
WEEKLY NEWS

✠ Quinquagesima Sunday ✠

On Sundays

Low Mass at 8 a.m. at The Lady Altar after which silence is kept in S John's Chapel for

Centering Prayer. At 10 o'clock we pray the **Rosary.**

Confessions are heard in Church from 10.30-10.50. **Terce** is recited at 10.30 followed by **Solemn or Sung Mass** at 11 and **Coffee Hour** just after Mass in the Parish Hall. When scheduled, the **Sunday Forum** is then held in the adjacent Yarnall Room.

Vespers is chanted in Latin at 3 p.m. in the church followed by the **Novena** to Our Lady of Clemency and **Benediction.**

Weekdays

Daily Mass is offered Monday through Friday at 12.10 p.m. (10 a.m. on Saturdays and holidays).

Vespers is recited in the Church at 5.30 p.m. Monday through Friday and at 3 p.m. on Saturdays followed by **Shrine Prayers** to Our Lady of Clemency. **Confessions** are heard regularly on Sundays at 10.30 a.m. or by appointment.

Service booklets for all services are published and available on the Usher's tables and at www.s-clements.org.

FAITH, PENANCE, PRAYER

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

In this year's liturgical calendar on Quinquagesima Sunday we also commemorate The Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes when in 1858, just three years after the founding of S Clement's, Mary appeared eighteen times to a 14 year old peasant, Bernadette Soubirous between February 11 and July 16 in the cave of the rock at Massabielle. At that same time a spring appeared and miraculous cures and healings began to occur there.

Like the shepherds at our Lord's birth, Bernadette was poor, the eldest of six surviving children, a daughter of François Soubirous, a miller, and his wife Louise, a laundress. At the time of the apparitions she and her family lived in a one-room basement, a former jail called *le cachot* (the dungeon). We can only imagine her brave persistence during the extensive investigations she faced by the church hierarchy and the French government. Bernadette was in no position to be taken seriously by apparently powerful men. Yet, at her insistence, Lourdes became that holy place where millions of people are consistently bowled over by the mercy and love of God. Sometimes there are cures. Always there are miracles. Concerning the latter, Bernadette insisted: "One must have faith and pray; the water will have no virtue without faith." Here's a plain message for us as we approach Lent. Have faith. Pray.

A little later on in her short life Bernadette entered the Sisters of Charity of Nevers where she worked in the motherhouse as an assistant in the infirmary and as sacristan. Here's what she said looking back on the famous apparitions: "The Virgin used me as a broom to remove the dust. When the work is done, the broom is put behind the door again."

Last May I was prayerfully remembered at Lourdes during the annual pilgrimage of the American Society of the Order of

About today's Mass

We reach a further stage in the religious history of humanity. After Adam, "the father of the human race" (Septuagesima), after Noah, "the father of the new generations" (Sexagesima), comes the great figure of Abraham, "the father of believers", whom the lessons at today's Matins set before us as the subject of our mediation.

Because he believed that God's promises would be carried into effect Abraham is our father in the faith; because he was willing to sacrifice Isaac, "the son of the promise", on whom all his expectations were based, God increased his posterity like the stars in the sky and the sand of the seashore. According to St. Paul we belong to this posterity - Christ and all of us together with Him. And Isaac, doomed to sacrifice and then snatched from death, is the figure of Christ who died and rose again. (Hebrews 11. 17-19)

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," The Gospel of the Mass, while it announces the passion reminds us at the same time of the cure of the man born blind - an example of the gift of faith which takes men from their blindness, from darkness and from sin. In the Epistle, St. Paul's fervent hymn in praise of charity also emphasizes that supernatural transformation which the redemption wrought by Christ should effect in our human souls.

Malta where one of our Shrine Guardians, Fr. David Sellery presently serves as Director of Development and Membership Engagement. While in my illness I welcome much help from gifted medical specialists right here in Philadelphia, two terrific surgeons and a wise oncologist, I give glad thanks to Our Lady of Lourdes for the steady improvements I first began to notice last May. Presently I am cherishing my time as your priest and pastor.

Throughout this diocese and in our own parish I sense the activity of Our Lady's Broom sweeping away fear. Bucking all trends, Bishop Gutiérrez steadily insists this is no time to close churches. Nor is it a time for our peculiar Clementine witness to be disregarded. The saving mysteries we celebrate, ordinarily in the faithful simplicity of daily masses and offices, sometimes with solemn music and ceremonies, graciously, gloriously, beautifully anticipate a heavenly homeland. They also guide a humble, expectant church on paths of peace and journeys to justice on which we are never alone because we dwell, live, flourish, under the defense of the Most High.

Just as the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes relied on S Bernadette, just so may she inform and assist what we are to do for Christ this Lent, loving her Son wholeheartedly, and everyone else for his sake, and all by his grace.

Yours faithfully,
Fr. Alton

