



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

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

10th 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
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 11/4/22-17/4/22

MASS TIMES:

Monday 11/4 6.30pm
 Tuesday 12/4 9.30am
 Holy Hour 5.30pm
Week 5 of the St Antony's Novena 6.15pm
 followed by Mass at 6.30pm
 Wednesday 13/4 7.30am & 9.30am
First Rite of Reconciliation Wednesday 13th April 2022
 6.30pm-7.30pm

Holy Thursday 14/4 See page 3
 Good Friday 15/4 See page 3
 Holy Saturday 16/4 See page 3
 Easter Sunday 17/4 See page 3



ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH 11/4/22-17/4/22

MASS TIMES:

Monday 11/4 No Mass *Rosary 7.30pm
 Rosary - Prayed every Monday at 7:30pm with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour.
 Tuesday 12/4 7.30am
 There will be no Holy Hour on Tuesday 12th April as the priests of the parish are attending the Mass of the Oils at St Patrick's Cathedral. The next Holy Hour will be 7.30pm Tuesday 19th April.
 Wednesday 13/4 9.30am

Holy Thursday 14/4 See page 3
 Good Friday 15/4 See page 3
 Holy Saturday 16/4 See page 3
 Easter Sunday 17/4 See page 3



OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

KOROBEIT

Mass of Easter Sunday 17/4

8.30am

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 PALM SUNDAY-Sr Mary Fermio rsj

For most of us life is a mystery; space is a mystery; the workings of our bodies, world finance, politics can be mysteries. What happens after death is a mystery, and can only be discovered in death itself.

Jesus was a mystery to the Jewish people. Who was he? Where was he from? Is he the Messiah that we have waited so long for? Why is it they cheer him into the city one day, and call out Crucify him another? To Pilate Jesus was a mystery, a man he tried to understand. Was he a King? Was he guilty or innocent? Would his decision threaten his own position in the Roman Empire? So he sat on the fence and washed his hands of the whole affair, handing him over to his accusers.

Mary, his mother, and the disciples must have wondered many times – What is Jesus on about? What is our future? Is following him a waste of time, a danger? Yet so many unexplained things had happened – the blind could see, the deaf hear, the cripples walked and the dead were brought back to life. All a mystery to these simple people. Yet seen with their own eyes.

So how do I approach this mystery – and the only way I can see it is by MY faith – which in itself is a mystery. Why me? Why not her/him? Why do I believe in Jesus?

A question Easter answers for all of us.



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. Please bring a plate to share for a gathering after the Mass.

PRIME TIMERS

Our next outing will be for lunch at the Melton Valley Golf Club, 2/30 Melton Valley Drive, Melton. Tuesday 26th April, for 12 o'clock. Seniors lunch available for \$18.00.

RSVP by Friday 24th for catering and staffing purposes.

Enquiries contact Ineke 0400120401 or ineke49@yahoo.com

EASTER VIGIL

We will have a gathering after the Easter Vigil, if you are attending please bring a plate to share. Thank you.

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 8.30am Mass this Sunday.

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.

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>	No morning Mass
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

Holy Saturday 16th April
Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

8.00pm

Easter Sunday 17th April
Mass of Easter Sunday

8.30am

Mass of Easter Sunday

10.30am

No 5.00pm Mass

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>		No morning Mass
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



Palm Sunday 9 & 10 April

Every day, more than 200 million children miss out on school, around 690 million people go hungry and 2.2 billion people cannot access clean drinking water. With your generosity, Caritas Australia has been able to help millions of vulnerable people around the world, through Project Compassion appeal. Please donate to Project Compassion 2022 to help continue empowering vulnerable communities around the world lift themselves and their communities out of poverty. 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, or visit lent.caritas.org.au or phone 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: 16th & 17th 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

8.30am: Olen & Lillian
10.30am: Leonia & Annonica

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

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

Emmanuela Borg, Joseph Borg, Carmelo Geordamaja, Dean Michael Komanycki, Carlo Lloyd, John Mercieca, Jane Spiteri & Oli Oli Tomasi Tuilau.

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

MINISTERS OF THE WORD: HOLY WEEK

7:30pm Holy Thursday	Maggie Kratochvil
3:00pm Good Friday	Gerard O'Shea & Maureen Zahra
7:30pm Easter Vigil	Dominic van der Linden & Beatrice Younger
8:30am Easter Sunday	Margaret Love
10:30am Easter Sunday	Sonia Smith

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

April: John Thorne

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

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

Ada Judge, Marjorie Long, George Maver, Daphne Pocock, John Reilly, Marie Sommerfeld and Doris Storey.

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, 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: 16th & 17th April

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil:

8.30am: Easter Weekend

10.30am:

CUPPA VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil:

8.30am: To be advised

10.30am:

CHURCH FLOWERS

April: Ana & Ropeta



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 : 16th & 17th April

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Sunday: To be advised

CHURCH FLOWERS

April: Melinda Martin Blooms



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: Lorraine Tellis

0437 658 423

Group 2: Nirmala Meegama

0452 200 344

Group 3: Aubrey & Doreen Smith

0433 003 322

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

Six days before the Passover,
when the Lord came into the city of Jerusalem,
the children ran to meet him;
in their hands they carried palm branches
and with a loud voice cried out:
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed are you, who have come in your abundant mercy!
O gates, lift high your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory!
Who is this king of glory?
He, the Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory.
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed are you, who have come in your abundant mercy!

FIRST READING Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord has given me
a disciple's tongue.
So that I may know how to reply to the wearied
he provides me with speech.
Each morning he wakes me to hear,
to listen like a disciple.
The Lord has opened my ear.
For my part, I made no resistance,
neither did I turn away.
I offered my back to those who struck me,
my cheeks to those who tore at my beard;
I did not cover my face
against insult and spittle.
The Lord comes to my help,
so that I am untouched by the insults.
So, too, I set my face like flint;
I know I shall not be shamed.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 21

Commentator: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

All: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

All who see me deride me.
They curl their lips, they toss their heads.
'He trusted in the Lord, let him save him;
let him release him if this is his friend.'

Many dogs have surrounded me,
a band of the wicked beset me.
They tear holes in my hands and my feet.
I can count every one of my bones.

They divide my clothing among them.
They cast lots for my robe.

O Lord, do not leave me alone,
my strength, make haste to help me!

I will tell of your name to my brethren
and praise you where they are assembled.
'You who fear the Lord give him praise;
all sons of Jacob, give him glory.
Revere him, Israel's sons.'

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

SECOND READING Philippians 2:6-11

His state was divine,
yet Christ Jesus did not cling
to his equality with God
but emptied himself
to assume the condition of a slave,
and became as men are,
and being as all men are,
he was humbler yet,
even to accepting death,
death on a cross.
But God raised him high
and gave him the name
which is above all other names
so that all beings
in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld,
should bend the knee at the name of Jesus
and that every tongue should acclaim
Jesus Christ as Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!
Christ became obedient for us even to death,
dying on the cross.
Therefore God raised him on high
and gave him a name above all other names.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

GOSPEL Lk 22:14-23:56

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my drinking it,
your will be done.

NEXT WEEKEND'S READINGS-

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESSURECTION OF THE LORD

First Reading: Acts 10:34, 37-43:

Second Reading: Col 3:1-4

Gospel: Jn 20:1-9



Lent 2022

The three marks of Lent:

Three. Almsgiving

Of the three marks of Lent — prayer, fasting and almsgiving — almsgiving is surely the most neglected. And yet, in the only place where the Bible brings all three together, the inspired author puts the emphasis firmly on the last: “Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness ... It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life” (Tobit 12:8-9).

Why is almsgiving better than prayer and fasting? Because it is prayer, and it involves fasting. Almsgiving is a form of prayer because it is “giving to God” — and not mere philanthropy. It is a form of fasting because it demands sacrificial giving — not just giving something, but giving up something, giving till it hurts.

Jesus presented almsgiving as a necessary part of Christian life: “When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:2-3). He does not say “IF you give alms”, but “WHEN you give alms”. Like fasting and prayer, almsgiving is non-negotiable.

The first Christians knew this. “There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need” (Acts 4:34-35).

That was the living embodiment of a basic principle of Catholic social teaching, what tradition calls “the universal destination of goods”. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it succinctly: “The goods of creation are destined for the entire human race” (n. 2452).

As with prayer and fasting, so with almsgiving. If we have a plan, we’ll find it easier to do. Throughout history, many Christians have used the Old Testament practice of “tithing” as a guide — that is, they give a tenth of their income “to God”. In practice, that means giving it to the poor, to the parish, or to charitable institutions.

My friend Ed Kenna, an octogenarian and dad, remembers the day he decided to start tithing. “When I was a senior in high school, back in 1939-40, I read an article on charitable giving in a Catholic newspaper,” he recalls. “And it had a lot of testimonies to the fruits of tithing. Breadwinners told how God provided whenever they were in need or had an emergency. I decided, then and there, to start tithing, and I’ve been doing it ever since.”

For Kenna, those 65 years have had their financial ups and downs. He served in the military during World War II, went to college and raised a family of nine

children. Through it all, he says, he was often tempted, but he never wavered in his tithing. “There were many times when I reached a point where I said, ‘Something has to give — but I’m not going to give up on my tithing.’”

It is a matter of trusting God, Kenna adds, “and God will not be outdone in generosity”.

Jesus said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), and those who tithe often find themselves on the receiving end as well. “I worked as an industrial engineer through the highs and lows of American industry,” Kenna recalls. “Twice my job fell victim to corporate mergers, but the phone always rang just in time. I never lost an hour of work to layoffs.”

He sees the difficult times as God’s test of our trust. “It’s especially hard in the beginning. On your first pay cheque, it hurts. On the second, the pain is a little less. At about the third or fourth, there’s no pain at all. You get used to it. It’s a habit. But you have to make that firm resolution: I’m gonna do it and not give in.”

Kenna, like many others, also gives of his time and has, for decades, been a volunteer for the St Vincent de Paul Society. Indeed, many Catholics extend the concept of almsgiving beyond money to include time and talent.

Many Australians today enjoy a better standard of life than any king or emperor ever knew. Central heat, air-conditioning, electric lights, consistently safe food and water, antibiotics, and even aspirin — these are luxuries beyond the dreams of our ancient ancestors.

We are living high, but are we giving high?

It is a good question to ask ourselves during Lent. It is a scandal, after all, for Christians to have closets overstuffed with clothing when there are families who are shivering because they can’t pay their heating bill. It is a scandal for Christians to be epidemically overweight when they have near neighbours who go to bed hungry.

We need to give to God — whom we meet in our neighbour — until these problems go away. Whatever we give, whether it is a tenth or a 20th or half, is symbolic of the greater giving that defines the Christian life. As God gave himself entirely to us, so we give ourselves entirely to Him. In the Eucharist, He holds nothing back. He gives us His body, blood, soul and divinity — everything He has. That’s the giving we need to imitate.

Charity begins at home, where we daily make the choice to give our time, our attention, our affirming smile, and give generously. But charity must not stop there, because for Catholics “home” is universal, and our family is as big as the world. We need to dig deep and give much where much is needed. But, whenever possible, our charity should also involve personal acts, not just automatic withdrawals from our bank account. Pope John Paul II asked us to see, and be seen by, “the human face of poverty”.

Sometimes all we can give is a smile, but sometimes that is the greatest sacrifice, the greatest prayer, and indeed the most generous and most sacrificial alms.