



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

13th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME-YEAR C

26th June 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.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

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 - 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 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) 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 27/6/22-3/7/2022

MASS TIMES:

Monday 27/6	6.30pm
Tuesday 28/6	9.30am & 6.30pm
Wednesday 29/6	9.30am
Thursday 30/6	9.30am
Friday 1/7	9.30am
First Friday Devotion*	6.30pm
First Saturday Devotion	8.30am

*Please note that the first Friday mass will be at 6:30 p.m., there will be no devotions afterwards or midnight mass due to the mission.

Rosary 9.00am before 9.30am weekday Mass. 

Sunday Masses

Saturday 2/7	5.00pm
Sunday 3/7	8.30am, 10.30am & 5.00pm

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

ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH 27/6/2022-3/7/2022

MASS TIMES:

Monday 27/6	No Mass	Rosary	7.30pm
with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour			
Tuesday 28/6			9.30am
Holy Hour			7.30pm
Wednesday 29/6			9.30am
Thursday 30/6			9.30am
Friday 1/7			9.30am
Saturday 2/7			9.00am

Sunday Masses

Saturday 2/7	5.00pm
Sunday 3/7	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 0456 718 965

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 13TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME- Mary Fermio rsj

How many times today have you made a choice – time to get up, clothes to wear, breakfast, which Mass to go to...Some choices have a profound effect on our lives – our career, marriage partner, getting married or not, what we buy, where we live, whether we commit a crime or not.

Jesus made a deliberate choice to go to Jerusalem, where his cousin John had been beheaded, where he knew people were waiting and planning his death, because he threatened their livelihoods. This was the cost of discipleship, the cost of following the Father's will for him, the cost of love for us, the cost of a desire for our salvation. This choice was to leave Jesus open to the will of the leaders of God's people.

Our parents made a deliberate choice to have us baptized. We made a deliberate choice at our Confirmation, a choice to follow Jesus. We also have to live the cost of discipleship if we are faithful to that choice.

We choose to accept the consequences no matter how difficult. We hear on the news of people choosing situations where death is a threat. The many Catholics killed at Mass in Nigeria had made a choice to be there despite the unrest in their country.

What would you choose? How strong is your commitment to live your faith?

There is a choice you have to make in everything you do. So keep in mind that in the end, the choice you make, makes you.

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+).

WEEKDAY MASS TIMES

Parishioners please note, they will be no 7.30am weekday masses for the next two weeks during the School Holidays.

Where are we going? - An event organised by the Missionaries of God's Love Brothers

YOUTH DAY

Thursday 30th June
10am to 7pm

Location: Parish Hall

For ages 16– 35
Lunch and Dinner provided

DIVINE MERCY NIGHT

Friday 1st July
7pm to 9pm

Location: St Anthony's Church

All at home are invited
Confessions and Prayer Ministry
available

FAMILY FESTIVAL

Saturday 2nd July
2pm to 9pm

Location: Padua Hall

For all ages– All family members are
invited Children's Ministry available
Dinner provided (Celebration Meal)
Option for attending 5pm Parish Mass
also available

ST ANTHONY'S

FIRST FRIDAY MASS

Please note that the first Friday mass will be at 6:30 p.m., there will be no devotions afterwards or midnight mass due to the mission.

ST BERNARD'S

FATHER MARCUS' FAREWELL

Fr Marcus will celebrate his last weekend Masses at St Bernard's on the 2nd and 3rd of July. A farewell lunch will be held in St Bernard's Parish Centre following the 10.30am Mass on Sunday 3rd July. Please bring a plate of food to share. Contact Dagmar van der Linden on 0431 676 017 for more information.

THE BEAUTIFUL HANDS OF A PRIEST

Shared by St Bernard's parishioner Lucille Wheelahan

We need them in life's early morning,
we need them again at its close.
we feel their warm clasp of true friendship,
we seek them when tasting life's woes.
When we come to this world we are sinful,
the greatest as well as the least.
And the hands that will make us like angels,
are the beautiful hands of a priest.

At the altar each day we behold them,
and the hands of a king in his throne.
Are not equal to them in their greatness,
their dignity stands all alone.
For there in the stillness of morning
ere the sun has emerged from the east,
there God rests between the pure fingers
of the beautiful hands of a priest.

And when we are tempted to wander
on the pathways of shame and of sin,
tis the hands of a priest will absolve us
not once, but again and again.
And when we are taking life's partner
other hands will prepare us a feast,
but the hands that will bless and unite us
are the beautiful hands of a priest.

God bless them and keep them all holy
for the Host which their fingers caress.
What can a poor sinner do better
but to praise Thee who chose thee to bless?
And when death-dews on our eyes are falling
may our courage and strength be increased
to see, raised above us in blessing,
the beautiful hands of a priest.

WORSHIP NEWS

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

ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 2nd & 3rd 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: Marian Muller
8.30am: Leonia Jessop
10.30am: Karina Dunne
5.00pm: Rebecca Comini

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm Vigil: Ann Tennakoon
8.30am: Geoff Sutton
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: Godwin & Lillian
10.30am: Godwin & Lillian
5.00pm: Leonia & Annonika

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

James Plant

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

Cecil Fernandez, Mary Rose Gauci, Antonio Savona & Peter John Thomas.

Please pray for the Sick:

Hazel Michael, Nickolia & Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana, Jamie Coghlan, Christabelle, Melanie Fue, Bruce Hynes, 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, 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: Evana Miesen
8.30am: Gerard O'Shea
10.30am: Dominic Van Der Linden

MINISTERS OF THE WORD: 2nd & 3rd July

5.00pm: Sonia Smith
8.30am: Dominican Sisters
10.30am: Dudley Rodrigues

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

July: Josephite Associates C/- Carmel Shea

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

Dorothy (Dot) Elmer & Ivan Prkic

Funeral Mass will be held at St Bernard's for Dorothy (Dot) Elmer on Monday 27th June at 11:00am.

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

Violet Borg, Mary Evans, Hazel Glasheen, Brian Glenane, Bronwyn Kays, Stan Mullane, Paul Murray, Rod Osborne, Audrey Peasley, David Rowen, & Ted Shelly.

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: 2nd & 3rd July

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil: Lorraine Tellis
8.30am: Ineke Allen
10.30am: Elizabeth Underwood

CUPPA VOLUNTEERS—THIS WEEKEND

5.00pm Vigil: Julie Sequira & Cristal D'Souza
8.30am: Geoff & Debra Sutton
10.30am: Dwi Rochfort & Gerard Anderson

CHURCH FLOWERS

July: Gloria



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

ST BERNARD'S

WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS : 2nd & 3rd July

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Piety Stall will open after Saturday 5pm Mass & Sunday 8.30 Mass
25th June: Marj Tung
26th June: Dianne Shelly

CHURCH FLOWERS

July: To be advised



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 to \$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

***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



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 Marcus or Fr Lucas .

FATIMA STATUE—ST ANTHONY'S

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

Group 1: Brian Barker 0408 974 322

Group 2: Carolyn Cruz 0401 875 410

Group 3: Mary & Tony Galea 0401 169 224



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

All peoples, clap your hands.
Cry to God with shouts of joy!

FIRST READING 1 Kings 19:16, 19-21

The Lord said to Elijah: 'Go, you are to anoint Elisha son of Shaphat, of Abel Meholah, as prophet to succeed you.' Leaving there, Elijah came to Elisha son of Shaphat as he was ploughing behind twelve yoke of oxen, he himself being with the twelfth. Elijah passed near to him and threw his cloak over him. Elisha left his oxen and ran after Elijah. 'Let me kiss my father and mother, then I will follow you' he said. Elijah answered, 'Go, go back; for have I done anything to you?' Elisha turned away, took the pair of oxen and slaughtered them. He used the plough for cooking the oxen, then gave to his men, who ate. He then rose, and followed Elijah and became his servant.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 15

Commentator: You are my inheritance, O Lord.

All: You are my inheritance, O Lord.

Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord: 'You are my God.'
O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;
it is you yourself who are my prize.

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my body shall rest in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead,
nor let your beloved know decay.

You will show me the path of life,
the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand happiness for ever.

You are my inheritance, O Lord.

SECOND READING Galatians 5:1, 13-18

When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. My brothers, you were called, as you know, to liberty; but be careful, or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence. Serve one another, rather, in works of love, since the whole of the Law is summarised in a single command: Love your neighbour as yourself. If you go snapping at each other and tearing each other to pieces, you had better watch or you will destroy the whole community.

Let me put it like this: if you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit, the Spirit is totally against such a thing, and it is precisely because the two are so opposed that you do not always carry out your good intentions. If you are led by the Spirit, no law can touch you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Speak, O Lord, your servant is listening;
you have the words of everlasting life.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 9:51-62

As the time drew near for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely took the road for Jerusalem and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' But he turned and rebuked them, and they went off to another village.

As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

Another to whom he said, 'Follow me,' replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury the dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.'

Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good-bye to my people at home.' Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all within me, his holy name.

NEXT WEEKEND'S READINGS-

14th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Is 66:10-14;

Second Reading: Gal 6:14-18;

Gospel: Lk 10:1-12, 17-20



St Bernard of Clairvaux XV

The experience of God in this life Mystery into Words

(b) The visit from the Word

When St Bernard attempts to describe something of his own mystical or contemplative experience, he acknowledges, first of all, what was not involved in the experience. Thus he writes: "The coming of the Word was not perceptible to my eyes." Even at the moment of vivid encounter, when the Word is utterly present to Bernard, that presence appears somehow both elusive and strangely intangible.

"Although he has come to me, I have never been conscious of the moment of his coming. I perceived his presence, I remembered afterwards that he had been with me; sometimes I had a presentiment that he would come, but I was never conscious of his coming or of his going.

"And where he comes from when he visits my soul, and where he goes, and by what means he enters and goes out, I admit that I do not know even now ... I have ascended to the highest in me, and look! the Word is towering above that. In my curiosity I have descended to explore my lowest depths, yet I found him even deeper."

What Bernard discovers in contemplative prayer, is that — this side of paradise — no human thought, no human feeling, can comprehend the mystery of God.

But here there is a question that must be faced: if God's presence is so elusive and mysterious, how is it possible for the contemplative ever to speak about it, or even to know if the experience itself has actually taken place?

This question Bernard wisely anticipates. He says: "You ask, then, how I know he was present, when his ways can in no way be traced."

St Bernard answers by speaking not of an immediate experience of God, but rather of experience at another level. He begins to share with us, in fact, some of the discernible effects of God's presence on his own interior life, effects which are both moral and

spiritual. What we are being allowed to glimpse, then, with the help of St Bernard, are the signs of an amazing love: vivid, shining traces of the mystery of grace.

He writes: As soon as he enters in, he awakens my slumbering soul; he stirs and soothes and pierces my heart, for before it was hard as stone, and diseased. So he has begun to pluck out and destroy, to build up and to plant, to water dry places and illuminate dark ones, to open what was closed and to warm what was cold; to make the crooked straight and the rough places smooth, so that my soul may bless the Lord, and all that is within me may praise his holy name."

Obviously, the coming of the Word brings with it enormous blessing. And so, it is natural to ask if there is some way we can prepare ourselves to receive from God such a gift.

Bernard, in his answer to this question, does not talk about the need for new or novel methods of prayer or meditation. Instead, he speaks simply about two very down-to-earth realities: "good works" and "the practice of the virtues". He even insists at one point that "the grace of contemplation is never owed except to the commandments".

But Bernard also draws attention in his teaching to the vital importance of the emotion — the deep spiritual emotion — of desire. God, he says, will visit the soul "provided it is committed to seeking him with all its desire and love".

But why desire? Why is it so important? Bernard explains: "The fire of holy desire ought to precede his advent to every soul whom he will visit, to burn up the rust of bad habits and so prepare a place for the Lord. The soul will know that the Lord is near when it perceives itself to be aflame with that fire."

According to Bernard, objective instruction alone is no guarantee of progress in the spiritual life. The commandments and the law must, of course, be given to us. But the inner heart, if it is really to change, needs also to be moved, in some form or other, by grace."

To be continued