Holy Cross Retreat

Letter 350

30th October 2026

Greetings,

Friday marks the end of instruction period at YTU, so **Chris** will not be required to provide lectures until 9.00pm on Mondays and Wednesdays until perhaps the first semester next year.

Also, classes at 'Heart of Life' have given way not to assignment preparation time so **Joseph** is free from attending classes. He has been advised that he will graduate on November 15th with the Damascus Spiritual Leaders and Spiritual Direction Certificate. **Congratulations Joseph.**

Erick has completed ten week's counselling at St John's, Dandenong, which he has enjoyed and benefited from. He has been able to practice what he studied for and appreciated the experience of being able to help disadvantaged young people

JD has three more weeks of study before he has to present the outline of his research project to an academic confirmation panel in order to have it accepted for formal studies.

Coffee Cart



The **Coffee Cart** was back last Sunday but the weather was too wet for us to gather outside. We had generous hep in setting up and we were able to go ahead with Coffee, cake, biscuits and conversations. The next Coffee Cart Sunday will be on November 29th

Come Away Day

Everyone is welcome on Wednesday November 18th.
Registration from 9.30am. Departure is **3pm.** (BYO lunch please)
The day concludes with Eucharist.
The suggested cost is $30.00 or a donation, according to your means.

Jars



Chris would appreciate any unwanted 500ml jars with lids that he can use to fill with honey. The jar may have previously held tomato paste or something similar. Any donations of jars are welcome. Thank you.

Milly's 'visit' to Vietnam



Lots of people head off to places like Vietnam. Milly's visits are nothing like a holiday, but this trip gave Milly greater satisfaction than some previous visits, because she and her co-helpers were able to do so much more as the result of the generous donation made to support her work in the treatment of Epidermolysis Bullosa. These photos show some of the $4,000 worth of medications for pain relief, vitamins, minerals etc, that Milly was able to purchase for treatment – around.









Some photos are too distressing to include, but reality is part of this whole story and to know some children are receiving treatment to relieve pain, discomfort, embarrassment and more, makes our support of this needy cause significant. We will continue to support Milly and her husband Tony and their team, in this most needed and generous outreach.

Milly posted this message: *Vietnam you have been part of me for seventeen years now .. How can a mother and grandmother from Australia make that claim? It's simple... it's love... love that transcends countries, ethnicity, language barriers. Epidermolysis Bullosa brought us together. Holding a child and a parent whose pain goes beyond imagining.. making a little difference, letting them know they count, they are important, they are no different than any of us ... and no one* should suffer so much... May God bless you all till we meet again, Niem Tin and all the precious families whose trust and support warms my heart so much .... I am a better human because of you. Milly



Anthony Albanese must call Angus Taylor stat, and here's what he must say
Peter Hartcher (political editor of The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age).
24th October, 2026

You've heard many tributes to Helen Haines. You're about to hear many more. Don't be fooled. Australia is on the brink of missing the moment. If so, nothing significant will change. We'd not be returning to business as usual. We'd be descending into violence as foretold. Some of the specifics of the attack on her may allow an easy excuse for inaction. The alleged assailant apparently had a history of mental illness. You can already hear the argument for a fatalistic complacency: "Ah, so he's some random madman, it's not politically motivated after all."
Even if that turns out to be the case, it misses the point entirely. Several points. The first is that, if mental illness is a factor, that's a part of Australia's problem, not an excuse for ignoring it. Second. The overarching reality is that our society has descended into a new era of disrespect, distress and danger. Authority figures, including members of parliament, are not the only targets. But they're the biggest. They're increasingly at risk. Even if this dreadful mangling of the blameless Haines hadn't happened, widen this week's news aperture a bit.

Two days after the attack on Haines,an angry man walked screaming into the electoral office in Perth of Hannah Beazley, a minister in the West Australian government and daughter of Kim Beazley. Police allege that the man was armed with two sets of improvised nunchucks and threatened staff. In court, the accused said he was carrying drumsticks, not nunchucks. He had a history of mental illness. On the same day, a man laughing maniacally walked into the electoral office in Brisbane of the federal Communications Minister Anika Wells. He pointed a toy gun at the receptionist's head. Draw your own conclusions about his mental wellness.

There are about 20 cases before the courts of people accused of threatening the life of the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, as my colleague Paul Sakkal disclosed this week. One after another this week, MPs told reporters that they'd been hit with dozens, even hundreds of threats against their lives, their families' lives and their staffs. Women MPs routinely are threatened with rape. Independent senator Fatima Payman said she'd referred more than 100 threats to police, with seven of the cases now before the courts. Barnaby Joyce said a man drove his car at him and only stopped when federal police officers obstructed the would-be assailant.

The number of violent threats against MPs and high office holders reported to police rose from 555 four years ago to 1067 last year, according to Australian Federal Police Commissioner Krissy Barrett. In other words, if Helen Haines had not been attacked and maimed horribly, it's only a matter of time before others are. ASIO and the federal police have been warning of exactly that for many months now. Are politicians the only targets of abuse, threats and violence? Of course not.

Coles and Woolies workers are abused, airline staff are abused. Ambulance paramedics are abused. Teachers are abused. A few years ago, you didn't see signs at a service counter asking you to "please show respect". Now they're common. At the doctor's office, at the airport, at the dry cleaner's. Just about anyone and everyone is a target now. This is about much more than violence against political figures. The political class might be the canaries; we all live in the same coalmine.

"Elevated levels of grievance, intolerance and polarisation continue to create a permissive environment of violence," the ASIO chief, Mike Burgess, said after the attack on Haines. "The temperature and trajectory of the security environment are concerning." Note, the word "trajectory". So it'd be the height of foolishness to minimise the Haines attack. She's a dedicated and caring servant of the people, as everyone who knows her has attested. She lost her legs to this wanton violence. The least we can do is to not lose focus on the problems that led to it.

What to do? Every one of us can and should act. We share the pleasures and the pains of the same country. We can all contribute to improving it in this dire moment. Pauline Hanson managed to show some responsibility this week. The One Nation leader apologised for the puerile cartoon video that mocked Jacqui Lambie's vaginal prolapse. She had the video taken down. It might be coincidental that she did so after the assault on Haines. But if she, arch provocateur and Trump acolyte, can accept responsibility, show some respect and mend her ways, everyone can.

Well, almost everyone. "That was great, man. Wow. Man, I loved that," Donald Trump gushed this week when one of his supporters punched a heckler at a Trump rally. We won't get any help from him. We have to look to ourselves to help ourselves. The action agenda starts at the top. With the prime minister, Opposition Leader Angus Taylor, the state premiers. It's blindingly obvious that "social" media has opened a vector of hate and incitement into our society, indeed, every society. It's sufficiently obvious that federal Assistant Treasury Minister Andrew Leigh last week wrote a speech titled *The Anger Machine*. His speech took on special resonance when he delivered it this week.

If you doubt the connection between "social" media and violence, Leigh's speech is persuasive. Among a raft of evidence, he says: "A study in Germany found that anti-refugee sentiment on Facebook predicted attacks on refugees. In weeks when Facebook Germany experienced major server outages, hate crimes fell."

The AFP's Krissy Barrett this week said that the federal police "have been increasingly concerned about the number of individuals being warned and being charged about their behaviour – particularly their online threats and abuse". And, again, it's much broader than MPs and leaders alone.

Another senior federal police official testified this week that Australia was facing a "tsunami" of youth crime enabled by "social" media and now being turbocharged by AI. Acting deputy commissioner Sandra Booth told a parliamentary inquiry that police found a 13-year-old boy allegedly with violent extremist material. He was being groomed to commit a school shooting. The need to civilise this deeply uncivilised industry is a matter of self-protection for the whole of society. It's Australia's good fortune that the federal government has a proposed law before the parliament right now.

The Digital Duty of Care bill would force the big "social" media corporations and AI businesses to accept responsibility for what's published on their sites on pain of fines of up to $109 million. It's Australia's poor fortune that the Coalition has not only taken objection to parts of the bill, but refused to negotiate over it. So it's at an impasse.

The action agenda now? First, Albanese should pick up the phone and invite Taylor to discuss the problem of the Hate Machine and find some common ground. The attack on Haines surely has brought urgency and potency to the task. Second, Taylor has a responsibility to agree to meet Albanese, to discuss, and to find constructive solutions that both parties can accept. If he doesn't, Albanese will end up negotiating with the Greens to get his bill through the Senate. The Coalition will have zero input in that case. So get on with it in the national interest.

Along the way, both men should instruct their staffs to stop the practice of drawing up "dirt sheets" on opponents. It's an ancient practice and they've all done it. Albanese's office this week was accused of handing out such a sheet on Haines months ago. Anyone who's spent more than a minute in politics or political journalism knows that this document wasn't a real dirt sheet. It was way too genteel. But it was an attempt to raise questions about Haines' motives in asking for big infrastructure projects in her electorate. So it was not a customary dirt sheet, but it was unattractive. And unfair. Enough.

Next is the problem of mental illness. Patrick McGorry this week took to the airwaves to point out that probably tens of thousands of mentally ill Australians are unable to get access to care. McGorry, professor of youth mental health at Melbourne University, described how the standalone mental hospitals were closed down by state governments 30 years ago and never properly replaced.

The result is that "people with severe mental illnesses remain banished to the margins of society, consigned to languish in their bedrooms, or suffer on the streets or in jail", as he wrote in *The Age* two months ago. The states are responsible for mental health care. The third item on the action agenda is for the premiers. Every one of them has a responsibility to create a functional mental health care system.

They'll try to hide and wait this out. But it's only going to get worse. Which premier will show leadership?

Then there's the rest of us. Andrew Leigh has some suggestions: "Friendship may well be the most underrated health intervention around. A review of 148 studies found that stronger social relationships were associated with 50 per cent higher odds of survival over the study periods. "A friend's foolish opinion sits alongside everything else we know about them. A stranger's foolish post can become all we know. Protecting friendships gives us practice in seeing a whole person, and in remaining connected through disagreement.

"Switching off our devices can help us reconnect with one another. Go out to dinner with a friend, and agree that the first person to touch their phone pays the bill. Start a book club where the reading is optional but the conversation is compulsory. Invite friends over for a potluck dinner, with everyone bringing a dish and a stranger. Organise a summer get-together on your street."

If we only end up giving MPs a bit more protection, only one thing will change. The cost will go up. They will remain vulnerable to violence. The causes must be treated, not just the symptoms. A bigger action agenda will be required over time. But we cannot miss this moment. If we don't take these actions for Helen, we should at least take some of them for ourselves.

It is helpful to have this strong and thoughtful reflection, and especially Peter Hartcher offers some very practical suggestions we could take up, to do our bit in fostering a respectful environment that encourages individuals and families to sometimes set aside social media and focus on conversations that enrich relationships, provide for engagement with people who hold different viewpoints, and listening and learning from others who do hold different views based on their different experiences and cultures.

Many reading this article belong to a Passionist Family Group, and the backbone of the Movement has been getting together in each other's homes for potluck dinners, exactly as Peter Hartcher describes. This common and valuable practice has lessened since COVID. Whereas we often find ourselves complaining about the 'state of affairs' described in this article, maybe there is a practical thing we can do, rather than just complain that 'someone should do something.' Peter McGrath CP who founded the PFGM used to encourage people to see Family Groups as a simple way for 'strangers to become friends'. That is what we need!

Note: the original photos in this article have not been included.

Tagle as dean of cardinals, a powerful symbol for Asia and Africa

Paterno R. Esmaquel 11 (October 20th, 2026)

The election of Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, a 69-year-old Filipino, as dean of the College of Cardinals has made headlines around the world and drawn cheers, especially in his native Philippines. He wass elected by the cardinal-bishops and confirmed by Pope Leo XIV on October 8, 2026. The former Manila archbishop, after all, is the first Asian to take on this role, replacing 92-year-old Italian prelate Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re. He was by the cardinal-bishops and confirmed by Pope Leo XIV on October 8, 2026.



Concerning Tagle's new role, one common question is its impact on the Church, which has 1.4 billion members. If viewed through the lens of day-to-day governance or policymaking, the role of the dean carries little weight. The dean of the College of Cardinals is the *primus inter pares* — the first among equals — in this collegial body of 241 cardinals, whose primary task is to advise the pope and, for those among them below 80 years old, to elect his successor. The Code of Canon Law states that the dean "presides over the College of Cardinals," but "neither the dean nor the assistant dean possesses any power of governance over the other cardinals."

A *Vatican News* article explains that the dean "will not exercise hierarchical governing authority over his fellow cardinals but rather coordinate their activities." The dean takes on his most important role when the pope dies or resigns. He is then responsible for convening and presiding over the conclave, the papal election in which cardinals under 80 elect the pope's successor. (The dean, however, can only preside over the conclave if he himself is below 80 years old; otherwise, the vice dean should take his place.)



This means we cannot expect much from the dean in day-to-day matters. Other personalities in the Vatican, particularly in its dicasteries, hold more functional roles that help run the Church's complex bureaucracy. Neither can we expect much from the dean when it comes to policy, including doctrine. Church policies do evolve, but the evolution can take decades or even centuries.

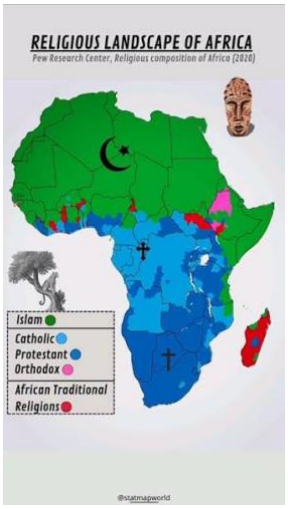
We cannot compare the dean of the College of Cardinals to any powerful figure in national politics. Even if the dean occupies such a lofty position, he cannot change even a letter in the Church's policies.

Only the pope can, in the end, decide such policy shifts with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the prayerful discernment of the People of God. What, then, is the big deal about Tagle's election as dean?



In the Catholic Church, power is measured not only by function or policy. Like other religious traditions, the Catholic Church draws its power largely from symbols — our stories, icons, emblems, and saints. From a religious perspective, we cannot dismiss any position or ritual as "just" ceremonial. What is ceremonial can also be political. The ceremonial role of Tagle, while lacking in functional or policy impact, is a powerful symbol of the Church's shift to the Global South.

Over the past few decades, we have witnessed the decline of the Catholic Church in Europe — its traditional power centre — and its rise in Asia and Africa. This year's *Annuario Pontificio,* which compiles official Vatican statistics around the world, states that in terms of the number of baptized Catholics, "Europe remains the least dynamic continent, with Catholic numbers rising by only 0.8 percent."



Africa now holds a slightly larger share of the global Catholic population (20.3 percent) than Europe (20.1 percent), while Asia accounts for 11 percent. Asia and Africa have also seen growth in the number of bishops (+3.3 percent for Asia and +2.6 percent for Africa), while Europe (+1.1 percent) and the Americas (+1.3 percent) fall below the global average of 1.75 percent.

Yet, according to *Annuario Pontificio*, "Europe and the Americas together continue to account for roughly 68% of all bishops." Thus, while the Church is declining in Europe and growing in Asia and Africa, the hierarchy remains predominantly European. This has been the case for centuries.

The College of Cardinals, created in 1150, was traditionally composed of European clerics. According to the book *Il Conclave: Storia e Segreti*, the college was, in fact, 97 percent European until over a century ago. Today, Europeans still make up the largest number of cardinals, but their percentage has dwindled over the years. Based on the latest Vatican statistics, the College of Cardinals is now 45 percent European, a far cry from the nearly 100 percent over the past millennium.





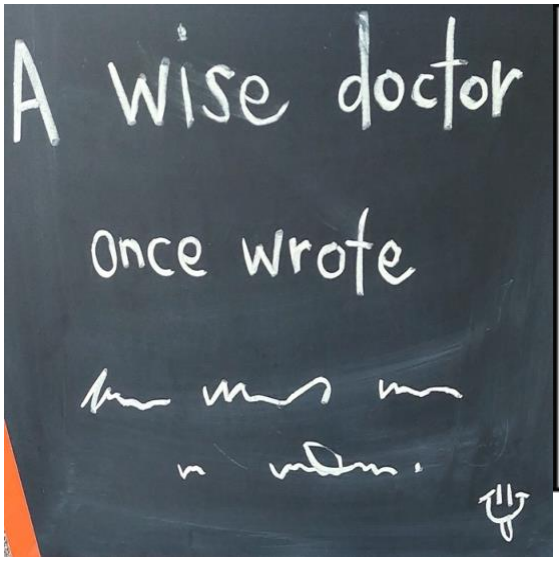
In the current composition, 15% of cardinals are Asians while 12% are Africans. The last conclave, which elected Pope Leo XIV, saw the biggest number of Asian and African cardinal electors in history — 30% combined, compared to 19% in the conclave of 2013 (which elected Pope Francis) and 18% in the conclave of 2005 (which elected Pope Benedict XVI). Yet, despite the changing statistics, one thing remained missing — representational leadership — until Tagle was elected dean.

The Filipino cardinal's new position is a tectonic move towards greater representation of Asia and Africa. Tagle, as the first Asian dean of cardinals, represents the changing face of the Catholic Church, from a Eurocentric to a more universal and, in fact, more "catholic" Body of Christ. But the bigger challenge goes beyond ecclesiastical titles or even greater representation of continents.

The election of the first Asian dean of cardinals is a powerful symbol, yet that power derives not from an attitude of dominance, as if to say, "We, the Asians and Africans, are now here to lord it over the Europeans." The symbol matters only insofar as it propels Catholics to greater mission. For Catholics in Europe, especially clerics in the Roman Curia, it serves as a reminder that the Church is larger than the Western world and that an inclusive attitude is part of the New Evangelization. For Catholics in Asia and Africa, it is not only a matter of pride, but a call for us, former recipients of the European missions, to be the new missionaries for the rest of the world.

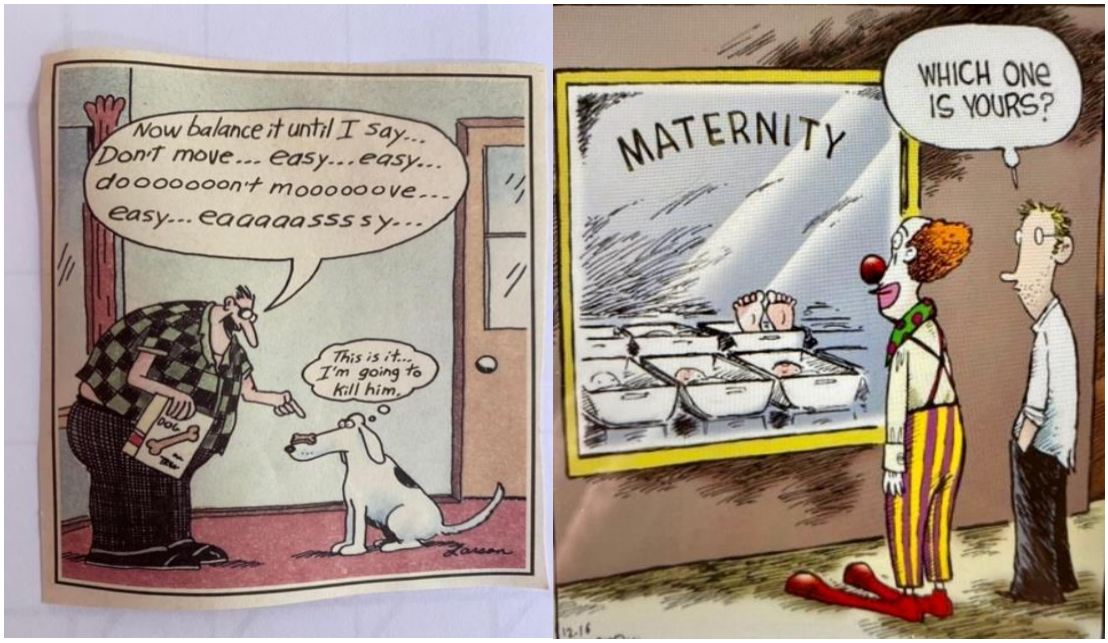


Humour





"Don't blame me. I was cleaning his cage and he flew up the pipe."



Four men were in the hospital waiting room because their wives were having babies. A nurse went up to the first man and said “congratulations! You’re the father of twins.” “That’s odd”, answers the man, “I work at the Twin Towers Inn”.

The nurse said to the second man, “congratulations! You’re the father of triplets!” “That’s weird”, answers the second man, ”I work for the 3M company!”

The nurse told the third man, “congratulations! You’re the father of quadruplets!” “That’s strange”, he answers, “I work for the Four Seasons Hotel!!”
The fourth man started banging his head against the wall. “What’s up?” the others asked. He groaned, “I work for 7 Up!”

A father knocked on his son's door. "Jaime," he says, "wake up!"
Jaime answered, "I don't want to get up, Papa."

His father shouted, "Get up, you have to go to school."
Jaime groaned, "I don't want to go to school."

"Why not?" asked his father.
"First, because school its so dull; second, the kids tease me; and third, I hate school."

His father said, "Well, I’ll give you three reasons why you must go to school. First, because it is your duty; second, because you are forty-five years old, and third, because you are the headmaster."

Famous artists' works stolen



A thief in Paris planned to steal some paintings from the Louvre. After careful planning, he got past security, stole the paintings and made it safely to his van.

However, he was captured only two blocks away when his van ran out of gas



When asked how he could mastermind such a crime and then make such an obvious error, he replied,

"Monsieur, that is the reason I stole the paintings. I had no Monet to buy Degas….



to make the Van



Go(gh)"



Maybe you have De Gaulle to forward this to someone else



I included it because I thought I had nothing Toulouse.

Birthday

Tina Molinaro will celebrate her 90th birthday on Tuesday, November 3rd

Happy Birthday Tina.

Prayers



We remember that those who have died recently, especially Giulia Galli (Mark's mother) and those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially Fleana De Prato (Alida's mother), Angelo Vigilante (Celeste's brother) Tom Barry (Maree's father), Sam Cilmi (Marilyn's husband and, Giuseppe Larosa.

Kathy Shady has been recovering well, so we ask your prayers for one more week, please.

Sue McMahon (daughter of Kath Jordan) shared an update of her own daughter Beth Scott, for whom we have been praying. We have also been praying for Sue's young grandson, Max McMahon...

Beth spent 4 weeks in the Royal Melbourne Hospital after her 11 hour surgery to remove a sarcoma (tumour) in her thigh. It was as large as a football. The amazing surgeons removed the tumour and then reconstructed her thigh taking a large skin graft from her back. She has had to learn to walk again, using a variety of frames and still cannot sit as that impedes the blood flow to the skin graft.



After four weeks, she was moved to Royal Park Rehabilitation Hospital where she will continue her rehab. She is very strong and determined and does everything asked of her. Since being in the Rehab hospital, she has progressed from a walking frame to elbow crutches, and commandeers every visitor to go for a walk with her.

On Tuesday she walked with crutches for 2.6k with a friend, firstly in the grounds of Royal Melbourne Hospital, Royal Park Campus, then through part of the adjoining Royal Park Golf course in a circuit back to the hospital. Being able to walk outside in the fresh air and gardens has greatly lifted her spirits, especially after being cooped up in hospital for 6 weeks. She will remain on immunotherapy well into next year.

Max is now 4 years old and is in the Children's Hospital in Sydney where his treatment for leukemia hasn't been as successful as they hoped. However they keep trying new treatments so we remain hopeful. Sue asked for our continued prayers.

We pray for all members of our Holy Cross family who are coping with illness including many not listed here, and all who care for them: We remember… (Beth and Max), Maureen Barns Bruno Petrocco, Cathy Petrocco, Pam Storey, Kay Lewis, Ray Lewis, Dawn Heffernan, Kathy Shady, Marie Spowart, Nada Atme, Paul Fitzgerald, Stephen Cougle, Joan O'Callaghan, Christine Storey, Graham Burke, Teresa Lim, Peter Heffernan, Carol Battistella, Bernadette Owen, George Hall, George Ryan, David Chai, Lucia Isgro, Fr. Brendan Lane, Edward Atme, Rod Gorfine, Kate Lenic, Nina Conti, Luke Norden, Peter Barry, Alexander Lim, Pam Gartland, Doris Castro, Anne Woon, Denise Egan, Marilyn Cilmi, Julia Cantone, Anne Jenkins and Helen McLean.



Chris will send the link for this Sunday's Mass on Saturday afternoon.
Brian