



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

16th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME-YEAR C

17th July 2022

PARISH PRIEST: Fr Fabian Smith
ASSISTANT PRIESTS: Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint and Father Samuel Kapani

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

Office Manager: 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.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 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 10.30am-1.00pm Wed & Thu 9.00am-1.00pm

Email: bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au
Website: www.stbernardsbacchusmarsh.com.au
Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/stbernardsbacchusmarsh>

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 Samuel Kapani, 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 - Secretary	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 Samuel Kapani

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) Evana Miesen & Ron Geurts

Items for the newsletter must be submitted by Wednesday 1.00pm. Please email judyparishnews@gmail.com or call 0414 007 009

MASS AND DEVOTIONS

ST ANTHONY'S MELTON SOUTH 18/7/2022-24/7/2022

MASS TIMES:

Monday 18/7	6.30pm
Tuesday 19/7	9.30am & 6.30pm
Wednesday 20/7	7.30am & 9.30am
Thursday 21/7	9.30am
Friday 22/7	7.30am & 9.30am

Rosary 9.00am before 9.30am weekday Mass.



Sunday Masses

Saturday 23/7	5.00pm
Sunday 24/7	8.30am, 10.30am & 5.00pm

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

ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH 18/7/2022-24/7/2022

MASS TIMES:

Monday 18/7	No Mass	Rosary 7.30pm
with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour		
Tuesday 19/7		7.30am
Holy Hour		7.30pm
Wednesday 20/7		9.30am
Thursday 21/7		7.30am
Friday 22/7		9.30am
Saturday 23/7		9.00am

Sunday Masses

Saturday 23/7	5.00pm
Sunday 24/7	8.30am & 10.30am

Confession available 30 minutes prior to each Mass.

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

KOROBET

VIGIL MASS

6.30pm

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

PARISHIONER'S FIRST COLLECTION/SECOND COLLECTION

Parishioners who normally give cash each weekend for the collections, if they wish to donate, are now able to go to the link below and make their payments online.

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

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

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

REFLECTION 16th SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME- Mary Fermio rsj

Friendship is a special gift we need to treasure. There are various degrees of friendship, and to keep our friends we need to learn to listen, as well as to share.

Jesus treasured his friends – Martha and Mary regularly welcomed Jesus (maybe his apostles as well!) being generous hosts and listeners. The story reveals two kinds of friendship – Firstly, the person who provides the food, puts on the kettle, gets out the cake tin, makes the tea. The other who is content to carry on a conversation, listen to the other, share thoughts. Though Martha sounds a bit cheesed off, maybe she wanted to hear what Jesus was saying too, and



felt a bit imposed upon. Seem familiar?

Our friendship with Jesus, usually expressed in prayer, can have the 'busyness' of saying words, talking to Jesus, telling him my troubles, asking for help, etc etc! But like Mary there is a time for just sitting and listening to what Jesus wants to say to ME. This can be even more important – the better part! There is a story of an old man who sat in the church day after day, just sitting. When the priest asked him what prayers he said, he replied: "I look at him, and he looks at me"!

PARISH & EVENTS NOTICES

NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

THINKING OF BECOMING CATHOLIC?

Looking for love? Needing hope? Seeking God's love? Find peace, hope and love through the Catholic Faith. Call our Catechist Naim Chdid to learn more 0437 004 790. Classes begin on the 23rd August at 7.00pm at St Anthony's Church of Padua, 67-75 Exford Road, Melton South (Age 16+).

SPECIAL COLLECTION-PETER'S PENCE -THIS WEEKEND

This weekend we will have The Peter's Pence collection. The collection helps the Holy Father in his mission in two ways:

- makes possible many works of service throughout the universal Church, carried out by the Dicasteries that assist the Pope in evangelization, the promotion of integral human development, education, communication, etc.;
- contributes to numerous charitable works directly assisting the most in need (people and families in distress, populations hit by natural disasters or war, or who are in need of humanitarian assistance or development support).

FOSTERING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH FAITH By Dr. Benjamin Arulanandhu

These sessions are intended to strengthen our knowledge about mental health, and how to improve mental health outcomes through faith.

Who should attend? All are welcome and is not limited to those with mental health concerns.

These sessions are intended to journey together in Faith.

8 sessions, every Wednesday starting from 17th August in St Anthony's Meeting room 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

ST ANTHONY'S

SAVE THE DATE - Liturgy Formation Session - Saturday, 30th July 2022

All Readers, Extraordinary Ministers, Mass Coordinators and Choir members are required to attend this Liturgy Formation Session scheduled for Saturday, 30th July 2022 from 9am to 11am at the Padua Hall. Please save this date!

PRIME TIMERS

Our July outing will be to the Braybrook Hotel. 353 Ballarat Rd. Braybrook. Tuesday 26th July, 22 at noon.
International Buffet Lunch. Seniors lunch \$24.90.
Let's make it a Christmas in July Theme.
Please RSVP by Friday 22nd July, ineke49@yahoo.com or 0400120401.

ST BERNARD'S

St Lawrence of Brindisi, Feast Day 21 July. Born **Giulio Cesare Russo**, was a Roman Catholic priest and a theologian as well as a member of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin. From his tenderest years Saint Lawrence of Brindisi evinced rare gifts of nature and grace. An accomplished linguist, in addition to his native Italian, Lawrence could read and speak Latin, Hebrew, Greek, German, Czech, Spanish, and French fluently. Lawrence was ordained a priest at the age of 23.



Lawrence was beatified on 1 June 1783 and canonized as a saint on 8 December 1881.

Source: Wikipedia

St Apollinaris: Feast Day 20th July

The life of Apollinaris is the subject of conjecture more than analysis. Very little is known about him. Some traditions hold that he was a disciple of Saint Peter and came from Antioch, where Saint Peter was the first bishop. Other traditions, based on some historical evidence about the sequence of bishops in Ravenna, assert that he was bishop there in the late second century. Some legends speak of him as a martyr, while others say he suffered for the faith in the manner of a confessor but was not a blood martyr.



Source: mycatholic.life

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH CORPORATE DINNER

VENUE: Tabcorp Park 2 Ferris Road Melton 3337
DATE: 22nd October 2022
TIME: 6pm till late
DRESS CODE: Black Tie
ADULT: \$100 per head (3-course meal)
CHILD: \$50 (12 years and under)
LIVE BAND—FUN FOR ALL—GROUP ENTERTAINMENT
RSVP: 1st October 2022
YOUR SUPPORT IS MUCH APPRECIATED AND WILL GO TOWARDS FUNDING THE EXTENSION OF PADUA HALL
CONTACT: JULIE S: 0402 182 458
ANA T: 0406 503 363



WORSHIP NEWS

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

ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 23rd & 24th July

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: Liza Fernandes
8.30am: Amy Honrade
10.30am: Annonica Mavaega
5.00pm: Dolores Turcsan

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm Vigil: Ann Tennakoon
8.30am: Ron Howard
10.30am: George Bonello
5.00pm: Not rostered

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

MASS COORDINATORS

5.00pm: Coleen & Godwin
8.30am: Julie & Lillian
10.30am: Godwin & Lillian
5.00pm: Olen & Annonica

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

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

George Magri

Please pray for the Sick:

Hazel Michael, Nickolia & Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana, Jamie Coghlan, Christabelle, Lydia De Vega, Melanie Fue, Bruce Hynes, Kotinis Cornelia Kani, Judy Layton, Peter Manicaro, Reg Marslen, Lisa Melia, Damien Michael, Tony Michael, Veronica Michael, Nickol, Paul Nowak, Caleb O'Brien, John Osborne, Catherine Roberts, Peter Roberts, Pat Roberts, Samantha Smith, Charlie Spiteri, Janko Stojanovic, Christina Tuigamala, Uatoa Tuigamala, Clint Abela Wadge, Wai Walsh and all those who have requested our prayers.

PLEASE LET US KNOW WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE IS NO LONGER REQUIRED ON THIS LIST

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Father we lift up all those who are facing illness. We ask that You bring healing, comfort and peace to their bodies. Calm their fears and let them experience the healing power of your love. Amen



ST BERNARD'S MINISTRIES

MINISTERS OF THE WORD : THIS WEEKEND

5.00pm: John Thorne
8.30am: Moira Ross
10.30am: Beatrice Younger

MINISTERS OF THE WORD: 23rd & 24th July

5.00pm: Vikki Benson
8.30am: Margaret Love
10.30am: Dominic Van Der Linden

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

July: Josephite Associates

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

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

Marisa Avati, John & Muriel Daly, David Johnson, Adrianus (Aad) Weerdenburg, Lois Wheelahan and Irene Wojcicki.

Please pray for the Sick:

Patricia Allison, Noah Barlow, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett, Steven Braszel, Tina Bower, Fred Capuano, Gary Ching, Chris, Josephine Cilia, Robyn Cola, Ted Cooling, Lindsay & Kathleen Dally, Judy Delahey, Jack DeLuca, Theresa Dockter, Allison Evans, Helen Evans, George Farrell, 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: 23rd & 24th July

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil: Liza Fernandes
8.30am: Mercy Seufatu
10.30am: Gilles Maitre

CUPPA VOLUNTEERS—23rd & 24th July

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

CHURCH FLOWERS

July: Rosabella



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.

WE ARE ALSO LOOKING FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR A VINNIES SOUP VAN SERVICE IN THE MELTON AREA.

The program would provide a regular evening meal service at a fixed location and time to people experiencing disadvantage and homelessness in the Melton Area. Email us at soupvans@svdp-vic.org.au or scan the QR code on the notices on the Church Noticeboards.

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.



ST BERNARD'S

WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS : 23rd & 24th July

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Piety Stall will open after Saturday 5pm Mass & Sunday 8.30 Mass
16th July: Carmel Shea
17th July: Margot Short

CHURCH FLOWERS

July: Tup Shea



PRESBYTERY & CHURCH GROUNDS-MOWING

July: Stephen Millington

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 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 Samuel or Fr Lucas .

FATIMA STATUE—ST ANTHONY'S

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

Group 1: Wayne & Marian Muller 0400 007 286

Group 2: Anna Taunnu 0406 503 363

Group 3: Louise Sciberras 0401 413 439



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



Lord, we ask you to continue
to be with us as we
' TAKE THE WAY OF THE GOSPEL '
together in prayer.
May we open ourselves to you
with a new depth of trust and conviction
in your guiding hand,
so that we may discern our journey
with compassionate and humble hearts
and come to know your Holy Spirit
Moving within and amongst us,
And so be transformed Amen.



LITURGY OF THE WORD

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

See, I have God for my help,
The Lord sustains my soul.
I will sacrifice to you with willing heart,
And praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.

FIRST READING 18:1-10

A reading from the book of Genesis

The Lord appeared to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre while he was sitting by the entrance of the tent during the hottest part of the day. He looked up, and there he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, and bowed to the ground. 'My Lord,' he said 'I beg you, if I find favour with you, kindly do not pass your servant by. A little water shall be brought; you shall wash your feet and lie down under the tree. Let me fetch a little bread and you shall refresh yourselves before going further. That is why you have come in your servant's direction.' They replied, 'Do as you say.'

Abraham hastened to the tent to find Sarah. 'Hurry,' he said 'knead three bushels of flour and make loaves.' Then running to the cattle Abraham took a fine and tender calf and gave it to the servant, who hurried to prepare it. Then taking cream, milk and the calf he had prepared, he laid all before them, and they ate while he remained standing near them under the tree.

'Where is your wife Sarah?' he asked him. 'She is in the tent' he replied. Then his guest said, 'I shall visit you again next year without fail, and your wife will then have a son.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 14

Commentator:

The just will live in the presence of the Lord

All: The just will live in the presence of the Lord

Lord, who shall dwell on your holy mountain?
He who walks without fault;
he who acts with justice
and speaks the truth from his heart;
he who does not slander with his tongue. **R.**

He who does no wrong to his brother,
who casts no slur on his neighbour,
who holds the Godless in disdain,
but honours those who fear the Lord. **R.**

He who keeps his pledge come what may;
who takes no interest on a loan
and accepts no bribes against the innocent.
Such a man will stand firm for ever. **R.**

The just will live in the presence of the Lord

NEXT WEEKEND'S READINGS-

17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Gen 18:20-32;

Second Reading: Col 2:12-14

Gospel: Lk 11:1-13



SECOND READING 1:24-28

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians

It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church. I became the servant of the Church when God made me responsible for delivering God's message to you, the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his saints. It was God's purpose to reveal it to them and to show all the rich glory of this mystery to pagans. The mystery is Christ among you, your hope of glory: this is the Christ we proclaim, this is the wisdom in which we thoroughly train everyone and instruct everyone, to make them all perfect in Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Happy are they who have kept the word
with a generous heart
and yield a harvest through perseverance
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 10:38-42

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha who was distracted with all the serving said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered: 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord, the gracious, the merciful,
Has made a memorial of his wonders;
He gives food to those who fear him.

St Bernard of Clairvaux XVIII

The experience of God in this life

The preacher of grace and truth

(b) Bernard and Truth (cont.)

Sometimes, in the spiritual life, we like to imagine that, with our thoughts and feelings, we can reach out and directly touch or experience God. But, on the evidence of the Old and New Testaments, our human experience of God, although it does quicken, for a time, real depths of spiritual emotion, is never as important or as sacred as the call to loving obedience, for example, or to daily surrender.

God is the one, we have to say, who desires to “experience” us. And thus, when we encounter his truth, or when he comes to us as truth, this is not merely an abstract code against which our thoughts and deeds are being judged. It is, rather, the reality of a profound touch probing and testing our hearts. What the Word asks, when he comes to an individual in prayer, is not, “Do you experience me?” but “Do you love me?”, “Do you listen to my Word?”, “Do you put it into practice?”

As we read through Bernard’s homilies, one thing emerges very clearly: an authentic preacher of the Gospel cannot be a preacher of grace only, or of truth only. The Word that Bernard proclaims, and the Word that he encounters in prayer, comes to him always “full of grace and truth”. Unfortunately, in the actual practice of preaching, there has been a tendency, in almost every age, to emphasise one aspect of the mystery, and to ignore the other.

Preaching in the early part of the 20th century, for example, was characterised by an active and robust preaching of moral and dogmatic truth. God was the giver of the commandments, and the upholder of Church law. But, often, there was little or nothing said about God’s prodigal kindness and compassion.

In contrast, preaching in the second half of the 20th century marked a return to a Gospel emphasis on God’s astonishing grace, and to a renewed focus also on the humanity of Christ. But with this renewal — inspired, I have no doubt, by God’s own Spirit — there was a tendency at times to speak almost exclusively of the grace of God, and of the mercy of God, but to say nothing or almost nothing about God’s truth or God’s law. The end result was that, for many in the Church, including many young people listening to school talks on religion or to Sunday homilies, even the great sacred words such as “grace” and “compassion” began to lose their salt and

their savour.

Once preaching is no longer based on the full Gospel message, and no longer grounded on what St Bernard calls “inward experience”, then the Word itself becomes somehow debased, and sacred truth degenerates into mere ideological conviction. On the one hand, then, we have the extreme proponents of a false rigorism, and on the other, the no less extreme proponents of what might be called cheap or easy grace. Bernard was able to go beyond these opposites. His words bear the full weight of the mystery of God, the paradox, that is, of a truth that lets us off on nothing, and of a grace that lets us off on everything.

Conclusion

What matters finally, for Bernard, is that all those to whom the Word of God is preached, should begin to experience in faith God’s true nature. He writes: “This vision of God is not a little thing. It reveals him to us as listening compassionately to our prayers, as truly kind and merciful, as one who will not indulge his resentment. His very nature is to be good, to show mercy always and to spare. By this kind of experience, and in this way, God makes himself known to us for our good.”

Truth, then, is fundamental to prayer, in St Bernard’s understanding, but grace is essential. The hypothesis that, at some stage, the Word might come to Bernard only as judge but not as friend, not as “bridegroom”, that he might come as truth but not as grace, prompts Bernard to exclaim: “God forbid that this may ever happen!”

Bernard is well aware that “truth is bitter unless seasoned with grace”. So, in the concluding words of Sermon 74, he prays that the Word of God not approach merely “with the stern gaze of truth”, but enter, rather, “as one who brings peace, joy, and gladness”.

These words are born of a profound faith experience. They are wise and sacred words, instinct with the sure hope that comes from faithful prayer, and from a profound knowledge of the Word. It is true, that as a preacher, Bernard tells us he is “afraid to speak”. Nevertheless, again and again, he dares to put “mystery into words”. Burdened with the joyful knowledge of God’s nature, he “cannot remain silent”. His whole desire, as a man of living faith, and a humble initiate of the Gospel, is to proclaim the knowledge of God in Christ, not as “a mere deposit of doctrinal truths”, but, to use the expression of Pope John Paul II, as “a personal and living experience of the Mystery”.