

Feast of the Assumption 8-15-10

At least in this part of the country, the Catholic Church is known for two things: our beliefs in the Virgin Mary....and parish festivals. Here at St Bernadette, the two come together every August.

The Feast of the Assumption means something like this: Mary is forever in heaven—wherever and whatever “heaven” actually is. Mary has a “glorified body,” a spiritual body—whatever exactly a glorified body is. And Mary is aware of us, looking down at our festival—whatever it means to “see” in heaven. I do hope that she might be pleased by us at St. Bernadette. After all, we are named after Bernadette Soubirous, the young girl to whom Mary appeared 18 times in 1858.

Every year, our festival has a theme—printed on our T-shirts. Last year was this: “Extreme Makeover: Church Edition.” This beautiful new building.

Here is this year’s theme: it’s a guitar with angel wings. The words are “Livin’ on a Prayer.” Last year at St. Bernadette: build a building. This year: *live on prayer*. Which is what the Blessed Virgin Mary did her entire life: live on prayer.

“Livin’ on a Prayer” is a rock song by a group called Bon Jovi. It’s about a couple who have no money. Tommy works on a dock, but his union is on strike. Gina works in a diner, long hours. Every day, Tommy and Gina are “livin’ on a prayer”---like thousands of struggling families across the country, and some in our parish too.

And imagine Mary of Nazareth, a hundred generations earlier: she is fourteen, there is a baby, Joseph does not earn enough. Mary is the lowly, the hungry, one of the little ones of the world. At some point, Joseph dies, and she becomes a single parent. Later, she stands at the Cross and watches as her Son is executed. The Virgin Mary is "living on a prayer" too, isn't she? *I know she would approve of this year's T-shirt!*

In the song, Gina cries at night, and she dreams of running away. But in the chorus, Tommy sings, "We've got each other—and that's a lot." And then he adds this: "we're halfway there, livin' on a prayer."

"Halfway there." Or maybe not. Or maybe 95% there. Sooner or later, "knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door." "Climbing the stairway to heaven."

Anyway, thanks to Bon Jovi for the song. And thanks to the parish member who designed this year's shirt. And thanks to the Virgin Mary, in heaven, watching over all of us.