



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
12 / 13 SEPTEMBER 2026
24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A
"I HAVE A DREAM"

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

This Sunday is about forgiveness, and most of us have something to learn about this important act.

In the Book of Sirach, our first reading, tells how awful wrath and anger are, and how the sinner "holds on to them" – a wonderful image. Release them and let them go, it says.

The Psalm speaks beautifully about God's absolving love: "Bless God, who forgives your sin and heals every illness, who snatches you from death and enfolds you with tender care." The second reading says we ought to live not for ourselves but for others. We should imitate God. When we live for the Lord, it says, we will also be graced to die for the Lord.

Forgiveness is a major ingredient of living for God and for others. People do not always do right, and we need to forgive them as God does. Forgiveness is the gift and the goal.

But what does it consist of?

Our culture has some pretty diverse ideas about this. For some it is a condescending act performed only by a person who is higher than another—a King or Queen or a judge or a boss or a media star—someone who leans down to grant pardon. For others it means "I can forgive but I can never forget." Perhaps this means, I will remain angry forever, but I will never act upon it. Such a stance can include an uncomfortable attitude: "I will choke back my hurt and anger by a sheer act of the will. I may have been savaged by someone, but I will not display it in my reaction."

On Easter Sunday of 1960, that seer of truth and lover of God, Dag Hammarskjöld, wrote an interpretation that is very moving: "Forgiveness breaks the chain of causality because he who 'forgives' you—out of love—takes upon himself the consequences of what you have done. Forgiveness, therefore, always entails a sacrifice. There is a price you must pay for your own liberation. Since it has come through another's sacrifice, you in turn must be willing to liberate in the same way, in spite of the consequences to yourself. You absorb them, if doing so truly flows out of love. (from Hammarskjöld, *Markings*, p. 197)

Let us apply these insights to the Gospel.

There, Jesus tells a long and involved parable about a servant who is pardoned by the master but then goes out and refuses, viciously, to forgive his own fellow servants.

At about six lines from the end the owner of the vineyard calls him a "wicked servant" and says, "should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?"

What is the lesson? That the deepest motivation for forgiveness is loving gratitude.

If someone has forgiven me out of love, then my authentic reaction will be deep appreciation. I will want spontaneously to pass the gift on. It follows that if God has forgiven me, I will want to give to anyone else the same liberation I have received.

By doing so we halt the chain of causality and pass along love instead of hate.

As we dwell in Christ's presence this Sunday, especially as we receive Communion, let us sense his forgiving love, signified so deeply in the sacrament. Let us allow our gratitude to flow to others.

During this time of pilgrimage, sinfulness in the life of the Church obscures the reality of our life in Christ – a common life that should be a sign of hope for struggling humanity. It is not without reason that we begin the Church's most solemn liturgies with an acknowledgement of our sinfulness. It should not surprise us, therefore, that the passage of Matthew's gospel from which we are reading – concerning our life in the Church – is in large part about problems associated with the sinfulness of members of the Church. Last Sunday's reading discussed the reconciliation of members guilty of public crimes destructive of the community. Today's reading concerns the forgiveness called for within the community at a personal level.

As was so often the case, Peter's impulsiveness gives rise to an important lesson. Peter has received a commission that involves considerable power in the life of the community of disciples. He thinks he is expressing what Jesus expects of him in the exercise of his authority. The question he puts to Jesus implies that he will be ready to forgive 'seven times'. His round number really hints at an indefinite readiness to forgive. Apparently, the scribes of the day taught that one was not obliged to forgive after the third or fourth time. But the response of Jesus declares that this vagueness is not enough: 'Not seven, but seventy-seven times' – there should be no limit to our readiness to forgive! Perhaps, as we hear this gospel, we are tempted to think that it has little to do with us – because we have never faced up to the ill will and resentments we have towards other members of our community, and to the gossiping

Breaking the Chain of Causality



✠✠ and factions these attitudes give rise to. Though these attitudes may not seem seriously sinful, they can be very damaging, making it impossible for our parishes to live the kind of life that leads others to share in our faith. Resentment and the vengeful spirit have been part of the human story since the beginning. Living in covenant with living God, and learning God's ways, old Israel came to accept that vengeance must be left to the Lord. For peoples who did not know the covenant, there was no limit to the spirit of revenge. In fact, the response of Jesus reminds us of this spirit, as expressed in book of Genesis, where Lamech boasts that he will exact 'vengeance seventy-seven-fold' (Genesis 4:24). Jesus is reminding us of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew's text, Jesus is remembered as teaching, 'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). Because the meaning of the word, 'perfect', in the biblical tradition has not been properly understood, one contemporary Bible renders this verse, 'Set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his'. The parable of the unforgiving manager drives home this lesson. Clearly, the ruler's generosity brings to mind the generosity of God. The debt forgiven was a fantastic amount, defying the imagination of Jesus' audience, impossible to repay. We are invited to compare our unforgiving spirit with the boundless generosity of our God. Let us examine our attitudes to others in our worshipping community. Have we failed to face up to our antagonisms, and tended to justify them by being judgmental of the attitudes of our fellow Christians? The great Church Father, John Chrysostom, has good advice for us as we examine our conscience. If we are not aware of our destructive attitudes we shall never grow up spiritually. On the other hand, he tells us, awareness of our own failings helps us to find the wisdom, gentleness and compassion that should be ours as true followers of the Saviour.

"There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, that it ill behoves any of us to find fault with the rest of us".

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Sirach 27:30–28:7

- ✠ Is it harder for you to forgive someone else or to ask someone for forgiveness? If you or your ancestors are the ones needing forgiveness, how can you apologize/make reparation now for actions that happened in the past, such as slavery or destruction of the environment?
- ✠ When you want to "hug wrath and anger tight" (paraphrase of the reading), do you have ways or people or places who will help you calm down your anger?

Second Reading Romans 14:7-9

- ✠ Sometimes God asks people to do extraordinary things. But most of the time not. How do you live your ordinary life for the Lord? Can you find God there? If you did regularly, would your life be, paradoxically, extraordinary?
- ✠ God created all things in love; God entered creation; and God rescued us. God does not leave us alone in this world or the next. Does thinking about this help you know that you are loved? And if you are a loving person, would you have time for things like holding grudges? Might you just want to "live for the Lord"?

Gospel Matthew 18:21-35

- ✠ Do you think God wants you to forgive your neighbour just for your neighbour's sake, or for yours too? We know that we need unlimited forgiveness ourselves. God loves us so much God has forgiven all our sins. Should those thoughts help us forgive others?
- ✠ Pope Francis says that Jesus asks us to do something radical when he asks us to forgive our brothers and sisters unreservedly. Can you think of ways you can do this?

Jesus asks us to believe that forgiveness is the door which leads to reconciliation. In telling us to forgive our brothers (and sisters) unreservedly, he is asking us to do something utterly radical, but he also gives us the grace to do it. What appears, from a human perspective, to be impossible, impractical and even at times repugnant, he makes possible and fruitful through the infinite power of his cross. The cross of Christ reveals the power of God to bridge every division, to heal every wound, and to reestablish the original bonds of brotherly love.

– Pope Francis, *Homily*, Mass for Peace and Reconciliation, Seoul, 18 August 2014.

SAFEGUARDING SUNDAY

The Catholic Church in Australia marks Safeguarding Sunday (formerly Child Protection Sunday) on the second Sunday of September -- at the conclusion of National Child Protection Week. Safeguarding Sunday seeks to acknowledge the immense damage caused by the sexual abuse of children and adults at risk, including by priests, religious and lay people within Catholic contexts. It makes a commitment to practices and protocols that create and maintain safe environments for all people. It invites people to pray for those harmed by abuse directly and indirectly.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT – AUGUST 2026

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) has released the [2026 Social Justice Statement, Living the Gospel in Times of Social Division](#). In this statement, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB reflects on the growing tensions and divisions experienced within our communities and invites Catholics to respond through the lens of the Gospel — embracing mercy, human dignity, respectful dialogue, reconciliation and solidarity.

The statement encourages parishes, families, schools and agencies to use this resource for prayer, formation and action. The full statement is attached for your information and reflection.

MARTIN LUTHER KING'S NOBEL PEACE PRIZE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

I accept the Nobel Prize for Peace at a moment when twenty-two million Negroes of the United States of America are engaged in a creative battle to end the long night of racial injustice. I accept this award in behalf of a civil rights movement which is moving with determination and a majestic scorn for risk and danger to establish a reign of freedom and a rule of justice. I am mindful that only yesterday in Birmingham, Alabama, our children, crying out for brotherhood, were answered with fire hoses, snarling dogs and even death. I am mindful that only yesterday in Philadelphia, Mississippi, young people seeing to secure the right to vote were brutalized and murdered. And only yesterday more than 40 houses of worship in the State of Mississippi alone were bombed or burned because they offered a sanctuary to those who would not accept segregation. I am mindful that debilitating and grinding poverty afflicts my people and chains them to the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

Therefore, I must ask why this prize is awarded to a movement which is beleaguered and committed to unrelenting struggle; to a movement which has not won the very peace and brotherhood which is the essence of the Nobel Prize. After contemplation, I conclude that this award which I receive on behalf of that movement is profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time – the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression.

Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood.

If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. The tortuous road which has led from Montgomery, Alabama, to Oslo bears witness to this truth. This is a road over which millions of Negroes are travelling to find a new sense of dignity. This same road has opened for all Americans a new era of progress and hope. It has led to a new Civil Rights bill, and it will, I am convinced, be widened and lengthened into a superhighway of justice as Negro and white men in increasing numbers create alliances to overcome their common problems.

I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. I refuse to accept the idea that the “isness” of man’s present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal “oughtness” that forever confronts him. I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

I believe that even amid today’s motor bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow. I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nations, can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men. I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centred men have torn down, men other-centred can build up. I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive goodwill will proclaim the rule of the land. “And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid.”

I still believe that we shall overcome.

This faith can give us courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, we will know that we are living in the creative turmoil of a genuine civilization struggling to be born.

Today I come to Oslo as a trustee, inspired and with renewed dedication to humanity. I accept this prize on behalf of all men who love peace and brotherhood. I say I come as a trustee, for in the depths of my heart I am aware that this prize is much more than an honour to me personally. Every time I take a flight, I am always mindful of the man people who make a successful journey possible – the known pilots and the unknown ground crew.

So, you honour the dedicated pilots of our struggle who have sat at the controls as the freedom movement soared into orbit. You honour, once again, Chief (Albert) Luthuli of South Africa, whose struggles with and for his people, are still met with the most brutal expression of man’s inhumanity to man. You honour the ground crew without whose labour and sacrifices the jet flights to freedom could never have left the earth.

Most of these people will never make the headlines and their names will not appear in *Who’s Who*. Yet when years have rolled past and when the blazing light of truth is focused on this marvellous age in which we live – men and women will know and children will be taught that we have a finer land, a better people, a more noble civilization – because these humble children of God were willing to suffer for righteousness’ sake.

I think Alfred Nobel would know what I mean when I say that I accept this award in the spirit of a curator of some precious heirloom which he holds in trust for its true owners – all those to whom beauty is truth and truth beauty – and in whose eyes the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold.

– Martin Luther King Jr, Oslo, Norway, 10 December 1964
Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated on 4 April 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	14 Sep	The Exaltation of the Holy Cross	Numbers 21:4-9	John 3:13-17
Tuesday	15 Sep	Our Lady of Sorrows	Hebrews 5:7-9	John 19:25-27
Wednesday	16 Sep	Sts Cornelius and Cyprian, bishops, martyrs	1 Corinthians 12:31–13:13	Luke 7:31-35
Thursday	17 Sep	Weekday, 24 th Week in Ordinary Time	1 Corinthians 15:1-11	Luke 7:36-50
Friday	18 Sep	Weekday, 24 th Week in Ordinary Time	1 Corinthians 15:12-20	Luke 8:1-3
Saturday	19 Sep	Weekday, 24 th Week in Ordinary Time	1 Corinthians 15:35-37,42-49	Luke 8:4-15
Sunday	20 Sep	25 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Saturday, 12 September 17:30 Family Mass followed by Pizza dinner
- ✦ Weekend, 12/13 September Blessing of September Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays
- ✦ Sunday, 13 September 10:00 Open Day at Thirroul Surf Lifesaving Club – Nipper Regos
- ✦ Sunday, 20 September 08:00 One Baptism during Mass
- ✦ Thursday, 24 September 19:15 Parent Meeting for October Baptisms
- ✦ Friday, 25 September Last day of School Term 3 – *school resumes on Monday, 12 October*
- ✦ Weekend, 3–4–5 October Celebrations of St Francis of Assisi – with the Blessing of Animals

**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**

THIS WEEK'S RECIPE: INTENSELY FLAVORED LEMON CAKE

1 large lemon (boiled for 6 minutes, sliced, and seeds removed); 180g granulated sugar; 70ml vegetable oil; 50ml milk; 3 eggs; 250g flour; 10g baking powder; 1 tea glass mixed dried fruits; 1 teaspoon butter (for the middle part). Boil the lemon for 6 minutes, slice it, and remove the seeds. Whisk the eggs and sugar, then add the milk and vegetable oil. Add the boiled lemon and blend until smooth. Add the flour and baking powder, mix well, then add the dried fruits and mix again. Bake in a preheated oven at 160°C with fan setting for about 30–35 minutes. Make sure to check with a toothpick to see if it is fully baked.

HAVE YOU EVER GIVEN THOUGHT TO BEING A FOSTER CARER??

In NSW, there is a heartbreaking shortage of foster carers. CatholicCare Wollongong has seen a significant increase in enquiries about providing foster care – can you help with this urgent shortage in our local community? Bishop Brian produced a video about this need back in 2024 – and the need is more urgent today. Please find out about this need so you might be able to help, or you might know someone who could help. It won't hurt just to watch the video – you never know what horizons it opens up: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gK5X40Ms8k>

THE SEASON OF CREATION 2026

The Season of Creation 2026 runs from **1 September to 4 October**, and its official theme is “Living Water,” with the symbol “Immersion in Living Water,” inspired by Ezekiel 47:9–12, which describes the life-giving water flowing from God's sanctuary, restoring ecosystems and symbolizing spiritual renewal and ecological healing. The Season of Creation is an annual ecumenical celebration observed worldwide by Christian communities. It focuses on prayer, reflection, and action for ecological justice and care for creation. It begins on **1 September**, recognized as the **World Day of Prayer for Creation**, and ends on **4 October**, the **Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi**. Key emphases include: ecological restoration; spiritual renewal; human responsibility; climate justice. Special St Francis Feast Day Mass on Saturday, 3 October (17:30), and Sunday, 4 October (08:00); Blessing of Animals at 09:30 on Monday, 5 October.

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website		NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website	SUNDAY
24 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A		25 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	MASS TIMES
1 st Reading	Sirach 27:30–28:7	1 st Reading	Isaiah 55:6-9
2 nd Reading	Romans 14:7-9	2 nd Reading	Philippians 1:20-24
Gospel	Matthew 18:21-35	Gospel	Matthew 20:1-16
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		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>	
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