

Holy Cross Retreat

<https://holycrosscentre.com/community/>



26th January, 2024

Letter 206

Greetings and a happy **Australia Day**. The celebration these days creates division, but for me, for now, it is important to celebrate every aspect of who we are and have become. Stories of families, communities or nations are not without pain, but eliminating pain from the story alone, will not create healing. Something more is needed than changing the date of Australia Day.



In our community, **Hai** will turn 32 on February 1st. **Hai, Thang, Cu'o'ng, Rafael** and **Budi** returned to ELSPM studies on Monday. They had a half day on Wednesday and today is a public holiday.

JD is heading to Hobart for a retreat and a few days break next Tuesday Jan 30th and **Tri** is heading to Sydney the same day for ten days, before YTU resumes.

Joseph (Joey) is heading to Endeavour Hills the following day to help out in the parish for a week, while Brendan and Luke are away.

Tom McDonough CP and **Frank Bartoli** both turned 75 last weekend

In our Province, each local community has a leader elected by the Provincial Council and each 'Passionist' parish has a parish priest appointed by the Provincial with the consent of his Council, and with the approval of the diocesan bishop. In our Province, these two roles are exercised for four year terms beginning on February 1st in the year following the election of a Provincial and Council. Our Provincial Council was elected in July 2023 (see below with Fr General, our own, Joachim).



So, on **Thursday February 1st**, the community leaders and parish priest appointments (announced in November) take effect until 31st January 31st 2028. There are some other appointed roles that will also take effect on that date.

St Brigid's Marrickville Community Leader:	Tiernan Doherty
St Brigid's Marrickville Parish Priest:	Giltus Mathias
St Paul's Glen Osmond Community Leader:	Tom McDonough
St Paul's Glen Osmond Parish Priest:	Tom McDonough
St Gabriel's Endeavour Hills Community Leader:	Brendan Connell
St Paul Apostle Endeavour Hills Parish Priest:	Brendan Connell
St Joseph's Hobart Community Leader:	Pastor Mumburi
St Joseph's Hobart Parish Priest:	Pastor Mumburi
St Joseph's, Boroko Community Leader:	John Curtis
St Joseph's, Boroko Parish Priest:	John Curtis
St Mary's (The Fort) Oxley Community Leader:	Ray Sanchez
Holy Cross, Templestowe Community Leader:	Brian Traynor
St Paul's, Thủ Đức, Saigon	Joseph Diên
St Gabriel's Thủ Đức, Saigon	Paul Vương
Vinh diocese new residence	JB Tuệ
Province Secretary	Joseph Đoàn

Each local community elects a Vicar, to substitute when the Community Leader is away, and an Econome, to be



responsible for community finances in liaison with the local lay finance officer, in our case, Rose Cincotta. These elections are held annually. This week the Holy Cross professed community elected Erick Niyiragira as community vicar,



and Chris Monaghan as community econome.



It is exciting for the Province to welcome back Tiernan Doherty from his role as Community Leader in Highgate, London, to community leader St Brigid's Marrickville. Tiernan has been a much-loved leader of Holy Cross community and always hailed for his generous hospitality. Tiernan was the Passionist who most assisted the foundation of the St Gabriele Association.

A pope (and a God) too merciful

By Robert Mickens



"I like to think of Hell as being empty. I hope it is." That was

Pope Francis' response when asked how he imagines Hell during a recent interview on a popular TV talk show that airs each Sunday evening in Italy. The show's host and his studio audience erupted in applause at the pope's response. And the 3.4 million viewers throughout the country who tuned-in to the January 14 broadcast of "Che Tempo Che Fa" were likely heartened by it, too.

Hell no! Even though Francis prefaced his answer to the question by stating clearly that it was "not a dogma of faith" he was expressing but his "own personal thought", some people in cyberspace freaked out. "Social media in flames: Pope targeted for not preaching fire and brimstone," said the clever headline of an article written by Cindy Wooden, the Rome bureau chief of Catholic News Service (CNS).



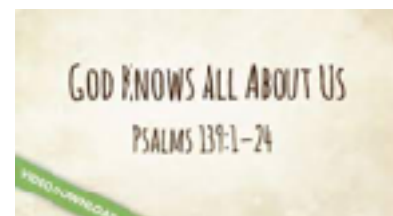
And from what one could see on X (former Twitter), the gist of their anger is that the Jesuit pope's words are "dangerous" because they will lead people astray and encourage them to abandon "a serious practice of the faith". They are suggesting that if we start saying no one is going to Hell, this will open the door to "anything goes". And then, what's the point of "being good" or following the rules?

Your imagine of Hell may match your image of God. Before unpacking all that, we need to give a bit more context to the hour-long interview that Francis did via video-link from his Vatican residence, Casa Santa Marta. The question about Hell came at the very end of a segment that began when the TV host, Fabio Fazio, asked him,



"When you pray, how do you imagine the face of God?" The pope said his image of God was like the "generous father" in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Francis pointed out that the son had "prepared a speech" to ask his father's forgiveness, but before he could even get the words out of his mouth, his father immediately embraced him. He didn't allow the son to speak, the pope said. "I like to think of God like this, as embracing us," Francis said, adding that God knows even better than us that we are sinners.

And he said that's why he believes in "a God who is not scandalized by our sins because he is a father and accompanies us". The pope then went further. "Does God accompany sinners or immediately condemn them to Hell? No, he chooses to accompany us.



The Lord sent his son into the world, not to condemn the world but to save it... we say it in the liturgy," he concluded. "So it's hard to even imagine Hell, a father who condemns someone for all eternity," Fazio commented.

"Yes, it's difficult to imagine this," Francis said, before adding those few words to express the hope that Hell is empty.

Reacting like the older son in the parable



It's a shame to say, but those (or at least some of those) who have reacted negatively to Pope Francis' words about Hell are very similar to the older brother in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He's furious that his father is so merciful. The older son has followed the rules, has been obedient, and has worked hard for his father. His "good for nothing brother", on the other hand, has gone and squandered his inheritance through a life of debauchery and loose morals. Why should their father now welcome him back home like a hero, throwing him a lavish dinner party and giving him a ring and expensive clothes? It's just not fair.

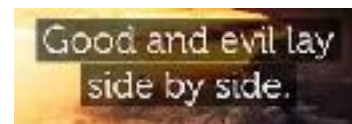
Similarly, in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard it is not fair that the landowner pays the people who worked only one hour, the exact same wage he gives to those who laboured all day under the hot sun. The first crew complains (the verse says they are "envious") because the landowner is "generous". And that is exactly how the pope describes the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He calls him the "generous father".



Of course, the wealthy landowner and the "prodigal" father (another meaning of prodigal is, after all, "to give lavishly"), are not being fair -- by normal human standards. And that is the hitch here. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and neither are your ways my ways," says the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8)... and we could list scores (perhaps hundreds) of other verses from Sacred Scripture to show how God's logic is different from our human logic, and how God's justice is restorative justice, not the retributive justice that seems clearly to be the type we humans prefer and believe is right.

*My thoughts are
not
**YOUR
THOUGHTS***

Leaving aside the theological arguments about whether anyone is actually in Hell, which is not a physical place but is taught as the state of absolute alienation from God, there is also the issue of paradox. We mere mortals seem to struggle with accepting paradoxes. We are trained to think categorically, dualistically, and it is hard to see how good and evil sit side-by-side even as part of God's plan -- or at least as a result of the infinite patience that is part of who this "generous father" is.





The Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat naturally baffles us. Why does God allow the weeds (evil) to continue to grow among the wheat (goodness)? We don't often do that in our own lives. But evidently God does, according to Jesus. And, of course, we ourselves are all a field of weeds and wheat, as the pope has reminded us before.

He's pointed out that the line of good and evil runs through every human heart. But we grapple with such paradoxes. Why is this when we are able to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was both human and divine; that he died, and yet God raised him to life; that dying and rising is indeed the very pattern of all life and creation; that bread and wine can be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ? Given all this, why is it so difficult for us to believe that God, in a similarly mysterious and humanly illogical way, can save from eternal damnation even those whom we believe are the most vile and unrepentant sinners?

Obviously, this says more about any one of us than it does about God. And while it is not a Church dogma, Pope Francis has reminded us that Jesus used a parable to show us that God is a "generous father" who does not condemn us but who accompanies us even as we sin. This is the God who "embraces" us even before we are able to ask for forgiveness. It is hard to imagine that this God would condemn someone for all eternity, isn't it? "Yes," says the pope. "It is difficult to imagine."



Heaven, or the happiness in which we will find ourselves, is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a personal relation [with God]....This final condition can be anticipated in a certain sense now on earth.... Moreover, the pictures of Hell given to us in Sacred Scripture must be correctly interpreted. They express the total frustration and emptiness of a life without God. More than a place, Hell is the state of the one who freely and finally removes oneself from God, the source of life and joy. *(John Paul 2nd, 1999)*

I Believe in God: A Reflection on the Apostles' Creed

Joan Chittister OSB



I believe in God who made us all and whose divinity infuses all of life with the sacred. I believe in the multiple revelations of that God alive in every human heart, expressed in every culture, and found in all the wisdoms of the world.

I believe that Jesus Christ, the unique son of God, is the face of God on earth in whom we see best the divine justice, divine mercy, and divine compassion to which we are all called.



I believe in the Christ who is One in being with the Creator and who shows us the presence of God in everything that is and calls out the sacred in ourselves. I believe in Jesus, the Christ, who leads us to the fullness of human stature, to what we were meant to become before all time and for all other things that were made.

Through Christ we become new people, called beyond the consequences of our brokenness and lifted to the fullness of life. By the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the woman Mary, pure in soul and single-hearted—a sign to the ages of the exalted place of womankind in the divine plan of human salvation.



He grew as we grow through all the stages of life. He lived as we live prey to the pressures of evil and intent on the good. He broke no bonds with the world to which he was bound, He sinned not. He never strayed from the mind of God.



He showed us the Way, lived it for us, suffered from it, and died because of it so that we might live with new heart, new mind, and new strength despite all the death to which we are daily subjected.

For our sake and for the sake of eternal Truth he was hounded, harassed and executed by those who were their own gods and who valued the sacred in no other. He suffered so that we might realize that the spirit in us can never be killed whatever price we have to pay for staying true to the mind of God.



He died but did not die because he lives in us still. “On the third day” in the tomb he rose again in those he left behind and in each of us as well to live in hearts that will not succumb to the enemies of life.

He changed all of life for all of us thereafter. He ascended into the life of God and waits there for our own ascension to the life beyond life. He waits there, judging what has gone before and what is yet to come against unending values and, in behalf of eternal virtue, for the time when all of life will be gathered into God, full of life and light, steeped in truth.



I believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God on earth, who keeps the Christ vision present to souls yet in darkness, gives life even to hearts now blind. Infuses energy into spirits yet weary, isolated, searching and

confused. The spirit has spoken to the human heart through the prophets and gives new meaning to the Word throughout time.

I believe in one holy and universal church. Bound together by the holiness of creation and the holiness of hearts forever true. I acknowledge the need to be freed from the compulsions of my disordered life and my need for forgiveness in the face of frailty. I look for life eternal in ways I cannot dream and trust that creation goes on creating in this world and in us forever. Amen.



"I believe in God: A reflection on the Apostles' Creed." [In Search of Belief](#). Liguori, MO: Liguori. 2006. Joan Chittister

The Universe is our Context: Zoom series

Jenny Bowler from Endeavour Hills is offering a course on the powers of the Universe based on the work of Brian Swimme who with Thomas Berry CP wrote "The Universe Story". Brian says "*The Universe is Our Context*" and it takes a lot of reflection, learning, unlearning and contemplation to connect to this simple reality. Jenny will offer a series of 'workshops' using her knowledge of music and imagery to help participants to embody the 'powers of the Universe' that Brian Swimme has identified. This series begins on Wednesday 7 Feb 10am-11.30am and will go for 12 weeks each Wednesday until 24 April is by zoom. If you would like to participate please contact Jenny on e-mail opalearth@gmail.com

You can watch Brian Swimme's beautiful movie 'Journey of the Universe' at <https://storyoftheuniverse.org/videos/>

The Canticle of the Cosmos at <https://storyoftheuniverse.org/videos/canticle-to-the-cosmos/> was recorded in 1990 and is brilliant 12 x 1 hour series.

The Powers of the Universe at <https://storyoftheuniverse.org/power-of-the-universe/> was recorded in 1998 and is an 11 x 45 minutes series.

Please see the attached pdf '**The Powers of the Universe**'

Humour



**WHEN YOU CAN'T
DECIDE WHAT TO WEAR**



JIM RECEIVES A NOTE UNDER THE DOOR AND IS INTRIGUED, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE IT'S THE CLOSET DOOR.

**Managing your weight
around the holidays just
requires a little planning..**

**For example, I took the
batteries out of my scale on
Wednesday.**



COFFEE IN HAND, SUPPLIES AT THE READY, ALICE SETTLES IN, WAITING FOR THE FIRST TELEMARKETER TO CALL.

If I waited until I had all my ducks in a row, I'd never get across the street. Sometimes you just have to gather up what you've got and make a run for it.

People who ask me what I'm doing tomorrow probably assume that I even know what day of the week it is.

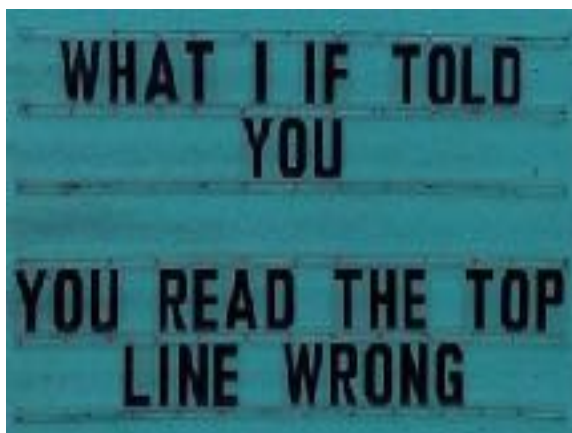
I made a huge to do list for today. I just can't figure out who's going to do it.

Did you ever wonder why there are no dead penguins on the ice in Antarctica ?



Where do they go? Penguins are ritualistic aquatic birds, and live an extremely ordered and complex life. Penguins are very committed to family. They mate for life, and maintain compassionate contact with offspring throughout their life.

If a penguin is found dead on the ice surface, other family members and those in their social circle have been known to dig holes in the ice, using their vestigial wings and beaks, until the hole is deep enough for the dead bird to be rolled into, and buried. The male penguins then gather in a circle around the fresh grave and sing: "Freeze a jolly good fellow." "Freeze a jolly good fellow."





FOR ALL, WHO MAY BE HAVING A BAD DAY..



It Can Always Be Worse.

Visa experience



If there is someone with visa experience, especially visas for the USA, you might please contact Joey. He has been asked to assist in the annual mission appeals in the US, and their visa requirements are complicated for someone unused to them. His email address is: joseph.liaia@gmail.com

Prayers

We remember those who have passed away recently and those whose anniversaries occur around this time.

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



Maree Bartoli, Paul Geogeghan, Tony Tome, Pam Storey, Peter McNamara, Peter & Bernadette Owen, Alexander Lim, Michael O'Callaghan Dawn Heffernan, Maeve & John Reardon, Shirley Barnes, Gerry Bond, Bronwyn Burke, Monique Hardinge, Helen McLean, Mary Hackett, Pam Gartland, Patricia Keeghan, Errol Lovett, Greg Agosta, Phil Drew, , Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Anne Jenkins, Kate and Mary Dunn, Chris O'Toole, Gary Perritt CP, Jeff Foale CP Gerald Quinn CP and baby Alfred Theodore in London.

The **Mass link** for this Sunday will be sent on Saturday by Chris.

Brian