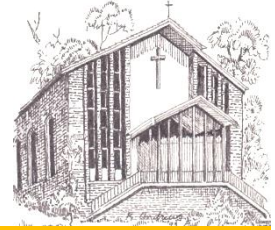




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



11 / 12 MAY 2019
4TH SUNDAY OF THE 50 DAYS OF EASTER ✦ YEAR C
Happy Mothers Day

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Greet Him

Think of the endearing way domestic animals and pets recognize their owners. Dogs collapse into a frenzy of delight when you come home, even if you have been gone for just ten minutes. The new heaven has arrived in their midst and hysterics are the least they can do. There are cats like this somewhere, but mostly your house cats have an opposite reaction from the heartsick dogs. "Oh it's you again," they seem to say, bored.

I do know one exception. My cousin's cat always modelled indifference with most people, but when I walked into the house it made a quiet bee-line to where I took a seat, making no secret of how it enjoyed being petted by me. I have never been sure whether to be complimented or not, nor can I explain it. There might be months between visits and still it makes its way to the petting machine, with both dignity and craving.

Jesus, judging from his stories, also paid a lot of attention to animals. He had watched shepherds and sheep many times in his trips through the lands and he observed their kinship, one for the other. It was not cat-like or dog-like, but nevertheless it was heartfelt. Shepherds made the sheep safe, guarded them, and led them to food and drink. Jesus even compared a milling crowd of people to "sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

I have been told that in the Jerusalem of Jesus' day various flocks would arrive along with their respective shepherds, but that there was only one sheepfold (the pen for sheep), so all the shepherds sent all the sheep into it. This made for a rather large herd overall, and there wasn't a practice of branding or marking in order to tell one from the other. What's more, sheep, unlike dogs, do not rejoice themselves into knots when their shepherd walks in.

Then how could each shepherd reclaim own sheep?

Two ways.

First, the shepherd knew them by heart. Sometimes he had a special name for each character in the flock. And second, the sheep themselves recognized their master's voice immediately. When he called out, they simply got to their feet and came with him, through the sheep-gate.

Jesus refers to this familiarity in Sunday's short Gospel reading. "My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they know me," he says. Haven't you ever longed to hear the voice of someone who could make things alright, who could lift the burdens from your shoulders? Someone who knows you by name and loves you?

Jesus says he is that someone.

You "shall never perish," he adds, as he holds you in his own hands. It is the Father  



✠✠ who has given you to Jesus. Who could revoke that gift?

I have a hunch that you do recognize Jesus' voice when you hear it. Your feelings move when you hear trustingly a certain gospel, for instance. Or when you receive the bread of everlasting life and the cup of unending salvation—not as a stranger might, but as a member of the well-fed and greatly cared for flock.

What about trying, this Sunday, to notice whether your spirit inclines to Jesus? Maybe you settle into his lap for care.

Your soul seeks him always. And he finds you.

The liturgies of the last two Sundays have led us to reflect upon the apostles' coming to faith on the Risen Lord. As they shared this faith with the first generation of Christians, the image of Jesus as 'shepherd and guardian' of God's people (1 Peter 2:25) established itself in Christian consciousness. One of the Church's first representations of the Saviour portrayed him as a youthful shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders – no doubt indicating that when they heard the parable of the lost sheep, the first Christians instinctively identified the shepherd of the parable with the Risen Lord.



The image has a long pre-history. In Old Testament times, the peoples of the Middle East, had a old tradition that spoke of a king as 'shepherd' of his people. Though these ancient rulers were all too often exploiters of their subjects, this remarkable ideal of humble service lived on in the peoples' traditions. In the outlook of old Israel, something remarkable occurred when this image was associated with the God of the covenant, the champion of the oppressed – who rebuked the nation's rulers through his prophet: 'You have failed to bring back strays or look for the lost ... I myself shall take care of my flock' (Ezekiel 34). This arresting theme is echoed in the psalms, Israel's confession of faith – in Psalm 99 used in today's liturgy, and in the familiar Psalm 23.

Against this background, the New Testament passages that speak of Jesus as 'shepherd' ('when the chief shepherd appears, you will be given an unfading crown of glory', 1 Peter 5:4; 'the God of peace brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep', Hebrews 13: 20) take on a new depth of meaning – a meaning that is fully expressed in today's short gospel reading from John.

'The Father and I are one': with these final words of the fourth gospel's long and familiar passage on the 'shepherd' theme, Jesus makes it clear that, in his role as 'shepherd', he identifies himself with the Shepherd who is the God of Israel – full expression of the Father's being. Because he speaks with the fullness of the divine authority, true believers 'listen to his voice'; he is the very Author of 'eternal life'. The first two readings complement this affirmation, by celebrating the universal nature of his flock: before the throne of the one who laid down his life for them are gathered 'people from every nation, race, tribe and language'; his 'salvation reaches the ends of the earth'.

How should we live out our faith in the Risen Lord? Let us learn from the first generation of Christians who did so by owning him as their 'Good Shepherd' – by 'listening to his voice' as they were pondering all that the great truths of faith offered them, and by living in the hope he brought to the world as he 'led them to springs of living water'.

The image of the Good Shepherd is one of love, care, protection, intimacy and closeness, which has implications for us who are followers of Jesus. We are challenged to share his concern for those who are in trouble, for those who suffer injustice, for the sick and for the poor. It is not good enough for us to say to those suffering "*You should trust in Jesus to make things work out for you*". As his followers, we share the same concerns as he has, and show our love in very practical ways, as Jesus did. It may be inconvenient to offer assistance, it may cost us time, effort and money, but love demands that this be done.

SIGNIFICANT WEDDING ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR?

Are you celebrating a significant wedding anniversary this year, **25, 50, 60 or more years**, please contact the Parish Office **as soon as possible**, so that arrangements can be made to inform the diocesan office so congratulations can be sent to you from our bishop.

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Next **Tuesday, 14 May**, commencing at **11:00am** in the McCarthy Centre, Trish from Wollongong CatholicCare will be guest speaker. Light luncheon to follow. All welcome! Monthly meeting 1:30pm.

USED STAMPS

Used stamps are worth money! That money can be used to help people in need in many and various ways. If you have any used stamps, **please drop them in to the sacristy – there is a special box in the sacristy for used stamps.**



PLASTIC BOTTLES – A RECYCLING PROJECT

At Easter about one hundred small plastic bottles of Holy Water were distributed so that you could bless your home or cars with it. When you have used the Holy Water, **please return the empty plastic bottles** to the church – place them in the tray near the baptism font, so we can fill them again. *How long should you keep Holy Water?* We bless new Holy Water usually every month, so it's probably a good idea not to keep Holy Water longer than a couple of months. *What do you do with it then?* Best solution is to pour it on a garden – but not on sensitive plants, as we use salt water from our beach for our Holy Water.



THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The symbolic descriptions in the Book of Revelation are not to be taken as literal descriptions, nor is the symbolism meant to be pictured realistically. One would find it difficult and repulsive to visualize a lamb with seven horns and seven eyes; yet Jesus Christ is described in precisely such words (5:6). The author used these images to suggest Christ's universal (seven) power (horns) and knowledge (eyes). A significant feature of apocalyptic writing is the use of symbolic colours, metals, garments, and numbers (four signifies the world, six imperfection, seven totality or perfection, twelve Israel's tribes or the apostles, one thousand immensity). Finally, the vindictive language in the book is also to be understood symbolically and not literally. The cries for vengeance on the lips of Christian martyrs that sound so harsh are in fact literary devices the author employed to evoke in the reader and hearer a feeling of horror for apostasy and rebellion that will be severely punished by God. The Book of Revelation cannot be adequately understood except against the historical background that occasioned its writing. Like Daniel and other apocalypses, it was composed as resistance literature to meet a crisis. The book itself suggests that the crisis was ruthless persecution of the early church by the Roman authorities. *[more next week]*



BLESSING OF MOTHERS

Tender, gentle God of love, bend down your ear: bless the mothers of our families. Bless them with the strength of your Spirit, as they taught their children to walk. Bless them with the melody of your love, as they shared how to talk and sing. Bless them with a place at your eternal dinner table, they who fed and nurtured life. Bless them today with good things, with good health, with pride in their children, with joy, love and laughter. Surround them with many good friends. May they who carried life in their wombs be carried one day to your divine embrace. May your blessings descend on all mothers. Amen! Alleluia!

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK AND BEYOND

Monday 13 May 6:00pm Enrolments for Confirmation 2019 close
 Tuesday 14 May 11:00am Catholic Women's League
 Weekend 18/19 May Baptisms: 1 on Saturday; 3 on Sunday



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

5,686 rescues performed since 1 July 18 – last week **5,478**

SWIM SAFELY – WHERE THE WAVES BREAK – OR IN THE POOL

SOCIAL JUSTICE

“Combatting the culture of abuse, the loss of credibility, the resulting bewilderment and confusion, and the discrediting of our mission urgently demands of us a renewed and decisive approach to resolving conflicts. Jesus would tell us: ‘You know how among the Gentiles those who seem to exercise authority lord it over them; their great ones make their importance felt. It cannot be like that with you’ (Mark 10:42-43). Loss of credibility calls for a specific approach, since it cannot be regained by issuing stern decrees or by simply creating new committees or improving flow charts, as if we were in charge of a department of human resources. ... Consequently, amid the upset and confusion experienced by our communities, our primary duty is to foster a shared spirit of discernment, rather than to seek the relative calm resulting from compromise or from a democratic vote where some emerge as ‘winners’ and others not. No! It is about finding a collegial and paternal way of embracing the present situation, one that, most importantly, can protect those in our care from losing hope and feeling spiritually abandoned. This will enable us to be fully immersed in reality, seeking to appreciate and hear it from within, without being held hostage to it.”

– Pope Francis, 1 January 2019.

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Fourth Sunday of Easter • Year C

1st Reading Acts 13:14,43-52
 2nd Reading Revelation 7:9,14-17
 Gospel John 10:27-30

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Fifth Sunday of Easter • Year C

1st Reading Acts 14:21-27
 2nd Reading Revelation 21:1-5
 Gospel John 13:31-35

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

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 ☎ 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