

Holy Cross Retreat

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



Letter 238

30th August, 2024

Greetings to you all.

Once again while Brian is away, I will be communicating with you through this means. It is an honour to continue Brian's initiative, but I am afraid that I am not anywhere near as good as him when it comes to writing.

There is a saying "*If you don't have anything good to say, stay mute.*" If you do not hear from me or find yourself going through the newsletter in 43 seconds, you will know why. There will be still things that you may prefer not to read because it's not important to you, all because of my *verbal diarrhoea*, but let us hope we can keep in touch until Brian, our leader returns.

I look forward to hearing any interesting news you might share with me, preferably with a photo, so that I can add to this communication – Thank you to those that shared personal news with me last time.

The Boss takes off at 5.30am



Some of the community members got up on Wednesday morning at 5.30am to wish Brian a safe trip. Guess why I didn't join in the photo? It was dark, and all you could see were my white teeth! Brian was well dressed for Canada, but he was not going to Canada, and it is not winter there at the moment. Safe trip Brian, wherever you are going, our prayers and thoughts are with you. Have a well-deserved break.

Prayers for vocation discernment wanted



Kevin visited our community on Wednesday, accompanied by Savio who was seated nearest to him in the photo. Savio shared that Kevin is the first professed Passionist he has

had the pleasure of meeting. Savio expressed a keen interest in learning more about the Passionist way of life. This interest was sparked by the work of the Passionist Family Group Movement established by Brian and Paul Traynor in New Zealand, which also includes Hamilton where Savio lives. He first learned about the Passionists through his local parish last year. Savio asked for prayers as he is currently discerning his future path, with religious life being a recurring option for him. During his visit to Melbourne to see his sister, Savio also made time to visit our community. Chris Monaghan kindly gifted Savio a small book containing quotes from St. Paul of the Cross to aid in his discernment process. May the Spirit of God illuminate and guide Savio's heart as he continues on this journey.

'Ask and you shall receive' Luke 11:9-13



In Letter 235 we asked for a set of lounge suite and we received two sets, thanks to Des and Marlene Thornston. The Gospel words "ask and you shall

receive" could not have felt more real for us. You can see in the photo above, muscles men working hard to pick up and deliver the couches last week on Friday. I was there but late at each time they were lifting something heavy, until John or Tri yelled out, 'Erick'! I was not late intentionally of course! Thank you to the working party in the photo and those not in the photo who helped us for at least two hours. We are also deeply grateful for such beautiful lounges, thank you Marlene and Des. We will try not to spill coffee or 'holy water' on your beautiful couches!

Come Away Day



The next 'Come Away Day' of the year will be held at Holy Cross on Wednesday 4th September.

The theme of the day is "JOURNEY IN HOPE".

After the long winter break this is an opportunity to celebrate the re-birth of creation in Spring and to continue this re-birth in the flow of the Spirit's gifts into our lives. The day's program provides opportunities for prayer, reflection and group interaction in the beautiful grounds and facilities of Holy Cross. All are welcome. Just come as you are. BYO lunch. Registration is from 9.30am. The program concludes with a celebration of the Eucharist with a departure time of around 2pm. The cost of the day is \$25.00 or a donation according to your means. For any further details contact Sr Brigid cp on bridget.m64@gmail.com. Brochures about the 2024 Program are available in the back porch of the Chapel. Please put this Date in your Diary and consider inviting a friend along to share the Come Away Day experience.

Coffee Cart 22nd September



The next Coffee Cart will be held at Holy Cross in September 22nd, after 10.00am Sunday Mass. All are welcome either to mass, to hot drinks or to both. After a long homily, I believe there will be some needed treats to go with the hot drinks.

Happy Feast Day to the Passionist Sisters

The link below is offered to honour our Venerable Elizabeth Prout, foundress of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, for her birthday on September 2nd.

<https://youtu.be/rsngPHJOKwU>

Prayer for the General Chapter (Brian)

There are two pre-meetings in Rome before the General Chapter begins on October 7th. You may wish to join our brothers especially Joachim, Denis, Chris, Brian and Tue as they prepare to participate the coming General Chapter in prayer. Below are two prayers.

Merciful God, You gifted St. Paul of the Cross with a special charism by which he could see in the Passion of your Son "the most overwhelming work of your love".

Help us to capture this Love in our lives of prayer, penance, solitude and poverty.

By being filled with and strengthened by this Love, may the words and deeds of our proclamation of the Gospel of the Passion be heard throughout the world. May we keep the memory of his Passion alive in the hearts of all people.

Grant your Spirit to the participants of the 48th General Chapter of our Congregation so that, remaining faithful to the spiritual patrimony of our Founder, they may find the pathways to a renewal of our mission in the Church and in the world.

Amen.

Father of overwhelming love and compassion, you called St. Paul of the Cross to gather companions in your name. Now, during our General Chapter, everyone in our Holy Spirit Province be one with your Crucified Son.

Lord Jesus, you have etched in our heart the memory of your sorrowful passion, keep us always attentive to the suffering women, men and children, found everywhere in today's world.

Holy Spirit, you transform us into valiant witnesses, apostles and contemplatives of the Resurrection, give us an ardent missionary zeal so that we may bring the Word of the Cross to our world.

Sorrowful Mother, you remained at the foot of the cross to the end, support us when we tire in the work of discernment so that we may learn to trustingly seek only the will of the Father.

Amen.

Contextual theology (8) - Brian



The context for theology is critical, and even when considering our own personal history we can find ourselves saying “but things were different then”. When I was a novice in 1967, one of our penitential acts was to whip ourselves with a cord whip with five prongs. I was incredulous when I was told about this in the first days of arriving in Goulburn, but it was part of ‘the deal’.

Times have changed, and to suggest this practice today would be to face ridicule. The theology that led to bodily penitential extremes changed with Vatican 2, and by the time I came to Melbourne in 1968 this practice of ‘taking the discipline’. was regarded as for ‘bygone days’.

In earlier reflections we have recognised that the (new) universe stories, calls us to look much wider at all of God’s creation rather than focusing almost solely on humans. In this reflection (for now) I will summarise a 2018 interview with distinguished theology professor and author, Sr Elizabeth Johnson CSJ. The interview was based on her book ‘Creation and the Cross’ and was published under the title, ‘No one had to die for our sins’.

<https://uscatholic.org/articles/201811/no-one-had-to-die-for-our-sins/>



Johnson noted that for the majority of Christians, care for creation falls low on their list of priorities and this is related to how they think about the redemption offered by God. Often children ask if their pet dog will ‘go to heaven’. If we expand our idea of redemption to all creatures we can then act ethically toward the earth and other creatures.

Johnson highlights that our theology of redemption has been mostly focused on humans, since Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, released his book. ‘*Creation and the Cross*’ one thousand years ago. But in 2015, Pope Francis in ‘*Laudato Si’* (On Care for Our Common Home) wrote, “Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.”



At the very end of *Laudato Si'*, Francis wrote, "At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God . . . in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place." Johnson said she started thinking about this

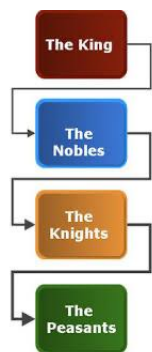


and went back to scripture. She found that there are narratives about the love of God for the natural world and its response to God. Even in Psalm 36, where it says, "You save humans and animals alike, O Lord." She said to herself, "Why don't we know this because absence of this awareness is putting care for creation very low on all

kinds of surveys of what Christians care about.

"We haven't made the animals and the natural world part of our narrative of salvation. We haven't included them in what Christ has done. We know God created everything in the beginning, but then they disappear and everything is about us!" Johnson started to write and give lectures to get people to consider a whole new theology of redemption, starting from square one again and bringing in what's crucial for the future of life on this planet".

Someone would always say to Johnson, "You're wrong about this, because we're saved by the cross, and Jesus died to save us from our sins." "Everybody knows that Jesus died to save us from our sins. It's in every liturgy and all of our Mass prayers. This idea that salvation takes place through the cross to save us and forgive us from sins is well embedded, but this seriously reduces the meaning of redemption in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament". It was then, that Johnson discovered that Anselm's theory of atonement took hold in the West in the 11th century. This idea promoted that Jesus had to die a bloody and horrible death on the cross in order to save us from our sins, because God was offended by our sins and had to receive satisfaction, or payback, in order to forgive us. It was a matter of God's honour.



Anselm came up with this idea as the result of his context (his own experience). He lived in a feudal society, where there was no police force nor armies. The word of a lord was law, and this resulted in civil order. If you broke a law that disturbed the order of the society in which you lived, you had to pay back something to the lord in order to restore that order. That payback was called *satisfaction*. You had to make satisfaction when you broke a law in order to restore the honour of the lord, so that peace could be restored.

PAYBACK

Anselm took that political arrangement and made it cosmic. He said, “This is the way the universe works, and God is the lord of the world. Sin violates God’s word and breaks God’s law. We have to pay something back in order to restore the order of the universe.” When Anselm was asked in the dialogue (which is a feature of his book), “Why couldn’t God just say, ‘I forgive you?’” he said, “It would not restore true order, because we would not be repaying the honour that is due to God.”

The trouble is, that humans cannot pay back God for our sins, because God is infinite and we humans are not. Anselm’s solution is that God sends his son, who is divine, to take on our obligation. Jesus Christ is sinless, and does not deserve to die, but humans deserve death.. If Jesus had just lived his life without going through death, the debt would not be repaid, because every person owes God obedience and honour. So, Jesus died freely, a violent death on the cross in order to pay back something to God that God was owed, but that ‘we’ couldn’t pay back. Jesus shares this satisfaction with all his sisters and brothers who are sinners, and that’s how we’re all saved!



The satisfaction theory makes Jesus’ death necessary. But no one had to die for God to be merciful. It goes completely against the teaching of Jesus in the gospels. Look at the parable of the prodigal son, where a father welcomes back his son who



dishonoured him by spending half his fortune. When the son comes back, the father runs out, hugs him, and throws a party. Complete mercy. According to Anselm’s theory, that father should have said, “Now go out in the field and work for a number of years until you pay back what you owe me.”

“Anselm was trying to make sense of the cross for people who were asking questions. He did so by calling on the political system of his day. “But”, says Johnson, “it runs right against the gospels. People, including Thomas Aquinas, criticized Anselm for making it necessary that Jesus do this, for taking away God’s freedom to be merciful”. At that same time in history, the sacrament of penance began to be given greater emphasis. A person could get some of satisfaction that Christ won on the cross: by being sorry for their sins and doing penance. Satisfaction then got connected with the sacraments. The liturgical prayers were written with the idea of satisfaction, and a high number of sermons were devoted to this idea. This influenced the average person’s faith, devotions and prayer.



Anselm's book does not mention the resurrection. Everything has to do with the death of Jesus, because that was the payment. In contrast, the testimonies of the resurrection experience in the New Testament, see Jesus' death as a disaster, not the point of Jesus' life. The disciples walking to Emmaus said, "We had hoped he was the one, but we're going home, because he wasn't." Peter said, "I am going fishing". If

the resurrection had not happened; if they hadn't experienced the risen Christ, there would be no Christianity. If Jesus' death had not brought life out of that tragedy, there would be no Christianity.

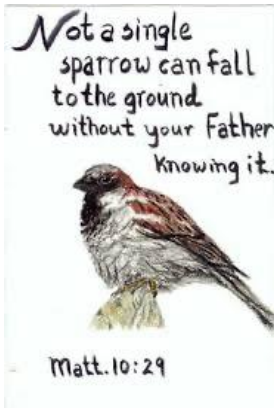
All through the Jewish scriptures it is clearly expressed that God is the merciful redeemer of the whole world, who frees slaves, loves the animals, and walks with people in their troubles. "The Lord is, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Exodus 34). That phrase and those adjectives are repeated innumerable times in the Psalms and in the prophets. This is the God that Jesus believed in.

The whole life of Jesus—the way he preached, healed, stood up for those on the margins, had conflicts with those in power, and tried to live faithfully to what he was being called in his own prophetic ministry is what leads him to the cross. His ministry that blazed like a meteor. It was very short, a year according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke; three years according to John.



Jesus burst out of that carpenter shop after being baptized by John and started a ministry to which people rallied, because they knew in their hearts that what he was saying and doing was good news. Joy broke out wherever he went. The parables and the way he shared table companionship with sinners and prostitutes and

assured these people that they would go to heaven ahead of those who were in charge of the law! He was presenting a roadmap for Christian life: caring for your neighbour including the stranger and even one's enemy and not just the person in your own family whom you love. This cannot be left out of the life of Jesus. The focus on the cross and suffering, has to be in relationship to being a faithful disciple.



When Jesus spoke about creation it was to reaffirm God’s loving and merciful care. It is reflected in the those texts about the sparrow, the little bird that falls to the ground dead. You could buy two of these little birds for a penny but such an insignificant creature will not fall to the ground without you’re the Father knowing (Matthew) and not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight (Luke). Faithful to his tradition, Jesus knew God would not abandon the creation he made and loved. The prophets describe that in ‘the deserts will bloom and all of nature will flourish’. (Isaiah 35:1)

One of the ways the disciples attempted to understand the death of Jesus was through the sacrifice of the lambs in the temple. The connection between the lambs’ bloody death and sacrifice was another way of interpreting Jesus’ death. When Jews sacrificed lambs in the temple, did they think they were making satisfaction to God? No. Even though an animal was sacrificed, it was not to pay back God.



People sacrificed fruits, the first of their harvest, They sacrificed grain, incense, and so on. Sometimes if somebody committed a sin and wanted to get right with God, they would bring a *sin offering*. This was a way to reset your relationship with God once you had broken it. It wasn’t that God needed to be placated this way, but you needed to say you were sorry.

This is very similar in its own way to the theology of the sacrament of reconciliation. Telling your sins to the priest, being sorry, and doing a penance doesn’t make God merciful. God is already merciful. Reconciliation is something that we do as human beings to re-enact getting back on track in our relationship with God. It’s a re-consecration, a rededication, a setting back on the right path in this relationship. It’s a human thing. It is not required to change God’s mind from anger to mercy.



How can we shift our thinking away from a theology of atonement? (next week)

Humour (Brian)

- An archaeologist is the best husband any woman can have: The older she gets, the more interested he becomes in her.
- They say that alcohol kills slowly. So what? Who's in a hurry?
- Alcohol and calculus don't mix. Never drink and derive
- One nice thing about egotists: They don't talk about other people.
- There was a woman who said, "I never knew what happiness was until I got married...and then it was too late."
- Grandpa said it used to be said that before marriage, a man yearns for the woman he loves. After marriage, the 'Y' becomes silent!
- I know a lady who only have 9 toes. She was lack-toes intolerant.
- I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin awareness.
- I accidentally rubbed ketchup in my eyes. Now I have Heinzsight.
- Did you know muffins spelled backwards is what you do when you take them out of the oven?
- Scientifically, a raven has 17 primary wing feathers, the big ones at the end of the wing are called pinion feathers. A crow has 16. So, the difference between a raven and a crow is only a matter of a pinion.
- I was walking in the jungle and saw a lizard on his hind legs telling jokes. I turned to a local tribal leader and said, "That lizard is really funny!" The leader replied, "That's not a lizard. He's a stand-up chameleon."
- I tried to come up with a carpentry pun that woodwork. I thought I nailed it but nobody saw it.
- Singing in the shower is fine until you get soap in your mouth. Then it's a soap opera.
- The Black-Eyed Peas can sing us a song but the chick peas can only hummus one.

Prayers

We remember all the recently deceased, especially and those whose anniversaries occur this week, especially

Marj Hogan (1st September)

Bill Molinaro (5th September)

Mario Minichilli (5th September - 1st anniversary)

**I thank my God each time I think
of you!
And when I pray for you,
I pray with joy.**

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

Sophia Chung, Zoe Chung, Michael O'Callaghan, Peter McNamara, Pam Storey, Lorraine Gill, Adrian Woon, Maree Bartoli, Ann Burke, Sandra Street,

Paul Darbyshire, , Luke Norden, Carol Battistella, Monique Hardinge, Robyn Burns, John Reardon, Alexander Lim, Peter & Bernadette Owen, Gerry Bond, Agnes Mumburi, Mary Dunn, Greg Agosta, Bronwyn Burke, Helen McLean, Phil Drew, Anne Jenkins, Pam Gartland, Patricia Keeghan, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Errol Lovett, Chris O'Toole and baby Alfred Theodore in London.

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

Thank you

Erick & Brian.