



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
1 / 2 AUGUST 2026
18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A
CONFIRMATION ✨ COMMISSIONING

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

The Innermost Desire

Today's first reading (Isaiah 55:1-3) is one of the great roots of spirituality for the Biblical tree. It talks about desire. If you are thirsty, come to the water. If you are hungry, come and eat. It is as simple as that.

Most people know the hymn "Come to the Water." The Christian and Catholic community understand Isaiah's words (the words of the hymn) as naming something very deep within them, a mighty and profound opening within human beings in which they can taste the sweetness of the Lord. Think of huge areas of the world physically without enough food or water, such a scourge upon the earth. We can help solve it. But only by feeling the keen hunger within us for God.

Only God can slake our thirst for being loved and giving love, our need for the whole of our life to make sense, our feeling of emptiness at odd times or maybe all the time, our desire for "something more" than our difficult lives can provide. Some of us are simply hoping that there is some reason for hoping at all.

Only God can give out food good enough to satisfy our longing, because only God is the creator and lover of all that is. God is not some being who created the world at some time in the distant past and then sat back to let things take their course, however rough that course may be. God creates all things right now, continuing to keep everything in existence right this second. Even one centimetre of a second's inattention on the part of God and the world would cease.



To the eyes of faith this continuous creation is a beautiful cause for quiet gratitude.

"Come to the Water" says as much: "Why should you spend your life, except for the Lord." The word "spend" here calls to mind spending your wages. But more important, the Gospel for Sunday says how Jesus paid out his own life. It is a special scene. Jesus is grieving for his mentor and friend, John the Baptist. He wanted to be alone in order to let that grief happen. But instead of solitude, Jesus finds a huge crowd of hungry people, hoping he will feed their souls. His heart is moved by them—he had compassion for them. He puts aside his own sadness and cures them. He feeds their hunger and slakes their thirst.

In the Gospel reading, it is their physical needs he attends to, as a symbol of their deeper hunger. And on Sunday we are fed by his life itself (especially when we hear the readings) and by his very passion, death and resurrection (Eucharistic rite, Communion). We are invited in. Our deepest longing is to be assuaged. We are fed.

"Take this, all of you, and eat it. This is my body."

The first reading comes a portion of Isaiah that is encouraging those who had been in exile in Babylon to trust in God's providence and they will see an abundance of blessing. God invites the people to come to him, for life comes from God. God promises to renew the covenant, the everlasting relationship, with those who respond. It is a passage filled with hope and invitation. It hints at a bountiful banquet as a symbol of the abundance that comes from being with God. There is also a communal aspect, "all who are thirsty." God invites us repeatedly into community and relationship.

God wants a relationship with each of us and with all of us. Each day God invites us to "Come to me." While a relationship with God does not insulate us from challenges, trials, or sufferings. Having the relationship ensures us that God is with us in those times and throughout our life. When God is with us, we can trust, as did Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well."

The Gospel passage continues the theme of God's abundant providence with the feeding of the multitude. This banquet that Jesus offers is set in contrast to the banquet that Herod provided in the preceding verses that ended in the death of John the Baptist. The banquet that Jesus offers promotes and sustains life. Jesus grieves John's death and in that pain is able to meet others in pain and share life with them.

The feeding of the multitude is recorded six times in the four gospels, more than any other event in the ministry of Jesus. Upon seeing the crowd, Jesus is moved with pity and heals the sick. As the evening draws on, Jesus has the people sit, and he takes the bread, looks up to heaven, blesses it, breaks the loaves, and orders them to be distributed. These same words are used in Matthew at the Last Supper, take, bless, break, and eat. The feeding of the multitude is a prefiguration of the Eucharist, which will be a sharing in the eternal messianic banquet.

Jesus meets the need of the crowd in their lack and their poverty. Jesus also seeks to meet us. If we do not recognize our poverty, if we do not have a need, then what Jesus offers is of little value. When we realize our need, then there is room for Jesus to enter our life at that moment. It is also there that we recognize our need for one another ✨

✠✠ and become a community of followers. The western culture perspective is very individualistic. There is great emphasis on doing it ourselves. The Gospel perspective is that we can never do it all by ourselves. We continually need God and one another to come to the fullness of life. The ministry of the disciples is also highlighted. Jesus commands them to give the bread to the people. Ministry in the Christian community has existed from the beginning. It has changed and evolved over time, depending upon who the people were who were ministering and what the needs of the community were.



In baptism, we are all called to further the work of Christ in our families, our neighbourhoods, our workplaces, and the world at large. This is called the ministry of the laity. We are to bring the virtues and ideals of Christ to the world at large.

A specialized ministry within the Christian community also developed and it is identified as ordained ministry. These ministries are currently only open to males. There are three components to this ministry. Deacons care for the needs of the Christian community through visiting the sick, organizing food pantries, assisting in education, and ministering at prisons. Secondly, there are presbyters, commonly referred to as priests. They pastor parishes, celebrate the sacraments, and co-ordinate the ministries and life of a particular Christian community. Thirdly, there are bishops (overseers) who are responsible for the life of the Christian community in a region or for a designated group in the church (diocese). They oversee the ministries and organize the church to respond to more significant needs than the resources of a particular community.

Reflection Questions

1. How have you experienced God's abundant generosity in your life? What helps you remember how many blessings are available to you?
2. How connected do you feel to the community of believers? What could help you feel more part of a parish or of the church?
3. How do you bring your Christian life into your relationships and activities?
4. What obstacles have diverted God's love from renewing and strengthen you?
5. What can you do be more open to letting God's love into your life?

Having completed Matthew's collection of Kingdom parables, we are now reading from the narrative section that follows. The response of the people of Galilee has been disappointing, and Jesus turns his attention to forming the group of disciples who are to carry on his mission. The miracle of the feeding of the multitude must have been remembered as of great significance by the first Christians – it is recounted in all four gospels. This incident, it seems, gave rise to different traditions of presentation, both of which are included in Matthew's gospel. Today's presentation is for a Palestinian community – the twelve baskets symbolise the feeding of the tribes of Israel. The other narrative is the telling of the story in a Gentile context – with seven baskets symbolising the seven Gentile nations referred to in the biblical traditions.

As the only miracle in which the disciples are called by Jesus to play a part, it is an excellent introduction to this narrative of the formation of the disciples by Jesus. When they suggested that the people leave Jesus to find food, he replies, 'Give them something yourselves'. Then, when they produced two loaves and two dried fish, he broke the loaves and handed them to his disciples, who gave them to the crowd. As we listen to this reading, it is not difficult to recognise that the early Christian communities looked back on this incident as a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. Today's liturgy opens up the vast perspectives suggested by this awareness.

The first reading from Isaiah reminds us of the Old Testament's amazing tradition of faith and piety – something that has been long neglected in our Catholic awareness. The words of the prophet are not artful poetry, but the expression of the faith and trust that sustained God's faithful people during their disastrous exile in Babylon. God's people – especially those who have nothing – are called to the Lord's feast. The only condition of partaking is a thirst for God. If they respond, and 'come' to the Lord's table, they will find 'life', and they will share in the blessings of an 'everlasting covenant'. If only we came to our celebration of the Eucharist with similar dispositions.

The Eucharistic awareness of the first Christians communities is reflected in all the gospels, in a narrative that clearly echoes their liturgy of the 'breaking of bread', Jesus 'says the blessing', 'breaks the loaves', and has his chosen disciples minister to the people. The crowd in the traditional story handed on by Matthew was immense. 5000 men with their families would have amounted to 20 or 30 thousand – about 10% of the population of Palestine at the time! As we know, numbers in the Scriptures are often symbolic. Clearly, this miracle is remembered as of momentous significance – inclusive of the whole people.

Today's reading from the letter to the Romans fits well in a liturgy celebrating the greatness of the Eucharist. This central sacrament of the Church's common life 'in Christ' is a celebration of God's love 'made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Paul assures the Christians of Rome, for whom persecution for the faith has already been a personal experience, that no power, visible or invisible, can come between them and the Saviour's love revealed to the world in Eucharistic celebration of the Paschal Mystery.

CONFIRMATION – CHLOE KELLY, SUNDAY, 2 AUGUST 2026

The Sacrament of Confirmation was celebrated in our Parish by Bishop Brian on Thursday, 2 July. However, **Chloe Kelly** and her family were overseas on that date, so Ken has been delegated by Bishop Brian to celebrate Chloe's Confirmation this Sunday morning during the 08:00 Mass. Congratulations, Chloe.



COMMISSIONING OF EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Following Covid restrictions and since reintroducing the distribution of Holy Communion under both species, the Body and the Blood of Christ, we have used just two ministers distributing the Blood of Christ. This has slowed down the distribution of Communion. So, from 8/9 August, four ministers will now distribute the Blood of Christ at weekend Masses. In order to achieve that an appeal was made for more Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to complete the necessary training. That has now been completed. This weekend and next, all **forty-two ministers** will be commissioned for our Parish.

Those ministers are: Chris Agnew; Barbara Bosley; Anne Bower; Trish Buchan; Judy Bull; Anne Clarke; Ted Clarke; Monique Davis; Anne Denning; John Denning; Paul Gallagher; Gary Grace; Marie Grace; Chris Halloway; Denny Halloway; Pat Hazell; Maureen Heydon; Cesia Holowinski; Patience Hook; Belinda Hughes; Paul Hughes; Henrie Idziak; Belinda Jordan; Julie Joyce; Kate Kors; Michael Martellozzo; Pat Mirabito; Frank Nowlan; Genevieve Nowlan; Ronelle Peardon; Dominic Philippa; Deirdre Platt; Jo Pye; Patricia Roberts; Claire Ryan; David Ryan; Janice Ryan; Joan Scott; Jodi Steel; Lyn Toohey; Karl Weber; and Therese Weber. **Thank you** to these parishioners who are entrusted with this service in our Parish.

HOMILY OF POPE LEO AT LAMPEDUSA ON 4 JULY 2026 – PART 2

My dear friends, those who allow themselves to be drawn into this dynamic of compassion and mercy begin to live differently, to be citizens in a different way and to work differently. Then the civilization of love — the one envisioned by my holy predecessors John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II — can truly emerge. Together with a great number of prophets and martyrs of the last century, they understood that only mercy can respond to the depths of the human heart and the horrors of war by opening the way to a new beginning. Now, standing on the shoulders of these giants, we have entered a millennium in which we must give spiritual, cultural, legal, political and economic expression to the civilization of love. May the enormity of the suffering we witness help us grasp the radical nature of this call.

Like the Good Samaritan, we can always change our plans and direction. More than the Good Samaritan, we have the resources and opportunities to give hope a concrete, historical reality. He “went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (*Luke* 10:34). We, too, must recognize that “the civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization” (Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas*, 213). To this, friends of Lampedusa, you are witnesses! Here, as we encounter each other, we gain a better understanding of our era, and each of us can assess the direction of our own lives. “Certainly, not everyone has the same power to make a difference... Yet, no one is without responsibility. We all have our own areas for action, and it is precisely there — and nowhere else — that we must choose whether to fuel the mentality of force (even if only through indifference, cynicism, lies or hatred), or to preserve the mindset of peace (with truth, moderation, closeness and care)” (*ibid.*, 212).

From this far-flung corner of Europe on the Mediterranean Sea, one can more clearly perceive the momentous challenge that the phenomenon of migration poses to European societies. In this regard, just as with the ecological transition and the promotion of peace, Europe possesses a unique potential, stemming from its history and culture, and therefore bears a corresponding responsibility. Thanks to its geographical location and institutional framework, Europe is capable of addressing the crisis — in this region — in a comprehensive manner, integrating immediate relief efforts into a long-term strategic plan capable of receiving, protecting, supporting and integrating migrants, while at the same time assisting developing countries so that no one is forced to emigrate. All of this must be done with vigilance, ensuring respect for the dignity of every person. This is a task not only for public institutions but also for civil society as a whole and for the Church.

Sisters and brothers, as I said recently in Tenerife during my Apostolic Journey to Spain, in Lampedusa too, the culture of hospitality has a tourist dimension, which, unfortunately, can feel threatened by migration routes and give rise to indifference, or even opposition, to their dramatic aspects. Indeed, for many a vacation is merely a distraction, a time of light-heartedness and carefree enjoyment. It then seems as though an invisible wall has to be erected between the sea of shipwrecked migrants and the vacationers. Have the courage to think differently. Little by little, with a bit of creativity, you will be able to ensure that anyone who spends time on this island, even if only for rest, becomes more humane, inspired by your charity, what the sea has taught you and the encounters that have formed you. There is authentic rest when the meaning of life is rediscovered, and true well-being when the economy is just and fraternal. In such an economy, care for creation and social friendship come together in a synthesis that humanity is seeking today.

The first reading reminded us that, by practicing hospitality, “some entertained angels without knowing it” (*Hebrews* 13:2). May you, in your own small ways, be a prophetic sign of what we can aspire to achieve together on a larger scale. You and your families will be the first to benefit from this, overcoming divisions and differences that only charity can dissolve. The parish, in particular, should be a community where, guided by the Gospel, we learn to welcome, accompany and integrate one another in a spirit of communion.

Here, next to the altar, we have the image of Our Lady of Safe Harbour, the patroness of Lampedusa. Perhaps you know that Saint Augustine liked to describe human life as a voyage across a stormy sea and one's destiny as a safe and secure harbour. Let us not be overcome by fear, but rather look upon daily hardships as a time of opportunity and witness. May your faith, dear friends, be strengthened by these years of trial and generous commitment. May this venerated image speak to you once again with the same power as in days past, when those who handed down this devotion entrusted themselves to the Virgin's intercession with radical sincerity. In God we all have a safe haven, and every Christian community is called to be a reflection of it on earth. And to you, the communities of Lampedusa and Linosa, may you never lack the breath of faith, hope and charity: “O'scià!” [a traditional greeting of the people of Lampedusa].

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

			Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II
Monday	3 Aug	St Dominic, priest	Jeremiah 28:1-7 Matthew 14:22-36
Tuesday	4 Aug	St John Vianney, priest	Jeremiah 30:1-2,12-22 Matthew 15:1-2,10-14
Wednesday	5 Aug	Weekday, 18 th Week in Ordinary Time	Jeremiah 31:1-7 Matthew 15:21-28
Thursday	6 Aug	The Transfiguration of the Lord	Daniel 7:9-10,13-14 Matthew 17:1-9
Friday	7 Aug	St Mary MacKillop – School Mass	1 Kings 17:8-16 Colossians 3:12-17
Saturday	8 Aug	St Mary of the Cross MacKillop	Matthew 6:25-34
Sunday	9 Aug	19 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>	

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Saturday, 1 August	Birthday of all horses
✦ Friday, 7 August	09:30 Mass with the whole school for the feast of St Mary MacKillop Anointing of the Sick immediately after Mass
✦ Saturday, 8 August	18:30 Dinner at Club Thirroul with fellow parishioners after Mass
✦ Weekend, 8/9 August	Blessing of those celebrating August Wedding Anniversaries, Birthdays
✦ Wednesday, 12 August	10:30 Catholic Women's League Monthly meeting – BYO lunch
✦ Saturday, 15 August	09:30 Mass for the feast of the Assumption of Mary [Holy Day]

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** – animals welcome at these Masses for a blessing. There will also be the Blessing of Animals at 09:30 on Monday, 5 October in the courtyard next to the church.

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: PRUNE & DARK CHOC CHUNK COOKIES FROM CHEF RAYMOND

100g unsalted butter, softened; 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil; ¼ cup maple syrup; 1 egg; 1 tsp vanilla extract; 1 cup wholemeal flour; ½ cup rolled oats; ½ tsp baking soda; ¼ tsp sea salt; ¾ cup prunes, chopped into small pieces; 80g dark chocolate (70%), chopped into chunks; ¼ cup pecans, chopped.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan) and line a large tray with baking paper. In a mixing bowl, beat the butter, extra virgin olive oil and maple syrup until creamy. Add the egg and vanilla extract and beat again until smooth. In a separate bowl, mix the wholemeal flour, rolled oats, baking soda and sea salt. Add the dry ingredients to the wet mixture and fold together. Stir through the prunes, dark chocolate chunks, and pecans. Scoop heaped tablespoons of dough onto the tray and lightly flatten with your fingers. Bake for 10–15 minutes, until the edges are golden and the centres are still slightly soft. Leave on the tray for 5 minutes, then transfer to a rack to fully 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 MASS TIMES
18 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	19 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	Saturday 17:30
1 st Reading Isaiah 55:1-3	1 st Reading 1 Kings 19:9,11-13	Sunday 08:00
2 nd Reading Romans 8:35,37-39	2 nd Reading Romans 9:1-5	☒ Saturday Mass is recorded.
Gospel Matthew 14:13-21	Gospel Matthew 14:22-33	
Parish of St Michael – Thirroul <i>One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes</i> <i>Moving forward as a Parish Family</i> 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	☒ 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>