



St Anthony's Parish

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



St Bernard's Parish

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

The 23rd Sunday In Ordinary Time-Year A

6th September 2020

PARISH PRIEST: Fr Fabian Smith

ASSISTANT PRIESTS: Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint /Father Marcus Goulding

ST ANTHONY'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Lesley Morffew Mon Tue Wed & Fri 9am-4pm

Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson Tue-Thu 10am-2pm

Parish Office Hours: phone/email contact only

Father Fabian 0403 435 471

Fr Lucas 0478 768 141 /Fr Marcus 0468 367 893

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

Catholic Regional College - Melton (Years 7-12)

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

Website: www.crcmelton.com.au

ST BERNARD'S PARISH

Parish Secretary: Dolores Turcsan Wed-Fri 9am-1pm

Admin Assistant: Judy Johnson Tue-Thu 10am-2pm

Sacramental Coordinator/ Bookkeeper: Naim Chdid
Tue & Fri 10am-1pm

Parish Office Hours: phone/email contact only

Father Fabian 0403 435 471

Fr Lucas 0478 768 141 /Fr Marcus 0468 367 893

Email: bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au

Website: www.stbernardsbacchusmarsh.com.au

St Bernard's School Principal: Emilio Scalzo

19a Gisborne Rd, Bacchus Marsh VIC 3340

Phone: (03) 5366 5800

Email: principal@sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

Website: www.sbbacchusmarsh.catholic.edu.au

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Sue Alexander	0400 171 843
Lillian Christian - Vice Chair	0400 441 257
Stephen Fernandes	0439 743 533
Amy Honrade	03 9747 0078
Natalie Howard - Chair	0410 478 046
Villy Julita	0403 751 343
Rose Ma'ae	0431 386 473
Sally Markulin	0405 814 490
Kim Nguyen	0431 035 980

EX-OFFICIO:

Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Marcus Goulding
and Damien Schuster Council Secretary: Judy Johnson

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Cathy Belcher - Vice Chair	0431 082 886
Shane Cook -School Advisory Board	0419 999 052
Peter Farren	0418 594 501
Moir Ross	0400 675 056
Aaron Russell	0401 927 502
John Thorne - Secretary	5310 6692
James Waters - Chair	0403 822 795

EX-OFFICIO:

Fr Fabian Smith PP, Fr Lucas Kyaw Myint, Fr Marcus Goulding
and Emilio Scalzo

CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS

Coordinator: Godwin Barton (0425 734 449)

Officers: Karina Dunne & Lorraine Tellis

PARISHIONER'S FIRST COLLECTION/SECOND COLLECTION

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

The link to the St Anthony's Parish is: [CDFpay for St Anthony's Parish, Melton South](#)

The link to the St Bernard's Parish is: [CDFpay for St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh](#)

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

MASS AND DEVOTIONS

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Anointing of the sick can be organised with the Priests directly, please call them.
Father Fabian 0403 435 471 / Fr Lucas 0478 768 141 / Fr Marcus 0468 367 893

MASS TIMES—LIVE STREAMING FROM ST ANTHONY'S CHURCH

Monday-Saturday: 5.30pm Adoration/Rosary/Benediction
6.00pm Mass

Sunday: 10.30am Mass

MASSES AVAILABLE ON LIVE STREAMING— FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

St Anthony's Parish are live streaming Masses on YouTube.

The Masses are also being live streamed on Facebook. You can watch Masses by going to the website: stanthonypadua.com.au. Click the link for Live Masses.

The Masses are coming through the St Anthony's Facebook page—St Anthony of Padua Catholic Church Melton South (you will need to have a Facebook account to be able to view the Masses).

ST ANTHONY'S FACEBOOK

Please visit our Facebook page.:

[St Anthony of Padua](#)

[Catholic Church Melton South](#) Live

Masses streaming from St Anthony's daily.



MASS AT ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

The 11am Sunday Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral will be televised every week during the COVID-19 restrictions, on Channel 31 (often listed as Channel 44 on digital TVs). Also 'Mass for you at Home' is televised on channel 10 every Sunday at 6am. Please share this news with friends and family who might be limited to TV viewing. Please check your TV guides for changes.

PARISHIONER'S FIRST COLLECTION/SECOND COLLECTION OR PARISH APPEALS

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.

Parishioners are able to make quick and easy recurring thanksgiving payments or can choose a one-off offering from the comfort of their own home.

When making an offertory online, parishioners have the option to choose which collection they would like to partake in, as they usually would during Sunday Mass - first collection, second collection or a parish appeal.

The link to the St Anthony's Parish is: [CDFpay for St Anthony's Parish, Melton South](#)

The link to the St Bernard's Parish is: [CDFpay for St Bernard's Parish, Bacchus Marsh](#)

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

A PRAYER FOR ALL FATHERS AND PRIESTS

God our father, we give you thanks and praise for fathers young and old.

We pray for young fathers, newly embracing their vocation; may they find courage and perseverance to balance work, family and faith in joy and sacrifice.

We pray for our own fathers, who have supported and challenged us;

May they continue to lead in strong and gentle ways.

We pray for fathers around the world whose children are lost or suffering;

may they know that the God of compassion walks with them in their sorrow.

We pray for men who are not fathers but still mentor and guide us with fatherly love and advice.

Most importantly, we pray for all our Priests, our spiritual fathers who guide, teach us and lead us to You and who feed and nourish us with Your Sacraments.

We remember fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers who are no longer with us but who live forever in our memory and nourish us with their love. Amen



Source: The Catholic Telegraph

PHOTOS OF THE RENOVATION/EXTENSION



St Anthony's
Parish



CHAPEL WINDOWS

These beautiful windows are in our new chapel. The windows cost \$8,000, if you are able to donate towards the cost, it would be greatly appreciated.

Bank details.

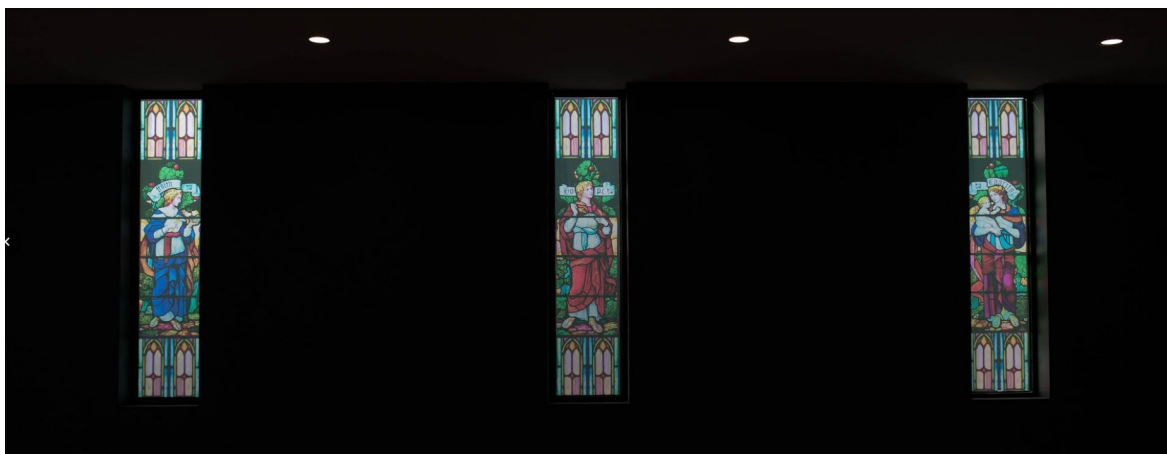
Acc Name **ST ANTHONYS CHURCH**

BSB **083 347**

Account No **641915964**.

Please put in your Full Name for record keeping purposes.

Thank you.





St Anthony's Parish

Dear Parishioners of St Anthony's,

I wish to write to you about the progress with our church extension. Much work has been happening during these past six months. In the next three weeks our church extension will be completed. Thank you for all your creative ideas to raise money and for all your financial support. I know that you have gone out of your way to support the many fundraisers to make this happen. You have given very generously to make a ten-year dream come to reality.

Whilst we have run a tight ship and have diligently used all the money allocated for the project to complete the building, we have not exceeded much over the budget. The furnishings in the chapel are not included in the extension project. Whilst we are in lockdown we are unable to raise any money to furnish and complete the works in the new chapel.

Only if you are in a financial position to help make this happen and wish to contribute towards the furnishings, I am providing bank details. Ac Name **ST ANTHONYS CHURCH**, BSB **083 347** Account No **641915964**. Please put in your Full Name for record keeping.

Two White Angels, Two Painted Angels, St Anthony's Statue, Carpet, 10 Pews with upholstery for the seat and kneeler which will seat a total of 40 in the new chapel. I sincerely apologise for asking. If you need to talk to me please contact me on 0403 435 471. Donations can be made over some months.

Many Blessings
Fr Fabian



ST ANTHONY'S PARISH OFFICE

Parishioners please be advised that the St Anthony's Parish Office will be closed during the COVID-19 Stage 4 lockdown. The Parish Staff will be working from home. Please contact us for any assistance you need.

Lesley Morffew Parish Secretary **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9.00am-4.00pm**

Email Lesley: meltonsouth@cam.org.au or call **9747 9692**

Judy Johnson Admin Assistant **Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 10.00am-2.00pm**

Email Judy: judyparishnews@gmail.com or call **0414 007 009**



Est. 1874

St Bernard's Catholic Parish

BACCHUS MARSH

Dear parishioners of St Bernard's,

Masses Suspended. Bacchus Marsh was placed under Stage 3 Stay at Home restrictions at 11.59pm on Wednesday, 5th August. This necessitates the temporary suspension of public Masses until the lock-down is lifted. It has been wonderful to see so many of you taking the opportunity to attend Mass over the last few weeks. The suspension of public Masses is a great suffering for Catholics, but we are now well practiced at keeping our faith alive at home.

Pray at Home. We are working hard to help you keep close to the Lord throughout lock-down. Over the last couple of weeks, we have developed a new website which will be regularly updated with helpful links and resources to support your relationship with God at home. For more information, visit StBernardsBacchusMarsh.com.au

Pastoral Care. Fr Lucas and Fr Marcus continue to reside at St Bernard's presbytery. They will pray for you daily at their private Masses. If you have any pastoral or sacramental need, please do not hesitate to contact them.

Parish Annual General Meeting. Given the limitations we are currently experiencing, our parish AGM will be held via Zoom at 7.30pm on Thursday, 10th September 2020. Parishioners who wish to attend the AGM via Zoom should email Dolores at bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au. A link will be sent out to you prior to the AGM with instructions about how to connect to the meeting. If you are unable to participate in the AGM by Zoom and have questions or comments for the AGM, they should be emailed or submitted in writing to Dolores prior to the AGM. Responses to any queries will be brought to you by members of the Parish Council following the AGM.

Many blessings,

Father Fabian 0403 435 471

Fr Lucas 0478 768 141 /Fr Marcus 0468 367 893

THE SWAG

Your copy of the SWAG can be collected from the Convent, 68 Lerderderg St.
Ring Sr Mary. 5367 2078 to organise a time.



ST BERNARD'S PARISH OFFICE

Parishioners please be advised that the St Bernard's Parish Office will be closed during the COVID-19 Stage 3 lockdown. The Parish Staff will be working from home. Please contact us for any assistance you need.

Dolores Turcsan Parish Secretary **Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 9.00am-1.00pm**

Email Dolores: bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au or call **0432 055 992**.

Naim Chdid Sacramental Coordinator/ Bookkeeper **Tuesday & Friday 10.00am-1.00pm**

Email Naim: bacchusmarsh@cam.org.au

Judy Johnson Admin Assistant **Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 10.00am-2.00pm**

Email Judy: judyparishnews@gmail.com or call **0414 007 009**

ST ANTHONY'S CARE TEAM

Dear St Anthony's Parishioners

The Care Team at St Anthony's would like to reach out to all our Parishioners during this difficult time.

Many of us are living in lockdown and isolation. Our Care Team, are available for a chat and to offer some support during these COVID-19 restrictions.

Please give one of our team members a call, they would love to hear from you!

Sue Alexander	0400 171 843	Lillian Christian	0400 441 257
Stephen Fernandes	0439 743 533	Amy Honrade	03 9747 0078
Natalie Howard	0410 478 046	Villy Julita	0403 751 343
Rose Ma'ae	0431 386 473	Sally Markulin	0405 814 490
Kim Nguyen	0431 035 980		

If you know of a fellow Parishioner that would benefit from contact from our Care Team, please give **Judy Johnson** a call on **0414 007 009**, who will be able to organise contact for the Parishioner.

God Bless

A CORONAVIRUS PRAYER

Jesus Christ, you travelled through towns and villages "curing every disease and illness."

At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.



Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbours from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.

Jesus Christ, heal us.

- Prayer originated from <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/02/coronavirus-prayer>

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

ST ANTHONY'S

ST ANTHONY'S PASTORAL CARE

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

A. N. Antony, James Cabrerros, Concetta Chircop,
Dorothy Davis, Emanuel Debrincat, Richard D'Souza,
Helen Mary Hurtis, Mavis McBain & Genoveffa Micallef.

Please pray for the Sick:

Nickolia & Klara Butkovic, Maria Caruana, Mary Caruana,
Chinnamma Joseph, Judy Layton, Peter Manicaro, Reg Marslen,
Damien Michael, Kevin Michael, Tony Michael, Veronica Michael,
Wanda Novak, Caleb O'Brien, John Osborne, Peter Poole,
Irene Rahilly, Catherine Roberts, Peter Roberts, Pat Roberts,
Charlie Spiteri, Dolores Turcsan, Clint Abela Wadge,
& John Xuereb and all those who have requested our prayers.

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

FATIMA STATUE

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

Group 1: Carmen Vella	0429 435 724
Group 2: Gregory McCutcheon	0455 457 645
Group 3: Helen Calleja	0401 497 980



ST BERNARD'S

ST BERNARD'S PASTORAL CARE

FAITH ON FIRE PRAYER GROUP

Every fortnight on Thursday at 7.00pm. We pray the Rosary, Stations of the cross, Divine Mercy chaplet and do a Bible reading and discussion.

Next meeting **To be advised**

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

Angelina Baiti, Hormankia Gixti, Noreen Matthews, Rosa Pollino,
Peg (Margaret) Shanahan, Fr Peter Sinnema, Monica Steele,
Edward Thorne & James White.

Please pray for the Sick:

Noah Barlow, Chaiel Balcombe, Michael Barrett, Peter Bennett,
Steven Braszel, Kevin Bridges, Tina Bower, John Canty,
Fred Capuano, Gary Ching, Josephine Cilia, Robyn Cola,
Ted Cooling, Marianne Cuskelly, Lindsay & Kathleen Dally,
Judy Delahey, Jack DeLuca, Allison Evans, Helen Evans,
Justin Fernandez, Pasquale Gagliarbi, Mario Galea,
Cynthia Goodyear, Gwen Green, Joe Gristi, Adam Hillier,
Elle Hillman, Kiahni Holamotutama, Alicia Holborn,
Chaiel Jackson, Matthew Jansen, David Kasprzak, Michael Larkin,
Marie Maloney, Patricia Marechal, Brian Marshall, Debbie Marshall,
Jordanis Mary Pauline McDonald, Ian McKechnie, Marcus Meno,
Paul Mullin, Arthur Pape, Michael Paterson, Georgia Peacock,
Mitchell Prendergast, Peter Roberts, Ken Shaw, Terry Sims,
Marian Smith, Elizabeth Stehmann, Susan Trist,
Dolores Turcsan, Stephen Van Eede, John Van Orsouw,
Angela Vicum, Louis Vogels, Barry Walsh, Mary Walsh,
Cath Wheelahan, Jayne Wilkins, Patricia Yazbek,
& Betty Young.

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

NEO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

[bow during the next line]

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in
accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and
his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is
adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen

Along the track

Father's Day

Father's Day was not invented by Bunnings or by big department stores or greeting card suppliers. It was not even invented in America! Father's Day dates back to at least the Middle Ages in Europe, and over there it is observed on 19 March, the feast day of Saint Joseph. The Spanish and Portuguese brought Father's Day to the Americas probably during the last years of the 14th century. Despite its current commercialism, it has for many, many years provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the important influence fathers play in our lives.

My father died forty-four years ago. He didn't have an easy life. His own father died when he was eighteen and he abandoned a fledgling career in the bank to come home and care for his mother and her sister. He became a farmer and a very good one. Years later my mother died suddenly and left him with eight children, one of whom was killed in a car accident not quite twelve months later. He never really got over those shocks. He was a quiet and rather shy person, not a man who could show affection easily but, remembering him on Father's Day, I realise that I was lucky. He was a good father, a good provider who cared for us in the best way he could. We all owe much to him and his support for us. In his own undemonstrative way, he loved each of us. His faith obviously meant so much to him and my own faith owes much to him.

That was a simpler, far slower time. We did not face the pace, the complexities of life that are around today. Being a parent today brings with it many new pressures and challenges but there are, I suggest, some things that parents of all times share. Jesus gave us a clue in the Sermon on the Mount and, with Father's Day on the way, perhaps we might focus on fathering.

Beatitudes for Fathers

Blessed are the poor:

Blessed is the father who appreciates that children are gifts God has entrusted to him to love, cherish, guide and protect, to help them understand that they are loved in the good times and in the down times.

Blessed are those that mourn:

Blessed is the father who knows how to comfort, who can empathise with his children's tears, fears and struggles and who is not afraid to show his own emotions.

Blessed are the meek:

Blessed is the father who enjoys spending time with his children, who is gentle, patient and encouraging, who helps his children to come to know themselves and seeks to understand them, the father who appreciates

that meekness isn't weakness and that winning isn't everything.

Blessed are those who hunger for justice:

Blessed is the father who by example teaches respect for others and for self, who seeks out the positive and minimises the negative, who keeps his children from smallness of spirit.

Blessed are the merciful:

Blessed is the father who cultivates a humble and listening heart and so is one who can be firm and compassionate, who treats his children with generosity of spirit and respect, who teaches by example the importance of forgiving and being forgiven.

Blessed are the pure of heart:

Blessed is the father who loves his children without possessiveness, who is able to affirm their dignity and worth as well as the gifts associated with their gender, respecting them for who God made them to be.

Blessed are the peacemakers:

Blessed is the father who encourages his children, who is able to dialogue with them and give them space to express themselves, who does not condemn but shuns the aggressive approach and the language of violence.

Blessed are they who are persecuted in their search for righteousness:

Blessed is the father who encourages his children to be generous and open hearted, who helps them to understand how to be their own person and not just follow the crowd, to pursue what they know is fair and right, even when that may be unpopular, to be steadfast but not stubborn.

There's a song "My Old Man," I think sung by John McDermott about the death of his father. It contains these lyrics:

I thought he'd live forever
He seemed so big and strong
But the minutes fly
And the years roll by
And suddenly when it happened
There was so much left unsaid
No second chance
To tell him thanks
For everything he's done

Good thing we have Father's Day.

Regards
Jim Quillinan

Email: jquillinan@dcsl.net.au

LITURGY OF THE WORD

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right;
treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

FIRST READING Ezekiel 33:7-9

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows, 'Son of man, I have appointed you as sentry to the House of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, warn them in my name. If I say to a wicked man: Wicked wretch, you are to die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked man to renounce his ways, then he shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. If, however, you do warn a wicked man to renounce his ways and repent, and he does not repent, then he shall die for his sin, but you yourself will have saved your life.'
The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: 94

Response: O that today you would listen to his voice!
Harden not your hearts.

Harden not your hearts.
Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;
hail the rock who saves us.
Let us come before him, giving thanks,
with songs let us hail the Lord. **R.**

Come in; let us bow and bend low;
let us kneel before the God who made us
for he is our God and we
the people who belong to his pasture,
the flock that is led by his hand. **R.**

O that today you would listen to his voice!
'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when your fathers put me to the test;
when they tried me, though they saw my work.' **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 13:8-10

Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow men you have carried out your obligations. All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

God was in Christ, to reconcile the world to himself;
and the Good News of reconciliation he has entrusted to us.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.

'I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.

'I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Like the deer that yearns for running streams,
so my soul is yearning for you, my God;
my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.

NEXT WEEK'S READING

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Eccl 27:30-28:7;

Second Reading: Rom 14:7-9;

Gospel: Matt 18:21-35



The life of Catholic worship and piety XXXIII

What is the role of novenas today?

Succinctly, a novena is a nine-day period of private or public prayer to obtain special graces, to implore special favours, or make special petitions. (Novena is derived from the Latin *novem*, meaning nine.) As the definition suggests, the novena has always had a sense of urgency and neediness.

In our liturgical usage, the novena differs from an octave, which has a more festive character, and either precedes or follows an important feast. For example, in our Church calendar we celebrate Octave before Christmas, where the recitation of the “O” Antiphons help us prepare for the birth of our Saviour. We also celebrate the Octaves of Christmas and Easter, which include the feast days themselves and the seven days that follow, to highlight the joy of these mysteries.

The origin of the novena in our Church’s spiritual treasure is hard to pinpoint. The Old Testament does not indicate any nine-day celebration among the Jewish people. On the other hand, in the New Testament at the Ascension scene, our Lord gives the Apostles the Great Commission, and then tells them to return to Jerusalem and to await the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Acts of the Apostles recounts: “After that they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet near Jerusalem — a mere Sabbath’s journey away. Together they devoted themselves to constant prayer” (Acts 1:12,14). Nine days later, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost. Perhaps, this nine-day period of prayer of the Apostles is the basis for the novena.

Long before Christianity, the ancient Romans also celebrated nine days of prayers for various reasons. The author Livy recorded how nine days of prayer were celebrated at Mount Alban to avert some evil or wrath of the gods as predicted by soothsayers. Similarly, nine days of prayer were offered when some “wonder” had been predicted. Families also held a nine-day mourning period upon the death of a loved one with a special feast after the burial on the ninth day. The Romans also celebrated the *parentalia novendialia*, a yearly novena (February 13-22) remembering all departed family members. So, it is possible that Christianity “baptised” this pagan practice.

Whatever the exact origins may be, the early Christians did have a nine-day mourning period upon the death of a loved one. Eventually, a novena of Masses for the repose of the soul was offered. To this day, there is the *novendiala* or Pope’s Novena, observed upon the death of the Holy Father.

By Fr William Saunders, catholiceducation.org/en/

In the Middle Ages, particularly in Spain and France, novenas of prayers were offered nine days before Christmas, signifying the nine months our Lord spent in the womb of our Blessed Mother. These special novenas helped the faithful prepare for the festive, yet solemn, celebration of the birth of our Lord.

Eventually, various novenas were composed to help the faithful prepare for a special feast or to invoke the aid of a saint for a particular reason. Some of the popular novenas still widely used in our Church include those of Miraculous Medal, Sacred Heart of Jesus, St Joseph and St Jude.

It is difficult to say why we do not find novenas as much a part of public worship now as before Vatican II. I remember asking this question to an elderly priest, who said that he remembered people who would skip Mass yet attend the weekly novena. As Catholics, the primary focus of our spirituality and public worship should be the Holy Eucharist and the Mass. With the advent of liturgical renewal and the increased participation of the congregation at Mass, perhaps this is why novenas fell by the wayside.

Also, some people, I think, have hurt the cause of novenas because of superstition. In every parish I have been assigned, I have found copies of a St Jude novena, which states that if a person goes to Church for nine days and leaves a copy of the novena to St Jude, then the prayer will be granted — sort of like a spiritual chain letter.

This is dispensing-machine Catholicism; just as a person puts a coin in the vending machine and presses the button to get the desired soft drink, here a person says the prayer, goes to Church, and is supposedly guaranteed that the request will be granted. So much for God’s will. What is really sad these days is that the person simply photocopies the letter; one would think they could at least hand-write it. Worse yet, I usually have to pick up these letters, which are left all over the Church.

Nevertheless, novenas still hold a legitimate place in our Catholic spirituality. The Enchiridion of Indulgences notes: “A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who devoutly take part in the pious exercise of a public novena before the feast of Christmas or Pentecost or the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

Here the Church is again emphasising that the novena is a pious, spiritual exercise to bolster the faith of the individual, and that the individual should be truly devout, always remembering the goodness of the Lord who answers all of our prayers according to His divine will.