Sunday September 13th, Twenty-Fourth Sunday 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.

I hope you are all well, and it is lovely to wake up to a lovely sunny sky.

Forgiveness is the watchword of today’s Scriptures. Quite simply, forgiveness. In today’s Gospel Jesus tells us that we must forgive everybody from the heart, so let us make sure that we all make more of an effort to forgive everybody from the heart. And we’ll all live happily ever after. The end. I mean, I could end this sermon there (and no doubt a few of you would like me to). But what more is there to be said? A lot more, actually. The parable we hear in today’s Gospel primarily is an answer to Peter’s attempt to quantify forgiveness, as if there comes a stage when one need forgive no longer, or that one has forgiven enough.

Jesus speaks of servant who owed the king a huge some of money, a completely over the top impossible debt. The king agrees to wipe out the whole debt there and then because he felt so sorry for him. With his debts cancelled this servant immediately starts haranguing a fellow servant who owes him the tiny sum, eventually attacking him because he’s unable to pay his debt. His extraordinary ingratitude gets back to the King, and this unforgiving creature eventually gets his comeuppance.

The parable speaks of our need to forgive our brothers and sister, but first and foremost we should not consider this story to be solely about our forgiveness towards others. Just as we no doubt at some time all need forgiveness from our fellow men, so we all need - and so we have all received - the forgiveness of God. As forgiveness has come to us from Christ’s sacred heart, so, as Christ said, we should each forgive our brother and sister from the heart.

Jesus’ closing remarks remind us that this parable is very much a continuation of the teaching do unto others as you would have done unto you. If we want to receive forgiveness then we should show forgiveness to others. But showing forgiveness to others is not just about the desire to receive it in return for kindnesses shown, but a desire to change the world into a place where forgiveness and generosity of spirit is the norm. How the parable might have differed if the servant had gone on to forgive his fellow servant; this servant, too, might have gone away forgiving those in debt to him. Instead of forgiveness to all, the conclusion for his vicious actions is imprisonment and torture. For imprisonment and torture are the consequences of a lack of forgiveness. Not necessarily physical imprisonment, but a spiritual imprisonment. If we fail to forgive others how can we fully understand and take to our hearts and souls the forgiveness which has been won for us by Christ? If all we have within our hearts is resentment and anger, and we find ourselves unable to pray for our neighbour with forgiveness, how can we possibly understand Christ’s forgiveness towards ourselves?

Forgiveness, so central to our lives as Christians that no amount of words can ever fully convey its importance. But no amount of words can ever take the place of acting upon this teaching about forgiveness either. And if we do, perhaps we will indeed all live happily ever after.

For our hymn today let us sing ‘Praise to the Holiest in the Height.’ remembering that it was on the cross that Christ won forgiveness for us <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlBgTmiJCPI>

And so here we are on another Sunday? For you is it the first day of the week or the last? Either way, as we know Sunday is named after the old sun god, with all our days of the week being named so (Monday after the moon god and so on). However whilst that is the case in many languages, it’s not true in all:

 In Hebrew, Arabic, Persian and related languages, the word ‘Sunday’ means ‘first’.

 In Greek, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian ‘Sunday’ means ‘Lord’s Day’.

 In Russian, the word for Sunday is Воскресенье (Voskreseniye) meaning Resurrection.

 In other Slavic languages like Polish, Ukrainian, Croatian, and Bulgarian among others, the word for Sunday means ‘no work.’

So let’s make Sunday the first day of week, celebrating the resurrection of the Lord, and let’s do no work! Sound’s good to me.

Eileen will be doing her madcap Sound-of-Music walk along the boundary of the Parish this afternoon to raise money for new curtains for the Parish Hall. We wish her well, and glad that the sun is shining for her. I attach a pic of the route she is taking, and no doubt there will be one or two photographs of her venture for next week’s message.

Have a great week. There are lots of lovely Feasts and Saints days next week, and I’ll look forward to sharing them you. God bless.

Mass yesterday evening was recorded – there was no hymn I’m afraid, as I just about made it croaking through Mass without trying an Alfie Boe impression. Mass is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KH3x3IgiQuo&feature=youtu.be>

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.