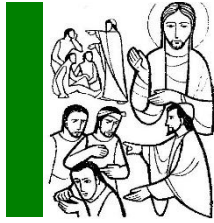


Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
19 / 20 SEPTEMBER 2026
25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A
TWO BAPTISMS – WELCOME

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Just Imagine

By accident, a primary school religion teacher discovered a great trick of teaching, one needed very much. The class was often in complete chaos each time the teacher arrived. But if the teacher told a story, even the simplest story, the pandemonium ceased. It morphed into rapt attention. You could hear a pin drop. Until the story ended, that is, and then anarchy resumed.

There must be a special part of the brain devoted to story-hearing.

Why does the gospel get such special attention at Mass? Why do we hold the book up and parade it to the lectern? Because it is a story, the story of Jesus. We are struck by the narrative about him, much more than we are by the sometimes-complicated theology in Paul's letters. Within the gospels, which are themselves stories, we find the parables Jesus told.

Stories.

So, take a good look at the parable in Sunday's Gospel and let the story lead you. See if it works. Imagine the landowner hiring labourers for his vineyard as he shakes their rough hands and invites them to work. You can see their satisfied smiles, since they know they will get the usual daily wage.



The day gets hotter. And hotter. High noon has come and the owner walks back to town to go shopping for this and that. He glances around. Men are leaning on buildings, loitering really, bored but still hopeful. The owner crosses over to them and offers to hire them. They come to life and hurry off to his vineyard to earn just half a day's wages. It is more than nothing.

Then, the workday is about over. The owner is still in town for whatever reason, and what should he see but strong men lolling about in doorways, wet with sweat from the heat and from their dejection. To their surprise, he hires them too.

Day ends and "just wages" are handed out. It is the exact same amount for every worker, no matter how many or how few hours anyone had worked. Look at the faces. Anger in the ones who had slaved all day 'This is not fair! We demand our rights! We put in the time and these oafs did nothing. The late ones smiling sheepishly.

What does the story mean? You will find the answer if you sense the scene rather than just use brain power. Let your imagination see the kindness in the owner's face. Call to mind the gloom of the ones hired so late. See their amazement now.

Obviously, these wages are not a strict remuneration for hours worked. They more like a gift from a fond heart. How does this feel to you? Didn't Jesus tell his parable to show how God's caring heart works, how he gives a depth of love to each person in this world, especially to ones who suffer and are left behind?

If it is hard to see, ask for light.

'The last will be first and the first last'. These words of Jesus, with which today's reading from Matthew concludes, occur in different contexts in all three synoptic gospels – God's ways constantly overturn our human expectations. And that is the lesson of the parable in today's gospel. Of all the parables of Jesus, the story of the labourers in the vineyard is probably the most puzzling for Christians of successive generations. That means that it is a great success, that it achieves what Jesus intended. A plausible story, reflecting the common experience of his hearers begins to unfold. It was normal for day labourers seeking employment to gather in public places. One *denarius* would have been a normal day's wage. We are given a hint where the story is leading however; Israel, the Lord's vineyard, was a familiar theme of the scriptures. An element of suspense holds the attention of the listeners – what is the unusual behaviour of the landowner leading to? Then the conclusion of the story comes as a shock, leaving us unsettled, as our reasonable expectations are not fulfilled.

That is the purpose of the parable, to invite us to leave aside the human logic and predictability with which we shape our world, and to enter the Kingdom announced by the Saviour, the new world shaped by God's generous and merciful ways. This parable may have been directed originally at the Pharisees' refusal to hear the Good News of God's ways brought by Jesus; but the fact that we still find ourselves challenged by the story indicates that it has a lesson that is valid for every generation.

'Did we not agree? Take your earnings'. God will never be unjust. But the Lord's great plan for the human family has a measure that goes far beyond our human calculations of what is appropriate and just – designs of generosity and mercy conceived in the eternal depths of the divine freedom. 'Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways'.



✠✠ Jesus is calling us to bow down before the mystery of God's 'grace'. 'Why be envious because I am generous?' 'Grace' is the term used by the scriptures, for this new world of God's generosity announced by Jesus. In a sense, 'grace' is the essential message of the New Testament – where the term occurs countless times: 'God's grace has been revealed to save the whole human race' (Titus 2:11); 'It is by God's grace you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own ... so that nobody can claim the credit' (Ephesians 2:8). The 'grace' or favour of God announced in the Christian gospel is God's generous outreach to each one of us determined before time began. Because God's will is effective and all-powerful, 'grace' also refers to the many blessings of our new life in Christ. Our Catholic upbringing has stressed these created effects; but we should have given more attention to the folly of divine love made known to us through these blessings. This, we could say, is the point of Jesus' parable: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ' (Ephesians 1:3).

So, what are we to do when we are feeling downcast and helpless, overwhelmed by anxiety or pain? The answer is clear. Jesus tells us that God will keep coming to us to invite us from dawn till dusk to enjoy God's love. God began inviting us from the first moment we looked into our mother's eyes and experienced her love. God will still be inviting us when those who love us most are standing around our bed as we prepare to die. In the words of the Psalm: 'God is near to those who call, who cry out from their hearts.'

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading **Isaiah 55:6-9**

- ✠ "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." Can God always be near? Name some times in your day when it is easier to find God than at others. What helps you remember to "find God in all things" in your life?
- ✠ Isaiah is writing about a call to conversion in this reading. "Let the wicked person forsake his way." For what ways do we need to ask for mercy, and need to "forsake"? What about environmental, or racial or immigrant injustices, and fixing the wrongs? Does God ever withhold mercy or pardon?

Second Reading **Philippians 1:20-24,27**

- ✠ Is there someone or some group who "magnifies" the Lord for you? Every time you are around him/her/them, do you feel Christ is somehow present. Why is that? What is it about them that "clears your eyesight"?
- ✠ What did Paul mean when he said, "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain." What do you think was the "fruitful labour" for Paul? What is your "fruitful labour"?

Gospel **Matthew 20:1-16**

- ✠ This Gospel reading is not about strict justice but outrageous generosity. Are any of us ever worthy of grace, first hour worker or eleventh, no matter what? What is the message of this parable? What is the message for you in your everyday life?
- ✠ How would grace be handed out if humans made the rules? What if God's ways were like our ways, if God's bountiful generosity did not exceed the level of simple distributive justice? According to Pope Francis in *Joy of the Gospel*, paragraph 48, who are the "last" in "the last shall be first"?

If the whole Church takes up [the] missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, "those who cannot repay you" (Luke 14:14). ... Today and always, "the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel," and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.

– Pope Francis, *A Mother with an Open Heart*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 48.

BAPTISMS THIS SUNDAY – WELCOME TO ISABELLE AND JOWAN

WELCOME to ISABELLE AND JOWAN DANCY baptised this Sunday: *welcome and thank you to parents, godparents, family and friends from our Parish.*

Baptism is the first Sacrament of Christian Initiation, followed by Confirmation and Eucharist. In most of the Eastern Catholic Churches, the three Sacraments are celebrated together as is done in the Latin Catholic Church with adults and children over the age of reason – that is 7 years or older. If you want your infant son or daughter (under 7 years) to receive Baptism, the next Baptisms to be held in our Parish will be during Masses on **Saturday, 17 October / Sunday, 18 October**. The next Baptism preparation meeting for parents will be in the presbytery on **Thursday, 24 September at 19:15**. Call in to the Parish Office to collect the Baptism Enrolment Forms. Baptism is the first Sacrament of Christian Initiation, followed by Confirmation (Year 6) and Eucharist (7- or 8-year-olds).



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.

DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG – BISHOP’S ANNUAL APPEAL

Our faith calls us to help one another through prayer and action. Offering dignified support to priests who are unwell, care for our retired clergy, and a sound and holistic formation of our seminarians, is my responsibility as your Bishop. I seek your prayers and practical support to help me ensure that I can do this. Your tax-deductible donation to this appeal is very much appreciated. – Bishop Brian.

Next weekend at both Masses, the Annual Appeal takes place. You can also donate online: <https://www.dow.org.au/giving/>

SPRING EQUINOX – WEDNESDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER AT 10:05

“Equinox”: The best way to remember what an equinox is to think of a similar word and that’s ‘equal’. Equinoxes are when the sun is directly over the equator meaning that the length of the day is equal to the length of the night. This occurs only twice a year, typically around 20-21 March for the autumn equinox (also known as the autumnal equinox in the southern hemisphere) and around 22-23 September for the spring equinox (also known as the vernal equinox for the southern hemisphere). During equinoxes, the sun exerts a stronger pull on the earth than the rest of the year, because of the alignment between the sun and the equator which impacts on tides. If there’s also an alignment of the moon with the earth and sun, then tides will get even stronger.

PARISH PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM – ENVELOPES OR DIRECT DEBIT

Thanks to your generosity as parishioners, our Parish is able to function and stay afloat. Many parishioners contribute to the Parish via the “tap” machine near the front door. Others use the direct debit method, where monthly or fortnightly, an automatic payment is made from a parishioner’s account to the parish account. *If you would like to donate using the “direct debit” method, please contact the parish office to arrange your contribution.* Other parishioners use the **weekly envelopes**, a system that has been in use for many years. If you use the weekly envelopes, the next set of envelopes commences on 3/4 October. **Collect your new set of envelopes** from this weekend onwards – they are available on a table near the entrance to the sacristy. *Thank you for your generosity.*

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

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 in the courtyard and at Bailey’s grave 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.**

Mark your diary: ***Three Presentations on the Life and Legacy of Saint Francis*** – in person or on Zoom on these **Thursdays – 8 October, 15 October, 22 October** – each night from 19:30 to 21:00 with a cuppa and supper. In person at the Parish Hall, 1 Station Street, Thirroul or on Zoom <https://dowcatholic.zoom.us/j/99053445383>

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS, MONDAY, 5 OCTOBER AT 09:30

As usual, the Blessing of Animals will take place on the **Monday** of the long weekend, **5 October at 09:30** at the **Parish of Saint Michael, 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul**. The blessing takes place in the courtyard next to the church. You will also be able to visit **Bailey’s grave** in the backyard of the presbytery. All animals under 800kg and their carers are welcome, though please keep the larger crocodiles on a tight leash. The **feast of St Francis of Assisi** is celebrated with **special Masses** on **Saturday, 3 October at 17:30** and on **Sunday, 4 October, at 08:00** – **pets are welcome at both Masses.**

Blessed are you, Lord God, maker of all living creatures. May we always praise you for all your beauty in creation. We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.



SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	21 Sep	St Matthew, apostle, evangelist	Ephesians 4:1-7,11-13	Matthew 9:9-13
Tuesday	22 Sep	Weekday, 25 th Week in Ordinary Time	Proverbs 21:1-6,10-13	Luke 8:19-21
Wednesday	23 Sep	St Pius of Pietrelcina, priest	Proverbs 30:5-9	Luke 9:1-6
Thursday	24 Sep	Weekday, 25 th Week in Ordinary Time	Ecclesiastes 1:2-11	Luke 9:7-9
Friday	25 Sep	Weekday, 25 th Week in Ordinary Time	Ecclesiastes 3:1-11	Luke 9:18-22
Saturday	26 Sep	Weekday, 25 th Week in Ordinary Time	Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8	Luke 9:43-45
Sunday	27 Sep	25 TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Sunday, 20 September 08:00 Two Baptisms during Mass
- ✦ Wednesday, 23 September 10:05 Spring Equinox – equal day and night – *summer is on the way*
- ✦ 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, 26-27 September Bishop's Annual Appeal
Surfing Season commences – Swim Between the Flags
- ✦ Friday, 2 October 09:30 Anointing of the Sick during Mass
- ✦ Weekend, 3-4-5 October Celebrations of St Francis of Assisi – with the Blessing of Animals
- ✦ Sunday, 4 October 02:00 Daylight Saving commences
- ✦ Monday, 5 October Public Holiday – Labour Day

**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: A QUICK AND TASTY SANDWICH

Beat one egg and pour it onto a pan with oil or butter. Put two slices of bread on the egg, then flip it. Fold the overhanging egg onto the bread. Add to one slice of the bread slices of (ham), tomato, cheese, avocado and lettuce. Add ground pepper. Fold the other slice of bread on top. Cut and serve! How easy is that!

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	
25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A		26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A		MASS TIMES	
1st Reading	Isaiah 55:6-9	1st Reading	Ezekiel 18:25-28	Saturday 	17:30
2nd Reading	Philippians 1:20-24,27	2nd Reading	Philippians 2:1-11	Sunday	08:00
Gospel	Matthew 20:1-16	Gospel	Matthew 21:28-32	 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>	