



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
30 SEPTEMBER / 1 OCTOBER 2023
26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + YEAR A
BLESSING OF ANIMALS – MONDAY

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Why Be Good?

In the early Old Testament, there seems to have been an ongoing belief, one that we hang on to today sometimes: that good people are rewarded and sinners are punished even unto death.

“When the righteous person turns away from their righteousness and commits iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked person turns away from the wickedness they have committed and does what is lawful and right, they shall save their life.” [Ezekiel, first reading]

There is so much good sense in this reading. Sin really does mess up our lives, letting them come apart at the seams, doesn't it? And those who live lives of virtue usually are edging toward integration and freedom. The Psalm for this Sunday is a straightforward request for being included with the favoured ones: “Remember your mercies, O Lord.”

But throughout the Hebrew Testament, an opposing and terrible observation gradually arose. Good people do suffer and die while scoundrels often have a fine time of it.

How can this be? How could a good God be unjust? We hear that question today from the Ukraine. Many Psalms are filled with the same lament also. The Book of Job is an ancient and puzzling repetition of the same question.

Before reading further, you might want to think about your own answer to the question. Why do bad things happen to good people?

There are clues. First, how many people do you know who are completely good or completely bad? A childlike, over-simple belief says that good friends are always good. Adults, on the other hand, know how mixed the human reality is. Each of us has a jumble of “good plants and weeds” within us. That is what the Gospel is about.

A father asks his younger son to go work in the fields and the son says “yes, of course I will do that for you, father.” He must be the good one, mustn't he? But, in fact, he does not do what he promised. He becomes the famous prodigal son.

The older son originally says something like, “No. I will not go out in the heat and pull your damned weeds. Why should I?” Yet of course, he does go out and work all day. Today we know him as the good son, though he had been mean at the beginning.

The lesson? God the father loves everyone, whether they are sinners or not. And in order for any of us to love like God does, we must prepare to love them in spite of the drawbacks in their personality, the hurts we receive, not just the good things. This can be horrifying!

The great example of a good man suffering is Jesus' cross. The second reading from St Paul's letter to the Philippians puts it this way: “Though he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Though God's son was perfectly blameless, he took upon himself the mixed nature of human beings. He showed once and for all the mysterious reason why good people suffer, as he suffered.

Let God make you good.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus has already warned his disciples three times that he is to suffer; and he has indicated that the chief priests and leaders of the people will be responsible for his death. The brief parable in today's reading, addressed ‘to the chief priests and the elders’, reflects the growing confrontation with these authorities that will lead, in the end, to his death. He knows that, in their opposition to him, they see themselves as upholding the traditions of Israel – giving expression to their faithfulness to the Lord. His parable gently confronts them with their tragic miscalculation. In Matthew's narrative, immediately before Jesus tells this parable, he was challenged by these leaders: what authority did he have for teaching in the Temple precincts? He showed up their hypocrisy, putting them in a dilemma – asking them what authority John the Baptist had when he preached to the people.

The simple story of the parable he now addresses to them ends with a question. His parables, we recall, were designed to leave the hearers pondering an unsettling question. Because the answer to the question he put to them is straight forward – the son who initially refused, and ‘afterwards thought better of it and went’, was the one who did the father's will – the opponents of Jesus answered accordingly. But as they do so, they begin to realise what Jesus' parable is driving at. As the defenders of the nation's faith traditions, they see themselves as always saying ‘Yes’ to God. But now Jesus is inviting them to reflect that their actions may not match their professions of faithfulness. John the Baptist called the people to a conversion whereby they would be open to what was about to take place in the great plan of God. The very ones these leaders despised, as ‘outside the law’ – tax collectors, sinners,



✚✚ those whose busy lives and slender means made it impossible for them to observe all the rituals and customs they emphasised – were listening to the teaching of the one announced by the Baptist, while they themselves were intent on destroying him, not recognising that he came from God. The ironic lesson of the parable would have been very real to the Jewish converts of Matthew's community.

The old proverb, 'Actions speak louder than words', reminds us of the inconsistencies that can be present in the lives of all of us. The parable of Jesus reminds us that these inconsistencies can be present in our Christian lives – when we see ourselves as fervent believers, always faithful to our devotions and religious observances, but with little practical expression to show of our following of Christ. St Paul's exhortations to the Philippians in today's reading provide simple but telling examples of the practical attitudes that true followers of Jesus should have: no competition or petty rivalry, putting the wellbeing of others before our own, being genuinely concerned to assist those around us. And, as always, Paul leads us back to the ultimate pattern of our life as disciples of the Lord – the Son who said 'Yes' to the Father, came to work in the God's vineyard, setting aside his divine glory and making himself the Servant of us all. 'In your attitudes you must be the same as Christ'.

Jesus may well have told the same parable in different forms. As we hear today's brief parable we may well ask whether it is related to the great parable, in Luke's gospel, of the wayward son who found his way back to his father's love and welcome.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Ezekiel 18:25-28

- ✚ If we turn away from wickedness we are turning toward God. Spiritual writers call this "conversion." Are we converted just once or do we experience conversion many times in our lifetime?
- ✚ Distress, daily conversion, and the struggle for justice; do challenges such as these become possible if Jesus is part of your daily life?

Second Reading Philippians 2:1-11

- ✚ The reading says "... in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." Who is doing this now where you live? Are people working for racial justice? What about those trying to change the climate crisis?
- ✚ Paul begins this reading with "if there is ... any sharing in the Spirit." Do you ask the Holy Spirit, who lives in you, for help in situations when you find yourself in a quandary? Do you always receive help when you ask for it?

Gospel Matthew 21:28-32

- ✚ Using the idea of "conversion" from above [i.e., when we turn away from wickedness we are turning toward God], discuss the two sons in this reading. Which one needed to change and turn toward his father? Are you presently in need of conversion in any area of your life? What counts more in building community, saying some good words, or actually doing some good deeds? At which one are you better, words or deeds?
- ✚ According to Pope Francis what does superficial religiosity refer to? Is God always beside us to help us if we need it? Does God tire of waiting for us to change our minds?

To the father's invitation to go and work in the vineyard, the first son impulsively responds "no, I'm not going," but then he repents and goes; instead, the second son, who immediately replies "yes, yes dad," does not actually do so; he doesn't go. Obedience does not consist in saying "yes" or "no," but always in taking action, in cultivating the vineyard, in bringing about the Kingdom of God, in doing good. With this simple example, Jesus wants to go beyond a religion understood only as an external and habitual practice, which does not affect people's lives and attitudes, a superficial religiosity, merely "ritual," in the ugly sense of the word.

... In today's Gospel, the one who makes the best impression is the first brother, not because he said "no" to his father, but because after his "no" he converted to "yes," he repented. God is patient with each of us: he does not tire, he does not desist after our "no"; he leaves us free even to distance ourselves from him and to make mistakes. Thinking about God's patience is wonderful! How the Lord always waits for us; he is always beside us to help us; but he respects our freedom. And he anxiously awaits our "yes," so as to welcome us anew into his fatherly arms and to fill us with his boundless mercy.

– Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 27 September 2020.

CENTENARY OF THE PARISH – SATURDAY, 28 OCTOBER

All are invited to join our parish family, old and new, to celebrate the Parish's first 100 years! Mass with Bishop Brian will be held at **17:30 on Saturday, 28 October**, followed by a community gathering: a BBQ in the school grounds for **all**. Further details to follow. In addition, to celebrate the Centenary, you will be able to order special mementos: **100 Year Anniversary Book; Centenary Wine Glasses; Centenary Wines – Sauvignon Blanc or Merlot**. Order forms are available in the church, from the Parish Office, or on the Parish's website or with the Bulletin emails. **Orders** need to be placed by **Tuesday, 3 October the latest**. Hand or email in your order form to the Parish Office, or in a special box on the front seat in the church. **By 10 October**, please phone or email the Parish Office, or complete the sheet in the church indicating how many from your family will be attending the **BBQ dinner after the 17:30 Mass on Saturday, 28 October**. All are invited to attend.

AN OPEN LETTER ON THE VOICE TO CHURCH LEADERS FROM REV TIM COSTELLO*

Continued from last week — Barely any Australian Christian today imagines they would have opposed William Wilberforce's fight against slavery had they been alive in his day. But that's not what history teaches us. Many Christians said Wilberforce's campaign was political, not spiritual. *'The Record'*, an evangelical newspaper in Wilberforce's time, labelled his campaign against slavery as divisive and not of the Gospel. They balked at giving any political expression to the biblical vision of being "*neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free*" but united in Christ.

When alive, voices like Wilberforce that challenge inequality are always accused of being divisive and political. The irony is that once they have died, we celebrate them. Why don't we learn from history? How is it that many can joyfully sing the anti-slave anthem Amazing Grace, then go out and oppose the Voice? Why are leaders not challenging the flood of disinformation from White Christian nationalist websites from the USA?

It's hard to imagine a stronger connection than that between Wilberforce's evangelical network in the 1830s and the cause of justice for Indigenous Australians. They made the bold case that Aborigines had been made in God's image and had rights as those who occupied this land. They established the Aboriginal Protection Society, which exposed colonial injustices. The evangelical Secretary for the Colonies, Lord Glenelg, and the evangelical civil servant James Stephen, sought to prevent the takeover of unoccupied lands in South Australia, insisting that unoccupied lands belonged to the Aboriginal people and needed their consent or treaty. Those efforts were circumvented by Robert Torrens and other settlers, who wanted to behave like the other Colonies and just take the land.

The Wilberforce evangelicals had more success in New Zealand. Why was the Treaty of Waitangi struck in 1840? Because of the strengths of that Christian evangelical vision in Westminster. It would be more than 150 years before native title was recognised as law in Australia in the Mabo case in 1992. Once again there was a massive 'No' case scare campaign claiming that Australians would lose our backyards with the Native title Act. But as sensible voices at the time reassured us, not one centimetre was lost.

Like MLK, we can be both proud of our many national achievements, as well as being honest about injustices that date back to our foundations. Captain Cook in 1770 claimed all of the land on the Eastern continent of Australia for the British King on the basis of the legal principle of discovery. In the same year, America's second President, John Adams, wrote in the Massachusetts Gazette that this principle clearly "could give not title to the English King by common law, or by the law of nature, to the lands, tenements, and hereditaments of the native Indians."

When Australia's constitution was being written, the language of natural rights – so familiar to Wilberforce's network – had sharply declined. The only delegate to raise questions about the fate of Aboriginal Australians was Sir William Russell, the delegate from New Zealand – a country that by then had fifty years' experience of a treaty with Indigenous inhabitants. Russell warned that the new federal Parliament "would be a body that cares nothing and knows nothing about native administration." Cautious voices told him not to worry because Australia's Aborigines were dying out, as if the fate of Indigenous peoples could be attributed to natural causes. And so, Aborigines were left out of our Constitution – the injustice that we are now addressing – while special provision was made in our Constitution for the future inclusion of New Zealand.

I fully accept that voting 'No' does not mean you are a racist. But I'm sure there's not too many racists voting 'Yes'. Enough of the discredited line that to stand up to injustice is divisive, dangerous and unwise. Four in five Indigenous Australians are asking for a voice, and Christians represent a larger share of the Indigenous population than the population at large. Let's heed the lessons of history, from Botany Bay to Uluru. Let's raise our voices for Amazing Grace, but let's not fail the true test for our generation.

* Rev Tim Costello is an Australian Baptist minister who was the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Advocate of World Vision Australia. Costello worked as a lawyer and served as mayor of St Kilda.

MASSES NOT 'TELEVISED' FROM 2 TO 27 OCTOBER

Each Saturday evening and Tuesday evening, the Masses at Thirroul are 'recorded' and an email link is sent out so people can watch the Mass. This service seems to be appreciated by not a number of people. As Ken will be away from **2 to 27 October**, in the USA and Canada, attending Canon Law Conferences, Masses from Thirroul will not be 'televised' during that time. The next Mass to be 'televised' will be the Centenary of the Parish Mass, the 17:30 Mass on Saturday, 28 October.

In the meantime, you may wish to view Mass from another parish ... St Francis Xavier Parish, Box Hill, Victoria. **Daily Mass** is available from Box Hill Parish. Click on this link: <https://www.facebook.com/GBHparish> Mass is "live streamed": **Weekdays (Monday-Friday): 12:00; Saturday: 17.30; Sunday 10.15.** The Masses are available on the website if you do not want to watch them live. **If you do not have a facebook account**, when you click on the above link, it will ask you to either log in or create an account – but if you dismiss the dialogue box you can then access the Mass. You don't have to have or create a facebook account.

TRANSPORT HERITAGE EXPO – CENTRAL STATION – 30 SEP TO 2 OCT

The award-winning Transport Heritage Expo brings Sydney's transport history to life with heritage train, bus and boat rides, heritage displays, entertainment and so much more! Don't miss this fantastic and nostalgic long weekend event for families and transport enthusiasts alike. Steam train rides, vintage bus rides, red rattler rides, steam boat rides, railmotor rides, clock tower tours! https://www.transportheritageexpo.com/?mc_cid=f371b08e0c&mc_eid=43ed067496

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year I

Monday	2 Oct	The Holy Guardian Angels	Exodus 23:20-23	Matthew 18:1-5,10	
Tuesday ✦	3 Oct	Tuesday of Ordinary Time Week 26	Zechariah 8:20-23	Luke 9:51-56	
Wednesday	4 Oct	St Francis of Assisi	Sirach 50:1,3-4,6-7	Galatians 6:14-18	Matthew 11:25-30
Thursday	5 Oct	Thursday of Ordinary Time Week 26	Nehemiah 8:1-12	Luke 10:1-12	
Friday	6 Oct	Friday of Ordinary Time Week 26	Baruch 1:15-22	Luke 10:13-16	
Saturday	7 Oct	Our Lady of the Rosary	Baruch 4:5-12,27-29	Luke 10:17-24	
Sunday	8 Oct	27 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>			

THIS WEEK'S RECIPE: Lemon Slice

1¼ cups plain flour; 1 tbs lemon zest; 1 tsp vanilla; ½ cup raw sugar; 1¼ cups rolled oats; ⅓ cup lemon juice; 1 tin condensed milk; ½ cup brown sugar; ½ tsp salt; 2 large egg yolks; ½ tsp carb soda.

Preheat oven to 160°C. Grease slice tray. Mix flour, oats, salt and bicarbonate. Stir in sugar. Melt butter, add vanilla and mix into dry ingredients. Press half mixture into tray. Bake for 15 minutes. Whisk together condensed milk, egg yolks, lemon zest and juice. Pour over cooked crumb base. Sprinkle remaining crumbs on top. Bake for 20–25 minutes. Slice into squares when slightly cooled. Enjoy! 😊

Please send in your favourite recipe so it can be shared in the Bulletin – we need more recipes!

BLESSING OF ANIMALS, MONDAY, 2 OCTOBER AT 09:30

As usual, the Blessing of Animals will take place on the Monday of the long weekend, 2 October at 09:30 at the Parish of Saint Michael, 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul. The blessing takes place in the courtyard next to the church. All animals under 800kg and their carers are welcome, though please keep the larger crocodiles on a tight leash. The feast of St Francis of Assisi is on Wednesday, 4 October, with Mass at 09:00 – animals are welcome at that Mass.

PLEASE BRING IN ...ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA: drop items in the special plastic bins near the church entrances.

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Sunday, 1 October	02:00	Daylight Saving begins ... spring FORWARD one hour
✦ Monday, 2 October	09:30	Blessing of Animals in courtyard next to the church Ken leaves for USA and Canada for Canon Law Conferences
✦ Wednesday, 4 October	09:00	Mass for the Feast of St Francis of Assisi
✦ Friday, 6 October	09:30	Anointing of the Sick during Mass
✦ Weekend, 7/8 October		Blessing of October Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays
✦ Saturday, 14 October	18:30	Dinner at Club Thirroul after 17:30 Mass
✦ Friday, 27 October	06:55	Ken returns from Canon Law Conferences
✦ Wednesday, 1 November	09:00	All Saints Day Mass
	19:00	First Penance – Reconciliation Rite II
✦ Saturday, 28 October	17:30	Centenary Mass with Bishop Brian, then Centenary BBQ



THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A

1 st Reading	Ezekiel 18:25-28
2 nd Reading	Philippians 2:1-11
Gospel	Matthew 21:28-32

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A

1 st Reading	Isaiah 5:1-7
2 nd Reading	Philippians 4:6-9
Gospel	Matthew 21:33-43

SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday	17:30
Sunday	08:00

No Masses recorded 2 to 27 Oct

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

Kerry Fabon • Parish Secretary

Tues, Wed 09:00–15:00; Fri 08:30–15:00

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Parish School of St Michael

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USUAL WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday	—
Tuesday ✦	17:30
Wednesday	09:00
Thursday	09:00
Friday	09:30

Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday