



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
9 / 10 MARCH 2024
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT + YEAR B
PRAYER - FASTING - ALMS GIVING

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Look

God is light. We have all heard this preached, but the readings on this Fourth Sunday in Lent drive the point home. The question: can we look at the light?

As the first reading says, the people of Judah “were exceedingly unfaithful” by worshipping false gods, polluting the sacred temple, ignoring God—and doing it with vigour. The first reading has all the terrible details.

Out of compassion God sent prophets to warn them, but each of them received only scorn. “There was no remedy,” the reading says. The people were condemned by their own actions. God’s love remained constant, but theirs did not. An invading force took them as captives into Babylon, where they remained in exile for seventy years until the good and just King Cyrus conquered Babylon and let them go.

They had suffered in Babylon. For the Psalm we have one of the most poignant of all psalms, the exquisite number 137. In it the people weep as captives in a foreign land. They refuse to sing songs of their homeland because they are exiled from everything they held dear, everything that their own infidelity had robbed from them. As far as they know, the light of life had gone out.

It was not God but they who had closed their eyes to the light. John’s Gospel tells us that a person is condemned because that person “has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” God has no desire to condemn, but people condemn themselves by walling God out.

At the end of the Gospel there is a very interesting, wise saying that sums up the message of this week’s Lenten readings: “the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.”

Maybe these sentences reveal the heart of sin itself. Light displays too much of our life. We become ashamed. We hide ourselves.

Yet we are built to seek the light.

Once there was a city built in the sunlight. Warmth and laughter abounded. Memories of day would remain every night until the sun could return. Fear one morning said light is too bright. Too much truth can be seen. How can we seem what we say we are if light the intruder is here? So, walls went up and a ban on all windows and nothing of day could remain. The city said, you have left us, O sun. In the darkness we have gone blind. But the sun outside still shed its light, and its warmth and its laughter and love. It lightened the walls and gave warmth to their chill, while within, the soul bored a hole. Into it poured a single beam, a sunlight of laughter and care. Softly, silently, almost like spring, love opened and blossomed and grew.

Listen to the light.

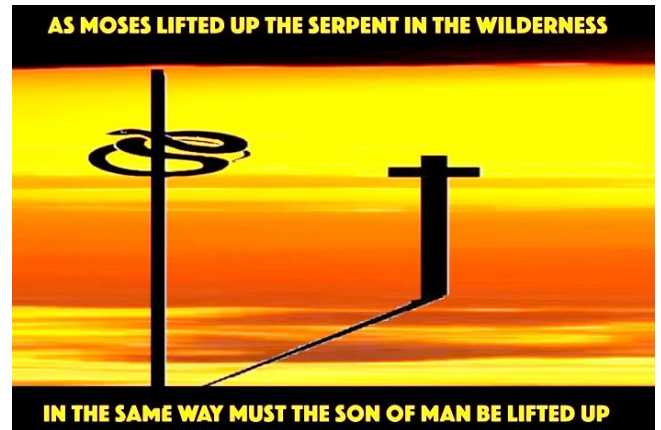
Listen to God this Lent. Let love open and blossom and grow.

There is often a time in a long journey when we find the going hard. The enthusiasm with which we set out has faded, and there is still a long way to go. At this stage in our Lenten journey we may be inclined to identify with Nicodemus of today’s gospel – not daring, as a well-known Pharisee, to consult Jesus openly, he came ‘by night’, weighed down in his heart, no doubt, by an interior darkness of confusion and embarrassment.

In our disappointment with our lives, the darkness seems so real and overwhelming. The first reading, telling the story of old Israel – a story of unfaithfulness, stubborn selfishness, destruction and exile – reminds us how often human history has been filled with darkness, right down to our own day. In the second reading from the letter to the Ephesians, Paul confidently confronts this darkness: for him reliance upon false and selfish securities is to embrace ‘death’.

If we are inclined to feel demoralised at this point in our Lenten journey, we are invited by today’s readings to find again the source of new energy and encouragement. In the midst of the deepest darkness the true Light shines! Old Israel finds that God’s designs will not be frustrated by their foolishness and selfishness – the conqueror of the Babylonians sends them back to rebuild the temple. Paul announces to those who are in danger of losing their way the astounding truth at the centre of our faith – God’s free gift to a lost world of new life in Christ: our redeemed humanity is God’s ‘work of art’, we each have our part to play in the realisation of God’s great designs.

But it is especially in climax of today’s readings, the words spoken to Nicodemus, by Jesus – the Light of the World – that all our darkness is dispelled! These words are perhaps the most quoted of the Gospels. Let us not take



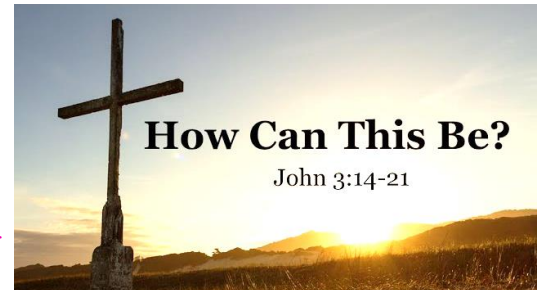
✚✚ them for granted, but take them to heart and rejoice in the new life they bring: ‘God loved the world so much that he gave his own Son, so that everyone who believes in him ... may have eternal life’. A world weighed down by the darkness of failure and selfishness must know, Jesus says, that he came from the Father, not ‘to condemn’ but to bring reconciliation and life.

As we take our bearings in the middle of a long journey, we often find new purpose and energy. Reflecting at this point in our journey of Lent, on the burdens we carry, can bring us to find again, in a more personal way, the essential truth of our Christian faith, the great truth we are celebrate at the end of our journey.

Sin is essentially dysfunctional. It doesn’t work. It doesn’t satisfy our hearts and, if we dare to think about it, it makes no sense to our minds. We can only bear it by blocking off our mind and heart and stumbling around in the distracted surface of our lives. Sin can numb and then kill our soul. If we persevere in sin we become like a river that is dead. It keeps flowing, but nothing can live in it. The rain continues to fall, acid rain that destroys everything it touches. In our impatience to get at the wine of love, we break the glass and the wine is lost. To sin is to lose reverence, to ignore the sacred, to try to live without the One who is the source of life. We simply cannot really live exiled from our own soul and from God who has made us for communion with him.

It is here that Jesus fulfills his irreplaceable role in our world. He is human like us. He was born into a polluted world, a violent world, a sick world. It sloshed all around him, sucking him finally into a whirlpool of suffering and death by crucifixion. It was, in many ways, an ugly world, and he was not spared its contagion. But he remained pure. He showed us that we are ‘God’s work of art’. He showed us what a good life looks like. We needed to see it. We needed to know that it is possible. And it is not just a matter of admiring Jesus from a distance while being unable to imitate him. As Paul says in today’s second reading: ‘God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—for it is by grace you have been saved.’ (Ephesians 2:4-5)

God brought us home to our own hearts where God our Father dwells with the Son and the Spirit of love. We are indeed temples of God. We are ‘works of art’ – each one of us is a unique spark of the divine fire, a unique and very beautiful – yes, very beautiful, expression of God. We are called to a life of Faith, Hope and Love. We will never ‘live the good life as God meant us to live it’ unless we decide to believe what Jesus reveals to us about God and about ourselves. The result will be that we will find ourselves living from the heart, living a life of love, living at home, in the presence of God – at home with ourselves and so able to give ourselves to others in love.



QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading 2 Chronicles 36:14-16,19-23

- ✚ “The God of their fathers (sent) his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people.” Does God send messengers “early and often” now? What about to you personally? What can you do to “open your door wider” so that the messengers can get in?
- ✚ “But they mocked the messengers of God.” Wangari Maathai was ridiculed for years for crying out against damaging forests. Because of her persistence, the Green Belt Movement, a re-forestation project in Kenya was started. Can you name some other people who have been rejected because of the messages they delivered?

Second Reading Ephesians 2:4-10

- ✚ In *Diary of a Country Priest*, the writer, George Bernanos, makes this statement: “Grace is everywhere.” Can this be true? Discuss.
- ✚ “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God.” Would you define grace as God’s own life? Is it grace that makes “prophets” bring problems that need fixing (climate, racial, immigration, hunger, prisons) to our attention?

Gospel John 3:14-21

- ✚ “For God so love the world that he sent his only Son ...” So, what is your job? Who is going to tell the world about this love? Name some ways (other than preaching) that you can do such a thing. Might you run into difficulties at times? When this happens can you remember that you are not alone and that you will always receive the grace you need?
- ✚ How does Pope Francis “help us see the true face of God”? Does he emphasize Jesus’ words to Nicodemus, “God so loved” and God “gave”?

Nicodemus was a Jewish elder who wanted to know the Master. Do Jesus’ words to him, God so loved, help us to see the true face of God? He has always looked at us with love, and for the sake of love he came among us in the flesh of his Son. He went in search of us when we were lost. In Jesus, he came to raise us up when we fell. In Jesus, he wept with us and healed our wounds. In Jesus, he blessed our life forever. The Gospel tells us that whoever believes in him will not perish. In Jesus, God spoke the definitive word about our life: you are not lost, you are loved. Loved forever.

– Pope Francis’ homily for 4 Lent B, 14 March 2021



Memory is 26 years old and lives in rural Malawi. As the eldest child in a low-income farming family, Memory had to take on many household chores and farming activities to support her parents. They struggled to pay for Memory's school fees and school supplies, and Memory often had to walk to school barefooted.

With the support of Caritas Australia and its partner the Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM), Memory was able to enrol at a technical college where she learnt technical skills in carpentry. She undertook a three-year carpentry course, with CADECOM supporting part of her tuition and boarding fees.

Memory became the first female carpenter from her village. Today, she works as a carpenter at one of Malawi's largest hydroelectric power stations. With the income from her job, she can provide financial support to her family and inspire other young women in her community so that they may have the opportunity to succeed in a male-dominated industry. Samoa may be a country surrounded by water, but access to clean drinking water is scarce in some areas, with many families facing extreme hardship as a result.

Please donate to Project Compassion.

Together, we can help vulnerable communities face their challenges today and build a better tomorrow *for all future generations*.

You can donate through Project Compassion donation boxes and envelopes available from your parish, by visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion or by calling 1800 024 413.



Scan this with your phone to donate to Project Compassion

SECOND LENTEN SERMON: JESUS IS BOTH WORD AND SACRAMENT

The Preacher of the Papal Household, Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa OFM Cap, gave his second sermon for Lent 2024 on Friday morning, 1 March, focusing on Christ as the light of the world. "For us today, Jesus the light of the world," the Cardinal acknowledged, "has become a believed and proclaimed truth."

However, he recalled, "there was a time when it was not just this." Rather, he suggested, "it was a lived experience, as sometimes happens to us, when, after a blackout, the light suddenly returns," or when, "in the morning, opening the window, you are flooded with daylight."

Light of the World — Cardinal Cantalamessa asked what the words of Jesus, "I am the light of the world," mean for us, here and now. The expression "light of the world," he highlighted, has two fundamental meanings. The first meaning, he said, is "that Jesus is the light of the world," as "He is the supreme and definitive revelation of God to humanity." The second meaning, he noted, is that Jesus "is the light of the world," in that "He sheds light on the world," that is, "He reveals the world to itself; He shows everything in His truth, for what it is before God." The Cardinal went on to elaborate on each of the two meanings, while acknowledging debates on faith and reason, and other misunderstandings.

Withdraw from what is not God's — As he reflected on Jesus lighting the world, he went on to denounce the phenomenon of worldliness. "The danger of conforming to this world, of worldliness," he observed, "is the equivalent, in the religious and spiritual sphere, of what, in the social sphere, we call secularization. No one, least of all myself," he acknowledged, "can say that this danger does not also loom over him or her." Cardinal Cantalamessa recalled the saying attributed to Jesus in an ancient, non-canonical writing: "If you do not fast from the world, you will not discover the kingdom of God."

'Do not conform' — "This," the Cardinal said, "is perhaps the most necessary fast of all today: fasting from the world." Yet, he clarified, the world to which we must not conform "is not the world created and loved by God." That world, rather, the papal preacher clarified, we are called to engage and meet, especially in the poor, discarded, and suffering. "The change must take place first of all in the way we think," he said, as he recalled St. Paul's exhortation to the Christians of Rome: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

Combatting worldliness — The Franciscan Cardinal acknowledged there are many causes at the origin of worldliness, but the main one "is the crisis of faith." "In this struggle against the world outside us, and that inside us," Cardinal Cantalamessa said, "our great comfort is that the Risen Christ continues praying for us to the Father."

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	11 Mar	Monday of the 4 th Week of Lent	Isaiah 65:17-21	John 4:43-54
Tuesday	12 Mar	Tuesday of the 4 th Week of Lent	Ezekiel 47:1-9,12	John 5:1-3,5-16
Wednesday	13 Mar	Wednesday of the 4 th Week of Lent	Isaiah 49:8-15	John 5:17-30
Thursday	14 Mar	Thursday of the 4 th Week of Lent	Exodus 32:7-14	John 5:31-47
Friday	15 Mar	Friday of the 4 th Week of Lent	Wisdom 2:1,12-22	John 7:1-2,10,25-30
Saturday	16 Mar	Saturday of the 4 th Week of Lent	Jeremiah 11:18-20	John 7:40-52
Sunday	17 Mar	FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		



FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Tues, Wed, 12/13 March	Andrew and Ken at meeting of the Friars in Sydney
✦ Monday, 18 March	Feast of Saint Patrick (transferred from 17 March)
✦ Tuesday, 19 March	Feast of Saint Joseph
	19:30 Reconciliation Rite II for Lent
✦ Tuesday, 26 March	19:00 Chrism Mass at the Cathedral
✦ Thursday, 28 March	19:30 Holy Thursday – Mass
✦ Friday, 29 March	10:30 Good Friday – Way of the Cross
	15:00 Good Friday – Liturgy of the Passion
✦ Saturday, 30 March	19:00 Easter Vigil
✦ Sunday, 31 March	08:00 Easter Sunday – Mass of the Resurrection with Baptism



CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE – MONTHLY MEETING AND THANKS!

We will be meeting next Wednesday, 13 March, commencing 11:00 in the McCarthy Centre. All welcome! Catholic Women's League would like to thank all parishioners who so generously supported the World Day of Prayer Service and also for joining us for morning tea afterwards. We will be forwarding \$822.00 to the World Day of Prayer Committee. Please continue to pray for the people of Palestine.

FORMED

✦ 'Formed' is FREE for parishioners in the Diocese of Wollongong

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LAETARE SUNDAY - REJOICE! – 21 DAYS UNTIL EASTER!

Laetare Sunday is the fourth Sunday in the season of Lent. Traditionally, this Sunday has been a day of celebration within the austere period of Lent. This Sunday gets its name from the first few words of the traditional entrance verse (Introit) for the Mass of the day. "Laetare Jerusalem" ("Rejoice, O Jerusalem") is Latin from Isaiah 66:10.

BE SAFE ON OUR BEACHES! 5,716 RESCUES SO FAR THIS SEASON!

PLEASE BRING IN ... ANY NON-PERISHABLE ITEMS EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA.

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR B

1st Reading 2 Chronicles 36:14-16,19-23

2nd Reading Ephesians 2:4-10

Gospel John 3:14-21

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT • YEAR B

1st Reading Jeremiah 31:31-34

2nd Reading Hebrews 5:7-9

Gospel John 12:20-30

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

Kerry Fabon • Parish Secretary

Tues, Wed 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00

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Parish School of St Michael

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USUAL WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday

Tuesday 17:30

Wednesday 09:00

Thursday 09:00

Friday 09:30

Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday