



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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT -YEAR C

27th 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
Moira 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 28/3/22-3/4/22

MASS TIMES:

Monday 28/3	6.30pm
Tuesday 29/3	9.30am
Holy Hour	5.30pm
Week 3 of the St Antony's Novena followed by Mass at	6.15pm 6.30pm

Wednesday 30/3	7.30am & 9.30am
Thursday 31/3	9.30am
Friday 1/4	7.30am & 9.30am
Stations of the Cross	10.00am & 7.00pm
First Friday Devotion	7.30pm & Midnight
First Saturday Devotion 2/4	8.30am

Sunday Masses

Saturday 2/4	5.00pm
Sunday 3/4	8.30am, 10.30am & 5.00pm

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

ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH 28/3/22-3/4/22

MASS TIMES:

Monday 28/3- No Mass	*Rosary	7.30pm
Tuesday 29/3		7.30am
Holy Hour		7.30pm
Wednesday 30/3		9.30am
Thursday 31/3		7.30am
Friday 1/4		9.30am

Station of the Cross (Soup & Stations)		
Soup 6.30pm	Stations	7.30pm
Saturday 2/4		12.15pm
*Rosary - Prayed every Monday at 7:30pm with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour.		

Sunday Masses

Saturday 2/4	5.00pm
Sunday 3/4	8.30am & 10.30am

Confession available 30 minutes prior to each Mass.

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

KOROBEIT

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 ON FORGIVENESS– Mary Fermio rsj

In his homily last Sunday, Fr Richard Leonard SJ spoke of a woman, who abused by an uncle, had an abortion at 20 years old, married, had 8 children and never told anyone, and never went to Communion for 70 years, believing she could not be forgiven. For the first time in her life, when 90 years old, she heard the word compassion, approached a priest, went to Confession and found freedom.

Jesus' story of the son returning to his father, who, after wasting his inheritance and realising his need, just wants a job on the farm, no matter how menial, believing he could not be forgiven. How surprised he must have been when his father came to meet him with open arms. No recriminations! No- I told you so! Knew you were a wastrel! Nothing but complete and utter forgiveness. The only sour note was the jealous brother, who worked like a slave, and obviously had none or little relationship with either his father or brother.

What is my relationship with God, the Father? Do I believe God forgives like that – open arms, no recriminations, no accusations, just love. We must believe that there is nothing we **have done**, nothing **we will do**, nothing **we can do**, that God will not forgive.

How can I refuse just a generous, open God who welcomes me home! As a Parish Community, we are the face of God, we are God's people, we are the ones who welcome a newcomer, a late starter, a wanderer, with no judgements, no questions, just an open-hearted welcome.

If compassion is God's measuring stick, we can only follow God's example.



PARISH & EVENTS NOTICES

NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

CATHOLIC REGIONAL COLLEGE- MELTON

Catholic Regional College, Melton is a Year 7-12 co-educational secondary school. It provides education for students from the Parishes of Bacchus Marsh, Melton & Melton South. Applications for Year 7 2024 at our Melton West and Cobblebank campuses are now open. Applications are due by Friday 19 August 2022. College tours will be held. You can register for a tour of the College on our Website <http://www.crcmelton.com.au/join-us/college-tours> or Ph: 03 8099 6000

INFORMATION SESSION FOR THE PERMANENT DIACONATE DO YOU FEEL LIKE BEING CALLED TO SERVE?

The Permanent Diaconate is open to single and married men who want to serve God and the Church as ordained ministers. COME & SEE! An Information Session about the Permanent Diaconate will be held on **Saturday 2 April 2022, 10:00 -11.45 am** at the Catholic Theological College (CTC), East Melbourne. For more information: Contact: Office of the Permanent Diaconate (Phone) 03 9412 3357 (Email) diaconate@cam.org.au

NINE DAY NOVENA PRAYING FOR PEACE

The Nine Day Novena will begin at St Anthony's Church on Sunday 3rd April and end on Monday 11th April. Please see flyer for details.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS ENDS ON SUNDAY 3rd APRIL 2022

Just a reminder that Daylight Savings ends next week. Don't forget to turn your clocks back.



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 more information.

ST ANTHONY'S

UPDATE FOR THE EASTER/LENTEN TIMETABLE

Parishioners please note Mass will be held at **9.30am Tuesday 12th April 2022.**

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.

ST BERNARD'S

UPDATE FOR THE EASTER/LENTEN TIMETABLE

Parishioners please note First Rite of Reconciliation **will not** be held on Tuesday 12th April. Reconciliation **will be held on Friday 8th April 7.00pm-8.30pm.**

PIETY STALL

We would like to open the Piety Stall after all weekend Masses but to do so we need more volunteers. The time commitment is about 20 minutes. If you would like to help please let the Parish Office know or Margot Short margotmshort@gmail.com.

TRANSPORT NEEDED – CAN YOU HELP?

Do you live in Darley and frequently attend the 5:00pm Vigil Mass on Saturdays? If so, and you are willing to drive an elderly parishioner to this Mass on a regular basis, please contact the parish office on 5367 2069 to advise your availability. Thank you.

MOWING ROSTER– VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed for the mowing roster. If anyone can spare an hour once a month call Colm on 0413 223 400. 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.



Fourth Sunday of Lent 26 & 27 March

From her life as a child soldier in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rosalie is now a business owner, a community leader and a role model for other ex-combatants seeking to readjust to civilian life. Please donate to Project Compassion 2022 and help women like Rosalie to succeed in the future, providing hope For All Future Generations. 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: 2nd & 3rd April

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: Gavin Pereira
8.30am: Mercy Seufatu
10.30am: Romeo Sacris
5.00pm: Dolores Turcsan

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm Vigil: Aloysius Dacunha
8.30am: Lillian Christian
10.30am: Naim Chdid
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: Godwin & Lillian
10.30am: Godwin & Lillian
5.00pm: Godwin & Leonia

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

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

Ida Christian Enriquez, Vincent Hallsworth, Marina Marano, Catherine McLaren & Charlie 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: Vikki Benson
8.30am: Nathan Costin
10.30am: Dominic Van Der Linden

MINISTERS OF THE WORD: NEXT WEEKEND 2/3

5.00pm: Sonia Smith
8.30am: Moira Ross
10.30am: Dudley Rodrigues

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

April: John Thorne

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

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

Brice Lummis & George Hamm.

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: 2nd & 3rd April

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil: Kim Barton

8.30am: Ineke Allen

10.30am: Elizabeth Underwood

CUPPA VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil:

8.30am: To be advised

10.30am:



CHURCH FLOWERS

April: 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 : 2nd & 3rd April

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Sunday: Carmel Shea

CHURCH FLOWERS

April: Lent –no flowers



PRESBYTERY & CHURCH GROUNDS-MOWING

April: Ron Geurts

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

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

FIRST READING Joshua 5:9-12

The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have taken the shame of Egypt away from you.'

The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening in the plain of Jericho. On the morrow of the Passover they tasted the produce of that country, unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn, that same day. From that time, from their first eating of the produce of that country, the manna stopped falling. And having manna no longer, the Israelites fed from that year onwards on what the land of Canaan yielded.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 33

Commentator: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

All: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
In the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad.

Glorify the Lord with me.
Together let us praise his name.
I sought the Lord and he answered me;
from all my terrors he set me free.

Look towards him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.
This poor man called; the Lord heard him
and rescued him from all his distress.

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

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

NEXT WEEKEND'S READINGS-

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

First Reading: Is 43:16-21;
Second Reading: Phil 3:8-14;
Gospel: Jn 8:1-11



SECOND READING 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.
The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
I will rise and go to my Father and tell him:
Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.
Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man,' they said, 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them:

'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me." So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about, "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property - he and his women - you kill the calf we had been fattening."

'The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Lent 2022

The three marks of Lent:

One. Prayer

Tradition tells us that Lent has three distinguishing marks: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Let's begin with Prayer because it is the one that unites them all. Fasting and almsgiving are themselves just forms of prayer.

There are two classic definitions of prayer. One comes from St John of Damascus (eighth century): "Prayer is the raising of the mind and heart to God." The other comes from St Clement of Alexandria (third century). He defined prayer as "conversation with God".

In prayer we talk to God, and He talks to us. As in any relationship, this conversation takes many forms. Think of all the ways a husband and wife communicate: formal marriage vows, casual chat, winks across a crowded room, affectionate caresses, and phrases they never tire of repeating.

Our communication with God includes a similar range of expressions — set phrases, quiet conversation, gestures such as the Sign of the Cross, and the intimate embrace of the sacraments. Just as a man and woman grow in love by repeating "I love you", so we Christians grow in love by repeating the Church's prayers.

Prayer comes in many forms and styles. These are usually divided into "vocal" and "mental" prayer. The categories are helpful, but not watertight. All prayer, after all, should involve our mind; so, in a sense, all prayer is mental prayer.

When we look at all prayer as conversation, it can change the way we go about it. Thinking of prayer as conversation can help us also to overcome obstacles — such as distractions, dryness, inability to focus — because all these things also come up in human conversation. Prayer is a conversation that never ends. In the Scriptures, St Paul says: "Pray at all times" (Ephesians 6:18); "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:1); and "be constant in prayer" (Romans 12:12). He saw prayer as an endless conversation.

That seems to be asking a lot, but it is the best way to think about it. If we are to pray well, we have to form the habit of prayer. And, like any good habit, prayer requires sustained effort over time with much repetition.

Many people bristle when they hear about discipline in prayer. They think prayer should always be spontaneous. And sometimes prayer does come spontaneously, as when we experience some great joy or great sorrow. But spontaneity is most often the fruit of discipline. It is usually the best-trained musicians who can improvise freely. To do anything well takes time and patient endurance through sometimes-tedious exercises.

The most effective way to discipline our prayer life is by following a program, a schedule of sorts — what the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin called "a game plan for the Christian". The best time to set up such a plan is during Lent.

By Mike Aquilina, www.catholiceducation.org

A "plan of life" is a firm but flexible program that schedules our prayer amid the ordinary duties of work, family life and social activity. A daily plan should include some vocal prayers, such as the Rosary or other devotions; plus reading of the Bible and some spiritual book (the writings of the saints are best); attendance at Mass (at least on Sundays and holy days, but more often if possible); and quiet time for more focused conversation with God in mental prayer. The best place for this prayer is in church, before Jesus in the tabernacle.

Prayer first means God is speaking to us and not the other way around. That requires silence — the art of listening carefully to the Lord. And the best place to do that is in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament requires real effort and commitment, but even when our hearts are dry and it seems fruitless to keep on praying, being before the Eucharistic Lord is like being in the sunlight — even by doing nothing we still absorb those powerful rays of light.

Our plan should include weekly or monthly practices, such as confession, fasting, almsgiving and so on.

It helps to set standard times, or to key each practice to other activities, so that we never forget. We can keep our spiritual book by the coffee pot and read while the java is brewing every morning. We can use the beginning of our lunch hour as a reminder to say the Angelus. We can pray the Rosary while waiting for the bus home in the evening. We can listen to ten minutes of the Bible on tape as we drive.

This is how Jesus modelled prayer for us. His own prayer life was rich and varied. Sometimes He offered formal prayers (Mark 12:29, 15:34). He kept holy days, made pilgrimages and attended the rich liturgy of the Jews (John 7:10-14). He also prayed spontaneously (John 11:41-42). He made time to pray alone in silence (Luke 3:21-22). Yet He also prayed together with His friends (Luke 9:18). He fasted, and He studied the Scriptures.

Not that it is always easy to do. But the formal quality of prayer helps us know what to do when we meet with obstacles. "Never, Never, never, never give up!" says my friend Steve Galvanek. A systems analyst, husband and dad, Steve says his plan sustains him even when he is tired and preoccupied. "If in my feeble attempts to say a Rosary, I manage just one or two heartfelt Hail Marys, that's far better than if I hadn't tried at all."

Even the more unpleasant and difficult things in life can become reminders to pray. The key is to think of them as opportunities rather than obstacles. Another friend of mine, Sarah Scott, admits that it is hard to find time to pray. She is a mother of five, owner of a home-based business and volunteer at her children's Catholic school. "It helps to offer everything up all the little things that you don't like to do," she says. "I hate folding laundry. But, instead of getting annoyed about it, I try to offer it up and think about what other people have to deal with. Efforts like this keep me talking with God throughout the day."