

Holy Cross Retreat

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



Letter 290

29th August, 2025

Social Justice Sunday

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has issued a social justice statement "Signs of Hope on the Edge" The statement and resources are available for download at <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au>. See the Prayer on Page 14.

PFG weekend

The National PFGM weekend held at Holy Cross last weekend, was an enriching experience based around the theme of [nurturing](#). We were fortunate to have a wonderful presentation on this theme, by, Paul Casey, who, with his wife Marg has been in a leading and animating role with PFG's in the Wagga Wagga region. Paul is still guiding university students in psychology. The notes of his presentation are below on Page 5. There was a warm and united sense of community among those present who have spent many years seeking to create and sustain community in parishes through the Passionist Family Group Movement.



Paul Casey is four from the left in the front row. At the extreme left is my brother, Paul.

Athletic prowess

Last Saturday, [Vin Molloy](#), aged 92 who is one of our longest serving volunteers, managed to equal his age in a round of golf, by scoring 92 for 18 holes.

Our brother, [Pastor](#) ran in the 'Barossa' half-marathon last weekend, running...22.79 kilometres at an average pace of 4.51 minutes per kilometre. This was a PB for him.

Meanwhile, [Erick](#) is slowly building up to run in the Melbourne marathon on October 12th. That requires the occasional 30 kilometre run before breakfast!

Happiness

Author: Anonymous

(Happiness Tips from the Viber app)

“When we think of happiness, we often think of it as a single mental state. This perspective is confusing because happiness is a term we use to combine entirely different chemical processes in our bodies. Each process has a different role and purpose.

To increase long-term happiness, we have to understand the difference between short-term, medium-term, and long-term happiness chemicals. It's ok to look for a short-term happiness boost like ice cream, but we need to consciously realize that



it'll go away quickly and that those dopamine activities (e.g., social media, junk food, TV shows) are usually taking up too much time and starve out medium and long-term happiness chemicals. A medium-term happiness chemical is serotonin, which we get after accomplishing a task or being creative. The long-term happiness chemical is oxytocin which comes from safe relationships. We should spend most of our time making sure we have the right skills to be in a safe relationship and building those relationships”.

When I worked in mental health, I was aware of the roles of brain chemicals like dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin. I understood the short-term pleasures triggered by dopamine, and the healthier functions of serotonin and oxytocin- but I had not fully appreciated how these chemicals related to the medium- and long-term happiness.

This message was a real eye opener for me, very encouraging- especially when I reflected on Jesus' commandment *“Love one another as I have loved you”*. Jesus' wisdom shines through here- He knows that it is **only** by living in love that we can experience true, lasting happiness.



Of course, this is easier said than done. It seems to me that the path of love involves confronting the tension between love and difference- something we often face in families or communities. We tend to think love should equal shared values; but with time, we realise this is not always the case. Staying present in these relationships can be challenging and painful at times. Yet deep down, we all know that only through love, can we reach the kind of peace and joy that we truly long for.

Mercy before rules

August 19, 2025 Peter Roe SM (from 'Flashes of Light')



In an interview with 'America'; in 2013, Pope Francis *"I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. It's useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol. You have to heal his wounds, and then we can talk about everything else."* A field hospital isn't sterile. It is noisy, rushed, and stitched

together on the fly. You treat people where they've fallen; before the shooting stops, before they've cleaned up, before they even know what's happened to them.

We see what happens when we wait for people to tidy up their lives before offering the assistance they need. It's not a great "ministry" model. Francis put his idea of the Church as a field hospital plainly in his interview: *"The things the Church most needs today is the capacity to bind wounds and warm hearts. Proximity. Closeness. You don't ask someone who's just been blown apart about their cholesterol levels. You stop the bleeding first. Everything else can wait"*.



The image of the Church as a field hospital the Gospels, where Jesus first touches the leper - and then speaks; he lifts the woman bent double - and then calls her daughter. Mercy comes before rules, presence before doctrine, touch before teaching. In the ordinary rhythms of life, this is not theory. It looks like the neighbour bringing soup to someone who is having chemo. It sounds like a friend listening through the night during a devastating life-or-death situation. It feels like someone supporting the parents of a disadvantaged child. We don't have to go searching for these sacred spaces of mercy; they're everywhere.

**Hands of Mercy
Everywhere**

Mercy before rules

The Church, in this sense, is not just the clergy or an institution; it is everyone: the people of God, believers who respond to the pain around them with presence, patience, and compassion. We carry this "field hospital" into our kitchens, workplaces, classrooms, and bus stops. And it is work we do together; Field hospitals rely on teams. In the Church, that means small groups who pray for the sick, parish ministries that stand with the disadvantaged, friends who walk with the bereaved, and communities that advocate for justice.





This way of living means practising non-judgmental presence: Listening before speaking. Holding space before offering solutions. Turning everyday spaces into places of mercy. It means gossip gives way to encouragement, cynicism to kindness and bullying to empathy. Truth be told, the Church won't be recognised for its creeds or committees. It'll be known for how it shows up in times of need and for how ordinary folks respond to extraordinary pain, not with polished theology, but with compassion. We may not have all the answers. But if we love well, if we walk with instead of preach at, maybe that's enough. Maybe, that's where the Church most looks like Christ.

Jeff Foale CP



Three weeks ago, Jeff (aged 92) received a call in Saigon from Le Van Hieu, former Governor of South Australia. He asked Jeff whether he could attend a celebration for the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Vietnamese refugee boat people in South Australia. The event was scheduled for the 18th of October. Jeff advised him that he was already committed to an event that day marking the 20th anniversary of the Passionist community here in

Vietnam. The former governor proposed the Vietnam event be held a week later and confirmed this a few days later.

Jeff will be the principal guest of honour because of his role in welcoming and supporting the boat people to Adelaide all those years ago. Included in Jeff's work was that the Glen Osmond Passionist community of the time converted the retreat centre into a hospitality centre for refugees.

What we do to show our deepest hopes



Once day all the people in town decided to pray for rain. On the day of the prayer, all the people gathered, and only one boy came with an umbrella! **That is faith!**

When you throw babies in the air they laugh because they know you will catch them. That is **trust!**

Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning but still we set the alarm to wake up. That is **hope**

We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future- That is **confidence!**

PFGM National Meeting 2025 Reflection on Nurturing (from Paul Casey)

Nurturing in the widest sense can be considered as our efforts to aid and support the growth of all living things. Looking at it only in the context of human



relationships, nurturing involves a special relationship, for example, such as exists between a parent and child or a teacher and student, where often an older, more life-experienced person, provides various forms of **care** (I stress **care**) so that the one in their charge is **helped**

develop physically, emotionally, socially, morally, spiritually, and intellectually. Nurturing both **sustains and offers opportunities for growth.**

We have a responsibility/dependency relationship, perhaps pictured as a *vertical relationship*, between:

- (i) someone who has the requisite life knowledge, skills, and emotional maturity to be able to both sustain and offer opportunities for growth and
- (ii) the growing person.

Initially, this may seem to be a one-way relationship, and arguably it is in part. However in words from the 'Peace Prayer', sometimes attributed to St Francis, *'it is in giving that we receive'*. Perhaps, to nurture another is to grow a little, to **nurture ourselves**.



Nurturing has many dimensions.

We might argue that nurturing is multi-dimensional. We nurture life-experienced people, such as members of our family, our friends, our church, those in any group to which we belong, indeed, anyone who is part of our lives on a day-to-day basis. This is a **horizontal dimension**. We may do this especially through listening to the stories of the lives of other people. What on the surface to an outsider may seem passive is actually something active. So, sometimes, nurturing may involve simply, **being there**. Again, it is in giving that we receive.

Being
There

Nurturing is lifelong.

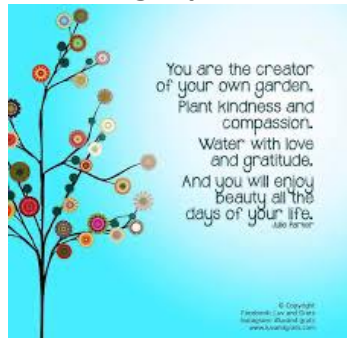
Growth is from birth to and 'through' death, and so nurturing is from birth to and '**through**' death. Physical growth reaches a peak and then gradually declines. However, there is no summit for growth in the personal, moral and spiritual areas, and to some extent the cognitive area, if we are fortunate. ***We can always grow/develop. Nurturing is lifelong.***



Nurturing ourselves as well as others.

While we may think of nurturing as being about caring for and enhancing the lives of others, we also need to be mindful of nurturing ourselves and the world around us.

Nurturing is part of our relationship with the world, other people, and ourselves



– **the fullness of life.** Moreover, we may tend to think of nurturing as aiding growth, but we can also think of it as **sustaining what already exists** –maintenance - nourishing – ‘watering the garden’ as it were.

Conservation is a term usually linked with the environment, sustaining the environment. I think that this is in the category of nurturing. And, just as we aim to conserve the environment, we also need to conserve ourselves through caring for ourselves: physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Achieving Integrity (Fullness) – Putting our lives together.

Psychologist Erik Erikson has theorised about the stages of lifespan development. The final, desired stage is Integrity – when we put it all together. Irrespective of the highs and lows of our lives, we bring everything together, feel a sense of accomplishment and have few regrets, a sense of wholeness and acceptance. We need to be able to accept things that did not work out without bitterness and anger. So, a major nurturing task is to grow into a sense of integrity, irrespective of the hand that life has dealt us.



However, I suggest that we don't put it together just once and then stop. We are always putting it together. So, it is getting on with learning new things, every now and then pausing to integrate. A cycle: be active, reflect, be active again. How can FG's or other support communities help people to do this?

On becoming our best possible selves.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed a hierarchical stage theory of human needs. Maslow begins with physiological needs, through safety, love and



belonging, esteem, and aesthetic needs, and finally self-actualization – becoming our best possible self. PFGs can provide a framework and support for meeting human needs, especially the higher needs, ultimately, self-actualisation, the need, as I said, to become the best kind of person that we can. This is a goal that strictly is always being striven for and never quite attained, so again I make the point that we always have the potential for growth.

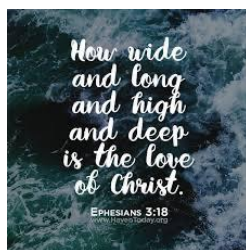
So, in regard to Passionist Family Groups, which arguably are essentially about nurturing, we can try to think of ways that enable continual growth in these areas and help people and ourselves reach the stage that Erikson calls Integrity and that Maslow terms Self-Actualisation.

St Paul, Ephesians 3:16-19.

The theorising of psychologists Erikson and Maslow led me to think of a hymn written by Fr Frank Andersen msc based on St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, specifically 3: 16-19 – The Fullness of God.



The relevant verses are: "I pray that out of his glorious riches **he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being**, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—**that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**"



Paul was able to experience 'from the inside' the total vastness of God and God's love. I especially want to draw attention to the following verse of Fr Frank Andersen's hymn:
***May your hidden self, grow strong and may you live,
Strong in faith and built on love, until you know –
How high and long, how wide and deep, the fullness of God***

Most especially, 'May your hidden-self grow strong' and knowing 'the fullness of God'.

- (i) what is the hidden in others and ourselves that can be brought out, and
- (ii) can we add to the psychology concepts of integrity and self-actualisation the spiritual dimension of being part of 'the fullness of God'?



Continuing on the themes of '**being there**' and '**nurturing embracing the totality of life**', in the context of giving and receiving, by way of example, I think of a half-hour spent a few months ago holding the hand of a 98-year-old friend, Jean, who was close to death and who has since died. It was a special time - just the two of us. Again, I suggest that nurturing embraces the totality of life, and paradoxically dying may be regarded as a form of growing. My being there I hope aided her dying, and her dying certainly sustained my living. On one occasion for about thirty minutes, Jean just sobbed. Tears can nurture, can aid growth. A point to consider.

Basal Tears lubricate, nourish, and protect the eye's surface, which helps with clear vision and washing away debris. They are present all the time, even when we are not crying, and are spread across the eye when we blink.

Reflex Tears serve as a defence mechanism to quickly wash away irritants such as dust, smoke, onion fumes from our eye, as they also do with physical trauma. These tears contain a higher concentration of antibodies to help fight potential bacteria and are released in larger amounts compared to basal tears.



Emotional Tears are produced in response to strong emotions, like joy, sadness, fear, or anger. They are chemically different from other tears, containing higher levels of protein-based hormones, natural painkillers (like Leu-enkephalin), and stress hormones. Scientists believe they may help release stress and potentially promote social bonding by signalling distress to others.

So, while we may tend to think of nurturing as requiring us to do something, again I suggest that simply **being there**, perhaps like the sun and the rain if that is not stretching it too far, may be nurturing!

Death is one of the great mysteries of life, not an end point. I wonder if we can see death as part of our growth?

Nurturing never ends

Just as love never ends, neither does nurturing. Nurturing others and ourselves at a spiritual level does not ever have to cease; nurturing to accept, to let go, to accept that things end, that where there is love there will also be grief, and that where there is life there will also be death; and especially to note from the Peace Prayer, that it is in giving that we receive, and to suggest that perhaps a major goal of all nurturing and life is to find peace within ourselves and amongst all: Ultimately to find the fullness of life.



Storytelling as nurturing – Pope Francis

Pope Francis reminded us that human beings are storytellers. According to



Francis, as storytellers we are engaged in “the process of constant growth, discovering ourselves, and becoming enriched in the tapestry of the days of our lives.” In other words, storytelling is fundamental to human development. Francis wrote an *Afterword* to the book ‘The Weaving of the World’, that gathers the reflections of some forty-four writers, artists, theologians, and journalists on the theme

of storytelling as a way towards salvation.

Francis noted that 'we need stories that reveal who we truly are, also in the untold heroism of everyday life'. He sees storytelling as 'the weaving of a fabric with unbreakable threads that links the past and present, everything and everyone'. **We are our stories – not static stories, but ever changing, ever growing stories.** So stories strengthen. Stories nurture!

The role of Rituals

A ritual, expressed formally, is a set of actions, often symbolic, that are performed repeatedly in a prescribed order, typically with a specific purpose or meaning.



One example that comes to mind is the *Ode of Remembrance* at RSL clubs each morning and evening) It can be a formal ceremony, a religious practice, or a personal habit, often involving gestures, words, or objects. Rituals can be found in various contexts, from religious ceremonies to sporting events, to everyday routines. (For example, we ask people how they are going.) They serve to structure our social behaviour, express our cultural values, and even influence our thinking and feeling.

Rituals can help build and strengthen every kind of community by giving a sense of belonging and a common purpose. They provide a framework for social interaction (e.g. Mass), can mark important events (e.g., Anzac Day), and tell something about our cultural values (e.g., various festivals). So, they help build community.

For reflection. *What are some rituals that people have in their PFGs?*
What are some more that we could consider?

Some 'random' thoughts. The meaning of life.



The meaning of life is to wonder, to learn, to enjoy, to contribute, to love, and to let go graciously and gratefully.
Are nurturing and the meaning of life related?
How might we nurture in others a capacity to reflect on the meaning of life?

From: "We are companions on the Journey"

We are fed and we are nourished, by the strength of those who care

Note: Paul had some particular applications of this for PFGs which is not included here to avoid too much reading. He did offer some concluding thoughts.

Review of the points covered

- Concept of nurturing
- More than one dimension
- Life-long - through death
- Nurture ourselves as well as others
- Points from Erikson, Maslow, and St Paul
- Dying as a form of growing and a mystery of life
- Story-telling and nurturing
- Rituals as nurturing
- Nurturing and the meaning of life.



The '**Peace Prayer**' attributed to St Francis talks about 'sowing' in the first part, but I suggest it is about nurturing in the second part.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me **sow love**;

where there is injury, **pardon**;

where there is discord, **union**; *

where there is doubt, **faith**;

where there is despair, **hope**;

where there is darkness, **light**;

where there is sadness, **joy**.

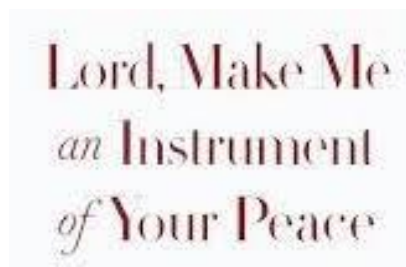
O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive; it is in self-forgetting that one finds;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

*(not in some versions)



Come Away Day (Wednesday 10th September, 2025)

The 'Come Away' days are held at Holy Cross Retreat, 207 Serpells, Road, Templestowe. The theme for our next is '**Awakening to the New**'.

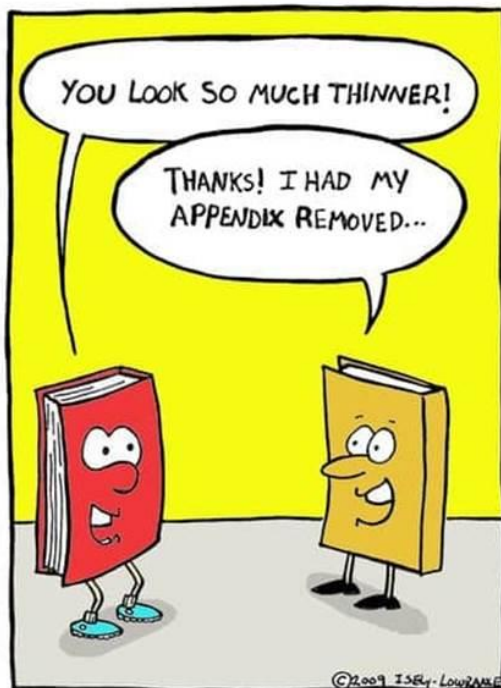
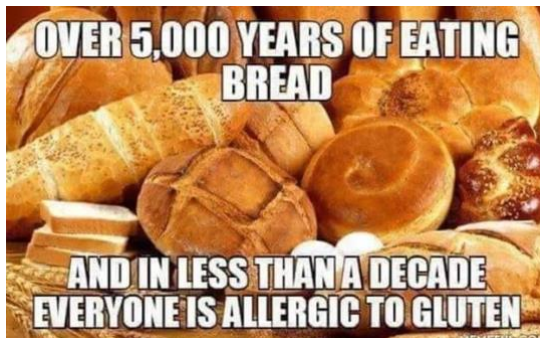
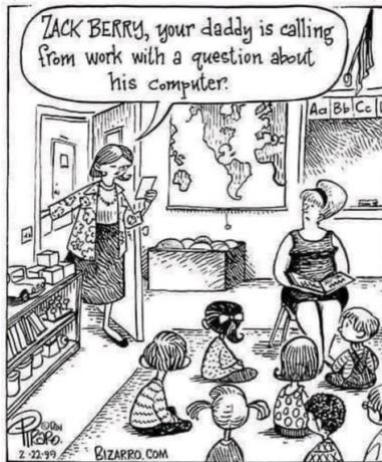
The day begins with a "cuppa" at 9.30am and the formal part starts at 10.00am.

The day's programme provides opportunities for some input, prayer, silent reflection and group interaction in the beautiful grounds of Holy Cross. All are welcome. Just come as you are. BYO Lunch. Tea & coffee provided.

You are invited to contribute \$30, or a donation according to your means. The day will end with the Eucharist and departure at 2.30pm. It is helpful to know the expected numbers so that we can have handouts ready, so please email Sr Brigid on bridget.m64@gmail.com

Humour

There is a self-help group for compulsive talkers. It is called On and On Anon



A guy walks into a lumberyard and asks for some two-by-fours. The clerk asks, "How long do you need them?" The guy answers, "A long time. We're gonna build a house."



My Kid: I feel like you're always making up rules and stuff.

Me: Like what?

My Kid: Like if I don't clean my room a portal will open and take me to another dimension.

Me: Well that's what happened to your older brother.

My Kid: What older brother?

Me: Exactly.

OLDTIMERS

NEVER MAKE A WOMAN MAD.
THEY CAN REMEMBER STUFF
THAT HASN'T EVEN
HAPPENED YET.

SHARED ON I'M NOT RIGHT IN THE HEAD.COM

Police have
confirmed that the
man who tragically
fell from the roof of
an 18th floor
Nightclub
Was not a bouncer

I'VE BEEN SOBER NOW 43
DAYS

NOT IN A ROW OR ANYTHING,
JUST IN TOTAL.

Coffee Cart



This Sunday after 10.00am Mass

Join us please

Prayer for the Social Justice 2025-2026

O God, Source of all Life,
you created earth as our home
and us in your image, out of love.
Set our hearts astir with that same love,
that we might build a culture of encounter
and systems that justly serve
those living in homelessness
and mental ill-health.

Jesus our Brother,
you noticed those living on the edge,
listened, healed and served them, out of love.
Move us from our embarrassment or discomfort
by those who show us your suffering face.
Instead, may we be taught by them,
offer our loving friendship
and share your good news together.

Holy Spirit, Source of all Hope,
you inspire our relationships
with transforming power, out of love.
Deepen our vision and enlarge our hearts
so that the fear and isolation
of homelessness and mental ill-health
may be countered by love's warmth and certainty,
that we might walk together as pilgrims of hope.
Amen.

Congratulations

Yesterday, August 28th, **Kay and Ray Lewis** celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. We extend congratulations and prayers of gratitude and blessing for them.

Prayers

We remember those who have died and especially those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially **Elizabeth Pillay (first anniversary), John Bick, Lauren Williams, Marj Hogan, Bill Molinaro, Mario Minichilli**. We pray they have found joy in God's eternal presence.



We pray for members of our Holy Cross family who are coping with illness and all who care for them, especially

Anne Woon, Gerry Bond Pam Storey, Noel Smyth, Kate Lenic, Maria Giantomasso, Nello Campomizzi, Denise Egan, Lesley Yang, Peter Addicoat, Greg Agosta, Dr Peter Heffernan, Nancy Reynolds, Caroline Meade, Phil Drew, Marilyn Cilmi, Caroline Hagedorn, Rex Cambry, Jeanelle Bergin, Peter Barry, Maureen Barns, Peter & Bernadette Owen, Fr Brendan Lane, Alexander Lim, Carol Battistella, Graham Burke, Luke Norden, Zoe & Sophia Chung, Pam Gartland, Anne Burke, Doris Castro, Rod Gorfine, Patricia Keeghan, Julia Cantone, Helen McLean, Bro Jerome, Anne Jenkins and Errol Lovett.

Mass on line

Chris will send the link for Sunday Mass, on Saturday afternoon.

God bless,

Brian