

Sunday November 15<sup>th</sup>, Thirty-Third 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.

And here we are on the penultimate Sunday of the Church's liturgical year.

Yesterday evening we had our annual Bereavement Mass, where I read out all the name of the people who had died in the last year. But why do we pray for the dead? And do we still talk about Purgatory?

From before the moment of Adam's happy fault in the Garden of Eden our salvation had been assured in the person of Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God. And this salvation was won for us through his life, death and resurrection. Our salvation is there, and all who die in God's grace and friendship are indeed assured of their eternal salvation.

How do we die in God's grace and friendship? The Ten Commandments are our earliest set of rules for living, not just at one with God, but with one another, in a community. The teachings of the Church are about allowing us to be the people God made us, in his own image and likeness – and the Sacraments are the greatest aid to this that there could possibly be. In The Gospels we have the wonderful Beatitudes, And the people who are described in the Beatitudes are people who live in Christ's friendship, confounding this world of sin and sadness through comfort and joy and faith, thirsting for what is right, seeking to upbuild, rather than destroy. And whatever life or death situations they find themselves in are able to look to God with trust and faith, as members of his family, as children of God, living in his grace and friendship. No doubt this is how we are able to remember many of our friends and family, our relations, or those who have worshipped beside us in church, who we are thinking of in this month of the Holy Souls.

But all of us live, and have lived, in a world of sin. And so it is by the grace of God that we are given a period of time - or a period out of time - in order to be purified further, and so achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. If we have lived lives journeying to heaven, if we have lived lives by the spirit of the Beatitudes, by observing the Ten Commandments, by following the teachings of the Church, then we may then experience this final period of purification, which the Church, many years ago at the medieval councils of Florence and Trent, called 'Purgatory', a word which means 'a place of cleansing'. The Church suggests that this is far from an unhappy time. Ancient scholars, in seeking to describe purgatory have written of peaceful places of prayer, with an almost child-like

underlying excitement, as we are conscious that our salvation is assured, and just need to make that final preparation.

I think about purgatory today of all days, and in this month of November, traditional the month of prayer for the whole souls, as the whole doctrine of purgatory is bound up in our practice of prayer for the dead. In the Old Testament book of Maccabees this practice is first mentioned when Judas Maccabaeus made atonement for the dead that they might be delivered from their sin. From the beginning the Church has honoured the memory of the dead and offered prayers for them - most especially in the holy sacrifice of the mass, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God.

As so as St. John Chrysostom preached, *'Let us help and commemorate the dead. If the sons of Job were purified by their father's sacrifice, why should we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation. Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer up our prayers and our works for them. Amen.'*

*Eternal rest give unto them O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.  
May they rest in peace. Amen.*

For a hymn today, let's sing one of my favourites, which I sang at Mass last night, 'Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAXiN0egN-I> The Video is quite beautiful too.

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> I mentioned *paraskevidekatriaphobia*, the fear of Friday 13<sup>th</sup>, and *hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia*, the fear of long words. But there is a myriad of other words for some strange and not so strange phobias, including:

Samhainophobia - Fear of Halloween

Ephibiphobia - Fear of teenagers

Chronomentrophobia - Fear of clocks

Barophobia - Fear of gravity

Melophobia – Fear of music

Arachibutyrophobia - Fear of peanut butter (particularly sticking to the roof of your mouth)

Koumpounophobia - Fear of buttons

Porphyrophobia - Fear of the colour purple

Alektorophobia - Fear of chickens or hens

Ecclesiophobia – Fear of Church

Hierophobia - Fear of priests or sacred things

Dimanichophobia -Fear of Sunday

Cenosillicaphobia - Fear of an empty glass

Mavrogatphobia - Fear of black cats. Now who could be afraid of this little cutie? (A throwback photo to June 2016, not long after Tobias moved in to SB's)

We should remember, however strange they may sound, that phobias can be fearful and debilitating things, so here is a prayer to not be fearful:

*Dear Lord,*

*You know that we live in a crazy and chaotic world.*

*You also know my struggles in my daily life.*

*When life gets to be too much, please help me come to you.*

*Calm my thoughts and emotions*

*and open my heart to your peace, comfort, and wisdom.*

*Help me not to live in fear.*

*Please reduce the feelings of fear and anxiety that plague me.*

*Help me rest in You and trust You as I navigate through this broken world.*

*Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Don't forget that the Church is open every day from noon till 1pm, and on Sundays the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed.

Yesterday evening's Bereavement Mass was recorded and is available on the YouTube at <https://youtu.be/vz7JvyVr6mQ> Texts for Mass each day can be found at <http://www.universalis.com/>

I hope you can make the best of the second Sunday in 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. 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.