



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
24/25 AUGUST 2024
21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + YEAR B
SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Distressing Words

For the last several weeks Jesus has been using his words to distress the disciples.

That's right.

Last week he said that if they want eternal life they have to eat his flesh and drink his blood! His followers could not possibly have understood this. They muttered. "This saying is hard; who can accept it?"

And they left.

This Sunday he makes it even harder. Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about his words, he said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. ... Because of this many of his disciples turned back, and no longer went about with him."

A sad scene, and puzzling too. Why is Jesus saying such things to his followers, and how is anyone supposed to understand it?

The following unwritten guideline might help in reading the Gospel of John, from which our Sunday reading is taken. There, whenever an event or saying does not seem to make complete sense, we can understand that it is masking deeper meanings. In other words, often a delicious significance is hidden behind events that are described in a bewildering way.

If this can be our axiom, let us try to apply it to a saying from this week's Gospel: Jesus was ... ascending to where he was before. Ok, where was he "before"?

He was in the bosom of the Holy Trinity. God's love leaned out to us in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. He "descended" to us.

But he will have to "go back to the next life," because he was a human being, even though he was God. He is telling them this: if body and blood shock you, wait till you see me ascend into heaven!

And what about the words, "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless."

In the readings from the past few weeks, we have seen that Jesus' ascension would never be a desertion of us but would be his presence on earth in a new form. The third person of the Trinity was going to dwell within any people who believe.

The third person will dwell in us?

If so, where will our beloved Jesus be? Well, since the members of the Trinity are at one in everything, then they are completely present within each other. So, Christ is within the Holy Spirit. That Spirit offers to live deep within each believer, within each person who says yes to its presence. The same thing can be said for the Father.

Fine, but how do we acquire this Holy Spirit? Definitely through Baptism. And, of course—as in Jesus' command from last week—through eating and drinking his body and blood. Communion makes us "become what we have eaten," the body of Christ. We are to let Christ have flesh again, in our hearts and in our actions.

The Spirit is to be the soul within the Body of Christ, and we are to be the body.

When we are part of the "Body of Christ," we therefore have eternal life, as he told his followers. Peter sums it up. "We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Celebrating the Eucharist together this Sunday will be meant to give us the power to live the Body of Christ into the world.

Today's first reading from Joshua reminds us of the Old Testament framework that has provided the background for the meditation in John's gospel on the Eucharistic mystery. Joshua assembles 'all the tribes of Israel'. Their long journey to the Promised Land has united them; but as they now begin life in their new land they must declare their loyalty to the Lord, who has cared for them despite their constant rebellion and complaints.

Some among 'the followers of Jesus' find the faith he is offering them 'intolerable'. Aware of their 'complaining', he is again insistent, telling them that their faith will be asked to accept far more than this – when his Paschal Mystery is realised (cf. John 1:50, to Nathanael): 'It is the Spirit that gives life', he tells them, recalling his words to Nicodemus, when he told



To Know and Believe

John 6:60-69



✠✠ him that we must be ‘born from above, from the Spirit’ if we are to find faith in him: ‘No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man’ (cf. John 3: 13).

The violent language and the dramatic and tragic outcome of this exchange – ‘many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more’ – make it clear to us that this meditation is a response to disputes which are threatening to divide the community which gave us this gospel.

We know from the other gospels that Peter speaks in the name of the disciples of Jesus, in confessing that Jesus is the messiah through whom Israel’s hopes will be fulfilled. The hesitation of the waverers is countered finally by Peter’s confession. His words have sustained the Church in its Eucharistic life down through the centuries: “Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life; you are the Holy One of God”.

The Eucharist is the sacrament that makes present and active in our midst the Saviour’s Paschal Mystery. In the passage with which we conclude our readings from the letter to the Ephesians we see how central our sacramental sharing in the Paschal Mystery was for the communities cared for by St Paul. (The structure of the family in contemporary society is taken for granted in this exhortation – something which should not distract us from the deep truths expressed in this text.) The Ephesians are urged to live their family life inspired by the unselfish example of Christ. In the ‘mystery’ realised in Christ’s death and resurrection, the Lord has united believers to himself in a union so intimate and personal that it may be compared to the marital union – through this union the Saviour and his Church become ‘one body’. He is a loving Bridegroom who cares for his Bride, especially through the great sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist: he ‘washes her with a form of words’; and he ‘feeds’ the Church and sustains it.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b

✠ Both the first reading and the Gospel are concerned with choice. Are the messes in which we find ourselves usually the result of wrong choices? If God created us to automatically do the right thing all the time, like robots, what could we not do? Would we ever be able to choose to love God? Why do you think God gave us free will?

✠ Do you have more invested in a choice you made, or in a choice someone else made for you? What are the implications for your family, church, job, and community?

Second Reading Ephesians 5:21-32

✠ Compare and contrast the bride with a difficult childbirth and the church with the birth of new ideas. An example of the latter would be some of the family problems addressed in the meetings of the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

✠ Paul compares husband and wife with Christ and the Church. What is his point?

Gospel John 6:60-69

✠ Jesus asks, “Do you also want to leave?” If you were there at the time would you be one of the many disciples who returned to his/her former way of life or one that stayed with Jesus? Is there any middle ground here?

✠ “As a result of this many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.” What does Pope Francis say was the obstacle or the reason some people left Jesus?

Jesus’ words enkindled great scandal: he was saying that God decided to manifest himself and accomplish salvation in the weakness of human flesh. It is the mystery of the incarnation. The incarnation of God is what provoked scandal and presented an obstacle for those people—but often for us too. Indeed, Jesus affirms that the true bread of salvation, which transmits eternal life, is his very flesh; that to enter into communion with God, before observing the laws or satisfying religious precepts, it is necessary to live out a real and concrete relationship with him. Because salvation came from him, in his incarnation.

This means that one must not pursue God in dreams and in images of grandeur and power, but must recognize him in the humanity of Jesus and, as a consequence, in that of the brothers and sisters we meet on the path of life. God made himself flesh.

... God made himself flesh and blood; he lowered himself to the point of becoming a man like us. He humbled himself to the extent of burdening himself with our sufferings and sin, and therefore he asks us to seek him not outside of life and history, but in relationship with Christ and with our brothers and sisters. Seeking him in life, in history, in our daily life. And this, brothers and sisters, is the road to the encounter with God: the relationship with Christ and our brothers and sisters.

– Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 21st Sunday Ordinary Time B, 22 August 2021

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME OPEN DAY – 31 AUGUST

The University of Notre Dame Australia Open Day Saturday, 31 August, 10:00–15:00. Join us to discover what Notre Dame has to offer! Explore Sydney Campus, meet students, academic staff and graduates. Contact: 8204 4404 or sydney@nd.edu.au Register: <https://www.notredame.edu.au/>

CATHOLICARE WOLLONGONG

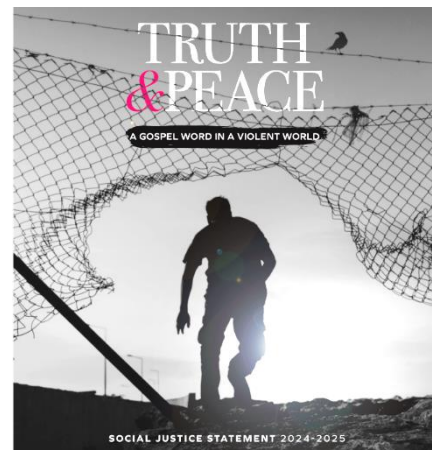
At CatholicCare Wollongong we focus on client needs, offering families, children and individuals opportunities for growth, healing, resilience and hope. Our services and programs: <https://www.catholiccare.dow.org.au/> 4227 1122

SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 2024

Social Justice Sunday observance by the Catholic Church in Australia has a long tradition. Since 1940, Catholic bishops have teamed up practically every year to issue major social justice pronouncements. The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) was created in 1987 by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), as the Catholic Church's national justice, peace, and human rights institution. The Bishops' Commission for Justice and Development holds the ACSJC accountable to the ACBC.

The ACSJC's activities are divided into three categories: diocesan awareness and networking, education and formation, research, advocacy, and public policy. The Social Justice Statement's media rollout calls on the entire Catholic Church to act with greater urgency and to be guided by *Laudato Si's* integrated social and ecological vision. On this day, dedicated individuals, religious institutes, schools, and organizations that have long worked on environmental issues are affirmed, praised, and utilized as a model for the Catholic community to follow.

The Australian Catholic Church's commitment to inspiring engagement and effective responses among the Catholic community is exemplified through the Social Justice Statement. The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council works with and supports a nationwide network of contacts appointed by each diocese, as well as keeping in touch with the Holy See's Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. The Office for Justice, Ecology, and Peace's responsibilities include implementing initiatives and programs on behalf of the Bishops, assisting the Bishops in their advocacy on social justice issues, raising awareness of issues, and collaborating with others working to promote social, economic, and ecological justice.



TRUTH AND PEACE: A GOSPEL WORD IN A VIOLENT WORLD

In 1963, the world was on the brink of nuclear war. It was at that time that Pope St John XXIII issued his ground breaking encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). It was a heart-felt plea to the Church and all people of goodwill for an end to war and for the banning of nuclear weapons. He promoted a peace which is grounded in the inalienable and inviolable dignity of every person. His successors have echoed the same impassioned plea.

In the 2024–2025 Social Justice Statement, “Truth and Peace: A Gospel Word in a Violent World”, Australia’s bishops scrutinise the signs of our own troubled times, observe the violence around us, and ask why it is so. They also ask what is needed if there is to be peace.

In a world full of pessimism, they put their faith and hope in the possibility of peace.

Using Scripture and the guidance of Pope St John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* and Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti*, we learn that peace is possible if we put our trust in Christ who is the way, the truth and the life and the Prince of Peace. It is from him that we learn about the architecture of peace. From him, we learn a commitment to the culture of encounter, the value of dialogue at all levels and the importance of seeing everyone as our sister, our brother.

The statement also provides some suggested actions to help us to build on our commitment to be peacemakers locally and internationally.

In 1945, the dropping of nuclear weapons on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki introduced the world to a frightening new chapter in the history of human conflict. Imagine thousands of people vaporised in an instant and thousands more condemned to the agonising death caused by the immense power of radiation. Imagine a thriving city turned into a virtual wasteland in the blink of an eye.

While nuclear weapons have not been used since then, violence and conflict continue to plague our world in this new century. As this year's Social Justice Statement points out, there are over fifty State-based conflicts and over eighty non-State conflicts raging across the globe at present. We know all too well about some of these brutal conflicts such as the war in Israel and Palestine and the war between Ukraine and Russia, but there are many more that are not so well-known – Sudan, Myanmar, West Papua to mention just a few. Yet, whether we know about these conflicts or not, the consequences for our fellow human beings are just as devastating, just as lethal, for little children, for their mothers and fathers and for their grandparents. In every century up to the present, grief and loss are the constant companions of those caught up in the senselessness of war.

Is it any wonder that Pope Francis recently said that our world is “on the abyss”? But, despite all these seemingly endless horrors, our statement is not one of resignation and pessimism. We cling to the hope that springs from the God who is love, the God who loved each and every one of us into being and bestowed on us a dignity that no-one can take away. In the face of the many lies and false promises of the tyrants, this truth, the truth that we are loved by God and are born to live in peace and to flourish continues to fill the dreams of every Christian woman and man. Every person of goodwill shares this dream too. While we may stand on the abyss, we can turn back if we are prepared to take the risk of challenging the lies of the merchants of war, and to embrace with passion and commitment what has always brought peace and joy to every human heart.

The Bishops' Social Justice Statement is attached to the electronic version of the Bulletin and can be downloaded for free at: <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2023/08/22/social-justice-statement-2023-24/>

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	26 Aug	Monday, Ordinary Time Week 21	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12	Matthew 23:13-22
Tuesday	27 Aug	St Monica, mother of St Augustine	2 Thessalonians 2:1-17	Matthew 23:23-26
Wednesday	28 Aug	St Augustine, bishop, doctor	2 Thessalonians 2:1-17	Matthew 23:27-32
Thursday	29 Aug	The Passion of St John the Baptist	Jeremiah 1:17-19	Matthew 6:17-29
Friday	30 Aug	Friday, Ordinary Time Week 21	1 Corinthians 1:17-25	Matthew 25:1-13
Friday	31 Aug	Saturday, Ordinary Time Week 21	1 Corinthians 1:26-31	Matthew 25:14-30
Sunday	1 Sep	21 ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Weekend, 31 Aug / 1 Sep Blessing of Fathers for Father's Day at both Masses
- ✦ Sunday, 1 September World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation
- ✦ 1 September to 4 October The Season of Creation – "To Hope and Act with Creation"
- ✦ 1 to 11 September Ken travels to Brisbane for the Canon Law Conference
Andrew will look after the parish
- ✦ Friday, 5 September 09:30 Anointing of the Sick during Mass
- ✦ Tuesday, 10 September Closing Date for Enrolments for First Penance and Communion
- ✦ Thursday, 12 September 10:00 Diocesan Launch of Catholic Mission Month @ Thirroul

CROSS + GENERATION TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

This program is a partnership between CatholicCare, Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong and Holy Spirit College (Bellambi). The program pairs students with seniors to assist you with technology. Bring in your device, either your phone, laptop or tablet and the students will assist you with becoming more confident and familiar with downloading apps, sending messages, using google maps or other help you may need. *Refreshments will be provided at each session.* Holy Spirit College, Bellambi: 09:30–11:00 on these Thursdays ... 24 October; 7 November; 21 November; and 5 December. Please join us in this unique opportunity to connect with seniors, and students for some information sharing in a fun relaxed setting here at the high school. Places will fill quickly, so please contact Jane Hollier Parish and Community Officer CatholicCare on ☎ 0417 018 152 or janeh@catholiccare.dow.org.au

RECIPE: BANANA CAKE – Raymond, Your Weekend Chef

70g butter; 1 cup brown sugar; 1 egg, beaten; 3 ripe bananas, mashed; 1½ cups self-raising flour; 1 cup sultanas; 2 tbsp milk.

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C. Grease and line base of a loaf tin (22cm x 12cm). Cream butter and sugar together, add egg, then the bananas one at a time. Add flour, sultanas and milk. Stir to combine. Pour into prepared loaf tin and bake in oven for 45 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre of the cake comes out clean. Cook in tin and then slice to serve.

Do you have a favourite winter recipe? Email it to the Parish Office.

**PLEASE BRING IN ... ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK
TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY**

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR B
 1st Reading Joshua 24:1-2,15-18
 2nd Reading Ephesians 5:21-32
 Gospel John 6:60-69

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

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR B
 1st Reading Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8
 2nd Reading James 1:17-18,21-22,27
 Gospel Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

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SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday 📺 17:30
 Sunday 08:00
 📺 Saturday Mass is recorded.

THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES

Monday _____
 Tuesday 📺 17:30
 Wednesday 09:00
 Thursday 09:00
 Friday 09:30
Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday