



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
26 / 27 SEPTEMBER 2026
26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A
ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI – NEXT WEEKEND

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Motivation

Sometimes God appeals to people's self-interest to get them to do what is right. Many of us need it, so that, through self-interest, we can overcome our self-interest.

We are shown this in the first reading, where we find a straight-out argument between the people and God. They claim that "The way of the Lord is unfair!" They quote the famous saying, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2). Apparently, their argument is that sin belongs to their fathers or mothers, not to them. So, God is punishing unjustly.

God's reply in this reading is as follows: You say, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

Then God shows them that punishment comes to those who actually commit an iniquity, not to those who just happen to be born of sinful parents. It is your own actions that matter. If you sin, it is fair that I punish you. If you do virtue, it is fair that I give you life.

Jesus' parable in the Gospel takes it one step further. There we hear about a man whose father asks him to go work in the vineyard. The man says, rudely, "I will not." Surely, he would be counted as one of the sinful people described above. Or maybe he just had a headache, or was not a morning person, or whatever. But when his father leaves the house, he changes his mind and goes out to work hard on the vines.

He has a brother. This one says in effect, "Yes, of course I will go out and do your will!" Isn't this exactly what God had been telling the people in the first reading? I am sure the father in the present parable was pleased, especially after the rude reply he had gotten from his first son. Of course, as we know, this brother changed his mind and did not bother to go at all.

This second brother's selfish interests were served by saying "yes, yes" to his father. It made him look good. But he did not trouble himself to actually do what he had promised. Self-interest did not get him to do good, but only to seem to do good.

So finally, God decided to show us motivation that cannot be reduced to self-interest.

If we want motivation, as well as encouragement, solace in love, participation in the Spirit, compassion, and mercy, St Paul says to look at what Christ did (second reading). Then you will not act out of selfishness, but will serve others humbly, as Christ did. This is the ultimate motivation in Christianity.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. Therefore, God highly exalted him.

Self-interested motives are not the only ones. Just look at Christ—when you are at prayer and at Mass—and let him form you in humility. Let God make you good.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus has already warned his disciples three times that he is to suffer; and he has indicated that the chief priests and leaders of the people will be responsible for his death. The brief parable in today's reading, addressed 'to the chief priests and the elders', reflects the growing confrontation with these authorities that will lead, in the end, to his death. He knows that, in their opposition to him, they see themselves as upholding the traditions of Israel — giving expression to their faithfulness to the Lord. His parable gently confronts them with their tragic miscalculation. In Matthew's narrative, immediately before Jesus tells this parable, he was challenged by these leaders: what authority did he have for teaching in the Temple precincts? He showed up their hypocrisy, putting them in a dilemma — asking them what authority John the Baptist had when he preached to the people.

The simple story of the parable he now addresses to them ends with a question. His parables, we recall, were designed to leave the hearers pondering an unsettling question. Because the answer to the question he put to them is straight forward — the son who initially refused, and 'afterwards thought better of it and went', was the one who did the father's will — the opponents of Jesus answered accordingly. But as they do so, they begin to realise what Jesus' parable is driving at. As the defenders of the nation's faith traditions, they see themselves as always saying 'Yes' to God. But now Jesus is inviting them to reflect that their actions may not match their professions of



✠✠ faithfulness. John the Baptist called the people to a conversion whereby they would be open to what was about to take place in the great plan of God. The very ones these leaders despised, as ‘outside the law’ – tax collectors, sinners, those whose busy lives and slender means made it impossible for them to observe all the rituals and customs they emphasised – were listening to the teaching of the one announced by the Baptist, while they themselves were intent on destroying him, not recognising that he came from God. The ironic lesson of the parable would have been very real to the Jewish converts of Matthew’s community.

The old proverb, ‘Actions speak louder than words’, reminds us of the inconsistencies that can be present in the lives of all of us. The parable of Jesus reminds us that these inconsistencies can be present in our Christian lives – when we see ourselves as fervent believers, always faithful to our devotions and religious observances, but with little practical expression to show of our following of Christ. St Paul’s exhortations to the Philippians in today’s reading provide simple but telling examples of the practical attitudes that true followers of Jesus should have: no competition or petty rivalry, putting the wellbeing of others before our own, being genuinely concerned to assist those around us. And, as always, Paul leads us back to the ultimate pattern of our life as disciples of the Lord – the Son who said ‘Yes’ to the Father, came to work in the God’s vineyard, setting aside his divine glory and making himself the Servant of us all. ‘In your attitudes you must be the same as Christ’.

Jesus may well have told the same parable in different forms. As we hear today’s brief parable, we may well ask whether it is related to the great parable, in Luke’s gospel, of the wayward son who found his way back to his father’s love and welcome.

We know how much we need forgiveness from God. Every time we pray the ‘Our Father’ we say: ‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us’. Jesus insists that we must ‘forgive our brother or sister from our heart’ (Matthew 18:35). Sometimes we are like the second son in today’s Gospel. We find ourselves saying: ‘Certainly, I will do your will. I will forgive them’. But when we continue to feel hurt and we are called to forgive as we have said we would, does our heart reach out like that of Jesus and offer a healing forgiveness or do we allow our heart to close in on its hurt, blocking out any mercy or love? Understanding is not sufficient. Forgetting is not possible or helpful. The passing of time of itself does not heal. We are asked to be open to a genuine change of heart on the part of the one who has offended us, and we need the largeness of heart to accept this change and to give love graciously. Jesus gave us his broken body and poured out his love for us from his broken heart.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Ezekiel 18:25-28

✠ When we turn away from wickedness we are turning toward God. Spiritual writers call this “conversion.” Are we converted just once or do we experience conversion many times in our lifetime? If so, in what sense?

✠ What do you think the Pope means when he refers to the “difficulty of daily conversion”?

We face so many challenges in life: poverty, distress, humiliation, the struggle for justice, persecutions, the difficulty of daily conversion, the effort to remain faithful to our call to holiness, and many others. But if we open the door to Jesus and allow him to be part of our lives, if we share our joys and sorrows with him, then we will experience the peace and joy that only God, who is infinite love, can give.

– Pope Francis, World Youth Day, 2014

Second Reading Philippians 2:1-11

✠ The reading says “... in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” Who is doing this now where you live? Are there people marching for racial justice? Or health care workers? Or those trying to change the climate crisis?

✠ Paul begins this reading with, “... if there is any sharing in the Spirit ...” Do you ask the Spirit, who lives in you, for help in situations where you find yourself in a quandary? Do you always get help when you ask for it?

Gospel Matthew 21:28-32

✠ Using the idea of “conversion” from above, discuss the two sons from this Gospel reading. Which one needed to change and turn toward his father? Are you presently in need of conversion in any area of your life? What counts more in building community, saying some good words, or actually doing some good deeds? At which one are you better, words or deeds?

✠ Jesus told the chief priests and elders, “John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him.” Why didn’t they believe John the Baptist? Was it hard for them to change their minds and think in new ways? Is it hard for you”?

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. **Thank you, as always, for your generosity.**

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

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.

THE FEAST DAY OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Jubilee celebrations at St Michael 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 the Masses on Saturday and Sunday, and in the courtyard on the Monday.*

THE TRANSITUS OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

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.** This year, the *Transitus* will be incorporated into the 17:30 Saturday evening Mass at Thirroul.



THREE PRESENTATIONS ON THE LIFE AND LEGACY 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.



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 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. Key emphases include: ecological restoration; spiritual renewal; human responsibility; climate justice.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year II

Monday	28 Sep	Weekday, 26 th Week in Ordinary Time	Job 1:6-22	Luke 9:46-50
Tuesday	29 Sep	Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, archangels	Daniel 7:9-10,13-14	John 1:47-51
Wednesday	30 Sep	St Jerome, priest, doctor	Job 9:1-12,14-16	Luke 9:57-62
Thursday	1 Oct	St Thérèse of the Child Jesus, virgin, doctor	Job 19:21-27	Luke 10:1-12
Friday	2 Oct	The Holy Guardian Angels	Exodus 23:20-23	Matthew 18:1-5
Saturday	3 Oct	Weekday, 26 th Week in Ordinary Time	Job 42:1-3,5-6,12-17	Luke 10:17-24
Sunday	4 Oct	SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ 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 – 09:30 ... 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: CHOCOLATE BLUEBERRY BROWNIES *from Chef Raymond*

125g unsalted butter, chopped; 125g dark chocolate, chopped; 337.5g (1½ cups) castor sugar; 112.5g (¾ cup) plain flour; 30g (¼ cup) Dutch cocoa powder; ½ tsp salt; 3 eggs, lightly whisked; 1tsp vanilla extract; 123g (¾ cup) blueberries (fresh or frozen); sea salt flakes for serving.

Preheat oven to 180°C (160 fan forced). Line a 9×9-inch brownie pan with baking paper. In a bowl, add butter and chocolate. Microwave at intervals of 30 seconds for approximately two minutes, stirring in between. Mixture should be smooth, shiny and silky. Allow to cool slightly. In a large bowl, add sugar, flour, cocoa powder and salt and stir to combine. Add melted chocolate and butter, eggs and vanilla and mix gently to form a batter. Stir through blueberries. Pour batter into prepared tin and bake for 25-30 minutes. The centre should be soft but not jiggling. Allow to cool completely before slicing. Sprinkle with sea salt flakes to serve.

THE TRIBUNAL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In 2015, Pope Francis wrote that “charity and mercy demand that the Church, like a good mother, be near her children who feel themselves estranged from her.” The Interdiocesan Tribunal of Sydney, which has an Office in the Diocese of Wollongong, is a service of the Church to assist with the pastoral care of Catholics and non-Catholics who are civilly divorced, and who are seeking to remarry or who want clarification of their standing in the Church. The Tribunal also assists remarried persons seeking to have their current marriage recognised in the Church, and remarried persons wishing to be baptised or received into the Catholic Church.

Any divorced person, or a divorced and remarried person is welcome to contact the Wollongong Office of the Tribunal to obtain further information, or to have their status within the Church clarified.

Brochures are available at the back of the church in the notice board area.

The Wollongong Office of the Tribunal is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. You are welcome to contact the Tribunal on 4222 2409 or tribunal@dow.org.au or visit www.tribunal.dow.org.au

THIS Sunday's Readings – <i>on website</i>	NEXT Sunday's Readings – <i>on website</i>	SUNDAY MASS TIMES
26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A	SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI	Saturday 17:30
1 st Reading Ezekiel 18:25-28	1 st Reading Sirach 50:1,3-4,6-7	Sunday 08:00
2 nd Reading Philippians 2:1-11	2 nd Reading Galatians 6:14-18	Saturday Mass is recorded.
Gospel Matthew 21:28-32	Gospel Matthew 11:25-30	
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>