



**Welcome to  
the Parish of  
Saint Michael  
Thirroul**



**PARISH BULLETIN**  
**16 / 17 MARCH 2024**  
**FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT + YEAR B**  
**PRAYER - FASTING - ALMS GIVING**

**THIS WEEK'S READINGS**

*Coming to Pieces*

A tiny grain plants itself deep within the soil. It is tucked into complete darkness. It is fearless, comforted by the tough, safe shell that is its home. It belongs there, and knows it. In quiet. In growth. Home.

The growing seed's former peace is replaced by shock. Its earlier great protector is now opposing it, holding it back. Crushing it. Then, suddenly, as if planned from all eternity, the protecting shell cracks right open, letting in the outside. "Wait, wait, I need you," shouts the seed.

Nothing doing. The shelter is going to pieces! Moisture trickles in, and bits of dank, cold soil. Anything and everything can now wriggle right into the heart of what was a quiet, pure place.

The seed goes crazy.

But it copes somehow, wildly extending a new, thin arm outward, then slithering out its whole self. "Steady by jerks," it says, through the cracks in its shell. It had to get out of there, so it dares its way into the rough, cold mud. How foolish and how shaming. Stay where safety is, you fool!

But the transforming tiny self seems to take on a new life. Is this its new home now? Buried in the slippery soil? Ok, it moves with caution.

Too much is in its path, including a huge, unyielding rock. A jagged, rough, uncaring rock, heedless of tiny green shoots.

And so, the story ends.

But not yet. The former seed appears to have will power. It is seeking something—urging itself toward some pressing objective, rooting its way by intuition. Along the under-edge of the rock it goes, brutally, fearfully and with rending pain. After what seems like years it achieves the far under-edge of the gnarly rock and, guess what.

It starts upward again.

Now there are hard clods it has to press through, and plenty of pebbles. The higher it goes the more dry the surrounding soil. Finally, the top crust. But it too forbids penetration. It is an ultimate, intractable, stupefying barrier. And so the story ends.

Except for one voice from deep within. Push, push, it murmurs. I am with you.

Now just a thinnest lesion in the tough crust. With a certainty that might have been written on its heart, this vine-to-be squeezes through and gets to the place it was meant to be all along. In a haven of light and warmth, bathed in the sun's astonishing rays. It is now a plant and it relaxes and stretches and yawns in the wafting breezes of Spring.

This is just like our own journey, isn't it? Of course, dark mud can take a chokehold on our life.

But, Jesus says, do not worry, child, trust me. "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit".

As our destination draws near, at the end of an important journey, we may well have mixed feelings. We look forward to arrival; but we may be uncertain and anxious about the outcome.

As we face the challenge of entering deeply into the climax of the Church's year of faith – the commemoration of the Saviour's Paschal Mystery – it is as if the liturgy of this last Sunday of our journey anticipates our mood and reassures us. The readings bring us some of the greatest texts of the Scriptures, texts which – as we stand among the Greek pilgrims who wanted to 'see Jesus' – help us, in the words of the gospel, to come to terms with 'the kind of death Jesus was to die'.

The horror of the Saviour's Cross is plainly stated: his 'obedience' to the Father's will, according the letter to the Hebrews, is made with 'prayer and entreaty, with loud cries and tears'. And John's gospel tells us, 'his soul was troubled', as his fateful 'hour' approached – in which he was to give all, like 'a wheat grain' which 'falls on the ground and dies'.

If he invites us to share this fate with him – 'wherever I am, my servant will be there too' – he also helps us to trust in his Father, as we face the ordeals of our personal lives. His prayer is 'heard', and through the sufferings which have been a sharing in the destructiveness and darkness of our world, he enters into a new and final existence. In the words of the letter to the Hebrews, he is 'made perfect'; as John's gospel puts it, he is 'glorified'. This is a 



✠✠ powerful statement in biblical language – God’s ‘glory’ is the incomparable divine greatness. Having ‘emptied himself’ to become one with us, the manhood he shares with us is now filled with divine greatness – and the grain which falls to the ground ‘yields a rich harvest’, transforming the whole of creation.

The outcome is certain, therefore, and beyond all humanity’s imagining. It is the inauguration of the ‘new covenant written in our hearts’, foretold by Jeremiah, and sealed with the Saviour’s blood. The Crucified One will become ‘a source of eternal salvation’ for all who become his followers (Hebrews). Having been ‘lifted up from the earth’, he will ‘draw all people to himself’, that they may share in his new existence (John).

The Church’s liturgy prepares us well for what lies at the end of our journey. May it prove a faith-filled meeting with the generosity of our God, for each one of us.

Our period of preparation for Easter is fast drawing to a close. We are soon to enter Holy Week in which we contemplate Jesus, his arms outstretched on the cross, embracing our world. There is much darkness and pain in our world. The Church invites us to be disciples of Jesus and embrace the world with him, for it is only the love of God which we see revealed in Jesus that has the power to transform our suffering. Jesus shares it with us and takes us through it to the joy of his resurrection.

There is a lot of suffering in our lives and too much of it in the world around us – physical suffering, suffering of the heart and suffering of the mind. When suffering comes upon us it is often accompanied by bewilderment. None of us finds it easy to cope. If we fail to find any meaning at all in it we can be tempted to despair. So, the question is: Does our experience of Jesus help give some meaning to suffering that can enable us to bear it, and perhaps be of some help to others in their pain and confusion?

Jesus certainly suffered. His physical sufferings are familiar to us all, including the terrible suffering of crucifixion. We can imagine how much he suffered in his heart. People failed to believe him when he revealed to them a God of love. He was rejected. He was also betrayed, denied and abandoned even by those in the inner circle of his chosen friends. We have some insight into his mental anguish when we reflect on his prayer in the agony and on the cross.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

### First Reading **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

- ✠ “I will make a new covenant, ... I will write it on their hearts.” Something new for the chosen people and for us. What kinds of things has God “written on our hearts”? Will we find the “God of Surprises” there?
- ✠ In this reading the Lord says, “ ... I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sins no more.” Are you good at forgiving? How about forgetting?

### Second Reading **Hebrews 5:7-9**

- ✠ “In the days when Christ Jesus was in the flesh, he offered prayers supplications with loud cries and tears. ...” What causes us to cry out with tears? Children dying in wars? Gun violence in schools and public gatherings like the shooting after the super bowl parade? Starving people? What might be the outcome of our tears?
- ✠ Jesus spent his life alleviating the suffering of others. Is he finished with that, or does he continue to care for suffering people today? If so, how? Are you a caretaker or are you cared for?

### Gospel **John 12:20-33**

- ✠ When Jesus thought about what was coming, he said, “I am troubled now. Yet what should I say?” What are some of the things that trouble you? On whom do you call when you are troubled?
- ✠ The Greeks told Philip, “We would like to see Jesus.” Today many people would like to “see Jesus.” Do we have any responsibility as Christian communities to help the seekers meet and know Jesus? How do we do that?

We too must respond with the witness of a life that is given in service, a life that takes upon itself the style of God—closeness, compassion and tenderness—and is given in service. It means sowing seeds of love, not with fleeting words but through concrete, simple and courageous examples, not with theoretical condemnations, but with gestures of love. Then the Lord, with his grace, makes us bear fruit, even when the soil is dry due to misunderstandings, difficulty or persecution, or claims of legalism or clerical moralism. This is barren soil.

Precisely then, in trials and in solitude, while the seed is dying, that is the moment in which life blossoms, to bear ripe fruit in due time. It is in this intertwining of death and life that we can experience the joy and true fruitfulness of love, which always, I repeat, is given in God’s style: closeness, compassion, tenderness.

– Pope Francis, Angelus for 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, Year B, 21 March 2021

## PREPARE FOR EASTER: RECONCILIATION RITE II, TUESDAY, 19 MARCH

One way to help prepare for Easter is by celebrating one of the Sacraments of Healing, that is the Sacrament of Penance – or Reconciliation. The Sacrament of Penance using Reconciliation Rite II will be celebrated in our Parish on this **Tuesday, 19 March commencing at 19:30**. All are welcome.

**PLEASE BRING IN ... ANY NON-PERISHABLE ITEMS EACH WEEK  
TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA.**

**Partnership in action**

The work of Caritas Australia is only possible with the dedication, passion and tenacity of our local partners who implement the programs. They are the heroes on the ground, working tirelessly behind-the-scenes every day to create a better future for their communities.

Caritas Australia partners with the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) to support communities living in urban slums in the Philippines. FCJ runs a number of programs that include house renovating, food processing, basic literacy skills, urban gardening, upcycling and income generating activities. They also have a clinic visited weekly by a doctor and community nurse.

Caritas Australia partners with Caritas Samoa to assist communities to have increased access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene to ensure human health and well-being by providing water tanks and sanitation facilities.

Caritas Australia partners with the Catholic Development Commission in Malawi through the A+ program. Since 2016, the A+ program has helped 7,397 families across Malawi improve their food security, access to basic water and sanitation, boost women's income generation and strengthen child protection.

**Please donate to Project Compassion.**

Together, we can help vulnerable communities face their challenges today and build a better tomorrow *for all future generations*.

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

**Scan this with your phone to donate to Project Compassion****THIRD LENTEN SERMON: I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

In his third sermon for Lent 2024, Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, the Preacher of the Papal Household, meditated on these words of Jesus from John's Gospel. Cardinal Cantalamessa explained the context of this passage about the Good Shepherd. It is the discussion with "the Jews" which takes place on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles.

We must understand how shepherds were perceived in Jesus' time, the Cardinal said. "In the beginning Israel was a people of nomadic shepherds." This society did not look upon the sheep solely as a means of income, he said. The shepherds spent day after day alone with the sheep. They built up a personal relationship with them. "This explains why," Cardinal Cantalamessa added, "to express his relationship with humanity, God used this image, which has now become ambiguous." Kings and priests and leaders in general were later referred to as shepherds. As these did not always tend well to their people, the image of the bad shepherd made its appearance alongside that of the good shepherd. In the book of the prophet Ezekiel, God promises to take care of his flock: "The lost I will search out, the strays I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, and the sick I will heal."

The Cardinal explained how every shepherd is also a sheep of the great shepherd. "The pastor of the Church is also a 'wounded healer,' a sick person who must help others to be healed." Cardinal Cantalamessa went on to define the "main disease" for which we need treatment: Fear. "Psychology and psychoanalysis try to heal people's fears and neuroses by analysing them and bringing them from the unconscious to the conscious," he noted. "The Gospel adds something that science cannot give." Cardinal Cantalamessa called Christ the "solvent" of all fear who has said to his disciples: "Do not be afraid, I have overcome the world." Only God can save us in this violent and mad world that we live in, he said.

The Cardinal pointed out, "Never before had it been said in the Bible that the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." This is the most consoling thing Jesus could say to his disciples, since "Jesus promised to do it and He did!" By taking our fears upon himself, Cardinal Cantalamessa said, "Jesus also redeemed our fears and anxieties. 'By His wounds, we were healed,' the Scripture says of him." And added the Cardinal, "He didn't just give us the example of how to overcome anguish; he gave us the means to overcome it: his presence and his grace."

Cardinal Cantalamessa spoke finally of the martyrs who have made this belief a tangible experience. They welcomed martyrdom without fear and trusting that Jesus was with them. Although it may not always be within our power to free ourselves of fear and anguish, the Cardinal said, it may be in our power to free someone else. "Whether pastors or simple believers, we must be wounded healers, who, nevertheless, can heal others."

# SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

<b>Monday</b>	<b>18 Mar</b>	<b>Saint Patrick</b> , bishop	Jeremiah 1:4-9	Acts 13:46-49	Luke 10:1-12,17-20
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>19 Mar</b>	<b>Saint Joseph</b>	2 Samuel 7:4-5,12-14,16	Romans 4:13,16-18,22	Matthew 1:16,18-21,24
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>20 Mar</b>	<b>Wednesday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent</b>		Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95	John 8:31-42
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>21 Mar</b>	<b>Thursday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent</b>		Genesis 17:3-9	John 8:51-59
<b>Friday</b>	<b>22 Mar</b>	<b>Friday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent</b>		Jeremiah 20:10-13	John 10:31-42
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>23 Mar</b>	<b>Saturday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent</b>		Ezekiel 37:21-28	John 11:45-57
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>24 Mar</b>	<b>PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY • YEAR B – Scripture Readings are listed below.</b>			

## FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ <b>Monday, 18 March</b>	<b>Feast of Saint Patrick (transferred from 17 March)</b>
✦ <b>Tuesday, 19 March</b>	<b>Feast of Saint Joseph</b>
	<b>19:30 Reconciliation Rite II for Lent</b>
✦ <b>Friday, 22 March</b>	<b>Palms needed for Palm Sunday by 10:00 to the church</b>
✦ <b>Tuesday, 26 March</b>	<b>19:00 Chrism Mass at the Cathedral</b>
✦ <b>Thursday, 28 March</b>	<b>19:30 Holy Thursday – Mass of the Lord’s Supper</b>
✦ <b>Friday, 29 March</b>	<b>10:30 Good Friday – Way of the Cross</b>
	<b>15:00 Good Friday – Liturgy of the Passion</b>
✦ <b>Saturday, 30 March</b>	<b>19:00 Easter Vigil</b>
✦ <b>Sunday, 31 March</b>	<b>08:00 Easter Sunday – Mass of the Resurrection with Baptism</b>



## AUTUMNAL EQUINOX 2024: 14:06, WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH

An **Equinox** is an astronomical event that happens twice each year, once in spring and once in autumn, when the tilt of the Earth’s axis is inclined neither away from nor towards the Sun. During Equinoxes the tilt of the Earth (with respect to the Sun) is 0° and because of this, the duration of the day and the night are almost equal on Equinox day, i.e. ~12 hours. Sunrise next Wednesday, 20 March, at Thirroul, will be at ~06:59 and sunset at ~19:07.

## PALMS NEEDED FOR PALM SUNDAY – BY FRIDAY, 22 MARCH

To decorate the church for Palm Sunday, plenty of large palm branches are needed. Please drop them to the church, or on the lawn outside the sacristy door **by 10:00, Friday, 22 March the latest**. Thank you for your help.

## ROSEMARY NEEDED FOR GOOD FRIDAY – BY THURSDAY, 28 MARCH

On Good Friday, 29 March, during both the Way of the Cross (10:30) and the Liturgy of the Passion (15:00) small strips of rosemary are given to everyone. Please cut the rosemary into strips of about 10cm long and drop them into the church on **Holy Thursday morning, 28 March**. On ANZAC Day, 25 April, rosemary will be given to all who attend the special 08:30 Mass. Rosemary is an ancient symbol of fidelity and remembrance. The aromatic herb grows wild on the Gallipoli peninsula in Türkiye, where the original Anzacs served in World War I. Australians traditionally wear sprigs of rosemary as a symbol of remembrance on Anzac Day or Remembrance Day.

## SMALL PLASTIC BOTTLES NEEDED FOR EASTER – BY NEXT WEEKEND

During the **Easter Vigil, Saturday, 30 March**, Easter Holy Water is blessed and given to everyone to take home to bless their homes and cars. Small plastic bottles (with lids) are needed to ensure everyone can take home a bottle. Please bring along (clean) small plastic bottles **by next weekend**, so they can be filled before Easter. Thank you!

### THIS Sunday’s Readings – on website

<b>FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR B</b>	
<b>1st Reading</b>	Jeremiah 31:31-34
<b>2nd Reading</b>	Hebrews 5:7-9
<b>Gospel</b>	John 12:20-33

### NEXT Sunday’s Readings – on website

<b>PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY • YEAR B</b>	
<b>1st Reading</b>	Isaiah 50:4-7
<b>2nd Reading</b>	Philippians 2:6-11
<b>Gospel</b>	Mark 14:1–15:47

### SUNDAY

#### MASS TIMES

<b>Saturday</b>	<b>17:30</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>08:00</b>
☞ 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](http://www.thirroulcatholic.org.au)

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Parish School of St Michael

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### USUAL WEEKDAY MASSES

<b>Monday</b>	_____
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>17:30</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>09:00</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>09:00</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>09:30</b>

*Anointing of the Sick 1<sup>st</sup> Friday*