

Sunday October 25<sup>th</sup>, Thirtieth Sunday In Ordinary Time Year II

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.

But of a wet and windy start to the half term. Let's hope things improve weather wise in the next few days. The weather certainly improved during mass this morning from the thunderous hailstones at 9:15am!

Sir Tim Rice once said that the game of chess is the most simple and complicated game ever devised. You'll wonder where that opening sentence is going, but I promise you, it does get somewhere.

The teaching in today's Gospel, Matthew 22:34-30, is some of the most simple and straightforward teaching that Jesus speaks, if not the most clear and concise words in the whole of the Bible. Which are the greatest commandments? *'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind and you must love your neighbour as yourself.'* These words could not be simpler, spelling out as they do the fundamental the law and the prophets as Jesus says, and also his own teaching, the fullness of God's truth. It could be argued that there is nothing left to say. We have everything we need for Christian living in that statement, that indictment to love. But of course it is somewhat more complicated than that. Because once we have digested the words that Jesus has spoken to us, we have to live those words out in our lives, and that's where things become more difficult. Simple and complicated.

The first commandment to love God is beautifully descriptive in its injunction to us to love God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. Loving God is not just one part of our lives. Loving God, learning to love God wholeheartedly, is something that takes the whole of our lives. It's about building up a relation with God, as our Creator, our Teacher, our Father, and, in Jesus Christ, our friend and brother. Such a simple task, to love; yet in the face of the love shown to us by God, something huge, and awe-inspiring.

And just how huge the task is, is spoken of in the second commandment which, as Jesus says, resembles the first; you must love your neighbour as yourself. As if the task of loving God was not huge enough, Jesus quickly reminds us that we cannot love God and fail to love our neighbour. Because none of us live in a vacuum. We live in a world, surrounded by other people. And if our relationship with God is one of love, then our relationships with, not just our friends and family, but

the whole of humankind, our relationship with all our neighbours near and far, also has to be a relationship of love.

And no one, especially not Jesus, no one says that is easy. Loving our family and friends might seem the simplest of things, but in these most complex of relationships, in the day to day conflicts and contentions of human life, the commandment to love can often be left on the back-boiler. And if we find it hard to love those with whom we are familiar, how much more difficult the hundreds, thousands of people we are never likely to meet, but who need our love, our support our prayers. If this seems an impossible task, how can we possibly expect to come to love the enormity of God?

Love. Love God and love our neighbour. So simple and so complex. And love, as someone once said about the game of Chess, takes a minute to learn, but a lifetime to master. Maybe even an eternal lifetime.

*Father, You have asked us to continue to love one another, for love comes from You.*

*Anyone who loves is Your child and knows You.*

*Those who do not love do not know You, for You are love.*

*You have shown how much You loved us by sending Your one and only Son, Jesus,  
into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him.*

*This is real love - not that we loved You,*

*but You loved us and sent Your Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

*Thank You, Jesus, for giving Your life for ours.*

*We were not worthy, yet, You made us worthy to love and know You.*

*Today, we confess that we will love You with all of our hearts, souls, strength and minds,  
and we will love our neighbour as we love ourselves.*

*Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

So for a hymn today we have to sing about love, so how about 'Love Is His Word, Love Is His Way'?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfat\\_YiZ6v0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfat_YiZ6v0)

My sister mailed me with some news from Australia yesterday. Apparently it is very exciting over there as this weekend... Oh, I'll let her explain it: *'Today is Aussie League Football Grand Final Day, with the excitement of FA Cup day in the 1970's turned up to eleven. Flags everywhere and everybody gets together with friends to celebrate, team flags are everywhere and the day before is a public holiday with a big parade in Melbourne. Not this year of course, but we did get to see our good friends Anne and Pat to watch the final, as we do every year (usually with a few others). They live just up the road but this is the first time we have been able to see them since before Christmas. Anne is a lecturer in history at Ballarat University. In the early 80's when she and her late husband were*

*travelling in the UK (he was from Yorkshire) she researched part of her thesis at Blackpool Library while he took their sons Pat and his brother to the Pleasure Beach. She was studying the life of James Oddie who came from Blackpool and founded the city of Ballarat (where we live).’ So there you go, small world and all that. And she attached a pic of them watching the game. I trust that all the players prayed this sportsman’s prayer beforehand:*

*May the Lord bless you and keep you;  
May God’s courage fill your hearts,  
And God’s strength be in your legs.  
May God’s right arm be upon you,  
And God’s shoulder be at your back.  
May God’s passion inflame your spirit,  
And the dignity of God’s presence guide your play  
And stem your temper;  
This day, may God’s enduring fortitude  
Raise you up to be men and women  
Who are strong, noble and wise.  
May the blessing of Almighty God descend upon you,  
The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*

Lovely to see people at Mass this morning, and I hope you continue to have a good weekend and half term, whether soggy or sunny.

Sunday Morning’s mass was recorded and is available on the YouTube at [https://youtu.be/Fvt\\_cY0-87o](https://youtu.be/Fvt_cY0-87o) Thanks to Ian for sorting that out for us each week.

Texts for each day can be found at <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

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.