

Holy Cross Retreat

Letter 105

18th February, 2022



Sunday Mass

There are some people arriving each week at 10.30am. If you know people who may not be aware of the change in time could you advise them please that Mass each week at Holy Cross is at 10.00am.

"Come Away Day:" Monday 21 February (9.30am-2pm)

The theme of the Come Away Day next Monday is "A Promise of Newness" which will enable us to reflect on living with the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 virus.

Participation is restricted to fully vaccinated persons by Government regulations and a mask is required for the indoor sessions. A package of materials used on the day will be provided to any interested person, regardless of their vaccination status. For further details, please contact Frank Burke on burke.frank942@yahoo.com.au

Sunday February 27th: St Gabriel celebration

An outdoor Mass for the feast of Passionist **St Gabriel Possenti** will be held in the Shrine and celebrated by Fr Chris on Sunday 27th at 10.30am. You are able to drive around and park on the oval. Please use the QR code on the green shed in the driveway. The Mass will not have the normal procession because of COVID-19 restrictions. You are welcome to bring your own lunch and arrange your own table of guests etc to share lunch 'under the trees' after Mass. To book a table please contact Mayrose between 10am-3pm Monday to Friday on: 0423804555

The normal Sunday Mass will be held on the same day in the chapel at 10.00am. **Margaret and Tony Aldridge** will celebrate the 60th anniversary of their marriage.

Parking

Our parking adviser reported last Sunday that 90% of people are parking in the correct space. Thank you. The two problems seem to be:

- a) a few people not moving forward to the back yellow markers of the space and therefore creating insufficient space for others to safely reverse.
- b) A few people not parking within one designated space.

Tri has repainted the log markets and the lines.

Centre set-back

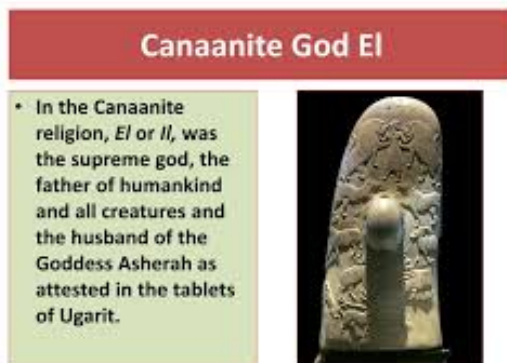
A new regulation from the Department of Health has banned overnight stays for school groups. This means a number of groups Mayrose had booked for the Holy Cross Centre have postponed once again! It is just as well we are in the computer age or else the bookings, cancellations and postponements would have resulted in many wasted pages of paper. We have to 'keep smiling'.

GOD and RELIGION....Part 2



The 'Enuma Elish' is a lengthy Babylonian creation story. A written version dating to the 12th century BCE was found in Nineveh about two hundred and fifty kilometres north of Babylon. Nineveh had been the capital of Assyrian. Babylon no longer exists, but at that time it was about eighty-five kilometres south of modern-day Bagdad, in Iraq.

Famous stories such as the 'Fall of Man' and the 'Great Flood' were originally written down in Sumer. They were then translated and modified later in Babylon, and reworked by the Assyrians before they were used by the Hebrew scribes for the versions which appear in the Bible. Scholars have been able to establish that the Genesis account borrowed from this myth and made significant changes to it. Both Genesis and Enuma Elish are religious texts which detail and celebrate cultural origins. Enuma Elish recounts the origin and founding of Babylon under the leadership of the god Marduk: Genesis describes the origin and founding of the Jewish people under the guidance of the Lord (Elohim in Genesis 1 or Yhwh in Genesis 2).

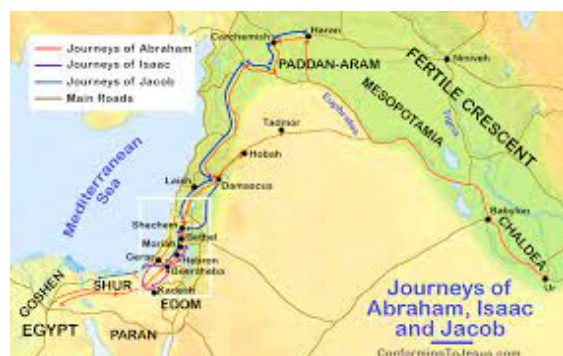


Both in Babylon and throughout the Middle East, myths developed that spoke of the competing gods, most of whom had their own 'area' of responsibility. These myths influenced the people of Canaan where Judaism, Christianity and Islam have their roots. The supreme Canaanite god was El and the Bible often makes mention of El (e.g. El ohim. El Shaddai and Israel-el), as it does of Baal (El's son), the god of fertility and storms. In fact, the Canaanite

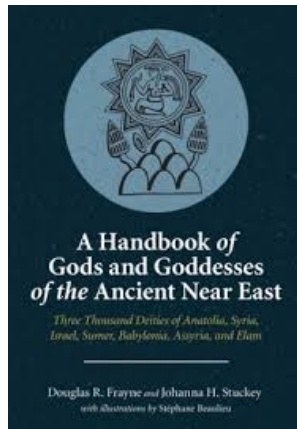
myths which told of the death of a god and then the return of that god to the divine realm (which happened to Baal) appear in many cultures, including Christianity.

The Biblical story tells of Abraham leaving his home city of Ur (in what is today southern Iraq). Ur had a temple dedicated to Nanna, the moon god.

When he arrived in Canaan around 1850BCE, Abraham made an offering, not to Nanna, but to the God who had now been revealed to him.



Belief in God – which God?



It is most likely this god was El. Abraham was introduced to God as El Shaddai, god of the mountain. It was not until Moses, about 400 years later, that YHWH 'appeared'. It seems likely from the Biblical story, that the patriarchs followed typical belief of the times and worshipped several gods, while recognising El as the superior god. The Biblical story highlights that it was long battle for the people of Israel to accept the 'One' god. The fact that one of the ten commandments declares that 'You must not have other gods instead of me', indicates that people did believe in other gods, and as if to prove this, while Moses was up on Mt Sinai receiving the commandments for his people, his priest-brother Aaron was helping to build a golden calf, an idol to the god Baal!

We can also note that Abraham's God, El appears to be very different to YHWH. El appears to Abraham as a friend. Sometimes El takes on a human form and he and Abraham meet face-to-face. They share a meal and they have an argument! It was typical and understandable, that the gods within various cultures of this time shared the same nature as humans. El offered friendly advice and guided Abraham, as he also did with Isaac and Jacob. Genesis says that God appeared to Abraham by an oak tree at Mamre, near Hebron. Following his vision of the ladder, Jacob dedicated a shrine to Beth (house) - El and committed himself to Elohim (his only god).

Later, Jacob wrestled with God (Gen 32: 24) and enquired about God's name. When Jacob is not told God's name, this conveys an understanding that God cannot be controlled by humans. Interestingly, Jacob declared "I have seen God face to face and survived". Later, such a proclamation (to have seen God) was considered blasphemous!



A process



The growth to new understanding did not happen in one stage and, it was the events in the lives of the people, that affected their developing understanding of God. The very familiar ways of relating to God were retained in the Bible, but this is totally opposite to the description of God meeting Moses in the burning bush, and on Mt Sinai. The accounts

come from different eras, but are preserved through different traditions (Priestly, Yahwist, Elohist and Deuteronomic) which we will consider in a week or two.

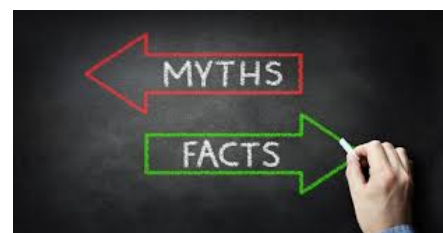


In the Biblical account, Abraham is constantly called a man of faith. His faith is not in a set of doctrines, statements, creeds or laws. Rather it is trust that God would deliver on God's promises. Abraham's test is to offer his son as a sacrifice. Animal sacrifice was very common throughout ancient history, and human sacrifice also occurred. This demand, as it is presented, of

Abraham killing his son to satisfy God, might suggest that this God is cruel by asking such a terrible gift of Abraham to prove his faith. What this event shows, is the growing understanding of the people about God. Child sacrifice ceased in the Israelite Biblical tradition, and this story explains why.

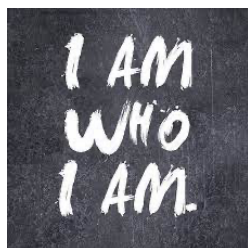
Reading a story like this today, along with the terrible pain and death inflicted on the people of Egypt in the Exodus, highlights the huge price that was paid for a belief in 'election' when this was seen not as election for justice, but for privilege.

YHWH became known as YHWH Sabaoth, god of the armies, who initially seemed to show little compassion for anyone other than his own tribe. This mentality reflects human thinking of the time about their gods, and it remains alive today in the vengeance and self-righteousness of fundamentalism.



Leaving Israel for Egypt and new understandings

The Biblical story tells of the people of Israel leaving their land and travelling to Egypt because of severe famine. This experience was to be a turning point in their understanding of God and of who they were. Following years of slavery in Egypt, a liberator was introduced. Moses received his mission from a very different kind of God, to Abraham. This God is shrouded in mystery and spoke to Moses from a bush



that burned but did not disintegrate. Moses was warned that the ground on which he was standing was sacred. In the culture of the time, to name something was to be able to control it, which is why humans had so much control over most of their gods. When Moses sought to know this God's name, he learns that this God is 'I am who I am'. In other words, "You can't know"!

The God revealed in the Biblical story continued to be revealed as a powerful tribal God; not yet a universal God. He smashed the Egyptian armies, having previously sent horrible plagues that caused untold suffering. The Israelites saw that their God was more powerful than the Egyptian gods, and that he was a liberator. It was good to have this God, provided you were an Israelite! Oppressed peoples have always found comfort and inspiration in the story of the Jewish Exodus.

When the people were freed and made their way back to the promised land, they had to wander in the desert for forty years. Many become disillusioned about God's promise, and because of a lower life expectancy than in our day, many died without ever 'receiving' the promise.

A new understanding of God – Mt Sinai



Moses went up to Mount Sinai, and unlike Abraham or Jacob, was unable to see God. This was a significant development in recognition that we cannot 'know' God. While Moses was up on the mountain shrouded in mystery, the people were building a god they could see (the golden calf). That story captures the great challenge that was occurring (and does occur among

us). The resulting image of God, from this experience is that God, can be displeased, jealous, and changing. These were human characteristics that existed along with gentleness and compassion and projected onto God. The people were directed not to have other gods, but when they returned to Canaan, they did worship other gods. It was a long journey to faithfulness when God seemed out of reach.

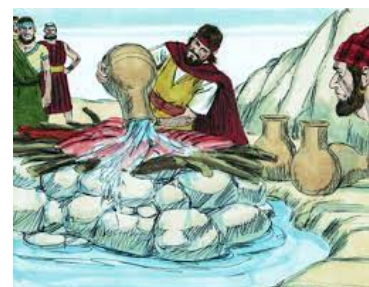
Another understanding of God brought by the Prophets

950	900	850	800	750	700	650	600	550	500	450	400
Egypt			Assyria			Babylon			Persia		
N. & S. Kingdoms			Judah Alone			Exile			Post-Exile		
△ Solomon dies			△ Israel falls			△ Judah falls			△ Captives return		
Major Prophets			Isaiah			Jeremiah/Lam. Daniel			Ezekiel		
Minor Prophets			Obadiah	Jonah	Micah	Nahum	Zephaniah	Habakkuk	Haggai	Malachi	
			Joel	Amos	Hosea				Zechariah		
Other Prophets & OT Books			Elijah	Elisha					Esther	Ezra	Nehemiah

It was the emergence of the prophets that brought a new dimension to the Israelites understanding of God. The major prophets were reluctant to take on their vocation, which is not surprising given the unpopular message they were called to pronounce! The prophets fought against the old myths in favour of axial reform. Local pagan cults were

violently suppressed by kings David and Josiah and Baal and Marduk were mocked.

It has to be appreciated that even when Elijah appeared in the ninth century, almost a thousand years after Abraham, worship of Baal among the Israelites was common. Even King Josiah's pagan wife Queen Jezebel worshipped Baal. Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." (1 Kings 18:21). This account in the Book of Kings tells of a test Elijah was called to settle. Who was more powerful, the God of Israel or Baal. When Baal lost the test, Elijah had all 450 Baalite priests killed! This is another stage of faith understanding.

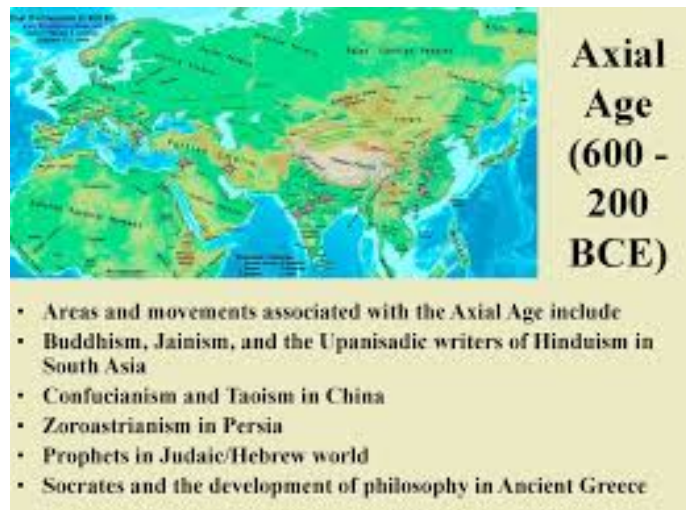




The cruelty of these murders is a prelude to recognizing that idolatry and paganism must end. The story highlights that the struggle for a monotheistic religion was not easy, and leaders or prophets like Elijah strongly demanded the rejection of other faiths.

When Elijah escaped out of fear of reprisal, he sought refuge in a cave and had a vision. There he discovered that God was not present in the way Elijah expected. God was not in the powerful earthquake or thunder and lightning, but in a gentle breeze. Although cruelty and violence was a part of life, Elijah discovered that God is gentle and he set about sharing this conviction with the people of Israel.

Scripture scholars suggest that the Biblical book of Isaiah covers three separate eras, rather than referring to one single person. First Isaiah, as he is referred to, lived about 745 BCE and was a prophet during a remarkable period known as the Axial Age that extended from around 700BCE-200CE.



During these centuries, and especially during the sixth century BCE, the great religions emerged, many of them within one hundred years of each other. The great Jewish prophets emerged during this period of time. It was a time marked by the growth of trading networks, the rise of large cities, and there had been extreme violence as the result of increased warfare.

Despite their great diversity of culture and geography, there was a common recognition that compassion and social justice were primary values. Confucius and Lao-tzu in China, Gautama Buddha in India, Zoroaster in Persia, Thales and Pythagoras in Greece and the major prophets of Israel, were all filled with this spirit. This new awareness had to be reflected in the nature of the gods of these various cultures.

To be continued

In Pedra do Telégrafo, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) people love to be photographed hanging off this famous rock. Monitor your reactions as you look at the photos





You probably thought anyone putting themselves at risk like those in these photos needs psychiatric help. In fact the rock is less that a metre above the ground!



Things are not always as they seem!

<https://theculturetrip.com/south-america/brazil/articles/everything-you-need-to-know-about-rios-pedra-do-telegrafo/>

Gerry Bond

Gerry has been in hospital for over two weeks and yesterday (Thursday) he celebrated his **90th birthday**. He celebrated y having an operation! We wish Gerry well, pray for his recovery and give thanks for Pat's faithful care of him.

Rex and Jan Cambry

Congratulations to Rex and Jan on their 56th wedding anniversary on January 22nd. Rex mentioned this me and I omitted to 'advertise' it. Our prayers and best wishes.

A life-catcher.....Hello!

Over this COVID period of almost two years, we know many people have felt increasingly wary of mixing with others. Even within families, many have had to insist on RA tests before coming to a family event. The same wariness exists among many people who normally frequent Holy Cross.

Well before COVID, loneliness was a critical issue in our society, and within parish communities. Those who have lost spouses or are more housebound will feel this keenly. Quite a number of people report feeling isolated, disconnected from their family or regular companions because of a genuine fear of 'catching COVID'. What can we do?



Yukio Shige is a former Japanese policeman and in the past twenty years since his retirement, he has prevented 721 people from taking their lives at a clifftop in Tojinbo in Fukui prefecture. He was asked, "what is the first word you use when you approach someone who is about to take their life?" He said, "it is simple: *Konnichiwa* (Hello)"

If that works so effectively, and it is so simple to say, I wonder how many people we know might be uplifted to hear that simple warm word over the phone or to read it on a piece of paper or in an email, if it cannot be said in person? "Hello"!

Yukio is referred to as a life-catcher. We can be that for others too. It doesn't cost anything. It doesn't take long, but it can make a huge difference to say Hello. It might save a life. It will certainly help with loneliness and depression.

Each of us can be a life catcher! We can just say 'hello'!

Erick Niyiragira



Some very good news for Holy Cross is that Erick has returned for a period of time. Erick was appointed first as a deacon and after ordination in 2016 as a priest, to assist Tim O'Toole in Marrickville parish. Fourteen months later, Tim (the PP) died rather suddenly from cancer. Erick was asked to take on the PP role because of a severe shortage of men at the time. He finished Tim's term and was reappointed for two years, until January 21st 2022. Having completed that term now it was decided to provide Erick with a period of transition rather than have him immediately take up another appointment where there is an urgent need.

In recent years, one of the roles we have considered Erick for is formation. That still remains an option. He will be engaged in a Spiritual Leadership programme through 'Heart of Life', and we have recommended he undertake no ministerial work for two or three weeks, and use the time to debrief after a very demanding appointment, relax, read and appreciate the opportunity to learn more about spiritual leadership. The course will involve some weekend sessions.

Pastor



We received this very nice photo of Pastor blessing the coffin of his deceased father. Since the funeral he has had the long awaited opportunity to spend some time with his family, and now he has a few precious weeks with his mother before he takes up his next ministerial appointment.

As so many of our Holy Cross women know, grieving the loss of a husband is a painful time, and a lonely time. Pastor's mother was quite unwell in the week leading up to Peter's passing, and she found eating too disinteresting in the week afterwards. Pastor's presence will be a very healing time for her.

The community misses Pastor very much and we hold him in our grateful prayers.

World Day of Prayer.....Friday March 4th, 2022

Theme: "I know the plans I have for you"

10.00am Donvale Presbyterian Church
5 McGowans Road, (Cnr Springvale Road
Donvale
Speaker: Ms Naomi Chua (from AMES)
Naomi works with Afghan refugees



8.00pm St Bishoy & St Shenouda's Coptic Church
1-8 Prospect Road, Bulleen
Speaker: Isaiah from 'Just Voices'
A program of Jesuit Social Services

Inquiries: 0438 034739

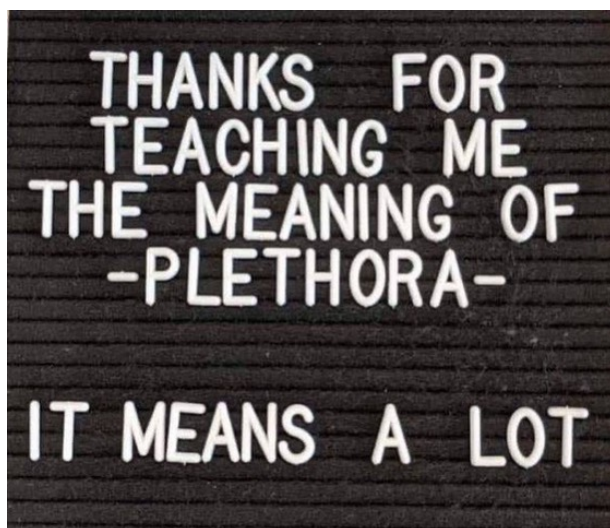


Plastic bottle tops

Thank you to those who have collected tops and passed them on to us. We have been advised that the company has now ceased the project so the tops are no longer required.

Quotes: "If you are already skating on thin ice, you might as well dance"
"Keep a green tree in your heart and perhaps a singing bird will come"

Humour



A guy walks into a lumberyard and asks for some two-by-fours. The clerk asks, "How long do you need them?" The guy answers, "A long time. We're gonna build a house."



By a nose



John Qi, our Chinese student has been learning to drive, with the generous help of Peter Norman and Joe Senso. His driving test is Monday February 21st. John told us last night that he was very puzzled by one of Peter's instructions yesterday as he was parking. "Put your nose in"! John did not know where he was supposed to put his nose, or why he had to put his nose somewhere. But like other idiom, he picked it up at the drop of a hat!

Q What did the clock ask the watch?

A Hour you doing?

Q What do you call an ant who fights crime?

A A vigil**ante**!

Q. What do you call an ant waiting for an emergency vehicle?

A. An ambul**ant**

Q. What do you call a soldier ant?

A. Milit**ant**

Q. What do you call a lose living ant?

A. Deced**ant**

Q. What do you call an old, out of fashioned ant

A. **Ant**iquated

Q Why are snails so slow?

A Because they're carrying a house on their back.

Q What is the smartest insect?

A A spelling bee!

Q What do you call a guy who's really loud?

A Mike.

Q Which superhero hits home runs?

A Batman!

Q What is a room with no walls?

A A mush**room**.

Q What social event do spiders love to attend?

A Web**bing**s.

Q What kind of maths do birds love?

A Owl-ge**bra**!

Q What did the Dalmatian say after lunch?

A That hit the spot!

American English

Following the video last week of the Vicar who insisted on speaking English properly, here is a reflection on how Americans have clarified some English words.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCo0hSFAWoc>

Pick up and drop home?

Greta Smith lives in Roseville Aged Care at 110 King Street. Would anyone be able to bring Greta to Mass and drop her home please? If so, could you advise Mayrose (between 10.00am-3.00pm Monday-Friday) on 04238 04555. Thank you.

Some years ago a Year 12 girl told me that her mother who spoke little English was walking along her street when a woman stopped her car and called out, "Would you like a lift?" The girl's mother was puzzled. She had learned that a lift went up and down inside a building, and in her one-story home there was no need for a lift. She shook her head and declined the offer, only to learn from her daughter, that this was a neighbour trying to be kind.

So there is no need to 'pick up' Greta, just drive her to Holy Cross for Mass and back to King Street!

The link for **Mass link** for **7th Sunday of the Year** will be sent on Saturday

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



God bless and have a good weekend

Brian