



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
25 / 26 APRIL 2026
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER • YEAR A
LEST WE FORGET

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!!

The Good Shepherd

Sheep are completely helpless if they are unshorn, especially if they get turned on their back. Maybe we remember our childhood when we turned various insects on their back to watch them struggle and never achieve their proper legside down position—without help.

Another thing about sheep is their loyalty. It does shade into stupidity, the way they follow the shepherd without question. But there is something deeply symbolic of love if the shepherd is kind and careful with them.

History tells us that all the sheep were kept together in a big sheepfold where the various shepherds had brought their small herds down to Jerusalem. Without brands, without markings of any kind, how, you might ask, does each shepherd get back the sheep that belong to him or to his boss?

Well, first, the shepherd calls each of his flock by name. He has been with them on the hillsides so that he knows just who each sheep is. The one with the nick in its ear, the one with the pretty face, the one that limps. There is a name for each one because they are not just a herd; each has a personality that is special, just like human beings.

And second, the sheep each recognize not only the name he calls them by, but the actual voice of the shepherd. It is a much-loved sound to them. The one who flipped them back on their feet when he found them upside down. The one who protected them from wolves. The one who took them to fresh pastures when they had eaten the fields down to nubs. A stranger's voice could not have the gentle resonance of their own master and friend.

Alright, so why does Jesus use sheep imagery on the upcoming fourth Sunday of Easter? It really is obvious as, if you will pardon the comparison, we are a lot like sheep. The shepherd calls us each by name—the utter God of the universe does this (of the galaxy, infinity, etc.). God is great enough that in Jesus he knows each and every one of us better than we know ourselves. The name God uses for each of us reaches way down into the full potential of our souls, calling us to be most truly who we are in ourselves and in the Lord – to be the best person we can be ... to be an become ever more fully that we are meant to be. An intimate recognition within each of us responds.

And, like the sheep, each of us knows by heart the sound of God's voice. Alright, we may misunderstand it, ignore it, resist it, slam all our gateways shut to it, but in our moments of sane and solitary wholeness our spirits know the sound of that voice. It resonates within us.

Whichever ones of us are free hearken and follow. The call is safe, in spite of wolves and wildness all around. The call lets our fear drop away, turns us right side up so that we can go follow our master and friend over rocks and even through dark valleys. Often people insult the human race by calling it a bunch of sheep. But this Sunday it is the greatest compliment we could get.

The image of Jesus, as a shepherd, established itself early in the outlook of the first Christians. The letter of Peter, identifying Jesus with the Suffering Servant of the Isaian writings, calls him their 'shepherd and guardian'. It is a pity that this great theme is associated for many people with a sentimental image of the Saviour. Today's gospel reading invites us to reflect that for Jesus himself the comparison would have suggested the rough and tumble of a world in which widespread poverty led to theft of livestock, and the disputes and violence arising from such a practice.

The image of the shepherd was long established in the biblical tradition. It was used by the prophets to challenge Israel's corrupt rulers; Israel's Lord, the familiar psalm tells us, will care for them 'like a shepherd'. When, in the passage following today's reading, Jesus declares, 'I AM the Good Shepherd', he is making a messianic claim. In the sequence of John's gospel, today's reading follows immediately after the healing of the blind man. The implication is that the conflict between Jesus and the opponents whose bad faith had been demonstrated on that occasion could be compared to the conflicts that arose between honest shepherds and the thieves who preyed on them.

The shepherd theme gives rise in this passage to a whole complex of comparisons. They can be confusing if they are not considered separately. As our passage begins, Jesus compares himself with his opponents. He comes to God's people with the 'messianic signs' that confirm his mission from the Father. His enemies, on the other hand, are robbing God's people of the blessings he brings – using their authority to undermine the trust and enthusiasm with which he was initially received.

As the passage continues, Jesus – having identified himself with the shepherd who enters the sheepfold with proper authorisation – speaks of the relationship that exists between such a shepherd and his sheep. They recognise his voice when he calls them – as the common people did when he began his ministry. He knows them and leads them to pasture.



✠✠ The obtuseness of those he is challenging leads Jesus to take up a new comparison – one that makes more clear the claim that he is making for his mission from the Father: ‘I AM the gate of the sheepfold’. This comparison may have been suggested by words of Psalm 118, a psalm used as a processional hymn for the Feast of Tabernacles (cited several times in a messianic sense in the New Testament): “This is the gate of the Lord God, where the upright go in”. ‘I AM the gate’ Jesus says, ‘Enter through me; you will be safe, and be sure of finding pastures’.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord – these words were to become one of the most meaningful phrases of the Church’s common life. In a sense, they sum up the whole of Christian faith: Jesus is for us, ‘the Resurrection and the Life’; he is the ‘mediator’ of the new and everlasting covenant; he is our ‘way to the Father’.

“I lay down my life.” (John 10:10) “Over my dead body!” Have you ever heard that challenge? It is not so much the content of Peter’s ringing sermon in the Acts of the Apostles that triggers the words. It is rather the First Letter of Peter, with its daunting description of Christ and the manner of his suffering that bring “over my dead body” to mind. We are told that Christ’s suffering is a path for us to follow. And yet it remains, for the most part, truly a “road not taken” by people and institutions that bear the name of Christ. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

This is a hard road to follow. We think that if we do no wrong and tell no lies, we have some justice due us. We might have the gumption to take insults without retaliation, but to undergo pain and suffering and offer no resistance—that is too much to expect. Jesus, for his part, does not rely on his innocence or righteousness or the truth of his ideas. His sole security is the one who sent him. More troubling still, Jesus takes our sin into his own body on the cross. Only by his wounds and death are we healed and given life. It is over his dead body that we are saved. That is what this letter seems to be saying.

How proper, then, that the next few words allude to the fact that we were like straying sheep who are now returned to our shepherd, the guardian of our souls. The Good Shepherd, as we all know, is one of the abiding pictures of Christ in Christian imagination. Words like “pastor” and “pastoral care” draw their meaning and power from the image of Jesus as the kind and caring guide of the flock.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Acts 2:14,36-41

✠ Those listening to Peter’s sermon were “cut to the heart.” Does anything affect you this way? (School shootings? Ukraine war? Iran war?) They asked, “brothers, what should we do?” How do you think you would have responded to Peter’s sermon??

✠ Do you know what the word conversion means? Is it a once-in-a-lifetime experience or is it on-going? Explain. Who needs conversion? Name the things that conversion involves besides a change of behaviour.

Second Reading 1 Peter 2:20-25

✠ Christ’s innocence and lack of vengeance show us what God’s love is like. Where do you find strength to endure your own suffering? How can suffering be an occasion of grace? Was the pandemic an occasion of some graces for you?

✠ In this reading Peter says the following about Jesus: “When he was insulted, he returned no insult.” Is he referring to the suffering inflicted on a person who does good? Can you give other examples in which this has been the case. Have you had this experience? Where do you think Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King got their ideas of nonviolence?

Gospel John 10:1-10

✠ When flocks were mingled together, each flock would recognize the sound of their own shepherd’s voice and come to him, ignoring other shepherds’ voices. Can you tell which “voice” in your life belongs to the Good Shepherd? Which of the following is your favourite comparison of Christ to the Good Shepherd? Then explain.

- calling by name;
- recognition of voice;
- following Christ;
- not following strangers;
- shepherd as gate.

✠ The Good Shepherd “calls his own sheep by name, ... he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him.” According to Pope Francis what is it about the relationship between shepherd and sheep that makes them follow? And where does Christ, the Shepherd, lead his followers?

He knows his sheep. But this does not only mean that he knows many things about us. To know in the biblical sense also means to love. It means that the Lord, “while he reads our inner beings,” loves us. ... Jesus seeks a warm friendship, trust, intimacy. He wants to give us a new and marvellous awareness—that of knowing we are always loved by him and, therefore, that we are never left alone by ourselves.

[He knows his sheep.] ... They listen, they feel they are known to the Lord, and they follow the Lord who is their shepherd. ... They go where he goes, along the same path, in the same direction. They go to seek those who are lost (cf. Luke 15:4), they take an interest in those who are far away, take to heart the situation of those who suffer, know how to weep with those who weep, they reach out their hands to their neighbours, carrying them on their shoulders. 30

HOMILY OF POPE LEO XIV AT KILAMBA, ANGOLA, SUNDAY, 19 APRIL 2026

Dear brothers and sisters, I celebrate the Eucharist here among you with a grateful heart. Thanks be to God for this gift, and thank you for your warm welcome!

On this third Sunday of Easter, the Lord has spoken to us through the Gospel about the disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. *Luke* 24:13-35). Let us allow ourselves to be illuminated by this word of life. Two of the Lord's disciples, with broken and sad hearts, set out from Jerusalem to return to the village of Emmaus. They had seen the death of Jesus, whom they had faithfully followed. They were returning home disappointed and disheartened. On the road, they were "talking with each other about all these things that had happened" (*Luke* 24:14). They were compelled to speak of it, to recount once more what they had seen and to share what they had experienced. In doing so, however, they risked becoming prisoners of their grief and closed off to hope.

Brothers and sisters, in this opening scene of the Gospel, I see a reflection of the history of Angola, of this beautiful yet wounded country, which hungers and thirsts for hope, peace and fraternity. Indeed, the conversation along the road between the two disciples, who reflected with sorrow on what had happened to their Master, brings to mind the pain that has marked your country: a long civil war with its aftermath of enmities and divisions, of squandered resources and poverty.

When one is long immersed in a history so characterized by pain, one can risk losing hope and remaining paralyzed by discouragement, just like the two disciples. Indeed, they were walking, yet they remained fixated on the events of three days earlier when they saw the death of Jesus. They conversed with each other, but without hope of a solution. They continued to speak of what had happened, with the weariness of those who do not know how to start afresh or whether it is even possible to do so.

Dear friends, the Good News of the Lord, even for us today, is precisely this: he is alive, he has risen, and he walks beside us as we journey along the path of suffering and bitterness, opening our eyes so that we may recognize his work and granting us the grace to start afresh and rebuild the future.

The Lord walks alongside the two disappointed disciples, who are running out of hope. As their travelling companion, he helps them to piece together the fragments of that story, to look beyond their pain, to discover that they are not alone on the journey and that a future, still inhabited by the God of love, awaits them. When he stops to dine with them, sits at the table and breaks the bread, then "their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (*Luke* 24:31).

Here, too, is the path laid out for us, for you, dear Angolan brothers and sisters, to begin anew. On the one hand, there is the certainty that the Lord accompanies us and has compassion on us, and on the other, the commitment that he asks from us.

We experience the Lord's companionship above all in our relationship with him, in prayer, in listening to his word that sets our hearts ablaze like it did to the hearts of the two disciples. This takes place especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is here that we encounter God. For this reason, we must always be vigilant regarding those forms of traditional religiosity that certainly belong to the roots of your culture, but at the same time risk confusing and mixing magical and superstitious elements that do not aid your spiritual journey. Remain faithful to what the Church teaches, trust your pastors, and keep your gaze fixed on Jesus, who reveals himself in the word and in the Eucharist. In both we experience that the risen Lord walks beside us and, united to him, we too overcome the "deaths" that besiege us and live as those who have "risen."

This certainty that we are not alone on the journey includes a generous commitment on our part to sooth wounds and rekindle hope. Indeed, if the two disciples on the road to Emmaus recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread, this means that we too must recognize him in this way: not only in the Eucharist, but wherever there is a life that becomes like broken bread, wherever someone offers himself or herself as a gift of compassion like him.

The history of your country, the ongoing difficult consequences you endure, the social and economic problems and the various forms of poverty call for the presence of a Church that knows how to walk alongside you and how to heed the cry of its children. A Church that, with the light of the word and the nourishment of the Eucharist, knows how to rekindle lost hope. A Church made up of people like you who give of themselves just as Jesus gave of himself in the breaking of the bread for the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Angola needs bishops, priests, missionaries, men and women religious, and lay people who carry in their hearts the desire to "break" their own lives and give them to others, to commit themselves to mutual love and forgiveness, to build spaces of fraternity and peace, and to perform acts of compassion and solidarity towards those most in need.

Through the grace of the risen Christ, we can become like this broken bread that transforms reality. Just as the Eucharist reminds us that we are one body and one spirit, united to the one Lord, so it is possible to build together a country where old divisions are overcome once and for all, where hatred and violence disappear, and where the scourge of corruption is healed by a new culture of justice and sharing. Only in this way will a promising future be possible, especially for the many young people who have lost hope.

Brothers and sisters, today we need to look to the future with hope and to build the hope of the future. Do not be afraid to do so! The risen Jesus, who walks the path with you and breaks himself as bread for you, encourages you to be witnesses of his Resurrection and protagonists of a new humanity and a new society.

On this journey, dear friends, you can count on the Pope's closeness and prayers! But I too know I can count on you, and I thank you! I entrust you to the protection and intercession of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Muxima, that she may always sustain you in faith, hope and charity.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	27 Apr	Monday of the 4 th week of Easter	Acts 11:1-18	John 10:11-18
Tuesday	28 Apr	St Peter Chanel, priest, martyr	Acts 11:19-26	John 10:22-30
Wednesday	29 Apr	St Catherine of Sinea, virgin, doctor	Acts 12:24–13.5	John 12:44-50
Thursday	30 Apr	Thursday of the 4 th week of Easter	Acts 13:13-25	John 13:16-20
Friday	1 May	Friday of the 4 th week of Easter	Acts 13:26-33	John 14:1-6
Saturday	2 May	St Athanasius, bishop, doctor	Acts 13:44-52	John 14:7-14
Sunday	3 May	FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Friday, 24 April 14:30 School ANZAC Day Service
- ✦ Saturday, 25 April 06:00 ANZAC Day Dawn Services
- 08:30 Special ANZAC Day Mass
- ✦ Thursday, 30 April 19:15 Baptism Parent Meeting for May Baptisms
- ✦ Friday, 1 May 09:30 Anointing of the Sick during the 09:30 Mass
- ✦ Month of May National Count of Attendance (Mass Count) at all Sunday Masses
- ✦ Weekend, 2/3 May Blessing of those celebrating May Wedding Anniversaries or Birthdays



SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION 2026 – ENROLMENTS CLOSE ON 11 MAY

Confirmation, one of the three Sacraments of Initiation, is celebrated in our Diocese for **Year 6 students or older**. This year the Sacrament will be celebrated on Thursday, 2 July. If you would like your daughter or son to receive Confirmation, you need to complete an enrolment form and return it to the Parish Office **by 11 May**. Details of Confirmation, including an Enrolment Form: <https://thirroulcatholic.org.au/confirmation/>

PLEASE BRING IN ... ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA – FOOD ITEMS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED

MORE EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION NEEDED

With the reintroduction of Holy Communion under both kinds – the Body and Blood of Christ – **more ministers are urgently needed** to save the current ministers being rostered on every fortnight. If you attend Mass regularly, please consider being of service in this ministry. Full training is provided. **There will be a short training course starting soon in our parish – please volunteer NOW.** This service is needed by our Parish: please contact the Parish Office with your name, phone number and email: ☎ 4268 1910 ✉ thirroul@dow.org.au

HEAR FROM POPE LEO

You can view the **Vatican's Daily Bulletin** online and for free; news from the Vatican and information about Pope Leo and his speeches: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino.html> – and, in addition, locally here in our Diocese, **Sunday Echo** is a **limited-release resource** the Diocese has developed that contains, using the Holy Father's most recent homily or reflection and accompanying discussion questions. **Each issue will be released the day after Pope Leo XIV gives a homily or reflection on the most recent Sunday Gospel readings** go to <https://www.dow.org.au/media-resources/faith-circles/> to access or sign up to have sent to you.

“It is therefore necessary for all the baptized to feel that they are part of the work of evangelization, and so become apostles of charity and witnesses to a new humanity.” – Pope Leo, 22 April 2026, Equatorial Guinea

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER ♦ YEAR A

1 st Reading	Acts 2:14,36-41
2 nd Reading	1 Peter 1:20-25
Gospel	John 10:1-10

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER ♦ YEAR A

1 st Reading	Acts 6:1-7
2 nd Reading	1 Peter 2:4-9
Gospel	John 14:1-12

SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday	17:30
Sunday	08:00
☑ Saturday Mass is recorded.	

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

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Parish School of St Michael

James Bryce Principal ☎ 4267 2560

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>	