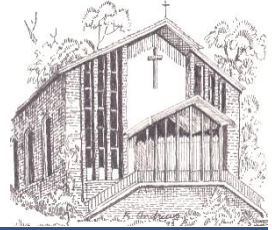




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



22 / 23 DECEMBER 2018
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT ✦ YEAR C
The Angels' Candle ☸☸☸ Christmas Liturgy Times

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Spaciousness

During Advent we have been celebrating our emptiness.

This sounds odd, and yet give it a thought. If we were completely filled up, we would have no room to let anyone or anything in. We would be like a clump of mud or a great thick mountain. (Maybe nice to look at, but not so good at relating.)

Somewhere in Scripture the people ask God to take their hearts of stone and make them into hearts of flesh. Throughout Advent we have been asking especially for that. A time to become aware of God and then thank God for the spacious emptiness that a human heart has within it. Living hearts, not stone ones.

Increasing our own emptiness and our own darkness can be frightening. The shade spreads out its kingdom every day in the northern hemisphere as Christmas comes nearer. The people there see less by natural light, and their body systems squirm to readjust.

Some are resentful as the daylight hours get shorter and shorter—and especially when “daylight savings time” collapses and the dark settles in an hour sooner in the afternoon. It is dark well before most people leave work – or even, school! Depressing.

There is some wisdom in deprivation and darkness. Increased dark allows human beings to rug up and stay inside their shelter, cosy and patient, waiting for the light to come back. This helps them reflect upon themselves:

Such small creatures within so vast a night.

God says as much to Bethlehem in the First Reading, “You, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, ... the Lord will give [you] up, until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth.”

Light had already come from that darkness, of course. King David traced his origins to Bethlehem, centuries before (see 1 Samuel: 17:12). And of course, Jesus was to be born in the same town. This strange, wide place in the road could produce Kings?

It is the same way within our souls. Our darkness and our emptiness are where Jesus is to be born on Christmas. The places in us that are gloomy, angry or jealous, these form our darkness. The friends who leave us behind, they have a high, family time while we feel so alone—this is where the child will be born.

Watch Mary hasten to her cousin's house, a long trip, on foot, over dirt and sand and rocks, under the hot, hot sun (Gospel). She does not have a need to be coddled and queenly in order to bring forth The Holy One. She does not spend a second worrying



whether the way is too hard. Her soul somehow knows about the soft light that will shine from within her. Everything else is in second place.

Maybe emptiness can speak humbly from within us too. For a minute or two we could quit trying so hard to make everything alright in our admittedly arduous worlds.

Let go and let God. That way we will get to know the one whose “origin is from of old” (First Reading). We might even let him take up his home in us. He can make himself whatever size is needed for our souls.

What better Christmas could there be?.

Our Advent season draws to a close with a liturgy filled with promise and expectation. Luke’s gospel text describes the first meeting of John the Baptist with the Lord he is to herald so selflessly – in a tableau rich in implications, as we shall see. The first reading from the prophet Micah sums up the immense hopes about to be realized with the coming of the New David. The messiah will be born in Bethlehem, the city of David; he will be a mighty leader, gathering God’s scattered people and exercising a rule giving expression to God’s ‘power and majesty’; he will, in fact, be peace personified (cf. Ephesians 2:14).

The reading from the letter to the Hebrews describes how the Saviour’s coming inaugurates a new and final order of things in the plan of God. The old covenant, with its animal sacrifices and burnt offerings, was only a foreshadowing. Many times, the prophets, in the name of God, had rebuked the people for relying upon these external observances while their hearts were far from God and God’s ways. Jesus himself was to run up against this same attitude. The letter to the Hebrews, we know, was written for people who looked back nostalgically to the rituals of old Israel, inviting them to leave these shadows behind and rejoice in the reality they pointed to. Today’s passage takes us to the heart of the matter – the eternal designs of God shaping the mission of the eternal Son made human. True worship, as the psalm quoted reminds us (Psalm 40), is giving one’s life over to God in fidelity and obedience. The Saviour’s becoming one of us, and giving himself – ‘once and for all’ – into the hands of his Father, through his Paschal Mystery, has realized this pattern in a manner beyond all human expectations. By this self-offering, he has become the true worship of the whole of creation. More than that, he has united us to himself in his act of worship – God’s ‘will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body’.

But all of this is in the future, as Luke describes the dawn of salvation. Presenting the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, he invites us to recognize how much is involved in the drama that is beginning. It realizes the designs of the eternal Father, whose ‘promise made to Mary is fulfilled’; the Old Testament and its time of waiting is coming to an end, as its final and greatest spokesman recognizes the coming of the Son of God; it is through Mary – ‘most blessed of all women’ – that this dawn of salvation takes place; and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that Mary has conceived, and Elizabeth with her child are able to enter into the joy that faith in this coming, or advent, brings to the world.

God has to “make us turn in a different direction” so that we can find Christ in poverty (Bethlehem) and in the poor and outcast (Mary and Elizabeth).

“Christ, our Saviour, not only loved the poor, but rather ‘being rich he became poor,’ he lived in poverty. His mission centred on advising the poor of their liberation and he founded his Church as the sign of that poverty among people.”

– Latin American Bishops, *Poverty of the Church*, Medellin Documents, 1968: 7



VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Thanks to you for your generosity and thanks to Vinnies for their ministry! Over the last few weekends **\$8,120** was donated! Amazing result! Thank you!

You gifts of hampers, toys, non-perishable items and gifts have provided joy to many families and individuals in our local area. On Monday, Vinnies members prepared the parcels for distribution before Christmas. **Thank you for your generosity!**



A Christmas without family after fleeing domestic violence. A Christmas without comfort and peace of mind, after bills have mounted up. Or a Christmas without a roof over your head, after losing your home. This year more people than ever will experience homelessness over Christmas. There are **116,000** people across Australia either sleeping on the streets, in temporary or inadequate dwellings, or in halfway-solutions like boarding houses or crisis accommodation. A Christmas without a home is no Christmas at all.

FIRST COMMUNION CONTINUES

Congratulations to Noah Henderson and Cameron Sheldrick who will receive the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time this Sunday.

BAPTISMS IN FEBRUARY 2019

Baptism, the first sacrament of initiation, prepares us to celebrate the Eucharist. Baptisms are usually held on the third weekend of each month [except January and Lent], during either of the weekend Masses. Baptism forms are obtainable from the Parish Office.

Next baptisms in our Parish will be during the weekend Masses on either **16 or 17 February 2019**. Baptisms after that will be on **Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019**. If you want your infant daughter or son baptized on 16/17 February, at least one parent needs to attend the Baptism Preparation Class which will be held at 7:15pm on **Thursday, 31 January**. Enrolment forms are obtainable from the Parish Office.

THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

The summer solstice occurs exactly when the axial tilt of the Earth's semi-axis in a given hemisphere is most inclined towards the Sun – for the Earth, this is 23° 26'. This happens twice each year, at which times the Sun reaches its highest position in the sky as seen from the North or South Pole respectively. The summer solstice this year occurs at **09:21:42** (i.e. 9:21am and 42secs Sydney time) on **Saturday, 22 December**. Sunrise in Sydney that day is 05:41 and Sunset is at 20:06 (8:06pm). In Oslo, Norway, that day, sunrise is **9:18am** and sunset **3:12pm!** In **Santaland**, in Rovaniemi, in Lapland, Northern Finland, the sun will rise at **11:08am** and set at **1:22pm!**



PLenary COUNCIL 2020 – WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

The closing date for Plenary Council submissions is 6 March 2019. We really want to hear from everyone! *Listen humbly to the Spirit and each other and speak boldly of what you hear!* The Thirroul Plenary Team will be available in January to host listening and dialog sessions. We are also planning a special session in January on the topic of the Church's responses to the matters revealed in the Royal Commission and the subsequent report. *If you'd like to attend a session, please add your name to the sheet in the church or email the Parish Office, with your preferred time.*

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Monday	24 Dec	4:00pm Setting up in School grounds
		6:30pm Christmas Eve Mass in School
		9:30pm Christmas Eve Mass Wombarra
Tuesday	25 Dec	9:00am Christmas Day Mass Thirroul
Wednesday	26 Dec	9:00am Mass: Feast of St Stephen, <i>first martyr</i>
Thursday	27 Dec	9:00am Mass: Feast of St John, <i>apostle, evangelist</i>
Friday	28 Dec	9:30am Mass: Feast of the Holy Innocents, <i>martys</i>



ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA

935 rescues performed by surf lifesavers since 1 July 18 – last week 749

SWIM SAFELY AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME



CHRISTMAS LITURGIES

- ❖ Christmas Eve Mass 6:30pm Monday 24 December in our Parish School
- ❖ Christmas Eve Mass 9:30pm Monday 24 December at Wombarra church
- ❖ Christmas Day Mass 9:00am Tuesday 25 December at Thirroul

All are invited to bring along a bell to ring during any of the Christmas Masses. Children are welcome to dress as shepherds or angels for any of the Christmas Masses. 🛎️🛎️🛎️

- ❖ Boxing Day Mass 9:00am Wednesday 26 December Feast of St Stephen
- ❖ Christmas Week 9:00am Thursday 27 December Feast of St John
- ❖ Christmas Week 9:30am Friday 28 December Holy Innocents
- ❖ Feast of the Holy Family 5:30pm / 8:00am 29/30 December
- ❖ New Year's Day 9:00am Tuesday 1 January 2019 World Day of Peace

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Fourth Sunday of Advent • Year C

1 st Reading	Micah 5:1-4
2 nd Reading	Hebrews 10:5-10
Gospel	Luke 1:39-44

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Feast of the Holy Family • Year C

1 st Reading	1 Samuel 1:20-22,24-28
2 nd Reading	1 John 3:1-2,21-24
Gospel	Luke 2:41-52

SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Church of St Michael • Thirroul

Saturday – 5:30pm • Sunday – 8:00am

Bulli • Sunday 8:30am and 5:30pm

Corrimal • Saturday 6pm, Sunday 9:30am

LITURGIES THIS WEEK

Wombarra [Liturgy]	Monday	4:30pm
Thirroul	Tuesday	6:30pm
	Wednesday	9:00am
	Thursday	9:00am
	Friday	9:30am

Parish of St Michael – Thirroul and Wombarra

Moving forward as a Parish Family + one of the Northern Illawarra Parishes

Patrick Vaughan • Parish Priest ❖ Andrew Granc ofm, Geoff Allen, Ken Cafe ofm • Assisting

📍 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive
☎ 4268 1910 📠 4268 1976

📮 PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515

📧 thirroul@dow.org.au

Parish Office Hours Tuesday, Wednesday Friday [except January]

9:00am to 3:30pm Magda Pires
10:00am to 3:00pm Maureen Franciskovic

🌐 www.thirroulcatholic.org.au Parish School of St Michael 📞 4267 2560