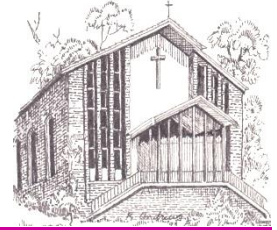




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



28 / 29 MARCH 2020

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT ❖ YEAR A



Prayer



Fasting



Almsgiving



THIS WEEK'S READINGS

The Desires of the Heart

When Lazarus died, Mary of Bethany must have been heartbroken.

You can see why she would have been. She loved her brother Lazarus, and she trusted and loved Jesus. Like everybody else in her community, she knew that Jesus could heal sick people. So, when her brother got sick and she knew that Jesus was nearby, she turned to him for help. Then she waited three desperate and increasingly miserable days. During those days Jesus didn't come, and Lazarus died.

And so she was devastated. Her beloved brother was dead, and her beloved Jesus seemed to have disregarded her entirely in her time of need. She must have felt sure that she had lost the desires of her heart and lost them irretrievably.


But what the story of the raising of Lazarus shows is that a person can feel sure about such things and still be thoroughly mistaken.

Of course, Mary was right about some things. She had this much accurate insight into herself: she was right in thinking that it was her heart's desire to have her brother and to be loved by Jesus.

But she was mistaken about what the fulfillment of those desires would be. She thought that she could have the desires of her heart only in case Jesus came to her to heal her brother before he died. Consequently, when Lazarus did die, Mary thought that she had lost what she wanted most.

What the story makes clear, though, is that the Lord can know better than a human person does what she most wants. We are not surprised if the Lord knows better than we do what is good for us, and we generally expect that good to be something we don't want. But in this story the Lord knows better than Mary what she herself actually wants.

When Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, Mary has her brother, and is loved by Jesus in a way more deeply fulfilling to her and more glorious than the mere healing of her brother in his sickness would have been.

And here is the thing to notice: Jesus was in the process of giving her what she wanted most even as she was firmly persuaded that she had lost it forever. And so the story helps us see that the Lord can be trusted even with the deepest distress of the hearts of 



☞☞ those who are his own. As the Psalmist promises (Psalm 37:4), the Lord will give the desires of their hearts to those who put their trust in him.

Our Lenten journey is drawing to a close; today's readings remind us of what lies ahead, with Ezekiel's vision of new life for a valley of bones and Paul's promise that the Spirit that will 'give life to our mortal bodies'. The gospel reading from John tells the story of the raising of Lazarus. This sequence –



carefully crafted as a prelude to the passion narrative – prepares us for what is to come; Jesus confronts death itself and emerges victorious.

As the narrative opens, the Lord's coming death is called to mind, Mary the sister of Lazarus is identified as the one who, at this time, 'anoints the Lord with ointment' – for 'the day of his burial' (cf. John 12:7). The illness of Lazarus 'will not end in death, but in God's glory' and the glory of the Son of God. The death of Jesus, if he 'goes to Judaea' is a real and terrifying prospect for his disciples – leading Thomas to exclaim, 'Let us go too, and die with him'. The narrative highlights the 'friendship' of Jesus with the family of Bethany: soon to be caught up in the drama of the Saviour's rejection by the nation's leaders. Such a detail, we know, has significance in the meditative style of John's gospel. 'I call you friends, not servants' (John 15:15), Jesus will tell his disciples. And the repeated reference to 'the beloved disciple' in the narrative that follows brings out in graphic detail the implications of these words - an encouragement for all who follow the way of discipleship.

We are left in no doubt that Jesus triumphs over death in all its horror. The mortal remains of Lazarus have been in the tomb for 'four days': 'Already there is a stench', his sister warns. Numerous mourners have now assembled, not all of them well disposed towards Jesus – an intimation of what is soon to follow. 'Could he not have prevented this man's death', some of them ask.

This confrontation with death, Jesus makes clear, is a sign. As he sets out for Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, he declares, 'I am glad for your sake, because now you will believe'. And although he knows that the Father 'always hears him', he addresses the Father publicly, 'for the sake of those who stand around, so that they may believe that it was you who sent me' – the claim of his divine mission that is many times repeated in the course of John's gospel.

In the exchanges that take place between Jesus and the sisters of Lazarus, he leads them towards the fullness of faith that will unite them with him in his final victory over death – his Paschal Mystery. Like his other disciples, Martha has already found faith in Jesus as 'the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world'; now she is led to recognise the full implications of this coming, as she affirms her faith in the truth of Jesus' words, 'I AM the resurrection and the life' – the very source of 'eternal life'.

'Lazarus, come out!': the victory is complete and absolute. 'Unbind him and let him go.': words of promise for all who will believe in his coming triumph.

ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK

Don't forget, you can bring in one non-perishable item per family each week and leave it on the front veranda of the presbytery. Your weekly items provide regular support to the needy in the Illawarra. Thank you!

PROJECT COMPASSION 2020

Tawonga is a ten-year-old girl, living with a disability. She lives in a village in northern Malawi, Africa [*look it up on Google Maps*] in a region plagued by food insecurity and poverty. For most of her life, her parents have struggled to put meals on the table. Tawonga often had to miss school because she was too sick from hunger. The family also faced discrimination in their community due to her disability.

Since participating in a Caritas Australia supported program, Tawonga's life has transformed. Her family now grows enough food to provide three meals a day, ending the struggle of malnutrition, and helping her thrive at school.

Tawonga, whose name means 'thank you', says her community is blessed with many resources, like rivers, fertile soil and hills. However, with dry spells followed by floods, armyworm infestations and crop failures, her parents struggled to make a living.

In 2016, Tawonga's parents heard about the A+ program run by Caritas Australia's partner, CADECOM (Catholic Development Commission in Malawi). They learnt irrigation farming and were given fertiliser and high-yield seeds. With these new techniques, their production of crops almost tripled. With your help, this transformational program can continue to empower vulnerable women, men and children, and strengthen the communities around them. Let's Go Further, Together.

The Scriptures this Sunday are about life and about death. In the midst of a world with so much death, we believe in a God of life. Jesus says to Martha: **"I AM** the resurrection and the life."

We are invited to implement God's vision of life. Jesus says: "Lazarus, come out!" Jesus says to those around him: "Unbind him, and let him go." Our contemporary world needs us, the people of God, to respond to Jesus who invites us out of our tombs and into freedom; freedom to respond to the needs of others, freedom to let go of everything that keeps us from being fully alive.

Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus. We too have so much to weep over: in a world of plenty, 6 million of Malawi's 19 million people require food aid. 23% of all child death cases in Malawi are related to under-nutrition. 663 million of our sisters and brothers around the world do not have easy access to clean, safe drinking water.

Hearing Tawonga's story can also bring about a change in us. **In what ways can we go further together to ensure the inherent dignity of all?**

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Share your hope wherever you are, to encourage, console, comfort and revive. Please open the future, or, to use the expression of a current scholar, frequent the future. Open the future, inspire possibilities, generate alternatives, help to think and act differently. Take care of your daily relationship with the risen and glorious Christ and be workers of charity and sowers of hope. May you walk, singing and weeping, so that the struggles and concerns for the lives of the least and for threatened creation may not take away from you the joy of hope (cf. *Laudato Si'*, n. 244).



TAWONGA, MALAWI

– Pope Francis 7 November 2019

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK AND BEYOND

Weekend 28/29 Mar	Fifth Sunday of Lent Year A John's Gospel: Jesus with Martha, Mary and Lazarus
Friday 3 Apr	Please bring in palms for Palm Sunday
Weekend 4/5 Apr	Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord Year A ↳ collect bless palms from the presbytery veranda
Sunday 5 Apr	Daylight Saving ends
Monday 6 Apr	Holy Week begins
Thursday 9 Apr	Holy Thursday
Friday 10 Apr	Good Friday [the text of the Way of the Cross will be emailed]
Saturday 11 Apr	Easter Vigil
Sunday 12 Apr	Easter Sunday ↳ collect Easter Water from the presbytery veranda

SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Please be safe on our beaches and waterways. So far, since 1 July 2019, there have already been **4,373** rescues – that's **170** since last week!
Please be safe and keep your distance on our beaches. **FLAG SWIM FLAG**



NEEDED FOR NEXT WEEKEND AND FOR EASTER

For next weekend, Palm Sunday, **PALMS**, both large and small: please put them on the presbytery veranda by Friday, 3 April. For Good Friday, 10 April [and also for Anzac Day] rosemary (cut up into small strips) will be needed. Please put cut rosemary on the front veranda of the presbytery by Thursday, 9 April. At the Easter Vigil, water is blessed, and everyone will be able to collect a bottle to take to bless your homes and cars. If you have some or can acquire some small plastic bottles, please put them on the presbytery veranda by Sunday, 5 April.

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Fifth Sunday of Lent • Year **A**

1 st Reading	Ezekiel 37:12-14
2 nd Reading	Romans 8:8-11
Gospel	John 11:1-45

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Passion or Palm Sunday • Year **A**

1 st Reading	Isaiah 50:4-7
2 nd Reading	Philippians 2:6-11
Gospel	Matthew 26:14 – 27:66

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
Thirroul Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

Some liturgies will be recorded and a link will be emailed

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