



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN

27 / 28 APRIL 2024

5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER + YEAR B

50 DAYS OF EASTER! ALLELUIA!

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Cutting Back

The Gospel for this Sunday of Easter has the familiar story about the vine and the branches. Jesus, the vine, is rooted and stable and will always bring us all the nourishment we need.

Maybe you would like to stop there and contemplate such a rich image. Do so if you would like.

Because just beyond it there is the small matter of being pruned. To prune a plant is to cut parts of it off. Jesus mentions it twice in our reading: Speaking as the vine, he says that the Father ... takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes, so that it bears more fruit.

Ouch.

If we bring forth no fruit, we “will be thrown out like a branch and wither.” If we bear some, we have to be pruned. We lose either way!

And it seems to be our fault:

If only I were a better person, if only I had done the right thing, if only the world were different, if only I had been dealt a better hand in the game of life, or, or, or. If I weren't so full of guilt, I wouldn't have to be pruned.

It is all my fault!

Guilt is a major feature of human life. “Everything goes wrong,” it says, and it is my fault.

To tell the truth, many people take the crucifixion as a direct result of their own sins. “I caused this. My sins killed Jesus.” This is not completely false, but it is out of control. How could your small sins take down the Lord of the universe?

So, could there be a better way to deal with guilt?

First, decide whether you are bearing no fruit at all. None. If that is really and actually true, then get help from someone, because spiritually you are dying. Most of us do bear good fruit—it is just that we don't remember that we do.

Second, with that understood, look at what pruning is. It is a way to make things better, make a better plant, a better tree, a better orchard. If you cut tired old branches from your Philodendron, for instance, it will begin to thrive again, not wither. Pruning encourages new growth and the overall health of the plant or tree.

Third, seen in that way, you and I do need to be trimmed regularly, don't we? Maybe unconsciously we have been thinking that we ourselves are the vine, independent of Christ, not just a branch. The reason pruning would help is not that we should be punished, but that it promotes health of the whole person, the whole garden, the whole orchard—the mystical body of Christ.

Trust the steadiness of Jesus' gardener hand. Trust even while suffering. Drink in your overflowing share of trust at Sunday's table of the Lord. Let the Word instruct you, let the body and blood of Christ, which was pruned to almost nothing, fill you and shape you.

Then you can say to the Lord with the rest of us, go ahead, trim whatever gets in the way! I am not the vine, I am a branch. My job is not to be perfect, it is to remain in Christ, and to let him do good within me and through me and us.

Today's gospel reading, ‘I am the true vine’, brings us another of John's ‘I AM’ meditations. It takes up an important theme developed by the Old Testament prophets and one of the psalms: the old Israel was the Lord's ‘vine’, lovingly planted and tended; but it brought forth only bitter fruits. In Jesus, however, this divine project has been taken up again by the Father – coming forth from his Paschal Mystery, he is the true vine which will bear fruits which give eternal ‘glory’ to the Father.

Thus, our liturgy carries forward our Easter reflection upon what the Saviour's Paschal Mystery means in our lives and in the life of the Church. One of the central themes of the New Testament is the solidarity we have with Christ through what was achieved by God through his death and resurrection. For Paul we live ‘in Christ’, we are ‘limbs of his body’. John often repeats that Christ (and his Father) now ‘dwell’ or ‘make their home’ in us.

We could easily overlook the fact that what comes through clearly in this gospel is the call to fruitfulness – sharing with the Son all that makes him the ‘true’ vine, beloved of the Father who has given him over for the sake of the whole world. The vine's branches are ‘pruned’ by the Father by means of ‘the word’ – a clear call to nourish our Resurrection life through a knowledge and love of the Scriptures. The fruits we will bear are primarily the



JOHN
Chapter 15:1-8



✠✠ witness we must give to others, and the outreach through which we are called to embody the Saviour's presence in our world. Israel was called to be 'a light to the nations' but failed; the New Israel, brought into existence through our solidarity with Jesus in his Paschal Mystery, must fulfil that great mission – an apparently impossible task, until we recall that what is at stake is the Father's great design in creation, and we recognise that all that is to be achieved derives from the One who is 'the true vine'.

In the first reading from Acts, the story of the apostolic Church, energised by its Resurrection faith, continues. The conversion of Paul – through his meeting with the Risen Lord – is a great turning point in this story. As now, the difficulties to be overcome, if the community of believers was to bear life-giving fruits, were both internal and external. It was not easy to accept and trust as a brother the man who had been so violent against them. And the message of life – brought to a lost world – was hated by those who preferred darkness to the light.

If the fruits of life 'in the vine' stressed in the gospel are the Church's effective witness and outreach, the 'discipleship' referred to at the end of the gospel's teaching brings great personal blessings to each believer. The reading from John's letter spells out some of them: learning from the Saviour what authentic 'love' is; finding the trust in God which overcomes all our deepest fears and self-doubts; the unspeakable privilege of the divine indwelling; and finally the gift of God's own Spirit.

Our faith cannot be an escape. We must name evil when we see it, and we must oppose it. So-called 'ethnic cleansing' of which our generation has seen far too much is an appalling evil. Driven by fear, haunted by memories of past oppression, we human beings tend to revert to the protection of our tribe or race by demonizing those who differ from us and whom we see as threatening us, and by combining in what we might call 'a coalition of the willing' to obliterate those we define as our enemies, in order to ease our fear. No one doubts that there is a certain logic in this, but it is directly contrary to the revelation given us in Jesus, to the very basis of Christianity, and it ignores a teaching that is central to Jesus' revelation, He called us to do what he did: 'Love your enemies!' Atrocities committed in the name of asserting the rights of one's race or nation are still atrocities and God who hears the cry of the poor and oppressed calls upon us to have the will and the courage to oppose such evils. This much is clear.

In the face of sin and its consequences, the Church today encourages us to cry out for mercy while we continue to trust in God: 'Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you'. It is true that our lives are surrounded by grace. All day long angels are ministering to us if only we had eyes to see. We are surrounded by all the martyrs and saints of our Church interceding for us and urging us to take time to pray, take time to receive the immense love which is being offered to us, take time for our souls to breathe. At every moment we are being loved into life by God who is gracing us to surrender to his love and so be radiant sacraments of his love in our hurting world. If we each open ourselves to allow the radiance of God's creative love to enter and purify and energise our lives, the radiant beauty of God's love will become apparent to all, and his love will be seen to fill the whole earth: 'Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you'.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading Acts 9:26-31

- ✠ What motivated Paul to speak out boldly? Think of examples of people who speak out to bring changes in social justice. Name some ways to "speak out" using your voice.
- ✠ What injustices cry out to you to speak out frankly, without fear, and to bear the courage of your convictions, just as the early apostles did?

Second Reading 1 John 3:18-24

- ✠ St John says to "walk the walk, not just to talk the talk." Where do you fit on a continuum between walkers and talkers?
- ✠ What would your world look like if every day, you performed a kind deed for some unsuspecting person? Who would benefit from these acts?

Gospel John 15:1-8

- ✠ And everyone that [bears fruit] he prunes so that it bears more fruit." Have you ever felt like you were being "pruned?" Explain. At times do you have "dead wood" that needs to be pruned? Discuss.
- ✠ "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit." According to Pope Francis, what is the fruit that we, the branches, need to bear, that might result from this mutual abiding?

... the branches can do nothing without the vine, they need sap to grow and to bear fruit. ... But Jesus needs us too, like the vine with the branches. Perhaps to say this may seem bold to us, and so let us ask ourselves: in what sense does Jesus need us?

He needs our witness. The fruit that as branches we must bear, is the witness of our lives as Christians. After Jesus ascended to the Father, it is the task of the disciples—it is our task—to continue to proclaim the Gospel in words and in deeds. And the disciples—we, Jesus' disciples—do so by bearing witness to his love: the fruit to be borne is love. Attached to Christ, we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and thus we can do good to our neighbour, we can do good to society, to the Church. The tree is known by its fruit. A truly Christian life bears witness to Christ.

— Pope Francis, *Regina Caeli* for 5th Sunday of Easter, 2 May 2021

THE JOURNEYS OF SAINT PAUL

The Acts of the Apostles records three missionary journeys of St Paul and his companions. The fourth missionary journey was done by St Paul alone, as a prisoner in chains, from Jerusalem to Rome, and eventually to his death.



Paul's First Missionary Journey 44AD to 46AD

Acts 13

From Antioch to Cyprus
to Asia Minor

Paul's Second Missionary Journey around the years 49AD to 52AD

Acts 15:36-40, 16, 17, 18:1-22

Acts 15:36-40, 16, 17, 18:1-22

Overland from Jerusalem to Antioch,
thence to Asia Minor, Turkey, Greece



Paul's Third Missionary Journey Around the year 53AD to 58AD

Acts 19-26

Antioch across Asia Minor to Ephesus,
thence ship to Greece and return

Paul's Journey to Rome

from the prison in Caesaria
to the prison in Rome
including being shipwrecked

around the year 60AD

Acts 27-28



SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year B • Weekdays Year II

Monday	29 Apr	St Catherine of Siena, virgin, doctor	Acts 14:5-18	John 14:21-26
Tuesday ✕	30 Apr	Tuesday of the 5 th Week of Easter	Acts 14:19-28	John 14:27-31
Wednesday	1 May	Wednesday of the 5 th Week of Easter	Acts 15:1-6	John 15:1-8
Thursday	2 May	St Athanasius, bishop, doctor	Acts 15:7-21	John 15:9-11
Friday	3 May	Sts Philip and James, apostles	1 Corinthians 15:1-8	John 14:6-14
Saturday	4 May	Saturday of the 5 th Week of Easter	Acts 16:1-10	John 15:18-21
Sunday	5 May	6 TH SUNDAY OF THE 50 DAYS OF EASTER • YEAR B – <i>Scripture Readings are listed below.</i>		

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ 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
✦ Friday, 10 May	17:10 Ken returns from Canon Law Conference
✦ Weekend, 11/12 May	Mothers' Day – Special Blessing of all Mothers 18:30 After Saturday Mass, dinner at Club Thirroul
✦ Monday, 13 May	Confirmation 2024 Enrolments close

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 ...**

FIVE PLUS ONE PRAWN DIPPING SAUCES

Cocktail Sauce – ⅔ cup (160g) tomato sauce; 1 tbsp mayonnaise; ¼ tsp each mustard powder (or Dijon), onion powder, garlic powder, white sugar; dash Tabasco; 1 tsp lemon juice, fresh; 1 tsp Worcestershire Sauce; *salt, pepper*.

Tartare Sauce: 1 cup (220g) mayonnaise; 1tbsp gherkin/cornichon, very finely chopped; 1½ tsp fresh dill, finely chopped; 1tsp fresh parsley, chopped; 1tsp capers, drained and finely chopped; 1½ tbsp lemon juice, fresh; ½ tsp white sugar; ¼ tsp salt.

Marie Rose Sauce: ⅔ cup (145g) mayonnaise; 1tbsp tomato sauce; 1tsp Worcestershire Sauce; 1tsp fresh horseradish (or sub 1½ tsp jarred); dash of Tabasco; pinch cayenne pepper.

Thai Lime Sweet Chilli Sauce: 5tbsp (75g) Sweet Chilli Sauce, store bought; ⅔ cup (165ml) lime juice, fresh (4–5 limes); 5tbsp (75ml) olive oil (can sub with neutral oil like canola); 1 garlic clove, minced; 1tbsp white sugar (or other); ¼ cup coriander / cilantro leaves, finely chopped.

Family Favourite: ⅔ cup (145g) mayonnaise; ⅓ cup (80g) tomato sauce; 1½ tbsp capers, drained and finely chopped; 1½ tbsp gherkin/cornichon, finely chopped; 1½ tbsp shallots or onion, finely chopped; ¼ cup dill leaves, finely chopped; dash Worcestershire Sauce; 4 or so dashes of Tabasco; 1tbsp lemon juice (adjust to taste).

Poker Machine Sauce: *to taste* ... tomato sauce; Worcestershire Sauce; cream (or milk); lemon juice; pepper. Mix and adjust quantities to your taste ... and according to how many prawns you have!

THIS Sunday's Readings – on website	NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website	SUNDAY
5 TH SUNDAY OF EASTER • YEAR B	6 TH SUNDAY OF EASTER • YEAR B	MASS TIMES
1 st Reading Acts 9:26-31	1 st Reading Acts 10:25-26,34-35,44-48	Saturday ✕ 17:30
2 nd Reading 1 John 3:18-24	2 nd Reading 1 John 4:7-10	Sunday 08:00
Gospel John 15:1-8	Gospel John 15:9-17	✕ Saturday Mass is recorded.
Parish of St Michael – Thirroul <i>One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes</i> <i>Moving forward as a Parish Family</i> Patrick Vaughan • <i>Parish Priest</i> Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm • <i>Assisting</i> Kerry Fabon • Parish Secretary Tues, Wed 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00	www.thirroulcatholic.org.au 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive PO Box 44 • Thirroul 2515 4268 1910 4268 1976 thirroul@dow.org.au Parish School of St Michael 4267 2560	THIS WEEK'S LITURGIES Monday Tuesday ✕ 17:30 Wednesday 09:00 Thursday 09:00 Friday 09:30 <i>Anointing of the Sick 1st Friday</i>