

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 74

23rd July, 2021

1st World Day for Grandparents and Elderly: July 25th

A message from Pope Francis (abridged)



Dear Grandfathers and Grandmothers, Dear Elderly Friends, “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20): this is the promise the Lord made to his disciples before he ascended into heaven. They are the words that he repeats to you today, dear grandfathers and grandmothers, dear elderly friends. “I am with you always” are also the words that I, as Bishop of Rome and an elderly person like yourselves, would like to address to you on this first World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly.

The whole Church is close to you – to us – and cares about you, loves you and does not want to leave you alone! I am well aware that this Message comes to you at a difficult time: the pandemic swept down on us like an unexpected and furious storm; it has been a time of trial for everyone, but especially for us elderly persons. Many of us fell ill, others died or experienced the death of spouses or loved ones, while others found themselves isolated and alone for long periods. The Lord is aware of all that we have been through in this time. He is close to those who felt isolated and alone, feelings that became more acute during the pandemic.

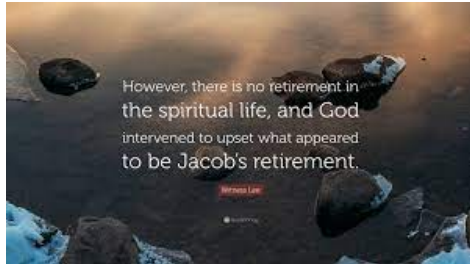
Tradition has it that Saint Joachim, the grandfather of Jesus, felt estranged from those around him because he had no children; his life, like that of his wife Anne, was considered useless. So the Lord sent an angel to console him. While he mused sadly outside the city gates, a messenger from the Lord appeared to him and said, “Joachim, Joachim! The Lord has heard your insistent prayer”.¹ Giotto, in one of his celebrated frescoes,² seems to set the scene at night, one of those many sleepless nights, filled with memories, worries and longings to which many of us have come to be accustomed.

Even at the darkest moments, as in these months of pandemic, the Lord continues to send angels to console our loneliness and to remind us: “I am with you always”. He says this to you, and he says it to me. That is the meaning of this Day, which I wanted to celebrate for the first time in this particular year, as a long period of isolation ends and social life slowly resumes.

May every grandfather, every grandmother, every older person, especially those among us who are most alone, receive the visit of an angel! At times those angels will have the face of our grandchildren, at others, the face of family members, lifelong friends or those we have come to know during these trying times, when we

have learned how important hugs and visits are for each of us. How sad it makes me that in some places these are still not possible!

The Lord, however, also sends us messengers through his words, which are always at hand. Let us try to read a page of the Gospel every day, to pray with the psalms, to read the prophets! We will be comforted by the Lord's faithfulness. The Scriptures will also help us to understand what the Lord is asking of our lives today. For at every hour of the day (cf. Mt 20:1-16) and in every season of life, he continues to send labourers into his vineyard. I was called to become the Bishop of Rome when I had



However, there is no retirement in the spiritual life, and God intervened to upset what appeared to be Jacob's retirement.

reached, so to speak, retirement age and thought I would not be doing anything new. The Lord is always – always – close to us. He is close to us with new possibilities, new ideas, new consolations, but always close to us. You know that the Lord is eternal; he never, ever goes into retirement!

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells the Apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (28:19-20). These words are also addressed to us today. They help us better understand that our vocation is to preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young, and to care for the little ones. Think about it: what is our vocation today, at our age? To preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young and to care for the little ones. Never forget this.

At this crucial moment in history, you have a renewed vocation. You may wonder: How this can be possible? My energy is running out and I don't think I can do much. How can I begin to act differently when habit is so much a part of my life? How can I devote myself to those who are poor when I am already so concerned about my family? How can I broaden my vision when I can't even leave the residence where I live? Isn't my solitude already a sufficiently heavy burden? How many of you are asking just that question: isn't my solitude already a sufficiently heavy burden? Jesus himself heard a similar question from Nicodemus, who asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" (Jn 3:4). It can happen, the Lord replies, if we open our hearts to the working of the Holy Spirit, who blows where he wills. The Holy Spirit whose freedom is such that he goes wherever, and does whatever, he wills.

As I have often observed, we will not emerge from the present crisis as we were before, but either better or worse. And "God willing... this may prove not to be just another tragedy of history from which we learned nothing... If only we might keep in

We need the Holy Spirit to give us new eyes, to open our minds and our hearts to face the present moment and the future having learned this lesson: That humanity is one. No one is saved alone. No one.

mind all those elderly persons who died for lack of respirators... If only this immense sorrow may not prove useless, but enable us to take a step forward towards a new

style of life. If only we might discover once for all that we need one another, and that in this way our human frailty can experience a rebirth” (Fratelli Tutti, 35). No one is saved alone. We are all indebted to one another. We are all brothers and sisters.

Given this, I want to tell you that you are needed in order to help build, in fraternity and social friendship, the world of tomorrow: the world in which we, together with our children and grandchildren, will live once the storm has subsided. All of us must “take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies” (ibid., 77). Among the pillars that support this new edifice, there are three that you, better than anyone else, can help to set up. Those three pillars are dreams, memory and prayer. The Lord’s closeness will grant to all, even the frailest among us, the strength needed to embark on a new journey along the path of dreams, memory and prayer.



Who, if not the young, can take the dreams of the elderly and make them come true? Yet for this to happen, it is necessary that we continue to dream. Our dreams of justice, of peace, of solidarity can make it possible for our young people to have new visions. You need to show that it is possible to emerge renewed from an experience of hardship. Without memory, we will never be able to

build; without a foundation, we can never build a house. Never. And the foundation of life is memory.

Finally, prayer. Your prayer is a very precious resource: a deep breath that the Church and the world urgently need (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 262). Especially in these difficult times for our human family, as we continue to sail in the same boat across the stormy sea of the pandemic, your intercession for the world and for the Church has great value: it inspires in everyone the serene trust that we will soon come to shore. May all of us open our hearts in sensitivity to the sufferings of the poor and intercede for their needs. May each of us learn to repeat to all, and especially to the young, the words of consolation we have heard spoken to us today: “I am with you always”! Keep moving forward! May the Lord grant you his blessing.

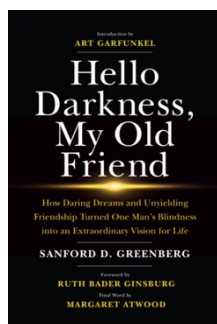
Sharing the Darkness

‘Hello Darkness my old friend’ are the opening words to the Simon and Garfunkel hit, ‘The Sound Of Silence’. The song was a tribute to the bond of friendship Art Garfunkel shared with his university roommate Sandy Greenberg. Art Garfunkel is godfather to Sandy Greenberg’s three children, and Sandy now aged 80 says, “He lifted me out of the grave; his selfless devotion gave me a reason to live again”.

Sandy and Art met during their first week as students at Columbia University in New York and bonded over their interests in books, poetry and music. They made a pact to always be there for each other in times of trouble, never expecting that the pact would be tested so soon.

Sandy was at a baseball game when suddenly his eyes became cloudy and his vision unhinged. Soon after, "darkness descended." Within days Sandy went blind. Doctors realized that glaucoma had destroyed his optic nerves.

Sandy's family were too poor to help him. He dropped out of university, gave up his dream of becoming a lawyer, and plunged into depression. "I wouldn't see anyone, I just refused to talk to anybody," says Sandy. "And then unexpectedly Arthur flew in, saying he had to talk to me. He was insistent." Art told Sandy, "I need you back there. We made a pact together that we would be there for the other in times of crises. I will help you'." They returned to Columbia University, where Sandy became dependent on Art's support who called himself "Darkness" in a show of empathy. "I was saying, 'I want to be together where you are, in the black'."



Sandy recalled: "He would come in and say, 'Darkness is going to read to you now.' "Then he would take me to class and back. He would take me around the city. He altered his entire life so that it would accommodate me." Art would walk him to class, bandage his wounds when he fell, and even filled out his graduate applications. Although Paul Simon wrote the famous song, the lyrics are infused with Garfunkel's compassion as Darkness, Sandy's old friend.

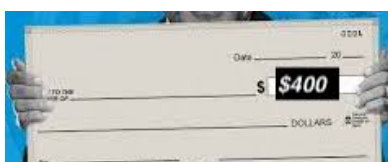
One day Art was guiding Sandy through New York and they stood in front of the very crowded Grand Central Station, Garfunkel apologized that he had to leave for an assignment. Sandy felt abandoned all alone in the rush-hour crowd. He stumbled and fell. Sandy recalls. "I cut my forehead and my shins. My socks were bloodied. I had my hands out and bumped into a woman's breasts It was a horrendous feeling of shame and humiliation.

I started running forward, knocking over coffee cups and briefcases, and finally I got to the local train to University. It was the worst life." Back on campus, he who apologized and he Garfunkel's voice. "For a enraged, and then I happened." Garfunkel had not abandoned Sandy at the station, but had followed him the entire way home, watching over him. "Arthur knew it was only when I could prove to myself I could do it that I would have real independence," says Sandy. "And it worked, because after that I felt that I could do anything.



Columbia couple of hours in my bumped into a man, recognised it as moment I was understood what

"That moment was the spark that caused me to live a completely different life, without fear, without doubt. For that I am tremendously grateful to my friend."



Sandy not only graduated, but went on to study for a master's degree at Harvard and Oxford.

While in Britain, Sandy received a phone call from Art who wanted to drop out of architecture school and record his first album with Paul Simon. He explained: "I need \$400 to get started." Sandy and his wife, had \$404 in their current account and they sent the money. Sandy felt this was the first time he had been able to live up to his half of their pact." The Sound Of Silence went to No 1 across the world.

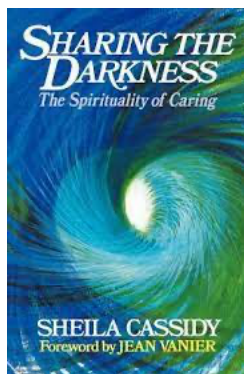
Simon & Garfunkel went on to have four smash albums. Sandy went on to extraordinary success as an inventor, entrepreneur, investor, presidential adviser and philanthropist. The father of three, who launched a \$3million prize to find a cure for blindness, has always refused to use a white cane, guide dog or braille. "I don't want to be 'the blind guy'," he says. "I wanted to be Sandy Greenberg, the human being."

Six decades after they met the two men remain best friends, and Garfunkel credits Sandy with transforming his life. With Sandy, "my real life emerged," says the singer. "I became a better guy in my own eyes, and began to see who I was - somebody who gives to a friend. "I blush to find myself within his dimension. My friend is the gold standard of decency." Says Sandy: "I am the luckiest man in the world"

The video: 'Sound of Silence':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9z87viDmOo>

Sharing the Darkness...Sheila Cassidy



It seemed appropriate to continue the theme of 'Darkness' in a positive light, through mention of the writings and action of Australian doctor, Sheila Cassidy. Sheila volunteered to work in Chile and was imprisoned there in 1975 for providing medical care to opponents of the Pinochet regime. Sheila was kept in custody without trial and severely tortured in the hope that she would disclose information about her patient and other contacts.

After being released Sheila returned to the UK, and became Medical Director of St Luke's Hospice in Plymouth about 300 kilometres south west of London. In her book 'Sharing the Darkness' Sheila explained how she tried for a time to live like a truly poor person while continuing her challenging work assisting the dying, but this caused severe exhaustion and burnout.

Among the actions she had taken was to remove her bed and mattress to sleep on the floor, turning off the house heating, reducing her food intake and giving away her

television set. She ignored the advice of friends that this would lead to ill-health. After she became ill, Sheila realised that it had been unwise for her as a doctor to do what she had done because it lessened her opportunities to assist those who needed her medical experience and abilities. She came to a profound insight that those in need rely on the abilities and financial support of others. From that time this insight shaped her own work including the advice she gave to those undertaking training in the medical profession.

Her insights and experience help to validate the feelings of those who sometimes consider their own ministry or lifestyle as worthwhile but not specifically 'at the margins'. This is a common situation for many of us, whether we are religious or laity and it highlights that the needs of everyday people are important too. They often experience social abandonment, isolation and loneliness. More significantly, in relation to the Passionist charism, ordinary people can suffer from loss of faith and a lack of love not only from significant others, but from God.

In 'Sharing the Darkness', Sheila describes the cost of Christian discipleship for those working in the front line of caring such as those terminally ill with cancer. As we witness and hear about the thousands of front line nurses, doctors and other medical staff throughout the world working among those with COVID or working where COVID could be present, it is a timely reminder of the cost of true discipleship and the admiration we have for those who selflessly serve those in desperate need.

*All you
need is
Love*

Sheila said, *"The older I get, the less I know, except that what really matters is loving. At heart, professional loving is about competence, empathy, and communication."* She placed a lot of emphasis on preparation for this work or vocation including paying attention to one's own needs so that these do not get in the way of genuine care and that the carer can truly enter the darkness of the those who suffer and share that darkness with them.

'The spirituality of those who care must be the spirituality of the companion, of the friend who walks alongside, helping, sharing and just sometimes sitting, empty-handed, when he or she would rather run away. It is the spirituality of presence, of being alongside, watchful, available... of just being there'

Sheila was given a poem written by Sydney Carter (author of the song 'Lord of the Dance') which she made her own personal commitment.

*No revolution will come in time to alter this man's life
except the one surprise of being loved.
He has no interest in civil rights neo marxism, psychiatry
or any kind of sex.*

*He has only twelve more hours to live
so never mind about a cure for cancer,
smoking, leprosy or osteoarthritis.*

*Over this dead loss to society you pour your precious ointment,
call the bluff and laugh at the fat and clock faced gravity
of our economy.
You wash the feet that will not walk tomorrow.
Come levity of love, show him, show me
in this last step of time - Eternity
leaping and capering.*

Imagine if we could love that way!

Reflections



These three reflections involve a lot of reading. Hopefully Pope Francis' reflection will provide encouragement and inspiration for many of us, as will the wonderful story of Art Garfunkel and Sandy Greenberg and the challenge Sheila Cassidy gives in caring for those in need. Our own sight-impaired Frank Bartoli is an inspiration to us at Holy Cross and perhaps we can include some of his wisdom in a newsletter. Frank was awarded an AOM in 2006 for service to sport for people with vision impairment as a competitor and through a range of executive roles.



COVID - Local news

The lockdown in Melbourne has continued beyond the five days originally imposed and in this past week or so we have seen COVID cases rise in all parts of the world. Our Centre has remained closed, like so many businesses and the continual cancellation, rebooking, cancellation, rebooking cycle is wearing, particularly on Mayrose.

COVID in Vietnam

Fr Jeff Foale shared a story with me about a family of five. Four members were sick and tested Covid-19 positive and so were bundled off to hospital, leaving one family member at home alone. Some days later the police found that remaining person at home, now dead!

One of students Peter (Danh) shared that "Travel and business have been closed since the outbreak started after the national holiday in May. Because this happened quickly it left many citizens in limbo, especially the poor who have been desperate. At the same time, hundreds of tons of supplies including vegetables are being supplied to HoChiMinh city by people from everywhere in Vietnam. The people from

areas that were flooded last year who suffered so much devastation and loss are now helping out with food and other needs. Others in other places are also helping. I believe that everyone shares what they have with other neighbours because 'doing common good' is a high Vietnamese value that has been in our culture for centuries.

The outbreak is mainly in HoChiMinh even though there are few cases in other provinces. I have stayed in the community for more than 4 weeks and still it is not known when the restriction will be lifted. We now have 30 men living in community and need more food than before. Fortunately benefactors and families send veggies for us and some other needs. We are blessed to have them. Two brothers to go out to pick up food like that. Everyone else stays back in the community. Father Jeff is now in isolation himself from us, he has meals alone in a different room and attends mass from the back of the chapel. We are still waiting for vaccine having already registered to get the jab. The city governors claim that 70% population of HCM must achieve herd immunity. This includes people who have acquired the virus and have recovered and those able to access vaccine which is not free for civilians. So the outbreak will be worse before it gets to the point of achieving herd immunity".

Vaccination and seeing

A man had his second dose of the vaccine last week. On the way home he began to have blurred vision. When he got home, he called the vaccination centre for advice and to ask if he should see a doctor or be hospitalized. He was told NOT to go to a doctor or a hospital, but just return to the vaccination centre and pick up his glasses!

He's got a head for it

We use that expression to describe someone's ability. The man in this video certainly deserves that recognition. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b827hc1V97w>

Humour related to darkness

Q. What did God do after he created a 24 hour period of alternating light and darkness?

A. Called it a day.

Q. Why is Dark spelled with a 'K' and not a 'C'?

A. Because you can't 'C' in the dark

Q. What did the lumberjack do when it got dark?

A. He took his axe and saw.

Q. Why is the time period from the 5th-14th centuries known as the Dark Ages?

A. Because it was the time of knights.

Q. Will glass coffins ever be popular?

A. Remains to be seen

When I was young I used to be afraid of the dark. Now when I get my electric bill I'm afraid of the light.

I walked downstairs to find my daughter eating cereal in complete darkness. I asked her, "What kind of psycho eats cereal in the dark?"
"A cereal killer" she replied.

When I gave up my seat to a blind person on the bus I lost my job as a bus driver

I finally learnt how to separate my washing into lights and darks...Turns out there can be a bit of a grey area

I fell down a really deep dark hole today. I couldn't see that well.

I avoid bike trails after dark. They're full of cycle paths.

Tom the pessimist, saw a dark tunnel. Dick the optimist, saw a light at the end of the tunnel. Harry the realist, saw a freight train. The train driver sitting in his illuminated cabin saw three idiots standing on the tracks!

My Dad hates getting directions from me. He left because I was right.

**Because Melbourne's lockdown has been extended,
Masses at Holy Cross will not resume until Sunday August 1st**



Michael Doyle

This is a photo taken of Michael on his 90th birthday. He was given a cushion for his computer which he will appreciate. The family continues to take wonderful care of Michael and Mardi.

Province ordination anniversaries

Brian Gleeson 60th (Friday 23rd July)

David Wilkie 56th (Sat 24th July)

Paul Mercieca 54th (Sat 24th July)

John Curtis 45th (Sat 24th July)

The link for Sunday Mass (Week 17 Year B) will be sent tomorrow afternoon.

We remember

All those affected emotionally, physically or financially by COVID lockdowns throughout Australia and the rest of the world.

We remember **Errol Lovett** who's brother John died this past week in Brisbane. Sadly, Errol was unable to get to see him and will be unable to attend his funeral.

**I thank my God
every time I
remember you.
In all of my prayers
for all of you,
I always pray with joy.**

Philippians 1:3-4

Please also remember Maree Bartoli, Maria Robson, Jim Molan, Jan Mulally, Graham Hille, Peter Owen, Anne Jenkins, Pam Grehan, Angelo Vigilante, Pam Gartland, Patricia Keeghan, Brian Tresseder, Maeve and John Reardon, Michael and Mardi Doyle, Michael O'Callaghan, Kate and Mary Dunn, Jim Monaghan, Ray Sanchez CP, Jim Coucher CP and all who seek or need our prayers.

May the extra days of lockdown be kind to you

Brian