

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 315

27th February, 2026

Erick and **Tri** were in Endeavour Hills this past week assisting Brendan on the parish while TP, the assistant priest is away. As it was during the first week of Lent, Tri was able to see what it is like to be in a parish as a deacon during Lent, for the first time. It happened that on Ash Wednesday, the Provincial made a formal announcement that Tri will be joining Endeavour Hills Parish as an assistant priest on the parish, after his ordination. Although there are still some months to go, Brendan took the opportunity to announce this to parishioners during the 7pm Mass on Ash Wednesday. Parishioners naturally applauded the announcement, welcoming Tri in advance.

Apart from the fact that Tri assisted at morning Masses as a deacon he joined in the Stations of the Cross, and so on, he also joined the Bread Run ministry. Like Holy Cross used to do before Bakers Delight closed, Endeavour Hills parishioners and professed religious meet weekly to collect bread from Endeavour Hills Baker's Delight, take it to the parish, pack it into small bags, and go in different groups to drop the bread off to people in need.



The rest of the bread is left in the church foyer for people to collect as they wish. Tri and Erick were impressed by the number of people who volunteer regularly. You can see in the photos above, Tri at the bakery, at the parish, and delivering bread to a home.

JD was also at Endeavour Hills before Erick and Tri went there. He again returned this week to assist Brendan after Erick and Tri both returned to Holy Cross.

Mike is still away on holidays in Vietnam and he has been enjoying Luna New Year's Holidays with his family.

Chris and **Jerome** have been home, holding the fort, making a small community. Chris is usually at work (YTU) during the day and Jerome stays home, so he has talked about selling the property and leaving on a long holiday but has not yet acted on it! We hope his is joking.

Brian arrived back on Monday afternoon after a week of ministry in New Zealand. He had an interesting arrival in Wellington with high winds causing the plane to be diverted just prior to landing, from Wellington to Auckland. Passengers were sent in taxis to a hotel in Auckland, and after getting to bed at 11.00pm, he had to be up at 4.45am to get a taxi (30 minutes) back to the airport to catch the early scheduled flight back to Wellington. On arrival at the airport he learned that the flight was delayed until 11.30am and later, til 12.15pm. A few hours after arrival there he was able to get a flight on Sounds Air a small airline to Blenheim having learned that all Air New Zealand flights out of Wellington were cancelled for the day (and the following day). Sounds Air allow passengers to transfer to other lights with no extra charge, and were most helpful. He will leave again on Friday morning for Sydney to attend PFG, Community Leaders, and Formation Commission meetings, all at different stages over twelve days.

Viva San Gabriele



Although his Feast falls on Feb 27th, St Gabriel's Feast Day was celebrated last Sunday as planned by the *San Gabriele's Committee*. Despite the consistent light rain, the festival went on with people coming and going throughout the day. Chris celebrated the 10.30am Mass outside in Italian, assisted by JD and Tri, while Erick celebrated the indoor 10am Mass in English. Many

people commented on Chris' homily, saying how touching it was. Erick heard a lady, while driving past Chris, saying out loud, "Thank you Fr Chris, we love you. Your homily was amazing; it restored my faith in Catholicism!"

Chris, along with other CPs, made an appearance at the festival following the Mass to join in the fun. Erick had African visitors from Shepperton who were warmly welcomed by everyone. Here you can see Chris with them, wearing an Italian hat with feathers. One of the Italian gentlemen, was impressed that Chris wore the hat and told Chris that he had also worn it decades ago while serving in the military in northern Italy. Chris then explained how he made it a mixed Italian and Australian hat.



He said that the two feathers on his hat included one from a kookaburra found on the Holy Cross property. I'll leave it to you to guess the

bird of the second feather.

The feast closed in the late afternoon as the rain grew stronger. Bruno and the team continued to work hard, packing up despite their tiredness and the increasing rain. We congratulate them on putting on another successfully impressive festival commemorating St Gabriel.



Coffee Cart

The Coffee Cart was in operation after 10.00am Mass and again after the St Gabriel's Mass. There were also vintage cars on display for the feast.



Theresa La Mana celebrated her 88th birthday on Sunday. Each week, Theresa is the first person to arrive for Mass every Sunday.





Last week, Joe and Grace Ko and Liz and Gaby Atme visited the beautiful St Joseph's, church in Hobart which is under the pastoral care of the Passionists, where they caught up with Joseph Liaia.



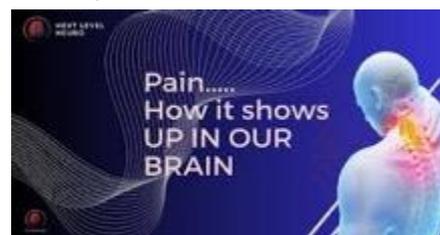
The science of pain – Part 2

A measurement for chronic pain is getting closer (*Andul-Ghaaliq Lalkhen*)



Eastern medicine and philosophy has long recognised the interconnectedness of body and mind, and so too did the west in early civilisations. In ancient Greece the *Algea*, the gods of physical pain, were a group of spirits also associated with psychic pain – with grief and distress. But in the 1600s the French philosopher René Descartes set western thinking on a different course, asserting that the mind and body were separate entities.

“In a lot of countries we tend to want to downplay any possible psychological influences and we want to say it’s all physical,” says Nicholas, a director at the University of Sydney’s Pain Management Research Institute. Being told that pain has a psychological component can be distressing, particularly for those who experience chronic pain. It can feel dismissive, a suggestion that the pain is not real. “When people come to see me, they’re often worried they’re being told it’s all in their head,” Nicholas says. “Of course pain is in your head. It’s in your brain. You know, it’s the brain that is where you get that experience ... It’s never all physical.”



Sometime between 11am and 11.30am on 22 May 2024, as I sat at a big white conference table, before a screen of colleagues zooming into a meeting, a cyst on my right ovary exploded. I felt pain right away. With my right hand, I pressed hard into my lower stomach and breathed in and out slowly to ride through the feeling. I thought “I shouldn’t have eaten so many Jols”. I returned to my desk but still felt sore so I went for a walk around the block to shake it off. I felt a little better, returned to my computer, popped in and out of smaller meetings, answered emails, edited articles, finished work at 5.30pm, then walked half an hour to my sister’s apartment and lay on her couch. While the pain was fairly strong I was still convinced an overconsumption of sugar-free sweets was responsible.



Only when my sister called a helpline two hours later and a nurse told me to go to hospital did I relent. We arrived at emergency about 9pm, 10 hours after that first sharp twinge. Later in the night, as I climbed on to an examination bed, I froze. Pain sloshing around my abdomen violently halted my movement. As I stopped there silent, halfway to laying down, I saw the serious look on the doctor’s face. I realised that perhaps my report of my pain was an unreliable guide. She was looking for other clues.

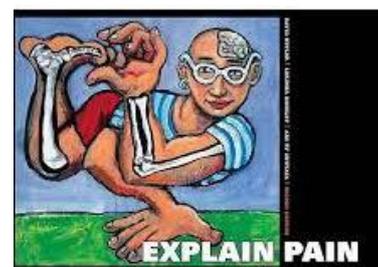


(I would later learn that medical staff use self-reported pain as only one of a few measures to assess a patient, others include observations of movement, the ability to talk, facial expressions and guarding.)

It was the middle of the night before an MRI returned the findings that I had spent the day with what the doctor called “a belly full of blood”. The next day I had surgery. At my bedside an obstetric surgeon shook his head as he explained what was going on in my body. A burst cyst has a reputation for being very painful, he said. Why had I rated my pain as a six or seven? Didn’t it make more sense to give it a 10? I shrugged. I’d wanted to give myself some wriggle room.



So why was my experience and report of pain so out of whack with the tissue damage my body experienced? “It actually starts with our judgments,” says Associate Prof Melissa Day, from the University of Queensland. “So it’s not what happens to us. It’s how we judge what happens to us.” In other words, if we give ourselves a convincing explanation for what we feel, an explanation that does not include danger or damage to our body – if we think it’s the Jols and it will pass – we are less likely to feel pain severely.



Pain is a protective mechanism – injury or tissue damage activates the brain’s warning system that creates it. We have a tendency to valorise those who do not complain of pain when they confront an acute injury. To say this is a tough person, a stoic person. But individual toughness or weakness is not what’s at play in pain responses, and the same person can have two entirely different reactions to pain-inducing events in different contexts.

When Lorimer Moseley tried a heat pad pain test on himself, increasing the temperature on the pad on his hand and noting his rising pain levels, it took



removing the pad from his skin to realise he had given himself two-and-a-half-degree burn. “This happens to people who do a lot of pain research because you just get exposed and your brain doesn’t think it’s worth protecting you as much as it should,” he says. “But I put my hand in hot water to do the dishes – I’m hopeless.”

Just five years ago the International Association for the Study of Pain revised its definition of pain. The new definition follows what is called a bio-psychosocial model, which recognises not just the biological causes of pain but the role of psychology and social context in creating, amplifying – or dulling – it. While this is the contemporary thinking about pain, says Nicholas: “Most people don’t use it. Most clinicians, unfortunately, even.”



The biological causes are clearest. Pain tolerance, researchers speaking to Guardian Australia say, has some genetic component. Red-haired people, for example, Moseley says, have on average a different threshold at which their nerves are triggered by a change in temperature in a heat-based pain threshold test.

Complex social factors play a substantial role: multiple studies have found that people from a lower socioeconomic status experience both more chronic pain and, in experimental pain tests, demonstrate lower acute pain thresholds. For all people, injury or tissue damage activates the brain’s warning system that creates pain. The associated stress can trigger a psycho-biological response that helps the hurt person get through it without being immobilised.



Melissa Day says the best coping techniques will be different for different individuals and short-term stress actually motivates us. “Gets adrenaline pumping through our bodies, allows us to have natural endorphins to push through. There’s also endogenous opioids that our brain releases to have that short-term relief of pain.”

The psychological elements are becoming more widely understood. “One thing we know is perhaps the strongest predictor of pain tolerance is how people think about pain,” Day says. “If we think ‘this is terrible, this is awful, it’s going to do me serious damage’ – those types of people will have lower tolerance.” This includes people who tend to be anxious or who catastrophise pain.



violinist is more likely to report higher levels of pain when a pain stimulus is applied to their dominant playing hand than when their other hand is subjected to the same stimulus, Moseley says – because an injury to their dominant hand could end their career. Farmers are known to delay seeking treatment, maybe because they expect that a part of being a farmer is to have pain. So [their brain] doesn’t urge them to do anything about it.



“There’s a range of factors there in terms of learning histories about pain and how from a young age responses to pain are very much linked to gender as well – how parents respond to a son versus a daughter.” As psychologists working in pain, Day and Nicholas are interested in what behaviours might help people in pain tolerate or reduce the amount of pain they are experiencing. “Coping techniques will be different for different individuals and across different contexts, Emotional regulation strategies, meditation and learning how to calm the body can be effective. Working on beliefs about the pain and shifting attention away from it, says Nicholas, fall under individual control. “If you can control those factors you will have a better response to pain,” Day says.



People who are more sensitive to punishment tend more often to retract at the appearance of pain, whereas those more oriented towards rewards are more likely to push through it to achieve a goal, she says. Elite athletes are known to have higher pain thresholds as they are habituated to pain in their training regimes. Which is to say, if you are in a grand final and you think you’ve got a shot at winning, and you know the national team selectors are watching, your fixation on your goal might increase your ability to ignore the pain radiating from your jaw! Is that what made John Sattler play on? I will never know. He died in 2023.



We know he had all the predispositions for withstanding acute injury: he was habituated to pain as an athlete in a game famed for its big hits, he was reward-oriented in a moment when the stakes were high, he was a male socialised to value withstanding pain as a badge of toughness, and saw toughness valued as a social virtue. The clash would have got his endogenous opioids pumping.



His attention was redirected away from his injury. Pain is a protective mechanism but, that day it seems, Sattler judged protecting his jaw as less important than claiming the premiership.

“People who think they have a higher pain threshold – we will never know,” Moseley says. “It’s the same human that makes the pain and that tolerates it.” And so the experience of acute pain is caught in the realm of mystery and mythology; where we can understand much of what is happening in a body and part of what is happening in a brain but never actually know what another person feels.

The legend of John Sattler goes that after that fateful right hook from Bucknall, the bloodied captain turned to his teammate Matthew Cleary. That no one knew, perhaps not even himself, the damage that had been done to him became his mythological power. “Hold me up,” he said. “So they don’t know I’m hurt.”

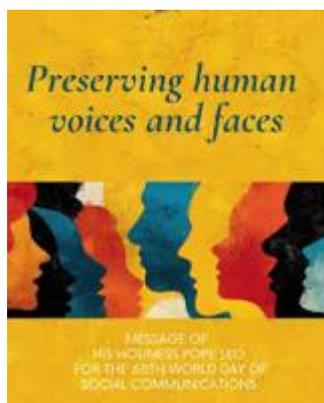
The challenges of AI-powered art: the lesson of Leo XIV

Fr Anthony Spadaro SJ (February 16th, 2026)



Last spring, an image generated by artificial intelligence won a major photography prize. Boris Eldagsen, the photographer—if that is the right word—had typed a prompt, refined it, and submitted the result. The judges were impressed. When the source was revealed, the art world convulsed with a question it had been avoiding: What, exactly, makes a creative gesture human? The tools have changed before. But this time, the tool claims to create.

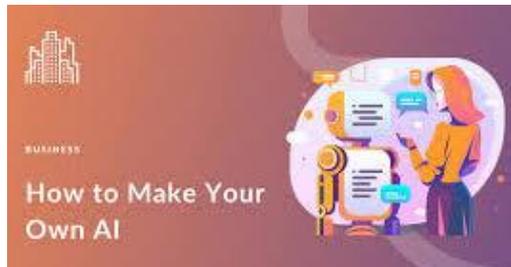
An answer comes from an unexpected place. In his Message for the Sixtieth World Day of Social Communications, Pope Leo XIV raises a question that exceeds both technology and theology, touching the core of contemporary creativity itself.



“Safeguarding Human Faces and Voices,” the title reads. Considered carefully, it becomes more than a pastoral exhortation—it reads like an aesthetic manifesto for the age of intelligent machines. “The face and the voice are unique and distinctive traits of each person,” Leo writes. They are not merely instruments of communication but living surfaces where identity emerges and exposes itself, at risk—where one “shows one’s face,” as the Italian idiom has it. Every work of art, regardless of medium, originates in this embodied condition.

Even when art turns conceptual, minimal, digital, it carries an irreducible remainder: lived experience, a point of view, an interior tension seeking form.

Artificial intelligence can imitate styles and recombine archives with an expertise that borders on perfection. But it does not possess a face or a voice in the sense Leo intends. It does not know the exposure, risk, or accountability of the person who



takes the floor. It does not know what it means to be answerable for what one creates. One of the most incisive passages in Leo's Message concerns AI's capacity to "simulate human voices and faces, wisdom and knowledge, empathy and friendship." The word he chooses is telling: simulate. Not

create. The distinction may seem slight, almost academic, but it is everything. In the realm of art, it becomes decisive.

'Death of the author'

Generative systems recombine what already exists: they learn patterns, replicate styles, and produce variations. The results may be dazzling. But they lack lived



memory, formative struggle, the labour that shapes and transforms. Art, by contrast, always emerges from an encounter with reality. Even when it refuses narrative, even when it presents itself as pure formal device, it bears a biography, a wound, a desire. It is a situated gesture, undertaken by someone

who assumes responsibility for it. A work of art is not merely an object; it is a position taken in the world, a way of inhabiting time and responding to it.

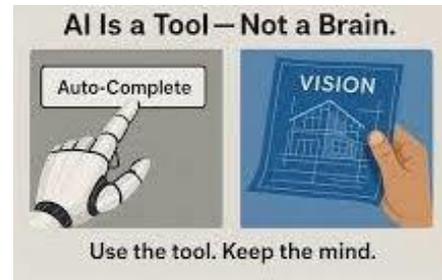
Leo's reflections carry significant weight in current debates about art and AI, particularly in the context of the risk that art dissolves into mere "artifice." He warns that "a large part of the human creative industry risks being dismantled and replaced with the label 'Powered by AI,' transforming people into passive consumers of unthought thoughts, anonymous products without authorship, without love. Meanwhile, masterpieces of human genius in music, art, and literature are reduced to a training ground for machines."



These words speak directly to the art world—and, one might add, to fashion and design. What happens when the author disappears? What happens when a work no longer emerges from vision but from an automated process, and when masterpieces become raw material for algorithmic refinement?

Art history has repeatedly unsettled the traditional idea of authorship. But it has always done so through deliberate, risky human acts. Even the “death of the author” was, paradoxically, signed.

An algorithmically generated work answers to no one. It risks nothing. It loses nothing. For that very reason, even when it produces flawless images, it remains estranged from what we call artistic experience. Another word threads its way through Leo’s message, running counter to our efficiency-obsessed age: effort.



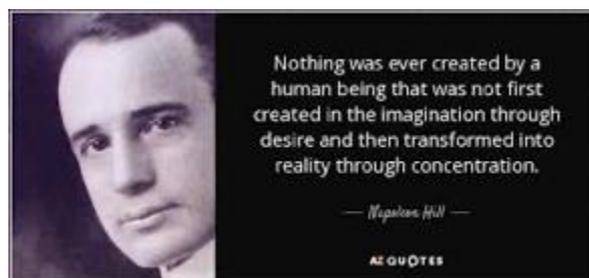
He warns against delegating to machines “the effort of one’s own thinking.” In art, that effort is not incidental; it is constitutive. Creativity is born not of efficiency but of resistance—of prolonged gestation, doubt, error, the real possibility of failure. It is through this labour that the artist forms and transforms, often against himself.



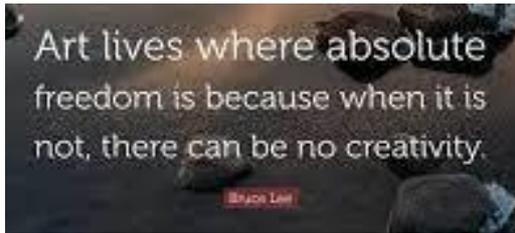
When artificial intelligence promises instant solutions—ready-made images, fluid text—it risks eroding not only artistic labour but also what might be called the education of making: the way the act of creation changes the creator.

To renounce that process, Leo suggests, is to “bury the talents we have received in order to grow as persons.” There is, perhaps, an elegance in that effort worth recovering. Leo also warns of a “world of mirrors,” in which algorithms return reassuring versions of ourselves, constructed “in our image and likeness.” Historically, art has done the opposite: it introduces discrepancy, disturbance, and unforeseen space.

Every significant work is an encounter with something that does not coincide with us. Even when we recognize ourselves in it, we do so by traversing a distance that transforms us. AI, oriented toward personalization and predictive taste, tends to collapse that distance.



It gives us precisely what we want, mirrors our preferences, and confirms our desires. But without distance, there is no desire. Without desire, no imagination. One of art’s fundamental tasks—to make visible what we had not yet seen, to confront us with what we did not anticipate—becomes impoverished.



There is also a further confusion to resist: between human imagination and artificial “hallucination.” Imagination is intentional and responsible; it knows it is opening possibilities beyond the real. Hallucination is the involuntary production of falsehoods that the

system cannot distinguish from truth.

Leo’s message does not indulge nostalgia for an analogue past. It does not reject technology. It offers something rarer: an aesthetic compass for the future. Art is where life rehearses freedom—where knowledge is not merely organized but set in motion, anticipated, felt before it is understood.



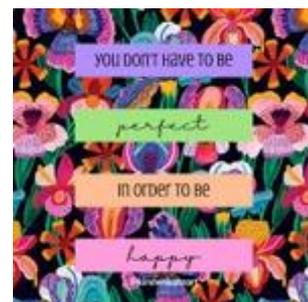
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit palaeontologist and philosopher whose thought has influenced Catholic intellectual life for more than half a century, arrived at a version of the same insight: the more the world rationalizes and mechanizes, he wrote, the more it needs “poets” as its ferment and safeguard.



Leo proposes three pillars: responsibility (clearly identifying AI-generated content and protecting artistic authorship), cooperation (among technology industries, lawmakers, artists, and educators), and education (developing critical thinking and digital

literacy). Above all, he insists: “We are not a species made of biochemical algorithms, predefined in advance. Each of us has an irreplaceable and inimitable vocation.”

Face and voice thus become aesthetic criteria before they are moral ones. They remind us that creativity cannot be reduced to calculation, and that art—even in the age of artificial intelligence—remains a place where the human being exposes himself or herself, risks, and speaks. In a time of flawless images and synthetic voices,



Leo suggests that art’s most urgent and radical task may be precisely this: to safeguard imperfection, singularity, the irreducibility of human experience. To defend what no machine will ever replicate: the artist’s soul, his personal search, his love for truth and beauty—that sacred dimension, as Leo calls it, in which we recognize “a reflection of divine love.”



The point is not to avoid the machine or to halt innovation. It is to learn how to enter genuine dialogue with it, without allowing ourselves to be encapsulated in algorithmic filters. The future of art will not be decided in competition with algorithms, but in fidelity to that vocation of creation that constitutes us as human beings. To safeguard faces and voices in art is to safeguard our own humanity—not against technology, but beyond the algorithm.

Pope Leo's message names three points at which AI threatens the depth of human communication.

The first is the uncertainty it sows about whether we are encountering machines or people.

The second is the way in which algorithms confine our attention to people and ideas that mirror ourselves

The third is the bias created by designers and engineers whose own prejudices and ignorance shape what we see and think.

Patented an AI that lets you keep posting from beyond the grave

By Sydney Bradley (Feb 12th, 2026) (Abbreviated)

Meta was granted a patent in late December that outlines how a large language model can "simulate" a person's social media activity, such as responding to content



posted by real people. "The language model may be used for simulating the user when the user is absent from the social networking system, for example, when the user takes a long break or if the user is deceased," the patent says. If you're no longer posting online, whether that's because you need a break from social media or you die, your followers' user experience will be

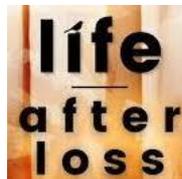
affected - in short, they'll miss you.

"The impact on the users is much more severe and permanent if that user is deceased and can never return to the social networking platform," the document says.

To fill that void, Meta would essentially create a digital clone of your social media presence, training a model on "user-specific" data — including historical platform activity, such as comments, likes, or content — to understand how you *would* (or rather, *did*) behave. That clone can then respond to other people's content by liking and commenting, or responding to DMs. Meta says it is not intending to move forward with the technology.



Edina Harbinja, a UK-based professor at the University of Birmingham's Law School, has concerns. "It does affect not just legal issues, but a lot of very important social, ethical, and deeply philosophical issues as well," Harbinja, who specializes in digital rights and post-mortem privacy, told Business Insider.



Joseph Davis, a sociology professor at the University of Virginia, said he was concerned with the impact that tools like a Meta bot could have on how humans experience grief. Davis said, "One of the tasks of grief is to face the actual loss, "Let the dead be dead,".



Humour

Joe appeared on 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire' and was halfway to the final prize. "Now", the host said, "for one million dollars, and remember you only have one phone a friend life-line left. Everything is riding on this last question. Will you go for it?"

"Absolutely," said Joe.

"Which of the following birds does **NOT** build its own nest?"

a) Sparrow b) Thrush c) Magpie d) Cuckoo?"

Joe didn't have a clue, so he said, " I'll phone my friend, Frank"

Joe called and repeated the question. "Joe, that's easy", said Frank. "It's a cuckoo."

"Are you sure?" asked Joe.

"Of course I'm sure." Frank repeated

Joe hung up the phone and said, , "I'll go with cuckoo as my answer."

"Is that your final answer?" asked the host. "It is." Joe said.

There was a long, long pause and then the host screamed, "Cuckoo is the correct answer! Joe, you've won a million dollars!"

The next night, Joe invited Frank to the pub to buy him a drink. "Tell me, Frank? How did you know it was the Cuckoo that doesn't build its own nest?"

"Because", said Frank, "everyone knows the cuckoo lives in a clock!"

To keep your job safe from AI, use AI to do your job better

A machine Learning algorithm walks into a bar. The bartender asks "What will you have?". The algorithm says "What everyone else is having?"

Parents : "If all your friends jumped into the well, will you?"

Kid : No!

AI machine Learning : Yes!

This book on marriage says, "Treat your wife like you treated her on the first date".

So after dinner tonight I am dropping her off at her parents' house!

I've just renamed my wifi network to "Police Surveillance Van #02". That should keep the neighbors on their toes for a while

Last night, my wife asked me if I'd seen the dog bowl. I said, "I didn't know he could."

Did you hear about the town that legalised pot but banned alcohol?

The residents were left high and dry.

**I DON'T UNDERSTAND
HOW A CEMETERY CAN
RAISE ITS FUNERAL
PRICES AND BLAME IT
ON THE COST OF
LIVING!**

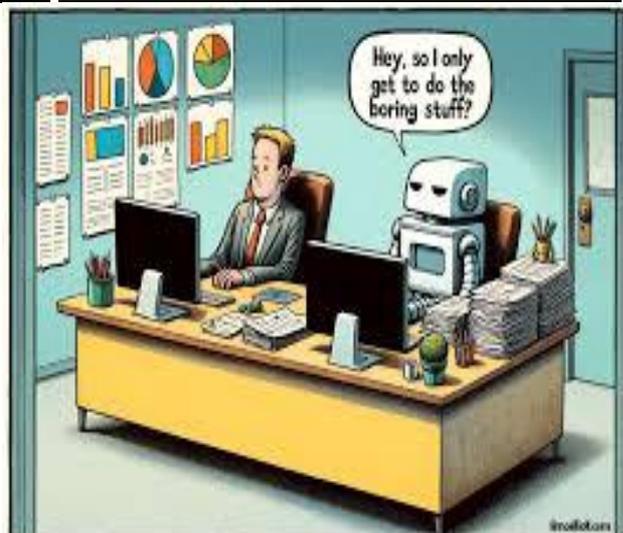
UnkNOWN PUNster ©2021

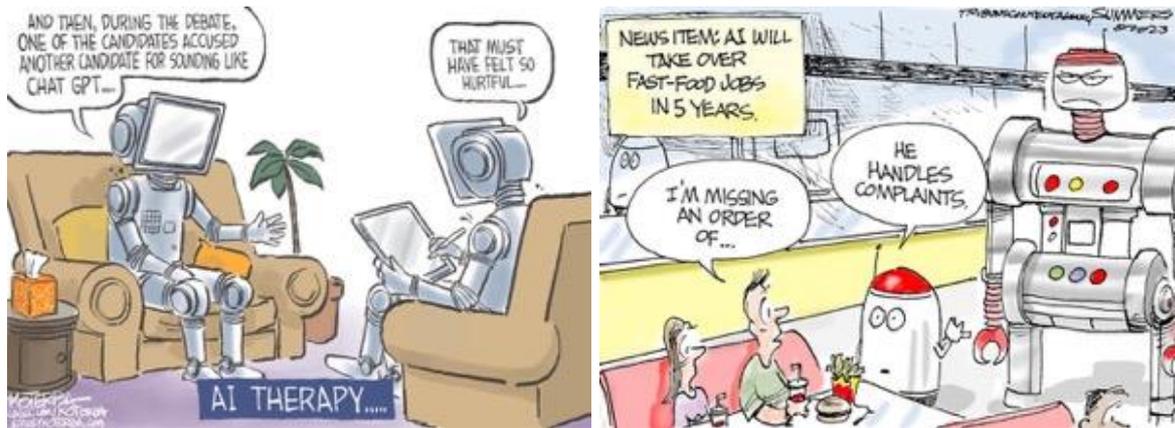
It's perfectly OK to talk to yourself and it's perfectly OK to answer yourself. But it's totally sad that you have to repeat what you said because you weren't listening.

**I never thought
I'd be the kind of
person who'd
wake up early in
the morning to
exercise ...
And I was right.**

**When a woman asks
you to guess her age,
it's like deciding
whether to cut the
blue, red, or green
wire to diffuse a
bomb.**

**I THOUGHT THE DRYER MADE
MY CLOTHES SHRINK.
TURNS OUT IT WAS THE
REFRIGERATOR.**





Prayers

Joseph Liaia was very saddened to hear that his uncle Henry (Ulalom) passed away on Monday in PNG. He has two MSC sons.



We remember those who have died recently especially [Henry Ulalom](#), as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially [Stan Wells](#), [Peter Robson](#), [Val Carrigg](#), [Connie Costanzo](#), [Evelyn Rebello](#), [Rosa Vasarelli](#), [Maxine Vita](#) and [John Whyte](#). 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](#), [Bro Jerome CP](#), [Lesley Yang](#), [Anne Jenkins](#), and [Errol Lovett](#).

SATURDAY
RECORDED MASS

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

Brian