



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 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

9th February 2020

PARISH PRIEST: Fr Fabian Smith

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

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Lesley Morffew

Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson

Parish Office Hours:

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

Wed—Thurs 9.00am-5.00pm **Friday** 9.00am-4.00pm

Email: meltonsouth@cam.org.au

Website: stanthonysmeltonsouth.wordpress.com

St Anthony's School Principal: Damien Schuster

Wilson Road, Melton South 3338

Phone: 8099 7800

Email: principal@sameltonsth.catholic.edu.au

Website: www.sameltonsth.catholic.edu.au

Catholic Regional College - Melton (Years 7-12)

Principal: Marlene Jorgensen **Phone:** 8099 6000

Website: www.crcmelton.com.au

ST BERNARD'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Dolores Turcsan

Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson

Sacramental Coordinator/ Bookkeeper:

Naim Chdid **Fri** 10.00am—3.00pm

Parish Office Hours: Tue –Fri 9.00am-1.00pm

Email: bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au

Website: <http://pol.org.au/bacchusmarsh/Home.aspx>

St Bernard's School Principal: Emilio Scalzo

19a Gisborne Rd, Bacchus Marsh VIC 3340

Phone: (03) 5366 5800

Email: principal@sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

Website: www.sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Sue Alexander	0400 171 843
Lillian Christian - Vice Chair	0400 441 257
Stephen Fernandes	0439 743 533
Amy Honrade	03 9747 0078
Natalie Howard - Chair	0410 478 046
Villy Julita	0403 751 343
Rose Ma'ae	0431 386 473
Marthese Mercieca	0421 378 691
Kim Nguyen	0431 035 980
EX-OFFICIO:	
Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Alexander Athanas and Damien Schuster Council Secretary: Judy Johnson	

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Cathy Belcher - Vice Chair	0431 082 886
Shane Cook -School Advisory Board	0419 999 052
Peter Farren	0418 594 501
Moirra Ross	0400 675 056
Aaron Russell	0401 927 502
John Thorne - Secretary	5310 6692
James Waters - Chair	0403 822 795
EX-OFFICIO:	
Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Alexander Athanas and Emilio Scalzo	

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

Coordinator: Godwin Barton (0425 734 449)

Officers: Aloysious Dacunha, Karina Dunne & Lorraine Tellis

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

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

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

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

MASS AND DEVOTIONS

ST ANTHONY'S MELTON SOUTH

MASS TIMES : 10th-16th February

Monday:	7.45am	FFS
Tuesday am:	9.15am	FAA
Tuesday pm:	6.30pm	FFS
Wednesday:	7.45am	FAA
	9.15am	FFS
Thursday:	7.45am	FAA
	9.15am	FLM
Friday:	7.45am	FFS
	9.15am	FAA
Saturday Vigil:	5.30pm	FFS
Sunday:	8.30am	FFS
	10.30am	FFS

INDIVIDUAL RECONCILIATION

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

ROSARY:

Prayed at 9.00am before every weekday Mass.

ADORATION:

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



ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH

MASS TIMES : 10th-16th February

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
Friday:	9.30am	FLM
Saturday Vigil :	5.00pm	FLM
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 6th March**

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

Next Date: **Friday 6th March**

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

Next Mass: **14th February**

SENIOR PARISHIONER'S MASS

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

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

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS KOROBET

MASS TIME		
Saturday Vigil:	6.30pm	FLM

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE

MARIAN EUCHARISTIC YOUTH RETREAT

Join us for talks, games, activities, sacraments and a talent night!

When: July 6-8 (2 nights, 3 days)

Where: The Summit, 21 Cemetary Rd, Trafalgar East

Ages 16-30

\$160 – includes Accommodation, meals and transport. \$50 deposit required.

Limited spots available! Register by 15th February by contacting:

Janine Mondares 0401 622 754

PARISH EVENTS & NOTICES

PROVIDENCE AGED CARE RESIDENCE– KNIT AND NATTER GROUP

We have had a request from the Providence Aged Care Residence, Bacchus Marsh. They have a 'Knit & Natter' group who knit trauma teddies for the Children's Hospital and also for local charities. They are in need of 8 ply wool (any colour) to continue their work. If you are able to help please leave the wool at the Church or Parish Office for Judy to collect.
Thank You!

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.

PRIME TIMERS

The Prime Timers next outing will be held on Tuesday 25th February at the Braybrook Hotel, Ballarat Road, Braybrook.
Buffet Meal : \$20.90 (seniors).
Please RSVP by Saturday 22nd Feb Ineke: ineke49@yahoo.com or 0400 120 401

PIETY STAND

A small Piety Stand has been set up in the Confessional temporarily until the renovations are complete.

ST BERNARD'S

PARISH OFFICE HOURS– THIS WEEK

The Parish Office will be open:
Tuesday-Thursday– 9.00am-12noon
Friday-10.00am-3.00pm

NEW ROSTERS FOR READERS AND EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

The rosters for the Readers and Extraordinary Ministers have been emailed this week, if you would like to collect a printed copy you will be able to pick one up from the Sacristy this weekend.
Thank you.

KSC MEETING

KSC Meeting this Monday 10th Feb at 7pm. This is a social meeting at Ron's place, with details as emailed.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A ALTAR SERVER

Share God's mercy and the joy of faith

Current and new parents and children come along to find out more and register for 2020

Registration: Wednesday 19th February, 2020

3:30-4:30pm at St Bernard's church

Training sessions:

4th March and 11th March, 3:30-4:30pm

at St Bernard's church

Further information:

Bernadette: mob 0407 510 303



PRAYER FOR DROUGHT RELIEF

Eternal God,

In wisdom and love, you created our earth to sustain us and give us life.

We turn to you now in faith, hope and love, asking you to look with favour on our drought-stricken land, on our starving animals, on our failing crops.

Strengthen, sustain and give new heart to our farmers and to all who are affected by drought; be with those who support them.

In your loving providence, send abundant rain and restore our parched earth.

Father of all compassion, hear our prayer through Jesus Christ your Son, in whom the promise of new life has dawned, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of life: Renew your faithful people; Renew the face of the earth.

Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Mary, help of Christians

– Pray for us.

St Mary of the Cross Mackillop

– Pray for us.



WORSHIP NEWS

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

ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 15th & 16th Feb MINISTERS OF THE WORD

5.30pm : Stephen Fernandes
8.30am: John Brewis
10.30am: Susan Malinov

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.30pm: Gavin Pereira & Ann Tennakoon
8.30am: Ineke Allen, Lois Brewis
& Geoff Sutton
10.30am: Elaine Lacey & Sally Markulin

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

MASS COORDINATORS

5.30pm: Godwin Barton & Pat Fernandez
8.30am: Natalie Howard & Ron Howard
10.30am: Leonia Jessop & Annonika

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 the death anniversary at this time of:

Babette Arandez, Peter Azzopardi, Maria & Joseph Cauchi, Arthur Chiles, Falanai Aukuso Kelsall & George Portelli

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: 15th & 16th Feb MINISTERS OF THE WORD

5.00pm: John Thorne
8.30am: Moira Ross & Marj Tung
10.00am: Sr Mary Fermio

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

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

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ROSTER

February: Mary Flanagan

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

FAITH ON FIRE PRAYER GROUP

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

Next meeting **20th February**

We pray for the death anniversary at this time of:

Sam Azzopardi, Katherine Caldwell, Alma Dowsett, Mary Gaidzkar, Andree (Onnie) Greenwood, Raymond Hare, Peter Shea, Betty-Jean Tregurtha, Sam Vereker & Laurie Wheelahan

Please pray for the Sick:

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

SERVICE / COMMUNITY

ST ANTHONY'S

VOLUNTEERS WEEKEND: 15th & 16th February

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.30pm: Volunteer needed

8.30am: Edwina La Rose

10.30am: Indika Silva

CUPPA ROSTER

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



CHURCH FLOWERS-February

Rosabella Tuala



CLEANING ROSTER: Thursday

Lorelle Porter

Volunteers would be appreciated as well.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Welfare Number: 1800 305 330

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

New members most welcome, training provided.

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

COMBINED CHURCHES CARING MELTON INC

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

Address: 100 Coburn Road Melton South 9747 6811

Hours: Mon- Thurs: 10.00am-3.00pm

Friday : 10.00am-12.15pm

School Holidays : 10.00am-12.30pm

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



Amen

ST BERNARD'S

VOLUNTEERS WEEKEND : 15th & 16th February

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: **1st March 2020**

Host: **Parent & Friends**



CHURCH FLOWERS—February

Rita Marshall



COUNTING TEAM # 9

Kath Connell

Val Dickson

Michael Duffy

Mary Delahey

PRESBYTERY & CHURCH GROUNDS- (February)

Front Garden: Stephen Millington

Back/Side Garden: Volunteer Please

Parish Centre: Volunteer Please

Carpark/Pines: Sean Giani

Back Paddock: Volunteer Please

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY:

Welfare Number is 1800 305 330.

The Vinnies Store is located at 8 Grant Street, Bacchus Marsh. The store is open 7 days a week. If you are able to volunteer and would like some more information, please contact the Store Manager on 8199 4205.

THE NEIGHBOURS PLACE

Emergency Foodbank and Hospitality centre

Address: 77 Main Street Bacchus Marsh

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

Email: neighbourspl@iinet.net.au

SOUL FOOD

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

Contact: Jenny Kearney 0408 104 155

PARISH CENTRE BOOKING

Tel: 5367 3427 Mon—Fri 9.00am to 6.00pm

Hall Managers: Marie & Terry Casey

FAITH FORMATION

ST ANTHONY'S

BAPTISM PREPARATION PROGRAM

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

Next preparation : **Thursday 27th Feb**

Baptisms are held on the 1st and 3rd

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

See details on Parish Homepage as listed on front page and download forms. Forms are also available from the Parish Office or from the Sacristy after Mass from Father. Both parents are required to attend these meetings. We kindly request adults only and a copy of the birth certificate. **Please be advised that Baptism applications must be submitted 2 months in advance.** Contact Fr Fabian, Fr Alexander, Fr Lucas or the Parish Office for queries.

BAPTISM TEAM: Karina Dunne & Judy Johnson

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

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

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

FATIMA STATUE

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

Group 1: **Dacunha Family** **0469 863 253**

Group 2: **Naim Chdid** **0437 004 790**

Group 3: **Rohini Selvanayagam** **0425 868 967**



ST BERNARD'S

BAPTISM PREPARATION PROGRAM

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

Next program: **Sunday 23rd Feb**

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

Registration forms can be downloaded from our website www.pol.cam.org.au/bacchusmarsh. Bring completed registration form with a copy of birth certificate to the program. Please note: Both parents are required to attend the program. **Please be advised that Baptism applications must be submitted 2 months in advance.** Contact Fr Fabian, Fr Alexander, Fr Lucas or the Parish Office for queries.

COORDINATORS : Kate & Danny

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

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



PRAYER TO ST MICHAEL

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



NICENO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

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

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

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

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

[bow during the next line]

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

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

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

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

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

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

WEEKLY PRAYERS & READINGS

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

O come, let us worship God
and bow low before the God who made us,
for he is the Lord our God.

FIRST READING Isaiah 58:7-10

Thus says the Lord:
Share your bread with the hungry,
and shelter the homeless poor,
clothe the man you see to be naked
and turn not from your own kin.
Then will your light shine like the dawn
and your wound be quickly healed over.
Your integrity will go before you
and the glory of the Lord behind you.
Cry, and the Lord will answer;
call, and he will say, 'I am here.'
If you do away with the yoke,
the clenched fist, the wicked word,
if you give your bread to the hungry,
and relief to the oppressed,
your light will rise in the darkness,
and your shadows become like noon.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM : 114

Comm: A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

All: A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

He is a light in the darkness for the upright:
he is generous, merciful and just.
The good man takes pity and lends,
he conducts his affairs with honour.

The just man will never waver:
he will be remembered for ever.
He has no fear of evil news;
with a firm heart he trusts in the Lord.

With a steadfast heart he will not fear;
open-handed, he gives to the poor;
his justice stands firm for ever.
His head will be raised in glory.

All: A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

When I came to you, brothers, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ. Far from relying on any power of my own, I came among you in great 'fear and trembling' and in my speeches and the sermons that I gave, there were none of the arguments that belong to philosophy; only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. And I did this so that your faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
the man who follows me
will have the light of life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Let them thank the Lord for his mercy,
his wonders for the children of men,
for he satisfies the thirsty soul,
and the hungry he fills with good things.

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS –

THE 6TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Sirach 15:15-20;

Second Reading: 1 Cor 2-6-10;

Gospel: Mt 5:17-37



The life of Catholic worship and piety XI

Why We Need Sacred Things (Plural)

In the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church, there were lots and lots of sacred things.

The best definition of religion I have ever come across is that given by French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*: “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions — beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church.”

“Sacred things” (or “holy things”) is the key here. In the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church, there were lots and lots of sacred things. There was a great pyramid of sacred things. Way up at the top of the pyramid, of course, was God, the most holy of all holy things and the source of the sacredness that trickled down to all lesser sacred things.

Of these lesser sacred things, the most holy was the Virgin Mary, the mother of God. Below her were angels and saints, some of them more sacred than others. There were nine orders of angels.

On Earth there were sacred persons, they too in descending ranks of sacredness. The pope was very holy indeed; thus he was spoken of as “His Holiness”. Cardinals were a bit less sacred; ordinary bishops less sacred still; parish priests were at the bottom rank of clerical holiness, but they too should be treated with a reverence due to sacred persons. Religious sisters were sacred, both the kind and gentle nuns and the mean nuns who hit your hand with a ruler. The habits nuns wore were also sacred.

Buildings were sacred. St Peter’s in Rome was the most sacred of all. Medieval Gothic cathedrals were also sacred, especially those of Paris and Chartres. Ordinary parish churches were sacred, even the hideous churches built in the 1950s in a “modern” style.

Inside, the church overflowed with sacred things: statues and pictures of saints, Stations of the Cross, candles, baptismal fonts, holy water. The altar was holy, made even holier by the altar rail that set it apart from the rest of the church. The Eucharist was the holiest of all things on Earth, so holy that it mustn’t be touched by the hands of laypersons.

There were sacred ceremonies, the Mass above all. But also lesser ceremonies: Confession, burial of the dead, fasting in Lent, meatless Fridays, fasting from midnight before receiving Communion, reciting the rosary, genuflecting when entering a church pew.

The great advantage of having all these many kinds and degrees of holy things is that Catholics were at all times surrounded with sacred persons, places, and things. We could easily “feel” the sacred. We experienced it every day of the week, especially on Sundays.

But there were disadvantages too. All of this could degenerate into superstition. Instead of seeing these lesser sacred persons, places, and things as dim reflections of the infinite holiness of God, we might see them and treat them as if they were sacred in and of themselves. We could slip into idolatry. Instead of believing in a God who has countless reflections, we might feel that there are countless lesser “gods”, some big (Our Lady), some medium-sized (bishops and priests and nuns), and some little (candles and holy water).

A fear of this kind of superstition is what, centuries ago, inspired the fierce anti-Catholicism of the Puritans. They had little or no use for the Virgin Mary or the saints or popes or crucifixes or religious statues or stained-glass windows. They felt that there are only two holy things: God and the Bible, the Bible being holy not in itself but because it shows us how to be in touch with God.

Many of the reforms, both formal and informal, made in the post-Vatican II period were motivated by a kind of Catholic Puritanism. Reformers felt that much of popular Catholicism had degenerated into superstition. By getting rid of, or at least by downplaying, the myriad of other-than-God sacred things, it would be easier for Catholics to focus on the one and only essentially holy thing: God.

This reform may have worked for some people, but, by and large, it has been a failure. God alone is not easily known, not easily experienced. He is incomprehensible, as Thomas Aquinas reminds us; He is a hidden God, as Pascal reminds us; He is “entirely other” as Karl Barth says.

Except for a small number of mystics and semi-mystics, most of us will not be able to experience God directly. We will experience him, if we experience him at all, through his myriad of sacred reflections. Get rid of those reflections and you run the risk of getting rid of God.

Reverence for sacred things *can* degenerate into superstition and idolatry. The danger of Puritanism is that it can degenerate into agnosticism and atheism. But we do better to run the risk of superstition than to run the worse risk of atheism.

It is time to reform the reform. We need altar rails, nuns wearing habits, rosary beads, holy water, Latin. We need to notice that religion is about sacred things (plural), not about a single sacred thing.