



Letter 312

6th February, 2026

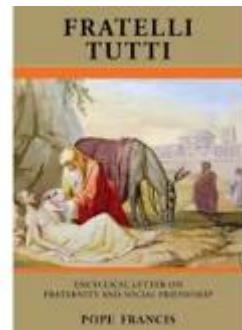
Feb 11th..World Day of the Sick



The 'World Day of the Sick' was established by John Paul II in 1992. Each year there is a theme and this year Pope Leo has chosen "The compassion of the Samaritan: loving by bearing another's pain". He noted that this image "is always relevant and essential for rediscovering the beauty of charity and the social dimension of compassion" and helps further "direct our attention towards the needy and all those who suffer, especially the sick."

Pope Leo said that we hear in Luke's gospel how Jesus responded to a scholar of the law, who asked him to identify the neighbour he must love. He responded with a story! A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked by robbers and left for dead. While a priest and a Levite passed him by, a Samaritan had compassion for him. He bandaged the man's wounds, took him to an inn and provided financially for his care.

This passage was highlighted by Pope Francis in his 2020 Encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti' on human fraternity and social friendship. There, compassion and mercy towards those in need are not reduced to a merely individual effort, but are realized through relationships: with our brothers and sisters in need, with those who care for them and, ultimately, with God who gives us His love, he said. The gift of encounter can be experienced in three ways: "The joy of offering closeness and presence"; "The shared mission of caring for the sick"; and, "Always driven by love for God, to encounter ourselves and our neighbour."



"In the parable, when the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he did not 'pass by.' Instead, he looked upon him with an open and attentive gaze – the very gaze of Jesus – which led him to act." With this in mind, Leo highlighted that love is not passive, but it goes out to meet the other. Being a neighbour is not determined by physical or social proximity, but by the decision to love. This is why Christians become neighbours to those who suffer, following the example of Christ, the true divine Samaritan who drew near to a wounded humanity.

"The gift of encounter flows from our union with Jesus Christ," he said, stressing, "We recognize him as the Good Samaritan and we make him present whenever we reach out to a wounded brother or sister."



While acknowledging that we live "immersed in a culture of speed, immediacy, and haste—a culture of discard and indifference that prevents us from pausing along the way and drawing near to acknowledge the needs and suffering that surround us," Leo observed that it is precisely in this hectic scenario that we can discover joy from helping others.

Compassion is a profound emotion that compels us to act. It wells up from within and leads to share in the other person's pain or burden. Leo said, "In my experience as a missionary and Bishop in Peru, I have personally witnessed many who show mercy and compassion in the spirit of the Samaritan and the innkeeper. I have seen it in family members, neighbours, healthcare workers, those engaged in pastoral care for the sick, and many others who stop along the way to draw near, heal, support, and accompany those in need.

"By offering what they have, they give compassion a social dimension, and this experience, occurring within a network of relationships, transcends mere individual commitment." For this reason, care of the sick is not only as an "important part" of the Church's mission, but it is as an authentic "ecclesial action." "We are members of a single Body that brings the Lord's compassion to the suffering of all people, each according to our own vocation. "To serve one's neighbour is to love God through deeds." Leo said that it is his hope that our Christian lifestyle will always reflect the fraternal, "Samaritan" spirit."



We know that one of the commendations in Matthew's Last Judgement is "I was sick and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36). The sick includes the elderly, many of who suffer from medical conditions, from poor mobility and from loneliness. Often the sacrament is celebrated in a home, hospital or aged care facility. This is enriched by the presence of relatives at a critical time in an individual's or family's life.

On February 11th at 9.30am, we will celebrate a Mass of Anointing at Holy Cross for anyone able to come, including anyone who may be able to bring others. The Mass will be followed by morning tea in the Holy Cross Centre dining room.

We encounter at times, individuals who misunderstand that this sacrament was revised on January 1st, 1972 following recommendations from Vatican 2. The name of the sacrament was changed from Extreme Unction (Last Anointing) or Last Rites to 'Anointing of the Sick'.



There is more emphasis in the revised sacrament on prayer for healing, especially spiritual healing, and it includes the forgiveness of sins for those unable to celebrate



the Sacrament of Penance. Because a person can be gravely ill as a result of sickness or ageing, the sacrament can be received more than once. In this sense it is not as associated with thoughts of "if I am going to be anointed, people must think I am going to die". In a similar way, the sacrament can be extended to young people including children, if they face serious sickness. The oil used in the anointing has been blessed by the local Bishop.

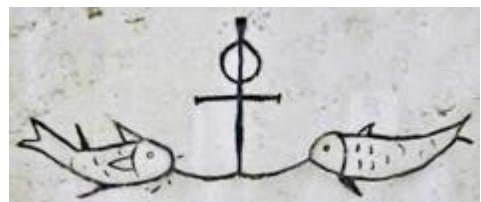
The revised rite encourages occasional public and communal celebration of the sacrament of the sick, such as we are proposing for February 11th. Many parishes have such celebrations. The communal gathering for anointing of the sick enriches the experience of 'carrying each other's burdens' thereby deepening our experience of love.

**Feast of the Commemoration of the Passion (Friday before Ash Wednesday)
13th February, 2024**



Paul of the Cross requested the Pope of the time (Pius 6th) to institute this feast on the Friday before Lent begins, as an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the joyful aspect of the Passion. We know that Paul believed the Passion was the most overwhelming sign of God's love, but so often in his time and in ours, the Passion is dramatic and the focus is on the horrible sufferings of Jesus and that his death on the cross was to pay for our sins.

In the very early days after Jesus death, his followers did not talk about the cross. It was not the primary symbol of being a follower, as it is for us today. The cross was scandal; a sign of failure. Instead, the fish and the anchor were the principal symbols. Paul of Tarsus eventually learned that speaking logic and philosophy to potential Greek converts did not work. So he switched to speaking about the scandal of the cross – a crucified messiah, and developed what became the Passionist moto; "We preach Christ and him crucified".



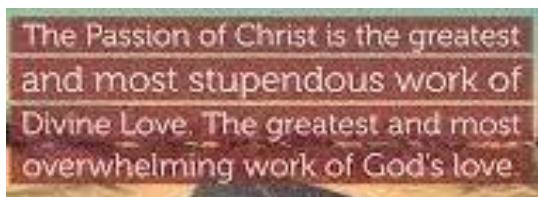
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Most of us grew up with sermons and rituals that put the emphasis on the physical sufferings of Jesus and the belief that Jesus death freed us from sin – yet we spent our whole life trying to avoid going to hell! Unfortunately many of our common prayers reflect this.

Franciscan sister Ilia Delio is a Doctor of theology and science. She has said, "Jesus taught us that salvation is about whole-making and healing. It's not the grace of being rescued from a depraved, fallen world. It's the grace of love, that heals us. I think that's what it means to be saved: to be healed and to be whole and to be sent on our way to be whole-makers ourselves. If Catholicity has shrivelled in our current milieu, it's because it has shrunken into a legalistic set of propositions and rules. Jesus made us whole by inviting us into his life".



This feast is a time to acknowledge that we are thankful for the self-giving of Jesus, and that he not only shows us the way, he is the Way! He showed by the way he lived and the way he died, that trusting in God will bring us to the truth that "all will be well". What more could we want? We have seen that pattern throughout our lives – many of our greatest lessons and blessings have come through sadness, pain, suffering and loss. That is the rhythm of life.



We have been touched deeply by God's grace, and our lens for giving thanks is that Jesus gave his life to bring about what God wanted. His death was cruel and unfair, but he did not walk away from it. We see

cruel and unfair deaths reported in the thousands every day – and yet we live in hope. This is the gift of the Passion. It is for us the most overwhelming sign of God's love. Jesus saw it that way.

Ash Wednesday



There will also be 9.30am Mass and Blessing of the Ashes on Wednesday February 18th.

This is the day that Lent 2026 begins.

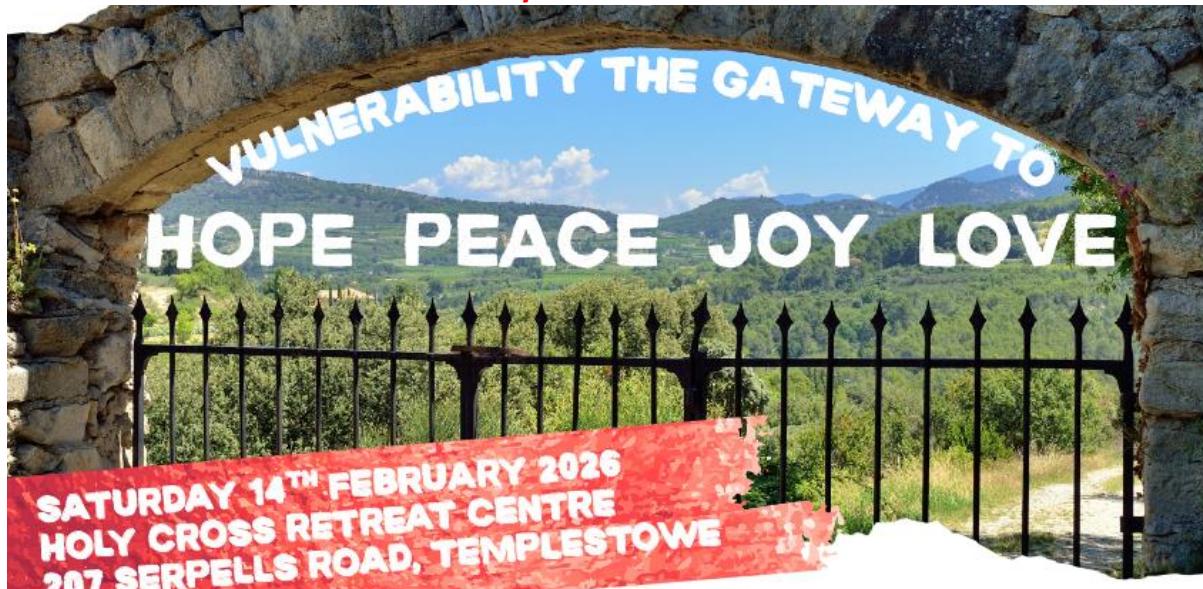
60 years



On Thursday February 12th, **Graeme and Kay Newcombe** celebrate 60 years of marriage. Graeme is trying to count how many breakfasts he has prepared for Kay over all those years. On Friday mornings he creates very stimulating conversations with the A Team around the Holy Cross kitchen table. Congratulations to a wonderful couple and

their long commitment to one another.

A warm invitation is extended to anyone interested.....



SCHEDULE

MORNING TEA 9.15 - 9:55 AM

SESSION 1

10:00 - 10:35 AM
10:35 - 10:50 AM

VULNERABILITY AND HOPE

PRESENTER: TRI
REFLECTION TIME

SESSION 2

10:55 - 11:35 AM
11:35 - 12:30 PM

VULNERABILITY AND PEACE

PRESENTER: ERICK
REFLECTION TIME

LUNCH BREAK (12:30 - 1:25 PM)

SESSION 3

1:30 - 2:10 PM
2:10 - 2:30 PM

VULNERABILITY AND JOY

PRESENTER: BRIGID
REFLECTION TIME

AFTERNOON TEA (2:30 - 3:05 PM)

SESSION 4

3:10 - 3:50 PM
3:50 - 4:50 PM

VULNERABILITY AND LOVE

PRESENTER: KAREN AND JEN
REFLECTION TIME

MASS

5:00 - 5:45 PM

BBQ DINNER START 6PM

DAY RETREAT COST: DONATION

FOR ENQUIRIES CONTACT: GERARD DALY - GERARD.DALY23@BIGPOND.COM

St Gabriel's day



On Sunday February 22nd, we celebrate the feast of Passionist saint, Gabriel Possenti at Holy Cross beginning with Rosary and an outdoor Mass in the St Gabriel shrine, at 10.00am. Gabriel died of TB at the age of 23 in 1862. He is patron of the Abruzzi region of Italy and one of the Church's patrons of Youth. Gabriel (originally named Francis), was baptised in the same font as St Francis of Assisi. Gabriel's shrine in Isola del Grand Sasso is among the fifteen most visited shrines in the world, attracting more than 2,000,000 visitors each year.

It is hard for anyone to explain how Gabriel became famous. He was not yet ordained when he died, so he had little contact with people in his years as a Passionist. His mother died when he was four, and his father moved the family from Assisi where he was born, to Spoleto. His vocational story had some parallels with St Francis. Gabriel was a noted leader and an intelligent successful student, and although he was a strong and devout Christian, he loved dancing and the life that went with it. He promised to become a religious several times following personal experiences of danger or injury but always recanted. During a procession in 1856 he heard an inner call, and at age 19, he joined the Passionist. That was a late vocation in those days! In complete contrast to our social media age, it took six months for the notice of his death in isolated Isola, 170 kilometres from Rome to reach the Passionist Generalate.

St Gabriel's day includes a brief procession after Mass, shared cooked lunch, music, dancing and fellowship. Everyone is welcome. An Italian Passionist, Padre Christopero Monaghano, will celebrate the Mass.

Local history

Last week we shared some local history and photos around Finn's hotel. Here is another photo of a street many people would have driven down.



The photo above as taken in 1951, of Church Road between Serpells Road and (looking towards) Porter street. There were only two houses on the left side of the road and one on the right hand side. The remaining land was used for orchards or grazing.

205 Serpells Road



Notice was received on Wednesday of a new dwelling to be built at 205 Serpells Road, on the other side of Smiths Road from Holy Cross. You may recall the report of the cottage being demolished in late October. Above right is an artist's impression of how the new house will look. If you want to view the plans etc, you can use this link below and scroll down to the pdfs under 'Title':

[https://manninghamweb.t1cloud.com/T1PRDefault/WebApps/eProperty/P1/PublicNotices/PublicNoticeDetails.aspx?r=P1.WEBGUEST&f=\\$P1.ESB.PUBNOT.VIW&rf=P1.ESB.MCCALLAP.ENQ&ApplicationId=PLN25%2f0377](https://manninghamweb.t1cloud.com/T1PRDefault/WebApps/eProperty/P1/PublicNotices/PublicNoticeDetails.aspx?r=P1.WEBGUEST&f=$P1.ESB.PUBNOT.VIW&rf=P1.ESB.MCCALLAP.ENQ&ApplicationId=PLN25%2f0377)

Community coming and goings

The community has had a quiet week with Mike away for a few days, JD away for a few days, and Chris and myself away for a few days.

Jerome had a couple of tough days following some medical tests, but during the week he has picked up. He was donated some stamps and coins belonging to recently deceased Fr Paul Mercieca so that was created some excitement for him.

Chris travelled to Sydney on Sunday afternoon for a Provincial Council meeting and a celebration with Joachim Rego of their 50th profession. Members of Provincial Councils who served with one or both of them, including **myself**, joined them for the occasion. I returned on Wednesday and Chris on Thursday.

JD returned from holidays and has now taken up residence for two weeks in our community at Endeavour Hills while Tuan Paul is on holidays back in Vietnam.

Mike spent last weekend at Endeavour Hills and today he leaves for holidays with his family, back in Xuan Son in the Do Luong district in northern Vietnam.

Erick and **Tri** have not been anywhere significant, and have been 'holding the fort'.

Recently ordained **Vinh**, visited Holy Cross for a couple of days and celebrated a Mass with the community. He is now at Endeavour Hills where he will celebrate Mass in the parish where he served as a deacon.

Ron Davoren



Many would remember Ron from his days at Holy Cross when he was co-ordinating hospital chaplain at Royal Melbourne hospital. He has had a number of appointments since then and is retired, but still very fit and active despite turning 85 early next month. Today Ron celebrates 60 years of professed Passionist life. Before joining the Passionists in 1964, Ron had been an apprentice carpenter and he has used those skills over the years wherever he has lived, especially when he was in PNG. We congratulate Ron on this milestone.

Humour

1. The boy who completed the exam below could not believe he was not awarded 100%! Each answer was absolutely grammatically correct. Sadly, the teacher did not share the boy's sense of humour.

Q. In which battle did Napoleon die?	A. His last battle.
Q. River Ravi flows in which state?	A. Liquid.
Q. What is the main reason for divorce?	A. Marriage.
Q. What is the main reason for failure?	A. Exams.
Q. What can you never eat before breakfast?	A. Lunch and dinner.
Q. If you throw a red stone into the blue sea, what will it become?	A. Wet.
Q. Where was the Declaration of Independence signed?	
A. At the bottom of the page.	
Q. How can a man go eight days without sleeping?	
A. No problem, he sleeps at night.	
Q. How can you lift an elephant with one hand?	
A. You will never find an elephant that has one hand.	
Q. If it took 8 men 10 hours to build a wall, how long would it take 4 men to build it?	
A. No time at all, the wall was already built.	
Q. How can you drop a raw egg onto a concrete floor without it cracking?	
A. Anyway you want because concrete floors are very hard to crack.	

2. Farmer Joe was in his car when he was hit by a truck. He decided his injuries from the accident were serious enough to take the trucking company (responsible for the accident) to court. In court the trucking company's lawyer was questioning farmer Joe. "Didn't you say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'?" asked the lawyer.

Farmer Joe responded, "Well I'll tell you what happened. I had just loaded my favourite mule Bessie into the...."

"I didn't ask for any details," the lawyer interrupted, "just answer the question. Did you not say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'?!"

Farmer Joe said, "Well I had just got Bessie into the trailer and....

The lawyer interrupted again and said, "Judge, I am trying to establish the fact that, at the scene of the accident, this man told the Highway Patrolman that he was just fine. Now several weeks after the accident he is trying to sue my client. I believe he is a fraud.

The Judge was interested in Farmer Joe's answer and said to the lawyer, "I'd like to hear what he has to say about his favourite mule Bessie." Joe thanked the Judge and proceeded, "Well I had just loaded Bessie, my favourite mule, into the trailer and was driving her down the highway when this huge semi-truck and trailer ran the stop sign and smacked my truck right in the side. I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie was thrown into the other. I was hurting real bad and didn't want to move. However, I could hear ole Bessie moaning and groaning. I knew she was in terrible shape just by her groans.

Shortly after that a Highway Patrolman came on the scene. He could hear Bessie moaning and groaning so he went over to her. After he looked at her, he took out his gun and shot her between the eyes. Then he went over to my dear dog, Mitzy who had a broken back and was howling. the Patrolman put his gun to Mitzy's ear and shot him. He then came across the road with his gun in his hand and looked at me. He said, "Your mule was in such bad shape I had to shoot her, and your dog too. How are you feeling?"" I told him, "I've never felt better!"

3. Q. What did 20 do when it was hungry? A. Twenty-eight.
Q. Why is grass so dangerous? B. Because it's full of blades!
Q. Why are mountains so funny? B. Because they're hill areas.
Q. Why did Beethoven get rid of his chickens?
A. All they ever said was, "Bach, Bach, Bach!"
Q. Why wasn't the cactus invited to hang out with the mushrooms?
A. He wasn't a fungi.

4. One day in Contract Law class, the professor asked one of his better students, "Now if you were to give someone an orange, how would you go about it?"

The student replied, "Here's an orange."

The professor was livid. "No! No! Think like a lawyer!"

The student then recited, "Okay, I'd tell him, 'I hereby give and convey to you all and singular, my estate and interests, rights, claim, title, claim and advantages of and in, said orange, together with all its rind, juice, pulp, and seeds, and all rights and advantages with full power to bite, cut, freeze and otherwise eat, the same, or give the same away with and without the pulp, juice, rind and seeds, anything herein before or hereinafter or in any deed, or deeds, instruments of whatever nature or kind whatsoever to the contrary in anywise notwithstanding...'"

The professor said, "Well done. That is very clear".

Prayers



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

Fr Greg Manly CP, Michael Keeghan, Mariano Dalla Riva, Kathleen Humphreys, and Kay Mithen. 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: **Monica Sleeman (Kevin Hennesy's sister), Kate Dunn (Bro Jerome's sister), Philip Mithen (Fr Chris' brother), Mary Cougle, Dennis Cougle, , Pam Storey, Bronwyn Ure, David Chai, Lucia Isgro, Gladys Bardini, Marie Spowart, Nina Conti, Max McMahon, Maria Di Giantomasso, Fergus Ryan, Bob Hallam, Lisa Iverach, Anne Woon, Kate Lenic, Cate Sweeney, Greg Agosta, Denise Egan, Carol Battistella, Dr Peter Heffernan, Anne Burke, Nancy Reynolds, Luke Norden, Jeanelle Bergin, Caroline Hagedorn, Doris Castro, Gerry Bond, Marilyn Cilmi, Maureen Barns, Bernadette Owen, Alexander Lim, Rex and Jan Cambry, Phil Drew, Caroline Meade, Patricia Keeghan, Graham Burke, Zoe & Sophia Chung, Rod Gorfine, Pam Gartland, Peter Barry, Julia Cantone, Helen McLean, Bro Jerome CP, Lesley Yang, Anne Jenkins, and Errol Lovett.**



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

Brian