



Welcome to
the Parish of
St Michael
Thirroul

25 DECEMBER 2022
CHRISTMAS EVE AND DAY
Peace and Joy from the Franciscan Friars

Welcome • especially to visitors attending our Christmas Liturgies.

CHRISTMAS IN 2022 ... Insights from Saint Francis of Assisi


Brother Pacifico was an early companion of Francis. Before his conversion, Pacifico had achieved fame as a master of the courtly songs which were the popular music of the time. Indeed, he was known as the King of Verse. Francis requested of Brother Pacifico that he travel about with other friars and join the singing of praises to the Lord with preaching the Gospels. For Francis, singing represented a natural expression of the spirit of his company, the spirit of joy: “What re the servants of God but God’s minstrels who should lift up the hearts of people and move them to spiritual joy?”

The image of Francis and his companions travelling through the towns and country sides of Italy, singing and bursting with unrestrained joy, was surely a common one. Francis found joy in the message of the Gospel. As is always true with joy, his became contagious. Since his time, “Franciscan joy” has become an identifying mark of Francis and of those who share his spirit.

The God whom Francis loved was to be enjoyed. Once when Francis noticed one of the friars walking along with lowered head and a gloomy countenance, he rebuked him for such an outward display of sadness. He suggested that he keep his sorrow between himself and God and to pray for a restoration of his soul to the joy of God’s healing. “But in front of me and others show yourself as always having joy; for it is not fitting for a servant of God to show sadness outwardly, or to have a clouded face.”

Francis reminds us that God’s unconditional love for us is the cause of our joy and that nothing will separate us from God’s love. Joy is an essential of life. Unlike happiness, which comes and goes like the weather, one minute bright and sunny, the next cloudy and rainy, joy wells up from the source of our life and makes living worthwhile. Joy runs deep. It is never superficial. It withstands suffering and pain. In fact, it transforms pain and suffering into compassion. Joy leads us to celebrate that in good times and bad, we belong to God.

Someone to love, someone to care for. It was that thought which gripped Francis’ heart at Greccio, when Francis set up the first Christmas Crib. Francis had decided to celebrate the Birth of Jesus in a new way. He had brought a real ox and ass to the altar so that they, too, could share in this re-birth of Christ in the bread and wine of the Christmas Eucharist.

At Christmas, it was the infant Christ who was born again in the hearts of people, and it struck Francis that God had come to earth as a baby so that we would have 



☞☞ someone to care for. Christmas was the dearest of feasts because it meant that God was now one of us: someone to care for, someone to try and please, someone to love. God, a helpless baby; God a piece of bread. How much trust the God of the universe had in God's own creatures.

Someone to love. That was Greccio, that was Christmas. Francis prayed for all the lonely people of the world that they would understand what God's becoming human meant to them personally. God was like us now in everything but sin. And God let Godself be touched and handled by everyone who would come to God. Someone to care for, someone to touch. That was Greccio, that was God becoming human.

Francis left Greccio that year with a new heart, for the friars would keep alive the custom of celebrating Christmas in that fashion. Someday, perhaps, everyone could look into the altar creche at Christmas and know they had someone special to love, someone divine to care for. And everyone would begin anew to love.



May the joy, peace, serenity and trust that springs from Christmas be yours.

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

WEEKDAY LITURGIES **THIS WEEK**

Monday AND Tuesday 9:30am

Wednesday 9:00am

Thursday 9:00am

Friday 9:30am

Patrick Vaughan, *Parish Priest*

Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm, *Assisting*

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✉ thirroul@dow.org.au

Parish Office Hours – Tuesdays and Wednesdays – 9:00am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 3:30pm

Fridays – 9:30am to 2:30pm

🌐 www.thirroulcatholic.org.au

Parish School ☎ 4267 2560