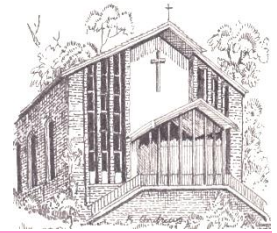




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



21 / 22 MARCH 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT ❖ YEAR A



Prayer



Fasting



Almsgiving



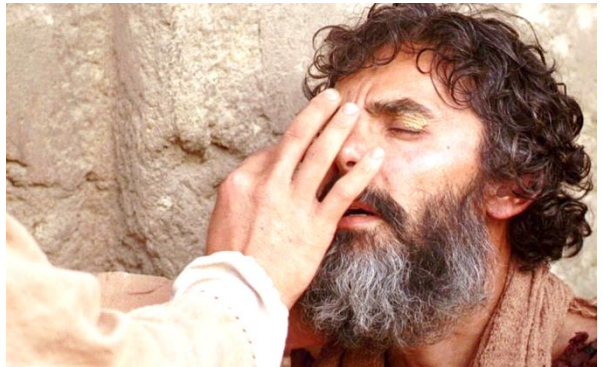
THIS WEEK'S READINGS

The Blind Man Who Wanted for Nothing

The Psalm says, "The Lord is my Shepherd. There is nothing I shall want."

But the Gospel Reading tells the story of a man born blind. How is the Psalm supposed to be made consonant with the Gospel reading? Doesn't the man born blind have something that he lacks?

The disciples of Jesus are anxious about this blind man too, and they try to allay their anxiety by finding some explanation for his blindness. "Why was this man born blind?" they ask Jesus. "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" If it was anybody's sin, then they can reasonably hope that such suffering won't come to their families, at least it won't come if they all try hard not to sin.



But this is an appalling way to think about suffering, isn't it?

It is terrible to suppose that all suffering is punishment for sin. What kind of God inflicts blindness on a newborn as a punishment for sin?

Jesus dismisses their attitude entirely. This man's blindness has nothing to do with the sins of anyone, Jesus says. It's something about the future—not something about the past—that explains his blindness. God let this man be born blind that the works of God might be manifest through him.

So that is Jesus' explanation for the man's blindness, but it looks at least as bad as the thought of the disciples, doesn't it? What kind of God inflicts blindness on a newborn so that the works of God can be manifest in him later?

But think about that blind man himself.

At the outset of the story, he is an impoverished outcast, a beggar, a nobody. Then the mighty works of God are manifest in him, and he takes the Lord as his Shepherd. The result is that he himself becomes glorious. When the story ends, he has become an icon of faith and courage. He has stood up to the worldly power of the leaders of his community and witnessed to the goodness of God in very challenging circumstances. He has become an example to us all.



Who would not want to be like him? And that is why it was true for him that the Lord was his shepherd, even though he was born blind. In the end, the Lord was his Shepherd, and there was nothing the blind man lacked, just as the Psalmist says.



Another riveting narrative from John’s gospel. More than once, Jesus was condemned for healing on the Sabbath. In this reading, one such incident is described at length, in a way that calls to mind words of this gospel’s Prologue: ‘The Word was the true light, and his own people did not accept him’. The courageous refusal of the ‘man born blind’ to be intimidated by the authorities of the synagogue, when even his family refuse to stand by him, has given us one of the most memorable incidents in the gospels. Like the story of the Samaritan woman, this incident is recounted in a manner that gives expression to a profound meditation upon the saving work of Christ.

The Saviour himself intones the theme of this meditation: ‘I am the light of the world’. The powerful symbolism of light often finds expression in the Scriptures. It is often appealed to in the Psalms, the confession of faith of the ordinary people in old Israel – God’s Word is ‘a light on the path’ of life (Psalm 119); God is Israel’s ‘light and salvation’ (Psalm 27). The contrast between light and darkness is often appealed to in the New Testament, as in today’s reading from Ephesians.

The tragedy of spiritual blindness is vividly exemplified in the refusal of the Pharisees to be open to what was confronting them in the signs given through the ministry of Jesus – as their empty reasoning is made to look foolish by the straightforward honesty of the man they are trying to intimidate. ‘You can be his disciple’, they declare in their frustration, ‘We are disciples of Moses’. And, as he responds to their arguments, pointing out that his miraculous healing shows that Jesus is surely ‘a prophet’ and that he must have ‘come from God’, the man who was born blind is progressively ‘enlightened’ – to be finally welcomed by Jesus into the company of his disciples, making his confession, ‘Lord, I believe you are the Son of Man’ – the very title that was to seal the fate of Jesus before the Sanhedrin.

As he urges the Ephesians to a life of authentic discipleship, Paul contrasts a life of ‘goodness, right living and truth’ with the ‘shameful’ things done in the dark. The story of the ‘man born blind’ and his courage in the face of great odds reminds a community with deep roots in old Israel of the challenge of genuine discipleship.

It is now well recognised that the meditation upon Christian faith and life that gave us John’s gospel was made against the background of the Church’s sacramental life. It may well be that today’s narrative – with its progressive reference to anointing, washing and confession of faith – is influenced by the baptismal practice of the community. In the early centuries, the instruction of the catechumens concerning the Church’s sacramental life was an ‘enlightenment’. It is interesting to note, at a time when the catechumenate is assuming an increasing importance in the life of the Church, that these instructions made frequent use of John’s gospel.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Does the social apostolate exist to solve problems? Yes, but above all to promote processes and to encourage hope – processes that help people and communities to grow, that lead to awareness of their rights, to deploy their skills and to create their own future.

– Pope Francis 7 November 2019

PROJECT COMPASSION 2020

Thirty-two-year-old Sakun lives in a village in central east India. She developed polio as a child and has difficulty walking. Until now Sakun, an indigenous Gond woman, has been isolated in her community, unable to earn a livelihood and without knowledge of government schemes that could help her. Sakun lives with her sister in a rural area of Chhattisgarh, India's poorest state. Home to 26 million people, with 10 million living in poverty.

Life is hard in this region, and even harder for the state's indigenous people. Sakun belongs to the Gond tribal community which is amongst India's officially designated Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Historically disadvantaged, they suffer higher poverty rates than other parts of India.

In 2018, Sakun joined a Caritas Australia-funded program which is implemented by Caritas India and its local partner, Samarthan. Through their strategic guidance and support, Sakun learned new skills and gained important mobility.

Sakun now earns her own income and makes a small profit which goes towards her family's basic needs. She is more resilient, more confident and more independent.

With your help, Caritas Australia can help uplift vulnerable communities and support the right of indigenous peoples around the world. A brighter future women, men and their families can start today. Let's Go Further, Together.

Today's gospel story of Jesus healing the man born blind has a strong and powerful message for our times. Disability was considered to be result of sinfulness in the time of Jesus. Even today suffering can be considered a result of sinfulness by some. Jesus, however, rejects these notions by healing the man and even more radically healing him on the sabbath.

The healing of the man born blind is twofold; the physical cure leads to a spiritual revelation which allows him to see Jesus as the Son of Man. The miracle also causes a stir amongst the community; as here is a man who went unnoticed now challenging the leaders, revealing their own blindness. Jesus' love and compassion bring light – to the man born blind but also to those around him.

As is the case in many countries, people like Sakun and her family are often 'out of sight' when it comes to receiving the support and care needed to participate in the life of the community. Through her participation in the Caritas Australia program Sakun's dignity is upheld as an equal member of the community, her voice is heard and respected. She has a means to earn an income and is now more independent with her new improved mobility.

How can we use our freedom and courage, much like Jesus with the man born blind to act with justice and love to those who are excluded?



PLENARY COUNCIL 2020 – Northern Suburbs Listening and Discernment Report

Following the Listening and Discernment sessions held across Bulli, Corrimal and Thirroul from September to December 2019, suggestions for action were provided to the Plenary Council Theme Working Groups. The Local Animators have collated these responses into a report for parishioners, released with last weekend's Bulletin. Thank you to everyone who participated in one or more of the sessions, across the three locations. Participants said they enjoyed the opportunity to meet others from across three of the Northern Suburbs parishes. The Animators would also like to specially thank Pat and Ray Mirabito and Millie Hira for their dedicated practical support to the sessions.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK AND BEYOND

Weekend 21/22 Mar **Fourth Sunday of Lent Year A**
John's Gospel: Jesus with the Man Born Blind

Tuesday 24 Mar 7:30pm **Reconciliation Rite II for Lent**

Wednesday 25 Mar **Annunciation of the Lord ... *Nine months until Christmas***

Thursday 26 Mar **Baptism Preparation Meeting 7:15pm**

Weekend 28/29 Mar **Fifth Sunday of Lent Year A**

John's Gospel: Jesus with Lazarus, Mary and Martha

Friday 3 Apr 9:30am Anointing of the Sick during Mass

Bring in palms for Palm Sunday

SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Please be safe on our beaches and waterways. So far, since 1 July 2019, there have already been **4,203** rescues – that's **18** since last week!

Please *be safe* on our beaches. **FLAG SWIM FLAG**



EASTER "JOBS" DURING THE EASTER LITURGIES

Several people will be needed for various "jobs" during the Easter Liturgies. If you or any of your family would be available, please email or phone the Parish Office this week.

ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK

Don't forget, please bring in one non-perishable item per family each week.

SMALL PLASTIC BOTTLES NEEDED FOR EASTER WATER

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 or can acquire some small plastic bottles, please bring them in by Sunday, 5 April.**

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Fourth Sunday of Lent • Year A

1st Reading 1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13

2nd Reading Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel John 9:1-41

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Fifth Sunday of Lent • Year A

1st Reading Ezekiel 37:12-14

2nd Reading Romans 8:8-11

Gospel John 11:1-45

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

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Parish Office Hours **Tuesday, Wednesday Friday**

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

www.thirroulcatholic.org.au

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