



St Anthony's Parish



St Bernard's Parish

67-75 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
OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, KOROBET
309 MYRNIONG-KOROBET ROAD 3341

The Presentation of the Lord

Year A

2nd February 2020

PARISH PRIEST: Fr Fabian Smith

ASSISTANT PRIESTS: Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint & Fr Alexander Athanas SAC

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Lesley Morffew

Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson

Parish Office Hours:

Mon 9.00am-4.00pm **Tue** 1.00pm-5.00pm

Wed—Thurs 9.00am-5.00pm **Friday** 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: 8099 7800

Email: principal@sameltonsth.catholic.edu.au

Website: www.sameltonsth.catholic.edu.au

Catholic Regional College - Melton (Years 7-12)

Principal: Marlene Jorgensen **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 –Fri 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
Lillian Christian - Vice Chair	0400 441 257
Stephen Fernandes	0439 743 533
Amy Honrade	03 9747 0078
Natalie Howard - Chair	0410 478 046
Villy Julita	0403 751 343
Rose Ma'ae	0431 386 473
Marthese Mercieca	0421 378 691
Kim Nguyen	0431 035 980

EX-OFFICIO:

Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Alexander Athanas
and Damien Schuster Council Secretary: Judy Johnson

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Cathy Belcher - Vice Chair	0431 082 886
Shane Cook -School Advisory Board	0419 999 052
Peter Farren	0418 594 501
Moirra Ross	0400 675 056
Aaron Russell	0401 927 502
John Thorne - Secretary	5310 6692
James Waters - Chair	0403 822 795

EX-OFFICIO:

Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Alexander Athanas
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 Wednesdays. Email: judyparishnews@gmail.com

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

If you need a Priest in the case of an emergency please call 0403 435 471

MASS AND DEVOTIONS

ST ANTHONY'S MELTON SOUTH

MASS TIMES : 3rd-9th February

Monday:	7.45am	FFS
Tuesday am:	9.15am	FFS
Tuesday pm:	6.30pm	FAA
Wednesday: St Agatha Memorial	7.45am	FAA
	9.15am	FFS
Thursday: St Paul Miki & companions Memorial	7.45am	FAA
	9.15am	FAA
Friday:	7.45am	FFS
	9.15am	FFS
1st Friday Devotions	7.30pm	FAA
	Midnight	FFS
Saturday Vigil:	5.30pm	FFS
Sunday:	8.30am	FAA
	10.30am	FAA



INDIVIDUAL RECONCILIATION

Saturday: 4.45pm and **before** and weekday Mass.

ROSARY:

Prayed at 9.00am before every weekday Mass.

ADORATION:

30 min. before and 30 min. after every weekday Mass.

ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH

MASS TIMES : 3rd-9th February

All weekday Masses (except Thursday) will be held in the Chapel

Monday :	No Mass	
Tuesday:	5.30pm	FAA
Wednesday : St Agatha Memorial	9.30am	FAA
Thursday : St Paul Miki & companions Memorial	9.30am	FFS
Friday:	9.30am	FAA
Saturday Vigil :	5.00pm	FAA
Sunday :	8:30am	FFS
	10.00am	FFS

INDIVIDUAL RECONCILIATION

Saturday: 4.30pm and before and after weekday Mass.

ROSARY: Prayed every Monday at 7.30pm with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour. Rosary is also held on the first Friday of the month following morning mass.

Next Date : **Friday 7th February**

ADORATION: 30 minutes before every weekday Mass. Adoration is held every first Friday 10.00am until 4.00pm

Next Date: **Friday 7th February**

PROVIDENCE MASS: Is held on the second Friday of the month at 11.00am The Village 5-7 Griffith St, Maddingley.

Next Mass: **14th February**

SENIOR PARISHIONER'S MASS

Is held on the third Friday of the month in the Parish Centre at 10.30am. Everyone is welcome not just the seniors.

Next Senior's Mass: **21st February**

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS KOROBET

MASS TIME		
Saturday Vigil:	6.30pm	FAA

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE

THE JOURNEY CATHOLIC RADIO PROGRAM – AIRS 09 FEBRUARY 2020

As always, these notices are one week in advance.

On the first show back for the Journey in 2020 we have a stellar lineup for you, including Trish McCarthy with a wonderful piece called *Rest* and Mother Hilda Scott with another sensation *Godspot*. Go to WWW.jcr.org.au or www.itunes.jcr.org.au and to ensure that you never miss a show it can be sent to you each week as a podcast via email – for free. If you love the show, let your local radio station know that you'd like to hear it broadcast locally each week.

PARISH EVENTS & NOTICES

HOUSE VISITATIONS AND BLESSINGS

Dear Parishioners, if you would like a Priest to visit your home and have a house blessing please contact Judy Johnson 0414 007 009 or email judyparishnews@gmail.com a date and time can be organized.

NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

ST ANTHONY'S

ST ANTHONY'S SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM

Our Sacramental Program Catechesis commences Saturday 1st February for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist and it will be held at the St Anthony's Church.

Lessons for **Reconciliation and 1st Eucharist** are 2.00pm-6.30pm.

February: Saturdays 1st, 8th, 15th & 29th

March: Saturdays 14th, 21st & 28th

April: Saturday 4th

THESE SESSIONS ARE COMPULSORY FOR ANY CHILD ENROLLED IN OUR PROGRAM

DONATIONS FOR HEATING AND COOLING FOR CHURCH

If you would like to make a direct online donation to the heating and cooling fund you can do so with the following details

Account Name: St Anthony's Parish Annual Appeals

Account No: 083347/025471925

Reference: 110116461. Thank You.

MARRIAGE BLESSINGS—THIS WEEKEND

This weekend at all Masses you are invited to have a Marriage Blessing, if you have celebrated or about to celebrate your Wedding Anniversary. You will be invited to stand and receive the Blessing at all Masses.

PARISH OFFICE HOURS—THIS WEEK

The office hours are back to normal this week.

ST BERNARD'S

ST BERNARD'S SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM

Our Sacramental Program Catechesis commences Saturday 1st February for the Sacraments of 1st Eucharist & Confirmation and it will be held at the Parish Centre, St Bernard's

Lessons for **1st Eucharist and Confirmation** are 1.45pm-5.45pm.

February: Saturdays 1st, 8th, 15th & 29th

March: Saturdays 14th, 21st & 28th

April: Saturday 4th

THESE SESSIONS ARE COMPULSORY FOR ANY CHILD ENROLLED IN OUR PROGRAM

GETTING TO KNOW ST MARY MACKILLOP-OUR AUSTRALIAN SAINT

A monthly hour of stories, reflection and prayer on the **first Thursday at 10.30a.m.** at St Joseph's Convent 68 Lerderberg St. Bacchus Marsh.

Topic 6th February: Mary's childhood and Celtic spirituality.

Please ring Sr Mary 5367 2078 or

email mary.fermio@sosi.org.au

PARISH OFFICE HOURS— THIS WEEK

The Parish Office will be open:

Tuesday-Thursday— 9.00am-12noon

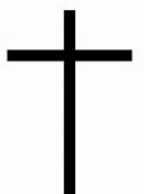
Friday-10.00am-3.00pm

Quote of St. Agatha—Feast day 5th February

“Lord Jesus Christ, you created me, you watched over me from infancy, kept my body from defilement, preserved me from love of the world, made me able to withstand torture, and granted me the virtue of patience in the midst of torments.”

“Jesus Christ, Lord of all things! You see my heart; you know my desires. Possess all that I am — you alone. I am your sheep; make me worthy to overcome the devil.”

Saint Agatha is the patron saint of breast cancer patients.



WORSHIP NEWS

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

ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 8th & 9th Feb

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

5.30pm : Gavin Pereira
8.30am: Anthea Scerri
10.30am: Faustina Ma'ae

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.30pm: Philip Anyayahan & **Volunteer Please**
8.30am: Michael Higgins, Villy Julita
& Edwina La Rose
10.30am: Doris Bonello & George Bonello

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

MASS COORDINATORS

5.30pm: Godwin Barton & Stephen Fernandes
8.30am: Godwin Barton & Lina Calleja
10.30am: Godwin Barton & Josephine German

ALTAR SERVERS

5.30pm: Josh Djie-Spiteri & Jonathan Dacunha
8.30am: Rhys Tuala & Andre Oqueli
10.30am: Anakin Anderson & Ethan Porter

If you are unavailable please contact Ben Kratochvil 0423 076 305

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recent death of :

Kurt Schuster

We pray for the death anniversary at this time of:

Emma D'Gracia & Pat Growley

Please pray for the Sick:

Jean Barnett, Nickolia & Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana, Liza Fernandes, Judy Layton, Peter Manicaro, Reg Marslen, Brendan Michael, Veronica Michael, Wanda Novak, John Osborne, Peter Poole, Irene Rahilly, Catherine Roberts, Peter Roberts, Pat Roberts, Charlie Spiteri, Dolores Turcsan, Clint Abela Wadge, & 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

Father we lift up all those who are facing illness. We ask that You bring healing, comfort and peace to their bodies. Calm their fears and let them experience the healing power of your love.

Amen



ST BERNARD'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 8th & 9th Feb

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

5.00pm: Miesen Family
8.30am: Kratochvil Family
10.00am: Lindorff Family

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm: Vikki Benson
8.30am: Colm Carragher
10.00am: Jenny Kearney

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ROSTER

February: Mary Flanagan

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

FAITH ON FIRE PRAYER GROUP

Every fortnight on Thursday at 7.00pm. We pray the Rosary, Stations of the cross, Divine Mercy chaplet and do a Bible reading and discussion.

Next meeting **6th February**

We pray for the recent death of:

Kevin Mullane & Joe Teuma

We pray for the death anniversary at this time of:

Olive Andrews, Rooney Arnold, Sam Borg, Nina Cassar, Richard Evans, Mary Gaidzkar, Mercy Kumar, Greg Light, Keith Light, Dorothy (Jill) Smith, Tom Thompson & Laurie Wheelahan.

Please pray for the Sick:

Noah Barlow, Dudley Baddeley, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett, Steven Braszel, Kevin Bridges, Tina Bower, John Canty, Fred Capuano, Gary Ching, Ted Cooling, Marianne Cuskelly, 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, Chaiel Jackson, Matthew Jansen, David Johnson David Kasprzak, Michael Larkin, Marie Maloney, Patricia Marechal, Debbie Marshall, Jordanis Mary Pauline McDonald, Ian McKechnie, Marcus Meno, Paul Mullin, Arthur Pape, Michael Paterson, Georgia Peacock, Bev Pickett, Mitchell Prendergast, P Peter Roberts, Ken Shaw, Terry Sims, Marian Smith, Elizabeth Stehmann, Susan Trist, Hayden Tung, Mitchell Tung, Dolores Turcsan, Stephen Van Eede, John Van Orsouw, Angela Vicum, Louis Vogels, Barry Walsh, Mary Walsh, 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: 8th & 9th February

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

The Piety Stall will be closed during the renovations. We will be setting up a small Piety Stand with a few popular items while the renovations are underway. The Piety Stand will be set up shortly and Parishioners will be advised when it is open.

CUPPA ROSTER

Cuppas after Mass will return after the Church Renovations are completed.



CHURCH FLOWERS-February

Rosabella Tuala



CLEANING ROSTER: Thursday

Lorelle Porter

Volunteers would be appreciated as well.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Welfare Number: 1800 305 330

The Melton South Conference meet every 3rd Tuesday morning in the Holy Family Room 10.30am.

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

God, strengthen and sustain all those who volunteer in our Churches; that with patience and understanding they may love and care for your people; and grant that together they may follow with Jesus Christ offering to you their gifts and talents.



Amen

ST BERNARD'S

VOLUNTEERS WEEKEND : 8th & 9th February

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Saturday: Trish Davine

Sunday: Margot Short

MORNING TEA ROSTER

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

Next Morning Tea: **1st March 2020**

Host: **Parent & Friends**



CHURCH FLOWERS—February

Rita Marshall



COUNTING TEAM # 8

Colm & Maggie Carragher

Jill Braithwaite

Marg Tung

PRESBYTERY & CHURCH GROUNDS- (February)

Front Garden: Stephen Millington

Back/Side Garden: Volunteer Please

Parish Centre: Volunteer Please

Carpark/Pines: Sean Giani

Back Paddock: Volunteer Please

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY:

Welfare Number is 1800 305 330.

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.

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 27th Feb**

Baptisms are held on the 1st and 3rd

Sunday of the month: **5th & 19th April**

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. **Please be advised that Baptism applications must be submitted 2 months in advance.** Contact Fr Fabian, Fr Alexander, Fr Lucas 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 Alexander or Fr Lucas .

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: **Paul & Sonia Zarb** 0477 813 272

Group 2: **Sr Therese Dague** 0418 480 880

Group 3: **Indika & Mangala Silva** 0410 677 692



ST BERNARD'S

BAPTISM PREPARATION PROGRAM

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

Next program: **Sunday 23rd Feb**

Baptisms are held on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month: **5th & 19th April**

Registration forms can be downloaded from our website 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. **Please be advised that Baptism applications must be submitted 2 months in advance.** Contact Fr Fabian, Fr Alexander, Fr Lucas or the Parish Office for queries.

COORDINATORS : Kate & Danny

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

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 PROCESSION

Your merciful love, O God,
we have received in the midst of your temple.
Your praise, O God, like your name,
reaches the ends of the earth;
your right hand is filled with saving justice.

FIRST READING Malachi 3:1-4

The Lord God says this: Look, I am going to send my messenger to prepare a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his Temple; and the angel of the covenant whom you are longing for, yes, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. Who will be able to resist the day of his coming? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he is like the refiners' fire and the fullers' alkali. He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and then they will make the offering to the Lord as it should be made. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will then be welcomed by the Lord as in former days, as in the years of old.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM : 23

Comm: Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!

All: Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!

O gates, lift up your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is the king of glory?
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant,
the Lord, the valiant in war.

O gates, lift high your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is he, the king of glory?
He, the Lord of armies,
he is the king of glory.

All: Who is this king of glory? It is the Lord!

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS – THE 5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Is 58:7-10;

Second Reading: 1 Cor 2:1-5;

Gospel: Mt 5:13-16



GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

This is the light of revelation to the nations,
and the glory of your people, Israel.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord-observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: "Every firstborn male must be consecrated to the Lord,"

and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon.

He was an upright and devout man; he

looked forward to Israel's comforting

and the Holy Spirit rested on him.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit

that he would not see death until

he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus,

to do for him the law required, he took him in his arms and blessed God, and he said:

"Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation, which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel."

As the child's father and mother stood they wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ' You see this child; he is destined for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected and a sword will pierce your own soul too-so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.

She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

My eyes have seen your salvation,
which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples.

The life of Catholic worship and piety X

Keeping Relics in Perspective

Relics include the physical remains of a saint (or of a person who is considered holy but not yet officially canonised) as well as other objects which have been “sanctified” by being touched to his or her body. These relics are divided into two classes: First-class, or real, relics include the physical body parts, clothing, and instruments connected with a martyr’s imprisonment, torture and execution. Second-class, or representative, relics are those which the faithful have touched to the physical body parts or grave of the saint.

The use of relics has some limited basis in sacred Scripture. In II Kings 2:9-14, the Prophet Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah, after he had been taken up to Heaven in a whirlwind; with it, Elisha struck the water of the Jordan, which then parted so that he could cross.

In another passage (II Kings 13:20-21), some people hurriedly bury a dead man in the grave of Elisha, “but when the man came into contact with the bones of Elisha, he came back to life and rose to his feet”. In the Acts of the Apostles we read: “Meanwhile, God worked extraordinary miracles at the hands of Paul. When handkerchiefs or cloths which had touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases were cured and evil spirits departed from them” (Acts 19:11-12).

In these three passages, a reverence was given to the actual body or clothing of these very holy people who were indeed God’s chosen instruments — Elijah, Elisha, and St Paul. Indeed, miracles were connected with these “relics” — not that some magical power existed in them, but just as God’s work was done through the lives of these holy men, so did His work continue after their deaths. Likewise, just as people were drawn closer to God through the lives of these holy men, so did they (even if through their remains) inspire others to draw closer even after their deaths. This perspective provides the Church’s understanding of relics.

The veneration of relics of the saints is found in the early history of the Church. A letter written by the faithful of the Church in Smyrna in the year 156 provides an account of the death of St Polycarp, their bishop, who was burned at the stake. The letter reads: “We took up the bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and laid them in a suitable place, where the Lord will permit us to gather ourselves together, as we are able, in gladness and joy, and to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom.”

Essentially, the relics — the bones and other remains of St Polycarp — were buried, and the tomb itself was the “reliquary”. Other accounts attest that the faithful visited the burial places of the saints and miracles occurred. Moreover, at this time, we see the development of “feast days” marking the death of the saint, the celebration of Mass at the burial place, and veneration of the remains.

After the legalisation of the Church in 313, the tombs of saints were opened and the actual relics were venerated by the faithful. A bone or other bodily part was placed in a reliquary — a box, locket, and later a glass case — for veneration.

The Church strived to keep the use of relics in perspective. In his Letter to Riparius, St Jerome (d. 420) wrote in defence of relics: “We do not worship, we do not adore, for fear that we should bow down to the creature rather than to the Creator, but we venerate the relics of the martyrs in order the better to adore Him whose martyrs they are.”

Perhaps in our technological age, the whole idea of relics may seem “strange”. Yet, all of us treasure things that have belonged to someone we love — a piece of clothing, a lock of hair. These “relics” remind us of the love we share with that person while he was still living and even after death. Our hearts are torn when we think about disposing of the very personal things of a deceased loved one.

During the Middle Ages, the “translation of relics”, meaning the removal of relics from the tombs, their placement in reliquaries, and their dispersal, grew. Sadly, abuses also grew. With various barbarian invasions, the lack of means for verifying all relics, and less than reputable individuals who in their greed preyed on the ignorant and superstitious, abuses did occur.

Pope St. Gregory (d. 604) forbade the selling of relics and the disruption of tombs in the catacombs. Unfortunately, the popes and other religious authorities were powerless to control the translation of relics or prevent forgeries. Eventually, these abuses prompted the Protestant leaders to attack the idea of relics totally. (The abuses and the negative reaction to relics has led many people to this day to be skeptical about relics.)

In response, the Council of Trent (1563) defended invoking the prayers of the saints, and venerating their relics and burial places: “The sacred bodies of the holy martyrs and of the other saints living with Christ, which have been living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, and which are destined to be raised and glorified by Him unto life eternal, should also be venerated by the faithful. Through them, many benefits are granted to men by God.”

Since that time, the Church has taken stringent measures to insure the proper preservation and veneration of relics. The Church absolutely forbids the selling of sacred relics, and they cannot be validly alienated or perpetually transferred without permission of the Holy See. Moreover, any relic today would have proper documentation attesting to its authenticity.

The Code of Canon Law (No. 1237) states: “The ancient tradition of keeping the relics of martyrs and other saints under a fixed altar is to be preserved according to the norms given in the liturgical books.” Many churches also have relics of their patron saints which the faithful venerate on appropriate occasions.

And yes, reports of the Lord’s miracles and favours continue to be connected with the intercession of a saint and the veneration of his or her relics. In all, relics remind us of the holiness of a saint and his cooperation in God’s work; at the same time, relics inspire us to ask for the prayers of that saint and to beg the grace of God to live the same kind of faith-filled life.