

Monday January 11<sup>th</sup>, Monday of Week 1 in Ordinary Time Year 1.

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.

Well there were far fewer at Mass over the weekend, and if that means people are staying at home and being safety conscious, protecting their own health AND everybody else's, then well done. Numbers for the online mass are well up, so it's great that people are watching through God-given technology.

And so we begin Week 1 in Ordinary Time Year 1. It's called 'Ordinary Time' as it is ordered by numbers, and it is Year 1 (there is a two year cycle for Ordinary time). You can work out that it is Year 1 as the majority of the Liturgical Year is an odd numbered year, 2021. So, back to green vestments though we will be leaving up the crib until February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. I'm doing my best to have liturgically correct face masks, as you can see, but it's not always easy!

The Letter to the Hebrews, written by an unknown author circa 80AD, is used for the first four weeks of Ordinary Time Year 1. It begins with a powerful introduction: Hebrews 1:1-6. The Greeks thought of things as being copies or shadows of the real creation, and they looked for the real creation; the Jews saw the need for the perfect sacrifice. Both are now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God sent his Son, the very expression of his essence, into the world. He made his great sacrifice and purified humankind and has now taken his royal seat at the right hand of the glory in the heights. In the past bits and pieces of this were revealed to people, but now we have it all.

For the first nine weeks of Ordinary Time we use the gospel of Mark and today we see the beginning of the public mission of Jesus, which he begins after hearing that John the Baptist has been arrested. He we see him calling his first four Apostles, with an incredible *phrase* 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.'

*Thank you, dear Lord, for 'catching' me in the net of your grace.*

*Thank you for calling me to be one of your fishermen.*

*Help me, by your Spirit, to fish faithfully each day.*

*No matter where I am, no matter what I'm doing,*

*may I demonstrate the Gospel in the way I live.*

*And may I find ways to share the good news naturally and honestly.*

*All praise be to you, O God,*

*because you are a God of justice and mercy,  
of judgment and love. Amen.*

So we just have to sing 'Follow Me, Follow Me... leave your fishing nets and boats upon the shore.'  
I'm afraid this is the best version I could find: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujhYHIukK8Q>

There is much mention of fishing nets in today's Gospel. Simon Peter and Andrew were called by Jesus whilst casting his net, and James and John were called while mending their nets. The nets that first century Galilean fishermen used were in the form of a bag, coming to a point at the bottom, to which a long rope is attached. It had a mouth about three feet in diameter, with weights around it which keep it open when thrown, and close it when it sinks through the water. Sometimes this is used from a boat. When used from the shore, the fisherman wades or swims in, and throws it with great dexterity to a considerable distance, and then draws it in by the rope. Later in the Scriptures the nets would become a metaphor for God's goodness to us, in the story of the miraculous catch of fish in the fifth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. Here the nets burst with so much fish, and Peter leaves them to follow the Lord. Here's an old Fisherman's prayer:

*I pray that I may live to fish  
Until my dying day.  
And when it comes to my last cast,  
I then most humbly pray:  
When in the Lord's great landing net  
And peacefully asleep  
That in His mercy I be judged  
Big enough to keep.*

And Amen to that for us all!

As I announced at Masses over the weekend I am starting a 'Tech Fund' to help our school supply online learning equipment which the school will then lend out to families who need the support. The likelihood is that there will be a lot more online learning for the foreseeable future, and our children have already missed a lot of schooling, and larger families with children of different ages need some help. Our teachers are doing an amazing job providing online lessons, so it would be great to support them. Tablets which are suitable for the youngest children cost £130 and laptops cost £320. I have written to all the Undertakers asking for donations. I appreciate that times are difficult for many people, but any donations would be gratefully received. I may do a first 'challenge of 2021, to boost the funds. Many thanks in anticipation.

And in other news Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, thinks I am spending far too much time at the computer, and not enough time feeding him treats, as you can see in the attached pic!

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.