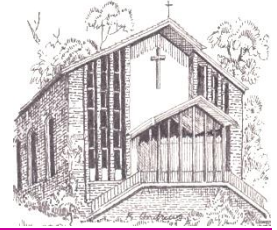




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



7 / 8 MARCH 2020

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT ❖ YEAR A



Prayer



Fasting



Almsgiving



THIS WEEK'S READINGS

The Promises of God

When God told Abraham to leave home, God was asking a lot of him. The world was not a global village then. Travel wasn't easy; there were no planes, taxis, or hotels. Furthermore, leaving home was a decisive break with all the good of home, because going back for a visit was difficult or just out of the question entirely. So, leaving home then was a loss that we can't imagine well anymore, in our era of video calls and texting.

Still, when God told Abraham to leave, Abraham went.

Why did he go? Presumably because he wanted what God offered him. If Abraham left, God told him, then Abraham would become a great nation, and all the communities of the earth would find blessing in him. That is a fairly stunning reward.

So Abraham, who had a great desire for that reward, obeyed God, left what was familiar and beloved to him, and wandered off as a stranger in a strange land.

And then notice what happened.


Abraham lived a very long time after this promise of God's and he stayed faithful to God's commands his whole life. But by the time Abraham died, this is all Abraham had: one son to carry on his posterity under this promise and two grandchildren. By anybody's estimation, this is a very small family. Certainly, one son and two grandsons is not a great nation. Furthermore, hardly any communities knew Abraham at all, let alone found a blessing in him. The idea that all the communities of the earth would find blessing in Abraham really would have been completely laughable at that time, wouldn't it?

Of course, as we now see it, all Jews, Christians, and Muslims are the Abrahamic peoples. Many great nations are included among the Abrahamic peoples. All of them know Abraham and think that they find blessing in Abraham.

And so, God's stunning promise to Abraham has been completely fulfilled.

But Abraham did not live to see it. He had to take the fulfillment of God's promise to him on faith.

So, maybe Abraham is the father of faith because he was willing to stake his life on a promise whose fulfillment did not come in his lifetime on earth. In this, he is not only the patriarch of the family of faith but also a pattern to follow for all those in his family.

Each year on the second Sunday of Lent, the liturgy's gospel reading tells of the Transfiguration. This year we hear Matthew's account. Throughout our long Lenten observance, we are encouraged to keep in mind the triumphant glory of the Saviour that we are 



✠ ✠ preparing to celebrate, and the challenge it brings to us. All three gospels link the Transfiguration with the warning of Jesus, that he was ‘destined to suffer’ in Jerusalem, and that those who are his true followers must ‘take up their cross and follow him’.

What is the basis of this mysterious narrative, that is not easy to relate to the later attitudes displayed by the apostles as the story of the gospels unfolds? It had obvious importance for the Church of the beginnings, because it is given in all three synoptic gospels. Luke associates this experience of the three apostles – who were to witness the agony of Jesus in the garden – with a moment in which Jesus led them in prayer. Perhaps the narrative has its basis in an ecstatic prayer experience. Perhaps the more restrained presentation of Luke, the gentile convert, is significant. Luke avoids reference to a metamorphosis (‘transfiguration’), a phenomenon associated with the gods of the pagan mythology. He merely states that ‘the aspect of Jesus’ face was changed’. No doubt, the early Church saw this narrative as an important expression of their faith in the Saviour – as sharing in the Father’s greatness and glory, even in the obscurity of his earthly life.

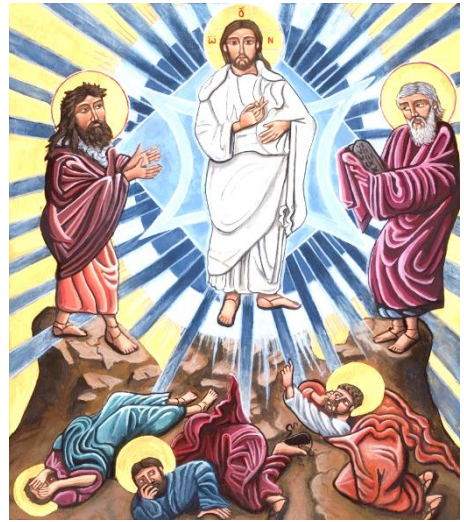
Matthew’s recounting of this tradition, with its many references to biblical themes familiar to the Jewish converts of his community, presents the Jesus of the Transfiguration as fulfilling what was prefigured in the history of old Israel: the ‘mountain’ reminds us of the defining moment of the Sinai covenant; ‘Moses and Elijah’, representing the Law and the Prophets, both have close links with Sinai; the ‘cloud’ recalls the ‘shekinah’ cloud that was an expression of God’s presence during the Exodus; the shining face of Jesus reminds us of the face of Moses when he came down from the mountain; Peter’s reference to the ‘three tents’, or booths, recalls the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, when the people lived in booths celebrating their arrival in the promised land – a celebration of the kingship of God that came to be filled with messianic expectations. Matthew adds to the words of the Father from the cloud a reference to one of the songs of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 42:1), bringing us back to the association of the Transfiguration with the warning of Jesus – of the ordeal that lay ahead of him in Jerusalem, and the challenge of discipleship.

The term used by Mark and Matthew for the transformation that took place in Jesus – that we are accustomed to translate, ‘transfiguration’ – is also used in the New Testament to describe the spiritual transformation brought by life ‘in Christ’. For the first Christians, it had overtones of the blessings of the final kingdom announced by Jesus. The journey begun so long ago – in the story of Abraham’s heroic response to the call of God, and the promises that accompanied – has brought God’s people to the moment of fulfilment.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our world needs transformations that protect life under threat and defend the weakest. We seek changes and many times we do not know what they should be, or we do not feel able to deal with them; they are beyond us. At the borders of exclusion, we run the risk of despair if we follow human logic alone. It is surprising that so often the victims of this world do not allow themselves to be overcome by the temptation to give in; rather, they trust and cling to hope.

— Pope Francis, 7 November 2019



PROJECT COMPASSION 2020

Twenty-seven-year-old Phany, lives in a village in western Cambodia. Struggling to earn a living as a rice farmer, she was forced to leave her daughter behind in the village, to take up construction work in the city.

Then in 2016, Phany joined a Caritas supported program, learning more productive farming and irrigation techniques. Her community learned to work together for better water management, to combat drought.

Over 70 percent of Cambodia's population live in rural communities – and the farming families living in poverty are the most food insecure. Thirteen percent of Cambodians live below the poverty line, while 35 out of every 1000 babies die due to malnutrition.

In 2016, Phany joined the Upholding Community Dignity Together program, where she learned new farming techniques, such as a drip irrigation system which enabled her to get a better yield from her vegetable crops and to conserve water for drier periods. She also learned how to grow vegetables and raise chickens and ducks. Phany's community also took part in training in health, nutrition, hygiene and disaster preparedness, arming them with better strategies to cope with environmental changes.

"I am proud that I was a farmer who had no skills and now I can earn and improve my living, share my knowledge and also improve solidarity in the family and amongst our neighbours," Phany says. "I live better than before, I'm not as tired. I can earn and live in the village, I don't need to go to city to find job."

With your help, mothers like Phany can continue to uplift their communities and provide food for their families. A brighter future for women, men and their families can start today. Let's Go Further, Together.

The transfiguration in the Gospel readings today describes a dazzling transformation. The witness of which had a profound impact on Peter, James and John. The transfiguration renewed their vision and they felt compelled to perpetuate the experience by remaining high on the mountain. Jesus encouraged them to continue their journey.

From a mountain you can see the landscape from a different perspective, noticing landmarks which may not have been clear from below. Often climbing the mountains in our own lives; overcoming challenges, offers us an opportunity for a new perspective, a clearer vision. Much like Peter, James and John, when we behold the divinity of Jesus, our view is expanded, so that we can now see in a different way. This doesn't deny the circumstances of our life or world, rather it shows us that in the midst of these circumstances, there is life, hope and each other. This is what allows us to endure, face and respond to the needs of our world.

Do you need to change your perspective so together we can go further, recognising that our responsibility for others goes beyond our immediate community? We pray for all those around the world who rely on farming to sustain their families.

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

This Tuesday, 10 March, commencing at 11:00am in the McCarthy Centre, we will have a Trading Table. Light luncheon to follow. All welcome. Monthly meeting 1:30pm.



WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK AND BEYOND

Weekend 7/8 Mar **Second Sunday of Lent Year A**
Blessing of March Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays
Project Compassion boxes or envelopes still available

Friday 13 Mar **Anniversary of election of Pope Francis 2013**

Weekend 14/15 Mar **Third Sunday of Lent Year A**
John's Gospel: Jesus with the Samaritan Woman at the Well

Saturday 14 Mar 6:30pm **Social Dinner at Thirroul Bowling Club**

SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Please be safe on our beaches and waterways. So far, since 1 July 2019, there have already been **4,051** rescues – that's **239** since last week! *Please be safe on our beaches.* **Water is still 21°C!** **FLAG SWIM FLAG**



TRIBUNAL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Marriage breakdown is a traumatic experience for all those concerned. The Church reaches out in support of those who are divorced, while upholding the permanence of a true Christian marriage. The Wollongong Office of the Tribunal extends an invitation to any divorced person who would like to talk about the annulment process. You can be assured that your privacy will be respected. Should you choose to apply for an annulment, you will be guided and supported through the process. For further information please phone the Wollongong Office of the Tribunal Office on 4222 2409 or email tribunal@dow.org.au

USED STAMPS ... AND NON-PERISHABLE ITEMS

Please bring in any used stamps and put them in the small box just inside the sacristy. And don't forget, **please bring in one non-perishable item per family each week.** Your weekly items provide regular support to the needy in the Illawarra. **Thank you!**

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Second Sunday of Lent - Year A

1st Reading Genesis 12:1-4
2nd Reading 2 Timothy 1:8-10
Gospel Matthew 17:1-9

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Third Sunday of Lent - Year A

1st Reading Exodus 17:3-7
2nd Reading Romans 5:1-2,5-8
Gospel John 4:5-42

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