

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 309

16th January, 2025

Roadworks

On Tuesday contractors for Manningham Council began building up and resurfacing Serpells Road. Unfortunately we were not given any advance notice, nor any timeline for the work to be completed. They have begun at the Tuckers Road 'join' and are working along the street. For those coming to Mass on Sunday or to Holy Cross for the next week, the safest way to get here is to come up Smiths Road (off Reynolds Road) and enter directly into the car park, or access from Tuckers Road is now OK. W

A big group

The Disciples of Jesus Summer Retreat was a big affair with 106 participants here for a week. They were a great group to have here – joyful, helpful and respectful. Here is a photo of them taken in the Holy Cross chapel.



Thank you

To the Communities at Holy Cross and Our Lady of the Pines, a very sincere "Thank You" for your kindness and support. Your attendance at the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Life of Brian Gesell, and your condolences have been comforting for both myself and my children. I hope your New Year is Graceful and Peaceful. Sue Gesell

Congratulations

Rex and Jan Cambry have been on our prayer list for quite some time; Rex for cancer treatment and Jan for memory loss. Next Thursday, 22nd January, they celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary and they are living their marriage commitment in a profound way with a deep love for and appreciation of one another. We send sincere congratulations and prayers on a wonderful milestone.

Holidays

Chris has been away camping this week – away from the bushfires.

Tri left for a short holiday on Tuesday afternoon. He is travelling with a diocesan priest friend and looking forward to seeing a little more of Australia.

JD will leave for two weeks holiday today (Friday). He is travelling with his brother who is an Oblate, living in Camberwell.

Mike will holiday in Vietnam from February 6th

Coming up



Tomorrow (Saturday) **Chris** will celebrate his 50th profession as a Passionist. This is our major milestone event and comes with the opportunity of a Province sponsored sabbatical, which Chris will have to work out with the President of YTU! He completed a three month sabbatical in late 2019, just a few months before COVID-19 so he might delay this for a while. On Saturday (24th) the community will celebrate with Chris and on Sunday 24th, the Coffee Cart will be here to enable everyone to acknowledge Chris' long term commitment.

Chris and his classmate, Joachim Rego who completed 12 years as Superior General of the Passionist Congregation in October 2024, will celebrate in Sydney on Monday February 2nd. with a number of Passionists with whom they shared time on the Provincial Council, The current Provincial Council, of whom Chris is 1st Consultor, will meet that Monday and Tuesday.



Chris has endeared himself to all at Holy Cross over many years. He undertook theological studies here and was ordained in 1981. He served as deacon that year at St Ives in Sydney, and ministered in Terrey Hills parish, and in 1982 he was appointed to Hobart. It was while he was there that the Provincial of the time, Jerome Crowe, a Scripture scholar, asked Chris if he would agree to undertake

Scripture studies at the Pontifical Institute in Rome and Jerusalem. Chris was grateful for this opportunity and along the way he learned Italian to a very high level as well as French and German and added Biblical languages like Hebrew and Greek and several other Scriptural-related languages. If you want to read Egyptian hieroglyphs, you know who to ask!

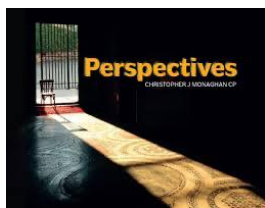
Of course he achieved a very high score in his exams and returning to Australia in 1987, Chris took up a teaching responsibility at the Yarra Theological Union, based at Holy Cross and has since acquired a doctorate. He has been involved with YTU ever since then and has been President since 2009. Apart from the years 2001-2008 when he was community leader at Endeavour Hills, Chris has lived at Holy Cross.

His 8 life principles say so much:



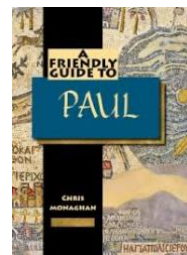
- 1) Live you life with passion
- 2) Try to bring some joy into the life of another person each and every day
- 3) Be patient with yourself - you can't get it right first time overtime
- 4) Leave the world a better place because you were here
- 5) Find your own path, the way that it right for you
(St Bede's College motto where Chris attended is: "Per Vias Rectas" 'By Right Paths')
- 6) Life is not a spectator sport
- 7) Don't be scared to ask for help - you'd be surprised how many people are happy to be your mentor is you are prepared to learn
- 8) Live your life generously - it will come back in ways that you do not expect!

Chris has over 400 videos on Vimeo at <https://vimeo.com/user109760034>



These are mostly weekly homilies he has provided without interruption since COVID-19 put us in to Lockdown. There are many of his talks throughout the 'pages' of the internet. Apart from academic books and articles, Chris has produced two small books, 'See with the eyes of the Heart' and 'Perspectives', which have a beautiful written reflection on each page, with an accompanying scriptural quotation and stunning photograph.

Chris produced for Garrett Publishing some simple guides to the gospels and St Paul which have been highly valuable for high school students. This brings to mind an amusing incident about eighteen months ago. It is not hard to imagine what it must be like for Chris to be sitting at the back of the community chapel each morning, listening to others of us in the community offering reflections on the readings. One morning, when Mass was finished, Chris took the opportunity to enlarge on what Matthew had meant in the gospel text that had been spoken about during the homily. After about two minutes, Tri, who was sitting next to Chris and getting hungry, tapped him on the shoulder and said, "You have done a lot of study, Fr Chris"!



As is well known, Chris has an incredibly wide variety of talents, scholar, author, musician, artist, photographer, skier, marathon runner, bike rider, lead-lighting artist, juggler, bee-keeper, general fix-it man, mono-cycle rider, computer whiz and several others. He enjoys camping outdoors and feeds a flock of different variety of birds each morning and the ducks who live within the former orchard dam area, which he has cultivated. Each morning that quiet visit to the dam

results in a daily reflection with an associated biblical quote and photograph.

We congratulate Chris on fifty years of Passionist brotherhood, on the generous use of his gifts, of his Biblical expertise and the sharing of his faith, experience and knowledge to so many diverse groups over so many years. He has been and remains a treasure for our Holy Cross family. Ad multos annos!

Joachim Rego CP



Joachim arrived in Australia in 1969 at age 15 from Burma (now known as Myanmar) with his family, who settled in Marrickville. Being musicians, the family quickly became involved in the parish. Joachim entered the Passionists at the same time as Chris and completed his theological studies at YTU. He has never been appointed to Holy Cross since then. After ordination Joachim served in Hobart as a hospital chaplain (until 1985) and then accepted a request to be a founding missionary of the Passionists in India, where he served as novice master for the maximum six month period that was allowed.

From there he accepted another request to minister in Papua New Guinea for four years. Joachim served for eighteen years! His time there included two years of formation ministry in Irian Jaya. At that time transport was a seven minute flight for the 100 kilometres trip from Vanimo (population 12,000) in the far north west of PNG to the capital Irian Jaya capital, Jayapura (population 412,000, 100 kilometres west of Vanimo). Now the journey can be undertaken by car. To prepare for this ministry Joachim learned Bahasa Indonesia.



For most of his time in PNG, Joachim served in Vanimo diocese, where as well as parish and retreat ministry for clergy and religious, he served as community leader, novice master and formator. He served as Regional Vicar for PNG for the maximum eight years (two terms). He also established a house of prayer in Weewak, 280 kilometres south east of Vanimo. He was elected and served as President of the Conference of Major Superiors during his time there.



Joachim returned to parish ministry at Marrickville, Australia in 2003 and in 2006 undertook a 'one hundred day' sabbatical in San Antonio, USA. One outcome of this sabbatical was the writing of some music and the subsequent release of a CD titled 'Whispers of God's Love'. Given Kevin Hennessy shared the sabbatical time, it is no surprise that one of the songs on the CD is titled 'Praise God!' Joachim was elected Provincial in 2007. One year after his re-election, he was elected Superior General of the Congregation in 2012 and served the maximum two terms in Rome, until 2024, when he returned to Marrickville.

Joachim has lived a rich and varied ministry and his quiet humble nature has been a wonderful gift to the Province and the Congregation. We salute him. Ad multos annos.

Paul Mercieca CP – Always Room at the Inn

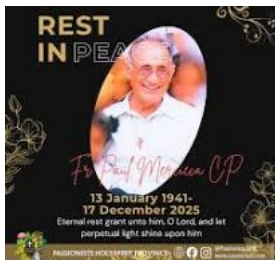


Tri told the story at Christmas Eve Mass about the children's Christmas play where in response to Joseph's pleas for accommodation for Mary, himself and the soon to be born child, the child playing the inn-keeper showed his compassion.

He said, "I'm sorry there is no room in the Inn to stay, but you can come in and have a cup of tea if you like". We'll come back to this story.

On December 21st last year, Bro Charles Mercieca brother (also a Passionist) Paul, died in our community in Oxley, Brisbane. Paul was one the early residents at Holy Cross having come here from Adelaide in 1965 to continue his studies for ordination. Paul's parents, were Maltese, and Paul and older brother Charlie, grew up in Broken Hill. There were ten siblings and sadly, four of them died between 2017-2018, which was a great cross for Paul.

In his funeral homily, Fr Joachim Rego CP said about Paul *"There was an attractive simplicity about Paul; he was always himself, a man with a compassionate heart*



after the heart of Christ – a heart that felt compassion for people in their sorrows, struggles and pain. In these special and privileged moments with people, Paul didn't preach sermons, but he was present with people, supporting them with prayer and engaging with them in empathy, seeking to 'feel with' them and 'walk in their shoes'. He loved being with people and was always keen to accept hospitality even if it meant

double or even triple booking a meal on the same night!"

Joachim continued, *"As a priest, Paul was a true pastor. He genuinely cared for all types of people, regardless of their status, nationality, colour or religion. He was a friend and pastor to all, especially the battlers, the strugglers, and the newcomers (migrants). Paul was much loved by the people in PNG. He endeared himself to them by his simplicity, his kindness and care, his spiritual and material support and, above all, by his humanity. Nothing was too much when it concerned the welfare of the people: ferrying the sick, day and night, from the village to the hospital; visiting the sick in their homes and in the hospital; regular visits and pastoral care of prisoners; teaching, playing with families which brought them so much joy; leading the people in prayer, the Sacraments, and the Eucharist which sometimes involved hours of walking to get to churches; providing material assistance to the many poor and needy.*



Paul was truly a missionary, bringing Jesus and his message to the people, not only in word, but, like Jesus, allowing his compassionate heart to feel pity for the people and helping them in their need. Paul brought much joy and laughter, comfort and strength, welcome and hospitality wherever he was. True to his second name, Emmanuel, Paul embodied the face and presence of God”.



He was awarded an OBE for his wonderful ministry in PNG and he received this personally from Queen Elizabeth 2nd,

Back to the children’s play and the inn-keeper’s welcome. Tom McDonough CP offered this story of Paul. *“When in February 2009, I arrived in Port Moresby one mid-afternoon, Fr Paul, then Parish Priest of our St Joseph’s Parish, met me at the airport to take up my new appointment as community leader and parish priest. As we drove home, Paul said he had something to tell me. “Of course,” I replied, antenna twitching. “I let a family into the Presbytery last night, to stay, it will only be for a few days”, he said.*

They were a Sri Lankan family, the parents and their two children, a girl in Year 8, and a little boy not yet started school. The daughter was very, very bright, and had been invited to join a summer school on the resort island of Laloki. Unbeknownst to the family, a very well-connected businessman, also attended, and drugged and abused her each day. The girl’s father was employed in one of the abuser’s businesses.

When the family found out, even before they went to the Police, the Police and the man responsible turned up at their home and threatened them not to report the abuse. They did so anyway, the Police took their passports and the businessman threatened to kill them. They fled their home and went to many shelters and churches on the Sunday seeking some help. They were turned away by everyone except Fr. Paul, who happened to be in the Presbytery when they came to the gate.

The family actually stayed for three and a half years. Never going outside except after dark. We turned away people who arrived at the gate looking for their ‘relatives’. We drove them to the United Nations to get them official Refugee status. The parishioners provided food. My sister’s high school provided a computer and some lessons for self-schooling by the girl.

After almost three years in vain applying for refugee status in Australia, we swapped and applied to New Zealand. Three months later, they were welcomed in New Zealand, completed an orientation program, a house was provided, work was found for the parents and schooling for the children. The daughter, who had been teaching herself was put straight into Year 11.

She passed her HSC and enrolled at University in Human Rights Law. None of which would have happened, and all if it did happen, it was because Fr Paul said: “Of course we have room, come in!”

Much thanks to Tom for this valuable insight into Paul’s life and ministry.

Signs of Departure

Pope Leo sets a different path on governing the Vatican and Curia.

[Massimo Faggioli](#)

January 8, 2026



Eight months after his election, having completed his first trip abroad, Pope Leo XIV has given us a pretty good sense of his theological and political visions and his fundamental continuities with Pope Francis. But he has also shown signs of departure from his predecessor, especially in how he governs the Vatican and the Curia. This has always been an important factor when it

comes to understanding a pope—but given Francis’s personal governing style and Leo’s U.S. roots, it takes on even greater significance.

The day after his election, Leo announced that he had provisionally confirmed the



members of the Roman Curia *donec aliter provideatur*—“until it is otherwise provided.” He later followed with several important appointments. The first, in July, was naming sixty year old Archbishop Thibault Verny as the new president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Verny is already a member of the commission and succeeds Cardinal Sean O’Malley. There’s the sense that Verny was chosen to solve some of the problems of the Commission - especially the lack of clarity on its mission.

Verny was president of the French bishops’ commission for the Protection of Minors, and Leo seems less skeptical or fearful than Francis was about the thorough approach the French took to investigating the abuse crisis. This could affect churches in other countries, beginning with Italy—this became clear from the pointed exchange between the PCPM and the Italian bishops’ conference after the commission’s published report criticised the Italian church’s handling of cases.

In September, Leo appointed a new prefect of the Dicastery for the Bishops: Archbishop Filippo Iannone from Naples—a Carmelite, jurist, and canon lawyer with extensive experience in courts, pontifical universities, and the archdiocese. His appointment to the post that Robert Prevost occupied from 2023 to 2025 was not a surprise. Iannone was deeply involved with the 2021 revision of the *Code of Canon Law's* “Book VI: Penal Sanctions in the Church,” one of seven books codifying the Latin rite of the Catholic Church, with updated descriptions of the crimes of sexual abuse.



Archbishop Iannone is experienced in assessing allegations of clerical abuse and played a key role in expanding the reach of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (2019), a framework for investigating abuse, to include lay Catholic leaders. This appointment is further evidence of Leo’s intention to address the issue of abuse.

Leo has a doctorate in canon law himself, and some of his other appointments suggest he’s not afraid of reversing some of the reforms of Francis’s pontificate. In November, he re-established the central sector for the diocese of Rome, which had been dissolved by Francis in October 2024 in an attempt to draw the clergy and



institutions of the city centre into closer solidarity with those on the outskirts, where most Romans live but where parishes and priests are comparatively few. Francis was hoping to counteract the sense that the centre was becoming a “living museum,” admired by millions but insufficiently integrated into the daily pastoral life of the metropolis. This never sat comfortably with many of the priests who minister in the city of Rome and struggled to

implement it in practice.

Leo also restored the role of the Prefecture of the Papal Household, with his November appointment of the Nigerian Augustinian F r. Edward Daniang Daleng as vice regent. This brought a close to years of institutional uncertainty dating to December 2012, with Archbishop Georg Gänswein’s dual role as prefect and personal secretary to Benedict XVI, which continued after Benedict’s resignation in February 2013 until his death.



Leo has also taken up the project of synodality begun by his predecessor. In July, he added two new study groups to the original ten post-synodal groups established by Francis. They are tasked with studying liturgical topics with a synodal perspective as well as the statute of episcopal conferences, ecclesial assemblies, and Particular Councils.

Perhaps the most visible changes are how Leo works with the Roman Curia. Leo clearly relies more than Francis did on the work and the institutional mission of the Vatican dicasteries. In November, he presided over a meeting of all dicastery



leaders. More telling are the two speeches he has given to the Curia. In May, he reinterpreted the old adage “popes pass, the Curia remains,” which is often used to explain the power of the Vatican system to slow the pace of change. But Leo said: *“The Curia is the institution that preserves and transmits the historical memory of a Church, of the ministry of its bishops. This is very*

important. Memory is an essential element in a living organism”.



It is not only directed to the past but nourishes the present and guides the future. Without memory, the path is lost, it loses its sense of direction. Here, dear friends, is the first thought I would like to share with you: to work in the Roman Curia means to contribute to keeping the memory of the Apostolic See alive, in

the vital sense I have just mentioned, so that the Pope’s ministry may be implemented in the best way. And, by analogy, this can also be said of the services of Vatican City State.

Similar sympathy for the Curia’s work was evident in a December speech in which he distanced himself implicitly from what had become a tradition under Francis: the dreaded pre-Christmas public scolding of the Curia. With Leo, there seems to be an overall effort to improve morale with the publication of the General Regulations of the Roman Curia and its staff. Leo also reinstated the “conclave bonus” (abolished by Francis) for Vatican employees who serve through the hectic days of the election of a new pope.

In his relationships with top and mid-level officials, Leo seems intent on reassuring them about their roles and significance. An important example of this is the greater role for the Secretariat of State. Both Benedict XVI and Francis, in different ways, limited its prerogatives, which the curial reforms of Paul VI in 1967 and John Paul II in 1988 had strengthened—not just for the diplomatic work of the Holy See, but also for the coordinating of all dicasteries. Additionally, Leo’s recent appointments signal a pivot of the Secretariat of State from a mostly Italian-speaking entity to more English-speaking.





Finally, Leo is holding his first consistory of 170 cardinals, in response to a pre-conclave request by the cardinals to be more regularly consulted by the pope. Francis, contrary to expectations, consulted only twice, in 2014 and 2022, with all the cardinals in the consistory, even though in 2024 he increased the number of cardinal electors to 142—the largest college of electors in Church history.

Leo's decisions are also important for how they signal a different understanding of synodality in the governance of the Church: not as a *replacement* of collegiality (collaboration between and within bodies made of equals), but as something that *needs* collegiality.

Francis understood synodality as part of the strong personal relationship between the pope and the people, and this worked to the detriment of collegiality in the Vatican.

On the other hand, exactly one month after his election, in April 2013, Francis created the Council of Cardinals “with the task of assisting [him] in the governance of the universal Church and of studying a project for the revision of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* on the Roman Curia.”



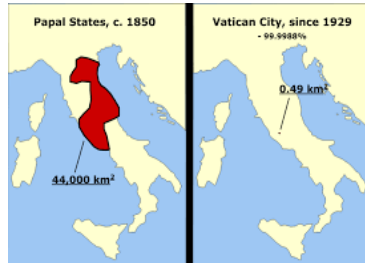
During his pontificate, the C9 met several times every year and functioned as the privy council of the pope. As time went by, it lost meaning and visibility, and Francis never clarified its role within the institutional architecture of the Vatican.

The C9 continued to meet until the end of 2024. It could have been one of the most important institutional innovations created by Francis, but it died with him, and Leo has never mentioned it. This reflects Leo's different understanding of the role of the Roman Curia as part of a Church theology that is more institutional, less movement-like, and less personal.

Leo has introduced, in his gentle style, a different way to govern the Vatican—one that is more mindful of the need to work together with all those in the hierarchy. It may signal the beginning of what could be a profound change in the way the Curia works. As Thomas Reese put it recently, “It is time for American management practices in the Vatican. If an American pope cannot do that, we will have more scandals in the future.”



It's not as if the Curia and the Vatican have never acted to change the system. During the Napoleonic era in the early nineteenth century, the shock of Pius VI's kidnapping to France (where he died) and the occupation of Rome spurred the implementation of then-modern bureaucratic practices.



The definitive loss of the papal states in 1870 did the rest. For the Curia, it was a change more profound than Vatican I, Vatican II, or any papal reform. But that was two centuries ago. Maybe the U.S.-born pope can accomplish something of similar scale—without, of course, such drastic outside intervention.

Year of St Francis

Pope Leo XIV proclaimed a “Special Year of St Francis” until January 10th 2027, to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the death of Francis of Assisi. The Pope wrote, “In a world where “the virtual takes over the real, disagreements and social violence are part of everyday life, and peace becomes more insecure and distant every day, this Year of St Francis spurs all of us, each according to our possibilities, to imitate the poor man of Assisi, to form ourselves as far as possible on the model of Christ,”

Humour

You know you are ageing when your birthday cake is a fire hazard

12 commandments for Seniors

- #1 - Talk to yourself. There are times you need expert advice.
- #2 - “In Style” are the clothes that still fit.
- #3 - You don't need anger management. You need people to agreeing with you.
- #4 - Your people skills are just fine. It's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.
- #5 - The biggest lie you tell yourself is, “I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it.”
- #6 - “On time” is when you get there.
- #7 - Even duct tape can't fix stupid, but it sure does muffle the sound.
- #8 - It would be wonderful if you could put yourself in the dryer for ten minutes, then come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller.
- #9 - Lately, you've noticed people your age are so much older than you.
- #10 - Growing old should have taken longer.
- #11 - You still haven't learned to act your age and hope you never will.
- #12 - “One for the road” means visiting the WC before you leave the house

Today, I donated my watch, phone, and \$50 to a poor guy. You don't know the happiness I felt as I saw him put his knife back in his pocket.

I miss times when I was working at the zoo. My boss fired me just because I left the lion's gate open. I mean who would steal a lion?

I was in a cab today, and the cab driver said, "I love my job, I'm my own boss. Nobody tells me what to do." Then I said: "Turn left."

Why do supermarkets make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get to the pharmacy for their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front?

Why do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and yet get a *diet coke?*

Why does the sun lighten our hair, but darkens our skin?

Why is 'abbreviated'* such a long word?

Why is it that doctors and attorneys call what they do 'practice'?

Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavouring, & dish washing liquid made with real lemons?

Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called the rush hour?

Why do they sterilize the needle for lethal injections?

Why are they called apartments when they are all stuck together?

If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport, 'the terminal' ?

Why aren't airports called plane stations (like train stations)?

Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis is a lung disease and at (45 letters) is a longer word than hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia (36 letters) which is a fear of long words!

The word run has 545 meanings! Remember - if you are trying to find out all these meanings and you feel run down, that the clock is running!



Some years ago, Chris was engaged to lead a retreat for priests in Perth. The arrangements were made and a final question he was asked was, "How ill I recognise you at the airport?" Chris suggested, "Look for Grouch Marx". On arrival, he was approached by the priest organiser with an outstretched hand, "Welcome, Chris".

Birthday

Birthday greetings to **Frank Bartoli** who will be 77 next Friday, January 20th.

Caveat church



Our Lady of Seven Sorrows church in catholic Caveat, forty kilometres west of Yark, was destroyed by the current bushfires on Sunday. Caveat is part of the Yea-Alexandra parish where Fr Jose Matthew is parish priest. Many would remember Jose from his time living at Holy Cross as a Passionist. Jose visited us on Christmas Day.

In the district some have lost homes, many have lost sheds. Farms have been burned and many have lost personal possessions. Jose has asked for prayers not only for those who have suffered loss, but for those psychologically scarred.

Coffee Cart



Next Sunday after 10.00am Mass

Prayers



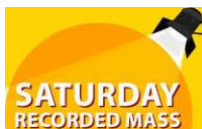
We remember those who have died recently especially as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially

Jim Molan, Mary Bortolotto, Maureen Highby, Max Horlock, Viv Rabot, Domenico Di Giantomasso and Carlo Valmorbida.

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



Chris will send the link for next Sunday's Mass, on Saturday

Brian