

Tuesday June 30th, Tuesday in Week Thirteen in Ordinary Time, Year II

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 trust everyone continues to pray for all our needs at this time.

Amos 3:1-8.4:11-12 gives another strong oracle against Israel and we have a part of it here in today's first reading. These people have been specially favoured by God - he took them out of Egypt - and yet they commit serious crimes against one another. They are acting like the animals, and there's lots of zoological imagery in his oracle – it's actually very poetic. *'Does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey? Does it growl in its den when it has caught nothing? Does a bird swoop down to a trap on the ground when no bait is there?'* Again he concludes grimly, *'Israel, prepare to meet your God!'*

Yesterday we were told that commitment is necessary if we wish to follow the Lord, and today we are given an injunction to deepen our faith if we wish to follow Jesus. Matthew 8:23-27 gives us the story of Jesus calming the storm, with Jesus asking the disciples, *'Why are you so frightened, you men of little faith.'* The Gospel concludes with the apostles soberly reflecting, *'Whatever kind of man is this? Even the winds and sea obey him?'* In the Scriptures we have Jesus' parables of the Kingdom, stories with a meaning, which tell us something about God and his Kingdom. We also have allegories, in which each individual part of the story has a meaning, such as the Parable of the Sower, in which Jesus himself explains how the different grounds, which each receive the seed differently, refers to peoples different receptions of the Word of God. But we also have living parables, where an actually event in the life of Jesus, can be interpreted as a parable. Today we might see the Gospel as referring to how Jesus not just calms nature, but how he can calm us amidst the storms in our lives, and the things that threaten us, or make us feel afraid. Perhaps we are afraid to go out to the shops, or even into Church. Perhaps we are afraid for our loved ones, our young, our elderly and most vulnerable. Let us ask the Lord to breathe his peace through the heat of our fears, and increase our faith that we put our trust solely in him.

Father,

In the name of your son Jesus,

I ask that you increase my faith in you.

Help me to remember that you are a mighty God when I am in difficulty.

Open my eyes that I may see how mighty you are.

You are bigger than anything I can think of.

*Definitely, you are bigger than my problems.
Today I simply ask for faith to overcome my doubts and worries.
If I have a strong faith, I can overcome all that troubles me.
Thank you Father for prayers answered,
through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

So let today's hymn be 'Eternal Father Strong To Save... For Those In Peril On The Sea.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjcSpCSUjdk>

The composer Benjamin Britten wrote a Church cantata based on an old Miracle play about Noah's ark called 'Noye's Fludde'. It concludes with the hymn 'Eternal Father Strong To Save,' so if you like the hymn you might like to check out this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gff5SOgZ3mc>

Today we have the Optional Memorial of the First Martyrs of The Holy Roman Church. The Church celebrates this feast in memory of the martyrs who suffered during the persecution of Nero, following the fire which destroyed much of Rome in 64AD, during which Nero famously 'fiddled while Rome burned'. Christians from every background were put to death with ingenious cruelty, and it was in these persecutions that Saints Peter and Paul, whose feast we celebrated at the weekend, were martyred, Peter being crucified upside down, as he felt unworthy to be crucified in the same way as Christ, and Paul being beheaded, his head bouncing three times, and on each bounce a fount of Holy water sprang up, and the place is now called 'Tre Fontani', 'three fountains'. The blood of the martyrs watered the seed ground of the Church.

*O God,
who consecrated the abundant first fruits of the Roman Church
by the blood of the martyrs,
grant, we pray, that with firm courage
we may together grow strength from so great a struggle
and ever rejoice at the triumph of faithful love.
Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, you Son,
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
on god, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Incidentally, the phrase 'to fiddle while Rome burns' has come to mean to occupy oneself with unimportant matters and neglect priorities during a crisis. The source of this phrase is, as I said above, the supposed story that Nero played the fiddle while Rome burned, during the great fire in AD 64. Great story, but there was no such instrument as the fiddle in first century Rome. If Nero played anything during the Rome fire, it was probably the lyre. It was the historian Suetonius who recorded

that Nero was responsible for the fire and that he watched it from a tower while playing an instrument and singing about the destruction of Troy. There you go. Every day's a school day.

I asked to have a meeting at 5pm in the hall for all stewards and cleaners, and anyone who wants to come along and help. Can I change that meeting to take place **in the Church** at 5pm, so we can have a proper rehearsal and try out and see what will work best? Please let Eileen or myself know if you can or can't come. Cheers.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Shaun Jones whose funeral I will celebrate at Carleton Chapel and Cemetery at 1:15pm this afternoon. *May he rest in the peace and love of Christ.*

And big happy birthday greetings to Judy Berk, and also big happy birthday greetings to Maria Poyner, who today is celebrating her 91st birthday, alas, not on a cruise as she celebrated her 90th last year. Even in her nineties Maria has embraced modern technology and sought herself an iPad in order that she can watch Mass at St. Bernadette's, as you can see in the attached picture! Now that's impressive! Well done!

Whatever you do today, make it a good day.

Mass for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul is available on the YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6N4h8PodpVA&feature=youtu.be>

The official link for the Mass Sheet is

<https://www.rpbooks.co.uk/uploads/www.rpbooks.co.uk/15SsPeterPaul.pdf>

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). 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, most of the time. 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.

