

Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
23 / 24 MARCH 2024
PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY + YEAR B
HOLY WEEK    **EASTER TRIDUUM**

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

King? Really?

This Sunday, called "Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion," has two halves to it, palms and passion, as you might have guessed. They stand in jarring contrast to each other.

First, the palms proclaim Jesus' kingship.

The palms we hold during the ritual procession are an imitation of what the local people did long ago, the ones who lined the road. This opening part of the ceremony is more than just another historical reminiscence, it is a proclamation today of Jesus as king. It is the first half of the jarring contrast.

You may not have noticed the kingly aspect specifically, but there are multiple clues in the First Gospel. (i.e., the reading that takes place just before the palm procession). First, he rode on a colt, an animal that was used for royalty's entrance into a city. Second, the disciples spread their cloaks over the colt's back as they would for someone royal.

Then the crowds along the way treated Jesus as a kingly hero. They spread out their coats on the roadway and covered them with palm branches cut from the fields. It was a symbol to soften the pathway for the kingly one: to keep the dirt off of him. And they cried out, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

The King.

Second, the soldiers do their best to destroy any kingship in Jesus.

The Mass itself and its Passion Reading follow. They show the ridicule Jesus' kingship was put to, a fool's tale. Soldiers tie him up and yell "King of the Jews." It is their derogation of this poor, ridiculous captive.

They jam a "royal" crown on his head, one made of thorns. They wrap a fake robe of purple around him (the colour reserved for kings because of its rarity in that era). They spit on him. They strike him. They laugh. They make a tortured fool out of this great "king."

The first reading had already told us why such torture happened. Because the King chose it. The reading says, "I was not rebellious; I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting."

You or I would have cried out, "My God, why have you abandoned me?" The Responsorial Psalm says exactly these words, and Jesus will say them from the cross.

But are these the words of a king? Does such a total surrender represent kingly action? What do you say? No!

But scripture says the opposite.

Yes.

Jesus, king of kings, "did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited"—for safety or honour or for whatever other reason. As the greatest king he emptied himself out, taking the form of a slave, and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. This, in allegiance to God and in service of the people.


On this day of the king, Jesus knew who he was, even under the worst duress and strife. He was and remains the one who loves, no matter what. We have here the opposite of the kind of greatness we always imagine: service of God's people as the true basis of rulership.

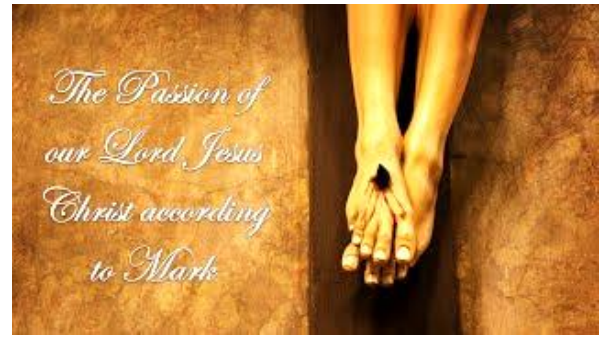
A good ruler pulls a kingdom together and makes it safe, a place of abundance. If they accomplished such a goal, no kingly suffering would be too great. Palm/Passion Sunday is a large-scale revelation of kingship's true meaning, a vision we certainly need today.

Real love.

As we come to know the liturgy better, we recognise that it is a masterpiece, wisely shaped over the centuries as the Holy Spirit has guided the Church. Today, as the greatest week of the Church's year begins, the lesson of the liturgy is astoundingly restrained and simple, yet so appropriate.

We are reading from Mark's gospel. In his very simple telling of the story the brief acclaim of the entry into Jerusalem is in contrast with the stark horror of the story of the passion. The people cry out that 'the kingdom of our father, David, has come'. How ironic is the way in which these words are to be fulfilled!

The reading from Isaiah invites us to learn from the example of the Saviour – the confidence we should have in our Father in heaven, whatever the trials we may face. But it is something else which makes the reading so appropriate on the threshold of Holy Week – with him we must have minds and hearts open to a new meeting with our God in what lies ahead. Like God's Servant we should be glad that the Lord 'wakes us to hear, to listen like disciples'. 



✚✚ We are invited to learn something that it is beyond the power of human words to express; to learn anew the astounding generosity of our God as we meet it in the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus – to find how true is the old saying, ‘Actions speak louder than words’.

In the second reading, from the letter to the Philippians – echoing a hymn used in the liturgy of the first generation of the Church – Paul summarises with majestic brevity the drama of what God has done in the Saviour’s **Paschal Mystery**: how he ‘emptied himself’, shared our human condition, even to ‘accepting death on a cross’, and finally, how he is now ‘raised high’, one with the Father in the glory of the divine name.

The principal reading, of course, is the telling of the story of the Lord’s passion and death, confronting us in Mark’s factual and forthright style, with the cruelty and horror of a horrendous miscarriage of justice. In the darkness which descends upon ‘the whole land’, the rending of the temple veil ‘from top to bottom’, and the confession of the gentile centurion – ‘In truth this man was a son of God!’ – we have the dawning light of the new order of things which will be inaugurated with the Saviour’s resurrection. Actions speak louder than words. The age-old custom of preserving the palms from this day’s liturgy is a wonderful reminder of how real was the drama which opened the way to eternal life for the whole world – a drama in which we are all involved. The liturgies of the Church’s coming celebration of the Paschal Mystery will teach us, not with fine oratory, but by recounting the great events in which the divine Truth found expression in our human history. Let this recognition set the tone for our participation in the liturgies of Holy Week. Jesus found the religious institution symbolised by the temple to be not a vehicle of grace but a barrier to it. He was forced to empty it. This is our final chance as we begin Holy Week to ask him to cleanse away whatever in our hearts is a barrier to grace. We are asked also to take a good look at the institution of the Church, especially as it is lived in our local community. Are we as a church an instrument of grace to those outside and a way of holiness for those within. If not, Jesus will have to do to us what he did to the temple. God, who wills everyone to live to the full, will have to bypass us.



QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Isaiah 50:4-7

- ✚ We understand Jesus as the subject of this reading. Could it apply to others too? Name some people, like John Lewis, who have spoken on God’s behalf and have “set their faces like flint” when confronted by injustice. What injustice do you feel strongly about? Is there anything can you do to help make it right?
- ✚ “Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear.” What am I hearing now? The cries of starving children? Of the planet in crisis? Of racial injustice?

Second Reading Philippians 2:6-11

- ✚ “Agape love” is selfless and free from self-concern and self-preoccupation. It includes conversion, vulnerability, search for justice, and suffering. Explain Jesus’ love for us in terms of *agape*. What would the world be like if everyone had some of this kind of love?
- ✚ Discuss Javier Melloni’s statement: “The will of God is the divinization of every creature; and it was to bring about this divinization that the one who was in God and who was God, emptied himself in order to participate in our human condition and transform it from within.” Can you agree with such a statement?

Gospel Mark 14:1–15:47

- ✚ The woman “wastes” expensive perfumed oil on Jesus. Does this relate to God’s self-wasting love on humankind? How is the Eucharist a continuation of Christ’s self-giving love for us? Does your busy schedule allow time to “waste” on love?
- ✚ What was it about Jesus’ death that amazed the centurion and made him say, “Truly this man was the Son of God”!

Today’s Gospel shows us, immediately after the death of Jesus, a splendid icon of amazement. It is the scene of the centurion who, upon seeing that Jesus had died, said: “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39). He was amazed by love. How did he see Jesus die? He saw him die in love, and this amazed him. Jesus suffered immensely, but he never stopped loving. This is what it is to be amazed before God, who can fill even death with love. In that gratuitous and unprecedented love, the pagan centurion found God. His words—Truly this man was the Son of God!—“seal” the Passion narrative.

The Gospels tell us that many others before him had admired Jesus for his miracles and prodigious works, and had acknowledged that he was the Son of God. Yet Christ silenced them, because they risked remaining purely on the level of worldly admiration at the idea of a God to be adored and feared for his power and might. Now it can no longer be so, for at the foot of the cross there can be no mistake: God has revealed himself and reigns only with the disarmed and disarming power of love.

– Pope Francis, Homily for Palm Sunday, 28 March 2021



This year, we shared with you the story of three inspiring women from across the globe, who overcame challenges to complete their education, access water and find secure employment. With the support of compassionate people like you, they are now forging a path to a better future for their families and their communities.

Ronita from the Philippines has now graduated high school and secured a job at a call centre. This job was only possible because of a certificate she gained from completing her studies.

Leaia and her family now have a water tank at their home in Samoa. She and her family now have a steady supply of clean drinking water. Next year, they will also have a toilet built, with the support of Caritas Samoa, which will further improve their health and living conditions.

Memory completed her vocational training course in carpentry and joinery. After completing a work contract at one of the largest electrical companies in Malawi, Memory now plans to return to her village and provide carpentry services to people in her community.

It's through the generosity of people like you that we can continue to support people like Ronita, Leaia and Memory.

There is still time to donate! Together, we can help vulnerable communities face their challenges today and build a better tomorrow, **for all future generations.**

Scan this with your phone to donate to Project Compassion

FOURTH LENTEN SERMON: 'I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE'

In his fourth sermon for the Roman Curia, Cardinal Cantalamessa continued his meditations on the "I Am" sayings of Jesus. He looked more closely at the word from chapter 11 of John's Gospel, "I am the resurrection and the life." He summarized the teaching of this chapter, saying: "The resurrection of Lazarus causes the death of Jesus; the death of Jesus causes the resurrection of all who believe in him!" The Cardinal outlined how Jesus revealed to Martha that the resurrection He was referring to was different from that which she had come to know and understand. He was not speaking of the resurrection at the end of time, but a resurrection that begins here and now. Cardinal Cantalamessa explained, "Jesus can say 'I am the resurrection' because He is the Risen One!"

He described how many non-believers reproach believers for not being able to be objective, "since faith imposes on them, from the start, the conclusion at which they must arrive." He argued that these non-believers actually do the same as they start with the assumption that God does not exist. And yet, he continued, "no event in antiquity is supported by as many first-hand testimonies as this one. Some of them date back to personalities of the intellectual calibre of Saul of Tarsus who had previously fiercely fought against this belief." Having reaffirmed the historical fact of the Resurrection of Christ, the Cardinal then took a look at the deeper meaning of Jesus' words: "I am the resurrection and the life."

Using the Apostles as an example, Cardinal Cantalamessa pointed out that "hope" was the key component of their experience. St Peter starts his first Letter by praising God, who "in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:3-4). The Cardinal contemplated "what a surge of hope could produce in our spiritual life," comparing us to the cripple who was healed by the apostles and began "jumping and praising God" (Acts 3:1-9). He continued to explain that the presence of hope changes everything, "even when externally nothing changes." Hope is an anchor and a sail, he said. It keeps us secure and is a driving force that encourages us to move forward.

Cardinal Cantalamessa said that tribulation "leads us to hope only in God. It leads to that state of perfection that consists in hoping when there seems to be no hope. Such was Mary's hope under the cross," he added, and explained that popular "piety is not wrong when it invokes Mary with the title of *Mater Spei*, mother of hope." He reassured his listeners that "God does not promise to remove the reasons for weariness and exhaustion, but he gives hope." And he continued, "It is really like putting on wings."

The Cardinal concluded his sermon with the words of the Apostle Paul: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	25 Mar	Monday of Holy Week	Isaiah 42:1-7	John 12:1-11
Tuesday	26 Mar	Tuesday of Holy Week	Isaiah 49:1-6	John 13:21-33,36-38
Wednesday	27 Mar	Wednesday of Holy Week	Isaiah 50:4-9	Matthew 26:14-25
Thursday	28 Mar	Holy Thursday	Exodus 12:1-8,11-14	1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Friday	29 Mar	Good Friday	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	John 18:1-19:42
Saturday	30 Mar	Easter Vigil	Genesis 1:1-2:2	Mark 16:1-7
Sunday	31 Mar	EASTER SUNDAY • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Tuesday, 26 March	19:00	Chrism Mass at the Cathedral
✦ Thursday, 28 March	09:00	Setting up in the church for the Easter Triduum
	19:30	Holy Thursday – Mass of the Lord's Supper
✦ Friday, 29 March	10:30	Good Friday – Way of the Cross with Collection for Holy Places
	15:00	Good Friday – Liturgy of the Passion with Collection
✦ Saturday, 30 March	19:00	Easter Vigil
✦ Sunday, 31 March	08:00	Easter Sunday – Mass of the Resurrection with one Baptism

CONGRATULATIONS TO DIANNE AND IAN HAMILTON: 50 YEARS MARRIED



Congratulations to **Dianne and Ian Hamilton** who were married at the Church of Saint Michael, Thirroul on 15 February 1974. Pope Francis has sent them a Papal Blessing for the occasion, which was presented to Dianne and Ian on Saturday, 9 March. Congratulations to Dianne and Ian – and their family.

ROSEMARY NEEDED FOR GOOD FRIDAY

On Good Friday, 29 March, during both the Way of the Cross (10:30) and the Liturgy of the Passion (15:00) small strips of rosemary are given to everyone. Please cut the rosemary into strips of about 10cm long and drop them into the church on **Holy Thursday morning, 28 March.**

HOLY THURSDAY MORNING HELP NEEDED

In order to prepare for the Easter Triduum liturgies, help is needed at **09:00** on Holy Thursday morning. Please just turn up to help if you can.

BISHOP BRIAN'S PASTORAL MESSAGE FOR EASTER

Jesus is risen! Alleluia! He rose, just as he said he would, and has won for us the gift of eternal life. Pope Francis reminds us in his Lenten message: "Through the desert God leads us to freedom." If the invitation of Good Friday is to follow Jesus to the cross—where sin was defeated—then the call of Easter Sunday is the sound of freedom, proclaimed to all people, at all times, and in all places. This is the song sung over the world by our loving God: "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." So let us hesitate no longer. Let us step out of the tomb of sorrow and despair into the light of hope and freedom, knowing that, "Whatever faces us there, whatever storms ... Jesus is with us." Therefore, let us make our lives a song of joy, peace, kindness, and above all else, love. I urge you to live your life as if it matters to God ... because it does. Every blessing for this Easter season. I pray that we all find the fullness of life promised to us in Jesus.

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY • YEAR B

1 st Reading	Isaiah 50:4-7
2 nd Reading	Philippians 2:6-11
Gospel	Mark 14:1-15:47

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

EASTER SUNDAY • YEAR B

1 st Reading	Acts 10:34,37-43
2 nd Reading	Colossians 3:1-4
Gospel	Mark 16:1-7

SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday 19:00

Easter Sunday 08:00

☞ Saturday Mass is recorded.

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

Kerry Fabon • Parish Secretary

Tues, Wed 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00

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THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES

Monday

Tuesday 17:30

Wednesday 09:00

Thursday 19:30

Good Friday 15:00

Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday