



Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



25/26 MARCH 2017
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT ✦ YEAR A
Over half-way through Lent ✦ Scrutiny #2

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Softening the Heart

The prophet Samuel comes to Bethlehem to choose a new king from the family of Jesse. He rejects Jesse's oldest son because "the Lord does not see as the human sees; the human looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." With this single statement, the Word of God unmasks much of the world's blindness.

We look at poor people and see nothing other than rundown houses and littered streets. We look at the homeless and see nothing other than dirty faces and ragged clothes. We look at people who are different from us and we see nothing other than the colour of their skin or the way they dress or the language they speak – and we put labels on them!

In today's Gospel, Jesus, the light of the world, takes away the man's blindness. This wonderful story challenges us to "live as children of light."

Our Lenten prayer and practices should serve to take away our blindness so that we can look into the hearts of others and love them as sisters and brothers. It "should turn hatred to love, conflict to peace, death to eternal life." It should enable us to say with the blind man: "I can see and I believe in God."



"God's word proclaims the oneness of the human family—from the first words of Genesis, to the 'Come, Lord Jesus' of the Book of Revelation. God's word in Genesis announces that all men and women are created in God's image; not just some races and racial types, but all bear the imprint of the Creator and are enlivened by the breath of God's one Spirit."
— US Bishops, *Brothers and Sisters to Us* (1979) 25

Another riveting narrative from John's gospel. More than once, Jesus was condemned for healing on the Sabbath. In this reading, one such incident is described at length, in a way that calls to mind words of this [John's] gospel's Prologue: 'The Word was the true light, and his own people did not accept him'. The courageous refusal of the 'man born blind' to be intimidated by the authorities of the synagogue, when even his family refuse to stand by him, has given us one of the most memorable incidents in the gospels. Like the story of the Samaritan woman, this incident is recounted in a manner that gives expression to a profound meditation upon the saving work of Christ.

The Saviour himself intones the theme of this meditation: 'I am the light of the world'. The powerful symbolism of light often finds expression in the Scriptures. It is often appealed to in the Psalms, the confession of faith of the ordinary people in old Israel – ✦

✚ – God’s Word is ‘a light on the path’ of life (Psalm 119); the Lord himself is Israel’s ‘light and salvation’ (Psalm 27). The contrast between light and darkness is often appealed to in the New Testament, as in today’s reading from Paul’s letter to the people of Ephesus.



The tragedy of spiritual blindness is vividly exemplified in the refusal of the Pharisees to be open to what was confronting them in the signs given through the ministry of Jesus – as their empty reasoning is made look foolish by the straightforward honesty of the man they are trying to intimidate. ‘You can be his disciple’, they declare in their frustration, ‘We are disciples of Moses’. And, as he responds to their arguments, pointing out that his miraculous healing shows that Jesus is surely ‘a prophet’ and that he must have ‘come from God’, the man who was born blind is progressively ‘enlightened’ – to be finally welcomed by Jesus into the company of his disciples, making his confession, ‘Lord, I believe you are the Son of Man’ – the very title that was to seal the fate of Jesus before the Sanhedrin.

As he urges the Ephesians to a life of authentic discipleship, Paul contrasts a life of ‘goodness, right living and truth’ with the ‘shameful’ things done in the dark. The story of the ‘man born blind’ and his courage in the face of great odds reminds a community with deep roots in old Israel of the challenge of genuine discipleship.

It is now well recognised that the meditation upon Christian faith and life that gave us John’s gospel was made against the background of the Church’s sacramental life. It may well be that today’s narrative – with its progressive reference to anointing, washing and confession of faith – is influenced by the baptismal practice of the community. In the early centuries, the instruction of the catechumens concerning the Church’s sacramental life was an ‘enlightenment’. It is interesting to note, at a time when the Catechumenate is assuming an increasing importance in the life of the Church, that these instructions made frequent use of John’s gospel.

PROJECT COMPASSION – WEEK 4

“To live as true children of God means to love our neighbour and to be close to those who are lonely and in difficulty.” – Pope Francis

Nguyet spent 14 years of her life in silence and isolation. Her severe disability restricted her movements, her access to her neighbourhood, and her chance of an education. Nguyet’s life changed when her neighbour introduced her to the Caritas-sponsored program Capacity Building for Parent Associations Supporting Children with Disabilities (CBPA). Now a new world has opened for her.



She is discovering her creativity, and reimagining her future.

As a young neighbour looks on admiringly, a Vietnamese teenager transforms a pile of coloured paper into vivid flowers. When the little girl leaves, 15-year old Nguyet turns to the books brought by her in-home teacher, to practise her maths. Later she prepares a simple meal for her parents to eat when they return from work. For her first 14 years, Nguyet was confined to living behind closed doors, with her parents close by to take care of her many health needs. Then a neighbour’s kindness brought the outside world to Nguyet, and her life and the lives of her parents were changed forever. Quynh is a teacher. *“I’m Nguyet’s neighbour, so I knew her when she was a little girl. I felt compassion for her.”* ✚

✚ Through Quynh's introduction, Nguyet's mother, Tim, became linked with a Parents' Association. The Association is run through a program called Capacity Building for Parent Associations Supporting Children with Disabilities (CBPA) and has been supported by Caritas Australia since 2010.

The program is managed by Catholic Relief Services, a local partner of Caritas Australia in Vietnam. Duong, Nguyet's case manager, explains: "The CBPA project aims to help parents by providing training so that they can support children with disabilities to integrate into the community, and be more confident in community integration."

Through CBPA, students with disabilities attend neighbourhood schools alongside their peers whenever possible, and in-home education is offered for children like Nguyet who are confined by their disabilities. This made it possible for Quynh to lend a hand.

"The school doesn't have enough facilities for children like her. I volunteered to come and teach her at her house," Quynh says.

The program supports Quynh with resources so she is able to offer Nguyet lessons at home, teaching her maths, reading, writing and crafts.

Parents' Associations in Vietnam have contributed considerably to communities, raising the awareness of parents of children with disabilities. Before, parents of children with disabilities were very reluctant to bring their children to join in public events. But they are now more confident, and can actively provide better care and education for their children.

"Parents' Associations have proved their ability to the local government in helping disabled children. They also show that, whenever they are supported and cared for properly, children with disabilities can [achieve] change," says Duong.

Learning to express herself creatively has opened a new world to Nguyet. She designs and sews clothes for her dolls, and makes delicate paper flowers.

Nguyet dreams of selling her flowers. Her quickness at maths has enabled her to help her parents with shopping, and introduced her to the world of business.

The whole family has benefited. Her parents can go out to work knowing she will manage on her own.

"We are very happy for her," her mother Tim says. Now, at last, she nurtures the hope that her child "can be independent, and build the future she wants."

"Faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbours in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them." – Pope Francis, Message for Lent 2016.

PROJECT COMPASSION BOXES/ENVELOPES

Please take home a Project Compassion box and/or a set of donation envelopes and support Caritas Australia this Lenten season themed "**Love your neighbour**". You can donate through Parish boxes and envelopes, by phoning ☎ **1800 024 413** or by visiting 🌐 www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion.



NEWS IN BRIEFS

Rite II Reconciliation during Lent will take place at **7:30pm** on **Tuesday, 4 April**.

Easter Liturgies – we will need extra ministers and helpers ... if you will be around, please sign up or volunteer your services – *email the Parish Office or sign up at church.*

THIRROUL SURF LIFESAVING CLUB

Surf Lifesaving Patrols help keep our beaches safe. Swim between the flags. So far in Australia this season **6,244 rescues** have been made! *Last week it was 6,104!*

ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA

ARE YOU AVAILABLE FOR THE NEXT 2 ROSTER PERIODS?

The next ministry roster periods run from **27 May** until **10 Sep**, then from **16 Sep** until **31 Dec**. School holidays during that time are: 7–22 July and 29 Sep to 14 Oct. If you are unavailable anytime between **27 May** and **31 December**, please let your roster coordinator know by **20 March**. *Please contact your Roster Coordinator, not the Parish Office.*

TWO FOSTER HOMES NEEDED FOR GIRLS

CatholicCare’s Foster Care Program is urgently looking for separate foster homes for two girls aged 10 and 11. Due to their complex needs, both girls need homes where they will receive one-on-one care and there are no younger children. Carers must be flexible, resilient and able to work in a supportive team environment with CatholicCare. Full training provided. **📞 Contact Toni on 4254 7712 or tonil@catholiccare.dow.org.au**

CONCERNED ABOUT ISLAM IN AUSTRALIA?

Come grab a free coffee and enjoy an honest conversation with a local Muslim. Break down barriers, find common ground and celebrate the differences that make this country so unique. **6:30pm to 7:30pm, Friday, 31 March** at **Bulli PCYC, Princes Highway**. Please register for this free event: pccillararra@gmail.com This event is sponsored by Illawarra **Peace, Coffee and Conversations**.

AN IDEA FOR LENT: Say three nice things to your husband/wife and children every day. You may think this is easy, but try to say things that aren’t the normal “Thanks” or “You look nice.” or “Good job.” *Try to do 3 out-of-the-box things: “I love how you always help the kids.” or “I love how you work hard on your homework, even when it is tough. You are a hard worker.”*

<p>THIS Sunday’s Readings <i>on our website</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">4th Sunday of Lent YEAR A</p> <p>1st Reading 1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13</p> <p>2nd Reading Ephesians 5:8-14</p> <p>Gospel John 9:1-41</p>	<p>NEXT Sunday’s Readings <i>on our website</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">5th Sunday of Lent YEAR A</p> <p>1st Reading Ezekiel 37:12-14</p> <p>2nd Reading Romans 8:8-11</p> <p>Gospel John 11:1-45</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SUNDAY MASS TIMES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Church of St Michael • Thirroul</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Saturday – 5:30pm • Sunday – 8:00am</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bulli Sunday 8:30am and 5:30pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Corrimal Saturday 6pm, Sunday 9:30am</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LITURGIES THIS WEEK</p> <p>Wombarra [Liturgy] Monday 4:30pm</p> <p>Thirroul Tuesday 5:30pm</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Wednesday 9:00am</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Thursday 9:00am</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Friday 9:30am</p>

Parish of St Michael – Thirroul and Wombarra

Moving forward as a Parish Family + one of the Northern Illawarra Parishes

Patrick Vaughan • Parish Priest ❖ Geoff Allen, Ken Cafe ofm • Assistant Priests



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**Parish Office
Hours**

**Tuesday, Wednesday
Friday**

9:00am to 3:30pm Magda Pires
10:00am to 3:00pm Maureen Franciskovic



www.thirroulcatholic.org.au

Parish School of St Michael 📞 4267 2560