



Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul



28 / 29 AUGUST 2021
22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + YEAR B
CURRENTLY IN LOCKDOWN UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Washing Your Hands Before Dinner

We resume our readings from Mark's gospel. Life in a human community is governed by 'laws and customs', as Moses reminds the people of old Israel in the first reading. These regulations and their interpretation can give rise to confusion; so, Moses urges the people to 'add nothing' and 'take nothing from' the law which he gives them in the name of God. We meet the same issue in today's gospel reading: Jesus is being hounded by antagonists – some of whom have come from Jerusalem for the purpose. They resent the fact that the disciples of Jesus 'do not respect the traditions of the elders' and observe ritual purifications. The response of Jesus has an important lesson for every age, as we endeavour to make Church regulations that are truly life-giving.

As is usually the case, the Response to the Psalm expresses well the message of the liturgy's readings: 'The just will live in the presence of the Lord'. As the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5 and 6) teaches us, we are truly the People of God if our life together gives expression to the ways of our Father in heaven. This is the standard against which we should evaluate the 'laws and customs' we draw up for the Church's common life, and the way they are applied.



The words of Jesus, in this and similar exchanges, are surprisingly sharp. The issue is far more important than a detail of ritual observance. Those who were leaders in Israel should have been helping the people to live according to the ways of God – so that they would be 'a light to the nations', as the prophets had taught. Instead, they had lost sight of Israel's great destiny, and worked against it, in fact, by elaborating a system of self-serving regulations. They have no real concern for the ways of God, Jesus tells them, and he quotes against them the words of Isaiah: 'This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me'. Jesus shows himself a true interpreter of Israel's faith as he urges his followers to find integrity through the motives of the heart rather than in the observance of external rituals of purification. No wonder the people followed him so eagerly.

But in what follows – as Jesus departs radically from the provisions of the Old Law concerning foods considered to make a person 'impure' – we recognise that he is conscious of an authority that is above the Law of Moses. Jesus and the Pharisees have a public fight about the Jewish tradition of washing your hands before dinner. Jesus puts the



✠✠ Pharisees and their tradition down with a scathing denunciation. He calls the Pharisees “hypocrites,” who have God on their lips but not in their hearts.

So, what does this story say about tradition?



Well, we might think, if cleaving to tradition gets the Pharisees the denunciation of the Lord, then so much the worse for tradition!

And yet where would we be without tradition? Our whole religious understanding and practice, even our creeds, are shaped by tradition.

The solution to the perplexity lies in the story. When the Pharisees ask Jesus why his disciples don't keep the tradition of handwashing, their question isn't a request for information. It is a challenge to his whole ministry. From the point of view of the Pharisees, a person couldn't be from God and not wash his hands before dinner in accordance with the tradition.

A tradition hands on something precious from one generation to another. But the tradition the Pharisees cling to does not in fact convey the God of Moses, does it? What kind of God would make his total acceptance or rejection of a person dependent on whether or not he washed his hands before dinner? Where is the righteous, merciful, loving God of Moses in this view of the Pharisees?

In the first reading, Moses orders the people to communicate God's commands without adding or subtracting anything from them. The Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed which are part of the tradition that structures our faith, do not violate this order of Moses, because the Apostle Creed and the Nicene Creed do not change biblical teachings. They only unfold the biblical teachings and give deeper insight into them.

But when the Pharisees give privilege of place to handwashing above the true goodness of Christ, they don't transmit what Moses gave them. They wreck it, in the name of tradition. And that is why Jesus says the tradition of the Pharisees is the tradition of humans. These defenders of religious tradition have lost their grip on the very thing they were supposed to pass on, God's goodness and love. That is why Jesus calls them 'hypocrites.'

It is a cautionary tale for all of us, isn't it?

In the second reading we begin to read from the Letter of James. This letter, associated with the name of James 'the brother of Jesus', a leader among the presbyters of the Jerusalem church, gives us a glimpse of the outlook that united the first Jewish converts to faith in Christ. It is very down to earth and practical, filled with the spirit of the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. And because this literature fosters life in harmony with the ways of God, it illustrates well the spirit Jesus advocates in the gospel. James points to 'the Father of lights', the giver of 'everything that is perfect'; he urges making the message of the 'Word' of God our life standard; and we should honour God especially by our generosity to those in need. In identifying himself as 'slave (Greek: *doulos*) of God' – an expression used also by Paul (Titus 1:1) – James is acknowledging God as his Lord to whom he owes complete obedience. He is also making a claim, though a humble one, to authority, for



✠✠ Abraham also was known as the slave of the Lord (Psalm 105:42), as was Moses (2 Kings 18:12), Joshua (Judges 2:8), and David (2Samuel 7:5). We can also see a reference to the suffering servant (that is, 'slave') of the Lord who is portrayed in the poetry of the anonymous prophet of the exile (see Isaiah 42:1). James wants his readers to receive his word as coming from God.

He goes on to speak of himself as 'a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ'. Paul also speaks of himself as a 'slave of Christ' (Galatians 1:10; Romans 1:1). The obedience which James gives to God is expressed through his obedience to Jesus, who, being acknowledged by the Jewish Christians as the longed-for Messiah, is called 'Christ'. Jesus is also called 'Lord' (Greek: *kurios*), a title which has a range of meanings. As a title of respect Jesus is addressed in this way a number of times in the Gospel (see Luke 5:12; 6:46; 9:54; 10:17; 22:33). It is used in the Jewish scriptures also as a title of the king when the focus is on the power of God which the king wields, as distinct from his communion with God through being anointed as the 'Christ'. When James calls Jesus 'Lord', he is referring to him as the Messiah raised to glory.

However, of even greater significance is the fact that the title 'Lord' translates the Greek *kurios* which in turn translates the sacred name YHWH – the name by which God introduces Godself to Moses when God appears in the burning bush and commissions Moses to go back to Egypt to liberate the Hebrews from slavery (Exodus 3:13-15). It is this mysterious and divine aspect to which James is referring here in identifying this 'Lord' as Jesus, the risen and exalted Christ. To have God's name is to exercise God's power (see Exodus 23:20-21). James is claiming that in exercising kingly power, Jesus is the one through whom God has chosen to save.

A comparison with much of the teaching of the moralists of the Greco-Roman world of the first century casts into relief the Jewish-Christian perspective of our author. It also reveals that he is not interested, as they sometimes were, in educating his readers to conformity with the social mores of the society of the day. Quite the contrary. His key point is that his readers must make a choice which, in many ways, will mean a rejection of the morals of the 'world' - a term that always has negative connotations in James. Nor is James composing a sectarian document aiming to defend Christians. He is frequently critical of members of the community who fail to live according to the faith which they profess.

ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK

TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA

STILL NEEDED DURING LOCKDOWN

DROP ITEMS ON THE FRONT VERANDAH OF THE PRESBYTERY

Vinnies Winter Appeal: please donate online by 31 August

SPIRITUALITY ON THE SOFA: 7:15PM WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER

"RECONNECTING THROUGH MUSIC" – Come, and in the comfort of your own home, engage in some stimulating conversation at **SOS** [*Spirituality on the Sofa*] with **Sam Allchurch** and **Dawn Walker**. Sam is the Director of Music at Christ Church St Laurence, Artistic Director of the Sydney Chamber Choir, and Associate Artistic Director of Gondwana Choirs. Dawn, a graduate of Melbourne University Conservatorium, was the Director of Music at Balwyn High School, Melbourne where she taught for 25 years prior to retirement. See the flyer attached to the email Bulletin for the **zoom link**. ☎ 0414 873 910

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK – AND BEYOND

Monday to Thursday Canon Law Conference AUS and NZ [Ken 'attending']

Friday 27 Aug Saint Gregory the Great, pope, doctor

Our church is currently closed – until at least 30 September. Please KEEP IN TOUCH.

PLENARY COUNCIL 2021

Plenary Council Prayer Campaign: People across the country are invited to participate in the "Fan the Flame" prayer campaign leading up to the first assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia. The assembly starts on 3 October. Campaign materials include resources for personal and communal prayer, reflections, musical suggestions and multimedia content. Find the resources at: www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/fanthe flame/

FAREWELL TO MAGDA ... WELCOME TO LAUREN



Magda Pires, Parish Secretary, began employment in August 2015. After six years, Magda has submitted her resignation as she is moving into a new job in accounting. Magda's last day will be **Tuesday, 31 August**. The Parish is indebted to Magda for her friendliness, faithfulness and expertise in service of our parishioners, visitors and parish over the past six years. On **Friday, 27 August** between 1pm and 2pm, you can **zoom in** on your computer to say farewell to Magda.



Lauren Faulks commenced as Parish Secretary on Tuesday, 24 August. Lauren is from West Wollongong. **Welcome Lauren!** Lauren will be working the same hours as Magda has been: Tuesdays and Wednesday, 9:00am to 3:30pm, and Fridays, 9:30am to 2:30pm. Say hello to Lauren via zoom on this Friday, 27 August, between 1pm and 2pm.

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B

1st Reading Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8

2nd Reading James 1:17-18,21-22,27

Gospel Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B

1st Reading Isaiah 35:4-7

2nd Reading James 2:1-5

Gospel Mark 7:31-37

SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Church of St Michael • Thirroul

Saturday – 5:30pm • Sunday – 8:00am

**Church closed because of lock down
now closed until further notice**

LITURGIES THIS WEEK

Thirroul

**Church currently closed
because of lock down
until further notice**

Monday 4:30
Tuesday 4:30
Wednesday 4:30
Thursday 09:00
Friday 09:30

Parish of St Michael – Thirroul and Wombarra

Moving forward as a Parish Family + one of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes

Patrick Vaughan • Parish Priest ❖ Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm • Assisting

325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive

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thirroul@dow.org.au

Parish Office

Hours

Magda Pires – Parish Secretary

Tuesday, Wednesday 9:00am–3:30pm Friday 9:30am–2:30pm

www.thirroulcatholic.org.au Parish School of St Michael 4267 2560