



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

Pentecost Sunday

Year A

31st May 2020

PARISH PRIEST: Fr Fabian Smith

ASSISTANT PRIESTS: Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint /Father Marcus Goulding

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Lesley Morffew

Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson

Parish Office Hours: Mon-Fri 10.00am-1.00pm

Father Fabian 0403 435 471

Fr Lucas 0478 768 141 /Fr Marcus 0468 367 893

Email: meltonsouth@cam.org.au

Website: www.stanthonyofpadua.com.au

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

Parish Office Hours: Tue/Thu/Fri 10.00am-1.00pm

Father Fabian 0403 435 471

Fr Lucas 0478 768 141 /Fr Marcus 0468 367 893

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
Kim Nguyen	0431 035 980

EX-OFFICIO:

Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Marcus Goulding
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
Moir 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 Marcus Goulding
and Emilio Scalzo

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

Coordinator: Godwin Barton (0425 735 449)

Officers: Aloysious Dacunha, Karina Dunne & Lorraine Tellis

[PARISHIONER'S FIRST COLLECTION/SECOND COLLECTION](#)

Parishioners who normally give cash each weekend for the collections, if they wish to donate, are now able to go to the link below and make their payments online.

The link to the St Anthony's Parish is: [CDFpay for St Anthony's Parish, Melton South](#)

The link to the St Bernard's Parish is: [CDFpay for St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh](#)

Please put your name and thanksgiving number if you know it as a reference. Thank you.



St Anthony's Parish

Dear Parishioners

If you have not attended a Mass since the COVID-19 restrictions have been relaxed and if you would like to, please call [Judy Johnson 0414 007 009](tel:0414007009) to have a Mass date and time allocated for you. Thank you.

Dear Parishioners of St Anthony's

We are pleased to be able to celebrate public Masses at St Anthony's subject to the temporary conditions laid down by the Victorian Government and the Archbishop of Melbourne. We can accommodate [20 people at Mass \(from 1st June 2020\)](#) in addition to those required for the celebration of Mass.

To ensure everyone has the opportunity to come to Mass, parishioners will be contacted and a Mass time will be allocated.

Masses will be celebrated weekly at the following times:

Monday – Saturday 9.15am and 6pm

Sunday 8.30am and 10.30am

Confessions 30mins before each weekday mass

Rosary Monday – Saturday 5.30pm

Only those who are allocated a time and day will be admitted entrance to the church for Mass. The more flexible you are with your day and time the easier it will be for you to attend mass.

St Bernard's Parish



**Thank you to all the Parishioners who have called and registered with us for a Mass. We are continuing to contact Parishioners who have left their details.
Once you have attended a Mass you may register again for another Mass and we will be in touch.**

PUBLIC MASS AT ST BERNARD'S IS BACK! REGISTER NOW!

Call 0432 055 992 now! From Sunday 17th May 2020, we are pleased to be able to celebrate public Masses at St Bernard's subject to the temporary conditions laid down by the Victorian Government and the Archbishop of Melbourne. We can accommodate **20 people (from 1st June 2020)** at Mass in addition to those required for the celebration of Mass.

To ensure everyone has the chance to come to Mass, parishioners will be limited to attendance at one Mass a week for the time being. Masses will be celebrated weekly at the following times:

Sunday 10am
Tuesday 6pm
Wednesday 10am
Thursday 6pm
Friday 10am
Saturday 6pm (Vigil)

To register for a Mass, call our dedicated hotline 0432 055 992. Leave a message indicating your name, contact number and preferred Mass time and day. We will then call you back to confirm your registration. We will require 24 hours to process your registration. **Only those people whose registration we have confirmed will be admitted entrance to the church for Mass.**

PARISH EVENTS & NOTICES

RECONCILIATION/ANOINTING OF THE SICK

St Anthony's Parish—Father Fabian/ Father Marcus are available for Reconciliation Tue-Friday 10.00am-1.00pm, also you can arrange a time to see them for Reconciliation outside these hours just give Father Fabian or Father Marcus a call.

St Bernard's Parish—Father Lucas is available for Reconciliation Tue-Friday 10.00am-1.00pm, also you can arrange a time to see him outside these hours for Reconciliation , just give him a call.

Anointing of the sick can be organised with the Priests directly, please call them.

Phone numbers for the Priests are listed on the front page of the newsletter.

MASSES AVAILABLE ON LIVE STREAMING- FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

St Anthony's Parish are live streaming Masses on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1MHR7tf4-7qIFEikXU6l_w
The Masses are also being live streamed on Facebook. You can watch Masses by going to the website: stanthonyofpadua.com.au. Click the link for Live Masses. The Masses are coming through the St Anthony's Facebook page- St Anthony of Padua Catholic Church Melton South (you will need to have a Facebook account to be able to view the Masses).

MASS TIMES—LIVE STREAMING FROM ST ANTHONY'S CHURCH

Monday-Saturday: **5.30pm Adoration/Rosary/Benediction**
 6.00pm Mass

Sunday: **9.30am Mass**

ST ANTHONY'S FACEBOOK

Please visit our Facebook page.:

[St Anthony of Padua Catholic Church Melton South](#)

Live Masses streaming from
St Anthony's daily.



PARISHIONER'S FIRST COLLECTION/SECOND COLLECTION OR PARISH APPEALS

Parishioners who normally give cash each weekend for the collections, if they wish to donate, are now able to go to the link below and make their payments online.

Parishioners are able to make quick and easy recurring thanksgiving payments or can choose a one-off offering from the comfort of their own home.

When making an offertory online, parishioners have the option to choose which collection they would like to partake in, as they usually would during Sunday Mass - first collection, second collection or a parish appeal.

The link to the St Anthony's Parish is: [CDFpay for St Anthony's Parish, Melton South](#)

The link to the St Bernard's Parish is: [CDFpay for St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh](#)

Please put your name and thanksgiving number if you know it as a reference. Thank you.

MASS AT ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

The 11am Sunday Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral will be televised every week during the COVID-19 restrictions, on Channel 31 (often listed as Channel 44 on digital TVs). Also 'Mass for you at Home' is televised on channel 10 every Sunday at 6am. Please share this news with friends and family who might be limited to TV viewing. Please check you TV guides for changes.

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH OFFICE HOURS- THIS WEEK

Monday- Friday 9.30am-1.30pm

ST BERNARD'S PARISH OFFICE HOURS-THIS WEEK

Tue/Thu/Fri- 10.00am-1.00pm

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

Email: judyparishnews@gmail.com

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE

MEDIA RELEASE -26 May 2020

Melbourne Congratulates Bishop Mark Edwards OMI New Bishop for the Diocese of Wagga Wagga

‘On this Feast Day of St Philip Neri, it is with great pleasure—and a twinge of sadness—that I welcome the appointment of Bishop Mark Edwards OMI as the next Bishop of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga,’ Archbishop Peter A Comensoli said. ‘St Philip was a 16th century disciple well-known for his natural ability to connect with people and invite them to an encounter with the risen Jesus. As Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, Bishop Mark has shown this same missionary zeal, especially in his work with our young people and tertiary communities, and with the people of the Western Region of the Archdiocese for whom he has cared for these past years as their Regional Bishop. He will be well-placed to listen to and lead the people of God in Wagga Wagga.’

In 2014 Bishop Mark was consecrated Bishop, and was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne. As part of that role, he was appointed Regional Bishop for the Western communities of the Archdiocese and became Episcopal Vicar for Tertiary Education and Youth He also currently serves on the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council and the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education.

With a heart for the young, Bishop Mark has dedicated much of his time to the ongoing development of youth ministry within the Archdiocese, encouraging a deeper sense of discipleship and vocation among youth leaders. He has been instrumental in establishing stronger networks with tertiary chaplains, encouraging their ongoing formation and enabling their accreditation within the Archdiocese.

In 2015, Bishop Mark attended the Synod on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment and in 2016 led the Victorian pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Poland.

In accepting his appointment, Bishop Mark expressed his gratitude and humility to the Holy Father: ‘I am deeply humbled by this appointment and wish to express my thanks and good wishes to all the people of Melbourne, with whom I have been for the last six years.

‘As Pope Francis often reminds us, we stand at the edge of a new era. We must continually ask ourselves, “How are we to be Church? How are we to be effective missionary disciples and share the Good News in the context of 21st century Australia?”

‘I am very much looking forward to meeting with and listening to the People of God in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga as we seek to address these questions.

‘My episcopal motto is “Learn who you are in the eyes of God”. This line from the first homily of St Eugene de Mazenod is a reminder that God loves each of us and invites us into a relationship with him. God gives us what we need and I know He has been preparing me for this next mission. I experience this as a call from the Lord.’

For further information please contact: Annie Carrett, Director Office of the Archbishop T: 03 9926 5614
M: 0439 600 233 E: annie.carrett@cam.org.au

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

ST ANTHONY'S

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for those whose death anniversaries occur at this time:

Seloti Alainuuese, Angela Aquilina, Emmanuel & Jan DeBrincat, Philip Giordamanja, Alfred Grech, Eugene Julien, Heather 'Rose' Marslen & Romeo Miranda

Please pray for the Sick:

Jean Barnett, Nickolia & Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana, Liza Fernandes, Judy Layton, Peter Manicaro, Reg Marslen, Kevin 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)

ST BERNARD'S

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 **To be advised**

We pray for those whose death anniversaries occur at this time:

Denis (Jim) Barry, Bill Dickson, Merv Dillon, Stan Douglas, Christine Hansen, Sandra McCann, Leo Ryan, Paul Stokie, James Younger.

Please pray for the Sick:

Noah Barlow, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett, Steven Braszel, Kevin Bridges, Tina Bower, John Canty, Fred Capuano, Gary Ching, Josephine Cilia, Robyn Cola, 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, 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, Peter Roberts, Ken Shaw, Terry Sims, Marian Smith, Elizabeth Stehmann, Susan Trist, Dolores Turcsan, Stephen Van Eede, John Van Orsouw, Angela Vicum, Louis Vogels, Barry Walsh, Mary Walsh, Cath Wheelahan, Jayne Wilkins, Patricia Yazbek, & Betty Young.

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

FATIMA STATUE

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

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| Group 1: Uili & Lagi Maiava | 0405 330 160 |
| Group 2: George & Doris Bonello | 0431 459 668 |
| Group 3: Joseph & Carmen Cilia | 9747 1594 |



NEO-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



A Prayer to Combat the Coronavirus Pandemic

Most Merciful and Triune God,
We come to You in our weakness.
We come to You in our fear.
We come to You with trust.
For You alone are our hope.

We place before You the disease present in our world.
We turn to You in our time of need.

Bring wisdom to doctors.
Give understanding to scientists.
Endow caregivers with compassion and generosity.
Bring healing to those who are ill.
Protect those who are most at risk.
Give comfort to those who have lost a loved one.
Welcome those who have died into Your Eternal Home.

Stabilize our communities.
Unite us in our compassion.
Remove all fear from our hearts.
Fill us with confidence in Your care.

(mention your particular concerns and prayers now)

Jesus, I trust in You.
Jesus, I trust in You.
Jesus, I trust in You.
Amen.

(Source: My Catholic Life)

Along the track

This Quiet Time

And so we are being 'let out'. Our weeks of isolation are gradually being eased and we can see that there may be an end to this stage of the dreadful virus. There is a sense of relief and growing optimism. But it has been a time of contrasts.

For many, isolation has been a quiet time, a time to stop and reflect, to enjoy the things we so often miss out on in our busy lives, the joys of family life, times of solitude and peace, time to read, to listen, time to complete the things we may have neglected or put on hold. At other times it has been stressful, bordering on frantic. Home schooling, learning to work from home, living continually in such close quarters day after day, coping with the monotony and boredom of sameness – they can test us out in ways we hadn't experienced before.

So what have we learned so far?

We don't behave well under threat. Remember the panic buying and, despite all the reassurances, we kept doing it, not just toilet paper but pasta and flour, frozen goods, cleaning products, essential supplies. And remember the stories about people coming from all over the place to buy up what they could in country stores? No-one, it seems actually saw them but they had a friend who was told by someone else that it did happen! But so many believed them – why? Remember the rudeness and aggression, especially to those at the checkout points? It brought out the worst in us.

In contrast, the virus has brought out some of our best qualities, food being left at the door for those who could not go out, others shopping for them, people keeping in touch by phone, text or email. There have been so many stories of quiet generosity. There were more people walking, more friendly greetings, food banks reported a spike in donations. Every day brought new ways to bring humour, the funny stories and songs, the poems, the videos all helped. Humour has proved to be a very important safety net. Pope Francis recently used St Thomas More's prayer for humour: "Grant me, O Lord, a good sense of humour. Allow me the grace to be able to take a joke, to discover in life a bit of joy, and to be able to share it with others".

We discovered we are not all in this together. The burden of these times was not shared equally. Many had no income. They could not stockpile and an uncertain future awaits. Those in aged care were deprived of life-giving visits from family. The refugees stayed locked up and vulnerable as did prisoners while in contrast others retired to their country or seaside retreats to weather it out. Some lost loved ones and could not farewell them with a final hug

or a final goodbye or through the important rituals of grieving. There will be a lot of families around Australia for whom that's been a delayed process. Just how 'not equal' we are only really emerges at times like this.

We are realising who an 'essential worker' really is. The doctors, nurses, and medical staff, the first responders deserve our gratitude. Their commitment and care have been extraordinary. But let's not forget the cleaners, those who remove our garbage, the warehouse workers, those who drive the transports, the bus, tram and train drivers, the volunteers, the posties, those who kept serving meals on wheels and looking after the food banks, the grandparents and teachers and so many others who brought a little companionship, healing, calm and soul to the situation. Pope Francis described them as "the saints who live next door"

We are being reminded daily of our own fragility, how precious life is. I read recently about one person who knew he was in the vulnerable category so he stayed strictly in lockdown at home. He made perhaps two brief trips to the local shops and caught the virus, which proved fatal for him. None of us is immune. While the elderly may be more vulnerable, others are susceptible too. This quiet time may have helped us to understand what being wanted and being needed mean. All of us want to feel as if we are needed, that someone needs and values what we do. Some have found that not being able to work has affected them deeply. Who they are is very much tied up with their job. But while our income may be needed, it is easy to overlook that we are loved for who we are, not what we bring home. That teaches a very important lesson – take time to treasure each moment of life, our own, our family, our friends – well, everyone really. Easy to say, much harder to remind ourselves not to take life for granted and not to take loved ones for granted either, just because we may see them often.

Pope Francis urged us to use this time of the coronavirus pandemic to "rediscover the importance of small acts of kindness, affection and compassion that often go unnoticed in daily life, but they are nonetheless decisive, important," he said, "a hot meal, a caress, a hug, a phone call. They are familiar gestures of attention to the details of everyday life that make life meaningful and that create communion and communication among us."

Regards
Jim Quillinan

Email: jquillinan@dcsi.net.au

LITURGY OF THE WORD

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world and that which contains all things understands what is said, alleluia.

FIRST READING Acts 2:1-11

When Pentecost day came round, the apostles had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech.

Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, each one bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely' they said 'all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome - Jews and proselytes alike - Cretans and Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.'

**The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: 103

Response: Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

All: Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the Lord, my soul!
Lord God, how great you are,
How many are your works, O Lord!
The earth is full of your riches. **R.**

You take back your spirit, they die,
returning to the dust from which they came.
You send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the earth. **R.**

May the glory of the Lord last for ever!
May the Lord rejoice in his works!
May my thoughts be pleasing to him.
I find my joy in the Lord. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose.

Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.

**The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 20:19-23

In the evening of the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

'As the Father sent me,
so am I sending you.'

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit.

For those whose sins you forgive,
they are forgiven;
for those whose sins you retain,
they are retained.'

**The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and spoke of the marvels of God, alleluia.

NEXT WEEK'S READING- THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

First Reading: Ex 34:4-6, 8-9;
Second Reading: 2 Cor 13:11-13;
Gospel: Jn 3:16-18



The life of Catholic worship and piety XIX

Holy Smoke: Incense in worship

Our altar boys practically fight for the honour of being the thurifer. That's the name for the server who carries the thurible — the censer — in the procession at Mass. They like being thurifer because they get to wear the more ornate lace surplice, and they know thurifer is the most complicated job and is reserved for the older, more experienced boys.

The use of incense is optional for most Masses. It is used to purify the coffin at funerals and to bless statues and images.

The first recorded use of incense for worship is from Egypt around 2400 BC. That's 400 years before the time of Abraham. Incense was also used in ancient China and plays a part in Buddhist, Shinto and Taoist ceremonies. Hindus have also used incense in worship from ancient times.

In the Old Testament, God gave Moses instructions on how to build the tabernacle — the traveling temple of God. The Book of Exodus recounts the instructions to build an altar of incense to stand to the side of the altar of sacrifice. When the priest enters the tabernacle each morning and evening to tend the perpetually burning lamps, he is also commanded to offer incense.

Just as the oil lamps were to burn constantly in the Temple as a sign of God's presence, so there was a constant pillar of smoke ascending to heaven from the tabernacle. The pillar of smoke was a sign of God's constant guiding presence to the people. It hearkened back to the column of smoke that led the people through the wilderness by day and the column of fire that led them during the night.

God even gave Moses a recipe for making incense: "Take these aromatic substances: storax, onycha and galbanum, these and pure frankincense in equal parts; and blend them into incense. This fragrant power, expertly prepared, is to be salted and so kept pure and sacred. Grind some of it into fine dust and put this before the covenant in the tent of meeting where I will meet with you. This incense shall be treated as most sacred by you" (Exodus 30:34-36).

The Jewish offering of incense continued throughout the Old Testament period — first in the tabernacle, and then in the Temple in Jerusalem. Incense was also offered as part of the religious ceremonies in the surrounding pagan religions. In fact, most of the references in the Bible to incense are the Old Testament prophets lamenting the fact that too often the Jewish people had forsaken the Lord and chosen to make sacrifices, including the offering of incense to false gods.

Why did people offer incense in the first place? The priests of pagan religions believed that the incense was a "spiritual offering". The smoke was an intermediary substance between earth and air. The demons were marked by a sulphurous stench, and the fragrant incense would drive them away; the beneficial gods would be appeased and grant the worshipper protection and prosperity.

John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, was a priest of the Jewish religion. He was taking his turn serving in the Temple when the angel Gabriel appeared, informing him of the pregnancy of his wife, Elizabeth. The Temple duty he was performing at the time was the evening offering of incense. As he did so his actions echoed Psalm 141:2: "Let my prayer be incense before you; my uplifted hands an evening offering."

The psalmist expresses the true meaning of the offering of sacrifice. It is not to appease angry false gods or to drive away fearsome demons. Instead, the rising smoke is a symbol of prayer. The wafting smoke and the lifting up of one's hands in the traditional gesture of prayer provides a most powerful and poignant symbol of pure and heartfelt prayer to the true God.

This beautiful prayer action is seen at the announcement of John the Baptist's birth. That a priest of the Old Covenant was offering incense when the birth of the forerunner of the New Covenant is announced links the use of incense as a prayer offering to the worship of Christ the Lord.

The fulfilment of this worship is pictured in the Book of Revelation when St John has a vision of the worship in heaven (Chapter 4). He understands the worship in heaven to be a completion of the Jewish worship in the Temple. Because of his vision and because the first Christians were Jews, it would make sense that the early Christians used incense in their Eucharistic ceremonies.

The offering of incense as viewed in the first few centuries of Church writings is usually negative. One of the most common ways to ask Christians to compromise their faith was to force them to offer incense to pagan gods. It is probable, therefore, that the practice of using incense in Christian worship was abandoned to avoid confusion among the faithful and to present a clear witness: incense offerings were associated with paganism and, therefore, abandoned by Christians.

Incense in worship made a comeback in the fifth century once Christianity was firmly established. Its use increased in the East and the West so that its use as a symbol of prayer and as a means of sanctifying and purifying became universal.

As the use of incense increased, its connection with the Book of Revelation was seen more clearly. The Apostle John saw clearly that the offering of incense was a beautiful symbol of prayer. He wrote: "The 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones" (5:8). The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand.

The servers at Catholic Mass kneel before the altar during the Sanctus — when the faithful sing with the angels, "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory". As they do so they echo the angels in heaven. Then the server swings the incense as the priest offers up the Lamb of God on the altar. At that point in the Mass heaven's doors are opened, earth and heaven meet, and we get a glimpse of glory.