



# Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



**PARISH BULLETIN**  
**9 / 10 DECEMBER 2023**  
**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT + YEAR B**  
**VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL.**

## THIS WEEK'S READINGS

*A Long Time*

Love always wants to share itself.

And God is love.

So, God always wants to share Godself; therefore God made planets and black holes and galaxy clusters, and God bestowed God's very self upon every microscopic atom of the exhaustive creation God had caused to be. What a privilege for us, what a sharing.

*Surely this would have been enough.*

But the planets and asteroids could not know they were receiving God. And they were unable to love God in return, willingly, for God's presence. Their manner of reception was only a relishing of their rough, craggy existence, a way of being exactly what they were or are created to be.

Therefore, God made a new beginning. God thought up a miraculously intricate trail by which something called life could come about. God chose a diminutive blue planet circulating insignificantly around a very small star, within what would later—millions of years later—be called the Milky Way.



God caused water. And then God made life to eke its way out of the seas onto shore. Into trees, amoebae, chimps, and even dinosaurs. It chose as its home the highest mountains, the coldest high specks of space, the hottest flaming deserts, and even the oceans' depths. God loved this abundant "life" like a mother loves her children.

What a delight! God enwrapped them all with love, a love in which they basked. But did not know it.

Did they need to know it?

If you had taken one look at the dinosaurs and apes and fishes and birds, you would have seen that: *this miraculous creation would have been enough.* But still there was room.

God's overflow of love discovered more space for giving and being received. God scooped out "openness" in various living creatures. These now could receive knowingly the affectionate love God was bestowing upon them, and could give love back to God!

As a result, the human race inched—slowly, cumbrously—into being. Don't ask for the number of Cro-Magnon species that came about, or how hunting turned into farming and cooking, how weaving and building and fences and fire burst onto the scene. They did.

And God took time to deepen out the spiritual hollow inside these newly fashioned humans in which they could, even in fear and distraction, actually receive God's Glory—not passively like a rock does the sun, but actively and knowingly, welcoming unto themselves the great gratuity of God's life, love and presence.

We are those humans. Each of us is able to open in this manner, each of us standing at the apex of such a long history of God's love for us.

Advent is the treasured time to ask quietly, humbly, in what way we love in return.

Do we take time to treasure that opening deep within ourselves? Will we let it thrive? That would mean bringing patience to bear on our nervous, bothersome life, letting God's presence be enough. It might mean living in a new way. It might mean celebrating at Mass in a new way, a way of patient listening and receiving instead of holding our watches ready so we can time the homily.

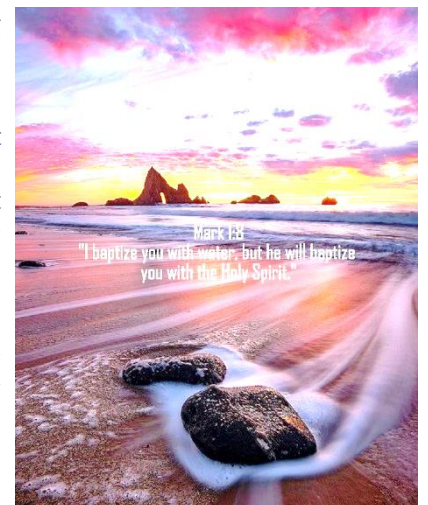
And that would be enough, would it not?

Maybe, but what if God's tender love wanted to make its way out of the church and into the world? Wouldn't that quite mean the birth of a child named Jesus? We could carry the love God placed in our hearts out to the whole world.

***And that would indeed be enough.***

As we prepare to celebrate the Lord's 'coming' at Christmas, our Advent liturgies invite us to a fuller appreciation of the great plan of God – a plan that will reach its climax with the inauguration of God's final Kingdom, in the 'second coming' of the Saviour.

We read again from the final chapters of the Book of Isaiah. This amazing passage helps us to understand the wonder and joy with which the apostolic generation read the texts of the Old Testament, and recognised that they had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Their faith in Christ, they proclaimed, was 'according to the Scriptures' (Luke 24:27; 1 Corinthians 15:4 etc.) In this passage, the message of God's generous ways already finds a sublime and inspiring expression: 'Comfort, O comfort my people, speak tenderly to their hearts'; let the 'joyful messenger'



✚✚ proclaim God's presence in their midst; God will lead the exiled people home through the wilderness, in a new Exodus; Israel's God will be 'like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering the lambs in his arms'.

This Old Testament text provides the background for the gospel reading, which is the opening passage of Mark's gospel – 'the beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ the Son of God'. It is echoed by Mark, in his quotation from 'the book of the prophet Isaiah' (His quotation, in fact, combines two other Old Testament texts with the words from Isaiah). John the Baptist appears as the 'messenger' foretold. He 'prepares a way' for the Saviour, who – in his Paschal Mystery – will lead God's people in the final Exodus of God's great plan. He will prove himself a 'Good Shepherd' to a people 'harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd' (Matthew 9:36). Mark's description of the Baptist – 'clothed with camel's hair' and living on 'locusts and wild honey' – presents him as another Elijah: the old prophet whose witness to the unique divinity of the God of Israel made him a legendary model of the prophet's role. John's 'baptism of repentance' prepared for the coming of the Saviour; and all generations of Christians have been inspired by his humble 'Advent' witness to the one who would 'baptise with the Holy Spirit' – 'I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals'.

2 Peter [the second letter of Saint Peter, from which our other reading comes, with its reference to the 'Second Coming' of the Saviour] is one of the last texts of the New Testament to be written. It reflects the mood of the early Church, as it comes to terms with the fact that they faced an indefinite wait before the Lord's promised return. Like them we must bow before the mystery of God's ways, maintaining an alert faith in the certain, but unknowable, final return of the Saviour. If we must look forward to our familiar world coming to an end – as foretold in the dramatic imagery of the prophets – we should not be frightened, because creation will be transformed in a 'new heaven and new earth', in which all the things we hold dear will be filled with the 'righteousness', or incomparable goodness, of God's ways.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

### First Reading      Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

↳ Left to human management, world history can seem to be a wasteland or at best a rough road. What are the "wasteland" aspects of it right now? What can you do to help smooth out this "rough road"?

↳ Do you think God has been walking on the roads of world history? Does God walk with you when you are in "rugged country"? Could Isaiah's shepherd image help flatten out the ruggedness in your life?

### Second Reading      2 Peter 3:8-14

↳ This reading says that the Lord "is patient with you." Granting this, are you patient with others? For instance, how do you react when a car cuts you off, or you are blamed falsely? Is there a line between holy anger and patience? Are you patient with yourself?

↳ "We await new heavens and a new earth." What is your relationship with the earth? Do you take the earth for granted, or do you treat it with reverence? What small/large thing can you do to remedy the climate crisis?

### Gospel      Mark 1:1-8

↳ Compare the statement of John the Baptist that he is, as Isaiah prophesied: "a voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'" (John 1:23), with Pope Francis' statement below:

My mission of being in the heart of the people ... is not an "extra" or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing. All around us we begin to see nurses with soul, teachers with soul, politicians with soul, people who have chosen deep down to be with others and for others.  
– Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, paragraph 273

↳ How do you share John the Baptist's mission to proclaim Christ's coming into the world? Do you do this with words or by the way you live? How is John's message of repentance and judgment different from Jesus' message?

## FIRST COMMUNION 2023

**Congratulations to these 30 Candidates** who will receive First Communion over the next few weeks. The Candidates began receiving First Communion from last weekend: **8** on Saturday, 2 December; **5** on Sunday, 3 December; **11** on Saturday, 9 December; **2** on Sunday, 10 December; **1** on Saturday, 16 December; and **1** on Sunday, 17 December. Please remember before the Lord these Candidates and their families.

**Ruby Stuart-Street; Julia Marciano; Matilda Gully; Willow Bulmer; Leila Matts; Theodore Bland; Ella Embleton; Blake McEntee; Piper Dale; Cody Wilson; Ethan MacFarlane; Ruby Kelley; Molly Horan; Poppy Elliott; Finn Duggan; Liam Elias; Reuben Cooper; Willow Beattie; Clare Deeming; Daisy Deacon; Annabel Constable; Charlotte Paduch; Isobel Paduch; Anna Hopkins; Isaac Muscat; Macy Maytom; Oliver Zondag; Ivy Amber; Florence Mayers; Clancy Mayers. Congratulations to the Candidates and to their families and friends.**

# VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL – THIS WEEKEND AND NEXT

The annual Vinnies Christmas Appeal is being held over the weekends, 2/3 and 9/10 December.

You can support the Appeal in any of the following ways:

✓ **Hampers** – 3 categories (families, single female, single male) *notices in the church*  
↳ if you cannot attend church, but want to make a hamper up, contact the Parish Office

✓ **Giving Tree** – tags on the tree have name and gender of children (up to 11 years)

✓ **Donation Envelopes** – available in the church for cash or credit card donations, as well as **online** donations

You can also bring in **CHRISTMAS ITEMS** – *Christmas cakes, puddings, long-life custard, tinned ham, biscuits, lollies, soft drinks, tinned veggies, chips, jelly – no cigarette or alcohol products please.*

You can donate online to the Thirroul Vinnies Christmas Appeal:

<https://my.fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/fundraise-your-way-conference/vinnies-thirroul-2023-christmas-appeal-page/donate>

**Vinnies Christmas Cards** are available this weekend – only \$5 for a pack of 10, *and you are supporting Vinnies.*

Thank you for your anticipated and continuing generosity to the needy of our local communities.



**PLEASE BRING IN ... ANY CHRISTMAS ITEMS EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA: drop items in the special plastic bins near the church entrances.**

## CHRISTMAS 2023 AT THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL, THIRROUL

- |         |                      |   |
|---------|----------------------|---|
| ❖ 19:30 | Tuesday, 12 December | Reconciliation Rite II                    |
| ❖ 18:30 | Sunday, 24 December  | Christmas Eve Mass in the Parish School   |
| ❖ 21:30 | Sunday, 24 December  | Christmas Night Mass in the Parish Church |
| ❖ 09:00 | Monday, 25 December  | Christmas Day Mass in the Parish Church   |

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

This year, **Year B** of the three-year cycle of Sunday Scripture Readings, we read mainly from Mark's Gospel.

The gospel of Mark is very much shorter than either Matthew or Luke, and if one takes a quick glance through the three so-called Synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke seem to contain just about everything that is in Mark, plus a lot of extra material, especially sayings of Jesus. The gospel according to Mark has its own special and very attractive qualities. The fact that Mark has relatively few words of Jesus, necessarily focuses attention on action, and an action that moves quickly (the word 'immediately' occurs forty times). Mark's gospel is not poetically crafted, but it has its own dramatic power. Furthermore, his presentation of Jesus' feelings has a particular attraction to today's readers.

We do not possess any of the original manuscripts of the New Testament. Our earliest copy of Mark's gospel is a papyrus manuscript dating from the third century, preserved thanks to the dry heat of the Egyptian desert. The first and last pages did not survive the ravages of time, and some other small sections have been lost, but most of the gospel can be read there. The whole gospel can be found intact in two books from the fourth century, one kept in the Vatican library, and the other discovered only last century in a monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Mark became Peter's interpreter, he wrote down accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of what the Lord had said and done ... for he had not heard or followed the Lord. Mark's gospel is very conscious of conflict. Having lost his two mentors, Peter and Paul, in Nero's persecution in the middle sixties, Mark completed his gospel during the catastrophe of the Jewish-Roman war which broke out in 66AD.

In portraying as he does the last two or three years of Jesus' life, Mark aimed to demonstrate that Jesus had died as he had lived, and that the message of Jesus' love, given so unforgettably on the cross, could inspire Jesus' disciples to continue to live as Jesus had lived. His was the task of assembling the material and arranging it in such a way as to present its inner meaning by conveying something of the wonder of the person who had captured the imagination and inspired the lives of so many.

It is providential that we have four gospels, each with its own insights and perspective. This should help us to avoid going to the gospels expecting to find one fixed answer to our questions about Jesus' life and preaching. One definite answer might have simplified matters, and might, perhaps, have appeared to satisfy our curiosity, but the variety of insights that we have in the different gospels helps us see Jesus from different angles, and also to observe how different disciples responded to him. By contemplating Jesus of Nazareth and by listening to him, we can become more sensitive to the presence and inspiration of the risen Christ, speaking to us now through Mark's inspired words.



# SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	11 Dec	Monday of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Week of Advent	Isaiah 35:1-10	Luke 5:17-26
Tuesday	12 Dec	Tuesday of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Week of Advent	Isaiah 40:1-12	Matthew 18:12-14
Wednesday	13 Dec	St Lucy, virgin, martyr	Isaiah 40:25-31	Matthew 11:28-30
Thursday	14 Dec	St John of the Cross, priest, doctor	Isaiah 41:13-20	Matthew 11:11-15
Friday	15 Dec	Friday of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Week of Advent	Isaiah 48:17-19	Matthew 11:16-19
Saturday	16 Dec	Saturday of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Week of Advent	Sirach 48:1-4,9-11	Matthew 17:10-13
Sunday	17 Dec	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

## THIS WEEK'S RECIPE: Rosemary Prime Dijon Rib

2 white onions, cut to 2.5cm slice; ¼c Dijon mustard; 1 prime rib (about 2.7 kg); 1½ cups (375 ml) salt; ½c (75ml) prepared horseradish; 2 tbsp (30 ml) mustard seeds; 2 tbsp (30 ml) fresh thyme; 2 tbsp (30 ml) fresh rosemary; 2 tbsp (30 ml) ground black pepper; 5 bay leaves, crumbled; 3 egg white.

Preheat oven 230°C. Place the onion slices in the bottom of a roasting pan. Put aside. Evenly brush the prime rib with mustard. Put aside. In a large bowl, combine salt, horseradish, mustard seeds, thyme, rosemary, pepper and bay leaves. Add the egg whites and stir until the mixture looks like wet sand. Press the salt mixture evenly over the fat side and ends of the prime rib, then place the cut of meat, bone side down, over the onions in the roasting pan. Roast for 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 160°C and continue cooking for 20 minutes per 450g or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the roast indicates 55°C, so meat is cooked just through medium rare. Transfer the rib roast to a cutting board and let rest for 20 minutes. Remove and discard salt crust before slicing meat. Serve with your favourite roast vegetables and succulent gravy.

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

## FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Wednesday, 6 December	Ken travels to New Zealand, returns Saturday, 9 December	
✦ Weekend, 9/10 December	Vinnies Christmas Appeal – Week 2 First Communion – Week 2 Blessing of December Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays 18:30 Dinner at Club Thirroul	
✦ Tuesday, 12 December	19:30 Reconciliation Rite II	
✦ Wednesday, 13 December	09:15 Year 2 attending Mass 17:30 Parish Pastoral Council meeting	
✦ Friday, 15 December	09:30 End of Year School Mass	
✦ Weekend, 16/17 December	Blessing of the Christmas Crib Two Baptisms, Sunday, 17 December	
✦ Wednesday, 20 December	School summer holidays begin	
✦ Friday, 22 December	14:27 Summer Solstice [longest day]	
✦ Sunday, 24 December	18:30 Christmas Eve Mass in the school grounds – bring a chair Children dress as shepherds or angels ... and bring a bell 21:30 Christmas 'Midnight' Mass in the church – will be 'televised'	
✦ Monday, 25 December	09:00 Christmas Day Mass – bring a bell	
✦ Tuesday, 26 December	09:30 St Stephen's Mass – Boxing Day – public holiday	

### THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR B	
1 <sup>st</sup> Reading	Isaiah 40:1-5,9-11
2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading	2 Peter 3:8-14
Gospel	Mark 1:1-8

### NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR B	
1 <sup>st</sup> Reading	Isaiah 61:1-2a,10-11
2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
Gospel	John 1:6-8,19-28

### SUNDAY

#### MASS TIMES

Saturday	17:30
Sunday	08:00
☞ 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

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 1 <sup>st</sup> Friday	