

Holy Cross Retreat

Letter 96

17th December, 2021



Warm greetings,

We are about to celebrate the final week of Advent. We have had a focus of hope, peace and joy over the first three weeks. The theme for the final week is love.

Please take note of the Christmas Masses and requirements so that we can celebrate joyfully and safely.

Holy Cross Office closure

Mayrose will take annual leave from today until January 9th. Rose will be in the office next week from Tuesday until lunch time Thursday. Rose will then also take annual leave, until the Office reopens on January 9th.

Christmas Masses

Christmas Eve occurs next Friday. Mass will be celebrated outside 'under the trees' at **7.30pm**, preceded by Carols, which start at **7.00pm**. We canvassed opinions about the location (under the trees or on the back lawn. Opinions were divided, but we have decided to go for 'the trees' principally because the music group (Chris, Dominic Marasea and Frank Van den Boom, who make up 'The Journeymen') find standing in the direct sunlight for a long period, very difficult.

There will be a lot of chairs provided, but if you have your own light chair it would be helpful to bring it. **Please remember to bring something warm to wear.**

You can either park in the car parks and walk to the tree area or follow the parking directions and drive down and park on the oval. Either way, please be ready to check in with your QR code at the reception desk in the driveway. It is no longer a government requirement to produce your double vaccination certificate. With such a large crowd present, it is important please, that anyone feeling unwell and potentially carrying COVID, not risk attending.

Mass will be celebrated on **Christmas Day** (Saturday) at 10.00am.

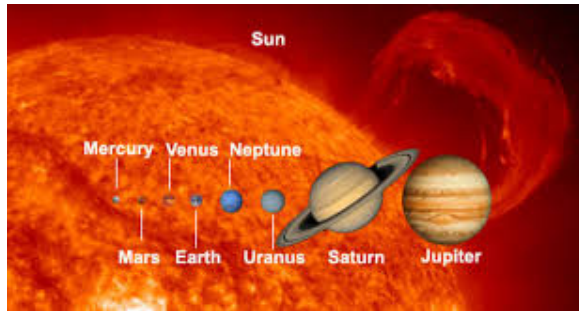
Mass will be celebrated on **Boxing Day** (Sunday) at 10.00am.

Chapel Chairs



Thank you again for the generous donations towards the new chapel chairs. They are being made in Christchurch, NZ and we have been told to expect them in March.

Creation 16: Life on Earth (Part 1)



A little over four and a half billion years ago, some of the materials created in a supernova, spun off to form our sun. In turn some of that material collected into the shape we have come to know as Earth. It was the right size and in the right place in relation to the sun, that when allowed to cool, it could establish

life. That took a very long time! For several hundreds of millions of years, earth was showered and shaken by debris from the new solar system, as meteors and large rocks crashed into its surface. As a result of this activity, earth boiled for five hundred million years.

The radioactive surface cooled its crust pouring out fiery molten rock, pushing up mountains, and carving out valleys, rearranging them again and again. Meteors crafted craters of all sizes as they crashed into the Earth's surface. Chemicals and gases were released into the atmosphere.



Millions of comets brought huge amounts of ice which unfroze, and it rained for a hundred million years! Huge electrical storms shook and split the surface. Rivers formed and poured themselves into growing seas, creating the oceans. Boiled liquid matter that became rock as it cooled, broke up or was washed down rivers and into the seas, filling them with salts and other minerals.

The chemicals supplied by the work of the supernova and created within our solar system, were powerful and diverse. The energy from powerful lightning caused chemical reactions which led to the emergence of a new form of life. The same self-organizing capacity as the stars and galaxies display, was at work on Earth.



Cells brought about the ability to create complexity and unity. Most valuable of all, cells had memory. Scientists explain that cells such as bacteria, known as prokaryotes, remember what the early earth was like. This is because they still construct themselves in the way they did then, despite the enormous change in atmosphere and ocean conditions. These cells remember how they were created billions of years ago, because they still reproduce it.

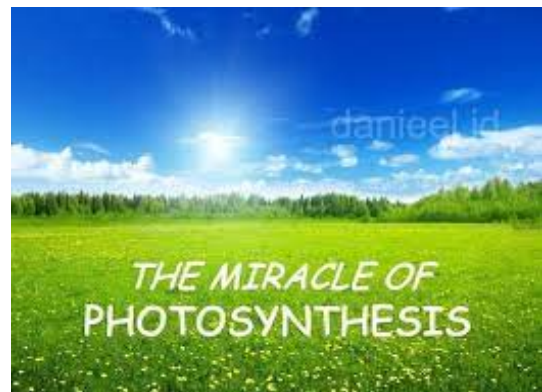
This vital gift for all life, to remember the past, was present in the first cell. Living memory is a part of every species, and connects past and present forms of life. Some early cells did not need the incredible energy that had been used to create and sustain other forms of life. They learned and remembered a new way. They also had the gift of developing from generalised to specialised forms, through genetic mutation. In time the first cell's descendants multiplied, mutated and filled the oceans.



Initially, they were sustained by the chemically rich turbulence that had set life in motion. But as this activity slowed, so did the production of compounds. If the food supply had been exhausted, the cells would have disappeared, along with the Earth's ability to generate such life. Mutations overcame this difficulty. New cells emerged that could survive on the dead body parts of other cells, or on their waste. This

created a circle of interconnectedness. The decaying body of one cell created life for another in a similar pattern to how the death of a star and the subsequent led to the creation of life for earth.

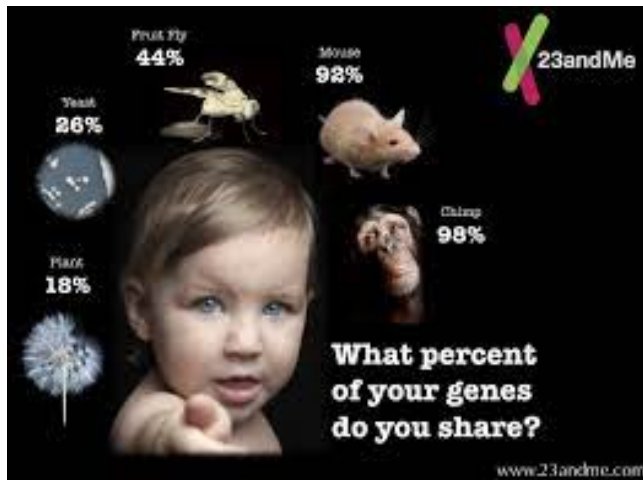
In an incredible act of creativity perhaps a million years after the emergence of the first cell, some cells developed a molecular 'net' that could capture packets of energy from the sun travelling at three hundred thousand kilometres per second, and convert these into structures for food. We call this process photosynthesis and it remains an astounding miracle.



In their book, 'The Universe Story', Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme express their astonishment at this achievement. *"This is an act of unsurpassable elegance from a being one millionth of a metre across, weaving a molecular power without a brain, without eyes, without hands, without blueprints, without foresight, without reflective consciousness"*.



Cells are capable of sharing their memory among themselves. They learned to do this by creating and inserting some of themselves into a small tube, and sending a copy into a companion. This recipient cell was now also able remember how to capture food from the sun!



This ability to store and share information in matter, enabled the cell to remember, to recreate and share memories. The genes of deoxyribonucleic acids (DNA) enable a cell to share with any other cell what it 'knows'. This gave cells the capacity to multiply and mutate. DNA information is limited in each individual, so it is the members of the species between them, that contain this living memory. Together

the community creates, discovers, learns and remembers.

The Passionist community of priests, brothers, sisters and laity highlight the human experience of this phenomenon. The Passionist charism or distinctive gift, is 'out there' to be caught or experienced, and it is carried by the Passionist species (professed and lay men and women) who share it across many different countries. Each individual has a sense of this charism and carries it, but none of them alone, possesses it. Members of other religious Congregations share something of this charism, but not in the same way. It is suggested that this reality might explain the experiences many people describe as psychic, whereby members of the same group despite their physical separation, probe, discover and create similar ideas at a similar time.



The early atmosphere of earth became increasingly dominated by carbon dioxide as volcanic eruptions released carbon stored under the earth's surface. Mutated cells developed the ability to draw upon carbon dioxide which led to increasing bacterial communities. This led to a decline in the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and reduced the amount of carbon that oceans could draw from the air. When the bacteria died, their decayed bodies formed into limestone which was drawn into convective interaction with earth's molten rock.



Stromatolites discovered in 1961 at Shark Bay south of Carnarvon, Western Australia, closely resemble those formed three and a half billion years ago. Stromatolites are rock-like structures built by microbes (single-celled cyanobacteria). Some scientists believe that cyanobacteria were the predominant form of life on early earth for more than two billion years, and may have been responsible for creating earth's atmospheric oxygen. As cells withdrew carbon from the air, Earth's temperature dropped.



Ice spread across the continents two billion years ago and cracked rocks, which enabled seawater to penetrate and dissolve the minerals. This was the first ice age and life mutated into blue-green bacteria (algae) that took hydrogen from the seas and released oxygen as waste. In doing this, oxygen which had been sent into the planet's networks by the sun catchers, became destructive, eating into every environment that supported life. Oxygen attacked the cell's DNA nerve centre, consuming electrons and destroying structures so that the cell was unable to perform its life-sustaining tasks. Oxygen made food inedible and attacked the cellular membrane. It attacked and destroyed the 'memory' in many living cells. Oxygen had helped to create cells. Now they faced total annihilation. This part of microscopic life, without eyes, ears and brains, was in supreme danger. The biosphere was at the verge of collapse.

In what begins to seem like an adventure story, a new bacterium mutated and not only survived, but invented respiration! This changed oxygen from a being a threat, to a gift. This powerful energy-transforming cell permeated the oceans. It received energy from the sun, hydrogen from the water and carbon from the atmosphere. It controlled combustion with oxygen. This was another miracle!



This new cell had a memory of how to gather what it needed and it had access to the chemicals it required. It reproduced and splintered into many species. As these species extracted hydrogen from the sea, oxygen continued to increase, resulting in other forms of life being unable to survive. Too much oxygen meant constant fire and eventually, destruction of the atmosphere. The conditions that had made the sea rich in nutrients were gone. Oxygen levels were now far beyond what the earlier



earth could have endured. It seems that the entire system, including the new respirator cell, worked to stabilise the level of oxygen, at twenty-one degrees, which is what it is today, just below the level of spontaneous combustion. An incredible new transformation was now possible.

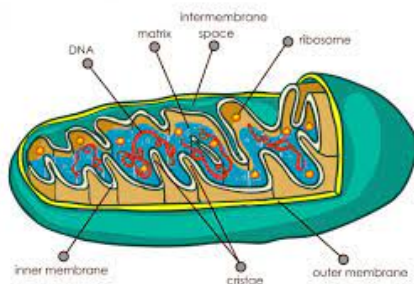
Around two billion years ago, a bacteria cell somehow mutated from its parent cells. It attached itself to another cell and invaded it, feasting on its insides. The cell used its own DNA to create its own nutrients! It multiplied until it expelled the captor cell, while retaining its own DNA. This union made complex life possible, and led later, to the development of organisms such as plants that could emit oxygen. This new species of cell is known as eukaryotes (possessing a nucleus). They were much larger than their pre-nucleus cousin, the prokaryotes.

we need each other

If the invading cells had continued their drive, they would have devoured their captors and died, because they lacked genetic

materials. If the captors had fought back and destroyed their invaders they would have suffocated in ever-increasing oxygen. In another of life's profound lessons, these natural enemies, needed each other, for either of them to survive. The invader learned to restrict its feeding to its captor's waste products instead of settling in its stomach, and oxygen was injected by the invader allowing the captor cell to survive in this oxygenated environment.

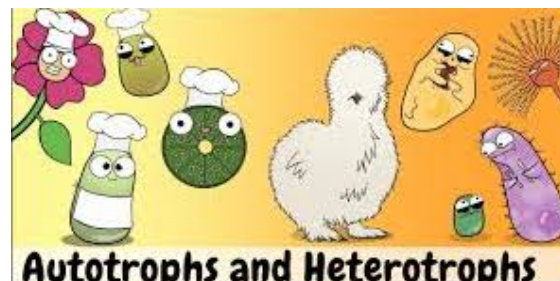
For two billion years, this interdependence became the predominant form of all life transfigurations. The invader cell evolved into mitochondrion, necessary in all complex cells. This new cell mutated without needing to feed itself either from the sun, other cells' waste or the earth's chemicals. Instead, it swallowed its neighbour,



while still alive. This was the beginning of predator-prey relationships. The DNA of the predators made it more attentive to its prey, while the DNA of the prey remembered what helped it to survive. Each needed the other. These interdependent relationships survived and reproduced. Mitochondria lives in our cells today but was originally an independent organism. It has its own DNA and replicates by itself.

A sexual eukaryotic cell had emerged possessing a double nucleus. Faced with the urge to reproduce, it was able to rely on its memory to divide the cell and arrange for the respective parts to swap with each other, so that each formed a single cell, with its own nucleus and a single set of chromosomes which were released into the ocean currents. Now, when one of these cells interacted with a mate, a new sensation occurred that led to one entering the other cell completely.

The development of heterotrophy (organisms that cannot produce their own food, but take nutrition from other sources of organic carbon, mainly plant or animal matter) created the first ecosystem, as organisms fed on one another. In this way, death began to



become a condition for creative life! Life invented deliberate sacrificial cell death, to facilitate the growth of organisms and the development of complex life.

Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but for those who love, time is eternity.

—Henry Van Dyke

“Each needed the other!” Even early on in the development of life on earth, this reality emerged. The adaptations and mutations that occurred and how early life forms learned and adapted, is a true wonder. All of this so far had taken 3.7 billion years since the formation of Earth. Every person who has ever lived, owes his or her life to this unfolding of life over billions of years, including the many

miracles that took place as the One behind the many creative developments, enabled increasingly complex life forms to evolve, as we will see more dramatically in the next instalment.

To be continued

Jellyfish



Given they have been living in our oceans for more than 650 million years, jellyfish deserve special recognition. They are the oldest multi-organ animal group on our planet. It would be possible to feature nearly any other animal and marvel at how it has evolved and what it is learned. We know from the way jellyfish are adapting to warmer and toxic oceans, that they are adapting

better than any other creature in the ocean, and that is why they have been here for so long.

The first thing that we can clarify is that jellyfish are not made of jelly and they are not fish! They are found in every ocean in the world. They have boneless bodies and have no heart or brain. Most species do not have eyes.

There are more than 2,000 types of jellyfish and they came in many colours and sizes. Some glow in the dark. Some grow as wide a little over two metres and some develop tentacles up forty metres long. These tentacles hang from their body and can be poisonous. They use their tentacles to protect themselves by stinging animals.





The renowned box jellyfish is considered the most venomous creature in the world. It has sting that is fatal to humans. Some years ago in late April, fellow Passionist David King and myself were conducting a parish mission in Mackay, Queensland. David is a keen swimmer. We were down by a beach where there was a displayed sign "Box Jellyfish live in these waters from October to May".

David asked a local, "Would it be safe to swim in these waters, this week, given it nearly May?" The man replied. "I reckon you'd be fine mate; you'd have to be really unlucky". Those last six words were enough for David to decide to choose lucky!

It will take us a long time to adjust our language to what we are learning about life. It is likely that humans will always call jellyfish, jellyfish. We will still talk about rainfall, even though rain does not always fall (considering Earth is turning and spinning all the time), and we will still talk about sunrise, even though the sun does not rise!



Christmas Humour







Humour

Q. What happens if you eat too many Christmas decorations?

A. You get "tinsel"-itis!

Q. Why did Santa Claus get a parking ticket on Christmas Eve?

A. He left his sleigh in a snow parking zone.

Q. What do you call an Elf that runs away from Santa's workshop?

A. Rebel without a Claus!

Q. Which of Santa's reindeer is the best on his feet?

A. Dancer

Q. What is Santa's cat's name?

A. Santa Claws!

- Santa, uou sleigh me.

- At Christmas, your presents is requested.

- But wait—there's myrrh.

- The Christmas alphabet has no el.

- Who will have the final sleigh?

Q. What did the bees do after they got married?

A. They went on a honeymoon.

Q. What musical instrument is found in the bathroom?

A. A tuba toothpaste.

Q. What kind of music do mummies listen to?

A. Wrap music.

Q. Where is one place you should never take a dog?

A. Flea market.

Q. How did Benjamin Franklin feel when he discovered electricity?

A. Shocked.

Q. What do you get when you cross a chicken and a dog?

A. Pooched-Eggs!

If a turtle doesn't have a shell is it homeless or naked?

What was the best thing before sliced bread?

What do you do when you see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?

If someone with multiple personalities threatens to kill themselves is it considered a hostage situation?

I went into a book shop and asked the saleswoman where the help section was. She said if she told me, it would defeat the purpose.

9.00am Mass

The 9.00am Mass at Holy Cross will cease after this Sunday. It is a big adjustment for those many people who have come to that Mass for some years, to come at 10.00am. We thank everyone for their openness to adjusting their usual time to make this one Mass possible, which was a strong request from Fr Gerry when he was parish priest.

Study desks

We have a number of good study desks (123cm x 77cm) that we are happy to give away. Maybe you know someone with a need for good desk?

Egg orders

For those who order and pick up eggs each fortnight from Holy Cross, could you please arrange for the next order of eggs to be paid for **next Thursday Dec 23rd**, **between 9.30am-12.00pm**, and then pick up the eggs on **Monday 27th between 12pm-2.00pm**. Thank you

A lovely message

We received this lovely email this morning.

"I walked around the back of the monastery to leave a small token about memories large and big. I remember fondly being taken there with Our Lady of the Pines

*primary school, and later on with Marcellin College. I walked around the back and felt the peaceful embrace as I did 20-35 years ago. Please forgive my trespass as I came at 12.30 and didn't want to wake anyone. The campus was part of my spiritual learning and I wanted to honour the memories of an old boy still seeing an open field for the love to cast over. I walked from the bike shed to the white cross and back. The feeling took me back to 80's and the 90's. I remember thinking the oval is a place that the spirit can spread for those who need it wide and open. I felt love even though I was only there for 5 minutes. I thank God your monastery is still same after all this time. Because I still love the oval after all this time!
Please donate my contribution specifically to the grounds up keep if you are able."*

We remember and pray especially for three month old Thomas Dart-Stone a great nephew of Kevin & Anne McKay. Thomas is having uncontrollable seizures.

We also pray for all those involved and affected by the terrible tragedy in Devonport.

We also remember....

Jacki Tomm, Maree Bartoli, Peter Owen and his and Bernadette's son in law Barry Wong, Errol Lovett, Bronwyn Burke, Mary Coburn, Brenda Rodrigues, Graham Hille, Margaret Tittingcom, Jim Molan, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Angelo Vigilante, Mary Hackett, Patricia Keeghan, Pam Gartland, Jim Monaghan, Maeve and John Reardon, Carmel King, Anne Jenkins, Mary Corcoran, Pam Grehan, Pam Stretch, (NZ) Michael & Mardi Doyle, Kate and Mary Dunn, Anne Cunningham CP, Ray Sanchez CP and all who seek or need our prayers.



The **Mass link** will be sent on Saturday afternoon.
Next week's newsletter will be sent on **Thursday**.

May you have a good weekend

Brian