



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 2nd Sunday of Lent

Year A

8th 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
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 : 9th-15th March	
Monday:	7.30pm FLM
Tuesday am:	9.15am FLM
Tuesday pm:	6.30pm FLM
Wednesday:	7.45am FLM
	9.15am FFS
Thursday:	7.45am FAA
	9.15am FLM
Friday:	7.45am FAA
	9.15am FAA
Stations of the Cross	12.30pm
Adoration and Confession	6.00pm
Stations of the Cross	7.00pm
Saturday:	8.30am FLM
Saturday Vigil:	5.30pm FFS
Sunday:	8.30am FFS
	10.30am FFS
INDIVIDUAL RECONCILIATION	
Saturday: 4.45pm and before 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 : 9th-15th March	
All weekday Masses (except Thursday) will be held in the Chapel	
Monday :	No Mass
Tuesday:	5.30pm FAA
Wednesday :	9.30am FAA
Thursday :	9.30am FFS
Stations of the Cross	10.00am
Friday:	9.30am FLM
Stations of the Cross	7.00pm
Saturday Vigil :	5.00pm FAA
Sunday :	8:30am FAA
	10.00am FAA
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 2nd April	
ADORATION: 30 minutes before every weekday Mass. Adoration is held every first Friday 10.00am until 4.00pm Next Date: Friday 2nd April	
PROVIDENCE MASS: Is held on the second Friday of the month at 11.00am The Village 5-7 Griffith St, Maddingley. Next Mass: 13th March	
SENIOR PARISHIONER'S MASS Is held on the third Friday of the month in the Parish Centre at 10.30am. Next Senior's Mass: Friday 20th March	

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS	KOROBET
MASS TIME	
Saturday Vigil:	6.30pm FAA

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE



First Sunday of Lent

8th March 2020



Twenty-seven-year-old Phany was a struggling farmer and was forced to leave her daughter to take up construction work in the city. Her life has been transformed since joining a Caritas supported program, learning crop growing skills and better water management, to combat drought.

Please donate to Project Compassion 2020 and help mothers like Phany continue to uplift their communities, and provide food for their families.

Let's Go Further, Together. You can donate through Parish boxes and envelopes, by visiting www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion or phoning 1800 024 413.

PARISH EVENTS & NOTICES

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)- EXTRACT OF LETTER FROM MOST REV PETER A COMENSOLI

Due to the rapidly changing situation in respect to the threat posed by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and acting on the advice of the Australian and Victorian Departments of Health, the following precautionary measures are to apply across the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

- **Holy Communion:** The distribution of Holy Communion under Both Species is to cease. The chalice is not to be shared at any Masses, and is for the celebrant(s) only.
- **Ministers of Communion:** Ensure that all Ministers of the Eucharist, including Clergy, sanitise their hands before and after distributing Holy Communion.
- **Rite of Peace:** Parishioners with coughs and sneezes, the vulnerable, or those parishioners that may feel uncomfortable at shaking hands at the Sign of the Peace, may wish to exchange the Peace of Christ with a smile or a bow.

These measures are temporary and will be reviewed.

TRIDUUM OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Throughout the Archdiocese of Melbourne we will be praying for a 3 day period for Priestly and Religious Life. 1 hour of Adoration.

St Anthony's Parish: Fri 20th March 6.00pm-7.00pm

Sat 21st March 4.30pm-5.30pm

Sun 22nd March 9.30am-10.30am

St Bernard's Parish: Fri 20th March 8.30am-9.30am

Sat 21st March 4.00pm-5.00pm

Sun 22nd March 10.45am-11.45am

LENTEN CALENDAR

Lenten Calendars are available for collection in the foyer/rear of the Church. Please note the correct times for the Parish Retreat Day advertised in the calendar is **9am-5pm** on Saturday 28th March, at The Missionaries of Love and Peace, 274 La Cote Road, Greendale.

NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

ST ANTHONY'S

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.

LENTEN PRAYER GROUP

The Lenten Prayer Group will meet on Monday mornings at 10.30am in the Holy Family Room.

Contact Marion Muller 0400 007 286

BINGO

Parishioners please note

Bingo continues every Tuesday evening during the renovations. We have 3

sessions per evening with a cost of \$3.00 a book. Eyes down at 7.00pm. Finish time is 9.45pm. Come and have a great social evening, have some fun and maybe get lucky too. Coffee and tea is provided and there are canteen services available. Venue: St Anthony's Padua Hall.



COMBINED CHURCHES MELTON SPECIAL COLLECTION-NEXT WEEKEND

Next weekend we will have a special collection to support the Combined Churches Caring Melton Inc. The group aims to supply free food to help people in need and walk along side of them to reduce dependency thorough friendship and education. Please give generously. Thank you.

THANKSGIVING ENVELOPES

Thanksgiving envelopes can be collected at the rear of the Church. All Parishioners who use the credit card and direct debit payment facility will receive their statements at the end of March. Thank you to our team of volunteers who helped with our working bee.

ST BERNARD'S

LENTEN REFLECTION

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

ST BERNARD'S PARISH ANNUAL FETE

Friday 13th March from 3.30pm onwards. Lots of fun for everyone! Rides, Stalls, Plants, Cakes, Lions Train, Food, Drinks and lots more.

JOSEPHITE ASSOCIATES UPDATE

MARCH 4: GET TOGETHER We will meet at the Neighbour Centre in sunny Woodend. It is in Forest St, and it will commence at 11.30 am and go to 2.30pm. Lunch will be provided. Friendship and prayer will reign. **MARCH 11:** Enveloping the Newsletters, if anyone would like to help Diane Corro and Chris envelope the March newsletters please let Chris know, 11am at the Heritage Centre. **MARCH 14: LEADERS' DAY** at the Heritage centre. It commences at 9.30am for a 10 am start and finishes about 3pm. The theme is **SERVICE AS NEIGHBOUR**. Morning tea and lunch will be provided. Donation is \$20 and the Heritage shop will be open.

THE NEIGHBOURS PLACE

Next weekend we will have a special collection for The Neighbours Place. The group is a Christian not for profit organisation whose aim is to serve people who are disadvantaged, at risk or temporarily unable to feed themselves or their family and who are in need of emergency food relief. Please give generously. Thank you.

THANKSGIVING ENVELOPES

Thanksgiving envelopes and statements can be collected in the foyer of the Church. Korobeit parishioners, please note your envelopes will be sent to you in a couple of weeks. Thanks to our team of volunteers who helped with our working bee. It was greatly appreciated!

KSC

KSC will be meeting Monday 9th March at 8pm in the Parish Centre.

WORSHIP NEWS

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

ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 14th & 15th March MINISTERS OF THE WORD

5.30pm : Pat Fernandez
8.30am: Ineke Allen
10.30am: Leonia Jessop

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.30pm: Philip Anyayahan & **Volunteer Please**
8.30am: Lois Brewis, Lillian Christian
& Geoff Sutton
10.30am: Sally Markulin & Elaine Lacey

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

MASS COORDINATORS

5.30pm: Godwin Barton & Carmen Vella
8.30am: Natalie Howard & Ron Howard
10.30am: Leonia Jessop & Annonikia

ALTAR SERVERS

5.30pm: Kieran Grech & Jedi Anyayahan
8.30am: Nixon, Thytus & Aaron Ben
10.30am: Anakin Anderson & Nick Taunuu

If you are unavailable please contact Ben Kratochvil 0423 076 305

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for those who have died recently:

George Saliba

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

Charlie Calleja, Nicolas Andi Durhanuddin Joseph Micallef & Maria Zahra

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: 14th & 15th March MINISTERS OF THE WORD

5.00pm: John Thorne
8.30am: Peter Lafranchi & Magaret Love
10.00am: Beatrice Younger & Martin Phillips

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm: Peter McPhan
8.30am: Carol Jones
10.00am: Diane Corro

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ROSTER

March: Dianne Corro

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 **19th March**

We pray for those who have died recently:

Doris Libreri

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

George Borg, Lara Paige Cameron, Maurice Dally, Mary Delahey, Peter Gavin, Mary Glasheen, Reginald Kirwan, Edward Kula, Elizabeth Kyczynski, Margaret Linard, Brooke Lovel, Christopher Mallia, Ray Marshall, Jane Sammut, Mark Sims, Kathleen Squires and Greg Whelan.

Please pray for the Sick:

Josephine Cilia
Noah Barlow, Dudley Baddeley, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett, Steven Braszel, Kevin Bridges, Tina Bower, John Canty, Fred Capuano, Gary Ching, 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)

SERVICE / COMMUNITY

ST ANTHONY'S

WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS: 14th & 15th March

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.30pm: Volunteer Please

8.30am: Edwina La Rose

10.30am: Indika Silva

CUPPA ROSTER

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



CHURCH FLOWERS

Lent— No Flowers



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

WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS : 14th & 15th March

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Saturday: Sean Giani

Sunday: Marj Tung

MORNING TEA ROSTER

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

Next Morning Tea: **5th April**

Host: **Rosary & Prayer Group**



CHURCH FLOWERS

Lent—No Flowers



COUNTING TEAM # 4

Gerard Harrington

Chris Eggleston

Diane Shelly

PRESBYTERY & CHURCH GROUNDS- (March)

Front Garden: Stuart Robertson

Back/Side Garden: Volunteer Please

Parish Centre: Ron Geurts

Carpark/Pines: Ron Geurts

Back Paddock: Colm Carragher

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 26th March**

Baptisms are held on the 1st and 3rd

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

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: **Barry & Rosanna Melder** 9743 5063

Group 2: **Gordon & Gladys Clarke** 0402 021 435

Group 3: **Santo & Liz Schembri** 0466 854 476



ST BERNARD'S

BAPTISM PREPARATION PROGRAM

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

Next program: **Sunday 22nd March**

Baptisms are held on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month: **3rd & 17th May**

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 : Justin & Katie

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

LITURGY OF THE WORD

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

Of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face.
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek;
hide not your face from me.

FIRST READING Genesis 12:1-4

The Lord said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing.

'I will bless those who bless you:

I will curse those who slight you.

All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you.'

So Abram went as the Lord told him.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM : 32

Comm: Lord, let your mercy be on us,
as we place our trust in you.

All: Lord, let your mercy be on us,
as we place our trust in you.

The word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.
The Lord loves justice and right
and fills the earth with his love.

The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul is waiting for the Lord.
The Lord is our help and our shield.
May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you.

All: Lord, let your mercy be on us,
as we place our trust in you.

SECOND READING 2 Timothy 1:8-10

With me, bear the hardships for the sake of the Good News, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy - not because of anything we ourselves have done but for his own purpose and by his own grace. This grace had already been granted to us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time, but it has only been revealed by the Appearing of our saviour Christ Jesus. He abolished death, and he has proclaimed life and immortality through the Good News.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

From the shining cloud the Father's voice is heard:
this is my beloved Son, hear him.

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. There in their presence he was transfigured; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him'. When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. 'Stand up,' he said 'do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus. As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order. 'Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;
listen to him.

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS –

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

First Reading: Ex 17:3-7;

Second Reading: Rom 5:1-2.5-8;

Gospel: Jn 4:5-42



Catholic worship and piety: Lent 2020 III

Mortification, penance and fasting

The root word for “mortification” comes from the Latin, *mors* and *mortis*, and it translates as “death”. In the spiritual life, therefore, mortification refers to voluntary actions by which we gradually “put to death” all of our vices, sinful habits, and the self-centred tendencies that lurk beneath them. Spiritual writers use terms like abnegation, sacrifice, self-sacrifice, and self-denial to refer to the same thing.

Jesus spoke about mortification as an absolute necessity for growth into Christian maturity. Here are some of the better-known passages:

- “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me” (Luke 9:23).
- “In all truth I tell you, unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest” (John 12:24).
- “Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it” (Mark 8:35).

St Paul regularly emphasised this “best practice” of the spiritual life. Here are some examples:

- “You must see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11).
- “You were to put aside [we could say “put to death] your old self, which belongs to your old way of life and is corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind was to be renewed in spirit so that you could put on the New Man that has been created on God’s principles, in the uprightness and holiness of the truth” (Ephesians 4:22-24).
- “We too, then, should throw off everything that weighs us down and the sin that clings so closely, and with perseverance keep running in the race which lies ahead of us” (Hebrews 12:1).

I list so many quotations (and there are a lot more) because this is a hard concept for us to accept. A secular culture by definition seeks heaven on earth. According to that mindset, suffering of any kind is valueless and to be avoided — a far cry from the Christian pattern of death to sin (through voluntary self-denial) as a path to true life.

In one of Pope Benedict’s messages for Lent, he explained the reason behind this pillar of Christian spirituality: “Freely chosen detachment from the pleasure of food and other material goods helps the disciple of Christ to control the appetites of nature, weakened by original sin, whose negative effects impact the entire human person.”

In other words, because God has chosen to redeem our fallen human nature, and not just replace it, his grace enters into our wounded, self-centred, sin-tending souls, and gradually transforms them (think of Jesus’

parable of the leaven in the dough). But since we are free, spiritual creatures (not just instinct-driven squirrels), we have to freely cooperate with his grace in order for this process to fully develop. One of the ways we do this is through freely denying ourselves certain pleasures that are not in themselves sinful, for example, not listening to the radio for the first three minutes of a half-hour commute, offering the silence as an act of mortification, and maybe using it to pray.

When we do that, we learn to govern our tendencies to pleasure and self-seeking (which are always waiting for opportunities to run wild); we tame them so that they are fruitful and not destructive, like a tamed stallion as opposed to a wild stallion. This self-governance helps create interior order and peace, so that we can better hear and respond to God’s word in our lives. The mortification is never an end in itself, but a means by which we become better followers of Christ.

Spiritual writers have used many images to explain the value of mortification. Picture a jar full of very sour vinegar. You want to fill it up with sweet honey. First, you have to empty out the vinegar, and then scrub the inside of the jar, and only then can you put in the honey. Just so, to receive the many gifts of grace God wants to give us, we have to empty out and scrub clean every corner of our heart and mind otherwise the grace can’t get in.

Think of a garden (as in Jesus’ parable of the sower). The soil is our fallen human nature, riddled and overgrown with poisonous weeds (vices, selfish tendencies, psychological and emotional wounds). God comes and plants the seed of grace, the seeds of all the Christian virtues. We water those seeds through prayer and the sacraments. But we also need to pull up the weeds (and some of them have very deep roots) otherwise they will choke the growth of grace.

What does this have to do with Lent? The Church is a wise mother. She knows that we like to feast more than we like to fast, which is perfectly normal. But she also knows that if we don’t fast (practise mortification), we will get spiritually out of shape quickly. So she has built into the liturgical year certain seasons when we focus a little bit more than usual on this aspect of our spiritual life — penitential days and seasons, like Lent.

Fasting (some form of mortification, voluntary self-denial) is a normal part of every Catholic’s Lenten journey; it gets us in shape for the holiest days of the year: Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday.

Each of us should choose some form of mortification (something that we notice, but not something that distracts us or overburdens us — balance and realism are important for a healthy spiritual life). In this way, we can unite our increased spiritual efforts to those of our Catholic brothers and sisters throughout the world, making this season a real family affair. Together we go with Jesus into the desert, where he spent 40 days practicing mortification, as a preparation for his public mission.