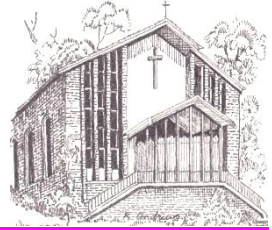




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



12 / 13 DECEMBER 2020
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ❖ YEAR B
Blessing of the Crib ♦ *Gaudete* Sunday

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

"I rejoice heartily in the Lord," the prophet says in the first reading. And why wouldn't he? He has glad tidings. The poor will be taken care of, the broken-hearted will be healed, the captives will be freed, and the prisoners will be released. Who wouldn't rejoice in these things?

As the winter dark and cold encroach in the Holy Land, and the birth of the baby Jesus draws near, we hear these beautiful words everywhere. But the problem is that, for many people, this is a time of depression, not of joy.


And why? Well, because the poor are still poor; people are broken-hearted; and the captives and prisoners are not released. The bank forecloses on the house of a person who has lost their job; a friend is treacherous; a spouse succumbs to alcoholism. What has happened to the promise of the beautiful words? How is joy possible? The answer lies in Mary's words in the Magnificat. "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour," she says. Does anyone think that she took these words back when she stood by the cross as her son was crucified?

How can Mary maintain the words of the Magnificat even at the foot of the cross? The answer is that the greatest love of the Lord was there. The words of joy that Mary spoke, before the Lord was born, are only more true in the suffering she bears at his cross. His love doesn't take away her suffering at his crucifixion. How could it? But her suffering is enveloped in his great love, and so it is transfigured.

Joy in the Lord is compatible with waiting for the final redemption from our suffering and our sin because Christ is Emanuel, God with us. Even now, because his love suffuses all our suffering, our souls can proclaim the greatness of the Lord, and our spirits can rejoice in God.

Our Lord transfigures the suffering of our lives in his love.

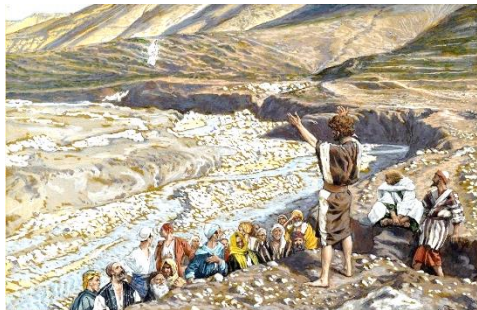
Genuine Christian faith does not make us long-faced; it should make us enthusiastic and happy. Even in Lent, the most serious season of the Church's year, the Sunday at the mid-point of the journey to Easter has a theme of rejoicing. In the same way, on this third Sunday of Advent, our liturgy takes up a joyous theme.

In our first reading, from Isaiah, the prophet is filled with joy. He has the anointing of the Spirit to bring, in the name of God, 'good news' of encouragement, healing, freedom, and an outpouring of God's special favour. This message is especially for 'the poor' – those who have no security except in God. Originally addressed to God's people in their 

Joy in the Lord



✠✠ exile – this proclamation was read by Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth. And he added, ‘This text is being fulfilled today, even as you listen’. As the text continues, the prophet ‘exults for joy’, using marriage themes to express the covenant bond of love between the chosen people and their God; and he looks forward to their renewed life becoming an inspiration to all the nations of the world.



The second reading from 1 Thessalonians – the earliest writing of the Christian Scriptures – is chosen for our Advent liturgy, no doubt, because it rises to a climax with its reference to ‘the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’. But it is a good choice, because it takes up today’s theme of joy. Paul’s reference to those things that unite that early Christian community provides a useful check list as we evaluate the life of our own communities: ‘constant prayer’, thankfulness to the Father, offered in and through Christ; an openness to the promptings of the Spirit that comes through members who are in tune with God’s ways (‘the gift of prophecy’); and the ‘peace’ that is the fruit of all these shared blessings. True joy comes with the experience of what we are made for; the joy brought by Christian faith, the joy all true believers have experienced, the joy that only God can give, comes through the things Paul speaks of.

John the Baptist is again our Advent guide, in today’s gospel reading from John. Because he has revived the ways of Israel’s prophets, he has caused quite a stir, and the authorities of Jerusalem send interrogators who ask him to give an account of himself. His selfless response is disarmingly frank: he is not the messiah; he is not one of the old prophets come back to life; he is not the New Moses of Israel’s expectations. His role is that of a herald, ‘a voice crying in the wilderness’, that announces one who stands among the crowd, still ‘unknown’ to them. The description of his witness in this passage leaves his hearers hungry to know more of the one to whom this great figure shows such reverence – a prelude to a great theme of John’s gospel, ‘the true light’ that is going to transform a darkened world.

Today’s liturgy can serve to remind us of today’s call to a ‘New Evangelisation’ – bringing the true joy of the light of Christ to a world in which there is so much darkness and pain. When the task seems beyond us, let us remember with the old prophet, that we are working for God’s future; let us understand with Paul that it is first and foremost the quality of our lives together that will bring people to share our faith; and let us learn from the Baptist that the effectiveness of our outreach will depend upon the unselfish commitment we have made to the Saviour and what he stands for.

CHRISTMAS VOLUNTEERS ARE STILL 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 are currently limited to 100 in the church – details will be updated in accordance with NSW Health Regulations. 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 by THIS Wednesday** – *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

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

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES – YOU MUST REGISTER BEFOREHAND

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 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.)*

Mark's gospel is very conscious of conflict. Having lost his two mentors, Peter and Paul, in Nero's persecution in the middle sixties, Mark completed his gospel during the catastrophe of the Jewish-Roman war which broke out in 66AD. Many Christians must have been wondering about the reality of the salvation brought by Jesus. Mark realised that Christians must expect to suffer as Jesus suffered, and that they should not let apparent failure in this life distract them from living as Jesus lived. God was faithful to Jesus and would be faithful to them. Their hope in Jesus would not be in vain, for Jesus was the promised Messiah. According to one commentator: Mark's task was to present Messiahship in the terms drastically reinterpreted by Jesus, and to present resurrection as that which came only at the end of persecution and terror.

If Mark's was the first of the gospels, then his was a superb achievement. He drew on thirty years of oral tradition and had in Peter the best of mentors. Nevertheless, it fell to him to take the various sayings of Jesus and the disconnected memories, and to create out of them a mosaic of faith in which the real values and attitudes of Jesus of Nazareth are presented convincingly and attractively. His was the task of assembling the material and arranging it in such a way as to present its inner meaning by conveying something of the wonder of the person who had captured the imagination and inspired the lives of so many.

In portraying as he does the last two or three years of Jesus' life, Mark aimed to demonstrate that Jesus had died as he had lived, and that the message of Jesus' love, given so unforgettably on the cross, could inspire Jesus' disciples to continue to live as Jesus had lived.

A final note. It is providential that we have four gospels, each with its own insights and perspective. This should help us to avoid going to the gospels expecting to find one fixed answer to our questions about Jesus' life and preaching. One definite answer might have simplified matters, and might, perhaps, have appeared to satisfy our curiosity, but the variety of insights that we have in the different gospels helps us see Jesus from different angles, and also to observe how different disciples responded to him.

By contemplating Jesus of Nazareth and by listening to him, we can become more sensitive to the presence and inspiration of the risen Christ, speaking to us now through Mark's inspired words. May we learn to be faithful disciples of Jesus in our obedience to God, and in carrying out the commission given us to 'go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation'(16:15), building communities of faith that will reveal the true God in today's world.

REGISTERING FOR SATURDAY, SUNDAY AND CHRISTMAS MASSES

**You must register BEFOREHAND 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>

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK – AND BEYOND

Monday 14 Dec Saint John of the Cross, priest, doctor
Tuesday 15 Dec 7:30pm Reconciliation Rite II at Thirroul



**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 **795 rescues** [last week **730**] completed by surf lifesavers, and **2,655 first aid** treatments [last week **2,330**] have been performed.



BLESSING OF THE CHRISTMAS CRIB

Blessed are you, Lord God, ruler of all creation, we thank you because you love us so much. From the dawn of creation, you have shown us your love: you sent your only Son to bring us joy, peace and eternal life. Bless ✦ this crib. Let the crib remind us of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary. Let the crib remind us of the poor and humble birth of Jesus. Father, we praise you through Christ our Lord. Amen.

GAUDETE SUNDAY

The third Sunday of Advent, so called from the first word of the Introit at Mass (*Gaudete*, i.e. Rejoice). The season of Advent originated as a fast of forty days in preparation for Christmas, commencing on the day after the feast of St Martin (12 November), whence it was often called “St Martin’s Lent” – a name by which it was known as early as the fifth century. The spirit of the Liturgy all through Advent is one of expectation and preparation for the Christmas feast as well as for the second coming of Christ.

THIS 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

NEXT Sunday’s Readings *on our website*

Fourth Sunday of Advent • Year **B**

1st Reading 2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14,16
2nd Reading Romans 16:25-27
Gospel Luke 1:26-38

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