

Sunday February 7th, Fifth 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.

It was very noticeable whilst greeting people outside Church last night that the days are getting longer and spring is on its way, a spring which will hopefully bring health and happiness, and freedom from the present lockdown.

So, what would your perfect day be? I guess a lot of things we would put in our 'perfect days' have been somewhat put on hold with Covid restrictions, whilst we are perhaps treasuring more highly the things that we can do. Today's Gospel, Mark 1:29-30, is a kind of 'perfect day' in the life of Jesus.

It begins with a visit to the Synagogue, followed by a miracle, the healing of Peter's Mother-in-law who is in bed with a fever – and Eileen has helpfully provided us with a knitted version of the scene. As Jesus takes her by the hand, the fever miraculously disappears. This is followed by more healing miracles, spiritual and physical, as many people are brought to the Lord, *'He also cast out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak because they knew who he was.'* After that Jesus goes away on his own and prays, time to be with his heavenly Father and 'recharge his batteries' as it were. The apostles find him, and he tells them. *'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came,'* a sentence which neatly explains Jesus' primary mission – to preach and teach. And of they go, *'preaching in the synagogues and casting out devils.'*

I call it a 'perfect day' because, just as the 'Our Father' is the 'perfect prayer' incorporating as it does, praise, petition, and humility, Jesus' perfect day incorporates everything wonderful that he came to earth for, yes, preaching and teaching as he states himself, but also outpourings of love and forgiveness in his healing ministry, as well as time set aside for personal prayer and conversation with God the Father.

Even in these strange covid times, we still have many opportunities to make our day's as perfect as the Lord's, and one good thing to happen over the last ten months, is that we have found many different ways to spread God's word, serve one another, and pray together. I never thought this time last year that we would be streaming masses, sending video prayers to schools, writing Messages every day, asking for money for computers and so on but they have all been wonderful ways to

communicate God's word and serve the community. And a joy to do. So let's try and make all our days as perfect as the Lord's, helping each other out in whatever way can, seeking spiritual healing, praying for physical healing for those in need, and turning to our Heavenly Father in prayer for all our needs. Let's make every day a perfect day, in the eyes of Our Lord.

God our Heavenly Father and Lord,

Thank you for raising me up this morning.

Help me make this day perfect,

by following the example of your Son.

You know we live in challenging times

So help us through these challenges by showing us how to serve you.

Lift our spirits when the day does not go as we planned.

Open our hearts to new, exciting, unexpected directions.

Keep us safe and healthy, and bless those who are helping us so to do.

And in the words of St. Richard of Chichester:

Day by day, Lord, three things I pray.

To see thee more clearly,

Love thee more dearly,

And follow thee more dearly.

Day by Day.

Amen.

'My God Accept My Heart This Day' is a suitable morning hymn:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=124CyzthyAE> though if you are reading this in the evening you may prefer 'Day Is Done But Love Unfailing': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QnCEleZsIo> which is being sung to the Welsh melody 'AR HYD Y NOS'.

I mentioned last Monday that the hymn tune of 'Lord For Tomorrow And It's Needs' is sung to a hymn tune called 'PROVIDENCE' and someone emailed to ask why does the hymn have two names? Well it does and it doesn't. Whilst these days most hymn writers write both words and music, for our old hymns it was a different set up, the hymn texts and hymn tunes being two different things. Take for example 'Faith Of Our Fathers'. It is actually a set of verses by the poet F.W. Faber. The tune we generally sing it to in England is called 'SAWSTON' (for some reason the names of hymn tunes are always written in capital letters). But there are other tunes that we could sing the hymn to, in fact in most YouTube versions of the hymn, certainly American versions, they sing it to the tune 'ST CATHERINE', which we usually use for 'O Bread of Heaven.' Texts and music are interchangeable if they have the same meter, or rhythm, in this case '88 88 88' with both the hymns having six lines of eight syllables. Some hymn books, as well as having alphabetical lists of hymns, also have a 'metrical index, which tell you which tunes have which meter, meaning that essentially you could sing one set

of words to several different tunes. The Hymn Book 'Laudate' lists eight different tunes with the meter '88 88 88' so you could actually sing 'Faith Of our Fathers' or 'O Bread Of Heaven' to them all. Try singing, for example, 'Faith of Our Fathers' to the tune 'STELLA' which we use for 'Hail, Queen of Heaven.' It fits as it is the same meter. In earlier times congregations had no printed hymnals, so the music leader would announce the singing of a hymn text to a specific hymn tune. People would know the tune names and would know what tune to sing. Before hymnals, hymn texts and tunes were interchanged all the time. Common uses of tunes paired with texts ended up in the printed hymn books that we have now. So there you have it. Go have a good sing – although sadly, not in Church at the moment!

Have a lovely day – and do your best to make it a perfect day!

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.