

Sunday January 24th, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B.

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.

The last ten months have taught us all to 'expect the unexpected', and that's certainly true for the characters we meet in today's liturgy of the Word. Jonah was living an unremarkable and presumably happy life until the word of the Lord came to him, asking him to go and preach repentance to the people of Nineveh: Jonah 3:1-5,10. And it wasn't a calling that Jonah expected or wanted. He thought of Nineveh as nothing more than a notoriously wicked pagan city. The people didn't merit the chance to hear the word of the Lord. Why should they be given the chance to repent and find salvation when, as far as Jonah was concerned, all they deserved was to be punished for their sins? And so Jonah's first reaction was to resist the Lord's call and to run away. It was only after a series of adventures culminating in the episode with the whale that the reluctant prophet accepted his calling and took God's message to Nineveh.

And then moving in to the New Testament there was Simon. From his earliest days, Simon was to be a fisherman, brought up with the life, living in a lake-side community. He had married, and settled down probably expecting to provide for a family, working with his brother Andrew. And this, he assumed, would be his future. But the Lord had other plans for Simon and his brother: Mark 1:14-20. They met Jesus, a preacher who seemed to speak with an authority they'd never heard before. And when he called them to be his disciples, everything changed. In contrast to Jonah, there was no attempt to resist the call or to run away. On the contrary, 'at once they left their nets and followed him'. Somehow, they knew that it was the only thing to do. Even though it meant that their lives would never be the same again.

I'm sure we all had plans for the last ten months, plans which most likely have been turned on their heads by the situation we have all found ourselves in, trivial things like holidays, serious things such as illness and tragedy. St. Paul gives us some advice regarding the unexpected here. He doesn't give us answers - and quite rightly so, in the context, because everybody's life is and will be very different, but his advice is clear. We need to set our eyes on God. Paul expected the Second Coming of Christ to be very soon, and he exhorted his congregations to live in constant expectation of it. But his counsel not to become engrossed in the ways of the world is still as valid as ever. We need to have a different perspective, and to be open to the word of God whenever and however it comes.

Both Jonah and Jesus preached repentance, and John the Baptist in the middle of them. The word 'repent' means to 'change your mind, change your way of thinking, change your life'. And so the call to repentance is a call to look at the direction of our lives. Our minds need to be open to hear God's word to us. And if that word is calling us to change direction, to change the way our lives are heading, to change the way we think and act, or humbly accept what is coming our way, then we need to respond to it as the first disciples did - without hesitation, but with great trust, in the Word of the Lord.

Lord Jesus,

*I am humbled that You consider me worthy to be used in ways big and small
to accomplish Your will here on earth.*

Help me listen to your word and recognise my role in your Church.

Help me respond without hesitation whenever I perceive Your voice calling me into action.

May my actions achieve to make your will be done.

And I may thankfully and humbly serve you, and my fellow people,

In all that I say and do.

May this prayer itself be an act of service,

Though the same Christ our Lord.

Amen.

And let's all say, 'Here I am, Lord' as we sing 'I The Lord Of Sea And Sky.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

I mentioned yesterday that it was National Pie Day, when we are also supposed to buy, bake and eat a pie. But there are many other National and International Days, which are just as weird – and some quite sensible.

February 9th: National Pizza Day. An excuse to eat pizza? What more could you want!

February 27th: National Retro day. Time to blast out some ABBA methinks.

March 18th: National Awkward Moments Day, celebrating cring-worthy moments.

April 1st: National Pet Month. Extra treats for Tobias, I guess.

April 22nd: National Stationary Week. Time to buy some more pens?

May 1st: National Share A Story Month. Created to inspire people to read and share stories.

May 11th: Eat what you want Day. I guess for me that's another Pizza Day then!

May 29th: National biscuit Day. With a cup of tea.

June 1st: National Milk Day. The date is the first day milk was delivered in a glass bottle.

June 7th: National Fish & Chip Day. Any excuse.

July 7th: World Chocolate Day. For pudding after your fish and chips.

August 13th: National Prosecco Day. Well it would be churlish not to.

August 19th: World Photo Day. Time for a selfie.

September 13th: Roald Dahl Day. Something for everyone to enjoy.

September 2nd-8th: Organ Donor week. All five types: Organ, Tissues, Marrow, Platelets and Blood. A very worthy week.

September 16th: National Spa Week. Take the cucumber out the gin and place on your eyes.

October 1st: International Coffee Day. Celebrating everyone from farmers to baristas.

October 14th: National Baking Week. Encouraging us into the kitchen.

November 3rd: National Sandwich Day. Time for a Tesco Meal Deal!

December 14th: Christmas Jumper Day. Almost the festive season.

Hopefully we will also be celebrating a Coming Out of Lockdown Day in the not too distant future!

Lord, Jesus, today is Your day,

and I want Your will to be done.

So, whatever happens,

hold my hand and let's face it together.

Amen.

I hope you are having a great Sunday, and have a great week. Oh, and the attached pic is a birthday card from the school – well done to them. Cheers!

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.