

## Holy Cross Retreat



### Letter 106

24<sup>th</sup> February, 2022

### Sunday Mass

Mass each Sunday at Holy Cross is at 10.00am.

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

Last Monday's shared day had the benefit of being held on a perfect weather day. The participants enjoyed the opportunity to listen and share at an unhurried pace to reflect, to appreciate the beautiful grounds at Holy Cross and to share Eucharist together.

### Sunday February 27<sup>th</sup>: 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 27<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am. You are able to drive around and park on the oval. 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 and **masks will not be required**. Margaret and Tony Aldridge will celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their marriage.

### Drive a student

It would help our morning routine if anyone was available to drive Tri to YTU (Box Hill) on **Wednesdays** (departing Holy Cross at 8.55am) starting March 2nd. Hopefully he will learn to drive and secure a licence over the coming months. John is going for his licence next Monday.

### Chairs



Our chapel chairs were due at the beginning of March. We were advised last week there will be a month long delay. I'm sure if we are realistic, it will be slightly longer than that, but we live in hope. Once again the community expresses deep appreciation for the donation made to purchase chairs.

### Ash Wednesday



There will be a Mass and distribution of ashes on Wednesday next week at 9.00am.

## GOD and RELIGION...Part 3

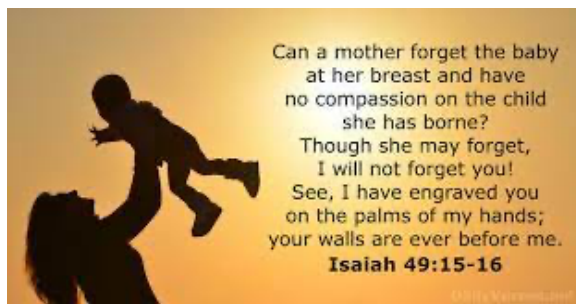


The prophet **Isaiah** brought a refinement to how God could be experienced. He had a vision while praying in the Temple, that amid the incense and blood of sacrificed animals, he 'saw' God sitting on a throne wrapped in a cloud, expressing God's 'otherness'. He heard the chanting of 'Holy, Holy'. Which meant 'other' or 'separate'. There was a huge gulf between God and

humans. Isaiah became aware that this God, YHWH was no longer a god of war, nor a tribal deity.

For Isaiah, YHWH was not confined to Israel. Rather, God's otherness filled the whole world. Isaiah became aware of his own smallness. His people were on the brink of extinction and Isaiah foresaw the great sorrow that was to come. He felt a call to warn the people of what he lived to see, the destruction of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians (in 722 BCE) and the breaking up of the ten tribes there. Twenty years later, the violent destruction of Judah followed and the exile of most of the population. Isaiah saw something new in this experience.

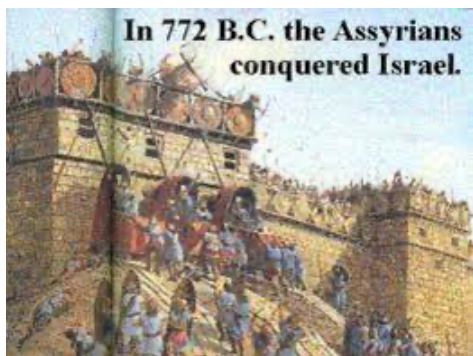
Rather than attributing the destruction either to the fault of the people or the power of Assyria (and its gods), Isaiah saw that this was actually the work of YHWH, who was using Assyria to lead the people to something new. As a prophet of the Axial Age, Isaiah had moved past the experience of war, power and might as signs of God's presence. Now God could be experienced in defeat or victory and through everyday political events. This was a God of history, not just of one people or one kind of experience. This was to be a step away from cultic observances that recognised God in victory, to a God also recognised in sorrow. External



observances were not enough now, there had to be a deeper meaning, and that meaning was compassion. *"When you lift up your hands in prayer, I will not look. Though you offer many prayers, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with the blood of innocent victims". (Isaiah 1:15)*

### The Social justice prophets

As well as Second and Third Isaiah, two contemporary prophets, Amos and Hosea preached a similar message in the northern kingdom. Amos preached about social justice and compassion. He pointed out that the people had totally misunderstood the nature of the covenant which they had interpreted as privilege rather than responsibility.



Like Isaiah, Amos proclaimed that if the only way the people would learn about the need for social justice was through defeat by the Assyrian army, then so be it. However, it seems that most people continued with their cultic observances and ignored Amos' message! Perhaps in explanation of this, author Karen Armstrong suggests that *"the religion of compassion is only followed by a*

*minority; most religious people are content with decorous worship in a synagogue, church, temple or mosque."* Sadly, this seems to remain true.

Hosea used marriage as a metaphor for the relationship between YHWH and Israel. He felt called by God to choose a wife from among prostitutes. She did not remain faithful to him after their marriage. This was to serve as a lesson for him of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Hosea saw the old Canaanite cultic sacrifices, and fertility rites being offered at Dan and Beth-El. These external observances did not impress him. He promoted an interior awareness and acknowledgement of God. "What I want is love, not sacrifice, acknowledgment of God, not holocausts". (Hosea 6:6)

Another prophet emerged who is commonly referred to as Second Isaiah. He too brought a message that YHWH was not a national god, but a God for all peoples. He firmly sought to establish a monotheistic faith which had struggled to take hold. He built on the idea of First Isaiah to suggest that God controlled other nations to fulfil God's purpose. Perhaps not surprisingly, the prophets were largely ignored.



While in exile in Babylon, new questions emerged such as, 'how could the Jewish exiles there, practise their religion away from their land and with the Temple destroyed?' Up until this time it was generally believed that a god's power was tied or restricted to their own territory, and especially in the temple. Many now abandoned YHWH, but others had no other god. YHWH was all they had. Second Isaiah promised them hope. Perhaps because of their contact with the



cosmological myths of Babylon, there was a new interest in YHWH's role in creation. For those who remained faithful, paganism lost its attraction, and, in the sorrow of exile, Judaism was born. Second Isaiah has YHWH proclaim, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8).

## The influence of Persia, Greece and Syria



When King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon, and allowed the Israelites and other captives to return in 538, Isaiah's message seemed vindicated. Cyrus was a model of tolerance and he encouraged people to rebuild their shrines and temples. He did not impose his god on the people. The exile had lasted for nearly fifty years. It

seems the majority of the people did not return to Israel. Those that did, took back a different understanding of their faith, which must have been very challenging for those who had not shared that experience in Babylon.

The Biblical prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel came from their time in Babylon, and Jeremiah appeared at a similar time, but he had remained in Jerusalem and did not go into exile. Following these great prophets (including Isaiah) there were to be no more major prophets for 500 years.

Around 435 BCE the centre of world power began to shift from the East to the West. Babylon had been the major world power, until it was overtaken by Persia. At the height of the Persian power Philip of Macedon united the islands of Greece and became their ruler. His son was Alexander the Great. In 332 BCE Alexander, defeated the Persians and the Greek empire was born with city-states established throughout the area surrounding, and including, Israel. Many aspects of Greek culture were attractive to Jews and some aspects of Judaism were attractive to Greeks, including the synagogue gatherings and their belief in YHWH. Judaism began to be 'Hellenised'. After Alexander's death in 323 BCE, his empire was divided. Ptolemy, gained Egypt and the northern African countries. Seleucus, gained Syria, to the north of Israel and the remainder was shared between two other generals.



Israel suffered greatly at the hands of Ptolemy and for the next one hundred years, Israel was caught up in unending conflicts between Syria and Egypt. The book of Daniel tells of these conflicts. During this time, Greek influence became strong in Israel and the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek. Here they encountered the difficulty of one culture trying to interpret the language of another. Many people took on Greek names and learned to speak Greek. A Hellenist party formed to promote Greek culture and philosophy and to liberalise some of the Jewish laws.

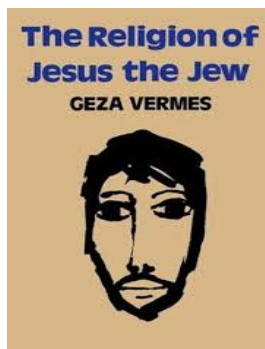


An alternative party, the Pharisees, was keen to preserve Jewish traditions. They promoted an idea of the sacred being present in everyday life. It was this spirituality that allowed people to celebrate faith and experience the divine presence in their own homes, and at their own meals, as if they were in the Temple. This became necessary during

some of the really difficult times, such as when King Antiochus IV from Syria, captured Jerusalem in 203 BCE and deposed the high priest, bringing the long line of succession to an end.

### Rome and Jesus

Some years later, Antiochus retaliated against an uprising and desecrated the Holy of Holies in the Temple in a deeply horrific way, killing numerous people. Six years after this event, Judas Maccabaeus led a revolt. He recaptured Jerusalem and cleansed the temple. But in 63 BCE Pompey captured Jerusalem for Rome, and as is well known, Israel was still under Roman domination, but with full religious freedom, at the time Jesus was born.



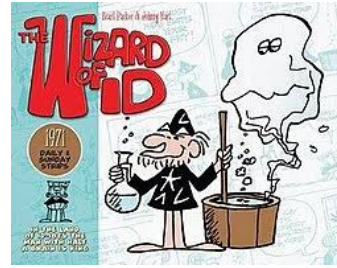
To the people of the time, Jesus was a reformer. He did not set about the establishment of a new religion. He lived and died a faithful Jew, albeit one who dreamed radically new possibilities. The Movement that began after his death and resurrection believed that the Messiah of Israel had come. There was no more waiting. They were a small minority, or a sect within Judaism. Before the gospels were written there is no evidence that people, saw Jesus as a divine figure, though certainly there was a conviction that he was possessed by

God's spirit.

Paul began preaching throughout the pagan Roman Empire with a message that Jesus was a universal redeemer. To those, accustomed to the gods being elitist or at least supreme (such as the Emperor) this was an entirely new message; that God could be present in a low-class carpenter! When we read of these events and experiences in the Bible, we have to remember that we are interpreting someone else's words, because the Bible was not written in English.

There is a 'Wizard of Id' cartoon which depicts the King looking down on the people, and saying to Rodney, "I don't know why, but the people remind me of sheep". Rodney, replies 'Sire, maybe it is because you have fleeced them so often'!

If you know English, you know that sheep are fleeced of their wool, but not everyone who knows English, would know that the word fleeced is sometimes used to describe one person cheating or swindling another. If you don't know this meaning, you won't see the humour in the cartoon. This aspect of language is important to remember when reading the Bible. So often people say "It says in the Bible....." What they are reading has been translated from Greek and as we know, there are different translations.



**To be continued**

### **St Gabriel...Passionist. (Feast: February 27<sup>th</sup>)**

Gabriel is very popular and is a patron of Youth. In 1959, Pope John XXIII named him the patron of the Abruzzi region, where he spent the last two years of his life. Many of the members of our Holy Cross family come from this region and are therefore keen to celebrate his feast and identify with his gifts to the region. He was born Francis Possenti. He died in 1862 at the age of twenty-four of TB. He did not do anything outstanding and it is still a mystery why he became so well known. It took six months for the notice of his death in isolated Isola to reach the Passionist Generalate in Rome!

He came from a wealthy family and he was well educated. Because of his outstanding public speaking skills, his father had great hopes for him having a professional career. He was popular and loved the 'high life' with a reputation for dancing. He turned his back on all this and became a Passionist and died before he was ordained. His 26 year old sister Teresa died of cholera in June 1855. Teresa was like a second mother to him. His father noticed Teresa's death had changed Gabriel. He spoke of this to his son and to his great amazement he learned that he wanted to enter the Passionists!

On August 22 1856 the sacred icon of Our Lady was carried in procession through the streets of Spoleto. When the statue passed Francis he heard a message somehow calling to him: "Francis, the world is not for you. The religious life is waiting for you." A few days later the final "Academia" of the school year was held. It was a night of great recognition for Francis, but also a night of painful family farewells. The next morning he left for the Passionist novitiate.

When one of the Passionists who was promoting his cause for canonisation came to take away his bones, a number of local farmers heard about this and armed with pitchforks formed a barricade and would not let him leave. "Gabriel belongs to us they said".

At Isola people remembered how "their Gabriel" had taught them to pray. They felt close to a saint who loved Mary as they also did. They could identify with him. In an age of holy and mighty popes and bishops, of illustrious kings and rulers, of learned theologians, philosophers, and scientists, these Italian Catholics felt closer to someone more like them.

The Passionist residence in Grand Sasso in the Abruzzi region was built originally by St Francis of Assisi, Here now there is a huge shrine dedicated to St Gabriel's shrine with a basilica built twenty-five years ago, to accommodate the huge crowds who come here. The biggest numbers come in summer and part of the seasons either side of it. Snow falls during the winter and can close the roads. Busloads of pilgrims come. They alight from the bus and have four stops. They first go to the old basilica and head to the confessional. In summer 32 priests hear confessions all day. Some of our men frequently are in the confessional for 12 hours in the weekends. Chris exercised this duty during his years studying in Rome.

Next stop is the old basilica where they can visit the museum with its thousands of written testimonies from people who have been cured. Many stop at the place above where St Gabriel was first laid to rest. Women often place their babies on this glass panel, in the hope of a cure. These cures are a mystery. There are too many common stories to dismiss them.

Interestingly, an Italian Passionist named Marco explained that at this spot many people used to come and cry out with joy at an instant cure. This occurred often while Mass was continuing very closely nearby. Bernard Silvestrelli, had been a fellow novice with Gabriel and when he became General, he came to the Shrine and is reported to have said "Gabriel, I am your General now and from now on there will be no more cures here. They will have to occur outside" Amazingly, they stopped, but did occur outside. Then Bernard himself was declared "Blessed" in 1988 and the old shrine reopened. The cures began again at the original spot!

It is hard for anyone to explain how Gabriel became famous. He was barely 24 years old when he died and not yet ordained, so he had little contact with people in his years as a Passionist. His mother died when he was four, and his father moved the family from Assisi where he was born, to Spoleto. His vocational story is classic, and had some parallels with St Francis. Gabriel was a noted leader and an intelligent successful student. The people claimed him for their own after his death and he is still there.

**World Day of Prayer.....Friday March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**Theme:** "I know the plans I have for you"      **Inquiries:** 0438 034739

**10.00am** Donvale Presbyterian Church

**8.00pm** St Bishoy & St Shenouda's Coptic Church

## Lent



Greg Manly CP lectured many of us as students at Holy Cross, in theology, scripture and Liturgy. Greg suggested that to make Lent more meaningful, the last thing to do, not the first, would be to choose a Lenten penance! The reason for this, Greg suggested is that you should use the Lenten period to choose a practice not just to perform for the Lenten period, but as the result of a prayerful discernment of your spiritual life during Lent. "It is better to strive to eliminate disagreeable habits or actions for fifty-two week of the year, not just six".

The starting point in a meaningful Lenten programme is to agree that the end purpose is to grow into closer union with Jesus. To do this we can divide a Lenten programme into three areas for daily examination: These are simply: MYSELF, OTHERS and GOD.

FASTING can begin with the simple recognition of not over-eating. Other insights according to personal needs will unfold.

HUMILITY is the recognition that we are dependent on God for everything. Our successes and talents should always be a cause for thanks and praise.

PRAYER should be a constant ingredient of our life. Much of our prayer can be active - responding with recognition for help; for thanks or with openness to God's will in our daily situation.

STUDY is the active reflection on the Gospel and how it applies to our lives. It requires at a minimum, some reading of scripture and preferably some study of what we read. By the time we reach Easter we can have established a pattern that we might want to continue, that involves setting reasonable personal goals and constantly assessing them in the light of our Christian commitment. So 'giving up something' or 'doing something extra', will not be for 40 days but it can become a life pattern. This can allow us to 'convert' ourselves and feel renewed in mind and heart, in a wholesome way that includes our relationships, our personal needs and our faith in Jesus.



Humour



"You'll have to get behind me and push."

WHAT FACE MASKS SAY ABOUT A PERSON :

RAESIDE  
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Victoria Times Colonist ©Hairy Dog Productions, Inc. raesidecartoon.com

 <p>N-95</p>		
HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL	SEMI-PROFESSIONAL	THRIFTY
		
HANDY WITH NEEDLE AND THREAD	PROBABLY A BANK ROBBER	SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED OUT OF THE HOUSE



### **Don't mess with old people**

An old lady handed her bank card to a bank teller and said, "I would like to withdraw \$10. The teller told her, "For withdrawals less than \$100 please use the ATM."

The old lady wanted to know why. The teller returned her bank card and irritably told her, "These are the rules. Please leave if there is no other matter. There is a line of customers behind you."

The old lady remained silent for a few seconds, then handed the card back to the teller and said, "Please help me withdraw all the money I have." The teller was astonished when she checked the account balance. She nodded her head, leaned down and respectfully told her, you have \$300,000 in your account and the bank doesn't have that much cash currently. Could you make an appointment and come again tomorrow?

The old lady then asked how much she could withdraw immediately. The teller told her any amount up to \$3000. "Well, please let me have \$3000 now", she said. The teller then handed it very friendly and respectfully to her. The old lady put \$10 in her purse and asked the teller to deposit \$2990 back into her account.

The moral of this tale .....Don't be difficult with old people, they spent a lifetime learning the skills!"

Two Eskimos were sitting in a kayak. They started to feel cold so they lit a fire in the boat. Not surprisingly, it sank, proving that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.

A woman sent twenty different puns to her friends with the hope that at least ten of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did!

Q How does a vampire start a letter?

A Tomb it may concern....

Q What do you call two bananas on the floor?

A Slippers.

Q How do you know when a bike is thinking?

A You can see their wheels turning.

Q What kind of shoes do frogs love?

A Open-toad!!

Q What goes up and down and doesn't move?

A The staircase.

Q When does a joke become a "dad joke"?

A When the punchline is a parent.

Q How much did the man sell his dead batteries for?

A Nothing, they were free of charge!

### Quotes:



Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly

Life is not about waiting for a storm to pass, it is about learning to dance in the rain

The newsletter is being sent a little earlier this week so that those interested are aware that there is a **9.00am Mass tomorrow (Friday)** to celebrate the Passionist feast 'The Solemn Commemoration of the Passion'. If you wish to bring a small amount of something to share, morning tea in the dining room will follow.

The link for **Mass** for **8th Sunday of the Year** will be sent on Saturday.

We remember Tony Brooks, Jacki Tomm, Maree Bartoli,

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

Peter Owen, 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

To our Abbruzzi family, buona festa for Sunday.

Brian