



# St Anthony's Parish

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TEL: 9747 9692 FAX: 9746 0422

# St Bernard's Parish



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TEL: 5367 2069  
OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, KOROBET  
309 MYRNIONG-KOROBET ROAD 3341

**The 4th Sunday of Lent**

**Year A**

**22nd March 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 9.00—12 noon  
**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 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
Moira 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: Aloysius 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

## Dearest Parishioners

The Bishops of the Province of Victoria have after prayerful and considered reflection determined the following actions:

- Immediate suspension of public liturgies, celebrations of the Mass, until further notice.
- All other gatherings are suspended.

Whilst all public liturgies and gatherings have been suspended, both the church, St Anthony's and at St Bernard's will be opened from 8am to 8pm every day for private prayer. Holy mass will be offered for you every day in private by the three priests in the parish. If you need to talk to any of us or receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation or the Sacrament for the sick, please do not hesitate to contact any of the priests in the parish. So that one of us is readily available to care for you at this challenging time we, the three priests, have decided to live separately in different location within the parishes until further notice.

Father Alexander will be residing at **St Bernard's Presbytery** to care for those in Bacchus Marsh and can be contacted on **0451 665 632**.

Father Fabian will be residing at **St Anthony's Presbytery** to care for those in Melton South and can be contacted on **0403 435 471**.

Father Lucas will be residing at Missionaries of Love and Peace **at Greendale** to care for those in Korobeit and can be contacted on **0478 768 141**.

**This living arrangement will be in place until public liturgies resume.**

Not being able to go to Mass during the week and on a Sunday can be very distressing, but over a long period of time it can also take its toll on your spiritual life. To prevent that from happening, here are some things you can do at home or when you visit the Church until public liturgies resume.

### 1. Make a Spiritual Communion

Spiritual Communion is the heartfelt desire to receive Our Lord, even when we are unable because of the distance or for some other reason. **This desire to receive him through spiritual Communion is an act of love which prolongs our thanksgiving even when we are not in the Eucharistic presence of Our Lord.** The wish to live constantly in his presence can be fuelled by acts of love and desire to be united with him and is a means of drawing more deeply from the life of the Holy Spirit dwelling within our souls in the state of grace. Here are two options for prayers you can say:

#### From St Aphonius Liguori:

My Jesus, I believe that You are truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as being already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

#### From St Thomas More:

I wish, my Lord, to receive You with the purity, humility and devotion with which your Most Holy Mother received You, with the spirit and fervour of the saints. Come Lord Jesus. Give me, good Lord, a longing to be with You ... give me warmth, delight and quickness in thinking upon You. And give me Your grace to long for Your holy Sacraments, and specially to rejoice in the presence of Your very blessed Body, Sweet Saviour Christ, in the Holy Sacrament of the altar.

**'The effects of a sacrament can be received by desire. Although in such a case the sacrament is not received physically ... nevertheless the actual reception of the sacrament itself brings with it fuller effect than receiving it through desire alone'. (St Thomas Aquinas)**

## **2. Watch Mass live:**

It may not be the same as being there, but if you can watch a Mass online it will help you to maintain your Sunday routine and to remind yourself that Sunday is the Lord's day. Some options for watching Mass online: The Dominican Sisters of St Joseph live stream and record Mass every day, as well as the Rosary, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Divine Office. They have a schedule on their website so that you know what time to be in front of your screen if you want to watch it live. The website Mass Online offers links to Mass being streamed in many churches across the world. Likewise, Live Mass offers the same service. Both websites give a schedule of when Masses take place local time and allow you to save them to Google Calendar in advance to remind you.

If you live with other Catholics, whether your family or flatmates or if you have Catholic neighbours, you may like to gather together to watch Mass to create a sense of community. Watching Mass at the same time every Sunday – or indeed every weekday – may help you to create a new routine, which will be particularly important to your wellbeing if you're housebound or without Mass for a long period of time. Even if you have no one to watch with you, watching online will help you to feel that you belong to a worldwide community of believers – to Christ's Church.

## **3. Read the Mass readings of the day**

Even when the world is business as usual, it's important to read Sunday Mass readings ahead of time. If you can, try to spend some time meditating on them to discern what God might be trying to tell you through the readings. Lectio Divina is a great method of meditating on Scripture that was started by St Ignatius of Loyola and is something you might like to utilise when praying with the Sunday Gospel. For an explanation on Lectio Divina, here is a helpful video from a parish priest, or alternatively here is a written guide from IgnatianSpirituality.com. For the readings themselves, the Magnificat App is currently free to help all those unable to attend Mass. The UK edition is available on Android and on iOS. Editions for the US and in other languages are also available – such for Magnificat wherever you get your apps. Alternatively, find them online at Universalis.

## **4. Mark the Lord's Day**

When you're housebound for weeks on end, or even if you're no longer commuting, you may find it harder to notice that it's a Sunday as it becomes just the same as every other day. It's more important than ever then to mark the Sabbath. You might like to make an effort to wear your "Sunday best" even if you're not leaving the house, or to have a day free from screens, pray the rosary together as a household, or something else.

**On behalf of Father Alexander and Father Lucas, I can assure that each of you are in our prayers and at every mass during this time.**

Many blessings

Fr Fabian

Wednesday 18 March 2020

Prayerful greetings to the people of God across Victoria,

This morning, the Prime Minister announced that non-essential indoor gatherings will be limited to 100 people, and outdoor events of more than 500 people will be disallowed, effective today. Given the seriousness of COVID-19, we support this measure as being responsible and sensible, and we encourage everyone to follow public safety guidelines respectfully.

The Bishops of the Province of Victoria have given this prayerful and considered reflection, and have determined the following actions:

- Immediate suspension of public liturgies, celebrations of the Mass, until further notice.
- All other gatherings are suspended. For clarification of any concerns, please contact your local diocesan authority.

We are very aware that this restriction will be particularly difficult for families who are planning liturgies such as funerals, weddings and baptisms. At this time, so long as appropriate precautions are able to be put in place (such as distancing between participants), it may be possible for these liturgies to proceed with a carefully limited congregation. Deferring these liturgies may also be an option that is offered to families.

In light of this, all Catholics in Victoria are dispensed from their Sunday obligation until further notice (canon 1248). We encourage you to continue active participation in the life of the Church, through activities such as time in personal and family prayer, reflecting on the Scriptures, making a spiritual communion, or participating in a Mass online (<http://bit.ly/MassOnDemand> or <https://melbournecatholic.org.au/Mass> or [www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass](http://www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass)).

We encourage our priests to continue to celebrate Mass for the spiritual good of God's people, the intentions of the faithful and the alleviation of the present crisis. We assure our people that the Mass is being offered for you in our parishes and that while you are not physically present, you still participate spiritually and that you are close to the hearts of your pastors in the Eucharist.

We urge the clergy to make themselves available to visit individuals, especially those who are unwell and vulnerable. This includes viaticum and all the opportunities for healing through the Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation. Again, we encourage you to regularly consult your local websites for further details of local arrangements.

Tomorrow further pastoral guidelines will be shared in the Dioceses of Melbourne, Ballarat, Sale and Sandhurst. Clergy and religious should consult with their Ordinary if any questions remain uncertain.

All of this is happening during the Season of Lent, a time of preparation for the Easter mysteries. While we are invited to be self-sacrificial at this time, we must remember the words of Jesus upon appearing before his disciples after his resurrection: Again and again he said 'peace be with you.' (Jn 20:19) Let us not panic, nor be anxious, nor reduce ourselves to caring only for ourselves. This is a time to be sensible, practical, prayerful, and to share Christ's peace with those who are struggling to feel calm and safe.

Thank you for all your patience, prayers and resilience.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli—Archbishop of Melbourne

Most Rev Paul Bernard Bird CSsR MA,DD-Bishop of Ballarat

Most Rev Shane Mackinlay-Bishop of Sandhurst

Most Rev Patrick Michael O'Regan—Bishop of Sale

## PARISH EVENTS & NOTICES

### NEWSLETTER

Please keep up to date with Parish News through our newsletter which will be on the St Anthony's website [stanthonysmeltonsouth.wordpress.com](http://stanthonysmeltonsouth.wordpress.com)  
St Bernard's website <http://pol.org.au/bacchusmarsh/Home.aspx>

### FEAST OF ST JOSEPH

**Sunday 22nd March 2020** Due to the current situation with coronavirus this celebration has been cancelled.

### BINGO

Please be advised Bingo has been cancelled until further notice due to coronavirus.

## NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

### ST ANTHONY'S

#### LENTEN PRAYER GROUP-St Anthonyms

The Lenten Prayer Group will meet on Monday mornings at 10.30am in the Holy Family Room.  
Contact Marion Muller 0400 007 286

#### COMBINED CHURCHES MELTON SPECIAL COLLECTION

Last weekend we had a special collection for Combined Churches Inc. We collected \$ 617.00. Thank you for your generosity.

#### PRIME TIMERS

The Prime Timers event planned for Tuesday 31st March has been cancelled, due to coronavirus.

### ST BERNARD'S

#### LENTEN REFLECTION

Beginning on **Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February 10.30am to 11.30am** at St Joseph's Convent 68 Lerderderg St and for the following 5 Tuesdays. Please contact Sr Mary 5367 2078 if coming.

#### THE NEIGHBOURS PLACE- SPECIAL COLLECTION

Last weekend we had a special collection for The Neighbours Place. We collected \$210.00. Thank you for your generosity.

## Prayer to St Joseph

(From the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne)

St Joseph,

You were receptive to God working in your life. Help us by your prayers at this time of trial.

You kept Jesus and Mary under your watchful care: may your prayers assist our local Church to respond to those in need.

You taught the Christ Child your trade and prayers: help us follow his example of love.

You were part of God's plan for all humanity: assist us to be vigilant and responsible this day.

You spent your life in service: may we be mindful of others, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, caring for them in these difficult days.

You trusted in the clear primacy of God over all history and every situation:  
help us to grow in faith and pray to the Father.

*Thy will be done.*

Amen



## WORSHIP NEWS

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

### ST ANTHONY'S

#### ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased: Niuapu Tovio

We pray for those whose death anniversaries occur at this time: Ossy Anderson, Marya Dolores Borg, Josephine Buttigieg, Angelo DeBrincat, Teresa D'Silva, Morris Khouri & Lila Morrison

#### 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 MINISTRIES

#### 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 2nd April

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

Dudley Baddeley, Michael Brady, Leigh Gray, Annie Holloway, Christopher Mugavin & Frank Shanahan.

#### Please pray for the Sick:

Noah Barlow, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett, Steven Braszel, Kevin Bridges, Tina Bower, John Carty, 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, Mary Wadeson, 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)



### 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

# LITURGY OF THE WORD

## ENTRANCE PROCESSION

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her.  
Be joyful, all who were in mourning;  
exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

## FIRST READING

Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13  
The Lord said to Samuel, 'Fill your horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen myself a king among his sons.' When Samuel arrived, he caught sight of Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed one stands there before him,' but the Lord said to Samuel, 'Take no notice of his appearance or his height for I have rejected him; God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart.' Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen these.' He then asked Jesse, 'Are these all the sons you have?' He answered, 'There is still one left, the youngest; he is out looking after the sheep.' Then Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send for him; we will not sit down to eat until he comes.' Jesse had him sent for, a boy of fresh complexion, with fine eyes and pleasant bearing. The Lord said, 'Come, anoint him, for this is the one.' At this, Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him where he stood with his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord seized on David and stayed with him from that day on.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM : 22

Comm: The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.

**All:** The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose.  
Near restful waters he leads me,  
to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path;  
he is true to his name.  
If I should walk in the valley of darkness  
no evil would I fear.  
You are there with your crook and your staff;  
with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me  
all the days of my life.  
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever.

**All:** The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!  
I am the light of the world, says the Lord;  
whoever follows me will have the light of life.  
Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

## GOSPEL

John 9:1-41

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered, 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'

'As long as the day lasts

I must carry out the work of the one who sent me;  
the night will soon be here when no one can work.

As long as I am in the world

I am the light of the world.'

Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.' The man himself said, 'I am the man.' So they said to him, 'Then how do your eyes come to be open?' 'The man called Jesus' he answered 'made a paste, daubed my eyes with it and said to me, "Go and wash at Siloam"'; so I went, and when I washed I could see.' They asked, 'Where is he?' 'I don't know' he answered.

They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath.' Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet' replied the man.

However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind and had gained his sight, without first sending for his parents and asking them, 'Is this man really your son who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?' His parents answered, 'We know he is our son and we know he was born blind, but we don't know how it is that he can see now, or who opened his eyes. He is old enough: let him speak for himself.' His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to expel from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. This was why his parents said, 'He is old enough; ask him.'

So the Jews again sent for the man and said to him, 'Give glory to God! For our part, we know that this man is a sinner.' The man answered, 'I don't know if he is a sinner; I only know that I was blind and now I can see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He replied, 'I have told you once and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples too?' At this they hurled abuse at him: 'You can be his disciple,' they said 'we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we don't know where he comes from.' The man replied, 'Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where he comes from! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to men who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a man who was born blind; if this man were not from God, he couldn't do a thing.' 'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away. Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe', and worshipped him.

Jesus said: 'It is for judgement that I have come into this world,  
so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind.'

Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, 'We are not blind,  
surely?' Jesus replied: 'Blind? If you were, you would not be guilty,  
but since you say, "We see", your guilt remains.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

## COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord anointed my eyes: I went, I washed,  
I saw and I believed in God.

## NEXT WEEK'S READINGS – FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

First Reading: Ezek 37:12-14  
Second Reading: Rom 8:8-11  
Gospel: Jn 11:1-45



# Catholic worship and piety: Lent 2020 V

## Almsgiving

Of the three distinguishing marks of Lent — prayer, fasting and almsgiving — almsgiving is surely the most neglected. Yet, in the only place where the Bible brings all three together, the inspired author puts the emphasis firmly on the last: “Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness ... It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life” (*Tobit 12:8-9*).

Why is almsgiving better than prayer and fasting? Because it *is* prayer, and it involves fasting. Almsgiving is a form of prayer because it is “giving to God” — and not mere philanthropy. It is a form of fasting because it demands sacrificial giving — not just giving anything, but giving up something, giving till it hurts.

Jesus presented almsgiving as a necessary part of Christian life: “When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (*Matthew 6:2-3*). He does not say *if* you give alms, but *when*. Like fasting and prayer, almsgiving is non-negotiable.

The first Christians knew this. “There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need” (*Acts 4:34-35*).

That was the living embodiment of a basic principle of Catholic social teaching, what tradition calls “the universal destination of goods”. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it succinctly: “The goods of creation are destined for the entire human race” (n. 2452).

But they can’t get there unless we put them there — and that requires effort. With almsgiving, if we have a plan, we’ll find it easier to do. Throughout history, many Christians have used the Old Testament practice of “tithing” as a guide — that is, they give a 10th of their income “to God”. In practice, that means giving it to the poor, to the parish, or to charitable institutions.

My friend Ed Kenna, an octogenarian and dad, remembers the day he decided to start tithing. “When I was a senior in high school, back in 1939–40, I read an article on charitable giving in a Catholic newspaper,” he recalls. “It had a lot of testimonies to the fruits of tithing. Breadwinners told how God provided whenever they were in need or had an emergency. I decided, then and there, to start tithing, and I’ve been doing it ever since.”

Kenna served in the military during World War II, went to college and raised a family of nine children. Through it all, he says, he was often tempted, but he never wavered in his tithing. “There were many times when I reached a point where I said, ‘Something has to give — but I’m not going to give up on my tithing.’”

It’s a matter of trusting God, Kenna adds, “and God will not be outdone in generosity.”

By Mike Aquilina, [www.catholicexchange.com](http://www.catholicexchange.com)

Jesus said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (*Acts 20:35*), but those who tithe often find themselves on the receiving end as well. “I worked as an industrial engineer through the highs and lows of American industry,” Kenna recalls. “Twice my job fell victim to corporate mergers, but the phone always rang just in time. I never lost an hour of work to layoffs.”

He sees the difficult times as God’s test of our trust. “It’s especially hard in the beginning. On your first paycheque, it hurts. On the second, the pain’s a little less. At about the third or fourth, there’s no pain at all. You get used to it. It’s a habit. But you have to make that firm resolution: I’m gonna do it and not give in.”

Kenna, like many others, interprets tithing to mean taking 10 per cent off the “first fruits” — gross income, rather than net. He divides this up as 5 per cent to the parish and 5 per cent to other Catholic institutions. He also gives of his time and has, for many decades, been a volunteer for the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Indeed, many Catholics extend the concept of almsgiving beyond money to include time and talent as well, donating a portion of these to worthy causes.

In the late fourth century, St John Chrysostom looked at the good life people were living in the imperial court, and he was filled with righteous anger. In the name of God, he raged against those who owned toilet seats made of gold, while other people starved in cold hovels.

While our commodes may be made of less precious materials, many of us today enjoy a better standard of life than any Byzantine emperor ever knew. Central heating, air-conditioning, electric lights, consistently safe food and water, antibiotics, and even aspirin — these are luxuries beyond the dreams of our ancient ancestors.

We are living high, but are we giving high?

It’s a good question to ask ourselves during Lent. It is a scandal, after all, for Christians to have closets overstuffed with clothing when there are families who are shivering because they can’t pay their heating bill. It is a scandal for Christians to be epidemically overweight when they have near neighbours who go to bed hungry.

We need to give to God — whom we meet in our neighbour — until these problems go away. Whatever we give, whether it’s a 10th or a 20th or half, is symbolic of the greater giving that defines the Christian life. As God gave Himself entirely to us, so we give ourselves entirely to Him. In the Eucharist, He holds nothing back. He gives us His body, blood, soul and divinity — everything He has. That’s the giving we need to imitate.

Charity begins at home, where we daily make the choice to give our time, our attention, our affirming smile, and give generously. But charity must not stop there, because for Catholics “home” is universal, and our family is as big as the world. We need to dig deep and give much where much is needed.

But, whenever possible, our charity should also involve personal acts, not just automatic withdrawals from our bank account. Pope John Paul asked us to see, and be seen by, “the human face of poverty”.