

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 321

9th April , 2026

Greetings,

Threat against people of Iran unacceptable: (Cath News.....8 April 2026)

Pope Leo XIV asked “all people of goodwill to always search for peace and to reject war,” and called for a return to the negotiating table to pursue peaceful solutions, noting that attacks on civilian infrastructure are against international law. “Search always for peace and reject war.”

Pope Leo renewed that appeal for peace in a brief statement on Tuesday evening to a group of journalists waiting for him outside Villa Barberini, the papal residence in Castel Gandolfo. Against the backdrop of the US-Israeli war against Iran and US President Donald Trump’s threat to destroy “the whole Iranian civilisation” on Tuesday night (10am Wednesday AEST) if Tehran does not comply with a deadline set by the White House to reach a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the Pope said he wished simply to say, once again, what he had said in his *Urbi et Orbi* [message](#) on Sunday, “asking all people of goodwill to always search for peace and not violence, to reject war – especially a war which many people have said is unjust, which is continuing to escalate and which is not resolving anything”.

Speaking in Italian, he said: “Today, as we all know, there has also been this threat against the entire people of Iran. And this is truly unacceptable. There are certainly issues of international law here, but even more, it is a moral question concerning the good of the people as a whole, in its entirety.”

The Pope spoke of the wide-reaching consequences of the conflict and said, “We have a worldwide economic crisis, an energy crisis, and a situation in the Middle East of great instability, which is only provoking more hatred throughout the world. Come back to the table. Let’s talk. Let’s look for solutions in a peaceful way”, he urged.

The Pope went on to remember all those who are being unfairly harmed in the conflict. “Let’s remember, especially, the innocent: children, the elderly, the sick, so many people who have already become, or will become, victims of this continued warfare – and to remind all that attacks on civilian infrastructure are against international law, and that they are also a sign of the hatred, division, and destruction that the human being is capable of. I would invite the citizens of all the countries involved to contact the authorities – political leaders, congressmen – to ask them, to tell them, to work for peace and to reject war and violence.”

Easter at Holy Cross

We celebrated a unique journey last week and used the refrain 'the tree of defeat became the tree of victory'



The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2: 9)

Marty Haugen wrote a song 'Beneath the Tree of Life'

Come and gather beneath the tree of life,
Come and gather beneath the tree of life;
Root of wisdom, branch of peace, fruit of healing and release.
Come and gather beneath the tree of life.

The graced life of trees (Dr Ann-Maree O'Bernie RSM)

The within-ness of God in all that God creates bears witness to all of life being graced by God. Yes, "graced" the active verb — God's presence and action within every element of creation. I believe that the "everywhere and everywhen God" of Karl Rahner, who sees God as Grace, as Love, graces not only humans but creation as well. And in turn, "the God within" graces others with a generous outpouring of self.



Trees are a perfect example of this mutual exchange of grace, and they are not selective in their giving. Did you know that trees communicate with other trees and plants? They read the landscape; they share their wisdom, warning each other of potential diseases that "the warned" actively mitigate against.

Studies have shown that trees respond to their environment minute by minute, and many of us know the healing presence of trees in our lives. God's graced presence in trees spills over to be a graced presence to all around them.

Treed landscapes help prevent erosion and the formation of wastelands, thereby "slowing the flow" of floodwaters. Trees cool our urban landscapes and filter contaminants, producing cleaner air for all to breathe. Considering the graced life of trees is a paschal analogy worth noting. Having celebrated Palm/Passion Sunday, the "[Tale of Three Trees](#)" comes to mind, an American folk tale, retold by Angela Elwell Hunt, that maps the original dreams of three trees to the incarnational, life, passion, death, and resurrection of the one through whom "all things came to be" (Jn 1:3). It seems that the graced life of trees has been in the hearts and minds of people for a long time.



Paschal grace is evident in another experience of "[A Story of a Tree](#)": an elm whose primary life was cut short by an infestation of elm beetles, running rampant due to climate change. This elm was transformed into beautiful sacred furnishings. "The beauty of the timber in colour, texture, and fragrance was inspiring. The simple elegance of the shape created by this most generous master craftsman

matched the natural beauty in the timber. The design of the altar is three upward sweeping arms, giving the impression of branches holding up the offering on the altar, suggesting both Trinity and incarnation...

The tree lives on, assuming a new significance as people from all walks of life gather around the table to celebrate life and death, commitment, and hope in a God whose love and mercy are revealed in the beauty of creation.

The uplifting arms of the tree are a sign of hope and promise in a world so disfigured by "rot" is a symbol that will endure and hopefully continue to inspire. Just beyond the sanctuary, where the altar stands, another Elm holds its branches to the sky, offering shade and shelter for all kinds of creatures, while we look on in awe and amazement, in gratitude for all the beauty of creation."

Trees talking to each other

The brief video illustrates something of the life of trees.

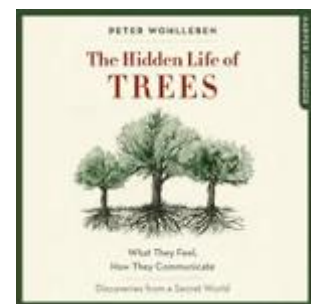
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWOqeyPIVRo>

Some further thoughts on trees



In 2018, journalist Richard Grants wrote, “Until recently, most scientists have generally thought of forest trees as disconnected loners, competing for water, nutrients and sunlight, with the ‘winners’ shading out the losers and sucking them dry. Now, however, we can appreciate that trees of the same species are communal, and often form alliances with trees of other species. Forest trees have evolved to live in cooperative, interdependent relationships, maintained by communication and a collective intelligence similar to an insect colony.

Peter Wohlleben, author of ‘The Hidden Life of Trees’, says that now people are referring to the Wood Wide Web. He says that trees are connected to each other through underground fungal networks. They share water and share nutrients through networks, which they also use to send distress signals about drought and disease or insect attacks, and other trees alter their behaviour when they receive these messages.”



There is a symbiotic relationship between trees and fungi. As a kind of fee for services, the fungi consume about 30% of the sugar that trees photosynthesize from sunlight. That sugar fuels the fungi as they scavenge the soil for nitrogen, phosphorus and other mineral nutrients, which are then absorbed and consumed by the trees. Young saplings in a shaded part of the forest may lack the sunlight to photosynthesize, but they survive because big trees pump sugar into their roots through the network! To communicate through the network, trees send chemical, hormonal and slow-pulsing electrical signals, which scientists are just beginning to decipher. Alarm and distress appear to be the main topics of tree conversation. Trees also ‘communicate’ through the air, using pheromones and other scent signals.



Wohlleben says that when a giraffe starts chewing acacia leaves, the tree ‘notices’ the injury and emits a distress signal in the form of ethylene gas. Upon detecting this gas, neighbouring acacias start pumping tannins into their leaves. In large enough quantities these compounds can sicken or even kill large herbivores.



Giraffes are aware of this and having evolved with acacias, this is why they browse into the wind, so the warning gas doesn't reach the trees ahead of them. If there's no wind, a giraffe will typically walk 100 metres — farther than ethylene gas can travel in still air—before feeding on the next acacia. Giraffes, you might say, know that the trees are talking to one another!

When elms and pines come under attack by leaf-eating caterpillars, they detect the caterpillar saliva, and release pheromones that attract parasitic wasps. The wasps lay their eggs inside the caterpillars, and the wasp larvae eat the caterpillars from the inside out. "Very unpleasant for the caterpillars," says Wohlleben. "but very clever of the trees." "When a deer is biting a branch, the tree brings defending chemicals to make the leaves taste bad, and when a human breaks a branch the tree knows the difference, and brings in substances to heal the wound.



Prayer for the Tree of Life

Creator of the Universe, you call us to be keepers and tenders of this Garden of the Earth, we call home. Among the trees in this Garden is the Tree of Life, with all of its beauty, biodiversity, and wondrous interdependence. Guide us with wisdom and inspire us with faith, to act upon our sacred calling to restore and preserve the intricate web of life. For present and future generations, may we be known as healing humans who learn how to live in balance and harmony with your Creation. Amen.

Good Friday homily

Tri led the Good Friday liturgy. We congratulate him on his thorough preparation, on his excellent decision to involve younger people and the way he led the solemn liturgy. Here is his homily for that occasion

Two years ago, a Vietnamese YouTuber was doing a livestream. It was light and casual - just a bit of fun. During that livestream, a woman made a joke about him - nothing extreme, nothing harmful in its intention. But the internet... didn't take it that way. Within hours, the 'comments section' exploded with harsh words, mockery and personal attacks.



Strangers who knew nothing about her, began to judge her, tear her down, and shame her publicly.

Even worse, content creators tried to take advantage of the drama to create contents that attracted views, likes, and comments. It became so overwhelming for her that she had to shut everything down—her social media and her public presence. She stayed indoors afraid to go out.

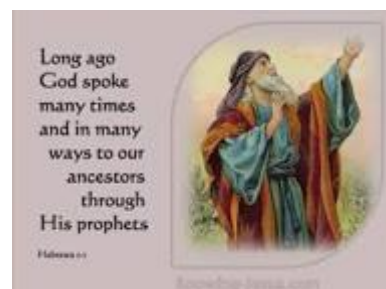
Recently, after everything calmed down, she reappeared and shared that she had been deeply hurt, almost traumatized. That toxicity is a clear example of violence in the form of social media communication.



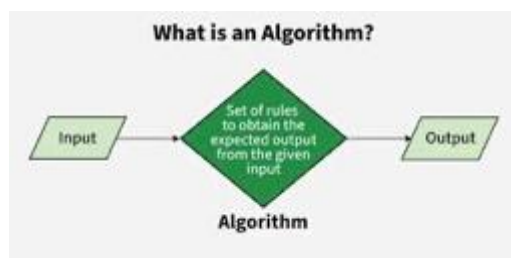
Now, when we talk about communication, we often think of journalists, media outlets, influencers—people who use words to deliver messages. But communication is not limited to words. Experts agree that at least 70% of communication is non-verbal. This includes facial expressions, body language, gestures, eye contact, and tone of voice. Communication is expressed the way we ‘show up’; the way we look at others; the way we relate

to people. Pope Leo XIV affirmed this in his Message for the 60th World Day of Social Communication. He said that communication includes both our faces and our voices, *and “it is sacred”*.

Our communication is sacred because of love: *“God called us to life through the word he addressed to us.”* (Pope Leo XIV). In this way, communication is not merely about giving information, it is about transmitting God’s love. For centuries, this was clearly demonstrated through the Hebrew prophets. And in the fullest and most perfect way, God communicated God self in the person of Jesus.



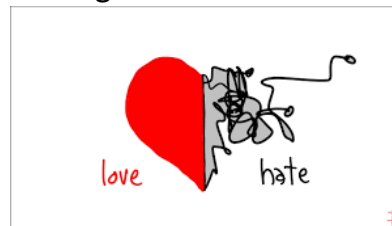
But then... what is happening in our world today? Based on data from organizations like the Center for Countering Digital Hate and the University of California, Los Angeles) through their initiative to study Hate, the current state of media is a profound anthropological crisis. Social media has become an "arena" where algorithms prioritize outrage to maximize profits.



With 80% of young people facing hate speech monthly and over 20% of teenagers directly attacked by cyberbullying, These are not just numbers. These are real people - real wounds. Now, if any of you here are content creators, producing entertaining or educational material —you know algorithms work, right?

Each day, about 15% of online content is negative - hate, toxic, violent. Meanwhile, content about love or positivity makes up around 45%.

It doesn't sound hopeful does it? But here's the catch. The algorithm doesn't promote what is *good*. It promotes what gets *attention*! Every like, every comment, every sharing tells the system: *this works*. And once something is seen as "effective," it gets pushed out to more and more people. And the irony is that people often pay more attention to content filled with conflict, anger, and drama... even though, deep down, they actually want love.



So what happens? Posts about love are often ignored—they just... drift away. At the same time, toxic content gets amplified—again and again—reaching new audiences every time. It's a bit scary, isn't it? So we need to be alert, because even though we might be just consuming content, we might be indirectly contributing to spreading negative content. Despite this, let's not point a finger at social media; let's look at our daily life!



How many words of encouragement and love do you speak each day? And how many words do you speak that come out of frustration, sarcasm, or anger when you are deal with your family, with strangers; when you walk into a room, or when you reply to someone's message? Are you building up? Or are you quietly tearing down? How often is it truly driven by love?

Now, in the Passion account that we just heard, there is a small detail we might easily miss. Above Jesus' head on the Cross, there was a sign: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." It was written in three languages: Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Hebrew—the language of Scripture; Latin—the language of the Roman Empire. Greek—the language of culture and philosophy.



This is not accidental. It means that the Passion and death of Jesus—God's self-giving love—was meant to be communicated to everyone.

Every nation! Every culture! Every generation! Perhaps this is the clearest message for us today: That every part of our life - our words, our actions, our presence, our showing up — should communicate love. No hate. No cyberbullying. No violence..... but, love!



Celebrating

The community was very grateful for the many people who assisted in conducting the various ceremonies and in particular for the faith and joy of our wider Holy Cross family. **Erick** led the Holy Thursday evening liturgy with gentle warmth which enabled us to appreciate again the gift of Eucharist and the ritual of hand-washing as a profound expression of the model of serving that Jesus left us. **JD** and **Erick** led smaller gatherings around the grounds for the Stations of the Cross on Friday morning that allowed us to reflect more deeply on how aspects of that journey to Calvary speak to our own faith experiences and challenges.



Tri led the principal Good Friday celebration and by combining creativity with solemnity, he demonstrated his capacity and competence as a liturgical leader. **Chris** led the dawn service (meant getting up at 4.00am) It. was very well attended again (by around 140 people) on a beautiful morning that allowed the Easter message to be experienced by a tight-knit worshipping community who followed this with breakfast prepared by the St Gabriel's community and cooked by the ever faithful women.



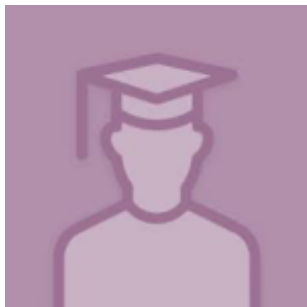
Guardians of the new fire.

Chris also led 10.0am Mass for which we had to go looking for extra chairs. As with all the ceremonies, the many hours of preparation that the community spent (especially **Chris** and **Tri**) ensured the Easter experience provided the joy and hope that Easter proclaims.



This photo shows the dawn had broken but there was still soft light for those gathered at St Gabriel's shrine on Easter morning.

Joseph assisted with the Easter celebrations in Hobart, **JD** assisted in two parishes with Vietnamese communities and **Erick** led a very sad funeral liturgy at Melton on Saturday afternoon and a baptism for a very needy family on Sunday, with the African community. His mother and several other members of his family stayed at Holy Cross over Easter and participated in the events at Melton.



Erick decided some time ago to keep his graduation low key to save costs, but we acknowledge and rejoice with him on officially graduating today Friday April 17th, with a Master of Counselling degree. Erick's course specialised in counselling for trauma and he is looking at ways now to deepen his knowledge with practical experience, with a hope to especially be able to assist the many refugees that sadly, have experienced profound trauma.

A special message for Easter from Fares Abulebda



Fares is a Palestinian writer and speech therapist who lives in Gaza

To my Christian brothers and sisters, on the occasion of Easter, I wish you peace, compassion, and light.

I am a Muslim...but I do not see this day as belonging only to you.
Its message is universal —about hope after pain,
about life rising even after the darkest moments.
When we speak about Jesus Christ,
we are not only speaking about faith, but also about the truth...
about a man who stood with the oppressed,
who spoke when silence was easier,
who chose justice even when it came with a price.

As Muslims, we believe in Jesus. We honour him as a messenger of mercy,
a voice of the voiceless, a symbol of standing firm in the face of injustice.
But his story...was never only about faith.
It was also about ظلم — injustice.

He was not targeted because he was wrong.
He was targeted because he spoke truth, in a world that feared it.
They did not defeat him with arguments, they silenced him with power.
They distorted his image, turned people against him,
and then... they watched.

Some shouted against him. Some justified what was happening.
And many... remained silent.
And this is where the story never really ended.

Today, as the world celebrates this sacred day,
there are places where light still struggles to exist.
In Palestine...in the land where Jesus once walked,
the suffering continues.
Children are pulled from under the rubble. Families are erased.
Lives are reduced to numbers.
Not because they are guilty —
but because they exist... in the wrong place, in the eyes of power.

You see it. And then you hear it being justified.
You hear the cries...
and then you hear people question whether those cries are even real.
And here...you begin to understand the story differently.

The cross was never just a moment in history. It was a test of humanity.
A test of who stands for truth,
who excuses injustice, and who chooses silence.

I am a Muslim...but today, I understand how a person can be crucified
not only with nails...but with lies, with propaganda,
with dehumanization, and with global silence.

Back then, there was a crowd.
And that is the part that never changes.
There is always a crowd.
People who see, people who know,
but choose comfort over courage.

And today...we are that crowd.
Or we decide not to be.

If Jesus were among us today, on this very day that honours him,
would he stand with power?
With those who hold weapons, influence, and control?

Or would he stand with the oppressed...
with the child under the rubble,
with the mother who lost everything,
with a people asked to endure the unbearable in silence?

The answer is clear. But it is not easy to accept.

This day is meant to celebrate light. But light loses its meaning
when we ignore the darkness others are forced to live in.

Easter is not only a celebration. It is also a question.

When this time is written in history...
when future generations look back at this moment... who will we be?
Those who stood for what is right?
Those who justified the ظلم?
Or those who stayed silent... and said later, "we didn't know"?

Because this time...we do know.

To my Christian brothers and sisters, I wish you a blessed Easter.
May it be filled not only with faith, but with justice that includes everyone,
with compassion that reaches beyond borders, and with courage to stand for truth.

I am a Muslim... but I believe humanity is one,
pain is one, and truth... does not belong to one faith alone.

Happy Easter.
May the light you celebrate find its way to every place that still waits for it.

Fares Abulebda
Gaza
4 April 2026



On Easter Sunday afternoon those of us at home (Jerome, Chris, Tri and myself) accepted an invitation to join the Endeavour Hills community (Brendan, Luke and Tuan Paul) together with Kevin Hennessy and Brigid. Unfortunately, Karen was unwell.

We had a very enjoyable time and a very nice meal. Following this, a late afternoon snooze was the order of the day.




Fassionists of the Holy Spirit Province
warmly invite you

<p>to the Ordination to Priesthood of Dcn. Cao Van Tri, CP</p> <p>by Most Rev. Bishop Thinh Nguyen, DD. Auxiliary Bishop of Archdiocese of Melbourne</p> <p><i>At 10:00 AM, Saturday 30th May 2026</i></p>		<p>Mass of Thanksgiving of the Newly Ordained Priest</p> <p>Fr. Cao Van Tri CP</p> <p><i>At 10:00 AM, Sunday 31st May 2026</i></p>
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Holy Cross Retreat, 207 Serpells road, Templestowe, VIC 3106
Refreshments to follow in the dining hall

Rev. Denis Traver CP
 Provincial




RSVP for catering purposes by 15th May 2026

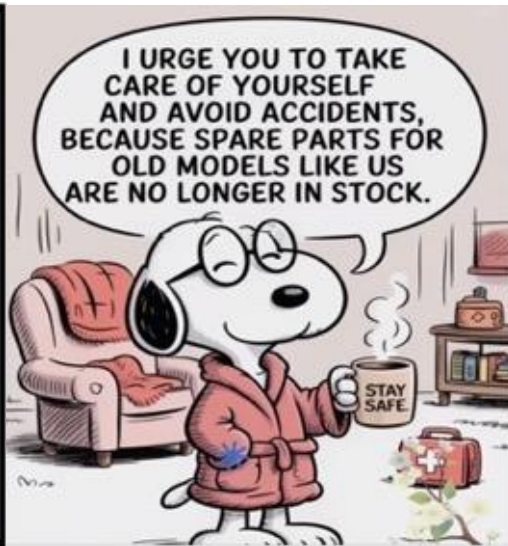
 f.xcaovantri@gmail.com
 0468865574

Please note the reference to the RSVP

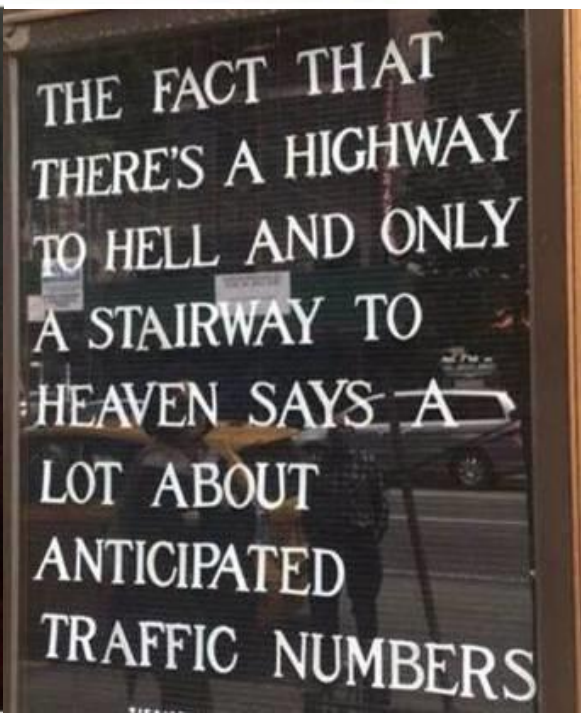
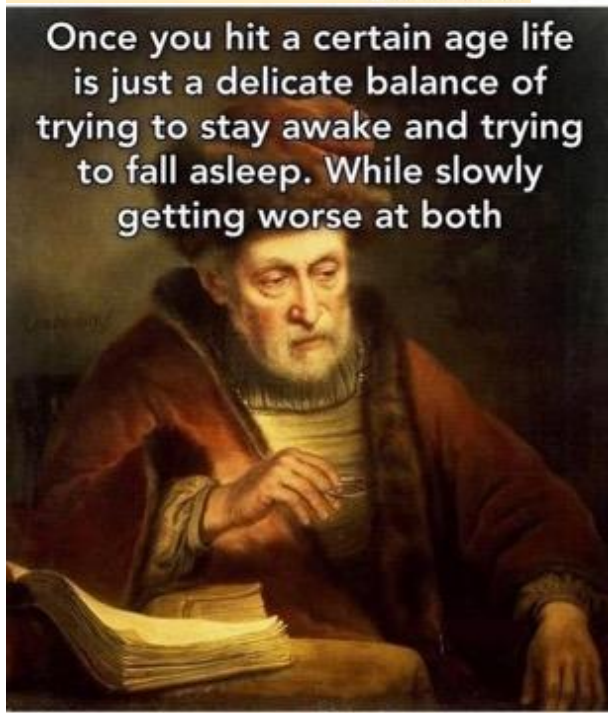
Humour



**I JUST POSTED
A SELFIE AND
PEOPLE TOLD
ME TO GET
WELL SOON!**



A CLOCK FOR RETIRED PEOPLE!



An elderly man thinking his wife was losing her hearing went about 20' behind her and asked "Can you hear me sweetheart?" No reply. Moved to 10' and inquired again. No reply. 5' and not a word. A few inches behind ear, he asked "Can you hear me now honey"? His wife said "For the fourth time, yes."

I WISH MY SIBLINGS WOULD STOP CALLING ME "SPOILED" JUST BECAUSE I'M THE YOUNGEST IN THE FAMILY. THE TRUTH IS, MY PARENTS JUST KEPT HAVING CHILDREN UNTIL THEY FOUND THE ONE THEY LIKED. IT'S REALLY NOT MY FAULT.



A man goes to the doctor, worried about his wife's temper.
The doctor asks, "What's the problem?"
The man says, "Doctor, I don't know what to do. Every day my wife seems to lose her temper for no reason. It scares me."
The doctor says, "I have a cure for that. When it seems that your wife is getting angry, just take a glass of water and start swishing it in your mouth. Just swish and swish but don't swallow it until she either leaves the room or calms down."
Two weeks later, the man comes back to the doctor looking fresh and reborn.
The man says, "Doctor, that was a brilliant idea! Every time my wife started losing it, I swished with water. I swished and swished, and she calmed right down! How does a glass of water do that?"
The doctor says, "The water itself does nothing. It's keeping your mouth shut that does the trick."



A man consulted a surgeon about a brain transplant. The surgeon said, " I have two brains here – a psychiatrist's brain which you could have for \$5,000 and a politician's brain you could have for \$25,000 dollars".

The man asked "does that mean the politician's brain is so much better?"

"No" said the surgeon, "the politician's brain has never been used".

A ***paraprosdokian*** is a 'figure of speech' in which the latter part of a sentence is unexpected and often humorous.

Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.

Take my advice always, I don't use it, anyway.

My wife and I were happy for twenty five years, but then we met.

Behind every great man is a woman rolling her eyes.

Ever stop to think and forgot to start again?

Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

He who laughs last thinks the slowest.

If, at first attempt, you don't succeed, sky diving is not for you.

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be a piece of stationery.

Today a man knocked on my door and asked for a small donation towards the local swimming pool, so I gave him a glass of water.

A multi-tasker can waste time, be unproductive and procrastinate all at once.

If you smile when things go wrong, for sure you'll be thinking of someone to blame.

Hospitality is making guests feel like they're at home when you wish they were.

Women spend more time wondering what men are thinking about than the time men actually spend thinking.

Women sometimes make fools of men, but most men are the do-it-yourself type.

Provincial Council

The Provincial Council has been meeting at Holy Cross this week yesterday and today.

Challenge

Can you avoid crying?

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/qfgQGhhgU0I>

Prayers

For the Cogle family.

Tuesday was Mary Cogle's birthday. Sadly, Dennis is slowly slipping away and their son Stephen continues with radiation treatment.



We remember those who have died recently [Fergus Ryan](#) and we express our sympathy to his wife Cathy. We also remember those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially [Michael Doyle](#), [Ann McCrohan](#), [Dominic O'Brien](#), and [Carolyn Thompson](#).

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:

[Dennis Cogle](#), [Mary Cogle](#), [Stephen Cogle](#), [Joan O'Callaghan](#), [Fr Chris Mithen](#), [Pam Storey](#), [Paul Fitzgerald](#), [Bronwyn Ure](#), [Kate Dunn](#), [David Chai](#), [Lucia Isgro](#), [Marie Spowart](#), [Nina Conti](#), [Max McMahan](#), [Maria Di Giantomasso](#), [Cate Sweeney](#), [Carol Battistella](#), [Bob Hallam](#), [Lisa Iverach](#), [Anne Woon](#), [Kate Lenic](#), [Jeanelle Bergin](#), [Dr Peter Heffernan](#), [Greg Agosta](#), [Nancy Reynolds](#), [Luke Norden](#), [Caroline Hagedorn](#), [Bernadette Owen](#), [Doris Castro](#), [Gerry Bond](#), [Marilyn Cilmi](#), [Maureen Barns](#), [Denise Egan](#), [Alexander Lim](#), [Caroline Meade](#), [Rex & Jan Cambrey](#), [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](#), [Jeff Foale CP](#) and [Errol Lovett](#).



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

Brian

The community extends again our warm greetings and prayers for the Easter season