

Holy Cross Retreat

Letter 299

205 Serpells Road

31st October, 2025



There seems to be some mystery surrounding the property adjacent to Holy Cross in Smiths Road. For a few days it has had a wire fence enclosing the front and where you would expect to see a notice of development, there has been a blank white page inside a plastic holder. Early afternoon on Wednesday, Tri alerted me to some activity occurring on the property and sent me the photo immediately below. From that photo it appeared to me that the house had been damaged. I looked up the

Manningham Council notes and there is mention there that on 6th October 2025, Council received a request to remove four large trees. Other (older) notices refer to the house as being heritage listed.

The site of 205 Serpells Road was originally part of 45 acres David Tully, a Doncaster district fruit-grower, bought, and later allocated 15 acres for his son-in-law and fellow orchardist, Frank Smith and a house (pictured left) was erected soon, after in 1915. Frank was married to David's daughter, Esther. The property was held in Tully's name until 17 July 1923, when it was transferred to Frank, who was described at the time as a 'fruit-grower'. The present house was first recorded in the 1914-15 and was rated as worth 35 pounds. After Frank Smith died, Ester subdivided the property and the house was sold in in August 1958. It was owned by a young couple Ken and Lorraine Nelson in 1968 when I was a Passionist student. It was sold in 1976 for \$26,500 and again in 1980 for \$33,00. It was sold in April 2024 for \$1,050,00.



I returned from evening Mass with the Marist Brothers and took another photo in the semi-darkness. By then the house was completely demolished. Interestingly, the blank white page inside a plastic holder had been removed from the wire fencing. As long as any of us professed or lay, have been coming to Holy Cross, that 205 house has been standing until this afternoon. Now we'll wait to see what unfolds. Certainly the house is no longer heritage listed!

November 2nd – All Soul's Day

This Sunday after communion we have a slide presentation (including photos) accompanied by a relevant songs featuring deceased relatives who have worshipped at Holy Cross or are related to people who have belonged to Holy Cross. As advised last week, if you have a photo of a person in this category whom you want added to the slide presentation, please email the photo to Tim Horlock on:

horlocktim1@gmail.com.

Feel free before Mass, to place on the altar a piece of paper with the name of any deceased relative or friend you want remembered during Mass.

A reflection from Fr Brendan Byrne SJ

The episode in Luke's **Gospel** where Jesus raises of the son of the widow of Nain (7:11–17) is an appropriate choice for the commemoration of 'All Soul's'. This scene, unlike so many others in the Gospels, does not begin with someone asking Jesus for help. As he approaches the Galilean village of Nain with his disciples, he simply comes across the funeral procession and, moved with compassion, takes action.



'Moved with compassion' translates a Greek word (*esplagchnisthe*) indicative of strong emotion. The lame translation 'Jesus felt sorry for her' (the Jerusalem Bible reading in our *Lectionary*) is hardly adequate. Luke uses the same Greek expression to convey the response of the Good Samaritan for the

wounded man that he sees by the side of the road (10:33); it is also the reaction of the father of the Prodigal Son when, from afar, he catches sight of the young man returning to the family home (15:20). In other words, we have to do here with a great wave of divine compassion welling up in the face of human tragedy – here the death of a young person, and the grief and future desperate situation of his mother. Without a husband and lacking other sons, who will provide for her in her later years?

Note the lovely touch at the end. Jesus doesn't just call the young man back to life: 'He gave him back to his mother' (v. 15). The mother's grief is as much the concern of Jesus as the restoration of the young man to life. In this way the Gospel in a more general way addresses not just the problem of death itself but the grief occasioned by the passing of those we love.

Given the feast of All Souls, there are a couple of reflections in this week's newsletter, related to that feast.

What is dying?

I am standing on the sea shore,
a ship sails in the morning breeze and starts for the ocean.
She is an object of beauty and I stand watching her
till at last she fades on the horizon and someone at my side says:
“She is gone.”
Gone!
Where?
Gone from my sight—that is all.
She is just as large in the masts, hull and spars as she was when I saw her, and just as
able to bear her load of living freight to its destination.

The diminished size and total loss of sight is in me, not in her, and just at the
moment when someone at my side says, “She is gone” there are others who are
watching her coming, and other voices take up a glad shout:
“There she comes!” —and that is dying.

Bishop Brent (1862-1926) was an Episcopalian bishop about whom it was said, “he
was born a poet and made himself a prophet”

Death and Dying.....

Michael Barbato is a retired palliative physician and author

Not surprisingly, preparing for death teaches us about life and helps us to lead a
more fulfilling life. Laying claim to the fact that we will all one day die is what makes
life as valuable as any treasure, and death the treasure chest that contains it.



Dying is one of the most important times in a person’s life. Preparing for it means leading a full and good life, as best we can. To reflect on this life as it draws to an end is what brings completion. To relive all that has been beautiful or painful, to talk about relationships that have been replenishing and those that need healing, to face our beasts, to speak of the people we love and to remember the wondrous things that have filled our life. If we can accept death as part of life, not just as the end to life, living and dying become inseparable. Rather than a shadow that hovers over life, death becomes the light that illuminates life.

When asked how he created such beautiful sculptures from blocks of marble, Michelangelo replied, “The beauty is already there, all I do is remove the excesses.” Just as Michelangelo’s chisel exposed the hidden beauty of the stone, dying too can bring forth unexpected treasures, not only for those who are dying, but



also for the family and friends who care for them.

It has been said the pain of dying or losing someone you love is the hardest thing any of us will have to bear, and the experience will tear a person apart in ways no one could ever imagine. Indeed, many of my patients and their family have said to me, “I never imagined it would be like this.” Yet, after forty years of medical practice I never cease to be amazed by the courage people exhibit as they confront their own death and the changes that can occur.



Two emotions, love and fear dominate the life of those whose death is imminent. These emotions are inextricably linked – the thought of being separated from those we love is often the greatest fear, but that same love also sustains us as death approaches. Being torn between two extremes is a dominant theme at this time of life and it is not unusual for the dying person to struggle with any number of conflicting emotions.

Apart from love and fear, other conflicts include hope and disappointment, letting go and reaching out, autonomy and dependence, sadness and joy, peace and despair, anger and contentment and so the list goes on. All contribute to the chaos and paralysing uncertainty that can accompany death. These conflicts are not unique to the dying – they are part of everyday life. The emotional tugs and resulting tensions are, however, dramatically increased when someone is dying, and it is not uncommon for them or their carers to say, ‘they are being stretched to breaking point’.



With time and the right environment, it is possible for love to subsume and all but replace fear. This transformation is a gift for it often leads to a state of equanimity and extraordinary peace – no longer does the dying person feel pulled and torn by the many opposing conflicts – they arrive at a point where dualities exist, but no longer dominate their life. Love becomes the healing balm that soothes and allows all concerned to navigate the surreal transition from life to death. It facilitates the difficult task of letting go – for the dying person to submit graciously to the unknown and for family and friends to let go of the fear that makes the dying person’s journey more difficult.



When we let go of fear, we shed much of the excess that Michelangelo spoke of, and the fear of dying is replaced by the joy of living another day. We also discover the beauty of seeing the world and the people we know as if for the first time – according to one author, the birds seem to sing louder and sweeter as death nears.

Whether it is in life or death, confronting our fears is scary but necessary; it brings out the best in all of us – such is the courage I alluded to earlier.

In saying this I do not, for one moment, deny the overwhelming sadness that



surrounds the death of someone we love. I am also aware that many, 'rage, rage against the dying of the light' and for them death is anything but healing. What this article attempts to emphasise is the healing power of love and how it can, potentially, transcend the fear which makes death more difficult than it needs to be.

What family and friends can do to create an environment where love replaces fear.



To fully understand the concept of a healing environment we need to distinguish between *healing* and *curing*. Most people are familiar with and understand the meaning of the word 'cure'. In the medical setting, cure is used to describe the outcome of any successful medical or surgical intervention –

antibiotics cure infection, chemotherapy may cure cancer, surgery can cure appendicitis. In every day vernacular it is not uncommon for the word *fix* to be used instead of cure.

For example, it is often said, 'the doctor (or the medicine) fixed my problem'. Cure then is orchestrated by someone else (usually a doctor) and the person who is cured is, for the most part, a passive player in the whole process. Someone other than the sick person does the curing.

Healing is quite different. Firstly it has nothing to do with the physical body. Healing involves the psychological and spiritual domains and deals with suffering that arises from an emotional or existential source. Unlike cure, healing does not solve or remove a problem; it simply allows a person to see their suffering in a different light and this, in turn, can lead to acceptance, peace and equanimity (healing).



Such a change may occur spontaneously but more often than not it follows a deep and meaningful connection with another person – a family member, friend, counsellor et cetera. They, by their very presence, create a climate that encourages the troubled person (an active and integral participant in the process) to talk about whatever it is that concerns them.

This powerful combination of one person exploring and another listening constitutes the *healing environment*, and it is this environment which, almost miraculously,



facilitates the healing. As it has nothing to do with the physical domain, healing is possible even when there is no hope for cure – in other words healing, unlike curing, can occur in the face of death.

Healing, of course, is not limited to the dying situation. Most of us can remember a time when a stressful situation was made better simply by talking about it. Now, if you reflect on that time, you may find it was not the talking, but how the other person listened that made the difference. Listening is a powerful tool and is the instrument that allows healing to take place.

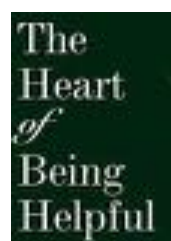
A concert pianist can make beautiful music only if their piano is tuned for the occasion. Healing can take place only if the listener is tuned into what the other person is saying and feeling. It's a wonderful gift to have someone who really 'hears' what you say, and who does this without interruption, advice or any form of judgment.



It goes without saying a major ingredient of this healing process is the quality of the 'listener's' presence. To have someone really listen at times of distress is a gift. They and the environment they create are the catalysts for change provided this healing environment is not compromised by another person entering into the space, noise or other unwanted interruptions.

So, if someone starts to open up or if they are clearly distressed close the door to safeguard their privacy and to ensure they will not be interrupted, turn off your mobile phone and switch off the television or radio. The person may require five or fifty minutes of your time, so make yourself comfortable and show them by your actions that you are prepared to stay for however long it takes.

To be fully present while someone talks about their suffering is hard work and requires your full and undivided attention. It does however, have its rewards as the occasion teach you something about yourself. The art of being a *healing presence* is not something that comes naturally nor is it something you can learn from books. It is something that comes with experience including the experience of having had someone be a healing presence for you.



In my work as a palliative care physician, I have regularly noted how a sick person's distress can melt away, not because of any treatment I have given, but seemingly through the influence of another's presence. It's not what these people say or do – in fact they often say little and they certainly do not fuss or busy themselves – there appears to be a calmness or healing quality about them

that is felt and taken in by others. These people, I suspect, are at peace with themselves and have no agendas when they enter a sick person's room other than to be there with them.

While they are saddened by the other's illness, they do not offer false encouragement or avoid uncomfortable situations by engaging in idle conversation. They simply sit and listen. I have always believed the 'energy' we bring into any



space or conversation can have a profound influence on how others feel. What is this 'healing energy'? It certainly has something to do with the way we communicate – the words we use and the body language we adopt. Communication is 90 percent non-verbal and only 10 percent verbal, so our 'presence' is far more important than the words we choose to use. Indeed, words often get in the way of effective communication and may have an agenda other than to heal – they may be used to ensure our comfort.

The most positive 'energy' we bring into any space or conversation is unconditional love – love that is devoid of judgment and attachments. Such love can be sensed, but surprisingly, its effects can also be demonstrated. Using state of the art X-rays, a recent study confirmed positive effects in the brain of healthy individuals when 'healing' energy was directed their way. What is remarkable is that the person directing the healing energy was remote from the person to whom it was directed. This is mind-boggling stuff that challenges rational thinking and a conventional-only approach to care. It is also of practical significance and relevant to our present discussion for the following reasons:

1. Our frame of mind can have a profound effect on those we relate to, and the more vulnerable a person, the greater the effect. So, when planning a visit to a sick or dying relative/friend, make this a priority and not something to be squeezed into a busy programme. When you are with them, be very conscious of their body language and respond appropriately. If the person appears tired, make it a short visit. If they 'want to talk' prepare yourself for a longer stay.



Remember, it is the quality of your stay and not its length that is important. So, be focused on how the other person is feeling as much as what they are saying and make them, not you, the centre of attention. Love, it would seem, has no boundaries, so maintain loving and peaceful thoughts at all times for this may have a healing effect both during and after your visit.

2. The second point I wish to raise relates to the not infrequent scenario of a person dying alone. Often this happens after one or more family members have sat by the bedside for hours-days and leave briefly to get a breath of fresh air or to have a cup of tea.



This causes the family great distress for they feel guilty about their loved one dying alone. I have always believed it is not their physical presence that is important, but the emotional imprint they leave behind. So, if feelings of love, peace and acceptance permeate the room, these remain when family members are out of the room, even when they are miles away. You do not need to be in the room to generate this healing effect – it can be achieved in absentia. Such is the power of a healing environment.

The implications of this so-called distant or non-local healing are enormous. It not only allows us, the healthy, to be part of a healing process for the sick and dying, but it also gives clues for how we can care for each other. Paraphrasing the words of Nelson Mandela, we are more powerful than we believe – we are instruments of peace, love and healing.

Christmas hampers

Beginning on November 16th, if you wish to bring either a complete hamper, or goods (food, toys etc) that would assist a poor family enjoy Christmas, we will ensure they are delivered to families in need. Thank you.

Broken Rosary Beads



If you have broken rosary beads in bedroom drawers, [Len Watson](#) would like to collect them and pass them on to a quadriplegic priest who enjoys creating new sets from the broken and old. Please bring them to Mass and put them in the box in the foyer, or drop them into the 207 box outside the front door at Holy Cross. Thank you.

Note

From Monday afternoon until late Thursday, I will be facilitating an Assembly of the Pallottine community at Millgrove, about 45 minutes from Holy Cross.

Sunday luncheon

The San Gabriele Association of the Passionist community Melbourne will be holding their last Sunday luncheon for this year on the 16th November at 12pm in the Holy Cross Centre Dining Room.

Come and enjoy a great afternoon of food, fun and entertainment for only \$40 per person. BYO drinks

Please contact
Bruno 0419503300 or Joe 0419369372
Book your table early as bookings go quickly

Kevin Hennessy – 50 years ordained

Kevin is well known to our Holy Cross family. He is celebrating Mass for this special occasion at 11.00am in St Mary's Geelong, 150 Yarra Street, Geelong, on Sunday 30th November. For catering purposes, if you wish to attend and enjoy a light lunch, please email Kevin at kevin.hennessy@passionists.com

Lessons from Geese



Geese and other migratory birds flying along in a V formation. Scientists have discovered that this helps them conserve energy. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates wind currents that produce an uplift for the bird immediately following.

[Lesson One](#): People who share a common sense of direction and sense of community can get where they are going faster and easier, because they are benefiting from what each other has created. By flying in the V formation, the whole flock adds at least 70% percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own and the V allows them to see each other and avoid collisions.



[Lesson Two](#): If we stay linked with those who are headed the same direction, we will stay with the task at hand. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front.

[Lesson Three](#): When the lead goose gets tired, it drops to the back and another goose flies the point position. Taking turns doing hard work benefits everyone

[Lesson Four](#): Geese honk from behind to encourage those in front. We respond to and benefit from encouragement from others.

[Lesson Five](#): When a goose gets sick or is wounded and falls out of formation, two geese fall out and follow the goose to help and protect. They stay until the bird is either able to fly or until it has died.



They then launch out continuing their journey by taking turns to be the front flyer. If we follow the example of geese, we will stand by each other in times of need.

Lessons from Geese

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TBwdLG4ljc>

Birthdays

Maurice Molan celebrated a special birthday on Wednesday

My brother, **John** celebrates his 82nd birthday today.

Dennis Cogle will celebrate his 91st birthday on Saturday

John Cahill will celebrate his 70th birthday on Saturday

Michael McInerney (Adelaide) will celebrate his 80th birthday on Saturday.

(On one occasion when Michael was attending a function the hosts thought three people were attending – Mick, Mack and Ernie!)

Come Away Day

The last **Come Away Day** for 2025 will be held at Holy Cross on **WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 19th**. The theme of the day is **'ONE CANDLE LIGHTS THE WAY ...'**. This is an opportunity to rest and reflect and to focus on the deeper meaning of our life journey as we approach the time of Advent. The day's program provides opportunities for prayer, silent 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 **3pm**. The suggested cost is \$30.00 or a donation according to your means. Registration is helpful for planning purposes. For any further details contact Sr Brigid cp on bridget.m64@gmail.com. Please put this Date in your diary and consider inviting a friend along to share the Come Away Day experience.

Out in the garden

Over recent weeks, Mike has done an amazing job in the gardens. With Jerome unable to continue what he did for so many years, Mike has stepped up, and with help from Peter Norman, the roses around the back look great.



Mike has carried dozens of wheelbarrow loads of upended weeds away from the gardens, and brought an equal number of barrow loads of mulch to the gardens. Tri got out on the mower on Tuesday afternoon and spent two and a half hours mowing the oval. It makes such a difference to the look of the property when this work is done.

We've also had our BBQ team working to finish the area they have worked so hard to create. Peter Norman is setting about creating a garden that will border the path from the carpark to the shrine, and Peter Day, back from England, has joined John Stretch and the 'A Team', in completing the painting of the Tavern.

Work in progress:

The new kerbing along the front of the Holy Cross property was completed on Tuesday afternoon, and it is a marked improvement. Following advice I have written to the Council to ask if the 90 + bollards can be removed, since they seem to serve no purpose now, and they make the mowing of that front lawn a very demanding and time-consuming task. We'll see what the response is to that request.

Looking towards Bupa and Tuckers Road



Looking west towards Church Road. This is the exit driveway,



Bro Ed

I made a delightful visit on Tuesday to Bro Ed Braden CP who is in a very impressive aged care home, 15 kilometres past Geelong. Ed is a Geelong 'boy' and he is most appreciative of the nearby support of his family. Kevin Hennessy is a frequent visitor. Kev is also being a 'Geelong boy'. It was great to spend time with Ed, who has always retained a keen interest in his Passionist brothers, and despite many significant health challenges over the years, Ed has retained his wonderful sense of humour and keen interest in people. It was obvious that Ed is loved by the staff, which is no surprise.

Property for rent

Two lovely women from our Holy Cross community are on the hunt for a new place to call home, a cheerful three-bedroom haven with a safe spot for one trusty car and rent that's kind, not scary.

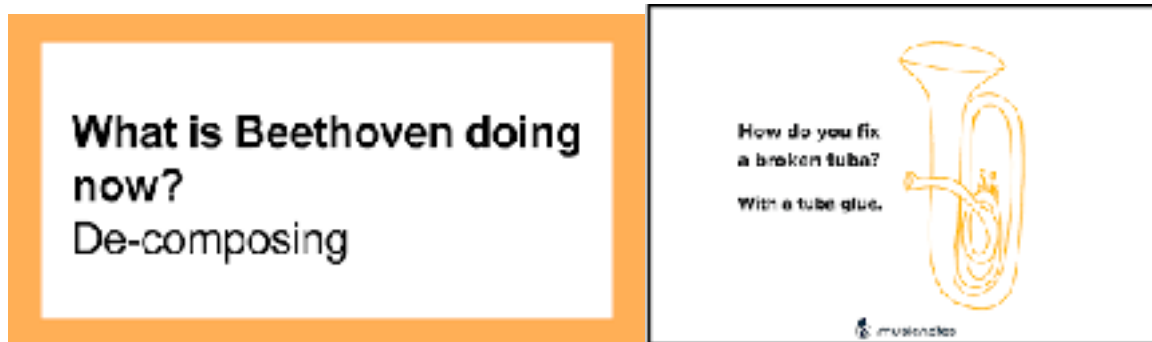
These women come with big hearts, responsible habits, and a knack for turning houses into homes. No pets or children, no parties unless you call a cuppa tea and

laughter a daily party! There will be a few of those, yet be assured peace will be kept. So, if you or someone you know, has a rental property looking for caring, reliable tenants, this could be a match made in real estate heaven. Burwood, Malvern, Hawthorn, Doncaster and surrounds are on the wish list, but they are open to possibilities.

Please contact Brian this week if you have such a property to rent or if you know of someone who does. Email: bttraynor@icloud.com

Humour

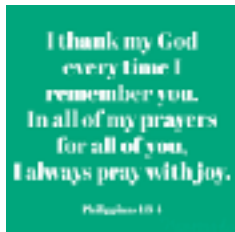




- The piano in the aquarium needed attention, so they called in the piano tuna.
- I wanted to learn how to play the organ, but it was only a pipe dream.
- The squeeze box is the best instrument there is, according to the experts.
- The person who invented the electric guitar must have been a livewire.
- Some violinists are so highly strung they should bow out.
- I dated a violinist once but I said no strings attached.
- Marvellous experience playing the bagpipes breathtaking!
- I wanted to sign up for a sitar course but there were too many strings attached.
- My clarinet has a good pitch. I can hit someone in the audience at 20 metres.

Prayers

We remember those who have died recently especially and those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially [Patricia McDonald](#), [Philip McDonald](#), [Christina Moore](#), [Anthony Zaia](#) and [Angelo Vigilante](#). We pray that all who have died 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 [Marist Brother Doug Walsh](#) fms who is in palliative care. Also,

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

Mass on line

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

God bless,

Brian