



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
27/28 JULY 2024

17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ✦ YEAR B

GRANDPARENTS AND ELDERLY

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

The Call

If today has been “one of those days” for any of us, meaning stressful and tiring, maybe we could let the readings for Sunday bring us home for a while.

We could look especially at the second reading, taken from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

- It calls us to “live with humility.”

We do not have to be perfect in order to be loved. Lives that have to be huge and greatly respected and listened to and in control are based on fear, not humility. Gradually we could try to accept the love God has for us, the love that makes us safe.

- It calls us to “live with gentleness.”

This can be a little more difficult. Commercials say that women have to be beautiful at all times or be rejected. They must take care of others, be happy with their detergent, be as strong as men, or at least as men seem to be, keep up the social calendar, and have a full-time job as well. These are some of the pressures advertising puts on women. But relax. God is the gentlest one of all, milder than any product, milder than the air we breathe. Relax. We are enough. We are loved by God, who is infinitely gentle.

And culture tells males that gentleness is just for women and children. Men have to be tough, all tough, and only tough. This is false. Both men’s and women’s bodies and minds have the capacity to be strong, but peace comes from balancing toughness with tenderness toward our mates, our families, our religious brothers and sisters, our elders, our friends.

- It calls us to “live with patience.”

Patience is often defined as “bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint.” This is a good enough definition, but did you know that the Latin origin of the word patience (*patior*) means “to allow”? We are to allow the gift of real life in all its forms, not push it away simply because there is too much else to do. God gives us ourselves one minute at a time, one hour at a time, not sooner.

If we want “to have it all and have it now” we are going against our nature. Each moment, each flower, each step is precious if we let it be. We are to accept the gifts of the compassionate giver and let be.

- It calls us “to bear with one another through love.”

Think how wonderful it would be if someone were to bear with you, even when you mess up. You would not have to be anything but your own adequate self, loved by God, able to bear up under the surprisingly light burden of loving others.

- Finally, it calls us “to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.”

One Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

This is the Lord we are to keep before our eyes.

This is our hope and our call. It is the “barley loaf,” the “one bread” we will receive in our own hands-on Sunday.

Our gospel readings from Mark have brought us to his account – typically brief – of the feeding of the crowd with the loaves and fishes. The liturgy of this and the next four Sundays develops this theme by switching to readings from the extended meditation on the Eucharist in the sixth chapter of St John’s Gospel. (A comparison of the two gospels shows that, in this chapter, John follows a sequence of events that Mark had adopted before him.)

As we become familiar with the style of John’s gospel, we recognise that today’s account of the feeding of the crowd – the introductory section of this long meditation – has strong overtones of the Eucharistic celebration: it is announced that the ‘feast of Passover’ is approaching; Jesus ‘gives thanks’ as at the Last Supper; Jesus himself distributes the loaves to all present.



This incident reminds us that the Saviour, whose Paschal Mystery we share in as we celebrate the Mass, is concerned for the welfare of God’s people at every level. We must have a concern for our brothers and sisters that is more than words and pious thoughts, if we are to show in our lives the true fruits of the Paschal Mystery. It has often been pointed out that, in the miraculous feeding of the crowd, Jesus called upon the generosity of collaborators. The ‘small boy’ was certainly generous to give up his meal when asked for it. But he was to see his generosity make possible an explosion of divine generosity that is still remembered as we tell the story of Jesus. Surely, there is a clear lesson here for disciples of every age.



✠✠ As we will find so often, the divine simplicity of the essential message of the Scriptures makes it easy to link the second reading with the central theme of the liturgy. Our reading from Ephesians speaks of our Christian communion – the sharing in the Paschal Mystery that unites the Christian community. This passage speaks of the unselfish charity and the unity that should mark communities brought together by the ‘vocation’, or God-given calling, which they have received.

The charity that binds the Christian community is the practical expression of the unity established by the Saviour’s Paschal Mystery. Our reading from Ephesians reminds us that the roots of the unity brought by the Holy Spirit, as we become ‘one Body’, are very deep. We have ‘one and the same hope’ of eternal life with our God in a new creation; we have only ‘one Lord’, the Saviour who is also our brother, ‘one faith’ in what God has done for us in Christ, ‘one baptism’ in which we have died and risen to new life in him, and ‘one God who is Father of all’ in whom we can place all our trust.

The Eucharist, Vatican II insistently tells us, is the ‘basis and centre’ of the Church’s life. It is not surprising that the same term ‘communion’ is used for all that we share ‘in Christ’ and for our sharing in the Eucharistic celebration.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading 2 Kings 4:42-44

✠ Elisha knows that twenty loaves won’t be enough to feed the crowd. He must trust God over his own logic. Is this leap-of-faith kind of trust ever required in your life? Does such trust become easier with practice? Feeding everyone is very important in these readings. How important is feeding the hungry to you today?

✠ Both Elisha and the man from Baal-shalishah had to have faith that a miracle would happen. Do you consider miracles only “something that breaks the laws of nature”? Are there some everyday miracles in your life?

Second Reading Ephesians 4:1-6

✠ Paul reminds the brothers and sisters to “preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit.” What do you do to preserve unity when it seems that such unity is going away? Are all people welcome to the church, since even Judas was welcome at the first Eucharist?

✠ Which would be better, to preserve the peace by not talking to anyone with whom we disagree, or to preserve the unity by staying and talking out the problem?

Gospel John 6:1-15

✠ What do you think God is more likely to do, miraculously drop food where there is starvation or inspire people to help their neighbours solve their problems? If the latter, how can you help (through the Holy Spirit) in third world countries, your city, diocese, parish, office, or neighbourhood?

✠ According to Pope Francis, does God use our gifts, even if they are in the category of “two fish, five loaves”?

Let us now try to put ourselves in the place of that boy. The disciples ask him to share everything he has to eat. It seems to be an unreasonable proposal. ... In human terms, it is illogical. But not for God. On the contrary, thanks to that small freely given and therefore heroic gift, Jesus is able to feed everyone. This is a great lesson for us. It tells us that the Lord can do a lot with the little that we put at His disposal.

Even today, the multiplication of goods cannot solve problems without fair sharing. The tragedy of hunger comes to mind, which affects the little ones in particular. It has been calculated officially that every day in the world around seven thousand children under the age of five die due to malnutrition, because they do not have what they need to live.

Faced with scandals such as these, Jesus also addresses an invitation to us, an invitation similar to the one probably received by the boy in the Gospel, who has no name and in whom we can all see ourselves: “Be brave, give what little you have, your talents, your possessions, make them available to Jesus and to your brothers and sisters. Do not be afraid, nothing will be lost, because if you share, God will multiply. Banish the false modesty of feeling inadequate, trust yourself. Believe in love, believe in the power of service, believe in the strength of gratuitousness”.

– Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 25 July 2021

WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

Pope Francis has chosen a line from Psalm 71 – “Do not cast me off in my old age” – as the theme for the 2024 celebration of the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. In a note announcing the theme for the day, which is being celebrated this weekend, the Vatican said the choice was “meant to call attention to the fact that, sadly, loneliness is the bitter lot in life of many elderly persons, so often the victims of the throwaway culture.” Pope Francis celebrated the first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly in 2021 and decreed that it be observed each year on the Sunday closest to the feast of Sts Joachim and Anne, Jesus’ grandparents. As the Catholic Church prepares for the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis has asked Catholics to focus on prayer, which is why he chose the prayer of an elderly person from the Psalms for the theme, the Vatican said in a statement released on 15 February.

You can read the message of Pope Francis for the IV World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly 2024: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/nonni/documents/20240425-messaggio-nonni-anziani.html>

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO G7 SUMMIT ON 16 JUNE 2024 – PART 2

Precisely in this regard, allow me to insist: in light of the tragedy that is armed conflict, it is urgent to reconsider the development and use of devices like the so-called “lethal autonomous weapons” and ultimately ban their use. This starts from an effective and concrete commitment to introduce ever greater and proper human control. No machine should ever choose to take the life of a human being.

It must be added, moreover, that the good use, at least of advanced forms of artificial intelligence, will not be fully under the control of either the users or the programmers who defined their original purposes at the time they were designed. This is all the more true because it is highly likely that, in the not-too-distant future, artificial intelligence programs will be able to communicate directly with each other to improve their performance. And if, in the past, men and women who fashioned simple tools saw their lives shaped by them – the knife enabled them to survive the cold but also to develop the art of warfare – now that human beings have fashioned complex tools, they will see their lives shaped by them all the more.

The basic mechanism of artificial intelligence

I would like now briefly to address the complexity of artificial intelligence. Essentially, artificial intelligence is a tool designed for problem solving. It works by means of a logical chaining of algebraic operations, carried out on categories of data. These are then compared in order to discover correlations, thereby improving their statistical value. This takes place thanks to a process of self-learning, based on the search for further data and the self-modification of its calculation processes.

Artificial intelligence is designed in this way in order to solve specific problems. Yet, for those who use it, there is often an irresistible temptation to draw general, or even anthropological, deductions from the specific solutions it offers.

An important example of this is the use of programs designed to help judges in deciding whether to grant home-confinement to inmates serving a prison sentence. In this case, artificial intelligence is asked to predict the likelihood of a prisoner committing the same crime(s) again. It does so based on predetermined categories (type of offence, behaviour in prison, psychological assessment, and others), thus allowing artificial intelligence to have access to categories of data relating to the prisoner’s private life (ethnic origin, educational attainment, credit rating, and others). The use of such a methodology – which sometimes risks *de facto* delegating to a machine the last word concerning a person’s future – may implicitly incorporate prejudices inherent in the categories of data used by artificial intelligence.

Being classified as part of a certain ethnic group, or simply having committed a minor offence years earlier (for example, not having paid a parking fine) will actually influence the decision as to whether or not to grant home-confinement. In reality, however, human beings are always developing, and are capable of surprising us by their actions. This is something that a machine cannot take into account. It should also be noted that the use of applications similar to the one I have just mentioned will be used ever more frequently due to the fact that artificial intelligence programs will be increasingly equipped with the capacity to interact directly (*chatbots*) with human beings, holding conversations and establishing close relationships with them. These interactions may end up being, more often than not, pleasant and reassuring, since these artificial intelligence programs will be designed to learn to respond, in a personalised way, to the physical and psychological needs of human beings. It is a frequent and serious mistake to forget that artificial intelligence is not another human being, and that it cannot propose general principles. This error stems either from the profound need of human beings to find a stable form of companionship, or from a subconscious assumption, namely the assumption that observations obtained by means of a calculating mechanism are endowed with the qualities of unquestionable certainty and unquestionable universality.

This assumption, however, is far-fetched, as can be seen by an examination of the inherent limitations of computation itself. Artificial intelligence uses algebraic operations that are carried out in a logical sequence (for example, if the value of X is greater than that of Y, multiply X by Y; otherwise divide X by Y). This method of calculation – the so-called “algorithm” – is neither objective nor neutral. Moreover, since it is based on algebra, it can only examine realities formalised in numerical terms.

Nor should it be forgotten that algorithms designed to solve highly complex problems are so sophisticated that it is difficult for programmers themselves to understand exactly how they arrive at their results. This tendency towards sophistication is likely to accelerate considerably with the introduction of quantum computers that will operate not with binary circuits (semiconductors or microchips) but according to the highly complex laws of quantum physics. Indeed, the continuous introduction of increasingly high-performance microchips has already become one of the reasons for the dominant use of artificial intelligence by those few nations equipped in this regard. Whether sophisticated or not, the quality of the answers that artificial intelligence programs provide ultimately depends on the data they use and how they are structured.

Finally, I would like to indicate one last area in which the complexity of the mechanism of so-called Generative Artificial Intelligence clearly emerges. Today, no one doubts that there are magnificent tools available for accessing knowledge, which even allow for self-learning and self-tutoring in a myriad of fields. Many of us have been impressed by the easily available online applications for composing a text or producing an image on any theme or subject. Students are especially attracted to this but make disproportionate use of it when they have to prepare papers.

Students are often much better prepared for, and more familiar with, using artificial intelligence than their teachers. Yet they forget that, strictly speaking, so-called generative artificial intelligence is not really “generative”. Instead, it searches big data for information and puts it together in the style required of it. It does not develop new analyses or concepts, but repeats those that it finds, giving them an appealing form. Then, the more it finds a repeated notion or hypothesis, the more it considers it legitimate and valid. Rather than being “generative”, then, it is instead “reinforcing” in the sense that it rearranges existing content, helping to consolidate it, often without checking whether it contains errors or preconceptions.

– Part 3, conclusion, next weekend.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	29 Jul	Sts Martha, Mary and Lazarus	1 John 4:7-16	John 11:19-27
Tuesday 	30 Jul	Tuesday, Ordinary Time Week 17	Jeremiah 14:17-22	Matthew 13:36-43
Wednesday	31 Jul	St Ignatius of Loyola, priest	Jeremiah 15:10,16-21	Matthew 13:44-46
Thursday	1 Aug	St Alphonsus Liguori, bishop, doctor	Jeremiah 18:1-6	Matthew 13:47-53
Friday	2 Aug	Friday, Ordinary Time Week 17	Jeremiah 26:1-9	Matthew 13:54-58
Saturday	3 Aug	St Dominic, priest	Jeremiah 26:11-16,24	Matthew 14:1-12
Sunday	4 Aug	18 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Thursday, 1 August	Happy Birthday to all horses		
✦ Friday, 2 August	09:30	Mass of the Feast of St Mary MacKillop – with whole school	
✦ Wednesday, 7 August	17:30	Meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council	
✦ Friday, 9 August	09:30	Anointing of the Sick during Mass	
✦ Saturday, 10 August	18:30	Dinner at Club Thirroul after the 17:30 Mass	
✦ Weekend, 10/11 August	Blessing of August Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays during Mass		
✦ Thursday, 15 August	09:00	Mass for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary	

**PLEASE BRING IN ... ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK
TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY**

FOSTER CARERS NEEDED – MESSAGE FROM BISHOP BRIAN

Over 350 children and young people in NSW are in urgent need of foster care, with nearly 100 of them residing in our diocese. These vulnerable young people are placed in high-cost emergency accommodations, such as hotels and caravan parks, without the stability and nurturing relationships they deserve. It is imperative that we come together to offer these children a loving and secure environment by opening our homes and hearts. Whether through weekend respite care or full-time fostering, we can make a significant impact on their lives. Please consider contacting CatholicCare Wollongong at 4227 1122 to inquire about becoming a foster carer.

RECIPE: RAYMOND'S LEMON DELICIOUS SLICE

150g unsalted butter, chopped; ½ tsp vanilla extract; ½ cup caster sugar; 1 tbsp cornflour; 1½ cups plain flour; soft icing mixture, to serve. Lemon topping: 4 eggs; 1 tsp finely grated lemon rind; ½ cup plain flour; 1½ cups caster sugar; ⅔ cup lemon juice.

Preheat oven to 180°C/160°C fan-forced. Grease a 3cm-deep, 16cm x 26cm slice pan. Line with baking paper, allowing a 2cm overhang on all sides. Place butter in a large microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on MEDIUM (50%) for 1 minute or until melted. Set aside to cool. Stir in vanilla and sugar. Sift cornflour and plain flour over butter mixture. Using a wooden spoon, stir until a soft dough forms. Transfer to prepared pan. Press into pan. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden. Remove from oven. Set aside to cool. Make topping – whisk eggs, lemon rind, flour and sugar together until smooth. Add lemon juice. Whisk to combine. Pour over base. Bake for 15 minutes or until just set. Cool completely in pan. Dust with icing sugar. Cut into pieces. Serve. **Yum!**

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR B

1 st Reading	2 Kings 4:42-44
2 nd Reading	Ephesians 4:1-6
Gospel	John 6:1-15

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR B

1 st Reading	Exodus 16:2-4,12-15
2 nd Reading	Ephesians 4:17,20-24
Gospel	John 6:24-35

SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday 	17:30
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	09:00
Friday	09:30
<i>Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday</i>	