

Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
20 / 21 SEPTEMBER 2025
25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR C
BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Be Shrewd

Question: are you shrewd? Can you get troubled circumstances to work to your advantage?

If you said yes, doesn't that mean you are un-Christian?

After all, aren't we supposed to dedicate ourselves to charity, giving always to others. Or at least that is the usual understanding of Christianity, and of Judaism too. What would shrewdness have to do with it?

Start with the first Reading. God sees that the merchants are actually agreeing to "fix their scales for cheating!" This is bad enough, but they have determined also to actually buy poor people, to purchase them and their lives for silver or even for a pair of sandals!

The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: never will [he] forget a thing they have done!

Such slavery no longer exists in most countries, for which, hurray! But aren't each of our own lives being bought off by luxury? Haven't you noticed that commerce wishes to buy you with pay TV, or a convertible, or prescription drugs, or real-estate plans, or weight reduction, beautiful teeth, slick automobiles, perfect wheel chairs, and even breath-freshening chewing gum (whose advertising portrays sexual promiscuity in order to sell their gum)?

God's reaction is very clear, and we should react similarly.

God hates it.

Yet in the Gospel, a parable portrays God's attitude quite differently. The master comes back to find that his top steward has been squandering the master's property. Naturally he plans to fire the man, and in this he agrees completely with the first Reading, that cheating should not be tolerated.

But then comes the curve ball. The servant is portrayed as shrewd. He thinks up a plan. If I am to be fired, I had better acquire some friends so I will not be homeless. Since I will remain steward until I give an account, I will go to each of my master's debtors and make a deal. Give me half of what you owe and I will count it on the books as fully paid.

The master actually commends him for this plan! He tells the servant, you have been prudent in preparing a home for yourself!

Why does he treat this dishonest servant differently than the dishonest merchants in the first Reading? The answer is in Sunday's Psalm 133, which says: Praise the Lord, who lifts up the poor!

Do you think the merchants from the first Reading were "lifting up the poor"? Weren't they buying and selling them instead, purchasing them for even "a pair of sandals"?

Well, the Gospel's steward doesn't show disdain for the poor even though he is taking care of his own future (by making friends with the poor). He gets a portion of their debts back for the master. He never buys or sells them—he makes their life a little easier by cutting their debts in half, and he courts the master's favour by cutting losses to his property.

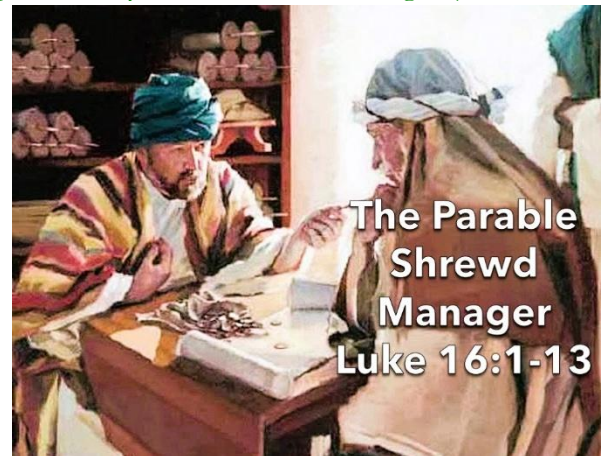
So, he was shrewd.

He did good by being so clever. The remaining servants were happy. The master was happy. The steward kept his job. Good was served rather than evil.

Maybe the actual moral for Sunday is: be clever when you do good.

All three Readings of today's liturgy point to issues of social justice. In an age in which self-interest and individualism often call the tune, we Christians must not neglect these issues. Our world is far more complex than that of Amos the prophet. Corruption has different forms these days – carefully concealed but just as sinful, because of the damage it does to the life of the community. The inequitable sharing of the world's resources, often artificially maintained, that contributes significantly to world tensions, should be a matter of concern for all Christians.

The situation described in the letter to Timothy is very different from ours – but at the same time so similar. The Christians of that community had no possibility of manipulating the levers of power in the politics of the Roman Empire. The Church should not endeavour to manipulate the political processes of today's democratic state. In both situations, however, Christians still have great responsibility, as citizens. We must make an honourable contribution to the common welfare, at whatever level we are involved. We must have no part in the corruption that can be very tempting, in the complex processes of today's social order. We must support legitimate authority; and have good will towards our fellow citizens, respecting their different points of view, and seeking to work together with them ↗ ↗



✠✠ to make a just society. Our great contribution is the Christian values we live by – the vitality of a human community comes from the values its citizens are committed to.

In today's Gospel, we meet again Luke's concern to bring home to his fellow Christians the responsibilities and dangers brought by this world's possessions. All will be well in this area of our social responsibility, if our real concerns look beyond the material things that are a necessary part of our lives. If the Church today, as St Pope John Paul II had said, renounces any desire 'to be a participant or competitor in the game of politics', it is called to contribute to the wellbeing of the human community by the witness and example it gives. Our lives, and the quality of our relationships as a Christian community, should demonstrate to our troubled world that living according to the ways Christ has given us is not a bondage, but a fulfilment.

The parable of the unjust steward is puzzling. Scholars are not agreed whether the 'astuteness' praised by his master was his making fraudulent changes to his debtors' promissory notes, or his forgoing claims for the commission customary in such transactions. In either case the lesson is clear: those dedicated to worldly pursuits are often more wholehearted in their projects than believers are in promoting the things of God. We certainly have a long way to go, if the effective witness held up to us by John Paul II as a goal is to become a reality.

A key question to ask in relation to public policy is what policies are more conducive to the welfare of all citizens, especially those who are most disadvantaged. St Paul VI in his encyclical on the *Progression of Peoples*, 1967, n.14, states: "Development is not to be reduced simply to economic growth. For development to be authentic it must be integral, that is to say, it must have regard to the promotion of each and every person, and of the whole person."

Today's readings provide food for thought and prayer as we examine our collective conscience. Social life is very complex. We cannot be single-issue voters, but we are asked as Christians to examine which of the various sets of policies is more conducive to the task of government which is to work for the common good, and especially to care for the most disadvantaged. This is also why Paul, in today's second Reading, asks us to pray for our political leaders. The policies they espouse and the honesty with which they organise public life to carry out these policies has a critical effect on the level of justice in society and people's wellbeing. Paul asserts that 'God wants everyone to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the truth'. We are not expecting our political parties to espouse the beatitudes of Jesus (though it would be good if they did), but we are asking them to be committed to the truth and to fulfil their primary responsibility, which is to help create a social environment in which everyone can have the opportunity to reach his or her full potential as a creative human being graced by a loving God. Jesus said that his mission was to enable everyone to 'live to the full' (John 10:10). That is our mission, too.

Jesus' parable recorded in today's Gospel speaks of a manager who was astute enough to use his master's reputation for generosity to his own advantage by writing down people's debts. Jesus does not want us to follow him in his selfish behaviour, but he does want us to remember that God, like the master, is generous and that we would do well to write off people's debts through forgiveness. He also wants us to place our trust in God's loving forgiveness rather than in material possessions. Let each of us examine ourselves to see what we have done up to now, and what we ought to do.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Amos 8:4-7

- ✠ Throughout Hebrew scriptures the orphans and widows were the responsibility of those in right relationship with God. What are some things people can do when they feel responsible for people in need? What can you do to help correct an unjust situation?
- ✠ Israel's covenant mandated love of the neighbour. Was it on a collision course with the people's behaviour in this reading? What drives people to be oppressive and exploitive? Is money evil, or is it the love of money that is—to the exclusion of everything else, including love of neighbour? Give examples from today.

Second Reading 1 Timothy 2:1-8

- ✠ Paul was appointed preacher and apostle to take the Good News to the Gentiles. Can you take such a message beyond the sphere of the Church?
- ✠ Paul asks prayers for kings and for those with authority. Do you think the Church should address political, economic and social problems, or just stick to "religion"?

Gospel Luke 16:1-13

- ✠ Was the unjust steward dishonest or just clever? How would the kingdom of God benefit if you were more resourceful on its behalf here on earth? Can you think of a way you can be more resourceful or more clever in your spiritual life?
- ✠ Several years ago, in his morning homily Pope Francis spoke on the parable of the crafty steward. What would you use the grace of Christian cleverness for if you received it? If you ask for it, will you receive it?

The Holy Father said, there is another road. It is the path of "Christian cleverness." This path, he said, "allows us to be cunning but not according to the spirit of the world. Jesus himself said it: be wise as serpents, innocent as doves." Uniting these two realities is a grace and a gift of the Holy Spirit, the Pope said. "This Christian cleverness is a gift; it is a grace that the Lord gives to us. But we need to ask for it."

– Pope Francis, *Morning Meditation, Domus Sanctae Marthae*, 8 November 2013

BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL – CARING FOR THOSE WHO CARED FOR US

This weekend at both Masses, there will be a special collection. Our faith calls us to help one another through prayer and action. Your tax-deductible donation to this appeal will help Bishop Brian ensure a dignified retirement for our diocesan clergy through suitable accommodation, transport assistance and holistic health care. Currently, there are ten clergy in retirement. It is likely that our diocese will have an additional ten diocesan clergy retiring over the next five years. As a matter of priority, Bishop Brian, with your help, needs to ensure that there are the resources to continue to care for our ageing clergy.



Our diocese has four deacons, Joseph Nguyen, Sinh Le and Darren McDowell who are in parishes in our diocese, as well as Seth Harsh who is completing studies in Rome. Joseph, Sinh and Darren will be ordained presbyters (priests) on Saturday, 13 December at All Saints Church, Shellharbour. In addition, there are three other seminarians studying for the priesthood at Homebush. Your contributions help pay for their studies and upkeep during their training.

**PLEASE BRING IN ... ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK
TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA – WINTER ITEMS ARE STILL NEEDED**
Thank you for your great generosity!

PROVINCIAL CHAPTER OF THE FRIARS

From Sunday, 21 September to Wednesday, 24 September, at Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, the friars will be holding their Provincial Chapter – something that occurs every three years. This year will see some major changes as the number of friars in the Province (Australia and New Zealand) decreases and ages. There are currently 37 friars who are members of the Province, plus six other friars from other Provinces working here, plus a further 13 friars who are migrant chaplains working in Australia from other provinces. The median age of the friars of the Province is 81 years. Andrew and Ken will be in North Sydney for the Chapter, so there will be Liturgy of the Word with Communion on Tuesday, 23 and Wednesday 24 September. Please pray for the friars.

SPRING EQUINOX 2025

The Spring Equinox, marking the start of astronomical spring in Sydney, 2025, will occur on **Tuesday, 23 September 2025, at 04:19**. It is important to note the difference between a solstice and an equinox: the solstice is the longest or shortest day, while the equinox is when day and night are nearly equal in length. The Spring Equinox is one of the two days of the year when the sun and the earth's equator align, resulting in nearly equal amounts of daylight and darkness.

BLESSING OF ANIMALS, MONDAY, 6 OCTOBER AT 09:30

As usual, the Blessing of Animals will take place on the **Monday** of the long weekend, **6 October at 09:30**. The blessing takes place in the courtyard next to the church. All animals under 800kg and their carers/handlers are welcome, though please keep the larger pythons on a tight leash. The **feast of St Francis of Assisi** is on **Saturday, 4 October**, with a special **Mass at 09:30 on Saturday, 4 October** – animals are welcome at that Mass.

Blessed are you, Lord God, maker of all living creatures. May we always praise you for all your beauty in creation. We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan; it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

History teaches us that most people are only ever a small nudge away from being able to abuse, torture and murder other human beings. We only need a reason to be evil. As the writer Aldous Huxley put it, "The surest way to work up a crusade in favour of some good cause is to promise people that they will have the chance of maltreating someone." This is known as the 'cruelty of moral indignation.' Nietzsche once argued that there will always be some people in the background of a community who will take great pleasure in some insatiable outburst of violence, all in the name of some holy or justifiable revenge. They will seethe at some imagined offence and take great pleasure in harming other people, because they will see it as a kind of justice. Huxley takes this idea further because he says that these moral crusaders will find no problem in recruiting others to their cause, because there is an element of righteous sadism to many people that needs only the slightest fuel to take flame. As Huxley put it, "To be able to destroy with good conscience is the most delicious of moral treats." And so, the manipulative will play these emotions easily. They will label something quite obviously cruel as being 'for the greater good,' and they will shed crocodile tears at some sad but unavoidable harm we need to do other people to reach some utopia. The road to Eden will be paved by the bodies of dead enemies and the mutilated 'other.' Beware those who seem to love the cruelty of moral indignation. They do not seek a better world, they seek only the pleasure of punishment.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year C • Weekdays Year I

Monday	22 Sep	Monday of Ordinary Week 25	Ezra 1:1-6	Luke 8:16-18
Tuesday	23 Sep	St Pius of Pietrelcina [Padre Pio], priest	Ezra 6:7-8,12,14-20	Luke 8:19-21
Wednesday	24 Sep	Wednesday of Ordinary Week 25	Ezra 9:5-9	Luke 9:1-6
Thursday	25 Sep	Thursday of Ordinary Week 25	Haggai 1:1-8	Luke 9:7-9
Friday	26 Sep	Friday of Ordinary Week 25	Haggai 1:15-2:9	Luke 9:18-22
Saturday	27 Sep	St Vincent de Paul, priest	Zechariah 2:5-9,14-15	Luke 9:43-45
Sunday	28 Sep	26 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ **Weekend, 20-21 September** Bishop's Annual Appeal – special collection at both Masses
- ✦ **Sunday-Wednesday, 21 to 24 September** – Provincial Chapter of the Friars [Andrew and Ken in Sydney]
- ✦ **Tuesday, 23 September 17:30** Liturgy of the Word with Communion [not 'televised']
- ✦ **Friday, 26 September** Last day of School Term III
- ✦ **Thursday, 2 October 19:15** Baptism Preparation Meeting for October Baptisms
- ✦ **Friday, 3 October 09:30** Anointing of the Sick during Mass
- ✦ **Saturday, 4 October 09:30** **MASS FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI**
- ✦ **Weekend, 4-6 October** Transport Heritage Expo, Central Station <https://www.transportheritageexpo.com/>
- ✦ **Monday, 6 October 09:30** **BLESSING OF ANIMALS**

RECIPE: PASSIONFRUIT SLICE

Melted butter, to grease; 150g (1 cup) self-raising flour; 85g (1 cup) Desiccated Coconut; 100g (½ cup) caster sugar; 100g butter, melted; 395g can sweetened condensed milk; 125ml (½ cup) fresh lemon juice; 2 tbsp passionfruit pulp.

Preheat oven to 180°C. Brush a 16 x 26cm (base measurement) slab pan with melted butter to lightly grease. Line the base and 2 long sides with non-stick baking paper, allowing the sides to overhang. Use a wooden spoon to combine the flour, coconut, sugar and butter in a large bowl. Use your hands to bring the dough together in the bowl. Transfer to the prepared pan. Use a metal spoon to press firmly over the base. Bake for 12 minutes or until light golden. Set aside to cool. Reduce oven temperature to 150°C. Use a balloon whisk to whisk together the condensed milk, lemon juice and passionfruit pulp in a large bowl until smooth and well combined. Pour into the pan and spread evenly over the base. Bake in oven for 15 minutes until just firm to the touch. Set aside to cool completely. Cut into slices to serve.

MENALIVE GROWING GOOD MEN WEEKEND 2025: 5 TO 7 DECEMBER 2025

Friday, 5 December to Sunday, 7 December at The Tops Conference Centre, Stanwell Tops. A powerful weekend for fathers and their teenage sons (ages 12-17). Strengthen your bond, explore the journey into manhood, and share in engaging activities, reflection, prayer, and a memorable Rite of Passage. Places are limited — register early to secure your spot! \$500 per father & son pair (includes accommodation, meals, activities & resources). For more information and registration, visit www.dow.org.au/events

AGED CARE AT HOME

CatholicCare, a ministry of the Diocese of Wollongong, can assist you to access aged care support services at home ensuring you or your loved ones receive the right care and support in your own home. Call ☎ 4211 6103 or go to www.catholiccare.dow.org.au

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

25 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR C	
1 st Reading	Amos 8:4-7
2 nd Reading	1 Timothy 2:1-8
Gospel	Luke 16:1-13

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

26 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR C	
1 st Reading	Amos 6:1,4-7
2 nd Reading	1 Timothy 6:11-16
Gospel	Luke 16:19-31

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Parish School of St Michael

James Bryce Principal ☎ 4267 2560

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