



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
17 / 18 FEBRUARY 2024
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT + YEAR B

PRAYER - FASTING - ALMS GIVING

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

What Is Lent?

Undertaking an important journey, we must be well prepared. As we set out on our journey to Easter, we must be clear about the destination that gives meaning to this journey.

Today's gospel reading invites us to prepare ourselves in the company of Jesus. As he set out on the journey that was to lead to Easter, he prepared himself by withdrawing to some desert place, and confronting the temptation to avoid the great task that lay ahead of him. This is an astounding moment in the life of Jesus. Have we taken seriously the fact that, in sharing our human experience, Jesus knew the weight of human decisions and the temptations involved – though, of course, he was without sin in the response he made? This testing brought Jesus new strength, and he began to proclaim the Good News of the coming reign of God. In his company, during the coming days, let us recognise the nature of our temptations, and the bonds of selfishness from which we want to be freed as we make our journey to Easter.

Jesus found strength in the certainty with which he looked to the end of his journey. Though what lay ahead would not be easy, he knew that God's goodness and mercy would be victorious in the end – through his generous response to the call of his Father.

The first reading from the Book of Genesis invites us to share in this hope and expectation as we set out on our journey. It is the conclusion of the story of Noah and the ark which saved him from The Flood – one of the old stories in the introductory pages of the Bible, describing a wayward humanity, in need of the salvation God was to give. The story ends on a note of hope and promise – the rainbow will be a sign of the covenant God makes with humanity, promising that he will always be merciful.

What a magnificent symbol – reminding us of the trust we can place in God, whatever our difficulties and failings! Whenever we see the rainbow and know its promise of fine, clear weather after a storm, we should remember God's promise, and renew our trust in God's mercy, and the final triumph of God's goodness.

The second reading interprets the story of the flood and Noah's being saved as a kind of foretelling of the wonder of baptism – the destination of our journey to Easter, because it is through our baptism that we share in the risen life of Christ.

The *beginning of our journey* is a time for personal reflection for each of us. Perhaps, however, we need to ponder more deeply the astonishing fact that Jesus knew temptation, though he was without sin in his response to its challenge.

Ash Wednesday was a few days ago, starting the Lenten countdown toward Holy Week and Easter. But maybe some of us are not completely clear as to why these weeks of preparation are there in the first place.

One opinion is that Lent is a time to deprive yourself. You give up candy or drinking or desserts or heavy meals or ... well, choose your favourite and then give it up. These are part of Lenten practice.

Lenten deprivation gave birth to *Mardi Gras* (literally meaning "Fat Tuesday"). In contrast to the toughness of Lent. Mardi Gras, at least in non-covid-19 years, had you eat all the fat you could, parade around in costume, go wild. The public usually does not recall that Mardi Gras has something to do with what is to them a quaint old practice, Lent. But that sharpens the question: what have they or we forgotten about Lent and its practices?

Well, what if we described Lent as a "Retreat"? A Retreat, in Catholic and other religions, is a space of days taken out to pray and to be with the Lord. Often one goes to a retreat house to do these. In St Louis, for instance, there is a beautiful place called "White House"—different from the one for the president—which has a stunning view of the Mississippi River. For many decades Jesuits have preached retreats there every weekend and sometimes during the week. Sizeable groups of men or women stay for two or three days to meditate, listen to talks, and refresh their spiritual lives.

This does not mean that you should disappear to the nearest retreat house for the five weeks of Lent. But what about letting each Lenten day partake of certain retreat practices? For instance, what about setting aside a little time each day to let your insides settle down for a while, to create a space within you to welcome God. Maybe set up a special place in your home or someplace else just to pray. How about a picture or crucifix or maybe a candle? Or just 10 minutes of silence, with the TV, the computer and the mobile phone OFF?

And why not use some time to read in advance the gospel from the upcoming Sunday Mass? Sit down, read it slowly, and let the scene described take place within the your heart and mind. This week you could ask Jesus how it felt to have the Spirit drive him into the desert, as described in this week's Gospel. The point? Let the Lord's loving deeds be your motivation for "giving up" anything during Lent. Make a gift of gratitude to God—rather than just refraining from something or other. How does any of this prepare you for Holy Week and Easter? By doing exactly what Jesus does when he makes of himself a gift consisting of suffering and death. He is returning a gift of love to the Father. Lent prepares us to witness this reality of our saviour.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Genesis 9:8-15

- ↳ God made a covenant with us, and “with every living creature ...” Does that reconfigure your attitude toward all creation—“our common home,” including the environment? How?
- ↳ Why do you think God chose a rainbow to be a sign of this covenant? Was it a sign for future generations, us included, as well as Noah's family?

Second Reading 1 Peter 3:18-22

- ↳ Compare Noah with Christ-----: Noah brings people out of the flood into a new creation; Christ to a new life or transformative experience through the waters of baptism.
- ↳ Baptism is about dying and rising. Do you have any Lenten plans that might impact your dying to self or, figuratively speaking, rising from the dead?

Gospel Mark 1:12-15

- ↳ “He was among the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.” What are the “wild beasts” today? Are they personal wild beasts or community ones? Climate crises? Wars? Racial discrimination? Gun Violence? The death penalty? Rejecting refugees? What angels minister to you? To whom do you yourself minister?
- ↳ In the “duel” in the desert, who wins, Jesus or the devil? What does Pope Francis say about the “last desert,” death? What does it have to do with who really wins?

The Tempter seduces. Indeed, during the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert, the “duel” between Jesus and the devil begins, which will end with the Passion and the Cross. Christ's entire ministry is a struggle against the evil one in its many manifestations: healing from illnesses, exorcisms of the possessed, forgiveness of sins. It is a struggle.

After the first phase in which Jesus demonstrates that he speaks and acts with the power of God, it seems that the devil has the upper hand when the Son of God is rejected, abandoned and finally captured and condemned to death.

The devil appears to be the winner. In reality, death itself was the last “desert” to cross in order to definitively defeat Satan and free us all from his power. And in this way Jesus won in the desert of death, so as to win in the Resurrection.

– Pope Francis, *Angelus*, First Sunday of Lent, Year B, 21 February 2021

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER, 10:30, FRIDAY, 1 MARCH

The World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women who welcome you to join in prayer and action for peace and justice. Through preparation and participation in the worship service, we can come to know how our sisters of other countries, languages and cultures understand the Biblical passages in their context. We can hear their concerns and needs and can feel ourselves in solidarity with them as we pray with and for them. In this way, it is possible to enrich our Christian faith as it grows deeper and broader in an international, ecumenical expression.

The motto of the World Day of Prayer movement is **Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action**. Through our participation in the World Day of Prayer, we affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence on the world.

The World Day of Prayer is an ecumenical prayer movement developed from a Christian women's perspective as a creative response to issues of concern around the world.

The prayer this year has been prepared by **women of Palestine** – so this is a special opportunity to join with them in prayer and in praying for peace in their country. This program calls us to **bear with each other in love, despite all difficulties and oppression**. The program was written by a group of ecumenical Christian Palestinian women in response to the passage from Ephesians 4:1-7.

This year's World Day of Prayer will be held **in our Parish Church of Saint Michael, at 10:30 on Friday, 1 March** – all are welcome and encouraged to attend. **Refreshments will be provided afterwards.**



THE BIBLE IN A YEAR

Last year, Ascension Press ran the Catholic Bible in a Year Podcast featuring Fr Mike Schmitz and Jeff Cavins. It was the world's number 1 Religious Podcast with over 250 million downloads. It will run again throughout 2024 – and while a new podcast is released daily, you can do it at your own pace by signing up at the website shown here, and it's not too late to catch up or just work through at your own pace. It is a great resource for personal formation for anyone in our parish! <https://ascensionpress.com/pages/biy-registration>

DIOCESAN YOUTH MINISTRY LEADER – CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

Suitably experienced and qualified persons are encouraged to apply for the role of Youth Ministry Leader in the Diocese of Wollongong. Applications close on Thursday, 29 February 2024. For more information and a detailed role description, please go to: <https://dow.org.au/position-vacant-diocesan-youth-ministry-leader/>



This year, Project Compassion brings you the stories of three resilient women from three different corners of the world. They are facing vastly different challenges, but are all united by one dream: to create a better tomorrow *for all future generations*.

Meet **Ronita** from the Philippines. Ronita is a mother of two young boys living in a slum in Quezon City. She went back to school to finish her education so that she could earn income to support her children.

Meet **Leaia** from Samoa. Not having access to a reliable source of clean water was very difficult for Leaia and her family. But, with the support of Caritas Australia, a water tank was installed at their home, improving their health and living conditions.

Meet **Memory** from Malawi. Memory, the eldest daughter from a rural Malawian family, trained to become a carpenter and is now a trailblazer for future generations of women in her village.

Throughout Project Compassion, you will get to know the stories of Ronita, Leaia and Memory. Journey with them as they forge a path to a brighter future for all generations.

Please donate to Project Compassion.

You can donate through [Project Compassion donation boxes and envelopes](#) available from your parish, by visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion or by calling 1800 024 413.

Scan this with your phone to donate to Project Compassion

THIS WEEK'S STORY

22-year-old **Ronita** lives with her husband and two children in a barangay (local district) in Quezon City, which is situated in Metro Manila in the Philippines.

Ronita left school when she became pregnant as a teenager. This could have had a life-long impact on her ability to find work and provide for her family.

Thankfully, Ronita was given a second chance at completing her studies when she heard about the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ), Caritas Australia's local partners in the Philippines. Through the FCJ's Alternative Learning System (ALS) program, Ronita was able to re-enrol in her studies, and continue learning in a safe and flexible environment – even with the arrival of her second child, Egzy Grey.

After completing her ALS classes, Ronita went on to earn her Grade 12 Senior High School Diploma. With her new diploma, Ronita has now secured a job at a call centre which she hopes will allow her to support her family.

With the support of the FCJ, Ronita has overcome tremendous obstacles to enjoy better employment prospects and a brighter future for her whole family.

"I have now graduated senior school and I am so proud of myself," she said, "I feel hopeful for the future...Now it's not impossible for me to achieve my dream...Thank you."

Pope at Ash Wednesday Mass: Jesus calls us to return to our heart this Lent

At the beginning of Lent, Jesus invites each one of us to "go into our inner room," Pope Francis said in his homily for Mass on Ash Wednesday. "Going into your inner room means returning to the heart... going from without to within, so that our whole life, including our relationship with God," reflects the reality of our inner being. The Pope said that Lent offers us the opportunity to "go back" to our authentic selves, removing all the masks and illusions that we too often wear. This, he said, is why "in a spirit of prayer and humility, we receive ashes on our head"—the ashes remind us we are dust, but dust that is loved and preserved by God: "The ashes placed on our head invite us to rediscover the secret of life" and allow us to feel ourselves to be loved by God "with an eternal love."

The Pope went on to explain that the recognition that we are loved by God will in turn help us to see that we are called to love others in turn. The traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, he said, "are not mere external practices," but "paths that lead to the heart, to the core of our Christian life."

Pope Francis invited everyone to listen to the voice of the Lord calling us to "go into your inner room," to "return to your heart. Too often we find ourselves no longer having an inner room," especially in a world where everything has become "social." But it is precisely in the secret chamber within each one of us "that the Lord has descended in order to heal and cleanse you. Let us enter into our inner chamber. There the Lord dwells, there our frailty is accepted, and we are loved unconditionally."

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	19 Feb	Monday of the 1 st Week of Lent	Leviticus 19:1-2,11-18	Matthew 25:31-46
Tuesday	20 Feb	Tuesday of the 1 st Week of Lent	Isaiah 55:10-11	Matthew 6:7-15
Wednesday	21 Feb	Wednesday of the 1 st Week of Lent	Jonah 3:1-10	Luke 11:29-32
Thursday	22 Feb	The Chair of Saint Peter, apostle	1 Peter 5:1-4	Matthew 16:13-19
Friday	23 Feb	Friday of the 1 st Week of Lent	Ezekiel 18:21-28	Matthew 5:20-26
Saturday	24 Feb	Saturday of the 1 st Week of Lent	Deuteronomy 26:1-19	Matthew 5:43-48
Sunday	25 Feb	SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		



FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Friday, 23 February	09:30	Mass for Opening of School Year
✦ Thursday, 29 February	19:15	Baptism Preparation Meeting for Easter and April Baptisms
✦ Friday, 1 March	09:30	Anointing of the Sick during Mass
	10:30	WORLD DAY OF PRAYER at St Michael Church, Thirroul
✦ Saturday, 9 March	18:30	Dinner at Club Thirroul after the 17:30 Mass
✦ Weekend, 9/10 March		Blessing of March Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays
✦ Tuesday, 19 March	19:30	Reconciliation Rite II for Lent
✦ Tuesday, 26 March	19:00	Chrism Mass at the Cathedral
✦ Thursday, 28 March	19:30	Holy Thursday – Mass of the Lord’s Supper
✦ Friday, 29 March	10:30	Good Friday – Way of the Cross
	15:00	Good Friday – Liturgy of the Passion
✦ Saturday, 30 March	19:00	Easter Vigil
✦ Sunday, 31 March	08:00	Easter Sunday – Mass of the Resurrection

“RETURN TO GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART” – POPE FRANCIS

The Pope concluded his homily on Ash Wednesday with the appeal, “Let us return to God with all our heart!” He encouraged the faithful during Lent to make time for silent adoration, for time to hear the voice of the Lord in our lives, and to not be afraid “to strip ourselves of worldly trappings and to return to the heart, to what is essential.” Finally, Pope Francis said, “Let us acknowledge what we are: dust loved by God – and that, thanks to God, we will be reborn from the ashes of sin to new life in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit.”

RESTORE PALLIATIVE CARE FUNDING

In the last NSW State budget, \$150 million was slashed from palliative care, having a direct effect on how people die in NSW. It flies in the face of guarantees made at the time of the passing of new laws for Euthanasia, ensuring that everyone in NSW would have true choice as to how they died. No one should be pushed into euthanasia because of funding issues. People of faith need to urgently stand up for the sanctity of human life by objecting to these cuts. Please urgently sign this petition and invite friends and family to do the same: <https://bit.ly/restorethefunding>

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

THIS Sunday’s Readings – on website

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT ♦ YEAR B	
1 st Reading	Genesis 9:8-15
2 nd Reading	1 Peter 3:18-22
Gospel	Mark 1:12-15

NEXT Sunday’s Readings – on website

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT ♦ YEAR B	
1 st Reading	Genesis 22:1-2,9-13,15-18
2 nd Reading	Romans 8:31-34
Gospel	Mark 9:2-10

SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday	17:30
Sunday	08:00
☞ Saturday Mass is 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

www.thirroulcatholic.org.au

325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive

PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515

4268 1910 4268 1976

thirroul@dow.org.au

Parish School of St Michael

4267 2560

USUAL WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday	_____
Tuesday	17:30
Wednesday	09:00
Thursday	09:00
Friday	09:30
<i>Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday</i>	