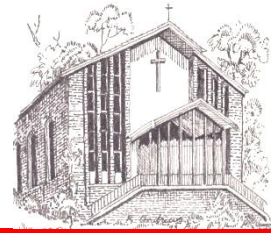




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



24 / 25 MARCH 2018

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD ✦ YEAR B

Holy Week



The Easter Triduum

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Making Peace Possible

An ancient tradition says that Jerusalem means City of Peace. Through the centuries Jerusalem has been anything but a city of peace. It has been attacked, destroyed, and plundered on numerous occasions. Today it is the eye of a storm that is causing death and destruction.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem to become its messiah. He came not at the head of a conquering army but riding on a donkey, the animal we refer to as an ass. He came not to play God but to “empty himself and take the form of a slave.” He came to face rejection: “With that, all deserted him and fled.” Mark’s picture of Jesus’ rejection is bleak. There are no disciples around at the end, no relatives, not even God: “Why have you forsaken me?”



What will it take for us to understand the meaning of the cross, how Jesus made peace possible by his own suffering and dying? We keep thinking that we will bring peace by killing others in war; Jesus showed us that we bring peace by dying for others.

“Earthly peace arising from love of neighbour is an expression and result of the peace of Christ which flows from God our Father. For the incarnate Son, prince of peace, has reunited all of us to God through his cross and has restored the unity of all human beings in one people and one body by putting hatred to death in his own flesh (Ephesians 2:16), and by being raised up in the resurrection to pour the Spirit of charity into the hearts of women and men. This is why all Christians are earnestly called upon ‘to do the truth in love’ (Ephesians 4:15) and to unite with true peacemakers to plead and work for the establishment of peace.”

– Vatican II, *Church in the Modern World*, 1965: 78

As we come to know the liturgy better we recognise that it is a masterpiece, wisely shaped over the centuries as the Holy Spirit has guided the Church. Today, as the greatest week of the Church’s year begins, the lesson of the liturgy is astoundingly restrained and simple, yet so appropriate.

We are reading from Mark’s gospel. In his very simple telling of the story the brief acclaim of the entry into Jerusalem is in contrast with the stark horror of the story of the passion. The people cry out that ‘the kingdom of our father, David, has come’. How ironic is the way in which these words are to be fulfilled!

The reading from Isaiah invites us to learn from the example of the Saviour – the confidence we should have in our Father in heaven, whatever the trials we may face. But it is something else which makes the reading so appropriate on the threshold of Holy Week –



✠✠ with him we must have minds and hearts open to a new meeting with our God in what lies ahead. Like God's Servant we should be glad that the Lord 'wakes us to hear, to listen like disciples'. We are invited to learn something that it is beyond the power of human words to express; to learn anew the astounding generosity of our God as we meet it in the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus – to find how true is the old saying, 'Actions speak louder than words'.



In the second reading, from the letter to the Philippians – echoing a hymn used in the liturgy of the first generation of the Church – Paul summarises with majestic brevity the drama of what God has done in the Saviour's **PASCHAL MYSTERY**: how he 'emptied himself', shared our human condition, even to 'accepting death on a cross', and finally, how he is now 'raised high', one with the Father in the glory of the divine name.

The principal reading, of course, is the telling of the story of the Lord's passion and death, confronting us in Mark's factual and forthright style, with the cruelty and horror of a horrendous miscarriage of justice. In the darkness which descends upon 'the whole land', the rending of the temple veil 'from top to bottom', and the confession of the gentile centurion – 'In truth this man was a son of God!' – we have the dawning light of the new order of things which will be inaugurated with the Saviour's resurrection.

Actions speak louder than words. The age-old custom of preserving the palms from this day's liturgy is a wonderful reminder of how real was the drama which opened the way to eternal life for the whole world – a drama in which we are all involved. The liturgies of the Church's coming celebration of the Paschal Mystery will teach us, not with fine oratory, but by recounting the great events in which the divine Truth found expression in our human history. Let this recognition set the tone for our participation in the liturgies of Holy Week.

**PROJECT
COMPASSION**
FOR A JUST FUTURE

Sixth Sunday of Lent 24/25 March 2018



When Psyche Mae featured in Project Compassion 2008, she was living in a squatter settlement, on the edge of a giant rubbish dump outside Manila in the Philippines. Her family was forced to pick through the rubbish to sell what they could to survive. Thanks to the support of individuals and Caritas Australia, in 2018, Psyche Mae is now a young social worker, achieving her dream of helping others struggling to leave poverty behind them, with plans to study a Master's degree.

Please donate to Project Compassion 2018 and help improve the health and wellbeing of communities in the Philippines so they can work towards

eradicating poverty, providing a just future for all.

A Just Future starts with your support!

You can donate through Parish boxes and envelopes, or by phoning **1800 024 413**.

NEEDED IN PREPARATION FOR THE EASTER LITURGIES

Rosemary for Good Friday, 30 March: please bring them in
by **Thursday, 28 March**, cut into strips about 10cm long



Helpers needed on Thursday, 28 March 9am to 10am

to help prepare for the Easter Triduum ... no heavy lifting involved at all.

SWIM SAFELY

So far in Australia **this season 5,658 rescues** have been made! *Last week it was 5,201!*

EASTER LITURGIES 2018


The **Easter Triduum** is the highpoint of the Church's entire liturgical year. It begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, continues with the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil and closes with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday. **Please join us if you can.**

Mass of the Lord's Supper	Holy Thursday, 29 March	7:30pm
Way of the Cross	Good Friday, 30 March	10:30am
Celebration of the Lord's Passion	Good Friday, 30 March	3:00pm
Easter Vigil with adult baptisms	Holy Saturday, 31 March	7:00pm
Easter Sunday Mass with infant baptisms	Easter Sunday, 1 April	8:00am

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

THE PASSION NARRATIVE IN MARK'S GOSPEL [Part 2]

Mark's Gospel is noted for its manner of framing a key scene with two other related stories. That takes place in the next portion of the passion story: Jesus' words over the bread and wine are framed by his predictions of Judas' betrayal and Peter's and the rest of the disciples' failure. Once again Mark's dual focus on christology and discipleship – so characteristic of his gospel – are in evidence. Celebration of the Passover is the setting for all of these stories. Israel's great pilgrimage feast commemorated the exodus from the Egypt, God's act of liberating love that was basis of Israel's hope. So the gospel highlights the fact that Jesus' encounter with death, a death that would liberate others, was entwined with Passover. Mark uses the bare ritual of the Passover meal to proclaim in Jesus' own words the meaning of the passion. Jesus takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it, gives it to his disciples saying, "This is my body" and then he takes a cup, once again offers thanks, gives it to the disciples, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many..." Here was the inner meaning of every act of Jesus' ministry which Mark had narrated earlier in the gospel: Jesus' compassionate healing, his befriending of those left on the margins, his forceful teaching, his confrontations with evil, his feeding of the hungry crowds. All of this was a life given for the others, all of this was "bread broken" and "blood...shed for many". Such was the spirit of his mission that would ultimately end in triumph and such was the mission the disciples were called to carry out. But there was a long road ahead and much pain and conversion of heart before they would be ready. And so Jesus' solemn words and eloquent gestures at the supper are framed with his predictions that Judas Iscariot would fail tragically and the rest of his disciples would abandon him. Even Simon Peter, the first disciple to be called (1:16-20) and their leader, would publicly disown Jesus out of fear and abandon his master.

Now the setting shifts from the upper room to Gethsemane, an olive grove on the outskirts of the city, and here in two major scenes the pace of the passion story quickens. 

☞☞ The spectre of violent death hovers over Jesus and torments him. As he had done several times in the gospel Jesus gathers his strength in prayer. It is not a polite or heroic prayer but one that echoes the raw expressions of faith found in the psalms: “Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.” (14:36). So much of the spirit of Jesus is here: his tenacious and intimate devotion to God, his “Abba,” the fierce struggles with the power of evil and death that marked his ministry in Galilee (see, for example, 5:1-20). Mark informs his readers early in the Gospel that Jesus is the Son of God, one in whom the Spirit abides and one whose name God’s speaks at the Jordan (1:9-11) and on the mount of Transfiguration (9:7). But Jesus is also genuinely human, wary of death and crushed by the thought that his mission was running aground. So Mark dares to present us with this scene, one that would be fixed in Christian memory forever: a wrenching prayer of faith and fear from the lips of Jesus.

Mark continues his method of presenting the disciples in stark counterpoint with Jesus. Three times he comes to find support in their presence, only to find them sleeping. The Gospel had already made clear that this “sleep” is not mere fatigue at the end of a long celebration. This brand of sleep could be deadly, it was the spiritual torpor [lethargy] of those who do not recognize the moment of crisis in history and do not prepare themselves to face it. Jesus had warned the disciples about this type of “sleep”: “Watch, therefore, you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’” (13:35-37). That moment of crisis comes swiftly. Judas and an armed crowd break into the stillness of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, the apostate disciple identifying Jesus with a treacherous kiss. Mayhem breaks out: they seize Jesus and arrest him, meanwhile a “bystander” (*one of the crowd? one of Jesus’ followers?*) lashes out with a sword and wounds a servant of the High Priest.

Jesus faces that wall of violence and condemns it. How often has this scene been repeated in the centuries since Mark wrote: a night-time arrest; the forces of violence seeking to destroy the voice of justice; violence breeding more violence; the lone heroic stance of the martyr who refuses to betray the spirit of God. Again Mark contrasts the response of the disciples with that of Jesus. The crisis has come and they cannot endure it. *All of them flee, abandoning Jesus, one of them so panic stricken that he tears away from the grip of his captor and flees naked. The disciples have left behind their dignity, their calling, and the one who gave them life.*

<p>THIS Sunday’s Readings <i>on our website</i></p> <p>Passion [Palm] Sunday • Year B</p> <p>1st Reading Isaiah 50:4-7</p> <p>2nd Reading Philippians 2:6-11</p> <p>Gospel Mark 14:1–15:47</p>	<p>NEXT Sunday’s Readings <i>on our website</i></p> <p>Easter Sunday Morning • Year B</p> <p>1st Reading Acts 10:34,37-43</p> <p>2nd Reading Colossians 3:1-4</p> <p>Gospel Mark 16:1-7</p>
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Parish of St Michael – Thirroul and Wombarra

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

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

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Parish Office Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday
Thursday this week

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