



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
20 / 21 APRIL 2024
4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER + YEAR B
50 DAYS OF EASTER! ALLELUIA!

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Is Greed a Virtue?

In today's Gospel Jesus compares the good shepherd to a mere hired hand. The hired one cares about his salary and maybe when he gets off work. A good shepherd cares about his sheep.

There is nothing wrong with working for hire and doing your job even if you do not like it. A lot of us are like that about our jobs, out of necessity.

Look at it this way. Imagine that there are "handles" on things, poetically speaking. Everything I own—honours that come to me, possessions, etc.—all of this has "handles" that someone could grab in order to wrestle it away. Home, car, looks, reputation, career, money saved up for the children's education, respect from others, pleasure, youth, you name it.

We grab the handles tight. We want to keep what we have.

Who can blame us? But an ominous power comes into play at that point. The forces of greed and evil tell our hearts that everything in the whole world is there just to be grabbed for myself and kept. "Greed is a virtue," these forces say, in fact it is the only true virtue. The first decades of this century present an economic crisis that seemed a perfect result of this way of thinking. But there is an alternate way of life. It has to do with love, the kind of love that the good shepherd shows us. It says, "the real value in life is to receive, not to grab and possess." All that you have and all that you are is a gift from God. You can open your hands and let God pour into them whatever you really need. And if you keep your hands open, you can easily let what you have pass on to others, those who are without.



Two ways of life, then: on one side, "Grab and Keep." On the other, "Receive and Let Go." The hired hand says the first, the good shepherd the second.

Do you understand, thus far? Good, because the story continues.

There comes an epic battle between these two ways of life. It is waged on the cross. Evil applies its weapons: it seizes and tears away from Jesus everything with "handles" on it—friends, followers, career, respect, relation to God, ordinary comfort, slaking of thirst, the ability to breathe, and then life itself.

It takes everything. Evil wins.

Except ...

... there is a fatal flaw in the grab-and-keep philosophy. Since this viewpoint thinks that everything whatsoever has handles on it, there is an important reality that it cannot recognize at all.

Love.

Love lets go, receiving humbly, giving humbly. The devil has no way to perceive love since there are no handles on unselfishness. The devil has to misinterpret what he sees, as just another form of self-interest.

So, he burrows down to the innermost sanctum of Jesus' soul, greedy to seize the ultimate prize itself, the reality of God. Salivating for it, ravenous, unable to hold back, he throws open the tabernacle doors of Jesus' soul.

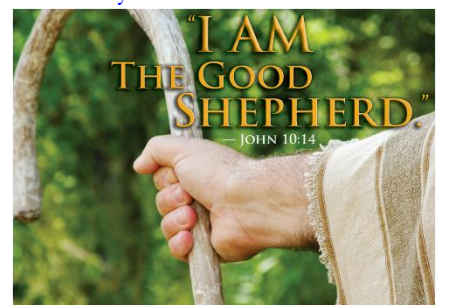
He finds that this sacred space is empty. Completely empty! Present are the quiet stillness of receiving gratefully and lightly letting go, but they are without handles. The devil gives up and goes on his way, confident that everything is now his.

But it isn't. Love wins because it has given everything away.

Shall we try it this Easter season? With help from the Good Shepherd?

As we have noted, the readings for many Easter liturgies bring us the meditations of John's gospel upon what the life of the Word made flesh means to the world. Sayings of Jesus beginning with 'I AM' abound in this gospel – clearly intimating the Saviour's claim to the divine name itself (cf. Exodus 3:14). They come readily to mind: 'I AM the bread of life' (6:35); 'I AM the gate' (10:9); 'I AM in the Father' (10:38); 'I AM the way; I AM truth and life. No one can come to the Father, except through me' (14:6); 'I AM the true vine' (15:1); 'I want those you have given me to be with me where I AM' (17:24); 'I AM he ... I have told you that I AM HE' (18:5, 8); and the momentous, 'Before Abraham ever was, I AM' (8:58).

The gospel reading of today's liturgy, 'I AM the good shepherd', heard against this background, takes us deep into the mystery of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ – and, as we shall see, it tells us of how God's initiative in the Paschal Mystery was conceived in the depths of the Trinitarian Life itself. ↪ ↪



✠✠ The Good Shepherd theme has had a great impact on Christian consciousness. One of the earliest and most repeated motifs of Christian art is the youthful shepherd carrying the lost sheep home on his shoulders. The image it suggests is so telling that it has featured prominently in the Church's preaching in every age. As so often happens with the best things in life, we tend to take this theme for granted. Today's text helps us to find a fresh appreciation of its implications. In it, Jesus explains these implications by reference to the Paschal Mystery.

He says that he is the 'good' shepherd – in contrast to the unfaithful shepherds who have failed God's people, thinking only of their own interests – because, as he three times repeats, he 'lays down his life' for them. He lays it down, he explains, 'in order to take it up again'. In his Resurrection, he will be a source of life for them. And in this drama of his death and resurrection, he is carrying out and making clear to the human family what his Father wills for them – an enterprise so dear to the Father that he looks upon the Son's obedience with a renewed love.

It is a plan that works to bring all those who believe into unity. There are other 'folds', or pens, than the one the community that gave us John's gospel finds itself in. Through his Paschal Mystery, the Good Shepherd will lead them in the forming of a single 'flock', overcoming all the apparently insurmountable barriers that divide the human family.

The other readings illustrate the blessings that belong to those who 'know' the Good Shepherd and 'listen to his voice'. We recall the faith and courage of Peter, as he works the Christian Church's first miracle in the power of the divine name – 'in the name of Jesus'. And we are told that we can become 'God's children', through 'the love that the Father lavishes on us', with a future which when it is fully revealed will give us a share in the intimate life of God.

Jesus' disciples experienced him as the perfect human expression of God's Word (God's Word-made-flesh). God's 'Word' is God's self-communication, something that has been going on everywhere since the beginning of time. God communicates with all his creatures, through nature, through people and events. God is present at the heart of everything. Religion is our response. The problem is that our response is necessarily imperfect. This was true of Judaism. Jesus' disciples experienced Jesus as correcting, perfecting and fulfilling their religion. Whatever they had previously believed to be true but that did not fit with what they experienced in Jesus, they had to leave behind in order to embrace what Jesus revealed about the God he called 'Father'.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Acts 4:8-12

- ✠ Peter says that it was Christ who healed the crippled man: Christ "is the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone." What gave Peter the courage to speak out like this, when before Jesus died, he couldn't even admit that he knew him? Do we receive that same gift when we speak out for truth or goodness?
- ✠ In this reading Peter responds to attempts by the "leaders of the people and elders" to discredit Jesus' message. Do you see efforts to discredit Jesus' message in the world today? Can you think of other besides racial bias that discredits "love your neighbour"? How can you help bring God's saving grace to a world/neighbourhood in desperate need of healing?

Second Reading 1 John 3:1-2

- ✠ What gifts have you received as a child of God? What gifts have you received today from God?
- ✠ God is always present, hovering like a mother hen. Why does God not just jump right in and save us from all the messes we get into?

Gospel John 10:11-18

- ✠ Jesus said, "I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep." Jesus is applying the unconditional love between himself and his Father to the relation between himself and his own. What does this tell you about how well you are known and how much you are loved? And, for whom would you lay down your life?
- ✠ According to Pope Francis, what two things does Jesus want us to learn from the Good Shepherd metaphor?

The second aspect is that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows—the first aspect: defend; the second: he knows his sheep and the sheep know him (v. 14). How beautiful and comforting it is to know that Jesus knows us one by one, that we are not unknown to him, that our name is known to him! We are not a "mass", a "multitude" for him, no. We are unique individuals, each with his or her own story, he knows each of us with our own story, each one with his or her own value, both as creatures and as people redeemed by Christ. Each of us can say: Jesus, knows me! It is true, it is like this: He knows us like no other. Only he knows what is in our hearts, our intentions, our most hidden feelings. Jesus knows our strengths and our defects, and is always ready to care for us, to heal the wounds of our errors with the abundance of his mercy.

... Therefore, Jesus the Good Shepherd defends, knows, and above all loves his sheep. ... Christ's love is not selective; it embraces everyone. He himself reminds us of this in today's Gospel when he says: "And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So, there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16). These words testify to his universal concern: He is everyone's shepherd. Jesus wants everyone to be able to receive the Father's love and encounter God.

– Pope Francis, *Regina Caeli* for 4th Sunday of Easter, 25 April 2021

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES – OR ‘SOME ACTS OF SOME APOSTLES’

For the 50 days of the Easter Season, the *first reading* at Masses is from *Acts of Apostles* – here is an introduction to this book.

The Acts of the Apostles, the second volume of Luke’s two-volume work, continues Luke’s presentation of biblical history, describing how the salvation promised to Israel in the Old Testament and accomplished by Jesus has now under the guidance of the Holy Spirit been extended to the Gentiles. This was accomplished through the divinely chosen representatives whom Jesus prepared during his historical ministry and commissioned after his resurrection as witnesses to all that he taught. Luke’s preoccupation with the Christian community as the Spirit-guided bearer of the word of salvation rules out of his book detailed histories of the activity of most of the preachers. Only the main lines of the roles of Peter and Paul serve Luke’s interest.

Peter was the leading member of the Twelve, a miracle worker like Jesus in the, the object of divine care, and the spokesman for the Christian community, who, according to Luke, was largely responsible for the growth of the community in the early days. Paul eventually joined the community at Antioch, which subsequently commissioned him and Barnabas to undertake the spread of the gospel to Asia Minor. This missionary venture generally failed to win the Jews of the diaspora to the gospel but enjoyed success among the Gentiles.

Paul’s refusal to impose the Mosaic law upon his Gentile converts provoked very strong objection among the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, but both Peter and James supported his position. Paul’s second and third missionary journeys resulted in the same pattern of failure among the Jews generally but of some success among the Gentiles. Paul, like Peter, is presented as a miracle worker and the object of divine care.

In Acts, Luke has provided a broad survey of the church’s development from the resurrection of Jesus to Paul’s first Roman imprisonment, the point at which the book ends. In telling this story, Luke describes the emergence of Christianity from its origins in Judaism to its position as a religion of worldwide status and appeal. Originally a Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem, the church was placed in circumstances impelling it to include within its membership people of other cultures: the Samaritans, at first an occasional Gentile, and finally the Gentiles on principle. Fear on the part of the Jewish people that Christianity, particularly as preached to the Gentiles, threatened their own cultural heritage caused them to be suspicious of Paul’s gospel. The inability of Christian missionaries to allay this apprehension inevitably created a situation in which the gospel was preached more and more to the Gentiles. Toward the end of Paul’s career, the Christian communities, with the exception of those in Palestine itself, were mainly of Gentile membership. In tracing the emergence of Christianity from Judaism, Luke is insistent upon the prominence of Israel in the divine plan of salvation and that the extension of salvation to the Gentiles has been a part of the divine plan from the beginning.

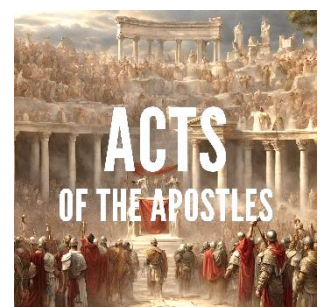
In the development of the church from a Jewish Christian origin in Jerusalem, with its roots in Jewish religious tradition, to a series of Christian communities among the Gentiles of the Roman empire, Luke perceives the action of God in history laying open the heart of all humanity to the divine message of salvation. His approach to the history of the church is motivated by his theological interests. His history of the apostolic church is the story of a Spirit-guided community and a Spirit-guided spread of the Word of God. The travels of Peter and Paul are in reality the travels of the Word of God as it spreads from Jerusalem, the city of destiny for Jesus, to Rome, the capital of the civilized world of Luke’s day. Nonetheless, the historical data he utilizes are of value for the understanding of the church’s early life and development and as general background to the Pauline epistles. In the interpretation of Acts, care must be exercised to determine Luke’s theological aims and interests and to evaluate his historical data without either exaggerating their literal accuracy or underestimating their factual worth.

Finally, an apologetic concern is evident throughout Acts. By stressing the continuity between Judaism and Christianity, Luke argues that Christianity is deserving of the same toleration accorded Judaism by Rome. Part of Paul’s defence before Roman authorities is to show that Christianity is not a disturber of the peace of the Roman Empire. Moreover, when he stands before Roman authorities, he is declared innocent of any crime against the empire. Luke tells his story with the hope that Christianity will be treated as fairly.

The date of the composition of Acts is disputed. Because there is no mention of the outcome of Paul’s arrest [the apostle is awaiting trial at the close of the book], some have thought that the book was published before Paul’s martyrdom under Nero, about 65–67AD. On the other hand, internal qualities that hint at the author’s considerable degree of historical maturity in assessing the significance of the first thirty years of the church’s history suggests a later date, perhaps in the 80s. Luke’s purpose in writing was to awaken the faith by showing the triumphant progress of the Good News and to defend Christians against the charge that they were destructive of Jewish institutions and a troublesome element in the Roman empire. None of the judges and other authorities who hear Paul and other Christians find them guilty of anything wrong.

The principal divisions of the Acts of the Apostles are the following:

- I. The Preparation for the Christian Mission (Acts 1:1-2:13);
- II. The Mission in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-8:3);
- III. The Mission in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:4-9:43);
- IV. The Inauguration of the Gentile Mission (Acts 10:1-15:35);
- V. The Mission of Paul to the Ends of the Earth (Acts 15:36-28:31).



SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	22 Apr	Monday of the 4 th Week of Easter	Acts 11:1-18	John 10:1-10
Tuesday	23 Apr	Tuesday of the 4 th Week of Easter	Acts 11:19-26	John 10:22-30
Wednesday	24 Apr	Wednesday of the 4 th Week of Easter	Acts 12:24-13:5	John 12:44-50
Thursday	25 Apr	ANZAC Day Isaiah 9:2-7	Ephesians 2:13-18	John 14:23-29
Friday	26 Apr	St Mark , evangelist	1 Peter 5:5-14	Mark 16:15-20
Saturday	27 Apr	Saturday of the 4 th Week of Easter	Acts 13:44-52	John 14:7-14
Sunday	28 Apr	5 TH SUNDAY OF THE 50 DAYS OF EASTER • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

- ✦ Saturday, 20 April **Baptism of Pierce Bryce during 17:30 Mass**
- ✦ Thursday, 25 April **06:00 ANZAC Day Dawn Service at Thirroul Cenotaph and elsewhere**
- ✦ **08:30 ANZAC Day Mass at St Michael's Church, Thirroul**
- ✦ **20:45 Ken leaves for Canon Law Conference, Poland, returning 10 May**
- ✦ Monday, 29 April **School Term 2 commences:** staff return today; students tomorrow
- ✦ Friday, 3 May **09:30 Anointing of the Sick during Mass**
- ✦ Weekend, 4/5 May **Blessing of those celebrating May Wedding Anniversaries or Birthdays**
- ✦ Weekend, 11/12 May **Mothers' Day – Special Blessing of all Mothers**

MORNING TEA VOLUNTEERS NEEDED URGENTLY

Morning tea after Mass on Sundays is a popular and longstanding tradition at St Michael's. Thank you to all who have assisted with this over many years. As several of our current volunteers are unable to continue, we **need at least 3 or 4 volunteers to join the roster**. With these numbers you would only be rostered on once every roster (16 weeks). Please consider helping out if you can. Thanks. Judy Bull, morning tea coordinator. **If you can help, please contact Judy Bull or call the Parish Office 4268 1910 ... meantime, try this ...**

BAPTISM THIS WEEKEND – WELCOME PIERCE BRYCE

Welcome and congratulations to **PIERCE PETER BRYCE**, baptised in our Parish this Saturday evening. **Pierce** is the fourth son of **Lauren and James Bryce**. James is the principal of our Parish Primary School of St Michael. The next Baptisms to be held in our Parish will be during Masses on **18/19 May**. Following that, Baptisms will be on **Saturday, 15 June or Sunday, 16 June**. The next Baptism meeting for parents will be in the presbytery on **Thursday, 30 May 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 and Eucharist. In our Diocese, Confirmation is celebrated in Year 6, this year on 4 July, and **enrolments for Confirmation 2024 close on Monday, 13 May**. Enrolment forms are on our Parish website.



QUICK RECIPE OF THE WEEK – ANZAC BISCUITS

1 cup rolled oats; 1 cup wholemeal flour; 1/2 cup sugar; 3/4 cup coconut; 125 grams butter; 2 tablespoons golden syrup; 1/2 tsp baking soda; 2 tablespoons boiling water. Combine rolled oats, flour, coconut and sugar. Combine butter and golden syrup and microwave until melted. Mix soda with boiling water and add to melted butter mixture, stir into dry ingredients. Place teaspoon lots on a greased tray, roll into ball shapes and press to flatten (about 12 per tray). Bake at 170 Celsius for 20 minutes. Cool on trays. Makes about 35 biscuits – **not enough!**

<p>THIS Sunday's Readings – on website</p> <p>4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER • YEAR B</p> <p>1st Reading Acts 4:8-12</p> <p>2nd Reading 1 John 3:1-2</p> <p>Gospel John 10:11-18</p>	<p>NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website</p> <p>5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER • YEAR B</p> <p>1st Reading Acts 9:26-31</p> <p>2nd Reading 1 John 3:18-24</p> <p>Gospel John 15:1-8</p>	<p>SUNDAY</p> <p>MASS TIMES</p> <p>Saturday 📖 17:30</p> <p>Sunday 08:00</p> <p>📖 Saturday Mass is recorded.</p>
<p>Parish of St Michael – Thirroul</p> <p><i>One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes</i></p> <p><i>Moving forward as a Parish Family</i></p> <p>Patrick Vaughan • <i>Parish Priest</i></p> <p>Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm • <i>Assisting</i></p> <p>Kerry Fabon • Parish Secretary</p> <p>Tues, Wed 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00</p>	<p>🌐 www.thirroulcatholic.org.au</p> <p>📍 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive</p> <p>📧 PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515</p> <p>☎ 4268 1910 📠 4268 1976</p> <p>📧 thirroul@dow.org.au</p> <p>Parish School of St Michael</p> <p>☎ 4267 2560</p>	<p>THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES</p> <p>Monday _____</p> <p>Tuesday 📖 17:30</p> <p>Wednesday 09:00</p> <p>Thursday 09:00</p> <p>Friday 09:30</p> <p><i>Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday</i></p>