

Sunday July 12th, Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year II

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the advice from the government and the medics about what we should be doing in this time of crisis.

I've just come in from the 10am mass and it was lovely to see some more familiar faces. The mass was made even more special by a communion rendition of 'Ave Verum Corpus' from our choir mistress Kath Pickup and her family accompanied by Stephen on the organ. Absolutely beautiful, and providing a real holy and spiritual atmosphere to our somewhat restricted masses.

Today we hear the familiar, and wonderful, parable of the sower, in Matthew 13:1-23, a lesson in how we respond to the word of God. Jesus himself not only gives us this wonderful parable, but also helpfully provides his own explanation, calling his disciples aside to share some quiet, intimate moments that they might have a deeper understanding of his word, and therefore one day be able to share that Word with others.

The parable of the sower speaks of the greatness of God's gifts to us, and all of us should be able to accept the gifts of God, especially the great gift of his word, the Word of God, and the very presence of his son, Jesus. The various receptions and attitudes of the heart to the Word of God are likened to the different types of ground on which the seed falls. There is the path, soil-less patches which are hardened through bitterness of resentment; there is shallow soil on which seed falls, people who accept God's word, but are unable to allow it to mature or grow; there are thorny patches which neglect God's word, choking it, not allowing it to grow; and good soil, hearts which hear the word of God, and tell others, that more people hear God's word and it grows and multiplies, like a happy and healthy fruit tree.

As we listen to this parable we are asked to reflect on our own reception of the Word of God, and all his great gifts to us, especially the gift of his Son Jesus in the Eucharist, and many people have been reflecting in this time of pandemic on how much we have missed receiving this special sacrament. Jesus clearly wants the apostles to be people who hear his word and share it with others, who listen to his voice, witness his actions, and go and do likewise. But Jesus' words make it clear that all people, whether scribe or Pharisee, or you and me, all people are open to change -whatever soil they are made of. Jesus teaches that, like a good gardener who sees possibilities, each of us can be transformed to bear fruit. It may require drastic pruning, clearing of weeds, and careful loving attention. But if we

want to change, if we want to bear fruit, then Jesus, the ultimate gift of God, is the gardener there to help us.

The beautiful first reading from the prophet Isaiah 55:10-11 speaks of a world which acknowledges and takes the word and the will of God to itself, allowing it to breath and grow and succeed in what it was sent to do. If each of us, individually, has the will to change and become as fertile soil, then, with God's help, the world will one day be that beautiful garden.

So as we respond to the Word of God, let us sing 'Love Is His Word, Love Is His Way.' I'm afraid this is the best version I could find – there were some absolutely excruciating renditions on the YouTube, and some so slow the hymn was lasting fifteen minutes!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQWC1IV-fl8>

Many thanks for all the emails congratulating me on the Anniversary of my Diaconate Ordination. It's clear that photos of my old days in Rome go down well, so I'll look out for a few more. I attach one today of the second time I met Saint John Paul II (it's so strange to think that I actually shook hands with an actual Saint). It was just after we had been to Mass with Saint John Paul in his private chapel in the Vatican at 6am. As we entered he was kneeling and he then stood up to get vested, and he seemed to be enormous, a tall hulking man. At the time I was choirmaster at the college, so arranged a handful of English Hymns, including Newman's 'Firmly I Believe and Truly,' and 'Hail Queen of Heaven.' On meeting him he said 'You sang beautiful,' which is one of the best reviews I've ever had. Afterwards we were treated to a private tour of the Sistine Chapel and they allowed us to lie on the floor and look up at the Michelangelo's masterpiece (which you're forbidden from doing otherwise). It was a very special day, and a highlight of my Rome years. And congratulations to my mate Eddy in Lincoln who today is celebrating the twenty-eighth anniversary of his Diaconate Ordination. Talking of Rome, I believe there has been a documentary about the Scottish Seminary in Rome on the BBC called 'Priest School.' I haven't watched it yet, but it is on the BBC catch up thingy, so might be worth a look.

I attach today's not a lot-of-news-newsletter, and you can join us for mass on the YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgz-obCrZJc&feature=youtu.be> beginning with the hymn 'Dear Lord and Father Of Mankind'. The mass sheets for this month can be accessed at https://www.rpbooks.co.uk/_uploads/www.rpbooks.co.uk/RedMass_July2020.pdf

It's a beautiful day today, so I hope you are able to get out and about, and enjoy some social distanced exercise. It's definitely a day for a walk on the prom – although I have to clean my car first as it goes

for a service tomorrow. Hey ho! Incidentally, I visited our retired priests at St. Winifrede's the other day, as they slowly come out of lockdown. They are once more gathering round the table for lunch, and are in good spirits, and praying for us all

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.