

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 306

19th December, 2025

Greetings,

Our apologies that some people are still receiving the newsletter. At the same time as I was having problems with bulk mail sent via iCloud, the Province changed its server system which did not affect me, but it has affected Erick, so several people for some mysterious reason, dropped off his 'sent' list. We hope to rectify this.

Because Christmas falls in this coming week, there will be no newsletter sent on Boxing Day (December 26th). **The next newsletter will be sent on January 2nd.**

Christmas hampers



As previously noted, we delivered a good number of hampers to Vinnies and several more to the Sacred Heart mission in St Kilda, where Sr Karen CP ministers. The mission would be grateful for any further hampers, so please donate if you are able, by Sunday (December 21st). Thank you.

Christmas Masses

Christmas Eve Carols and Mass: Holy Cross chapel.

On Christmas Eve: Carols 7.00pm and Mass at 7.30pm

This will be livestreamed:

https://youtube.com/live/Mi_PmiH_DU8?feature=share

On Christmas Day: Mass will be at 10.00am.



Who is doing what



Jerome doesn't dress up like this man on the left did, many years ago. He has had some more time in hospital recently and he has a number of medical appointments, but he is always positive. He is home and feeling much better.

Chris will begin a well-deserved holiday on Boxing Day.

Erick will be away for a week from Boxing Day

JD has a number of evening commitments in parishes for Reconciliation until Christmas.

Mike is in Adelaide assisting in Glen Osmond parish until December 29th.

Tri has had a busy time lately including the interviews and recording, some of which you have seen the link for in the

newsletter. Our Christmas meal will be on the night of Christmas Day, and we will be joined by Srs Brigid and Karen, and our brother from Endeavour Hills, Tuan Paul.

Fr Paul Mercieca CP

We received word on Wednesday morning that Paul collapsed in our community house ('The Fort'), in Oxley, Brisbane. Paul died despite the efforts of a doctor and ambulance personnel. Paul and Bro Charles who spent years at Holy Cross were brothers of Maltese heritage and born in Broken Hill. May Paul rest in peace.

Coffee Cart Day



This Sunday December 21st will be **Coffee Cart Day** after 10.00am Mass. The van will be around the back, and we to invite you after Mass, to come for a coffee and view the not yet completely renovated Tavern, and the nearly completed renovated BBQ area.

Importance notice - Newsletter

There will be no newsletter in Christmas week. Boxing Day is Friday December 26th. So there will be no newsletter that day. The next newsletter (307) after this one, will be on January 2nd.

We hope to rectify the problem of some people not receiving the newsletter. Each week it is sent early on Fridays, so if you have not received it by 9.00am, please let me know. This, of course will not apply on Boxing Day!

Charlene Nheu - Joy

This week we have a link for another Advent interview, this time with Charlene Nheu, who is a young parishioner of our Passionist St Paul Apostle, Endeavour Hills where Brendan Connell is parish priest. Charlene is also a member of our Passionist Retreat Team. Tri conducted the interview on the theme of Joy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XdNI0yYoA4>

Peace Prayer

Back in 1982, John Denver wrote and performed a beautiful reflection on peace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ea9U3E58HC8>

Pope Leo is continually calling for peace – may that start with us.

An inspiring and comforting song we know well, and a brilliant version of it.

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

Gerry Bond



Tri visits a few people on Tuesdays, and 93 year old Gerry Bond is one of them. Gerry is always positive and joyful. This week Gerry shared with Tri a beautiful home-made card he received from his great granddaughter. Gerry and Chris Mithen CP were at school together.

Funerals.



We celebrated two funerals this week – **Noel Smyth** on Monday and **Peter Owen** on Wednesday.

One of our Holy Cross family shared last Sunday that she had been a patient with Noel for 44 years. His family owned the Templestowe hotel and he grew up seeing his parent supporting the Passionists and the Blessed Sacrament community and he continued that support of us. The two central aisles of the cathedral were packed, and the generous, devoted and dedicated service Noel offered as a medical doctor for almost fifty years was celebrated. Noel was 74. Chris, Kevin Hennessy, Erick and myself concelebrated.



Peter Owen and Bernadette have been married for over 60 years and just a few years ago the lead our 'Come Away' team. Her eulogy was read by Tim Horlock and there could hardly ever have been a better eulogy: loving, honest and filled with the story of a devoted couple and an everyday family who suffered the tragic loss of a son to cancer, at age 25 and the pain of separation caused by Peter's advanced dementia.

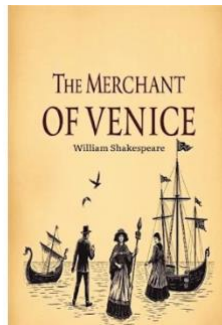
Another son, Paul, gave a humorous, and like Bernadette, honest and admiring testimony to his father who was multi-talented especially in music, a long time volunteer at Eastern Health palliative care and a deeply committed disciple of Jesus. Peter was aged 93.

Bondi



The tragedy of December 15th was a stark reminder of the challenges we face in promoting and living in peace, and the deeply unfair situation that Jewish people and so many others suffer from, being labelled and targeted by hatred.

They are each individual people with hopes and dreams like ours, but so often they are demonised and forced to live in fear.



Act 3 of 'William Shakespeare's play, 'The Merchant of Venice' reveals that an money lending agreement has been made between Antonio, a Christian merchant and Shylock, a Jewish money lender. The terms and conditions of the loan are simple: Antonio must repay his debt in full to Shylock within three months. If the debt is not repaid within that timeframe, Antonio must forfeit one pound of his own flesh to Shylock. Antonio and Shylock have known each other for a long time.

They had traded together but they despise one another. Shylock feels he has been discriminated against by Antonio and other Christians who display overt anti-Semitic views; when he is asked for money by Antonio he sees an opportunity to take revenge.



In his now famous speech in the play, Shylock explains the rationale behind the grotesque conditions of his contract with Antonio, arguing for his dignity against Semitic discrimination. Shylock challenged his Christian audience asking, are not all humans created equal?

"Like using fish as bait for fish, if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He has disgraced me, and cost me a fortune, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies, and what's his reason? I am a Jew!"

If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

- William Shakespeare

www.quotes.pics

Has not a Jew eyes? Has not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction”.

One way we can respond to the Bondi event is to determine personally to be mindful of generalisations that put people into boxes while not respecting either their dignity or their individuality. A way to peace is to reject personal bias and consider all peoples and every person to be a sister and brother. Jesus advised us: “I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me a drink; I had insufficient clothes and you gave me garments; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was sick and you came to see me”.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was ill and you looked after me.

Matthew 25.35-36



Please find letters from Denis Travers our Provincial and Giuseppe Adobati, our General, in response to the Bondi tragedy on Pages 16 & 17.

Advent – Love

During the Sundays of Advent we have focused on a theme for each week...Hope Peace and Joy. This coming Sunday we focus on **Love**.

love
CHANGES
Everything

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Some years ago I played the song “Love Changes Everything” during a parish mission session. Afterwards a woman complained to me, “That song should not be used in church. It does not mention God even once”. I replied, “St John’s gospel tell us that Jesus said, “God is Love”. After looking a bit stunned she walked away. In

the church we have so often complicated gospel love by putting the emphasis on rules, on do’s and don’ts, whereas Jesus made it rather simple. “Love one another as I have loved you”!

Nowhere is love better described than in St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul begins in Chapter 13 by saying, *"If I can speak in tongues or use the language of angels, but if I don't have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal"* That lady who spoke to me after the missions session was a noisy gong. She missed the whole point – Love changes everything!

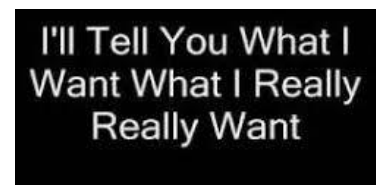


In the section we know so well, St Paul says, *"Love is patient and always takes the initiative; love is not envious, boastful, arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends"*.

What is left to be said? There are no limits. Love never stops loving! Advent loves calls to this love. It reminds us that the Christmas God comes among us not as an overpowering and dominant warlord, but a human baby, just like any of us. This baby was vulnerable, needy and helpless. This baby was born in a cattle trough, not in a palace. This baby, God-among-us, Emmanuel grew into the man Jesus, whose love knew no limits; the man of compassion and forgiveness, thus assuring us of our own human capacity to love; to be like him.



Unfortunately the word 'love' is often misused, so that people will say 'I love ice cream' or 'I love that car'. This is 'object-centred' love. People with low self esteem are often victims to this kind of love, and of course it is shallow because it is not relationship focused but focused on what 'I' want or need.



Projective love is idealistic and romantic. It is blind to faults. One person may see another person in an ideal way, and project on to them all that they want that person to be. Many famous fables or fairy stories reflect this kind of love. Projective love is possessive and it excludes others. It holds back and is a 'closed' love, because it seeks exclusivity believing the other person can meet every need. Because it is unrealistic, projective love eventually becomes disillusioned.



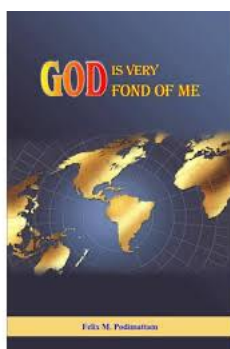


Unconditional love seeks to accept others 'as they are', even with their weaknesses. This kind of love is capable of sacrificing oneself for the other. It is the basis of the Christian message and it is symbolised in the cross. It is what allows a person to feel safe and secure because they know they are loved not just for

their externals (looks, gifts, possessions etc) which can change, but they are loved 'as they are' – for better or worse!

In the massacre at Port Arthur a man noticed Martin Bryant (the gunman) turn and point his gun at his wife lying on the floor. Instantly the man threw himself on top of his wife. He was shot dead. She survived. This is ultimate love. Unlike object-centred and projective love, this love focuses on the other person, not oneself. Only unconditional love allows the other person to grow. This love is more than a feeling. It is a decision and a commitment.

A man named Richard spent many years ministering to homeless men in inner-city Melbourne. One man he met grabbed his attention. Johnny was the quintessential hobo. He slept in bus shelters, carried his belongings in a shopping trolley, while



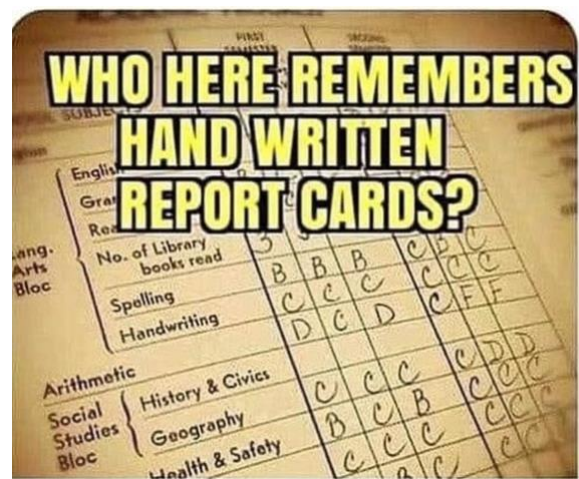

his body was covered in street grime. What stood out though amidst the misery and emptiness of Johnny's dog-eat-dog world was his deep sense of respect for others; his warm, peaceful countenance.

This inner beauty seemed so incongruous, so confounding, to Richard. His curiosity got the better of him and he posed a clumsy question: "Johnny, your life isn't exactly a bed of roses, yet you are you so content and so kind to others. How has that happened?" After a quiet, thoughtful pause, Johnny said gently, "God is very fond of me!" This is the message Jesus preached and acted out – that God was very fond of Samaritans, lepers, tax-collectors, prostitutes, public sinners. If we loved as Jesus loved, there would be no hatred. Let us remember Jesus final prayer - "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!"



Looking back....

Remember when people had diaries and got mad when someone read them? Now they put everything online and get mad when people don't.



YOU CAN CALL ME OLD ALL YOU WANT, BUT MY GENERATION MADE MUSIC THAT WILL NEVER BE MATCHED AGAIN



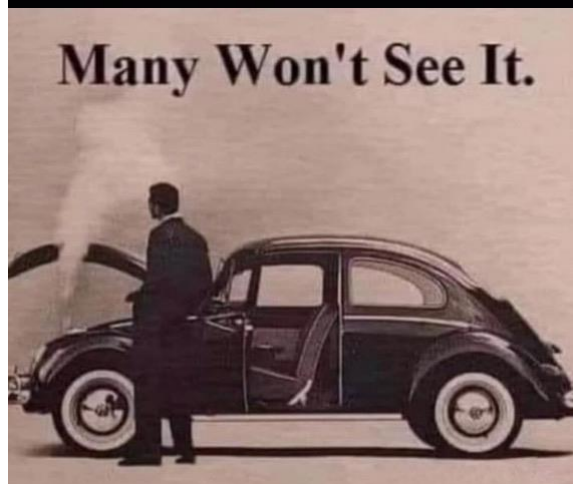
When you're young, your grandparents try to tell you their history, and you don't care because it doesn't interest you at the time. Later on, you wish you had written down what they said.

**"How much of an allowance did you get as a teenager per week?"
Me: I was allowed to live there.**





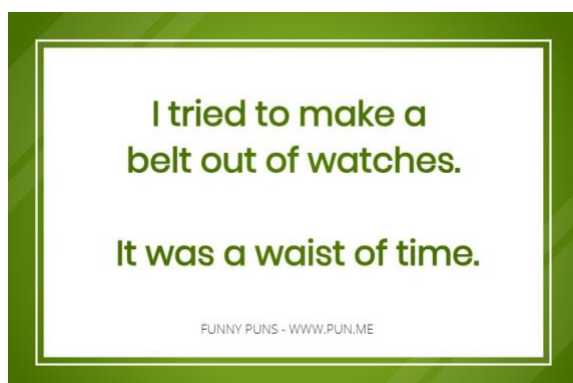
Hard to believe I once had a phone attached to a wall.



Free advice:

Don't let success go to your head, nor failure go to your heart.

Humour



I used to be a shoe
salesman until they
gave me the boot.

FUNNY PUNS - WWW.PUN.ME

I used to be a doctor,
but then I lost patients.

FUNNY PUNS - WWW.PUN.ME

I used to date a girl
with a lazy eye.

It turns out she was
seeing someone else
the whole time!

FUNNY PUNS - WWW.PUN.ME

If a judge loves the
sound of his own voice,
expect a long sentence.

FUNNY PUNS - WWW.PUN.ME

I don't trust stairs...

...they are always up to
something.



1960 Hits Renamed

Some songs from the 60's are having their title revised to accommodate aging baby boomers who can remember doing the "Limbo" as if it were yesterday. Here are some examples:



Mrs Brown you've got a lovely walker
Herman's Hermits



How can you mend a broken hip
Bee Gees



The first time ever I forgot your face
Roberta Flack



I can't see clearly now
Johnn Nash



Fifty Ways to Lose your lover
Paul Simon



Once, Twice, three times to the bathroom
The Commodores



A Whiter shade of hair
Procul Harem



You make me feel like sleeping
Leo Sayer



Denture Queen
Abba



Knock three times on the ceiling if you hear me fall
Tony Orlando



I am Woman hear me snore
Helen Reddy



It's my procedure and I'll cry if I want to
Leslie Gore



Christmas greetings

Because there will not be another newsletter for Christmas, the community would like to take this opportunity to extend our prayers and thoughts for a blessed Christmas.

We are sustained and nourished by the inspirational faith and fellowship of our Holy Cross family, and by the welcome and generosity extended to others. We are the recipients of wonderful support, care and generosity. We particularly want to acknowledge [Mayrose](#) our Retreat and Conference Centre manager, and [Cecilia](#) our Finance Officer, and each of the [Holy Cross Centre staff](#).

Our [A Team](#) respond to so many small jobs as well as undertaking more significant and demanding jobs. A major project of theirs in recent months has been the renovation of the Tavern led by [John Stretch](#) and advised by [Franca Cursio](#). One of the A Team, [Peter Day](#), is also a regular on the push mower, keeping our lawns looking nice. One of the two original 'A Team' members, [Vin Molloy](#), is retiring today (for the second time). Vin will still assist as community financial advisor, but at 93, he needs now to spend more time with his wife Clare. He has spent several months sorting out, labelling and tagging hundreds of keys for the house. They have their 'break up lunch today, so we'll include a photo after Christmas.

Peter Norman oversees the ground maintenance and as a result of his attentiveness, he puts in many hours every week. Peter has also taught many of our students to drive. Each week he also collects the flowers for the chapel, kindly donated by **Joe and Anne Toscano**. A team of ladies arrange them in vases each week. Every week **Carmen Zammit** washes and irons the altar linen. **Shirley Barnes** cooks twice a week for the community each week, and a few other people, including **Teresa Lim**, prepare, donate or cook for us on occasions. Teresa also arranges and looks after our altar cloths. We have missed her in recent weeks while she has been confined because of illness.

Our '**Come Away**' team led by **Sr Brigid CP** includes **Pam Storey, Kay Lewis, Lien Thai** and **Paolo Cheng**, has continued to offer opportunities for spiritual enrichment. Our small group of **Passionist Companions** meets faithfully and reminds us how strong and alive the Passionist charism is among so many committed Passionists who are not professed.

The **St Gabriel's Association** are an active, visible and generous group. Their personal contribution, their generosity and hard work has been invaluable to Holy Cross. **Bruno Petrocco** has been the key man over many years. He has a small band of willing helpers that have undertaken many tasks that have assisted the Association now led by **Joe Cursio**, and certainly assisted Holy Cross. A special mention is needed to acknowledge the amazing work **Vince Celestino** has undertaken at his own cost for years now, creating two car parks.

A group of women and men are rostered to assist with the liturgy as **readers** for the Saturday recorded Mass that Chris celebrates, and for Sunday Masses. **Tri** prepares the readings and the Power Point used at Mass every week, and he and a growing team of **Alida Valmorbida, Mirella Rao** and **Christian** display the Power Point at Mass. **Sr Brigid** prepares the Prayers of Intercession every week.

A very generous benefactor who wishes to remain anonymous, donates the coffee each month when the **Coffee Cart** is here, because he values the spirit of community we have, and he wants to see it increased. Another **benefactor couple** have contributed to several projects over the years, including the purpose and installation of air-conditioners in the Retreat Centre rooms and the chapel. Other benefactors such as the **Mattioli family** have assisted us with some large painting tasks and regularly, members of our Holy Cross community make generous donations to us. A special mention is due to **Tina Minichilli** who is the Province Risk Management Officer. She works closely with **Graeme Newcombe**, our community Safeguarding Officer to identify, eliminate or reduce safety risks. Tina is constantly visiting and assisting people who are unwell and networking to create and sustain relationships. She was the driving force behind the very successful fundraiser held in August.

The community is incredibly grateful for **Tim Horlock**. Tim is a great link among us for knowing what is needed, what is going on, supporting community building and so much more. His role as both funeral celebrant and funeral director has enriched funeral celebrations we have held at Holy Cross.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge and thank our professed brothers, **Jerome, Chris, Erick, Mike, JD** and **Tri**. They each serve the local community, the wider Holy Cross community and as various communities beyond Templestowe. We are a happy and well-bonded community. Although composed of different cultures and ages, we thrive on our faith and charism, as well as on respect, appreciation, fraternal support and humour. Our meal times always involve sharing and humour.

We will be a changed community in 2026. This has been the story of Holy Cross for many years. **Mike** is due for a holiday in February and following that he will be appointed to a new community (as yet unknown). **Tri** is to be ordained on Saturday May 30th at Holy Cross. Soon after that he will have a holiday in Vietnam and take up a new appointment (as yet unknown). We are awaiting the granting of visas to **Joseph Thang, Vincent Thang and Joseph Cu'ong**, who were here as postulants in mid 2023-mid 2024. It is expected that they will arrive sometime in January.

Christmas Blessing

May there be harmony in all your relationships.

May sharp words, envious thoughts and hostile feelings be dissolved.

May you give and receive love generously.

May this love echo in your heart like the joy of church bells.

May each person who comes into your life be greeted as another Christ.

May the honour given to the Babe of Bethlehem be that which you extend to every guest who enters your presence.

May the hope of this sacred season settle in your mind.

May it be a fountain of courage for you.

May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children be awakened within you.

May it lead you to renewed appreciation of what you too easily take for granted.

May you daily open the gift of your life

and be grateful for the hidden treasures it contains.

May the coming year be one of good health for you.

May you have energy and vitality.

May you be well in body, mind and spirit.

May you keep your eye on the Star within you

and trust this presence to guide and direct you each day.

May you go often to the Bethlehem of your heart

and visit the One who offers peace.

*And may you bring this peace into our world. **Amen***

"If you look for Me at Christmas" (Author Unknown)

If you look for Me at Christmas, you won't need a special star -
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem, I'm right there where you are.
You may not be aware of Me amid the celebrations -
You'll have to look beyond the stores and the decorations.
But if you take a moment from your list of things to do
And listen to your heart you'll find I'm waiting there for you.
You're the one I want to be with, you're the reason that I came,
And you'll find Me in the stillness as I'm whispering your name.
Love, Jesus

Prayers

We remember those who have died recently especially [Fr Paul Mercieca CP](#), as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially [Tim O'Toole CP](#), [Maree Boden](#), [Anna Cahill](#), [Julie Duncan](#), [Grace Sheehan](#), [Julie Therese Duncan](#), [Stephen Ralph](#), 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: we especially remember [Lucia Isgro](#), [Pam Storey](#), [Fr Jeff Foale CP](#), [Gerry Bond](#), [Anne Woon](#), [Fergus Ryan](#), [Mary and Dennis Cogle](#), [Jo Ridgeway](#), [Max McMahon](#), [Nina Conti](#), [Monica Sleeman](#), [Maria Di Giantomasso](#), [Lisa Iverach](#), [Caroline Hagedorn](#), [Kate Lenic](#), [Cate Sweeney](#), [Fr Brendan Lane](#), [Anthona Henderson](#), [Joanne Moorcroft](#), [Dr Peter Heffernan](#), [Bob Hallam](#), [Elizabeth Walsh](#), [Billy Uasike](#), [Nancy Reynolds](#), [Graham Burke](#), [Maureen Barns](#), [Denise Egan](#), [Marilyn Cilmi](#), [Alexander Lim](#), [Bernadette Owen](#), [Caroline Meade](#), [Carol Battistella](#), [Anne Burke](#), [Rex & Jan Cambry](#), [Jeanelle Bergin](#), [Luke Norden](#), [Rod Gorfine](#), [Zoe & Sophia Chung](#), [Pam Gartland](#), [Patricia Keeghan](#), [Peter Barry](#), [Doris Castro](#), [Julia Cantone](#), [Helen McLean](#), [Phil Drew](#), [Bro Jerome CP](#), [Greg Agosta](#), [Lesley Yang](#), [Anne Jenkins](#), [Errol Lovett](#) and [Fr Mark Robin Hoogland CP](#)

God bless,

Brian



THE TRAGEDY OF THE BONDI SHOOTINGS

Over the weekend Australians were subjected to violence and death along Bondi Beach, Sydney. Normally we simply identify ourselves as 'Australians' and in fact widely celebrate our multi-cultural diversity. We are unaccustomed to adding any culturally or religiously based adjectives to our essential identity. But the prejudice and terror unleashed on our fellow citizens merely because they live their Jewish faith with pride is horrific and deserving of our strongest condemnation.

We often preach of the little acts that gently build God's reign in our world. Sadly, in the violence at Bondi we see too that prejudice, ignorance and hate filled memories can also lead to acts which break down harmony and our sense of a common humanity.

We offer our support to the Jewish community at this time. Many of us have friends and associates who share their Jewish faith with pride. Their peace and sense of security will be threatened at what should be a time of happiness and festivities.

No doubt these murders will lead to further security processes and perhaps other changes in the way we live our freedom. Further gun control or gun ownership scrutiny may be a helpful action, but the deeper need is advocacy for tolerance.

As Passionists let our message - be it in preaching or lived example - be one of inclusion and acceptance.

Overseas violence resonates in every setting, our message must be one that builds harmony and tolerance in the face of destructive messaging and unreflective prejudices.

Father Giuseppe our Superior General has written to us today, I whole heartedly endorse his message and suggest it is shared in our parishes and on our social networks for all to see.

May God bless you.

Denis Travers C.P.

Provincial

15 December 2025

Dear Fr. Denis,

Greetings from Sts. John and Paul's, Rome.

On behalf of the General Council and in my own name, I wish to express our deep closeness and heartfelt support to you, to the confreres of the Holy Spirit Province, and to all the people entrusted to your pastoral care in Australia following the tragic shootings on Bondi Beach the other day.

We are profoundly grieved by this senseless act of violence and by the loss of innocent lives. Such events once again expose the painful reality of growing hatred, fear, and fragmentation among peoples—realities that strike at the very heart of our shared humanity and wound the hope of peaceful coexistence.

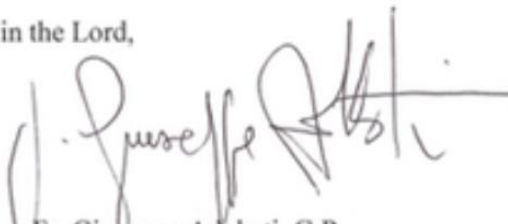
At moments like these, the Passionist vocation takes on renewed urgency. As sons of St. Paul of the Cross, called to keep alive the *Memoria Passionis*, we stand before the Cross of Christ where all violence is unmasked and all hatred is overcome by self-giving love. In the crucified and risen Lord, we recognize both the depth of human suffering and God's definitive response: reconciliation, mercy, and peace.

In this holy season of Advent, as the Church prepares to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, our sorrow is accompanied by a renewed call to conversion of hearts. Advent invites us not only to wait, but to witness—to become artisans of peace, preachers of harmony, and signs of hope in a world so often marked by division and fear. The peace that Christ establishes through his death and resurrection is not fragile or fleeting; it is a peace rooted in justice, compassion, and forgiveness.

Please be assured of our prayers for the victims and their families, for those traumatized by this great tragedy, and for the entire nation of Australia at this difficult time. We also pray for you and your confreres, that you may be strengthened in your mission to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, and to continue offering a prophetic witness of peace, reconciliation, and unity.

May the Lord who comes to dwell among us in humility and love sustain you with his consolation, and may Mary, Queen of Peace, keep you under her maternal protection.

With fraternal affection and solidarity in the Lord,



Fr. Giuseppe Adobati, C.P.
Superior General