



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
18 / 19 DECEMBER 2021
4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT ✦ YEAR C
THANK YOU FROM VINNIES

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Where the Truth Lies

In today's readings, there is the sketch of a wonderful world.

In that world there are angels, who take care of human beings. There is a ruler, who shepherds people and protects them. By his power and his goodness he brings peace to all the earth.

There is peace for the troubled psyche of every person too. God turns each unsettled, uneasy, unhappy heart to Godself. And, turned to God, every heart can be at peace.

There is salvation from sin and even holiness. God has redeemed God's people and consecrated them to Godself. They are the saints of God.

And there is glory.

Who was this Elizabeth? An ordinary Jewish woman of her time, distinguished by her barrenness and not much more. And yet look at her in the Gospels, filled with the Holy Spirit and exercising the office of prophet to Mary, mother of the Lord. She is glorious in this story, isn't she? In the world sketched by the readings there is the glory and beauty of holiness available for all God's people.

But consider the everyday world we live in. Do we find angels, majestic rulers, goodness protecting the people, peace in the world, holiness in our hearts, glory in our lives? Look around the shopping mall, listen to the news media. What world are the writers of the readings living in?

And yet our own experience of grace gives us hope in the world of the readings, doesn't it?

The ugliness and the evil, so easy to see, overlies a deeper reality, which we can sense in the quiet moments of our lives when, like Mary, we are open to the call of the Lord. The everyday world of the mall and the news media, which looks so compelling, is a thin thing which will crumple and dissolve in time. What will remain is the world we hear about in Sunday's readings.

In Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people, "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!" (Deuteronomy 33:27). Underneath, in the refuge of the everlasting arms, is where the truth of the readings lies. And the Truth behind the readings lies in the womb of Mary, waiting to be born.

Our Advent season draws to a close with a liturgy filled with promise and expectation. Luke's gospel text describes the first meeting of John the Baptist with the Lord he is to herald so selflessly – in a tableau rich in implications, as we shall see. The first reading from the prophet Micah sums up the immense hopes about to be realized with the coming of the New David. The messiah will be born in Bethlehem, the city of David; he will be a mighty leader, gathering God's scattered people and exercising a rule giving expression to God's 'power and majesty'; he will, in fact, be peace personified (cf. Ephesians 2:14).

The reading from the letter to the Hebrews describes how the Saviour's coming inaugurates a new and final order of things in the plan of God. The old covenant, with its animal sacrifices and burnt offerings, was only a foreshadowing. Many times, the prophets, in the name of God, had rebuked the people for relying upon these external observances while their hearts were far from God and God's ways. Jesus himself was to run up against this same attitude. The letter to the Hebrews, we know, was written for people who looked back nostalgically to the rituals of old Israel, inviting them to leave these shadows behind and rejoice in the reality they pointed to. Today's passage takes us to the heart of the matter – the eternal designs of God shaping the mission of the eternal Son made human. True worship, as the psalm quoted reminds us (Psalm 40), is giving one's life over to God in fidelity and obedience. The Saviour's becoming one of us, and giving himself – 'once and for all' – into the hands of his Father, through his Paschal Mystery, has realized this pattern in a manner beyond all human expectations. By this self-offering, he has become the true worship of the whole of creation. More than that, he has united us to himself in his act of worship – God's 'will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body'.

But all of this is in the future, as Luke describes the dawn of salvation. Presenting the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, he invites us to recognize how much is involved in the drama that is beginning. It realizes the designs of the eternal Father, whose 'promise made to Mary is fulfilled'; the Old Testament and its time of waiting is coming to an end, as its final and greatest spokesman recognizes the coming of the Son of God; it is through Mary – 'most blessed of all women' – that this dawn of salvation takes place; and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that Mary has conceived, and Elizabeth with her child are able to enter into the joy that faith in this coming, or advent, brings to the world.

Mary reminds us to find the heart of God in the most simple, ordinary things – what more ordinary than a mother awaiting the birth of her child? God came in the gentlest, humblest and most irresistible way. Look out for God.



QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Micah 5:1-4

- ↪ A leader shepherds his flock in the majestic name of the Lord, but comes from Bethlehem, too small to be among the clans of Judah. With “majesty” at one end of the continuum and “poverty” at the other, where do you think today’s Church falls?
- ↪ If you were expecting a majestic ruler how would you have felt about the stable and manger? When you experience poverty in your life, do you accept it as a meeting place with God or do you run from it?

Second Reading Hebrews 10:5-10

- ↪ What does “once and for all” mean? Could it mean that Jesus’ coming to do his Father’s will completes the New Covenant and sanctifies us all?
- ↪ “What is the mission of the Messiah? Why is Christ’s offering shown as effective whereas the “sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings” of the Old Covenant can seem less so?

Gospel Luke 1:39-44

- ↪ The infant “leaped for joy” in Elizabeth’s womb at the recognition of the soon-to-be-born saviour. What does this moment mean as humankind’s welcome to the saviour. How close do you come to “leaping for joy” when you recognize God’s presence in your life?
- ↪ Why would Mary travel to the hill country “in haste”? Pope Francis says Mary experienced the gift she received as a mission. Do we have the same mission: to reach all people with God’s love?

Mary’s is *a faith that sets her on a journey*. The young woman of Nazareth, after hearing the message of the angel, “went with haste into the hill country” (Luke 1:39) to visit and assist Elizabeth, her cousin. She did not consider it a privilege to be chosen as the Mother of the Saviour; she did not lose the simple joy of her humility after the visit of the angel. She did not keep thinking about herself within the four walls of her house.

Rather, she experienced the gift she had received as a mission to be carried out; she felt urged to open the door and go out; she became completely caught up in God’s own “haste” to reach all people with his saving love. That is why Mary set out on her journey. She chose the unknowns of the journey over the comfort of her daily routines, the weariness of travel over the peace and quiet of home; the risk of a faith that makes our lives a loving gift to others over a placid piety.

– Pope Francis Apostolic Journey to Budapest, 15 September 2021

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES FOR 2022

Christmas Eve Friday 24 December 4:00pm Setting up for Mass in School Grounds

Christmas Eve Friday 24 December 6:30pm Parish School Grounds
Bring a chair and a bell

Christmas Eve Friday 24 December 9:30pm Parish Church
Carols and Mass during the Night

Christmas Day Saturday 25 December 9:00am Parish Church
Mass of Christmas Day

There will be NO 5:30pm Mass on Christmas Day, Saturday, 25 December

Boxing Day Sunday 26 December 8:00am Mass of the Feast of the Holy Family

Public Holiday Monday 27 December 9:30am Mass for the Feast of Saint John

Public Holiday Tuesday 28 December 9:30am Mass for the Feast of the Holy Innocents

Weekday Wednesday 29 December 9:00am Mass for the 5th day in the Christmas Octave

Weekday Thursday 30 December 9:00am Mass for the 6th day in the Christmas Octave

Weekday Friday 31 December 9:30am Mass for the 7th day in the Christmas Octave

**New Year’s Day Saturday 1 January 22 9:30am Mass for the Feast of Mary, Mother of God
World Day of Peace**

Saturday 1 January 22 5:30pm Mass for the Feast of the Epiphany

Sunday 2 January 22 8:00am Mass for the Feast of the Epiphany

The usual schedule of Masses now resumes – see page 4.

For all Christmas Masses, children are encouraged to dress as shepherds, angels

YEAR C – THE YEAR OF LUKE

It will become clear from the beginning of his work that Luke is especially interested in what he sees as God's controlling purpose, seen in the ministry of Jesus and carried forward in the ministry of the apostles and Paul. He therefore divides his work into two volumes: the gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

As he says in his introduction, he wants to present the story of Jesus 'from the beginning', that is, from Jesus' first emergence into public life at the baptism. He also wants to trace everything back 'from the very first', an expression better translated 'from its origins'. Permeating both books is the presence and action of God's Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit who is the origin of all that Jesus is and does and who provides the link between the prophets and Jesus, and between Jesus and his apostles. On every step of his journey, Jesus is responding to the powerful and personal influence of God's Spirit. It is the same with those who walk with Jesus and who follow on after him.



The annual Vinnies Christmas Appeal has finished, though you can still donate online. You have given an incredible **\$5,000** in cash, credit card and online donations. You also provided **14+** toys for 5 to 12 year-olds, you provided **24+** food/Christmas hampers, **35** food or gift vouchers. The estimated **total** value of the cash, vouchers, presents, hampers was **\$8,800**. Plus, more food items were delivered to Corrimal/Coniston: **THANK YOU**.

✓ **Donations Online** – you can still give to our local Vinnies Conference **online** by clicking **[HERE](#)**

ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM 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

BEATITUDES TO BE GOOD SHEPHERDS

Pope Francis invited Italy's bishops to live the "beatitudes of a bishop," an adaptation of the traditional Eight Beatitudes to provide guiding principles for being a "good shepherd" of a diocese.

- Blessed is the bishop who makes poverty and sharing his way of life, so that by his witness he is building up the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed is the bishop who is not afraid of tears streaming down his face, so that in them may be mirrored the pains of the people, the hard work of priests, finding God's consolation in the embrace with those who suffer.
- Blessed is the bishop who considers his ministry a service and not power, making meekness his strength, giving everyone the right to hold citizenship in his heart, to inhabit the land promised to the meek.
- Blessed is the bishop who does not shut himself up in the palaces of governance, who does not become a bureaucrat who is more attentive to statistics than to faces, to procedures than to stories, who is seeking to fight alongside humanity for God's dream of justice because the Lord, encountered in the silence of daily prayer, will be his nourishment.
- Blessed is the bishop who has a heart for the misery of the world, who is not afraid to dirty his hands with the mud of the human soul in order to find God's gold, who is not scandalized by the sin and frailty of others because he is aware of his own misery, so that the gaze of the Risen Crucified One will be a seal of infinite forgiveness for him.
- Blessed is the bishop who banishes duplicity of heart, who avoids every ambiguous dynamic, who dreams of the good even in the midst of evil, because he will be able to rejoice in God's countenance, discovering his reflection in every puddle of the city of humankind.
- Blessed is the bishop who works for peace, who accompanies journeys of reconciliation, who sows the seed of communion in the heart of the presbytery [the priests], who accompanies a divided society along the path of reconciliation, who takes every man and woman of goodwill by the hand to build fraternity: God will recognize him as his son.
- Blessed is the bishop who is not afraid to go against the tide for the sake of the Gospel, making his face 'stern' like that of Christ on his way to Jerusalem, without letting himself be held back by misunderstandings and obstacles because he knows that the kingdom of God advances in the contradiction of the world.

THIS WEEK'S RECIPE ... FROM RAYMOND – SAVOURY MUFFINS

Thank you, Raymond Cummins for this week's recipe: 2 cups self-raising flour; ½ cup tasty cheese; 1 tablespoon fresh parsley leaves, chopped; 125g butter; 1 cup milk; 1 egg, lightly beaten. Combine flour, cheese and parsley in a bowl. Add butter, milk, egg and chosen flavouring* – and stir with a large spoon until just combined. Do not over mix. Spoon mixture into 12 x ⅓ cup capacity muffin pans. Bake at 180°C for 15–20 minutes or until golden and cooked. *Some flavour variations: Ham and Corn – ¾ cup chopped ham with 125g can creamed corn and 1 spring onion finely chopped; Spinach, Mustard and Feta – 50g feta cheese, crumbled, with 1 cup baby spinach leaves, shredded, 1 spring only finely chopped and 2 teaspoons wholegrain mustard. Thanks, Raymond.

If you have a favourite recipe you are willing to share, please deliver or email it to the Parish Office or hand it in at Mass one day.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK – AND BEYOND

Monday	20 Dec	Mass of 20 December	————	Isaiah 7:10-14	Luke 1:26-38	
Tuesday	21 Dec	Mass of 21 December	5:30pm	Song of Songs 2:8-14	Luke 1:39-45	
Wednesday	22 Dec	Mass of 22 December	9:00am	1 Samuel 1:24-28	Luke 1:46-56	
Thursday	23 Dec	Mass of 23 December	9:00am	Malachi 3:1-4,23-24	Luke 1:57-66	
Friday	24 Dec	Mass of 24 December	9:30am	2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14,16	Luke 1:67-79	
		Christmas Eve Mass	6:30pm	Isaiah 9:1-7	Titus 3:4-7	Luke 2:15-20
		Christmas Night Mass	9:30pm	Isaiah 9:1-7	Titus 3:4-7	Luke 2:15-20
Saturday	25 Dec	Christmas Day Mass	9:00am	Isaiah 52:7-10	Hebrews 1:1-6	John 1:1-18
		<i>No 5:30pm Mass Christmas Evening</i>				
Sunday	26 Dec	Feast of the Holy Family	8:00am	<i>see below for Scripture Readings</i>		

OUR GARDEN NEEDS WATER

If you are passing – or would like to relax while hosing, **drop in and water** – please. **If you would like to take any herbs from our garden – you are more than welcome to do so.**

SURFING SEASON 2021-2022

Since 1 July 2021, there have been **890 rescues** [835 last week – and this time last year: 879] performed by Surf Lifesavers in Australia, and **2,164 first aids** [2,016 last week – and this time last year: 2,828]. The beach is for everyone to enjoy.

Knowing how to stay safe while at the beach will make sure that you and your family have the best day possible. The **Beachsafe App** can help you to select the right beach and can provide you with lots of information on the hazards and risks for the day. You can download it to your phone: <https://beachsafe.org.au/apps> **Stay safe and swim between the flags.**



FIRST COMMUNION CANDIDATES

This Saturday, **LIAM NEDESKI** and **AUDEN RAGGETT** receive First Communion, and on Sunday, **TULLY HENDERSON** and **KAI ROSSIGNOL** receive First Communion. **Congratulations!**

On Saturday, 8 January 2022, two candidates, on Sunday, 16 January, one candidate, on Saturday, 5 February, four candidates and on Sunday, 6 February, four candidates will receive First Communion.



SUMMER SOLSTICE

A solstice is an event that occurs when the Sun appears to reach its most northerly or southerly excursion relative to the celestial equator on the celestial sphere. Two solstices occur annually, around 21/22 June and 21/22 December. The day of a solstice in either hemisphere has either the most sunlight of the year (summer solstice) or the least sunlight of the year (winter solstice) for any place other than the Equator. The word solstice is derived from the Latin – *sol* (“sun”) and *sistere* (“to stand still”), because at the solstices, the Sun’s declination appears to “stand still”; that is, the seasonal movement of the Sun’s daily path (as seen from Earth) pauses at a northern or southern limit before reversing direction. In 2021, in Sydney, the summer solstice is on **Wednesday, 21 December at 02:59**. In terms of daylight, this day is **4 hours 31 minutes longer** than on June Solstice. In Ushuaia [bottom of South America] on 21/22 December, sunrise: 04:51; sunset: 10:11pm. In Santa Claus Village, Finland: sunrise 11:08am; sunset 1:21pm. Check out **Santa Claus Village, Finland**: <https://santaclausvillage.info/>

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

4th Sunday of Advent · Year C

1 st Reading	Micah 5:1-4
2 nd Reading	Hebrews 10:5-10
Gospel	Luke 1:39-44

Parish of St Michael – Thirroul

*One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes
Moving forward as a Parish Family*

Patrick Vaughan · *Parish Priest*

Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm · *Assisting*

Lauren Faulks · *Parish Secretary*

Tues, Wed 9am-3:30pm; Fri 9:30am-2:30pm

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

The Holy Family · Year C

1 st Reading	1 Samuel 1:20-22,24-28
2 nd Reading	1 John 3:1-2,21-24
Gospel	Luke 2:41-52

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SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday 5:30pm

Sunday 8:00am

Saturday Mass recorded

WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday —————

Tuesday 5:30pm

Wednesday 9:00am

Thursday 9:00am

Friday 9:30am

Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday