

On this St Patrick's Day, the first greenness that passed my eyes this morning was in the form of five green squares with letters printed on them. For me, every morning begins with Wordle. In the game of Wordle, each player must guess a five-letter word in up to six attempts. Various opening strategies are sworn-by. Most players sacrifice their first two moves to establish which vowels are involved; then try to guess the day's Wordle word on the third attempt. Three tries for me today, though four tries is the average route to success. A while ago my opening pair of words was ADIEU BORIS. This has since improved to ANGEL CHOIR. Most days, a School colleague and I compare our Wordle fortunes; Mr Bryson opens with LIONS and HATER. He's a fine Christian man, and he told me that while HATER is a good Wordle word strategically, he'd rather not be using it. But if you take H and E, A, R and T, you can instead make HEART. May the hater in our hearts be reformed. May the Word of God speak to our heart. God's law of love is written on our hearts. Be LIONHEARTS this Lent and into Easter, using: 10 different letters without repetition, including four vowels. The only vowel missing from LIONHEARTS, is U.

Receiving and loving God's word starts within. The Lord has written his strongest words on your heart. His words are the right ones for you, because he loves you. We heard the Lord say to the prophet Jeremiah in the first reading: *Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people.* When God says: *my people*, He's talking about you and me. He is our Father, and his likeness is written into our spiritual DNA. How are God's love letters received by us? Do we welcome them, do those letters turn green? Or are we indifferent, like in Wordle where letters turn amber or even draw a blank? The sooner God's word slots into place for us, the happier we will be, like in Wordle. The Lord says this: *Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts.* Brothers and sisters: take God's law to heart.

What came before God's new law, written on hearts, was the old law; think Moses and the ten commandments. The people of Israel proved too weak, too rebellious to keep those commandments, external rules that people struggled to keep to, no matter that they came from God. Some centuries ago, King Henry VIII destroyed many statues and icons in monasteries and Churches in England, replacing them with commandment boards. Lists of the ten commandments were hung or painted on the wall, covering up the vandalism. The commandments would remind worshippers of the old law of God that was written on tablets of stone. But for us enlightened ones, the law of God is no longer written on tablets of stone. The

Son of Man fulfilled and transformed that law, so that now the Holy Spirit writes it in our hearts and helps us to keep it. The sacraments of baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation are all ways God writes on our hearts, transforming us into icons of his glory. When we sin, confession restores our relationship with the Father. The heart of God is mercy.

Recently a clipboard wielding visitor came to see if our School was Catholic enough. It turned out there weren't enough words on the walls. Like our Benedictine values, words you now see on a wall near the mirror in the main hall. Like the pillars of Catholic Social Teaching, seen covered in post-it notes on the English corridor. My answer to the visitor wanting words on walls, suggested that perhaps these Christian values were written onto the hearts of everyone in the community. God's values are more useful if they are written on our hearts of flesh, than on the School walls made of stone. This approach saved me a lot of laminating.

The Catholic Church teaches, or better still the Lord teaches, that we deserve to be included by society, and our dignity respected by others not because we brazenly ignore what God has written on our hearts, but in spite of those sins. Because all of us are sons and daughters of God, that makes us brothers and sisters in God's family. Each of us resembles God in our soul, just like our facial features resemble our biological mothers and fathers. That fact is more than a mere accident of biology; we look like our parents because we are family. Families can hurt each other, but the good ones try not to. Our sins mess up our likeness to God; sin spoils and weakens our relationship with Him. We become unrecognisable Being a God hater was never written into our being; even Lucifer was created by God, intending for his creature to love and serve him. God calls us to love him and honour him with our lives, and he reminds us today: *within you I will plant my Law, writing it on your heart.* God's law is not a list of rules to be ticked off one by one. God's law is for our sake and for our salvation. It's about relationship. One rule of God's Church is to confess your sins once a year and to receive absolution. Receiving absolution brings to your wounded soul two five letter words; both are past Wordle solutions: STATE of GRACE. Being in a state of grace is great start if you want to know God with hearts made pure. Seek the GRACE of confession this Lent.

If our eternal redemption was a game of Wordle, we would do well to choose words from our gospel today. GRAIN, WHEAT, CROSS and DEATH. The Lord says this in our gospel: *unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.* This Lent, we are called to die to selfishness and rise to righteousness. Another

word draws us closer to the Word made flesh: SERVE. The Lord says: *If someone serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too.*

Dear brothers and sisters, the following words have won redemption for our broken hearts: GRAIN, WHEAT, CROSS, DEATH, GRACE and SERVE. ALPHA, and OMEGA. They uncover for us the Word of all Words, the Word made flesh, the name of all names that is written on our hearts. His name has not been mentioned once yet in this sermon; He is the last word: his name is JESUS.

*I love You, Jesus, my love above all things, I repent with my whole heart for having offended You. Never permit me to separate myself from You again. Grant that I may love You always, and then do with me what You will.*