

Monday May 24th, 2021, Monday in Week Eight of Ordinary Time Year One
& The Feast of Mary, Mother of the Church.

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 start of a new week, so I hope you all had a great Pentecost weekend, and are filled with the Holy Spirit!

And so we are back in Ordinary Time, the start of Week 8 – although there are so many Feasts and Celebrations this week, we won't be in green until Friday. None-the-less, let's take a look at our weekday cycle readings, which for this first week come from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, or Wisdom or Sirach as it is also known. The Book of Ecclesiasticus was written about fifty years before the coming of Christ. Its author, whose name is not known to us, was probably a member of the Jewish community at Alexandria, in Egypt. He wrote in Greek, in a style patterned on that of Hebrew verse. At times he speaks in the person of Solomon, placing his teachings on the lips of the wise king of Hebrew tradition in order to emphasize their value. His profound knowledge of the earlier Old Testament writings is reflected in almost every line of the book, and marks him, as an outstanding representative of religious devotion and learning among the sages of Judaism after the exile. The primary purpose of the author was the edification of his communities in a time when they had experienced suffering and oppression, in part at least at the hands of apostate fellow Jews. The first ten chapters in particular provide background for the teaching of Jesus and for some New Testament theology about Jesus. We begin this week with Ecclesiasticus 17:20-28, and like the first words of Jesus, we have a call to turn away from sin and repent, through which we will receive hope and encouragement from God; *'How great is the mercy of the Lord, his pardon on all those who turn towards him!'*

And we start in the middle of chapter 10 of the Gospel of St. Mark, where Jesus meets, and loves, a wonderful young man, who has followed all the commandments throughout his life. Sadly, Mark 10:17-27 reminds us how material things can make us earthbound, despite the opportunities to raise our minds and souls to heaven, as the rich young man feels unable to follow Jesus due to his riches, *'How hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.'* Hope is at hand, though, as when the Apostles question Jesus as to whether they have any hope of getting to heaven, Jesus replies, *'everything is possible for God.'*

*Father, I thank you for your mighty power,
I thank you because your power is unlimited,
and there is nothing impossible for you to do,
it is by your power that I'm alive today.
I rest on this power today,
please let your power provide the answer to all my prayers.
Help me to be a true follower of your Son,
by your power that knows no impossibility,
that I, in my lowliness, may be found worthy of the Kingdom of God.*

For this first day of Ordinary Time since before the Church throws us a little Feast Day for Mary, quite new Feast, actually, that of The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. On September 17, 1997, Pope John Paul II devoted a Wednesday general audience to the title 'Mother of the Church' with regard to its application to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He wrote, *'The faithful first called upon Mary with the title 'Mother of God', 'Mother of the faithful' or 'our Mother' to emphasize her personal relationship with each of her children. Later, because of the greater attention paid to the mystery of the Church and to Mary's relationship to her, the Blessed Virgin began more frequently to be invoked as 'Mother of the Church'.* The title 'Mother of the Church' thus reflects the deep conviction of the Christian faithful, who see in Mary not only the mother of the person of Christ, but also of the faithful. In 2018, Pope Francis decreed that the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church be inserted into the Roman Calendar on the Monday after Pentecost and to be celebrated every year. The decree was signed on February 11, 2018, the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, at the 160th anniversary of the Lourdes apparitions. It was universally issued on March 3, 2018.

Mother, help our faith!

Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize his voice and call.

Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise.

Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith.

Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature.

Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One.

Remind us that those who believe are never alone.

Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!

Amen.

And with that, it seems a great opportunity to sing ‘O Mother Blest, whom God bestows on Sinners and on Just.’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nb7PchC-p04>

As you will have known, over the past couple of weeks, Bernard has been collecting sponsorship for his wife and daughter to do the annual ‘Moon Walk’ in aid of Breast Cancer charities. Well the deed has been duly done, so congratulations to Linda, and her daughter Sarah for this great accomplishment. Linda writes to us: *‘Thank you! One behalf of Sarah and myself a huge thank you to all of you who kindly donated to ‘Walk the Walk’ for Breast Cancer. Though normally done in London at Midnight, this year the walks were done during the day and wherever you lived. We still wore our decorated bras though! It was a drizzly day on the 15th, but it kept us cool. We discovered that we had actually walked 29 miles in the end, instead of the 26.2 miles required. No wonder our legs ached! But it was worth every step to raise much needed funds for Breast Cancer. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Sarah and Linda (‘Annie’s Angels’).* Once again, congratulations, and thanks to everyone from St. Bernadette’s who contributed £574 to the fund. Well done! (And if you look somewhat tired in the photo, we fully understand!)

Enjoy a wonderful start to the week, under the Patronage of Mary, Mother of the Church.

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.