

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 198

1st December, 2023

Greetings,

Passionist Institute...last weekend
Our theme was 'Sailing Together'



Most people attended the Institute online via Zoom, which is a great substitute when distance and cost is a factor. We enjoyed having a number of people stay over the weekend to participate face-to-face in our Institute. Passionist Companions from New Zealand, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide and Endeavour Hills, attended our sessions at Holy Cross, together with our own Companions and professed members. Denis Travers (Provincial) and Paul Vuong CP from Saigon were also here. A highlight was a few hours of kareoke on Sunday night, with visitors and community members belting out tunes.

Coffee Cart



We had a really good number of people stay for a coffee after

last Sunday's Mass. The monthly Coffee Cart is very popular for the opportunity it provides for people to put names to faces and take the time to have a chat. We thank the generous provider these past three months as well as the ladies who made cakes and biscuits and those who took them around to people. Thank you.

Come Away Day

Some 15 men and women gathered at Holy Cross on Tuesday this week for a day of prayer, reflection and sharing on the theme, "Bring forth hope." In a world torn by conflict and wars, and signs that our social cohesion as a nation was under pressure, the group focused on how each of us, as people of faith, can be instruments of hope and peace in our families and the neighbourhoods in which we live.

A centring prayer led us into a period of quiet reflection on what we are becoming more aware of - firstly in ourselves and then the world around us. We then looked at the inspiring example of Israeli and Arab women transcending differences and walking together for peace in the midst of war - showing us by their collective courage and hope, the face of God, active in a divided world. The group was challenged to look at the small ways we can make a difference and change the encounter with others from "them and us" to "we." with the moving song "One Day" sung in Arabic, Hebrew and English, echoing in the background.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqvKDCP5-xE>

We moved to a candle lighting service where we each named the things that were in our hearts, finishing our time together with an anointing service and a celebration of the Eucharist. For further information on the day, please contact Frank Burke on 0407998781 or burke.frank942@yahoo.com.au.

Our chapel helpers



Apart from our various maintenance assistants, it is good for us to acknowledge those who help each week with the provision, delivery and arrangement of flowers for the altar, the cleaning of altar linen and cloths, our readers, both on Sundays and for the recorded Mass that Chris celebrates each Saturday morning. The provision of coffee once each Sunday for the past three months has been a most generous contribution to the community. Thank you

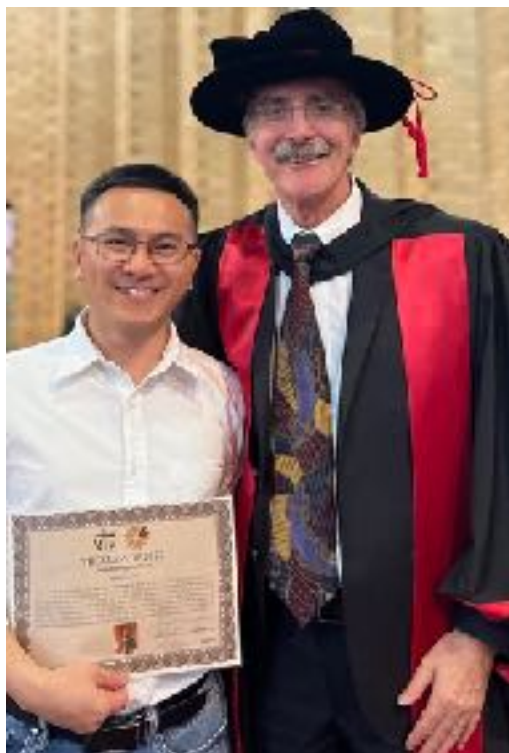
A good run



Last Sunday morning Erick won the 'Run for the Young' Lilydale to Woori Yallock marathon for the second successive year, and broke the record (his own), running 2 hours 29 minutes and 12 seconds. We congratulate Erick on another great performance on a damp and at time muddy track.

YTU graduation

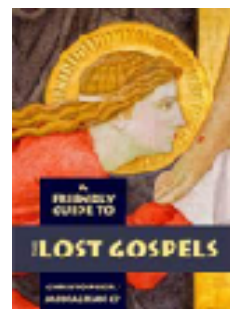
Last Friday evening Phi graduated from YTU with a Bachelor of Theology degree which is a great achievement, having begun his studies in Saigon and then having to



adjust to a different style of learning an in a different language.

Here he can be seen with Templestowe based bee-keeper, Dr Doctor Chris Monaghan CP

Chris has just published 'A Friendly Guide to the Lost Gospels'.



We are wondering how many people might be interested in obtaining a copy? (for \$20)

Passionists at the graduation



JD Cu'ong Thang Phi Chris, Hai Paul Vuong

Advent



Advent means 'the arrival' and liturgically we understand this to refer to the arrival of Jesus at the first Christmas. Advent marks the beginning of the new liturgical church year. This is Year B which features Mark's gospel.

Originally, Advent was a time of preparation for January 6th (the feast of Epiphany) related to the visit of the wise men from the East. These wise men only appear in Matthew, so we won't hear about them in Year B. Often they are called kings and usually people refer to them as the 'three' wise men, but Matthew doesn't tell us how many 'wise men' (or astrologers) from the East followed a star and came to Bethlehem.



Epiphany is an important feast because it celebrates Jesus as the universal Lord. The men from the East signified that people from 'east and west' had come to pay homage to Jesus, the ultimate revealer of God's love and fellowship. The period of advent used to start on December 17th and it was a festival period of prayers and activities celebrating that Jesus had arrived, rather than it being a preparation period during which we wait for Jesus to arrive.

In 274CE the Emperor Aurelian inaugurated the Roman feast of the 'Unconquered Sun', which celebrated the beginning of the sun's return at the Winter Solstice. December 25th became the day to celebrate this feast, and we know that in 336CE Christians celebrated the birth of 'unconquered Son', Christ, on this day. In time December 25th became the day to celebrate Jesus' birth and Advent became a four-week season of preparation for the feast. Christmas was a celebration of hope; when the promise of peace and justice would come about.



Christmas in the Middle Ages became sentimental and more focused on the circumstances of the birth of Jesus. In the 13th century, St Francis introduced the crib, so Christmas became associated with Bethlehem, the stable, the star, shepherds, angels, three kings from the East etc. Christmas became a popular feast, and took priority over Epiphany. Advent became a penitential period of preparation, like Lent before Easter. St Nicholas, who cared for the poor, became Santa Claus the gift giver. The feast of the Unconquered Son and the feast of the Lord of all creation became the feast of the baby Jesus in the manger. Instead of looking forward to the time when evil would be overcome, and working to bring this about, people looked back to the innocence of Bethlehem



The Advent wreath and Christmas tree were introduced in Germany in the 16th century. Their symbolism was that they were evergreens and they did not die, despite the cold. The emphasis was on waiting, not for the Messiah to bring about the reign of peace, but for him to be born... again! We pretended Jesus had not been born before and this led to Christmas becoming a time for children, although it was in fact really serious adult business! Jesus came to show the way to peace and fellowship; to overcome evil.

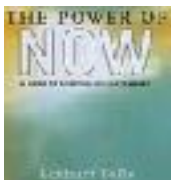
Christmas is meant to make a difference to the poor. It is not meant to be a commercial bonanza or an orgy of spending! We know that many people hunt around for an item to justify 'giving a gift' and yet most gift giving excludes the less fortunate who should be the focus of the Christmas spirit. The spending starts many weeks before Christmas as we have seen in recent weeks. and this challenges how we live Advent.



We associate Christmas now with shopping sales, Christmas cards with dogs, cats and snow images. Carols like 'frosty the snowman' have no relevance to a Christian Christmas. We erect Christmas trees and have family get-togethers with all the traditions we have inherited. These have become meaningful for us, but how do we recapture the deeper meaning?

One thing that can help is to introduce some religious symbols into our home and family, such as the Advent Wreath & candles, the Jesse tree and 'real' Carols. We can encourage children and grandchildren to be aware of community needs and suggesting family gifts for the poor (hampers etc).

At an adult spiritual level Advent is a time of expectancy for what's possible in our life here & now. 'Be Alert', 'Be on Guard' are good spiritual warnings. It seems obvious that we should decide what we are doing with our life. Too many people spend their lives either living in the past or the future, as Eckhart Tolle advises, "Be at least as interested in what goes on inside you as what happens outside. If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place".



Jesus was concerned about getting the inside right and about living in the present. Jesus cautions, "What does it profit a person to gain the whole world but lose themselves" (Mark 8:36) and he says, "Do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will look after itself; each day has enough problems of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

We can find ourselves wasting a lot of energy reliving things that have already happened, or being anxious about what might happen.

Tolle suggests, "Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry — all forms of fear — are caused by too much future, and not enough presence. Guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of non-forgiveness are caused by too much past, and not enough presence"



The modern media invades every aspect of our lives. Advertisers are taught how to get our attention, and to put tunes and images in our minds that won't go away. These messages get to us through radio in the car, TV at home, an Mp3 player or smartphone when we are out walking. We can shop in stores or online every day

of the week, night and day. Shopping has become a religion and advertisements are the sermons! The ads always try to tell us that we need to have more (this or that) stuff to make us happier. Tolle advises, "Pleasure is always derived from something outside you, whereas joy arises from within"

We have to make a decision to be contemplative: losing ourselves in the wonder, awe and magnificence of life; getting knocked off our feet; having to catch our breath; sighing from the heart. It is felt in our body. It is never far away, but it is possible to become dulled to it. It is up to us to find the moments and take the opportunities, especially when Christmas events become overwhelming.



Advent is a time when we might re-examine our priorities. It could be a time to make a determined effort to live the present moments God gives us. We don't need the past for our identity, or the future for our fulfilment.

We celebrate the liturgical coming of Jesus at Christmas, but God is not coming. God is already here! We are not waiting for life to begin. Life is happening! Advent reminds us, beginning with this Sunday's gospel reading that it is time to be alert and look around us. We need to be on guard (taking notice)





Mark's gospel



Throughout this liturgical year, we will be hearing Mark's gospel each Sunday. Mark wrote what was the first gospel sometime between 66-70CE. Some Scripture scholars have said that Mark's gospel is a Passion story with an introduction. It is an action story. Twenty-two times in the first Chapter, Mark uses the phrase, 'immediately' or 'at once'. Throughout the gospel, Jesus is very human – we hear him described as tired, angry, surprised and sleepy.

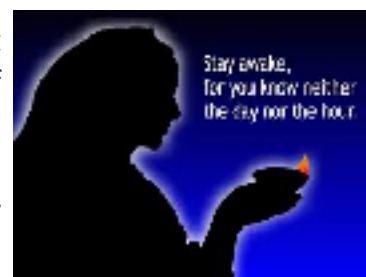
Mark wrote his gospel to encourage mostly non-Jewish Christians in Rome who were suffering persecution. In Jesus' life and death they could see that despite weakness and vulnerability, Jesus defeated death. Many of them faced persecution and execution, so they were strengthened by 'the one who has gone before us'.



Mark's contribution to every Christian is incredible, because Matthew included nearly everything Mark wrote in his gospel, and Luke included almost as much. Most of what we know of Jesus, has been told to us by Mark, and it is thought, Mark got most of his information from Peter.

Mark made it very clear that every follower of Jesus must recognise Jesus' trust in God and his spirit of self-sacrifice, and share in it. As Jesus accepted his cross and through his death showed the path to life that is eternal, so his followers are called to carry their cross with full confidence that they will share in that same life eternal life.

We can note in the gospel this first week of Advent, the urgent warning to 'Stay Awake'. This was a relevant warning for the Christians of Mark's time because of what is known as the Jewish war, which led to the destruction of Jerusalem including the Temple, in 70CE. Many spiritual writers suggest followers of Jesus in every age need to 'Stay Awake' or 'Wake-up'. What do we



need to do?



Celebration

On Thursday, the community (joined by Denis Travers and Paul Vuong) held a beautiful dinner cooked by Teresa Lim, and a sharing session to acknowledge my 50th anniversary. It was a really nice community time. I am grateful for the many messages and acknowledgements. Thank you sincerely.

Receipts



Research, conducted by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and funded by a CSIRO grant, has found that Australia prints an astonishing 10.6 billion paper receipts yearly. These receipts are typically coated with toxic chemicals, rendering them non-recyclable and contributing significantly to environmental damage. The average length of a receipt is 27.85 cm, so the total length of receipts produced each year would extend 2.95 million kilometres.

Get well

Rose, our finance officer has been unwell for a week with a very heavy flu. We send 'get well' greetings and the assurance of our appreciation of her great contribution to our community.



In Denmark, there are libraries where you can borrow a person instead of a book to listen to their life story for 30 minutes. This innovative, brilliant project is active in fifty countries. It is called Human Library.



A great way to get a free ride and a good view!

Humour

Someone said, "Nothing rhymes with orange." I said, "No, it doesn't."

If Adam and Eve were Cajuns, they would have eaten the snake instead of the apple and saved us all a lot of trouble.

We celebrated last night with a couple of adult beverages... Metamucil and Ensure.

When a kid says, “Daddy, I want mommy”, that’s the kid version of, “I’d like to speak to your supervisor”.

It’s weird being the same age as old people.

Just once, I want a username and password prompt to respond CLOSE ENOUGH.

You know you are getting old when friends with benefits means knowing someone who can drive at night.

Weight loss goal: To be able to clip my toenails and breathe at the same time.

After watching how some people wore their masks, I understand why contraception fails.

Some of my friends exercise every day. Meanwhile, I am watching a show I don’t like because the remote fell on the floor.

I just got a present labelled, “From Mom and Dad,” and I know darn well that Dad has no idea what’s inside.

The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The realist adjusts his sails.

There’s a fine line between a numerator and a denominator. Only a fraction of people will find this funny.

Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are.

I have many hidden talents. I just wish I could remember where I hid them.

Exercise helps you with decision-making. It’s true. I went for a run this morning and decided I’m never going again.

What happens when a frog’s car breaks down? It gets toad!

50 years - Peter Addicoat



Today, Peter celebrates his 50th ordination in Hobart, where he has spent 27 of his 50 years. Peter has combined an active ministry as parish pastor, with leadership of Passionist communities and an amazing thirteen years as novice master. Congratulations Peter.

Prayers

We remember [Richard Stempowski](#) (brother of Barbara Lunnon) who died in the USA last Thursday and for Des Grisell for whom we have been praying for some time. Des passed away peacefully on Wednesday. We also remember those whose anniversaries occur around this week, especially [Barbara Angus](#) and [Lorraine Lovett](#) (December 4th) [Albino Cavello](#) and [Anne Tobin](#) (December 5th) and [Marg Hogan](#) (December 7th)

We remember all others in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially..

Mary Dunn (Jerome’s sister), Des Grisell, Jeff Foale CP,
Marie Foale RSJ, Pam Storey, Peter McNamara, Maree Bartoli,



Peter & Bernadette Owen, Alexander Lim, Maeve Reardon, Monica and Anthona Hennessy, Gerry Bond, Bronwyn Burke, Helen McLean, Michael O'Callaghan, Phil Drew, Greg Agosta, Mary Hackett, Phil Drew, Pam Gartland, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Errol Lovett, Patricia Keeghan, Kate Dunn, Anne Jenkins, Chris O'Toole, Gerald Quinn CP. We also continue to remember Peter and Debbie's unborn son in London (now 33 weeks and still surviving with the tumour)

The **Mass link** for this Sunday (the **first Sunday of Advent** will be sent on Saturday by Chris.

Brian