

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 325

15th May, 2026

Greetings,

Happy 10 Years of Profession – JD Tan

Last week on Friday we celebrated JD's 10 years since he made his first vows to become a professed Passionist. Chris had just arrived very late on the night before due to flight delays, coming from his provincial visitation in Sydney. Despite the late night, he got up early to prepare for dinner, went to work, came back and cooked up a storm for the occasion. Thank you Chris. We congratulate JD and his classmates for their ten years of service to God as professed Passionists.



Younger Passionist Men, Melbourne

The day after JD's profession, we gathered in Endeavour Hills with Luke and TP (Tuan Paul) for the delicious meal and games together. Luke organised this group and initiated what we could do on the day. This happened following Denis Travers' advice that we (younger Passionists) should get together sometimes, to support each other in our religious journey. This first gathering of hopefully many, was a fun, and of course we raised a glass for JD for his 10 years anniversary. Needless to say, we didn't get to any mischief! TP was the champion of the day during a card game we played. We thank Luke and TP



for hosting us.

Next catch up will be in June and Holy Cross will host. We look forward to celebrating Tri, the newly ordained by then. What a tremendous idea and encouragement Denis has supported us with.

Happy Birthday Mayrose



Early this week some of the staff and community members gathered to enjoy some cake as we celebrated Mayrose's Birthday. It was good to see Ann there as well. We thank Mayrose for the effort she puts into managing the Holy Cross Retreat Centre. We pray blessings on her for many more years of good health, joy and peace. Happy Birthday Mayrose.

Repainting of the community chapel



The A-Team has begun repainting the community chapel upstairs. As you can see in the photos above, the chapel was emptied of all furniture. We haven't seen it this empty for a long time! Looking at these men on their knees you'd wonder if they are praying at the same time. My guess is that yes, they are praying too. In terms of painting, they have done the cuttings, and will put on the first coat of paint today. We thank them and pray that this process will go 'smoothly'!

Laudato Si Week (Brian)

Laudato Si week runs from May 17th-24th, 2026.

Laudato Si is a major Catholic teaching document (encyclical) written by Pope Francis



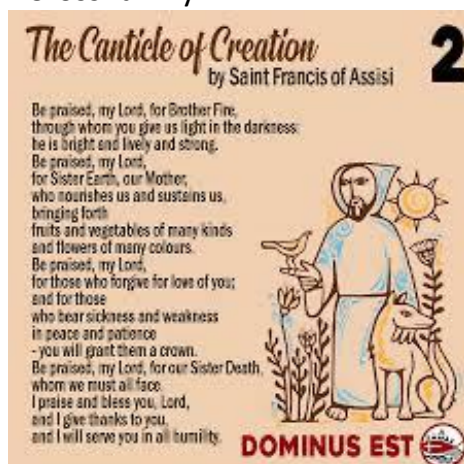
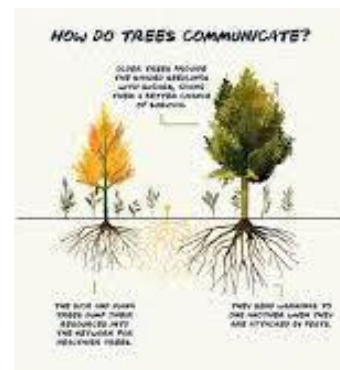
in 2015. The title means 'Praise be to you' and comes from St Francis of Assisi's prayer praising God for creation. The document teaches that Earth is our common home and a gift from God, and that all people have a responsibility to care for creation. The encyclical explains that environmental damage and

climate change affects everyone, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.

Laudato Si highlights that all life shares a common origin from a divine creator which means everything is connected. We need to reflect on the meaning and the responsibility of living in a world and among people where everything and everyone is interconnected.

Key Catholic ideas in *Laudato Si'* include stewardship, human dignity, the common good, solidarity, and integral ecology. This highlights that our faith is not only about prayer and worship. We are called to love, to justice, to responsibility, and to care for the world God created.

In order to make full sense of 'Laudato Si', it is necessary to understand what our current generation is so blessed to know, as the result of scientific discoveries. For example, it is only in very recent years that scientists have revealed that trees are social beings that communicate, share resources with each other and support sick neighbours. They form cooperative communities, feel pain, send warnings to each other about dangerous insects, and can live much longer lives than isolated trees. Except for the word trees, this could sound like our Holy Cross family.



St Francis had a unique appreciation of the beauty of the natural world. Videoed documentaries today have given us many insights and facts about the world around us. It is our spirituality that needs now to rise to a new understanding and a new commitment of living, with the awe and reverence for life that St Francis had and that Pope Francis promoted through 'Laudato Si'.

What a wonderful world.....Alice Carwardine (Brian)

We need to humbly remember we share a world with amazing creatures.



A short while ago I saw a short video – you know, the ones on YouTube or TikTok that are meant to grab your attention for about three seconds. This one went for about 30 seconds and in it showed someone working at an aquarium who was cleaning a tank. While cleaning, a small shark swam straight up and demanded to have its belly scratched.

The diver stopped work, rolled the shark over and scratched the shark's belly for a good while. I'm not sure the shark was quite wagging its tail like a dog, but it seemed to be having a great time.

https://www.reddit.com/r/aww/comments/afh0xb/zebra_shark_just_wanted_some_belly_rubs/

One of the comments on the video that popped up surprised me: *'In a world where there are creatures that love to be petted, how wonderful it is to be blessed with hands.'*

This is such a humbling statement. A reminder that even our hands have the capacity to bring joy to other creatures – including ones that we might otherwise swim away from. If we listen, Earth constantly reminds us of our humanly limitations and gifts. And we must not forget that other beings have wisdom different to ours. Humans, try as we might, will never have wings. Flight is a limitation of all humans. Insects and birds have evolved vastly different methods of flying. Some species of bee are so incredible that their ability to fly defies science.



It is a gift of humans to be able to whistle, and yet we have used that gift to try to emulate the beauty of bird song. Through the gift of music, we have been able to create something as complex as an orchestra or as catchy as Taylor Swift's music. And birds have done the same (maybe not the Taylor Swift part).

We may sometimes forget that dolphins and whales have their own languages. The gift of language has helped humans do a great number of things. It is unfortunate



that some use that gift to hurt others and say unkind things. When we listen to dolphins and whales, we are humbled in the face of the diversity of language, and it is a reminder to use our gift with care.



Humility in relationship to other beings means several things, I think. Humbly we need to remember we share many similarities with other creatures but that they have developed their own wisdom to be able to do amazing things. Ants are builders. Snakes get around without any legs. Turtles navigate using a kind of magnet in their brain.

We must also remember that our actions can harm and affect these amazing beings.

Can we gently ask ourselves, which of our actions harm other beings? Which actions make the lives of other beings more challenging? Which are necessary for our human needs? All of creation suffers. Death is an integral part of life. Nutrients and energy must flow to sustain life. But when we spray harmful chemicals that kill thousands of insects who perform a vital role in the ecosystem, is this harm avoidable?



When we litter, or pollute single-use plastics into the world, turtles and seabirds suffer. On average, dead sea turtles are found with 22 pieces of plastic in their



intestines. But there have been instances where it has only taken just one piece to kill a turtle. Is it necessary for us to manufacture, purchase and discard single-use water bottles that harm other beings as they break down?

When our eyes are closed at night, do we need to leave so many lights on in our homes? Some light is important for many of us to feel safe at night, but external lights can confuse small mammals and attract moths so they fly at the light until exhausted and disoriented.

Humility is a heavenly virtue that we can consider in terms of our 'humanness' and our 'earthling-ness'. We are first and foremost earthlings or earth-beings. Second, we are human. Other earth-beings also demonstrate humility. Prey is humble in the face of the predator. Rocks are humble in the face of the rushing river. Animals are humbled by the storm and seek shelter from its power. The bee humbly takes only what it needs from the flower. And the mother hen humbly sits upon her eggs.

How do your hands bring joy?



Alice provides formation to schools on Integral Ecology. She is passionate about bringing Laudato Si' to life and developing an eco-spirituality.

This article first appeared in the autumn 2026 edition of [Madonna](#) magazine.

Jerome's Missionary Stories - Part Three

Quote of the Day: *"In a way, yes. I preferred having a python in the roof over having rats everywhere!"*

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDbwkOpL0vM>

I heard you say that when Fr Clement Spencer travelled around saying Mass in remote places, he once had to use a toilet door as an altar table. Tell us more?

Yes, that's true. He said the only flat surface available was the toilet door, so he took it off and used it as an altar. Afterwards he had to put it back because otherwise nobody could use the toilet.



How did you travel between villages?

Mostly by walking. The longest patrol I did was five days on foot.

Five days walking sounds intense. What was that like?

You just kept walking. You kept your eyes on the track and kept going because there was nowhere to stop. In the remote mountain areas, villages could be a full day's walk apart without stopping.

How did you manage food and somewhere to sleep?

Usually near each village there was a bush house built for government patrol officers. Under Australian administration, villages had to provide one. They were rough, but at least you had shelter for the night.

Did you travel alone?

Never. You always travelled with local men who acted as carriers and guides. They taught you how to survive on patrol. Some of them preferred travelling with missionaries because it allowed them to enter tribal areas they normally could not go into safely.

What did the carriers carry?

Food, bedding, cooking gear, supplies - everything. Sometimes there were huge groups. The most I ever had was sixty-two carriers, and many of them were carrying food for the other carriers.



It sounds like those trips would have helped build strong relationships.

Very much. You spent the whole day walking together and the evenings sitting around telling stories. That's how you got to know people and learned language and culture.



With so many tribal languages, how did communication work?

Mostly through Tok Pisin. Sometimes you could have five carriers speaking three different languages between them, so Tok Pisin became the common language.

like?

The Diocese of Vanimo. It was a huge area, and often I lived on my own because there were too few missionaries.

What was your main mission station

The Passionists were responsible for

Did lay missionaries work with you?

Yes. Many were nurses or medical workers, and a lot were not Catholic. For a while I lived in the same house as two Anglican women missionaries which was more scandalous! The women stayed at one end and the men at the other. It was a long house. It was safer that way.

We prayed together. You could come back exhausted after a whole day walking, and the first thing they would be all-dressed saying "What time is prayer?" They kept us faithful to prayer.

What kind of medical situations did you deal with?

All sorts. Some of the worst were people attacked by wild pigs. Wild pigs have massive tusks and can tear people apart badly. We would patch them up, give pain relief, and try to organise a plane to get them to hospital.

Were wild pigs dangerous for you too?

Absolutely. If a wild pig charged at you, the safest thing was to climb the nearest tree very quickly. I learned to climb trees fast.

Did you have many encounters with snakes?

Plenty. The bush tracks were narrow and slippery, and sometimes a python looked just like another log across the path. I once stepped on a python and never wanted to repeat that experience.

What happened?

The snake moved at both ends at once, and I got away very quickly. Some of those pythons were about twelve feet long.



Did snakes ever get into the houses?

Often. Our houses had roofs but no ceilings, so pythons lived in the roof spaces because they hunted rats and mice. One night a python fell out of the roof while we had a visitor staying with us. The local man just said, "Don't worry Father, it's only a snake." The visitor didn't sleep all night.

So, the snakes were actually useful?

In a way, yes. I preferred having a python in the roof over having rats everywhere.

You also lived near the Indonesian border. Was that ever dangerous?

Sometimes. The border was not clearly marked, so occasionally Indonesian soldiers would suddenly appear out of the bush carrying guns. Military planes would also fly low overhead.

That must have been frightening.

It could be tense because you never knew what might happen. Thankfully nothing really bad happened in my area, but if trouble started, the safest thing was to move away quickly.



Is that how you survived all those years?

Probably. I became very good at getting away from dangerous situations quickly.

I heard your religious name was Dominic of the Holy Spirit. Why did you choose that name?

Back then everyone had to take a religious name. I chose Dominic of the Holy Spirit because we belonged to the Holy Spirit Province.

And why Dominic?

Because I was round, fat, and cuddly like St Dominic! A few years later everyone went back to using their own names, but the memories stayed.

Humour

- My dog used to chase people on a bike, until I took his bike away.
- Cats are smarter than dogs; you will never get eight cats to pull a sled through snow.
- I asked my cat what 2 minus 2 was, and he said absolutely nothing.
- My lizard is a great musician because he knows how to scale.
- Dogs have owners, but cats have staff.
- My puppy is a great magician; every time I look away, my shoe disappears.
- I wanted to buy a talking parrot, but the store only had a mockingbird that laughed at me.
- Cats can look at a blank wall and make you worry about your home's structural integrity.
- I taught my dog to get me a beer, which is great until he drinks it on the way back.
- My goldfish died, so I guess you could say he finally hit rock bottom.
- I tried to train my cat, but she just gave me a performance review with her eyes.
- My dog is an excellent computer programmer; he knows exactly how to use bytes.
- I bought my bird a digital watch, but he prefers a grandfather clock for the tweets.
- My cat thinks the laptop is a very expensive, heated mat made just for him.
- Dogs believe they are human, while cats believe they are God.
- I told my dog to sit, and he looked at me like I just gave a terrible speech.
- My snake is very polite because he always sheds his skin before entering a room.
- I bought a sweater for my short-haired dog, and now he walks like a tiny robot.
- My kitten is a terrible poker player because she always lets the cat out of the bag.
- I asked my dog how his day was, and he said it was ruff.
- My cat likes to sleep on my face just to make sure I am still breathing.
- The only thing my rabbit ever guards is his own carrot patch.
- I bought my dog a luxury bed, so naturally he sleeps on the hard floor next to it.
- My turtle is incredibly slow, but at least he always carries his own home security.
- I tried to take a selfie with my cat, but she chose violence instead.
- My dog barks at the wind just in case the air gets too confident.
- My cat watches me clean the litter box like a boss inspecting a janitor.
- Dogs come when they are called; cats take a message and get back to you.

Generation Gap. 🤔



iPhone 16 owners
buying an iPhone 17



I am here for you

Two husbands were having
conversation-
First guy : My wife's an angel !
Second guy : You're lucky, mine
is still alive and kicking.

Thanks:) I'm going through a
tough time so it means a lot

And sorry, I lost all my contacts,
who is this?

This is your Uber driver

I am here to pick you up



 **Fat Belly**
@██████████

Personally, bad English is such a
turn off for me. 😞



He said he had a house with a pool.

 **RIOS 508**
@██████████

You don't need to put "for me"
after writing "personally" 😞



Yesterday visitor shocked me....

I offered him juice and he was like I will drink it after eating!

Excuse me! After eating what?



I don't know why some people hate lazy people.... I mean... they don't even do anything..



Prayers

I thank my God
every time I
remember you.
In all of my prayers
for all of you,
I always pray with joy.

Philippians 1:3-4

We remember those who have died recently especially [Giulio Camiscia \(Livia's brother\)](#) as well as those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially [Ellen Concannon](#), [John Maher](#), [Betty Candy](#), [Leo Doherty](#), [Shirley Horlock](#), [Robert McKay](#), and [Betty Wells](#) We pray that all who have died, have found joy in God's ternal presence.

We also pray for members of our Holy Cross family who are coping with illness and all who care for them:

[Mary Cogle](#), [Stephen Cogle](#), [David Chai](#), [Fr Chris Mithen](#), [Paul Fitzgerald](#), [Pam Storey](#), [Joan O'Callaghan](#), [Kate Dunn](#), [Lucia Isgro](#), [Marie Spowart](#), [Nina Conti](#), [Max McMahan](#), [Kate Lenic](#), [Cate Sweeney](#), [Carol Battistella](#), [Bob Hallam](#), [Lisa Iverach](#), [Anne Woon](#), [Gerry Bond](#), [Dr Peter Heffernan](#), [Greg Agosta](#), [Nancy Reynolds](#), [Luke Norden](#), [Jeanelle Bergin](#), [Caroline Hagedorn](#), [Bernadette Owen](#), [Doris Castro](#), [Marilyn Cilmi](#), [Maureen Barns](#), [Denise Egan](#), [Alexander Lim](#), [Caroline Meade](#), [Rex & Jan Cambrey](#), [Phil Drew](#), [Patricia Keeghan](#), [Zoe & Sophia Chung](#), [Graham Burke](#), [Rod Gorfine](#), [Pam Gartland](#), [Lesley Yang](#), [Anne Jenkins](#). [Julia Cantone](#), [Peter Barry](#), [Helen McLean](#), [Jeff Foale CP](#), [Errol Lovett](#), [Arthur Reuss](#), [Lily Hayes](#), and [Jeremiah](#).

SATURDAY
RECORDED MASS

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

Brian / Erick