



Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



4268 1910



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Welcome - especially to all attending our Christmas Liturgies.



25 DECEMBER 2020
CHRISTMAS EVE AND DAY
Peace and Joy from the Franciscan Friars

CHRISTMAS IN 2020 ... BRING HOPE AND JOY INTO 2021



Despite the fact that many of the themes of Christian faith are fading, Luke's gospel account of the Saviour's birth resonates in the awareness of most Australians – the Child in the manger, the shepherds and the angels' song of "Peace on earth". We believers are challenged to own what the story has to tell a struggling, suffering world – beyond commercial trivialisation and the sentimental attractiveness of a new-born babe.

The Scripture Readings point beyond these superficialities, inviting us to share in the wonder and joy brought by the Saviour's birth: the dawn of salvation for the whole world! "God's grace (saving power) has been revealed" bringing "salvation for the whole human race"; "in these last days God has spoken through his Son".

For a renewed Christian faith, all things are moving towards the consummation of God's designs for creation. With the coming of this dawn, God's plan has reached its great climax. Blessed with faith in Christ, we rejoice as we hear Isaiah giving expression to the messianic expectations of old Israel, because we recognise their amazing fulfilment in the story of Jesus, the son of David, the "Prince of Peace", bringing to the human family the "good news" – "Your God is King!"

Luke's gospel narrative is so well remembered because it is a masterpiece. Christ's birth is set on the world stage, within the "*Pax Romana*" [Roman peace] of a mighty empire; and the nation's messianic expectations are fulfilled in Bethlehem, "the town of David". But contrasts soon emerge with these grand settings that fill this dawn of our salvation with gospel overtones, anticipating what is to take place as the Saviour's mission unfolds. The earthly pomp of the empire and the chequered history of the Davidic dynasty are far removed from this humble birth, amidst the overflow of a crowded inn – with a manger for a crib and a crowd of smelly shepherds as privileged witnesses. Rome's proud boast, that its legions have brought peace to the world, pales into insignificance for those who recognise what this birth means for the whole of creation – as the angel hosts sing "Glory to God" and "peace to all those who enjoy God's favour". The chatter of the shepherds is a foil to the response of Mary, the first of all Christian believers, looking into the future and "treasuring all these things and pondering them in her heart".

We have another very different masterpiece, in the opening passage of John's gospel. This telling of the same story is the fruit of a long meditation upon the dawning of the world's salvation: "In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God ... The Word was the true light that enlightens all men and he was coming into the world ... The Word was made flesh, he lived among us and we saw his glory, ✠ ✠



✠✠ the glory that is his as the only Son of God". As Christians, at Christmas we celebrate that our God entered into a new and unique relationship with humankind; that Jesus came to live among us as one of us, to bring the face of God before us in a radically different way. And the advent season is a time to prepare ourselves to re-immers in this wonderful reality.



Isaiah the prophet announces the coming of the Messiah. Foreseeing the birth of Christ, the prophet says of the people living at that time, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

Sometimes other people keep us in the dark for their own purposes. But we can keep ourselves in the dark, too, because we cannot face our sins and weaknesses. We do not want to see what we are. We shut our eyes against the light that reveals us to ourselves because that light seems so threatening. We cleave to the darkness because it seems so safe. When Christ is born, a great light is shined in our darkness because God is in our midst now. The King has come. His dominion is vast; he is Father forever. We lay a plumbline against a wall to check whether the wall is crooked or not. God is the plumbline by which our unbearable bentness is made manifest to us. When Christ comes among us, that holy measure illumines us and reveals what we are.

And so, as Malachi says (2:3), "Who can abide the day of his coming? Who wants to be in this light?"

And maybe that is why the Messiah comes to us through human birth, as a new-born baby. When he comes, he is tiny, fragile, weak. Needy and hungry, he suckles at the breast of his mother. The great Judge of all the earth comes to the creatures who are subject to him as a baby, helpless, powerless.

How much harsh judgment, superior condemnation, unbending rejection is there in a baby? Our fear of the light is defeated here. We do not have to figure out how to abide the day of his coming. We can surrender to it with gratitude and joy. The baby invites us. The light of his love welcomes us.

The first people to experience the coming of the saviour were shepherds, those lowly, uneducated ones who lived among the animals. They were not the only ones, of course, but they were the first to welcome the saviour. It was no accident that such lowly people would be called in first to pay homage to the saviour. It is to the lowly, after all, that Christ came first as Lord and Redeemer. The circumstances of his birth testify to that: his mother "wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the place where travellers lodged."

Christmas is the great annual renewal of our being a Church filled with wonder at the nearness of her God. The nearer we are to our God, the nearer we should become to those lowly ones who are God's special ones.

WEEKEND MASS TIMES

Church of St Michael · Thirroul

↳ Saturday 5:30pm and Sunday 8:00am

Bulli Sunday 8:30am and 5:30pm

Corrimal Saturday 6pm and Sunday 9:30am

USUAL WEEKDAY LITURGIES

Thirroul [Mass] Tuesday 5:30pm

Wednesday 9:00am

Thursday 9:00am

Friday 9:30am

Patrick Vaughan, *Parish Priest* Geoff Allen, Ken Cafe ofm, Andrew Granc ofm, *Assisting*

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JANUARY Parish Office Hours - Tuesdays and Wednesdays - 9:30am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 3:30pm

🌐 www.thirroulcatholic.org.au

Parish School ☎ 4267 2560