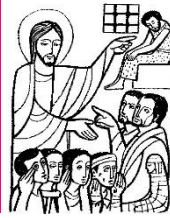


Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
13 / 14 DECEMBER 2025
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR A
BLESSING OF THE CHRISTMAS CRIB

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

A young man got a new watch, an inexpensive one.

The old one had worn out. This new one had something he liked very much, a second hand. He can watch the seconds tick by, and he can “time” anything he wants to.

Who wants to time things?

Well, he does, especially when he gets caught by a traffic light that changes to red just as he pulls up to it. He glances at his wrist to see just how long the light sits on red. Some of them last—listen to this—a minute and fifteen seconds!

Imagine having to sit with nothing to do when you are late and in a hurry, with a mechanical device deciding for an entire minute and a quarter the second when you are allowed to go on!

As you can see, this young man needs to put on some patience.

The second reading for Sunday says it this way: “The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.”

The farmer is attentive and tolerant because crops do not come up in a day. He has learned patience through many seasons.

How about those of us who are not farmers? How do we “put on” patience?

There are two parts to the answer.

First, have you noticed that when you are being impatient you are also failing to notice what is happening *in the present time*. That's when you are stuck in the future worrying about what *will* occur and how to make it happen; about where you are supposed to be by now; and how the red traffic light will not let you go.

And a lot of us reside in the past instead of the present. We re-hash mistakes we made and finally think of a retort that would have topped someone's nasty remark, and so on.

The present moment is the only one we actually live in. The precious goodness of God makes everything exist right now, not tomorrow or yesterday, which are only memories or projections. We will miss the present by looking backward or forward too much.

Second, we need to recall that God makes the future safe. God has promised that, in ways we cannot understand, the crooked will be made straight. Our gnarled lives will be filled with goodness.

Patience is really a way of remembering the constant love of God, no matter how frightening or disconcerting the future may seem or may actually be. We need to slow down, look around, and live.

Think about Mary's “be it done unto me,” her lifelong daily prayer, her nine months, her place at the cross. Notice that, when the angel gave her the annunciation, she did not demand guarantees and full details. She relied on God's love. She waited.

And, the Second Person of the Trinity, alive to earth's ways, waited until it was time to come into the world as Jesus. Then when he sensed that he was hungry, he suckled at his mother's breast, burping only when the occasion presented itself, not before. And think of his years of being just a carpenter day after day. God's beloved, making a chair!

But that is Advent.

Christ is with you. Christ's presence needs to grow.

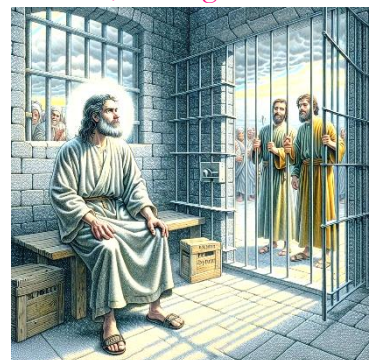
Just open. Watch for the signs.

Patience, people.

Waiting can be a time of soul-searching. Today's liturgy invites us to ask ourselves whether we are ready to hear the call of the Saviour, whose birth we are preparing to celebrate. Helpless in Herod's prison cell, John the Baptist is puzzled and discouraged, as he faced a similar question. He has generously pointed Jesus out – as the one who was to bring the realisation of Israel's hopes; why, he asks through his messengers, is God's prophet now suffering in prison at the hands of an unprincipled tyrant; why has the mission of Jesus not brought the time of justice God's people long for?

The reading from Isaiah – a typical example of the message of hope announced by the prophets – helps us to understand why John is puzzled. This magnificent proclamation describes what can be looked forward to, as a New Exodus – a time of liberation, healing and boundless joy, as those who have been banished are brought back to Zion. But this triumph of God is also described as a time of ‘vengeance’ and ‘retribution’. Having for centuries lived in bitterness under a series of occupying powers, the nation's expectations emphasised this latter part of the

Gifts



✚✚ prophets' message. They looked forward to a vindictive triumph that would crush their hated enemies. This heavily politicised interpretation of Israel's messianic hopes constituted one of the main obstacles to be overcome by Jesus, if he was to bring the people to enter into the inauguration of the final reign of God - about to take place in his own person.

God's triumph was not to be the imposition of divine power. The coming of God's kingdom involves collaboration on the part of our human freedom – inspired and sustained by the example of Jesus, who gave the needy and the powerless a privileged place in all that he did in the name of his Father, and lived out the 'new commandment' of love he had proclaimed. Jesus replied to John's inquiry, therefore, by pointing to the 'messianic signs' foretold by the prophets. But to those included in today's reading from Isaiah he adds another from the later Isaian writings: 'the poor have the Good News preached to them'. In a sense, the divine authenticity of his mission is summed up fully in these words – words that have echoed down the centuries in the life of the Church. In the continuation of our gospel passage, Jesus points to the gospel values so heroically embraced by John – in his courageous witness and his detachment.

The message of Jesus to John is, 'Do not lose faith in me; open your generous heart to the ways of God that define Israel's faith, and you will recognise that I am truly the one who was to come'. Jesus taught, we know, that in the present era the 'coming of the kingdom' is hidden and mysterious, overturning our human expectations. Our reading from James echoes one of the parables of Jesus concerning the coming of the kingdom (Mark 4:26), as James encourages believers in his community to imitate the farmer's patience, as the hidden seed grows.

Could the disciples of John the Baptist handle a Messiah who suffers with us, a Messiah who shares our fragility and vulnerability, a Messiah who knew persecution and abandonment and betrayal and who would suffer the terrible ignominy and awful pain of crucifixion? Can we handle that? Are we willing to measure ourselves and others by our love, or are we going to be seduced into measuring people by their productivity, their contribution to the economic welfare of the community? It is good to contribute to the economic welfare of the community (so long as that is truly what we are doing, and not using it as camouflage for personal aggrandisement), but the measure of our humanity is the measure of our love. This is what Jesus teaches us.

Christmas is fast approaching. As we prepare to take the child Jesus into our arms, like Simeon, let us get in touch with our longings, resist the distractions that can clutter this sacred season of rejoicing and pray that the love of God will purify our hearts and minds so that this Christmas will be for us and for those we love a season of profound and lasting joy.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading **Isaiah 35:1-6, 10**

- ✚ Isaiah said God would give signs to tell the Israelites of their delivery from slavery. What were these signs? What similar signs of God's loving presence are there in your life? And what about in the fields of medicine, social justice and climate change?
- ✚ Who does God use to transform the world now? Is there anything you could do, small or large, in the areas of racial or ecological justice, or of ending the war in Ukraine?

Second Reading **James 5:7-10**

- ✚ "See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth." How does this statement relate to Advent? How is patience involved in both situations?
- ✚ What are some qualities that patience brings with it? What does impatience bring? St James warns his community about complaining about one another. Is this a fault peculiar to James' community? How does it relate to patience?

Gospel **Matthew 11:2-11**

- ✚ John asked Jesus if he was "the one who is to come." Jesus answered, "the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised." Explain this in both the literal and metaphorical senses. The people who came to John were seeking the deepest desires of their hearts. How was Jesus' response an answer to those desires?
- ✚ Does God always come into your life the way you expect? John the Baptist might have expected a mighty one and was confused by the gentle, healing Jesus. Was he called to conversion? Can Advent be a time of conversion for us to recognize new or different ways Jesus comes into our lives?

[Jesus'] description shows us that salvation envelops the whole person and regenerates him. But this new birth, with the joy that accompanies it, always presupposes a death to ourselves and to the sin within us. Hence the call to conversion, which is the basis of the preaching of both the Baptist and Jesus; in particular, it is a question of converting our idea of God.

And the time of Advent stimulates us to do this precisely with the question that John the Baptist poses to Jesus: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" We think that all his life John waited for the Messiah; his lifestyle, his very body is shaped by this expectation. This is also why Jesus praises him with those words: no one is greater than him among those born of a woman. Yet he too had to convert to Jesus. Like John, we too are called to recognize the face that God chose to assume in Jesus Christ, humble and merciful.

– Pope Francis, Angelus, Sunday, 15 December 2019

VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2025

Thank you for your generosity with the Vinnies Christmas Appeal.

Our local Vinnies members will be making up hampers at **09:00 on Monday, 15 December**. Please bring to the church (or presbytery) all hampers, toys, food items, gifts etc. no later than **09:00 on Monday, 15 December**, as deliveries can take place the next day.

It is still not too late to make a donation online by using the QR Code. → → → → →

The following food items will always come in handy, so please bring them along at any time: **tinned fish, tinned meat dishes, tinned vegetables, spreads, sweet biscuits.**

Thank you for your generosity in supporting the needy in our local area.

\$7,023.80 was donated so far over the last two weekends – thank you!



CHRISTMAS 2025 AT THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL, THIRROUL

❖ 19:30	Tuesday, 16 December	Reconciliation Rite II
❖ 17:30	Wednesday, 24 December	Christmas Eve Mass in the Parish Church
❖ 20:00	Wednesday, 24 December	Christmas Night Mass in the Parish Church
❖ 09:00	Thursday, 25 December	Christmas Day Mass in the Parish Church
❖ 09:30	Friday, 26 December	Feast of Saint Stephen, the first martyr
❖ 17:30	Saturday, 27 December	Feast of the Holy Family
08:00	Sunday, 28 December	
❖ 09:00	THURSDAY, 1 JANUARY 2026	FEAST OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD WORLD DAY OF PEACE

Everyone coming to Christmas Eve or Christmas Day Masses are invited to bring a bell, and all children are invited to dress up as angels or shepherds.

A BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS CRIB

Blessed are you, God of all creation: you have sent your Son as the promised Saviour of the world so that he might share with us your divine life. Bless us as we prepare this crib, and let it be a reminder of the Lord Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary in the City of David. Grant that we may always serve you in faith as did the angels, praise you for your saving deeds as did the shepherd, and surround you with the warmth of our love as did the animals of the stable. Glory and praise to you, eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.



The Christmas Crib in its present form and its use outside of churches originated with Saint Francis of Assisi: “I wish to recall to memory the little child who was born in Bethlehem. I want to set before our bodily eyes the hardship of this infant needs, how he lay in the manger, how with an ox and ass standing by he lay upon the hay.” Through his famous celebration at Greccio, Italy, on Christmas Eve, 1223, with a Bethlehem scene including live animals, Saint Francis made the crib popular. Since then it has been a familiar sight in Christian homes all over the world.

THE LEGACY OF MARY MACKILLOP, SISTERS – AND BROTHERS

Before Australia built schools, nuns – and brothers – built hope, and nobody expected what happened next. In the 1800s, Australian Sisters – and Brothers – walked into the poorest streets, country towns and villages, and opened classrooms with nothing but chalk, books and courage, while governments argued. They taught thousands of children, orphans and others, that everyone else had forgotten. They didn’t just teach lessons. They changed a nation – and their schools still stand today. Teachers in our schools follow in their footsteps to this day.

BE SAFE ON OUR BEACHES – SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Encourage others, especially visitors, to swim between the flags – and to learn how to “read the surf”, spotting rips and places to avoid. Enjoy our beaches and keep them clean.

INVITE OTHERS TO SHARE CHRISTMAS AT OUR PARISH

Pray: ask God who you should invite—who comes to mind? Ask God to give you courage to invite them.

Invite them to come with you: this isn’t about them needing to go to church, this is about you inviting them to come with you to Christmas church.

Listen to them: everyone has a story. Everyone believes in someone or something. Listen to them—don’t judge or correct them—and then be ready to share your story and what you believe.

Introduce them to others: Who are your friends with in the parish? Introduce them to someone else.

Don’t take “no” personally: if they decline your invitation, accept their “no” graciously. If we respect their choice and focus on our relationship with them, there might be another opportunity to invite them again.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year C • Weekdays Year I

Monday	15 Dec	Monday of the 3 rd Week of Advent	Numbers 24:2-7,15-17	Matthew 21:23-27
Tuesday	16 Dec	Tuesday of the 3 rd Week of Advent	Zephaniah 3:1-2,9-13	Matthew 21:28-32
Wednesday	17 Dec	Wednesday of the 3 rd Week of Advent	Genesis 49:2,8-10	Matthew 1:1-17
Thursday	18 Dec	Thursday of the 3 rd Week of Advent	Jeremiah 23:5-8	Matthew 1:18-24
Friday	19 Dec	Friday of the 3 rd Week of Advent	Judges 13:2-7,24-25	Luke 1:5-25
Saturday	20 Dec	Saturday of the 3 rd Week of Advent	Isaiah 7:10-14	Luke 1:26-38
Sunday	21 Dec	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Saturday, 13 December 18:30 Dinner at Club Thirroul
- ✦ Weekend 13/14 December **Blessing of the Christmas Crib**
Blessing of December Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays
- ✦ Tuesday, 16 December 19:30 Reconciliation Rite II for Advent
- ✦ Wednesday, 17 December 09:15 Mass with New Communicants Year 2
Last school day for the year – Happy School Holidays!
- ✦ Weekend, 20/21 December Enrolment in the Order of Catechumens
Baptisms – one on Saturday, one on Sunday – so far!



RECIPE: HEDGEHOG SLICE NO-BAKE CHOCOLATE CLASSIC

1½ x 180g blocks dark chocolate, chopped; 395g can sweetened condensed milk; 125g unsalted butter, chopped; 2 tbsp golden syrup; 2 x 250g packets Scotch Finger biscuits, roughly broken; ½ cup desiccated coconut.
Topping: 1½ x 180g blocks milk chocolate, chopped; 40g unsalted butter, chopped.

Grease a 19cm square cake pan. Line the base and sides with baking paper, extending the paper 2cm above the pan edges. Put dark chocolate, condensed milk, butter and golden syrup in a saucepan on medium heat. Stir over heat for 5 minutes, or until melted and smooth. Cool for 2 minutes. Combine biscuits and coconut in a large heatproof bowl. Mix in the chocolate mixture to completely coat the biscuit mixture. Spoon the mixture into the prepared pan, pressing it well to compact. Cover. Refrigerate for 3 hours. For Topping, put milk chocolate and butter in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on HIGH (100%) for 1 minute, or until melted and smooth, stirring halfway through cooking. Pour over the slice, spreading to level. Refrigerate for 1 hour or until set. Remove the slice from the fridge 15 minutes before cutting into squares.

PLEASE BRING IN ... ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK
TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA – FOOD ITEMS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED
Think about some items for Christmas 🎄 Thank you for your great generosity!

THE SUMMER SOLSTICE

The Summer Solstice for 2025 will occur on **Sunday, 21 December** at approximately **17:03**. This is the longest day and shortest night of the year in the Southern Hemisphere. But notice, from Saturday, 6 December, the sun is rising later each day (by a few seconds), and the sun is still setting later each day. The earliest the sun rises in Thirroul was on Friday, 5 December when it rose at 05:36:53. This seemingly strange phenomenon is because of the fact that the earth is not perfectly round, and neither is its orbit around the sun – and, of course, the earth's rotational axis is inclined at an angle to the sun. All very complex, but it all works perfectly!

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ♦ YEAR A

1 st Reading	Isaiah 35:1-6,10
2 nd Reading	James 5:7-10
Gospel	Matthew 11:2-11

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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT ♦ YEAR A

1 st Reading	Isaiah 11:1-10
2 nd Reading	Romans 15:4-9
Gospel	Matthew 3:1-12

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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