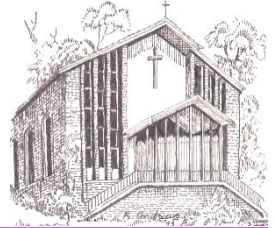




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



6 / 7 APRIL 2019

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT + YEAR C



Prayer



Fasting



Almsgiving



THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Caught!

It is a scene from a nightmare. Yet it turns out well. Pretend that you are the woman in Sunday's Gospel. You have been "caught in the very act of committing adultery." The officials shove you into a mob of people.

They see your hot shame and how it burns. They recite the ancient law of Moses: "The sacred law says you must be stoned to death for your crime."

Stoned to death! Humiliation would be bad enough! The sin is bad enough. Stoned! No! There is a man everyone calls the "Teacher." He has been captivating the crowd just before you were dragged in. Now you (= the woman) have become the centre of attention.

So, the nightmare gets worse. By means of your humiliation the accusers want to trap the Teacher and disgrace him! They are using you for this purpose. Now you see that your devastation is only a mere tool!

Their motto is hatred not love. They want death to happen.

They question the Teacher. Doesn't he agree that you should be stoned to death? They have him in a snare, this "Teacher," this dreamer, who always preaches about forgiveness and love. If he defends you for the sake of his so-called love, he will break the law of Moses! If he rejects his law of love, he must then follow Moses' law, pick up a stone and throw it.

This Teacher leans down, scratching absent-mindedly in the dirt. People hold their breath. The accusers fear. Why is he silent and what will he say? Now they themselves become nervous.

Let us figure out Jesus' answer. Could it be that "the Teacher" is thinking something like the following: "My Abba has loved each of them through all ages, no matter whether they were sinners or not. 'Be my people,' Abba always begged them. 'Love one another. I love you, and I forgive your sins.'" But their motto is hatred not love. They want death to happen.

For "Father", Jesus uses an Arabic word that expresses both familiarity and respect, "Abba." They shout again. "What is your answer? Shall we follow the law and stone this sinful woman?" Remember, reader, you are that woman, and you stand in humiliation, cheeks hot and tears falling. Your heart says in terror, "the accusers are right!"

But the Teacher lifts his head from the scratching in the dirt. He utters a sentence that sums up the Gospel and all of Lent: "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." (Gospel)



☞☞ The crowd creeps away, silently, sunk in their own hidden sins. Now you stand alone before this quiet Teacher, and your terror has gone. There is something about him that supports you, brings you out to solid ground.

“Well, where are they?” he asks. “Has no one condemned you?” You reply, “No one, sir.” Maybe he also asks, “Do you condemn yourself?”

You, the woman, spend a long time on this answer because the question is so very hard. Finally, you whisper, “I do not wish to condemn myself, Teacher.”

“Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus answers. “Go and sin no more.”

This scene could refashion the whole earth. If we could each accept our own sinfulness and the forgiveness that surrounds it. We would have peace. We would drink compassion from God, who has been there all along, tracing in the sand.

You stammer at last, “I believe, Lord. Help my unbelief.”

Today’s gospel reading, the story of how the enemies of Jesus – ‘looking for something to use against him’ – brought before him an unfortunate woman guilty of adultery, is one of the most memorable incidents recorded in the gospels – full of encouragement for us as we come towards the end of our Lenten journey. As we have recalled more than once, the four gospels of the New Testament bring together many small stories current in early Christian preaching. Today’s gospel is a story that survived independently of the canonical gospels – to be incorporated in the text of John’s gospel in about the third century. Scholars judge that it probably came originally from the pen of Luke. It is an appropriate choice for our Lenten liturgy. As we listen to the story, we are invited to join the crowd around Jesus witnessing the woman’s humiliation. If we have been guilty of serious failures, we are invited to meet the merciful love of God – a realistic love that invites the woman to acknowledge her ‘sin’; but at the same time Jesus sends her away with a new sense of her own worth: ‘Neither do I condemn you, go away and don’t sin any more’. As the amazing story of how Jesus challenged those who dragged the unfortunate woman before him unfolds, each of us is invited to identify with God’s compassionate ways – perhaps, our complacency is making us blind to our hidden selfishness.

Today’s first reading comes from the time of exile (over 500 years before the birth of Jesus). In the midst of apparent failure, the prophet – in the name of God – has an astounding message of hope. A ‘new’ intervention of God, like a new Exodus, is promised. As a consequence, the people God has made God’s own will ‘sing God’s praises’.

As is so often the case in the Church’s liturgy, the reading from Saint Paul is a celebration of fulfilment – what was promised and foreshadowed in the Old Testament reading has been realised! This reading brings together – simply but very effectively – some of the principal themes of Paul’s teaching. It can give a focus to our reflections in the last stage of our journey towards the Easter celebration. Paul speaks of achieving ‘perfection’. We will be misled by this term if we do not recognise that it belongs to the language of old Israel. Before his conversion, Paul sought to serve God by perfect observance of the prescriptions of the Law – ‘the perfection that comes from the Law, by my own efforts’. His conversion has made him realise that true ‘perfection’ – the right relationship with God that he calls in other places ‘justification’ – is a gift of God, found ‘through faith in Jesus Christ’. This powerful text helps us to appreciate all that this ‘faith’ implies for Paul. Far more than merely assenting to the right truths, it means ‘knowing Christ Jesus my Lord’ – a ‘knowing’ that is born of profound personal experience (as when someone says ‘I have known success and failure’). ‘Knowing’ Christ, Paul says is sharing his very life, ‘having a place in him’. Thus he ‘shares Christ’s sufferings’ and ‘the pattern of his death’. But through his faith in the Paschal Mystery, Paul ‘knows’ already ‘the power of Christ’s resurrection’; and his life is henceforth a ‘straining ahead’ to all that is promised to those who are faithful.

PROJECT COMPASSION

100% LOVE Salma lives with her husband, Masud, in the rural community of Gazipur, two hours from Bangladesh's bustling capital.

She was just 18 years old, pregnant and fearful for her life and that of her unborn child, when she featured in Project Compassion 2013. In Bangladesh, maternal and infant mortality rates are still tragically high. During her first pregnancy, Salma was very sick, she experienced abdominal pain and couldn't eat. She sought the help of a midwife called Pronoti, trained by Caritas Australia's Safe Motherhood Program.



Pronoti helped Salma safely through two pregnancies, thanks to her comprehensive training in midwifery, antenatal and postnatal care. The program has reduced maternal and infant mortality in the area by almost 70 percent. Over 400 women have been trained in midwifery since 2008 – and they have given over 28,000 women antenatal check-ups and delivered more than 15,000 babies.

Now 24, Salma smiles as she watches her one-year-old boy and six-year-old daughter play together. She is pleased that they are growing up strong and can focus on their hopes for the future.

“If the Safe Motherhood Program had not trained midwives like Pronoti, many of us would have to go to the private clinics 11 kilometres away,” Salma says. “Some of us women and our babies might die because of that. We are poor and so it is easy to get discouraged about the future. However, if we have hope, we have the courage to try and do things that seem difficult or impossible at the time.”

Please support Caritas Australia this Lenten season. **Lives change when we all give 100%.** You can donate through Parish boxes and envelopes, or by phoning 1800 024 413 or visiting www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

At the Easter Vigil water is blessed and everyone will be given a bottle to take to bless your homes and cars. *However*, we need more small plastic bottles. If you have some, please bring them in by Sunday, 7 April.

NEEDED FOR Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Anzac Day

Our Parish will need **PALMS, both large and small, for Palm Sunday, 13/14 April**, please drop **palms** at the church before **9:30am on Friday, 12 April**. We will also need plenty of **ROSEMARY** for **Good Friday, 19 April** and **ANZAC Day**.

WORDS OF PEACE BY ST OSCAR ROMERO

Peace is not the absence of war. That is a totally negative notion. Nor can we say that we have peace just because there is no war. Currently, there is no war in many countries; in fact, most of the world is not at war, and yet, there is true peace in very few places. It is not enough to not have war. Nor is true peace the balance of two adversaries' forces, claiming to be in harmony. Russia and the United States continue to be threats, even if there is civility between them. What remains though is fear, fear from all of the flexing as to who is more powerful. That it is not peace. If two boys or two men threaten a lawsuit against each other, but that lawsuit does not get to litigation, it cannot be considered peace either. There is still fear between two powers or the two parties. As the Pope has shared, nobody can talk about peace with a gun or a rifle in his hand; that is fear. There can be no peace either, says the Second Vatican Council, from the horrific quests for domination and wanting to subdue, whether it be a nation or a single person. That would be like saying peace comes from death or repression. Neither of them is peace. — Bishop Oscar Romero † 24 Mar 80

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK AND BEYOND

Tuesday 9 Apr Reconciliation Rite II at Thirroul, 7:30pm

Sunday 14 Apr Appin Massacre Memorial Ceremony, *Cataract Dam 11am-3pm*

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

4,844 rescues performed since 1 July 18 – last week **4,676**

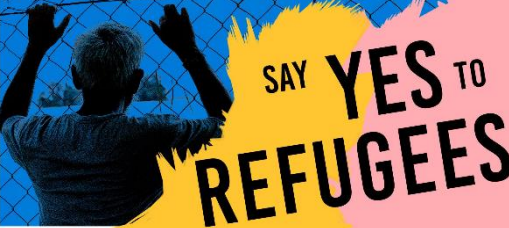
SWIM SAFELY – BETWEEN THE FLAGS WHERE THE WAVES BREAK



EASTER LITURGY TIMES

Tuesday	16 April	7:00pm	Chrism Mass at Wollongong Cathedral
Holy Thursday	18 April	7:30pm	Mass of the Lord's Supper
Good Friday	19 April	10:30am	Way of the Cross
		3:00pm	Liturgy of the Passion
Holy Saturday	20 April	7:00pm	Easter Vigil
Easter Sunday	21 April	8:00am	Mass of the Resurrection and baptisms

PALM SUNDAY RALLY & MARCH



PALM SUNDAY RALLY, MARCH

On Palm Sunday, 14 April at Wollongong Town Hall, 12:30 to 14:30, the Refugee Action Collective Illawarra invites you to its annual Palm Sunday rally for refugees. *The pressure to dismantle offshore detention on Manus and Nauru is growing.* Let us help to eradicate any scare campaign; **let us stand for freedom from fear and racism.**

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Fifth Sunday of Lent • Year C

1st Reading	Isaiah 43:16-21
2nd Reading	Philippians 3:8-14
Gospel	John 8:1-11

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Passion [Palm] Sunday • Year C

1st Reading	Isaiah 50:4-7
2nd Reading	Philippians 2:6-11
Gospel	Luke 22:14-23:56

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	5:30pm
	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

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