

Sunday July 18th, 2021, Sixteenth 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.

And a beautiful weekend it is!

*The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.
In meadows of green grass he lets me lie.
To the waters of repose he leads me; there he revives my soul.
He guides me by paths of virtue for the sake of his name.
Though I pass through a gloomy Valley,
beside me your rod and your staff are there, to hearten me.
You prepare a table before me under the eyes of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, my cup brims over.
Ah, how goodness and kindness pursue me every day of my life,
my home, the house of the Lord, as long as I live!*

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. It's such a beautiful phrase, one which is so familiar to us, that it's easy to miss the enormity of the sentiment in that one line.

The Lord is my shepherd. God's Son Jesus has come down from heaven to earth. The eternally begotten Son of God has entered history for me, freely of his own will, in obedience to his heavenly Father. And why has he done this? Because he loves me. He has done this for me, for my benefit, for my personal benefit. He loves and cares and knows me as an individual, and as such he has come to be my shepherd. A shepherd who will guide me, who will look after me, who I always looking out for me, ready to support me and help me at all times. Such is this shepherd that he was even prepared to die for me. That's the kind of shepherd the Lord is for me.

And because the Lord is my shepherd: there is nothing I shall want. It's quite clear from the Gospel that Jesus knows the needs of the people who are following him; he knows they need him as their shepherd. He is immediately open their desperate spiritual, heavenly, needs. But what is also wonderful about this Gospel is how Jesus also sees the human needs of the apostles, who needed time to eat, and pray and rest awhile for themselves. While he is prepared to forego this, insisting on fulfilling the needs of the people, he still insists on the apostles taking what they need at this time. Jesus knows the different and individual needs of these two groups of people, and fulfils them. From

such an example we can see that we shall not want, because God knows our needs. The likelihood is that he knows them better than we do ourselves. The problem here is that there is so much we want that we don't need. Our true needs will indeed be fulfilled by the Lord.

Just as the people were like sheep without a shepherd, so there are many people today lost and leaderless. As the first reading speaks about God raising up shepherds for the people, so we see the apostles being trained as shepherds by Jesus. And we in turn can, indeed we must imitate the Apostles in their care for souls, as we too seek to care for those in need, like Christ identifying people's true needs, rather than forcing our own concerns upon them, and then helping them realise their desires. If this seems a huge, thankless and tiring task, then surely all the strength and encouragement and motivation we need to do so is summed up in that one, wonderful phrase; *'The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.'*

Loving Heavenly Father, I come to You in Jesus' Name to thank You for the peace, comfort and joy that I can gain from this Psalm. You promise all-encompassing provision in my life and that I will lack nothing.

I ask You to guide me along the right path, to provide me with comfort and refreshment. In Your Name is where I can find peace, joy and a more fulfilled life.

It is such a blessing that no matter what destruction and chaos the evil one will bring my way, I do not need to fear because I know that You are with me and Your protection is unfailing. This continually brings me comfort.

I appreciate the fact that wherever I am, You provide and bless me beyond what I could ever understand.

Thank you that I can know that Your goodness and love towards me will never end. When You call me home I will join You in glory, praising Your Name forever and ever.

Direct my relationship with You to be like that of a sheep to his shepherd, where I rely on You in total trust for everything in my life at all times.

Through Christ the Good Shepherd. Amen.

And so let us sing the beautiful psalm itself, 'The Lord's My Shepherd.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3hNZT6ddJg>

We have heard some indication about Church usage for after July 19th, and whilst many things will stay the same, there are some changes. Please note that the instructions we have been given are very much 'guidelines' so different Churches will adapt the rules in different ways.

Please continue the option to wear masks whilst in the Church building, sanitize as usual, and optionally sign in for track and trace.

Social distancing is not required but please be sensitive to others, and for the time being the ropes will remain on alternate side benches.

Communion distribution will continue as present under one kind.

Singing, and other readings and various actions during mass (such as an offertory procession) etc., will be gradually reintroduced.

Please leave orderly as directed.

No doubt things will change and develop (and possibly revert) as time goes on so continue to watch this space, be sensitive to others, make grateful thanks for all who enable our Churches to open and the fact that we have the great gift of coming together to worship at all, and continue to pray for the Church and the world in these difficult and new times.

Some news and pictures from Australia today, where my sister writes, *'We went to dinner in Melbourne on Saturday night, and on Sunday we visited Auntie Joan (my brother-in-law's Auntie, a Sister of Mercy) and the wonderful Sister Maureen. Joan and Maureen met in 1947, in primary school and have been best friends and companions ever since. They joined the Sisters of Mercy order together at 16 and now in their 80's have adjacent flats in a retirement complex for religious sisters. Joan trained as a teacher and taught in Melbourne and country Victoria. In the 1970's she studied a Bachelor of Economics and Master of Education, leading her to become a respected principal of several schools. She had a particular focus on encouraging girls from new migrant backgrounds to remain in education. She is also an excellent seamstress, and her home is covered in photographs of spectacular costumes she designed and created for decades of school productions. She retired in 2002. Sister Maureen also taught in both primary and secondary schools around Victoria. Following this she managed the Mercy Conference Centre and worked in aged care. She has worked with homeless women and survivors of family violence. This year she was nominated for an award by the Victorian state government for this work. Joan has had some health problems recently, but Maureen continues firing on all cylinders, working in deprived areas hit by the pandemic as well as supporting Joan. The pics show them at school, Joan left, Maureen far right with the cheeky grin, as young women, and then Joan at her profession with her auntie, Antonia. They are both exceptional women who have changed many lives.'* And God bless them both for their lifelong ministry.

And just a quick nun joke: A man is drinking in a bar when a nun harasses him about drinking. In self-defence the man says, 'Who told you that drinking is bad?' The nun says, 'Mother Superior told me.' To which the man asks, 'So, have you ever tried it?' The nun replies, 'No, I haven't ever taken a drink of hard liquor.' The man says, 'Well then, don't criticize me if you haven't tried it. I'll tell you what if you try it and don't like it, I'll give up drinking for life.' The nun agrees, 'Okay but bring it in a teacup. I don't want people thinking I'm drinking.' The man goes up to the bartender and says, 'Bring me a couple of shots of vodka but bring one of them in a teacup.' The bartender looks at the man and says, 'Is that nun in here again?' I'll get my coat...

I hope you are enjoying the weather, and having a great weekend.

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.