



YTU Inaugural Eucharist 6<sup>th</sup> of March

Last Friday, Yarra Theological College (YTU) had their Inaugural Eucharistic Celebration to formally welcome and pray for new members of the University.



Among those who were welcomed to undertake theological studies are three of our Passionist students from Vietnam **Vincent Thang, Joseph Thang, and Joseph Cuong** (on the right in the photo). It is a welcome-back for them because they were here for their English studies through ELSPM prior to novitiate. They have begun their studies on line and have been awaiting visas for Australia to be granted for several months. Also in the photo above, are their classmates, Hai and DJ (now studying in Saigon) and Hau (centre) who is studying theology in Manila.



We also report that **JD** also a member of YTU, has achieved a significant big step in his doctoral journey. Last Monday 9<sup>th</sup>, he was **Confirmed** by a panel of experts (including Chris) that his research has been upgraded from probationary to official candidacy, to continue his research and that he is on track to complete this within the required timeframe. We congratulate JD and pray for his continued doctoral journey.

### Formation Commission Meeting in Sydney:

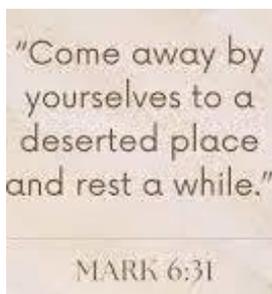
Last week I attended a four day meeting of the Province community leaders, in North Sydney, and then a day and a half in the Province Centre at Marrickville with the Province Formation Commission. The meeting of leaders was very positive and helpful. Members of the Commission gathered from New Zealand, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Adelaide and Melbourne. Holy Cross was represented by Sr Brigid, Lien Thai, Erick, and myself. As Denis Travers, our Provincial stated in his newsletter and in person at the meeting, "formation is a key ministry of the Province, a priority for our budgets, and in every sense a window into our future". We have approximately 35 professed, postulants, or aspirant candidates from our Province in various stages of the formation process, resident in PNG, Vietnam, the Philippines and Holy Cross.



For both meetings, our much valued collaborator Bro David Leary OFM facilitated discussion and helped us develop clear questions of vision in order for community leaders to support their brothers in their community and for formators to better accompany their candidates. David stressed

that if those in formation do not know themselves, any of the other layers (spiritual, academic or pastoral) will be built on sand. The Commission discussed the challenges that our Province faces and how we can meet these challenges.

### Come Away Day



The ***Come Away Day program*** is a long - time retreat and reflection ministry at Holy Cross. The first **Come Away Day** for 2026 will be held at Holy Cross on **WEDNESDAY MARCH 25<sup>th</sup>**. The theme of the day is '**CALL TO LIFE ...**'. As we celebrate the feast of the Annunciation, reflecting on Mary's YES to the Mystery yet to become known, we have an opportunity to rest, reflect and focus on the deeper meaning and call of our own life journey and how we respond. The day's program provides

opportunities for prayer, silent reflection and group interaction in the beautiful grounds and facilities of Holy Cross. All are welcome. Just come as you are. BYO lunch. **Registration is from 9.30am.**

The program concludes by **3pm** with a celebration of the Eucharist. The suggested cost is \$30.00 or a donation according to your means. Registration is helpful for planning purposes. For any further details please contact Sr Brigid cp on [bridget.m64@gmail.com](mailto:bridget.m64@gmail.com) . Please put this Date in your Diary and consider inviting a friend along to share the Come Away Day experience this year. Everyone is welcome.

**Theological body warns of technology threat to humanity**  
**By CathNews New Zealand.....March 10th, 2026**

The Vatican's International Theological Commission has sounded a warning about risks to human identity that can be posed by artificial intelligence and other technologies. The caution came in a document, published on March 4, titled *Quo vadis, humanitas? Thinking about Christian anthropology in light of some scenarios for the future of humanity*. The document was approved by Pope Leo XIV.



“At this juncture in the 21st century, the human family is faced with questions so radical that they threaten its very existence as we have known it,” the document stated. Addressing artificial intelligence (AI), the commission cautioned that forms of knowledge and calculation detached from embodied, situated human intelligence – and from relational

knowledge passed down through generations through education – can become a threat to the true good of humanity.

The document raised particular concerns about automated AI decision-making in sensitive areas, questioning the use of algorithms “when deciding whether or not to provide medical care, granting loans or mortgages, or providing insurance, or when preparing criminal cases in court . . . or when deciding on military strikes”.

Regarding social media, the document said online platforms can intensify “strong polarisations” among groups and can “tribalise” social exchange, fragmenting society into like-minded opinion blocs shaped by likes. The commission also warned that social platforms can become the “territory of loneliness, manipulation, exploitation and violence”.

The document raised concerns about what it describes as a “gigantic religious marketplace” online, where a variety of “digital religions” could offer an à la carte spirituality driven by individual interests rather than real bonds or community belonging. It also questioned the genuinely ecclesial character of some Christian communication on social networks, particularly when used to inflame polemics, foster division or damage the reputations of others.



[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_doc\\_20260304\\_quo-vadis-humanits\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20260304_quo-vadis-humanits_en.html)

## Passionist Institute



The Passionist Companions Leadership Group (PCLG) has begun planning for a face-to-face Passionist Institute at Holy Cross (from Friday evening June 19<sup>th</sup> til 1.00pm Sunday June 21<sup>st</sup>). We want to rejuvenate our acknowledgement and commitment to the Passionist Charism and present this is a new way for our new

times. Details will be provided very soon concerning registration costs, presenters and content. There are likely to be many people who read the weekly newsletter who would be interested in this Institute. It will be possible to participate online, if physical presence is not possible. Please note the dates.

## The real divide in Australia isn't left and right

Joe Zabar (25<sup>th</sup> February, 2026)

On Australia Day, two very different events unfolded. In one city, an Indigenous man burned the Australian flag. Within hours, the footage was everywhere, looped on television screens, amplified across social media, dissected by commentators. Politicians lined up to condemn the act, some calling for criminal penalties. It became a national story.



In another city, a pipe bomb was thrown into a crowd of Australia Day protestors, many of them Indigenous. It failed to detonate. For hours it received little coverage. Only after authorities declared it a terrorist incident did the story gain wider attention. Both events mattered. But the disparity in response is instructive. One incident inflamed cultural grievance and outrage; the other exposed vulnerability and violence. Only one dominated the national conversation. Why?



The answer is complex, part new media, part culture. In today's news cycle, speed, video and drama matter. And when combined with a narrative of cultural conflict, stories explode, perpetuating a cycle of hostility and anger between left and right, progressives and conservatives, the woke and the non-woke. This framing of our cultural conflict sits comfortably with politicians and media alike because it is simple, noisy and endlessly recyclable. But it is also wrong.



The rupture in Australian society is not ideological in the way we are encouraged to believe. It is more fundamental and more dangerous. It is a divide between those who believe society functions best when we consciously pursue the common good, and those whose politics and economics are driven by a narrow conception of the self.

This concept of self is not healthy individualism, the belief that each person has dignity, agency and the right to shape their own life. Rather, it is a more corrosive politics that gives primacy to the self and extends loyalty only to those of the same tribe, class, family or ideological in-group, regardless of the consequences for everyone else. Social identity theory helps explain how we arrived here. Human beings instinctively form groups. We draw lines between 'us' and 'them'. As social beings we derive meaning from belonging. We seek the comfort and safety of familiarity and fear the unknown. In moderation, this builds solidarity. In excess, it breeds suspicion and hostility. Modern politics and media have learned to weaponise this instinct.



Our democracy relies on a contest of ideas. It thrives on freedom of expression, a freedom underpinned by a robust fourth estate that holds society and its institutions to account without bias and without fear. Yet today's media, new and old, all too often trade in outrage and spectacle. The commercial imperative is to prioritise stories that travel fast and provoke emotion. Political strategists, similarly, reach for hyperbole and division to wound opponents and secure ascendancy.



At the same time, the shared moral frameworks that once anchored public debate have weakened. Religious participation has declined. Civic institutions have lost authority. Trade union membership has fallen and political parties have hollowed out. The spaces where Australians once encountered those unlike themselves and negotiated shared norms have thinned. Into that vacuum has flowed a more individualised culture.



For decades our society has been shaped through the lens of neoliberalism, which prizes market competition, personal advancement and consumer choice above collective provision. Success is framed as personal triumph; failure as personal deficiency. Structural advantage becomes invisible and shared obligation recedes. The erosion of the frameworks that enabled the common good to exist, combined with rising individualism, has intensified division.

Without widely accepted moral reference points of fairness, dignity and reciprocity, political disagreement becomes existential. If there is no shared commitment to the common good, only competing interests, then politics becomes a zero-sum contest among tribes, where those with power and wealth thrive and the rest merely survive.



We see the consequences of this in our society today.



Our parliamentary system designates the party not in government as ‘the Opposition’. The label may be procedural, but it reflects a deeper culture, one in which resistance can matter more than responsibility and where policies are judged less by their merit than by their origin.

In today’s politics, serious structural issues are displaced by symbolic battles. Working families, young Australians and households on a single income find it increasingly difficult to secure a home and meet basic needs. Our housing market is shaped by tax settings and investment incentives that favour asset holders. Yet debate frequently centres on rhetoric about ‘aspiration’ rather than meaningful reform to those incentives.

While inequality widens, the political debate is reduced to slogans about ‘budget repair’ or ‘tax relief’, untethered from a broader moral vision. Policy inertia prevails, protecting the status quo. All the while inequality grows.

A parliament oriented toward the common good would behave differently. Cross-party cooperation on housing affordability, climate transition, improvements to our tax and transfer system or Closing the Gap targets would be seen as a responsibility rather than capitulation. This is not naïve idealism. During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, national cabinet arrangements demonstrated that collaboration across jurisdictions and political divides was possible when the stakes were recognised as shared. The question is why does that feel exceptional rather than normal?



Former ALP staffer Sean Kelly argues that if political leaders wish to move beyond the old ways, they must alter the structures that entrench them. If we want a society framed in the common good, we must reform the systems that prevent it. We need to challenge the status quo, not merely narrate it differently. The common good is not a radical ideology. It is a demanding standard that insists social and economic arrangements be judged by how they affect everyone, especially those with the least power. It asks whether prosperity is broadly shared, whether dignity is protected and whether opportunity is real rather than rhetorical.

**Individualism says:**  
*You are responsible for your life.*  
**Collectivism says:**  
*Your life belongs to the group.*  
**Which worldview leads to freedom?**

It has deep roots in Western thought. Plato warned that a society organised around private appetite would collapse into injustice. Catholic social teaching, particularly in Rerum Novarum, articulated the responsibilities of capital and labour toward one another. Montesquieu understood that laws and institutions must serve the stability and flourishing of the whole, not merely the advantage of elites. The common good speaks to inclusiveness and opportunity. It delivers on our promise of the ‘fair go’.

Change will be hard but possible. And as Kelly argues, without reform to structures and systems, the status quo will endure. Imagine a media landscape where the first question asked is 'Will this inform?' rather than 'Will this rate?' Imagine algorithms designed to connect us through truth and knowledge rather than rage and grievance. Imagine a parliament where members are rewarded for durable reform rather than tactical point-scoring, where the wellbeing of the citizenry takes precedence over political ascendancy and where evidence matters more than factional alignment. It would be folly to expect such changes without action from everyday Australians. As citizens we too have obligations. A politics of the common good requires more than indignation.



It requires participation: voting thoughtfully, supporting independent journalism, engaging in civil society and using our financial power to force change. Most importantly, resisting the temptation to retreat entirely into one's own tribe.

Democracies rarely collapse overnight. They erode gradually through the normalisation of self-interest at the top and division below. A society organised around the self rather than the common good will become more unequal, more brittle and more prone to authoritarian impulses. The rights and freedoms that once seemed secure will prove fragile.



We have a choice: a society that is a shared project, or one reduced to a contest among tribes. If Australia is to flourish, we must have the clarity to recognise that choice and the courage to act upon it.

### **Pope Leo's Prayer for Peace**

It is an advantage for us that Pope Leo speaks English. In this brief video, he quietly, slowly and prayerfully calls on God's help to grant the world peace.

<https://www.popesprayer.va/praywiththepope/>

### **Birthdays**

John Hogan celebrates his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday this weekend and Lien Thai, her 71<sup>st</sup>.

### **Funeral**

Fr Chris Mithen's brother, Philip passed away last week and the funeral will be held at St Clements, Bullen on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March. Chris himself has not been so well of late so please keep him in your prayers.

## Humour

Jesus walked into a bar and said "Just a glass of water, please."

The barman looked at Him and said "Listen! if you're going to come in here and drink wine, you can pay for it like everybody else"

A man went into a book shop and asked the saleswoman where the help section was. She said if she told him, it would defeat the purpose!

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An old lady was sitting beside a young businessman on a flight. He noticed that she was reading the Bible and he said. *Do you really believe that stuff in the Bible is true?* "Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I do," said the old lady.

*"Yeah, right..."* even about the guy who got swallowed by a whale? How do you actually survive for 3 days in a fish's stomach"

*"I don't know,"* replied the old lady, *"but I can ask him when I see him in heaven someday."*

The young man said: *"but what if he's not in heaven because he went to hell?"*

*"Then" she said, "you may be able to ask him".*



No matter how I read this sign,  
I still have questions.



AA  
MEETING



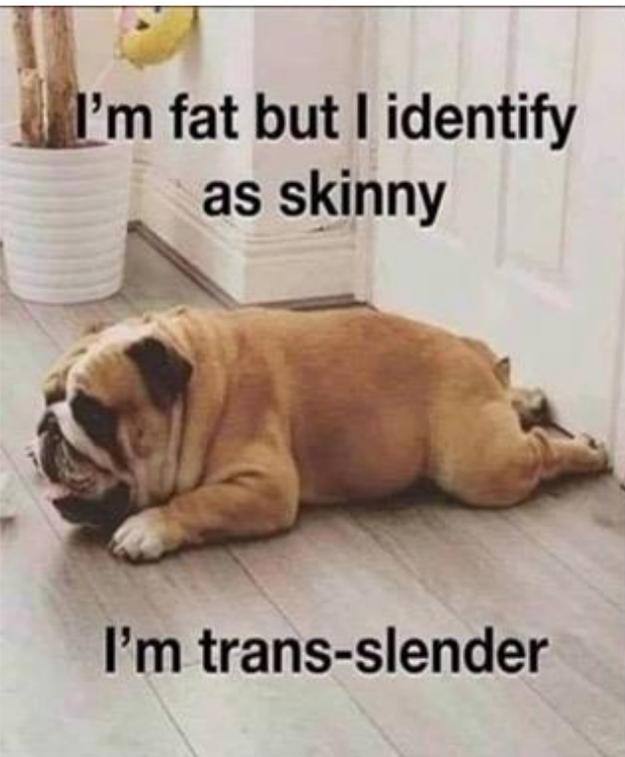
INDIAN HILLS  
COMMUNITY CENTER

BEFORE  
THE CROWBAR  
WAS INVENTED  
CROWS HAD TO  
DRINK AT HOME

INDIAN HILLS  
COMMUNITY CENTER

EAT  
ALPHABET SOUP  
HAVE A  
VOWEL MOVEMENT

I'm fat but I identify  
as skinny



I'm trans-slender

I told my wife I saw a  
deer on the way to  
work.  
She said how do you  
know he was headed  
to work?

A husband and wife were shopping. The husband picked up a case of Foster's light beer and put it in their cart. 'What do you think you're doing?' asked his wife.

"They're on sale, only \$10 for 24 cans", he replied. "Put them back, it's a waste of money", she demanded. He put them back and they carried on shopping. A few aisles further on along, the woman picked up a \$20 jar of face cream and put it in the basket.

What do you think you're doing?' asked the husband... "It's my face cream. It makes me look beautiful," replied his wife. Her husband retorted: 'So does 24 cans of Fosters and it's half the price...."

"CODE 215: HUSBAND DOWN, AISLE 7 !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

### Prayers



We remember those who have died recently especially **Margaret Ang, Philip Mithen** (Fr Chris' brother) **Elizabeth Walsh** (NZ) **Mike Cotter** (NZ), as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially **Paul Darbyshire** 15<sup>th</sup> March and **Michael O'Callaghan** (17<sup>th</sup> March – first anniversaries) as well as **Carmel Couhaud, Adrian Aloï, Maragaret Mary Excell, Richard Wall (Dian's husband)** and **Margaret Mangan**. We pray that they and 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, Stephen Cogle, Pam Storey, Kate Dunn, Nina Conti, Marie Spowart, Fr Chris Mithen CP Bronwyn Ure, David Chai, Maria Di Giantomasso, Lucia Isgro, Fergus Ryan, Bob Hallam, Lisa Iverach, Anne Woon, Carol Battistella, Kate Lenic, Cate Sweeney, Greg Agosta, , Dr Peter Heffernan, Caroline Hagedorn, Fr Jeff Foale CP, Fr, Denise Egan, Anne Burke, Nancy Reynolds, Bernadette Owen, Luke Norden, Jeanelle Bergin, Max McMahon, Doris Castro, Marilyn Cilmi, Phil Drew, Maureen Barns, Alexander Lim, Caroline Meade, Rex and Jan Cambry, Gerry Bond, Patricia Keeghan, Graham Burke, Zoe & Sophia Chung, Rod Gorfine, Julia Cantone, Pam Gartland, Peter Barry, Helen McLean, Jerome CP, Lesley Yang, Anne Jenkins, and Errol Lovett.



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

Brian