

Holy Cross Retreat

Letter 169



12th May 2023

Greetings,

Welcome to Holy Cross Newsletter

This week and for the following weeks until June, we will miss Brian Traynor as he is currently away. This means that we will also miss his regular efforts to find humour content to keep us smiling as well as the regular meaningful communications.

With me, learning on the job, you might be able to go through the newsletter in 2min and 17 seconds, or 5 more seconds if you are distracted. Fortunately to help us not regret the fact that the newsletter is too short, Brian kindly left some meaningful information to share on PFGM as well as some humour. I might add something to it but will not disclose who is the editor of what – leaving this to your great minds to work it out. Enjoy your reading, remember to time it and let your neighbour know how you went! Complaints to me are welcome, I promise to read them during my Christmas holidays ☺ With all seriousness, I would appreciate constructive feedback as long as it is not only behind my back.

PFGM GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION:

Below are some less quality photos (extracted from the Provincial Newsletter) of the celebration of the Passionist Family Group Movement 50 years Jubilee celebration over the weekend in Sydney.

As you may already be aware, we had representations from Holy Cross Community, some of whom are (as in the photo) Brian Traynor and Tina Minichill. Tim Horlock must be either hiding or taking the photos.

There Eucharist was celebrated, stories shared and jubilee tree planted in the presence of many PFGM people and special guests. Tom McDonough the provincial reported in the newsletter saying *“everyone went to bed, tired but happy, after a day well spent...”* We wait to hear more from those who were there in person.





Blessing and planting the jubilee tree.

Mayrose Abraham's Birthday:



In a simple but hopefully meaningful manner, we celebrated Mayrose's Birthday a day early as Chris Monaghan was about to travel to Ballarat for a few days of lecturing. Mayrose's actual birthday is today as mentioned by Brian in the previous newsletter. Chris sung and played guitar while Jerome and I tried to sing along, eagerly waiting for the cake! We thank Mayrose for the love and effort she puts into caring for Holy Cross Retreat Centre as the Manager. We pray many blessings on her, may she have many more healthy and happy years.



Prayer Group:

The St Peter's & Paul's charismatic prayer group meets in the church on Tuesdays at 7.00pm for prayer and worship

Please call Bernadette 0407 007 708 for enquiries or to attend.

Retreat Centre:

This week has been quiet after a busy week of different groups, concluded by a weekend of some Diocesan seminarians' retreat. A quiet time is a good time to cut the grass. Although we have been blessed to have the rain, it means that we are not able to cut the grass just yet. On Sunday afternoon there was a bit of sun, Phi tried to cut the grass but was only about 82.9% successful due to the still wet grass. Now that has worsened but one can appreciate the greenness atmosphere.



Happy Mothers Day to all mothers, living and those gone before us. We wish all mothers a very special day from Holy Cross. We hope and pray that they can perhaps receive more recognition and gratitude for their sacrificial love and care.



Jesus' Vision & PFG's (Part 1)



It is common to hear a person comment, "That wasn't very Christian!" Normally this means something they did or said 'wasn't very nice.' We often equate being like Jesus with being polite, not disturbing the peace, etc. There used to be talk of Jesus being 'little Jesus meek and mild!'. What does it fact mean to 'be like Jesus'? If we include some criteria from Jesus' own challenge: 'Love your enemies', 'turn the other cheek', 'welcome the stranger', 'forgive seventy times seven'.

Jesus saw God present in the 'little' people, those who were maginalised and he called us to do the same. So what does it really mean to say "that wasn't very Christian?"

When Jesus appears in John's gospel, the first question he asks is 'What are you looking for?' This is in response to his finding two disciples of John the Baptist following him. When he finds Temple priests and other officials in Gethsemane

about to arrest him, he asked them ‘Who you looking for?’ When he appears after his resurrection he asks this question again, ‘Who are you looking for?’ The progression of questions and their meaning is significant, and is an invitation to us, to search not for ‘something’ but for someone - Jesus.



Jesus grew up on the edge of an international city with people of different cultures and languages. Sepphoris was less than an hour’s walk from Nazareth. Because it was being rebuilt, it would have attracted tradesmen from a variety of places. Joseph and Jesus would have found plenty of opportunity to find carpentry work there. We note in the gospel that Peter is identified as being from Galilee because of his distinctive accent which was influenced by Greek speakers. Jesus would have spoken Aramaic, some Hebrew law and scripture, and probably a lot of Greek. At least some of his disciples (such as Simon, Andrew and Philip) would have been ‘Greek speakers’.

Jesus was baptised by and became an assistant to John the Baptist. After John was arrested, Jesus left the desert, gave up baptising and started a new ministry of preaching and healing in Galilee. He focused on the poor, the sinners, the sick; ‘the lost sheep’ of Israel. This was the result of contemplation and reading the signs of the times. Possibly Jesus had not preached in Galilee before because it was his own territory (“prophets are not accepted”).



It is clear from Matthew 11 that Jesus was not doing what John had expected of him. Jesus began to criticise the law and associate with tax collectors and well known sinners. Proclaiming that such people were good in God’s eyes, went totally against Jewish teaching. Jesus refers to himself being derided as a ‘drunkard and glutton’ (Mt 11:19). This was a technical term used in Deut 21:21. It means rebellious and disobedient. Such a person was to be taken

outside the city and put to death by stoning! Overly serious Christians seem to overlook this caricature of Jesus

The global Roman Empire and Greek culture influenced the rich and powerful, and many of them lived lives of luxury and decadence. Carpenters and fishermen were poor, exploited and oppressed by the Romans, by the Jewish leaders and by rich landowners. Their increasing debt led to a spiral of violence as they sought unsuccessfully to overcome their oppression. This is why there was a Roman presence in Galilee. Owners had to contribute labour and provide seed, food, and

fodder for next year's crop. They needed reserve money for births, death and marriage parties, for the purchase of new farm equipment and had to pay taxes which were sometimes 40% and 60%. If a land owner had a bad harvest and was forced off his land, sometimes he had no choice but turn to trades that were forbidden to Jews.

A Jew was not as helpful an employee as others because he was forbidden to work on the Sabbath. Many were forced to disobey this law in order to gain employment. These people were victims, not criminals, and that's how Jesus accepted them. By doing so, he was in opposition to the law. John had been calling people back to 'authentic Jewish life'. Jesus saw a deeper need. Jesus knew people's basic goodness and the burdens they were under. He was moved with compassion for them, He knew his Father God was too.



The priests controlled temple worship. They insisted on animals being sacrificed. People had to purchase these animals to fulfil their legal obligations, so the Temple was a place of flourishing trade from which the priests profited. Jesus challenged the corruption of the priests. He was more impressed by a poor

widow putting a small coin in the treasury box than with the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem.



Jesus became proactive. He chose synagogues and the Sabbath day, to publicly challenge the teaching of the elders. In a synagogue he called out a man with the withered arm. Jewish law permitted an action to save life on the Sabbath, but only if necessary. Jesus said 'No'. There is no waiting with God. God

heals every day. For Jesus, personal virtue, social position or possessions did not matter. Faith (trust in God's goodness) mattered.

Jesus rarely asked people to change and then follow: He just said 'Follow me'. People of religion were scandalized by his free mixing with sinners, his apparent disregard of the seriousness of sin, his permissiveness towards tradition and his free and easy way of treating God. He did not make authority his truth, he made truth his authority! He was driven by a profound experience of compassion and

he developed a solidarity with people from every walk of life. Even his enemies admitted about him, "we know that the rank of a person means nothing to you".

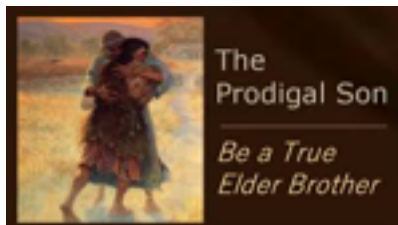
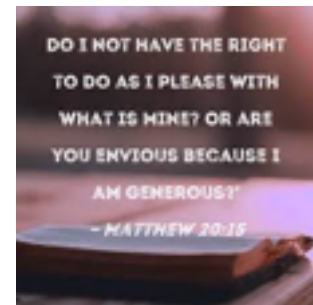


In Jesus' world, a Samaritan and a shepherd could be good; a shepherd could even leave 99 sheep to look for 1 that was lost; a father could make himself stupid by partying on the return of a worthless son. Precious seed could be thrown carelessly among thorns, on

rocky ground and on pathways. It went against everything the elders believed, and it sounded foolish - but that is what Jesus implied God was like.

Jesus was passionate that all humans are equal in dignity and worth. He treated beggars, the lame and crippled, with as much respect as those given high rank or status. He ignored the custom that considered women and children as inferior.

He encouraged people not to seek status but to 'go down the ladder' by seeking the lowest place, and advised his disciples to be like a child who has no rank or status. Jesus spoke of a justice born of generosity. He told the story of the vineyard workers who received a generous day's pay despite many of them working entirely different hours. While the pay was generous, some were envious that others received greater generosity.



The late workers had been unable to find employment and presumably their family needs would have been greater. Just as the early workers could not rejoice that these more needy workers had been paid, the elder brother in the prodigal son story could not be generous. He would have preferred to see his brother punished than to be

forgiven. Could those in the crowd listening to the story; can we, hear the challenge to forgive?

Jesus spoke of turning the other cheek instead of seeking revenge, of loving one's enemies, of doing good to those who hate you, blessing those who curse you, and forgiving others seventy times seven. More challenging were his words about the rich and poor. He proclaimed the opposite to popular belief. "Blessed are the poor", he said. How fortunate they were, not to be among the rich and wealthy. The rich will find it hard to



live in the kingdom where everything will be shared. Visit any poor village in the world and you will see a level of sharing never experienced by the rich.

The rich, Jesus said, will be like camels trying to get through the eye of a needle!. The poor will share gladly, they already do! He allowed God to break out of the captivity of tradition and institution. He said God isn't impressed by personal virtue or status, (not even by being a priest) nor put off by our sins. All God wants is faith and then God can act! Jesus said, "If you ask you will receive, if you seek you will find and if you knock, the door will be opened for you". Being anxious about yourself blinds you to the abundance that the kingdom offers. Faith leads to truth, and truth sets you free.



He used his meals with people to speak of the future in terms of the joy of a great banquet to which all are invited, all made welcome and no one felt excluded. In Judaism sinners were outsiders and forbidden to share meals with faithful Jews. For Jesus there were no outsiders.

The feeding of the 5000 is a reminder that God can and does feed all of his people. Those people were not asked to declare their moral status before they could share the meal. This was Jesus' dream; 'a kingdom of universal fellowship'.

(To be concluded next week)

Humour

Vladimir Putin, to get on the good side of voters, goes to visit a school in Moscow to have a chat with the kids. He talks to them about how Russia is a powerful nation and how he wants the best for the people.

At the end of the talk there is a section for questions. Little Sasha puts up her hand and says: "I have two questions. Why did the Russians invade Crimea and why are we sending troops to the Ukraine?"

Putin says: "Good questions." But just as he is about to answer the bell goes and the kids go to lunch. When they come back, they all sit down and there is time for some more questions. Another girl, Misha, puts her hand up and says: "I have four questions. Why did the Russians invade Crimea, why are we sending troops to the Ukraine, why did the lunch bell go twenty minutes early, and where is Sasha?"

Prayers

We remember those who's anniversaries are around this time and their families, especially **Ann Ryan (16/5)**, **Shirley Horlock (17/5)**, **Linda Smyth (18/5)** (Dr Noel's wife) and **Betty Wells (18/5)**



We also remember those in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially Tommy (4 month old), Ted Hallam, Pam Storey, Maree Bartoli, Bronwyn Burke, Gerald & Margaret Wright, Michael O'Callaghan, Lynda Chin, Gerry Bond Cathy Petrocco's sister, Marissa, Alexander Lim, Maeve Reardon, John Lazzari, Des Grisell, Peter Owen, Helen McLean, Greg Agosta, Errol Lovett, Peter DeMarzi, Chris O'Toole, Angelo Vigilante, Pam Gartland, Jim Monaghan, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Peter McNamara, Marg Casey, Mary Hackett, Patricia Keeghan, Anne Jenkins, Jerome, Mary and Kate Dunn.

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

*With Peace,
Erick*