

## Holy Cross Retreat



### Letter 344

18<sup>th</sup> September, 2026

Greetings,

### Province Assembly

There have been two gatherings of professed Passionists over the past two weeks, both with over 30 participants. Thirty-one of us gathered at Holy Cross last week to explore our life and mission, as a step in preparation for our Provincial Chapter in July next year.

Provincial, Denis Travers gave an extensive report that highlighted the development and growth over the past few years and the projected growth over the coming five years. It was recognised by the Assembly, that one need as a result of this group will be effective mentoring of our young Vietnamese and Papua New Guinean men as they move into full-time ministry. Possibilities of new ministries, not bound by tradition but shaped by it, and responding to 'the signs of the times' were central in our sharing. Already our communities are multi-cultural, but there remains much to learn about one another's cultures so as to live and minister together with respect and appreciation, not as seniors and juniors.



Along with many Congregation there are at least two telling realities. Our Western membership is aged and ageing, and our finances are dwindling. This is going to require brave and creative thinking and planning about our current residences, properties and ministries, so as to ensure the men of the future have what they need to 'continue the journey towards new horizons'. We benefited from three personal inputs (two from laity) as to how they see the major issues in our cultures, civil, church and the Passionists.



There will be a more informative summary when the various Committees gather the material from the two Assemblies. It appears that they were very similar in identifying key issues. What was most telling was that our charism is not only unique, it must continue to direct any of our planning for

community life and ministry. In a world that is fractured, many people are lonely and/or suffering in all sorts of ways. Our charism offers hope, not false hope and meaning in the face of suffering. We treasure this more than any other aspect of our vocation.

### Growing up (Jonah Golberg, 11<sup>th</sup> September)

One of the things young people don't understand very well about grown-ups, is that grown-ups never fully feel like they've grown up. The person we were when we were kids doesn't go away, it just sort of shrinks inside us. It's not another person or personality. It's more like it's one slice of the pie of who we are. It's hard to explain, but I think middle-aged people know what I mean. We're all a portfolio of commitments, passions, interests, perspectives, and theories of the world, and the stocks that make up our youthful personalities stay in the portfolio—they just become a smaller part of our holdings over time. This is why I often roll my eyes when young people claim that older people "just don't understand" this or that. We know what it was—what it is—like to be young; we just also know what it's like not to be, too.



Maybe the portfolio analogy is wrong. Maybe a better analogy is an iPhone app. When we're young, the youth app or apps dominate, but as we get older we acquire life management apps having to do with health, finances, etc. But anyone who's seen a grandparent play with their grandkids knows that old people know how to access the youth apps when necessary.

Or maybe that's stupid, too.

### South Korea (Source: UCA News)

South Korea faces an evolving addiction crisis characterized by rising substance abuse among young people and pervasive digital dependencies, coupled with a severe shortage of institutional rehabilitation infrastructure. With modern society



placing enormous stress on individuals, problematic behaviours have skyrocketed across Korea.

In response, Church leaders recently established a dedicated organization specifically designed to combat the surging rates of drug abuse, compulsive gambling, and severe online addiction that are currently devastating families and youths. The new pastoral program will heavily focus on providing a combination of deep spiritual counselling, accessible psychological support, and robust community-based rehabilitation for those desperately struggling to break their destructive habits.

A large portion of the problem has emanated from abuse of legal prescription drugs. Its geographic isolation because of its closed border with North Korea has limited the traditional physical flows of illicit narcotics but the advanced technological infrastructure in South Korea has created a nearly undetectable distribution system. Combined with a widespread acceptance of digital currencies and transactions, the drug market in Korea has altogether skipped the traditional street trade of illicit drugs and become a network of contact and faceless transactions.



Church officials emphasized that the stark rise in digital screen addiction, coupled with an alarming increase in easily accessible illicit narcotics, requires a fully united, compassionate response rather than mere criminal punishment. MP's passed a bill last year banning the use of mobile phones in schools from March 2026, amid concerns about the impact of social media on student welfare.

By opening their doors and resources to addicts from all walks of life, the Korean Church hopes to remove the heavy social stigma that often prevents struggling victims from seeking urgent professional help. The initiative also aims to partner directly with local medical professionals and civic groups, ultimately creating a much stronger, faith-supported safety net for the most vulnerable members of modern Korean society.

### **'The Australian' 9th September 2026**

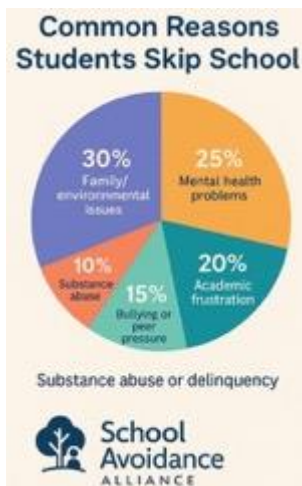


Chaotic classrooms, digital distractions, truancy and bullying are rife in Australian schools, the latest global testing reveals. Noise and disorder during lessons were reported by 41% of 15,000 Australian teenagers surveyed through the OECD's latest Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test. This is 30% per higher than the average across industrialised nations. One-third of the 15-year-old students reported that classmates don't listen to what the teacher is saying, and that teachers have to wait a long time for the classroom to quieten down. 25% Australian students admitted to being were distracted by using digital resources, such as smartphones, apps and websites, during lessons.

Federal Education Minister Jason Clare called for a “digital detox” and more focus on reading books, following last year’s ban on smartphones in classrooms. “This doesn’t mean there is no place for technology in schools – students need to learn digital skills (and) that includes how to use, and how not to use, AI,” he said. “But it does point to the need to wind back the amount of screen time in schools – a digital detox.” State and Territory ministers will discuss cuts to screen time when they meet next month.



Australian students are twice as likely to use digital devices for schoolwork, compared to the OECD average, and average 2.6 hours a day using technology for learning activities – well above the OECD average of 1.7 hours. One in seven students admitted to using laptops or phones for “leisure” while at school, wasting nearly an hour of lesson time every day.



The PISA report shows that 90% of students feel safe at school, although one in 20 reported being “hit or pushed around” by fellow students. 25% of teenagers said they had been bullied in person, or cyberbullied online. Truancy is rampant, with 44% of Australian teenagers confessing they had skipped at least one day of school in the two weeks prior to last year’s test – a truancy rate that is double the OECD average. These findings coincide with the worst mathematics and reading results since PISA began its international testing in 2000.

OECD director of education and skills Andreas Schleicher warned that AI chatbots and screen time were harming a generation of children by “shrinking attention spans”.

### School teachers and Principals

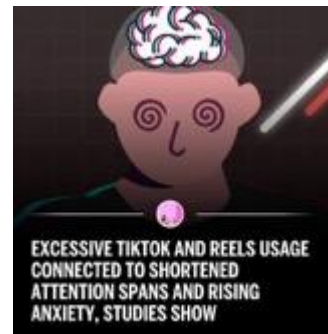


The Hechinger Report assists in providing support and professional development to education journalists in the United States. It has highlighted that teachers are adjusting the education space to accommodate students' lack of focus with new techniques like meditation and “brain breaks” in the classroom. Educators say it has been more challenging to get students to pay attention today.



Eighty-eight percent of respondents in an international study by Cambridge University of more than 3,000 teachers believed their students' attention spans were getting shorter. In a study published last year about kindergarten through second grade classrooms in the U.S, 75% of teachers said attention spans had dropped since the Covid pandemic, when the use of laptops and technology for schooling spread rapidly.

A growing body of research says that excessive screen time and fast content like Tik Tok videos are part of the problem. Many States have introduced laws requiring schools to have some form of a mobile phone ban. There is debate over whether screen time reduces people's ability to focus or it reduces their desire to focus.



To cope with and remedy shorter attention spans, educators are employing a list of new and old strategies including brain breaks; limiting screen time; cutting the time students spend on one activity; adding more engaging hands-on projects and meditation.

| Spaced Repetition vs. Cramming                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Why your brain forgets – and how to fix it.                                                                               |                                                                                                                                   |
| Cramming                                                                                                                  | Spaced Repetition                                                                                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-time overload</li> <li>• Short-term recall</li> <li>• High stress</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual exposure</li> <li>• Long-term retention</li> <li>• Remember for weeks</li> </ul> |

Remembering information long-term requires repeated attention over time. This is why cramming the night before a test might work to remember the information the next morning, but not for remembering it weeks, or even days, into the future.

To engage students, teachers say they often feel the need to deliver teaching not only in shorter bursts, but also in more entertaining ways.

One Principal suggests the new word is 'edutainment.' In a fifth grade science class, students cleared away their desks and walked in a big circle in the middle of the classroom, spinning around the teacher because they had a hard time distinguishing the difference between the Earth's "rotation" and its "revolution" around the sun. When asked the difference the following day, one student said, "Rotation is light and night, and it takes 24 hours. Revolution is going around one year — 365 and a quarter days."



Across Australia teacher resignations have risen sharply from 2020 to 2023. In NSW, teacher resignations more than doubled from 929 in 2020 to 2050 in 2023. In Queensland, 1684 teachers quit in 2020 but in 2023, the number rose to 2607 teachers. In Victoria For Victorians, 1193 teachers quit in 2020 and in 2022 1626 primary and 1651 secondary staff left. Similar ratios applies in South Australia and Western Australia.



One teacher explained her reason for resigning. “It was the searing mental and emotional load that came with supporting young people from psychologically complex and often heartbreaking circumstances. It was the dance between instilling high expectations with students while parents entitled their children to denigrate the importance of education and disrespect staff. It was too many classes, too many students, too many diverse learning needs and never the time or space to focus on what mattered”.



“To be an exceptional English teacher was to prepare and mark till midnight, to spend your weekends programming and to consistently sacrifice time with your family. It was saying yes when you were beyond burnout because saying no branded you as incompetent. The system demands excellence while it exhausts teachers with compliance exercises and administration rather than letting them focus on the only thing that truly matters”.

Many who resigned have shared disturbing stories of increasing admin workload, abuse from parents and behaviour issues from parents. Others mentioned the distance and the time required to for travel from home to school because they could not afford to live in a suburb near their workplace. Many mentioned the salary, especially considering the very long hours involved. Many teachers feel a need to arrive early before parents drop off their children, to avoid harassment and confrontation.

A 2025 survey (The Australian Principal OHS&W) showed that 54% of school leaders were considering leaving their position. The researchers warned, “Too many school leaders are at too great a risk of burnout. Without structural and systematic change, the risk of principals acting on their intention to consider leaving their current role is high”. They identified that 99% of Principals are working dangerously long hours every week.





Principals are averaging 54 hours per week during term and 19.6 hours during holidays – well above an average working week in Australia. Principals of independent schools work longer hours (averaging 56.3 hours each week). Some school Principals have had an extra door installed so they can escape aggressive and dangerous parents!

There are huge issues raised by these realities, as well as the reality that many of the teachers who are experiencing disillusionment are young.



They have identified teaching as an attractive career but the students they want to mentor are besieged with multiple challenges that include living in homes where domestic violence or abuse is their everyday reality, encountering cyber and personal bullying, having

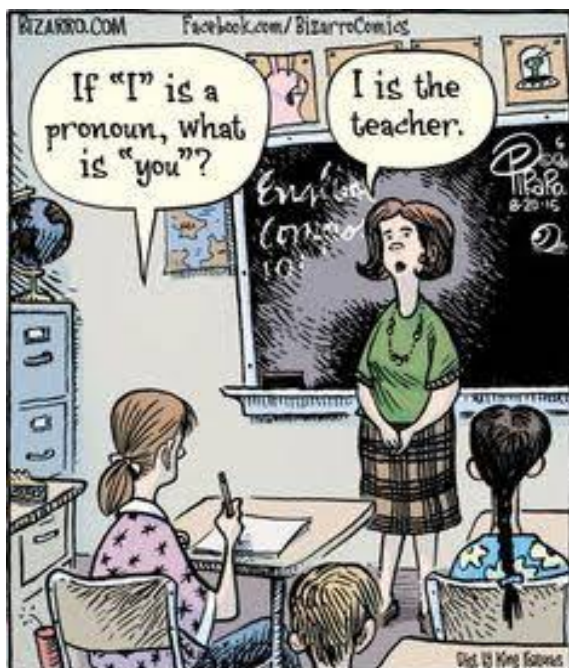
distracted minds as a result of an addiction to their various devices with a resulting struggle to concentrate for substantial periods and swamped by consumerism, loneliness, racism and isolation.



All teachers, but especially those who are young, need our encouragement.



## Humour



more awesome pictures at [THEMETAPICTURE.COM](http://THEMETAPICTURE.COM)

**I've opened a can of worms.**

**They just sit there, the worms. Hardly the chaos that's been advertised.**

**IN A SPAN OF 11 YEARS 115 PEOPLE DIED IN A WEIGHTLIFTING ACCIDENT AT THE GYM.**

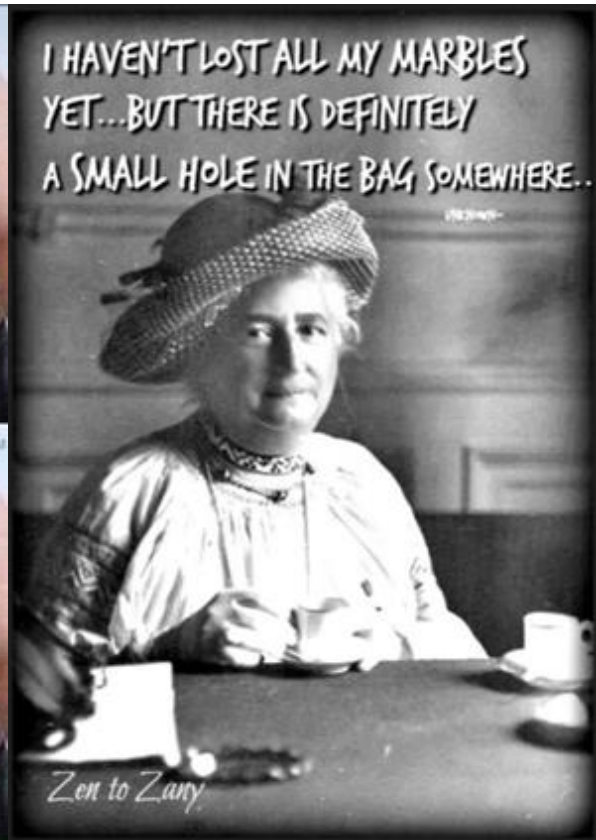
**IN THE SAME 11 YEARS ONLY 1 PERSON DIED EATING A DONUT.**

**MAKE GOOD CHOICES.**

**By the time someone says something in the meeting worth writing down, I've likely already taken my pen apart and lost the spring.**

**I GET MOST OF MY EXERCISE THESE DAYS FROM SHAKING MY HEAD IN DISBELIEF.**

**As the year comes to an end, I urge you to take care of yourself and avoid accidents because spare parts for old models like you are no longer in stock.**



**The problem with stealing quotes off the Internet is you never know if they are genuine.**  
~ Abraham Lincoln

**My wife just stopped and said, "You weren't even listening, were you?"**  
  
**I thought to myself... "That's a pretty strange way to start off a conversation."**

**It's a five minute walk from my house to the pub.  
It's a 35 minute walk from the pub to my house.  
The difference is staggering.**

**IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER AND 5 MILLION DOLLARS, WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU WOULD BUY?**

**MY WIFE SAID THAT IF I DON'T GET OFF MY COMPUTER AND HELP WITH THE DISHES, SHE'LL SLAM MY HEAD ON THE KEYBOARD, BUT I THINK SHE'S JOKINGSG67SGHI3DHGJRE7490DNDWHK3-2J4H37SHDUDKIJISD877HR8SK020A3Y3H3J3UHU338JESU83J8R**

**When you realize that 1970 and 2022 are as far apart as 1970 and 1918 ..... I'm just going to need a minute .....**

Jason Smith climbed to the top of Mt. Sinai to get close enough to talk to God. Looking up, he asked the Lord. "God, what does a million years mean to you?" The Lord replied, "A minute." Smith asked, "And what does a million dollars mean to you?" The Lord replied, "A cent" Smith asked "Can I have a cent?" The Lord replied, "In a minute."

### **Coffee Cart**



Next Sunday Ross will be back with his coffee cart. Cakes and biscuits are welcome and we encourage you to put on a name tag to help our community become more friendly which that is the purpose of these Sundays. One again we thank our special donor and all those who help set up or contribute in

other ways.

### **Feast of Holy Cross**



We were all home on Sunday night and Chris cooked dumplings and Aldi Pizzas for us.

### **Milly's fund-raiser**

Milly is very grateful for the support she has received and since the find-raiser day she has received another \$1,000. This will help many more children in need. Thank you to our Holy Cross community for your wonderful support.

## Prayers



We remember that those who have died recently especially We also remember those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially: [Brett Daly](#), [Kevin Lee](#), and [Michelle Reardon](#).

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

[Anthony Wright](#), [George Hall](#), [Christine Storey](#), [Marie Spowart](#), [Kathy Shady](#), [Stephen Cogle](#), [Paul Fitzgerald](#), [Joan O'Callaghan](#), [Nada Atme](#), [Graham Burke](#), [Peter Heffernan](#), [Dawn Herrefrnan](#), [Pam Storey](#), [David Chai](#), [Lucia Isgro](#), [Kate Lenic](#), [Nina Conti](#), [Carol Battistella](#), [Max McMahon](#), [Beth Scott](#), [Fr. Brendan Lane](#), [Edward Atme](#), [Bernadette Owen](#), [Rod Gorfine](#), [Maureen Barns](#), [Luke Norden](#), [Denise Egan](#), [Caroline Hagedorn](#), [Alexander Lim](#), [Marilyn Cilmi](#), [Julia Cantone](#), [Pam Gartland](#), [Anne Woon](#), [Doris Castro](#), [Anne Jenkins](#) and [Helen McLean](#).



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

Brian