

Holy Cross Retreat

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



26th

December 2024

Letter 255

Christmas

Christmas Eve was wonderful, with a very large crowd gathered on the back lawn, some of whom came early and had their dinner here. It is a lovely environment in which to celebrate Christmas, As mentioned in the last notice, the grounds were beautifully prepared after a lot of work by the community members, and as usual our grounds supervisor, Peter Norman, was here to help in the afternoon.

The community extends deep thanks for the many kind greetings and gifts offered that will help the season be more enjoyable.



Gardening

Speaking of gardening, our newest arrival Fr Mike has put in a lot of time the garden over the past two weeks. During a retreat last week he was working in the hot sun, when one of the retreatants came out and insisted on giving him some money to buy himself a drink. He contributed this donation to the community coffers. Two days later he was digging in a different garden and he unearthed a \$10 note! It's no wonder he enjoys gardening!



Kangaroos



It has been a while since we have seen a kangaroo on oval, but on Christmas morning and again during the evening, we had two kangaroos take up residence and made the most of the quiet.

Christmas dinner

The community celebrated our Christmas meal on Wednesday evening and we welcomed Srs Brigid and Karen from their home in Carnegie, Frs Brendan and Sonny from our community in Endeavour Hills and Fr Jose Matthew, parish priest now of Yea. Unfortunately Kevin Hennessy was unable to attend, because he had contracted COVID.

Jerome has not been well this past week but in true spirit he spent several hours assisting with the meal preparation, so we were able to enjoy roast pork and with contributions from others, Vietnamese salad and spring rolls, chocolate log, bombe Alaska and fruit salad.



We had a Kris Kringle exchange of gifts. The highlight of these was a gift Jerome received which will allow him to get up and down the corridor.

There is no Mass at Holy Cross on New Year's Day. The next Sunday Mass is 10.00am on Sunday January 5th.

Tom McDonough

recommended this fabulous video

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

Coffee Cart

Last Sunday was perhaps the best turn up for Coffee after Mass. So many people commented that it was nice to meet others and to learn names to go with faces. Thankyou.









JD will return home to Vietnam for a a month's holiday from New Year's Eve

Tri will take his holiday back home form January 15th.

Joey will move to Hobart on January 10th

Chris is officially on holidays now for a month



Br Noel Selbo CP

Noel was born in the very small Village of Warasai in the Nuku district, in PNG in 1982. This is 200 kilometres as the crow flies, from Vanimo. He worked for Catholic Health in nursing care and joined the Passionists in December 2015. It has been a long journey which has required great patience. Noel lived at Holy Cross in 2017-2018. He was finally professed as a Passionist on December 22nd, 2004.



Br Edward Wairoa CP

Edward was born in Dibi village, PNG in 1992. He had the most difficult start to life, with his mother dying in childbirth. His father died when he was aged three and he has no siblings. He studied until Year 8 in Cape Rodney and is the only PNG candidate from this part of the country. He joined the Passionists in 2016. Walter lived at Holy Cross from 2028-2019. He was finally professed as a Passionist on December 22nd, 2004.

Nabil Antaki, aged 75 and a native of Aleppo, has chosen to practice medicine in Syria, no matter the cost. Founder of the Blue Marists association, he has devoted

his life to supporting youth and the underprivileged, hoping to help rebuild Syria's shattered society.

By [Alix Champlon](#)

Nabil Antaki doesn't want to be "naive." The "moderate" rhetoric of the new Islamist authorities—who took control of Aleppo on November 30 and a week later hastened the fall of Bashar Al-Assad's regime—has so far been reassuring for Christian minorities. But this 75-year-old doctor, still practicing as a gastroenterologist at Aleppo's Saint Louis Hospital, insists on waiting to "truly judge their actions" in Damascus.



When not with his patients, Antaki, a Greek-Melkite Christian, dedicates his time to the Blue Marists, the association he co-founded with his wife, Leïla, and Marist Brother Georges Sabé. Created in 1986 to support Christians in neighbouring slums, the organization was initially called "The Ear of God." It adopted its current name in July 2012 when war reached the gates of Aleppo. "That's when we began helping all displaced populations, whether Christian or Muslim," Antaki recounts. Today, the organization leads numerous social projects focused on economic development and youth education.

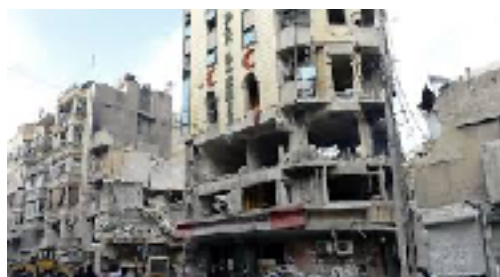
Serving Syria



What drives his mission? When Antaki graduated high school in 1966 from a Marist school in Aleppo, he aspired to "do a job that helps others." "I was 17, and I thought: either I help individuals as a doctor, or I help society and go into politics," Antaki recalled. With Syria under the single-party Baath regime, he ultimately chose medicine. He studied at Saint Joseph University in Beirut, Lebanon, and specialized in gastroenterology in Canada.

By the time he completed his training, he was married with two children. He and Leïla decided to return to Aleppo. "We made two major choices in our lives: returning to Syria in 1979 and staying after the war began in 2012." Neither the pleas of their children, who had emigrated to the United States nor the murder of Antaki's brother, killed by Daesh in a bus in 2013, swayed them.

"We've always felt we couldn't abandon our people," said the doctor. "We have a mission, and we must see it through."



As public hospitals lay in ruins and civilians wounded by shrapnel die on stretchers, Antaki

negotiates with private Christian hospitals to open their doors, offering reduced fees covered by the Blue Marists. “Even today, 90% of Syria’s population lives below the poverty line,” he emphasized.

The Gospel “in action”

“Nabil ensures that his faith is translated into living the Gospel in action,” said Brother Georges Sabé. A man of deep conviction and a staunch advocate for human dignity, Antaki rejects the idea of a “vertical” Christian charity, favouring solidarity among equals instead. “At the Blue Marists, he has initiated numerous projects focused on individual development,” Georges continued.

Nabil proudly bears the name Antaki, which means “from Antioch,” and enjoys saying he is a descendant of Saint Luke. Tradition holds that the evangelist was a physician in Antioch, and the Antakis—doctors from father to son—might be among his lineage. Nabil laments seeing Syria, the “cradle of Christianity,” empty of its Christian population. He notes that those leaving are often highly educated, like himself, with qualifications surpassing the average Syrian. This is why he has not yet retired.



“Many doctors have left for Europe,” said the man who had once planned to retire at 70. “But Syrians still need medical care, and young doctors need training.” Passing on his knowledge and values has become his final mission, alongside Leïla and Georges Sabé. In September 2024, the three handed over leadership of the Blue Marists to a new trio, ensuring the association continues to grow and adapt to the needs of a new Syria.

“Even today, 90% of Syria’s population lives below the poverty line”

Humour in a time of optimism

A group of retirees met in a coffeehouse to discuss the world's many problems. One of them shocked his friends by announcing: "I'm an optimist." Another asked: "If you are optimistic, why do you look so worried?" He replied, "Do you think it's easy to be an optimist?"

A Russian optimist said, "Things could not get worse." His Russian pessimist friend said, " Oh yes they can."

Bill put in his application in for the Optimist Club.....but he is telling everyone he doesn't think he will be accepted."

An optimist believes this is the best of all possible worlds. A pessimist is afraid he's right.

An optimist walked into a bar. The bartender asked "What'll it be?"
The optimist said, "It'll be okay."

An optimist and pessimist walked into a bar. The optimist ordered a drink while the pessimist put ice on the bruise

An optimist fell off of a cliff. As he plummeted to the ground he observed to himself: "So far, so good!"

An optimist is a person, who keeps his car engine running, while his wife goes shopping.

Q. What is the difference between an optimist, a pessimist and a realist?

A. A pessimist sees a dark tunnel, an optimist sees light at the end of the tunnel, a realist sees a train, and the train operator sees three idiots standing on the tracks."

Q. Why did the optimistic electrician lose his job?

A. He kept on turning negatives into positives.

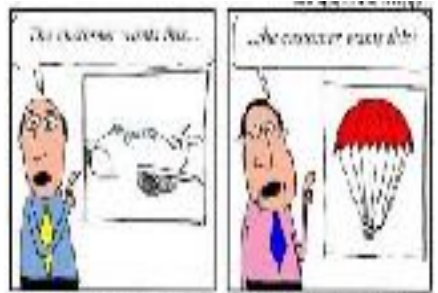
Q. Why did the optimist lose his job at the photographic processing lab?

A. He couldn't focus on the negatives.

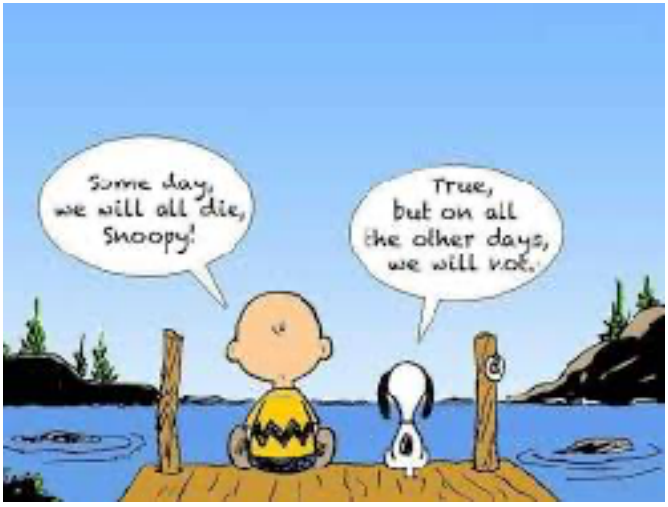
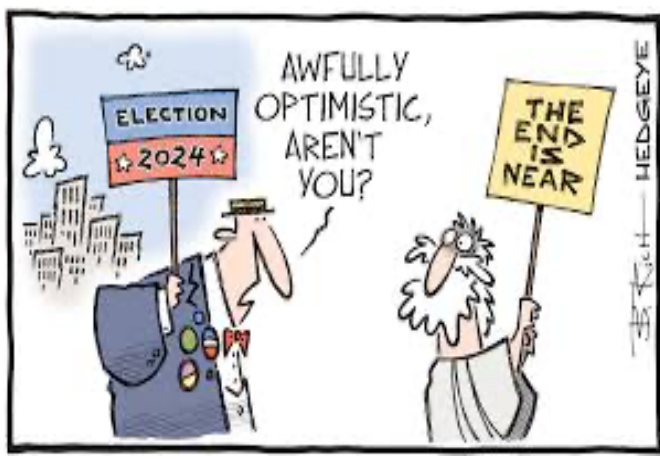
Q. Why are all optimists blind?

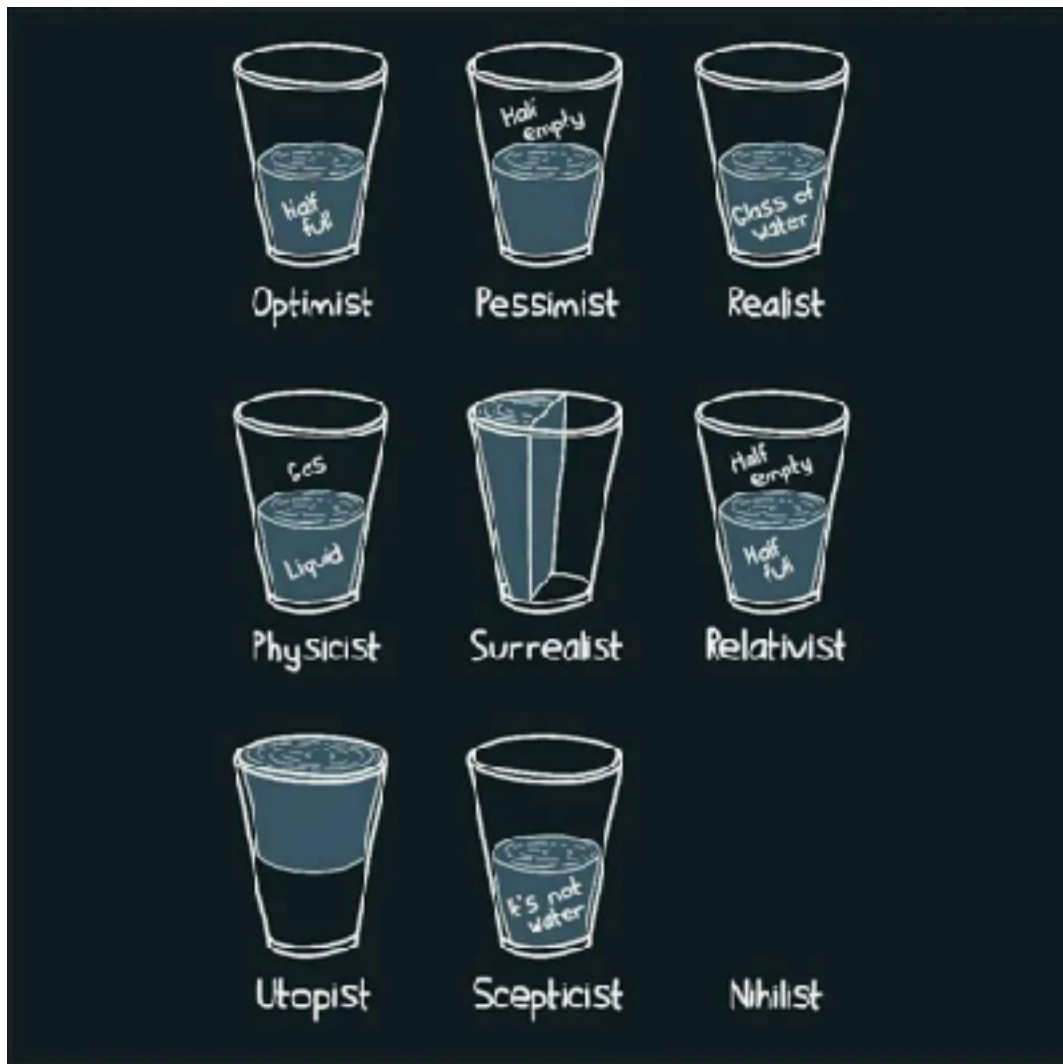
A. They're constantly looking at the bright side of life.





And that's the difference between an optimist and a pessimist.





A very clever woman

<https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Living/video/trickshot-queen-performs-wildest-basketball-trick-shots-youll-117089229>

Birthday

We make special mention of Sr Brigid who celebrates a milestone birthday on Saturday. Brigid is a wonderful gift to Holy Cross community and the Holy Cross family. We appreciate her person, her religious commitment, her spirituality, her gifts, her generosity and so much else. Happy Birthday, Brigid.

Saturday is also Fr Jose Matthew's birthday.

Prayers

We pray with everyone who has hopes for a new year. We pray for Sandra Street (a relation of Jenny Gill) who died on Christmas Eve morning. We pray with thanks that Sr Gen Walsh RSC is in remission and that Monique Hardige has recovered.



We pray for all of our Holy Cross family who are remain unwell and those who care for them. We especially remember Maree Bartoli who went into palliative care on Monday.

We pray also for:

Janus Kedzior, Rod Gorfine, Bro Minh Toan CP, Peter Barry, Rex Cambry, Monica Sleeman (Fr Kevin's sister), Desley Reynolds, Sharon Williams, Carol Battistella, Paul Darbyshire, Doris Castro, Alexander Lim, Julia Cantone, Zoe Chung, and her "baby" daughter Sophia, Michael O'Callaghan, Mary Dunn, Gerry Bond, Peter McNamara, Pam Storey, Lorraine Gill, Adrian Woon, Monique Hardinge, Bronwyn Burke, Caroline Meade, Luke Norden, John Reardon, Kaya Lenic, Peter & Bernadette Owen, Pam Gartland, Greg Agosta, Helen McLean, Anne Jenkins, Patricia Keeghan, Phil Drew, Errol Lovett, Chris O'Toole, and baby Alfred Theodore in London.

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

The community of Holy Cross extends thanks for your love, support and encouragement during this year.

We wish you and your family a blessed 2025.

Brian, Jerome, Chris, Erick, Joey, JD, Mike and Tri