



St Anthony's Parish

67-75 EXFORD ROAD, MELTON SOUTH, 3338.
P.O BOX 2152 MELTON SOUTH 3338
TEL: 9747 9692 FAX: 9746 0422



St Bernard's Parish

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

3rd Sunday of Advent– Year B

13th December 2020

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 /Wednesday/ Friday: 9.00am –4.00pm
Tuesday 9.00am-1.00pm Thursday 9.00am-5.30pm
Email: meltonsouth@cam.org.au
Website: www.stanthonyofpadua.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 BERNARD'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Dolores Turcsan
Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson
Sacramental Coordinator/ Bookkeeper: Naim Chdid
Parish Office Hours:
Monday Closed
Tuesday-Friday 9.00am-1.00pm
Email: bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au
Website: www.stbernardsbacchusmarsh.com.au
St Bernard's School Principal: Emilio Scalzo
19a Gisborne Rd, Bacchus Marsh VIC 3340
Phone: (03) 5366 5800
Email: principal@sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au
Website: www.sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

Catholic Regional College - Melton (Years 7-12)
Principal: Marlene Jorgensen **Phone:** 8099 6000
Website: www.crcmelton.com.au

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Sue Alexander	0400 171 843
Lillian Christian - Vice Chair	0400 441 257
Stephen Fernandes	0439 743 533
Amy Honrade	03 9747 0078
Natalie Howard - Chair	0492 947 201
Villy Julita	0403 751 343
Rose Ma'ae	0431 386 473
Sally Markulin	0405 814 490
Kim Nguyen	0431 035 980
EX-OFFICIO: Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Marcus Goulding and Damien Schuster Council Secretary: Judy Johnson	

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Shane Cook -School Advisory Board	0419 999 052
Peter Farren	0418 594 501
Maira Ross	0400 675 056
Aaron Russell - Chair	0401 927 502
EX-OFFICIO: Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Marcus Goulding and Emilio Scalzo	

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

Coordinator: Godwin Barton (0425 734 449)

Officers: Karina Dunne & Lorraine Tellis

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.

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

MASS AND DEVOTIONS

ST ANTHONY'S 14/12– 20/12 MELTON SOUTH

MASS TIMES:

Monday 14th Dec:	6.30pm*
Tuesday 15th Dec:	9.15am & 6.30pm
Wednesday 16th Dec:	7.30am & 9.15am
Thursday 17th Dec:	9.15am
Friday 18th Dec:	7.30am & 9.15am

A Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration will be held each Tuesday evening at 5.30pm

Saturday Vigil 19th Dec: 5.00pm

Sunday 20th Dec: 8.30am
10.30am
5.00pm

Confession available 30 minutes prior to each Mass

*No confessions on Mondays

ST BERNARD'S 14/12-20/12 BACCHUSMARSH

MASS TIMES:

Monday 14th Dec:	No Mass
Tuesday 15th Dec:	7.30am
Wednesday 16th Dec:	9.30am
Thursday 17th Dec:	7.30am
Friday 18th Dec:	9.30am

Saturday 19th Dec (EF Latin 1962) will not be held this week.
Fr Marcus will be attending an Ordination

A Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration will be held each Tuesday evening at 7.30pm.

Saturday Vigil 19th Dec: 5.00pm

Sunday 20th Dec: 8.30am
10.00am

Confession available 30 minutes prior to each Mass

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

KOROBET

MASS TIME

Saturday Vigil: 6.30pm

MASS BOOKINGS

ST ANTHONY'S MASS BOOKINGS

St Anthony's can now accommodate 350 people at Mass indoors. Online registration is no longer required for any of our regularly scheduled Masses. Simply turn up and sign in upon arrival using our QR code or the paper registration forms provided.

ST BERNARD'S MASS BOOKINGS

St Bernard's can now accommodate 150 people for Mass. Booking is no longer required for Mass at St Bernard's but you must sign in upon arrival using our QR code or the paper registration forms.

FACE MASKS

Face Masks are no longer compulsory during Mass. However, people must carry a face covering at all times. If a distance of 1.5m cannot be maintained, either indoors or outdoors, then face coverings must be worn (unless they are people that live with each other, or have a lawful reason, or are children under 12 years of age).

MASS TIMES—LIVE STREAMING FROM ST ANTHONY'S CHURCH

This Sunday 13th December will be the last live streamed Mass.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Anointing of the sick can be organised with the Priests directly, please call them.

Father Fabian 0403 435 471/Fr Lucas 0478 768 141 /Fr Marcus 0468 367 893

PARISH & EVENTS NOTICES

BAPTISM PREPARATION MEETING-ST ANTHONY'S AND ST BERNARD'S

A Baptism Preparation meeting will be held at St Anthony's Church on Wednesday 16th December at 6.30pm for parents wishing to have their child baptised. Please contact the Parish Offices for further details. Thank you.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY ASSISTING REFUGEE STUDENTS

MERCY CONNECT MELBOURNE – Mercy Works Ltd. is currently recruiting volunteers to support Refugee Students and Asylum Seekers in Primary and Secondary schools across the Melbourne Archdiocese. The volunteer commitment is approximately half a day per week during school terms. Experience working in an educational setting is preferred but not limited to. Please contact Sr. Mary Lewis RSM for an application form and further information. Training Day for new volunteers with emphasis on Child Safeguarding at the end of January.

Email: somml@bigpond.com (preferred for contact)

Website: www.mercyworks.org.au Tel: 9326 1895

NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

ST ANTHONY'S

PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office will be closed on Monday 14th December.

READER'S ROSTER WEEKEND 19th & 20th DECEMBER

Saturday 19th December

5.00pm: Lorraine Tellis

Sunday 20th December

8.30am: Amy Honrade

10.30am: Elaine Lacey

5.00pm: To Be Advised

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES-ST ANTHONY'S

CHRISTMAS EVE 24th December 2020

4.00pm-Christmas Eve Mass

6.00pm-Christmas Eve Mass

8.00pm-Christmas Eve Mass

10.00pm-Christmas Mass during the Night

CHRISTMAS DAY 25th December 2020

Midnight Mass

8.30am-Christmas Day Mass

10.30am- Christmas Day Mass

Pre-registration through our website stanthonyofpadua.com.au is essential in order to be admitted to one of our Christmas Masses. If you have made a booking but cannot attend, you must cancel by clicking the link at the bottom of the confirmation email. Thank you

ST BERNARD'S

READER'S ROSTER

To Be Advised

CHRISTMAS CARDS & COLUMBAN CALENDARS

Christmas cards (\$2.50 per pk 5) and Columban Calendars (\$9.00) can now be purchased from the Piety Stall which will be open from **9.30-10.00am on Sundays**.

They can also be purchased from the Presbytery during of-fice hours. Tues-Friday 9am-1pm.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

WANTED: Generous parishioners willing to do 2 prayers of the faithful each weekend for one month each year.

Guidelines provided, help given if needed. If you meet this description, please contact Sr Mary Fermio 5367 2078 asap or email mary.fermio@sosj.org.au Thank you.

THANKSGIVING ENVELOPES

Parishioners are able to collect their Thanksgiving envelopes for December 2020 to March 2021, in the Church foyer.

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES-ST BERNARD'S

CHRISTMAS EVE 24th December 2020

5.00pm-Christmas Eve Mass

7.00pm-Christmas Eve Mass

8.00pm-Christmas Eve Mass– Korobeit

10.00pm-Christmas Mass during the Night

CHRISTMAS DAY 25th December 2020

8.30am-Christmas Day Mass

10.30am X 2 Christmas Day Mass

Pre-registration through our website stbernardsbacchusmarsh.com.au is essential in order to be admitted to one of our Christmas Masses. If you have made a booking but cannot attend, you must cancel by clicking the link at the bottom of the confirmation email. Thank you

THE ADVENT WREATH



Advent, which begins the Church's liturgical year, began on Sunday 29 November 2020. Advent encompasses the four Sundays and weekdays leading up to the celebration of Christmas.

The Advent season is a time of preparation for our hearts and minds for the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas. The Advent Wreath can be a way to involve even very little children in learning about Christian preparation - not only for celebrating Our Lord's birth, but to make our hearts truly ready to receive Him.

Gathering materials for the wreath-perhaps on an outing in the park or woods, or even in the backyard- and assembling it at home is an interesting family project in which even the youngest children can participate.

The wreath and candles are full of symbolism tied to the Christmas season.

- The wreath itself, which is made of various evergreens, signifies continuous life.
- The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life we find in Christ.
- The evergreens that make up the wreath signifies victory over persecution and suffering. The pine and holly, signify immortality and the cedar signifies strength and healing. The pinecones that decorate the wreath symbolize life and resurrection. The wreath as a whole is meant to remind us of both the immortality of our souls and God's promise of everlasting life to us through Christ.
- The candles also have their own special significance. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent, and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple because the colour purple is a liturgical colour that signifies a time of prayer, penance, and sacrifice. And one candle, the third candle is pink and signifies joy. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of His second coming to judge the living and the dead.

The Candles

The first candle, which is purple, symbolizes hope. It is sometimes called the "Prophecy Candle" in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

The second candle, also purple, represents faith. It is called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

The third candle is pink and symbolizes joy. It is called the "Shepard's Candle," and is pink because rose is a liturgical colour for joy. The third Sunday of Advent is meant to remind us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, as well as the joy that the faithful have reached the midpoint of Advent.

On the fourth week of Advent, we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait for the birth of our Saviour. This final candle, the "Angel's Candle," symbolizes peace. It reminds us of the message of the angels: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."

The white candle is placed in the middle of the wreath and lit on Christmas Eve. This candle is called the "Christ Candle" and represents the life of Christ. The colour white is for purity—because Christ is our sinless, pure Saviour.

Celebrating Advent is an excellent way to prepare your mind and heart for Christmas.

In family practice, the Advent wreath is most appropriately lit at dinner time after the blessing of the food.

A traditional prayer service using the Advent wreath proceeds as follows:

During the **third week of Advent**, the father prays:

O Lord, we beg Thee, incline Thy ear to our prayers and enlighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Thy visitation. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."



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

ST ANTHONY'S

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

Wanda Nowak

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

Arthur Abela, Noue Taupi Asiata, Andrea Butcher, Rita Christian, Alessandro Di Martino, Anthony Merceica & Mary Nassolo.

Please pray for the Sick:

Nickolia & Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana, Chinnamma Joseph, Judy Layton, Peter Manicaro, Reg Marslen, Damien Michael, Kevin Michael, Tony Michael, Veronica Michael, Wanda Novak, Caleb O'Brien, John Osborne, Peter Poole, Irene Rahilly, Catherine Roberts, Peter Roberts, Pat Roberts, Charlie Spiteri, Janko Stojanovic, Dolores Turcsan, Clint Abela Wadge, & John Xuereb and all those who have requested our prayers. (PLEASE LET US KNOW WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE IS NO LONGER REQUIRED ON THIS LIST)

FATIMA STATUE

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

Group 1: **Joe & Jacqueline Spiteri** **0402 512 841**

Group 2: **Tune & Epi Kepu** **0410 416 445**

Group 3: **Godwin & Kim Barton** **9747 9493**



DIVINE MERCY NOVENA

1st Sunday of the Month-3.00pm

ST BERNARD'S

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

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

Patrick William Green, Kevin Michael Long, Robert Samuel Taggart & Joan Younger.

Please pray for the Sick:

Noah Barlow, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett, Steven Braszel, Tina Bower, John Canty, Fred Capuano, Gary Ching, Josephine Cilia, Robyn Cola, Ted Cooling, Marianne Cuskelly, Lindsay & Kathleen Dally, Judy Delahey, Jack DeLuca, Allison Evans, Helen Evans, Justin Fernandez, Pasquale Gagliarbi, Mario Galea, Cynthia Goodyear, Gwen Green, Joe Gristi, Adam Hillier, Elle Hillman, Kiahni Holamotutama, Alicia Holborn, Chaiel Jackson, Matthew Jansen, David 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, Susan Trist, Dolores Turcsan, 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)

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



I read somewhere that our lives expand or contract, depending on the stories we tell ourselves, and we get to choose which world we wish to inhabit by becoming conscious of which stories we want to share, amplify and embody each and every day.

So what stories will we tell about 2020?! What stories will we choose to share, to take to heart, what stories do we want others to hear?

2020 began so well, with the usual high hopes mixed with all sorts of jokes about 20/20 vision. But for so, so many people 2020 turned into a dreadful year. Loss and devastation, anxiety and tension, so much worry and uncertainty and for too many, not being able to be with loved ones.

2020 has left a lasting legacy. Throughout the year we were all waiting for things to return to 'normal' but, underneath it all, we realised that everything will not be as it used to be. Things have changed, some for the better, others not so.

There was a popular song way back when I was young – it was called 'Not Responsible'. It could well be a theme song for 2020. We began the year with dreadful bushfires, shocking destruction and loss. But 'now is not the time to talk about that', we were told. Then the pandemic hit. 'Let's wait till we all get through this', we were told. But we all wanted someone to blame, some person or organisation to be held to account but a virus doesn't play its game according to our rules. Even so, there was a lot of pointing the finger at the next person, dodging, denying or others blessed with wonderful hindsight. Lots of apologies but not much taking responsibility either. Will that be a legacy of this pandemic? Will that be the world we wish to inhabit? Will we no longer hold ourselves accountable?

'We are all in this together' didn't quite ring true. What we regarded as pretty artificial borders became real and one state after another banned fellow Australians. This virus was so contagious, drastic measures were needed. Being in Victoria made us wonder, why only us? But, at the same time, people took to the streets to protest about measures designed to protect the community – for them, individual rights became much more important than the common good. Conspiracy theories, once regarded as on the fringe began to take centre stage. Will they be the stories we choose to share, amplify and embody? We have seen some of the darker sides of ourselves, which perhaps in time become things we may learn from.

So what stories will we tell ourselves and others? Will we tell stories of the kindness we saw during the lockdown, where people reached out in small ways that made such a big difference? Shopping for others, checking that neighbours were OK, buying an extra item at the supermarket and dropping it off at the food bank and a hundred more other examples. Will we tell stories of the creativity, the humour and the funny stories we shared that did so much to keep spirits alive?

Will we tell stories about those in the front line who put themselves at risk to make sure the rest of us were safe while they cared for those who were ill? In doing so, so many of them caught the dreaded virus as well. We must tell their stories so they will not feel unappreciated and their gift to the rest of us will live on. I was told about a person who waited each day for the postie in the hope that a letter might arrive, news from the outside world as it were. Let's not forget the posties or the front line at the supermarkets and those in other shops and banks, in the trams and trains and buses and the front-liners who were confronted by those who refused to wear a mask. We have experienced patches of true generosity, care and resilience....and selfish disregard as well.

Will we tell the stories of those who died, so many of them who were frail, elderly and so very vulnerable. There was nowhere to escape, no holiday home or yacht to take them out of danger, no-one to hold his or her hand in their final hours, no way to give them the farewell they so richly deserved. Will we tell their stories so that their families do not feel they are forgotten and so that they can live on in our hearts and in our memories?

In Victoria, this lockdown was really hard. For most of us, it wasn't all that bad for a while but the going did get tough. God knows what it must have been like for the homeless, those in the high rise apartments, in those suburbs where the virus ran rampant. Not being able to visit family and friends was hard. There's nothing wrong with feeling proud that we 'did it' and proud of those who helped us, proud of learning skills of parenting in isolation or coping with the pressures of working alone from home. We can share those stories.

So why will we not return to 'normal'? Because the pandemic has blown the illusion that we are in control of our own lives. We are not. We are not invulnerable. We need others and they need us. We waited every day for news of a vaccine that others may have 'invented'. If anything, isolation taught us how much we need to talk to others, to stay in touch. Thank God for zoom and all the other forms of social communication.

In this time of unrest, individualism, disconnection, and conflict, what stories will we tell ourselves and share? Those that enrich our lives, stories of gratitude and quiet courage, our stories of transformation, kindness and a new shared empathy? Or will we spend our time in search of stories about blame. This time, it's not just about me? It is no longer about, "Am I right?" or "Are they wrong?" There is strength and power in stepping away from questioning what we gain or lose and asking "What is it that will help us to grow, to come together, to renew and rebuild?"

Will we now welcome each day for its freshness, its richness, for the opportunities it may bring? Will we think about the people who have brought so much into my life and will we reach out to them today? And tomorrow?

Regards
Jim Quillinan

Email: jquillinan@dcsi.net.au

LITURGY OF THE WORD

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.
Indeed, the Lord is near.

FIRST READING Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;
to proclaim liberty to captives,
freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.
'I exult for joy in the Lord,
my soul rejoices in my God,
for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,
like a bride adorned in her jewels.
'For as the earth makes fresh things grow,
as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will the Lord make both integrity and praise
spring up in the sight of the nations.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Luke 1:46-50, 53-54

Commentator: My soul rejoices in my God.

All: My soul rejoices in my God.

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her nothingness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.

He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy.

All: My soul rejoices in my God.

NEXT WEEK'S READING

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT

First Reading: 2 Sam 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16;

Second Reading: Rom 16:25-27;

Gospel: Lk 1:26-38



SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything - hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;
he sent me to bring Good News to the poor.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 1:6-8, 19-28

A man came, sent by God.

His name was John.

He came as a witness,

as a witness to speak for the light,

so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light,

only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:

Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you unknown to you the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear.

Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

The life of Catholic worship and piety XXXXVII

O Antiphons: A devotional meditation

DECEMBER 20

O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel, that opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens, come to liberate the prisoner from the prison, and them that sit in darkness.

O Clavis David, et sceptrum domus Israel; qui aperis, et nemo claudit; claudis, et nemo aperit: veni, et educ vinctum de domo carceris, sedentem in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

A key bespeaks access, and the one who holds the keys has the power to give or refuse admittance.

After original sin, we could no longer endure the presence of God; we were mercifully excluded from the garden, now guarded by an angel with the flaming sword (Genesis 3:24). We could not, on our own, ever hope to regain access to the Father. There was no way for us, in our sinful state, to tolerate the holiness of God.

Thus the prophet Malachi memorably asked, “But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appears?” Malachi went on to answer that only when God acted as a refining fire could we be pure enough to endure or abide His presence. And this Jesus did for us on the cross, purifying us with His own blood, with the fire of His love.

Therefore, it is Jesus who holds the key to open so that no one can close, to close so that no one can open (Revelation 3:7). He alone restores us access to His Father. He opens the gates, not of some earthly paradise, but of Heaven itself. And how beautifully this is shown in the rending of the curtain in the sanctuary from top to bottom.

Both the keys and the mention of His sceptre are reminders of His authority. One day we will stand before Him who will judge us. He alone will grant access, opening so that no one can shut. He alone will deny access to those unfit and incapable of the kingdom, closing so that no one can open.

DECEMBER 21

O Morning Star, Brightness of the everlasting light, and Sun of Justice, come to give light to those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O Oriens, splendor lucis æternæ, et sol justitiæ: veni, et illumina sedentes in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

The Latin word used here, *oriens*, literally and most simply means “the East”. More politically and allegorically, it can be translated “morning star”, “the dawn”, “Daystar”, “morning light”, “sunrise”, etc.

Christ is the light of the world. And He will come again from the East. Scripture says in numerous places that Christ will appear from the East:

“For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man” (Matthew 24:27–28).

By Mon Charles Pope, catholiceducation.org/en/

“Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east; and the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with his glory. And the vision I saw was like the vision, which I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision, which I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple” (Ezekiel 43:1–5).

“Sing to God, ye kingdoms of the earth: sing ye to the Lord: Sing to God, who mounts above the heaven of heavens, to the east. Behold he will give to his voice the voice of power: give ye glory to God for Israel, his magnificence, and his power is in the clouds!” (Psalm 68:32–34)

Until relatively recently, the Church faced to the East to pray. Doing so is a way of turning towards God and looking for Him and to Him. Where the altar could not be situated facing East according to the compass, the crucifix became a kind of liturgical East. Everyone would face the same way to pray, especially during the Eucharistic prayer.

The Latin word *oriens* is also the root of the English word “orientation”. To be oriented means to be properly directed, to be facing in the correct direction.

The modern practice of the priest facing the people to pray the Eucharistic prayer amounts to a departure from a practice going back to Old Testament times. Increasingly in the Church today there is a desire to “re-orient” the liturgy, literally and figuratively, so that all face the liturgical East during the Eucharistic prayer. On altars that face the people, Pope Benedict encouraged the placement of the crucifix, and he encouraged the clergy to instruct the people that we are really gathered around the cross more so than facing one another.

The antiphon goes on to speak of the Lord Jesus as the light of the world and begs Him to shed light on all of us who are in darkness and in the shadow of death. Indeed, Christ alone is the true light of the world and the lamp of the city of God!

The Lord wants His light to shine in this world! In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus indicates that He wants His light to shine through us. In this way, in a subordinate sense, we are to be the light of the world as Christ shines through us.

But O, the darkness, when Christians do not allow the light of Christ’s truth, His teachings, and His call to repentance and healing to shine through us! One may wonder how the world has become so dark today. The answer is not far away; look around. This has happened on our watch. Too many Christians have sheepishly hidden their light under a basket.

O come Lord Jesus, O Daystar, rising in the East, remove whatever hinders us from allowing your light to shine through us. Remove the fear. Remove the aversions. Cleanse us of our sins, which, like soot on glass, do not allow the light to go through. Come, Jesus, light of the world, shine in this world and through us.