



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
22 / 23 AUGUST 2026
21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A
JUBILEE YEAR OF SAINT FRANCIS

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

On previous Sundays Jesus has been curing people. Yet an odd thing happens in each case. He tells them, “Your faith has saved you.” That creates a mystery. Quite obviously Jesus does the healing, so why does he say their faith did it? Why didn’t he just say, “Go in peace, I have healed you”?

Let us seek the answer in Sunday’s Gospel. This will be a roundabout way to get at an answer, so I ask you to wait for it.

Jesus is in Caesarea Philippi, and the disciples are just back from their mission of preaching. He asks them who people think he is.

The disciples laugh boyishly and repeat some answers they have heard. Obviously, they regard these guesses as absurd. Something like this:

Believe it or not, some think you are John the Baptist returned from the dead!

The ones I talked to said you were the prophet Elijah! It was hilarious!

A few of them said you are Jeremiah or one of the other prophets! They just don’t know what to make of you.

Laughter all around.

But Jesus’ question was a curve ball and now it crosses the plate. He says abruptly, “And what about you? Who do you say I am?”

Eyes wander, feet scuff, laughter turns into a cough. The disciples’ faith is still young and perhaps they are confused about it, not to mention the fact that up to this point they have not been required to profess anything out loud. Red faces.

Peter is bold, awkwardly walking on water again, figuratively this time. He stammers out his best answer.

You ... you are ... the, uh, ... yes, uh, the ... the Son of ... you are the Christ, the Son of the living God!

Silence and then nods and relief all around.

“Simon, how great is your faith,” Jesus says. “Whatever you open with this faith will stay open. Whatever your faith shuts will remain shut, not only here but in heaven.”

A high compliment to Peter’s tottering belief status.

But does this help with the contradiction we began with? Is it Jesus’ action or an act of their faith?

Jesus is always seeking a two-way liaison between himself and us, not just one-way. He wants us to have a relationship to the fullness of who he is. Besides being a charismatic leader or a good friend, he is *the very reality of God’s love, present in the world, wide open to loving each of us—and being loved in return*. He wants a mutual love-relationship with you and me, one in which we open up our hearts and let Godly love in—and return it.

The name of that openness to God’s love on the part of a person is “faith.”

Faith.

So, the answer is truly, “your faith has saved you.” *But it is faith in Jesus’ cures*. These are never just a matter of him acting on his own, like a mechanic replacing spark plugs. They are love being given and love being received. The ones who were cured must have opened themselves and have at least a beginning relationship with Jesus as the loving Messiah.

Healing is then at last able to take root.

We are all familiar with today’s gospel. It tells us something fundamental about our life as Catholics. This text portrays Peter as the one authorised by the Saviour to lead his disciples in professing their faith in him. In this age, when God calls believers to work for Christian unity, it is important that we understand it well. When we compare Matthew’s account of Peter’s confession with that of Mark (Mark 8: 27-33), we see that the two evangelists present Peter in very different ways. In Mark’s account, to the questions of Jesus, Peter responds, ‘You are the messiah’. Then, when Jesus begins to explain that his role will be very different from that of the messiah of popular expectations – ‘The Son of Man is destined to suffer and be put to death’ – Peter cannot accept what Jesus is saying; and he is sharply rebuked by Jesus, ‘Get behind me Satan! You are not thinking as God thinks’.

When Matthew is writing his gospel, long after this incident, Peter has long been recognised and venerated as the one who was appointed by Jesus, as the leader of the chosen disciples who were to carry on his mission.

It Takes Two



✠✠ In order to celebrate the role given to Peter by the Saviour – a role that he has carried out with great faith and courage – Matthew combines two incidents that took place at different times. He uses Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi as an introduction to what is his main point – the commission that was given to Peter by the Lord, so fundamental for the life of the first Christian community. The gospels make it clear that Peter received such a commission. This commission may well have been referred to by Jesus in different contexts, in view of its basic importance in the carrying on of the mission of Jesus. The change of name recalled by Matthew in this text is so remarkable (Jesus used the Aramaic word for 'rock', *kephas*, never before used as a name, translated as *Petros* in Greek) that it obviously had far-reaching significance. Luke refers to the commission of Peter as being made in the highly charged atmosphere of the Last Supper: 'I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and once you have recovered, you in your turn must strengthen your brethren' (Luke 22:31). In John's gospel, the risen Lord's three questions to Peter on the shore of the lake – reminding us of Peter's three denials – lead on to his great commission, 'Feed my lambs, feed my sheep'. This whole tradition is filled with reminders of Peter's frailty – a great lesson for the whole Church, faithful and pastors.

In its totality, Matthew's text is a magnificent summary of the self-understanding of the Church of the first generation, and of Peter's leadership role in that Church. Matthew alone of the evangelists used the term 'church' (in this and a later text). This term, that Paul used so frequently – echoing the Old Testament term for the community of faith of old Israel – refers to the New Israel inaugurated by Jesus. The 'gates' of the cities of antiquity were the embodiment of their strength. The Church founded on the ministry of Peter, the 'rock', will triumph over the dark forces of the kingdom of death; and, under Peter's leadership, open the way to the final Kingdom announced and inaugurated by the Saviour. The words of Jesus make clear the practical implications of the authority given to Peter. 'Binding and loosing' referred to the authority of the teachers of old Israel, to legislate and determine policy, and to exclude from the community. If this pastoral authority is shared with the other apostles (cf. Matthew 18:18), it is only under the leadership of Peter that they can effectively carry out this pastoral responsibility.

The purpose of our life is to be in communion with God. We are all called to this communion and we can all help each other. Our best help comes from the saints in our midst – those who love with Jesus' love. The local church community is a family into which we have been baptised. We belong to each other.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Isaiah 22:19-23

- ✠ The Isaiah reading says, "He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." How can the Church act as father in the present crises: wars, immigration, racial, environmental? What other qualities or virtues do you look for in Church leadership, besides having a solid faith?
- ✠ "I will place the key of the House of David on Eliakim's shoulder..." In the Gospel Jesus tells Peter he will give him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. What might those keys unlock? Love? The depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God?

Second Reading Romans 11:33-36

- ✠ "For who has known the mind of the Lord?" Are you good at recognizing the Lord in your life? Are you able to know where God is leading you, or what God is doing in your life.
- ✠ "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! ...For from him and through him and for him are all things." Every person, every race, every part of our environment comes from God. How can we thank or "give glory" to God for gifts such as these? By loving? By protecting?

Gospel Matthew 16:13-20

- ✠ To answer Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am," you have to know him. Which of the following could help you know Jesus: music by Vivaldi; Michelangelo's David or Van Gogh's Irises; a good homily; a good book; good friends; suffering; joy; meditation; successes; weaknesses; family; flowers; homeless people? Can you find (and get to know) God in all things?
- ✠ When the disciples answered Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" they went from admiring Jesus to imitating him. They followed him. What do you think Pope Francis meant when he said that in following Jesus we are "looking ahead and welcoming the *kairos* (moments of) grace"?

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks his disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" ...They had to take that decisive step, from admiring Jesus to imitating Jesus. Today too, the Lord looks at each of us personally and asks: "Who am I – in fact – for you?" Who am I for you? This question, addressed to each of us, calls for more than a quick answer straight out of the catechism; it requires a vital, personal response.

That response renews us as disciples. It takes place in three steps, steps that the disciples took and that we too can take. It involves first, proclaiming Jesus; second, discerning with Jesus and third, following Jesus.

...

This International Eucharistic Congress marks the end of one journey, but more importantly, the beginning of another. For walking behind Jesus means always looking ahead, welcoming *the kairos* of grace, and being challenged every day by the Lord's question to each of us, his disciples: Who do you say that I am?

International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest us.... Pope Francis, *Address*, 12 September 2021.

THEME OF THE MESSAGE FOR WORLD DAY OF PEACE 2027

“Disarming Technology, Serving Peace. Politics as Preventive Responsibility”

For the celebration of the sixtieth World Day of Peace, which will be observed on 1 January 2027, the Holy Father has chosen the theme: “Disarming Technology, Serving Peace. Politics as Preventive Responsibility.”

His Holiness wishes to draw attention to the moral responsibility of those called to serve in the public sphere, and he urges all people to uphold the dignity of the human person and to contribute to the building of peace, beginning by “disarming technology.”

Recalling that “no algorithm can make war morally acceptable” (*Magnifica Humanitas*, 198), and warning of the risks involved in entrusting military decisions to artificial intelligence, Pope Leo XIV makes a fervent appeal to the international community to foster shared agreements capable of safeguarding human responsibility and humanitarian principles in situations in which human life and peaceful coexistence among peoples are at stake.

THE JUBILEE YEAR OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI



2026 marks the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis.

To mark the occasion, Pope Leo declared “The Jubilee Year of Saint Francis, from 10 January 2026 to 10 January 2027.”

Saint Francis died in Assisi on the evening of 3 October 1226.

All are invited to follow the example of Saint Francis of Assisi and become witnesses of peace and reconciliation. The life of the Poor Man of Assisi shows that God’s mercy works in history also through people who have opened their hearts to God’s action. Looking at his example, we see that God’s grace can transform even the greatest weaknesses. Precisely indulgence makes it possible to free the heart from the burden of sin

A **plenary indulgence** is the remission of all temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven. To receive the indulgence during the Jubilee Year of Saint Francis, the requirements are: receive the Sacrament of Penance; receive Holy Communion; pray for the Holy Father’s intentions; a pious pilgrimage to Franciscan churches; participation in Jubilee celebrations; prayer and meditation in the Franciscan spirit, as well as daily acts of charity and humility that express the spirituality of Saint Francis, concluding with the Our Father, the Creed and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Clare and all the Saints of the Franciscan Family.

The indulgence may also be offered for a soul in purgatory.

Pilgrimage Churches: during the Jubilee Year, pilgrims in the Diocese of Wollongong are encouraged to visit **St Michael Church, Thirroul** or **St Francis of Assisi Church, 1 Bruce Road, Warrawong**.

The biography of Saint Francis shows that true imitation of Christ is not based on declarations or ideas, but on a concrete and real lifestyle rooted in the Gospel. He reminds us of the timeless value of poverty and simplicity. By renouncing wealth and social prestige, Francis showed that freedom of heart is born of detachment from material goods. For today’s person, living in a world of consumerism, this is an extremely timely invitation to moderation, responsible use of goods, and placing God and neighbour above material possessions: it is a matter of “being” more than “having.”

Jubilee celebrations at **St Michel Church, Thirroul** will culminate on the long weekend of Saturday, 3 October, Sunday, 4 October and Monday, 5 October.

T Saturday, 3 October, 17:30 – Mass of Saint Francis and *Transitus*

T Sunday, 4 October, 08:00 – Mass of Saint Francis

T Monday, 5 October, 09:30 – Blessing of Animals

Pets are welcome at Masses on Saturday and Sunday, and on Monday.

The ***Transitus*** is a short liturgical celebration observed by Franciscans worldwide commemorating the death of Saint Francis. It is celebrated on the evening of 3 October. The term “*Transitus*” means “passage” or “crossing over” in Latin, symbolizing St Francis’s transition from earthly life to eternal life with God. The *Transitus* is distinct from the Feast of St Francis on 4 October, focusing specifically on his passing rather than his overall legacy – which is the focus of the feast itself, on 4 October.

All are welcome to these celebrations of the life of Saint Francis.

PRAYER FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR OF

St Francis

Saint Francis, our brother,
you who eight hundred years ago
went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace,
intercede for us before the Lord.

You recognised true peace
in the Crucifix of San Damiano,
teach us to seek in Him
the source of all reconciliation
that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed,
crossed the lines of war
and misunderstanding,
give us the courage to build bridges
where the world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted
by conflict and division,
intercede for us
so that we may become peacemakers:
unarmed and disarming witnesses
of the peace that comes from Christ.

Amen.

Prayer offered by Pope Leo XIV
for the Jubilee Year of St Francis, 2026



SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	24 Aug	St Bartholomew, apostle	Revelation 21:9-14	John 1:45-51
Tuesday	25 Aug	Weekday, 21 st Week in Ordinary Time	2 Thessalonians 2:1-3,14-17	Matthew 23:23-26
Wednesday	26 Aug	Weekday, 21 st Week in Ordinary Time	2 Thessalonians 3:6-10,16-18	Matthew 23:27-32
Thursday	27 Aug	St Monica, mother of St Augustine	1 Corinthians 1:1-9	Matthew 24:42-51
Friday	28 Aug	St Augustine, bishop, doctor	1 Corinthians 1:17-25	Matthew 25:1-13
Saturday	29 Aug	The Passion of St John the Baptist	Jeremiah 1:17-19	Mark 6:17-29
Sunday	30 Aug	22 ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Thursday, 27 August 19:15 Baptism Preparation Meeting for September Baptisms
- ✦ Monday–Thursday, 31 Aug to 3 Sep Canon Law Conference in North Sydney
- ✦ Friday, 4 September 09:30 Anointing of the Sick during Mass
- ✦ Weekend, 5/6 September Blessing of Fathers during both Masses
- ✦ Tuesday, 8 September Enrolments CLOSE for First Penance and First Communion (Year 2)

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 WINTER RECIPE: PEA SOUP WITH CUMIN *from Tony of Mortdale*

Split green peas are inexpensive and have an extremely low GI of 22. Cook them up in stock with a few vegies and spices and you have a very hearty, energy-boosting soup the whole family can enjoy. Pea soup is usually cooked with a ham bone in it, but this can make the soup too salty. Using smoked paprika helps to replicate the ham flavour without diminishing the health value. Serves 40 to 6.

1 cup split green peas; 1.5 litres vegetable stock; 2 stalks celery, chopped; 2 carrots, chopped; 1 potato, chopped; 2 tbs tea oil or olive oil; 3 cloves garlic, finely sliced (optional!); 12 large onion, finely chopped; ½ tsp smoked paprika; 2 tsp cumin seeds, dry-roasted; 1 tbsp mint, chopped; sea salt and pepper, to taste.

Rinse the peas thoroughly in a strainer. Add to a pan with the stock, celery, carrot and potato. Bring to the boil and reduce the heat to simmer for 30 to 40 minutes. Heat the oil in a pan and sauté the garlic (!), onion, paprika and cumin seeds from 5 to 7 minutes until soft and golden. Remove from the heat and place in a blender with the pea mix and mint, and process until smooth. Season and serve. To smarten up the soup's appearance and increase its digestibility, serve it with a spoonful of natural yoghurt and a small pinch of cayenne pepper.

SALE OF THE PARISH PROPERTY AT WOMBARRA

In 2018, our Parish ceased using Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Wombarra for Sunday Masses, and in 2021, after consultation and the proper procedure, the church was “decommissioned” and used for various secular purposes by the Diocese. Since 2025, the building has been unused, so a decision was made, and approved by the Bishop, to sell the property in order to provide funds for the future use of our Parish. A real estate agent was engaged, and, after the necessary final approvals, a contract of sale was signed on 6 August 2026 for the amount of \$2 million, with settlement on 9 March 2027. The Finance Council will invest this with the CDF to provide for our Parish.

FIRST PENANCE AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

The Sacraments of First Penance and Communion are celebrated when a child is in Year 2 or seven years old (or older). Enrolments for 2026 close on **Tuesday, 8 September**. Check the parish website for details.

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website		NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website	SUNDAY
21 ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A		22 ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	MASS TIMES
1 st Reading	Isaiah 22:19-23	1 st Reading	Jeremiah 20:7-9
2 nd Reading	Romans 11:33-36	2 nd Reading	Romans 12:1-12
Gospel	Matthew 16:13-20	Gospel	Matthew 16:21-27
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	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 <i>Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday</i>	