



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
18 / 19 JULY 2026
16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A
GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Pulling Out Weeds

The subject, forgiveness, is hefty enough for Jesus to devote a well-known parable to it. In it, servants ask the master whether they should pull out weeds that have grown up within the wheat-field.

“No,” he replies. “If you pull up the weeds you might pull up the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest” (Gospel).

So, if you or I have sinned, then we have weeds growing up along with the good that is in us. Would we like that failed part of us to be uprooted? No. Instead, God lets us develop, without destruction, steadily forgiving our weeds.

So, what kind of reality is forgiveness?

For one thing, it reverses an attitude at the bottom of entire ancient cultures and still perhaps at the root of modern entertainment. If someone harms me or my family (or ...), then I have the right and duty to destroy them. They are bad persons, not good, and no punishment is too severe.

This kind of “justice” does in fact work. Take a look at the heroes in movies fighting person to person across the tops of skyscrapers, bare-knuckle blows to the face, spinning kicks to the head, all leading ultimately of course to the fabulous plummet over the side, in which we are entertained with magnificent slow-motion shots of the crook’s terror as he heads for the inevitable splotch. Justice is established. Everyone is relieved and happy. Except, of course, the bad guy.

Just for fun, pretend that you are that bad guy. Is there a reason you are committing crimes, ones that merit such punishment? Is it possible that one part of you went haywire but that there is much good in you, much that could be brought back to life? Is there a part of you that says, “I wish I could stop this ugliness and be pardoned”?

If so, maybe you could look at the point of Sunday’s Gospel. When someone hurts us with their wrongs (or vice versa), maybe we can avoid rushing up to them to rip out weeds. Mixed with all the crab grass there are lovely flowers, and God loves very much all that they are.

Look, the crimes we commit don’t really agree totally with our inner self! None of the weeds growing up in us are wonderful, but they are only a part of who we are. Our urge to steal, to impress others falsely, to get what we want no matter what, to be lazy, petulant, or ... (please fill in the kind of wrong you yourself are drawn to). These are not a full description of who we are.

Let us do our best to tolerate the thorns and keep our hands off them. Our own weeds are treated with care. What if Jesus had said from the cross, “Father, damn them to hell forever because of what they are doing to me”? He said instead, “forgive them, they know not what they do.” He knew there was good wheat in them, even alongside terrible weeds.

Forgiveness is letting go of an angering injury and giving God a chance to love. Wouldn’t you like to be loved and forgiven this way?

Once again, our reading from Matthew’s gospel brings us the teaching of Jesus about ‘the Kingdom’, in parable form. As before, the parables are invitations to learn what the coming of God’s liberating and life-giving reign should mean for us. Though our situation is very different from that of those who first heard these parables, they have a clear message for the Church of today. The gospel truth speaks to all ages. Wheat and weeds growing together – a perfect image, surely, of the world in which we live. How should Christians react in this situation?

While we must speak out for the truth, we may well be tempted to emphasise our faithfulness by our impatience and intolerance towards those who do not journey with us. The parable of Jesus warns us that this is not God’s way. The reading from the book of Wisdom shows us that, as the Old Testament was drawing to a close, devout thinkers in old Israel were recognising that ‘the virtuous person must be kindly to others’, learning from the mysterious patience of God. Only the Lord of the harvest – whose grace is at work in a hidden way in every human heart – can sort out the good from the bad when all is gathered in at the end. We who are blessed with the gift of faith must prepare for the final harvest by becoming an exemplary crop ourselves. There is a lesson here, also, for those who belong to the new movements emerging in the today’s Church. They must avoid a sectarian spirit that would see their way as the only way. There is room in God’s Church for many spiritualities and traditions. True ‘catholicity’ shows an openness to this.

The other parables carry us further. “The Kingdom is upon you”, Jesus has announced. In the parable of the tiny mustard seed, he refers to the modest inauguration of the Kingdom. His hearers must have been puzzled, 



✠✠ as they saw the teacher who spoke with spellbinding power gathering twelve of his followers to symbolise the New Israel. Few of these followers had much to commend them, and some would have been considered positively disreputable. Jesus, however, is carrying forward the mission he has been given by the Father. He looks confidently beyond these humble beginnings, and he urges those ‘who have ears to hear’ to share his confidence: ‘No need to be afraid, little flock’, he tells this unpromising group, ‘for it has pleased your Father to give you the Kingdom’ (Luke 12:32). And those for whom Matthew wrote could already see faith in the Kingdom announced by Jesus spreading beyond the boundaries of Palestine. As they heard the parable of the seed that became a tree sheltering the birds of the air, they could recall that more than one of the prophets used the same image, speaking of the worldwide reign of God that was to come (cf. *Daniel* 4, *Ezekiel* 17 and 31). As the Church’s new era of evangelisation makes a faltering start, we too must take heart from the message of the parable. ‘God chooses the weak to shame the strong’ (1 *Corinthians* 2:27).

The parable of the yeast tells of the hidden designs of God being worked out in the chaos of history. Though we are all tempted to judge by appearances, we recognise that the good things that happen in our own faith communities are usually the fruit of long years of fidelity and generosity. ‘Three measures of flour’ would have made something like 130 litres of dough ready for baking! Though God’s designs are hidden, they are boundless in their promise. The explanation of the mixed harvest parable – an addition of early Christian teachers – warns those within the Church who are unfaithful to their calling that they must be converted.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading **Wisdom 12:13, 16-19**

- ✠ Care, justice, mercy, leniency. What would world history be like if all leaders had possessed these qualities? Are all people who work in law enforcement full of mercy, kindness and caring or could some use a little “topping off”?
- ✠ Does it give you hope that you can repent for sins? How does this translate into your dealings with other people?

Second Reading **Romans 8:26-27**

- ✠ Discuss this quote from *Prayer* by Hans Urs von Balthasar.

I have the conviction that my inadequate attempt to understand is supported by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit dwelling within me, that my acts of worship, petition and thanksgiving are borne along and remodelled by the Spirit’s infinite and eternal acts.”... “The Spirit breaks forth out of the very core of the believer’s spiritual life, showing him (her) the way, stirring him to action, thinking, willing and praying with him (her).

- ✠ Do you remember that the Spirit is present with you? What gives nobility to your small efforts, sufferings and weaknesses? Do you ever call on the Spirit when you are in need? Think of all the ways the Spirit has come to your aid when you have needed help.

Gospel **Matthew 13:24-43**

- ✠ According to Pope Francis, what is another reason that the man who sowed good seed in his field decides not to destroy the “weeds” right away?

The servants’ intention is to eliminate evil immediately, that is, evil people. But the master is wiser, he sees farther. ... Certainly, evil must be rejected, but those who do evil are people with whom it is necessary to be patient. This does not mean that type of hypocritical tolerance that hides ambiguity; but rather, justice tempered by mercy. If Jesus came to seek sinners more than the righteous, to cure the sick first before the healthy (cf. Mt 9:12-13), then our actions too as his disciples should be focused not on suppressing the wicked, but on saving them. Patience lies here. — Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 19 July 2020.
- ✠ Can you always tell the weeds from the flowers, or saints from sinners? If you are quick to judge might you mistake a saint for a sinner? Is God patient with you regarding the “weeds” in your own garden? How patient are you with others? With yourself?

VINNIES WINTER APPEAL 2026: Total for the Appeal SO FAR: \$5,864!

THANK YOU for your generosity and kindness this winter to help people get back on track and rebuild their life. You can still donate using your credit/debit card to **Thirroul Vinnies Conference**: go to this link to donate: <https://my.fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/fundraise-your-way-conference/vinnies-thirroul-winter-appeal-2026>

VINNIES NO INTEREST LOANS SCHEME [NILS]

No Interest Loans [NILs] provide individuals and families on low incomes with access to safe, fair, affordable credit with **no fees or charges applied**. If you hold a Health Care Card or Pension Card, or earn less than \$70,000 before tax (\$100,000 for couples or people with dependents), and if you have lived at your current address for at least 3 months (* some exceptions apply), and if you can show you can afford to repay the loan, you are eligible for a loan – loans are available up to \$2,000 for essential goods and services including: household items; car repairs and registration; medical and dental services; technology; furniture; education. Loans are not available for bills, debts, fines, cash, food, penalties. Apply **4283 3730** or nils@vinnies.org.au **Pass this information on ...**

POPE LEO'S MESSAGE FOR WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

Dear brothers and sisters: Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord promises that he will never forget any of us. He assures us that he has engraved our faces on the palms of his hands (cf. *Isaiah* 49:16) and that his love is greater than a mother's love for her child (cf. *Isaiah* 49:15). The prophet gives us a glimpse of an intimate and intense dialogue in which God addresses, in familiar terms, each person individually and the people as a whole. Even today, we can read these words as referring to each of us, and everyone can hear that "I will never forget you" spoken directly to them.

These are words that fill us with comfort and hope. They are the answer to an agonizing feeling that troubles the heart: "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me" (*Isaiah* 49:14). How often in Sacred Scripture, especially in the Psalms, does prayer spring from the despair of those who feel that their lives are of no interest to anyone and are being neglected! The painful feeling of being forgotten is, unfortunately, shared by many people, and among them are quite a few elderly people.

God's love, which forgets no one, offers itself as an act of justice and a response to the anonymity in which human life all too often ends up lost. The lives of many elderly people, in particular, seem to be covered by a veil that blurs the features of their faces and shrouds them in oblivion. This is what happens in homes where loneliness reigns and also in those care facilities where each person's uniqueness risks being reduced to a bed number or an illness.

The celebration of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is an opportunity to rediscover that the Church is called to be a mother to all and that at any age it is always possible to recognize ourselves as sons and daughters of God. May this day, therefore, be an inspiration for everyone, especially the young, to revive the beautiful custom of visiting their grandparents, the elderly members of the family and even those who have no one to visit them. Bring them, through this message and your presence, the closeness and affection of the Pope. Ensure that the words of the prophet, "But I will never forget you," take the form of a tender and affectionate encounter. "In an era that favours speed and fragmentation, the human person still yearns to receive care and recognition from attentive minds, kind words and hands capable of tenderness. The digital culture multiplies connections and offers new opportunities for interaction; yet, the human heart retains an irrevocable need for genuine closeness" (Encyclical Letter, *Magnifica Humanitas*, 239).

The Church understands the suffering of her elderly members; she knows full well that they are all too often viewed through the lens of stereotypes and considered a burden; she is aware that a profit-driven economy weakens family ties; she knows that many elderly people are left behind by children who are forced to migrate or, in some cases, to fight in wars. For each of these reasons, she joyfully proclaims the Lord's promise: "But I will never forget you!"

It is a joy, at any age, but especially when we are no longer young, to discover, as John Paul I said, that we are the recipients "of undying love on the part of God. We know he has always his eyes open on us, even when it seems to be dark. He is our father; even more he is our mother" (*Angelus*, 10 September 1978). Even if it does not come naturally to think this way, the truth is that even in old age we do not cease to be sons and daughters; therefore, the invitation to return to the arms of God — whose love is both paternal and maternal — remains worthwhile at any age.

For many, the discovery of God's tenderness takes place over the course of their lives, sometimes even in its final stages. Indeed, unlike in the past, it is increasingly common to reach old age without having had a genuine experience of faith. In such cases, old age — beginning with the questions that arise with greater urgency during this season of life — can become the right time to begin or resume a spiritual life. On this new journey, one can recognize that God, as Saint Augustine says, "is a mother because he cherishes, because he nourishes, because he nurses, because he protects" (*Commentary on Psalm* 27, II, 18). It is an awareness that helps us not to feel ashamed of the fragility that emerges and also to understand that we are always in need of one another and in need of attention and care. To God, who draws near to us and whom we learn to recognize in his tenderness, we can now turn with filial trust in prayer. It is never too late to begin turning to him. It can be a great gift for everyone.

Dear elderly men and women, Pope Francis spoke of you as a "new people" (*Catechesis*, 23 February 2022), since the number of older adults has never been so large in human history. It is, therefore, more important than ever to reflect with you, this "new people," on what our vocation might be when fragility — the human person's companion from birth — seems to take over. I would like to say to you: do not be afraid of fragility! It is precisely this weakness that holds within itself a new potential that also illuminates the other stages of life. Indeed, when "we acknowledge our fragility, our hearts become open to supporting one another and to invoking the One who can grant what no human power can ensure: the profound reconciliation of hearts and, with it, true peace" (*Meeting with the Algerian community*, Basilica of Our Lady of Africa, Algiers, 13 April 2026).

This is how we can live out our old age as Christians: "fragile" yet at the same time "called." A man and a woman can, in fact, be born anew in old age (cf. *John* 3:4-6) and exclaim, with the prophet: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (*Isaiah* 30:15). This strength can become an invitation not to resort to the ways of arrogance and power to ensure human coexistence, but to the ways of reconciliation and true peace. In this time, so harshly marked by the violence of war and social unrest, many wonder what the world in which their grandchildren will grow up will be like. I urge you, dear friends, to join me in praying earnestly that peace may soon come to the whole world.

Dear elderly brothers and sisters, I thank you for supporting me every day with your prayers, especially when you recite the Holy Rosary. I return this gratitude from the bottom of my heart and leave you with this prayer: may the Lord always renew us in faith, hope and love — He who never forgets us!

— Leo PP XIV

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	20 Jul	Monday, 16 th Week in Ordinary Time	Micah 6:1-4,6-8	Matthew 12:38-42
Tuesday	21 Jul	Tuesday, 16 th Week in Ordinary Time	Micah 7:14-15,18-20	Matthew 12:46-50
Wednesday	22 Jul	St Mary Magdalene	2 Corinthians 5:14-17	John 20:1-2,11-18
Thursday	23 Jul	Thursday, 16 th Week in Ordinary Time	Jeremiah 2:1-3,7-8,12-13	Matthew 13:10-17
Friday	24 Jul	Sts Anne and Joachim, Jesus' grandparents	Sirach 44:1,10-15	Matthew 13:16-17
Saturday	25 Jul	St James, apostle	2 Corinthians 4:7-15	Matthew 20:20-28
Sunday	26 Jul	17 th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Saturday, 18 July	17:30	One Baptism during Mass
✦ Monday, 20 July	09:00	School resumes for Term 3
✦ Friday, 24 July	09:30	Grandparents and The Elderly Special Mass and Blessing
✦ Thursday, 30 July	19:15	Meeting for Parents of those to be baptised in August

JUBILEE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI 2026

Our Parish warmly welcomes pilgrimage groups to visit St Michael Church during the Jubilee Year of St Francis of Assisi – 800 years since his death. A plenary indulgence is available, under the usual conditions, to all the faithful “who, with a heart detached from sin, participate in the Year of Saint Francis by visiting, in the form of a pilgrimage, any Franciscan conventual church or place of worship anywhere in the world dedicated to Saint Francis.” (Decree, 10 January 2026) Our parish will be celebrating the Feast of St Francis with **special Masses** on **Saturday, 3 October** and **Sunday, 4 October 2026**. There will also be the **Blessing of Animals** at 09:30 on **Monday, 5 October**.

PLEASE BRING IN ... ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK
TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA – THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY
Winter Items: soup; noodles; scarves; beanies; jackets; gloves; warm socks.

THIS WEEK'S RECIPE: SCALLOPED POTATOES

2 tbsp of unsalted butter; cracked black pepper; Parmesan cheese, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ to one cup; 1 tsp dried thyme; salt; $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of heavy cream; 6 medium sized russet potatoes, peeled, cleaned, and thinly sliced, lengthwise; 4 cloves of garlic, minced.

Start by taking out your jar of sauce and add the cream, garlic and thyme. Cook over medium heat until it heats up. In the meantime, start cutting your potatoes into thin slices. It takes a little time, but your patience will pay off as you dig these delicious potatoes. Preheat your oven to 190°C. Butter your baking dish. I like to use a classic pie dish for this, and I'm going to use about four layers on the thinly sliced potatoes, so use your judgment. Add a layer of potatoes on the bottom, overlapping the pieces slightly. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and parmesan, then add a little hot cream on top. Repeat the process three more times. Garnish with about half a cup of grated Parmesan cheese, making sure to cover the top of the potatoes. Place in a preheated oven for about 50 to 55 minutes, or until the sauce is bubbling and the top is golden brown. Remove from the oven and let stand for about 10 minutes before digging in. This will allow the cream to thicken and won't burn your mouth when digging in. I know it's hard to resist, but waiting pays off. The creamy, garlic and excellent parmesan cheese make these scalloped potatoes a great combination that can stand on its own for a late night snack, but goes really well with a baked ham.

CELEBRATING A SIGNIFICANT WEDDING ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR?

25, 30, 40, 50, 60+ years ... 2026 Significant Marriage Anniversaries Mass. Contact: helen.bennett@dow.org.au

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

16th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	
1 st Reading	Wisdom 12:13,16-19
2 nd Reading	Romans 8:26-27
Gospel	Matthew 13:24-43

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*

Mary Pahulu-Falevai • Parish Secretary

Tues, Thurs 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	
1 st Reading	1 Kings 3:5,7-12
2 nd Reading	Romans 8:28-30
Gospel	Matthew 13:44-52

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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