



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
25 / 26 JULY 2026
17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A
GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Look at the many different depths and types of wisdom in the world, and thus in this Sunday's Mass.

Here is an everyday example. A cartoon years ago showed a terribly decrepit old man is sitting on his front porch while a very beautiful woman walks by on the footpath. His mouth is hanging open, and there is a terrible flea-bitten dog at the man's feet.

His equally haggard wife is at the door, with the flyscreen door pushed open just far enough to take in this scene. She says to him, "Well whistle, you damn fool!"

One could have expected her to load guilt on the leering old man in his act of leering. Instead, words of everyday common sense. "Don't just sit there: at least do what every other heterosexual male in the world would do." Wisdom comes in many flavours, and there is a kind of common, real acumen in the old lady's words.

Now, let us examine Sunday's readings for different types of wisdom.

In the Gospel, Jesus uses the commonsense kind. He says, if you went out into a field and saw a suspicious mound of earth, and you happened to dig it up, and you found there a hidden treasure—as much gold as you could ever want—would you immediately go and tell everyone about it?

Of course not. It is like, "Well whistle, you damn fool!" Common sense says you would re-bury the treasure, disguising it perfectly, and then go sell all your property and come buy the field. Now the treasure is yours. "Look at what I found on my new property!"

It is an excellent example. It makes sense. Well then, Jesus asks, wouldn't you do as much for the kingdom of heaven? He has suddenly deepened the wisdom!

And in the first reading, Solomon uses another flavour of wisdom. He asks not for selfish gifts, but for an understanding heart so that he can rule God's people. This request moves God. He gives Solomon great practical wisdom in order that he might succeed as King. And other gifts as well.

Perhaps the deepest wisdom this Sunday is in the second reading. We have undoubtedly quoted these words, not remembering where they came from, "All things work for the good [of] those who love God." The older we get, the more true this seems. Even when darkness and loss become our daily bread, still the love of God labours incessantly to bring out greater forgiveness, larger love, more acceptance of life and love, even within pain. This is the wisest understanding that can be.

Sunday at Mass we can pay attention to any of these varieties of wisdom. The important thing is not to just sit there and gape, but to do what every other human being in the world would do if given a glimpse into the kingdom.

Listen to God's love, you sleepyhead!

The collection of parables of 'the Kingdom' that we conclude today is the centrepiece of Matthew's gospel. He closes this section with an autobiographical note. As he tells the story of Jesus for a community from a Jewish background, he sees himself as 'a scribe of the Kingdom'. The scribes who are often mentioned in the gospels were the rabbis who interpreted and taught the Law of old Israel. Matthew sees himself as an interpreter of the fulfilment of all the hopes of Israel brought by the Saviour. From the first, the apostles and their companions taught that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus were 'according to the scriptures'. If the essential message of the scriptures was making known the ways of God, these ways were given a dramatic and final expression, they announced, in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the new Moses, bringing the New Law of the Sermon on the Mount; he inaugurates a new Covenant in his blood; he establishes the new Temple that is his own body; he is the new David, the messiah exercising divine rule over God's final Kingdom. As one great writer put it, in the light brought by Christ, the Scriptures 'opened their heart for the rejoicing and astonished apostles'. The old figures and shadows have given way to realities beyond all the imagining of old Israel. Matthew shares in this enthusiasm and sees himself as a 'scribe of the Kingdom', as he relates the old to the new. But this fulfilment is mysterious, as the parables we have seen already make clear. A conversion is necessary

Layers of Wisdom



✠✠ if one is to recognise and appreciate the coming of the Kingdom announced by Jesus. Each parable presents a challenge – we must leave behind our too human way of seeing things and identify with the ways of God that have constituted the essential message of the scriptures from the beginning.

The parables of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price emphasise this need for conversion. Identification with the ways of God that shape the Kingdom must be unconditional. In our Australian land, buried treasure is the stuff of fairy tales; but in Palestine, with its long history of kingdoms and empires, the possibility of finding a treasure trove was real. And if this happened, the treasure belonged to the owner of the site. One who had such a stroke of good fortune, Jesus says, would do all that he could to buy the field – and in a similar way, no other allegiance will rule the life of one who has found the joy of letting God’s word and God’s ways to be the measure of his or her life. The pearl for which the merchant sells everything has the same lesson. For ancient peoples, a pearl was the loveliest of possessions. The merchant of the parable will do whatever is necessary to acquire the pearl he has found that is without compare. This does not mean that he saw no beauty and value in the other pearls that he came across. Our choice of the values of the Kingdom does not mean that we should despise other worthy causes. The parable teaches us, however, that identifying with the Kingdom announced by Jesus means getting our priorities right. The parable of the dragnet has a message similar to that of the wheat and the weeds. It is not for us to make final judgment of the good and the bad – that belongs to the Lord. Meanwhile, the Church – through which the Kingdom is ‘present in mystery’ – is made up of a ‘haul of all kinds’. Following the example of Jesus, who reached out to prostitutes and sinners, the Church will never turn its back on those who are still struggling with the issues of life.

Today’s Readings invite us to re-examine our goals in life. What am I living for? What do I want in life, for myself? For those I love? Is there something still hidden that if I found it I would give everything up for it? Among the broken and unexplored shells, is there a precious pearl waiting for me that would make all the searching and all the suffering worthwhile?

The Gospel says: Yes, there is. And it is God’s very self is calling me into a close communion of love – a love for which I am made. It is this communion of love that is the only life worth living. Nothing else, however alluring and distracting, can take its place, and to have this intimacy is to have everything. It makes everything worthwhile, for then everything is a sacrament, revealing God.

So, who is this God, so that I might recognise God when I find God? People have come up with many answers: some of them tragically wrong, many of them partly right. The people of ancient Israel, like all other people, had what was necessarily an imperfect grasp of God, but from the initial experience of the Exodus, they came to a basic understanding that is still at the heart of the Judeo-Christian religion. God is one who hears the cry of those who are oppressed. God is one who liberates and who loves. God is one who sees what is. There is no make-believe or pretence in God.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading 1 Kings 3:5,7-12

- ✠ “Understanding” or “*shema*” in Hebrew means listening or obedient. How would race relations, immigration problems, climate crises and wars change if leaders in the world earnestly prayed Solomon’s prayer, “Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart”? What impact might “listening” have on good leadership?
- ✠ Would anyone’s life change for the better if you had more of an understanding heart? How do you think you might improve your skills in this area??

Second Reading Romans 8:28-30

- ✠ “All things work together for good for those who love God.” In what ways did you see examples of this during the pandemic? People figured out new ways to solve problems? People stepping up to serve others in hospitals and food delivery? In keeping connected with one another?
- ✠ How have you experienced this in your own life, that everything works out when you love God?

Gospel Matthew 13:44-52

- ✠ Did the pearl-finder and the merchant have to be shrewd about obtaining their treasures? What about you? Are you shrewd about recognizing the “treasure” or the kingdom of God in your life? Do you find, or at least look for God, in all things? Do you notice when God is “whispering,” or just when God is “shouting” in your life?
- ✠ According to Pope Francis, how are “getting” and “giving” related when speaking of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price?

The Kingdom of Heaven is the opposite of the superfluous things that the world offers; it is the opposite of a dull life: it is a treasure that renews life every day and leads it to expand towards wider horizons. Indeed, those who have found this treasure have a creative and inquisitive heart, which does not repeat but rather invents, tracing and setting out on new paths which lead us to love God, to love others, and to truly love ourselves. The sign of those who walk this path of the Kingdom is creativity, always seeking more. And creativity is what takes life and gives life, and gives, and gives, and gives... It always looks for many different ways to give life. Jesus, who is the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value, cannot but inspire joy, all the joy of the world: the joy of discovering a meaning for one’s life, the joy of feeling committed to the adventure of holiness.

– Pope Francis, *Angelus*, Ordinary Sunday 17 A, 26 July 2020.

BLESSING FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

Loving and tender God, bless the grandparents and the elderly of our Parish. Bless them with long life, happiness, and health. May they remain constant in your love and be living signs of your presence. May Christ keep them ever young to the greater glory of God. May they be hopeful, energetic, smiling and clear-sighted. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, daughter of Saints Joachim and Anne, look with love on grandparents and the elderly the world over. Protect and support them! As they grow older, may they continue to be for their families strong pillars of Gospel faith, guardians of noble ideals, living treasures of sound religious traditions. Lord Jesus, help families and society to value the presence and roles of grandparents and the elderly. Mary, Mother of all the living, keep grandparents and the elderly constantly in your care; accompany them on their earthly pilgrimage, and by your prayers, grant that all families may one day be reunited in our heavenly homeland, where you await all humanity for the great embrace of life without end. Amen!

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. Loans are not available for bills, debts, fines, cash, food, penalties. Apply **4283 3730** or nils@vinnies.org.au **Pass this information on ...**

HOMILY OF POPE LEO AT LAMPEDUSA ON 4 JULY 2026 – PART 1

Dear brothers and sisters. God always loves us first. The beauty of the sea, this island and your faces is a reflection of his gratuitous initiative: love precedes us, surrounds us and brings us together. I am grateful to the Lord for the opportunity to visit you, following in the footsteps of Pope Francis, who chose to travel to Lampedusa on 8 July 2013 for his first trip as the Successor of Peter. The Apostles, as you know, sailed the Mediterranean and experienced the hospitality of the inhabitants of its islands and coasts, which have been a crossroads of civilizations for millennia. The Gospel resounds where peoples meet, people welcome one another, their lives intertwine and different cultures engage in dialogue. It falls silent, however, when each person makes him or herself an island, avoiding contact and cutting off exchange. In this sense, the parable of the Good Samaritan, which we just heard, describes a story that continues to speak to us (cf. *Luke* 10:25–37), and the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* has helped us re-examine it in light of the challenging historical circumstances in which we find ourselves. The word of God is always relevant for today and draws us into a conversation from which we emerge transformed. How, then, will we respond to the love of the One who loved us first?

Dear friends, today Lampedusa and Linosa lie along a path as dangerous as the one that led down from Jerusalem to Jericho (cf. v. 30). Here you have seen not just one, but thousands of human beings fallen into the hands of robbers who have taken everything from them, beat them brutally and walked away, leaving them half-dead (cf. *ibid.*). The sea has claimed the lives of others — those who did not manage to reach their hoped-for destination. Yet we feel their presence, which challenges us no less than that of those who have landed in need of attention and aid. Indeed, before any intellectual consideration or ideological conviction, the encounter with those who lie before us, stripped of everything, calls us to be close to them. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us: “Remember [...] those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering” (13:3). This is the heart of the Gospel parable: we become neighbours by acting as neighbours (cf. *Luke* 10:36–37)!

I have come to thank you, brothers and sisters of Lampedusa, for the solidarity that so many of you have shown. Once again, the miracle of compassion has taken place: “he saw them and had compassion on them” (v. 33). It is an inner revolution that brings forth within us God’s “heart” and broadens our thoughts, hearts and lives. I thank the volunteers, the organizations united in the “Forum Lampedusa Solidale,” the civil institutions, the Coast Guard, the mayors and local administrations that have served over the years. I also thank the deacons, priests, religious sisters, doctors, psychologists and educators, as well as the security forces and all those who, with or without the gift of faith, have chosen to love one another. Yes, it is love that has taken shape among you. Compassion, which recognizes a brother or sister in peril at sea, is its first stirring: a profound call to do what you might never have imagined possible. I greet the migrants who are here. They themselves have not only received solidarity but have often shown it on their journey, as the poor helping the poorest. Thank you, brothers and sisters, because there is nothing to be taken for granted in you reaching out to others; nothing happens automatically.

The parable tells us that love is always rooted in freedom, and freedom lies in the decisions we make. There are also those who choose not to be a neighbour and those who choose not to make a decision. Those who have lost their lives in this sea are victims both of decisions that were made and of decisions that were not made. Indifference to the common good and corruption in their countries of origin; a global economic system that generates poverty and exclusion; fear that fuels prejudice and contempt; the belief that such problems do not concern us; the criminal calculations of those who profit from the suffering of others; the slow and difficult transition from mere emergency management to the development of comprehensive and shared policies — all are present-day echoes of the haste to “pass by” (vv. 31–32) in the Gospel narrative.

In the parable, a priest happens to be there “by chance” (v. 31), followed by a Levite. Both see what is happening, but they continue on their way. Unfortunately, in every age there are those who fear being “contaminated” by contact with others, thus denying — even in the face of suffering and death — our common origin in God, the infinite dignity of every human being and the call to boundless love. It is time to recognize and affirm that religious affiliation must never become a reason for discrimination, as if faith had boundaries rather than being a universal call to salvation. Where there were walls of separation, Christ broke them down (cf. *Ephesians* 2:14). There is no love of God without love of neighbour, and there is no neighbour if I do not draw near. To pause, to be moved, to bend down, to weep before another’s pain — as Jesus did — means entering into the dynamic of love, the very movement in which God has revealed himself.

... continued next week.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	27 Jul	Monday, 17 th Week in Ordinary Time	Jeremiah 13:1-11	Matthew 13:31-35
Tuesday	28 Jul	Tuesday, 17 th Week in Ordinary Time	Jeremiah 14:17-22	Matthew 13:36-43
Wednesday	29 Jul	Sts Martha, Mary and Lazarus	1 John 4:7-16	John 11:19-27
Thursday	30 Jul	Thursday, 17 th Week in Ordinary Time	Jeremiah 18:1-6	Matthew 13:47-53
Friday	31 Jul	St Ignatius of Loyola, priest	Jeremiah 26:1-9	Matthew 13:54-58
Saturday	1 Aug	St Alphonsus Liguori, bishop, doctor	Jeremiah 26:11-16,24	Matthew 14:1-12
Sunday	2 Aug	18 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Thursday, 30 July 19:15 Meeting for Parents of those to be baptised in August
- ✦ Saturday, 1 August Birthday of all horses
- ✦ Friday, 7 August 09:30 Anointing of the Sick during Mass
- ✦ Saturday, 8 August 18:30 Dinner at Club Thirroul with fellow parishioners after Mass

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: HEALTHY BLUEBERRY MUFFINS FROM CHEF RAYMOND

Butter, coconut oil or cooking oil spray, for greasing; 250g wholemeal flour; 1 tsp baking powder; ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda; ½ tsp fine sea salt; ¼ tsp ground cinnamon; 100ml extra virgin olive oil; 125ml honey or maple syrup; 2 free-range eggs, preferably at room temperature; 140g Greek-style yoghurt; 2 tsp vanilla extract; 125g fresh or frozen blueberries; 1 tsp plain flour; 1 tbsp granulated sugar, for sprinkling (optional).

Preheat the oven to 220°C/200°C fan/gas. If you have a non-stick 12-hole muffin tin it may not need greasing or lining with paper cases; otherwise, grease all 12 holes of your muffin tin with butter, coconut oil or cooking oil spray, or line with paper muffin cases. In a large mixing bowl, mix the wholemeal flour with the baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, salt and cinnamon. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the oil and honey or maple syrup. Add the eggs and beat well, then add the yoghurt and vanilla and mix well. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and mix well using a large wooden spoon. Put the blueberries in a small bowl and mix with the plain flour (this prevents them from sinking to the bottom of the muffins). Gently fold the blueberries into the mixture, which should be quite thick. Divide the mixture between the 12 muffin cups. Sprinkle the tops of the muffins with sugar, if using. Bake for 15–20 minutes, until the muffins are golden on top. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

WHAT'S ON AROUND THE DIOCESE?

Check out upcoming Diocesan events and courses – too many to list in one place. Subscribe here and you will be kept in the loop dow.sh/stayingconnected about what's happening around our Diocese.

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website	NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website	SUNDAY
16 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	17 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	MASS TIMES
1 st Reading 1 Kings 3:5,7-12	1 st Reading Isaiah 55:1-3	Saturday 17:30
2 nd Reading Romans 8:28-30	2 nd Reading Romans 8:35,37-39	Sunday 08:00
Gospel Matthew 13:44-52	Gospel Matthew 14:13-21	☒ Saturday Mass is recorded.
Parish of St Michael – Thirroul <i>One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes</i> <i>Moving forward as a Parish Family</i> Patrick Vaughan • <i>Parish Priest</i> Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm • <i>Assisting</i> Mary Pahulu-Falevai • Parish Secretary Tues, Thurs 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00	☒ www.thirroulcatholic.org.au ☒ 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive ☒ PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515 ☒ 4268 1910 ☒ thirroul@dow.org.au 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>