

Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN

21 / 22 FEBRUARY 2026

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR A

PROJECT COMPASSION – WEEK ONE

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Lent is here. Jesus is tempted.

As are we.

It is often difficult to understand temptations, especially the ones found in the Gospel this Sunday. If we look at them, they might help us with our own.

(1) First is *food*. Jesus has been on a major fast, and the devil knows it. “Don’t worry!” he says. “You are rich! You are God! You can have all the food you want. Just turn this rock into bread!”

“The Father’s words are bread enough for me,” Jesus says.

(2) Second, what about *honour*? The devil says, “You can be the great one whom everyone respects! Think about how good that would feel. Side with me! OK, technically you would be worshipping me, but if you understand things my way, you are just taking care of ‘number one.’ Try it out.”

Jesus’ quiet response: “I pledge myself to the Lord my God, not to you. Such honours would tear me apart.”

(3) Third, *pride*. The devil says this: “You know that heaven must do whatever you command! Jump off this temple roof and prove your importance! Angels will rush down from heaven to catch you! Everyone will admire you! Come on, show us what you’ve got!”

Listen to the content of Jesus’ words: “Yes, I am very close to heaven and to God. But hear this. I choose to let God’s gentle, quiet love be my life. Not pride.”

Three temptations and three balanced, humble answers. Jesus knew how to hear his Abba’s words over the devil’s babble, and he would not desert the great love of his life, God.

Shrewd, the devil, resolves to try again later. And he will do so on the cross.

Check out your own life this Lent.

Possessions? Cars, books, clothes, appearance, and so on. You know the kind of list we could each make. Eating too much. Buying too much. Sexual lures. Holding our tongue when fairness demands that we speak out. Speaking out when we should be quiet. OK, these are just human foibles but they are also traps. “Look away from God,” they say. “He is outmoded anyway. Be interested in yourself. No one else is.”

And *honour*? Do you ever try to please other people so they will have a good opinion of you? We used to call this “human respect.” What would happen if your son or daughter were thrown off the team at school? How would you react if you lost your job? And so on.

Pride? Many people still sit at their desks or cars or kitchen tables, working hard, worrying about meetings and deadlines, wondering if they can live up to their own expectations and those of others. Or work to just keep their jobs. We say we have essential work to do. We are important. What we do makes us worthwhile.

Understand that these are temptations, scrambles.

Could this Lent be the right time to unscramble our values? Since God is the most wonderful and loving being anywhere, do you really want to block God’s reality out with lesser, undependable desires, especially those that boil down to riches, honours, or pride? Isn’t it true that *whatever really counts in your life is actually rooted in the love of God*.

Here is how Jesus put it: “love the Lord your God above all things and love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31).

The lessons of the Scriptures are conveyed, for the most part, through stories. Today’s readings bring us two outstanding stories of this kind: the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve, and the story of the temptations of Jesus, the ‘New Adam’, as he takes up his mission after his baptism in the Jordan.

Writing for his community of Jewish converts, Matthew tells the story of the temptations of Jesus in a way that echoes themes of the traditions familiar to them: his temptation ‘in the wilderness’ calls to mind the trials that led the people of the Exodus, during their forty years wandering in the desert, to lose their trust in the Lord; like Moses, at Mount Sinai, Jesus fasts for ‘forty days’; Jesus finds the strength to overcome his temptations by living according to the words of the Scriptures.

This carefully crafted story refers to more than a single episode in the life of the Saviour. It gives us an insight into the ongoing human experience of Jesus who, in the wonder of the Incarnation, shared our human condition and its struggles – even its temptations, though he was ‘without sin’ (Hebrews 4:15). The temptations of Jesus are set forth as an encouragement for us. As we give direction and meaning to our lives, we are tempted to seek security

Unscrambling



Facing Temptation

¶ in false gods (Colossians 3:5): pleasure and possessions; the exercise of power; the achievement of recognition and status. The Saviour's temptations have often been linked with these false securities. As, in his hunger, he rejects the consolation of miraculous food, Jesus encourages us to recognise the empty promise of pleasure and possessions, and to find our security in the truths of our Christian faith. As he turns his back on the earthly triumph many of his contemporaries associated with the coming of Israel's messiah, he invites us to see that a selfish exercise of power over others leads only to bitterness. As he refuses to turn aside from his mission to express the ways of his Father, by becoming involved in the politics of 'the kingdoms of the world', he points out to us the way that leads to the true peace yearned for by the peoples of the world.

In today's second reading – a text much discussed in recent scholarship – Saint Paul compares the Saviour, whom elsewhere he calls 'the final Adam' (1 Corinthians 15:45), with the Adam of the Genesis story. The point he wants to make is the incomparable greatness of the Saviour and the blessings he brings in the story of humanity – brought out in a comparison with the Adam figure of the Scriptures. He is not concerned to interpret the complex significance of that figure.

The gospels speak of the temptations of Jesus immediately after his baptism and the Father's words of encouragement as he comes from the waters. We may see here a concern in the community that gave us the gospels, to prepare those receiving baptism for the temptations that they will certainly face as they live their lives as disciples of the Lord.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading **Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7**

- ↳ What in the creation story establishes a bond between humans and all other creatures of earth? What in it establishes a bond between humans and God? Would it be a better world if humans did not have the freedom to choose? Knowing that people would not always resist the temptation to choose evil, why would God ever give the human race free will?
- ↳ After their sin Adam and Eve wanted to cover their bodies. They did not want to be seen as they really were. Is it easy to be honest about faults? If you do become honest about your failings, what is the next step?

Second Reading **Romans 5:12-19**

- ↳ We hear at Easter, "O happy fault! O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!" St Paul says in today's reading that the gift is much greater than the transgression (like killing a cockroach with a nuclear weapon!). Why do you think God would go to this extreme to save us?
- ↳ "... So, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous." Christ represents all of us before God. Should we be discouraged or saddened by our past sins? How does Christ lift these burdens and bring us peace?

Gospel **Matthew 4:1-11**

- ↳ How does it make you feel to think Jesus had to fight temptation the same way you do? Did he dialogue with the devil or just send him away with the Word of God?
- ↳ Why would Pope Francis say that the desert is "the place of the essential"? He says the following about Sunday's readings:

Let us imagine that we are in a desert. The first feeling would be that of being enveloped by a great silence: no sound besides the wind and our own breathing. The desert is a place of detachment from the din that surrounds us. It is the absence of words to make room for another Word, the Word of God, that caresses our hearts like a light breeze (cf. 1 Kings 19:12). ...

By calling us to the desert, Jesus invites us to listen to what matters, to what is important, to the essential. ... We need *to pray*. Because only before God do the inclinations of the heart come to light and the duplicity of the spirit cease. The desert is a place of life not of death because speaking to the Lord in silence, gives us life again. ...

The desert is *the place of the essential*. Let us look at our lives: how many useless things surround us! We chase after thousands of things that seem necessary and that in reality are not. How good it would be for us to free ourselves from many superfluous realities, to rediscover what matters. ...

– Pope Francis, *Beginning of Lenten Journey*, 26 February 2020

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV FOR LENT 2026

Listening and Fasting: Lent as a Time of Conversion

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the centre of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our **¶¶**

¶ commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through *listening*. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry” (*Exodus* 3:7). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen *as he does*. We must recognize that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church.”

Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, *fasting* is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we “hunger” for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our “appetites,” keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbour.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: “In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity.” Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because “those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly.” As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since “austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic.”

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbour. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

Together

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

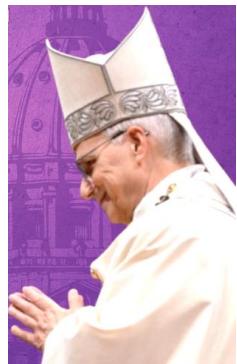
Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one’s conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires — both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity’s thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

From the Vatican, 5 February 2026, Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr

LEO PP. XIV



SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Monday	23 Feb	Monday of the 1 st Week of Lent
Tuesday	24 Feb	Tuesday of the 1 st Week of Lent
Wednesday	25 Feb	Wednesday of the 1 st Week of Lent
Thursday	26 Feb	Thursday of the 1 st Week of Lent
Friday	27 Feb	Friday of the 1 st Week of Lent
Saturday	28 Feb	Saturday of the 1 st Week of Lent
Sunday	1 Mar	THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR A

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Leviticus 19:1-2,11-18	Matthew 25:31-46
Isaiah 55:10-11	Matthew 6:7-15
Jonah 3:1-10	Luke 11:29-32
Esther 4:17	Matthew 7:7-12
Ezekiel 18:21-28	Matthew 5:20-26
Deuteronomy 26:16-19	Matthew 5:43-48

1 Mar THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR A – *Scripture Readings are listed below*

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

⊕ Weekend, 21/22 February	Catechumens ‘sent by the Parish’ to the Rite of Election
Sunday, 22 February	14:00 Rite of Election at St Francis Xavier Cathedral
⊕ Thursday, 26 February	19:15 Baptism Preparation Meeting for Easter and April baptisms
⊕ Friday, 27 February	09:30 Parish School Mass for Opening of the School Year
⊕ Friday, 6 March	09:30 Anointing of the Sick during Mass
⊕ Friday, 6 March	11:00 World Day of Prayer – Ecumenical Service at St Michael’s

LUNAR NEW YEAR – CHINESE NEW YEAR

Lunar New Year marks the beginning of a new year according to lunar calendars or, informally but commonly, to lunisolar calendars. Because a year of twelve lunar months is about 11 days shorter than a solar year (which determines the seasons), lunar cycle-based calendars may have strategies to take this fact into account. Pure lunar calendars have twelve lunar months invariably and consequently their New Year is not fixed relative to the solar year; no adjustments are made. In contrast, most lunisolar calendars also have twelve lunar months, but every few years, a thirteenth “leap month” is added to resynchronise with the solar year. Consequently, neither type of calendar begins on a fixed date in the international Gregorian calendar.

The history of the Chinese New Year festival can be traced back to more than 4000 years ago. Before the new year celebration was formed, ancient Chinese gathered around and celebrated at the end of harvest in autumn. However, the celebration is not Mid-Autumn Festival, during which Chinese gathered with family and worship the moon. In the Classic of Poetry, a poem written during Western Zhou (1045 BC – 771 BC), by an anonymous farmer, described how people cleaned up millet stack-sites, toasted to guests with mijiu, killed lambs and cooked the meat, went to their master’s home, toasted to the master, and cheered for long lives together, in the 10th month of an ancient solar calendar, which was in autumn. The celebration is believed to be one of the prototypes of the Chinese New Year.

Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, marks the beginning of a new year on the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar. It is one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture. Marking the end of winter and the beginning of spring, this festival takes place from Chinese New Year’s Eve (the evening preceding the first day of the year) to the Lantern Festival, held on the 15th day of the year. The first day of the Chinese New Year falls on the new moon that appears between 21 January and 20 February.

Chinese Lunar New Year 2026 falls on 17 February. This 15-day celebration ends on the evening of 3 March with the Lantern Festival. 2026 Lunar New Year is the “Year of the Fire Horse”.

**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
Tinned fish, tinned meat dishes, tinned vegetables, spreads, sweet biscuits – Thank you!!**

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website		NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website	SUNDAY MASS TIMES
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR A			
1 st Reading	Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7	1 st Reading	Genesis 12:1-4
2 nd Reading	Romans 5:12-19	2 nd Reading	2 Timothy 1-8-10
Gospel	Matthew 1:18-24	Gospel	Matthew 17:1-9
Parish of St Michael – Thirroul <i>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</i>		 www.thirroulcatholic.org.au  325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive  PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515  4268 1910  thirroul@dow.org.au <i>Parish School of St Michael James Bryce Principal ☎ 4267 2560</i>	THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES Monday _____ Tuesday 17:30 Wednesday 09:00 Thursday 09:00 Friday 09:30 <i>Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday</i>