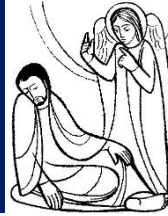




## Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



**PARISH BULLETIN**  
**17/18 DECEMBER 2022**  
**4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT + YEAR A**  
**BAPTISMS, CONFIRMATION, THANKS**

### **THIS WEEK'S READINGS**

In the gospel reading, in a dream, God tells Joseph to marry Mary, even though Joseph had discovered she was pregnant. According to Jewish law, premarital sex was punishable by death; and, in the ordinary course of things, pregnancy doesn't occur without sex. So, Mary's pregnancy out of wedlock exposes her to the penalty of death. Even apart from legal penalties, Mary's pregnancy jeopardizes her flourishing. As Joseph's own attitude shows, in Mary's society, no one wants to marry a woman who looks like a sinful woman and has an illegitimate child to support.

It is clear, then, that Mary's pregnancy exposes her not only to legal penalties but also to suffering and shame in her society. It is noteworthy too that Joseph needs to hear from God that God, and no man, is the father of Mary's child. Presumably, Joseph had already asked Mary how she came to be pregnant, and Joseph didn't believe her when she told him. That's why God had to confirm Mary's story for Joseph. How shaming for Mary to be thought a little liar as well as a sinful woman! Why would God put Mary through this?

As the first reading indicates, it helps us to recognize Jesus as Emmanuel—God with us—to know that Jesus did not have a human father; and we are helped towards that view by knowing that Mary was pregnant before she was married. But why didn't God protect Mary from the shame and suffering of being an unmarried pregnant woman by having the conception of Jesus result from some great public miracle involving Mary, so that everyone knows Mary's pregnancy stems only from the miraculous workings of divine power? God doesn't have to expose Mary to humiliation to make her pregnant, does God?

Well, here's one way to think about the matter. Mary's steadfastness and trust in God even in the trouble of being an unmarried pregnant woman are a training for her and a sign for us, aren't they? Mary will eventually find the greatness of soul to love God and her son at the foot of the cross, in the shame of having her son die a shaming death. And, from watching Mary standing by the cross we learn that human greatness has at its core fidelity through shame and suffering, don't we? And so the greatness of Christ on the cross is foreshadowed by the greatness of this small woman, pregnant, shamed, and faithful.



The gospel readings of the coming year come from Matthew. Today's reading, concerning 'how Jesus Christ came to be born', expresses the faith in the Incarnation of the community for which Matthew wrote. This community of Jewish Christians were anxious to persuade those with whom they had shared the traditions of Israel to believe in Christ as the 'fulfilment' of 'the Law and the prophets' (Matthew 5:17).

Whereas, the more familiar story of Christ's birth, in Luke's gospel, is centred on Mary, the mother of the Saviour, Matthew's account – so remarkable in its accord is essentials with Luke's account – is told from the point of view of Joseph, the one who was destined to be the foster father of the Saviour. It is through Joseph that the Davidic lineage of the child to be born – so important in the hopes of Israel – is proclaimed. Finding his betrothed to be with child, Joseph 'being a just man' considered divorcing her quietly. Some scholars see profound significance in Matthew's reference to 'justice' (i.e. fidelity to the traditions of Israel): the implication that before the divine mystery that confronted him – probably through his being informed by Mary – Joseph's first reaction was a sense of unworthiness. His reluctance was only overcome by a divine call that led him to take up the immense responsibility that was to be his.

As in Luke's account, Mary's virginal conception is clearly affirmed. Her son is not only to be 'a descendant of David', as our reading from Romans declares, but also the Son of God, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit – something that our reading from Romans declares will be made manifest to the whole world 'through his resurrections from the dead'. Matthew also cites the words of Isaiah, 'a virgin will conceive'. The prophet's prediction, in fact, was that Ahaz the king was to be given a sign from God in the coming birth of a son. (There are about a dozen of these 'all this was to fulfil' citations in Matthew's gospel. They are not technical interpretations of the texts cited, but expressions – in the spirit of the rabbinical traditions – of the conviction that Christian faith's reading of the Old Testament recognises the 'fulfilment' of old Israel's hopes.) The Davidic Messiah announced to Joseph in his dream is far more than a liberator from Roman occupation. His name – which means 'God saves' – points to his role as the Saviour. 'Saving the people from their sins', he will fulfil the true destiny of Israel, as the people chosen to bring the whole world to share in God's final blessings. Telling of his coming as 'Emmanuel' – a name that means 'God is with us' – Matthew invites the Jewish people to recognise that the great theme of divine presence, running through the Scriptures, 'I will be your God; and you will be my people', has found a realisation beyond all their imagining. In fact, Matthew's gospel will close with the same theme from the mouth of Jesus himself: 'I am with you always; yes, to the end of time'.



# QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

## First Reading Isaiah 7:10-14

- ✚ Isaiah said, "A virgin will bear a son and name him Emmanuel." How long had God planned for Jesus' birth? From the beginning of time? After Adam? If the birth of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, was the plan from the beginning of time, what does that tell you about God?
- ✚ God gave a sign to Ahaz, who hadn't even asked for one. Does God give signs that aren't requested? Give some examples. Do you think you ever miss any of God's plans for you? Why?

## Second Reading Romans 1:1-7

- ✚ Paul says the Gospel is about God's Son, descended from David. How can a human being from our history books be God's own self? Or is Jesus just a name in the history books?
- ✚ Can the "grace of apostleship" be different for everyone? Could everyone be "called to be holy"? Name some ways that you can take Christ into your work, home, parish, today.

## Gospel Matthew 1:18-24

- ✚ List the obstacles God encountered in bringing Jesus into the world. Is anything obstacle-free? How can good come out of obstruction? John Shea made a statement about Joseph's hesitancy to take Mary into his home. Discuss his statement: "This foreshadows the tension of all who will be drawn to Jesus. Is he a scandal to be rejected, or a manifestation of the Spirit to be welcomed?" (John Shea 45) "When Joseph awoke ..." Did Joseph wake up in more than one way?

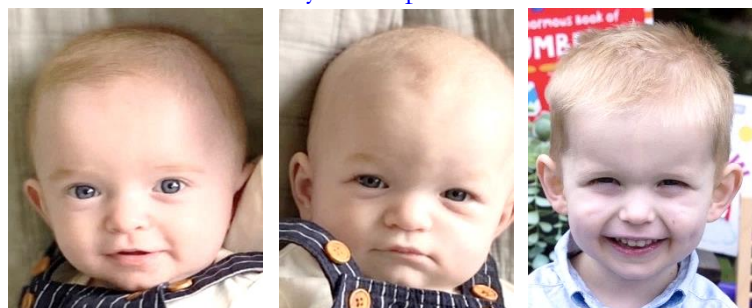
- ✚ Pope Francis says that St Joseph had some new horizons to navigate. What are all the new horizons in the Church and the world in general, that you think the Holy Spirit is showing us today?

At this point, Joseph trusts God totally, obeys the Angel's words and takes Mary with him. It was precisely this unshakeable trust in God that enabled him to accept a humanly difficult and, in a certain sense, incomprehensible situation. Joseph understands, in faith that the child born in Mary's womb is not his child, but the Son of God, and he, Joseph, will be its guardian, fully assuming its earthly paternity. The example of this gentle and wise man exhorts us to lift up our gaze and push it further. It is a question of recovering the surprising logic of God which, far from small or great calculations, is made up of penniness towards new horizons, towards Christ and His Word.

– Pope Francis Audience: St Joseph and new Horizons, 22 December 2019

## BAPTISMS THIS WEEKEND – CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME

**WELCOME** to **DREW KELLY, BEAU KELLY** and **FINN KELLY** baptised in our Parish this Saturday during the 5:30pm Mass: **welcome** and **thank you** to their parents, godparents, families and friends for bringing the children to our Parish community for Baptism.



Baptism is the first Sacrament of Christian Initiation. The three Sacraments of Christian Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. If you would like Baptism for your infant daughter or son – age younger than seven years – then you need to contact the Parish Office to obtain the Enrolment Form and other materials, and to book a time for the Baptism. Baptisms are held on the **third weekend** of the month, during either the 5:30pm Saturday Mass or the 8:00am Sunday Mass. At least one parent will need to attend a

Baptism Preparation Meeting which is *usually* held on the last Thursday of each month at 7:15pm in the presbytery. The next Baptisms to be held in our Parish will be on either Saturday or Sunday, **18/19 February 2023** and the Baptism preparation meeting will be in the presbytery on **Thursday, 2 February** at **7:15pm** – *there are no baptisms in January*. Call in to the Parish Office to collect the Baptism Enrolment Forms.

## SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION – CONGRATULATIONS

**CONGRATULATIONS** to **VERA ZAMUNER** who receives the Sacrament of Confirmation during the 5:30pm Mass this Sunday: **congratulations to you, your Sponsor and your family**. The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated for Year 6 students by our Bishop, Brian Mascord. In 2023, the celebration will be on **Thursday, 29 June**. Enrolment forms **for students in Year 6 in 2023** are now available on our parish website – enrol early to secure your spot!



## PARISH CENTENARY 2023

The centenary committee [Judy Bull, Ray Mirabito, Ronelle Peardon, Lynn Woodley] have held their first meeting to discuss plans for the parish centenary. The weekend celebrations will take place on **28-20 October 2023**. The committee is interested in **photos** and **stories** of parish events in the last 100 years. If you have any such items please start searching for them and lend/pass them on to the committee/Parish Office. Thanks. Judy Bull.

## VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL

The Vinnies Christmas Appeal involves cash donations (or credit/debit cards) along with the preparation of hampers and 'Giving Tree' gifts for distribution in our local area.

**PLEASE RETURN OR DROP IN ANY HAMPERS, TOYS OR GIFTS BY 9:05AM MONDAY, 19 DECEMBER.** THE TOTAL DONATED SO FAR IS **\$5,000**. Thank you for your continuing generosity. You can make donations online up until 31 December – on:

<https://my.fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/fundraise-your-way/vinnies-thirroul-christmas-appeal-2022?tab=updates>



**ONE CHRISTMAS ITEM [see above] PER FAMILY EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA: drop items in the special white plastic bin if you come to Mass**

## FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Saturday, 17 December Three Baptisms and one Candidate for Confirmation
- ✦ Sunday, 18 December Placing of Ivy Dignam's ashes in the Columbarium after 8am Mass followed by Morning Tea
- ✦ Monday, 19 December 09:00am Vinnies preparing hampers and toys for delivery
- ✦ Thursday, 22 December 08:47am Summer Solstice – length of day – 14 hours 24 mins 47 secs
- ✦ Saturday, 24 December 4:00pm **Helpers needed to set up in school for Christmas Mass**  
6:30pm Christmas Eve Mass in grounds of our Parish School  
Bring a chair and a bell  
📻 9:30pm Christmas Mass during the Night in the church
- ✦ Sunday, 25 December 9:00am Christmas Day Mass in the church
- ✦ Monday, 26 December 9:30am Mass for the Feast of Saint Stephen, the first martyr
- ✦ Tuesday, 27 December 📻 9:30am Mass for the Feast of Saint John, apostle
- ✦ then ... usual weekday and weekend Mass schedule resumes

## THANK YOU FROM OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Thank you to all who contributed to Samaritan's Purse – Operation Christmas Child. **11,000** shoeboxes of gifts have been sent to children in Ukraine, Cambodia, Fiji, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vietnam.

## SUMMER SOLSTICE

The summer solstice, also called the **estival** [From the Latin *aestivus* = summer] solstice or midsummer, occurs when one of Earth's poles has its maximum tilt toward the Sun. It happens twice yearly, once in each hemisphere (Northern and Southern). For that hemisphere, the summer solstice is the day with the longest period of daylight and shortest night of the year, when the Sun is at its highest position in the sky. Within the Arctic circle (for the Northern hemisphere) or Antarctic circle (for the Southern), there is continuous daylight around the summer solstice. The opposite event is the winter solstice. On the summer solstice, Earth's maximum axial tilt toward the Sun is 23.44°. Likewise, the Sun's declination from the celestial equator is 23.44°. An interesting idiosyncrasy relating to the summer solstice is that it does not feature the day with the earliest sunrise and latest sunset as is commonly expected. Similarly, on the winter solstice, the sunrise is not the latest and the sunset is not the earliest. However, this day does have the least amount of daylight hours. Because the path of the Earth around the Sun is an ellipse, not a circle, and because the Earth is off-centre on its axis, these combined phenomena can create up to several minutes difference between solar and mean time. Around the date of summer solstice, these effects make the Sun appear to move slightly slower than expected when measured by a watch or clock. As a result, the earliest sunrise occurs before the date of the summer solstice, and the latest sunset happens after the summer solstice. For the same reasons, around the winter solstice, the time of sunrise continues to get later in the days after the solstice. In **Sydney**, the summer solstice will occur on **Thursday, 22 December at 08:47am**, and that day will last **14 hours 24 mins 47 secs, two seconds** longer than the previous day, and three seconds longer than the next day – approximately!

## SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Already, since 1 July 2022, surf lifesavers have performed **881** rescues [*last week 698*], and **2,311** first aids [*last week, 1,990*]. Please be safe on our beaches and waterways.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO CATECHISTS

Congratulations and thanks to these parishioners, who have been Catechists in our local state primary schools: Peter Johnston and Liz Busch [10 years], Anne and Bob Bower [15 years], and Trish Buchan and Lorraine Jones [20 years]. They were presented with their Catechist Awards at a special Mass on 12 November 2022.

**For all Christmas Masses, children are encouraged to dress as shepherds, angels**

## WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

Monday	19 Dec	Monday of the 4 <sup>th</sup> Week of Advent Vinnies preparing hampers and toys for delivery	Judges 13:2-7,24-25	Luke 1:5-25
Tuesday	20 Dec	Tuesday of the 4 <sup>th</sup> Week of Advent	Isaiah 7:10-14	Luke 1:26-38
Wednesday	21 Dec	Wednesday of the 4 <sup>th</sup> Week of Advent	Song of Songs 2:8-14	Luke 1:39-45
Thursday	22 Dec	Thursday of the 4 <sup>th</sup> Week of Advent	1 Samuel 1:24-28	Luke 1:46-56
Friday	23 Dec	Friday of the 4 <sup>th</sup> Week of Advent	Malachi 3:1-4,23-24	Luke 1:57-66
Saturday	24 Dec	Saturday of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent <b>4:00pm Helpers needed in school grounds to prepare for Mass</b> <b>6:30pm Christmas Eve Mass in school grounds</b> <b>9:30pm Christmas Mass during the Night in Thirroul Church</b>	2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14	Luke 1:67-79
Sunday	25 Dec	<b>9:00am Christmas Mass during the Day in Thirroul Church</b>		

## THIS WEEK'S RECIPE: Earl Grey Shortbread Cookies from Chef Mark

2 cups plain flour; 2 tablespoons loose Earl Grey tea leaves; ½ teaspoon salt; ¾ cup icing sugar; 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract; 1 cup butter at room temperature.

In a food processor, pulse together the flour, tea and salt, until the tea is just spotted throughout the flour. Add the icing sugar, vanilla and butter. Pulse together just until a dough is formed. Place dough on a sheet of plastic wrap, and roll into a log, about 7-8cm in diameter. Tightly twist each end of wrap and chill in refrigerator for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 190°C. Slice the log into 1cm thick disks. Place on glad-bake sheets on a baking tray, about 5cm apart. Bake until the edges are brown, about 12 minutes. Let cool on sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to wire racks and cool to room temperature.

Thank you to those who have contributed their recipes and shared them here. Do you have a favourite recipe to share from around the world? Please email recipes to the Parish Office.

## CHRISTMAS LITURGY TIMES



emergencyplus



EMERGENCY



The **Emergency+** app is a free app developed by our emergency services. The app uses the GPS function built into smart phones to help a Triple Zero (000) caller provide critical location details to mobilise emergency services. It's **FREE** and highly recommended.

**Used Stamps** are always needed – please drop them in to the sacristy or to the Parish Office. They make money for needy causes.

### CHRISTMAS 2022 LITURGY TIMES

**CHRISTMAS EVE Saturday, 24 December**  
CHILDREN'S MASS

**6:30pm St Michael Parish School**  
Station Street or Raymond Road, Thirroul  
**in the Parish School grounds**  
**bring a chair or cushion**  
**and a bell** 🛎

**CHRISTMAS EVE NIGHT MASS Saturday, 9:30pm**

**at St Michael Church, Thirroul**  
325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive

**CHRISTMAS DAY MASS Sunday, 9:00am**

**at St Michael Church, Thirroul**  
325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive

**No evening Mass on Christmas Day**  
**Sunday, 25 December**

### CHRISTMAS WEEK LITURGIES

Monday,	26 Dec	<b>9:30am</b> (public holiday)
Tuesday,	27 Dec	<b>9:30am</b> (public holiday)
Wednesday,	28 Dec	<b>9:00am</b>
Thursday,	29 Dec	<b>9:00am</b>
Friday,	30 Dec	<b>9:30am</b>
Saturday,	31 Dec	
		<b>5:30pm</b>
Sunday,	1 Jan	<b>8:00am</b>

**Saturday Dinner:** after the 5:30pm Mass on the **second Saturday** of each month, enjoy dinner with other parishioners at Club Thirroul.

**Morning Tea** is served after 8am Mass on the first and third Sundays of each month. Delicious!

### THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

#### FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT • Year A

1 <sup>st</sup> Reading	Isaiah 7:10-14
2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading	Romans 1:1-7
Gospel	Matthew 1:18-24

### NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

#### CHRISTMAS MASS DURING THE NIGHT

1 <sup>st</sup> Reading	Isaiah 9:1-7
2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading	Titus 2:11-14
Gospel	Luke 2:1-14

### USUAL SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Saturday	<b>5:30pm</b>
Sunday	<b>8:00am</b>
	📺 Saturday Mass 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

Lauren Faulks • Parish Secretary

Tues, Wed 9am–3:30pm; Fri 9:30am–2:30pm

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

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Parish School of St Michael

☎ 4267 2560

### WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday	—
Tuesday	📺 9:00am
Wednesday	9:00am
Thursday	9:00am
Friday	9:30am
	<i>Anointing of the Sick 1<sup>st</sup> Friday</i>