



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

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT -YEAR C

3rd April 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 4/4/22-10/4/22

MASS TIMES:

Monday 4/4	6.30pm
Tuesday 5/4	9.30am
Holy Hour	5.30pm
Week 4 of the St Antony's Novena	6.15pm
followed by Mass at	6.30pm
Wednesday 6/4	7.30am & 9.30am
Thursday 7/4	9.30am
Friday 8/4	7.30am & 9.30am
Stations of the Cross	10.00am & 7.00pm

Sunday Masses

Saturday 9/4	5.00pm
Sunday 10/4	8.30am, 10.30am & 5.00pm

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

ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH 4/4/22-10/4/22

MASS TIMES:

Monday 4/4-	No Mass	*Rosary	7.30pm
Tuesday 5/4			7.30am
Holy Hour			7.30pm
Wednesday 6/4			9.30am
Thursday 7/4			7.30am
Friday 8/4			9.30am
Station of the Cross (Soup & Stations)			
Soup 6.30pm		Stations	7.30pm
Saturday 9/4			9.00am

*Rosary - Prayed every Monday at 7:30pm with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour.

Sunday Masses

Saturday 9/4	5.00pm
Sunday 10/4	8.30am & 10.30am

Confession available 30 minutes prior to each Mass.

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

KOROBEIT

VIGIL MASS

NO MASS

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.

LENTEN REFLECTION FOR THE 5TH SUNDAY—Sr Mary Fermio rsj

Each time we read a newspaper we are confronted with people who are obviously sinners, murderers, people who have no respect for others and deal in drugs. Surely, we may think, these people are doomed and unable to be forgiven. Yet today's gospel assures us nothing is beyond God's compassion.

The Pharisees, in trying to find a reason to have Jesus arrested – either for breaking Jewish Law or Roman Law – uses a woman as a pawn. She must have been married to be accused of adultery. But where was the man? The law stated that both must be stoned. If Jesus failed to accuse her, he would be accused of breaking the law and therefore he would be discredited. In the early Church, adultery was one of the three sins needing Confession, followed by public penance. So here was serious sin!

Jesus wrote on the ground – what, we don't know. When he stood up, he invited anyone without sin, to cast the first stone, and bent down again. When he looked up again, they had all gone except the poor woman, whom no one had accused. Jesus says: Neither do I condemn you! Go away and sin no more.

Once again, we see the compassion of Jesus evidenced towards a sinful woman.

Sin is no barrier to discipleship. The only barrier is a failure to trust God who refuses to condemn. As our Lenten journey moves towards Easter, let us place our confidence in the loving mercy of our good God.



PARISH & EVENTS NOTICES

NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

ST ANTHONY'S

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.

HOLY WEEK-ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

First Rite of Reconciliation Wednesday 13th April 2022
6.30pm-7.30pm

MASS TIMES

Monday 11th April	6.30pm
Tuesday 12th April	9.30am
5.30pm Holy Hour followed by Mass	6.30pm
Wednesday 13th April	7.30am & 9.30am
<i>Holy Thursday 14th April</i>	
Mass of the Lord's Supper	7.30pm
followed by adoration until Night Prayer	10.30pm
<i>Good Friday 15th April</i>	
Confessions	9.00am
Stations of the Cross	10.00am
Celebration of the Lord's Passion	3.00pm
Veneration of the Cross	7.00pm
Evening Prayer	7.30pm
<i>Holy Saturday 16th April</i>	
Easter Vigil in the Holy Night	8.00pm
<i>Easter Sunday 17th April</i>	
Mass of Easter Sunday	8.30am
Mass of Easter Sunday	10.30am

No 5.00pm Mass

ST BERNARD'S

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.

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.

MORNING TEA Please join us for morning tea in the foyer after the 8.30 Mass on the second Sunday of each month at St Bernard's parish. The next morning tea will be held on Sunday April 10th.

Enquires: Meg Kennedy, 0403 696 645

SAFEGUARDING Last weekend risk assessment surveys were distributed at our Masses. If you missed out, you can get one from me. The Government and our Catholic Archdiocese require all parish employees and volunteers, 18 and over, to obtain and submit a Working With Children Check associated with St Bernard's Parish. This needs to be done asap to ensure all our valuable volunteers can continue their good and much-needed help. For audit purposes, I need this responsibility to be met by May, 31st. Dolores, our parish secretary is available to help with WWCC applications during her office hours. Once obtained copies/details need to be provided to Dolores to be kept on file in our office.

CAM safeguarding induction material is on display in our foyer. It is a valuable self-education resource. From this date all activities run by parish personnel in our parish buildings or at external venues must complete the mandated safeguarding paperwork. Please obtain these forms from the office or from me well in advance of the event. Margaret Love, Safeguarding Officer.

First Rite of Reconciliation Friday 8th April 2022
7.30pm-8.30pm

HOLY WEEK- ST BERNARD'S PARISH

MASS TIMES

Monday 11th April	Rosary	7.30pm
with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour		
Tuesday 12th April		7.30am
Wednesday 13th April		9.30am
<i>Holy Thursday 14th April</i>		
Mass of the Lord's Supper		7.30pm
followed by adoration until Night Prayer		10.30pm
<i>Good Friday 15th April</i>		
Confessions		9.00am
Stations of the Cross		10.00am
Celebration of the Lord's Passion		3.00pm
Service of Tenebrae		7.30pm
Featuring Vox Choir of Ballarat		
<i>Holy Saturday 16th April</i>		
Easter Vigil in the Holy Night		7.30pm
<i>Easter Sunday 17th April</i>		
Mass of Easter Sunday (Korobeit)		8.30am
Mass of Easter Sunday (St Bernard's)		8.30am
Mass of Easter Sunday (St Bernard's)		10.30am



Fifth Sunday of Lent 2 & 3 April

Shaniella 23, from the Solomon Islands was determined to forge a path out of poverty, moving away to vocational school. With your support, Shaniella was able to overcome further challenges of natural disasters, and gain the skills she needs to create a brighter future for herself. Please donate to Project Compassion 2022 so this transformational program can continue to empower and strengthen vulnerable communities 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: 9th & 10th 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:
8.30am: To be advised
10.30am:
5.00pm:

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm Vigil:
8.30am: To be advised
10.30am:
5.00pm

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

MASS COORDINATORS

5.00pm Vigil: Coleen & Annonica
8.30am: Natalie & Ron
10.30am: Deepa & Lillian
5.00pm: Leonia & Olen

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

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

Marie Dromey, Marcelina Nailipay, and Stephen Vella

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

MINISTERS OF THE WORD: NEXT WEEKEND 9/10

5.00pm: Maureen Zahra & John Thorne
8.30am: Gerard O'Shea & Margaret Love
10.30am: Chloe Lindorff & Dominic van der Linden

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

April: John Thorne

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

William (Bill) Shea
Requiem Mass for Mr William Martin Shea to be held at St Bernard's, **Monday 4th April 2022 at 1.00pm** followed by burial at the Greendale Cemetery.

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

Franca Cinel, Irene & Br Brendan Gaynor, Myrna Jones, and Brenden Love

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: 9th & 10th April

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil: Kim Barton
8.30am: Edwina La Rose
10.30am: Judy Van Hoos

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 : 9th & 10th April

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Sunday: To be advised

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 12.00pm-4.00pm. 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: Darian & Hoan Pertzell

0413 961 958

Group 2: Richelle & Mike Lorenzo

0475 887 149

Group 3: John & Joyce Sultana

9747 9925

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

Give me justice, O God,
and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless.
From the deceitful and cunning rescue me,
for you, O God, are my strength.

FIRST READING Isaiah 43:16-21

Thus says the Lord,
who made a way through the sea,
a path in the great waters;
who put chariots and horse in the field
and a powerful army,
which lay there never to rise again,
snuffed out, put out like a wick:
No need to recall the past,
no need to think about what was done before.
See, I am doing a new deed,
even now it comes to light; can you not see it?
Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness,
paths in the wilds.
The wild beasts will honour me,
jackals and ostriches,
because I am putting water in the wilderness
(rivers in the wild)
to give my chosen people drink.
The people I have formed for myself
will sing my praises.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 125

Commentator: The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.

All: The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.

When the Lord delivered Zion from bondage,
it seemed like a dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
on our lips there were songs.

The heathens themselves said: 'What marvels
the Lord worked for them!'
What marvels the Lord worked for us!
Indeed we were glad.

Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage
as streams in dry land.
Those who are sowing in tears
will sing when they reap.

They go out, they go out, full of tears,
carrying seed for the sowing:
they come back, they come back, full of song,
carrying their sheaves.

The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.

NEXT WEEKEND'S READINGS-

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Entrance: Lk 19:28-40;
First Reading: Is 50:4-7;
Second Reading: Phil 2:6-11
Gospel: Lk 22:14-23:56



SECOND READING Philippians 3:8-14

I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything, and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him. I am no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts, the perfection that comes from the Law, but I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ, and is from God and based on faith. All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have become perfect yet: I have not yet won, but I am still running, trying to capture the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me. I can assure you my brothers, I am far from thinking that I have already won. All I can say is that I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come; I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us upwards to receive in Christ Jesus.
The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!
With all your heart turn to me,
for I am tender and compassionate.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

GOSPEL John 8:1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.
The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus 'go away, and don't sin any more.'
The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Everyone who lives and believes in me
will not die for ever, says the Lord.

Lent 2022

The three marks of Lent:

Two. Fasting

“It’s medicine for my biggest problem — selfishness and lack of self-control.”

On two days in Lent, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Catholics limit their eating to one full, meatless meal. On all the Fridays of Lent we abstain from meat.

Why do Catholics fast? Our reasons find firm grounding in the Bible. When we fast, we follow holy example. Moses and Elijah fasted 40 days before going into God’s presence (Exodus 34:28, 1 Kings 19:8). Anna the Prophetess fasted to prepare herself for the coming of the Messiah (Luke 2:37). They all wanted to see God, and they considered fasting a basic prerequisite. We, too, wish to enter God’s presence, so we fast.

Jesus fasted (Matthew 4:2). And since He needed no purification, He surely did this only to set an example for us. In fact, He assumed that all Christians would follow His example. “When you fast,” he said, “do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting” (Matthew 6:16). Note that He did not say “IF you fast” but “WHEN your fast”.

And WHEN is now. In Lent the Church extends the idea of fasting, beyond the minimal skipping of meals, to a more far-reaching program of self-denial. Jesus said: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself ... daily” (Luke 9:23). So we give up something that we ordinarily enjoy: sweets, soft drink, a favourite TV show, or the snooze alarm.

Fasting has its health benefits, but it is not the same as dieting. Fasting is something spiritual and far more positive. Fasting is a spiritual feast. It does for the soul what food does for the body.

The Bible spells out specific spiritual benefits of fasting. It produces humility (Psalm 69:10). It shows our sorrow for our sins (1 Samuel 7:6). It clears a path to God (Daniel 9:3). It is a means of discerning God’s will (Ezra 8:21) and a powerful method of prayer (8:23). It is a mark of true conversion (Joel 2:12).

Fasting helps us to be detached from the things of this world. We fast, not because earthly things are evil, but precisely because they are good. They are God’s gifts to us. But they are so good that we sometimes prefer the gifts to the Giver. We practise self-indulgence rather than self-denial. We tend to eat and drink to the point where we forget God. Such indulgence is a form of idolatry. It is what St Paul meant when he said: “Their god is the belly ... with minds set on earthly things” (Philippians 3:19).

How can we enjoy God’s gifts without forgetting the Giver? Fasting is a good way to start. The body wants more than it needs, so we should give it less than it wants.

St John of the Cross said that we cannot rise up to God if we are bound to the things of this world. So we

give up good things, and gradually we grow less dependent on them, less needy.

All of this is part of our preparation for heaven. For we are destined to lose our earthly goods anyway. Time, age, illness and “doctor’s orders” can take away our taste for chocolate, our ability to enjoy a cold beer, and even the intimate embrace of a loved one. If we have no discipline over our desires, then these losses will leave us bitter and estranged from God. But if we follow Jesus in self-denial, we will find a more habitual consolation in the ultimate good — God Himself.

How is it that some people are able to remain serene and cheerful amid extreme suffering and even when facing imminent death? It is not just a matter of temperament. They have prepared themselves for the moment by giving up the things of this world, one small thing at a time. They have grown so accustomed to small sacrifice that the big one is not such a stretch.

No one says that fasting is easy. In fact, says Benedictine Father Thomas Acklin, author of *The Passion of the Lamb: God’s Love Poured Out in Jesus*, “fasting can seem very hard, and it can seem that if I do not eat I will become weak and will not be able to work, or pray, or do anything”.

“Yet there is that marvellous moment,” he adds, “when, after some hours have passed, my stomach has stopped growling and I’ve even forgotten what I’ve given up, when there is a lightness, a freedom, a clarity of the senses and a brightness of attitude and feeling, an incomparable closeness to the Lord.”

Lent is a special season, but God wants these 40 days to have a lasting effect on our lives. So, in a sense, fasting is for always. Father Rene Schatteman, an Opus Dei chaplain in Pittsburgh, says that he received this lesson directly from a canonised saint. “I learned from St Josemaria Escriva, whom I had the privilege of knowing personally, that a person should make some small sacrifice at each meal, always, and not just during Lent.”

A Pittsburgh businessman (who asked for anonymity) told me of his long-time practice of fasting on Fridays, “a 12–15-hour fast from food, water-only”. He said, however, that this can be difficult to carry out, not because of the hunger, but because it can disrupt family life. “It’s very hard to sit at the family table and not eat. It’s not so much a question of resisting the temptation of the food. I always felt like I was breaking fellowship. My fasting actually felt selfish, like I was taking something away from our time together as a family.” He has since modified his fast, “to be broken at the family dinner in the evening.”

Why do Catholics fast? Our businessman put it well: “It’s medicine for my biggest problem — selfishness and lack of self-control. To force myself to curb my appetites, to not satisfy my desires — even for a short period of time — this is a good thing. To offer up the little sacrifice to God, for my family, for people who are hungry through no choice of their own, this I think is also good.”