

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 319

27th March , 2026

Mike



Last Sunday Mike celebrated 10.00am Mass and said farewell to Holy Cross. He expressed his appreciation for the warmth of the community; the honesty that helped him make corrections, especially to his accent and his English expression, as well as the support and affirmation he received. He especially noted the generosity of so many people that make Holy Cross what it is. He owes his driving licence to Peter Norman. He especially thanked the professed brothers of the community, who included his classmate, JD.

The community as well as Tuan Paul from Endeavour Hills, celebrated his much valued presence on Sunday evening with a meal prepared by Tri, and we gifted him with a warm top and warm gloves!



Chris chose these and was thoughtful enough to ensure Mike could use his phone in the cold weather without removing his gloves! On Monday the community blessed him at the end of Mass before he departed to take up his new appointment in St Joseph's, Hobart. Mike has been a great contributor to our community life including paying significant attention to our extensive gardens and to volunteer to cook. He has always shown a ready willingness when asked if he could assist with something, and we will miss him.

Holy Week

We begin Holy Week on Sunday

Joseph will be assisting our community in Hobart with the Easter liturgies

Erick will be celebrating Easter Sunday with the African community at Melton.

JD will be celebrating Easter Sunday with a Vietnamese parish community

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

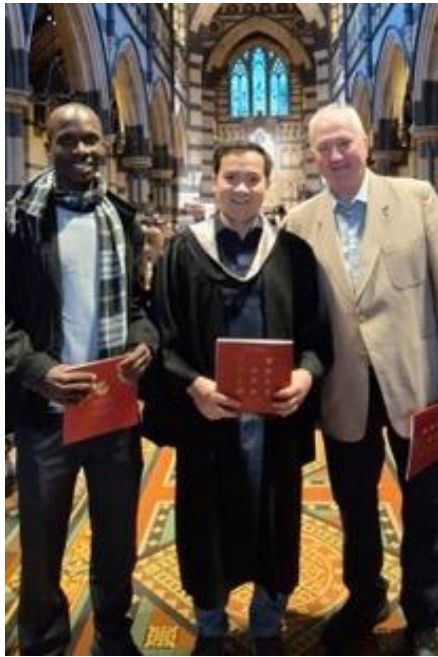
Palm Sunday 29th March: 10.00am Mass and **Coffee Cart**

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

Graduation



Last Friday, Tri officially graduated at St Paul's cathedral in the city. He was allocated two ticket holders to support him, so Erick and myself were there to witness the occasion. Tri now holds a Bachelor of Theology and Bachelor of Ministry degree from YTU.

Luke was also present. He was there to support Heather Cetrangolo who was conferred with a doctoral degree. Heather is a former member of the Passionist Youth team in Brisbane. She has a diverse set of skills and experiences including being an Anglican priest based in Port Melbourne, and a qualified lawyer. She has been ordained 15 years and served in parish ministry, chaplaincy in schools, universities, and community development.



Also present representing YTU, was Doctor Chris Monaghan CP and this photo shows him with Tri and other graduates from YTU some of whom we've seen here at times in different attire as 'the Party Boys'.

By this stage (when this photo was taken) Chris had packed away his colourful doctoral robes.

The YTU graduates with mortar board hats achieved Masters of theology.

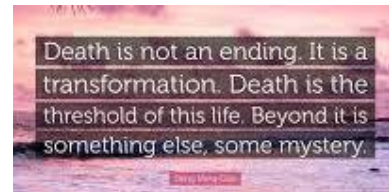
Part 2 of a response to the reflection forbidden tree and a troubling picture of God



During the Great Plague or Black Death in the 14th century, preachers continually reminded people that the evil plague was the result of their sins. It is estimated that at least 25,000,000 people died from that plague. Some questioned 'is this the end of the world?' In a similar way modern day fundamentalists have preached that AIDS or various natural disasters are a punishment sent from God for people's sins.

Biblical literature records a similar explanation for people's suffering and the state of the world, but punishment was always followed by blessing. There was an ongoing struggle in Israelite history for people to overcome their own sins so as to return to God's favour, and more particularly, when in exile, that they would return to Jerusalem. Biblical scholar N T Wright has suggested that this in fact could be considered as the major focus of Judaism.

The explanation for the state of the world, for a great deal of human suffering, extinction and death, when looking at life through the lens of evolution, is entirely different. These elements are interwoven with the unfolding of life through billions of years. Whereas in traditional Christianity, death has been considered a penalty for sin, in evolution, death is a biological necessity that leads to transformation.

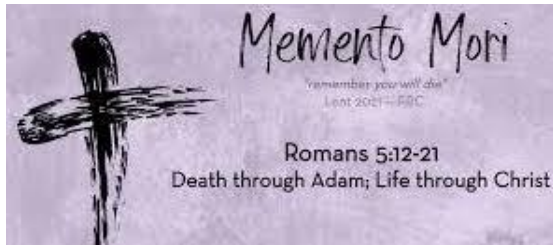


New forms of order, such as the formation of stars from supernova explosions or what emerged following the demise of the dinosaurs, including the emergence of mammals and humans, can only come about when death gives way to a new form of life. When considered this way, many people question today how unsuitable is the notion that Jesus came among us to atone or compensate for our sins or to open the gates of heaven that had been closed when Adam sinned. There is no scriptural evidence for this claim concerning heaven. Theologian John Haught proposes that *"for many Christians, original sin is the most difficult religious teaching to square with Darwinian evolution"*



Why did Jesus come and how does his life fit in with the story of evolution? Some theologians begin an answer to this by suggesting that Jesus did not and has not saved humans from sin, but he has saved them from death, which was the punishment that the Genesis stories tell of. The Book of Genesis tells a story that explains how humans lost paradise and with that, the full life God that had been promised them. The fault is directed to Adam who disobeyed God's command to not eat from the tree of knowledge.

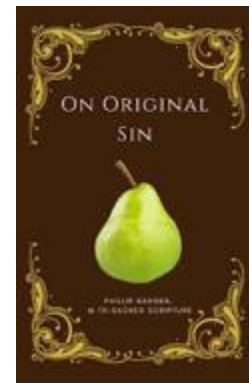
St Paul referred to this in his letter to the Romans: *“Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all men sinned -- sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come”*. (Romans 5:12-13).



Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all men sinned -- sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over

Evolution has established that death entered the world long before humans, but with the first human (Adam), death became a reality for the human family.

In the fourth century, St Augustine took up Paul’s thinking and sought to explain how it this fault of Adam had become a sin that every human shared in and carried. The Council of Trent endorsed his teaching. Augustine determined that this (original) sin was passed on through propagation (sexual intercourse). Some scriptural experts today suggest part of the original scriptural text he used to explain this, was incorrectly translated and therefore incorrectly interpreted by Augustine.



This text (of Romans) originally expressed that all other humans imitated Adam’s sinfulness; they did inherited it! Augustine taught that the guilt carried over for Adam’s inherited or transmitted sin could be removed through baptism, but that the effects of the sin remained, thus explaining the tendency to sin that every human inherits.



Following Augustine, sexuality was viewed in the Church in a very negative light, since even a loving act between man and wife was seen as transmitting sin to their new child. This had devastating consequences including the

clerical sexual-abuse crisis. Having set demanding standards for people in various areas of sexuality, the faults of its leaders has severely damaged and discredited church authority on such matters.

The emphasis on original sin resulted in a message heard in many sermons that urged people to repentance because “Christ died for your sins”. In a clever irreligious comedy sketch Dave Allen describes being told as a child by a nun that “Jesus died on the cross because of your sins”. When young Allen asked, “When was this?” Sister replied “Two thousand years ago”!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxo81Ok9Urk>

An entire generation growing up with the universe story, in little contact with church teaching or liturgy and baffled by 'church-speak' is at a loss to understand



how these repentance catch-cries relate to them. That they are sinners is easy to understand and accept. That this is the result of Adam's disobedience or that Jesus had to die on a cross to save them from sin (when they don't experience being freed of sin) makes little sense to them. They wonder, much like the people of Israel, how a good God, could condemn all humans for the mistake of one.

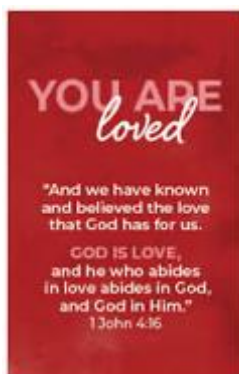
Young people have learned in science lessons that death is an essential biological process that began in the galaxies and has been a hallmark of life on earth for billions of years. The connection therefore between sin and death that was made in the Biblical world is critically relevant, but that is not what has been preached or taught. The Bible did not teach original sin as we know it, and it is not accepted in Judaism or Islam.

The hallmark of Christian belief is that Jesus is resurrected and has therefore opened a way for all humans to share in this new life he lives. This is a new unfolding of evolution. The death of Jesus, seen through the eyes of evolution does not save others from sin, rather it saves them from the finality of human death and from a loss of meaning. This is in tune with the message of the Genesis stories.



The implications of Jesus' life, death and resurrection is that by embracing Jesus' way of life, humans can fulfil their earthly existence as God intended and help create a universal fellowship in accordance with God's true project.

Scottish Jesuit theologian Jack Mahony suggests that *"it appears that what people in today's culture need most, is not a recovery of a sense of sin but the acquiring of a*



sense of purpose in their lives, something to give a shape and objective to their personal existence". Instead perhaps of seeing that humans fell from God's favour, the emphasis we might prefer today is to appreciate that humans are loved and blessed by God, and are constantly being called to become the persons they were created to be. This outlook reduces the sense of guilt, fear and negativity that has long been prevalent. It places a focus on the positive demands of the gospel rather than the simply avoidance of wrong doing. Jesus taught *"whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did to me"*.

One question that is been asked with more frequency is, 'would Jesus have still come if Adam had not sinned (if there had been no fall)?' Jack Mahoney suggests, we cannot answer that question until we understand what we are saved from.

Catholic and Protestant theology places a different emphasis on this second question. Rarely does a local Catholic church billboard advertise 'Jesus Saves', which is a common theme among evangelical churches. While both traditions recognise and teach about the fall of Adam, one simplistic description of their different emphases is that in Protestant theology Jesus saves us from hell, while in Catholic theology Jesus saves us from a life without hope and meaning.



Behind the question that asks whether Jesus came to restore fallen humanity as has been taught, or would he have come anyway, is a challenge to identify a different or deeper purpose for Jesus' life. To offer a satisfactory response it is necessary to note



what has been learned in recent years about the Scriptural language and meaning of Jesus' death, and the Jewish understanding of sacrifice. In a parallel to other ancient near east cultures where blood sacrifice was violent, throughout the Old Testament there are numerous examples of the significance of sacrifices which included the slaughtering of animals and scapegoating, and offerings made to God especially at the time of harvesting, in peace settlements and to atone for sin or impurity. They reflect an extreme preoccupation with God punishing humans for their sins.

The emphasis on these activities was often challenged first by the prophets and later by Jesus, as incorrectly being given greater importance than the fundamentals of faith, such as compassion, justice and good faith. It was not until the destruction of the Temple in 70CE that a new way had to found to celebrate reconciliation and thanksgiving without the shedding of the blood of innocent animals, and the obsession there had been with sacrifices as a way of appeasing God.



The early Christian community clearly saw the death of Jesus as a bloody sacrifice and it became a central theme of its message. His cruel death was surely not the end to Jesus' life that the disciples had expected, and they strived to develop an understanding of what his death meant for them.



They naturally drew on their tradition, and the letter to the Hebrews, in particular, drew on the sacrifice tradition, as did Paul's letter to the Romans. A link was also made with the suffering servant of Isaiah. Jesus' death was proclaimed as an action that restored people to God's friendship, but Jesus himself had preached of a God of total compassion (most clearly in the story of the prodigal son) who not only freely offered forgiveness, but took the initiative to do so.



As the gospel spread to Gentile communities, Greek philosophical understanding had to be considered, and the language of ransom (to release) or redemption (to buy back) was used to explain the effect of Jesus' death. Some Scripture scholars suggest that references to atonement in Mark and Matthew, grew out of the Jewish tradition that saw

death as a punishment and sacrificial atonement for sin. They were reflections of the early community as it searched to understand the meaning of Jesus' death.

Throughout Christian history various theologians have attempted to explain that Jesus death was a reparation for Adam's sin or a making satisfaction for the fault of Adam. This led to the development of a legal tone that demanded a suitable payment be made to God for the original sin of Adam. If Adam, having been offered freedom, disobeyed God, another human, representing the whole human family and with the same standpoint of freedom, had to obey God. But the Church took on an audacious role in this salvific proclamation with no resemblance to the compassion of Jesus!



Bishop Fabius Fulgentius, bishop of North Africa declared, *"No one, howsoever much*



almsgiving he has done, even if he sheds his blood for Christ, can be saved, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church". This statement was included in the decree by the Council of Florence in 1442 which said, *"The Church firmly believes, professes and preaches, that none who are outside*

the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can partake of eternal life, but they will go into eternal fire unless before the end of life they will have been joined to it [the Church] and that the unity of the ecclesiastical body has such force that only for those who remain in it are the sacraments of the Church profitable for salvation; and fastings, alms, and other works of piety and exercises of the Christian soldiery bring forth eternal rewards only] for them. (DS 1351)

We have to wonder especially in our common age, what kind of God was being considered within these theologies! The argument for reparation (restitution or compensation) grew out of an understanding that God had been offended by Adam's disobedience and so God inflicted a severe punishment (death) on every future human person because of that offence. It is an obvious question to ask



whether God could not have forgiven Adam and future humans with the same unconditional generosity that Jesus' parables and encounters describe.



The stumbling block to an honest answer to such a question appears to be the tradition of original sin developed by Augustine and officially formulated by the Council of Trent during the Reformation, which presents the death of Jesus as necessary for 'overcoming' the sin of Adam.

Immanuel Kant described the period of Enlightenment (the end of the 15th to the middle of the 17th centuries) as 'having the courage to use your own understanding'. His era challenged the mechanistic view of the world and the misuse of authority, which led to the revolutions in Britain, France and the United States. Kant called for mature thinking and urged people to ask questions and to trust their intelligence. What can be lacking in such a basic call, is the need for wisdom, reflection, dialogue and in-depth study, rather than the possibility of settling for a ready-made answer that may not give due consideration to tradition or its meaning.

⊘ Simplistic

We live in a similar age. Science is calling us to ask new questions and to seek new answers, but these cannot simply be 'convenient'. We should be focused on discovering, rather than discovery. The universe is not fixed and static. God is not only creator, but creating. God is a verb! 'God is'. A thinking Christian can accept both the broad outline of evolutionary theory and the fact that it impacts on the Christian understanding of God. Theology has to take into account the evolutionary view of life so that Christians can meaningfully talk about God in an evolutionary context.

Modern biblical scholars distinguish clearly between cosmological worldviews that the biblical texts assume and the religious insights that they try to communicate. What we need less of, is preachers and homilists blandly saying "Jesus died for your

Live your truth!

sins." They need to reflect on what this actually means and think about how these words will be heard by their audience.

Jesus spent his life sharing his conviction that God is a prodigal lover of each of us. This God did not demand that Jesus die on a cross. What God did call for from Jesus, as God does call for from each of us, is to strive to live our truth no matter what. Many Christian martyrs have recognised that if this causes hardship, suffering or death, then so be it, they will not compromise, because they believed God will raise them up. Jesus showed them so profoundly 'the' way, that he became the Way.

PASSIONIST INSTITUTE 2026

New wine, New wineskins

START FRIDAY 19TH JUNE 5PM
UNTIL SUNDAY 21ST JUNE 1PM



*We gather together to look at our Charism
and the challenges of our 'new times'.
"No one pours new wine into old wineskins"
(Luke 5:37)*

In Person Gathering encouraged yet recordings will be made available

Cost: \$175pp inc. accommodation and all meals

Location: Holy Cross Retreat Centre, Templestowe, VIC



BOOKINGS & QUESTIONS
GERARD.DALY23@BIGPOND.COM

Humour

Several years ago, a nursing sister nun in a full religious habit, was driving to visit a patient when she ran out of petrol. Fortunately she was not far from a service station, so she walked there and asked if she could borrow a petrol can to give her enough petrol to complete her task.

The attendant apologised and said that the only remaining can he had was given to a man a short time beforehand. The sister returned to her car to see if she could find something to use and among the goods in the boot was a bedpan, so she returned to the service station carrying the bed pan.

Two council workers had pulled up near to the car to eat their lunch. And they observed the sister pouring petrol into her car from the bedpan. The truck driver said to his co-worker, " I am not a religious man, but if that car starts, I am going to church on Sunday!"

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1. If you take an Oriental person and spin him around several times, does he become disoriented?
 2. If Poland's people are called Poles, why aren't Holland's people called Holes?
 3. If a pig loses its voice, is it disgruntled?
 4. Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?
 5. When cheese gets its picture taken, what does it say?
 6. Why is a person who plays the piano called a pianist but a person who drives a racing car not called a racist?
 7. Why are a wise man and a wise guy opposites?
 8. Why do overlook and oversee mean opposite things?
 9. Why isn't the number 11 pronounced onety one?
 10. "I am" is reportedly the shortest sentence in the English language. Could it be that "I do" is the longest sentence?
 11. If lawyers are disbarred and clergymen defrocked, doesn't it follow that electricians can be delighted, musicians denoted, cowboys deranged, models deposed, dog trainers debarked, and dry cleaners depressed?

12. What hair colour do they put on the driver's licenses of bald people?
13. Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the Post Office? What are we supposed to do, write to them? Why don't they just put their pictures on the postage stamps so the postmen can look for them while they deliver the mail?
14. No one ever says, "It's only a game" when their team is winning.
15. Ever wonder about those people who spend \$4.00 apiece on those little bottles of Evian water? Try spelling Evian backwards: NAIVE
16. If 4 out of 5 people suffer from depression, does that mean that the fifth one enjoys it?

Prayers



We remember those who have died recently especially [Erminia Barbera Di Renzoas](#) (Maria di Paolo's sister) as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially [Terry Maher](#), [Joan Haussegger](#), [Julie Ann Pallot](#), [Luigi Spinosa](#), [James Zammit](#), [Gina Aloj](#), [John Doherty](#), 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](#), [Pam Storey](#), [Fr Chris Mithen](#), [Joan O'Callaghan](#), [Vince Celestino](#), [Bronwyn Ure](#), [Kate Dunn](#), [David Chai](#), [Lucia Isgro](#), [Marie Spowart](#), [Nina Conti](#), [Max McMahon Fergus Ryan](#), [Maria Di Giantomasso](#), [Cate Sweeney](#), [Carol Battistella](#), [Bob Hallam](#), [Lisa Iverach](#), [Anne Woon](#), [Kate Lenic](#), [Dr Peter Heffernan](#), [Bernadette Owen](#), [Nancy Reynolds](#), [Gerry Bond](#), [Greg Agosta](#), [Luke Norden](#), [Jeanelle Bergin](#), [Caroline Hagedorn](#), [Doris Castro](#), [Marilyn Cilmi](#), [Maureen Barns](#), [Alexander Lim](#), [Caroline Meade](#), [Rex and Jan Cambry](#), [Anne Burke](#), [Denise Egan](#), [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