



# St Anthony's Parish



# St Bernard's Parish

67-74 EXFORD ROAD, MELTON SOUTH, 3338.  
P.O BOX 2152 MELTON SOUTH 3338  
TEL: 9747 9692 FAX: 9746 0422

61 LERDERBERG STREET, BACCHUS MARSH 3340  
TEL: 5367 2069 FAX: 5367 4863  
OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, KOROBET  
309 MYRNIONG-KOROBET ROAD 3341

## The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

30th December 2018

**PARISH PRIEST:** Fr Fabian Smith

**ASSISTANT PRIESTS:** Fr Patrick Bradford & Fr Joseph Panackal IV Dei

### ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

**Parish Secretary:** Lesley Morffew

**Admin Assistant:** Judy Johnson

**Parish Office Hours:**

Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri 9.00am—4.00pm

**Email:** meltonsouth@cam.org.au

**Website:** stanthonysmeltonsouth.wordpress.com

**St Anthony's School Principal:** Damien Schuster  
Wilson Road, Melton South 3338

**Phone:** 9743 1401

**Email:** principal@sameltonsth.catholic.edu.au

**Website:** www.sameltonsth.catholic.edu.au

**Catholic Regional College - Melton (Years 7-12)**

**Principal:** Mr Mark Sheehan **Phone:** 8099 6000

**Website:** www.crcmelton.com.au

### ST BERNARD'S PARISH

**Parish Secretary:** Dolores Turcsan

**Admin Assistant:** Judy Johnson

**Sacramental Coordinator/ Bookkeeper:**

Naim Chdid Fri 10.00am—3.00pm

**Parish Office Hours:** Tue –Thurs 9.00am-1.00pm

**Email:** bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au

**Website:** http://pol.org.au/bacchusmarsh/Home.aspx

**St Bernard's School Principal:** Emilio Scalzo  
19a Gisborne Rd, Bacchus Marsh VIC 3340

**Phone:** (03) 5366 5800

**Email:** principal@sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

**Website:** www.sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

### **ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL COUNCIL**

Sue Alexander	0400 171 843
Naim Chdid	0437 004 790
Lillian Christian	0400 441 257
Stephen Fernandes	0439 743 533
Amy Honrade	03 9747 0078
Natalie Howard	0410 478 046
Rose Ma'ae	0431 386 473
Marthese Mercieca	0421 378 691

EX-OFFICIO:

Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Patrick Bradford, Fr Joseph Panackal and Damien Schuster Council Secretary: Judy Johnson

### **ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL COUNCIL**

Cathy Belcher	0431 082 886
Shane Cook	0419 999 052
Peter Farren	0418 594 501
David Loxley	0459 974 960
Moira Ross	0400 675 056
Emillio Scalzo	5366 5800
James Waters	0403 822 795

EX-OFFICIO:

Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Patrick Bradford, Fr Joseph Panackal and Emilio Scalzo

## **CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS**

Coordinator: Godwin Barton (0425 734 449)

Officers: Aloysious Dacunha, Karina Dunne & Lorraine Tellis

Please contact Judy Johnson for any Parish news you would like published in the Newsletter

Articles must be received by midday Tuesdays. Email: judyparishnews@gmail.com

For appointments with Father Fabian please call Judy on 0414 007 009

For urgent matters only please call Fr Fabian on 0403 435 471



# The Catholic family: Feast of the Holy Family

The general breakdown of the family at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, prompted the popes, especially the far-sighted Leo XIII, to promote the observance of the Feast of the Holy Family with the hope that it might instil into Christian families something of the faithful love and the devoted attachment that characterise the family of Nazareth. The Holy Family is the model and exemplar of all Christian families.

Marriage is too often conceived as the sacrament which unites a man and a woman to form a couple. In reality, marriage establishes a family, and its purpose is to increase the number of the elect, through the bodily and spiritual fecundity of the Christian spouses.

Every marriage intends children. Although Mary and Joseph were not united in a carnal way, their marriage is a true marriage: an indissoluble, exclusive union, wholly subordinated to the child. Mary and Joseph are united only in order to bring Jesus into the world, to protect and raise him. They have only one child, but he contains the whole of mankind, even as Isaac, an only child, fulfilled the promise made to Abraham of a countless progeny.

The purpose of every marriage is to establish a Christian family. The Holy Family observed the religious laws of Israel; it went in pilgrimage to Jerusalem every year with other Jewish families. Jesus saddens and amazes his father and his mother because to their will and company he prefers “to be in his Father’s house”. Thus it may happen that God’s will obliges the family to make disconcerting sacrifices. Yet every Christian family must live in harmony and in prayer, which are the pledges of joy and union.

“He remained obedient to them.” Jesus was God. And through the fullness of grace Mary stood above Joseph. Nevertheless—if we except the event in the Temple—Joseph remained the head of the family; he took the initiative (as when the Holy Family fled to Egypt), and in Nazareth Jesus obeyed his parents.

We can go further to affirm that in a certain sense Christ Himself was the first devotee of His family. He showed His devotion to His mother and foster father by submitting Himself, with infinite humility, to the duty of filial obedience towards them. As St Bernard of Clairvaux wrote: “God, to whom angels submit themselves and whom principalities and powers obey, was subject to Mary; and not only to Mary but Joseph also for Mary’s sake ... God obeyed a human creature; this is humility without precedent.”

Today’s celebration demonstrates Christ’s humility and obedience with respect to the fourth

commandment, while also highlighting the loving care that His parents exercised in His keeping. For Pope Leo XIII, St Joseph “shines among all mankind by the most august dignity, since by divine will, he was the guardian of the Son of God and reputed as His father among men”. Pope Leo XIII continued: “Joseph became the guardian, the administrator, and the legal defender of the divine house whose chief he was. ... It is, then, natural and worthy that as the Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ.”

Almost intuitively, one can recognise that the mysterious, exemplary guardianship enacted by Joseph was conducted firstly, in a yet more intimate way, by Mary. Consequently, the Feast of the Holy Family speaks to us of the fond and loving care that we must render to the Body of Christ. We can understand this in a mystical sense, as guardians of the Church, and also in the Eucharistic sense. Mary and Joseph took great care of Jesus’ physical body. Following their example, we must take great care of His Mystical Body, the Church, and the Eucharist that He has entrusted to us.

We can learn from Mary and Joseph! What would they ever have overlooked in the care of Jesus’ physical body? Is there something, therefore, that we can withhold for the right and adoring care of His Eucharistic Body? No amount of attention, no sane act of love and adoring respect will ever be too much! On the contrary, our adoration and respect will always be inferior to the great gift that comes to us in the Holy Eucharist.

Looking at the Holy Family, we see the love, the protection, and the diligent care that they gave to the Redeemer. We cannot fail to feel uneasiness, perhaps a shameful thought, for the times in which we have not rendered the appropriate care and attention to the Blessed Eucharist. We can only ask for forgiveness and do penance for all the sacrilegious acts and the lack of respect that are committed in front of the Blessed Eucharist. We can only ask the Lord, through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, for a greater love for their Son Incarnate, who has decided to remain here on earth with us every day until the end of time.

Let us imitate the Holy Family in our Christian families, and our family will be a cell and a prefiguration of the heavenly family. Say a prayer dedicating your family to the Holy Family. Also pray for all families and for Australia to uphold the sanctity of marriage, which is under attack.

# WORSHIP NEWS

ALL VOLUNTEERS IN OUR PARISH MUST HAVE A CURRENT WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

## ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

**NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER:** 5th & 6th January

### MINISTERS OF THE WORD:

**5.30pm:** Pat Fernandez  
**8.30am:** Geoff Sutton  
**10.30am:** Karina Dunne

### EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

**5.30pm :** Ann Tennakoon (P) & Lorraine Tellis  
**8.30am :** Edwina La Rose (P), Ineke Allen  
& \*Volunteer Please\*  
**10.30am:** Dolores Turcsan & John Scerri

If you are unavailable for these dates please contact the emergency minister on the roster. Thank you.

### MASS COORDINATORS

**5.30pm:** Stephen Fernandes & Godwin Barton  
**8.30am:** Natalie Howard & Ron Howard  
**10.30am:** Josephine German & Godwin Barton

### ALTAR SERVERS

**5.30pm:** Kieran Grech & Mason Azzopardi  
**8.30am:** Nixon, Thytus & Aaron Ben  
**10.30am:** Nick Taunuu & Ethan Porter

If you are unavailable please contact Ben Kratochvil 0423 076 305

## ST BERNARD'S MINISTRIES

**NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER:** 5th & 6th January

### MINISTERS OF THE WORD:

**5.00pm:** Trish Davine  
**8.30am:** Jan Carragher  
**10.00am:** Carmel Shea & Jennifer Taylor

### EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

**5.00pm:** Stuart Robinson  
**8.30am:** Carole Ryder  
**10.00am:** James Waters

### PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ROSTER

**January:** Office Staff

### ALTAR SERVERS

**5.00pm:**  
**8.30am:** To Be Advised  
**10.00am:**

## ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

**We pray for the death anniversary at this time of:**  
Emanuel Bonnici, Yolanda Fitterer, Michael Angelo Gatt,  
Thomas Portelli, Leonard Sacco & Colin Thomas

**Please pray for the Sick:** Jean Barnett, Nickolia &  
Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana,  
Judy Layton, Peter Manicaro, Veronica Michael,  
Wanda Novak, John Osborne, Irene Rahilly,  
Catherine Roberts, Peter Roberts, Pat Roberts,  
Charlie Spiteri, Clint Abela Wadge, Michael Wright &  
John Xuereb and all those who have requested our  
prayers.

(PLEASE LET US KNOW WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE IS NO  
LONGER REQUIRED ON THIS LIST)

### PRAYER FOR THE SICK

May you be wrapped up in God's love,  
Found deep in his everlasting wings;  
Carried and kept safe and cherished.  
May the healing power of Christ be  
with you.  
Amen



## ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

### SPIRITS OF THE TWO HEARTS YOUTH GROUP

Experience faith, friendship and fun.

**Age group:** 11years+ **When:** Every 4th Thursday of the  
month 7.00pm-9.00pm **Where:** Two Hearts Centre,  
274 La Cote Road, Greendale

**Contact:** Sister Clare 0415 806 217 or

**Email :** [twoheartscentre@bigpond.com](mailto:twoheartscentre@bigpond.com)

'Coordinated by the Missionaries of Love and Peace of the Most  
Blessed Trinity of the Pilgrimage of the Two Hearts'



**We pray for the death anniversary at this time of:**  
Jim Craig

### Please pray for the Sick:

Noah Barlow, Dudley Baddeley, Michael Barrett,  
Peter Bennett, Steven Braszel, Kevin Bridges, John Canty, Fred  
Capuano, Gary Ching, Ted Cooling, Lindsay & Kathleen Dally, Judy  
Delahey, Jack DeLuca, Allison Evans, Helen Evans,  
Justin Fernandez, Pasquale Gagliarbi, Mario Galea,  
Cynthia Goodyear, Gwen Green, Joe Gristi, Brian Harrison, Adam  
Hillier, Elle Hillman, Kiahni Holamotutama, Alicia Holborn, Matthew  
Jansen, David Kasprzak, Loretta Kervin, Marie Maloney, Patricia  
Marechal, Debbie Marshall, Jordanis Maryo, Pauline McDonald, Ian  
McKechnie, Marcus Meno, Paul Mullin, Kevin O'Gorman, Arthur  
Pape, Michael Paterson, Georgia Peacock, Arabella Periera, Bev  
Pickett, Mitchell Prendergast, Peter Roberts, Ken Shaw, Marian  
Smith, Frank & Elizabeth Stehmann, Susan Trist, Hayden Tung,  
Mitchell Tung, John Van Orsouw, Angela Vicum, Louis Vogels,  
Barry Walsh, Mary Walsh, Carol Wells, Cath Wheelahan, Jayne  
Wilkins, Nils Wyren, Patricia Yazbek, Betty Young &  
Hannah Young.

(PLEASE LET US KNOW WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE IS NO LONGER  
REQUIRED ON THIS LIST)

## SERVICE / COMMUNITY

### ST ANTHONY'S

**VOLUNTEERS WEEKEND:** 5th & 6th January

#### **PIETY STALLS VOLUNTEERS**

**5.30pm:** Judy Van Hoos

**8.30am:** Pat Chiles

**10.30am:** John Scerri

#### **CUPPA ROSTER**

Cuppa Weekend: **23rd & 24 February**

**5.30pm:**

**8.30am:** To Be Advised

**10.30am:**



#### **CHURCH FLOWERS**

Ana Tannu & Roperta Mavaega



#### **CLEANING ROSTER: Thursday**

Lorelle Porter

Volunteers would be appreciated as well.

#### **SERVICE AND COMMUNITY QUADRANT**

Volunteers are required for the following groups:

Piety Stall, Social Committee, & Monthly Cuppa.

Contact:

Natalie Howard 0410478046,

Amy Honrade 0457042695

Lillian Christian 0400441257

#### **ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY**

Welfare Number: 1800 305 330

The Melton South Conference meet every 3rd Tuesday morning in the Holy Family Room 10.00am.

New members most welcome, training provided.

Non perishable items within the use by date can be left in the 'drop box' at the back of the Church. Thank you.

#### **COMBINED CHURCHES CARING MELTON INC**

CCCM's aim is to supply free food to help people in our local community in need and walk alongside them to reduce dependency through friendship and education.

Address: 100 Coburn Road Melton South 9747 6811

Hours: Mon- Thurs: 10.00am-3.00pm

Friday : 10.00am-12.15pm

School Holidays : 10.00am-12.30pm

### ST BERNARD'S

**VOLUNTEERS WEEKEND :** 5th & 6th January

#### **PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS**

**Saturday:** Mandy Harrington

**Sunday:** Jan & Colm

#### **MORNING TEA**

Is held on the first Sunday of the month in the Parish Centre after 10.00am Mass.

Next Morning Tea: **3rd February 2019**

Host: To Be Advised



#### **CHURCH FLOWERS**

Deborah Hosking



#### **COUNTING TEAM # 1**

Allan Comrie

Jim Scott

Peter Mooney

Margot Short

#### **PRESBYTERY & CHURCH GROUNDS- (January)**

Front Garden:

Back/Side Garden:

Parish Centre: To Be Advised

Carpark/Pines:

Back Paddock:

#### **ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY**

Welfare Number is 1800 305 330.

The Bacchus Marsh Conference meets once a month in the Parish Centre. New members are welcome and training is available. The contact number is 5310 6322.

The Vinnies Store is located at 8 Grant Street, Bacchus Marsh. The store is open 7 days a week. If you are able to volunteer and would like some more information, please contact the Store Manager on 8199 4205. Presently, the store is looking for homewares and toys. However, all donations are gratefully accepted.

#### **THE NEIGHBOURS PLACE**

Emergency Foodbank and Hospitality centre

Address: 77 Main Street Bacchus Marsh

Open: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 9.30am-3.00pm

Email: neighbourspl@iinet.net.au

#### **SOUL FOOD**

Soul Food provides a free community meal each Wednesday (excluding school holidays), in the Uniting Church Hall, Gisborne Rd, Bacchus Marsh. Meals are served up at 12noon. All are welcome and this is a free event. No need to book, just come along.

Contact: Jenny Kearney 0408 104 155

#### **PARISH CENTRE BOOKING**

Tel: 5367 3427

Mon-Fri 9.00am to 6.00pm

Hall Managers: Marie & Terry Casey

# FAITH FORMATION

## ST ANTHONY'S

### BAPTISM PREPARATION PROGRAM

Held on the fourth Thursday of the month in the Church 6.30pm-7.45pm.

Next preparation : **Thursday 24th Jan**

Baptisms are held on the 1st and 3rd

Sunday of the month: **Sunday 3rd & 17th February**

See details on Parish Homepage as listed on front page and download forms. Forms are also available from the Parish Office or from the Sacristy after Mass from Father. Both parents are required to attend these meetings. We kindly request adults only and a copy of the birth certificate.

Contact Fr Fabian, Fr Patrick, Fr Joseph or the Parish Office for queries.

**BAPTISM TEAM: Karina Dunne & Judy Johnson**

**ADULT PREPARATION** for the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist or Confirmation are through the R.C.I.A Program. Please see Fr Fabian, Fr Patrick or Fr Joseph .

**CHILDREN'S LITURGY** Is held during Saturday evening Vigil Mass and Sunday 10.30am Mass.

**DIVINE MERCY:** 1st Sunday of the month at 3pm .

### FATIMA STATUE

These families are praying together for the mission of the Parish:

Group 1: **James & Loraine Tellis** 9743 4292

Group 2: **Anastasia Flynn** 8088 0401



## ST BERNARD'S

### BAPTISM PREPARATION PROGRAM

Held on the fourth Sunday of the month in the Parish Centre at 11:15am.

Next program: **Sunday 27th January**

Baptisms are held on the 1st and 3rd

Sunday of the month: **Sunday 3rd & 17th February**

Registration forms can be downloaded from our website [www.pol.cam.org.au/bacchusmarsh](http://www.pol.cam.org.au/bacchusmarsh). Bring completed Registration Form with a copy of Birth Certificate to the program.

Please note: Both parents are required to attend the program.

Contact Fr Fabian, Fr Patrick, Fr Joseph or the Parish Office for queries.

**COORDINATORS :** To be advised

**ADULT PREPARATION** for the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist or Confirmation are through the R.C.I.A Program. Please see Fr Fabian, Fr Patrick or Fr Joseph.

**CHILDREN'S LITURGY** Is held every Sunday during 10.00am Mass in the meeting room in the Parish Centre.



### PRAYER TO ST MICHAEL

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil; may God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl through the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Amen.



## NICENO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

[bow during the next line]

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen

# WEEKLY PRAYERS & READINGS

## ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The shepherds went in haste,  
and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger.

## FIRST READING

A reading from the first book of Samuel

*For the whole of his life, Samuel shall be lent to the Lord.*

Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son, and called him Samuel 'since' she said 'I asked the Lord for him.'

When a year had gone by, the husband Elkanah went up again with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfil his vow. Hannah, however, did not go up, having said to her husband, 'Not before the child is weaned. Then I will bring him and present him before the Lord and he shall stay there for ever.'

When she had weaned him, she took him up with her together with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the temple of the Lord at Shiloh; and the child was with them. They slaughtered the bull and the child's mother came to Eli. She said, 'If you please, my lord. As you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the Lord. This is the child I prayed for, and the Lord granted me what I asked him. Now I make him over to the Lord for the whole of his life. He is made over to the Lord.'

There she left him, for the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM:

**Comm:** How happy they who dwell in your house, O Lord.

**All:** How happy they who dwell in your house, O Lord

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
Lord, God of hosts.

My soul is longing and yearning,  
is yearning for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and my soul ring out their joy  
to God, the living God.

They are happy, who dwell in your house,  
for ever singing your praise.

They are happy, whose strength is in you;  
they walk with ever growing strength.

O Lord, God of hosts, hear my prayer,  
give ear, O God of Jacob.

Turn your eyes, O God, our shield,  
look on the face of your anointed.

**All:** How happy they who dwell in your house, O Lord

## SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St. John

*He calls you his own children, and that is what you are.*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Open our heart, O Lord,  
to listen to the words of your Son.

Alleluia!

## GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

*His parents found him in the temple, sitting among the learned men listening to them.*

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was with the caravan, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.

Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.' 'Why were you looking for me?' he replied. 'Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?' But they did not understand what he meant.

He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.

## NEXT WEEK'S READINGS- THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

**First Reading:** Is 60:1-6;

**Second Reading:** Eph 3:2-3, 5-6;

**Gospel:** Mt 2:1-12



# The Catholic family: Raising children in a secular world V

## TEACHING THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

If you are raising a family today, the task set out before you is an enormous one. It is an undertaking that demands unflinching courage in a society where the climate towards God and towards families has become openly hostile.

What can families do who want not only to survive but who want to thrive?

### A Strong Family

Today there is an urgent need to strengthen families from within. In order to give our children a deep and lasting impression, values must be handed down with greater influence and impact. A family must be far stronger than was previously necessary.

To strengthen your family:

1. Rely first of all on God's grace to help you.
2. Have your priorities in line.
3. Persist in your efforts to keep family life joyful.

Only when your family is strong will it have the necessary impact to reach the hearts of your children. And when you reach them, you can begin to teach them to love our Lord. To love Him by imitating Him, for love seeks to imitate the One Who is loved.

### Rely on God's Grace

Parents, be strong in your convictions. Be convinced that the first way to strengthen your family is not to rely on your own power, but on God's grace. For your family to live as good Catholics, your lives need to revolve around Jesus Christ, not just hoping He fits into your lifestyle somewhere.

Let prayer and the Sacraments be the centre of your family life. Rely on those graces that God has promised in the Sacrament of Matrimony to guide your family and form your children. Ask for those special graces in prayer. We can pray for our children, and for God's help at Mass. We can obtain God's help through Confession. Put the Sacraments and prayer at the centre of your lives or else all the other things that you allow in the centre will push them out. They are essential to receiving the strength we need to raise a family in the midst of a contradicting society.

Extract from *Teaching the Catholic Faith Effectively*, edited by Father John Hardon SJ

You cannot hope to raise children well without God's help. You also cannot hope to leave the work to God and think He will take over if you ignore your responsibility. A prayer for God's help would be insincere if you were unwilling to put your best into it. Consider, parents, that you need to pray for your children while you do what is best for your family, rather than what might be most convenient.

When you pray at the end of the day, are you grateful for your children, reminding yourself of little instances during the day when they have done something special? If there is a problem or task that needs your attention, use that time prayerfully to reflect on what God wants you to do, possibly even spelling it out on paper.

In parenting, you can always get better at it. Whenever you fail, it's important not to be discouraged. But rather, place it all in God's hands when you have done what you can do. God can take all things, even our failures and mistakes, and use them for good; and He also wants us to give Him our failures and mistakes.

### A Strong Marriage

If a family begins with a marriage, a strong family begins with a strong marriage. A marriage can only be strong if each spouse gives 150 per cent.

A good marriage is selfless and without sin, therefore no artificial contraception, nor even the desire to regulate children, unless there is a grave reason. The class my husband and I attended when we were first married on Natural Family Planning never mentioned "grave reason". Were we surprised when we heard of such a thing! It was the start of a whole new way of looking at bringing children into the world. Suddenly they were no longer something to try to avoid for a certain time, but rather they became the blessings, the gifts from God that they were meant to be. Gifts to be enjoyed and loved.

The marriage provides the initial example; it is the first teacher, and it sets the tone for what a child sees as normal life. Parents must have a happy (although not perfect) marriage. Let Our Lord fill the voids with His love. The closer they are to living the faith and God's Will, the happier they will be.