



# Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



**PARISH BULLETIN**  
**7 / 8 DECEMBER 2024**  
**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL**

## **THIS WEEK'S READINGS**

## *Prepare the Way*

Now begins the second week of the Church's world-wide retreat in preparation for Christmas.

It is Advent, the quiet time, the great contrast with our culture's wild consumer-bonanza. It lets us examine just how open we are to the birth of Christ in our souls.

We are afraid, no mistake about it. The present era of world time discourages many of us.

Terrorism desires to destroy our way of life, for one thing. But add its effect in Gaza, Lebanon, Ukraine, Iraq, Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Georgia, Africa, the Balkans, and so many more. And consider the gigantic unemployment and loss of jobs, the disenfranchisement of the poor, the biggest annual deficit in history, huge corruption in the most trusted and giant companies, the biggest annual budget spending increases in history, and the world-wide climate disaster—who would not be depressed?

Parents worry themselves either too little or too much about conditions for their growing children. Not just the unstoppable sale and use of drugs, not just sexual promiscuity as a way of life that is being aggressively marketed to the youth segment of the population, but also the increasing collapse of values that we call the "new morality," but which is really dissolution.

In the face of all this, who can just sit back and have Advent?

But listen to what the First Reading proposes for our Advent retreat: "Take off the garment of your sorrow and suffering, O Jerusalem, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God. Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting; for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven."

Has someone quietly lost his or her mind? Or is Church just irreparably cut off from the "real world," hiding in pews and doting on a comforting and "nice" view of life?

Neither.

We are being asked to let our approach to life and to tragedy undergo revision, stretching.

The one who is gestating right now in our hearts, the one who is to be born there very soon, that one comes not to make the world pleasant and polite, but to connect it at its very roots with the mysterious depths of God, that one is on the way.

What do we do with widespread terrorist factions planning to throw down our life and all that surrounds it? The only answer we have comes from one who knows our life intimately well and who wants to be born in us. He has been in failure and disillusion and has dealt with them.

So the question is, will we let him be born in us again this year, a little more than in the past? Are we willing to let our womb stretch wider than ever before and so make room?

"Yes, but ..."

Is that your response?

Well, be at rest. You do not have to be capable of such a Christ-like feat all by yourself. As Paul says in the second reading, "the one who began a good work in you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." The tender care of God and of his carefully tending mother are with you just as they promised, if you will allow them to help.

Against this background, the Gospel begins the Advent storytelling that is such native soil to human beings. Once upon a time the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah (John the Baptist) in the desert, and he began announcing the coming of Jesus.

Listen.

Let us do all we can to "prepare the way of the Lord."

Last Sunday, the liturgy invited us to see Advent as a time of preparation for the Saviour's birth, the dawn of salvation. Today we take up this theme again, in the gospel reading from Luke. John the Baptist is a prominent figure in the liturgies of Advent. After a long period in which the voice of the prophets was not heard, the Lord's Precursor – praised by Jesus as 'more than a prophet' (Matthew 11:9) – made his appearance. Luke's introducing of John is dramatic and skilful. Situating John's heralding in the midst of the real world's history, he names contemporaries who foreshadow the tragic conflict that is soon to be enacted – Pilate who will authorize Christ's death, the petty rulers of the nation under occupation, the high priests whose hostility seals the fate of Jesus. But the gloom of this introduction gives way immediately to the vision of hope and promise that inspired John's mission. The Baptist – remembered as a man of the desert – is presented as inaugurating a new Exodus for God's people, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah.



✠✠ Because the first Exodus from Egypt was the defining moment in the destiny of the Chosen People, it is not surprising that old Israel sometimes looked forward to the final fulfilment of God's promises as a kind of new Exodus. Our first reading, from the prophet Baruch, takes up this theme – making part of today's liturgy, not only because it echoes the words of Isaiah, describing the making of a way through mountains and valleys 'so that Israel may walk in safety', but also because its message of hope is admirably suited to the mood of our Advent liturgies. Looking back on the return from the Babylonian captivity as a second Exodus, the prophet looks forward to God's final intervention on behalf of his people as a last great Exodus. It is an outstanding example of the boundless hopes of those among the Chosen People who were faithful to their Jewish faith, looking forward to the coming of the messiah, in the last years of Old Testament times. When God remembers his promises, and Jerusalem's children are reassembled, they will discard their mourning garments and 'put on the beauty of the glory of God forever'; God will make them a sign for 'every nation under heaven'; God will give them a new name, 'Peace through integrity'. We are challenged in this time of renewal, to match this remarkable faith and hope.



Last week, we saw how – as 'the Son of Man' foretold in the prophecy of Daniel – Jesus presented himself as the fulfilment of Israel's boundless hopes. In today's second reading, from Paul's letter to the Philippians, we see how this truth has become part of the faith of the first Christian Church. One of the principal themes of the prophets of old Israel, as they warned a wayward people to amend their ways, was the 'Day of the Lord', when all must face the judgment of God. Paul now takes up this old theme – but for him it is 'the Day of Christ Jesus', when the Saviour will return as Son of Man to be our Judge. Though it is a season of hope and joy, Advent is also a time in which we are called to a deeper conversion.

One of the great joys of loving is being able to give ourselves to the one we love. There is a wonderful peace when we can do this simply and happily and without reserve. God is love and so, to speak in human terms, God needs to give. God created the universe so that God could embrace it with love. That's why God made us. In one of his poems, Saint John of the Cross pictures God as creating the universe as a gift for the Son. God creates the world because God wants to give the Son a bride who will love him and who, because of this love, will be able to enjoy the love-life of the Blessed Trinity.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

### First Reading Baruch 5:1-9

- ✠ "Led away on foot by their enemies ..." Led or chased are we experiencing this today as well as in the time of Baruch? Where is the hope for the refugee suffering in exile today? Can you help God lower "the lofty mountains" or "fill the depths and gorges" for them in any way? How?
- ✠ God gave Jerusalem the name "the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship." How does this name fit the Church today? If poorly, what would you do to make it fit? What would you like God to name your parish, your community, you?

### Second Reading Philippians 1:4-6,8-11

- ✠ As you remain on the path or 'The Way, St Paul says, "then the one who began a good work in you will complete it." Who is the instigator of the good work in you? Whom do you trust, yourself or God to complete your good works?
- ✠ "And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best." How might the synod Pope Francis has called help discern what is of value in making a merciful Church in mission? Here are his words:

First, he [anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> century spiritual writer] helps us understand that the Holy Spirit is a sure guide and that our first task is to learn how to discern his voice, since he speaks through everyone and in all things. Has this synodal process made us experience this?

The Holy Spirit always accompanies us. ... The Holy Spirit makes the Church perennially faithful to the mandate of the Lord Jesus Christ and attentive to his word. The Spirit leads the disciples into all truth (John 16:13). He is also leading us, gathered in the Holy Spirit in this Assembly, to give an answer, after three years of walking, to the question of "How to be a synodal Church in mission." I would add merciful.

– Address of Pope Francis to the Second Session of the Synod, 2 October 2024

### Gospel Luke 3:1-6

- ✠ Why does Luke name the historical references in the beginning of this Gospel reading? Does it help you to locate John the Baptist in history books?
- ✠ "All flesh shall see the salvation of God"? What are the implications for humanity in this saying? Is the entire world included in this plan? What are the implications for you? Do you watch all year round for God's coming? What are some of the ways God comes to you every day?

# VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL – CONCLUDES THIS WEEKEND

The annual Vinnies Christmas Appeal concludes this weekend. Last week a total of **\$2,474** was donated! Thank you! You can support the Appeal in any of the following ways:

- ✓ **Hampers** – 3 categories (families, single female, single male) *notices in the church*  
↳ if you cannot attend church, but want to make a hamper up, contact the Parish Office
- ✓ **Giving Tree** – tags on the tree have name and gender of children (up to 11 years)
- ✓ **Donation Envelopes** – available in the church for cash or credit card donations, as well as **online** donations

You can also bring in **CHRISTMAS ITEMS** – *Christmas cakes, puddings, long-life custard, tinned ham, biscuits, lollies, soft drinks, tinned veggies, chips, jelly – no cigarette or alcohol products please.*

You can donate online to the Thirroul Vinnies Christmas Appeal:

<https://my.fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/fundraise-your-way-conference/vinnies-thirroul-christmas-appeal>

**Vinnies Christmas Cards** are available this weekend – only \$5 for a pack of 10, *and you are supporting Vinnies.*

Thank you for your anticipated and continuing generosity to the needy of our local communities.

**Words of Pope Francis:** “Let us remember that it is not truly Christmas without the poor. Without the poor, we can celebrate Christmas, but not the birth of Jesus.

“This Christmas too, as in the case of Jesus, a world ravenous for money, power and pleasure does not make room for the little ones, for so many unborn, poor and forgotten children. I think above all of the children devoured by war, poverty and injustice. Yet those are the very places to which Jesus comes, a child in the manger of rejection and refusal.

“The poverty of the manger thus shows us where the true riches in life are to be found: not in money and power, but in relationships and persons.”

**PLEASE BRING IN ... ANY CHRISTMAS ITEMS EACH WEEK  
TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA**

## FIRST COMMUNION 2024



**Congratulations to these nine Candidates** who will receive First Communion this weekend – on Saturday: **Arlo Harrison; James Lyon; Buddy Hay; Mary Brungs; Wilfred Batten; Audrey Inskip; Isabelle Inskip** – and on Sunday: **Arlo Shields; Madeline Foran**. Next Sunday, one Candidate will receive First Communion. Please remember before the Lord these Candidates and their families. **Congratulations to the Candidates and to their families and friends.**

## CHRISTMAS 2024 AT THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL, THIRROUL

- ❖ **19:30** Tuesday, 17 December Reconciliation Rite II
- ❖ **17:30** Tuesday, 24 December Christmas Eve Mass in the Parish Church
- ❖ **20:00** Tuesday, 24 December Christmas Night Mass in the Parish Church
- ❖ **09:00** Wednesday, 25 December Christmas Day Mass in the Parish Church

## CHRISTMAS LITURGIES 2024 – 24 AND 25 DECEMBER

Please note that the Christmas Eve Mass times and venues have changed: this year, both Christmas Eve Masses will be in the church – the first at 5:30pm (17:30) and the second at 8:00pm (20:00). The Christmas Day Mass remains unchanged **09:00 in the church**. Children are welcome at all three Christmas Masses, and are encouraged to dress up as shepherds or angels. Also, **bring a bell**.

Mass on Boxing Day, **Thursday, 26 December**, the feast of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, will be at 09:30, and on Friday, 27 December, the feast of Saint John, the apostle, will be at the usual time of 09:30.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year C • Weekdays Year I

Monday	9 Dec	The Immaculate Conception	Genesis 3:9-15,20	Ephesians 1:3-6	Luke 1:26-38
Tuesday	10 Dec	Tuesday of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Advent	Isaiah 40:1-11		Matthew 18:12-14
Wednesday	11 Dec	Wednesday of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Advent	Isaiah 40:25-31		Matthew 11:28-30
Thursday	12 Dec	Thursday of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Advent	Isaiah 41:13-20		Matthew 11:11-15
Friday	13 Dec	St Lucy, virgin, martyr	Isaiah 48:17-19		Matthew 11:16-19
Saturday	14 Dec	St John of the Cross, priest, doctor	Sirach 48:1-4,9-11		Matthew 17:10-13
Sunday	15 Dec	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR C – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>			

## FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦	Thursday, 12 December	16:45	School and Parish Christmas Concert and Dinner
✦	Friday, 13 December	09:30	End of Year School Mass
✦	Weekend, 14/15 December		Blessing of the Christmas Crib; one Baptism on Sunday
✦	Tuesday, 17 December	19:30	Sacrament of Penance, Reconciliation Rite II for Advent
✦	Wednesday, 18 December	09:15	Mass with Year 2 students
✦	Saturday, 21 December	20:20	Summer Solstice [longest day]
✦	Tuesday, 24 December	17:30	Christmas Eve Mass in the Parish Church – bring a bell Children dress as shepherds or angels ... and bring a bell
		20:00	Christmas Night Mass in the church – will be 'televised'
✦	Wednesday, 25 December	09:00	Christmas Day Mass – bring a bell
✦	Thursday, 26 December	09:30	St Stephen's Mass – Boxing Day – public holiday
✦	Friday, 27 December	09:30	Feast of St John – Mass as usual
✦	Wednesday, 1 January 2025	09:00	Mass for Mary Mother of God, and World Day of Peace

## CHRISTMAS SPICE FRUIT LOAF RECIPE

250g self-raising flour; ¼ teaspoon salt; 90g butter or margarine; 1 teaspoon cinnamon; 1 teaspoon nutmeg; 125g dried mixed fruit; 90g soft brown sugar; 2 eggs, beaten; 4 tablespoons milk.

Pre-heat oven to 160°C. Sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Rub the butter into the flour until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add spices, fruits and sugar. Beat the eggs with the milk. Stir the eggs and milk into the mixture. The mixture should just drop off the spoon when tapped firmly against the bowl. If it does not, add a drop more milk. Place into a greased loaf tin. Bake for about 75 minutes. Check if done by seeing if a sharp knife or skewer comes out clean. Turn out onto a wire rack and allow to cool. Slice and enjoy!

## THE FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY – IN ENGLISH

A working translation of the Final Document of the Synod on Synodality is now available in an English translation: <https://www.synod.va/en/news/final-document-of-the-xvi-assembly.html> See attachments to the email Bulletin.

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

## AT THE BEACH: SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

<p>THIS Sunday's Readings – on website</p> <p><b>SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT ♦ YEAR C</b></p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> Reading Baruch 5:1-9</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Philippians 1:4-6,8-11</p> <p>Gospel Luke 3:1-6</p>	<p>NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website</p> <p><b>THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ♦ YEAR C</b></p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> Reading Zephaniah 3:14-18</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Philippians 4:4-7</p> <p>Gospel Luke 3:10-18</p>	<p><b>SUNDAY MASS TIMES</b></p> <p>Saturday 17:30</p> <p>Sunday 08:00</p> <p>Saturday Mass is recorded.</p>
<p><b>Parish of St Michael – Thirroul</b></p> <p><i>One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes</i></p> <p><i>Moving forward as a Parish Family</i></p> <p>Patrick Vaughan • Parish Priest</p> <p>Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm • Assisting</p> <p><b>Kerry Fabon • Parish Secretary</b></p> <p>Tues, Wed 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00</p>	<p><a href="http://www.thirroulcatholic.org.au">www.thirroulcatholic.org.au</a></p> <p>325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive</p> <p>PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515</p> <p>4268 1910 4268 1976</p> <p><a href="mailto:thirroul@dow.org.au">thirroul@dow.org.au</a></p> <p>Parish School of St Michael</p> <p>4267 2560</p>	<p><b>THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES</b></p> <p>Monday</p> <p>Tuesday 17:30</p> <p>Wednesday 09:00</p> <p>Thursday 09:00</p> <p>Friday 09:30</p> <p><i>Anointing of the Sick 1<sup>st</sup> Friday</i></p>