

Holy Cross Retreat

Letter 99

6th January, 2022



Greetings as we complete the first week of the new year.

Sunday Mass

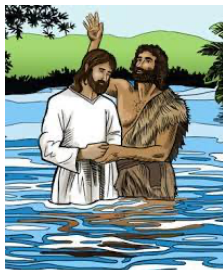
Sunday Mass each week at Holy Cross now is at 10.00am.

Holy Cross Office

The Office reopens on January 11th. The phone will be on Answering Service during the coming week.

Sunday feast: The Baptism of Jesus

In the Eastern church, the birth of Jesus, the Epiphany and the Baptism of Jesus are celebrated as one feast. This is to show the continuity between Jesus entering the world in Bethlehem, being recognized by all peoples through the Magi as the Messiah (Christ) and the initiation of Jesus into his ministry by being baptised by John in the Jordan river.



Jesus' baptism highlighted that he was a true member of the human family sharing their longings for liberation. Perhaps one aspect of this feast (The Baptism of Jesus) this coming Sunday that we might reflect on, is that no one becomes a commissioned follower of Jesus without having to grow and develop in their understanding of what this vocation means. Growth in faith was real for Jesus too.

Jesus did not sit up in the manager and recite the ten commandments. He had to learn like everyone else. He did not arrive with everything worked out. We can see from the events in the gospels that his ideas grew and his vision was expanded by some of the people he met.



Jesus was baptised a disciple of John, but after John's death, Jesus took a different path. He began spreading good news about a way of living by which people could be liberated from religious oppression. His focus was not on the next life. Jesus began offering a way of living here and now. He became totally dedicated to 'the reign of God' and to the universal family that included the marginalized. The kingdom of God is mentioned 120 times in the Synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke)

Jesus' baptism was the beginning of a faith journey that like any of



us was shaped by many events and encounters. Sometimes the worst events are our best teachers. Sometimes our greatest insights come from simple events or ordinary everyday experiences. Everything is a learning opportunity. It was a very sad event (John's death) that brought Jesus to tears and changed his direction.

One day back in 1951, Australian author and atheist Patrick White slipped and fell in the mud in his garden. He later wrote of that experience: "I lay where I had fallen, half-blinded by the rain, cursing through wet lips a God in whom I did not believe. Eventually I began laughing at my own helplessness and hopelessness, in the mud". White laughed because he had been cursing the God he had said he didn't believe in!

This is an example of our baptismal journey – the journey of ever growing and ever deepening faith. Most of us were reliant for many years on our family, school and Sunday church to nurture our baptismal commitment. Then we had to face the world on our own and for some it has been a difficult and challenging journey of doubt and belief, insight and learning. disappointment and hope.

*Faith is the journey
from believing in God
to trusting God.*

Jesus set out to preach that everyone belonged to one family and no matter who we are, we are brothers and sisters. Then he met a Canaanite woman! She asked him to cure her daughter. But Jesus told her his message was only for the people of Israel. Like a typical desperate Mother, she said "that's alright, do that, but we outsiders will have anything that is left over' (even *puppies pick up the scraps that fall for their Master's table*). Jesus praised her for her faith and promised healing for her daughter. The woman helped Jesus to expand his view. Now he knew that God wanted to include everyone in his family. His baptismal vocation continued to grow.

We can be sure Jesus did not know he would be crucified, but he did know the risk to his life, because he knew what had happened to John the Baptist. There is ample



evidence in the gospels that he avoided the large towns, so he knew what he was doing was dangerous. His baptismal faith was to be totally open to the will of God – that whatever happened to him, God would shape for good. His baptismal vocation led him to accept that his message would not

tolerated by the secular and religious authorities, but he would not - he could not, back down. This was who he was. He took the path of faithfulness, and accepted where it took him.

Many times we have gathered in our chapel at Holy Cross to farewell members of our community, and we have placed a pall over their coffin.



We have acknowledged that they have completed their baptismal vocation, or as St Paul expressed, "they have run the good race, they have kept the

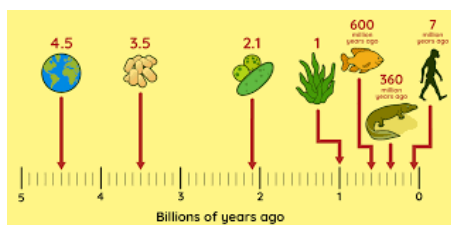
faith". Celebrating the feast of Jesus' baptism gives us the opportunity to acknowledge that he has shown us the way – the path of total faithfulness. It does not demand the same of every one of us, but we can each strive to imitate his example. It calls for us to be open to new understandings and new directions. Above all, it calls for us to remember that we are baptised "into Christ". We are called to be one with him. To think like him. To act like him; to love like him. That is what it means for us to be baptised.



Around the grounds

Pastor has spent a lot of time over the past two weeks painting outside furniture, steps and doors, washing external waterproof carpet, clearing the driveway and carpark of leaves, creating new edging for and mulching gardens. Even the heat didn't stop him. **Jerome** too has continued his work in the garden after having to spend some time off his feet because of spurs in his heel. **John and Tri** are now on holidays. John is enjoying Sydney (how could you not?) and Tri is enjoying Adelaide. **Brigid and Karen** ensure certain areas are cleaned with a woman's touch! **Chris** has been attending to his bees and they have produced a good amount of Templestowe honey.

Creation 18: Life on earth 3



Timelines showing the development of life on earth vary and change as new discoveries are

made. However, a summary form can be helpful.

- 4.5 billion years ago: (Single cell) life began in the sea: prokaryotes
- 3.9 billion years ago: Photosynthesis:
- 1.8 billion years ago: Oxygen had become like a lethal acid. One cell that could not adapt sucked in one that could (mitochondria). It lives in our cells today but was at one time, an independent creature. It has its own DNA and replicates by itself.

- 1.3 billion years ago: Cells gathered together (multicellularity) which marked the beginning of plants.
- 1 billion years ago: Sexuality (union to create a new life) introduced death whilst allowing new forms to emerge. Prior to this time, birth was achieved by cloning, and some mutations. Scientists believe death was not part of the genetic plan of the first bacteria.

- 1.3 million years ago: Fungi moved on to land
- 800 million years ago: Some creatures began consume one another (heterotrophy). This created the first ecosystem because organisms fed on one another. 99% of life feeds directly off the sun. Heterotrophy involves only 1%. (including animals).

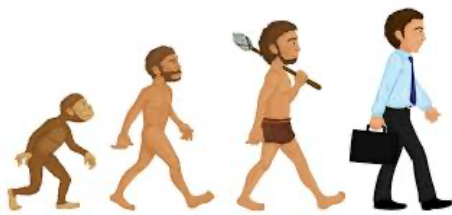
- 700 million years ago: [Plants](#) moved on to land
- 700 million years ago: The first [insects](#) moved to land
- 670 million years ago: [Brains](#) were introduced with worms; jellyfish appeared
- 550 million years ago: Clams and snails (the first shells)
- 510 million years ago: The first Vertebrates (backbone) appeared
- 500 million years ago: [Fish](#) developed
- 425 million years ago: Fish developed jaws
- 340 million years ago: Amphibians appeared on land
- 313 million years ago: Reptiles (from amphibians) appeared on land
- 216 million years ago: [Mammals](#) (from reptiles) appeared on land
- 160 million years ago: The first [birds](#) (from dinosaurs) appeared on land
- 114 million years ago: [Flowers](#) appeared on land
- 4 million years ago: The [first humans](#) appeared
- 300,000 years ago: [Homo sapiens](#) emerged from Africa
- 74,000 years ago: Toba (Sumatra) volcanic eruption. The human population was reduced to 1,000-10,000 breeding pairs
- 10,000 years ago: The first urban (towns) were built (e.g. Jericho, Catalhoyuk)
- 5,000 years ago: The first cities were built

Understandably, we have a great interest in human development, and many have believed that despite our very recent arrival on Earth, compared with other life forms, homo sapiens are the peak and supreme species. But how do we know what the next billions of year will unfold?



Other human species have gone extinct. If we do not adapt, the story of life suggests we will perish. It is easy to recognise that Earth can live without humans, but humans cannot live without Earth.

Eighteenth century Swedish botanist Carl Linneaus, coined the term 'Homo (human being) Sapiens' (wise), to describe our species. Some wonder whether we are in fact so wise! Others have described homo sapiens as the first species to be capable of self-consciousness that allows us to reflect on ourselves. Brian Swimme, reflecting on the incredible history of life on Earth suggests we give evidence of how what was once molten rock can now sing opera!

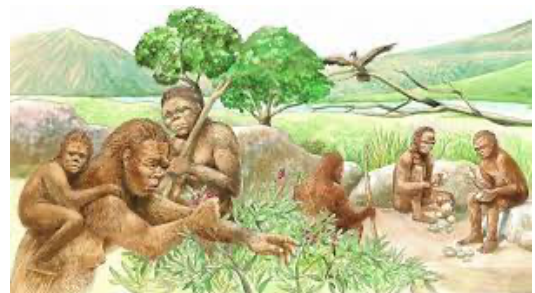


Passionist Thomas Berry suggested that modern humans have reinvented themselves at least four times. **First**, tribal communities were hunters and gatherers living in the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age era, which began two and a half million years ago.

Second, were the Neolithic or New Stone Age people, who moved into settled villages, around ten thousand years ago. **Third**, were agrarian societies less than five thousand years ago, who created what is referred to as the classic civilizations. **Fourth** were modern humans who emerged from industrial society over the past three hundred years.

Berry says that in order to understand what is required of us now, in what some describe as a fifth reinvention, (ecologically living people), it is important to know our story.

Four million years ago, humans in Africa learned how to stand on two limbs. Two million years later this practice allowed them to use their spare limbs (hands) to shape tools. Half a million years later, these hands were able to create fire, shaping the sun's energy that had been stored in sticks. None of those human species survived extinction.



Somewhere between one hundred thousand years ago, and seventy-five thousand ago, early humans left Africa. Then, as noted earlier, nearly all human life was lost in the Toba volcanic explosion seventy-four thousand years ago, and the journey for the human species restarted. Forty thousand years ago, gathering in caves, humans began to express in song and ritual what had captured

their minds, and they expressed this in art forms on the walls of their caves.

Twelve thousand years ago, humans began to cultivate plants and domesticate animals. A steady supply of food allowed populations to surge, so that ten thousand years ago, some villages began to sustain groups of more than one thousand people and the bulk of humanity began the most radical transformation in the human venture, of moving from a hunting and gathering mode of life, into that of settled village life, and later many of them, into cities.



The journey to developing self-consciousness began with the appearance of the first tree dwelling primates sixty million years ago believed to be the purgatorius, who were about the size of a rat. These small insectivores took to the trees and evolved into primates who possessed amazing frontal eye vision, hand dexterity and a quick ability to learn. A recent study suggests that the ability to retain vitamin D to regulate antibacterial proteins, has been conserved through almost sixty million years of evolution, and is shared by primates including chimpanzees and humans. This feature has not been found in any other known animal species.

While limited to this one family for fifteen million years, primates expanded over what is now Eurasia, throughout the next era (thirty-six to fifty-five million years ago,) and then through Africa, where a subgroup called the anthropoids emerged. These included monkeys that split from apes about twenty million years ago.

Gibbons, orangutans and gorillas emerged between nine and twelve million years ago and chimpanzee, five million years ago. Hominoids emerged from this line about four million years ago. Early hominoids, referred to as Australopithecus, appeared in modern day Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia and were distinguished by an increased brain size and by their ability to walk upright.



Over time they left the trees and increasingly wandered in the grasslands of the region. Hand-eye co-ordination and frontal eye focus also became distinguishing features of humans along with the increased capacity of the hand for grasping, which later had extensive repercussions for use in hunting, cooking, art and communication.

By using the hand for clasping, jaws tongue, teeth, lips and throat redeveloped which later made speech possible. Around two and a half million years ago, a species transition occurred and the earliest humans, Homo habilis appeared, marking the beginning of the Stone Age. Little evidence of them remains but they were able to make more refined tools than their ancestors. They became hunter gathering meat eaters.

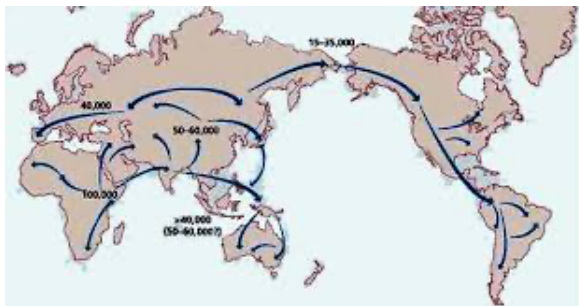




One million years later, Homo erectus appeared with a brain that was thirty-percent larger than Homo habilis. Homo erectus moved out of Africa through Asia and southern and Western Europe. Perhaps their most significant achievement was their ability to harness fire, which provided protection against the cold. Fire also provided the first opportunities for social gathering, a

sense of security from predators, and a new way to eat food that had been gathered. Homo erectus created new hand tools, most notably hand axes, as well as various stone tools for cutting trees, for hunting and for removing animal skins. They used animal skins for clothing or shelter. They also used tree stakes, branches and animal skins for shelter.

Fire may have provided them with a sense of awe and mystery that led them to think beyond themselves. It was thought that less than two hundred thousand years



ago, Homo sapiens emerged in Africa, but fossil evidence was found in June 2017 at least one hundred thousand years earlier. This may suggest that there were emergences in various places as well as later migration beyond the African-Asian world to the Americas, to Australia and to Europe. Living in these

different regions required great adaptability to the environment. It is believed that they lived in nomadic small tribal groups of about twenty-five to forty, moving on regularly to gain the food they required. Usually, men did the hunting and women, the gathering.

The size of these groups as we have found in our modern day with Passionist Family Groups seems to be about the optimum number for support and for loose organization. There was no accumulation of goods because they would have been too heavy to carry from place to place. Anyone could find the basic materials that were needed to make tools and shelter. Nature was more of a participant than a habitat.



This sense gave rise to a feeling of the sacred being present in the various life form and forces around them. Their lack of a sense of ownership was comically characterized in the movie 'The God's must be Crazy', where the introduction of a soft drink bottle brought chaos to the tribe!

Most scientists claim a migration took place when a small number of humans left

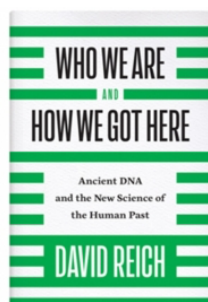
East Africa, one birthplace of modern humans, sometime between 150,000 and 45,000 years ago, and crossed the Red Sea into Asia. At the time, this was easily possible because the water level was much lower than it is today.

Some members of a sub-species occupied cave dwellings in the hills along the Neander river valley, about twelve kilometres from where Dusseldorf, Germany is today. They came to be designated as Neanderthals. They were taller than often assumed, with males averaging about one hundred and sixty-five centimetres in height and females about one hundred and fifty centimetres. They seem to have had little to little social organization beyond the immediate family unit.



They gathered fruit, berries and nuts and were meat eaters, but did not store food. They used fire, created stone and wooden implements such as spears. They developed skin covered dwellings, wore personal ornaments, and engaged in ceremonial practices and burial rituals.

Neanderthal may never have exceeded ten thousand in number and though they extended throughout Eurasia, perhaps their small gene pool explains their disappearance, giving way to modern Homo sapiens with whom they shared life, for a time. DNA testing has revealed that Homo Neanderthalensis and Homo sapiens share about 99.7% of their DNA. They shared a common ancestor somewhere between five hundred thousand and eight hundred thousand years ago. Neanderthals died out about 30,000 years ago, after sharing the same European landscape with modern humans for a thousand years.



Genetics professor David Reich presented a paper in May 2010 following the first draft sequence of the Neanderthal genome. He suggested Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens met and interbred in the Middle East around 45,000 to 80,000 years ago. It is suggested we each have about 2% Neanderthal DNA and perhaps some genetic risk factor of COVID-19 can be blamed on Neanderthals!

To be continued.....

Humour

A guy named Graeme was sitting around the house all day during Covid lockdown. His wife said, "Since you brought me that early morning cup of tea today you haven't done anything. If you want to do something useful, you could vacuum the house."

Graeme gave it a moment's thought and said, "Sure why not. Show me where the vacuum is" Half an hour later, he came into the kitchen to get some coffee. His wife said, "I didn't hear the vacuum working, I thought you were going to use it?"

Exasperated, Graeme answers, "The stupid thing is broken; it won't start. We'll have to buy a new one." "Really", she said. "Show me - it worked fine the last time." So, he showed her... ([have a look now at the attached video 'Vacuum'](#))

John Travolta tested negative for coronavirus yesterday. Turned out it was just Saturday night fever.

The World Health Organization has announced that dogs cannot contract Covid-19. Dogs previously held in quarantine can now be released. To be clear, WHO let the dogs out. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qkuu0Lwb5EM>

A woman saw an ad for burial plots, and said to her husband, "that's the last thing I need".

Intelligence is like underwear. It is important that you have it, but not necessary that you show it off.

A man reported that his dad was dying and no one could remember his blood type. Dad kept insisting "be positive," but it's hard without him.

- People are making end of the world jokes like there's no tomorrow.
- Relationships are like algebra. Have you ever looked at your X and wondered Y?
- A courtroom artist was arrested today for an unknown reason...details are sketchy.
- Don't let your worry get you down; remember, Moses started out as a basket case.
- Whatever you do, always give 100% unless you're donating blood.
- Dad, are we pyromaniacs? Yes, we arson.
- I've always had an irrational fear of speed bumps but I'm slowly getting over it.
- What word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it? Short.
- A girl said she recognized Tony from her vegetarian club but he'd never met herbivore.

One hundred and twenty years ago everyone owned a horse and only the rich owned a car. Now everyone has a car and only the rich have a horse. Oh how the stables have turned!



Chris has been increasing his biking stamina in readiness for his annual ten day bike hike with which begins this Sunday morning.

A team of three will train to Bairnsdale, then bike to Orbost and on to Warragul, and return to Melbourne by train. You can be sure Chris will have strong deeply tanned legs when he returns.

COVID in 2022



As COVID numbers climb to surprising numbers, and our everyday language calls us to welcome rather than avoid RATS, we are faced with new challenges, increased uncertainty, disruptions to plans, shortage of some products in supermarkets, more changes to regulations, wariness about attending various activities and resulting adjustments to our lifestyle.

Resilience is a much admired virtue,

and we are going to need a lot of it, because we are in the midst of chaos.

However, 'Chaos theory' suggests that order always emerges from chaos so we just have to be patient and work together for what is best. In times like this we learn a lot about ourselves as individuals and as a people.

The **Mass link** for the **Feast of the Baptism of Jesus** will be sent on Saturday afternoon

We remember and pray for Nugyen Danh (Peter's deceased sister **Mary**, Nguyen Kiet's deceased father, **Joseph**, Walter Enep's deceased father, **Mark**, and Gavan Leonard's deceased mother, **Dorothy**.

We also remember

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

**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

Have a good weekend

Brian