

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 307

2nd January, 2025



Greetings to each of you for 2026.

Funeral today

The Funeral Mass for Fr. Paul Mercieca, C.P., will be held on Friday 2nd January 2026 at St. Brigid's Church, Marrickville, commencing at 10.30 a.m. (AEDT). The link for the livestream is:

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@stbrigidsmarrickvilleparis9571/streams>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MarrickvilleCatholic>

A Team end of year break up lunch

On Friday December 19th, the 'A Team' after a morning of work, cooked a simple BBQ lunch and were joined by some A Team extras (Peter Norman, Bruno, Vince, Pino) and members of the community to acknowledge a year of good work and good fun.



Starting from the front left....Tri, Peter Day, Des Rigby, Joe Senzo, Graeme Newcombe, Vince Celestino, Bruno Petrocco, Pino Facciolo, Brian, Peter Norman, Vin Molloy, Jack Brolly, Ed Porad and John Stretch. Erick took the photo, Chris had returned to work at YTU and Maurice Molan was absent.

Christmas Crib



The crib in our chapel this year, was designed and created by [Tri](#)

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve was very cool, especially with a strong wind. Our concern about the weather was the major factor in our decision to have Carols and Mass inside. We know this disappointed a number of families but the feedback from those present was very positive. The chapel was filled to overflowing; the music was great and there was a very strong sense of community. Thank you to everyone who came. Tri gave a very passionate and challenging homily.

There are a few photos below.....





Peter (Power Point) Chris & Dominic

Tri – deacon and homilist



A very slim and athletic Santa!

Santa and friends at the end of Mass

Christmas morning

Morning Mass was quieter but it was a peaceful atmosphere aided by Chris' lovely singing.

Community Christmas

The community celebrated in the evening on Christmas Day. We were delighted to have Srs Brigid and Karen join us together with Tuan Paul from Endeavour Hills and one of Erick's sisters, Mediatrice. Brendan Connell CP and Jose Matthew also joined us for a time. We had fun with the exchange of Kris Kringle presents and were grateful to be surrounded by generous gifts from members of our Holy Cross family.

Another interview

Erick interviewed Ray and Kay Lewis just before Christmas, as part of the recent interviews he and Tri have recorded. Ray and Kay reveal what for them has been a wonderful marriage built on supreme trust in one another, an appreciation of and respect for their differences and in their own words "I couldn't live without her" and "I love him to bits". The link is: <https://youtu.be/uPWDrtScPKs>

Coffee Cart Sunday – December 21st

We held the Coffee Cart around the back two weeks ago, so that interested people could see the progress of the renovated Tavern which is not yet fully furnished, and the new area created at the far end, for BBQ's. We had around 80 people enjoy coffee, cakes and chatting.





Singalongs community and separation



Jesse Rifkin performs at piano bars in Washington and he wrote an interesting reflection on his experience published in 'The Age' on Tuesday. Often he invites the audience - 'everybody' join in and with iconic songs like Piano Man, We will Rock You, American Pie, Take Me Home Country Roads, Hey Jude, Sweet Caroline etc there is a universal response. He has noted however that with many contemporary songs only half know the chorus and in some cases it is 'all the girls' or 'all the guys' who sing. Rifkin has noted that subgroups favour a song because of its message, and in some cases that message is not important or attractive to another group, so instead of everybody joining in, these songs can become divisive.

Rifkin's point is that by not singing communally we can lose the emotional experience of feeling bonded with those from different groups or ideologies. This can have damaging effects on our wider experience of genuine humanity. He refers to surveys in the last two decades that reveal Americans are increasingly unlikely to have cross-ideology friendships or to live near neighbours who disagree politically. Some refuse to join-in with those who think or act differently from them.

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This behaviour is a result of focusing on our differences, rather than our similarities. We are different, as Kay and Ray admit in their interview reflection, but that is what enriches a relationship and builds community. In a true community we include those

who are different from us because they contribute something that we don't have. The secret of true community is the appreciation and love of difference. We are at risk in our internet society of listening only to what we already know or believe, and not listening to opposing views that could stretch or enrich our thinking. Cardinal Newman wrote, "to live is to grow; to grow is to change, and to become perfect is to have changed often".

This article for me highlighted the danger of 'standing still'. We know the Chinese proverb, "fear not going slowly, fear only standing still". If we do not reach out across divides, we fail to learn and we fail to grow.



Many issues are complex and even after studying and exploring them we can still be uncertain. That is far more healthy than becoming so fixed that we will not listen to other voices or other opinions which could help us understand better and help us to

be more appreciative of difference. A clear example is that to suggest the current debate in Australia around anti-Semitism is simple, is naive. Rather than taking up a fixed or closed position we need first to be citizens of the world and appreciate that history has given us an extremely complex



situation, and that what we must have as priority, is an attitude of dignity and respect for every person, and compassion for the many innocent people caught up in situations that are not of their own making.



It is interesting how so many people forget Jesus was Jewish. He was a Jew who healed the child of a Roman, and cured a Samaritan leper. He welcomed a tax-collector, assured the outcast woman at the well that she belonged and washed the feet of his disciples. Isn't that a model for how to treat others?

Wouldn't it help if we could all sing a chorus in unison. There must be such a song. This is one example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqvKDCP5-xE>

Epiphany....4th January



The magi as they are called, were astrologists or nature worshippers. They are only mentioned in Matthew's gospel and he does not tell us they were kings; nor how many Magi there were. These 'wise men' came to Bethlehem and were able to find Jesus by following their astrologist tradition. They followed a star!

The fact that they found Jesus challenges us, because many people within the Christian tradition never really find Jesus....not the real Jesus who was friend of sinners and outcasts, full of forgiveness and compassion – welcoming of everybody; They don't find the Jesus who talked about the kingdom of God as being like a party that includes everybody, both friend and stranger. Although the image that Jesus used often – that life in his kingdom is like a big feast that everyone is invited to join, many Christians want to exclude those who sin seriously, from the feast so, like many religious leaders in Jesus' own time - they miss the point entirely.



In the Acts of the apostles, Luke records St Peter saying, "I have come to see that God has no favourites; anybody of any nationality who seeks God and does what is right, is acceptable (to God)" This was a wonderful insight for Peter. He came to realise that every person is special to God, not just the people of his own Jewish tradition. He came to the incredible recognition that God does not have favourites – everyone is God's favourite!

Some years ago a scientist named Loren Eiseley told a story about something that changed his life. One night he was unable to sleep, so he got up early in the morning and went for a walk along the seashore. As he looked down the beach, he saw in the distance, a man throwing things into the ocean. As he got closer, he called out, "Good morning! What are you doing?" The man looked up and replied, "I am throwing starfish back into the ocean because the tide is going out, and if I don't throw them into the sea they will die.





Loren said "But there are many kilometres of beach and hundreds of starfish all along it. You won't be able to make a difference!" The man listened quietly. Then he bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves, and then he said "I've made a difference for that one!" The scientist was shocked by this beautiful answer. He realised that he had become an observer of life, whereas the star thrower was living life, **and** making a difference. He also realised that this was what the Christian religion taught – that every single person is important to God. The star thrower had created an epiphany – a manifestation of God.

Epiphanies are not something we think about; they are experiences that wake us up or change us. The feast of the Epiphany tells us that from the very beginning Jesus is someone to be personally experienced, not someone to be mentally agreed upon, proven or argued about. The feast celebrates that anyone from East or West can discover Jesus and know his love.



At Christmas we celebrated the message of the angels...'Peace on Earth and Good will to all people'. On this feast of the Epiphany we celebrate the importance and dignity of every person, wherever they come from, whatever their gifts or lack of gifts. If we want to, we can be like the star thrower: we can make a difference by welcoming and accepting others, whoever they are.

God's favourite

By seeing each person as special and treating them that way, we are reflecting how God sees us – that we are each God's favourite. That is how we can make a difference. We never know how people come to

discover or know Jesus, but if the astrologers could find him by following a star, anything is possible.

Let us be a star for others so that they can find Jesus through us, and let us be star-throwers, doing what we can to make a difference



History repeats itself....



"Scientific breakthroughs and technological innovations characterized the post war and post Spanish flu epidemic, earning it the nickname "the Roaring Twenties. The invention of radio, television, automobiles and aeroplanes transformed society. Yet, these advancements often led to misplaced confidence in materialism, side-lining virtues like temperance and morality. Consumerism thrived, and spiritual values were neglected. It was a time marked by chaos and dangerous ambition, where humanity wrestled with the question of where true authority resides". (All Saints Anglican Church, Clifton, 2025)

Retail analyst Victor Lebow stated in 1955: "Our enormous productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption".



Aldous Huxley critiqued consumerism in works like *Brave New World*, suggesting it leads to a superficial society obsessed with instant gratification and neglecting deeper values like spirituality.

Jesuit priest John F. Kavanaugh, author of *Following Christ in a Consumer Society: The Spirituality of Everyday Life*, wrote, "The more we try to ground our identities in external possessions or triumphs... the less we find underneath".



Cosmologist Brian Swimme claims that children today are more influenced by ads on television than they are by religion. Their spiritual development is replaced by materialism. Before entering first grade and before entering in any way into religious ceremonies, a child will have soaked up 30,000 advertisements".

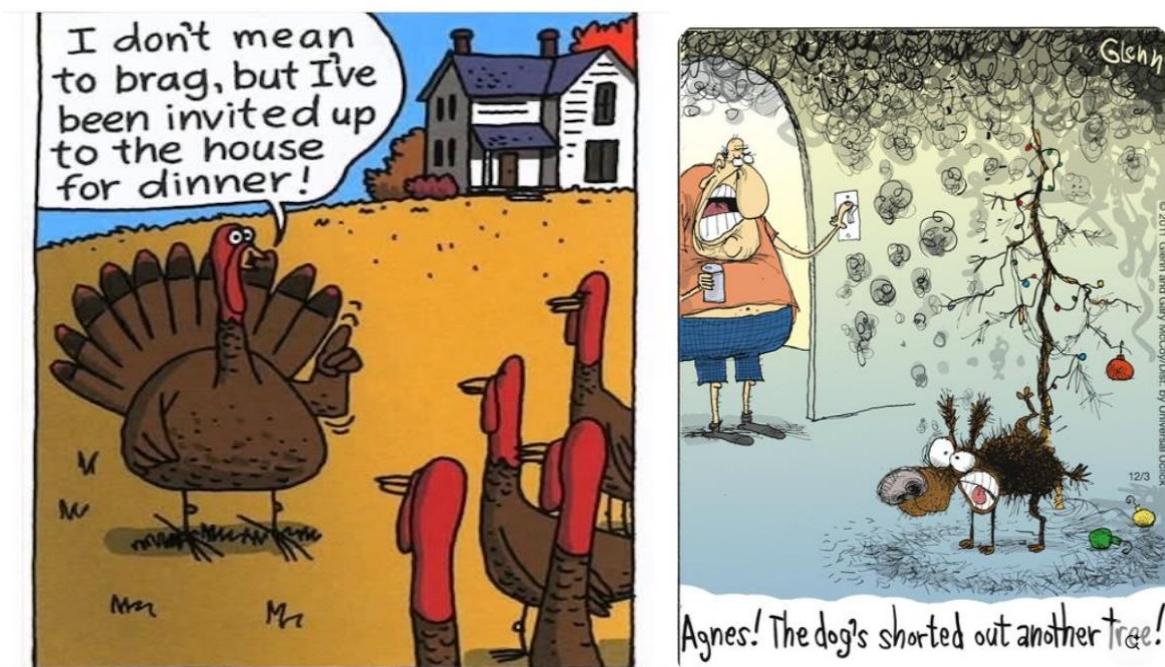
Writer Will Rogers said, "Too many people spend money they haven't earned, to buy things they don't want, to impress people they don't like,"

Author Kathleen Norris claimed, "Consumerism is our idolatry, the heart of our illusions of power, security, and self-sufficiency, which translate into rape of the environment."

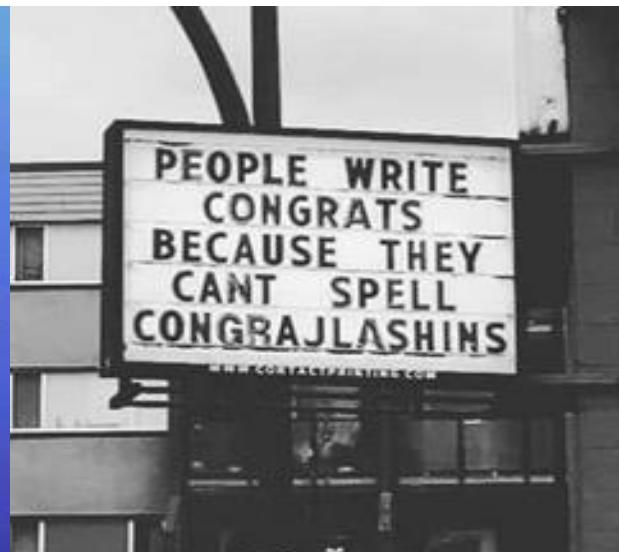
What will we focus on in 2026?

(From All Saints Anglican Church, Clifton, 2025 bulletin, December 2025)

Humour



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



**MY WIFE ASKED ME WHY I SPOKE SO SOFTLY IN THE HOUSE.
I SAID I WAS AFRAID MARK ZUCKERBERG WAS LISTENING!
SHE LAUGHED.
I LAUGHED.
ALEXA LAUGHED.
SIRI LAUGHED.**

House for rent. 5 minutes from the beach. 8 seconds if you fall.



The three hardest things to say are:

1. I was wrong
2. I need help
3. Worcestershire Sauce



BOSS: DO YOU BELIEVE IN LIFE AFTER DEATH?
EMPLOYEE: CERTAINLY NOT! THERE'S NO PROOF OF IT.
BOSS: WELL, THERE IS NOW. AFTER YOU LEFT EARLY YESTERDAY TO GO TO YOUR UNCLE'S FUNERAL, HE CAME HERE LOOKING FOR YOU.

My email password was hacked again. It's the third time I've had to rename my dog

This is what irony means. You buy an electric car to save the planet and a tree kills it!



I'VE BEEN SOBER NOW 43 DAYS



NOT IN A ROW OR ANYTHING, JUST IN TOTAL.

Push to open.

If that does not work pull.

If both do not work, try the actual entrance to your left.

Whoever put

the S in fastfood is a marketing genius.



Prayers

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all of my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.
Philippians 1:3-4

We remember those who have died recently especially **Jo Ridgeway** who died on New Year's Eve, as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially **Maureen Mathews, Tom Butler, Norma Norris, and Michele Salerno**. We pray that all who have died, have found joy in God's eternal presence.

We also pray for members of our Holy Cross family who are coping with illness and all who care for them: we especially remember

Mary Cougle, Dennis Cougle, Pam Storey, Lucia Isgro, Fr Jeff Foale CP, Gladys Bardini, Marie Spowart, Jo Ridgeway, Max McMahon, Bob Hallam, Fergus Ryan, Gerry Bond, Anne Woon, Monica Sleeman, Nina Conti, Lisa Iverach, Billy Uasike, Maria Di Giantomasso, Caroline Hagedorn, Kate Lenic, Cate Sweeney, Doris Castro, Joanne Moorcroft, Fr Brendan Lane, Anthona Henderson, Dr Peter Heffernan, Elizabeth Walsh, Denise Egan, Nancy Reynolds, Graham Burke, Maureen Barns, Bernadette Owen, Marilyn Cilmi, Alexander Lim. Caroline Meade, Carol Battistella, Anne Burke, Rex & Jan Cambry, Jeanelle Bergin, Patricia Keeghan, Luke Norden, Rod Gorfine, Zoe & Sophia Chung, Pam Gartland, Peter Barry, Julia Cantone, Helen McLean, Bro Jerome CP, Phil Drew, Greg Agosta, Lesley Yang, Anne Jenkins, and Errol Lovett,



Chris has sent the link to the Epiphany Mass early this week.
The link is: <https://vimeo.com/1150545208?share=copy>

We send you warm wishes for a joyful New Year.

Brian

