



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

14th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME-YEAR C

3rd July 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 4/7/2022-10/7/2022

MASS TIMES:

Monday 4/7	6.30pm
Tuesday 5/7	9.30am & 6.30pm
Wednesday 6/7	9.30am
Thursday 7/7	9.30am
Friday 8/7	9.30am

Rosary 9.00am before 9.30am weekday Mass.



Sunday Masses

Saturday 9/7	5.00pm
Sunday 10/7	8.30am, 10.30am & 5.00pm

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

ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH 4/7/2022-10/7/2022

MASS TIMES:

Monday 4/7	No Mass	Rosary	7.30pm
with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour			
Tuesday 5/7			9.30am
Holy Hour			7.30pm
Wednesday 6/7			9.30am
Thursday 7/7			9.30am
Friday 8/7			9.30am
Providence Mass			11.00am
Saturday 9/7			9.00am

Sunday Masses

Saturday 9/7	5.00pm
Sunday 10/7	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 14TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME- Mary Fermio rsj

When I was in the upper grades of our Primary school, the Sister in Charge would send me to the bank or to do a message for her. I felt trusted and hoped not to let her down. You may have had a similar experience with a parent or a teacher.

The disciples had been accompanying Jesus listening to his message and now they were being sent out, to give his message to the villagers around. I am sure they felt proud and a bit fearful. What if the people do not want to listen to THEM? What if they let Jesus down? Their instructions were rather strict – nothing extra, just themselves. A bit daunting, I would think – lambs being cast before the wolves! This really tested their trust in Jesus and in themselves and showed what the cost of discipleship really meant -being accepted or being rejected.

Each Sunday at the end of Mass, the Priest says to us:

GO – YOU ARE DISMISSED or GO TO LIVE THE GOSPEL BY YOUR LIVES.

We are meant to walk out, as a people sent, sent to take God's message of peace to all those we meet, to discover the cost of discipleship; no extras, just ourselves.

In our prayer we share with Jesus our failures and successes, and we listen to Jesus' response.



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 during the School Holidays, all morning weekday masses will be at 9.30am.

ST ANTHONY'S

SUPPER RUN

Thanks to our Social Committee for organising another successful fundraising event. Over 200 supper orders were received and \$3,000.00 was raised. The funds raised will go towards the extension of the Parish Hall. Thank you to everyone that supported this fundraiser.

PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office will be closed Thursday 7th & Friday 8th July.

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!

ST BERNARD'S

PROVIDENCE AND FRIENDS MASS

Parishioners are invited to the monthly Providence and Friends Mass on Friday 8th July at 11am.

Please bring a plate for morning tea/lunch.

If transport is required, please let the Parish Office know or call Margot Short 0419 507438.

SAFEGUARDING AT ST BERNARD'S

Reminder to all, over 18, who volunteer in any way at all e.g. – ministers, servers, choir, musicians, collectors, piety stall helpers, arrangers of social type functions, members of all parish groups, grounds and maintenance helpers, those acting pastorally on behalf of our parish, ... that, by now, they must have submitted a WWCC and a signed Code of Conduct declaration. All functions and activities must have risk assessment sheets completed. Parish centre usage by church or private users must be booked with the managers and have paper work completed at least one week in advance. All rubbish must be removed from the parish centre by all users and the building locked. Recently, doors were left unlocked and rubbish left. From July 1st any volunteer work or usage not in accord with requirements places the parish in breach of government legislation and CAM requirements.

Sincere thanks to Shane Cook from Shane Cook Homes for his generous donation of materials and workers - Zac Miessen, Will Cook, Joel Freeman, Logan Iredale and Jonas Cukavac – to get the old convent windows and doors re-boarded. Margaret Love

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUNDAY OBSERVANCE

Today is the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time and the day that the Australian Bishops and our National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council have invited us to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics number over 130,000 and are growing strongly. Today we acknowledge that God has been walking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, making His Presence known through a continuous living culture over many thousands of years. We pray in thanksgiving for these ancient peoples who have enriched and sustained our continent over all that time. We praise God for the people who nurtured the land here in our Parish that we call home.

Every year on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday, Catholics from across Australia come together to acknowledge and celebrate the gifts of Australia's First Peoples. This year our theme challenges us all into action.

The Harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Get up! Stand up! Show up!



WORSHIP NEWS

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

ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 9th & 10th 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: Aloysious Dacunha

8.30am: Mercy Seufatu

10.30am: Anastasia Mavaega

5.00pm: Dolores Turcsan

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm Vigil: Gavin Pereira

8.30am: Ron Howard

10.30am: Doris 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:

8.30am: To be advised

10.30am:

5.00pm:

ST BERNARD'S MINISTRIES

MINISTERS OF THE WORD : THIS WEEKEND

5.00pm: Sonia Smith

8.30am: Dominican Sisters

10.30am: Dudley Rodrigues

MINISTERS OF THE WORD: 9th & 10 July

5.00pm: Maureen Zahra

8.30am: Nathan Costin

10.30am: Chloe Lindorff

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

July: Josephite Associates C/- Carmel Shea

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

Maria Candeloro

Funeral Mass will be held at St Bernard's for Maria Candeloro on Tuesday 5th July 2022 at 11:30am.

Rosary to commence at 11:00am.

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

Spiro Abela, Thomas Blood, Damian Condon, Frank Condon, Lorna Condon, Alice Cook, Mary Glenane, Raymond Hare, Michael Marshall, Eddie Mullane, Imelda Pace, Hector Papworth, Jack Papworth, Sophie Papworth, Pat Pigott, Ivy (Pat) Ragan, Vicki Riddell, Brian Shanahan, Edward Skinner, Alice Sloan & Patricia Wittick.

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)**

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

James Lin Gidius Dunus

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

William Austin Ainsworth, Joh DeBrincat, Allan McBain, Biance McCurry, Chantelle Medhurst, Clarrie Rietschel.

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, 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



SERVICE / COMMUNITY

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

ST ANTHONY'S

WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS: 9th & 10th July

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

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

CUPPA VOLUNTEERS—23rd & 24th July

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

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 : 9th & 10th July

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Piety Stall will open after Saturday 5pm Mass & Sunday 8.30 Mass
9th July: Jan Farmelo
10th July: Jan & Colm

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 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: Uili & Lagi Maiava 0429 340 404

Group 2: Anna Taunnu 0406 503 363

Group 3: Anthony & Mary Saliba 0418 358 090

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

Your merciful love, O God,
we have received in the midst of your temple.
Your praise, O God, like your name,
reaches the ends of the earth;
your right hand is filled with saving justice.

FIRST READING Isaiah 66:10-14

Rejoice, Jerusalem,
be glad for her, all you who love her!
Rejoice, rejoice for her,
all you who mourned her!

That you may be suckled, filled,
from her consoling breast,
that you may savour with delight
her glorious breasts.

For thus says the Lord:
Now towards her I send flowing
peace, like a river,
and like a stream in spate
the glory of the nations.

At her breast will her nurslings be carried
and fondled in her lap.
Like a son comforted by his mother
will I comfort you.
And by Jerusalem you will be comforted.

At the sight your heart will rejoice,
and your bones flourish like the grass.
To his servants the Lord will reveal his hand.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 65

Commentator: Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

All: Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Cry out with joy to God all the earth,
O sing to the glory of his name.
O render him glorious praise.
Say to God: 'How tremendous your deeds!

'Before you all the earth shall bow:
shall sing to you, sing to your name!'
Come and see the works of God,
tremendous his deeds among men.

He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the river dry-shod.
Let our joy then be in him;
he rules for ever by his might.

Come and hear, all who fear God.
I will tell what he did for my soul.
Blessed be God who did not reject my prayer
nor withhold his love from me.

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

SECOND READING Galatians 6:14-18

The only thing I can boast about is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. It does not matter if a person is circumcised or not; what matters is for him to become an altogether new creature. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, who form the Israel of God.

I want no more trouble from anybody after this; the marks on my body are those of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, my brothers. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

May the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
and the fullness of his message live within you.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit. He said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest. Start off now, but remember, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near." I tell you, on that day it will not go as hard with Sodom as with that town.' The seventy-two came back rejoicing. 'Lord,' they said, 'even the devils submit to us when we use your name.' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Yes, I have given you power to tread underfoot serpents and scorpions and the whole strength of the enemy; nothing shall ever hurt you. Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed the man who seeks refuge in him.

NEXT WEEKEND'S READINGS-

15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Deut 30:10-14;
Second Reading: Col 1:15-20;
Gospel: Lk 10:25-37



St Bernard of Clairvaux XVI

The experience of God in this life Mystery into Words

Thus, in preparing for the Word's coming, the first thing of importance, we can say, is action or the keeping of the commandments. But also important is the drive or the urgency of an interior desire.

Many spiritual teachers and directors will say that love — Christian love — exists in action but not in feeling. St Bernard, however, being (I suspect) uneasy with this rather sharp and extreme either/or distinction, seeks to establish or to recover what he calls "a middle path". And, in Sermon 50, he makes bold to declare: "Love exists in action and feeling." And then goes on to say: "Among the many great and grievous evils that the apostle ascribes to men I have read this one is reckoned: to be without affection."

When Bernard experiences the Word as present in his soul, he is filled with the emotions of delight and joy. But when the Word suddenly seems to disappear, and all is darkness again, Bernard's prayer becomes a deep and sustained cry of sorrow and longing.

He writes: "When the Word has left me, all these spiritual powers become weak and faint and begin to grow cold ... Then my soul will inevitably be sorrowful until he returns and my heart again kindles within me — the sign of his returning. When I have had such experience of the Word, is it any wonder that I take to myself the words of the Bride, calling him back when he has withdrawn?"

For Bernard, part of the experience of God — a major part — is, paradoxically, the experience of his "absence". Again and again, both in life and in prayer, we are — or so it seems — left completely on our own, bereft of the sense of God. Reflecting on this fact, Bernard quotes the words of Jesus in John's Gospel, words intended of course to console us: "A little while and you shall not see me, and again a little while and you shall see me" (John 16:16).

But Bernard is not consoled. With real exasperation he exclaims: "Oh little while, little while! How long a little while! Dear Lord, you say it is for a little while that we do not see you. The word of my Lord may not be doubted, but it is a long while, far too long."

As soon as Bernard loses sight of his divine Lord, he begins to search for him again in prayer. And, what is more, he begins to speak of this search for God in a number of his sermons. The effect is truly

remarkable, for by speaking of God's "absence" in this way, by revealing to his readers, and to his brethren, something of his own spiritual anguish, the reality of God — the presence of God — is made more palpably real, perhaps, than ever before.

The Preacher of Grace and Truth

To deepen further our understanding of Bernard's contemplative experience of God, and to gain some insight into his way of preaching, it will be helpful to take up and examine two words which St Bernard repeats over and over again in Sermon 74: the word "grace" and the word "truth".

(a) Bernard and Grace

By "grace", Bernard means the wonderful experience in faith of coming to know God as "goodness and mercy", as someone "full of joy and radiance" — "*festivus et splendidus*". It means discovering for oneself God's great power to soothe and awaken the heart, and it means also perceiving with contemplative love and with wonder "the excellence of his glorious beauty".

There can, I think, be no doubt whatever that, in the 12th century, there was no one more than Bernard of Clairvaux who deserved the title "preacher of grace". According to his contemporary and good friend, William of St Thierry: "The force of his preaching began to shine out especially in the way in which he softened to conversion even the hard hearts of his hearers, and he rarely came home without a catch."

God, in St Bernard's opinion, wants us to "breathe freely", and to be confident in the knowledge that, when we turn to him in prayer, no matter how great our sins appear, his kindness is even greater. "Sorrow for sin is indeed necessary", we are told, "but it should not be an endless preoccupation".

Thus, when it comes to private prayer, "the just man", Bernard notes, "is not always accusing himself". If, on occasion, he does so, it is "only in the opening words". But, normally, his prayer will conclude "with the divine praises".

St Bernard sees clearly that it is never enough to confront the truth of oneself within the courtroom of private conscience. "As for me," he writes, "as long as I look at myself, my eye is filled with bitterness. But if I look up and fix my eyes on the aid of the divine mercy, this happy vision of God soon tempers the bitter vision of myself."

To be continued