



St Anthony's Parish

67-75 EXFORD ROAD, MELTON SOUTH, 3338.
P.O BOX 2152 MELTON SOUTH 3338
TEL: 9747 9692



St Bernard's Parish

61 LERDERBERG STREET, BACCHUS MARSH 3340
TEL: 5367 2069
OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, KOROBET
309 MYRNIONG-KOROBET ROAD 3341

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT -YEAR C

20th March 2022

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: Monday 9.00am-12noon
Tue 9am-4pm Wed 9am-5.30pm Thu /Fri 9am-4pm
Email: meltonsouth@cam.org.au
Website: www.stanthonyof padua.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

St Lawrence of Brindisi School **Principal:** Bill Hill
31 Waterway Boulevard, Weir Views, 3338
Phone: 0477 155 210
Email: principal@slweirviews.catholic.edu.au
Website: www.slweirviews.catholic.edu.au

Catholic Regional College - Melton (Years 7-12)
Principal: Marlene Jorgensen **Phone:** 8099 6000
109-141 Bulmans Rd, West Melton, 3337 **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 9am-1pm
Email: bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au
Website: www.stbernardsbacchusmarsh.com.au

St Bernard's School **Principal:**
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

Naim Chid	0437 004 790
Lillian Christian - Vice Chair	0400 441 257
Stephen Fernandes	0439 743 533
Amy Honrade	9747 0078
Natalie Howard - Chair	0492 947 201
Rose Ma'ae	0460 672 571

EX-OFFICIO: Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint,
Fr Marcus Goulding, Damien Schuster and Bill Hill
Council Secretary: Judy Johnson

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Shane Cook -School Advisory Board	0419 999 052
Peter Farren	0418 594 501
Peter Kennedy	0407 778 119
Maira Ross	0400 675 056
Aaron Russell - Chair	0401 927 502

EX-OFFICIO:
Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint and Fr Marcus Goulding

SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Coordinator: Godwin Barton (0425 734 449) **Officers:** St Anthony's -Karina Dunne, Lorraine Tellis & Geetha Vincent
St Bernard's - Margaret Love (0437 247 779)

MASS AND DEVOTIONS

ST ANTHONY'S MELTON SOUTH 21/3/22-27/3/22

MASS TIMES:

Monday 21/3	6.30pm
Tuesday 22/3	9.30am
Holy Hour	5.30pm
Week 2 of the St Antony's Novena followed by Mass at	6.15pm 6.30pm
Wednesday 23/3	7.30am ONLY
Thursday 24/3	9.30am
Friday 25/3	7.30am & 9.30am
Stations of the Cross	10.00am & 7.00pm

Sunday Masses

Saturday 26/3	5.00pm
Sunday 27/3	8.30am, 10.30am & 5.00pm

Confession available 30 minutes prior to each Mass.
No Confession on Monday.

ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH 21/3/22-27/3/22

MASS TIMES:

Monday 21/3- No Mass	*Rosary	7.30pm
Tuesday 22/3		7.30am
Holy Hour		7.30pm
Wednesday 23/3		9.30am
Thursday 24/3		7.30am
Friday 25/3		9.30am
Station of the Cross (Soup & Stations)		
Soup 6.30pm	Stations	7.30pm
Saturday 26/3		9.00am
*Rosary - Prayed every Monday at 7:30pm with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour.		

Sunday Masses

Saturday 26/3	5.00pm
Sunday 27/3	8.30am & 10.30am

Confession available 30 minutes prior to each Mass.

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

KOROBET

VIGIL MASS

6.30pm

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

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: <https://bit.ly/CDFpayMeltonSouth>

The link to the St Bernard's Parish is: <https://bit.ly/CDFpayBacchusMarsh>

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

REFLECTION 3rd SUNDAY OF LENT -Mary Fermio rsj

At times we meet people who blame God for illness, financial situation, even a death from an accident. Why? They ask, that person was a good person, why did they suffer.

A recent Compass program of an interview between Geraldine Doogue and Fr Michael Kelly SJ pointed out the fallacy of this. Fr Kelly had his leg amputated at the knee and was wearing a rather intimidating prosthesis leg. In his sixties and normally an active man, he had to learn to live this way. When challenged about God bringing this about, he replied: "God did not do this to me!" Very firmly he states that God does not act this way, yet some people expect God to snap fingers and change things. But that wasn't the way God worked Kelly has found life very challenging, has been depressed, but each day struggles out of bed and says: *Well God, here we go again.* When asked did he pray, he replied: "All day, every day!" (Program on I View)

In today's Gospel, Jesus points out that those killed by Pilate, and in the tower of Siloam, were no more guilty than everyone else in Jerusalem. Accidents, illness and death were not punishments from God. Floods and war are brought about by the natural laws of the earth or the evil in hearts. Therefore, repentance will save us.

Lent is a time when we "dig around, manure" our lives, as in the fig tree. God gives us the opportunity, so we need to take advantage of this time, to deepen our love of God and neighbour by prayer, penance and almsgiving.



PARISH & EVENTS NOTICES

NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

FLOOD APPEAL— SOCIETY OF ST VINCENTS DE PAUL

The floods in Queensland and New South Wales are having a devastating effect on the people living in these regions of Australia. For those wishing to support the long-term recovery work to be undertaken by St Vincent de Paul Society in Queensland and New South Wales, financial donations can be made directly to either state through:

[Flood appeal—assistance and donations - St Vincent de Paul Society - Good Works \(vinnies.org.au\)](#)

CARITAS AUSTRALIA-UKRAINE EMERGENCY APPEAL

The people of Ukraine are living through a crisis that will impact the country for years to come. Caritas Australia has launched an appeal to support Caritas Ukraine and other partners in the region. The appeal will support the provision of clean water, hygiene and food kits to vulnerable families, as well as safe collection centres for families on the move, emergency accommodation and support for distressed children and families.

[Ukraine | Caritas Australia](#)

LENT RETREAT DAYS FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG ADULTS, MEN, AND WOMEN

Once again, we are pleased to offer a Lenten Retreat Day. This year, it will be held on Saturday, 2nd April from 9am - 4pm. The Young Adults Retreat (Ages 16-25) will be held at St Bernard's. The Retreats for Children, Men, and Women will be offered at St Anthony's. Registration via our website is essential. Please see the leaflet included in the bulletin for more information.

ST ANTHONY'S

ST VINCENT DE PAUL – MELTON SOUTH CONFERENCE RECRUITMENT DRIVE

The Melton South Conference of St Vincent de Paul are looking for new members to continue its good work in the area.

The Society helps people experiencing poverty and injustice, and helps to create a more compassionate community.

Members of the Society will be speaking at each Mass on the 26th/27th March 2022. This will be a chance for everyone to hear about what is involved in volunteering for the Melton South conference. A Come & See event will also be held at 7pm on the 30th of March in the Meeting Room at St Anthony's Church, 67-75 Exford Road Melton South. This will be a chance to ask any questions you have.

SAVE THE DATE– BLESSING OF THE CHURCH

Archbishop Peter Comensoli will be celebrating Mass and blessing our renovated Church extension and Chapel on Sunday 24th April 10.30am.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

Last weekend we had a leaving collection for the World Day Of Prayer. We collected \$465.00. Thank you for your generosity.

MORNING MASS –WEDNESDAY 23rd March

Parishioners please note, they will be no 9.30am Mass on Wednesday 23rd March. We will have a 7.30am Mass on that morning.

ST BERNARD'S

HELP NEEDED

Finances are challenging for the parish at the moment so help in the basic handyperson/maintenance areas would be appreciated. At times, cleaning in addition to that already budgeted for is needed. If you would be prepared to lead or be part of a casual call-up cleaning group or a parish maintenance team, could you please leave your details at the Parish Office 5367 2069. Thank you.

SING WITH ST BERNARD'S 10.30am CHOIR

Parishioners are welcome to join the choir at St Bernard's 10.30am Mass each Sunday. Musical experience helpful but not required. Interested parishioners should contact Fr Marcus for an informal audition. You will also need to be prepared to attend rehearsals at 9.30am each Sunday.

THE NEIGHBOURS PLACE

The Neighbours Place (emergency foodbank in Bacchus Marsh) is currently looking for volunteers, who will be able to assist in mowing our lawns (just a small area). To help in providing basic garden maintenance. Lawn mower/whipper snipper provided. We are also looking for a volunteer to assist with stock intake just 2 hours twice a month. Some heavy lifting is required. If you are able to assist, please contact Jackie on 5367 6222.



Third Sunday of Lent 19 & 20 March



Janice 44, is a proud Wagilak woman, a traditional dancer, who tells stories through movements handed down over generations. With your support, Janice and the Djilpin Arts Aboriginal Corporation support the community to generate income and employment, while keeping culture alive. Please donate to Project Compassion 2022 and help provide employment and training for First Australians, allowing them to remain on country and keep their culture alive. Together, we can help vulnerable communities face their challenges today and build a better tomorrow For All Future Generations. You can donate through Project Compassion donation boxes and envelopes available from your Parish, by visiting lent.caritas.org.au, or by calling 1800 024 413

WORSHIP NEWS

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

ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 26th & 27th March

Please present yourself to the Mass Coordinator

15 minutes before the scheduled Mass time or a replacement will be found. Thank you.

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

5.00pm Vigil: Stephen Fernandes

8.30am: Amy Honrade

10.30am: Karina Dunne

5.00pm: Regina Tuala

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm Vigil: Philip Anyayahan

8.30am: Lillian Christian

10.30am: George Bonello

5.00pm: Not rostered

If you are unavailable for these dates please contact Lesley at the Parish Office Thank you

MASS COORDINATORS

5.00pm Vigil: Coleen & Carmen

8.30am: Natalie & Ron

10.30am: Lillian & Deepa

5.00pm: Leonia & Annonica

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

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

Marya Dolores Borg, Josephine Buttigieg, Angelo DeBrincat, Teresa D'Silva, Paola Giordamanja, Fayez Haddad, Philomena Michael & Lila Morrison

Please pray for the Sick: Nickolia & Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana, Melanie Fue, Bruce Hynes, Judy Layton, Peter Manicaro, Reg Marslen, Lisa Melia, Damien Michael, Tony Michael, Veronica Michael, Maiava Kuno Nickol, Paul Nowak, Caleb O'Brien, John Osborne, Catherine Roberts, Peter Roberts, Pat Roberts, Charlie Spiteri, Janko Stojanovic, Uatoa Tuigamala, Clint Abela Wadge, and Wai Walsh

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

MINISTERS OF THE WORD : THIS WEEKEND

5.00pm: John Thorne

8.30am: Dominican Sisters

10.30am: Charlotte Lindorff

MINISTERS OF THE WORD: NEXT WEEKEND 26/27

5.00pm: Vikki Benson

8.30am: Nathan Costin

10.30am: Dominic Van Der Linden

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

March: Cheryl Stephens

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

Domenico Sgarbossa and Sheila Prendergast.

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

Michael Brady, Wendy Diacono, Leigh Gray, Annie (Nancy) Holloway, Christopher Mugavin, Frank Shanahan, Joan Shanahan, Peter Ward & Bernard Wilkie.

Please pray for the Sick:

Patricia Allison, Noah Barlow, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett, Steven Braszel, Tina Bower, John Canty, Fred Capuano, Gary Ching, Chris, Josephine Cilia, Robyn Cola, Ted Cooling, Lindsay & Kathleen Dally, Judy Delahey, Jack DeLuca, Theresa Dockter, Allison Evans, Helen Evans, Justin Fernandez, Pasquale Gagliarbi, Mario Galea, Cynthia Goodyear, Gwen Green, Joe Gristi, Adam Hillier, Leonie Kervin, Elle Hillman, Kiahni Holamotutama, Alicia Holborn, Chaiel Jackson, Matthew Jansen, David Kasprzak, Michael Larkin, Marie Maloney, Patricia Marechal, Brian Marshall, Debbie Marshall, Jordanis Mary Pauline McDonald, Ian McKechnie, Marcus Meno, Paul Mullin, Arthur Pape, Michael Paterson, Georgia Peacock, Mitchell Prendergast, Peter Roberts, Ken Shaw, Bill Shea, Terry Sims, Marian Smith, Elizabeth Stehmann, Catherine Time, Susan Trist, Stephen Van Eede, John Van Orsouw, Angela Vicum, Louis Vogels, Barry 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

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

ST ANTHONY'S

WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS: 26th & 27th March

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil: Liza Fernandez

8.30am: Mercy Seufatu

10.30am: Gilles Maitre

CUPPA VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil:

8.30am: To be advised

10.30am:



CHURCH FLOWERS

March: Lent –no flowers

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Welfare Number: 1800 305 330

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

New members most welcome, training provided. Non perishable items within the use by date can be left in the 'drop box' in the Church foyer.

We cannot accept re-packaged food. Thank you.

COMBINED CHURCHES CARING MELTON INC

We're here to support City of Melton residents get ahead through access to our foodbank and other community programs. It's never just about the food or the budget help, it's about recognising the beauty that is in the person and bringing it out so they can be their best. Address: 100 Coburn Road Melton South 9747 6811

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 : 26th & 27th March

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Sunday: Margot Short

CHURCH FLOWERS

March: Lent –no flowers



PRESBYTERY & CHURCH GROUNDS-MOWING

March: Colm Carragher, Ron Geurts & Stuart Robertson

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

The Neighbours' Place is a Christian not-for-profit organisation whose aim is to serve people of the **Moorabool Shire**, west of Melbourne Australia, who are disadvantaged, at risk or temporarily unable to feed themselves or their family and who are in need of emergency food relief.

NILS is a **No Interest Loans Scheme** for assistance of up \$1500 for things like white goods, furniture and minor car repairs to keep life going.

We are located at [77 Main Street, Bacchus Marsh](#)

Phone: 03 5367 6222

Email: neighbourspl@iinet.net.au

Hours of Operation: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9.30am-12.30pm. Closed on public holidays.

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.

PARISH CENTRE BOOKING

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

Hall Managers: Marie & Terry Casey

FAITH FORMATION

ST ANTHONY'S AND ST BERNARD'S

BAPTISM PREPARATION PROGRAM— ST ANTHONY'S AND ST BERNARD'S

Dear Parishioners

Keeping in line with the Archbishop's vision for Mission, the Parishes of St Anthony's and St Bernard's have put together a new Baptism Preparation Program, for any parents who wish to have their child Baptised.



Preparations for Baptisms will take place on Saturdays alternating between both Parishes. A welcome Mass must be attended prior to the Baptism. Baptisms will be held on Saturday mornings at 11.00am.

Parents must attend two sessions. Sessions will run from 12..30pm-4.30pm. Godparents must attend the 2nd session. Bookings must be made to attend these sessions. Please visit our website for a detailed description of the new program. Contact the Parish Office to book your Baptism Preparation and Baptism.

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

FATIMA STATUE—ST ANTHONY'S

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



Group 1: Richard & Rosabella Tuala	0422 390 617
Group 2: Elaine & Edward Rodrigues	0405 956 724
Group 3: Tony & Stella Cochrane	9743 6340

DIVINE MERCY NOVENA

1st Sunday of the Month-3.00pm

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.



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

My eyes are always on the Lord,
for he rescues my feet from the snare.
Turn to me and have mercy on me,
for I am alone and poor.

FIRST READING Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

Moses was looking after the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, priest of Midian. He led his flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing but it was not being burnt up. 'I must go and look at this strange sight,' Moses said 'and see why the bush is not burnt.' Now the Lord saw him go forward to look, and God called to him from the middle of the bush. 'Moses, Moses!' he said. 'Here I am,' he answered. 'Come no nearer,' he said. 'Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father,' he said 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this Moses covered his face, afraid to look at God.

And the Lord said, 'I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow.'

Then Moses said to God, 'I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you." But if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them?' And God said to Moses, 'I Am who I Am. This' he added 'is what you must say to the sons of Israel: "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 102

Commentator: The Lord is kind and merciful.

All: The Lord is kind and merciful.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord,
all my being, bless his holy name.

My soul give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings.

It is he who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and compassion.

The Lord does deeds of justice,
gives judgement for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses
and his deeds to Israel's sons.

The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.
For as the heavens are high above the earth
so strong is his love for those who fear him.

The Lord is kind and merciful.

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

I want to remind you how our fathers were all guided by a cloud above them and how they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in this cloud and in this sea; all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, since they all drank from the spiritual rock that followed them as they went, and that rock was Christ. In spite of this, most of them failed to please God and their corpses littered the desert. These things all happened as warnings for us, not to have the wicked lusts for forbidden things that they had. You must never complain: some of them did, and they were killed by the Destroyer.

All this happened to them as a warning, and it was written down to be a lesson for us who are living at the end of the age. The man who thinks he is safe must be careful that he does not fall. The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

Repent, says the Lord;

the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL Luke 13:1-9

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

He told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, "Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

For anyone who drinks it, says the Lord,
the water I shall give will become in him
a spring welling up to eternal life.

NEXT WEEKEND'S READINGS-

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

First Reading: Joshua 5:9-12;

Second Reading: 2 Cor 5:17-21;

Gospel: Lk 15:1-3,11-32



Lent 2022

By Thomas Howard, www.catholiceducation.org

Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter, also recall the 40 days of Christ's temptation in the wilderness. There is a telescoping of things here, since His temptation did not in actual fact immediately precede His Passion, but "liturgical time" is such that spiritual significance may override chronological exactness.

Lent, like Advent, is a time of penitence. Here we identify ourselves with the Lord's fast and ordeal in the wilderness, which He bore for us.

This raises a point worth noting in passing. There are some varieties of Protestant theology and spirituality that so stress "the finished work of Christ" and the fact that He accomplished everything, that they leave no room at all for any participation on our part. Such participation, encouraged by the ancient Church, does not mean that we mortals claim any of the merit that attaches to Christ's work, much less that we can by one thousandth part add to His work. Nevertheless, the Gospel teaches us that Christians are more than mere followers of Christ. We are His Body and are drawn, somehow, into His own sufferings. We are even "crucified" with Him.

There is a sense in which Christ draws His Body (that is, the baptised) into His very self-giving for the life of the world and makes them part of this mystery. Saint Paul uses extravagant language about his own filling up "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ". It is a great mystery that the gracious donation of salvation by God could in any manner include His making us a part of it all, as He made the Virgin Mary an actual part of the process, and as Saint Paul teaches.

The ancient Church, in its observance of Lent, once more asks us to move through the Gospel with Christ Himself. The most obvious mark of Lent is the matter of fasting. I grew up as an evangelical but I knew that a few devout people in my tradition practised fasting now and again for special purposes — at a time of especially concentrated prayer, for example.

However, I thought of Lenten fasting and also of the old Catholic practice of refusing meat on Fridays as being legalistic, and perhaps even heretical, since it seemed to entail some notion of accruing merit. Since Christ had done all, why should we flagellate ourselves this way? Was it not a return to the weak and beggarly elements condemned by Saint Paul?

I discovered that the ancient Church teaches just what the New Testament teaches on the point: namely, that fasting is a salutary thing for us to undertake. Jesus fasted and assumed that His followers would. "When you fast", He said, not "if". Saint Paul both practised it and taught it. It seems to constitute a reminder to us that our appetites are not all and that man shall not live by bread alone. Furthermore, if we may believe the universal testimony of Christians who do practise it, it also clarifies our spiritual vision somehow. Lastly, it is a token of the Christian's renunciation of the world. There is nothing that a Christian will insist he must have at all costs. Fasting supplies an elementary lesson here.

Lent asks us to ponder Christ's self-denial for us in the wilderness. It draws us near to the mystery of Christ's bearing temptation for us in His flesh, and of how in this Second Adam our flesh, which failed in Adam, now triumphs.

Lent also leads us slowly towards that most holy and dread of all events, the Passion of Christ. What Christian will want to arrive at Holy Week with his heart unexamined, full of foolishness, levity, and egoism? To those for whom any special observances hint of legalism or superstition one can only bear witness that the solemn sequence of Lent turns out to be something very different from one's private attempts at meditating on the Passion. To move through the disciplines in company with millions and millions of other believers all over the world is a profoundly instructive thing.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. The first time ashes were imposed on my forehead, I found a cacophony of voices inside me: "Come! This is straight back to the Dark Ages."

But I was beginning to learn that when we encounter some spiritual truth in our bodies, it is brought home to us. When the priest came along with the little pot of damp ashes and with his thumb smudged my forehead — my forehead, the very frontal and crown of my dignity as a human being! — and said, "Remember, O man, that dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return", I knew it was true. I would return to dust, like all men, but never before had mortality come home to me in this way.

Perhaps we should, says the Church. Perhaps it is good for our souls' health to recall that our salvation, far from papering over the grave, leads us through it and raises our very mortality to glory. Each of us, like all men, must die. I felt the strongest inclination to wave the priest past as he approached me in the line of people kneeling at the rail. Not me — not me — like Agag coming forth delicately, hoping that the bitterness of death was past. Yes, you. Remember, O man ...

I was beginning to learn that when we encounter some "spiritual" truth in our bodies, it is brought home to us. We can meditate on suffering all day long, for example, but let us have migraines, and we know something we could not have known through merely mulling over the doctrine of suffering. We can meditate on love all day long, but let us kiss the one we long for, and we know immediately something we could not have known if we had thought about love for a thousand years.

Nay — our very salvation came to us in the body of the incarnate God.

"O generous love! that He who smote
In Man for man the foe,
The double agony in Man
For man should undergo",

says Cardinal Newman's hymn. The ashes effected something in me more than a smudge on my forehead. I had felt, if only for a moment, the thing that I wished most earnestly to be exempted from: death.