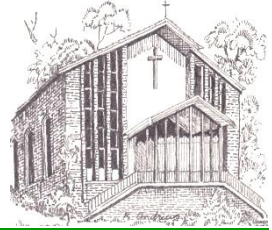




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



19 / 20 SEPTEMBER 2020
25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ❖ YEAR A
Bishop's Annual Appeal

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

What Is Owed to the Labourers

In the parable in the Gospel, the labourers who work all day receive the same wage as those who work just one hour, and so they complain.

You can see their point. Justice is giving a person what is owed to him. A person who works many hours deserves a bigger wage than a person who does the same work but for only one hour.

Or so it seems.

But think about how Jesus might have unpacked this parable if he had explained it to his disciples in the way he showed some of his other parables to them.

Here's one possibility. The vineyard owner is God. The labourers are human beings who are doing God's work in this life. The wage given is eternal life in union of love with God in heaven.

If we think about the parable this way, the labourers' complaint looks a lot less reasonable. When it comes to eternal life, what is justice? What does any human person deserve? What, actually, does God owe each person?

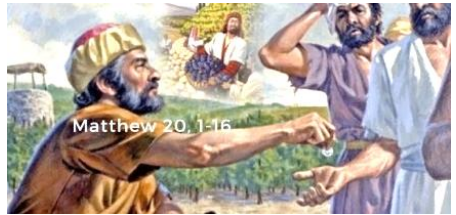
Well, here is the first thing to see: No one—that is, absolutely no one—is owed eternal life in union with God.

To think otherwise is to suppose that you can work your own way to heaven. And you can't. Salvation is God's free gift. God gives it generously to anyone who will receive it, but it is still God's free gift.

The problem with the labourers who complain, then, is that they think the vineyard owner owes them something. In their eyes, their work deserves a reward, a really big reward, more than the vineyard owner gives them. And so here is what we can see about them: they were working for themselves, to get that big reward for themselves.

And that is why they are last, not first, in the final distribution of God's rewards. God's people are meant to work for God, and not for what they can get from God for themselves. What God gives to people who work for God in this way is gift. It isn't deserved payment. What's more, the gift is God's very self. There is no greater reward than this, and joy is the only right response to the gift.

Those who understand their work and God's wage in this way may have come late to their labour, but they are the ones who are first in God's eyes. 'The last will be first and the first last'. These words of Jesus, with which today's reading from Matthew concludes, occur in different contexts in all three synoptic gospels – God's ways constantly overturn



our human expectations. And that is the lesson of the parable in today's gospel. Of all the parables of Jesus, the story of the labourers in the vineyard is probably the most puzzling for Christians of successive generations. That means that it is a great success, that it achieves what Jesus intended. A plausible story, reflecting the common experience of his hearers begins to unfold. It was normal for day labourers seeking employment to gather in public places. One denarius would have been a normal day's wage. We are given a hint where the story is leading however; Israel, the Lord's vineyard, was a familiar theme of the scriptures. An element of suspense holds the attention of the listeners – what is the unusual behaviour of the landowner leading to? Then the conclusion of the story comes as a shock, leaving us unsettled, as our reasonable expectations are not fulfilled.

That is the purpose of the parable, to invite us to leave aside the human logic and predictability with which we shape our world, and to enter the Kingdom announced by the Saviour, the new world shaped by God's generous and merciful ways. This parable may have been directed originally at the Pharisees' refusal to hear the Good News of God's ways brought by Jesus; but the fact that we still find ourselves challenged by the story indicates that it has a lesson that is valid for every generation.

'Did we not agree? Take your earnings'. God will never be unjust. But the Lord's great plan for the human family has a measure that goes far beyond our human calculations of what is appropriate and just – designs of generosity and mercy conceived in the eternal depths of the divine freedom. 'Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways'.

Jesus is calling us to bow down before the mystery of God's 'grace'. 'Why be envious because I am generous?' 'Grace' is the term used by the scriptures, for this new world of God's generosity announced by Jesus. In a sense, 'grace' is the essential message of the New Testament – where the term occurs countless times: 'God's grace has been revealed to save the whole human race' (Titus 2:11); 'It is by God's grace you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own ... so that nobody can claim the credit' (Ephesians 2:8). The 'grace' or favour of God announced in the Christian gospel is God's generous outreach to each one of us determined before time began. Because God's will is effective and all-powerful, 'grace' also refers to the many blessings of our new life in Christ. Our Catholic upbringing has stressed these created effects; but we should have given more attention to the folly of divine love made known to us through these blessings. This, we could say, is the point of Jesus' parable: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ' (Ephesians 1:3).

15 SEPTEMBER 2000 ... Twenty Years since the Olympics

And there were three friar 'Olympians' there! From right to left, Kevin Goode (RIP) in customer service, Andrew Granc as a translator, Ken Cafe as a driver. Good times!

PLANNED GIVING ENVELOPES

Thank you to all who contribute to our Parish Planned Giving Program by way of direct debits or the Planned Giving Envelopes. Your new series of envelopes are available in the **sacristy** or please call at the Parish Office. Thank you to all who contribute to our Parish.



THE BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

This year the appeal will support two important ministries: Caring for those who have cared for us – **supporting the retirement and health of our clergy**. There is the need for the Diocese to look after **14** retired clergy and plan for the care of an additional four clergy who will retire over the next five years. Your generosity will also help to provide continuing, valuable support from a Clergy Care Coordinator. The Appeal this year is mainly online [check your email], but there will be some envelopes available in the church.

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** [two paws apart].

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.



WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK – AND BEYOND

Monday 21 Sep Saint Matthew, apostle, evangelist

Tuesday 22 Sep Spring Equinox – 11:30pm ... Summer is on the way!!!

Wednesday 23 Sep Saint Padre Pio (Pius of Pietrelcina), friar priest

**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*

Rising sea levels threaten directly the one-quarter of people who live immediately on the coast or nearby – and they directly threaten many nations in the Pacific – and remind us that our population has grown so rapidly that we fill all of the Earth, and our resilience is limited by our numbers and the extent of our settlements and other developments. The poor will suffer disproportionately from climate change and sea-level rise, which will destroy their homes and their livelihoods in ways that are invisible to and generally ignored by the rich. Water and water poverty are exacerbated by climate change and insufficient to supply the needs of an increasing number of the poor. How can Sub-Saharan Africa, which feels such great water stress with its present population of 950 million people, possibly cope with the needs of the 2.5 billion people projected in live in the area at mid-century, a mere 30 years from now? Pope Francis is not only deeply devoted to improving the lot of the poor, but clearly desires to help us all understand why this is a human imperative.

The social dimensions of global change of all kinds are often disregarded, but they are in fact gigantic in size and reach, and in the misery caused to billions of people who are more heavily exploited than those who live in wealthy countries, or are simply wealthy.

... continued next week.

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A

1st Reading Isaiah 55:6-9

2nd Reading Philippians 1:20-24,27

Gospel Matthew 20:1-16

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A

1st Reading Ezekiel 18:25-28

2nd Reading Philippians 2:1-11

Gospel Matthew 21:28-32

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

Usually,
the Tuesday Mass will
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

PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515

4268 1910 4268 1976

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