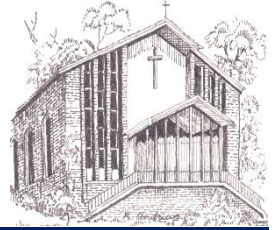




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



5/6 DECEMBER 2020 SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT ❖ YEAR B Vinnies Christmas Appeal

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Comfort

In the first Reading, the prophet reports a command given by God: ‘Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God!’ In the sorrows of life, who does not long for comfort? Who would not melt with gratitude at the tender comfort of God?

But what is comfort?

Sometimes what we want is just what the good shepherd gives his lost sheep. We don't want to walk along the road of our life to the Lord. We want God to carry us.

But a child that is carried all the time will never learn to walk, to leap and run. That child, weak enough already to have to be carried, will get only weaker as the carrying goes on.

And comfort isn't a matter of giving weakness. It's a matter of giving strength—strength for walking, even over very rough roads.

In fact, the “-fort” in “comfort” comes from the Latin word for “strong.” The “com-” in “comfort” is from the Latin word for “with.” To give comfort to someone is to lend them some of your strength. They are more able to stand on their own feet and walk because you are with them.

But what is the comfort of God? Where is it? How do we find it?

The Gospel says that Christ baptizes his own with the Holy Spirit. Because of this baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within each person who comes to Christ.

That is why no one who comes to Christ and receives his baptism of the Holy Spirit walks the wild and rocky road of life alone. God is so much with those baptized that, in the person of the Holy Spirit, God is within them. If God is for us, even within us, who can be against us? This is strength indeed.

And so, no wonder that the other name for the Holy Spirit is “the Comforter.”

As we prepare to celebrate the Lord's ‘coming’ at Christmas, our Advent liturgies invite us to a fuller appreciation of the great plan of God – a plan that will reach its climax with the inauguration of God's final Kingdom, in the ‘second coming’ of the Saviour.

We read again from the final chapters of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. This amazing passage helps us to understand the wonder and joy with which the apostolic generation read the texts of the Old Testament, and recognised that they had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Their faith in Christ, they proclaimed, was ‘according to the Scriptures’ (Luke 24:27; 1 Corinthians 15:4 etc.) In this passage, the message of God's generous ways already finds a sublime and inspiring expression: ‘Console my people, console them, speak to their hearts’; let the ‘joyful messenger’ proclaim God's presence in their midst; God will lead



↪↪ the exiled people home through the wilderness, in a new Exodus; Israel's God will be 'like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering the lambs in his arms'.

This Old Testament text provides the background for the gospel reading, which is the opening passage of Mark's gospel – 'the beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ the Son of God'. It is echoed by Mark, in his quotation from 'the book of the prophet Isaiah' (His quotation, in fact, combines two other Old Testament texts with the words from Isaiah). John the Baptist appears as the 'messenger' foretold. He 'prepares a way' for the Saviour, who – in his Paschal Mystery – will lead God's people in the final Exodus of God's great plan. He will prove himself a 'Good Shepherd' to a people 'harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd' (Matthew 9:36). Mark's description of the Baptist – wearing 'a garment of camel skin' and living on 'locusts and wild honey' – presents him as another Elijah: the old prophet whose witness to the unique divinity of the God of Israel made him a legendary model of the prophet's role. John's 'baptism of repentance' prepared for the coming of the Saviour; and all generations of Christians have been inspired by his humble 'Advent' witness to the one would 'baptise with the Holy Spirit' – 'I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals'.

2 Peter, from which our other reading comes – with its reference to the 'Second Coming' of the Saviour – is one of the last texts of the New Testament to be written. It reflects the mood of the early Church, as it comes to terms with the fact that they faced an indefinite wait before the Lord's promised return. Like them we must bow before the mystery of God's ways, maintaining an alert faith in the certain, but unknowable, final return of the Saviour. If we must look forward to our familiar world coming to an end – as foretold in the dramatic imagery of the prophets – we should not be frightened, because creation will be transformed in a 'new heaven and new earth', in which all the things we hold dear will be filled with the 'righteousness', or incomparable goodness, of God's ways.



CHRISTMAS VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

This year, because of the Covid-19 restrictions and construction in the school grounds, **ALL CHRISTMAS MASSES WILL BE IN THIRROUL CHURCH** with extra seating provided outside on the grassed area. Numbers will be restricted – further details will be provided once information is obtained from NSW Health. There will be four Christmas Masses this year. If you can help with any of the tasks below, please phone or email the Parish Office this week – *Thank you for your help!*

- **Helpers needed at 4:30pm Christmas Eve to set up chairs** for the 6:30pm Mass
- **5 Children** needed to do the readings at the Christmas Eve 6:30pm Mass

ADVENT RECONCILIATION ★ CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Rite II of Reconciliation at Thirroul: **Tuesday, 15 December at 7:30pm**

CHRISTMAS MASSES:	Thursday, 24 December	6:30pm Thirroul Church
	Thursday, 24 December	9:30pm Thirroul [not at Wombarra]
	Friday, 25 December	8:00am and 9:30am Thirroul
	Saturday, 26 December	5:30pm Thirroul
	Sunday, 27 December	8:00am Thirroul
	<i>then Masses will be at the usual times</i>	
	Friday, 1 January 2021	9:00am Thirroul



THE GOSPEL OF MARK INTRODUCTION – Michael Fallon MSC (ctd.)

We do not possess any of the original manuscripts of the New Testament. Our earliest copy of Mark's gospel is a papyrus manuscript dating from the third century, preserved thanks to the dry heat of the Egyptian desert. The first and last pages did not survive the ravages of time, and some other small sections have been lost, but most of the gospel can be read there. The whole gospel can be found intact in two books from the fourth century, one kept in the Vatican library, and the other discovered only last century in a monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. These and all other ancient manuscripts, whether written in Greek or in the various other languages into which the gospel was translated, attribute the gospel to Mark. Careful comparison of these ancient manuscripts also gives us confidence that the text we have is indeed the text as it came from Mark's hand.

According to Irenaeus, writing about 180AD, Mark is the John Mark mentioned in the Acts. The first time he is mentioned is during the persecution of the Christians under king Herod Agrippa I, probably in 44AD. We read in the Acts: *Peter [after his deliverance from prison] went straight to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark.* (Acts 12:12) The Hebrew name John followed by the Greek (Roman) name Mark suggests that he was a Greek-speaking Jew. This fits also with information we have from the letter to the Colossians (4:10), that he was a cousin of Barnabas, one of the leaders of the Greek-speaking community in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27, 11:21). We next hear of him moving from Jerusalem to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul (Acts 12:25), and setting out with them on what is known as Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-5,13). This did not work out well, and when Paul was setting out on a longer mission he refused to take Mark with him (Acts 15:36-40). Mark went instead with his cousin Barnabas to Cyprus, which was Barnabas's homeland (Acts 4:36). Mark must have met up with Paul again, for Paul mentions him with affection in two letters written probably during his Ephesian imprisonment about 54AD. *Mark, the cousin of Barnabas sends his greetings – you were sent some instructions about him; if he comes to you, give him a warm welcome ... Greetings from my dear friend Luke, the doctor.* (Colossians 4:10,14; see also Philemon 23-24) Paul speaks of him again in his final letter. The mention of Mark and Luke together in these letters is of some interest when we consider the literary relationship between their two gospels. *Only Luke is with me. Get Mark to come and bring him with you. I find him a useful helper in my work.* (2 Timothy 4:11)

Finally, Mark is mentioned in the First Letter of Peter, written probably from Rome about 64AD. *My son Mark sends you greetings.* (1 Peter 5:13) A Latin prologue to the gospel from the second half of the second century, and called the Anti-Marcionite prologue because it was written against a certain Marcion, states that the gospel was written after Peter's death and in Italy. This takes us back to the statement from Papias. We can imagine Mark learning much of his theology from Paul, but drawing on Peter's memories to fill in the picture of Jesus. As we read the gospel, we will do well to read it through the eyes and heart of Peter.

– continued next week

REGISTERING FOR SATURDAY, SUNDAY AND CHRISTMAS MASSES

**Now is the time to register for any Saturday or Sunday Mass
and ANY of the four Christmas Masses**

Phone or email the Parish Office or <http://thirroulcatholic.eventbrite.com.au>

BLACK FRIDAY

The term 'Black Friday' [the Friday following 'Thanksgiving' in the USA] comes from the notion (for small businesses) that it is the day that either makes or breaks them financially for the year ... if they make it, they are 'out of the red'. Christmas shopping begins!

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK – AND BEYOND

Monday 7 Dec Saint Ambrose, bishop, doctor
 Tuesday 8 Dec The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**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 **730** rescues [*last week 581*] completed by surf lifesavers, and **2,330** first aid treatments [*last week 2,058*] have been performed.



VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL CONCLUDES THIS WEEKEND

The annual Vinnies Christmas Appeal runs until Sunday, 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.*

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD — THANK YOU

This year 70 shoe boxes were packed; the boxes are going to 4 different places: Cambodia; Fiji; Madagascar; and Malawi. Thanks again: much appreciated to everyone.

THIS 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

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Third Sunday of Advent • Year **B**

1st Reading Isaiah 61:1-2,10-11
 2nd Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
 Gospel John 1:6-8,19-28

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