



2nd December, 2022

Greetings,

## Holy Spirit Province Report



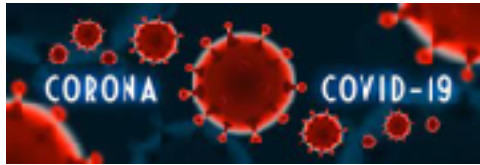
Last Monday night Fr Tom gave a comprehensive report accounting for what the Province has done in response to the 2019 Provincial Chapter and looking ahead to the Chapter in July 2023. Our Chapter back in 2019 followed the 2018 Congregational General Chapter held in Rome. Chris Monaghan was invited to give the opening address at that General Chapter and on Monday night Tom quoted a poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, that Chris used in the address.

*One ship sails East, and another West,  
By the self-same winds that blow,  
'Tis the set of the sails And not the gales,  
that tells the way we go.  
Like the winds of the sea are the waves of time,  
As we journey along through life,  
'Tis the set of the soul,  
that determines the goal,  
and not the calm or the strife.*



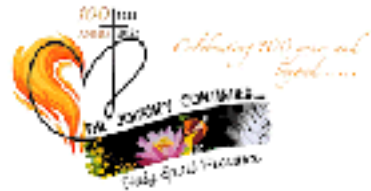
We have chosen 'Setting the Sails' as the motto for our 2023 Chapter and using another metaphor, Tom spoke about the now famed Camino Santiago de Compostela. While pilgrims all head for a common destination, there are eight different routes, and the path pilgrims take depends on the simple context -where the pilgrim starts! Tom explained that context is 'everything' and our starting point is a bottom line context for the direction we take. He considered the

global context of our times including the political shifts in many countries, the urgent need to heed climate change warnings and the various human rights issues around the world, especially demanding a recognition of diversity and respect for women, communication technology and so much more.



The COVID-19 pandemic has hovered over our Province concerns as it has for the entire world population. While the pandemic is not 'over', it is not as intense in any of our four countries.

Nevertheless it has caused a massive shift in what we were planning as a Province. Not all of this is negative, as we have adapted to new styles of communicating and planning. This has enabled (as it did for the Province report) for the entire Passionist family in all four countries to hear the Province report at the same time. Nevertheless as Tom highlighted, we have suffered from a lack of face-to-face contact. Tom highlighted that our future is one of connection with lay partnership. We do not exist apart from that.



Another context is the state of the Church which is collapsing in Western countries. The institution is different from the vocation of every Christian to bear witness to and carry the gospel message near and far. We are challenged to find new ways to do this, and we need the voice of the young to speak up and share their vision. The Church has suffered along with every institution from the misuse of authority, the elite being separated from the ordinary people and the criminal acts of sexual abuse on children and vulnerable adults. We have to continue working in and with this wounded church.

Our Province numbers in Australia and New Zealand are diminished. Despite disappointments and challenges in PNG there are still seven candidates in formation and many vocations in Vietnam. Some of the challenges of diminishment and growth in our Province are spelt out more in the section of our Province history in this newsletter. A written summary of Tom's session will be made available.



Our Passionist charism calls us to face uncertainty, loss, diminishment, letting go and suffering with the confidence Jesus took to Calvary. St Paul wrote, "Nothing can come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:39). Our future is a future of faith, love and service. It can look at times as if we are lost, confused or uncertain, but when we hand over to God, "All will be well".



If anyone has a spare pyx 'out on loan', we have run a bit short. Thank you

### **Erick**

Last Sunday Erick ran the Lilydale to Warburton marathon in the stunning time of 2 hours 30 minutes. In typical fashion, Erick downplayed his effort claiming the field was missing 'top athletes'. Nevertheless, Erick finished first and the second runner was 17 minutes behind him! His brother Nestori offered assistance by riding a bike and acting as an encourager and 'go better', and not having ridden for a while, Nestori sounded a little worse for wear than Erick.

### **PFGM National team**



This weekend the Australian National Passionist Family Group Movement Team is holding a meeting at Holy Cross, to review and plan for the year ahead. Dennis Morris led an interim team for five years, including the COVID years, and it will be a suitable occasion to extend thanks for his dedication though those years. We also farewell from the interim team, Gwen Winterscheidt and Michael Sullivan and thank them for their

generous contribution to future planning for the PFGM. The photo shows the team in 2021 (Gwen front left with her husband behind her, Frances Sullivan and her husband Michael behind her (far right), Mary Morris and her husband Dennis behind her, and their Passionist advisor. Usually it is said behind every good man there is a good woman. The photo is an interesting alternative to that!

Since September 1<sup>st</sup>, Tina Minichilli is the Australian National Coordinator and her NZ counterpart, Paul Traynor was appointed to that role last year. Paul will be attending the weekend.

### **Trees talking to each other**

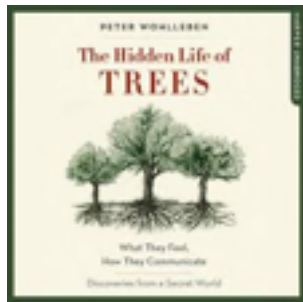
The brief video illustrates something of the life of trees.

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



In 2018, journalist Richard Grants wrote, "Until recently, most scientists have generally thought of forest trees as disconnected loners, competing for water, nutrients and sunlight, with the 'winners' shading out the losers and sucking them dry. Now, however, we can appreciate that trees of the same

species are communal, and often form alliances with trees of other species. Forest trees have evolved to live in cooperative, interdependent relationships, maintained by communication and a collective intelligence similar to an insect colony.



Peter Wohlleben, author of 'The Hidden Life of Trees', says that now people are referring to the Wood Wide Web. He says that trees are connected to each other through underground fungal networks. They share water and share nutrients through networks, which they also use to send distress signals about drought and disease or insect attacks, and other trees alter their behaviour when they receive these messages."

There is a symbiotic relationship between trees and fungi. As a kind of fee for services, the fungi consume about 30% of the sugar that trees photosynthesize from sunlight. That sugar fuels the fungi as they scavenge the soil for nitrogen, phosphorus and other mineral nutrients, which are then absorbed and consumed by the trees. Young saplings in a shaded part of the forest may lack the sunlight to photosynthesize, but they survive because big trees pump sugar into their roots through the network! To communicate through the network, trees send chemical, hormonal and slow-pulsing electrical signals, which scientists are just beginning to decipher. Alarm and distress appear to be the main topics of tree conversation. Trees also 'communicate' through the air, using pheromones and other scent signals.



Wohlleben says that when a giraffe starts chewing acacia leaves, the tree 'notices' the injury and emits a distress signal in the form of ethylene gas. Upon detecting this gas, neighbouring acacias start pumping tannins into their leaves. In large enough quantities these compounds can sicken or even kill large herbivores. Giraffes are aware of this and having evolved with acacias, this is why they browse into the wind, so the warning gas doesn't reach the trees ahead of them. If there's no wind, a giraffe will typically walk 100 metres — farther than ethylene gas can travel in still air—before feeding on the next acacia. Giraffes, you might say, know that the trees are talking to one another!



When elms and pines come under attack by leaf-eating caterpillars, they detect the caterpillar saliva, and release pheromones that attract parasitic wasps. The wasps lay their eggs inside the caterpillars, and the wasp larvae eat the caterpillars from the inside out. "Very unpleasant for the caterpillars," says Wohlleben. "but very clever of the



trees.” “When a deer is biting a branch, the tree brings defending chemicals to make the leaves taste bad, and when a human breaks a branch the tree knows the difference, and brings in substances to heal the wound.

## **PROVINCE HISTORY: AGEING, DIMINISHMENT AND GROWTH**



Our 2015 Provincial Chapter forced us to acknowledge that our Australasian members were ageing and decreasing in numbers, at the very time we were embracing Vietnam into our Province. We also acknowledged that we were in the early stages of learning how to live in multi-cultural communities and that this would be a significant challenge to overcome. Our early Province members adjusted to Irish, English and Australian membership, but they had a common language and similar cultures. We belong to a new world and a new religious and Congregational entity – PASPAC. We wanted to embrace these exciting times, so the 2015 Chapter agreed to five priorities for the next four years.

### 1. Multiculturalism & Cultural Sensitivity

We acknowledged with appreciation that our Province members and many who live and work alongside us, come from many different countries, and cultures. This cultural diversity was a reality already in most of our communities and among those with whom and to whom we minister. We wanted to actively promote cultural awareness and sensitivity and genuinely invite everyone to share their cultural reality in liturgy, community living and in our style of meeting and relating.



### 2. Initial Formation – PNG, Vietnam, Australia



We agreed that we wanted to offer men from Vietnam and PNG who wish to live our life, the best formation possible despite our limited personnel and some other resources. We agreed that we did not want to impose our methods and programmes on Vietnam, but we did want a cohesive Province approach to formation that built on the learnings of the post Vatican 2 era.

### 3. Youth Ministry in the Province

With an influx of students both in Melbourne and from Vietnam as well as having international novices in Adelaide, we recognised having a large number of young religious might attract others to our professed way of life. We stated clearly that these young

**youth  
retreat**

candidates can and must receive formation in various forms of youth ministry. For this reason, we determined that the Brisbane Youth Team remain a Province priority over the next four years and that our Province ministry to youth should be more specialised and not as diverse as it has been. We decided to focus on those areas where Passionist youth can gather (e.g. Oxley, Palmerston North, NZ, Templestowe and Glen Osmond) and the Chapter called for encourage local initiatives and the provision of resource for those who had an interest or the skills (e.g. our students) in youth ministry.



#### 4. Community Staffing & Maintaining our commitments

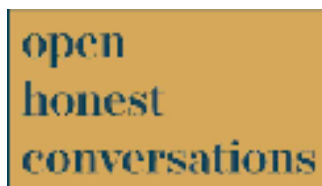


The Chapter recognised that we should not continue to expect older men to carry unreasonable loads. If some men are willing and capable of working on past their 70's, it was noted that at some stage this will cease. Several key positions were being held by men already in the pensioner age range, and while some of them can still work solidly at that age, pressure needs to be reduced, and time for relaxing and leisure considered.

Surveys and reports had been consistently referring to the reality that even seniors were often finding liturgy and church irrelevant and that we should expect Church attendance to continue to decline and age in Australia over the next four years.

#### 5. Professionalism and developing proper Systems

We noted that some roles could be better carried out by competent lay people either as employees or volunteers. It was agreed that local communities need to have a comprehensive manual that explains who and what duties are being carried out, including a reference to delegated tradespeople we deal with and on what basis. Policies and procedures needed to be put in place, and there was a need for them to be monitored and audited.



Two years after that Chapter, our 2017 Synod focused on creating honest and open in-depth conversations so that we could explore our stories, thoughts and feelings; our priorities at this time as a Province in our many locations; the unspoken rules that govern our conversations and relationships; the strategies we may initiate to bring our priorities to life, and the complex and difficult issue of clerical sexual abuse. We

agreed that we wanted to have conversations that are true to who we are and that building community is our primary form of evangelization.



A dominant feature of the 2017 Synod was reporting on and sharing about the outcome of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual abuse. Provincial, Tom McDonough gave some background into the Commission's report that was tens of thousands of pages long, and contained 409 recommendations which aimed to make

institutions safer for children. The Commission claimed that "society's values and mechanisms which were available to regulate and control aberrant behaviour, failed." It was "considered remarkable that in so many cases the perpetrator of abuse was a member of an organisation that professed to care for children. Just as remarkable was the failure of the leaders of that institution to respond with compassion to the survivor".

The Royal Commission recognised its responsibility to 'Bear Witness' which our Synod agreed we much echo. We have to remember what has happened and be strong in ensuring that we will never allow this to happen again. Tom pointed out that Church entities will be required to ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including bishops, provincials, clergy, religious and lay personnel have professional supervision with a trained professional who has a degree of independence from the institution within which the person is in ministry. They will be subject to effective management and oversight and be required to undertake annual performance appraisals.

## **BEAR WITNESS**



It was recognised that we must comply with robust screening processes including requiring candidates for religious ministry to undergo external psychological testing, including psychosexual assessment, for the purposes of determining their suitability to be a person in religious ministry and to undertake work involving children (RC 16.42).

In Australia there had been accusations that the Church suffered from scapegoating. As a Congregation and a Province we have to recognise our past failures. That the press reported abuse and cover up by clerics and religious was a great opportunity to commit to respectful and professional behaviour..



Two days of the 2017 Synod were devoted to considering the complex challenges of future planning for the Province. Once again we acknowledged that we were experiencing a decline in numbers and an increase in age in Australia and New Zealand,

while experiencing significant growth in Vietnam and PNG.



In order to support this growth, the experience of Australian members was considered vital, especially in the area of formation.

We noted that we were struggling to manage our present commitments, so this Assembly marked the beginning of a fifteen-month process of dialogue and consultation with Province members and our Passionist Family to discern our priorities and practice over the next five years, keeping in mind our commitment to the PASPAC region. These issues were considered further at a two-day Province Assembly in late November 2017.



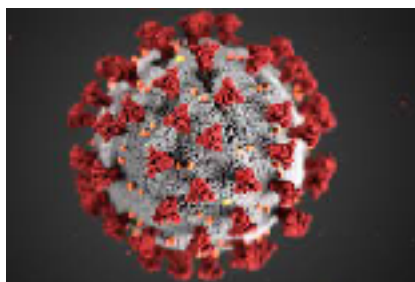
Five members of the Province died in the twelve-month period November 2017-2018, which highlighted again our issues of ageing and diminishment in Australia and New Zealand. The sudden deaths of Frs John Pearce and Ray Brain in 2019-2020. Was further endorsement of this reality.

The 2019 Provincial Chapter acknowledged that the Province had reached a 'tipping point' and faced severe challenges in meeting our commitments. The Chapter noted that we needed to respond to the challenges in Vietnam and Papua New Guinea. Two main goals were established for the next four years:

- a) To deepen and broaden our understanding of our charism and identity
- b) To be inclusive and foster lay involvement.



The Chapter avoided a focus on revised legislation and instead, established four priority areas to be addressed in the next four years: Community life, Ministry, Formation, and Finance and Property.



Within eight months of the Chapter, COVID-19 unleashed an era of huge uncertainty not only on the Province, but on the world, and opportunities to adequately respond to the call of the 2019 Chapter were extremely limited. Experts have suggested that by November 2022 there had been at least 6,200,000 deaths worldwide, from 640,250,000 infections. At that



time, Australia has had more than 16,000 deaths. Vietnam had had 43,150 deaths. PNG has had 650 deaths and New Zealand, 3,150 deaths.



Reporting in some countries is not considered accurate, but at June 2022, the number of reported deaths from COVID in other PASPAC countries have been provided. India 530,000, Indonesia 160,000, Philippines 64,500, Japan 47,500, South Korea 29,500, Myanmar 20,000 and China 5,250

By late 2021 we had seen a significant effect on our life, largely because of government lockdowns. Most of our religious were unable to travel outside their own community, whether it be within their own States in Australia, or in or to PNG, New Zealand or Vietnam. We had no Province gatherings in 2020 or 2021 and the Provincial Council was unable to meet face-to-face between March 2020 and during all of 2021.



This led to meetings within the Province being held by 'Zoom'. Many of these were very successful and they saved a lot of travel costs. At the same time it led to a more insular experience and certainly provided an unexpected opportunity to meet the Chapter's aim of addressing the improvement of community life!



Another aspect of COVID that affected the Province, was the inability of 'back-up' personnel in places where there was a need. No one was able to visit Vietnam from February 2020 until May 2022, which meant the newly ordained men there had to 'step-up' and take on responsibilities without the Provincial or Formation personnel from Australia to assist. Even by November 2022, only the Provincial had visited Vietnam since COVID began. The same has been the case for PNG and for Marlborough parish, New Zealand, from which we withdrew in February 2022.

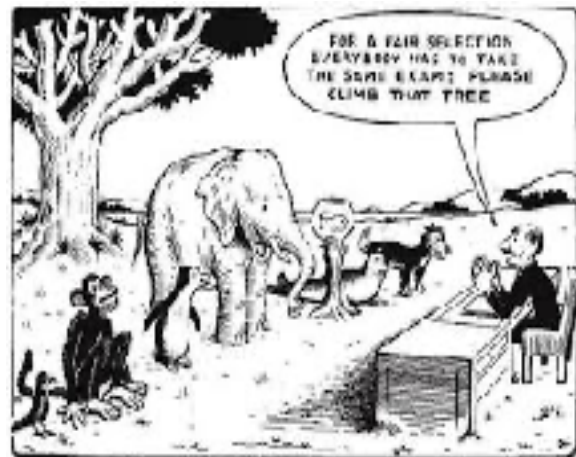
For both of our communities in Melbourne which was the most locked-down city in the world during 2020 and 2021, but also for our other communities, including Saigon, Port Moresby and Vanimo, a visit was not possible for many months, and even when it was possible, there was a genuine fear of visitors being trapped by the sudden lockdown of a city. A majority of the men in the Province had contracted COVID at least once by November 2022.

To be continued

### Humour

An engineer, a priest, and a doctor were trying to enjoy a round of golf. Ahead of them was a group so slow and ineptly that in frustration the three ask the green-keeper for an explanation.

They are a group of blind firefighters. They lost their sight saving our golf club last year, so we let them play for free". The priest said, "I will say a prayer for them tonight". The doctor said, "let me ask my ophthalmologist colleagues if anything can be done for them". The engineer said, "why can they play at night!?"





### A family trust exercise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y4vbS6c4p4>



We would be grateful if anyone could loan us a mobility walker for one week please, starting tomorrow (Sunday 4th Dec).

### Prayers

We remember those whose anniversaries occur around this time especially Tom Barry Sec 1<sup>st</sup>), Alberto Carvalho (Dec 5<sup>th</sup>) Marg Hogan (7<sup>th</sup> December).



We pray for all of our Holy Cross family who are unwell especially Maree Bartoli, Maeve Reardon, Michael Doyle, Paul Darbyshire Jim Molan, John Lazzari, Alexander Lim, Des Grisell, Lydia Chin, Gerry Bond, Helen McLean, Peter Owen, Greg Agosta, Dominic Isgro, Errol Lovett, Lesley Yang, Marg Casey, Norm Heyhorn, Chris O'Toole, Angelo Vigilante, Pam Gartland, Jim Monaghan, Peter DeMarzi, Anne Jenkins, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Peter McNamara, Patricia Keeghan, Mary Hackett, Margaret Wright, Mary and Kate Dunn and those who seek or need our prayers.

The **Mass link** will be sent by Chris on Saturday afternoon.

Have a good weekend

Brian