

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 332

26th June, 2026

Greetings,

Passionist Institute



Our Passionist Institute was held last weekend and we were very happy to have a good number of active participants at Holy Cross, as well as many more following online, across the four countries of our Province.

Passionist life and spirituality was founded on two Scriptural texts.

- a) The sending out of the twelve in pairs with the commissioning to take nothing with them, and other particular and relevant instructions (See Mark 6:7f). When the twelve returned, Jesus called them to 'come away to a quiet place', where they could be together, because the demands on them were so great.
- b) Paul the apostle's statement that Jesus did not cling to equality with God, but emptied himself (kenosis) and became like a slave. He humbled himself further being obedient to the will of the father (accepting the cross). Therefore, he has been raised. (Philippians 2: 3-11)

In exploring our charism and seeking to adapt it to our times, returning to these texts reminds us that Passionists are called to **proclaim the message of God's love**, which Paul of the Cross claimed is "the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love.

In order to do this, **community life** is essential. The sending out of the disciples is not as individuals, but as pair-partners, and when returning after engagement in mission, there is a need for rest and space (**solitude**) to reflect and regather energy. To achieve this Jesus did not suggest the disciples go off individually. Rather they, together with him, provided an opportunity to share their stories while engaging in rest. This, for Paul of the cross, should be a model for living community.

Our sessions in the recent Passionist Institute provided an opportunity to reflect on these aspects of our charism, along with the challenge of recognising that we are living in 'new' times (a change of era). That means 'how' we proclaim the message, how we live community life and how we create solitude, whether as professed or lay members, is critical. Whatever new knowledge we gain, we must strive to "use every means possible' to communicate as Paul urged, a message of God's love that falls like gentle rain on hardened hearts.

Paul did not direct a particular apostolate for Passionists. While it is true that missions were a traditional ministry, we do well to remember that Paul lived in Vetralla for twenty-eight years, and at one time there were forty-eight religious in the community, but only nine were missionaries. The men were encouraged to find opportunities to carry out the apostolate of proclaiming God's love through the message of the cross. Paul at one time was a chaplain to opposing armies!

Tri led us in a session on **the ethics of Artificial Intelligence**'. This is going to be an area of challenge of this 'change of era', and we have to be sufficiently informed concerning our moral responsibility, so that we can assist others.

Paul established communities as 'retreats'. He recognised geographical space and distance from activity could assist in creating **solitude**, but he confirmed that inner **solitude** is more important, because this allows us to listen and hear God, wherever we are. In this change of era, where busyness and noise surrounds us, we need individual and community responses so that we can create that inner peace for ourselves and one another.

Community life is the basis of Passionist life. How we live and where and how we minister, should reflect this. The "Christendom model" is in a state of collapse and a new era is dawning for the Church. Today, we must integrate belonging, behaving, and believing. They each have their place and together they make us mature followers of Jesus. Belonging cannot have last place as this is to occur. It has to be a focus based on our own commitment to community, that, we create opportunities for people to belong and that this is central to our proclamation.

The various sessions of the Institute are available on YouTube. There are handouts that have been distributed for some of the sessions and they can be emailed upon request. We hope these resources will be helpful for Companion sessions and for individual 'learning'.

Come Away Day



The Come Away day on Wednesday was very well attended with 22 present. The theme was '*Called to embrace the Mystery of the Heart*'. Most would recall the wonderline in the story of the 'Little Prince'. "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye. The heart sends signals to the brain through nerves, hormones, and pressure receptors — affecting our mood, and stress levels. So, it's not just the brain talking to the heart; the heart talks back."

Many thanks to our dedicated team for another beautiful day.

Community activities

Our community will be smaller for a few weeks with Joseph and Tri away, then from around July 9th, **Erick** will be away for two weeks, **Chris** away for a just over a week (both attending a formation programme in Indonesia, Chris as presenter and Erick as participant) and **JD** will be away for ten days, related to his grant to study and present a paper in Adelaide (see below).

Joseph left for holidays (back in Rabaul) very early on Monday morning with Erick offering to undertake a 4.15am drive to the airport. Joseph will enjoy a break after a particularly intense two-week period preparing for and writing assignments. As always, he found time to help with a number of tasks around the house, despite these other commitments.



Erick celebrated his 10th anniversary of ordination on Thursday. We celebrated this milestone together with Tri's third week of ordination! On the cake we had '10' and '0' candles!

Erick will celebrate his 38th birthday next Wednesday, July 1st.



Tri left for Vietnam at 6.00am Sunday morning. Again Erick was the generous driver, but this time, just to Doncaster Shopping Town, for Tri to 'catch' the Skybus to the airport. Tri will have a demanding time celebrating the way they do in Vietnam, a priestly ordination. It's a safe bet that when he returns, he will need some time to recover, because the past four weeks have been very demanding for him.

JD acquired a full driving licence recently, so he has joined Tri in relinquishing his 'P' plates. JD will present a paper in the first week of July at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. The paper is titled '*An Insight, through the Lens of Trauma, into a Theology of Resistance and Resilience in the Book of Revelation 2:1-7*'. The paper will offer an interpretation of the text through the lens of trauma.

50 years ordained



Tiernan Doherty and **John Curtis** will celebrate their 50th anniversary of ordination with 10.00am Mass here on **July 12th** followed by lunch. Anyone wishing to attend the lunch is asked to make contact with Bruno Petrocco: 0419503300 or Joe Cursio

0419369372 or place their name and the number of guests they will be bringing, on the form in the foyer at the back of the chapel. Bookings will be on a first in' basis. Cost is \$40 per person (BYO drinks please).

70 years ordained



Next Tuesday, June 30th, Chris Mithen will celebrate 70 years of life as a Passionist priest. You are welcome to join us for a jubilee Mass, at 9.30am at Nazareth House, 15 Cornell Street, Camberwell.

Refreshments will be shared afterwards.

Mary Cogle

Mary passed away just after midnight early Tuesday morning. She and Dennis have been at Bupa, across the road from Holy Cross for several months and it has been a gift for us and for them, to be so close, given their long and dedicated association with Holy Cross. They were both official Benefactors of the Passionist Congregation. Dennis passed away on April 13th. Mary's funeral will be celebrated at Holy Cross on Thursday July 2nd at 10.00am.

Passion Play news



The Melbourne Passion Play was the brainchild of Pat La Manna. It has been performed by a cast of more than sixty volunteer actors and a dedicated production and backstage team, for thirty years. A number of our students participated over several years. They joined the crew for rehearsals for several weeks before the two performances (on Palm Sunday and Good Friday). The first Play was staged in Rosebud in 1997.

It was subsequently held in Ruffey Lake Park in Doncaster, at Holy Cross and most recently at Catholic Regional College in Sydenham.

The Play was professionally directed, mostly by Gino Gammaldi, and was offered at no cost thanks to Pat and Helen Le Manna's generosity. Unfortunately, audience attendance has gradually declined for a variety of reasons, including the ageing of the crew, and the logistical requirements for staging the play have become increasingly demanding. A decision has been made to discontinue the Melbourne Passion Play which is a deep sadness to so many people who have devoted their lives to staging this production.



Particularly, I would like to acknowledge Gino's commitment and dedicated hard work, together with Helen and Pat La Manna and the incredible commitment they made to promote the memory of the Passion of Jesus. It was a welcome transfer of venue for us, when the Passion Play moved from Ruffey Park to Holy Cross and a number of our students participated. Although the average Roman soldier in the time of Jesus was around 170cm tall, I'm sure some of our students were among the shortest Roman soldiers ever!

To all those who were involved and to those who participated as crew or ‘spectators’, the end of the annual staging of the Passion Play is a reminder of various aspects of our current era that make our witness to the gospel increasingly challenging.

Diplomacy of words: Leo and politics as service

Antonio Spadaro SJ

April 29th, 2026



Leo XIV addressed members of the European People’s Party (PPE) on April 24 and the future diplomats of the Holy See two days later on Sunday. In both cases, he said, in effect, politics is either service or it is fraud.

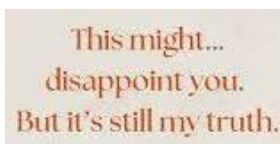
With the European parliamentarians, the pope cut straight to it. Real politics doesn’t chase easy consensus. It has the nerve for unpopular choices. And, above all, it doesn’t lapse into ideology: ideology warps reality, enslaves people, and Europe knows this better than anyone, having risen from the rubble of two ideologies that nearly destroyed it.

He spoke of the human person at the centre, of fraternity, of law, of beauty. Grand words, certainly. But he tethered them to a concrete problem: the widening distance between those who govern and those who are governed. And here he landed on a striking image: in the age of the digital triumph, he said, politics needs to go back to analogue. To direct contact. To the territory.



Two days later, at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy — the school that trains Vatican diplomats — he shifted register but not direction. The diplomat of the Holy See, he explained, is not a functionary. He is a messenger of peace. But not, mind you, peace as the world understands it, which is often just the outcome of a balance of power. That kind of peace, the pope said with notable bluntness, gets trampled every day.

No, the peace he means is a gift that precedes politics. The diplomat’s task is to become its instrument, even when the whole enterprise seems futile. There is a thread that binds the two speeches, and it leads back to something Leo XIV had



already told the Diplomatic Corps in January: words must once again mean something. They must adhere to reality. Without that adherence, political dialogue becomes performance, and diplomacy becomes theatre. The through line is clear. Peace is

not built by force. It is not built by slogans. It is built — the pope’s own formulation — through the humility of truth and the courage of forgiveness.

At a moment when war, as he himself put it in January, is back in fashion, this amounts to a programme. And a year into the pontificate of Robert Prevost, it is beginning to look like something more: a governing horizon for his Petrine ministry.



Refugee week: Once refugees, now part of Australia's story

Vietnamese mark 50 years of life in Australia with art and a world-first museum, our correspondent reports from Melbourne



A bronze statue, the 'Mythical Crane Boat' — dedicated to those who risked all and fled South Vietnam by boat after the communist takeover in 1975 — is unveiled at the Lennox and Butler Street Park in the inner Melbourne suburb of North Richmond. (Photo: Luke Hunt)



When the last helicopter left South Vietnam in 1975 — signalling the end of a long and brutal war — almost 20 million people were left behind. Frightened and with little desire to live in a communist one-party state, many started plotting an exit strategy. Up to half of the daring 800,000 who risked all by boat would perish at sea, but many did find asylum in the West, an embarrassment for communist Hanoi, where leaders were trying to convince a skeptical world that South and North Vietnam were one and at peace.

Those who made it say the risks were worth the rewards and half a century later, this is proving a cause for celebration in Melbourne with the launch of the world's first museum dedicated to South Vietnam's refugees, spearheading commemorations. "It is to tell the story of the refugees, why they fled, and then their boat journey, and then their settlement here," said Tammy Nguyen, chief executive officer for Vietnamese Museum Australia. "But it's also to showcase the contributions that the community has made to the fabric of Australia in the last 50 years of settlement here."

Thousands of stories will be told when the three-story Vietnamese Museum, costing A\$20,000,000, opens in mid-October in Sunshine, a suburb of Melbourne's west, after delays due to the Covid pandemic — which meant last year's 50th anniversary of the war's end was missed. "We're an industrious bunch. But people who had every intention to support, fund and contribute to the project all of a sudden found their business in absolute dire straits. Quite a few businesses closed down, some struggled to bounce back," Tammy said.



But the timing will also coincide with another half-century marker; July 2, 1976, when South Vietnam was formally annexed by the communists in Hanoi as part of modern Vietnam, after a 14-month occupation by North Vietnamese troops.



That day was remembered this week with the unveiling in an inner suburban corner park of the “Mythical Crane Boat,” a powerful artwork symbolizing the perilous journeys in boats hardly fit for purpose on the high seas. The bronze marker was welcomed by Aboriginal communities with the traditional Welcome to Country

and smoking ceremonies — an inhaling of burning eucalypt leaves to cleanse and ward off bad spirits while fostering a better future.

Among the survivors was Duy Quang Nguyen, now president of the Victorian chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, whose family life in Vietnam was dominated by famine, poverty and a fear of being thrown into a communist re-education camp. Soon after the communist takeover, a cousin had built a boat and Duy was offered a place with a crew of about 30 people — all relatives. He declined and all of them perished at sea.



But as life got harder, he followed his mother’s advice, saying, “There was no way to live in this country, Vietnam.” He spent 12 days at sea before landing at a Malaysian refugee camp, where he was interviewed and accepted by Australia. He found learning Australian English as difficult as the food served up on his arrival in



Tasmania as a 24-year-old in 1989, and understanding Australian football rules after a youth spent playing soccer. “You call that soccer. We called that football,” he said good-naturedly, with a smile. “But our kids, they now enjoy Australian football, but I tell you what I observed with football — that support comes from the family,” he said.

He says family and community networks are what made Australian life important for the 335,000 ethnic Vietnamese who call Australia home, alongside acceptance and political participation that he adds were bereft in Vietnam after 1975. Just a few feet from the “Mythical Crane Boat,” the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Straits islander flags fluttered alongside the red and yellow stripes of the former South Vietnam, a flag that remains officially loathed in Hanoi.



But communist dictums are scorned in equal doses here, by the crowd of perhaps 400 mainly Catholic Vietnamese who remember the harshness of communist troops when they first marched into Saigon. “We left because we don’t want to be communist.

They don't care about human rights, they want total control of everything — your home, your money, your job,” said 61-year-old Kim Le. “They put my brother and sister in jail.”

At 21, in 1989, she escaped through Nha Trang, spent seven days in a boat, and 14 months in a refugee camp on Palawan in the Philippines, where she was granted refugee status, settled in Adelaide and spent five years at university before a career



as an insurance broker. “We were heartbroken and there is a deep sorrow among all of us, Catholics and Buddhists. My father died in Vietnam. My brother ... he escaped. Both were soldiers. I love the South Vietnam flag,” she said, flanked by veterans who fought alongside Australian soldiers in the Vietnam War.

Her sentiments were echoed by Quang Dung Vu. Now 85, he survived seven years in a communist prison before being released in 1982 when he fled Saigon by boat to Thailand. “The first years in Australia were difficult. I worked hard in a factory. Long hours and menial work while studying at university to become an interpreter, but Australia was very good to us. Australians opened their hearts, and no one here will say a bad word about Australians.”



The Vietnamese Museum will be one of six multicultural galleries to be built in Australia and will open amid far-right pressure — most notably from Pauline Hanson, leader of the One Nation party — for a sharp cut in immigration numbers. Hanson



recently faced a public backlash across the country after calling for multiculturalism to be replaced by a “monoculture,” which was dismissed as incomprehensible by the Asian, Aboriginal and European Australians who

christened the “Mythical Crane Boat.”

“She says she’s a proud Australian yet wants to upend what it means to be Australian,” said an ethnic Irish-Australian. “My family has five generations on this land and what? We’re being told by a bush politician what to eat, how to dress and what language to speak. Her uniform? “People fled that type of political behaviour and she’s just another politician with a fantasy devoid of the reality about how Australians live. That’s very un-Australian,” he said. “Communists or fascists, they’re all totalitarians.”



Perhaps more importantly, the museum will also commemorate the 60,000 Australian soldiers who served in South Vietnam and the 521 who died. It will also pay tribute to Malcolm Fraser, the former Australian prime minister, revered for his unflinching efforts in providing a refuge for those who fled South Vietnam by boat, of different faiths and ethnicities.

Underbool



I came across a touching story about the town of Underbool, 500 kilometres north-east of Melbourne and 150 kilometres from Mildura, which at the last census had 215 residents. The story is particularly relevant because of the session shared by Erick and Gerard Daly at the Institute last weekend on 'community' as a central part of the Passionist charism. The story is also linked to our own efforts to strengthen the Holy Cross family with 'Coffee Cart' Sunday.

Underbool's major attraction is the 'Pink Lakes' of the Murray -Sunset National Park. The salt lake's colour is caused by salt-tolerant algae and this shifts dramatically depending on the season and the time of day.



Lee Brown takes her coffee van to Underbool on Tuesday mornings for just 20 minutes! The coffee van is a morning meeting place for the locals. Lee opens up at 7.30am and by the time Lee warms up the coffee machine, vehicles are arriving. The coffee van becomes the busiest spot in town. "People look at my hours online and think, 'What a waste of time,'" Lee says, "But that 20 minutes is important to the town." It is important for the tradies, the farmers, the truck drivers, the socialites and the passers-by. Her coffee fuels the people who keep the community alive. They time their morning around their freshly brewed barista coffee.



Lee often makes more than 30 coffees during her 20-minute shift, before heading to her other job at the Underbool Neighbourhood House. Three days a week, she stays open longer. Three hours. That's when her alfresco chairs fill, conversations stretch out, and locals settle in. "It's for my local people," Lee says. For customers, it's less about the coffee and more about what comes with it. For local shearer Hamish Farnsworth, the coffee van is a chance to see his neighbours. "The coffee van does a really good job of just trying to be there for the community. The coffee is just the bit that brings everyone together," he says.

The 20-minute coffee van that keeps a small community together



For farmers, days are often long and solitary. Hours in a tractor without conversation. He says five minutes spent with peers makes a difference to their mental health. Volunteers, fuelled by Lee's morning coffee, run a community pantry serving fresh milk and bread, the public pool, the cemetery and the recreation grounds where new netball courts have just been installed.

An Underbool local, Sonia McVicar says the coffee van brings together the people who keep the community alive. "It does wonders for community spirit. It takes a village," Sonia says. "That's what we are."

Please note that our **Coffee Cart** will be at Holy Cross next on Sunday July 5th, and then it will be in recess until August 30th

I Still Matter (Patricia A Fleming)

This beautiful reflection was suggested for the newsletter by Kay Lewis

My looks are nothing special, my face reveals my age,
My body shows some wear and tear, and my energy's not the same.

Too often my memory fails me, and I lose things all the time.
One minute I know what I plan to do, and the next it may just slip my mind.

I try hard to avoid my mirror, there are things I would rather not see,
And even those times when I just catch a glimpse, I can no longer recognize me.

The things I used to do with ease, can now cause aches and pains,
And the quality of the things I do, will never be quite the same.

I always compare my older self, to those younger versions of me,
And I know I'm wasting too much time, missing who I used to be.

But the thing that really makes me sad, is despite what people see,
Underneath my tattered, worn out shell, I'm still the same old me.

My heart can still feel endless love, and at times it still can ache.
My heart can fill with so much joy, and then it can suddenly break.

My soul can still feel sympathy, and longs for forgiveness and peace,
And there are times its light shines boldly through,
And times when it longs for release.

It's true, maybe now that I'm older, feeling lonely may be status quo,
But it also has made me more willing, to forgive and let past conflicts go.
So maybe to some I look ugly and old, a person who barely exists.
I'm still quite aware of the beauty inside, and my value should not be dismissed.

So although not as strong and no beauty, it's true,
I'm still here and want so much to live,
And I know that there's no one in this world quite like me,
And no one who has more to give.

Masaka Kids Africa video: I Look to You

Erick had some trouble displaying the full video during his Institute presentation, but he has provided the link. Based in Masaka, Uganda, Masaka Kids Africa it is a non-profit NGO and orphanage supporting children who have lost one or both parents to war, poverty, or disease. They achieved massive international popularity through dance videos on platforms like YouTube and TikTok, showing incredible synchronization, energy, and joy. They became the first Ugandan creators to reach 2 million subscribers on YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2sgHn0oUA4&list=RDJ2sgHn0oUA4&start_radio=1

They have a FIFA World Cup dance:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEl0pHvvSK6gb61YRvs0bOw>

Psalm 23...new expression

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3XbmhB0rdY>

More Victor Borge

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS0q5Srx30g>

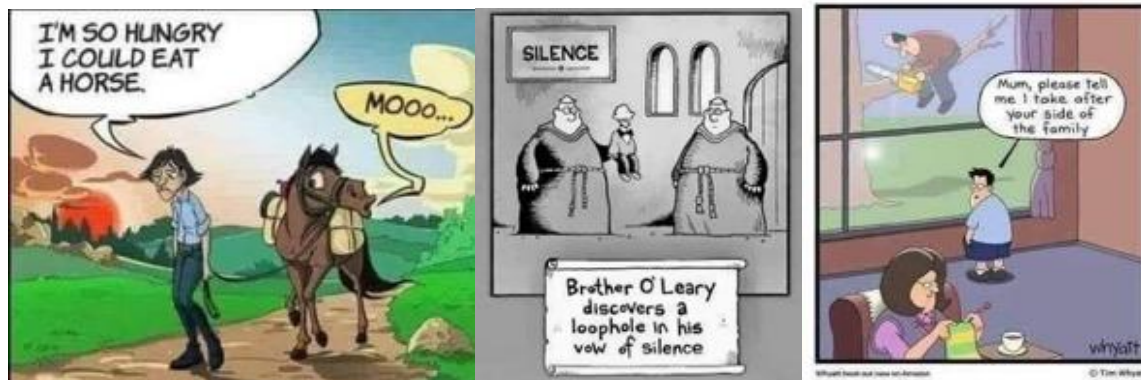
Humour



A teacher asked her students to write what they want to become and what they don't want to become. Some of them aspire to be a 'senior citizen'. Doesn't that warm your heart?

🐱 One child said, I don't want to be the president, or a doctor, or a scientist. I want to become a senior citizen because it is so it's so much fun.

Joe was at the airport, checking in at the gate when an airport employee asked, "Has anyone put anything in your luggage without your knowledge? To which Joe replied, if it was without my knowledge, how would I know? He smiled knowingly and nodded, that's why we ask.



My grandpa—

- 🐱 Can wake up late in the morning,
- 🐱 Take a nap in the afternoon,
- 🐱 Watch TV and go to sleep early
- 🐱 Has no homework.
- 🐱 If there's no work to do, he can sit under a tree and have a rest.
- 🐱 Sometimes he goes to the park and plays chess with someone.
- 🐱 He can play video games if he wants, no one cares.
- 🐱 He has coffee in the morning, tea after lunch, and beer in the night.
- 🐱 He doesn't have to pay on the bus
- 😊 Being a senior citizen is true fun!
- 😊



Senior citizens themselves don't even know how happy they are!!

🙏 Dedicated to all senior citizens 🙏🙏💡



Prayers



We remember those who have died recently, especially [Mary Cougle](#). We also remember those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially: [Gwladys Bourke](#) (Maree Butler's mother), [Francesco Cursio](#) (Joe's father), [Marie Louise Saddler](#), [Joan Goold](#), and [Brenda Roberts](#).

We pray with thanks that all who have died, have found joy in God's eternal presence.

We pray too for members of our Holy Cross family who are coping with illness including many not listed here, and all who care for them:

[Stephen Cougle](#), [Paul Fitzgerald](#), [Pam Storey](#), [Dr Peter Heffernan](#), [Max McMahon](#), [Beth Scott](#) (granddaughter of Sue McMahon) [Fr Chris Mithen](#), [Carol Battistella](#), [Lucia Isgro](#), [David Chai](#), [Marie Spowart](#), [Edward Atme](#), [Greg Agosta](#), [Jan Cambrey](#), [Bernadette Owen](#), [Bob Hallam](#), [Nina Conti](#), [Lisa Iverach](#), [Anne Woon](#), [Marilyn Cilmi](#), [Luke Norden](#), [Jeanelle Bergin](#), [Caroline Hagedorn](#), [Alexander Lim](#), [Maureen Barns](#), [Kate Lenic](#), [Doris Castro](#), [Denise Egan](#), [Caroline Meade](#), [Anne Burke](#), [Phil Drew](#), [Patricia Keeghan](#), [Nancy Reynolds Graham Burke](#), [Rod Gorfine](#), [Pam Gartland](#), [Peter Barry](#), [Lesley Yang](#), [Anne Jenkins](#). [Julia Cantone](#), [Kate Dunn](#), [Helen McLean](#), and [Errol Lovett](#).



[Chris](#) will send the link for next Sunday's Mass, on Saturday.

Brian