



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN

3/4 AUGUST 2024

18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + YEAR B

FOSTER CARERS NEEDED

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Endlessly Softly

Doesn't the word "falling" sometimes describe our lives? Falling into debt, falling out of belief, falling from blazing temperatures, falling from the pandemic, worrying about youths who say, "what shall we believe in?" and the crumbling of that one true foundation of society, the family?

The first reading talks about a time like this.

God had pulled his people out of ancient captivity by sending them on a 40-year "exodus" from the Egypt of that day. In this terrible journey and the blazing heat of those days, things indeed had begun to fall apart. The freed people began to grouse and censure Moses and Aaron, their leaders. They actually said that they would rather have stayed in the land of Egypt and be killed—Egypt which at least had fleshpots to eat from—than to starve now, wandering, through the desert.

How do we face the falling of their world and ours?

Maybe these words of Anne Lamott hold a key: "When a lot of things start going wrong all at once, it is to protect something big and lovely that is trying to get itself born, ... and this something needs for you to be distracted so that it can be born as perfectly as possible."

In the Exodus, something very big and lovely was trying to be born. God was holding their "falling to pieces" gently all the while. He even sent a huge flock of quail for meat as well as "bread from heaven" (*manna*) from the skies.

The gospel for Sunday flows right out of this incident. The people grumbled to Jesus, saying, "our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written: 'he gave them bread from heaven to eat.' What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you?"

A strange question, since, only the day before, Jesus had multiplied five barley loaves and fishes till there was enough to feed this same huge crowd. What a sign that had been. Did they forget just one day later?

Jesus said, "It was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven."

A crucial distinction. God had sent the manna, God sends Jesus, the true manna. Maybe God had distracted them (and us?) by the falling of his people.

There is a poem by Reiner Maria Rilke, the German poet, which may apply here. Autumn:

The leaves are falling, falling as from afar, as if from some far-off garden in the sky. They fall with gestures of denial. And in the nights the heavy earth falls out of all the stars in the loneliness. We all fall. This hand, here, falls. And look at the rest: it is in all! And yet, there is one who holds all this falling, endlessly softly, in his hands.

Maybe our warming, careening earth, our bumbling human affairs, and everything that is falling apart, all of it, even the planet earth, has behind it something big and lovely trying to get itself born.

There is really no other true answer to the falling of our world and of our planet, no answer at all unless supporting hands make safe the falling and support it with tenderness, since ... something lovely might just be being born.

In John's Gospel, Jesus' self-giving in the foot washing is the climax of the Last Supper narrative. This gospel presents the Eucharist in the long passage we continue to read in today's liturgy. This instruction may well have existed as an independent meditation upon the Eucharist before it was incorporated into the fourth gospel. It will help us to appreciate this meditation if we understand the literary form in which it is written (midrash) – a form common at the time among Jewish scholars. This approach takes an incident or a text in the Scriptures, and uses it to interpret a later event or situation. This meditation on the Eucharist is developed in the form of a dialogue between Jesus and those he is leading to Eucharistic faith. The framework adopted is the story recalled in the first reading – God's people being led by Moses through the desert. They are rebellious, even though God is providing them with food and drink. Like the old people, those who are interrogating Jesus in this meditation are given to doubting and complaining – they too find it difficult to accept what God is offering them.

What Jesus has to give is immeasurably greater than the earthly nourishment of the old story. It is only through faith that the hearers of Jesus can possess what he is offering them. In today's passage, therefore, Jesus is encouraging his hearers to find the faith they will need if they are to recognise 'the bread from heaven' that his Father is offering them. We too should take his teaching to heart, as his disciples,

Jesus urges his hearers – impressed by his feeding of the crowd – to look beyond earthly things: 'You had all the bread you wanted ... do not work for food that cannot last'. They have failed, he tells them, to recognise that the feeding of the crowd was a 'sign', pointing to another nourishment that 'the Son of Man is offering'. The



✠✠ tragedy of the old people's history was that they did not find the deep faith and trust God's caring for them should have brought; those listening to Jesus are in the same situation – Jesus urges them to recognise that his 'Father' is now giving (note the present tense) them 'bread from heaven ... the true bread' that 'gives life to the world'. His listeners echo the desires and yearnings of humanity down through the ages, for the fullness of life: 'Give us that bread always'. 'I AM the bread of life', Jesus declares. If they 'believe', he tells them – if they have the faith that is able to recognise what God is offering them – he will be their nourishment for eternal life.

There is still no direct reference to the Eucharist. When it is made in next week's reading, the Eucharist will be seen as the ultimate expression of all that the Saviour has become for us in his Paschal Mystery.

Disciples of the Lord, if they have genuine faith, must learn from the example of Jesus. The reading from Ephesians tells us that our faith needs a healthy focus. The teaching of St Paul contrasts the emptiness of the 'aimless kind of life' that is 'corrupted by illusory desires' with 'the way learnt from Christ ... the new self-created in God's way'.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Exodus 16:2-4,12-15

✠ The Israelites grumbled about the lack of food in the desert. They remembered their abundant pots of animal flesh in Egypt when they were captives. How is your trust in God when God calls you to new journeys in your spiritual life or ministry?

✠ "Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion." What do you think our directive for natural resources would be? Take only what we need? Share it? Develop new sources of sustainable energy (renewable, as in wind, solar, etc.)?

Second Reading Ephesians 4:17,20-24

✠ One translation has Paul calling the Ephesians to a spiritual revolution (drastic change). If you personally were to have a spiritual revolution, what would go and what would stay in your life? Would you add anything new?

✠ Paul urges them to "... put on the new self." Do you think God is ever finished creating you? Is this something you do (or God does) just once, or do you (or does God) do it continually?

Gospel John 6:24-35

✠ "Sir, give us this bread always." They were all starving for the food "that endures for eternal life." For the first Eucharist Jesus had someone find him a large room. Does the Church need to be a "large room" with open doors to accommodate everyone—the righteous and the sinners, those who have made mistakes and those who have gone astray?

✠ Why does Pope Francis say that our relationship with Christ and with our brothers and sisters is the road to our encounter with God? What was God's reason for the incarnation?

God made himself flesh. And when we say this, in the Creed, on Christmas Day, on the day of the Annunciation, we kneel to worship this mystery of the incarnation. God made himself flesh and blood; he lowered himself to the point of becoming a man like us. He humbled himself to the extent of burdening himself with our sufferings and sin, and therefore he asks us to seek him not outside of life and history, but in relationship with Christ and with our brothers and sisters. Seeking him in life, in history, in our daily life. And this, brothers and sisters, is the road to the encounter with God: the relationship with Christ and our brothers and sisters. – Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, 22 August 2021

FOSTER CARERS NEEDED – MESSAGE FROM BISHOP BRIAN

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

It has been brought to my attention a crisis affecting our diocese that I feel compelled to share with you all. Currently, 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.

I urge you to watch and share a video I have created outlining the challenges faced by the foster care system in our diocese at dow.sh/bmfc24 and consider speaking with CatholicCare Wollongong at 4227 1122 to inquire about becoming a foster carer. Your support can provide these children with the love and stability they need to thrive. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue, and may we all strive to be the loving, faithful families these children deserve.

CatholicCare Wollongong said, "At CatholicCare Wollongong's Permanency Support Program (PSP) we're passionate about children's wellbeing and their right to have stable, caring families and positive childhoods so they can thrive and reach their full potential. We're on a mission to find more people who will make great carers and help turn a child's life around. Sometimes children are unable to live with their parents or families and are in need of safe, nurturing care where they are able to heal and flourish. Often these children have experienced trauma. We need carers who can share their homes and lives and make a positive impact on a child's future for a short time or a lifetime." **Contact CatholicCare Wollongong on 4227 1122 for further information.**

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO G7 SUMMIT ON 16 JUNE 2024 – PART 3

In this way, it not only runs the risk of legitimising fake news and strengthening a dominant culture's advantage, but, in short, it also undermines the educational process itself. Education should provide students with the possibility of authentic reflection, yet it runs the risk of being reduced to a repetition of notions, which will increasingly be evaluated as unobjectionable, simply because of their constant repetition.

Putting the dignity of the human person back at the centre, in light of a shared ethical proposal

A more general observation should now be added to what we have already said. The season of technological innovation in which we are currently living is accompanied by a particular and unprecedented social situation in which it is increasingly difficult to find agreement on the major issues concerning social life. Even in communities characterised by a certain cultural continuity, heated debates and arguments often arise, making it difficult to produce shared reflections and political solutions aimed at seeking what is good and just. Thus aside from the complexity of legitimate points of view found within the human family, there is also a factor emerging that seems to characterise the above-mentioned social situation, namely, a loss, or at least an eclipse, of the sense of what is human and an apparent reduction in the significance of the concept of human dignity. Indeed, we seem to be losing the value and profound meaning of one of the fundamental concepts of the West: that of the human person. Thus, at a time when artificial intelligence programs are examining human beings and their actions, it is precisely the *ethos* concerning the understanding of the value and dignity of the human person that is most at risk in the implementation and development of these systems. Indeed, we must remember that no innovation is neutral. Technology is born for a purpose and, in its impact on human society, always represents a form of order in social relations and an arrangement of power, thus enabling certain people to perform specific actions while preventing others from performing different ones. In a more or less explicit way, this constitutive power dimension of technology always includes the worldview of those who invented and developed it. This likewise applies to artificial intelligence programs. In order for them to be instruments for building up the good and a better tomorrow, they must always be aimed at the good of every human being. They must have an ethical “inspiration”.

Moreover, an ethical decision is one that takes into account not only an action's outcomes but also the values at stake and the duties that derive from those values. That is why I welcomed both the 2020 signing in Rome of the *Rome Call for AI Ethics*, and its support for that type of ethical moderation of algorithms and artificial intelligence programs that I call “algor-ethics”. In a pluralistic and global context, where we see different sensitivities and multiple hierarchies in the scales of values, it might seem difficult to find a single hierarchy of values. Yet, in ethical analysis, we can also make use of other types of tools: if we struggle to define a single set of global values, we can, however, find shared principles with which to address and resolve dilemmas or conflicts regarding how to live.

This is why the *Rome Call* was born: with the term “algor-ethics”, a series of principles are condensed into a global and pluralistic platform that is capable of finding support from cultures, religions, international organizations and major corporations, which are key players in this development.

The politics that is needed

We cannot, therefore, conceal the concrete risk, inherent in its fundamental design, that artificial intelligence might limit our worldview to realities expressible in numbers and enclosed in predetermined categories, thereby excluding the contribution of other forms of truth and imposing uniform anthropological, socio-economic and cultural models. The technological paradigm embodied in artificial intelligence runs the risk, then, of becoming a far more dangerous paradigm, which I have already identified as the “technocratic paradigm”. We cannot allow a tool as powerful and indispensable as artificial intelligence to reinforce such a paradigm, but rather, we must make artificial intelligence a bulwark against its expansion.

This is precisely where political action is urgently needed. The Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* reminds us that “for many people today, politics is a distasteful word, often due to the mistakes, corruption and inefficiency of some politicians. There are also attempts to discredit politics, to replace it with economics or to twist it to one ideology or another. Yet can our world function without politics? Can there be an effective process of growth towards universal fraternity and social peace without a sound political life?”.

Our answer to these questions is: No! Politics is necessary! I want to reiterate in this moment that “in the face of many petty forms of politics focused on immediate interests [...] ‘true statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. Political powers do not find it easy to assume this duty in the work of nation-building’ (*Laudato Si'*, 178), much less in forging a common project for the human family, now and in the future”.

My reflection on the effects of artificial intelligence on humanity leads us to consider the importance of “healthy politics” so that we can look to our future with hope and confidence. I have written previously that “global society is suffering from grave structural deficiencies that cannot be resolved by piecemeal solutions or quick fixes. Much needs to change, through fundamental reform and major renewal. Only a healthy politics, involving the most diverse sectors and skills, is capable of overseeing this process. An economy that is an integral part of a political, social, cultural and popular programme directed to the common good could pave the way for ‘different possibilities which do not involve stifling human creativity and its ideals of progress, but rather directing that energy along new channels’ (*Laudato Si'*, 191)”. This is precisely the situation with artificial intelligence. It is up to everyone to make good use of it, but the onus is on politics to create the conditions for such good use to be possible and fruitful.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	5 Aug	Monday, Ordinary Time Week 18	Jeremiah 28:1-17	Matthew 14:13-21	
Tuesday	6 Aug	The Transfiguration of the Lord	2 Peter 1:16-19	Mark 9:2-10	
Wednesday	7 Aug	Wednesday, Ordinary Time Week 18	Jeremiah 31:1-7	Matthew 15:21-28	
Thursday	8 Aug	St Mary MacKillop, virgin	1 Kings 17:8-16	Colossians 3:12-17	Matthew 6:25-34
Friday	9 Aug	Friday, Ordinary Time Week 18	Nahum 2:1,3; 3:1-3,6-7	Matthew 16:24-28	
Saturday	10 Aug	St Lawrence, martyr	2 Corinthians 9:6-10	John 12:24-26	
Sunday	11 Aug	19 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>			

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦	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
		19:30	Spirituality on the Sofa
✦	Thursday, 8 August	09:00	Mass of the Feast of St Mary MacKillop
✦	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

SPIRITUALITY ON THE SOFA – WEDNESDAY, 7 AUGUST, 19:30

Come and meet via Zoom, two powerful and creative leaders who will invite us to reflect with them as they share with us some of their thoughts and experiences of how creativity can be a powerful healing tool in our journey in life. Topic: “LET’S TALK ABOUT HEALING THROUGH CREATIVITY”. Speakers: Dr Briody Scott and Gerard McCann. Start Zoom, then Meeting ID: 881 9482 4050 Passcode: 101016 – 19:30 to 21:00.

RECIPE: GOLDEN SYRUP DAMPER

3 cups self-raising flour; ½ teaspoon salt; 2 teaspoons butter; 2 teaspoons golden syrup; 1 cup milk; 2 tablespoons boiling water.

Place camp oven on fire to pre-heat. Dissolve golden syrup and butter in boiling water, then add milk. Mix flour and salt, then pour in liquid ingredients. Mix well until all ingredients are combined. Gradually add more milk if dough is not moist enough. Form into round circle, then place into pre-heated camp oven. Cover with coals and bake for approximately 25–30 minutes. *Do you have a favourite winter recipe? – Email it to the Parish Office.*

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

VINNIES WINTER APPEAL – THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Thank you to all parishioners and others who donated to the Vinnies Winter Appeal. In 2023, the total you generously gave was \$5,026 and the total in 2024 is \$6,056. In these difficult financial times – thank you very much!

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

18 TH 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

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

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

19 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR B	
1 st Reading	1 Kings 19:4-8
2 nd Reading	Ephesians 4:30-5:2
Gospel	John 6:41-51

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SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday 📺 17:30

Sunday 08:00

📺 Saturday Mass is recorded.

THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES

Monday _____

Tuesday 📺 17:30

Wednesday 09:00

Thursday 09:00

Friday 09:30

Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday