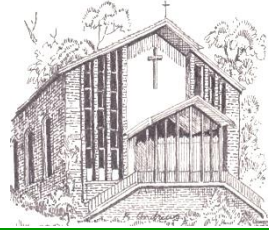




# Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



**12 / 13 SEPTEMBER 2020**  
**24<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ❖ YEAR A**  
**Child Protection Sunday**

## **THIS WEEK'S READINGS**

## *Love and Forgiveness*

In the Gospel reading, Peter wants to know how many times he has to forgive someone who sins against him. What is the number of times, Peter wants to know, that he has to forgive that sinner? But this question is confused. There is no such number as the one Peter is looking for. There is no limit on the number of times we have to forgive someone who has sinned against us.

We are able to understand the point of this Gospel story if we see the connection between love and forgiveness. Refusing to forgive is refusing to love, and it is never acceptable not to love. That is why it is never right to withhold forgiveness either.


The relation between love and forgiveness also helps us see the difference between forgiving a wrongdoer and enabling him to continue in his wrongdoing. Love wants the good for the beloved. A person who forgives a sinner loves that sinner; and because she loves him, she has a heart for his good. A wife who continues to live with a husband who beats her isn't forgiving him. She's helping him to get worse. There is nothing loving or forgiving about enabling a person to get worse. For her to forgive her husband is for her to want his good, even in the face of his bad treatment of her. But his good requires, first of all, that he stop hurting her, and then that he repent his terrible treatment of her.



If he is unrepentant, if he rejects goodness and love, then she can want the good for him anyway. But her forgiveness of him will be like a gift that can't be given because he won't receive it. Then the best she can do for him is to keep a distance from him, so that he doesn't get worse by continuing to hurt her.

God's love is like this, too. God's forgiveness is always there, and so is God's love. Because God loves every person, God offers the good to everyone too, no matter what that person's sins may be. God does not keep a careful distance from us when we sin. What stands between us and God is only our own unwillingness to receive the gift God is offering.

If we will only not reject it, the gift of God's love and forgiveness will be given to us and received.

During this time of pilgrimage, sinfulness in the life of the Church obscures the reality of our life in Christ – a common life that should be a sign of hope for struggling humanity. It is not without reason that we begin the Church's most solemn liturgies with an acknowledgement of our sinfulness. It should not surprise us, therefore, that the passage of Matthew's gospel from which we are reading – concerning our life in the Church – is 

✠✠ in large part about problems associated with the sinfulness of members of the Church. Last Sunday's reading discussed the reconciliation of members guilty of public crimes destructive of the community. Today's reading concerns the forgiveness called for within the community at a personal level.



As was so often the case, Peter's impulsiveness gives rise to an important lesson. Peter has received a commission that involves considerable power in the life of the community of disciples. He thinks he is expressing what Jesus expects of him in the exercise of his authority. The question he puts to Jesus implies that he will be ready to forgive 'seven times'. His round number really hints at an indefinite readiness to forgive. Apparently, the scribes of the day taught that one was not obliged to forgive after the third or fourth time. But the response of Jesus declares that this vagueness is not enough: 'Not seven, but seventy-seven times' – there should be no limit to our readiness to forgive! Perhaps, as we hear this gospel, we are tempted to think that it has little to do with us – because we have never faced up to the ill will and resentments we have towards other members of our community, and to the gossiping and factions these attitudes give rise to. Though these attitudes may not seem seriously sinful, they can be very damaging, making it impossible for our parishes to live the kind of life that leads others to share in our faith. Resentment and the vengeful spirit have been part of the human story since the beginning. Living in covenant with living God, and learning God's ways, old Israel came to accept that vengeance must be left to the Lord. For peoples who did not know the covenant, there was no limit to the spirit of revenge. In fact, the response of Jesus reminds us of this spirit, as expressed in book of Genesis, where Lamech boasts that he will exact 'vengeance seventy-seven fold' (Genesis 4:24). Jesus is reminding us of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew's text, Jesus is remembered as teaching, 'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). Because the meaning of the word, 'perfect', in the biblical tradition has not been properly understood, one contemporary Bible renders this verse, 'Set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his'. The parable of the unforgiving manager drives home this lesson. Clearly, the ruler's generosity brings to mind the generosity of God. The debt forgiven was a fantastic amount, defying the imagination of Jesus' audience, impossible to repay. We are invited to compare our unforgiving spirit with the boundless generosity of our God.

Let us examine our attitudes to others in our worshipping community. Have we failed to face up to our antagonisms, and tended to justify them by being judgmental of the attitudes of our fellow Christians? The great Church Father, John Chrysostom, has good advice for us as we examine our conscience. If we are not aware of our destructive attitudes we shall never grow up spiritually. On the other hand, he tells us, awareness of our own failings helps us to find the wisdom, gentleness and compassion that should be ours as true followers of the Saviour.

## **PLANNED GIVING ENVELOPES FOR 2020–2021**

**Thank you to all who contribute to our Parish Planned Giving Program by way of direct debits or the Planned Giving Envelopes.** The next series of envelopes commences on 3/4 October 2020. Your new series of envelopes are available in the **sacristy** or please call at the Parish Office. Thank you, again, to all who contribute to our Parish.

## **NEXT WEEKEND: 'THE BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL**

## SAMARITAN'S PURSE: OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



Operation Christmas Child hand delivers gift-filled shoeboxes to children in many countries who have nothing. Thailand, New Guinea and Cambodia are among those countries. Thirroul Catholic Women's



League combines with Austinmer Uniting Church Fellowship to fill shoeboxes. Please, if you can, lend your support to this outreach: gifts and donations to enable boxes to be filled for boys and girls aged 2yrs to 14yrs.

**Items required are ... face washers; soap [not liquid]; hair clips; toothbrushes; skipping ropes; coloured pencils; lead pencils; biro pens; pencil sharpeners; erasers; chalk [ask an oldie to tell you what that is!]** NB all items must be **NEW**.

On **EACH WEEKEND UNTIL 4 OCTOBER** there will be a tub for the items in the sacristy for your donations – or drop your gifts into the Parish Office. ***Thanks for your generosity.***

## ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI: FEAST DAY, SUNDAY, 4 OCTOBER

Saint Francis of Assisi abandoned a life of luxury for a life devoted to following the Gospel, after reportedly hearing the voice of God, who commanded him to rebuild the church of San Damiano and live in poverty. Born in Italy about 1181, Saint Francis was renowned for drinking and partying in his youth. After fighting in a battle between the towns of Assisi and Perugia, Francis was captured and imprisoned for ransom. He spent nearly a year in prison — awaiting his father's payment. Francis preached and taught a new kind of emotional and personal Christian religion that everyday people could understand. He even went so far as to preach to animals, which garnered criticism from some and earned him the nickname "God's fool." During his life he also developed a deep love of nature and animals and is known as the patron saint of the environment and animals. His life and words have had a lasting resonance with millions of followers across the globe.

## BLESSING OF ANIMALS: MONDAY, 5 OCTOBER, 9:30AM++

The annual Blessing of Animals will be held on the long weekend in October, from 9:30am onwards to 11:00am on Monday, 5 October. All animals are welcome. This year, because of social distancing regulations, all animals must keep two paws apart. You may bring your pets anytime between 9:30am and 11:00am so as to maintain social distancing [especially between the lions and sheep].

On 4 October, people all over the world will be celebrating the feast day of the Patron Saint of Animals, Saint Francis of Assisi. It is customary that in remembrance of St Francis of Assisi's love for all creatures, animals are led to churches for a special ceremony called the "Blessing of the Animals." Every year, millions of animals are blessed by priests/friars in a ceremony that touches the hearts of most of those in attendance.

## CHILD PROTECTION SUNDAY

This weekend, the Catholic Church in Australia marks Child Protection Sunday, on which we pray for those who have been abused, their families and supporters. We recognise and apologise for the harm done by priests, religious and lay people in Church settings. The Church takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. We recommit to practices that support survivors and make the Catholic Church and its ministries the safest possible place for children and people at risk. <http://www.catholic.org.au/childprotectionsunday>

# WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK – AND BEYOND

**Monday** 14 Sep **The Exaltation of the Holy Cross**  
**Tuesday** 15 Sep **Our Lady of Sorrows**  
**Wednesday** 16 Sep **St Cornelius, pope, martyr, and St Cyprian, bishop, martyr**

**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**

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

In its very first paragraph, the Encyclical quotes the words of St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures*, "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs". Using these words as his text, Pope Francis goes on to attack the global environmental deterioration that we have caused, and boldly addresses not only the Catholic Church but every person living on the planet, thus entering into dialogue with the world community about our common home. Calling for a discussion into which everyone enters, Pope Francis points out that "[w]e require a new and universal solidarity" [14].

The text of the Encyclical moves through atmospheric and general pollution and climate change, making clear their effect on us all. Striking is its statement, "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth" [23]. Our throwaway culture is overwhelming the necessity to recycle, and we disregard our obligations to one another in the style of our everyday lives. The climate is a common good, and one that because of our numbers and the enormity of our activities we must unite to protect. Not only carbon dioxide but other greenhouse gasses are affecting us progressively and often in unexpected ways.

*... continued next week.*

### **THIS Sunday's Readings** *on our website*

**24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Reading** Sirach 27:30–28:7  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading** Romans 14:7-9  
**Gospel** Matthew 18:21-35

### **NEXT Sunday's Readings** *on our website*

**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Reading** Isaiah 55:6-9  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading** Philippians 1:20-24,27  
**Gospel** Matthew 20:1-16

### **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**

<b>Thirroul</b>	Monday	—
	Tuesday	<b>17:30</b>
	Wednesday	<b>09:00</b>
	Thursday	<b>09:00</b>
	Friday	<b>09:30</b>

*The Tuesday Mass will 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](mailto:thirroul@dow.org.au)

**Parish Office Hours**     **Tuesday, Wednesday**  
**Friday**

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