

THIN SOWING MEANS THIN REAPING

Can you hear? Can you hear it? Let's be really still; keep silent, no coughing or shuffling; listen really hard. Can you hear now? Yes, there's traffic, a cough, a rumbling tummy. But can you hear all the voices, the conversations, the messages? At this moment the Cathedral is jam-packed with mobile phone calls, texts, TV channels, electronic signals, radio waves. You wouldn't know it. You can't hear them, see them, feel them, touch them, but they're real; they're really there! In fact, many important things in life are totally invisible. Think of love, the love of your Mum and Dad for you, or your love for them. You can't hold love and put it under a microscope. You can't see it, hear it, touch it, but it's real nonetheless. Many important things in life are invisible. Just like God. We can't see Him, touch Him or measure Him, but that doesn't mean He doesn't exist. He's the realist Reality of all! Think of a cake with a canopy over the top of it to keep the flies off. God, the angels and saints, form a sacred canopy encompassing us. That's why it's dead easy to be in touch with Him. We don't need an i-phone. We simply need to pray. All we need is prayer. All we need is to pray to Him in our hearts, and we're through, anytime anywhere, day or night.

Now over the last few months, I've been visiting all the schools of our Diocese. Perhaps I've been to your school? We have 76 schools and I've now been to over 50; by Christmas, I hope to have visited them all. Every school has its own personality and it's been really interesting. In every school, we've heard the same story, Jesus' story, the story of the Good Samaritan, about loving our neighbour, especially anyone in need. As the Bishop, I'm incredibly proud of you. You all do a fantastic job caring for those in need and I thank you for your enormous generosity to charity. But I've also tried to remind people that to be happy in life, we must love God as well as our neighbour. This is the First Commandment: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength. We need to build up a real friendship with God, especially through prayer: the theme of today's Gospel, the *Our Father*. Prayer is sometimes a bit of an effort. But as St. Paul said, *thin sowing means thin reaping*. We need to find time to pray, to spend a few moments in prayer before bed, to pray to Jesus during the day, talking to Him and listening to Him in our hearts.

You know I was saying the Cathedral is full of electronic signals. Well, we're also being watched. We're all being watched - or at least I am, and those of us on the sanctuary! Somewhere up in the gallery is a tiny webcam that enables live-streaming over the internet. People watch Mass here from all over the world, from Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia, as well as locally from Portsmouth. Most of the important things in life are invisible, like love and happiness. So too God, our loving Father. God encompasses us. He loves us and is close to us. But the closest we come to Him on earth is here in the Mass, when Jesus speaks His Word and lays down His life for us, feeding us with His Body and Blood. That's why Mass is so important. It's where we really can meet God. We can hear Him, touch Him, and in Holy Communion receive Him, and so leave Mass full of new life, ready to share His love with others, especially with the poor. So in this Good Shepherd Mass today, as we pray for our teachers and our schools, and as we pray for Mrs. Topp and our Schools Department, let's also pray for ourselves. May we be Good Samaritans, people who truly love and care for those in need and people who truly pray and love God first. That's the way to happiness.