



# Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



**25 DECEMBER 2017  
CHRISTMAS EVE AND DAY**

**Greetings of peace and joy from the Franciscan Friars**

**Welcome** - especially to all visitors attending our Christmas Liturgies. **Thank you** to all who have worked for and been of service to our Parish in so many, many ways over the last year. Your responsible, regular service, cheerfulness, support, hospitality, courtesy, integrity and deep faith are most appreciated. **Thank you** to all who have been so **very generous** this past year.

## **A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION**

### ***the Simplicity of God's Love***

The crib and the carols ringing in our ears remind us of what a special night this is. On this night was born a child who revealed God to the world in the endearing weakness of a baby emerging from his mother's womb, crying for milk to nourish his body and for love to nourish his soul, and surrounded, not by the important and powerful, but by shepherds, by men and women accustomed to respond to nature in simple, ordinary ways. The image that comes again and again in the readings of the Mass is that of light. The First Reading promises that those walking in darkness would see a great light. The Gospel reveals this light shattering the darkness of the night sky as the glory of God shines on the face of a tiny infant. *God offers this gift of light to each of us here tonight – and today – and to all those we love.*

If you had asked those familiar with the sacred writings of Judaism, what kind of sign they would have expected for the coming of the Messiah, they would have spoken excitedly of the lion of Judah roaring in the desert, of fire coming down from heaven, of the moon and stars whirling around the sky, the blackening of the sun, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and similar cataclysmic portents. We human beings find it hard to resist such tempting images. When Christ was born, the whole of created nature did sing, exult and dance for joy. Luke tells us this in his dramatic portrayal of the chorus of angels announcing the wonder of the Messiah's birth. But look at the sign given to the shepherds! The most simple, ordinary sign – a little baby kept warm in a tiny box of warm grass, there for the feeding of the sheep and cattle. This was a place where shepherds would feel perfectly at home. And you can imagine the simple welcome given them by Joseph and his young wife. You can imagine the simple welcome the shepherds experienced when they held this newborn baby in their arms. This is God knowing how to find a way into the hearts of anyone willing to welcome him.

In the Second Reading Paul tells us that healing, liberation, meaning and life are being offered by God not to a chosen few but to the whole human race. He also tells us what we have to do to be open to receive this love. For love never forces entry. Mary had to say Yes before God could be conceived in her womb. Joseph had to say Yes to Mary. Simple and poor as his birth was, someone had to say Yes if this new-born baby was to find the necessary protection to survive the cold of a mid-winter night.



✚✚ Love always requires a welcome, and this goes for God's offer of love as well. If we want to do more than celebrate Christmas for reasons of nostalgia; if we want to open our hearts to the amazing offer of grace that comes with this season, then Paul tells us what we must do: we must 'give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our ambitions that are limited to this world' (Titus 2:12). There lies the challenge of Christmas. Some of us are so caught up in the cares and occupations of life that we normally do not find time to worship God and enjoy the intimate communion with Jesus that is central to the life of the Christian community. There can be other reasons as well: reasons of hurt, rejection, confusion. Yet, such is the attraction of this night when God embraced humanity in all its life-giving goodness and in all its destructive wickedness, that we want to be here to celebrate Christmas. As disciples of Jesus, we come here to the community and to the Eucharist lest we find ourselves losing our bearings. Jesus is the lighthouse that warns us of the rocks and reefs. Jesus is the star that guides our hearts to the harbour of life that nothing, not even death, can cheat us of.

The Christmas celebrations take us to the heart of what Christianity is. How Jesus would weep to see the many ways down through history that people in his name have used Christianity as a group-identifying label to support their own personal and cultural egos and to put down others who are different. Religion is not something to be used for furthering the power and security of one's group. Nor is it another goodie in the smorgasbord of a consumer-driven society. A religion that does not continually awaken our deepest desires is worthless, as is a religion that does not purify our hearts from the tangle of the often superficial whims that drive us; a religion that does nothing about our dysfunctional and sinful behaviour. Such false religion can even be destructive, for it can lock onto us and prevent the penetration of grace. As the word indicates, religion is that which binds us back – back to reality and back to each other as brothers and sisters sharing the human condition. The wonderful reality that is special to Christianity is the person of Jesus who brings all human religious aspirations to a beautiful fulfillment by demonstrating that the one we call God is love and that no one is an outsider to this love.

**COLLECTION AT CHRISTMAS MASSES:** Last year you gave **\$4,949** at the Christmas Collections – we sent **\$2,000** to **Vinnies in Lismore to help with flood relief, and the rest, \$2,949**, given to **assist Vinnies** in providing to provide Year 10 students in our local area with the opportunity to complete high school studies that otherwise may not have been possible without some financial assistance. **Thank you for your great generosity.**

**THIS WEEK** Tuesday, 26 December, Boxing Day – Mass at 9:00am, **Feast of St Stephen**  
27 December onwards: usual weekday and weekend Mass times [see below]  
Monday, 1 January, **Mary, Mother of God** and **World Day of Peace**  
9:00am Mass at Thirroul

### WEEKEND MASS TIMES

Church of St Michael · Thirroul  
Saturday 5:30pm and Sunday 8:00am  
**Bulli** Sunday 8:30am and 5:30pm  
**Corrimal** Saturday 6pm and Sunday 9:30am

### USUAL WEEKDAY LITURGIES

Thirroul [Mass] Tuesday 5:30pm  
Wednesday 9:00am  
Thursday 9:00am  
Friday 9:30am

Patrick Vaughan, *Parish Priest* Geoff Allen, Ken Cafe ofm, Andrew Granc ofm, *Assisting*

 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive  
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**JANUARY Parish Office Hours – Tuesdays and Wednesdays – 9:30am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 3:30pm**

 [www.thirroulcatholic.org.au](http://www.thirroulcatholic.org.au)

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