

Holy Cross Retreat

<https://holycrosscentre.com/community/>



Letter 234

2nd August, 2024

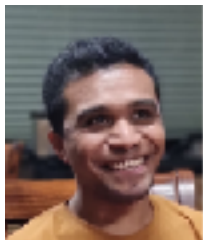
Sacrament of the Sick

This Sunday at 10.00am Mass we will celebrate a communal Sacrament of the Sick, with laying on of hands and anointing with oil.

YTU resumed

On Monday, YTU resumed with **Tri** back to studies and **Chris** lecturing on Monday nights. During the break, both of them were fully occupied, Chris has written a number of scholarly articles that required considerable research. **JD has** Greek on Monday mornings and is doing fulltime research which requires great discipline. **Erick** has resumed his university counselling course. **Rafael** is continuing his ELSPM studies and is hoping to pass an IELTS exam, to enable him to follow Budi to PNG. **Jerome** has been quite unwell for ten days, with a heavy cold.

Budi on his way to PNG



Budi left Holy Cross last Friday for a few days break in our community at Oxley, Brisbane. He flew to Port Moresby yesterday where he will spend two weeks before departing for Vanimo in the north-western area of the country. Passionists from Holy Spirit Province first went to Vanimo in 1981. Budi will be in good time to be present when Pope Francis visits Vanimo.

Seeing a little better

Leonardo Da Vinci advised, "There are three classes of people: those who see, those who see when they are shown; those who do not see". It is a profound reflection. Of course, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, in 'The Little Prince' suggested, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to

the eye". I am hoping that at least my physical sight is improved, following cataract surgery last Monday. The second eye will be done this coming Monday.



Mary of the Cross McKillop feast day Wednesday August, 8th

Sharing a coffee...for your diary



As previously advertised, there is an open invitation to share a coffee at Melissa Cakes Café Bar, 65 Parker St, Lower Templestowe once a month. The next gathering will be on **Thursday August 22 at 10.30am**. Just turn up and get to know some others from Holy Cross, a little better.

Marg Casey

We will celebrate Marg’s first anniversary next Wednesday August 7th, two days before another wonderful character, John Lazzari. Marg was a truly dynamic women, deeply loved by her family and many other people. She was an immense gift to the Passionist Family Group Movement. Her photographic artist daughter, Aletheia said of her, “Mum took life on with more enthusiasm, passion and delight than anyone I have ever known”.

Aletheia won the World Press Award for Southeast Asia and Oceania (Open Category) photography in 2024. In 2022 she won the Environment category of the Australian Photography Awards, and in 2021 won the Head On Landscape Award. She has twice been a finalist for the National Photographic Portrait Prize.



Aletheia spent ten years seeking a perfect portrait of her Mum, and her chance came a few months before Marg died. Marg had taken a rest from gardening and her bare-chested young grandson had just curled up in her lap.

Aletheia practices analogue photography, for which she has to wear a sheet over her head. She ran inside and grabbed her camera, did not or could not

process the film until six months after Marg’s death. The ‘perfect portrait’ had been spoiled by moisture getting into the film, producing some speckles and luminous haze



But she remembered her mother’s advice to her and her final lesson, “When you seek perfection, life will always throw something different at

you. Nothing is ever perfect, so lighten up, and roll with the punches”.

The photo captioned ‘My mother and Adelchi’ is among the 28 finalists for the City of Sydney 2024 Australian Life Photography Competition, drawn from 2,417 entries which are on display during August.

Marg’s husband Paul wrote and sent me the above information and the message immediately below.

“Brian Traynor cp in his Letter 220 included a reflective poem on grief by Donna Ashworth entitled *You Don’t Just Lose Someone Once*. For me, it is a gut-wrenching reminder of how possibly every moment, every thought, every word, and every action of every day, from the moment that we wake in the morning until the moment that we fall asleep at night, can be a series of fresh experiences of loss. A grieving hell. Then, to top it off, we may eventually struggle to remember who it is that we have lost. Is there no hope? Yes, there is.



The poem portrays us as children of the moment, not as people who integrate loss into their lives, and so change and grow. It suggests that we only perceive what wounds and are not open to dimensions that may offer hope, healing, and even joy. But for the grieving, as well as for the deceased person, ‘life has changed, not ended’. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus claimed: ‘There is nothing permanent except change.’ To live is to change and to let go. We are always a bereaved people, but we ‘press on’ (Peter McGrath cp).



Further, Donna Ashworth’s poem suggests that for me personally the path that I walk every day is only marked by the absence of my late wife, Margaret. However, it is also marked by her presence. But critically, I must be active to find it. Here are excerpts from our children’s and my eulogies at Margaret’s funeral. They encourage us to live fully, for others, with joy, and with her spirit ever present.

Siobhain: *We will miss you Mum beyond words, but you have instilled in us your resilience and strength.*

Dion: *She embodied the words of Mother Teresa. ‘Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier’.*

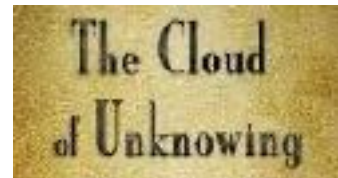
Aletheia: *This quote from Maria Popova perfectly encapsulates Mum’s ethos: ‘Choose joy. Feel the sorrow but keep pressing the weight of joy against it’.*

Paul (Me): *I will amend to 'you' the 'he' in the final line of Dylan Thomas's Elegy, written on the death of his father, 'Until I die you will not leave my side'.*

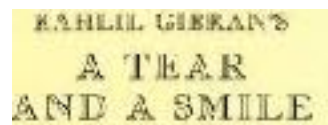


Next, reflect on the poem *I See His Blood Upon the Rose* by Joseph Plunkett. In this poem, Plunkett ties Christ's love to nature and the universe. *I see his blood upon the rose /And in the stars the glory of his eyes, /His body gleams amid eternal snows, /His tears fall from the skies.* The poem goes on to describe how other human aspects of Christ, such as his face and his voice, can be experienced in everyday encounters with nature. In this context, those who knew Margaret will immediately think of rainbows. I can add to that all the native flowers and shrubs that she planted around our home. Of course, these things remind me of her absence, but they are also signs of her presence, a paradox with which I can live.

Sadly, the time may come, when I may enter, as one my friends with the onset of dementia put it, 'the Cloud of Unknowing', and fail to even recognise a photo of Margaret. This would be life's unkindest cut of all. However, the phrase 'the Cloud of Unknowing' refers to a form of Christian mysticism that proposes that in surrendering our minds and selves to the 'Unknowing' we obtain a glimpse of God. It may be a final letting go that enables us to find the divine. And possibly that is where I and our family and friends will 'find' Margaret again.



One current goal for our family and me is to focus on what we have been privileged to have shared with Margaret and to honour that privilege by exhibiting her values in our lives. I am sad for what has ended, but I can rejoice in what has happened and in the legacy that continues. As the Neil Diamond song asserts, you can sing and cry at the same time.



I recommend Richard Rohr's point in the PFGM Winter Newsletter 2024: *'... grief is not a problem to be solved or a malady to be cured. It's a sacred reality to be entered.'*

*What is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun?
And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides,
that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered? (Gibran)*

Contextual theology...Part 5

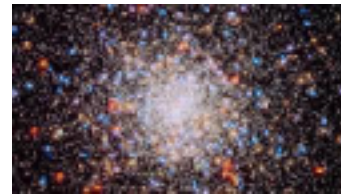
When we consider the context in which theology arises, it is important to note that every person, scientist, philosopher, Christian theologian or spiritual guide, who lived



before the nineteenth century did not know about the mass extinctions of life that have occurred. It would have been impossible for them to imagine that huge rocks had come from the sky and wiped-out giant animals, and that on one occasion this resulted in the wiping out of ninety-five percent of all species living at that time! As any of these great or wise thinkers gazed into the heavens anytime

until one hundred years ago, they believed that what they saw was the entire universe, when in fact it was a very small part of one average sized galaxy.

They did not know that what they thought were fixed stars were in fact suns; that many of these suns are massively bigger than our own, and that they are much further away than our sun. They did not know that what they were seeing in the night skies was the past, not the present. They did not know that earth was a 'wanderer' (the meaning of the word planet) just like the other planets they could observe. They did not know about tectonic plates, shifting continents and uplifting mountains.



They did not know how genetic information is stored in DNA, and they knew little of the history of life on Earth. Importantly, they could not have known, although some still claim this to be the case, that God did not choose a kind of creation of perfection achieved through design, but instead, emergent evolution has been at work – or play! Neither could they have comprehended that all life species had a

common ancestor!

Today, with the aid of physics, chemistry, biology, geology, archaeology, astronomy, anthropology, and so many other sciences, we know far better who we are, where we came from and what we are made of. This gives us a consciousness not only of our past, but our future. This has to give us a different sense of how we tell our religious story and many realise that in a universe that is so huge, we've often considered God to be very small.

Our Christian tradition highlights the human call to be co-creators and we now have a deeper understanding of the meaning and challenge of that vocation. Religious traditions are being challenged by modern science to reconsider their understanding of

the divine, and theology needs to re-examine its obsessive focus on the human, and instead consider the interconnected relationships of all life. In the twelfth century, Thomas Aquinas suggested that *“A mistake about creation will necessarily result in a mistake about God”*.



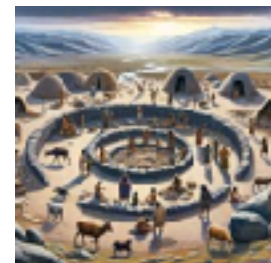
Traditions have to be updated as worldviews change. While we cannot be religious in the same way as early peoples, we can identify with their experiences. There have been significant changes in humanity from hunter-gatherer, to agricultural, to village and then city dwelling living, to scientific-technological and now perhaps to ecological humans. Throughout these changes, it is not possible to retain the same views of God, so our tradition and language needs to be updated to reflect the reality of the world around us. We know about the development of various peoples and the myths they held. We know as people developed, their need for a particular god sometimes lessened, so the relationship with that god became weaker and more remote, Sometimes the god was abandoned. That is still happening today.

It proved difficult for single deity religions to achieve their kind of belief, other than over a long process. The story of the people of Israel gives testimony to this. As people developed a more personal relationship with the forces around them, they began to

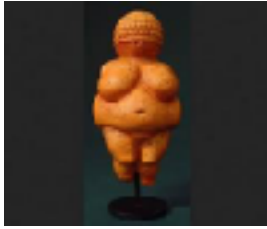


identify these forces as deities, attributing certain forces to particular gods. In this way, a multitude (poly) of gods (theism) emerged. Such believers were later referred to as pagans. Polytheism was popular because people felt their gods were accessible. The designation of the gods was not dissimilar in intent, from the patronage of Catholic saints, each with a particular area of ‘responsibility’ (Anthony when you lose things, Jude for hopeless situations etc.).

Early humans were nomadic hunter-gatherers. They lived in small family groups and were dependent on finding food for survival. Nature was beyond their control. They observed the rhythms of day and night, sunrise and sunset, thunder and lightning, rain and rainbows and for those who lived near the sea, they would have observed the changing tides.



Not surprisingly, their sense of a greater creating power was hidden in the sky as they tried to comprehend how these various forces interacted with each other and what or who controlled them. This is referred to as ‘the Sky God’ culture.



As humans moved from hunter-gatherer societies into the agricultural age, fertility was regarded as a mysterious and highly valued power. Humans began to create figures of pregnant women, and many developed a Mother Goddess cult. Sun worshipping developed as did the idea of offering the 'first fruits' of the harvest, during this time. While fertility gods and the Sky god, have receded in the minds of modern people, there are also traces of both that are still evident today, even among Christian believers.

In subsequent developments, such as that of settled village life, and then the movement into urban cities, awareness of the sacred was structured into a variety of religious activities. This sacred presence was revealed or experienced in a variety of ways, such as

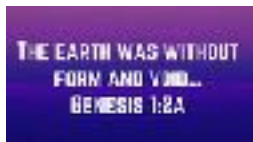


in nature, historical events, art, music, dance and ritual. It was felt in inner peacefulness and outer healing and through the whole range of human experiences, including suffering, pain, love, beauty, grief and death. It seems their early religious experiences were 'spirit' experiences (animism) which is still strong in some present-day cultures.

To express this belief, the spirits and energies of nature were commonly personified as animals. As civilizations developed and other lands and their peoples were conquered, the warrior image became more popular for depicting the divine. In turn, as kingdoms arose, cultures included references to King, Lord and Almighty, to denote God. These are still the most commonly used terms in Christian prayer today despite the millennia of change that occurred and the fact that many Christian cultures have never known a king.



This first Biblical creation account was probably written around 560 BCE and is credited to what is referred to now as the Priestly source, and throughout it, God is mostly referred to as Elohim. It uses material about the origin of the world already collected and used in Babylon, but presents the material differently. It does not depict Creation occurring as a result of a battle between the Gods, as other myths did, but by the power of God's word ('dabar'), out of a formless chaos.



In this unique scenario, humans are not servants of the gods, rather they are an image of God; trustees of creation, and superior to other forms of life. The second account of creation (Genesis 2:4-25) is an older account, possibly edited around 900 BCE. It identifies God as creating



heaven, which as in other nearby cultures, was considered to be a solid dome. Then God created the Earth and the seas. Next God created vegetation on earth followed by the sun, moon and stars. Next were sea animals and birds and finally land animals and humans. There was no attempt to be scientific in telling this story.

God then breathed (God's) life into the man through his nostrils so he now possessed God's spirit. The woman was formed later, from his rib, so that the man had a companion. In this Genesis myth, creation is a revelation of the sacred, and humans are connected to all other forms of life. It admits the reality of sin and death and developed an explanation for this.



The myth includes a flat earth supported above chaotic waters. Over the earth was a solid dome, the firmament, which protected the earth from the chaotic waters above. Beneath the earth was a cavity, called Sheol where all the dead were assembled. The Hebrews came to a unique understanding that God was 'one'. This implied that the universe was created and cared for by a single God, and that people were not at the whims of many gods, each governing their own province (fertility, harvests, victory etc.) according to their own laws. It was however, a struggle to come to monotheism because of the surrounding cultures and their beliefs.



The 'Enuma Elish' is a lengthy Babylonian story that includes a myth of creation recounting the struggle between cosmic order and chaos, and the battle of Marduk the sun-god to become the supreme god. Scholars have been able to establish that the Genesis account borrowed from this myth and obviously made significant changes. In neither account did creation come from nothing. That was an important development that came much later. Both in Babylon and throughout the Middle East, myths developed that spoke of the competing gods, most of whom had their own 'area' of responsibility. These myths influenced the people of Canaan where Judaism, Christianity and Islam have their roots.



The supreme Canaanite god was El and the Bible often makes mention of El (e.g. El ohim. El Shaddai and Israel-el), as it does of Baal (El's son), the god of fertility and storms. In fact, the Canaanite myths which reflected the death of a god and that god's return to the divine realm (which happened to Baal) appear in many cultures, including Christianity.



The Biblical story tells of Abraham leaving his home city of Ur (in what is today southern Iraq). Ur had a temple dedicated to Nanna, the moon god. When he arrived in Canaan around 1850BCE, Abraham made an offering, not to Nanna, but to the local god, as was common practice. It is most likely this god was El. Abraham was introduced to God as El Shaddai, god of the mountain. It was not to be until Moses, about 400 years later, that YHWH 'appeared'.

It seems likely from the Biblical story, that the patriarchs followed typical belief of the times and worshipped several gods, while recognising El as the superior god. The Biblical story highlights that it was long battle for the people of Israel to accept the 'One' god. The fact that one of the ten commandments declares that 'You must not have other gods instead of me', indicates that people did believe in other gods, and as if to prove this, while Moses was up on Mt Sinai receiving the commandments for his people, his priest-brother Aaron was helping to build a golden calf, an idol to the god Baal!



We can also note that Abraham's God, El appears to have been very different to YHWH. El appears to Abraham as a friend. Sometimes El takes on a human form and he and Abraham even meet face-to-face. They share a meal and they have an argument! It was typical and understandable, that the gods within various cultures of this time shared the same nature as humans. El offered friendly advice and guided Abraham, as he also did with Isaac and Jacob.

When Moses encountered God in the burning bush, and asked "what is your name?", the response he was given was "I am who I am?" (YHWH). This was God who could not be named and known.

A myth is something that has never happened, but is happening all the time.

To be continued.....



It is difficult to believe there would be such an advertisement (in 1904)

Humour

How do you make Budweiser? Send him to school.

What is Santa's favourite US state to visit? Ida Ho Ho Ho

I was walking down the beach when I heard a swimmer yelling for help with a shark circling him. I just laughed....I knew that shark wasn't going to help him.

What do you say when a chicken is looking at salad? Chicken sees a salad.

You are on a horse riding full gallop. Next to you is a giraffe at full gallop, and behind you is a lion on your tail. What do you do? Get off the carousel.

What family does the zebra belong to? Can't say, none of the families in our neighbourhood owns a zebra.

What is the cutest creature in the sea? A cuddlefish.

I once worked at a cheap pizza shop to get by. I kneaded the dough.

My friends and I have named our band 'Duvet'. It's a cover band.

I lost my girlfriend's audiobook, and now I'll never hear the end of it.



Request for physical help next week

On Monday 5th and Tuesday 6th (this coming week) carpet layers will be working throughout the Holy Cross Centre. It would be a big help to us if there are any fit and able persons, willing to help us on either of those days, to move furniture out of rooms into the corridor, and back in after they are carpeted. Our manpower is more limited than would usually be the case (cataract surgery, YTU classes, A Team absences etc).

If you can help, could you please call Mayrose on:

Stop press – Joey's travels



Joseph is continuing his mission appeal work across parishes in the USA. Today Joey is heading from Michigan to Indianapolis by bus (5 hours) where he will spend the night at the airport terminal before catching a

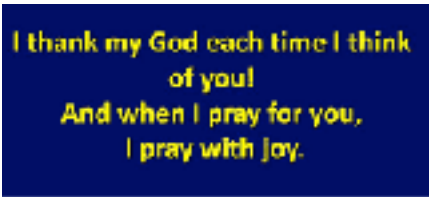


7.00am flight to Texas. It is very different from what we are used to doing here.

Prayers

We remember all the recently deceased especially and those whose anniversaries occur this week, especially:

Don Bertram (4th August)
Anne Weir (4th August)
Marg Casey (7th August)
Vianney Carey CP (8th August)
John Lazzari (9th August)
Jim Monaghan (9th August- Chris' Dad)



I thank my God each time I think
of you
And when I pray for you,
I pray with joy.

We also remember all others in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially.

Lorraine Gill, Adrian Woon, Maree Bartoli,
Pam Storey, Margaret Enriquez, Ann Burke,
Michael O'Callaghan, Tony Tome, Sandra Street, Paul
Darbyshire, Mary Dunn, Luke Norden, Carol

Battistella, Monique Hardinge, Robyn Burns, John Reardon, Gerry Bond, Ann Burke,
Peter & Bernadette Owen, Alexander Lim, Agnes Mumburi, Greg Agosta, Peter
McNamara, Bronwyn Burke,
Helen McLean, Phil Drew, Anne Jenkins, Pam Gartland, Patricia Keeghan,
Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Errol Lovett, Shirley Barnes, Chris O'Toole and baby Alfred
Theodore in London.

The **Mass link** for this Sunday will be sent on Saturday afternoon by Chris.

Thank you

Brian