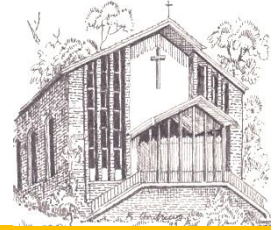




Welcome to the Parish of St Michael Thirroul and Wombarra



5 / 6 MAY 2018

SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE FIFTY DAYS OF EASTER ✦ YEAR B

Another Easter Reflection + Galatians 5:22

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

No Distinction

The theme of the two readings from John is love. We pray today that we might express in our lives the love we celebrate. The Johannine formula, used in both 1 John and the Gospel, is: "Love one another."

One might interpret this formula in terms of a false understanding of the Hebrew law: Love those who belong to your group and stay away from outsiders. The reading from Acts, however, makes it clear that we are to love everyone without exception, for "God shows no partiality" and we are to pattern our love after God's love.



The generosity of the Spirit surprised the circumcised believers accompanying Peter. They had grown up believing that God favours some people over others.

They are not unlike the people of our day who look down on others, regarding as inferior all those whom they consider "Gentiles" (= outsiders): migrants whom we call 'refugees' – or, derogatorily called, 'boat people' or worse and incorrectly, 'illegal immigrants' – non-Christians/non-Catholics, the divorced, women, gays, the handicapped, the unemployed, the homeless, the poor. Such favouritism does not bind the Spirit of God.

The Spirit will rescue the "insiders" from their hidden atheism by revealing God's love to everyone. Liberation for the "outsiders" will also come from the Spirit, not from any action by the "insiders."

"We cannot call upon God the Father of all if we refuse to behave like sisters and brothers towards certain people created to the image of God. The relation of man and woman to God the Father, and their relation to their fellow human beings, are linked to such a degree that Scripture says: 'Whoever does not love, does not know God.' (1 John 4:8) Therefore the basis is taken away from any theory or practice which draws distinctions between people, between nation and nation, with reference to human dignity and the rights flowing therefrom. The Church therefore condemns as foreign to the mind of Christ any kind of discrimination whatsoever between people, or harassment of them, done by reason of race or colour, class or religion."

– Vatican II, *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, 1965: 5

As we look forward to celebrating the Lord's Ascension and Pentecost's coming of his promised Spirit, our Easter season is drawing to a close. The mood of today's liturgy is reflective, inviting us to take in more fully the deep implications of our Easter faith.

Standing out in today's readings is the theme of love. What more important theme ✨ ✨

✠✠ is there for our restless human hearts? Yet it is so often trivialised and distorted in today's popular culture. From our earliest years we have learned to know what genuine love is, not from lessons in words, but by being loved ourselves. Today's readings invite us to recognise that the Paschal Mystery that is the centre of our Easter celebration is an expression of God's love for us, and an invitation to enter into the love of Jesus and his Father, and to give it expression in our own lives. True love expresses itself in action rather than in words. The Father's love, John's letter tells us, was expressed in our midst when he

'sent into the world his only Son, so that we could have life in him'. The words of Jesus in John's gospel remind us how complete is the gift



which he brings, as an expression of the love which he shares with the Father: 'A person can have no greater love than to lay down their life for their friend'.

Genuine love is an unselfish gift. It seeks the good of the beloved rather than its own benefit. God's love is an outreach of utter generosity; it comes before any response on our part, as John's letter points out. (As the continuation of our passage puts it 'God loved us first'.) And our response can give nothing to God except the joy in the heart of the selfless giver. As we contemplate the mystery of God's generosity, we are reminded that, in the end, love is the most precious of all gifts. If it is true that true joy is the finding of what our hearts are made for, then a love that is genuine brings a joy which is without compare: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you ... I have told you this that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete'. The fruit of genuine love is the intimacy of friendship – sharing all that matters in one's life with the beloved: 'You are my friends ... I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father'.

Coming to a deeper appreciation of the love the Father and the Son have for us, expressed in the Paschal Mystery, we will find new enthusiasm and energy for the outreach which must express our life in Christ during the coming week: 'You did not choose me, no I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit' (We are reading the continuation of the passage about 'the true vine').

The first reading continues the story of the early Church. As Peter baptises Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, we are reminded of our theme: God's generous love is for all, 'God does not have favourites' anybody 'who fears God (i.e. has a loving respect before God) and does what is right is acceptable to God'. Like Cornelius, we too have, through our baptismal sharing in the Paschal Mystery, been given to share in the mystery of the love of the Father and the Son.

PEACE ... WORDS OF POPE FRANCIS

"Peace can only happen one person at a time by forgiving others, stopping injustice and ending greed. ... Why do many powerful people not want peace? Because they live off war: the arms industry. When we see that everything revolves around money – the economic system revolves around money and not around the person, men and women, but money – so much is sacrificed and war is waged in order to defend the money. ... We must restore hope to young people, help the old, be open to the future, spread love. Be poor among the poor. We need to include the excluded and preach peace."

GALATIANS 5:22

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

ANOTHER EASTER REFLECTION

Why are eggs associated with Easter? Why are they such a powerful symbol of resurrection? The word needs some care. It is not resuscitation, as if Jesus were simply brought back to life, like Lazarus or the widow's son at Nam (see John 9 and Luke 7:11-15). Resurrection is transformation. The symbols of resurrection are many. So then, why eggs and Easter? An egg is totally changed. What is yellow and white liquid becomes alive with feathers and a chirp. If you look at the liquid of eggs alone, you would never tell what they would become. A liquid goo becomes a chicken – a sea gull, crow or magpie. Another Easter symbol is the seed, or acorn. You can look at a seed and never imagine what colour it may turn out to have. Similarly with a caterpillar and butterfly. These are resurrection symbols because they become something else, totally unforeseen and beautiful. And yet there is continuity: the egg becomes a chicken; an acorn becomes an oak-tree; a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.



There are also human resurrection symbols: persons recovering from drug addiction or alcoholism become what they have despaired of happening. They are the same persons, but now transformed; they have new life, new hopes, and new possibilities. Another resurrection symbol might be a teenager becoming an adult: he or she is the same, but different with the new beauties of maturity.

The resurrection is an invitation to look around to see transformation, to see what is evil being changed, what is immature becoming adult; what appears inert like an egg or seed sprouting life.

But for the Christian the resurrection has a still richer meaning. St Paul, clearly repeating a catechetical formula that he had learned, says to the Corinthians: "I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

We can tease out this text by looking at accounts of the resurrection. They are quite subtle. The first thing we can see is that Jesus "was raised on the third day." Who raised him? The Father by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Romans 1:3-4; 8:11). When we look at the resurrection appearances we notice that Jesus is not at first recognised by those who loved him and who were his close associates or disciples. The exception seems to be the Beloved Disciple who had special insight (see John 20:8; 21:7). The others come to faith; indeed faith was necessary to identify Jesus. The Risen Jesus is then the same but different. This can be put in another way by saying that Jesus is not resuscitated, but is resurrected.

Christ is risen, and has promised to take us with him. This life is not the end; we too will be transformed in endless life and beauty. Human life is good, but it will end. The resurrection gives hope and meaning to our existence here. In our weakness we will after death be raised in glory. Again there is continuity: it is I (not just my body) that I hope will be raised. As Paul writes: "So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be conferred by Bishop Brian on **Thursday, 28 June 2018** to Year 6 (or older) students. **Enrolment Forms** may be downloaded **from our Parish website**. Download and complete the Form, then return it to the Parish Office: thirroul@dow.org.au Enrolments close on **Monday, 14 May 2018**.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Ken is in Melboring 6-9 May visiting a friend who has cancer. Andrew is 70 on 10 May!

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE – Tuesday, 8 May, commencing **11:00am** in the McCarthy Centre. Our guest will be Noel from the **Illawarra Lapidary Club** – Noel will speak about the Lapidary Club and Lapidary work, gemstones, minerals, beading, jewellery making and other topics. Light luncheon to follow. All welcome! Monthly meeting 1:30pm.

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

PARISH CELEBRATION ON SATURDAY, 19 MAY

There will be a parish celebration for **Andrew's 70th Birthday** on **Saturday, 19 May** in the McCarthy Centre **following the 5:30pm Mass**. Families are requested to **bring a plate**. Tea, coffee and cordial will be provided, **BYO other refreshments**. If you are attending, please leave your name and the food you are bringing on the list at the church, or ☎ Maureen Heydon on 0438 674 997 or Judy Bull on 0407 672 417. Thank you.

SWIM SAFELY

Illawarra's coastal drowning toll stands at five for the season; the drownings occurred either outside of patrol hours or at unpatrolled beaches.



Volunteer lifesavers recorded **373** rescues this season, up from **209** the year before. Fewer people drowned in NSW this summer than last. But of those who tragically did, more than three-quarters were men aged 15 to 35 — and more than half of them were doing something they shouldn't have been. In Australia **this season 6,856** rescues have been made! Thanks to all surf lifesavers!

THIS Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Sixth Sunday of Easter • Year B

1st Reading Acts 10:25-26,34-35,44-48

2nd Reading 1 John 4:7-10

Gospel John 15:9-17

NEXT Sunday's Readings *on our website*

Ascension of the Lord • Year B

1st Reading Acts 1:1-11

2nd Reading Ephesians 4:1-7,11-13

Gospel Mark 16:15-20

SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Church of St Michael • Thirroul

Saturday – 5:30pm • Sunday – 8:00am

Bulli • Sunday 8:30am and 5:30pm

Corrimal • Saturday 6pm, Sunday 9:30am

LITURGIES THIS WEEK

Wombarra [*Liturgy*] Monday 4:30pm

Thirroul Tuesday 5:30pm

Wednesday 9:00am

Thursday 9:00am

Friday 9:30am

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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✉ thirroul@dow.org.au

**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