

Sunday September 27th, Twenty-Sixth 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.

And I hope you are all managing to have a good weekend, even if we can't all see our families and friends as much as we would like to.

One word: **Humility**. That's the key to all our readings this Sunday. Today's second reading from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians 2:1-11, is, I think, one of the most beautiful passages in the whole of Scripture. We actually read it every year on Palm Sunday. The canticle, in its most simple description, tells the life of Christ in terms of his divinity and his humanity. From the beginning he was God and with God. Out of humility, and out of obedience to his Father, he became man. And humbler yet he died on the cross. His raising from the dead means that he is now proclaimed as truly man and truly God by all creation, Jesus Christ, the Lord. Central to this most beautiful of canticles is the humility of Christ; in becoming man, in dying on the cross, in obedience to the will of his Father. And I think you'll agree with me, that, as well as being one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture, this Canticle to the Philippians is also one of the most joyful passages, concluding as it does with the great glorying of God.

This combination of humility and joy is echoed in all the readings today. True humility before God is presented as one of the keys to true happiness and joy, one of the keys to the Kingdom of God. The prophet Ezekiel in the first reading, Ezekiel 18:25-28, tells us that when the sinner renounces sin to become law abiding and honest... he shall certainly live. When the sinner recognises his sinfulness and humbly decides to change his way of life then he opens himself to eternal life. And preceding the Canticle, St. Paul is, as usual, even more forthright on the subject. If we are all to grow in the love of Christ then humility is to be our watchword.

And even the chief priests and the elders of the people were speedy with their explanation of Jesus' parable of the two sons in Matthew 21:28-32. The son who went off to work in the vineyard, despite having refused in the first place, was indeed the one who did the will of the Father, as opposed to the other son who agreed to work, but did nothing about it. Jesus goes on to explain that it is those who can see the truth, and admit the truth about their own lives - no matter how late in the day, who are making their way into the kingdom of Heaven - those who are humble enough to admit their mistakes and follow the pater of true righteousness.

So, as I say, all the readings make plain, humility is one of the keys of heaven. But, like all basic Christian teaching regarding love and forgiveness, which we have been hearing about over the past few weeks, whether this teaching is new or not, second nature or something in which we all need to strive harder, and whether we recognize its importance later in life, individually or in the Christian community, Christ has been there before us, humbler yet Our example and our guide. And so therefore let us humbly acclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Lord,

We pray for the heartfelt gift of humility.

*Humility in such a way that we do not cheapen our own worth
or value within,*

but that we take the alignment that we are here

for a greater purpose than just our own gain.

We pray that You will highlight to us what it truly means

to live a humble life,

and that our own worth will be revealed by Your Light.

*It is only then that we may truly live in freedom and right standing,
for we will hold our own value correctly.*

*Lord, we welcome You to mould and secure our hearts in true humility
by Your lead and example.*

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

For today's hymn let us with all humility bow, 'At The Name Of Jesus.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI2rKRCWmOU> in a version which is beautifully orchestrated, though I always think this hymn should be sung much faster.

Well more information has been received about what to do in Church, and, I'm afraid it is correct that only six people can attend a baptism service – which seems a tad ludicrous to me, but, hey, what do I know? There is some good news, though, in that finally the state has given us some advice about First Holy Communion and how we can celebrate them (obviously no advice from the diocese which has been conspicuous in its near total silence over the past seven months other than to disseminate government stuff, and insist that we have that QR squiggly thing at the door) so in the next week we will get in touch with last year's first communion candidates to see how we can move forward, and also start thinking about next year. Life, and the Sacraments that carry us through life, *must* go on!

Many thanks for your Christmas suggestions. I'll try and put a plan together and you can see what you think. One of the problems is that many people *only* go to Mass at Christmas, and we cannot reach those people to say that they have to book a place at a particular mass or what have you, they will just

turn up. So we need to factor that in to the proceedings. Talking of Christmas, it will soon be time to put the spouts on to boil. Talking of sprouts (which I actually love) one of the prayer videos which I sent to the school last June, and was filmed in the kitchen of Sheila Hargreaves, was this children's Grace Before Meals, which is rather fun:

Thank you for teaching me gratitude with this delicious bread and meat.

Thank you for teaching me patience while waiting 'til time to eat.

Thank you for teaching me faith, expecting food and never having doubts.

Thank you for teaching me suffering, by inventing brussel sprouts.

Thank you for giving me friends and family to sit with and share

Thank you for giving us Jesus, and for all your love and care.

And in the midst of all of this doom and gloom and covid misery we had some Good News yesterday as Colin and Jenny celebrated their Gold Wedding Anniversary. We had the traditional Anniversary Blessing yesterday morning in Church, and it was lovely to have something to celebrate and smile about (and even the odd tear as well!) even if there were too many of us to go off and have bacon butties together. We wish them socially distanced hugs and congratulations, and many more happy years together. Here's a lovely picture from yesterday and one from fifty years ago!

Many thanks for the inquiries to my health: after various blood tests and yet more tonsil swabs, it would appear I had a really bad throat and tonsil virus, unrelated to covid, which has also affected various glands rather badly, hence leaving me feeling totally washed out by about half one in the afternoon, with not much of an appetite. The virus is completely gone, thanks to massive blasts of penicillin and ibuprophen, but the effects of tiredness and washout will take at least another six weeks to wear off, but I was thoroughly informed that everything is going ok, and there is nothing to worry about whatsoever. It's also got me eating chocolate ice cream. I think this comes under the banner of 'prayers *being* answered.' Thank you for your support and understanding.

Yesterday evening's mass was recorded, and is available for the week on the YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdHv0p8amIk&feature=youtu.be>

with texts being available 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, though the building is, most of the time. 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.