Holy Cross Retreat

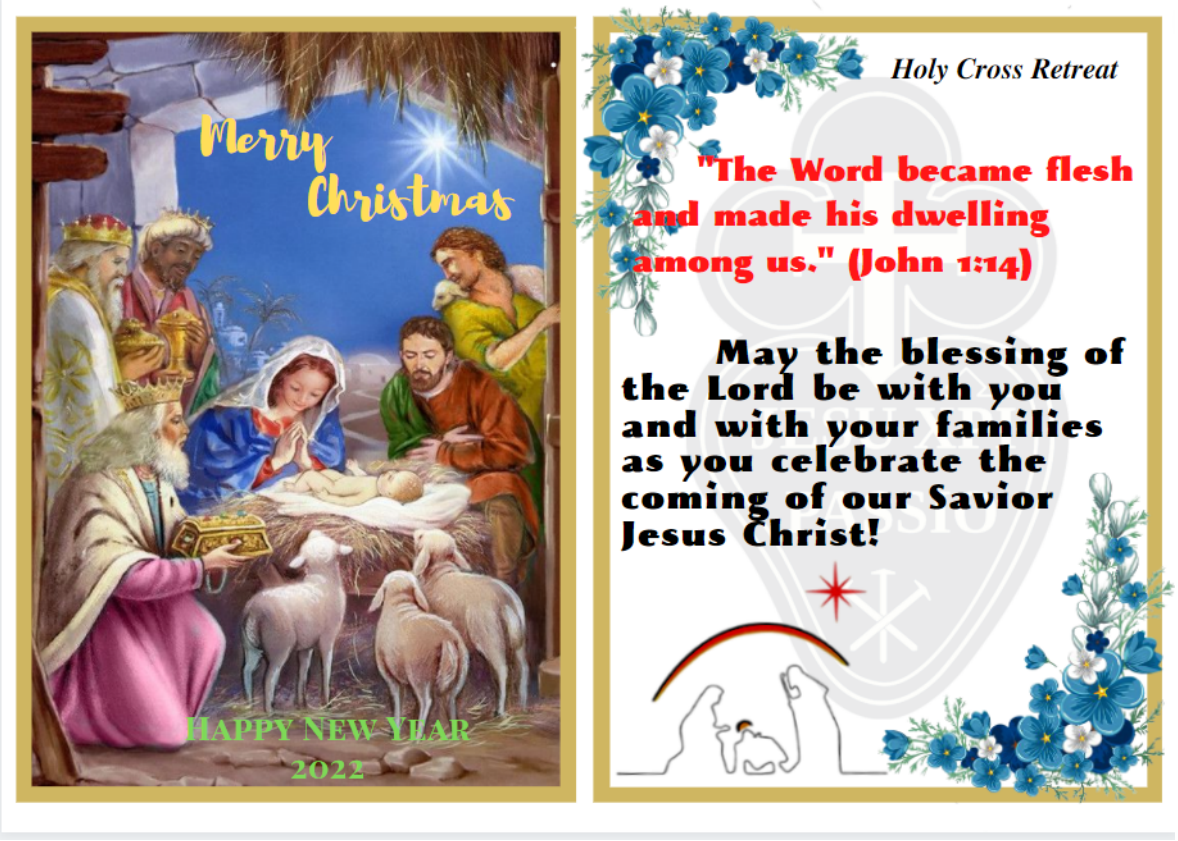
Letter 97

23rd December, 2021

Warm greetings,

We are close to Christmas! We have had a focus of hope, peace and joy over the first three weeks. The theme for the final week is love. The community extends warm greetings and blessings to each person connected with us.

Tri asked to include in the newsletter, this greeting 'card' he prepared.



Tri wanted these words to be added. They are taken from a letter written by Paul of the Cross

"I am praying that the blessed Solemnity of Christmas will be celebrated for you every day, even every moment, in the interior temple of your soul as you remain like a child on the bosom of the Divine Father so that at every moment you may be reborn in the Divine Word Jesus Christ."

Christmas Masses

Mass will be celebrated outside 'under the trees' at **7.30pm**, preceded by Carols, which start at **7.00pm**.

We hired an arborist on Tuesday this week, and with a number of generous volunteers we spent five hours clearing potentially dangerous overhead branches in that tree-covered area and throughout the property, to ensure it is safe.

On Christmas Eve you can either park 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 a vaccination certificate. If you are feeling unwell and potentially carrying COVID, please do not risk attending.

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.** The temperature can drop quite quickly.

Mass on **Christmas Day** (Saturday) 10.00am.
Mass on **Sunday 26th** (Feast of the Holy Family) 10.00am.
Mass from **January 2nd:** 10.00am

Recorded Masses

Chris will very kindly record a Mass for Christmas Day and for the Feast of the Holy Family. Both links will be sent tomorrow afternoon.

Holy Cross Office closure

The Office closes today at midday until January 10th. The phone will be on Answering Service during that time.

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 today Dec 23rd, between 9.30am-12.00pm, and then pick up the eggs on Monday 27th between 12pm-2.00pm. Thank you

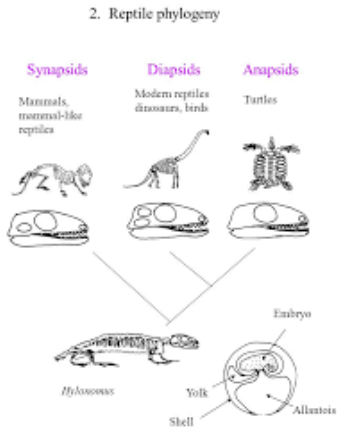
Peekaboo can change the world

Molly Wright from the Gold Coast is eight years old. Last year she became the youngest presenter of a 'Ted Talk' and since then 50,000,000 people have watched her seven and a half minute talk. You can watch Molly at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aISXCw0Pi94

Roadworthy certificate

If anyone knows a service station that will be open to issue a roadworthy certificate by Dec 31st, could you let me know, please?

Creation 17: Life on Earth (Part 2)



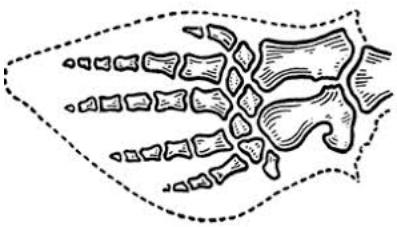
Development of life on Earth has occurred over 4.5 billion years. Consistently, various forms of life have given way to more complex life forms. Although we may not be used to the names, there have been four mega-dynasties of life on land: synapsids therapsids, diapsids and mammals. Synapsids are sub-divided into four types of reptile life. Further sub-divisions occurred, including one that produced turtles, but most of the others became extinct over two hundred and forty-five million years ago.

One sub-division that survived, produced therapsids and they formed the second mega-dynasty. Their cousin species, the diapsids evolved into dinosaurs who ruled the third mega-dynasty. Most of the therapsids could not survive the era of the dinosaurs, but a few hairy burrowing species did. They took advantage of the demise of the dinosaurs and developed into mammals who became dominant in the fourth mega-dynasty. So, thank God for synapsids! Transformations have occurred regularly, and just as in the formation of the galaxies, stars and life on earth, the dynamic of death and rebirth has been common. This has been seen most clearly as the result of mass extinctions. What seemed like 'the end' has often been a pathway to something new!

We know that more than ninety-nine percent of species that have lived on Earth are no longer present. Life seeks transformation beyond death, and both complexity and diversity are a hallmark of this ongoing 'drive', because life wants to live.

When trees became the principal form of plant life, there were significant developments from the early arthropods, such as insects, spiders, centipedes and prawns. The body formation of all animals today derived from the structures of those animals that were living at the same time as plants first grew on land. The majority of them were sponges, worms, snails, sea urchins, vertebrates, insects and crustaceans.

Cephalopods (e.g. octopus) might have come to dominate had it not have been for the development of fish with bones. The stronger skeletal support, flexibility and agility they developed provided them with significant advantages. Sharks developed such an impressive structure that they are little changed over 420 million years!



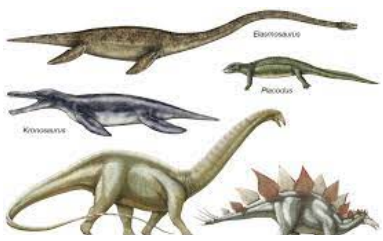
Sea squirts may have been the first vertebrate to leave the sea and come to land. Although they look to be no more than a bag of jelly, eighty percent of their genes are also present in humans! Sea squirts began swimming freely like tadpoles, and as adults they remained attached to one spot. They have a heart and the sign of a backbone, such as humans inherited.

Most animals belong to the category of tetrapods, four legged animals that walk on land. They have four limbs, each ending in five fingers or toes. Dinosaurs, whales, birds, humans and fish are all tetropods, which suggests they came from a common ancestor. Most of the changes needed for life on dry land happened in creatures that were still living in the sea. It seems that fish wanting to navigate swampy wetlands were the first species to evolve to be four legged. Once on land, animals found their limbs were a big advantage in ensuring their survival. Mudskippers and frogfish both use their fins as legs for hunting in shallow-water. It is thought that the descendants of one of these early 'walking' fish became amphibians.

Amphibians do not retain water well in their bodies and like their fish ancestors; they have to be in water to reproduce. Being cold blooded, they find it difficult to keep their bodies warm during cold weather. Because water and air flows so easily into and out of amphibian skin, they are much more vulnerable to pollution in water and air than other higher animals. Amphibian numbers are declining all over the world.

Some species that left the sea and developed lungs (e.g. whales, dolphins, penguins and seals) so as to survive on land, later returned to the sea. The nervous system developed gills in fish and digits on fins. Some species had more than five digits but five is what was passed on to reptiles who passed them on to birds, who passed them on to mammals, who passed them on to primates. Humans developed digits from this common ancestor. There is a remarkable similarity in the structure of gills and wings, and (to) hands and feet. There are also interesting variations such as that a horse's knee has the same bone design as a human wrist. There were species of fish that had more than five 'fingers' in their fins and feet, but nearly all gave way to those with five.

A distinguishing feature of the vertebrate world from its marine ancestors, was the freedom from needing to be in water, to mate. Reptiles developed a protective sack for their eggs. This enabled them to deposit



eggs far from predators. As reptile skin became more watertight, they could advance on land further than amphibians, and so came to dominate them. Reptiles developed the ability to maintain a warm body even in the face of a cold outer world.

Therapsids, who were reptile like mammals, developed a powerful snapping jaw, and became supreme in the food chain. The peak of this development were the dinosaurs. Some were less than a metre long and others thirty metres in length. They began to stay with their young after their hatching from eggs, nurturing, but not nursing them, until their independence. Around one hundred million years ago, insects joined the millipedes, spiders and scorpions who had first come to land, one hundred million years earlier.

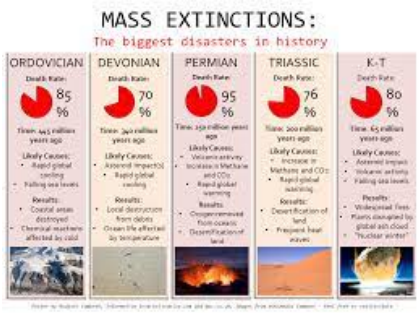
There is no certainty about how insects learned to fly. Some scientists describe it as an evolutionary 'accident'. One theory is that early insects developed small flaps, like solar panels to assist in soaking up and storing sunlight. These panels when extended would have provided them with the ability to be carried small distances by using the wind to glide and in time their shape was adapted to take on a more aero-dynamic ability, and these developed into wings. Another theory notes that wings have complex hinged joints and that these were developed in the oceans.

Early insects breathed through gills and an example of possible early adaption of these gills can be seen in the North American stonefly which emerges from the water and raises its gills to form a sail and is able to float through heavy waters. This 'sail' could easily have been flapped to create extra strength and in time, lift!

Insects had the skies to themselves for millions of years, until the large flying reptiles named pterosaurs took to the air. They had hollow bones so they were not weighed down and they would have been able to ride the thermal currents. Birds evolved into many different kinds, and one hundred and fifty million years ago it was the feather that enabled true flight. Once they learned to fly, the skies changed forever and so did all life because of the relationships that flowers and birds developed for nourishment and pollination. Flowering plants provided food in the form of seeds, which insects and birds helped to supply. Were it not for this gift of flowers, the human species could not have emerged.

After the disappearance of the dinosaurs there gradually emerged the beautiful plumage of birds, deep forest life, a brilliant array of flowers, beautiful tasting fruits, and the tender mother-infant bond

among mammals such as whales, elephants, horses, deer, rodents, bats, chimpanzee and humans. Some mammals, especially the primates, also developed conscious self-awareness.



The development and demise of various species has been greatly influenced by natural disasters that resulted in mass extinctions. 440,000,000 years ago, the Ordovician extinction occurred about before life on land had developed. 25% percent of marine families and 60% of marine gene pool disappeared. 360,000,0000 years ago, the Devonian extinction, led to the disappearance of about half of all species. 260,000,0000 years ago, the Permian extinction wiped out 95% percent of all marine species and 70% of land species. 210,000,000 years ago, the Triassic extinction, led to more than half of all marine life being wiped out, along with large amphibians and 50% other species. 65,000,000 years ago, the Cretaceous extinction, killed 16% of marine families, 50% of marine species and 20% of land vertebrate families, including the dinosaurs. There are fears that we are now in the midst of a sixth mass extinction.

Whenever we think of a 'bad day', it is worth appreciating that the effects of the explosion caused by a ten kilometre wide meteorite 65,000,000 million years ago, which ended the benefits of natural selection that had given dinosaurs life here on earth for one hundred million years. Mysterious as it is, without that destruction, our human species would not have developed the way it has. Had it been possible to be there that day, how would such a catastrophic event have been described? How do we determine what is good when transformation is yet to be recognised?

The history of life on earth includes mysterious patterns of death and destruction that speak to our spiritual selves, about a reality we know is transforming, and which

our faith (in the death and resurrection of Jesus) proclaims. The astounding connections and developments within life's myriad of species, highlights that Earth is a spiritual reality, gifted by God with self-creating powers. Once we are of this, we can appreciate that we do not live on a planet; rather we live in and as, a planet!

To be continued…..

Christmas Humour

Christmas Humour

Q Which cooking seasoning is the most festive?
A Christmas Thyme!

Q What do you call people with a fear of Santa Claus?
A Claus- trophobic.

Q Who deliveries Christmas presents to dogs?
A Santa Paws

Q Did Rudolph go to school?
A No. He was Elf-taught.

Q Why did the turkey join the band?
A Because it had the drumsticks!

Q Why was Santa's little helper depressed?
A Because he had very low elf esteem.

Q What did Adam say to his wife on Christmas?
A It's finally Christmas, Eve!

Q Why is Santa so good at karate?
A Cause he's got a black belt.

Q How did Mary and Joseph know Jesus' weight when he was born?
A They had a weigh in a manger…

Holy Cross community extends warm greetings and best wishes for a safe and enjoyable Christmas. We know for many families, Christmas is the highlight of the year. For some others, Christmas only highlights the pain and divisions. We pray there will be peace and goodwill, reconciliation and appreciation.

After another very difficult year and ongoing uncertainty about how COVID will affect us, let us stop for a moment and genuinely appreciate what we do have. At the top of that list is life, love, family and community. Wherever you are, give thanks, and if you can join us at Holy Cross on Christmas Eve, it is always a very special time.

We give thanks for every person who helps to make Holy Cross a spiritual home.

Happy Christmas and God bless

Brian, Chris, Jerome, Pastor, Brigid, Karen, John, Trí

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 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 Titteringcom, Patricia Keeghan, Jim Molan, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Angelo Vigilante, Mary Hackett, Pam Gartland, Peter McNamara, Jim Monaghan, Maeve and John Reardon, Pam Stretch, (NZ) Anne Jenkins, Mary Corcoran, Pam Grehan, Michael & Mardi Doyle, Carmel King, Kate and Mary Dunn, Anne Cunningham CP, Ray Sanchez CP and all who seek or need our prayers.