

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 292

12th September, 2025

Come Away Day



Our spring 'Come Away' day was held at Holy Cross on Wednesday, with Brigid having returned from General Council ministerial duties in England only the day before. The theme was '**Awakening to the New**'. This theme is related to the beginning of the Spring season and all that it offers, if we take the time to truly appreciate the emergence of new life within us and around us.

Improvements



The greatest improvement we have noticed this week is all the clean windows! It is amazing what a difference it has made! Fortunately no one took offence at mention of this, but of course the intention was to advise in last week's newsletter that at Holy Cross we are looking forward to having clean windows!

It is amazing what a difference a mistake of one letter, can make



Father's Day

Our custom is to acquire some 'Aldi' pizzas for Sunday nights and we gather downstairs in the HCC kitchen with a wine and lots of sharing. It is always a pleasant two hours. Last Sunday we received a few 'father's day greetings, so we toasted that and our own Father's.



BBQ area etc

For some weeks now, we have been discussing possibilities for an extra outdoor eating and BBQ area at the carpark end of our building. We set a principle of need v want, especially with regard to costs. Last Friday we a meeting on site and talked through possibilities.

We don't have a date for the completion of the car park, but it is not far away. Vince spent three days last week digging up what he had done and relaying the material because of damage caused by the constant rain and the fact that this showed allowance had to be made for water run-off. We (which means Vince!) have to create a small trench around the fence line so that we can lay cabling for more lighting to provide safety and better security. When that is done we can install the rest of the fencing.

Next, will be to build a concrete path from the carpark to the St Gabriel Shrine and create a garden against the wall at the end of the building. We will also plant a row of trees on the oval side of the carpark fence. Teresa Lim has kindly donated some

plants which Peter Norman has begun to put along the fence adjoining our nearest neighbour in Smith's Road.

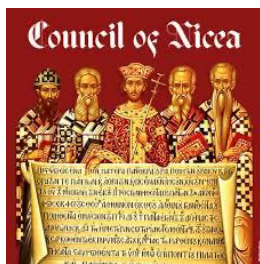
We have some work to do on the other side of the end of the building, but thanks to creative thinking we can repair an area of uneven garden tiles, transplant a few shrubs and create a nice BBQ area that will have shade. We will replace the all-weather carpet on the deck overlooking this area, and find more suitable seating.

John Stretch is overseeing the renovation of 'The Tavern' and we will keep some 'before' photos to show when that work is completed. This is the priority work we designated for the funds from the Fundraiser, so we'd like you to share in it. We will do some preliminary work today (Friday) to remove furniture and we expect what needs to be done to go through til late October.

The need for creeds—reimagining Nicaea

From 'Flashes of Insight'

September 2, 2025 Thomas OLoughlin (UK priest and theologian)



The Council of Nicaea was convened in 325 by the Emperor Constantine. It remains most famous for producing much of the creed used in the liturgy, but the need for new statements of the creed is ever present. If we do not reformulate expressions of faith, the formulae become empty—if solemn sounding—words.

One such reformulation was produced by Pope Francis just a few months after he was elected Bishop of Rome in 2013. It is short and to the point, and deserves to be better known as a memorial to him.

To believe in the Father who loves all men and women with an infinite love means realizing that “he thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity.” To believe that the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been taken up into the very heart of God. To believe that Jesus shed his blood for us removes any doubt about the boundless love which ennobles each human being.



Our redemption has a social dimension because “God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between people.” To believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone means realizing that he seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds: “The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, even the most complex and inscrutable.”

Evangelization is meant to cooperate with this liberating work of the Spirit. The very mystery of the *Trinity* reminds us that we have been created in the image of that divine communion, and so we cannot achieve fulfilment or salvation purely by our own efforts. ([Evangelii Gaudium §178](#))

‘Light from light’ – one of the key images in the creed of 325, is a metaphor that spoke directly to a culture familiar with lamps and candles in everyday life. Like the formula adopted by the bishops at Nicaea, this statement of Pope Francis has the trinitarian shape: Father, Son, Spirit – one God. Like the fourth-century creed, it is not a statement about a distant potentate “in the sky” but about our life in God who had entered fully into his creation as one of us in the Christ.



Nicaea’s creed in 325 was not perfect – it needed further work at a council in 381 (Constantinople I), and then clarifications at Ephesus (430) and Chalcedon (451). In the same way, Francis’s creed is but an “effort” for our time.

2025 has seen a string of memorials to the Council of Nicaea, but the challenge is not recall, but to reformulate our faith in God in ways that speak today in a living language.

How would you formulate a creed?



Feast of Holy Cross

This coming Sunday we will celebrate the feast of Holy Cross and the **Coffee Cart** will be here after 10.00am Mass!

Safeguarding Sunday



This Sunday is also Safeguarding Sunday when we acknowledge the pain and damage caused by the sexual abuse of children and adults at risk. We at Holy Cross, and across our Passionist Province acknowledge the personal harm that so many innocent and vulnerable children and adults have suffered. The effects on a generation of would-be believers has been catastrophic. So many have turned their back on ‘religion’ and the Church.

The best way to express our shame for what happened in the past is to ensure it is not repeated, so each of us is called to respond to local safeguarding practices and protocols that ensure every vulnerable person, child or adult, is always safe, and that each of them is treated with dignity and respect. We also invite people to pray for those harmed by abuse directly and indirectly.

The Passionist safeguarding and professional standards policies can be found on our Province website: <https://www.passionists.com/>

PFG weekend...Nurturing

In the past two newsletters there has been a summary of two sessions related to **nurturing**. These were presented at the National Team meeting of the Passionist Family Group Movement three weeks ago. In this newsletter is a summary of a presentation I gave that weekend related to what ministers and pastoral leaders might do to nurture themselves so they can engage in mission. There is something in this for everyone I think.

Finding contemplative moments to nurture ourselves for mission

It is vital for any of us to decide what we are doing with our life. This is not a focus on what we might have done, or what you might do.....but what am I doing **now**?



Eckhart Tolle, the author of *'The Power of Now'* says we need to **balance** our interior, with the exterior. *"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".*

We need to attend to our 'inside' (that's the real me, not the false ego). This echoes Jesus' caution... *"What does it profit a person if she/he gains the whole world but loses her/himself"* (Mark 8:36) Sometimes we may not really appreciate what the 'inside' is. There are 40,000 neurons in the heart, meaning that the heart has its own nervous system. The heart has its own intelligence and communicates with the brain.

Sometimes we may not really appreciate what the 'inside' is. There are 40,000 neurons in the heart, meaning that the heart has its own nervous system. The heart has its own intelligence and communicates with the brain. They talk about heart-brain coherence. The heart's electromagnetic field extends up to a metre beyond the body and it is thought that this might contribute to the 'magnetic' attractions or repulsions that occur between individuals, and affects social relationships. One person's brain waves can synchronize to another person's heart.

YOUR HEART HAS ITS OWN BRAIN (WITH 40,000 NEURONS) ✨
And it knows things before your mind catches up.

Neuropsychologist Rollin McCraty, claims there is scientific evidence that we are all connected through earth's magnetic fields and that our emotions and intentions can affect that global field. Those of us who believe in the power of prayer would not be surprised by such a claim. The experience of some heart transplant patients suggests that the heart also



holds memory. It would be good then for us to make a deliberate connection between our heart and nurturing.

A solitary emotion can puzzle us. What am I feeling? Why? How should I respond to this feeling? When we add the multitude of experiences we have, even within a few minutes, including the complete opposites of joy and sadness, it is no wonder that it is difficult to 'know myself'. Franciscan Richard Rohr proposes "that if you don't know that you are a mass of contradictions, then you don't know yourself!"

the way to live with contradictions is to
"...live them—not just endure them or
relieve ourselves from the tension by
quickly resolving them ... The times
when we meet or reckon with our
contradictions are often turning points"
- Richard Rohr



If I am going to nurture myself so that I can nurture others, there is a prior step. I have to spend some time understanding and accepting myself. Many people spend their lives either living in the past or the future. Jesus advises, *"Do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will look after itself; each day has enough problems of its own"* (Matthew 6:34).

To do this, we need to pay attention to what is happening **now** and to achieve that, we need to focus on the kinship and connection of all life - on true community. This enables us to take a full perspective of life. Focusing on the present, helps us be mindful. We have to live in the Now – in this moment, on this day! Mindfulness is different from meditation which seeks to still the mind. This does not 'work' for many active people. Mindfulness helps a person to become attentive to and a witness to, their own consciousness. In this process it is not important to stop thoughts.

What is important is for us to observe and appreciate those thoughts, because this is how we are. In this way, a person is able to listen to and take note of the voices going on within. Paul of the Cross, founder of the Passionists, echoed the advice of Benedict of Canfield, *"Pray as you are, not as you aren't"*. An energetic and busy person will pray differently from an introverted and not easily motivated person.



Focusing on God's presence is easier said than done, because everyday life is at the forefront of our thinking, planning and reviewing, and we are living in an age of continual stimulation, activity and noise. Some people want to approach every



difficulty with a solution, when often there isn't one! External things can completely absorb us. We can find ourselves wasting a lot of energy relieving things that have already happened, or becoming anxious over what might happen.

*"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" (Tolle). Remember Jesus' advice: "Let tomorrow take care of itself; each day has enough troubles of its own!" (Matt 6: 34)*



Modern media, including social media, invades every nook and cranny of our lives. Advertisers get our attention and put images and tunes in our minds that won't go away. This happens via the car radio, home TV, mobile phone, listening with headsets when out walking, or seeking internet access at all hours of the day and night -wherever we are.



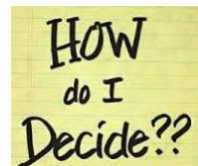
Jesus said, *"Consider (or pay attention to) the lilies in the field"* (Mt 6:25-34). This calls for slowing down and for observing (what's going on inside me as well as outside around me? How is this affecting me?

Paul of the Cross advised, *"Give yourself the rest you need. When you are walking alone, listen to the sermon preached to you by the flowers, the trees, the shrubs, the sky, the sun and whole world. Notice how they preach to you a sermon of love, of praise of God, and how they invite you to proclaim the greatness of the One who has given them being."*



Buying has become a religion in our age, and advertisements are the sermons. The ads keep telling us we need to have more (this or that) stuff to make us happier or they tell us to buy, when we are feeling a bit 'down', This pleasure is derived from something outside ourselves, but true joy comes from within and that is where true nurturing begins.

What can we do? We have to decide to seek contentment within! We have to make a decision to be contemplative. We have to make a decision to practice ways of being attentive to 'the now'...to this moment; to me and to the people and the life around me...in this moment.

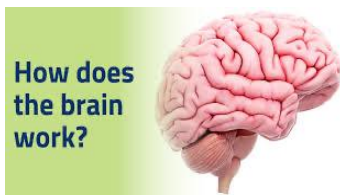


"Pay attention". That is what Jesus called for. Don't just walk past the lilies, but stop, observe, consider, pay attention to them, and as Paul of the Cross says, ask what lesson they have for you – now!

Note to Self:
Pay Attention

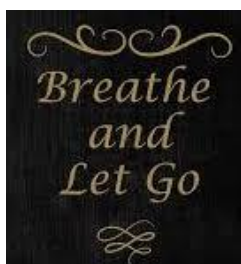
There is a challenge for us, deepened by the issues associated with climate change, to reduce our wants, because they are not our needs. We can appreciate that what we already have, can be enough. We have to stop, reflect and pay attention. This also means making choices about our environment that will help us achieve this. We are called to seek peacefulness within and without. That will nurture our spirit.

Jill Bolte Taylor is a neuroanatomist and public speaker. She studied the brain



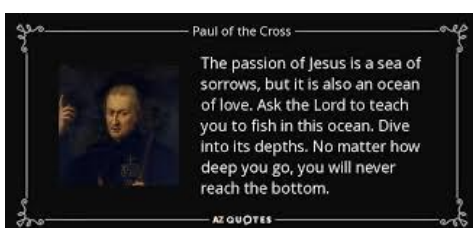
because one of her brothers suffered schizophrenia. One morning in 1996 when she was aged 37, she suffered a massive stroke in the left hemisphere of her brain. Within four hours she lost her ability to walk, talk, read, write, and remember parts of her past.

It took her eight years to fully recover, and she has done much valuable study into the workings of the brain. She advises that the limbic part of our brain enables a 90 second programme to trigger, surge through and then be flushed from our system. After 90 seconds this reaction is finished, unless we decide to re-open it! This means that an emotion (e.g. anger) can be triggered automatically. It sets alight chemical reactions in the brain and creates physiological experiences- for 90 seconds. Then a different feeling can be created, unless we choose to keep this circuitry running. We have a choice. We do not have to think thoughts that bring pain, negativity or past memories.



If we go over and over a past experience it changes nothing, and closes us off, so she recommends that we distract ourselves. We might do this by thinking of something pleasant or wonderful etc. We can practice relaxing by inhaling, holding our breath, exhaling softly, breathing slowly and being still. We can think of being 'right' in our brain, which is where we find peace (anxiety is in the left brain). So, pausing to *pay attention*, to become aware, can bring us peace or it can help us focus in a new direction. This is a positive nurturing action. Breathe in slowly, exhale, and let go!

It makes sense when we can, to try to create some silence. We need to make



interior and exterior space for quiet uninterrupted reflection. Paul of the Cross advised, "Physical solitude is a good thing, provided that it is backed up by prayer and a holy life, but far better than this, is solitude of

the heart which is the interior desert in which your spirit can become totally immersed in God, and can hear and savour the words of eternal life”

It is obvious that some practical tips can help us to be contemplative. The first is to turn off our screens; to limit what we watch and to recognise that some social or ordinary media content will not assist us to find peacefulness. We can observe people everywhere, walking and looking at their phone. What are they missing? The excellent video ‘Look Up’ addressed this issue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7dLU6fk9QY>



We cannot ‘consider the lilies’, if we are not looking at them or thinking about them! It is easy to pass them by, and never noticing the interplay of insect and plant that sustains life. If we are over-active or over-stimulated, will people experience us as people of peace - nurturers?

If we seem impatient with the current conversation and keen to check phone messages, all our words about the importance and dignity of each person, will become empty, and may leave some people feeling empty – of little worth. So we may need to limit the number of activities we are engaged in and be able to fully focus on ‘now’. Remember the Sabbath was important in ancient times; now we need it more than ever, because life is hurrying up. Stores are open at all hours, news is retold even more than every hour. Messages are sent 24/7.

CAN YOU KEEP UP

We have demanding commitments. Even ‘old’ people complain of being too busy, but we are human beings not human doings. Can we find the right balance?



John Lennon, a member of the famous musical group, ‘The Beatles’ took a five year sabbatical from writing and performing and captured something of his experience and observations in a song called ‘Watching the wheels’.

*People say I'm crazy, doing what I'm doing. Well, they give me all kinds of warnings
To save me from ruin. When I say that I'm okay, well they look at me kinda strange
"Surely, you're not happy now, you no longer play the game"*

*People say I'm lazy, dreaming my life away. Well they give me all
kinds of advice designed to enlighten me. When I tell them that
I'm doing fine watching shadows on the wall, "Don't you miss the
big time boy, you're no longer on the ball?"*



I'm just sitting here watching the wheels go round and round. No longer riding on the merry-go-round I just had to let it go.



Thomas Merton said “Contemplation is life itself, fully awake, fully active and fully aware that it is alive. “It is taking delight in God’s creation, a creation that is interconnected, unfolding, self-emerging and increasingly complex This invites us to be people of awe, because creation is a manifestation of the divine. We have to stop, look, listen and appreciate. Contemplation is losing yourself in the wonder, awe and the magnificence of life

“We've got this gift of love, but love is like a precious plant. You can't just accept it and leave it in the cupboard or just think it's going to get on by itself. You've got to keep watering it. You've got to really look after it and nurture it” (John Lennon)

Benefiting from attention to our deeper self, enables us to be more attentive to life around us; more sensitive to the people who are important to us, and better at nurturing the relationships we have.



If someone was to share this bench with you, who would it be, and if you were to engage in dialogue, what would you want to speak about with her/him?

Humour

- She was engaged to a boyfriend with a wooden leg but she broke it off.
- A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
- If you don't pay your exorcist, you get repossessed.
- With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.
- The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.
- You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.
- In democracy your vote counts. In feudalism your count votes.
- Local Area Network in Australia - the LAN down under.
- Every calendar's days are numbered.
- A lot of money is tainted - Taint yours and taint mine.
- A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat.
- He had a photographic memory that was never developed.
- A midget fortune-teller who escaped from prison is a small medium at large.
- Once you've seen one shopping centre, you've see a mall.
- Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.

- Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.
- Acupuncture is a jab well done.
- I never thought orthopaedic shoes would really work for me. But I stand corrected.
- I wrote a book on how to fall down the stairs. It's a step by step guide.
- My son was chewing on electric cords, so I had to ground him. it's ok though, he's doing better and conducting himself properly.

An answering machine responded.....

Hello. Welcome to our psychiatric hotline.

If you are obsessive-compulsive, press 1 repeatedly

If you are co-dependent, ask someone to press 2

If you have multiple personalities, press 3,4, 5 and 6

If you are paranoid-delusional, we know who you are and what you want. Stay on the line and we'll trace your call

If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully and a soft voice will tell you the number to press

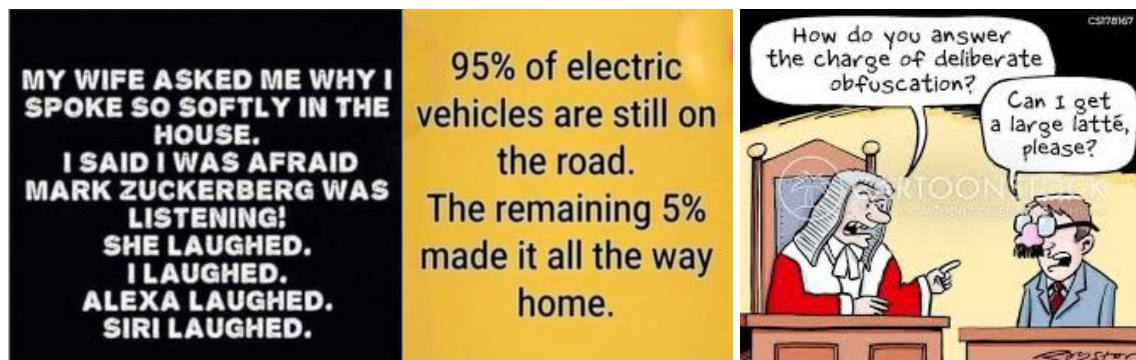
If you are bi-polar, it doesn't matter what number you press. No one will answer

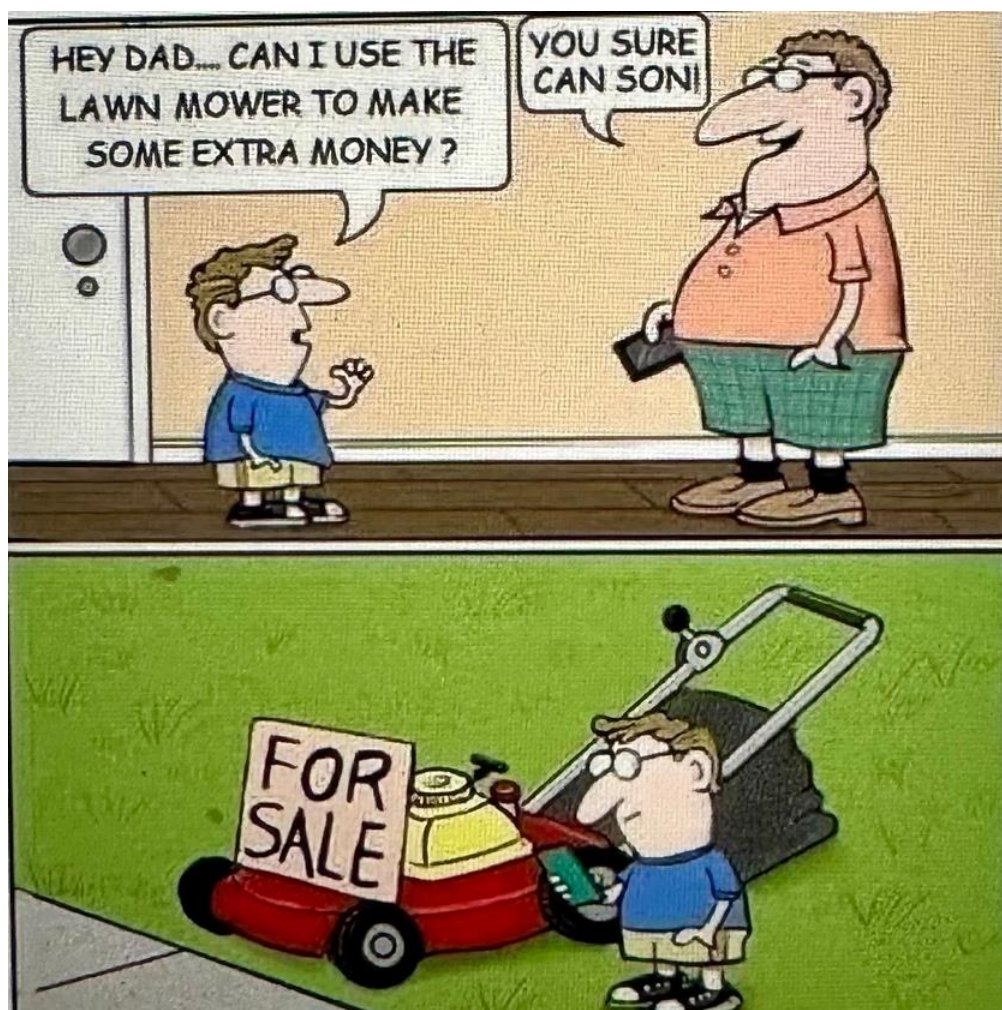
Tony and Maria were visiting a graveyard and he read a tombstone. "Here lies John Kelly. A lawyer and an honest man". Tony said to Maria, "Imagine that, they've got three men buried in one grave"

Don't worry" a patient told his psychiatrist, I will repay you every cent, or my name is not Alexander the Great".

During WW2, Frank received his draft papers and told to report for a medical examination. Pretending to have bad eyesight, when told to read the eye-chart, he said, "which chart?" When the physician held up a broom handle and said :what is this?' Fred replied "a pencil". He was declared unsuitable for the army.

That evening Fred went to see a movie, but when the lights came up he was horrified to see the optician sitting next to him. Leaning towards him, Fred asked, "Does this bus stop at Richmond?"





Congratulations

Erick ran 1 hour 8 minutes and 16 seconds last Sunday in the Burnley Half-Marathon. That is a 3 minutes and 13 second average per kilometre or 18.5 kph. He was very pleased with how the race unfolded and happy to have placed 8th in the race. He will bypass the Melbourne marathon next month and train for the Ballarat marathon on April 26th next year.

Away

Next Thursday (September 18th) I will be travelling to New Zealand until Sept 30th, so next week's newsletter will be sent on Thursday and Erick who will be acting community leader during my absence, will send out the newsletter the following week. I will only be back for eight days before I head to Vietnam for nine days.

Congratulations

Gerry and Pat Bond celebrate 65 years of marriage on Thursday next week (September 18th). Gerry is continuing a very long recovery and is currently in temporary care at Woodlands in Porter Street, Templestowe.

Pope Leo celebrates his 70th birthday on Sunday.

The Hope of Spring

God, thank you for Spring and the hope of warmer, longer, brighter days.
Thank you for the coming of growth and life and birth.
Thank you that things are coming awake in the world.
This is what our calendar says, and we do see some signs that it is real.
But we also still struggle with the residual layover of winter.
Now we ask that you bring into reality all that belongs in this season.
Your word says that we will have provision, and hope, and joy,
and health and loving relationships here and now in this life.
We ask that what belongs in this season would become actual in our practical lives.
We hope in you and in your promises. We hope in your gift of Spring.

- Author Unknown

Prayers

We remember those who have died especially **Roger Pantano** and especially those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially John Gill, **Brett Daly (son of Gerard and Linda), Abraham Lim, Peter Wright (Carmel Chubb's brother)** and **Kumar Fernando**

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, Fergus Ryan, Kate Lenic, Maria Di 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