

Holy Cross Retreat

Letter 171



Greetings,

19th May 2023

This weekend we celebrate **Pentecost Sunday** which is usually referred to as the birthday of the Church. With this in mind, happy birthday to us all. Another great excuse to celebrate.

I appreciate the response from an anonymous person who kindly wrote back last week after my apology for committing the mortal sin! Although this was obviously done in an attempt to brighten our spirits with a bit of humour, the person's reply was to say 9 Hail Marys. After I did that, I felt much better, thank you. As you know, there was once a time when confessions were exercised publicly in our Church history, so this disclosure is not new to our mature Church. But today Canon Law would have me excommunicated today if this was done in a serious manner. Enough about that, let us look at some of this week's happenings.

YTU wins the Brotherhood Cup

Over the past few months Yarra Theological Union (YTU) Seminarians have been practicing soccer every weekend in preparation for the Brotherhood Cup Competition. Fr Chris Monaghan said that this started back when he was a student. It was then AFL but the same competitive nature continues between different groups of seminarians from Victoria's Theological Institutes. In Chris' days he said that often it was brutal but with brotherly care. Chris recalls one Passionist student tackled another seminarian quite hard, and the seminarian asked him to stop. He then replied say *"Well, if you want me to stop, stop your hands from touching the ball."* Today the Holy Cross Vietnamese brothers mentioned that a good motto to follow in order to win will be (translated from Vietnamese) is *"The ball may go ahead, but you are staying with me!"*

On the previous weekend they gathered on the grounds of Holy Cross Centre to



practice for the last time before this past weekend when the competition occurred.

A week later, on Saturday 20th they then gathered to compete for the whole day at a Salesian College ground. They thrashed other teams and brought the cup home. The last time YTU won the annual cup was before Covid. Chris Monaghan, the President of YTU is most happy for the win. He encouraged the Holy Cross brothers to celebrate indeed for such a great effort and a win! One could report that luckily, not many were injured. It was all done with much care of one another. There is a talk about the 'brotherhood cup' being changed to 'unity cup' or alike so as to be more inclusive. These colleges that started exclusively for men, have now grown to become more inclusive of all, including, women religious, men and women from different denominations and so on. The pressure is on next year to defend the win.



Holy Cross Brothers Below (left): JD, Phi,



Tri, Thang and (right) Dung with the ball.

Catch Up With Gerard Go Deeper

Gerard Daly and I caught up recently for a few reasons. One reason was to check in with each other with regards to how we are going. Gerard ended up doing more listening than talking. I shared about the change in my current life with studies, my past traumatic experience, bla bla bla Gerard shared about how he feels more confident with his faith and can start doing more with his role as the Passionist Companions' leader. It is humbling and inspiring to talk to Gerard. After losing his son Brett so suddenly, how does he find strength to push through life so gently positive as well as so confidently in his faith. In Gerard's view, the Passionist Charism is a real gift that strengthens and gives us courage in our faith journey. We also discussed a Companions' 'Come and See' program for Endeavour Hills Parish Community, which will occur on the morning of Saturday 17th of June. Gerard, his family, myself and our close ones thank you all for always sending your positive energy through your prayers and love. Much love and unconditional positive regard right back at you! *May the Passion of Jesus Christ be always in our Minds and Hearts.*



Paul's churches and Passionist Family Groups (Part 1)

Scripture scholars suggest that Paul's letters were written between 50 AD and 61AD, before any other New Testament writings. They were written to different churches (groups of Christian people) addressing diverse and particular needs. Some of the letters credited to Paul were in fact written by 'disciples' rather than by Paul himself.

In the areas where Paul took the Christian message, many people were already attracted by the idea of a 'universal brotherhood and sisterhood', and many small groups formed to create a sense of belonging and to assist in charitable works. Most formed around a particular interest. There was a general disenchantment with



traditional religions. Some people were attracted by the 'mystery' religions from the East, others wanted a stricter adherence to traditions. There is a clear parallel to the searchings of the people of that time and the sense among many people today that religion is irrelevant, and the rise of the 'New Age' philosophies and fundamentalism.

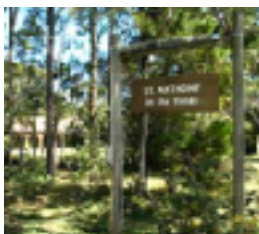
It helps to see that the communities Paul established were part of a wider movement and need. His letters and the Acts of the Apostles mention that he encountered various cults. Paul had undergone a conversion in Damascus, probably in 37AD. Prior to this he had vigorously resisted the spread of the new Christian movement. Three years later, he met with great hostility when he returned to Damascus and preached there about Jesus. Some Christians helped him escape (2 Cor 11:32). He made his way to Jerusalem where he received a cool reception, obviously because he had not convinced everyone that he had really changed. Barnabas used his influence to have him received into the group.

Paul stayed with Peter for two weeks and James was the only apostle he met, perhaps indicating that the others avoided him. He then spent 10 years working in the Provinces of Syria and Cilicia (350kms north of Jerusalem) and he underwent all sorts of incredible difficulties there (2Cor 11:23-29). During this decade, the church began to undergo change. Samaritans were added to the Church by Philip the deacon and Peter had baptised a Roman centurion named Cornelius, along with his family. This highlights the fact that the Jerusalem centred church had begun to include pagans and that this created some challenges. Early persecution of the church led to disciples fleeing Jerusalem to various cities where they started to make 'converts'. Syrian Antioch was built on the Orontes river and had a population of around 750,000. Religious tolerance was a matter of civic pride and here the 'followers of the Way' were first nicknamed 'Christians'. Word of conversions reached Jerusalem and the apostles sent Barnabas there. He took Paul along with him. Syrian Antioch was to become Paul's missionary base.

How did St. Paul change the world of his time?



- At the heart of his mission was the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News, and the Kingdom of God.
- By spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles, Paul opened the Church to all people, breaking down the barriers of race and ethnicity.
- Paul's mission was not just about preaching, but also about living a life of love and service to others.
- Paul's letters to the churches provide a window into the early Church's struggles and triumphs.



When the Passionist Family Groups first spread outside of Terrey Hills in Sydney in 1982, after nine years in that one place, it signalled the beginning of significant change which was to become evident within five years. How this developed and the effects it had, has many parallels to the early church development.

Paul begins his missionary work

Paul and Barnabas went from Selucia by ship to Salamis (200kms) on the island of Cyprus. This was Barnabas' own country, and they preached in the Jewish synagogues there. There were Jewish Christians already living there but no Gentile Christians. At Paphos 130 kilometres away at the other end of the island, the Roman governor became a convert. Paul now seems to have become the leader of the team which included John Mark, a relative of Barnabas. They sailed to what is now mainland Turkey, arriving at Perge in Pamphylia 260 kilometres away.

The main Greek speaking cities were the first places where new ideas and change were encountered, so it was logical for Paul to establish the Gospel there and leave the new Christians to take it to the surrounding countryside and smaller towns.



People travelled on the well-constructed Roman roads of this era, more than people of any time in history, until the nineteenth century. It is estimated that a person could travel about 160 kilometres a day by ship, 40 kilometres a day by horse (as official letter carriers did) and 20-30 kilometres a day on foot, as Paul often travelled.



Paul travelled about 16,000 kilometres on his missionary journeys. As a result, the roads were busy with a wide range of people such as government officials, traders, pilgrims, letter carriers, sightseers, fugitives, runaway slaves, prisoners, athletes, artisans, teachers and students.



This great mobility of people ensured that new ideas would spread far and wide. Many people migrated to Rome from eastern cities. In the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Romans (Ch 16), he sends greetings to twenty-six people there, although he had never been to Rome himself. After Perge, Paul and Barnabas headed for Antioch in Pisidia. This was a difficult and dangerous journey

of about 90 kilometres. John Mark had decided to return to Jerusalem. In Pisidia Paul and Barnabas were invited to speak in the synagogue. Pagans were encouraged by Paul's words but the Jews expelled them. This experience was to be repeated, and was to lead to Paul's changed strategy to 'go to the pagans'.

They made their way 150 kilometres due east for Iconium, where many Jews and Greeks would later be converted, but again they were driven out. They fled 50 kilometres south to Lystra. Here, Paul converted a young man named Timothy,

whom he was to choose as his secretary on his next journey. Some Jews from Pisidian and Iconium came to Lystra and encouraged the people to turn against Paul. He was stoned, but not killed. He and Barnabas went off to Derbe, 50 kilometres south east. In Derbe things were quieter and more successful. Despite his rejection in Lystra, Paul revisited there three times!

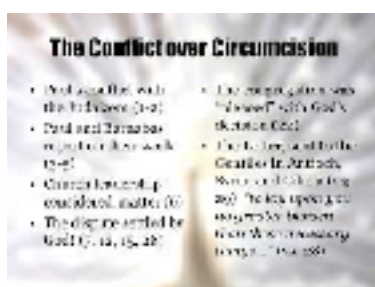
They had spent five years away, but still Paul and Barnabas decided to revisit their churches. This indicates they saw themselves as founders of churches, and that support and follow up was vital. They revisited the same towns from which they had been expelled, and delayed long enough in Perge to establish a church there, which was later to become prominent. They arrived back in Syrian Antioch and related what had happened to the 'whole community'.



In September 1983, the first Passionist Family Group missionary team headed 1100 kms north from Sydney to Bardon in Brisbane. Five years later there were 62 other parishes that had established Passionist Family Groups in Brisbane as well as in far away places such as Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra, Western New South Wales, and New Zealand.

Within ten years of this 'founding' in Bardon there were Passionist Family Groups in almost 300 parishes, as well as in other churches and in a jail in USA.

Over those years, professed Passionists in some areas visited every six-weekly meeting of group leaders to ensure there was proper support and follow up. In time they trained regional lay leaders to undertake this ministry.



Things were quiet for a while in Antioch until a dispute arose concerning the Jewish Christians. Word had filtered back to Jerusalem that Paul and Barnabas had not required pagan converts to be circumcised nor to follow the full law of Moses. Titus, an associate of Paul's, became a focus for debate. Some dedicated Jewish Christians who were also Pharisees, travelled down to Antioch to see for themselves what was going

on. They proclaimed that 'unless a man is circumcised in the tradition of Moses, he cannot be saved'. Paul was fierce in his opposition to this, citing Peter's baptism of Cornelius as an indication that Peter agreed with him. His recounting of an argument with Peter about this issue clearly highlights both his character and his total conviction of the message of Jesus regarding the pagans (Gal 2:11-12).

The church in Antioch decided to send Paul, Barnabas, Titus and some others to Jerusalem to discuss the problem with the apostles and elders. To make their point, the group travelled through the pagan towns of Tyre and Sidon, and through Samaria. The Jerusalem Council was a turning point. Delegates were sent back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas with a letter from James approved by the Council (Acts 15). It declared that the Law of Moses had prepared Israel for the coming of Jesus, but now salvation was found in him, not the Law. Had this development not occurred, the churches would no doubt have become sects of Judaism, and the gentile communities would have become a diversity of cults, lacking unity and a common founding.



Another mission

THE NEW TEAM

After spending about a year instructing people, Paul decided it was time to undertake a second major mission. Silas who had come from Jerusalem after the Council, became Paul's companion and scribe. Barnabas and John Mark went off to Cyprus. Paul and Silas headed north to Derbe and Lystra where they recruited Timothy. They visited many towns and passed on the good news from the Jerusalem

Council. They went north through Phrygia into Galatia where they were to break new ground.

[\(To be continued next week\)](#)

Pentecost Humour



Prayers

We remember **Geoffrey Ward (24/5)** recently deceased, those whose anniversaries are around this time and their families, especially **Beverley O'Loughlin (26/5)**, **Simon Kearney (28/5)** and **Marcellino Bortolotto (30/5)**.



We also remember those in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially Fr Gerard Quin CP, 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, 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*