

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 317

20th March , 2026

Scripture while you work



Last Friday morning, the 'A' Team's pre-work morning coffee time was extended by an impromptu Q & A session with local scripture expert, Chris. Imagine in a group of men comments like, "I didn't know that!"

This could become a regular excuse to delay the day's work! The photo shows Maurice, Peter, Des, John, Graeme and Vince eagerly involved. Ed was absent.

Holiday disappointment

There must be tens of thousands of people who have had or will have, their much-anticipated holiday cancelled because of the war in the Middle East. Some are people associated with Holy Cross and we extend our condolences to those who already have had to cancel as well as those anxiously waiting for some positive news. May there be good news.

Graduation



Tonight (Friday) Tri will officially graduate with a Bachelor of Theology and a Bachelor of Ministry degree. He is the first Vietnamese Passionist to study English in Australia (at ELSPM and Holy Cross) and then to study theology here at YTU. We congratulate Tri on this impressive milestone. He will be ordained a priest on May 30th.

Come Away Day

Next Wednesday, March 25th, there will be a 'Come Away' day at Holy Cross, themed "Call to Life". The day will have a mixture of input, sharing personal reflection based around the deeper meaning and call of our own life journey and how we respond. Advance registration is helpful for planning, and attendance is from 9.30am. Please BYO lunch. The suggested cost is \$30.00 or a donation according to your means. Everyone is welcome and you might want to bring a friend. For further details please contact Sr Brigid cp on bridget.m64@gmail.com .



Holy Week

These are the days and times for liturgies at Holy Cross during Holy Week.

Palm Sunday 29th March: 10.00am Mass and Coffee Cart

Holy Thursday: 2nd April: 7.30pm Remembrance of the Last Supper

Good Friday 3rd April: 9.00am & 10.30am: Stations in the grounds
3.00pm: Commemoration of the Passion

Easter Sunday 5th April 6.00am: Dawn Mass in the Shrine and Breakfast
10.00am: Easter Mass

Leo's journeys: tracing a wounded world's map (Antonio Spadaro SJ)



The Vatican Press Office has announced Pope Leo XIV's upcoming apostolic journeys: the Principality of Monaco, four African nations, Spain, and Lampedusa. The destinations could hardly be more different, yet they were unveiled together, as if to signal that the pontificate of Robert Prevost will be as rooted in Rome as it is restless—anchored and itinerant at once.

A message emerges with particular clarity. On the Fourth of July, America's Independence Day, the American pope will stand in Lampedusa—the island that has become both threshold and fault line of Europe, a crossroads of Mediterranean migration.



The date is not incidental. It reconnects his ministry to the first journey of Pope Francis in 2013, when Lampedusa became a moral geography as much as a physical one. The cycle begins, however, in Monaco—marking the first visit in modern history by a pope to the tiny principality. Beyond its reputation for glamour and spectacle, Monaco has cultivated a sustained

engagement with ecological responsibility and the dignity of the human person. The choice suggests that small states, too, can function as laboratories of moral seriousness.

Yet the heart of the semester lies in Africa. **Algeria** holds personal resonance for an Augustinian pope: it is the land of Augustine. But it is also a country that is overwhelmingly Muslim, with Christians accounting for less than one percent of the population.



The visit thus unfolds along two axes—spiritual lineage and interreligious dialogue. Algeria's political context remains delicate. Parliamentary elections expected by June could prove pivotal, and the pope arrives bearing a question—about freedom, about coexistence, about the fragile space where faith and public life intersect.

In **Cameroon**, Leo will encounter a country scarred by internal conflict. What began as peaceful protests by lawyers and teachers evolved into armed confrontation between separatist groups and government forces accused of serious human-rights abuses. The visit is less a diplomatic gesture than an act of proximity: an acknowledgment that ecclesial presence has meaning precisely where fracture is deepest.



Angola presents another paradox. It ranks among the major economies of sub-Saharan Africa and is one of the region’s leading oil producers. Yet more than forty percent of its population lives below the poverty line, and political power has remained concentrated for decades in the hands of a ruling elite.

In recent years, the Catholic Church in Angola has adopted an increasingly forthright voice, denouncing poverty and political intolerance. Leo will encounter a Church there that is both vibrant and embattled—rooted in the people it serves.

The final African stop is **Equatorial Guinea**, governed since 1979 by Teodoro Obiang, one of the world’s longest-serving heads of state, who presides over what critics describe as a family-based authoritarian system. Vast oil reserves coexist with widespread poverty; a majority of citizens live below the poverty line. The pope does not visit regimes; he visits peoples. The distinction matters.



Spain closes the arc. In Barcelona, Leo will inaugurate the Sagrada Família’s new central tower during the centenary year of Antoni Gaudí’s death—a gesture that binds faith, architecture, and national memory.

His stop in the **Canary Islands** draws an implicit line back to Lampedusa: another maritime frontier, another gateway through which African migration reaches European shores.

Leo does not choose comfortable destinations. He goes where conflict lingers and repression casts a shadow. He goes where the Church is growing—across Africa, which many demographers see as the future of global Catholicism. He walks in Augustine’s footsteps on predominantly Islamic soil to suggest that interreligious dialogue is not optional but necessary. He travels to an aging Europe, where faith confronts secular fatigue and migration has become a moral dividing line. taken together, these journeys form more than an itinerary. They trace a map of a wounded world—and of a Church that has chosen not to observe from a distance but to remain within it.



Synod releases Report on Mission in the Digital Environment

By Fr. Mark Robin Destura, RCJ



A study group of the Synod of Bishops has emphasized that the digital environment is becoming an essential space for the Church's mission in today's world. The reflection is presented by Study Group 3: "The Mission in the Digital Environment," prepared as part of the synodal process of the 16th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on *"For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission."* During the discussion, the group noted that "rather than seeing digital spaces as secondary or supplementary, the Church must recognize them as integral to its mission, particularly in a world where many people's primary means of engagement is online". They recognized the cyberspace as place for spiritual encounter where people go to the digital environments for all manner of things, including information about the Gospel and about finding God".

The final document presents the three guiding questions: What have we heard? What does it mean? and What do we recommend? With these three questions, they come up with the five essential themes. **First**, the digital environment is not merely a set of tools to be mastered; it is a culture. **Second**, digital engagement enables listening to, accompanying, and raising the voices of those whose voices are not heard, and is an expression of the Church's social mission. **Third**, this digital culture requires the same intentionality, formation, and missionary spirit that we bring to any cross-cultural ministry. **Fourth**, at its best, digital engagement naturally fosters elements of synodality: listening, participation, and shared responsibility. **Fifth**, at the same time, the digital environment poses immense challenges. It presents great risks, and is shaped through algorithms that can isolate us in echo chambers and manipulate us.



The challenge to understand this phenomenon continues to develop, particularly with the emergence of digital missionaries. The study group concludes with the proposals directed to the levels of the Holy See, Bishops' Conferences, and Dioceses, suggesting several steps in order to implement this Church's mission in the digital world. As a new missionary frontier, "the mission in the digital environment is a journey in progress." As digital technologies continue to evolve, further theological, pastoral, and canonical reflection will be necessary to understand concepts such as digital mission, online synodality, and digital accompaniment. Ultimately, the document suggests that the Church's presence in the digital environment can become a sign of communion and hope "reflecting the merciful face of Christ" in a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

The forbidden tree and a troubling picture of God

Flashes of Light.....Tony Flannery March 3rd, 2026 (edited)



The first Sunday in Lent gave us the creation story from the Book of Genesis as our first reading at Mass. Due to advances in knowledge, we now know that the real story of creation is much more ancient, complex, and continues to this day. The story we heard is not historical. It is mythological, and, treated as such, it can open up for us some pathways into the mystery of creation and the creator. Taking it as a literal account of what happened, as the Church did centuries, raises many questions. We now know hominoid life developed over billions of years through evolution.

The story of Adam and Eve explains the presence of evil in the world by the sin of Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit in the centre of the Garden of Eden. The story led to the belief that we have all inherited the consequences of their sin.



Because the story blamed the woman, Eve, for tempting Adam to sin, enormous damage has been done to women; who to this day, are not recognised by our Church as equal to the male of our species.

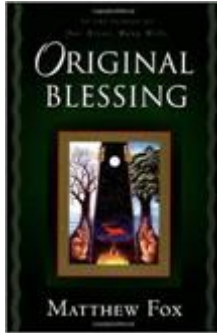
Maybe the biggest damage a literal interpretation of the creation story, is how it depicts the Divine. If he/she had created our first parents out of love, why place a forbidden tree in the middle of the garden to catch them out, so that they could be expelled. And then, a really vindictive side of the Divine, closed the gates of heaven to all humanity, immediately condemning them to Hell until such time as Jesus died a



cruel death to appease Divinity. This is not an act for a loving God! Now, thanks to advances in science and cosmology, we know so much more about the universe and humanity's place within it. It is no longer credible to present all Bible stories as literal, historical accounts of the word of God. There is an urgent need for a proper understanding of Scripture for all the believers. But it won't be easy because many more questions, about Church beliefs and teachings, will present themselves.

A response to this reflection

In the first chapter of Genesis after every stage in creation, we are told that God looked at what had been made and saw that it was good. The heavens and the earth and the sea, the plants, and the animals are all good.



All of this is said before humanity entered the scene. The world before and without people is good in and of itself, and is seen to be good in God's eyes. The original goodness of creation is seen to have been corrupted by the sinfulness of humanity (Adam and Eve). Some people today suggest that we should abandon this idea because we know through the story of evolution that a perfect paradise never existed in any literal sense before or after the 'arrival' of humanity.

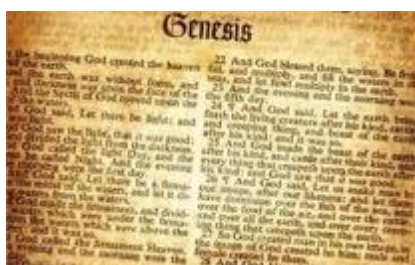
Humans are still evolving. Just as was the case when the Scriptures were written, we have not yet achieved what God is inviting us to become. We have achieved much good, but rather than reduce evil as we might have done, 'we' have introduced massive evils and deep suffering into history and spoiled our natural environment by ruthless and reckless exploitation in quest of wealth, power, and glory. That one hundred million people died in wars in the last century is proof of this. All of this is laid out before us again as death and destruction is daily news.



A stumbling block for those who accept evolution, is the traditional teaching of original sin, developed by St Augustine from his understanding of Chapter 5 of Paul's letter to the Romans (5:12-13). This teaching was a reflection on 'the sin of Adam'. Increasingly, Catholics familiar with evolution, are uneasy with the message of atonement implied in the doctrine of original sin which is repeated continually in liturgies and homilies and fails to proclaim the Biblical description that God saw what God made and saw that "it was good".

The creation stories of Genesis drew on ancient near-east traditions and were probably written between the sixth and ninth centuries BCE. They and the stories that follow them reflect the issues that the people of Israel had been and were experiencing. These writings provided an answer for the people of Israel, to the question that if God is good and loving, how is it that disasters, wars, death and ongoing suffering, was their lot? The answer or explanation given is related to 'the sin of Adam' which resulted in humans losing God's trust and being punished. Christian theology came to be describe this as 'the Fall', although Scripture experts claim it is not expressed as 'a fall' in Genesis.





The first eleven chapters of Genesis provide the background for the whole Biblical story. They contain four main stories (Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood and the Tower of Babel. Each has a common theme that begins with human sin and is followed by negative

consequences that lead eventually to *God's* grace. Adam and Eve violated God's command not to eat from the tree of knowledge. Cain assumed to himself power over life and killed his brother Abel. The generation of the flood became lawless and unjust, and the people of Shinar (in Babylon) began to build a tower to heaven where God resides. The common sin is first identified by the serpent: humans rejected being an image of God and wanted instead, to be God.

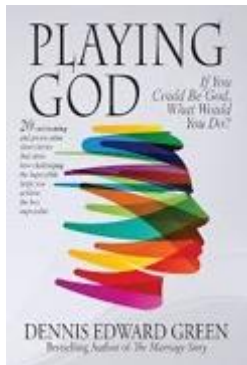
In each of these stories, humans attempted to reach beyond themselves and 'play at' being God, are followed by negative consequences. Not only do the humans seem to be punished, but so is the serpent, and even the earth is cursed. For Adam and Eve, their punishment is a life of toil to be followed by death. Cain is forced to wander alone over the earth.

The sinful generation and all living things are destroyed in the flood, except for Noah and the occupants of his ark. At the tower of Babel, the people are scattered, and their languages confused. They are now unable to communicate with each other.

The introduction of death in each story includes the breakdown or the death of relationships with all life forms and this clearly had not been God's original purpose. Despite the sentence of death that Genesis announces, in each of the four stories there is also a blessing. Eve was named the mother of all the living and she and Adam were given clothing. To prevent Cain being killed, God put a mark on him so he would be protected. Noah, his family and some animals survived the flood and became the source of new life on the earth, and God promised not to destroy the earth again. The separation following the tower of Babel episode is followed by the call of Abraham who is told, *"In you Abraham, all nations of the earth will be blessed"* (Gen 12:3).



The 2004 Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches *“In order to discover the sacred authors’ intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current”* (CC 110). Applying this principle, Scripture scholars have been reconsidering these four Genesis stories and seeking to focus on their message of sinfulness rather than on any factual events. These stories speak about the origin of sin and their effects. They describe how if we attempt to play God, for which we are not equipped, there will be a breakdown in relationships that effects every life form.



Every generation can identify this same inclination. This was well known by the Biblical writers and their explanation was not that human sinfulness was passed on through sexual intercourse, as Augustine was later to teach, but simply through the human condition. The imperfection it described could also be seen in other life forms. The Biblical narrative recounts many disasters such as the great flood, the ten plagues in Egypt, the destruction of Sodom, defeats in battle and other sufferings that resulted in huge loss of life.



It also tells of various punishments inflicted on the people, culminating in the ultimate punishment, the exile in Babylon. These events required an explanation. How was it, that a good and beautiful creation looked after by a loving creator, included all these realities, all this

suffering? Such a question is little different from what has been asked throughout human history, and is still asked today. Why is their suffering, especially if God is a loving God? **(To be continued)**

Humour

Police came round last night and told me my dogs were chasing people on bikes
My dogs don't even have bikes.



When you've mastered the art of minding your own business



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

Things to ponder

- why do peanuts float in a regular coke and sink in a coke zero. Try it.....
- Bill ate only natural foods until he learned that most people die of natural causes
- What disease did cured ham actually have?
- Once you're in heaven, what set of clothes will you have?
- If a deaf person has to go to court, is it still called a hearing?
- Why are you IN a movie, but you're ON TV?
- If electricity comes from electric does mortality come from moron?
- How did the person who made the first clock, know what time it was?

How important does a person have to be before they are considered assassinated instead of just murdered?

Why do you have to "put your two cents in"... but it's only a "penny for your thoughts"? Where's that extra penny going? (taxes?)

How is it that we put man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on luggage?

Why do people say they "slept like a baby" when babies wake up every 2-3 hours?

Why do people pay to go up tall buildings and then put money in binoculars to look at things on the ground?

If the professor on Gilligan's Island could make a radio out of a coconut, why couldn't he fix a hole in a boat?

If corn oil is made from corn, and vegetable oil is made from vegetables, what is baby oil made from?

Did you ever notice that when you blow in a dog's face, he gets mad at you, but when you take him for a car ride, he sticks his head out the window?

Why do the Alphabet song and Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star have the same tune?
- Why did you just try singing these two songs?

Birthday

Jack Brolly will be 93 next Wednesday, March 25th.

Wanted



If you have the skill or experience of putting Ikea furniture together, we'd be very grateful for some help sometime over the next 3-4 days. Please contact me on 98465013 or Mayrose on 98456014. Thank you

Prayers



We remember those who have died recently as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially **Antonia Russo (Mirella Rao's aunt), Mary Ellen Boulton, Matt Walsh, Paul Norden, Tanya Balnaves, Winifred Birkett, Arcangelo Facciolo, Peppino Vigilante, and Adrian Woon** 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, Stephen Cogle, Joan O'Callaghan, Fr Chris Mithen, Pam Storey, Vince Celestino, Bronwyn Ure, Kate Dunn, David Chai, Lucia Isgro, Marie Spowart, Nina Conti, Max McMahan, Maria Di Giantomasso, Cate Sweeney, Carol Battistella, Fergus Ryan, Bob Hallam, Lisa Iverach, Anne Woon, Kate Lenic, Dr Peter Heffernan, Greg Agosta, Nancy Reynolds, Luke Norden, Jeanelle Bergin, Caroline Hagedorn, Bernadette Owen, Doris Castro, Gerry Bond, Marilyn Cilmi, Maureen Barns, Denise Egan, Alexander Lim, Caroline Meade, Rex and Jan Cambry, Anne Burke, Phil Drew, Patricia Keeghan, , Zoe & Sophia Chung, Graham Burke, Rod Gorfine, Pam Gartland, Peter Barry, Lesley Yang, Anne Jenkins. Julia Cantone, Helen McLean, Jerome CP, Jeff Foale CP and Errol Lovett.



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

Brian