



Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



28 / 29 NOVEMBER 2020 FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT ❖ YEAR B Blessing of the Christmas Tree

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Wandering Off

In this reading from Isaiah the prophet is longing for the love of God. But what he finds instead is what he cannot bear: God angry, God gone.

The experience the prophet gives voice to is familiar to all of us. God is angry and has hidden his face; he is somewhere above the heavens, and we cannot find him there.

How can this be? How can this be? Doesn't God love us? Where is he? Why isn't he here?

The prophet answers these questions, and in the saddest way. The reason lies in our sinfulness, the prophet says. God is not gone from us because he has forsaken us. Our sins—our weaknesses, our wilfulness, our pride, our failure to love, our failure even to accept the love of others—all these things have made us wither. Desiccated and unclean, we have been blown away from God by the winds of life.



But how are we supposed to be holy—clean and good—for the Lord, except by the Lord's own doing? We reject as Pelagian the thought that any one of us can make himself holy by his own efforts. Only God's grace can make a person lovely in holiness.

And so the prophet cries out to God, "Why do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways?" There is an answer in the Responsorial Psalm. The Psalmist says, "Lord, make us turn to you!" This is a cry from a person who wanders from the Lord. He wanders because he wants to—that is the sad truth. But when he can't find God in his wandering, he cries to God, "make me turn to you!" Then he wants fervently not to want the very wandering he is so prone to want.

It may be then that God lets us do what we want to do, including wandering from him, so that finally we at least want to want him. Maybe we will find God when we cry with the Psalmist, "Lord, make me turn to you!"

Today we begin the Advent season. 'Advent' as we know means 'The Coming'. Already, when the gospels were written, the first Christians had begun to meditate on the significance of the Saviour's birth: the dawn of the world's salvation. The early Church celebrated Christmas in the depths of Europe's winter – probably because most people had traditions of special festivals at mid-winter. And as the days were beginning to lengthen, Christians were prompted to look forward to the springtime, when they would celebrate Easter, their greatest festival.

The feasts of Easter and Christmas are complementary. At Easter, the principal festival of the Church's year, we celebrate the great act of God – making the Risen Christ the 

✠✠ source of the life and blessings that will transform creation into God's final masterpiece. It is not surprising that the Church's meditations on the 'dawn' that was the Saviour's first 'Coming' came to be associated with his 'Second Coming' when he will inaugurate God's final kingdom. Our advent liturgies weave together the themes of these two 'Comings'.



Many of the readings of Advent are from the final chapters of the Book of Isaiah (40-66).

These chapters, coming from the time of the Exile, are filled with a renewed hope and confidence in the great future God has promised. Today's magnificent text is typical: 'You are our Father, our Redeemer from of old ... tear open the heavens and come down ... we are the clay, you are our potter, we are all the work of your hand'.

One of the insistent themes of the prophets of Israel was 'The Day of the Lord', when God was to come to rule the earth. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul affirms the Saviour's sharing in the fullness of divine authority, calling this final day, 'the day of our Lord Jesus Christ'. He tells his people that, in this present time of 'waiting', they should look forward to the Saviour's coming with confidence.

During the coming year, our gospel readings will be from Mark. Today's reading recalls a parable of Jesus, urging constant readiness for his return. We have no way of knowing how the end will come upon us. But the first 'Coming' of the Saviour – as truly one of us, born like us and sharing in what we all experience – makes it clear that we can look forward to the final 'Coming' with confidence.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK INTRODUCTION – by Michael Fallon MSC

The gospel of Mark is very much shorter than either Matthew or Luke, and if one takes a quick glance through the three so-called Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke seem to contain just about everything that is in Mark, plus a lot of extra material, especially sayings of Jesus. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that throughout most of the Church's life, Mark has been the least quoted and least used of the gospels. With more careful attention to the differences between the gospels, however, this situation is changing.

The gospel according to Mark has its own special and very attractive qualities. The fact that Mark has relatively few words of Jesus, necessarily focuses attention on action, and an action that moves quickly (the word 'immediately' occurs forty times). Mark's gospel is not poetically crafted, but it has its own dramatic power. Furthermore, his presentation of Jesus' feelings has a particular attraction to today's readers.

Clement of Alexandria held that Mark depended upon Matthew. Augustine considered Mark a precis of the longer gospels, and such was his authority that this assumption stood till the last century. Today, however, something approaching a general consensus has been achieved that there is a literary dependency of Matthew and Luke upon Mark, which is judged by most scholars to be the earliest of the gospels. Nevertheless, there are still scholars who consider that Mark borrowed from Matthew. The matter remains unresolved.

The Gospel itself contains no indication of its author.

continued next week

REGISTERING FOR SATURDAY AND SUNDAY MASSES

If you wish to attend 5:30pm Saturday Mass or 8:00am Sunday Mass, you need to register with the Parish Office by phone or email.

Register now for Masses up to the end of the year, 26/27 December.

FRATELLI TUTTI

ctd. Commentary by Daniel P Horan

Authentic peacemaking requires truth telling and a shared commitment to the good of the other. It also requires recognizing how decisions have consequences — sometimes dramatically negative ones — for “the more vulnerable members of society” (234). He adds: “Those who work for tranquil social coexistence should never forget that inequality and lack of integral human development make peace impossible” (235).

Again, this hearkens back to the model and vision of St Francis, who in promoting *fraternitas* as the lens through which to view all relationships, always prioritized the poor and marginalized.

Francis, like his medieval namesake, does not condone “easy” forgiveness or reconciliation, which often comes at the expense of silencing or dismissing the discomfiting experiences and histories of those who have been victimized. Instead, he insists on the importance of memory in a manner evoking the theological concept “dangerous memory” of Fr Johann Baptist Metz, and the rejection of decisions or actions arising from “fear and resentment” (266).

In the final chapter of the encyclical, the pope appeals to all religious believers, regardless of their tradition, to be agents of reconciliation, recognizing the fundamental commitment we all have to promote the common good.

Speaking from the Christian perspective, Francis ties together the importance of the example of Jesus Christ and *fraternitas* as the foundation for our universal human vocation to be peacemakers and reconcilers. “For us, the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it, there arises, for Christian thought and for the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all” (277). These three themes — *fraternitas*, crossing borders and building bridges and peacemaking and reconciliation — only begin to signal the manifold ways the inspirational spectre of St Francis haunts this latest encyclical letter. As the church begins to unpack the wisdom and challenge present in this teaching during the coming weeks, months and years, the fullness of the Franciscan influence will become even more apparent.

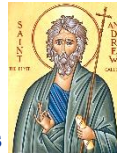
Fratelli Tutti. With these words, Saint Francis of Assisi addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel.

This saint of fraternal love, simplicity and joy, who inspired me to write the Encyclical Laudato Si’, prompts me once more to devote this new Encyclical to fraternity and social friendship. Francis felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh. Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters.

There is an episode in the life of Saint Francis that shows his openness of heart, which knew no bounds and transcended differences of origin, nationality, colour or religion. It was his visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt, which entailed considerable hardship, given Francis’ poverty, his scarce resources, the great distances to be travelled and their differences of language, culture and religion. That journey, undertaken at the time of the Crusades, further demonstrated the breadth and grandeur of his love, which sought to embrace everyone. Francis’ fidelity to his Lord was commensurate with his love for his brothers and sisters. Unconcerned for the hardships and dangers involved, Francis went to meet the Sultan with the same attitude that he instilled in his disciples: if they found themselves “among the Saracens and other nonbelievers”, without renouncing their own identity they were not to “engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God’s sake”. In the context of the times, this was an extraordinary recommendation. We are impressed that some eight hundred years ago Saint Francis urged that all forms of hostility or conflict be avoided and that a humble and fraternal “subjection” be shown to those who did not share his faith.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK – AND BEYOND

Monday 30 Nov **Saint Andrew**, apostle
Tuesday 1 Dec **World AIDS Day**
Thursday 3 Dec **Saint Francis Xavier**, priest
Friday 4 Dec **Anointing of the Sick** – after 9:30am Mass



**ONE CHRISTMAS ITEM [see below] 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**

SURFING SEASON ... BE SAFE

So far this season, there have been **577** rescues [*last week 545*] completed by surf lifesavers, and **2,049** first aid treatments [*last week 1,902*] have been performed.



VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL CONTINUES

The annual **Vinnies Christmas Appeal** runs from 21 November to 6 December. You can support the Appeal in any of the following ways:

- ✓ **Hampers** – 3 categories (families, single female, single male) *notices in the church*
 ↪ if you cannot attend church, but want to make a hamper up, contact the Parish Office
- ✓ **Giving Tree** – tags on the tree have name and gender of children (up to 12 years)
- ✓ **Donation Envelopes** – available in the church as well as **online** donations
- ✓ **Christmas cakes, puddings, long-life custard, tinned ham, biscuits, lollies, soft drinks, lollies, tinned vegetables, chips, jelly** – *no cigarette or alcohol products please.*

IN 2019, THERE WERE 38 MILLION PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS, 1.8 MILLION UNDER 15.

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

First Sunday of Advent - Year B

1st Reading Isaiah 63:16-17, 64:1,3-8
2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Gospel Mark 13:33-37

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Second Sunday of Advent - Year B

1st Reading Isaiah 40:1-5,9-11
2nd Reading 2 Peter 3:8-14
Gospel Mark 1:1-8

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

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