



# Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



**PARISH BULLETIN**  
**1 / 2 MARCH 2025**  
**8<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME · YEAR C**  
**PREPARING FOR LENT**

## THIS WEEK'S READINGS

*Seeing*

A person followed a blind person, in the literal dark. Neither of them fell into a pit. So, was Jesus wrong? The blind person had lost his sight before his tenth birthday, but as an adult he became a marvellous spiritual director. On a retreat he and another person went on a walk. It was after dark, quite so, and the sighted person was as good as blind when they got far enough from the house, with no neighbourhood around them. So, the blind following the blind.

As they went, the blind person upped the ante. He said, “do you want to go on a trust walk?”

Blindly (pun intended) the sighted person said, why, of course.

First, the blind man had me do the famous “fall backwards” that some will have done, where the sighted person was to release control and tumble back into the arms of, in this case, the blind man. The only problem was that he could not see, and it was also too dark for the sighted person to make anything out.

The sighted person willed to fall back, and the blind man caught him, and both were happy. The sighted person marvelled at the blind man’s conquering of his malady. All was good.

Except ...

... except that there was a “next step.” Quietly the blind man announced that he, a person supposedly unable to find his way, would lead the way. With the sighted person’s hand on his shoulder and a scarf around his eyes—to make certain that he would not cheat—the two went forth. Could they avoid a pit?

Both avoided it. It was indeed a walk of trust. Even though the sighted person anticipated that anything whatsoever could happen, it did not. He was relieved. The blind man was so used to guiding people spiritually that was possibly not an act of trust on his part. For him, it did not mean walking blindly into the unknown, it meant going ahead with increasing confidence that we are accompanied by God, no matter what might come around the next dark bend in the road.

What was the sighted person supposed to learn? To trust recklessly with only sightless guidance?

Well, maybe the point was that sightlessness is the only way to really see.

Jesus says in our Gospel that we have “wooden logs” in our eyes when we relate to others. Maybe we must close our eyes for a while in order to see around these. We should stop projecting on others our own blockages, and work on the much larger wooden logs in our own psyche instead. This seems to me a quite sound psychological insight.

Notice, this understanding does not imply that we should entirely give up relating to another person. Jesus is just saying that we need to clarify our own vision in order to help someone else. None of us will have perfect “vision,” but we should seek continually to clarify what we do see.

That night, the sighted person did not have anything like perfect vision. But the steady, blind guidance that the blind man gave him was an act of seeing unlike other times. As we begin Lent this coming week, can we all close our eyes for a while and be guided.

In the gospel reading, Jesus says that every tree is known by its fruit. You can tell the difference between the good and the rotten trees by their fruits, he says; but he is really talking about us. But what are the good fruits that you have to bring forth to count as a good tree?

You have mildness when you put up with a neighbour who is troublesome.

They are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Every person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells has the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Scripture lists nine fruits (see Galatians 5:22-23). Here is that list: **Love; Joy; Peace; Patience; Kindness; Goodness; Faithfulness; Gentleness; and Self-Control.**

The first four fruits that have to do with your relation to the Lord. When you are a good tree, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling in you. With the indwelling Holy Spirit, you are your beloved Lord’s, and the Spirit is yours in love and joy and peace. In that loving relationship, you can bear better – have patience with – the troubles of this life.

The next four fruits have to do with your attitude towards your neighbour. When you are inclined to wish the good for your neighbour, you have goodness; and when you are inclined actually to help your neighbour in good ways, you have kindness. You have gentleness when you put up with a neighbour who is troublesome, and you have faithfulness when you are inclined to forego getting revenge on your neighbour who has been unjust to you.

Finally, the last fruit has to do with your attitude about yourself. You have self-control when you are inclined to be content even if you are not the centre of everyone’s attention, when you are inclined to discipline yourself with regard to morally acceptable things, and when you manage to get your exercise in because you got yourself to turn the ↻ ↻



✠✠ TV off, and to discipline yourself about those things that tempt you but that are not morally acceptable. If you have all these good fruits of the Spirit, it will be easy to recognize you as the good tree that you are!

Once more, to appreciate what Luke intends to convey in today's gospel reading, we must hear it as a continuation of the passage we have reflected upon the last two Sundays. The parables of Jesus recalled in this reading are so familiar that they have become proverbial: the blind leading the blind; the speck in the brother's eye; a tree known by its fruits. Luke wants us to recognise that – as part of the teaching of Jesus – these parables are far more than the expression of homely truths. They certainly do express truths that are applicable to every human situation – continuing the wisdom tradition of old Israel, so wonderfully expressed in the reading from the book of Sirach. But the Good News of the Kingdom brought by Jesus (expressed in the teaching to the disciples we have already reflected upon) brings a truth far greater than has ever been expressed before. It is the promise of a new kind of existence, to be found by identifying with the ways of the living God – after the example of the One who is the revelation of the Father.

Luke invites us to find this deeper meaning that these parables had for Jesus. In the light of Jesus' teaching concerning true happiness this deeper meaning is not difficult to grasp. The 'blindness' Jesus warns against, especially for those who are leaders and guides in the community of disciples, is the blindness of those who assume the role of leadership although they have not owned the Saviour as the Light of the world and committed themselves to the new order he has inaugurated with his Law of Love. Disciples who have not made this conversion will see living according to their old ways – placing selfish limits on their practical love for their neighbour – as no more than a tiny 'speck' obscuring their vision. Such people do not recognise that presenting themselves as disciples of the Lord is kind of 'hypocrisy' – they make this clear by their readiness to point out the more obvious failings of their brothers and sisters. Genuine disciples will be known by their 'fruits': not in clever words or orations but in the witness of the quiet convictions that shape their lives – as, through the gift of Christ's Spirit, the disciple grows 'like his teacher'.

'The good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart'. Again, when related to the central message of the teaching of Jesus, these words are more than wise advice about the conduct of our lives. Jesus is speaking of the hearts of disciples – transformed by their acceptance of the ways of God after the example of Jesus, and putting no selfish limits to the love, or practical good will, they have towards their fellow human beings. The 'examination of conscience' has long been part of the practice of a dedicated Christian life. Today's gospel helps us to find the life-giving measure against which, as the Lord's disciples, we should review our lives. Those who have found the joy of true discipleship will recognise that something of the 'victory' Paul speaks of can already be ours, even in this present life.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

### First Reading Sirach 27:4-7

- ✠ Just as a tree is known by its fruits, Sirach says, so people are known by their conduct. How would you determine your vote? By what they say, or what they do? Or both?
- ✠ The furnace shows what the potter moulds. How does this relate to "tribulation is the test of the just"? Are you more likely to believe the words of people like Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, on the subject of anti-racism, over people who were not tested?

### Second Reading 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

- ✠ Georges Bernanos says in *The Diary of a Country Priest*, "Grace is everywhere." How could that statement apply to the first sentences in this reading: "When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality ..."?
- ✠ Just as grace changes the corruptible, will it also change death? How? Why does St Paul say death will lose its sting?

### Gospel Luke 6:39-45

- ✠ "Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye ... " Before we undertake correcting others' problems, what does Jesus ask us to check out in ourselves?
- ✠ Do you think these teachings of Jesus are a good start for Church leaders? "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice; blessed are the merciful." Could these help them learn to "see clearly" as leaders, discerning a right path?

With the question: can a blind man lead a blind man?" (Luke 6:39), he wishes to emphasize that a leader cannot be blind, but must see clearly. That is, he must have wisdom in order to lead wisely, otherwise he risks causing damage to the people who are entrusted to him. Jesus thus calls attention to those who have educational responsibility or who govern: spiritual pastors, public authorities, legislators, teachers, parents, exhorting them to be aware of their delicate role and to always discern the right path on which to lead people. A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). It is a call to follow his example and his teaching in order to be sound and wise leaders. And this teaching is included above all in the Sermon on the Mount — which, in the past three Sundays the liturgy has offered us in the Gospel—indicating the attitude of meekness and of mercy in order to be honest, humble and just people.

## PREPARING FOR LENT

**Mardi Gras** (*literally, in French, 'Fat Tuesday'*) or **Pancake Tuesday**, which is also known as **Shrove Tuesday**, is the day before the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday, reflecting the practice of the last night of consuming rich, fatty foods in preparation for the Christian fasting season of Lent, during which the consumption of such foods is avoided.

In our Parish, of recent years, it is the day when, after the 17:30 Tuesday Mass, the palms from last year's Palm Sunday are burned, to make the ashes which will be used on Ash Wednesday for the 'Imposition of the Ashes'.

So, **please bring in your palms from last year's Palm Sunday – drop them in to the church or Parish Office by 17:30 on Tuesday, 4 March.**

All are welcome to help with the burning of the palms after the 17:30 Mass on Tuesday, 4 March – and feel free to **bring along pancakes** to sustain you during the burning of the palms!



**Ash Wednesday** is on Wednesday, **5 March** and there are two Masses: **09:15** and **19:00**. At both Masses there will be the blessing and imposition of Ashes.

At the **09:15 Mass**, the Year 6 students from our Parish School will be present, and some of them will be commissioned to take the ashes to each class, Kindy to Year 5, and to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word with the imposition of ashes. A bowl of ashes is left in each classroom during Lent.

Ashes are a symbol of this passing world, a reminder of our death.

The imposition of ashes is also a symbol of penance and sorrow for our sins. The practice of sprinkling ashes on one's head as a sign of penance was customary even in the Old Testament—in the Book of Esther, Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes (Esther 4:1); Job sat in sackcloth and ashes to repent (Job 42:6); all of Ninevah put on sackcloth and ashes to repent after Jonah's preaching (Jonah 3:5-6). In early Christian centuries the imposition of ashes was only used for public sinners, but around the year 1000, popes and all faithful started to receive the ashes as a sincere and external token that we are all poor sinners.



**Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday** are days of **fast** and **abstinence**. All who are **18** years up to **59** years are bound to **fast**, and all who are **14 years and over** are bound to abstain from meat. Of course, anyone who is ill in any way, the laws of fasting and abstinence do not bind.

**Lent** is a penitential season of **prayer, self-denial** and **helping others**. In this way, the whole Church prepares for Easter with those who are to be baptised.

Catholics are obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, in Australia between Ash Wednesday and Trinity Sunday.

**The Season of Lent** lasts **40 days – and does not include the Sundays during Lent.**

Lent [Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday] is a time in which we either pre-prepare for, or recall our baptism. It is a time in which we are once again re-minded that we are the People of God. We are also reminded that such a great privilege carries with it its own set of responsibilities!

In this time of Lent, we come face to face with our own human weaknesses – we are sinners. In the early days of the Church, sinners were required to acknowledge their sinfulness publicly. They were made to wear sackcloth and be covered in ashes. Yes, we are all sinners but we must never lose sight of the fact that this is only part of the story. The second part is played out at Easter – Jesus has the last word on sin!

So, how do we celebrate Lent in our parish? Firstly, the décor of the church takes on a stark, simple character – no flowers, no brightly-coloured banners. We no longer sing or say the Gloria, nor any Alleluias! The Gospel Acclamation is *Glory and Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!* We display the sackcloth and ashes as a constant reminder to us of our need of God's mercy and compassion. We 'fast' from much of the beauty of the liturgy.

Secondly, the colour of the season is the purple shade of violet, symbolizing pain and suffering, and therefore, mourning and penitence. On Ash Wednesday we are blessed with the ashes as a public sign of our sinfulness. We will continue to bless ourselves during Lent in the spirit of penitence, sackcloth and ashes.

Our music and hymns will take on a more penitential mood. We will also make more use of silence as an aid to prayer. In many ways we prepare ourselves – a "spring" cleaning.

Our Diocese produces a Lenten Program – daily reflections on the Scriptures. This year, the program is called **'Metanoia'** - change in one's way of life resulting from penitence or spiritual conversion. Copies of the 'Metanoia' Lenten program are **free** and are available in the church in readiness for the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday on 5 March. While following the program on your own is a way of deepening your experience of Lent, doing so with a group is also an opportunity to get to know fellow parishioners and share your faith. There are sign-up sheets at Masses from this weekend to register your interest in joining a weekly Lenten group. Please sign up for a Lenten group: ☎ Kerrie Hennessy 0422 987 058.

**PROJECT COMPASSION BOXES OR ENVELOPES AVAILABLE TODAY**



## SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

|           |       |  | Sundays Year C • Weekdays Year I                                  |
|-----------|-------|--|---|
| Monday    | 3 Mar | Monday of Ordinary Week 8  | Sirach 17:24-29      Mark 10:17-27                                |
| Tuesday   | 4 Mar | Tuesday of Ordinary Week 8   | Sirach 35:1-12      Mark 10:28-31                                 |
| Wednesday | 5 Mar | <b>Ash Wednesday</b>   | Joel 2:12-18      2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2      Matthew 6:1-6,16-18 |
| Thursday  | 6 Mar | Thursday after Ash Wednesday   | Deuteronomy 30:15-20      Luke 9:22-25                            |
| Friday    | 7 Mar | Friday after Ash Wednesday   | Isaiah 58:1-9      Matthew 9:14-15                                |
| Saturday  | 8 Mar | Saturday after Ash Wednesday   | Isaiah 58:9-14      Luke 5:27-32                                  |
| Sunday    | 9 Mar | <b>FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR C</b> – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i> |   |

## FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

**PLEASE RETURN PALMS FROM LAST YEAR'S PALM SUNDAY BY TUESDAY, 4 MARCH**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| ✦ Tuesday, 4 March   | <b>Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) is on Tuesday, 4 March</b>                |
|                      | 17:30 burning of palms after the 17:30 Mass [ <i>bring pancakes</i> ] |
| ✦ Wednesday, 5 March | 09:15 Ash Wednesday Mass <i>with blessing and imposition of ashes</i> |
|                      | 19:00 Ash Wednesday Mass <i>with blessing and imposition of ashes</i> |
| ✦ Thursday, 6 March  | 19:15 Baptism Preparation Information for parents                     |
| ✦ Friday, 7 March    | 09:30 Anointing of the Sick during Mass                               |
| ✦ Friday, 7 March    | 11:00 Annual World Day of Prayer, St David's Church, Thirroul         |
| ✦ Saturday, 22 March | 17:30 Claudia Smith's ashes will be placed in the Columbarium         |

**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 WEEK'S RECIPE: Spinach and Ham Pastry Puffs

1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil; 1 large shallot, finely chopped; 1 clove garlic, grated; 1 tsp Italian seasoning (mixed herbs); 4 cups fresh baby spinach; 200g sliced smoked ham, chopped; 1 cup - 170g drained ricotta; ¾ cup grated mozzarella; 3 tbsp cream divided; ¼ tsp nutmeg; salt and pepper, to taste; 2x24 cm sheets frozen puff pastry, thawed; 2 eggs, 1 beaten, 1 yolk; 2-3 tbsp sesame seeds for garnish.

Preheat your oven to 200°C and line a baking tray with parchment paper. In a large frying pan over medium heat, heat olive oil. Add the shallot and garlic, herbs, and cook for about 1 minute until fragrant. Stir in the spinach and cook until wilted. Remove from the heat. In a medium bowl, mix the ham, ricotta, ½ cup grated mozzarella, 2 tbsp cream, egg, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Stir in the cooled spinach mixture. Set aside. Cut the puff pastry sheets into 4x4 squares (6cm each). This gives you 16. Spoon the filling into the centre of each square. Fold two of the edges of the pastry up pinching the corners together. Fold over the top. Place them on the lined baking tray. Brush the pastry with beaten egg yolk and 1 tbsp cream, and sprinkle sesame seeds, on top. Bake for about 20 minutes, or until the pastry is medium dark golden and crisp. Let them cool for a few minutes before serving.

If you have a favourite recipe you would be willing to share, please email it to the Parish Office.

## BE SAFE ON OUR BEACHES – SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Encourage others to learn how to “read the surf”, spotting rips and places to avoid. Enjoy our beaches.

### THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

#### 8<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR C

|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Reading | Sirach 27:4-7          |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading | 1 Corinthians 15:54-58 |
| Gospel                  | Luke 6:39-45           |

### 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

#### FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT ♦ YEAR C

|                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Reading | Deuteronomy 26:4-10 |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading | Romans 10:8-13      |
| Gospel                  | Luke 4:1-13         |

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Parish School of St Michael

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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 1<sup>st</sup> Friday*