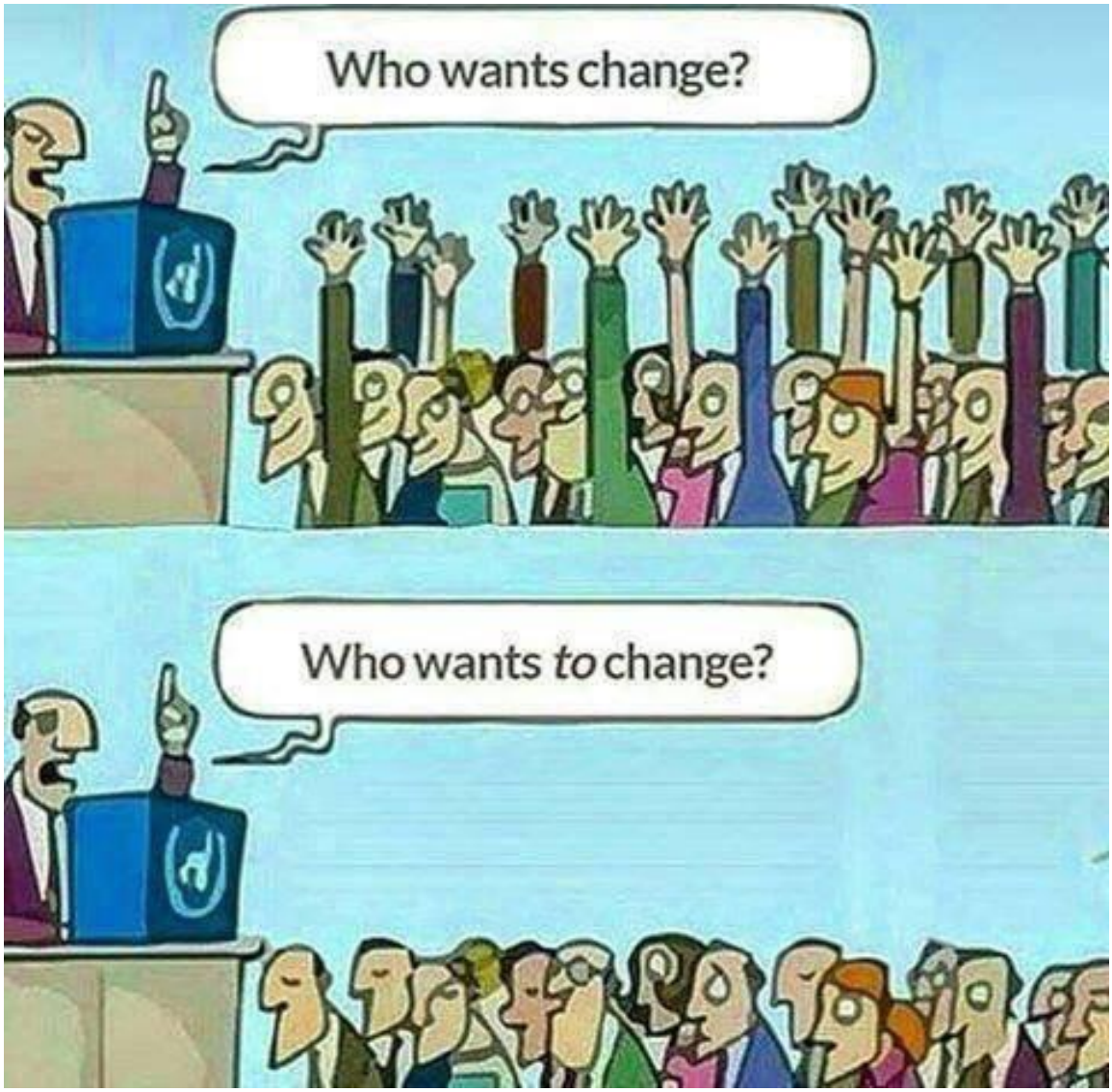
Holy Cross Retreat

Letter 351

6th November 2026

Greetings,

Although we commonly hear expressions like, ‘time flies’ or ‘the year is going so quickly’, it is far more common for people to comment on how quickly the year is coming to an end. The fact that it is November 6th, points to that. In Victoria, it is three weeks to the State election. Elections bring to mind the issue of change……



32nd Sunday November 8th – Prisoner week



In 2016 during the Year of Mercy, Pope Frances dedicated Week 32 of the liturgical calendar to observe the Jubilee for Prisoners. 'We need to nourish the roots of our hope so that they can bear fruit . . . despite whatever evil we have done. There is no corner of our heart that cannot be touched by God's love,' Pope Francis said at the time. Let us be mindful of the plight of prisoners and give thanks for the important work that prison chaplains undertake which was strongly portrayed in the powerful movie 'Dead Man Walking',

THE PRISONS WEEK PRAYER

Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care. Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime. Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day. Amen.

38th Birthday

One change is that Joseph will celebrate his birthday on Tuesday and leave 37 behind. There are six of us in the community and from Tuesday, three of us will be aged 38! So those 3 total 114 and the other three total 238!

November: remembering the deceased

Many people like to make **Mass offerings** during November, to have a Mass celebrated for a loved one. The community is happy to do that, and there is no need to include a stipend. Providing the name of the person is sufficient.

Recently deceased

Fr Brendan Lane died yesterday after a long battle with cancer. Brendan is a cousin of Jenny Gill who has been encouraging us to pray for him for almost two years. Brendan served in several parishes throughout Melbourne, spent four years as a missionary in Zambia and seven years as rector the seminary. May he rest in peace.

Mass for deceased relatives and friends

On November 15th)at 10.00am Mass, we will celebrate and remember deceased relatives and friends of our Holy Cross community. There will be a Power Point and music presentation after communion. As previously requested, if you have a photo you would like used for this, please send it to Tim Horlock by November 9th. You are invited to write the name of someone you want to remember and pray for, on a piece of paper and place it on the altar before Mass on November 15th.

Funeral Mass

The funeral for Maureen Barns will be held at Holy Cross on Monday 9th November at 2.00pm.

Come Away Day…….Wednesday November 18th.

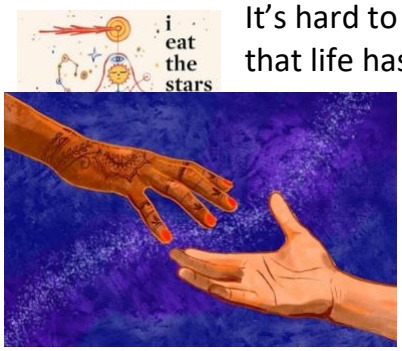
Everyone is welcome. **BYO lunch please. Registration is from 9.30am**.
The program concludes with a celebration of the Eucharist and a departure time of **3pm.** The suggested cost is $30.00 or a donation according to your means.

Provincial Council

Our Provincial Council will meet at Holy Cross this coming week from Monday to Thursday.

Recommended book: I Eat the Stars…. Sarah Wilson

Ray Sanchez CP has highly recommended this book 'for our times'. Here is a review and attached in digital form is a more detailed summary that Ray has provided.



It's hard to escape the feeling that something is deeply wrong . . . that life has become precariously off-balance. We are hit hourly with headlines about catastrophic wildfires, unprecedented flooding, record heat waves, collapsing democracies, AI and nuclear threat, rising economic inequality, widespread unrest and more. In *I Eat the Stars,* Sarah Wilson argues we are undergoing what every complex civilisation before us has – systemic collapse.

So how do we continue to live as sensitive humans amidst such a tumultuous shift? What does life look like when the systems we rely on deteriorate? Should we be having kids? How do we make financial decisions? Should we be prepping? And, most importantly, how do we avoid succumbing to doom and despair? In *I Eat the Stars*, Sarah Wilson delves into these pressing questions. Drawing on many years of research and wisdom gained from more than 200 conversations with philosophers, poets, game theorists and spiritual leaders, Wilson takes readers on an intimate journey as she lays out a path for living fully, meaningfully and beautifully through these troubled times. Our predicament, she argues, is ultimately an urgent call to us all to relish what is valuable to us – to eat the stars – and to return to our humanity once again.



I Eat the Stars empowers readers to move beyond panic, doom and despair. With her warm, incisively intelligent, wise and down-to-earth voice,

Wilson creates a space for readers to confront their fears and anxieties about an uncertain future, guiding them toward one rooted in truth, hope, justice, creativity, community, and to step up as 'warriors' and meet the moment. We are in what we were warned about for decades. But from a crisis comes stunning possibility.

Scams

Our Province Manager, Cam Garcia, has issued a warning notice concerning scam emails targeting church communities. Scammers may pretend to be a member or employee of the Province and request from you donations, gift cards, urgent payments or personal information.



Some messages may begin with a simple request for help, followed by a claim that the sender is unable to speak by telephone but needs assistance urgently. They may request money or gift cards to help themselves or someone in need. Cam has advised:

1. Do not purchase gift cards or respond to a requested donation without personally confirming the request.

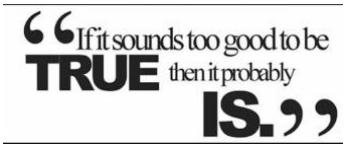
2. Do not reply to an email or use any contact details supplied a suspicious message. Use your own known contact details.

3. Be particularly cautious of emails asking you to sign in, reset your password or act urgently to prevent your account from being closed.

4. Independently verify any request from a local Passionist community parish or individual.

5. If you are unsure whether a message or request is genuine, contact a Passionist you know using the contact details you have, not those indicated in the email pr phone message, or contact the General Manager of the Passionists (details are on the Province website).

6. If you have sent money in response to a request, or disclosed banking details, please contact your bank immediately.



Shameful silence on the erasure of Christians in the Holy Land

John Menadue (November 1st, 2026)

They are the oldest Christian communities in the world. They have endured Roman persecution, Byzantine decline, the Crusades, Ottoman rule and British colonialism. What they have not survived is the state of Israel.

The 1922 British census identified that approximately 11% of the population of what was then known as Mandatory Palestine were Christians. Then followed the Nakba and Palestinian erasure. Today Palestinian Christians across all of historic Palestine – Israel, the West Bank and Gaza – account for approximately 1% of the total Palestinian population. In Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christianity, and the neighbouring towns of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, Christians comprised 86% of the population in 1950. They now constitute approximately 10%. This is among the most rapid population collapses of an Indigenous Christian community in modern history.



October 2024 Pope Francis wrote to Catholics of the Middle East, on the first anniversary of 7th October, expressing solidarity with Gaza and Middle Eastern Christians. In his Easter message, just before his death, he said: "I think of the people of Gaza and its Christian community where a terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation". He also declared his "closeness to the sufferings of Christians in Palestine and Israel and all the Israeli people and the Palestinian people".

Days after his election as Pope, Leo called for an immediate ceasefire and delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Four months later, and marking the International Day of Peace, Pope Leo said "those who really love the people living on the Gaza strip will work to achieve peace in the Holy Land…. Together with you and with the pastors of the churches in the Holy Land I repeat there is no future based on violence forced exile or revenge".



The Australian Catholic Bishops issued a token statement in May 2024 calling for an end to violence in the Holy Land, but omitted to say anything about the erasure of the Christian community. In May 2025, together with other Catholics – Claire Condon, Chris Sidoti, Marilyn Hatton, Francis Sullivan, Claire Victory, John Warhurst and Patty Faulkner – I sent a letter to Catholic Bishops asking them to speak up for Palestine. There was no response.



Palestinian Christians report that Israel's control of the West Bank and the current war in Gaza are the primary drivers of the community's decline, not Muslim neighbours with whom Palestinian Christians have existed for over a thousand years.

Research carried out by Dar al-Kalima University in the occupied West Bank, interviewing more than 1,000 people, concluded that the Israeli occupation of Palestine was the main factor behind the exodus of Palestinian Christians from the region. Only 2% of Christians named religious extremism as a driving factor. The report said the main causes were: "The pressure of Israeli occupation, ongoing constraints, discriminatory policies, arbitrary arrests, confiscation of lands added to the general sense of hopelessness among Palestinian Christians."

Israel's nation state law of 2018, which declares Israel the nation state of the Jewish people, specifically downgrades Arabic from an official language and has institutionalised a discriminatory framework that explicitly excludes Christian and Muslim Arab citizens from the founding national character of the stat e of Israel. It's called apartheid. There has also been concern about the violence against Christians in the Holy Land.



It has included physical aggression, spitting and stone throwing, and vandalism against churches, cemeteries and Christian property. The heads of all the churches in the Holy Land signed a joint statement in 2023 condemning the attacks and warning of the threat to the Christian presence in the Holy Land. The statement specifically condemned: "This systematic and unprecedented attack against Christians in the Holy Land …"

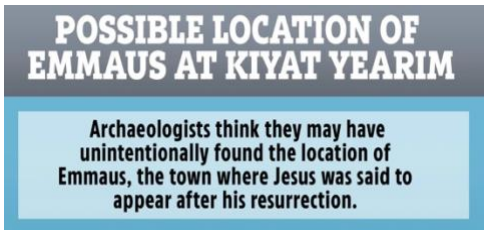
The small village of Emmaus tells a very big story about erasure. It was a sacred Christian site destroyed by Israel in the 1967 war. For Christians, Emmaus represents the foundational post-resurrection encounter, the moment when the risen Christ was recognised not in the temple or the synagogue but in the sharing of a meal with ordinary people on the road. The site was venerated by Christian pilgrims from the third century.



Throughout the mediaeval period, Eastern Orthodox pil grims and Catholic missionaries identified Imwas, the Arabic rendering of Emmaus, as the authentic site of the gospel encounter.

At the time of the 1967 war there was a mixed community that had lived continuously on the site for centuries. During the 1967 war, the inhabitants of Emmaus were expelled by the IDF. The village was obliterated by the IDF, along with two other Palestinian villages nearby. On the ruins of Imwas/Emmaus a Canada Park was established, a recreational forest funded by the Jewish National Fund of Canada. Was the park planted over the ruins specifically to make the erasure of the ancient villages permanent and to reframe the landscape as Israeli recreational space rather than Palestinian homeland?

Human rights organisations campaigned for the Jewish National Fund to at least acknowledge the history of the land on which the park was built and to include

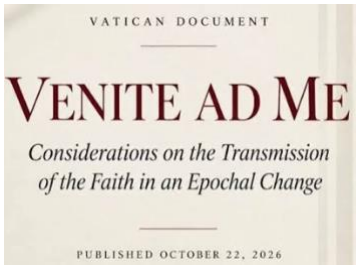


information about the destroyed villages. The JNF declined to do so. Only after litigation, did signs go up, which were soon vandalised and/or removed. The park continues to function as Israeli recreational space without any acknowledgment of the villages that it replaced, including Emmaus. The ethnic cleansing of both Christians and Muslims from Palestine continues. It is not only erasure of a people but of their culture and history.

Australian leaders in church and state are complicit in the ethnic erasure of the Palestinian people, Muslim and Christian alike, from their homeland. They appeal for our help. But they are not being heard. They are being ignored.

Venite ad Me: Catholic universities and the crisis of theologizing

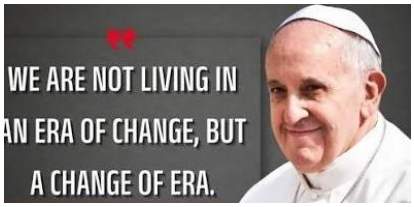
Venite ad Me is notable for what it omits, the role of universities and academic theology, revealing a mutual alienation between the Church and theology. *Massimo Faggioli* (October 28, 2026)



At one time, Catholic theologians teaching at universities could easily find themselves in the crosshairs of the former Holy Office of the Inquisition, now known as the Vatican Congregation (since 2022, the Dicastery) for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF). It is an important chapter in the history of the Catholic theological and intellectual tradition, especially between the early 20th century (the anti-modernist purge launched by Pius X) and the early 21st century. With the election and pontificate of Pope Francis in 2013, the relationship between Church authorities and theologians has entered a new phase, whose contours remain uncertain.

With a few exceptions, the era of purges against theologians has passed, and this is good news. This shift occurred not only because Church authorities developed a new sensibility toward modern theology, but also because of the evident crisis in theology's role within the Church. This is evident in the recent document, titled *Venite ad Me: Considerations on the Transmission of the Faith in an Epochal Change*, released on Oct. 22 by that Dicastery. The document, divided into eight chapters, addresses the challenges and opportunities facing the Catholic Church in passing the faith to new generations:

"The specific aim of this document is, therefore, to offer a focused reflection and to suggest concrete paths for proclaiming the fundamental Christian message, amid the epochal change we are experiencing" (paragraph 4).

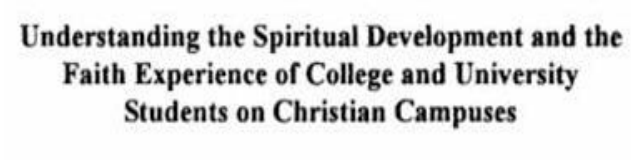


The way this document presents the transmission of the faith is focused on the Church and the family, or, as Italians used to say to describe someone who leads a very quiet, traditional, and sheltered life focused almost entirely on home, family, and religious duties, *"tutta casa e chiesa"* ("all house and church"). The document then moves on to describe the "epochal change": secularization, the ubiquitous presence of technology, and the quasi-religion of the self and personal identity.



In this 25,000-word document, the word "university" is used twice in passing. The word "theology" appears once, too, in a sentence referring to Pope Francis' 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. There is almost nothing about the role of higher education and of Catholic theology in the transmission of the faith.

Not even Catholic universities are mentioned, which is remarkable in a document rightly focused on the crisis of the transmission of the faith in Europe and the West (including Australia and New Zealand explicitly). The stimulating section on the "converts" rightly cautions against "triumphalism" over the rise in baptisms, but what is lacking is reflection on the university experience as a pivotal moment for many. If one reads the memoirs of high-profile converts in America, for example, or even those of Catholics who were received into the Catholic Church as adults, it becomes clear how important the college years were in drawing them closer to the Church.



This document is also important for what it does *not* say, as it reflects a general sense of the crisis of universities and their role in our present cultural and economic system.

It overlooks the mission of academic theology in higher education to address the intelligibility and translatability of the *kerygma* and of the faith in today's world.



The task of intellectual work is seen mostly in terms of preparation: "It is true that what intellectual research accomplishes is, at most, a preparation that introduces one to the faith—in the manner of what have traditionally been called the *praeambula fidei*—rather than its transmission in the strict sense." Nevertheless, a reasonable presentation of the contents of the faith and its demands constitutes an undeniable aid to the proclamation of the kerygma, particularly by helping to awaken the great questions in people's minds and hearts (paragraph 108).

Venite ad Me regards theology as one of the supports of Catholic social doctrine, which, in turn, draws on many other disciplines: "While remaining within the realm



of theological knowledge, the Church's social doctrine draws extensively on categories from the political, economic, and social sciences, often demonstrating the full relevance of the Christian vision for building a more just and fraternal society" (paragraph 109).

Overall, the *DDF* document does not recognize the distinctive role of theology in universities for the transmission of the faith: "A further and decisive area of attention is the world of Catholic schools and universities, as well as other Catholic institutions, especially those dedicated to charitable works" (paragraph 120).

This Vatican document should be read in all schools of Catholic theology because it is a matter-of-fact statement about the risk of their work becoming irrelevant. The



relationship between theology and the Church is one of mutual alienation. University theology is still recovering from the last few decades in which the language of high-level scholarship in university settings and seminary settings has become more and more esoteric, written incomprehensibly to the person in the pew, as English Anglican priest and noted theologian Sarah Coakley put it in her Oct. 18 interview in the *New York Times*.

This may be less true for Catholic institutions of higher education, but it is true that in academic theology, which now operates with an ecumenical and interfaith focus, there remains the difficulty of keeping the normative and the critical dimensions of intellectual work together yet distinct, without making them completely separate. On the other hand, the institutional Church has become more distant from theology, and this distance cannot be attributed to the faults of academics. New generations of priests, bishops, and religious are influenced by a cultural climate that is strongly post-intellectual, if not anti-intellectual, and an activist ethos sometimes takes the upper hand.

It is an illusion to think that the Catholic social tradition – and with it, the church as a "field hospital" – can thrive or even survive regardless of what happens to Catholic academic institutions and the theology within them.

The uncertainties in this DDF document reflect the change of pontificate in 2025: "Toward the end of his life, Pope Francis entrusted the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith with the task of offering the Church a reflection on the transmission of the faith, and Pope Leo XIV subsequently reiterated this request" (paragraph 138). But it can also be seen as the opening statement of a work in progress that the Vatican can encourage us to begin.



In the opening section, *Venite ad me* states that its purpose is "primarily to stimulate ecclesial reflection and pastoral commitment regarding the transmission of the faith."

For this reason, the text examines a variety of points of view without, however, claiming to settle the matter, which remains open to further analysis and development (paragraph 8). In the section on faith and culture, the document states that "the International Theological Commission will devote part of its work over the next five years to the cultural forms of transmitting the faith and will offer a valuable stimulus to the work that is only briefly sketched here" (paragraph 106).



The problem of the alienation of theology from the Church and of the Church from theology did not start with Francis and not even with Benedict XVI. It also has to do with the upheavals affecting the world of knowledge and science—a topic the pope touched upon in *Magnifica Humanitas*. We will see how Pope Leo's pontificate decides to reconnect with theologians, whose role in "safeguarding the human person" can be truly unique.

Ponderisms

In the 60s, people took acid to make the world weird. Now the world is weird and people take Prozac to make it normal.

Have you noticed that when you blow in a dog's face, he gets mad at you, but when you take him on a car ride, he sticks his head out the window?

Bill ate natural foods until he learned that most people die of natural causes.

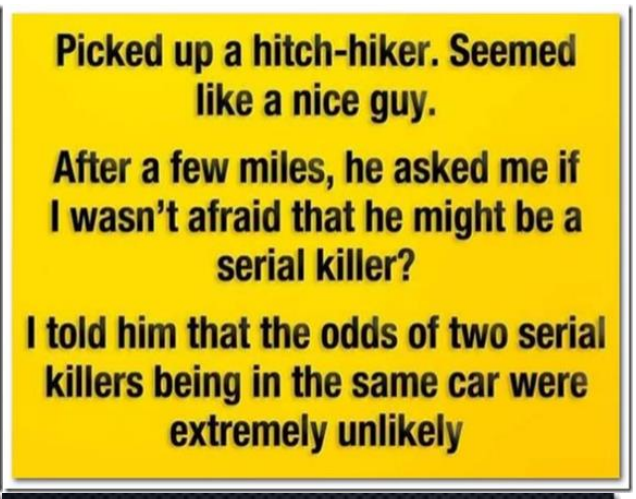
Have you noticed since everyone has a mobile phone that takes pictures these days, no one talks about seeing UFOs like they used to?

The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement.

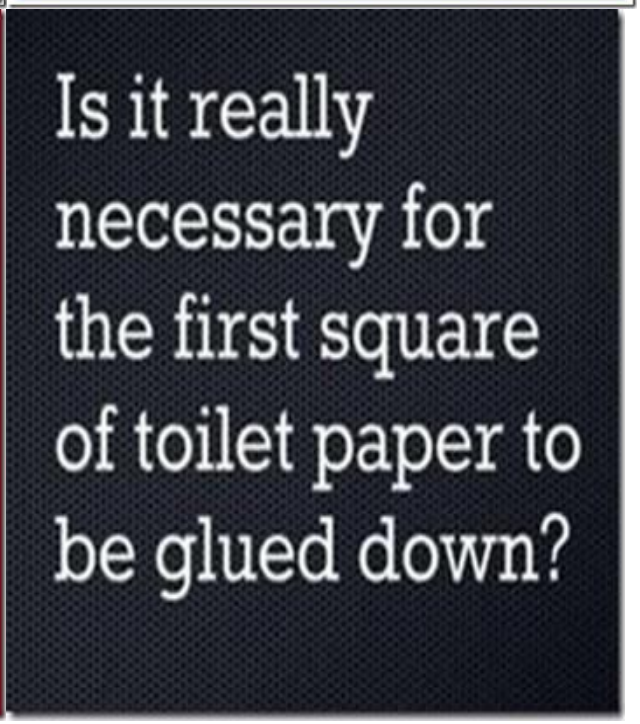
- All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.
-It one match to start a forest fire, but it takes a whole box to start a campfire?
- Have you ever wondered why there is a "USE BY DATE" on sour cream?
- Whenever I feel blue, I start breathing again
- There are two kinds of pedestrians: the quick and the dead.
- Health is the slowest possible rate at which one can die.
- Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?

Humour

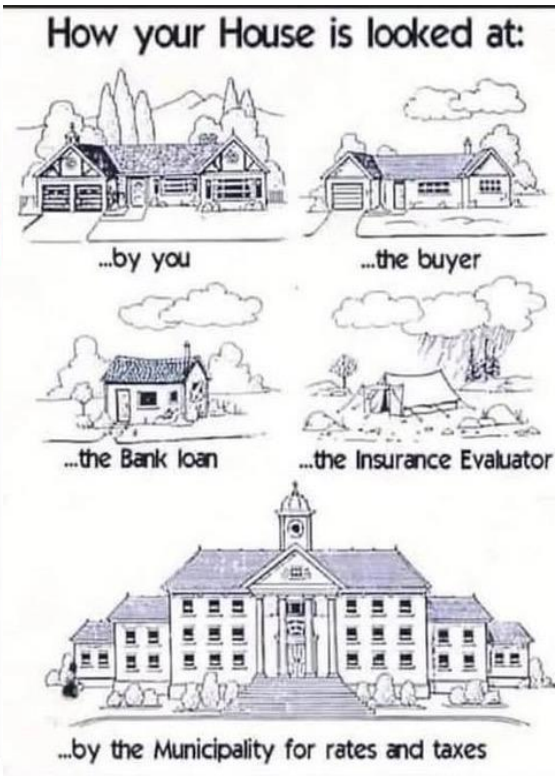












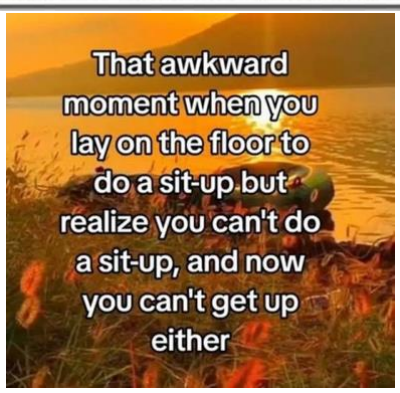


This'll freak you out

WORD	Rearrange the letters
DORMITORY	DIRTY ROOM
PRESBYTERIAN	BEST IN PRAYER
ASTRONOMER	MOON STARER
DESPERATION	A ROPE ENDS IT
THE EYES	THEY SEE
GEORGE BUSH	HE BUGS GORE
THE MORSE CODE	HERE COME DOTS
SLOT MACHINES	CASH LOST IN ME
ANIMOSITY	IS NO AMITY
ELECTION RESULTS	LIES LET'S RECOUNT
MOTHER-IN-LAW	WOMAN HITLER
SNOOZE ALARMS	ALAS NO MORE Z'S
A DECIMAL POINT	IM A DOT IN PLACE
THE EARTHQUAKES	THAT QUEER SHAKE
ELEVEN PLUS TWO	TWELVE PLUS ONE

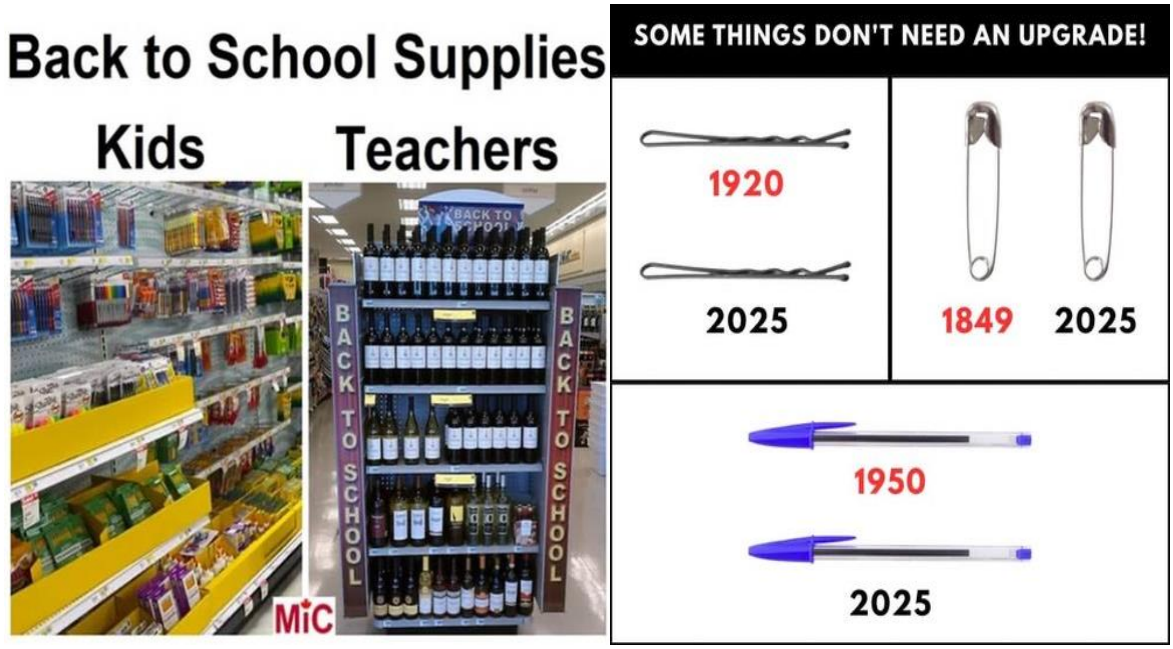


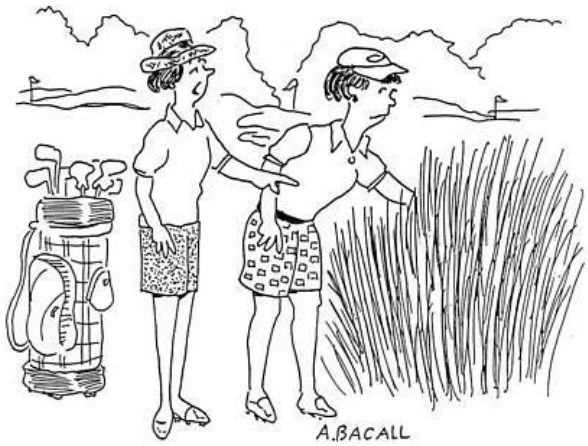






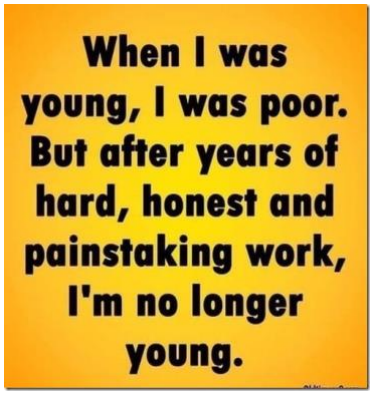






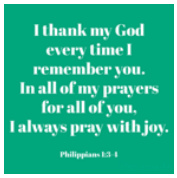
"I'll look for the ball. You look for the club."







Prayers



We remember that those who have died recently, especially **Fr Brendan Lane** and **Dawn Lindgren** (Cecilia's mother-in-law) and all those whose anniversaries occur at this time, especially Andrew Bertram (Linda's husband), Leo Fitzpatrick CP, Jan Emilianowicz (John's wife), Lawrence Brolly (Jack's brother) and Slavko Jurcevic (Joe's brother)

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…

We also 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… Cathy Petrocco, Beth Scott, Max McMahon, Bruno Petrocco, Stephen Cougle, Pam Storey, Kay Lewis, Ray Lewis, Dawn Heffernan, Marie Spowart, Nada Atme, Paul Fitzgerald, Joan O'Callaghan, Christine Storey, Graham Burke, Teresa Lim, Peter Heffernan, Carol Battistella, Bernadette Owen, George Hall, George Ryan, David Chai, Lucia Isgro, Edward Atme, Rod Gorfine, Kate Lenic, Nina Conti, Luke Norden, Peter Barry, Alexander Lim, Pam Gartland, Anne Woon,Doris Castro, 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

