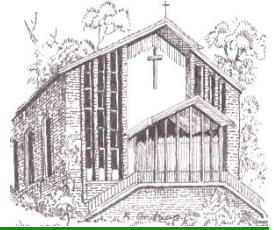




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



15 / 16 AUGUST 2020
20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ❖ YEAR A
Vinnies Winter Appeal 25 July to 23 August

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

What Matters

In the Gospel reading, Jesus and his disciples have walked out of Jewish lands and all the way into Gentile territory. There is a lot of excitement about him among the Gentiles, too, not least because they know that he can heal people. One Gentile woman in particular cries out to him to heal her daughter.

He won't answer her, and she keeps crying out to him. The disciples of Jesus can't stand her and her noise, and they urge Jesus to send her away. From their point of view, she's just a woman, she isn't Jewish, and she doesn't look like an important person even among the Gentiles. So, from the point of view of the disciples, she is a person who does not matter. They want Jesus to get rid of her.

In response, Jesus tells his disciples, "I am sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

But Jesus is in Gentile territory as he says this; and he left Israelite territory to go there. If he isn't sent to the Gentiles, why go to their territory? If he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel, why not just send this Gentile woman away, as the disciples want him to do?

Because he doesn't send her away, she comes closer to him and pleads with him for help. In reply, he says to her one of the most insulting things he says to anyone: "it is not right to take the bread of the children and give it to the dogs."

How could she matter less than this?

The solution to the perplexity of this story comes in the final exchange between the two of them. Jesus' treatment of her elicits from her one of the most impertinent responses to Jesus anywhere: "even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters," she says. And Jesus loves her for that pertness and the persistence behind it. "Great is your faith!" he says to her in praise.

But to have faith is to be one of the sheep of Israel and one of the children of Abraham. Gentile, female, or whatever else might make the disciples think that she is a person who doesn't matter, she has the one thing that really does matter in her cleaving to Jesus.

And so, it is true that Jesus is sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. She, a Gentile woman who persists in her calling to him, is one of those sheep. When Jesus crosses into Gentile territory, it is for her. It is right to give the bread of life to her.

Sometimes the gospel narrative has a ring of authenticity that is unmistakable. The response of Jesus to the Canaanite woman, in today's reading, must have been puzzling – ↪



✠✠ even embarrassing – to Christian converts from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. Jesus, in fact, echoes the Jewish custom in his time, of referring to Gentiles as ‘dogs’. It can only have been retained in the gospel tradition because it was what he had said. Those who heard the brave woman pleading for her daughter against all odds – she was an outsider appealing to a Jewish teacher, a plaintive voice in a very masculine world – must have remembered her story as a remarkable moment in the life of the Saviour. What is more, she is remembered as seeming to get the better of Jesus in their exchange. But this exchange leads, in the end, to a moment that those who witnessed it would never forget, confronting them with the generous and inclusive ways of God: ‘Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted’.



Once again, we should recall that this incident is included in a narrative section of Matthew’s gospel, in which Jesus is instructing his disciples. A significant part of the community for whom this gospel was written had belonged to a Jewish community that was extremely exclusive and intolerant. This attitude is puzzling, because the Old Testament scriptures included a remarkable vision of God’s plan as ultimately inclusive of all peoples. Abraham was promised that he would be father of many nations; the prophets looked forward to the peoples of the world – even Israel’s enemies – flocking to Jerusalem to worship the true God. In today’s reading from Isaiah, the prophet declares, in the name of God, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples’. As they embraced the Christian faith, Matthew’s community would have recognised that this great vision was being fulfilled with the inclusion of the Gentiles. But old ways die hard. They needed to renew their identification with the inclusive ways of God – something we too need to do as we meet the misconceptions and unfriendliness of today’s post-Christian outlook.

But why did Jesus hesitate, seeming to share in the intolerance of his contemporaries? The immediate task of the mission he had received from his Father was to call the chosen people back to the role that had been given them in a plan that was to benefit the whole human family – ‘I was sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel’. If they had been true to the covenant, learning to identify with the ways of God, they would have fulfilled their mission to be ‘a light to the nations’, a living invitation to find the true God. Jesus so angered the people of his own town of Nazareth, when he spoke of the inclusive ways of God, that they wanted to stone him. This issue was probably an important factor in the conflict that led to his death. In his exchange with the woman, he was probably referring to the messianic banquet of the end-time, that he had foretold would be shared by people coming from the East and the West. In the end, the extraordinary generosity of his words to the pagan woman, ‘Woman, you have great faith’, cancels out the apparent rejection of his first words to her. They invite us to rejoice that we share in her faith. We know he is the true ‘light to the nations’, fulfilling in his person the great destiny of Israel, bringing the whole human family to join in the messianic banquet.

OUR BISHOPS’ SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2020

To live life to the full – mental health in Australia today – All information, including the statement, podcast, liturgy notes, prayer and social media graphics may be found on <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2020/07/03/social-justice-statement-2020-21/> Social Justice Sunday is the last Sunday in August. Copies of the Social Justice Statement 2020 will be available in printed form and will be emailed with a future Parish Bulletin.

LAUDATO SI' [ctd.] *Commentary by Peter H. Raven, Member, Pontifical Academy of Sciences*

It was that in 1971, marking the 80th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's landmark Encyclical, that Pope Paul VI listed the environment as one of 11 social problems that the Church should confront in *Octogesima Adveniens*. He realized that the proper treatment of the environment would be necessary to correct other social problems, and if the environment were neglected, that would only serve to make them worse. In this regard he wrote, "Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation" (*Octogesima Adveniens* 21). In 1972, Pope Paul VI participated in the UN Conference on the Global Environment, the Stockholm Conference that drew the world's attention effectively to the universal nature of most environmental problems. He stated that "man and his environment are more inseparable than ever," and spoke to what he termed the "disorderly exploitation of the physical reserves of the planet." He ended by invoking the example of St Francis' love of nature, an inspiring theme for the Church over the years.

The environment remained an important concern for Pope St John Paul II, who served from 1978 to 2005, throughout the duration of his papacy. The Catholic Church was obviously dealing with the same facts on the environment as the rest of the world, and seeking to formulate constructive actions to deal with the array of problems that were becoming more obvious with every passing year. From the 1970s onward, the environment has been recognized generally as a global problem, but acceptable, general solutions to its problems have been difficult to develop. Pope John Paul II, in his statement for the 1990 World Day of Peace, stated that the Earth was in danger by virtue of "a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life." He consistently presented the ecological crisis as a moral problem and pointed out the very different possibilities for environmental solutions in poor developing countries and rich industrialized ones. Particularly impressive was the pope's joint statement with Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, Bartholomew I, in June 2002, stressing the need for ecological awareness as not only an environmental problem, but also a moral and spiritual one. The two religious leaders urged everyone to accept a common obligation to work to improve the world environment, a task from which all people would benefit.

In 1994, Pope St John Paul II added a discussion of the environment to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, under the discussion of the Seventh Commandment, *Thou shall not steal*. The world's goods are destined for the whole human race, and their maintenance requires respect for the whole of Creation, to be carried out in the light of respect for moral imperatives. As the years have gone by, the Church's teachings have tended increasingly to regard human beings as a part of Creation, not something divorced from it, but the sense of the Catechism in interpreting the Seventh Commandment is clear: we share a common responsibility for Creation.

... continued next week.

HOLY COMMUNION OR ANOINTING FOR HOMEBOUND

Do you know of any parishioners who are homebound, or who cannot or do not want to come to church during this pandemic? There is currently no obligation to attend Sunday Mass or Mass on Holy Days of Obligation. If you have health issues, or if you are not feeling well, please do not come to Mass. If you – or any parishioners you know – are homebound or who cannot or do not want to come to church, **please call the Parish Office so that it can be arranged for Holy Communion to be brought to them, and, if they wish, the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.**

FIRST PENANCE AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Parents of students in Year 2 or older are encouraged to enrol their daughter or son **as soon as possible** for these Sacraments. *Download the Enrolment Forms from our Parish website.*

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK – AND BEYOND

Thursday 20 Aug Saint Bernard, abbot, doctor
 Friday 21 Aug Saint Pius X, pope
 Saturday 22 Aug The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary



**ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK
 TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA
 drop items in the special white plastic bin if you come to Mass**

VINNIES WINTER APPEAL 2020

The **Vinnies Covid-19 Winter Appeal** will run from **25 July to 23 August 2020**. Vinnies is urgently calling for donations to support its work with people experiencing poverty, homelessness and disadvantage. **Donation envelopes** are available in the church ... or you may support us through secure payments made **online** or by calling in to the Parish Office with your donations. Please support the work that Vinnies carries out in supporting the needy members of our community. Reduction of government income support or major unemployment – often people who have never been unemployed ever before – may include significant numbers of people who have never needed to depend on charities previously. Thus, once again we call on your support and thank you for your anticipated generosity. **So far, \$4,988 has been collected!!!!!!**



Vinnies
good works

BAPTISMS AT THIRROUL

If you want your child baptized in our Parish, please contact the Parish Office so that a suitable time can be organized for the celebration – currently baptisms will not be held during the weekend Masses.

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A
1st Reading Isaiah 56:1,6-7
2nd Reading Romans 11:13-15,29-32
Gospel Matthew 15:21-28

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A
1st Reading Isaiah 22:19-23
2nd Reading Romans 11:33-36
Gospel Matthew 16:13-20

SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Church of St Michael • Thirroul
 Saturday – 5:30pm • Sunday – 8:00am

**Restricted numbers apply ... to attend ...
 you must register beforehand with the Parish Office**

LITURGIES THIS WEEK

Thirroul	Monday	—
	Tuesday	17:30
	Wednesday	09:00
	Thursday	09:00
	Friday	09:30

For the present, Masses
on weekdays will not
usually be televised.

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