

Sunday November 8th, Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year II, Remembrance Sunday

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.

A very different Remembrance Sunday than we are used to, but we will make the best of the day.

In a couple of weeks' time we celebrate the feast of Christ the King, the final Sunday of the Church's year. And as the liturgical year draws to a close, the readings in these last Sundays ask us to think about the last things, the end of the of time and the coming of Christ in his glory. And the familiar parable of the ten bridesmaids which is related to us in the Gospel today clearly asks us to think about the preparations we are making for the end of time, for the judgement of Christ, and for the Second Coming.

Heaven, the Kingdom of God, throughout the Scriptures is often compared to a wedding feast, a totally wondrous, joyful occasion. It's important to note that lest we worry about the end of time and some great horrible judgement, the wedding feast descriptions are there to show us that we should be looking forward to a joyful time, a time for rejoicing, with no sadness or bitterness or note of discord whatsoever. And any thoughts of Last Judgement can and should be seen as referring to our final entrance into eternal Life rather than the ultimate end. And that has to be something to be look forward to.

It's completely appropriate too, then, that the second coming of Christ at the end of time should be compared to the arrival of the Bridegroom at the wedding feast; one of the highlights and most important moments of the celebrations, and the focal point of great joy and rejoicing. And this parable focuses on the preparations that bridesmaids have been making. We are not asked to do much thinking in this parable; little is left to the imagine. Jesus immediately tells us that five were wise and five were foolish; five had taken spare oil for the lamps and five had not. Five had looked forward, prepared for the task which they had been assigned, and five had not. Five are responsible for their own actions, whilst five expect others to be able to supply what they lack. Five, have taken seriously the task in hand, prepared for it, and taken their role in this wedding feast seriously, are ready for the bridegroom and are admitted into the feast. Five, realising their mistakes too late, are themselves too late, and fail to make it in time for the festivities and the arrival of the bridegroom. Jesus doesn't dwell on any suggestions that the five wise bridesmaids should have handed over some of their oil. This parable is

not about selflessness or selfishness. It is about being single mind in one's desire to prepare for and fulfil one's duties and so enter the banquet - the wedding feast of the Lamb, in heaven.

Each of us, every single one of us, has a lifetime to prepare for heaven, to focus our minds on Christ, and await his return in glory. Jesus is open about the fact that we do not know the day or the hour, hence, as the Book of Wisdom says watch early and you will have no trouble. Living out the teachings of Jesus Christ is not something any of us can put off until tomorrow; it's far too important. Now is the hour of preparation.

And remember, we are preparing for something joyful, and so our preparations, our Christian lives, should also be joyful. It's not a question of being frightened of not going to heaven. It's a question of being determined to take up the invitation offered to us, spurred on by St. Paul's joyful assurance that where we hope to go, many of our friends and families have already gone before us. With such thoughts as these we should comfort one another. And with such thoughts as these we should continue, maybe just begin, our preparations.

Lord,

I do love You and I desire to love You all the more.

Help me to remain wide awake in my life of faith.

Help me to keep my eyes on You through all things

so that I am always prepared for You when You come to me.

Through the same Christ our Lord.

Amen.

So, let's joyfully continue our journey to heaven as we sing 'Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spE-BE23qxA>

And today, as I said, is, of course, Remembrance Sunday, when we especially remember all those who died in the Two World Wars, and all who have died in acts of warfare and violence whilst serving their country. At the recorded Mass yesterday evening we celebrated the Act of Remembrance, with The Silence and the Last Post. Please pray with us for all the fallen, and join in the Act of Remembrance.

Act of Remembrance.

Let us remember before God, and commend to his sure keeping:

those who have died for their country in war;

those whom we knew, and whose memory we treasure;

and all who have lived and died in the service of mankind.

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them. **We will remember them.**

Here follows The Silence. Then the Last Post is sounded.

Almighty and eternal God,
from whose love in Christ we cannot be parted,
neither by death nor life:
Hear our prayers and thanksgivings for all whom we remember this day;
fulfil in them the purpose of your love;
and bring us all, with them, to your eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

And let us sing 'Abide With Me' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiLNTWfV6j8> and I attach a picture of the altar set for our Act of Remembrance.

On Wednesday in school each class will be coming out into the memorial garden, where we will have a short memorial service, and the children will place poppies they have made in the ground. We will also be blessing the statue of St. Bernadette that has been given to the school in memory of Patricia and Karen Gregory. You'll see a lovely photo of it in the week.

Have a lovely Sunday, grateful for what we have.

Mass for Remembrance Sunday was recorded and is available on the YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROq2OZfeDhE&feature=youtu.be> and texts for Mass each day can be found at <http://www.universalis.com/>

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. 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.