



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
21 / 22 DECEMBER 2024
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT • YEAR C
THANK YOU FROM VINNIES

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Spaciousness

During Advent we have been celebrating our emptiness.

This sounds odd, and yet give it a thought. If we were completely filled up we would have no room to let anyone or anything in. We would be like a clump of mud or a great thick mountain. Nice to look at, maybe, but not so good at letting anything else get in.

Somewhere in Scripture the people ask God to take their hearts of stone and make them into hearts of flesh. Throughout Advent we have been asking especially for that. For time to become aware of God and then thank God for the spacious emptiness that a human heart has within it. Living hearts, not stone [stone-cold] ones.

But increasing our heart's openness can be frightening. The dark spreads out its kingdom every day in the northern hemisphere, even as Christmas comes near. People can see less and less by natural light. And people's bodies systems squirm to readjust — just like ours do to adjust to the heat and humidity of our long summer days.



Some people in the northern hemisphere are resentful as the daylight hours became shorter and shorter—and especially when “daylight savings time” collapsed and the dark settled in an hour sooner in the afternoon. It was dark well before people finish work. In Oslo, Norway, currently, sunrise is at 09:18 and sunset is at 15:12! Depressing.

The December solstice (winter solstice) in Oslo is at 10:20 am on Saturday, 21 December 2024. In terms of daylight, this day is 12 hours, 56 minutes shorter than the June solstice! In Thirroul, the December solstice (summer solstice) is at 20:20 on Saturday, 21 December 2024. In terms of daylight, this day is 4 hours, 36 minutes longer than the June solstice.

Such small creatures within so vast a night when you are up in the northern hemisphere.

However, there is some wisdom in deprivation and darkness. Increased dark allows human beings to hunker down inside their shelter—cozy and patient, waiting for the light to return, savouring the dark. This helps them reflect upon themselves.

God says as much to Bethlehem in the first reading. It is as if God says, “You are so tiny! You are not even counted among the clans of Judah. You are empty of big ideas, power, royalty and influence. How can you be sufficient to bring forth a ruler of Jerusalem?”

Light had already come from within that darkness, of course, sufficiency from insufficiency. King David had been born in Bethlehem, centuries before (see 1 Samuel: 17:12). And of course, Jesus was to be born in the same town. This strange, wide place in the road produced Kings?

Yes.

It is the same way with our souls. Our dimness and our emptiness are where Jesus is to be born on Christmas. Such darkness includes whatever in us that is gloomy, angry, jealous, or just discouraged. The friends who leave us behind, who have a high, family time while we feel so alone: this is where the child will be born.

Watch Mary hasten to her cousin's house, a long trip, on foot, over dirt and sand and rocks, under the hot, hot sun (Gospel). She does not need to be coddled and queenly in order to bring forth the Holy One. She does not spend a second in worrying about whether the way is too hard. Her soul somehow knows about the soft light that will shine from within her. Everything else is in second – or last-place.

This was Mary. Maybe emptiness can speak humbly from within us too.

For a minute or two we might quit trying so hard to make everything alright. Let go and let God. That way we will get to know the one “whose origin is from of old, from ancient days” (first reading).

We might even let that One take up its home within us. It can make itself whatever size is needed for our souls.

What better Christmas could there be, just around the corner?

Our Advent season draws to a close with a liturgy filled with promise and expectation. Luke's gospel text describes the first meeting of John the Baptist with the Lord he is to herald so selflessly – in a tableau rich in implications, as we shall see. The first reading from the prophet Micah sums up the immense hopes about to be realized with the coming of the New David. The messiah will be born in Bethlehem, the city of David; he will be a mighty leader, gathering God's scattered people and exercising a rule giving expression to God's ‘power and majesty’; he will, in fact, be peace personified (cf. Ephesians 2:14).

The reading from the letter to the Hebrews describes how the Saviour's coming inaugurates a new and final order of things in the plan of God. The old covenant, with its animal sacrifices and burnt offerings, was only a



☞☞ foreshadowing. Many times the prophets, in the name of God, had rebuked the people for relying upon these external observances while their hearts were far from God and God's ways. Jesus himself was to run up against this same attitude. The letter to the Hebrews, we know, was written for people who looked back nostalgically to the rituals of old Israel, inviting them to leave these shadows behind and rejoice in the reality they pointed to. Today's passage takes us to the heart of the matter – the eternal designs of God shaping the mission of the eternal Son made human. True worship, as the psalm quoted reminds us (Psalm 40), is giving one's life over to God in fidelity and obedience. The Saviour's becoming one of us, and giving himself – 'once and for all' – into the hands of his Father, through his Paschal Mystery, has realized this pattern in a manner beyond all human expectations. By this self-offering, he has become the true worship of the whole of creation. More than that, he has united us to himself in his act of worship – God's 'will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body'.



But all of this is in the future, as Luke describes the dawn of salvation. Presenting the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, he invites us to recognize how much is involved in the drama that is beginning. It realizes the designs of the eternal Father, whose 'promise made to Mary is fulfilled'; the Old Testament and its time of waiting is coming to an end, as its final and greatest spokesman recognizes the coming of the Son of God; it is through Mary – 'most blessed of all women' – that this dawn of salvation takes place; and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that Mary has conceived, and Elizabeth with her child are able to enter into the joy that faith in this coming, or advent, brings to the world.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Micah 5:1-4a

- ☞ A leader shepherds his flock in the majestic name of the Lord, but comes from Bethlehem, too small to be among the clans of Judah. With "majesty" at one end of the continuum and "poverty" at the other, where do you think today's Church falls?
- ☞ If you were expecting a majestic ruler how would you have felt about the stable and manger? When you experience poverty in your life, do you accept it as a meeting place with God or do you run from it?

Second Reading Hebrews 10:5-10

- ☞ What does "once for all" mean? Could it mean that Jesus' coming to do his Father's will completes the New Covenant and sanctifies us all?
- ☞ "What is the mission of the Messiah? Why is Christ's offering shown as effective whereas the "sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings" of the Old Covenant can seem less so?"

Gospel Luke 1:39-45

- ☞ The child "leaped for joy" in Elizabeth's womb at the recognition of the soon-to-be-born saviour. Discuss this moment as humankind's welcome to the saviour. How close do you come to "leaping for joy" when you recognize God's presence in your life?
- ☞ "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb." What does the experience of faith elicit in us?

Brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves honestly, from the heart: Do we believe that God is at work in our lives? Do we believe that the Lord, in hidden and often unpredictable ways, acts in history, performs wonders, and is working even in our societies that are marked by worldly secularism and a certain religious indifference?

There is a way to discern whether or not we have this trust in the Lord. What is the way? The Gospel says that "as soon as Elizabeth had heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb" (v. 41). This is the sign: to leap for joy. Whoever believes, whoever prays, whoever welcomes the Lord leaps in the Spirit, and feels that something is moving within, and "dances" with joy. I would like to dwell on this: the leap of faith.

The experience of faith, first and foremost, elicits a certain leaping in the face of life. To leap means to be "touched inside," to have an interior quiver, to feel that something is moving in our heart.

– Pope Francis journey to Marseille, 23 September 2023

VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL – THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

The annual Vinnies Christmas Appeal has concluded. A total of **\$6,869** has been donated! Thank you!

You can STILL donate online to the Thirroul Vinnies Christmas Appeal:

<https://my.fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/fundraise-your-way-conference/vinnies-thirroul-christmas-appeal>

What you donated: 19 Christmas Hampers; 20 toys/presents for children; 57 x \$30 gift cards to adults and teenagers; 17 hygiene packs; and more! Thank you, and thanks to our local Vinnies!!

**PLEASE BRING IN ... ANY NON-PERISHABLE ITEMS EACH WEEK
ONE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY**

CHRISTMAS 2024 AT THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL, THIRROUL

- ❖ 17:30 Tuesday, 24 December Christmas Eve Mass in the Parish Church
- ❖ 20:00 Tuesday, 24 December Christmas Night Mass in the Parish Church
- ❖ 09:00 Wednesday, 25 December Christmas Day Mass in the Parish Church

For all Christmas Masses, children are encouraged to dress as shepherds, angels and everyone – please bring a bell

CHRISTMAS LITURGIES 2024 – 24 AND 25 DECEMBER

Please note that the Christmas Eve Mass times and venues have changed: this year, both Christmas Eve Masses will be in the church – the first at 5:30pm (17:30) and the second at 8:00pm (20:00). The Christmas Day Mass remains unchanged 09:00 in the church. Children are welcome at all three Christmas Masses, and are encouraged to dress up as shepherds or angels. Also, bring a bell.

Mass on Boxing Day, Thursday, 26 December, the feast of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, will be at 09:30, and on Friday, 27 December, the feast of Saint John, the apostle, will be at the usual time of 09:30.

JUBILEE 2025 – PILGRIMS OF HOPE

The 2025 Jubilee is a jubilee in the Catholic Church that will be celebrated in the year 2025. It was announced by Pope John Paul II at the end of the Great Jubilee in 2000. This “Pilgrims of Hope Jubilee” was preceded by the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy of 2015–2016.

What is a Jubilee?

A Jubilee is a special year of grace and conversion, involving prayer, pilgrimage and sacramental repentance, held every 25 years, or during other years as called for by the Pope. Through a series of concrete rituals, acts and commitments, the goal of a Jubilee year is to inspire and encourage holiness of life among the faithful and therefore to strengthen the Church’s witness to God’s loving mercy in and for the world.

The word “jubilee” is derived from the Hebrew word *jobel*, which means “ram’s horn”; since it was precisely that horn which was used as a trumpet, whose sound indicated to everybody the beginning of the jubilee year. The book of Leviticus, in the code of holiness, is the source which tells us of the significance of the jubilee year, a year of liberation “par excellence,” which is at the end of seven weeks of years, the fiftieth year.

Papal Bull

Pope Francis has declared a Jubilee Year of Hope in 2025. The Holy Door of the Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican will be opened on 24 December 2024, thus inaugurating the Ordinary Jubilee. On the following Sunday, 29 December 2024, the Holy Door of the Pope’s Cathedral, Saint John Lateran, will be opened. Then, on 1 January 2025, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major will be opened. Finally, Sunday, 5 January 2025, will mark the opening of the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. These last three Holy Doors will be closed on Sunday, 28 December 2025.

Pope Francis decreed that on Sunday, 29 December 2024, in every cathedral and co-cathedral, diocesan bishops are to celebrate Holy Mass as the solemn opening of the Jubilee Year, using the ritual indications that will be provided for that occasion. The Holy Year will conclude in the particular churches on Sunday, 28 December 2025. The Ordinary Jubilee will conclude with the closing of the Holy Door in the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican on 6 January 2026, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

In the course of the year, every effort should be made to enable the People of God to participate fully in its proclamation of hope in God’s grace and in the signs that attest to its efficacy.

The Jubilee Logo

The logo shows four stylized figures, representing all of humanity, coming from the four corners of the earth. They embrace each other to indicate the solidarity and fraternity which should unite all peoples. The figure at the front is holding onto the cross. It is not only the sign of the faith which this lead figure embraces, but also of hope, which can never be abandoned, because we are always in need of hope, especially in our moments of greatest need.

There are the rough waves under the figures, symbolising the fact that life’s pilgrimage does not always go smoothly in calm waters. Often the circumstances of daily life and events in the wider world require a greater call to hope. That’s why we should pay special attention to the lower part of the cross which has been elongated and turned into the shape of an anchor which is let down into the waves. The anchor is well known as a symbol of hope. In maritime jargon the ‘anchor of hope’ refers to the reserve anchor used by vessels involved in emergency manoeuvres to stabilise the ship during storms. It is worth noting that the image illustrates the pilgrim’s journey not as an individual undertaking, but rather as something communal, marked by an increasing dynamism leading one ever closer to the cross. The cross in the logo is by no means static, but it is also dynamic. It bends down towards humanity, not leaving human beings alone, but stretching out to them to offer the certainty of its presence and the security of hope. The motto of the 2025 Jubilee Year: Pilgrims in hope, represented in green letters.



SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

			Sundays Year C • Weekdays Year I
Monday	23 Dec	Monday of the 4 th week of Advent	Malachi 3:1-4,23-24 Luke 1:57-66
Tuesday	24 Dec	Tuesday of the 4 th week of Advent	2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14 Luke 1:67-79
Wednesday	25 Dec	Christmas – the Birth of the Lord	Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-6 John 1:1-18
Thursday	26 Dec	St Stephen, the first martyr	Acts 6:8-10 Matthew 10:17-22
Friday	27 Dec	St John, apostle, evangelist	1 John 1:1-4 John 20:2-8
Saturday	28 Dec	The Holy Innocents, martyrs	1 John 1:5–2:2 Matthew 2:13-18
Sunday	29 Dec	THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH • YEAR C – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>	

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦	Saturday, 21 December	20:20	Summer Solstice [longest day] – sunrise 05:40, sunset 20:08
✦	Tuesday, 24 December	17:30	Christmas Eve Mass in the Parish Church – bring a bell
		20:00	Children dress as shepherds or angels ... and bring a bell
			Christmas Night Mass in the church – will be 'televised'
✦	Wednesday, 25 December	09:00	Christmas Day Mass – bring a bell
✦	Thursday, 26 December	09:30	St Stephen's Mass – Boxing Day – public holiday
✦	Friday, 27 December	09:30	Feast of St John – Mass as usual
✦	Wednesday, 1 January 2025	09:00	Mass for Mary Mother of God, and World Day of Peace

WHITE CHRISTMAS WREATH RECIPE – FROM ANNE

580g white chocolate; 2 cups rice bubbles; 50g dried cranberries; 200g dried mango, chopped; 80g (1 cup) shredded coconut; 100g slivered almonds; glace red cherries to decorate (optional).

Line with cling film a round bundt tin. Set aside. Melt the chocolate in the microwave in 30 second increments, stirring until smooth and melted. Add the rice crispies, cranberries, mango, shredded coconut and almonds to the chocolate. Stir to combine. Spoon into the prepared tin and press down. Place into the fridge for 1-2 hours or until set. Invert onto plate. Remove clingwrap. Decorate with glace cherries and rosemary sprigs. Serves 8, preparation 30 minutes. A tropical twist on the traditional white Christmas slice.

AT THE BEACH: SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Never swim alone. Don't swim directly after a meal or under the influence of alcohol. Check the water depth.

THE JUBILEE PRAYER

Father in heaven, may the faith you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of your Kingdom. May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally. May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT ♦ YEAR C

1 st Reading	Micah 5:1-4
2 nd Reading	Hebrews 10:5-10
Gospel	Luke 1:39-44

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

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

THE HOLY FAMILY ♦ YEAR C

1 st Reading	1 Samuel 1:20-22,24-28
2 nd Reading	1 John 3:1-2,21-24
Gospel	Luke 2:41-52

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Parish School of St Michael

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SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday 17:30

Sunday 08:00

Saturday Mass is recorded.

THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES

Monday _____

Tuesday 17:30

Wednesday 09:00

Thursday 09:00

Friday 09:30

Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday