

Saturday January 16th, Saturday 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.

Gorgeous day here, so deffo a walk on the prom this afternoon, before 5pm mass. Don't forget that 5pm and 10am masses are live streamed and remain on the site for a week. Just google 'YouTube St. Bernadette's Bispham' and we should pop up. And continued thanks for all the contributions to the tech fund – they are much appreciated. I'll keep it going for a week or so, and then publish a total. It's already quite amazing!

A wonderful passage from the Letter to the Hebrews this morning; 4:12-16. The word of God is alive and active, effective and penetrating, *'it cuts like any two edge sword'*, it can see into our hearts we are told in Hebrews 4:12-16. This is our faith. Through this faith we have Jesus Christ, the effective high priest, who was with both God and humankind and is capable of feeling our weaknesses with us.

And there's lots happening in the Gospel: Mark 2:13-17. First of all we have the call of Matthew, here referred to as Levi, son of Alphaeus. I love the immediacy with which the tax collector gets up to follow Jesus – it's as though he had been waiting for someone to take him away from the lifestyle he was living. Jesus goes on to eat with tax collectors and sinners that evening, and with consoling words Jesus points out to his detractors that he did not come to help those who believed that they were spiritually healthy; *'I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners,'* those who were striving to overcome sin in their lives, those who were genuine.

God our Father,

I believe that out of Your infinite love You have created me.

In a thousand ways I have shunned Your love.

I repent of each and every one of my sins. Please forgive me.

Thank You for sending Your Son to die for me.

I choose this day to renew my covenant with You

and to place Jesus at the centre of my heart.

I surrender to Him as Lord over my whole life.

I ask You now to flood my soul with the gift of the Holy Spirit

so that my life may be transformed.

Give me the grace and courage to live as a disciple in Your Church for the rest of my days.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

I opened the hymn book to look for inspiration for today's hymn and it fell open at 'Walk With me O My Lord' so let's go for it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FiWb6RXnS4>

Well it might be cold and frosty over here, and we might be all wishing it would warm up a little, but what if it's too warm? Over in Australia my sister writes: *'We were expecting 40 degrees and a total fire ban today. For some reason Ballarat missed it, but Ararat where I work got it. Total fire ban (once the dial goes to Very High) means no heat producing things outside, so no barbecues and no mowing the lawn. The fire that almost destroyed our house 4 years ago was started by somebody mowing their lawn on a total fire ban day. Twelve families lost everything, and we were lucky to escape. These signs are everywhere. Basically, if the dial goes to Extreme you grab your passports and insurance documents and get into the nearest big town. Code red is essentially too late. What takes it up there is not so much the heat but the wind. On hot windy days you can feel your skin crawl, and everybody is frightened.'* Perhaps we could pray this prayer for all who are affected by these fires in Australia, or other natural disasters over the world:

Creator of life, this beautiful land cries out.

For the disfigured splendour of charred forests, blackened soil, ashen skies, we grieve.

For the hundreds of millions of creatures that perished in smoke and flame, for the millions more who emerge after the inferno to starvation or predation, for the twisted, frayed and torn strands of ecosystems that may never recover, we mourn.

*For smoke-filled lungs, dread-filled hours, anxiety-filled evacuations,
for ruined livelihoods, incinerated sacred sites, smouldering homes,
for bereaved families, inflicted trauma, gutted dreams, we weep.*

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

I hope you have a great weekend. Tomorrow I will tell you all about our visit from the army and what's been going on, and what I've been listening to whilst a-walking on the prom. Enjoy the day and the fresh wintery weather.

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.