

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 316

6th March , 2026

Welcome back Joseph Liaia



Last week on Thursday we welcomed Joseph back to Holy Cross at dinner. It was good that Brian was around for this as he left the next morning for his ministries in Sydney. JD and Mike were away. Mike is on holidays and JD was in Endeavour Hills supplying in the absence of TP. JD got back to Holy Cross on Sunday.

Even within a short time Joseph has been busy in the garden. The photos below show the before and after work he did on Saturday while still unpacking his stuff. Welcome back to your home Joseph. Tri was also busy cleaning inside the our home and blowing the drive ways making them clean and welcoming for everyone. I enjoyed giving them moral support while mostly taking photos and drinking water!



Welcome back John Stretch



Last Friday we welcomed back a few A-Team members who had been away due to illness, including John. John recently had knee surgery and is still recovering. Despite some ongoing pain, he made an appearance and even managed to get some jobs done! The team was so happy to see him back that they gave him a salute to show both respect and a warm welcome. You can spot Chris on the trumpet, adding a touch of ceremony and fun at the same time.

Jerome also turned up wearing his shirt that reads, “Temporarily out of order,” with “just taking a nap” written underneath, very fitting! See another photo of Jerome below in his coins office. As always, it’s great to have the A-Team around. One of the most visible jobs they completed was painting the kerbs at the front of the church, helping everyone see them clearly and avoid falls - because no one wants to fall, especially not at church.



Fr Christopher Monaghan CP – Gemini (AI) reports:

While conversing at community table, last Sunday Chris told us how Google Gemini generated can say a lot about each of us. We went around the table and found interesting information about each of us. Chris’ was most interesting even though I’m sure it left a lot of information out (e.g. he speaks six languages), it has done a pretty good job. Something to try on friends. Below is what it says about “Fr Christopher Monaghan CP”:

“Fr. Christopher Monaghan CP is an Australian Passionist priest, biblical scholar, and current President of the [Yarra Theological Union \(YTU\)](#) in Melbourne. Born in Melbourne in 1955, he has been a lecturer in both Old and New Testament at YTU since 1987.



Academic & Professional Profile:

- **Education:** He completed his further studies in Scripture at the **Pontifical Biblical Institute** in Rome and Jerusalem during the 1980s. He holds a BTheol, LSS, and PhD.
- **Teaching Focus:** His primary areas of expertise include the Gospels of **Matthew** and **Luke-Acts**, as well as the **letters of Paul**.
- **Current Role:** In addition to lecturing, he has served as the **President of Yarra Theological Union** since 2009.

Published Works

Fr. Monaghan is the author of several books and Lenten resources aimed at making the Bible accessible to a wide audience:

- ***A Friendly Guide to the Lost Gospels:*** An overview of Gnostic texts like the Gospel of Thomas and Gospel of Mary.
- ***A Friendly Guide to Paul:*** A resource exploring the life and theology of the Apostle Paul.
- ***See with the Eyes of the Heart:*** A collection of photographic reflections.
- **Lenten Programs:** He has authored several [Garratt Publishing](#) Lenten resources, including *It's All About Hope* and *God is on the Journey, Too*.

Personal Interests & Community Life

- **Residence:** He lives at the Holy Cross Retreat in Templestowe, Victoria, where he is a member of the Passionist community.
- **Hobbies:** He is an avid **beekeeper**, **nature photographer**, and musician (playing guitar and mandolin). His photography often features in his homilies and publications.”

St Gabriel – Homily by Chris

Talking about Chris, below is a copy of the homily he gave at St Gabriel's feast day that is worth sharing. He kindly translated it into English for us but it sounded better in Italian when he preached! Our community celebrated the Feast on Friday (27th), with Chris presiding. We are blessed to benefit from Chris' wide knowledge and wisdom.

Homily for Saint Gabriel 2026:

We gather once again under this magnificent tent. We remember well last year, when strong winds blew away half of our gazebos on the morning of the feast of Saint Gabriel. It is a powerful reminder of how fragile life is and how suddenly our best efforts and plans can be swept away.



We live in turbulent and uncertain times, politically, financially, and religiously. These times are unsettling, and we might think that Saint Gabriel, who grew up in a wealthy family, knew nothing of these things.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

He experienced the loss of two brothers and his mother before he turned four. He may not have been able to talk about it, but this trauma affected him deeply. From the beginning of his life, he knew how fragile life can be. In his early years, his family had to move frequently due to his father's assignments as governor and papal administrator before settling in Spoleto. Settling in, making new friends, packing your bags, and starting over were all recurring aspects of Gabriel and his family's life. You all know what it means to move to a new country and start over: the difficulties, the hopes, the dreams, and the farewells to family and loved ones. All these experiences can build resilience, but they also bring wounds and challenges. There are always choices to make. Do you withdraw into yourself or embrace the possibilities a new place offers? Gabriel accepted the challenge with enthusiasm and passion, making friends and enjoying the discovery of new horizons. In this, he is a source of encouragement to us when we feel overwhelmed by constant change.

His family experience reflects the Italy of those turbulent years, both politically and religiously. It was not an easy life for the Possenti family. In the same family, there is a saint, a priest, a doctor, a devoted mother of seven, a Freemason, a revolutionary, a son who cares for his father into old age, and an extraordinary daughter who dies young, after caring for her siblings at home. We all know that in every family, there are differences in temperament, points of view, and life choices. The same good family can have brothers devoted to the church and others who lose their way and

become criminals or drug addicts. I say this because Gabriele can be the saint to whom we turn in all our family difficulties—especially when there are disappointments, frustrations, and misunderstandings.

Parents and grandparents are always concerned that their children and grandchildren find the right path in life. Your children and grandchildren may be restless and unsure of how to choose their career path. If they waver from one option to another, or make false starts in their careers, it's helpful to remember that Gabriel's path to becoming a monk was neither easy nor straightforward.

At just 13 years old, he suffered from a sore throat and promised to become a monk. He was likely influenced by his brother Luigi, who had joined the Dominicans the previous year. This promise was quickly forgotten after his recovery, and he returned to his life. He lived a normal life for a boy his age and time.



The shadow of death continued to haunt his family's life during this period. His brother Lorenzo committed suicide in 1853 at the age of 27. All these experiences raised profound questions in him about the meaning of life and how he wanted to shape his future.

The year after Lorenzo's death, Gabriele suffered from tonsillitis again, this time much more severe. Fearing for his life, he again promised to become a monk if he recovered. He wanted to keep this promise and asked to join the Jesuits. This request was accepted by the Jesuits. His father likely intervened because, despite being accepted, he did not leave home. His father knew Gabriel was considering religious life and made sure he went to the theater, dances, and played cards with his friends. We know that his father loved him deeply and wanted to keep him close and compensate him for all the suffering he had endured as a child. Maria Luisa's death from cholera in 1855 was one of the events that pushed Gabriele toward religious life. The following year, in September 1856, he entered the Passionist novitiate in Morrovalle. Gabriele grew up knowing the reality of death and the fragility of life.

When he entered, he probably knew deep down that his life would be short, so he lived his religious life to the fullest, wholeheartedly, and with total dedication. Gabriel embarked on this journey with hope: he had been warned that he would not be physically strong enough, and this proved to be true. The world might consider his decision foolish, but we see it from another perspective. That is, from the perspective of our faith. It is not the length of time that matters, but the quality of our life. The rich man in today's Gospel went away unhappy when Jesus asked him

to give up everything and follow him. Gabriel, on the other hand, accepted the invitation and felt indescribable joy and contentment.

Jesus spoke of how a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die in order to bear fruit. The same was true for Gabriel. He died young, but the impact of his life was enormous. Approximately 2 million pilgrims visit the shrine of Saint Gabriel in Isola del Gran Sasso each year, making it one of the 15 most visited shrines in the world. It is a place of peace, hope, and joy, where wounds can be healed, where people encounter God's love and are encouraged to take up their crosses as Gabriel did and follow him with faith. We can all draw courage from the fact that, just as Jesus looked upon the rich man and loved him, so too God looks upon us and loves us. Therefore, let us not be discouraged when we fail or when life takes turns that bring pain and suffering. Let us learn from Gabriel to make the most of each day we are given and live it to the fullest, as he did.



Let us pray that Gabriel will accompany us on our journey of faith and through life's challenges. Let us also pray that he will protect us and all those we love and bring us peace.

Saint Gabriel, pray for us.

Chris CP

Epstein was a symptom of systemic decay (Brian)

Sirwan Barzani 19th February 2026



When powerful institutions look intact, we assume they are functioning as they should. The Epstein files suggest otherwise. They reveal a web of misconduct protected by legal loopholes, settlements that silenced victims, and networks of influence that preserved reputations while ethical responsibility quietly slipped away. More than that, investigations were narrowed, warnings ignored, and those with the power to act often stayed silent.

The files bring to mind Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, a gothic tale of a mansion crumbling under hidden decay. Roderick Usher, heir to the family estate, lives surrounded by walls and damp corridors slowly falling apart. His twin sister, Madeline, falls ill, seemingly dead, and is entombed alive in a desperate attempt to hide the consequences of inaction. The mansion finally collapses during a violent night of storms and shouting, taking the family with it. Let us say the decay had been visible all along, and the destruction only makes it clear.

Like Poe’s house, the Epstein files show how institutional rot often lies behind a polished façade. Apparent stability conceals repeated compromises, procedural delays, and small ethical concessions that accumulate into systemic failure. As Poe’s narrator says, ‘I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit.’ Read alongside the Epstein documents, it becomes a powerful metaphor for modern political culture, where ethical warnings are visible early but overlooked until the sudden collapse comes and public trust finally fractures.



Many public discussions may treat Epstein as an anomaly, a uniquely predatory figure who manipulated elites around him. But the documents tell a deeper story, a pattern in which powerful institutions absorb ethical breaches without confronting them. They indicate that institutions learn to manage the problem and limit legal consequences to keep reputations intact and, more significantly, that ethical rules, which are meant to restrain power, are ignored when inconvenient. In Poe’s story, a thin fissure, visible but ignored, runs down the façade of the Usher mansion from the beginning.



Similarly, political scandals tend to unfold the same way as warning signs surface early. Allegations, legal settlements, and whispered concerns appear. Yet each incident appears manageable because the structure continues to function and the damage is declared tolerable.



This is where discussions of ethics in politics often go wrong. Ethics are framed as personal virtues such as integrity, honesty, and good character, rather than structural safeguards. In reality, ethical rules exist to restrain power precisely when powerful actors would prefer flexibility. Once those constraints become negotiable, institutions may continue operating for years, even decades, while internal credibility quietly collapses.

One of the other worrying things about the Epstein story is how often people could have stepped in. Many knew enough to feel uneasy, but systems built on loyalty and discretion rarely reward speaking out, so staying silent often seems safer. Ethical failure does not usually come from a single bold act. It builds slowly through repeated compromises, delays, and small concessions. Poe captures this paralysis in Roderick Usher, who senses the decay surrounding him but cannot act against the structure that defines him. He is not unaware, but trapped by fear and dependence. Modern institutions often operate in similar ways. Political networks rely on access and

**Silence protects
the abuser.**

**Accountability
protects the
culture.**

proximity, and challenging those networks can carry immediate professional consequences. Thus, over time, silence becomes easier than accountability.

Perhaps the most disturbing image in Poe's tale is the premature burial of Madeline Usher, an attempt to resolve a problem by hiding it. No literary metaphor can capture the harm experienced by Epstein's victims. But the institutional instinct to bury discomfort rather than confront wrongdoing is familiar. Survivors are marginalised, whistle-blowers dismissed, and legal settlements replace public accountability, so the problem is contained rather than resolved.

The Epstein files are less an attack on institutions than a reminder of how much they already tolerated. Public trust fades not because corruption is suddenly discovered, but because official records show how often ethical boundaries were negotiated. Political responses usually follow a familiar pattern. Blame a few individuals, promise reforms, and insist the system as a whole is sound. But scandals that last for decades rarely come from one mistake. They thrive in cultures where ethics are negotiable, loyalty matters more than accountability, and discretion is mistaken for judgment.

Accountability Ambassador
PLEDGE

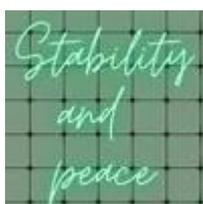


This raises a deeper question about contemporary political culture. What purpose do ethical standards serve if they are enforced only when convenient? When ethics function primarily as words rather than constraints and rules, institutions, like Poe's doomed mansion, look strong from the outside but are weak on the inside.

The fissures in contemporary political culture are now documented and widely understood. The question is whether institutions will undertake meaningful reform or, like the House of Usher, they will continue to absorb ethical compromise until the structure can no longer carry its own weight. Again, we should not forget that ethical collapse rarely announces itself through dramatic rupture. It accumulates quietly through tolerated compromises, managed scandals and deferred responsibility. We need to remember that collapse seems sudden only because the warning signs were ignored for so long. By the time collapse becomes visible, the damage is already done.



Pope calls for dialogue (Brian)



During his Angelus address last Sunday, Pope Leo expressed “deep concern” over the events in the Middle East. “Stability and peace are not built with mutual threats, nor with weapons, which sow destruction, pain, and death, but only through a reasonable, authentic, and responsible dialogue,” he said.

The Pope warned of an immense tragedy if violence escalates out of control.

“Faced with the possibility of a tragedy of enormous proportions,” he said, “I address to the parties involved a heartfelt appeal to assume the moral responsibility to stop the spiral of violence before it becomes an irreparable abyss!” Pope Leo prayed that nations may return to dialogue in order to seek peace. “May diplomacy recover its role and may the good of peoples be promoted, peoples who long for peaceful coexistence founded on justice,” he said. “And let us continue to pray for peace.”



Come Away Day

The next ‘Come Away’ Day will be on Wednesday March 25th.

Free premium TV wireless headphones from Ivan

If anyone who has difficulty understanding spoken words on TV due to loss of hearing, Ivan has an excellent Sennheiser RS 195 headphones. It is a premium closed, circumaural wireless headphone system designed to enhance TV speech clarity. Very easy to connect to TV via optical cable. Ivan is offering the headphones for free of charge. Anyone interested may contact Ivan on 0428 253 027 or see him after Mass at Holy Cross.

Free Footy Tipping for Footy Lovers

Below is an email from Mitre 10, for those who wish to enjoy footy tipping and maybe win something.

“Welcome to the 2026 Mitre 10 Footy Tipping Competition! 🏈

We’re excited to launch the combined Cornwells Doncaster, Lilydale Mitre 10 and Murphy’s Mitre 10 AFL footy tipping competition for the 2026 season!

This is your chance to put your footy knowledge to the test, enjoy some friendly rivalry across our teams, and have a whole lot of fun together throughout the year.

Whether you’re tipping every round or just enjoying the banter, we hope this brings some extra excitement to our days and helps build a greater sense of connection across all our stores.

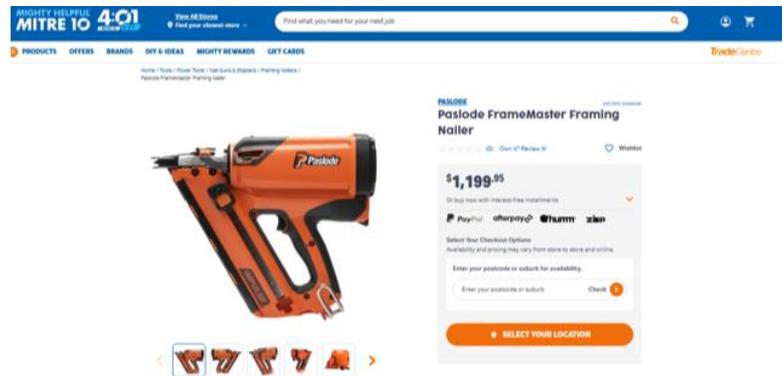
There’s plenty of pride up for grabs (and of course bragging rights!), so get your tips in on time each week and let the competition begin!

Good luck to everyone — may the best tipper win! 🌟

To register click here: <https://footytips.espn.com.au/comps/MurphysCornwellsM10>

Password: mitre10

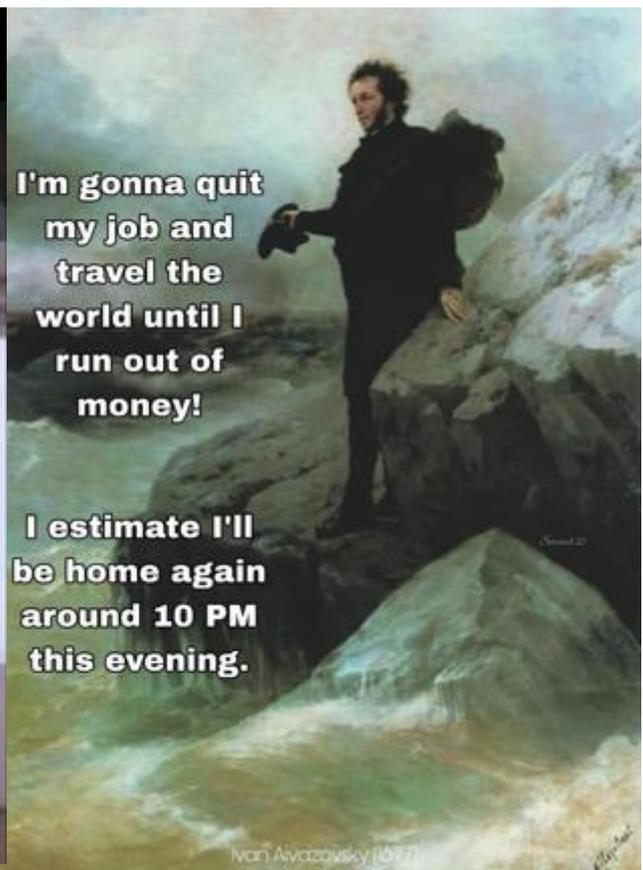
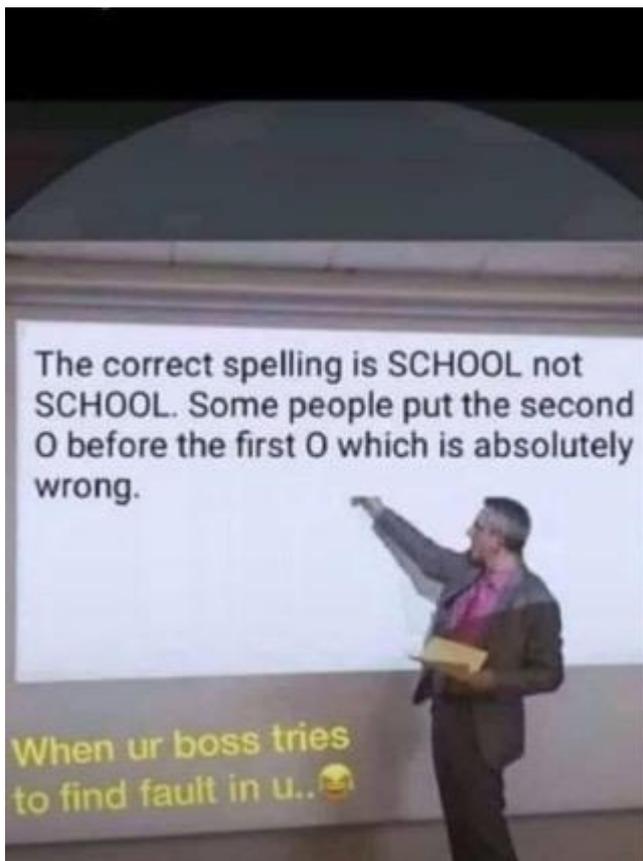
1st Prize:



Last Place: 1 SLAB OF 30 CANS

Humour



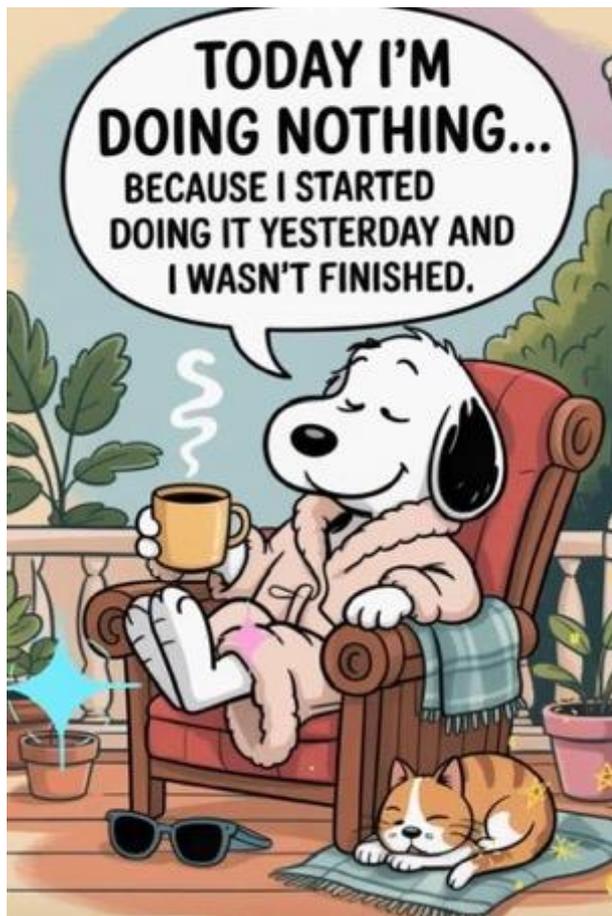


A mother invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to her six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like to say the blessing?"

"I wouldn't know what to say," the girl replied.

"Just say what you hear mommy say," the woman answered.

The daughter bowed her head and said, "Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"



Prayers



We remember those who have died recently especially **Ruth Schwensen, Corrado De Ruvo, and Chris Rua Anthony** (16 Years old) as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially **Gavan Elliott, Tony Fitzsimons** and **Alexander Lavery** 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, Philip Mithen, Bronwyn Ure, David Chai, Lucia Isgro, Gladys Bardini, Marie Spowart, Nina Conti, Max McMahon, Maria Di Giantomasso, Monique Hardinge Fergus Ryan, Bob Hallam, Lisa Iverach, Anne Woon, Carol Battistella, Kate Lenic, Cate Sweeney, Greg Agosta, Denise Egan, Dr Peter Heffernan, Anne Burke, Nancy Reynolds, Luke Norden, Jeanelle Bergin, Gerry Bond, Caroline Hagedorn, Doris Castro, Marilyn Cilmi, Maureen Barns, Bernadette Owen, Alexander Lim, Caroline Meade, Zoe & Sophia Chung, Rex and Jan Cambry, Phil Drew, Patricia Keeghan, Graham Burke, 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 / Erick