



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
7 / 8 DECEMBER 2024
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
BLESSING THE CHRISTMAS CRIB

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Let It Sing

“Brothers and sisters: rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.”

St Paul commands this in his letter to the Philippians (second reading). The word for rejoice in Latin is *gaudete*, so quite naturally this Sunday is called **Gaudete Sunday**.

Why all this exultation? Are we finally getting a break from the sombreness of Advent? Yes, but there is more to it than that.

Remember that Advent is like a retreat for the worldwide Church. In this upcoming third week we will pray about our lives in the context of the great beauty God has put in us and around us.

Can you imagine this?

One line in the first reading puts it in dramatic terms. Zephaniah says that the Lord “will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.”

Because of you! Have you ever in your life imagined that God might be exulting because of you? Have you ever let your image of God expand that far? Have you ever let God be one who exults you into existence, in the most profound sense of the word exult? *Exult means to feel or show triumphant elation or jubilation, to express great pleasure or happiness.*

In one of the books of Narnia by CS Lewis, the children are taken back to the very moment of creation. They hear the voice of Aslan (the Christ figure) singing into the wilderness. When the voice goes high, birds, clouds, blue sky appear. At a certain lengthy turn of melody, the mountains raise their heads laboriously. A low hum vibrates forth the depths of seas. Creation seems to be made out of melody.

Maybe it is.

How about this for a possibility: God’s gladness exults joyfully at every instant, and God’s song is the earth, the galaxies, the people and plants and chemicals and soaring hawks and encircling planets, droplets of dew and heavy black holes, youthful beauties, ancient wisdoms, and everything else that exists.

In other words, we are God’s song, God’s exultation.

Apply this, please, to Sunday’s Gospel.

There people in long rows gather to be baptized in expectation of the Saviour who is to come. Each segment (the crowd, the tax collectors, the soldiers) ask John the Baptist the exact same question: “Teacher, what should we do?” “Let your life exult,” he answers.

Let it sing, let it exult, let it be elated, let it dance and shout or sing in jubilation, expressing great joy and happiness.

Let your life be what it is: God’s joyous, interleaved and always consonant melody, sounding outwards in deepest joy. Share your cloak and your food, collect only what is owed, do not extort.

Do these things and you will be sounding the true melody of your life!

In today’s gospel reading we continue Luke’s account of the mission of John, the precursor of the Saviour. It reflects the life of a community that has come to recognize that, though the final moment of God’s plan has come through the Risen Lord’s Paschal Mystery, how that moment will unfold in the world’s history is God’s secret. They know that they must get on with their ordinary lives. Luke presents the preaching of John as ‘Good News’, foreshadowing important elements in the teaching of Jesus himself.

It is ‘tax collectors’ and ‘soldiers’ – representing those looked down upon by respectable society in old Israel – who are open to John’s message of repentance: the very ones who will respond to the message of Jesus. ‘What must we do?’ they ask John. It is not an easy question to ask with a humble sincerity that is open to hearing the truth. It reminds us of Advent’s call to a deeper conversion and commitment. Luke’s community remembers how John replied to this question, as calling them to get on with their ordinary lives, asking themselves whether they recognize Christ himself in their needy brothers and sisters, and whether they serve the Lord by the integrity with which they carry out their role in life.

Traditionally, the liturgy of the Third Sunday of Advent overflows with the theme of the joy of believing. This is one of Luke’s favourite themes, and the gospel reading’s reference to the ‘feeling of anticipation’ John’s preaching aroused, and his foretelling of the Lord who ‘will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire’ chime in with this theme. Clearly, our liturgy’s other readings have been chosen with this tradition in mind. ‘Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will



✠ say, Rejoice', Paul writes to the Philippians; and he recommends practical ways that lead to authentic happiness 'in the Lord': tolerance towards those whose ways are not our own, and a prayer that unites trust in the Lord for the future with thanksgiving for his many blessings in the past. No doubt, taking seriously his faith in the one who has baptized us 'with the Holy Spirit and fire' has given Paul a personal experience of the 'peace' of which he speaks, the peace that only God can give.

Something has gone wrong if our faith never brings us deep joy.

Joy is the experience of what we were made for. The faith that the Baptist heralded, the faith that is the gift of the Risen Lord, and the faith that unites Luke's community and so many other communities after them, is a personal knowledge of God's love and mercy. It brings a joy and peace 'that the world cannot give' (John 14:27). Even for old Israel, as our first reading from the book of the prophet Zephaniah reminds us, joy was one of the hallmarks of authentic faith. In this astounding text, the prophet calls the people to 'rejoice and exult with all your heart', because 'the king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst', victorious, 'renewing you in his love'. Their joy should mingle with the Lord's own rejoicing, as he 'exults over you with loud singing'. This text is doubly appropriate in these weeks of Advent – its words ('Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart ... The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst') may well have inspired Luke's Annunciation narrative.

Today, the Church is encouraging us to open our hearts to experience that special joy that comes from the Lord. The joy of which the liturgy speaks is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and it is a joy that we can experience in sorrow as in happiness. It cannot require the absence of all hurt or painful feelings. At the Last Supper when Jesus was experiencing a deep sadness in saying Goodbye to his friends, he spoke of his love for them, and his desire that they love each other, and he added: 'I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete'. (John 15:11) He asked them to pray for this joy. (John 16:24)

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Zephaniah 3:14-18a

✠ "The Lord, your God, will exult over you with loud singing." What are some examples in the world about which you might say, "listen! God is singing!"?

✠ This reading says it twice. "Do not let your hands grow weak! The Lord, your God, is in your midst." Have you ever remembered the presence of God in the middle of a crisis? What effect did it have on you?

Second Reading Philippians 4:4-7

✠ St Paul says we must: rejoice in the Lord always; be kind to all; lose anxiety; make all our requests known to God; and thank God as though he has already granted the requests. This is a long list. Are you better at some than others? Which ones could you improve on?

✠ Maybe you rejoice when you are singing at Mass on Sunday. Are there other times during the week that you experience the same kind of joy? What makes you happy in the Lord?

Gospel Luke 3:10-18

✠ What kind of people went to hear John and then repented? Would you show up to hear someone like John today? What would you want to see and hear? What are today's prophets talking about? Anti-racial problems? Starving immigrants? Climate crisis? Peace?

✠ John the Baptist gave concrete answers to the different groups that asked, "What should we do?" He is teaching us that faith is not abstract, but is incarnated into concrete life. What small tangible things can we do to prepare for Christmas?

How can I do my part? Let us make a concrete commitment, even if small, that is adapted to our situation in life, and let us continue to do it to prepare ourselves for this Christmas. For example: I can call a person who is alone, visit that elderly person or that person who is ill, do something to serve a poor person, someone in need. Even still: maybe I need to ask forgiveness, grant forgiveness, clarify a situation, pay a debt. Perhaps I have neglected prayer and after a long time, it is time to draw near to the Lord's forgiveness. Brothers and sisters, let us find something concrete and do it.

– Angelus for 3rd Sunday of Advent, 12 December 2021

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
❖ 09:30	Thursday, 26 December	Feast of Saint Stephen, the first martyr
❖ 09:30	Friday, 27 December	Feast of Saint John, apostle
❖ 09:00	WEDNESDAY, 1 JANUARY	FEAST OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD WORLD DAY OF PEACE

VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL – THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

A total of **\$4,654** was donated over the last two weeks! Thank you! Last year \$5,520 was donated. If you haven't done so, please drop **hampers, toys, Christmas food** to the church by 09:00 this Monday, 16 December, as, on Monday, Vinnies members will be making up parcels for people in need. Deliveries will be made by our Vinnies members on Tuesday, 17 December. Thank you for all your help!

You can still donate online to the Thirroul Vinnies Christmas Appeal:

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

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

FIRST COMMUNION – BAPTISM THIS SUNDAY



Congratulations to Eloise MacFarlane who will receive First Communion this Sunday – Please remember before the Lord Eloise and her family. **Congratulations Eloise!**



Congratulations to Maeve Jones who will be baptised this Sunday – Please remember before the Lord Maeve and her family.

Baptism is the first Sacrament of Christian Initiation, followed by Confirmation and Eucharist. In most of the Eastern Catholic Churches, the three Sacraments are celebrated together as is done in the Latin Catholic Church with adults and children over the age of reason – that is 7 years or older.

The next Baptisms to be held in our Parish will be during weekend Masses, **Saturday, 18 January or Sunday, 19 January 2025**. For the next Baptism meeting for parents, which will be held in the presbytery, please contact the **Parish Office**. Call in to the Parish Office to collect the Baptism Enrolment Forms

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- ❖ **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 NOVENA

The **Christmas novena** begins on 17 December, and from this time, the Advent focus shifts to the Christmas story and the Virgin Mary. These days serve to prepare more directly for the Lord's birth. There are special texts for the Mass prayers 17 to 24 December.

A BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS CRIB

Blessed are you, God of all creation: you have sent your Son as the promised Saviour of the world so that he might share with us your divine life. Bless us as we prepare this crib, and let it be a reminder of the Lord Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary in the City of David. Grant that we may always serve you in faith as did the angels, praise you for your saving deeds as did the shepherd, and surround you with the warmth of our love as did the animals of the stable. Glory and praise to you, eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.



The Christmas Crib in its present form and its use outside the church originated with Saint Francis of Assisi: "I wish to recall to memory the little child who was born in Bethlehem. I want to set before our bodily eyes the hardship of this infant needs, how he lay in the manger, how with an ox and ass standing by he lay upon the hay." Through his famous celebration at Greccio, Italy, on Christmas Eve, 1223, with a Bethlehem scene including live animals, Saint Francis made the crib popular. Since then it has been a familiar sight in Christian homes all over the world.

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

BE SAFE ON OUR BEACHES – SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Encourage others, especially visitors, to swim between the flags – and to learn how to "read the surf", spotting rips and places to avoid. Enjoy our beaches and keep them clean.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

			Sundays Year C · Weekdays Year I
Monday	16 Dec	Monday of the 3 rd week of Advent	Numbers 24:2-7,15-17 Matthew 21:23-27
Tuesday	17 Dec	Tuesday of the 3 rd week of Advent	Genesis 49:2,8-10 Matthew 1:1-17
Wednesday	18 Dec	Wednesday of the 3 rd week of Advent	Jeremiah 23:5-8 Matthew 1:18-24
Thursday	19 Dec	Thursday of the 3 rd week of Advent	Judges 13:2-7,24-25 Luke 1:5-25
Friday	20 Dec	Friday of the 3 rd week of Advent	Isaiah 7:10-14 Luke 1:26-38
Saturday	21 Dec	Saturday of the 3 rd week of Advent	Song of Songs 2:8-14 Luke 1:39-45
Sunday	22 Dec	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT · YEAR C – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>	

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ **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**

WHITE CHRISTMAS

185g white vegetable shortening, melted; 2 cups coconut; 100g white chocolate cooking melts, melted; 100g red glacé cherries, halved; 1 cup sultanas; 3 cups Rice Bubbles; ¾ cup sweetened condensed milk.

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Press mixture evenly into a foil lined 18cm x 28cm lamington pan. Refrigerate overnight or until set. Cut into slices to serve. Store covered in refrigerator.



INVITING OTHERS TO SHARE CHRISTMAS AT OUR PARISH

Pray: ask God who you should invite—who comes to mind? Write their name down and remember to pray for them. Ask God to give you courage to invite them.

Invite them to come with you: this isn’t about them needing to go to church, this is about you inviting them to come with you to church.

Listen to them: everyone has a story. Everyone believes in someone or something. Listen to them—don’t judge or correct them—and then be ready to share your story and what you believe.

Introduce them to others: connection creates belonging! Who are your friends with in the parish? Take a few moments to introduce them to someone else.

Don’t take “no” personally: if they decline your invitation, accept their “no” graciously. If we respect their choice and focus on our relationship with them, there might be another opportunity to invite them again.



THIS Sunday’s Readings – on website

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ♦ YEAR C
1st Reading Zephaniah 3:14-18
2nd Reading Philippians 4:4-7
Gospel Luke 3:10-18

NEXT Sunday’s Readings – on website

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT ♦ YEAR C
1st Reading Micah 5:1-4
2nd Reading Hebrews 10:5-10
Gospel Luke 1:39-44

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

🌐 www.thirroulcatholic.org.au

📍 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive

📮 PO Box 44 · Thirroul 2515

☎ 4268 1910 📠 4268 1976

📧 thirroul@dow.org.au

Parish School of St Michael

☎ 4267 2560

THIS WEEK’S LITURGIES

Monday _____

Tuesday 📺 **17:30**

Wednesday **09:00**

Thursday **09:00**

Friday **09:30**

Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday