

Thursday May 28th, Thursday in Week Seven of Eastertide

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the advice from the government and the medics about what we should be doing in this time of crisis.

And I hope everyone is praying together for our all our intentions in this time of need.

Once more we seemed blessed with the weather today, so if we can, let us take advantage of the sun.

And thank God for it.

O God,

We thank you for this earth, our home;

for the wide sky and the blessed sun,

for the ocean and streams,

for the towering hills and the whispering wind,

for the trees and green grass.

Grant us a heart opened wide to all this beauty.

Amen.

As there is no Feast Day today, we return to our Eastertide readings. In the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 22:30-23:6-11, Paul returns to Jerusalem and is arrested with many people trying to kill him. He is given the opportunity of explaining what he was doing and recounts the story of his conversion on the Road to Damascus. His preaching divides the Sadducees and the Pharisees - the Sadducees do not believe in the Resurrection so they will not accept that Jesus could rise from the dead. This causes a great row and Paul has to be rescued. The Lord tells him that he must also bear similar witness in Rome. It is an important 'plot point' in Paul's story, and the whole story of the Church, as we see the focus leaving Jerusalem and moving to the heart of the Roman Empire, the city of Rome itself.

And in the Gospel, John 17:20-26, Jesus continues his prayer: *'I pray for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one as you are in me and I am in you.'* It is incredibly humbling that in virtually his final prayer on earth before the events of Gethsemane and Good Friday, Jesus is thinking of us - you and me - who through the preaching of the Apostles, through *'their words'* enshrined in the scriptures and handed down from generation to generation, believe in him. His prayer that 'may they all be one' gains a new pertinence, as though we cannot be one physically in Church on a Saturday night and a Sunday morning, we are still called to be one community with

Christ in these difficult times. More than ever our prayers, and so much more, need us to stay together as one, until we can worship and celebrate as one in the hopefully not too distant future.

Dear Lord Jesus,

*You are our Prince of Peace and You prayed for unity in the body of Christ,
that we may be united in love just as You are united with the Father in love.*

*Give Your children the desire to love one another as You have loved us,
and let the world know that we are Your disciples by our love for one another.*

Give us a hunger to live in union with each another,

and may we be united as one, in the bond of peace and fellowship, in the Spirit.

This we ask in Jesus' name,

Amen.

So let today's hymn be 'Let There Be Love Shared Among Us.' and may we soon be able to offer each other a handshake of peace <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mvs6rMJUwc>

Incidentally, as yet there is absolutely no news on when we might open the Churches, nor how, though I am reading all your suggestions and comments. However Cardinal Vincent has pointed out to the Government that for Catholics an open Church is not necessarily a sign of a huge gathering all the time. We have, and can have, small services, and individuals pop into the open Church for silent prayer and lighting of candles. Social distancing is more than possible, even in our little Church. Watch this space. Or 'watch and pray,' as Jesus told the disciples.

As I mentioned yesterday at the end of the Message, Pope Francis is to lead the Holy Rosary in in Vatican Gardens to Invoke Mary's 'Aid in Pandemic' & 'Entrust All Humanity to the Lord' on Saturday afternoon as May, the month of Mary, draws to its close. This was communicated in a statement by the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization.

'The Holy Father will put at Mary's feet the many anxieties and sorrows of humanity, further aggravated by the spread of COVID-19. The appointment for the end of the Marian month is a further sign of closeness and consolation for all those that, in different ways, have been affected by the coronavirus, in the certainty that the Heavenly Mother will not disregard the requests for protection.'

It is to be a moment of world prayer for those that intend to join Pope Francis on the eve of Pentecost Sunday, and will be broadcast live at 18:30 on Saturday evening, UK time, on various outlets, not least the Vatican website. Some women and men, in representation of various categories of people particularly touched by the virus, will recite the decades.

'There will be a doctor and a nurse, for all the health staff committed on the front line in hospitals; a healed person and one who lost a family member, for all those touched personally by the coronavirus; a priest, hospital chaplain, and a Sister nurse, for all priests and consecrated persons

close to all those tried by the disease; a pharmacist and a journalist, for all the people that even in the period of the pandemic have continued to carry out their service in favour of others; a volunteer of Civil Protection with his family, for those that have done their utmost to address this emergency and for all the vast world of volunteers; and a young family, to whom a baby was born in this period, sign of hope and of victory of life over death.'

Let us make it 'appointment praying' on Saturday evening – and do your best to let others know about it that we can all be spiritually enjoined - worldwide - in prayer.

Over in Hong Kong, my brother's school where he teaches has now been opened, since being in lockdown since before Christmas. As well as the compulsory wearing of masks, the temperature of the students is also being monitored, and I attach a pic of him with his hand-held-non-contact thermometer. Perhaps we should get one for the Church, if it allows us to come together sooner!

Don't forget, if you are passing the Church, there is a bowl of Miraculous Medals, which you are welcome to take for yourself, and friends and family. I have also left some sealed bottles of Holy Water, on the table opposite the R.I.P board.

Finally, please pray for the repose of the soul of Albert Chisam, whose funeral I am celebrating at Carleton Crematorium this morning at 8:30am. *May he rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost. Any suggestions for ways to keep our faith and spirits up at this time are most welcome!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed, though the building is; we're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.