Saturday September 19th, Saturday in the Twenty-Fourth week in Ordinary Time, Year II

Good Morning from St. Bernadette’s.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

So who is in lockdown and who isn’t? If anyone wants to explain what is going on, please feel free. As Blackpool it would appear we are *not* in lockdown, but even if anyone *is* Churches continue to remain open for services as usual, with all our covid regulations and restrictions. But I am writing this at 10am on Saturday morning, so things might have changed by twenty-past the hour, who knows? But Mass as usual tonight at **5pm**, tomorrow at **10am**, and Tuesday and Thursday at **12noon**. If you are finding Sunday Morning starting to get a bit crowded, you may like to make Tuesday or Thursday your ‘Sunday’ Mass, as they are much quieter.

We finish the New Testament readings for the moment after today, with our last passage from St. Paul, I Corinthians 15:35-37.42-49. Many of the doubters among the Corinthians were asking that if the dead arise, what sort of body are they going to have. Paul uses a simple parable to demonstrate that we will be new types of being. The grain of wheat dies, but produces a new and stronger form of life. For us, what is sown is perishable, but what is raised is powerful. That is our prayer - to be with the Lord, to be like him, for we shall see him face to face. *‘We, who have been modelled on the earthly man, will be modelled on the heavenly man.’*

In Luke 8:4-15 on his way through the towns and villages, Jesus stops to tell the story of the seed falling in different places, the familiar Parable of the Sower. Only that which fell on good ground produced any fruit. Jesus gives the Apostles a whole explanation of the parable, and how the different soils refer to people’s different reactions upon hearing the Word of God. It’s quite clear, almost like an examination of conscience, that we have to discover what soil we are to be, praying that we can be the rich soil, which produces its crop a hundredfold, *‘Listen, anyone who has ears to hear.’*

 *Father, in the Name of Jesus, I thank You that You desire to speak to me every day—guiding me in spirit and in truth to obey Your Word and enjoy an abundant life.*

 *Lord, Your Word says that when we draw near to You, You will draw near to us. So, I draw near to You today. I seek Your face, Your truth and Your word for my life. I want to know You more, hear You more and obey You more.*

 *Your Word says Your sheep know Your voice and we will not follow the voice of a stranger. Help me to know Your voice and not be deceived by any other voice. Help me to guard my heart from the influences of this world and the people around me. Help me to view all thoughts and decisions through the lens of righteousness.*

 *As I seek to hear You today for instruction, correction and guidance, help me to confirm Your voice through Your Word. You said if I ask for wisdom, You will give it to me liberally, so I am asking for wisdom in the Name of Jesus to hear You clearly and consistently today and every day.*

 *Through your Son, Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Let’s pray that we produce a good crop for the Lord as we make today’s hymn ‘Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace.’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihhvm6eLWZI>

And today we have a memorial purely for England, that of St. Theodore of Canterbury. Theodore was born in in the early seventh century in Tarsus, which is now in Turkey, but back then was part of the Greek-speaking Eastern Empire. He studied at Antioch and Constantinople, and eventually ended up in Rome where joined a community of eastern monks. And this is where the English connection comes in, as the Pope at the time, St. Vitalian made Theodore a surprise choice to go to England and become the next Archbishop of Canterbury, which he became on the 27th May 669AD. His time as Archbishop was a very important one for the English Church. He presided over one of the first English Church Councils in Hertford in 672, and, being an incredibly intellectual man himself, established an influential school for Clergy at Canterbury. He also intervened in a dispute between St. Wilfred and St. Chad about liturgical practices, and whether they should have a quiet English reserve or some of the pomp and grandeur of Rome. Theodore died in 690 at the age of 88, having held the archbishopric for almost twenty-two years. He was buried in Canterbury at the church known today as St. Augustine's Abbey.

 *O God, who called your servant Saint Theodore*

 *to be a Bishop among us*

 *and to set the Church in England on a firm foundation,*

 *grant, we pray, through his intercession,*

 *that we may always remain steadfast on the rock which is Christ*

 *and be obedient to the calling we have received.*

 *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Talking of Canterbury, as we celebrated a short while ago the first Archbishop of Canterbury was St Augustine in 597 in fact nine of the first ten men elected to be Archbishop of Canterbury became saints. The other one was Wighard who died of plague around 666 before he could take up the post.

If you’ve never been to Canterbury, it is a beautiful city, and the Cathedral is amazing – make sure if you do go you are around for the bell ringers – the Cathedral has over twenty bells in its three towers, and, boy, can they make a noise! And incidentally, while we might be familiar with Chaucer’s ‘Canterbury Tales’ (I remember doing one of them for English Lit. A level – pure torture I thought) there is no evidence that Chaucer ever visited Canterbury (so he put us through all that Middle English stuff for nothing). But do stop for a slice of Canterbury Tart – which does indeed go back to Chaucer who made the very first mention of an Apple Pie in his aforementioned tales.

I attach a further picture from the children’s ‘Get Well Soon’ card. You can see that Years Four and Five know me very well indeed! On a medical note, I’m still feeling somewhat washed out, but getting it together! I will be seeing the doctor again the week after next, so we’ll see what’s going on then. Many thanks for all your prayers and support.

Mass this evening will be recorded and will be available on the YouTube by tomorrow morning, and I attach the Bidding Prayers and the Newsletter. Texts for mass can be found at <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

I hope you manage to have a lovely weekend, and hope that any restrictions are not putting paid to anybody’s plans. Let’s continue to stay safe and well, and do our best to avoid another total Lockdown.

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.