

*Beloved.* Do you remember the first word of the first reading, that Mr Freeman read this morning?

The first word of the first reading was: *beloved*. That is God speaking directly to you, through his beloved messenger St John. *Beloved*, he starts his letter to some of his friends.

What does 'beloved' mean? It is spelled be-loved. In a WhatsApp message I got on Tuesday someone spoke to me of their beloved parish church close to Bath City, St Alpheges its called, where a community finds belonging, where they pray and worship. A widow told me about her beloved when chatting recently - she meant, her beloved husband, whom she misses dearly. And on Sunday, the gospel will remind us of Jesus' baptism, during which a voice from heaven said: *This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*

Not many words have been heard directly from the mouth of God the Father Almighty. His word is written across the bible, inscribed in the universe he made. But we use eyes not ears to see and read of his love in those places. We know that in the beginning God said Let there be light; and there was light. But there was no one there to hear Him. Today, hear what God says to us this morning, What God our Father says, happens. So when God greets students of Caverel or Isabella, of Barlow, Roberts or Smythe houses with the name 'beloved', as he does this morning, you can be sure that God's love is part of your make-up, essential to who you are. What God says, is.

When you were baptised, or if and when you will be baptised in the future, you become especially beloved of God. Because you with your parents and Godparents are saying yes to God's love in your life. Same if you choose to be confirmed. The love of God can never be taken away, the only way to cut yourself off from his love is if you reject it outright. And even then, God searches for you to come back, to be loved in Christ, so that you may love others. Anyone who loves, whether they believe it or not, can only do so because God has loved them into being first. *God is love, and love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.*

Beloved brothers and sisters, there's a lot to take in on day one of a new term, but the most important thing any of us will hear today is the first sentence of our first reading. It is the only message I want you to leave Mass with today because it is crucial for our happiness and wellbeing, and that of our brothers and sisters around us. The Lord says: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.*