

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 201

22nd December, 2023

Greetings,

Welcome to these final days before Christmas.

Mass for the 4th Sunday of Advent will be at 10.00am this Sunday.

Christmas Day Mass will be at 10.00am on Monday December 25th.

Christmas Eve: Please note the earlier time this year: Mass will be at 7.00pm on Sunday night.. This will be preceded by Christmas Carols from **6.15pm**, and weather permitting, will take place 'under the trees' (parking on the oval). You are welcome to bring your picnic dinner, and if possible, please BYO chair. **If the weather is unpleasant we will celebrate in the chapel with a possible overflow in the Corbett room. The forecast at this stage is a maximum of 22 so it will be coolish outside by 7.00pm.**

The **Holy Cross Office** is closed until January 8th.

Our helpers

Last week we acknowledged those who particularly assist the home community and the wider Holy Cross family. This week we acknowledge **Anne and Joe Toscano** who have supplied flowers weekly again this year for our chapel. We really appreciate this generosity over many years.



Also, many positive comments are made about how nice our grounds and garden are. **Peter Norman** continues to assist us greatly in this regard, and the remaining credit goes to Jerome for the roses and extensive garden 'out the back', to Chris for his maintenance of the **dam** (see left), to various community members especially Joey, Erick, JD, Phi and Tri for their regular mowing, and to the students for the less popular but much valued

weeding, gardening and hand mowing. We've also mentioned **Vince Celestino** who has been very generously working on the old pool and labyrinth area for two years.

Advent 4 – Love

During the Sundays of Advent we have focused on a theme for each week...Hope Peace and Joy and lit a candle at Mass. This Sunday we focus on Love



Some years ago I played the song “Love Changes Everything” during a parish mission session. Afterwards a woman angrily complained to me, “That song should not be used in church. It does not mention God even once”. I replied, “St John’s gospel tell us that Jesus said, “God is Love”. After looking a bit stunned she walked away.

In the church we have so often complicated gospel love by putting the emphasis on rules, on do’s and don’ts, whereas in fact it is rather simple. Jesus said, “Love one another **as I have loved you**”!

Nowhere is love better described than in St Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. Paul begins in Chapter 13 by saying, “I may speak in tongues or use the language of angels, but if I don’t have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” That lady who spoke to me after the missions session was a noisy gong. She missed the whole point – that Love changes everything!



In the section from Corinthians that we know so well, St Paul continues, “Love is patient and always takes the initiative; love is not envious, boastful, arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends”. What is left to be said?

There are no limits. Love never stops loving! Advent love calls for a kind of love. Advent love reminds us that the Christmas God comes among us not as an overpowering and dominant warlord, but a human baby, just like any of us. This



baby was vulnerable, needy and helpless. This baby was born in a cattle trough, not in a palace. This baby, God-among-us, Emmanuel grew into the man Jesus, whose love knew no limits; the man of compassion and forgiveness, thus assuring us of our own human capacity to love like him.

Jesus was able to love as he did because of his relationship with God – the abba, father who loved him and in whose hands he knew he was safe. He learned to pray, “Father not my will but yours be done”. This is where each of us must start; with a relationship of total trust in God. If we haven’t got that, we don’t yet know true love and we cannot give to others what we do not have ourselves.



Canberra based priest Peter Day tells of a friend of his who spent many years ministering to homeless men in inner-city Melbourne.

One man grabbed his attention. Johnny was a typical hobo who carried his belongings in a shopping trolley and slept in bus shelters. He always looked untidy, yet he had a deep respect for others and a warm, peaceful countenance. Peter's friend asked him one day, "Johnny, your life isn't a bed of roses, so how is it that you seem so content and you are so kind to others?" After a thoughtful pause, Johnny looked up and said with a smile: "God is very fond of me. "Isn't that a beautiful thing

to be able to say?



This is the season to give thanks for the God who is very fond of each of us, and give thanks that Jesus has shown us how to express that love.

GATHER US IN

As we approach Christmas, we must be more mindful than at any other time of the less fortunate, the lost, the lonely, the excluded, the newly unemployed, the sick, the sad and the weary; those carrying heavy burdens. Can we even go close to imagining what it is like for the people of Gaza or the Israeli families waiting to know if their hostage relatives will be released, let alone the hostages themselves. These are the ones Jesus came to call into the family of God. So, surely must we!

"If you look for Me at Christmas"

If you look for Me at Christmas, you won't need a special star -
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem, I'm right there where you are.
You may not be aware of Me amid the celebrations -
You'll have to look beyond the stores and the decorations.
But if you take a moment from your list of things to do
And listen to your heart you'll find I'm waiting there for you.
You're the one I want to be with, you're the reason that I came,
And you'll find Me in the stillness as I'm whispering your name.
(Author Unknown)

A Kiwi kids Christmas story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWq60oyrHVQ>

Mary's Boy Child John Farnham (Carols by Candlelight)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NaGBxVgsBU>

O Holy Night Neil Diamond

<https://youtu.be/SIML9VKUIZw?si=sANK8ZBDBVVRJEGN>

This is the crib in our chapel, made by our three postulants, Hai, Thang and Cu'ong



Jesus will not appear in the crib until Christmas





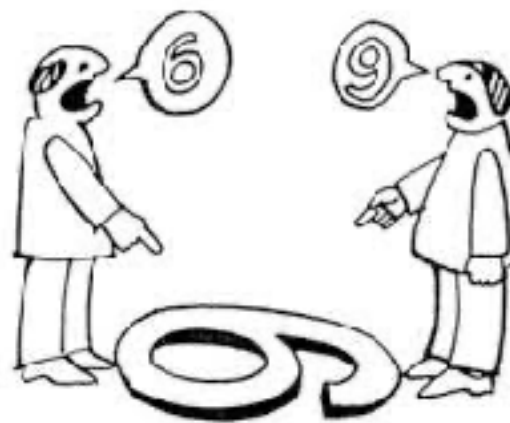
...and having completed their work, they looked at it and said “it is indeed very good” and evening came and morning came.....

Thanks to Hai Thang and Cu’ong for their very creative work and this video.

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Perspective



A Palestinian woman recently commented that it seems strange to her that the Christmas family is so small – just Mary, Joseph and Jesus. “In Palestinian culture”, the family is very large – sometimes more than two hundred. Surely it was the same with the family Jesus was born into, she said. The Cultural Atlas team says, “Relationships among Palestinian family members are usually close-knit, with relatives commonly living, working and socialising together throughout their lives. The extended family is also deeply valued, providing

emotional, financial and social support. Appreciating that låger family depends on your point of view!

Henry Kissinger

On February 12th 2002, recently deceased Donald Rumsfeld, was US Secretary of Defense. Rumsfeld responded to a question at a news briefing with what has since been labelled as the 'Known knows' speech. The comments were made in reply to a question at a news briefing in 2002

[K] Knowledge Known Knowns	[K] Awareness Known Unknowns
[DK] Disbelief Unknown Knowns	[DK] Ignorance Unknown Unknowns

about the lack of evidence linking the government of Iraq with the supply of weapons of mass destruction not long after the September 11th attacks on the United States. Rumsfeld was criticised and often mocked for this statement. Those familiar with the Johari Window, would be sympathetic to what Rumsfeld expressed, especially because he was speaking off the cuff. This is what Rumsfeld said.

“Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones”

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- Q What do you call a broke Santa? A. Saint- Nickel - less.
- Q What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa? A. Rebel without a Claus.
- Q What do you get when you cross a duck with Santa? A. Christmas quacker.
- Q What do you call an obnoxious reindeer? A. Rude-olph.
- Q What do you call a frog hanging from the ceiling? A. Mistletoad.
- Q What do you get when you cross a snowman and a vampire? A. Frostbite.
- Q What do you call Santa at the beach? A. Sandy Claus.
- Q Who is Santa's favourite singer? A. Elf-ish Presley.
- Q How is Christmas just like your job?
A You do all the work, and a guy you only see once a year gets all the credit.
- Q What's the absolute best Christmas present?
A A broken drum-you can't beat it!

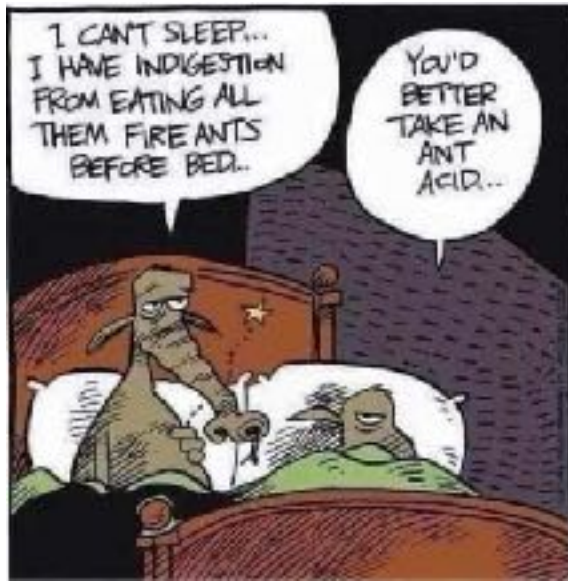


Humour











Christmas lights

For those of you who are placing Christmas lights and/or decorations in your garden, can you please avoid anything that has red or blue flashing lights together? Every time I come around the corner, I think it's the police and I have a panic attack. I have to brake hard, toss my gin out the window, hide the weed, fasten my seat belt, throw my phone on the floor, turn my radio down, all while trying to drive. It's just too much drama, even for Christmas. *Thank you for your co-operation and understanding.*

Christmas newsletter from the Sisters

Please open this link for the very professionally produced Christmas newsletter of the

Cross and Passion sisters, Brigid CP and Karen CP. [https://](https://sistersofthecrossandpassion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Christmas-Newsletter-2023-2.pdf)

sistersofthecrossandpassion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Christmas-Newsletter-2023-2.pdf

Message from a funeral

During a eulogy at a funeral I attended this week, it was reported that Bill was asked on what occasion, "Are you religious". He said, "No, I am spiritual". When asked, "What is the difference, Bill said, "A religious person spends all their life trying to get to heaven; a spiritual person has already been to hell and does everything they can to not go back"

Hospitals

On Monday **Jerome** had all three of his sisters in different hospitals. All three are now out, but concerns remain.

Community holiday

Eight of the community will have a partial or full holiday in the post Christmas weeks. Phi and Tri have nine days break before their CPE course resumes.

The Holy Cross community extends our prayers and warm greetings for a joyful and peaceful Christmas that inspires each of us to devote ourselves to building stronger fellowship wherever we can in 2024, as a witness to our belief in Jesus and our commitment to missionary discipleship.

**We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a Happy New Year**



**Jerome, Chris, Erick, Joey, JD, Rafael, Budi, Phi, Tri,
Thang, Cu'ong, Brian
Christmas blessing**

Hai,

**May there be harmony in all your relationships.
May sharp words, envious thoughts and hostile feelings be dissolved.
May you give and receive love generously.
May this love echo in your heart,
like the joy of church bells on a clear December morning.
May each person who comes into your life be greeted as another Christ.
May the honour given to the Babe of Bethlehem,
be that which you extend to every guest who enters your presence.
May the hope of this sacred season settle in your mind.
May it be a fountain of courage for you.
May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children be awakened within you.
May it lead you to renewed awareness and appreciation
of whatever you too easily take for granted.
May you daily open the gift of your life
and be grateful for the hidden treasures it contains.
May the coming year be one of good health for you.
May you have energy and vitality.
May you are well for your body, mind and spirit.
May you keep your eye on the Star within you
and trust this presence to guide and direct you each day.
May you go often to the Bethlehem of your heart
and visit the One who offers you peace.**



And may you bring this peace into our world. Amen

Prayers

We remember those whose anniversaries occur around this week, especially

Sarah Cahill (24th December)

Maree Bodin (25th December)

Grace Sheehan (28th December)

Stephen Ralph (29th December)

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



Marie Foale RSJ. Jeff Foale CP, Mary Dunn, Monique Hardinge, Paul Geogeghan, Maree Bartoli, Gary Perritt CP, Pam Storey, Monique Hardinge, John and Maeve Reardon, Peter McNamara, Gerry Bond, Phil Drew, Michael O'Callaghan, Alexander Lim, Peter & Bernadette Owen, Dawn Heffernan, Bronwyn Burke, Greg Agosta, Helen McLean, Mary Hackett, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Pam Gartland, Errol Lovett, Patricia Keeghan, Kate Dunn, Anne Jenkins, Gerald Quinn CP and Peter and Debbie's unborn grandson.

There will be **two Mass links** this week, that Chris will send out. One for the **Fourth Sunday of Advent** and the other for **Christmas Day**.

Brian