



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

5th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME-YEAR A

5th February 2023

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

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Lesley Morffew

Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson

Parish Office Hours: Mon 9.00am-12.00noon

Tue 9.00-4.00pm Wed 9.00-5.30pm

Thu/Fri 9.00-4.00pm

Email: parishsecretary83@gmail.com

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: 8099 6699

Email: principal@slweirviews.catholic.edu.au

Website: www.slweirviews.catholic.edu.au

ST BERNARD'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Dolores Turcsan

Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson

Sacramental Coordinator/ Bookkeeper: Naim Chdid

Parish Office Hours:

Tue 9.00am-11.30am 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:** Sr Mary Sarah Galbraith

19a Gisborne Rd, Bacchus Marsh VIC 3340

Phone: (03) 5366 5800

Email: principal@sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

Website: www.sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

St Francis Catholic College- Melton (Years 7-12)

Principal: Marlene Jorgensen **Phone:** 8099 6000

109-141 Bulmans Rd, West Melton, 3337 **Website:** www.crcmelton.com.au

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

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Naim Chid	0437 004 790
Lillian Christian - Vice Chair	0400 441 257
Stephen Fernandes	0439 743 533
Amy Honrade	0457 042 695
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
Moir Ross	0400 675 056
Aaron Russell - Chair	0401 927 502

EX-OFFICIO:

Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint and Fr Samuel Kapani
Sr Mary Sarah Galbraith

SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Coordinator/Officer: Godwin Barton (0425 734 449) **Officers:** St Anthony's - Lorraine Tellis 0437 658 423 & Geetha Vincent 0478 112 996
St Bernard's - Margaret Love (0437 247 779) Evana Miesen & Ron Geurts

Items for the newsletter must be submitted by Tuesday 6.00pm. Please email judyparishnews@gmail.com or call 0414 007 009

Judy Johnson's office hours: Mon-Wed 9am-1pm

MASS AND DEVOTIONS

ST ANTHONY'S MELTON SOUTH 6/2/2023-12/2/2023

MASS TIMES:

Monday 6/2	6.30pm
Tuesday 7/2	9.30am & 6.30pm
Wednesday 8/2	7.30am & 9.30am
Thursday 9/2	9.30am
Friday 10/2	9.30am

Rosary at 9.00am before 9.30am morning masses



Sunday Masses

Saturday 11/2	5.00pm
Sunday 12/2	8.30am & 10.30am

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

ST BERNARD'S BACCHUS MARSH 6/2/2023-12/2/2023

MASS TIMES:

Monday 6/2	No Mass
Tuesday 7/2	7.30am
Holy Hour	7.30pm
Wednesday 8/2	9.30am
Thursday 9/2	7.30am
Friday 10/2	7.30am
Providence Mass	11.00am
Saturday 11/2	9.00am

Sunday Masses

Saturday 11/2	5.00pm
Sunday 12/2	8.30am & 10.30am

(Rosary in the Chapel 10.00am on Sundays)
Confession available 30 minutes prior to each Mass.

OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

KOROBET

MASS TIMES

VIGIL	11/2	6.30pm
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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. Thank you.

REFLECTION 5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Sr Mary Fermio rsj

There must be no worse darkness in a person's life than to be homeless, hungry, without clean clothing, to have no hope and see no way out of their situation. Most of us do not know that darkness, but for many who do, there is no light at the end of the tunnel, and for some no solution except taking their own life.

Jesus throws the challenge out to us with the words: "YOU are the salt. YOU are the light!" We are the ones he relies on to destroy the darkness by being the light and hope to be seen and experienced by others. It is useless if we hide it and will not bring praise to God. Isaiah puts it quite bluntly: *share your food, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked and YOUR light will shine like the dawn and your wound quickly healed over.*

In our world today we have many opportunities to do this as a volunteer or donor in the many groups that help those in need: Vinnies, Soul Food, Neighbours Place, Food Bank, Save the Children, Asylum Resource Centres, Project Compassion, Centecare, Mercy Ships...it is endless.

Let your little light shine ... (Google these words and enjoy the song and dance of the light globes)



PARISH & EVENTS NOTICES

NEWS FROM THE PARISH OFFICES

FAITH FORMATION Sessions begin at 7.00pm every Tuesday at St Anthony's Church of Padua, 67-75 Exford Road, Melton South (Age 16+) Faith Formation topic this week: Liturgy and the Sacraments.

REJOICE CHRIST LOVES YOU-CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS

Come and listen. Every Monday and Wednesday 8.00pm-9.00pm beginning Monday 6th February.

St Anthony's Church-MacKillop Room. Please see postcards in the foyer for more details.

PASTORAL CARE APPEAL 2023

Next weekend is the Pastoral Care Appeal in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Each year a special collection is conducted in all parishes, so that the vital work of the Catholic Chaplains can continue. The Chaplains support thousands of Victorians every year in hospitals, prisons and youth justice centres. Your gift can help people find comfort and hope as they go through some of their darkest times of their life. Please give generously. You can also donate using the envelopes available or online at www.catholiccarevic.org.au or call (03) 9287 5513.

PALMS

We have a basket in the foyer for your palms, from last year. These palms will be burnt on Tuesday 21st February and the ashes will be used for our Ash Wednesday Masses on the 22nd February.

PROCESS FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE SACRAMENTS FOR CHILDREN RECEIVING FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST EUCHARIST IN 2023

Dear Parents, The Parishes of St Anthony's and St Bernard's continues to search for better ways to support you in your mission of bringing up your children in the Catholic faith, and help them in their journey with God in the best possible way.

Over the years we tried different processes according to the availability of our volunteers. Some years the classes were long, while others years were shorter. We tried our best to catechize the children in the faith, as well as prepare them for Sacraments at the same time. This year we will be splitting the Classes, Catechism classes in the First term and Sacrament preparation in the Second term.

Why Catechism?

Catechism is an essential way of teaching our children about God, the Trinity, Heaven, Angels, Saints, Prayer and other doctrine of the faith. Learning the catechism early in the intellectual and spiritual building material of a strong Christian life, and it is the best use of time on the part of both parents and their children.

Catechism is a proven method for fulfilling our calling as parents to instruct our children in the truth.

Term One Catechetical Classes begin 11th February 2023 and end 1st April 2023

Term Two Sacramental Classes—dates to be advised

NB: your child is required to attend **ALL Catechetical Classes** to be able to receive the Sacraments

Contact Sacramental Coordinator: Naim Chdid Email: enrol4sacraments@gmail.com or call the Parish Offices for further information.

ST ANTHONY'S

WANTED - QUALIFIED ELECTRICIAN FOR OUR PARISH

If you are a qualified electrician with experience, in the C-BUS system, we need you.

Please contact the Parish Office on 9747 9692.

WOMEN'S RECOLLECTION

Theme: Manifesting the Image of God with a Faith Made Alive

Date: Thursday 9th February 2023

Time: 6.00pm-8.30pm

Venue: St Anthony of Padua Church

Please see flyers for more details.

VALENTINE'S DAY DANCE

Save the date! Saturday 18th February

6pm -10pm Padua Hall

\$10 adults \$5 Child (6-12years)

Food available for purchase

DJ

More details to come.

BINGO

Bingo is held every Tuesday night at 7pm in the Padua Hall, St Anthony's Parish. Complimentary tea and coffee available. Canteen services available. Come along and enjoy a great night, and with a bit of luck you could be one of our lucky winners!

ST BERNARD'S

PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office will be closed on Tuesday 7th February.

SOUL FOOD

The figures are in for 2022, Soul Food Program Inc. distributed 6100 meals to the most vulnerable members of our local Community. (2021 was 4,200 meals). This represents a substantial increase in numbers of meals. To assist with our funding into 2023, Soul Food Program Inc. is holding a fundraiser at The Plough in Myrniong on Thursday 9th March 2023, at 12 noon. This will be a 3 course meal, with an Elvis Tribute show included. There will be raffles, and door prizes. Tickets are available through the Plough website, <https://theplough.com.au/> under events., or 5368 7173, or from Jenny 0408 104 155.

MORNING TEA-NEXT WEEKEND

There will be a morning tea after the 8.30am and 10.30am Masses next Sunday, February 12th. All welcome.

PROVIDENCE AND FRIENDS MASS

Parishioners are invited to our monthly Providence and Friends Mass on Friday 10th February 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.

WORSHIP NEWS

ALL VOLUNTEERS IN OUR PARISH MUST HAVE A CURRENT VALID WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK AND A CODE OF CONDUCT FORM SIGNED.

ST ANTHONY'S MINISTRIES

NEXT WEEKEND ROSTER: 11th & 12th February

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: Rebecca Comini

8.30am: Mercy Seufatu

10.30am: Rhys Tuala

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm: Dolores Turcsan

8.30am: Philip Anyayahan

10.30am: Doris Bonello

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

MASS COORDINATORS

5.00pm: Annonica & Coleen

8.30am: Julie & Lillian

10.30am: Leonia & Lillian

ST BERNARD'S MINISTRIES

MINISTERS OF THE WORD : THIS WEEKEND

5.00pm: Sonia Smith

8.30am: Gerard O'Shea

10.30am: Dudley Rodrigues

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm: John Thorne

MINISTERS OF THE WORD: 11th & 12th February

5.00pm: Maureen Zahra

8.30am: Dominican Sisters

10.30am: Beatrice Younger

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS

5.00pm: Vicki Benson

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

February: Sr Mary Fermio

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

Sharon & Kevin McCourt, Pero Price, Srechko Sakic & Leo Stolica

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

Babette Arandez, Peter Azzopardi, Maria & Joseph Cauchi, Percy Fernandez, George Portelli & Joe & Spira Vella.

Please pray for the Sick:

Hazel Michael, Nickolia & Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana, 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, Ian Novak, Kathleen Novak, Caleb O'Brien, John Osborne, Vaivasa Ruth Perez, 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 PASTORAL CARE

We pray for the recently deceased:

Doreen Blood

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

Jessica Cato, Alan Dovaston, Alma Dowsett, Mary Grech, Ronald Knight, Mercy Kumar, Greg Light, Marija Magdic, Peter Shea, Dorothy (Jill) Smith, Tom Thompson, & John Tippetts.

Please pray for the Sick:

Patricia Allison, Noah Barlow, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett, Carmel Berry, Steven Braszel, Tina Bower, Fred Capuano, Gary Ching, Chris, Josephine Cilia, Robyn Cola, Ted Cooling, Lindsay & Kathleen Dally, Judy Delahey, Theresa Dockter, Allison Evans, Helen Evans, George Farrell, John Fermio, 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, Colin Taffe, Catherine Time, Susan Trist, Stephen Van Eede, John Van Orsouw, Angela Vicum, Louis Vogels, Barry Walsh, Cath Wheelahan, Jayne Wilkins, Patricia Yazbek, Betty Young and all those who have requested our prayers.

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 VALID WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK AND A CODE OF CONDUCT FORM SIGNED.

ST ANTHONY'S

WEEKEND VOLUNTEERS: 11th & 12th February

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

5.00pm Vigil: Kim Barton
8.30am: Pat Chiles
10.30am: Geetha Vincent

CUPPA VOLUNTEERS

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

CHURCH FLOWERS

February: Tuala Family



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.

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 : 11th & 12th February

PIETY STALL VOLUNTEERS

Saturday: 5.00pm Margot Short
Sunday: 8.30am Carmel Shea

CHURCH FLOWERS

February: Deborah Hosking



PRESBYTERY & CHURCH GROUNDS-MOWING

February: Stuart Robertson & Sean Giani

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY:

Welfare Number is 1800 305 330.
The Vinnies Store is now located at Shop 19, The Village, 164-190 Main 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, the Parishes of St Anthony's and St Bernard's are updating their Baptism Preparation Program.

Baptisms will be held at St Anthony's on the 1st & 3rd Saturdays of the month at 11.00am and Baptisms will be held at St Bernard's on the 2nd & 4th Saturdays of the month at 11.00am.

Our websites will be updated shortly with all the information and the new Baptism application form.

Please contact the Parish Offices for further information. Thank you.



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: Richard & Rosabella Tuala 0452 633 761

Group 2: Naim Chdid 0437 004 790

Group 3: John & Joyce Sultana 9747 9925

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

O come, let us worship God
and bow low before the God who made us,
for he is the Lord our God.

FIRST READING Isaiah 58:7-10

Thus says the Lord:

Share your bread with the hungry,
and shelter the homeless poor,
clothe the man you see to be naked
and turn not from your own kin.
Then will your light shine like the dawn
and your wound be quickly healed over.
Your integrity will go before you
and the glory of the Lord behind you.
Cry, and the Lord will answer;
call, and he will say, 'I am here.'
If you do away with the yoke,
the clenched fist, the wicked word,
if you give your bread to the hungry,
and relief to the oppressed,
your light will rise in the darkness,
and your shadows become like noon.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: 111

Commentator: A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

All: A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

He is a light in the darkness for the upright:
he is generous, merciful and just.
The good man takes pity and lends,
he conducts his affairs with honour.

The just man will never waver:
he will be remembered for ever.
He has no fear of evil news;
with a firm heart he trusts in the Lord.

With a steadfast heart he will not fear;
open-handed, he gives to the poor;
his justice stands firm for ever.
His head will be raised in glory.

A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

When I came to you, brothers, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ. Far from relying on any power of my own, I came among you in great 'fear and trembling' and in my speeches and the sermons that I gave, there were none of the arguments that belong to philosophy; only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. And I did this so that your faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
the man who follows me
will have the light of life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under-foot by men.

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Let them thank the Lord for his mercy,
his wonders for the children of men,
for he satisfies the thirsty soul,
and the hungry he fills with good things.

NEXT WEEKEND'S READINGS

6th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME- YEAR A

First Reading: Sir 15:15-20;

Second Reading: 1 Cor 2:6-10;

Gospel: Mt 5:17-37



The Psalms XV

Psalm 119 (118) (Part One of two parts)

Psalm 119, according to the Hebrew tradition, (118 according to the Greco-Latin one) is a very special Psalm, unique of its kind. This is first of all because of its length. Indeed, it is composed of 176 verses divided into 22 stanzas of eight verses each. Moreover, its special feature is that it is an “acrostic in alphabetical order”: in other words, it is structured in accordance with the Hebrew alphabet, which consists of 22 letters. Each stanza begins with a letter of this alphabet and the first letter of the first word of each of the eight verses in the stanza begins with this letter. This is a demanding literary genre, in which the author of the Psalm must have had to summon up all his skill.

However, what is most important for us is this Psalm’s central theme. It is an impressive, solemn canticle on the *Torah* of the Lord, that is, on his Law, a term which in its broadest meaning should be understood as a “teaching”, an “instruction”, a “rule of life”. The *Torah* is a word of God that challenges the human being and elicits his response of trusting obedience and generous love.

This Psalm is steeped in love for the word of God, whose beauty, saving power and capacity for giving joy and life it celebrates; because the divine Law is not the heavy yoke of slavery but a liberating gift of grace that brings happiness. “I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word”, the Psalmist declares (verse 16); and then: “Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it” (v. 35). And: “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day” (v. 97).

The Law of the Lord, his word, is the centre of the praying person’s life; he finds comfort in it, he makes it the subject of meditation, he treasures it in his heart: “I have laid up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (v. 11). This is the secret of the Psalmist’s happiness; and then, again: “The godless besmear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts” (v. 69).

The Psalmist’s faithfulness stems from listening to the word, from pondering on it in his inmost self, meditating on it and cherishing it, just as did Mary, who “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart”, the words that had been addressed to her and the marvellous events in which God revealed himself, asking her for the assent of her faith (cf. Luke 2:19,51).

By Pope Benedict XVI, www.vatican.va

And if the first verses of our Psalm begin by proclaiming “blessed” those “who walk in the law of the Lord” (v. 1b), and “who keep his testimonies” (v. 2a), it is once again the Virgin Mary who brings to completion the perfect figure of the believer, described by the Psalmist. It is she, in fact, who is the true “blessed”, proclaimed such by Elizabeth because “she ... believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (Luke 1:45).

Moreover, it was to her and to her faith that Jesus himself bore witness when he answered the woman who had cried: “Blessed is the womb that bore you”, with “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:27-28). Of course, Mary is blessed because she carried the Saviour in her womb, but especially because she accepted God’s announcement and because she was an attentive and loving custodian of his Word.

Psalm 119 is thus woven around this Word of life and blessedness. If its central theme is the “word” and “Law” of the Lord, next to these terms in almost all the verses such synonyms recur as “precepts”, “statutes”, “commandments”, “ordinances”, “promises”, “judgement”; and then many verbs relating to them, such as “observe”, “keep”, “understand”, “learn”, “love”, “meditate” and “live”.

The entire alphabet unfolds through the 22 stanzas of this Psalm and also the whole of the vocabulary of the believer’s trusting relationship with God; we find in it praise, thanksgiving and trust, but also supplication and lamentation. However, they are always imbued with the certainty of divine grace and of the power of the word of God. Even the verses marked by grief and by a sense of darkness remain open to hope and are permeated by faith.

“My soul cleaves to the dust; revive me according to your word” (v. 25), the Psalmist trustingly prays. “I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes” (v. 83), is his cry as a believer.

His fidelity, even when it is put to the test, finds strength in the Lord’s word: “Then shall I have an answer for those who taunt me, for I trust in your word” (v. 42), he says firmly. Even when he faces the anguishing prospect of death, the Lord’s commandments are his reference point and his hope of victory: “They have almost made an end of me on earth; but I have not forsaken your precepts” (v. 87).

To be continued