

Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
16 / 17 MAY 2026
ASCENSION OF THE LORD • YEAR A

WELCOME TO THOSE BAPTISED

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!!

Stay a While

At schools and universities, the students and their life-networks always fly away at the end of each school year. Or at least drive away. The school always misses them.

If a student stayed on after the last day, there were empty halls and rooms and broad, completely undisturbed yards of grass. Yes, students were all glad to have the year done. But at the same time, why were the buildings deserted, and where is the buzzing life of intermingling students? Is Zoom the wave of the future?

All this must be a pointer to the hollowness that the disciples surely felt after the crucifixion. It was true especially of the women who had loved Jesus so much.

The passion had been the worst part for all of them.

What sort of lives could Jesus' followers find after the very centre of their lives had been taken away?

Well, you say, there was the resurrection. Correct. But we have seen how confusing this was to the disciples. Doubting Thomas said, "I will not believe this unless I put my hands on him." And Jesus' new presence did not last so very long, did it? Suddenly there was this week's "Ascension," and didn't it empty their lives all over again?

We might say that Jesus had graduated from life into Life. Having tunnelled through the tight passageway of death—as we certainly will do one day—he had given everything he was and everything he possessed to the Father. Out of sheer love.

Instead of there being nothing left for humankind, there was now humanity transformed: a divine human person who had opened himself all the way and who was now marked with the totality of love. He was on his way back to the dynamic, swirling, Trinitarian circle of love from which his humanity had issued in the first place.

After the Resurrection he had lingered only in order to tell us about it, to comfort us, to ease the loss!

"Stay in Jerusalem until my Spirit comes to fill your heart," Jesus said to his followers. They were going to be filled "with all humility and gentleness, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit."

Can we follow Jesus in his resurrection and ascension, his immense act of humble love poured into us and ever since known to be the Holy Spirit? Jesus would continue to be alive within the world after all, but in a different form: the Holy Spirit's presence within our own human bodies. Loss and absence have been turned into real presence.

In the Eucharistic Prayer and in Communion we take his Body and Blood into our own body and blood. His Spirit helps us accept his life, death, and resurrection. These settle into us and into others around us.

This real presence now abides forever in our midst, urging us, gently nudging us to say yes.

What does the Church celebrate on Ascension Day? We are being invited to have faith in an important aspect of the Risen Lord's Paschal Mystery. The Saviour was present to his chosen disciples after the Resurrection, laying the foundations of the Church's faith. That extraordinary presence was of limited duration, and soon gave way to another manner of presence – as the Saviour guides the Church through the blessings of his own Spirit. Today's liturgy gathers three passages of the New Testament that give expression to the faith of the first Christians in this phase of the Paschal Mystery.

The concluding passage of Matthew's gospel is deceptive in its brevity. It is in fact a masterly summary of the teaching of the whole gospel – as the Risen Lord himself sends his disciples on mission with words of encouragement. He gives expression to the fulness of the divine authority that 'has been given to him' by the Father. He sends them on a mission that is universal: 'Make disciples of all the nations'. They are to teach them to 'observe all his commandments' – the New Law of his Sermon the Mount. They are to carry out their mission by preaching the Good News and by baptising 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. And, as he echoes the words of the covenant that was the foundation of Israel's faith – 'I am with you' – he assures them that he is truly Emmanuel.

Luke's account, in the opening passage of the Acts of the Apostles, is the work of a skilful teacher – concerned to help his readers understand the mystery of the Lord's new manner of presence. Luke alone in the New Testament speaks of the Lord's dealing with his disciples as lasting 'forty days' – a round number frequently used in the scriptures; though it may be linked with the fifty days between Passover and the Pentecost celebration of old Israel. It is made clear that this period is a time of preparation and anticipation – the disciples can look forward to 'what the Father promised'; not many days hence they 'will be baptised with the Holy Spirit'. Luke's account is centred in



✠✠ Jerusalem. (In fact, he has omitted any reference to the disciples' withdrawal in discouragement to Galilee.) Though the divine plan that shaped the Old Testament is being fulfilled, a new era is beginning – shaped, not by false messianic hopes of 'the restoration of the kingdom of Israel', but by the Father's mysterious authority. It is the era of the Church's earthly pilgrimage. The Acts of the Apostles (like a second volume of Luke's gospel) will present the Church as carrying out its mission through the blessings of the Holy Spirit – 'You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth'. Luke, the careful teacher, sketches a graphic word picture for his readers: the Lord is 'lifted up', and a 'cloud' (Old Testament sign of God's presence) takes him from their sight. Perhaps the mystery of the Saviour's heavenly exaltation (see the early hymn of Philippians 2) has given rise to this kind of description in some circles. But Luke subtly modifies the crudeness of such a presentation. The two heavenly messengers make it clear that what is taking place is not an event of this world. Their advice to the disciples is not to stare into the sky, but to give themselves to the Church's earthly mission until the Lord returns.

The reading from Ephesians is an eloquent testimony to the way in which the Church understood this mission, carried out under the authority of the Risen Christ, who has made himself 'the head of the Church which is his body'.

Today we are celebrating the ascension of Jesus. Like all of us he departed this life when he died. It is our faith that he is living in communion of life with God his Father. The Psalm (Psalm 47) was composed in ancient Israel for the enthronement of the king. Today we celebrate the climax of Jesus' life. At his death he entered into the fulness of communion with God, which we speak of as 'heaven', where he became, in the words of the psalm, 'great king over all the earth'. Since Easter we have had a period of forty days in which we have been thinking about all the different ways in which Jesus has kept the promise which he gave his disciples in today's Gospel: 'I am with you always, to the end of the age'. The forty days is itself symbolic of our life's journey. We know that he will be with us at every stage of our life's journey.

Today, however, let us begin by forgetting ourselves and just looking at Jesus, and expressing our joy that at the end of his life's journey, God raised him to life and took him to himself, into an eternal embrace of love. We remember that on the day of his resurrection he asked Mary of Magdala to go and tell Peter and the other apostles: 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God' (John 20:17). Like us, Jesus spent his life dreaming of this day, his whole being longing to see God face to face and to enjoy the communion of love for which we are all created and for which we all yearn. As we love him, so our hearts are happy for him. His time of waiting, his time of suffering is over. Nothing can ever come between the longing of his heart and the joy of experiencing his heart's desire.

Being in communion with his Father, his heart is able now to reach out, beyond all the limits of space and time, to be wherever God's love is. And so, he is able to be with us. We recall another promise he made: 'When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to myself' (John 12:32). We speak of him being at God's right hand – which is our way of saying that he is at the heart of God's powerful action, bringing about the reign of God's loving will in this our broken world. We can still resist God's loving advances – hence the continual corruption of sin in our personal and communal lives. But nothing can stop God's love, and millions are welcoming this love and responding to it heroically in their lives.

The feast of the Ascension reminds us that the goal of our life is the same as his. The Second Reading reminds us of the 'hope which his call holds for us' and the 'life of glory which we are to inherit'. We and all those whom we love are called, like Jesus, to enjoy undistracted communion with God forever. Paul speaks of the glorified Jesus as 'the head of the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation' (Ephesians 1:23).

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Acts 1:1-11

✠ Jesus told his apostles that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. They would be his witnesses unto the ends of the earth. On whom did the disciples depend for understanding what that meant for them? Did they understand right away or did it take some time? Do we depend on the same source for spiritual understanding?

Second Reading Ephesians 1:17-23

✠ If the "eyes of your hearts be enlightened," what might they see? People suffering? The good that people are doing to relieve suffering? Would some of the goodness we see be related to "the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way"? What might be some "everyday kinds of fullness"? What kind of fullness would you like to have in your life?

Gospel Matthew 28:16-20

✠ "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (v. 20). How does Pope Francis say we realize Jesus' presence today? Are we ever alone?

Through His Spirit, who leads the Church to walk through history as the companion of every person. ... With the promise to remain with us until the end of time, ... Jesus is present in the world but with ... the style of the Risen One, that is a presence that is revealed in the Word, in the Sacraments and in the constant and interior action of the Holy Spirit. The Feast of the Ascension tells us that although Jesus ascended to Heaven, ... he is still and always among us: this is the source of our strength, our perseverance, and our joy, from the very presence of Jesus among us with the strength of the Holy Spirit. – Pope Francis, 24 May 2020.

BAPTISMS THIS WEEKEND – WELCOME!

WELCOME to **EAMONN KELLY, IVY BACKHOUSE, LEO BACKHOUSE, PIPER HAWKINS** and **AIDAN KENNY** baptised in our Parish this Saturday, and **CLODAGH McMULLEN** baptised this Sunday: *welcome and thank you to parents, godparents, family and friends from our Parish.*



In addition, **EVA KENNY** who has completed the Rite of Christian Initiation of Children, received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. **Congratulations and welcome!**

Baptism is the first Sacrament of Christian Initiation, followed by Confirmation and Eucharist. In most of the Eastern Catholic Churches, the three Sacraments are celebrated together as is done in the Latin Catholic Church with adults and children over the age of reason – that is 7 years or older. If you want your infant son or daughter (under 7 years) to receive Baptism, the next Baptisms to be held in our Parish will be during Masses on **Saturday, 20 June / Sunday, 21 June**. The next Baptism preparation meeting for parents will be in the presbytery

on **Thursday, 28 May at 19:15**. Call in to the Parish Office to collect the Baptism Enrolment Forms. Baptism is the first Sacrament of Christian Initiation, followed by Confirmation and Eucharist.

LAUDATO SI' WEEK – 17 TO 24 MAY – THEME: FROM HOPE TO ACTION

Laudato Si' Week is a celebration held annually from 17 to 24 May to mark the anniversary of Pope Francis' landmark encyclical on caring for our common home. Sponsored by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, this global celebration unites Catholics to listen and respond together to the cry of creation, rejoice in the progress we have made in bringing Laudato Si' to life, and intensify our efforts through the Laudato Si' Action Platform as well as other opportunities for education and action. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference committed to celebrating Laudato Si' Week annually in their Social Justice Statement (2021-22): *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor.6*

Laudato Si' Week 2026 invites us to move from hope to action. Hope is not passive; it is lived and shared through daily decisions, community life, prayer and concrete acts of care. This commemorative year reminds us that ecological conversion grows step by step, through restored relationships, protected creation, and strengthened communities. The next chapter of Laudato Si' begins with us, wherever we are.

The feast of the Ascension is a call for us to take responsibility for our world. Jesus' friends probably would have liked him to stay with them for more than forty days. That was not the plan. He returned to the Father and left us to be his hands and feet on Earth. Of course, he promised to be with us to the end of the time and to send the Holy Spirit. But there is no escaping the image of the disciples looking longingly into the sky. The angels tell them to get their heads out of the clouds. There is work to be done. There is a world to be loved, nurtured and cared for. Hope needs to become action. Pope Leo XIV wrote last year that 'when the earth suffers, the poor suffer the most.' He urged Catholic Education to 'combine social justice and environmental justice.' Jesus is our teacher. He tells us to look less at the heavens and more at the earth as we learn from its fragility.

AGEING WITH CONFIDENCE – WHAT'S AGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?!

Tuesday, 9 June 10:00 to 13:00 at The Fraternity Club. Join CatholicCare for a free community event with Dr Emily Steel from the Australian Human Rights Commission, sharing practical approaches to ageing well. Morning tea and info stalls included. Register via the QR code, call 1800 967 894 or www.catholiccare.dow.org.au ... Enquiries to Jane Hollier from CatholicCare 0417 018 152 or janeh@catholiccare.dow.org.au



TRAINING FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

More Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are needed. If you would like to be commissioned for this ministry, please just turn up for training in the church, on **Wednesday, 20 May at EITHER 16:00 OR 19:30**. Please **volunteer NOW**. This service is needed by our Parish. No need to register beforehand, just turn up on **20 May**.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	18 May	Monday of the 7 th week of Easter	Acts 19:1-8	John 16:29-33
Tuesday	19 May	Tuesday of the 7 th week of Easter	Acts 20:17-27	John 17:1-11
Wednesday	20 May	Wednesday of the 7 th week of Easter	Acts 20:28-38	John 17:11-19
Thursday	21 May	Thursday of the 7 th week of Easter	Acts 22:30, 23:6-11	John 17:20-26
Friday	22 May	Friday of the 7 th week of Easter	Acts 25:13-21	John 21:15-19
Saturday	23 May	Saturday of the 7 th week of Easter	Acts 28:16-20	John 21:20-25
Sunday	24 May	PENTECOST SUNDAY • YEAR A – Scripture Readings are listed below		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ **Month of May** National Count of Attendance (Mass Count) at all Sunday Masses
- ✦ **Weekend, 16/17 May** Saturday, 5 baptisms, 1 RCIC Candidate baptised; Sunday, 1 baptism
- ✦ **Wednesday, 20 May** 16:00 or 19:30 – Training for Extraordinary Ministers of Communion
- ✦ **Tue to Thu, 26-28 May** Clergy Inservice at the Catholic Club, Campbelltown
- ✦ **Thursday, 28 May** 19:15 Baptism Preparation Meeting for June Baptisms
- ✦ **Friday, 5 June** 09:30 Anointing of the Sicker during Mass
- ✦ **Monday, 8 June** Public Holiday – King’s Birthday
- ✦ **Tuesday, 9 June** 19:30 Confirmation Parents’ Meeting

WORDS OF POPE LEO – MONDAY, 11 MAY 2026

Compassion and empathy are sadly in danger of disappearing today. Technological advances have made us more connected than ever before, but they can also lead to indifference. The constant flow of images and videos of the hardships of others can dull our hearts rather than stir them. Pope Francis warned us that “we have become used to the suffering of others, [thinking]: it does not affect me, it does not interest me, it is none of my business” (Homily, Lampedusa, 8 July 2013). This type of apathy is becoming one of the most serious spiritual challenges of our time.





In such a context, Christians and Muslims, drawing from the richness of our respective traditions, are called to a common mission: to revive humanity where it has grown cold, to give voice to those who suffer and to transform indifference into solidarity. Compassion and empathy can be our instruments as they have the power to restore the dignity of the other. – *Address to Participants in the Interreligious Dialogue and Inter-Faith Studies*

Today, both science and religion face a different and perhaps more insidious threat: those who deny the very existence of objective truth. Too many in our world refuse to acknowledge what both science and the Church plainly teach – that we bear a solemn responsibility for the stewardship of our planet and for the welfare of those who dwell upon it, especially the most vulnerable, whose lives are imperilled by the reckless exploitation of both people and the natural world. This is precisely why the Church’s embrace of rigorous, honest science remains not merely valuable, but essential. – *Address to the Board of the Vatican Observatory Foundation*

CHIA SEEDS AND CACAO NIBS OATS COOKIES – from Raymond

Thank 100g flour; 100g rolled oats; 50g caster sugar; 50g desiccated coconut; 3 tbsp chia seeds; 3 tbsp cacao nibs; 100g butter; 1 tbsp golden syrup; 2 tbsp boiling water; 1 tsp baking soda. *If you don’t have chia seeds or cacao nibs, add whatever you wish: use choco chips, flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, nuts of your choice.*

Preheat the oven to 170°C. Grease two baking sheets and set them aside. In a bowl, mix together the first six ingredients in the ingredient list. Keep aside. In a wok or pan, melt the butter on medium heat. As soon as it melts, add the golden syrup and stir it in. Add the boiling water and immediately add the soda and whisk it in. It will begin to foam up. Remove from heat and quickly add and stir in the dry ingredients. Mix everything well so there are no dry bits. Take a tablespoon full of the mixture and roll it into a ball. Place it on to the greased baking sheet keeping a distance of 5cm between each cookie. Bake the cookie dough for 20 minutes or until the balls flatten and are golden brown in colour. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and allow the cookies to cool before you remove them onto a wire rack.

<p>THIS Sunday’s Readings – on website</p> <p>THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD ♦ YEAR A</p> <p>1st Reading Acts 1:1-11</p> <p>2nd Reading Ephesians 1:17-23</p> <p>Gospel Matthew 28:16-20</p>	<p>NEXT Sunday’s Readings – on website</p> <p>PENTECOST SUNDAY ♦ YEAR A</p> <p>1st Reading Acts 2:1-11</p> <p>2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13</p> <p>Gospel John 20:19-23</p>	<p>SUNDAY MASS TIMES</p> <p>Saturday  17:30</p> <p>Sunday 08:00</p> <p> Saturday Mass is recorded.</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>