



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
7 / 8 MARCH 2026
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT · YEAR A

PROJECT COMPASSION – WEEK THREE

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Cravings

The readings for Sunday speak of a key desire within us, a longing, a craving. The best symbol for this desire is the thirst for water.

A man remembers his younger days: “I remember bicycling with a friend out in the countryside on a very hot day. We had not counted on one particular hill that would rise up and up before us, a very long and unremitting one. We worked and worked and worked and at last achieved the top. Hurray! But the heat and humidity had perspired the water out of us we were thirsty. I felt like a paper copy of myself. We debated what to do. There was a farmhouse or residence of some kind just off to the left. Why not go ask for a drink of water?

“Because the house itself was at the top of another hill, and there were possibly four hundred steps leading up to it. Ok not four hundred, but it seemed like that to us. Could we possibly put ourselves through still another Olympic ordeal and clamber up the steep steps just in order to subject some innocent citizen to our begging?

“Yes indeed. We marched up, knocked on the door, were greeted by a most gracious lady who could think of nothing more delightful than to bring us each a big glass of cool, wet water. Aaaaahhhhhh. Drink it to the bottom. Thanks. Easy trip down the steps. Off and away.”

You can fast from food for but not from water. In the Gospel, Jesus uses a water as a symbol to the Samaritan woman about slaking her thirst forever, about putting a flowing fountain of water right inside her. He is talking about the longing each of us has deep within for “the love poured forth from God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit.” That is the way Paul puts it in the second reading. This need of ours is much like thirst except that it is more subtle. We use many other substitutes to fill it. Food, work, looks, accomplishment, alcohol, other persons, sexual satisfaction, and so on. They do not work. They leave us croaking the famous line “Is that all there is?”



It is not. We are constructed in such a way that without real love we die. St Ignatius points to this fact again and again. Our small selves are constructed with a soul that can open wide enough to admit even the very presence of God's self. And God is able to become whatever size will fit us. Tagore, a non-Christian poet, put it this way:

“What is there but the sky, O Sun, that can hold thine image? I dream of thee, but to serve thee I can never hope,” the dewdrop wept and said, “I am too small to take thee unto me, great lord, and my life is all tears. I illumine the limitless sky, yet I can yield myself up to a tiny drop of dew,” thus the Sun said, “I shall become but a sparkle of light and fill you, and your little life will be a laughing orb.”

Nothing else can slake our heart's thirst for God except God. Jesus, take your staff, strike our hearts of stone, and cause a fountain of God-love to spring forth within us. We pray with the Samaritan woman, “Sir, give me this water.”

We listen fascinated to the story of the meeting by the well of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Her history reminds us of our own frailties; her finding of faith and a new life encourages us. Thirst and hunger are such elemental experiences that they come immediately to mind, as we try to express the restless quest that shapes every human life. Though her life's searching has led her to make serious mistakes, we warm to the spirited woman from whom Jesus asks a drink. Jesus is thirsty; but what he seeks before all else is that this woman and those like her find true peace. In their memorable exchange he responds to the woman's searching. As she comes to recognise that she has found what her heart has been seeking, she ‘puts down her water jar’, and runs off to share the good news with the villagers she has been avoiding – by coming to the well at midday when few people are about.

This narrative has been written for a community that has meditated deeply upon basic themes of Christian faith – themes as relevant for us today as they were when the gospel was written. The Saviour is progressively presented as the one in whom humanity's long and troubled search will find what it has been looking for. He is ‘greater than Jacob’, the ancestor of Israel; he is not only ‘a prophet’; he is ‘the Christ’ of Israel's hopes. In fact – as in many texts of John's gospel – he intimates a claim to the divine name itself, ‘I AM he’.

His coming inaugurates a new order, ‘worship of the Father in Spirit and truth’ – something far beyond what has been known to Jews and Samaritans. He brings ‘living waters, welling up to eternal life’. John's community would have heard in these words overtones of the wonder of their baptism. The woman's reaction to her enlightenment was a reminder to those who had found faith in Christ that they too were called to be missionaries. And this reminder has a sharp edge. It is not easy for us, today, to appreciate the bitterness of the estrangement between Jews and Samaritans – though the shocking conflicts of recent times may help us to understand the violent attitudes that divided these two groups. Of the Synoptic Gospels, Luke alone – the gentile convert – shows any sympathy for the



✠✠ Samaritans. A missionary outreach to these people, therefore, must have seemed almost unthinkable to early Christians, most of whom were from a Jewish background. The attitude of Jesus, and the success he had in this chance meeting with Samaritans, was an encouragement for them to take up the Church's mission, even though the difficulties seemed insurmountable.

This lesson is hammered home for them – and for us – in the words of Jesus to his bewildered disciples: 'My food is to do the will of the one who sent me'; the harvest is 'ready' – 'grain for eternal life'. His final lesson is a call to humility – the saving plan he is inaugurating is God's work – among God's workers, 'one sows, another reaps'.

We are in the midst of Lent, focusing our attention on life as a desert journey in which we constantly experience thirst for love, for meaning, ultimately for communion with God, the 'fountain of life' (Psalm 36:9). This thirst is expressed simply in the opening words of Psalm 63: 'O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my body pines for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water'. The prophet Isaiah assures us: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' (Isaiah 12:3) – words which Pope Pius XII chose to open his encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Isaiah echoes God's call to each of us: 'Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant' (Isaiah 55:1-3).

Jesus is the bridegroom of the soul, inviting the woman at the well to a covenant of love that alone can satisfy the longings of her heart. We should never take love for granted. It is a beautiful but delicate plant and it must be constantly tended. Today's Psalm 95 speaks of the joy and the wonder of entering into God's presence, and the deep gratitude that wells up in our heart when we, like sheep, are welcomed by the Good Shepherd to graze in God's presence. Then comes the warning: 'Listen today to God's voice!' 'Do not let your hearts grow hard!' We are strange creatures. It is simply a fact that we can take love for granted and we can neglect the relationships that are the deepest ones in our life. It is important to recognise this, and Lent is a time for us to examine what is actually coming up out of our heart.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Exodus 17:3-7

- ✠ In the desert, filled with thirsty panic, the Israelites grumbled that God was not with them. With the war in Ukraine – and now in the Middle East, earthquakes in Turkey, the climate crisis, and racial discrimination, can you relate to this situation in some way? Moses was afraid for his life: what did he do? What helps you?
- ✠ Think of all the ways water is important to your life. The name of the mountain where Moses struck the rock was Horeb, which means "dry" or "desolate." What is the significance of this and of the water imagery in salvation history?

Second Reading Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

- ✠ Everything has been done for us. Christ died for all of us, made us deserving and gave us his Spirit to pour God's love into our hearts. What is our part?
- ✠ Paul says, "The Holy Spirit has been given to us." What do these words mean to you? Do you rely on the Holy Spirit to come to your aid when you need help? How often do you call on this Spirit?

Gospel John 4:5-42

- ✠ Jesus invited three of his disciples (and us) to gaze at him in his transfiguration. Do you ask yourself every night if you saw Jesus during the day?
- ✠ According to Pope Francis every encounter with Jesus leads to a change in a person's life. How did it change the Samaritan woman? Who was really the thirsty one here? For what do you thirst?

The Gospel passage from today, the Third Sunday of Lent, tells us of Jesus' meeting with a Samaritan woman (cf. John 4:5-42). He is on a journey with his disciples and takes a break near a well in Samaria. The Samaritans were considered heretics by the Jews, and were very much despised as second-class citizens. Jesus is tired, thirsty. A woman arrives to draw water and he says to her: "Give me a drink" (v. 7). Breaking every barrier, he begins a dialogue in which he reveals to the woman the mystery of living water, that is, of the Holy Spirit, God's gift. Indeed, in response to the woman's surprised reaction, Jesus says: "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (v. 10).

This gift is also the source of witness. Like the Samaritan woman, whoever personally encounters the living Jesus feels the need to talk about him to others, so that everyone might reach the point of proclaiming that Jesus "is truly the saviour of the world" (John 4:42), as the woman's fellow townspeople later said. Generated to new life through Baptism, we too are called to witness the life and hope that are within us. If our quest and our thirst are thoroughly quenched in Christ, we will manifest that salvation is not found in the "things" of this world, which ultimately produce drought, but in he who has loved us and will always love us: Jesus, our Saviour, in the living water, that he offers us.

WORDS OF THE HOLY FATHER AT THE END OF THE LENTEN SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Before concluding this week of spiritual exercises and retreat – a moment of blessing – I have the pleasure of being able to say thank you above all to our preacher who has accompanied and helped us during these days to have a profound spiritual experience, very important in our Lenten journey, starting on Sunday with “The temptations” and reflecting on the example, the witness of Saint Bernard, monastic life and many other elements of life in the Church. I must acknowledge that personally I found myself particularly invited to reflect in some moments. For example, this morning, when we spoke about the election of Pope Eugene III and Saint Bernard said: “What have you done? God have mercy on you”.

Then this chapel – let me tell you – on 8 May, when we were gathered here for the Eucharistic celebration. Above it is the inscription from Saint Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, which says these words: “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain”. So, in this context and in this spirit of communion, we are all gathered here working together, though sometimes very separately, and I think that being together in prayer is also a very important moment in our lives, reflecting on many issues that are important for our lives and for the Church.

I do not intend to review the whole week, but rather to share a few elements. For example, the reference to the Doctor of the Church John Henry Newman and the poem “The Dream of Gerontius”, where Newman uses the death and judgement of Gerontius as a prism through which the reader is led to contemplate his own fear of death and his own sense of unworthiness before God.

There are other elements such as freedom and truth, which are so important in our lives. And in all this, this evening, with my reflection on hope and on the true source of hope, which is Christ, I returned to reread the Letter to the Philippians. In the continuation of the text, written above, where Paul says: “If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labour to me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith”. And then he says, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ”.

Here is the invitation at the end of these days of prayer and reflection, which the very Word of God addresses to all of us: “Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ”.

On behalf of everyone present, then, thank you, Monsignor (Bishop) Varden, for all that you have offered us in these days. Your wisdom, your witness and that of the monastic life of Saint Bernard, the richness of your reflections, will continue for a long time to be for us a source of blessing, of grace, of encounter with Jesus Christ.

I would also like, at this time, to thank the collaborators of the Office of Liturgical Celebrations who prepared all the material for our prayer, as well as the choir, who I believe are still present. Thank you for helping us with the music, which is so important in our prayer. Music – I believe Monsignor Varden said this at some point – helps us in a way that words cannot, lifting our spirits to the Lord.

So, thank you, thank you all very much for your presence and participation during these days. We can conclude with the blessing.

Leo XIV

27 February 2026

MONORANJON FROM BANGLADESH

Monoranjon, 47, lives in a coastal village in southwest Bangladesh, one of the regions most affected by climate change. He and his family face extreme heat, cyclones, water scarcity, and rising salinity that is destroying crops and livelihoods. As a farmer and father of two, Monoranjon struggled to provide for his family and keep his daughter and son in school.

“In this dry season no seedlings come out from seeds. Due to heat of the sun and lack of water, plants are dying,” Monoranjon said.

Thanks to support from Caritas Australia and its partner Caritas Bangladesh, Monoranjon joined the Community Managed Sustainable Livelihoods and Resilience Program. He learned climate-resilient farming techniques, including organic vegetable cultivation, livestock vaccination, crab fattening, and salt-tolerant crop production. His income has improved, allowing him to send his children to school and access better nutrition. Monoranjon now teaches others in his village, inspiring change and resilience across the community.

‘Doing this I maintain my livelihood, but we have to work very hard. Seeing me, many people started. This is how they grow vegetables,’ Monoranjon said.



Monoranjon also works with his community to plant mangrove seedlings on the mudflat coastlines across the delta they live on, to prevent further erosion and flooding of their lands.

Despite these improvements, the region remains at grave risk. With the looming threat of increased strength and frequency of cyclones, rapid sea level rise, dangerously high temperatures and drought, more people like Monoranjon desperately need an increase in support, so they can continue to provide a future of education for their children, and a way out of poverty.

Please donate today. You can support Project Compassion 2026 through the donation boxes, envelopes or by scanning the QR code. **Or online at:** www.projectcompassion.org.au/donate or **by calling:** 1800 024 413



Thank you for standing with us, as we *Unite Against Poverty this Lent.*

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	9 Mar	Monday of the 3 rd Week of Lent	2 Kings 5:1-15	Luke 4:24-30
Tuesday	10 Mar	Tuesday of the 3 rd Week of Lent	Daniel 3:25,34-43	Matthew 18:21-35
Wednesday	11 Mar	Wednesday of the 3 rd Week of Lent	Deuteronomy 4:1,5-9	Matthew 5:17-19
Thursday	12 Mar	Thursday of the 3 rd Week of Lent	Jeremiah 7:23-28	Luke 11:14-23
Friday	13 Mar	Friday of the 3 rd Week of Lent	Hosea 14:2-10	Mark 12:28-34
Saturday	14 Mar	Saturday of the 3 rd Week of Lent	Hosea 5:15-6:6	Luke 18:9-14
Sunday	15 Mar	THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Weekend, 7/8 March	Blessing of those celebrating March wedding anniversaries and birthdays
✦ Wednesday, 11 March	11:00 Catholic Women's League meeting in McCarthy Centre
✦ Saturday, 14 March	18:30 Dinner at Club Thirroul with parishioners after 17:30 Mass
✦ Weekend, 14/15 March	2 nd Scrutiny of Catechumens preparing for Baptism
✦ Weekend, 21/22 March	3 rd Scrutiny of Catechumens and presentation of the Our Father
✦ Tuesday, 24 March	19:30 Reconciliation Rite II for Lent
✦ Thursday, 26 March	19:15 Baptism Preparation Meeting for Easter Infant Baptisms

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN OUR PARISH – CLEANERS, SAFETY OFFICERS

At the moment, there is an urgent need for three more Safety Officers [1 on Saturdays and 2 on Sundays] and for two more people to volunteer for the church cleaning roster.

Safety Officers help welcome people, organize the collections to be taken up and ensure the church is tidied after the weekend Masses. Safety Officers are rostered on about once every two weeks. Currently, teams of two parishioners clean the church – and Cleaners are rostered on only once every seven weeks.

If you can help in any way, please contact the Parish Office this week by Wednesday, 11 March. *Thank you.*

URGENT NEED FOR FOSTER CARERS

Could you open your heart and home to a child in need? There is an urgent need for foster carers in our community. For over 30 years, CatholicCare has supported carers to provide vulnerable children with a loving, safe home and a brighter future. Foster carers receive comprehensive training, regular case worker support, and a carer allowance for the child's day-to-day needs. If you've ever considered fostering, now is the time. Call: 1800 967 894. Email: fosteringfutures@catholiccare.dow.org.au We will support you every step of the way.

"THIS WEEK'S RECIPE" RETURNS – RAYMOND'S GOLDEN SYRUP SLICE

175g butter, chopped; ¾ cup (150g) caster sugar; ¼ cup golden syrup; 1 egg; ⅔ cup (100g) sultanas; 1 cup (100g) pecans, toasted, roughly chopped; 1½ cups (225g) self-raising flour; ¼ teaspoon salt.

Preheat the oven to 160°C fan-forced. Grease and line the base and sides of a small slice pan with nonstick baking paper (16 x 26cm base measurement). In a large microwave-safe bowl, place the butter, sugar and golden syrup. Heat on HIGH for 40 seconds, and then in 10-second bursts if necessary, until the butter is melted. Add the egg and whisk to combine. Add the sultanas, pecans, flour and salt and whisk to combine. Pour into the prepared pan and bake for 30 minutes or until golden on top. Cool in the pan for 20 minutes before lifting out onto a wire rack to cool completely. Cut into pieces and store in an airtight container in the cupboard.

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

<p>THIS Sunday's Readings – on website</p> <p>THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT ♦ YEAR A</p> <p>1st Reading Exodus 17:3-7</p> <p>2nd Reading Romans 5:1-2,5-8</p> <p>Gospel John 4:5-42</p>	<p>NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website</p> <p>FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT ♦ YEAR A</p> <p>1st Reading 1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13</p> <p>2nd Reading Ephesians 5:8-14</p> <p>Gospel John 9:1-41</p>	<p>SUNDAY MASS TIMES</p> <p>Saturday 17:30</p> <p>Sunday 08:00</p> <p>Masses not recorded at present.</p>
<p>Parish of St Michael – Thirroul</p> <p><i>One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes</i></p> <p><i>Moving forward as a Parish Family</i></p> <p>Patrick Vaughan • Parish Priest</p> <p>Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm • Assisting</p> <p>Kerry Fabon • Parish Secretary</p> <p>Tues, Wed 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00</p>	<p>www.thirroulcatholic.org.au</p> <p>325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive</p> <p>PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515</p> <p>4268 1910</p> <p>thirroul@dow.org.au</p> <p>Parish School of St Michael</p> <p>James Bryce Principal ☎ 4267 2560</p>	<p>THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES</p> <p>Monday _____</p> <p>Tuesday 17:30</p> <p>Wednesday 09:00</p> <p>Thursday 09:00</p> <p>Friday 09:30</p> <p><i>Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday</i></p>