

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 313

12th February, 2026

Mass and Anointing of the Sick

This Mass was celebrated on Wednesday morning at Holy Cross. See page 8 for the homily Tri gave.

Ash Wednesday



There will be 9.30am Mass and Blessing with the Ashes next Wednesday February 18th. This is the day that Lent begins for 2026.

TET



2026 is the year of the Fire Horse. The official new year date is February 17th. Families make a big effort to reunite during TET (Tet Nguyen Dan) and giving lucky money (in a



red envelope) is a common practice. Our Vietnamese brothers love this time of year. Traditionally it is a time to return home to one's family

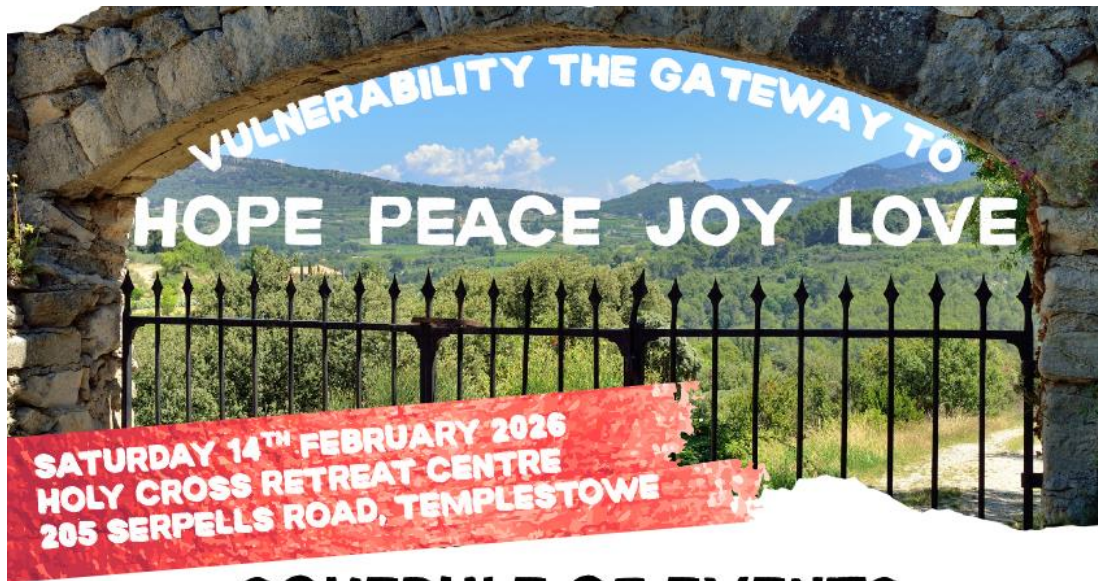
St Gabriel's day



St Gabriel's day on Sunday February 22nd, will include a brief procession after 10.30am Mass, a shared cooked lunch, music, dancing and fellowship. Everyone is welcome. Italian Passionist, Padre Christopero Monaghano, will celebrate the Mass.

As was the case last year, an array of vintage cars will be on display during the day.





SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MORNING TEA 9.15 - 10:00 AM

SESSION 1

10:00 - 10:40 AM

10:40 - 11:00 AM

VULNERABILITY AND HOPE

PRESENTER: TRI

REFLECTION TIME

SESSION 2

11:05 - 11:45 AM

11:45 - 12:15 PM

VULNERABILITY AND PEACE

PRESENTER: ERICK

REFLECTION TIME

SMALL GROUPS

12:15 - 12:45 PM

LUNCH BREAK (12:45 - 1:30 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 - 4:20 PM

VULNERABILITY AND LOVE

PRESENTER: KAREN AND JEN

REFLECTION TIME

SMALL GROUPS

4:20 - 4:50 PM

MASS

5:00 - 5:45 PM

BBQ DINNER START 6PM

DAY RETREAT COST: DONATION

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

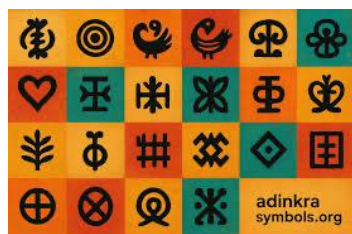
You are most welcome to join us for this all or part of this day. We do need registrations please to assist with catering (included in any donation).

Please email Gerard Daly at: gerard.daly23@bigpond.com

The Church is not a 'she'

(Flashes of Light', Stephen Bevans SVD) 3rd February, 2026

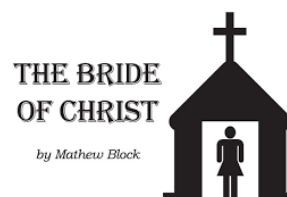
<https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/papal-commission-votes-against-ordaining-women-deacons>



One of the most dangerous things in theology, I believe, is to make the images by which we attempt to understand the mysteries of Christianity into ideas that are literally true. As the U.S. theologian Reinhold Niebuhr famously said, we need to take symbols seriously, but we cannot take them literally. For example

- Christ does not literally sit at the right hand of the Father.
- God does not have a body, and even though Jesus spoke of God as “Father”.
- God’s fatherhood cannot be the same as human fatherhood, for God is not male.
- We speak of the fire of Hell and Purgatory, but I can’t imagine any theologian today who would understand it as a fire that we know as human beings.
- We speak of the Eucharist as the Body of Christ, but the doctrine of “real presence” is not a physical presence but the presence of the risen, glorified body of Christ—a sacramental presence much more “real” than we can ever imagine.

In the same way, we speak of the church in female images. Israel is imaged, for example by the prophet Ezekiel (Chapter 16), as God’s bride, and in Ephesians 5:25-27 as the bride of Christ. Church and papal documents use female images and pronouns for the church—for example, the Second Vatican Council’s document “Ad Gentes” famous line that “the pilgrim church is missionary by her very nature.” And the liturgy almost always speaks of the church as a “she.”



In Eucharistic Prayer II, for example, we pray that God remember the church “scattered throughout the world, and bring her to the fullness of charity.” But speaking in this way is to use an image. The church is not female and is not a “she.”



The Second Vatican Council images the church in many ways. The church is certainly—literally—the People of God (although that is also an allusion to the image of the church as the New Israel), but the council also speaks of the church as the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit, a field, a building, a flock, a vineyard, Jerusalem, our mother, Christ’s spouse (see ‘Lumenr Gentium’). As the text itself says—these are metaphors. The church *is*, but of course it is **not**! Metaphors lead us into Mystery, but they do not capture the Mystery itself. As we all know, Juliet (of Romeo and Juliet) is not the rising sun!

Speaking of the church literally as “she” is only one of the several major flaws of the



Sept. 18 document issued by the Vatican Study Group on women’s diaconate, but, to my mind, it is a fatal one. The document states that a strong theological opinion insists that women being ordained to the sacramental diaconate would jeopardize “the nuptial meaning of salvation” and the “spousal meaning of the three levels of” the Sacrament of Orders. (*The three levels of the Sacrament of Holy Orders (Bishop, Priest and Deacon have a profound "spousal" meaning, based on the idea that the Church is the Bride of Christ and the ordained minister acts in the person of Christ to love, serve, and sacrifice for her).*

What the study group has done is to take literally the image of the church as the bride of Christ, and in that way necessitating the importance of the maleness of Jesus (which is doctrinally misleading, since the formulas refer only to the Word becoming “human” and “flesh”). The church is not a “she.”

Salesian theologian Linda Pocher Fma, a critic wrote of the document, said if one is to continue to exclude women from the diaconate, one should at least come up with a better argument!

Leo the Manager (Heidi Schlumpf)

January 24, 2026



In early January, Pope Leo XIV called a meeting of the world’s cardinals to continue their conversation about the future of the Catholic Church, which they’d begun at the conclave last spring. This consistory effectively marked the beginning of Leo’s papacy, since much of his agenda in 2025 had been set by his predecessor. Nine months in, we are starting to learn more about Leo’s

leadership—and it looks like he’s got some decent management skills.

The consistory was a response to a call from the cardinals, many of whom felt left out during the Francis papacy. Instead of holding regular consistories for discussion, Pope Francis met with select advisors through the so-called “C-9” Council of Cardinals, a group of nine men initially tasked with reform of the Vatican administrative institutions or Curia. By contrast, about 170 cardinals attended Leo’s first consistory on January 7-8. He has already scheduled a second meeting in June and promised to hold yearly consistories from then on.

In advance of the January meeting, Leo chose four topics for possible discussion:



synodality, curial reform, evangelization, and liturgy (all four also priorities of his predecessor). He then directed four Vatican officials to draft brief papers on each of the subjects, shared those documents with the cardinals, and had them vote on which two topics to tackle first. They chose synodality and evangelization. Although he gave several addresses during the meeting, Leo's emphasis was on listening. By most reports, the consistory was a success, garnering praise from across the ideological spectrum.

New leaders know they have to gain the trust of their team by getting to know them and listening to their input. At the same time, they must clearly and strategically communicate their vision, both internally and externally. An effective manager must demonstrate commitment to the organization's mission while being decisive about any necessary changes to address problems or weaknesses. And all this while also using interpersonal skills to build one-on-one relationships with various constituencies.

A seemingly healthy seventy-year-old, Pope Leo may have a long tenure with which to demonstrate his communication and other management skills.

By most reports, Leo is demonstrating an aptitude for many if not all of these skills. Because he was relatively unknown when elected, many commentators have been reluctant to make definitive pronouncements or predictions about how he would lead, beyond his obvious experience identifying other leaders while he was prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops. But the consistory and other actions point to him having the personality and skills necessary to be an effective manager, even of an organization as massive and complicated as the global Catholic Church.



Leo XIV speaks out on 'dictatorship' of economic inequality and support for migrants in first major text

(By Christopher Lamb, CNN)
Updated 11:41 am BST, Thu Oct 9, 2023



Pope Leo XIV delivers his speech as he leads the Jubilee Mass.

Most Catholics on both the left and the right remain cautiously optimistic about Leo, although those who bordered on schism during the Francis papacy are getting nervous. Leo sounds an awful lot like Francis—with a strong defence of migrants and a clear condemnation of war and violence—but, so far, he has been careful to also acknowledge the concerns of conservative Catholics who felt unheard or dismissed under Francis.



Pope-watchers have noticed these differences, including speakers at a recent academic meeting of historians in Leo's hometown. While Francis and Leo share many views and priorities, Leo has a different personality and style, said panelists at a January 9 presentation on the pope at the American Catholic Historical Association convention in Chicago. The current pope has the mind of a mathematician and canon lawyer. He's more cautious, a careful listener, and he thinks before speaking. He is less likely to blurt out, for example, "Who am I to judge?"

"He knows how to get out of the way," said Brian Flanagan of Loyola University in Chicago, one of the panellists at the historical association's convention. Kathleen Sprows Cummings of the University of Notre Dame noted, however, that it was not Cardinal Robert Prevost's reserved personality that moved him to the top of cardinal-electors' lists, but rather his combination of administrative savvy, pastoral presence, and global vision.

As the first pope in centuries to have been administrator of a religious order, Leo is used to having to get other people on board before implementing a decision. "He's a manager who reads the full reports before a visit, but also knows how to make the papacy not the top of a pyramid, but the centre of a conversation," Flanagan said. Those consensus-building skills will be necessary for creating unity in a fractured Church. Leo has already shown openness to diverse voices, meeting with both Fr James Martin who advocates for LGBTQ inclusion, and retired Cardinal Raymond Burke who supports the Latin Mass.



But effective managers have to do more than make nice with everyone; they have to make decisions, often hard ones. Fr. Thomas Reese, who literally wrote the book on the politics and organization of the Vatican, believes tough American management practices are needed in Rome to avoid further scandals in the Church. Reese is not against a pastoral approach that appeals to a "conversion of heart," but sometimes an ineffective employee has to be fired. "That includes anyone in the Curia, including cardinals, who do not support the pope's agenda," Reese writes.



Pope Leo doesn't seem indecisive or afraid of speaking truthfully and forcefully, even when his words may be controversial. He defended Chicago cardinal Blase Cupich for his plans to honour pro-choice Sen. Dick Durbin, noting that being "pro-life" involves more than opposing abortion.

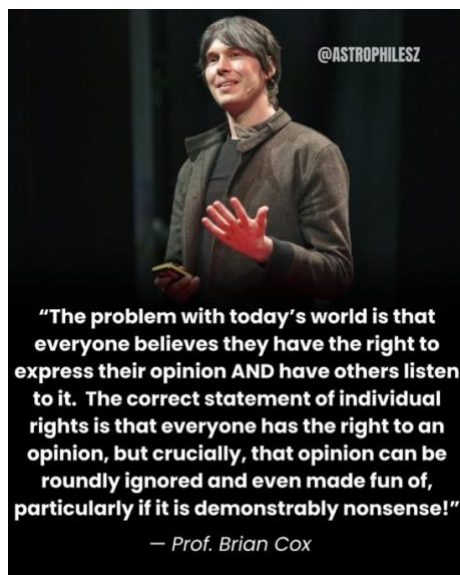
He has criticized the Trump administration for its treatment of immigrants and for its foreign policy in Venezuela, and continues to press for a two-state solution in Israel/Palestine. His own Trump-loving brother has noted that Leo is “neither quiet nor shy—if he has something to say, he will say it.”

Flanagan, who is an ecclesiology, believes that Leo may signal a shift away from the singular focus on the pope as a personality, but that may be nearly impossible in



today’s celebrity media environment. And while some journalists are concerned that Leo may be less quotable than his predecessor, so far he has been far more accessible to the media. Francis initiated the practice of freewheeling press conferences aboard the papal plane, but reporters have found Leo willing to answer questions nearly every week outside Castel Gandolfo on his “day off.”

A seemingly healthy seventy-year-old, Pope Leo may have a long tenure with which to demonstrate his communication and other management skills. While Francis was “a man in a hurry,” Leo is not in a rush, journalist Colleen Dulle of *America* magazine said at the convention panel. “He’s playing the long game.” That, too, is an important managerial skill, especially for a person guaranteed his job for life.



**RIGHT TO AN OPINION
DOES NOT MAKE
THE OPINION RIGHT**

QUESTION, RESEARCH, ANALYZE, & DISCUSS YOUR INDIVIDUAL OPINIONS AND BELIEFS AS WELL AS THOSE OF OTHERS.
EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOICE THEM, BUT THAT DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY EARN THEM RESPECT.

On the following two pages is the homily Tri gave for our ‘Anointing of the Sick’ Mass. The readings were: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Psalm 71 (70) 9, 15-16, 16, 22; Matthew 25: 31-40

On the 6th November 2013, after a general audience in St. Peter Square, Pope Francis had an encounter with a man, name Vinicio Riva. In an interview after the event, Vinicio described that, "I felt love... I felt a great warmth. I felt like I was in paradise."

Vinicio, an Italian, suffers from neurofibromatosis, a severe and visible skin condition. On that day, Vinicio was among the crowd listening to Pope Francis. With his confronting condition, many people instinctively turned away from him. This was like the biblical stories of lepers, who suffered not only from illness, but from being treated like an alien.

After his audience, Pope Francis walked straight to Vinicio. He did not hesitate to take Vinicio into his arm. He held his head, kissed his face, spoke with him and blessed him.



What happened in that moment was this: a man whom the world might instinctively avoid was treated as worthy of closeness, touch, and reverence. Without any explanations, without trying to fix or correct anything, the Pope affirmed Vinicio's dignity.

Today, the Word of God proclaims the same truth of human dignity and affirms that no kind of sickness can erase it.

Saint Paul tells us in the First Reading: "*The members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.*" He does not say - not tolerated; not pitied; not temporarily accepted, but **Indispensable**. It is a radical truth about how God sees the human person.

In the world around us, value is often measured by productivity. By efficiency. By independence. When someone becomes sick, dependent, slow, or fragile, a terrible question begins to haunt them: *What am I still good for?* And that question can hurt more than the illness itself.

We just heard from Psalm 71 that the Psalmist faced the same problem. He cried to God: "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength is spent." (Ps 71:9).

In the ancient world, old age often resulted in loss of social power, loss of physical protection, increased dependence, and risk of abandonment.

The psalmist is not simply an old person reflecting on life. He is an old person whose faithfulness has not protected him from suffering. He has enemies, slanderers, and he is experiencing social vulnerability - very real threats in the ancient world.

Here we see that this experience is not just of any one individual. Each one of us suffers from it in different ways.

But in the first reading, Saint Paul answers that quandry with authority: *“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you.’”* In other words, the Church — the Body of Christ — **cannot say to the sick, “We have no need of you.”**

This is because when one member suffers, all suffer together. Your presence matters. Your prayer matters. Your suffering, united to Christ, matters. **You matter!**

That is why the Gospel we heard today is so powerful. Jesus does not say, “I felt sorry for the sick,” nor, “I like the sick” nor “I am concerned about the sick”. NO - He says, *“I **was** sick.”*

Jesus identifies himself with those who are ill, weak, dependent, and vulnerable. So much so that he says: *“Whatever you did to one of the least of these, you did to me.”*

So each of today’s readings pronouced the truth of human dignity in each and every one of us.

In Vietnam, we are taught from a young age to respect our elders and to help them whenever we can. I carried that part of my culture with me when I came to Australia. One time, I saw an older person trying to move something heavy, so I stepped in and offered to help. But the person gently said, “Thank you, but I can do it myself.”

I remember feeling a bit confused.

Another time, I visited an aged care home. An elderly woman was drinking tea, but her hands were shaking and a few drops spilled. I didn’t say anything. But what she said next has really stayed with me. With a worried voice, she asked, “I didn’t spill it, did I? I’m not useless... am I?”

So for you who are carrying illness in your body or weakness in your strength: your life is not on pause. Your vocation has not been cancelled. You have not become a burden. If you are tired and need help, please don’t hesitate to ask for help. Asking for help does not erase your dignity. It does not make you any less valuable. In contrast, asking for help means you offer others opportunities to practice our values.

And to those who care for the sick — family members, caregivers, medical staff, friends and even myself — today’s Gospel speaks to us as well. When we sit by a bedside, when we listen patiently, when we help with dignity rather than frustration, we **are standing on holy ground**. we are ministering not only to a person, but to Christ himself.

At this Eucharist, and especially in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, Christ does not come to erase weakness as if it were a failure. He comes to **enter into it**, to consecrate it, to fill it with his presence.

So today, let us allow the Lord to correct the lies we may have believed. No one here is useless. No one here is forgotten. No one here is outside the love of God. Because in the Kingdom of God, the ones the world calls “weak” are often the ones through whom God reveals his greatest strength!

Humour



An Englishman and a Scotsman go to a pastry shop. The Englishman whisks three cookies into his pocket with lightning speed. The baker doesn't notice. Then the Englishman says to the Scotsman: "You see how clever we are? You'll never beat that!"

The Scotsman says to the Englishman: "Watch this, a Scotsman is always cleverer than an Englishman."

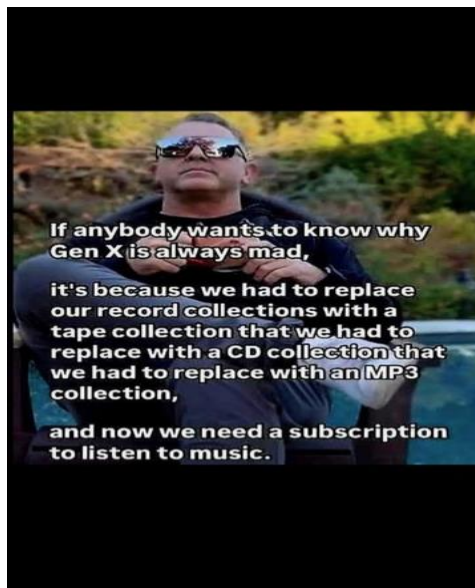
He says to the baker, "Give me a cookie will ya, I can show you a magic trick!" The baker gives him the cookie which the Scotsman promptly eats. Then he says to the baker: "Give me another cookie please for my magic trick." The baker is getting suspicious but he gives it to him. He eats this one too. Then the Scotsman says again: "Give me one more cookie..." The baker is getting angry now but gives him one anyway. The Scotsman eats this one too. Now the baker is really mad, and he yells: "And where is your magic trick?"

The Scotsman says: "Look in the Englishman's pocket!"





**FINALLY CLEANED OUT MY
MIDDLE KITCHEN DRAWER.**



**If anybody wants to know why
Gen X is always mad,
it's because we had to replace
our record collections with a
tape collection that we had to
replace with a CD collection that
we had to replace with an MP3
collection,
and now we need a subscription
to listen to music.**



I KNOW HOW IT'S GONNA END FOR ME

**ONE OF MY KIDS WILL
UNPLUG MY LIFE SUPPORT
TO CHARGE THEIR IPAD**

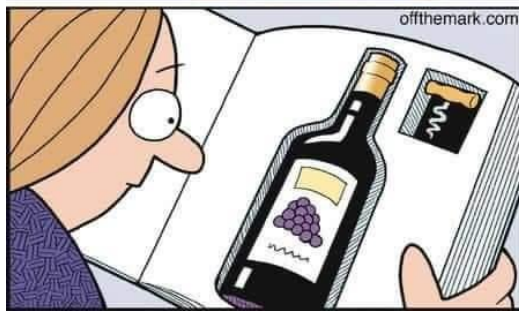
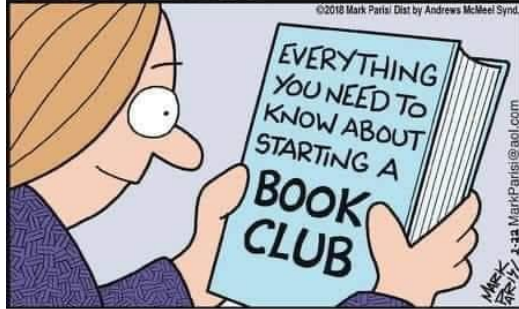


did you know?

**In 2016, a 70 year-old Kansas man robbed
a bank so he could get arrested, and get
away from his wife. He was sentenced
to house arrest.**



**Mother-in-law came for
dinner and said, "Why does
the dog keep looking at
me?" I said, "Because
you're using his plate!"**



A husband told his wife that he's going to "The Second Wife" for dinner. He didn't get the chance to explain that it was a restaurant. He is now in hospital recovering.

Time change. I had to go around and fix all my clocks.

It must have been a rough divorce



Funeral

Requiem Mass for Kevin Hennessy's sister, **Monica Sleeman** will be celebrated at St Peter and Paul's, Geelong West on Friday February 13th at 11.00am

A Team

John Stretch has returned home following surgery on his right knee.

Away

Please note that I will away in New Zealand, based in in our community in Blenheim from early next Sunday morning til Monday February 23rd, I will be back until Friday morning February 27th and then away for a formation day for PFG's and meetings of our Community Leaders and our Province Formation Commission until Tuesday March 10th, During my time away, Erick will be acting leader of Holy Cross.

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 **Monica Sleeman**, Kevin Hennessy's sister; **Bill Grattan**, former Passionist student, as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially **Judith Edwards**, **Geoffrey Morgan (Jerome's brother-in-law)**, and **Rocco and Lisa Rapone**. 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:

Mary Cogle, Dennis Cogle, , Pam Storey, Kate Dunn (Bro Jerome's sister), 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, Caroline Meade, Rex and Jan Cambry, Phil Drew, Patricia Keeghan, Graham Burke, Zoe & Sophia Chung, Rod Gorfine, Pam Gartland, Peter Barry, Julia Cantone, Helen McLean, , Lesley Yang, Anne Jenkins, Bro Jerome and Errol Lovett.

SATURDAY
RECORDED MASS

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