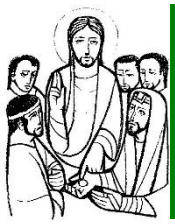


Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul

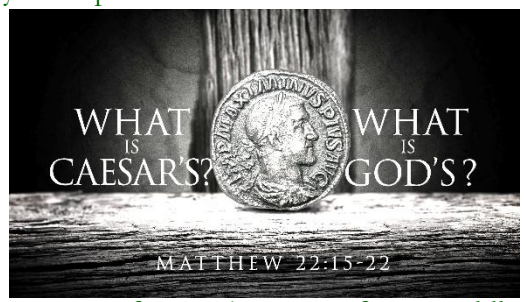


PARISH BULLETIN
17 / 18 OCTOBER 2026
29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A
POPE LEO AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Two Realms

There seem to be two realms, God's and Caesar's. Jesus says this in Sunday's Gospel: "Give therefore to Caesar the things that are the Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."



Which realm do we live in?

Are we "Sunday Catholics," giving to God maybe an hour per week at Mass and then getting on with television and cars and work and food? And maybe with being afraid? Or with wishing things had turned out better? Do you leave it to professionals to pray to God while you live a lesser life? Have we given your life to Caesar?

Or do we try it the other way around?

Perhaps we are so serious about Christianity and spirituality that we try to get away from enjoyment of any worldly thing so as to live uncorrupted. Through the history of Christianity there have been marvellous examples of this. The desert hermits. The cloistered nuns and monks. The great mystics. "A penny for Caesar and all the rest for God"?

If you push this statement too far, everything of Caesar must go away because it is not God, or on the other hand, God has to go away because science and secularism are so powerful.

Maybe Jesus made his statement to settle the argument posed to him by Pharisees. Here is a key. Can God and Caesar co-exist? What if you are created to be a container for God's presence right in the midst of the secular world?

What if, in spite of the voices within you saying that you are not worth much, in spite of the setbacks of life, the losses, the flatness, in spite of all these, what if God created you with room inside you where God, out of love for you, can be quietly present?

I can hear objections to such an idea: "God would never be at home in me, not until I do a lot better with my life." Or "You want me to be some kind of nut, running around acting holy?" Or "Sure, I want to let God in, but I like beer and TV too much." Or "What does all this have to do with real life?" Or simply, "I don't want to."

But if God were a great friend, a loving, faithful amigo who really does want to be with you, within you, as much as is possible? In fact, how would it be if God were a companion who truly and actually accepts you and forgives you completely whenever you need it? Wouldn't this give you another way to look at the connection between heaven and at earth?

Wouldn't it mean that God put you and me into the world to be holy in it, to be friends with the things of Caesar? To work in the world of sin in spite of our own sins?

Could be that we ourselves are those "things that belong to God" that Jesus spoke of. "Belong," not in a possessive way, but in the way felt by people who love and are loved. We "belong." If this were so, why wouldn't we want to give ourselves to God, and then also to bring our God-filled selves to Caesar's palaces and to the dirty roads outside them and show everyone what Jesus is all about?

Which realm should we live in? Both.

In these final weeks of the Church's year, our readings from Matthew's gospel point towards what lies ahead. Today's gospel and that of next Sunday tell of the growing confrontation with the nation's leaders that will lead to Jesus' death. And in our last three readings from Matthew's gospel Jesus warns his hearers that the end is approaching.

The exchange recorded in today's gospel is well known. Matthew's brief account tells us a great deal about the situation that was developing in the last days of Jesus life. The Jewish people bitterly resented the Roman occupation of their country; now, those who have turned against Jesus exploit this explosive situation to discredit him. The dilemma that Jesus is placed in by the question put to him about the paying of the Roman tax is brought out in Matthew's account by the composition of the group putting the question – Pharisees and Herodians. The Pharisees represent Jews who have a real problem of conscience paying the tax. Strict Pharisees would have considered the inscription on the denarius handed to Jesus – which almost certainly read, 'Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, great high priest' – to be blasphemous. This influential group, dedicated to upholding the traditions of God's people, would have asked themselves whether they were compromising their principles by paying their tax with this coin. If Jesus encouraged the paying of the tax, he would not only offend the Pharisees but also antagonise the common people who so resented the Roman rule. The Herodians, followers of Herod – the puppet ruler in league with the Romans – had no scruples concerning the tax. If Jesus condemned the paying of the tax, he could be denounced for subversion.

The famous reply of Jesus, "Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" is not a clever evasion, as we may be led to think. With this reply, he turns the question back on his

interrogators – taking the discussion beyond the level of the partisanship they are trying to exploit, he tells them that they are faced by a decision of conscience. As is so often the case – think of our own times – involvement in the political life of the nation is not a straightforward matter. The Romans had originally occupied Palestine at the invitation of Jewish leaders, bringing a relative stability, that replaced a situation of continuing anarchy. The contemporaries of Jesus must ask themselves whether the presence the Romans was the lesser of two evils. Today's first reading from the later Isaian writings is well chosen. Cyrus – who 'does not know' the God of Israel – is called by the prophet, God's 'anointed', as he fulfills God's designs, sending the Jewish exiles back from captivity after his defeat of the Babylonians. God is Lord of all, certainly, Jesus is telling his listeners; but Jewish conscience must judge whether the Roman presence is providential, preventing a worse situation. We should note that Jesus invites the people to make their own judgment of conscience; he does not make it for them. We would misunderstand the reply of Jesus if we thought it was meant to instruct us about the relationship that should exist between Church and State. His reply concerns, not the order of politics, but the order of moral responsibility – the individual's duty to participate in the life of the nation in a way that best promotes the common good of justice and peace. At a later date, when the Roman state became a demonic force intent on destroying the Church, defiance of the authorities was called for, and produced the martyrs who were the glory of the early Church.

Questions About This Sunday's Scripture Readings

First Reading **Isaiah 45:4-6**

- Cyrus was a Gentile, yet he permitted the Israelites to return from captivity in Babylon to their homeland. What people in the last hundred and fifty years have broken down the walls of prejudice and freed oppressed peoples? Were they all Christian? Do you think God chose them? Has God ever chosen you? If so, were you aware of it?
- Could God be "grasping the right hand" of scientists "though they know him not" who are trying to find cures for cancer, wars and solutions for the global warming crisis, and of activists trying to stop racial injustice?

Second Reading **1 Thessalonians 1:1-5**

- Do the following help in your reception of the word? ♦ Presence of the Holy Spirit? ♦ People living the Gosel with conviction? Compare and contrast these: ✦ receiving the word as a way of life; ✦ receiving the word as a code of conduct.
- St Paul says, "because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." What is more important: thinking about the word or acting on it? Where does the power to act come from?

Gospel **Matthew 22:15-21**

- In this Gospel reading, are the Pharisees more interested in taxes or in undermining Jesus' influence? Do God's and Caesar's worlds have to be separated? Can we divorce spiritual obligation from political policies … or social issues?
- Pope Francis says Caesar's image is on the coin, but we are all created in the image and likeness of God. To whom do we all ultimately belong? How would a Christian illuminate the world's human and social problems with the Light of the Holy Spirit."

> Christians are called to commit themselves concretely in the human and social spheres without comparing "God" and "Caesar"; comparing God and Caesar would be a fundamentalist approach. Christians are called to commit themselves concretely in earthly realities, but illuminating them with the light that comes from God. The primary entrustment to God and hope in him do not imply an escape from reality, but rather the diligent rendering to God that which belongs to him. … to live earthly life to the fullest, and to meet its challenges with courage. – Pope Francis, *The Angelus*, 22 October 2017

Final Presentation on the Life and Legacy of Saint Francis

Mark your diary: ***Final Presentation on the Life and Legacy of Saint Francis*** – in person or on Zoom on this ***Thursday*** – **22 October ["Praying with Saint Francis" – Ken Cafe ofm]**: from **19:30 to 21:00** with a cuppa and supper. In person at the Parish Hall, *or* on **Zoom** – click on this link **https://dowcatholic.zoom.us/j/99053445383**

Pope Leo Speaks Against the Death Penalty

Pope Leo XIV has posted on his official X account that the Catholic Church holds the death penalty to be "inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person." In a post published on **Saturday**, **10 October**, the **World Day Against the Death Penalty**, the Pope noted that justice can be upheld and the common good of humanity can be safeguarded without relying on capital punishment. He said criminals can be effectively detained in order to protect citizens, while still allowing those who are guilty of the possibility of redemption.

"The death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person. The common good can be safeguarded and the requirements of justice can be met without recourse to capital punishment: effective systems of detention have been developed that protect citizens while at the same time do not completely deprive those who are guilty of the possibility of redemption. #NoDeathPenalty," wrote Pope Leo.

Archbishop Paul Coakley, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, described a proposed public execution in the US as, "a barbaric promotion of a culture of death … undermining the nation's moral fabric."

POPE LEO'S ADDRESS AT UNESCO HEADQUARTERS, PARIS, 25 SEP 26 (ctd.)

(*continued from last week*) Thirdly, to keep alive the memory of our common humanity is to recognize its grandeur — that is, its immense potential — even though it is diminished by many forms of evil and injustice. Those engaged in the fields of education, science and culture are called all the more to care for every person, so that the beauty of our freedom may shine forth. This beauty has a name: justice. Freedom is indeed beautiful when it is oriented toward goodness and truth; it is disfigured when it descends into arbitrariness, violence or the thirst for power. To be human, then, implies a responsibility before history: the human being is one who grows, learns and works with both hands and mind. By that labour, we may cultivate the earth or disfigure it, create works of art or destroy them. At this particular juncture, we must recognize that the most terrible of "human works" is war, for then science itself is placed at the service of an inhumane will to destroy and to kill.

In this regard, the Preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO opens with words that retain a striking relevance today — as we saw at the "Wall of Peace" — "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" (*Constitution of UNESCO*, Preamble, 1945). These words were written in the aftermath of the Second World War, the most devastating tragedy of the past century. Humanity had come to realize that scientific progress, when severed from wisdom, can turn into a weapon of destruction; that culture, when subjected to ideology, can degenerate into falsehood and propaganda; and that education, when it abandons the truth, can become an instrument for manipulating consciences. The founding States of UNESCO understood that treaties are necessary, but not sufficient in themselves. They require a culture of peace and a shared commitment to peace, which sustain them. Peace cannot be built by treaties alone, nor by compromises between opposing forces. Peace is genuine when it springs from the virtue of justice rather than from a mere contract, and from an upright will rather than from an unstable balance of interests. Indeed, only an upright will can recognize in the other a brother or sister, a person like oneself.

Eighty years later, the words of your founding Charter have lost none of their force. Yet we also see how profoundly this common principle is threatened by forms of barbarity that fuel rivalry and conflict. Among the challenges facing the worlds of science and education today, I would draw particular attention to those arising from the vast field of technology. Our efforts in this domain must ensure that new technologies remain at the service of the human person, rather than becoming yet another instrument of domination and injustice.

Over the centuries, many tasks once performed by human beings have been entrusted to machines, whose capabilities and applications have continued to expand. More recently, certain artificial systems have even been given the name of our human faculty of thought: intelligence. At the same time, however, our ideas and relationships risk being impoverished by a process of dehumanization. The paradox has become increasingly evident: while "intelligence" is attributed to computational systems, we struggle to recognize the inalienable dignity of human persons, whose lives are judged according to the criterion of efficiency and, when deemed no longer productive, are rejected and discarded.

This painful reality invites us to reflect both on the fragility of our human nature and on the immense dignity of every human person — a dignity that remains undiminished even in the most vulnerable circumstances, even to death itself. The human being is certainly one who is born, but also *one who dies*. Our dignity is not destroyed by illness or suffering, nor is it dependent upon our abilities. Rather, it calls for loving care at every stage of life.

For the Christian faith, the mystery of the human person finds its fullest light in Christ, who, "in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself and brings to light its very high calling" (Vatican II Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). I n his light, every person appears to us as a creature willed and loved by God. This light also helps us to grasp more deeply the meaning of our shared human experience.)

(continued next week …)

MESSAGE OF POPE LEO FOR THE 100TH WORLD MISSION DAY, 18 OCTOBER 26

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we mark World Mission Sunday, we give thanks to God for the abundant fruits he has bestowed upon the Church since my predecessor, Pope Pius XI, established this annual celebration 100 years ago. He desired that it would foster, in every Diocese and parish, a deeper understanding of the greatness of the missionary task, fervent prayer for the work of evangelization, encouragement for the missionary vocation, and support for the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

Indeed, the realization of Pius XI's aim has borne fruit in my own life. Looking back on my youth, I can see how the prayers offered to the Lord of the harvest mysteriously helped prepare my heart to hear Jesus' call to follow him as an Augustinian missionary. Moreover, the prayers and contributions of the faithful encouraged and sustained my missionary work in Peru, as well as that of countless others throughout the world. For this reason, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported World Mission Sunday over the years.

In this centenary year, the present theme, "One in Christ, United in Mission," invites us to reflect on the fundamental task of nurturing the Church's unity in following Christ, particularly in our commitment and responsibility to spread the Gospel message of salvation to all people.

Indeed, through Baptism, each one of us becomes a member of the Body of Christ and has a unique role in contributing to Jesus' saving work. Our Lord calls us to cooperate as one family, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to bring everyone everywhere into a communion of faith in Christ.

I reiterate, therefore, the special appeal I made in the Message for World Mission Sunday: "Let us all commit to contributing to the great mission of evangelization — which is always a work of love — according to our own vocation and the gifts we have received. Your prayers and practical support… will be a great help in bringing the Gospel of God's love to everyone, especially the poorest and those most in need."

Finally, as we celebrate this centenary, I thank you for all that you will do to carry on the legacy of World Mission Sunday and to support generously the evangelizing mission of the Church throughout the world.

Scripture Readings This Week

Sundays Year A · Weekdays Year II

Monday	19 Oct	Weekday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time	Ephesians 2:1-10	Luke 12:13-21
Tuesday	20 Oct	Weekday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time	Ephesians 2:12-22	Luke 12:35-38
Wednesday	21 Oct	Weekday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time	Ephesians 3:2-12	Luke 12:39-48
Thursday	22 Oct	Weekday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time	Ephesians 3:14-21	Luke 12:49-53
Friday	23 Oct	Weekday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time	Ephesians 4:1-6	Luke 12:54-59
Saturday	24 Oct	Weekday, 29th Week in Ordinary Time	Ephesians 4:7-16	Luke 13:1-9
Sunday	25 Oct	30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A – *Scripture Readings are listed below.*		

Forthcoming Parish Events



- Weekend, 17/18 October — World Mission Day and Annual Mission Appeal
- Tuesday, 20 October — 15:45 — First Penance Class #1 in the Parish Hall
- Thursday, 22 October — 19:30 — Presentation on St Francis of Assisi – Parish Hall or Zoom
- Wednesday, 28 October — 19:00 — Sacrament of First Penance

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: Honey Joys *from Chef Raymond*

4½ cups cornflakes; 90g butter; 3 tbsp honey; ⅓ cup caster sugar.

Preheat oven to 150°C and line a 12-hole muffin tray with paper patty cases. Place the butter, honey and sugar in a saucepan over low heat. Stir until melted and glossy. Remove from the heat and add the cornflakes; gently fold until evenly coated. Spoon into the patty cases. Bake for 10–15 minutes or until golden and caramelised. Garnish with sprinkles while still warm. Allow them to cool completely so they crisp up.

Cross+Gen Technology Program @ Holy Spirit College



Delivered in partnership with CatholicCare and Wollongong Catholic Education to promote community engagement and wellbeing, bring your mobile phone, tablet or laptop and get help with downloading and using apps, sending messages and emails, using Google Maps and general technology questions. **Who can attend?** Grandparents, parishioners and older members of the wider school community. Session dates and times: Thursdays 09:10 to 10:30 on 22 October; 5 & 19 November; 3 December. **Location**: **Holy Spirit College, Bellambi, Cawley Road entrance**. **To book your place**, call *Jane Hollier at CatholicCare* ☎ 0417 018 152, janeh@catholiccare.dw.org.au **Cross+Gen** brings students and seniors together to build confidence and connection through practical technology support.

Catholic Women's League – Christmas Raffle

Our CWL ladies will be operating a Christmas Raffle this Spring. The prizes will consist of Christmas goodies. Tickets will be sold on Saturday, 31 October and Sunday, 1 November, and on 7 and 8 November 2026. Ticket costs one for $2.00 or 3 for $5.00. The raffle will be drawn after Mass on Sunday, 8 November. *Thank you for your support!*

How To Spot A Rip

Most people know that you don't swim in a rip, and if you get caught in a rip, **don't panic, put your arm up for help, and don't try to swim against the rip**. But, how can you spot a rip. Can you spot a rip current? Take this five minute quiz on Australia's number-one coastal hazard: **https://how-to-spot-a-rip.netlify.app/**

This Sunday's Readings – *on website*

29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A

1st Reading	Isaiah 45:1,4-6
2nd Reading	1 Thessalonians 1:1-5
Gospel	Matthew 22:15-21

Next Sunday's Readings – *on website*

30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A

1st Reading	Exodus 22:20-26
2nd Reading	1 Thessalonians 1:5-10
Gospel	Matthew 22:34-40

Sunday Mass Times

Saturday	17:30
Sunday	08:00

Saturday Mass is recorded.

Parish of St Michael – Thirroul

One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes Moving forward as a Parish Family

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

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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

Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday