

Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



Parish Bulletin
7 / 8 November 2026
32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A
Reflections on *Magnifica Humanitas*

This Week's Readings

Are We There Yet?

How can it be that the "typical questions" of children pass down from generation to generation?

They do.



Remember when you were little and driving to go on holidays. You can probably clearly remember asking your mum or day that famous, time-honoured question, "Are we there yet?" It was a real question, and you weren't quoting someone else, so you thought.

By now you have heard child after child ask exactly the same question of a parent, in exactly the same words. Maybe it is an innate instinct, like birds or whales migrating for summer/winter.

As we become mature, we human beings do learn to wait, to live with the "not yet." We call it "delayed gratification." We may want to be home, for instance, but to get there from work, we might have to walk to the bus stop, wait for the bus or train, tap on to pay, stand until there is a seat, sit down at long last, wait some more, get off, walk 50 blocks (it seems), unlock the door, and finally, finally, finally, put our feet up and relax. Some days this can be annoying, but usually "we get used to it."

But we shouldn't get overly used to it. That is the point of this week's readings. Since we are not children, we can overlook the joy or pleasure when our goal finally arrives. Do you even remember to taste food when you finally get your dinner? Did you remember to enjoy in quiet detail the friend you haven't seen (at least virtually) in a year?

Sunday's first reading reminds us peacefully and beautifully to watch for God at dawn; to keep vigil because Wisdom (the Holy Spirit of God) actually is searching for those who are waiting. The Psalm boldly names our craving for God! It says, "my soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God." And, the Gospel adds, stay awake, make preparations. Do not be foolish. Do not forget to be ready.

We are like parched ground without rain. We have huge fractures in our surface. Our souls ache for the gentle, courteous and tender outpouring God wants to do—not a thing like hurricanes or floods, but like a mother feeding her newborn. Let's face it. People desire God more than anything else. At the centre of our souls is a thirst that will never be slaked unless the God of all creation comes in person to be living water for us.

"Your kindness is a greater good than life," the psalm says to God.

What? But life is so essential, so to be preserved, so valuable that we fight like a cornered wolf when it is threatened. Even so, in spite of all our flurry, God's delicious kindness is a far greater good than anything else we know, greater even than being alive. It is worth the wait, no matter how long.

So, be excited like a child. Let yourself say "I want," like kids do. But also, be calm like an adult. Know that when our desires are thwarted, we can wait, as wisdom waits for us.

The last section of Matthew's gospel, before the narrative of the passion and resurrection, is a collection of Jesus' teachings urging readiness for death and judgment. The gospel readings for the liturgies of today and next Sunday (the last Sundays of the year's cycle) are from this section. Today we hear the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids. The stern tone of the parable should not obscure for us the festive background this story would have called to mind for the original audience. The wedding customs of Palestine – different from our own – have not changed much over the centuries. They come to a climax with the arrival of the bridegroom and his friends at the home of the bride. Upon his arrival, the friends of the bride, who have been waiting with her, go out to join the groom's party for a ceremonial entrance. Those who heard the parable would have recalled that in the Old Testament, Israel's God was called the bridegroom of Israel. The rabbis used the espousal imagery of the Song of Songs in recalling this theme. The members of Matthew's community would have recalled that Jesus referred to himself as 'the bridegroom' (cf. Matthew 9:35). The whole emphasis of the parable story, it is clear, is readiness for the coming of the Bridegroom. The 'cry' that goes up when he arrives, capturing the festive joy of the occasion, tells us of the eagerness with which the first Christians looked forward to the Lord's return. All the bride's friends are asleep – the Saviour's return, whether in the moment of death or at the end of the world's history – will come as a surprise to all. Though they are asleep, the wise bridesmaids are ready. Like the lover in the Song of Songs, they can say, 'I sleep, but my heart is awake'. We should not be distracted by their abrupt refusal to share their oil. Remember, in their original form the parables have one point to make. The foolish bridesmaids are removed from the scene to emphasis the point that only those who are ready will join in the festivities.

The first reading, from the book of Wisdom, is well chosen. In his story, Jesus calls the maidens who are ready 'wise'. Wisdom is greatly prized by the traditions of the world; it is a knowledge that helps us understand the things that really matter. Wisdom belongs to a set of Old Testament writings that give expression to a spirituality

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nourished by an outlook that comes from living one's life in harmony with the ways of God. As the parable invites us to ask ourselves whether we are ready to meet our Lord, and to review the loyalties and values that shape our lives, we may well ponder what is offered to us by God's Word in the first reading: the joy and peace that come from being in tune with God is there to be 'found by those who look'.

The first Christians looked forward eagerly to the Lord's return. With the passing of time, it became clear then to their period of waiting would be long. With the Saviour's resurrection, the last moment of God's plan has come; but as the second letter of Peter reminded those concerned about this delay, 'With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years' (3:8). These developments are echoed in the reading from 1Thessalonians. It seems that when they embraced the faith and rejoiced in the union with Christ brought by baptism this community thought that they would not see death before the Lord's return. Some have died, however, and Paul is instructing them to remove their confusion. With them we can look forward to festivities in store for us. 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! … Come, Lord Jesus' (Revelation 22:17,20).

In a most special way God came into our world in Jesus. He is God's word-made-flesh, and when as Christians we speak of the coming of the Lord it is to the birth of Jesus that we are especially referring. God's presence happened in its fullness in the person of Jesus, whose life-giving, love-giving, and self-giving finally and perfectly revealed God as love. Saint Paul wrote his letters after the death of Jesus. When he speaks about the coming of the Lord, he is referring not to the birth of Jesus, but to another coming to which he and his community were looking forward.

The Vatican Council reminded us that we are all called to a life of holiness, each in his or her particular way of life. This holiness consists in tending to the perfection of love. 'As the Day of the Lord approaches, we are to spend our time in love (Hebrews 10:24-25). John reminds us that while the fullness of glory is not yet ours, 'the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining' (1 John 2:8). In this time, we are to carry out the commandment of love given us by Jesus: 'Love one another as I have loved you' (John 13:34). Let us continue to commit ourselves to this love as we 'await with patience' (Romans 8:25) our personal encounter with Christ at the end of our lives and as we work for the purification and sanctification of our world (see *Gaudium et Spes* n.38-39).

All this is most beautifully expressed here in our Sunday Eucharist. Here we are in the closest communion with Jesus. Here we are in the closest communion with those who have gone before us and are being purified by God's love to prepare them for the fullness of eternal glory. And here we are in the closest union with the saints in heaven. Furthermore it is here that we come together to be nourished so that we can carry on the mission of Jesus to the world. As Paul says: 'As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1Corinthians 11:26).

Questions About This Sunday's Scripture Readings

First Reading **Wisdom 6:12-16**

- In this reading people are looking for Wisdom at the same time that Wisdom is searching for them. What does your "wanting wisdom" do for your "receiving wisdom"? Explain the following line from this reading. "…Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed, for he shall find her sitting by his gate."
- How is wisdom different from knowledge? Does either one enable you to see beyond the surface of things into their depths? Where do you think wisdom is most needed in your life? Can you think of any part of life on earth that does not need some wise knowledge?

Second Reading **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

- Is there anything you would do differently if you thought your own "end time" was soon to come?
- If people have been "caught up" with Christ (loving God and loving their neighbour with compassion) do you think there will be a big difference for them once they have "fallen asleep"?

Gospel **Matthew 25:1-13**

- Jesus' parable is about being watchful and well prepared. What kinds of things would you do to make sure you were one of those "who were ready"? Have compassion on the sick? On the homeless? the planet? victims of prejudice? When you watch for God in your life do you sometimes "doze off"?
- What is the "oil of charity" that Pope Francis refers to in his Angelus discussion of the parable of the ten virgins?

> It is clear that with this parable, Jesus wants to tell us that we must be prepared for the encounter with him. Not only for the final encounter, but also for the everyday great and small encounters, with a view to that encounter for which the lamp of faith is not enough; we also need the oil of charity and good works.
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> … When one makes the present absolute, one looks only to the present, losing the sense of expectation, which is so beautiful and so necessary, and also pulls us away from the contradictions of the moment. This attitude—when one loses the sense of expectation—precludes any view of the hereafter: we do everything as if we will never depart for the other life.
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> … We must live today, but a today that goes towards tomorrow, towards that encounter, a present full of hope. … The Lord will be able to come even while we are sleeping: this will not worry us, because we have the reserve of oil accumulated through our daily good works, accumulated with that expectation of the Lord, that he may come as soon as possible and that he may come to take us with him.
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> – Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 32nd Ordinary Sunday A, 8 November 2020

REFLECTIONS ON POPE LEO XIV'S ENCYCLICAL *MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS*

Everyone is talking about the Pope's new encyclical on AI, but almost nobody is talking about what's actually surprising in it. The headlines say Pope warns about artificial intelligence; Pope defends human dignity; Pope calls for regulation. All true, all expected. Here are **five** things buried inside ***Magnifica Humanitas*** that the news cycle is missing entirely.

Number 1: the Pope asked forgiveness for slavery in the middle of a document about AI. This is perhaps the most unexpected moment in the entire encyclical, a sophisticated theological argument about artificial intelligence data, governance and autonomous weapons, and then in paragraph 176, Leo stops everything and traces the history of the Church's relationship with slavery. He acknowledges that in antiquity and the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical institutions owned slaves; he acknowledges that the Apostolic See of Rome itself responded to requests from sovereigns, intervened to regulate and in certain cases legitimise the enslavement of those deemed infidels. He notes that it was only in the 19th century under his namesake Leo XIII that a formal, absolute and universal condemnation of slavery was clearly articulated. He says this constitutes a wound in Christian memory, one from which we cannot consider ourselves detached, and for this in the name of the Church: "I sincerely ask for pardon. Why here, why in this document? Because the argument he is making is precisely about the danger of moral blindness in the face of new technologies; the parallel is deliberate and devastating. We tolerated slavery for 18 centuries before condemning it unequivocally; we cannot afford the same delay with artificial intelligence. The workers who label data, who moderate content, who extract rare earth minerals from the ground, these are the people history will judge us by. The apology is not a digression; it is the moral heart of the document.

Number 2: the theory of the just war has been declared outdated. This is a major theological statement, and it has received almost no attention in the coverage of this encyclical. In paragraph 192 Leo writes that the just war theory which has all too often been used to justify any kind of war, is now outdated. He adds that humanity possesses far more effective and capable tools for promoting human life and resolving conflicts: dialogue; diplomacy and forgiveness. To understand the weight of this, some context is necessary. The theory of the just war is one of the oldest frameworks in Catholic moral theology – it goes back to St Augustine in the 5th century, developed through St Thomas Aquinas, and has been the standard framework the Church has used for centuries to evaluate when the use of armed force is morally permissible. Leo is not saying the right to self-defence does not exist; he preserves that; but he is saying that the broader tradition of justifying war through a checklist of conditions (proportionality, last resort, right intention, legitimate authority) has been repeatedly abused to justify virtually any conflict, and that AI-driven warfare, hybrid war, cyber-attacks and autonomous weapons have made the traditional framework inadequate. This is a deliberate theological repositioning stated plainly in the context of a document that calls for a civilization of love as the alternative to the culture of power.

Number 3: The Pope says that even AI's own creators do not fully understand what they have built. Paragraph 98 contains an observation that coming from a papal encyclical is remarkable: Leo writes that current AI systems are more cultivated: build developers do not directly design every detail but create a framework within which the intelligence grows as a result fundamental scientific aspects, including the internal representations and computational processes of these systems remain, at present, unknown. This is not a theological claim; it is an accurate description of the current state of AI research, and it is significant that the Pope understands and states it with this precision. It also explains more clearly than anything else in the document why Christopher Ola, the co-founder of anthropic, whose specific research focus is interpretability the attempt to understand what is actually happening inside AI systems was invited to the Vatican for the presentation his work is precisely the effort to answer the question the Pope is raising: what are these systems actually doing and can we understand it? The encyclical is not anti AI; but it insists that we cannot ethically deploy at scale systems whose internal workings remain opaque not even to those who build them this is one of the most technically precise arguments in the document, and it is almost entirely absent from the public conversation about it.

Number 4: Tolkien is cited by the Pope as a moral guide for our time in paragraph 213. Leo quotes a passage from the *Lord of the Rings* – the words come from a protagonist in one of Tolkien's novels, and they describe our responsibility in a world where the problems are larger than any individual. The passage speaks of how it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years, wherein we are set uprooting the evil in the fields that we know so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. This is cited in the context of building the civilization of love. The Pope's argument that the great transformation required in the age of AI will not come from a single spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanisation it is worth pausing on what it means for a Pope to cite Tolkien in a formal encyclical Tolkien was a profoundly Catholic writer. His mythology is saturated with a Catholic understanding of creation, fall, redemption and hope; but he is not a theologian. He is a storyteller and Leo is making a point about the nature of moral agency in a time of overwhelming complexity that ordinary fidelity in the places we actually inhabit is what history is made of.

Number 5: The encyclical contains what may be the most important sentence about AI governance written by any major institution this year. In paragraph 107, Leo writes that a more moral AI is not enough if that morality is determined by a few readers, Again, he is responding to what is called the alignment problem in AI, the effort to ensure that AI systems reflect human values. The dominant assumption in the industry is that if we can align AI with good values the problem is solved. The Pope's intervention is surgical. Whose values? Determined by whom? Through what process? Subjected to what scrutiny? He argues that the ethical frameworks embedded in AI systems will become, in his words, the invisible infrastructure of these systems, and if those frameworks are determined by a handful of companies in a handful of countries without democratic participation or social accountability, then we have not solved the problem of power; we have merely relocated it. This is not a conservative or progressive argument; it is a structural one, and it is arguably the most politically and philosophically significant statement in the entire encyclical. The fact that it is buried in paragraph 107 of a document most people will never read in full is precisely why it needs to be said clearly here now.

Five things the coverage is missing – an apology for slavery in a document about AI; the just war theory declared outdated; a Pope who understands that AI systems are opaque even to their creators; Tolkien cited as a moral guide; and a sentence about AI alignment that every tech ethicist should be reading. *Magnifica Humanitas* is a longer and more complex document than the headlines suggest, and it deserves to be read that way.

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A · Weekdays Year II

Monday	9 Nov	Dedication of the Lateran Basilica	Ezekiel 47:1-2,8-9,12	John 2:13-22
Tuesday	10 Nov	St Leo the Great, pope, doctor	Titus 2:1-8,11-14	Luke 17:7-10
Wednesday	11 Nov	St Martin of Tours, bishop	Titus 3:1-7	Luke 17:11-19
Thursday	12 Nov	St Josaphat, bishop, martyr	Philemon 7-20	Luke 17:20-25
Friday	13 Nov	Weekday, 32nd Week in Ordinary Time	2 John 4-9	Luke 17:26-37
Saturday	14 Nov	Weekday, 32nd Week in Ordinary Time	3 John 5-8	Luke 18:1-8
Sunday	15 Nov	33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – *Scripture Readings are listed below.*		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS



- Tuesday, 10 November 15:45 First Communion Class #2
- Wednesday, 11 November Remembrance Day
  - 10:30 Catholic Women's League Annual Mass [No 09:00 Mass]
- Friday to Sunday, 13-15 November Shaw and Partners Iron Series and Nipper Challege
  - Thirroul Beach: https://ironseries.com.au/rounds/thirroul/
- Saturday, 14 November 17:30 Three Baptisms during Mass
  - Family Mass followed by pizza dinner
- Saturday, 5 December 09:00 Disabled Surfers Association – volunteers needed
  - No experience required: https://www.disabledsurfers.org

THIS WEEK'S RECIPE: EASY FRUIT & GINGER HONEY LOAF *from Chef Raymond*

150g softened butter; 100g caster sugar (or dark brown sugar for a richer caramel flavour); 120g ginger-flavoured honey (divided: mix half into the batter and drizzle the rest on top); 3 medium eggs; 200g self-raising flour; ½ tsp baking powder; 1 tsp ground ginger (plus optional chopped crystallised ginger for extra bite); 1 cup mixed dried fruit (sultanas, raisins, or chopped dates); 2 tbsp milk.

Preheat your oven to 160°C fan (180°C conventional) and grease and line a 900g loaf tin. Mix the wet ingredients. In a large bowl, beat the softened butter and sugar together until pale and creamy, then beat in the eggs one at a time and stir in half of the ginger honey. Combine dry and fruit. Fold in the self-raising flour, baking powder, ground ginger, milk, and your mixed dried fruit until just combined. Bake: Spoon the batter into your lined loaf tin and smooth the top. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Finish with honey: While still warm, pierce the top lightly with a skewer and drizzle the remaining ginger-flavoured honey over the crust so it soaks in. Let it cool completely on a wire rack.



CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE – CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

Our CWL ladies are operating a Christmas Raffle this Spring. The prizes consist of **Christmas goodies**. Tickets are being sold on **this weekend before and after Masses**. Ticket costs one for $2.00 or **3 for $5.00**. The raffle will be drawn after Mass on **this** Sunday, 8 November. *Thank you for your support! Good luck!*

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 Sunday's Readings – *on website*

32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A

1st Reading	Wisdom 6:12-16
2nd Reading	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Gospel	Matthew 25:1-13

NEXT Sunday's Readings – *on website*

33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ♦ YEAR A

1st Reading	Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20,30-31
2nd Reading	1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
Gospel	Matthew 25:14-30

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

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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