

## Holy Cross Retreat



### Letter 170

19<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Greetings,

### Br Jerome Dunn and the birds make it to front page

While Chris Monaghan was away teaching in Ballarat, Jerome got up on a beautiful morning of Friday to feed the birds that Chris normally feeds each morning. They had been waiting for Chris and wondered where he was. As soon as Jerome or anyone came closer, they flew closer wanting to have their daily bread. They were rather pleased that Jerome came with bread and fed them to the brim! As Jesus said *“Look at the birds of the air... your Heavenly Father feeds them...(Matt 6:26)”*, - it is pleasing to see that Chris and Jerome participate in the Heavenly Father’s role on earth. Jerome noticed that the stingy birds weren’t around which allowed most of the birds to feel more safe while eating. I am not sure what The Heavenly Father thinks of the stingy birds but I know that sometimes we people can be like birds.



## Sr Margaret Bentley and our mourning ELSPM community

Recently I was pleased to have a catch up with Margaret who looks after the English Language School for Pastoral Ministry (ELSPM). Fr Kevin Hennessy has been and continues to be the main leader of ELSPM while Margaret follows in support for Kevin and their team. You may remember that Toan Nguyen, one of our Passionist students suddenly passed away after Easter. This was shocking and devastating news for all of us. Margaret has been able to hold the staff and students who knew Toan well. They were able to give opportunities to individuals to share about Toan and pray for him in a liturgy. We appreciate the effort Margaret has made to go above and beyond caring for our students and their staff. It goes without saying that Kevin does a lot of behind the scenes in offering support to Margaret and the ELSPM community. We are truly grateful. It was good to debrief with Margaret about Toan's passing as she looked after him at ELPM while I tried to do that while he was home, at Holy Cross community. Toan passed away after having gone back to Vietnam to his family. We continue to pray for everyone impacted by his death, particularly his dear parents and siblings.

*Margaret is in the photo below left with me. The photos on the right were put together on a notice board by ELLSP students in memory of Toan.*



## Mother's Day Sharing By Joan O'Callaghan

Last Sunday Joan was asked to share about her Mother and her own motherhood during mass. This was so that those present would be given a chance to hear from a mother reflecting on mothers from her own experience, giving everyone a chance to reflect on their own differing experiences. Joan has kindly shared her notes which might interest you. We thank Joan for taking the time and effort to share her personal reflections on Mother's Day.

### **Q.1. Tell us about your mother.**

My mother, Mary Catherine King was born in Yarrawonga on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1903. She was the eldest of three girls and was only 12 when her father was killed at Gallipoli. She was a gentle, loving, understanding person especially with my sister and me. She



always told us to look for the good in people and not to judge. She also told us that when we heard something good about a person, make sure you tell them as the world is all too ready to criticize people. As a war Veteran's child, she was able to attend Melbourne University where she took out a degree in Piano, Singing and excelled. She was one of the few people as a woman to attend the University in those days.

Recently I was sorting through some old papers and found a newspaper report from June 1923 almost 100 years ago. It described how the professorial Board of Melbourne University named my mother as the most brilliant student of any faculty and as a result was awarded a very valuable scholarship.

Our mother never forced my sister or me to become an academic, rather gently encouraged us to pursue our own passions.

Mine was to follow in her footsteps as I loved music and would sit at the piano from as young as 3 years old. I now teach 3 and 4 year olds.

Why am I telling you all this?

Well despite all her achievements and success in life, she was a very humble and unassuming person but with a strong and fair will. She was nourished by and was dedicated to her Catholic faith. Her life was one of faithful service to others and to

God, as she constantly prayed and put her trust in God, no matter what the outcome was.

She made the comparison with the petrol that you put into the tank of the car so it would go; and likewise prayer is what keeps us going, so fill up your tank with prayer. Sometimes she prayed the rosary and during the day I could hear her whisper the aspiration – “Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee.” I saw and heard her say this with hands clasped as we watched our beloved father dying from a very sudden heart attack as they tried to revive him without success.

Then I married Michael, she accepted him with open arms and to my knowledge they never had a clash.

Mum was adored by all, her grandchildren gave her a special name “Good Granny”



as she kept up with the times and never scolded them. She taught them all the piano and her students loved her. *In the photo on the left, she is holding Mary Louise, her first grandchild in 1962.*

She taught till she was 90+ and I intend to break her record, it's my passion too. In 1969 after my sister married and bought a house in Doncaster just near us, Mum sold our lovely old family home and bought a unit near the shopping town,

we would pick her up and take her to Holy Cross each Sunday as she loved the Charism of the Passionists. They loved and respected her.

On the Sunday of the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday Fr Tom McDonough had organised a little surprise for her. At the end of the mass someone walked in with a cake all lit up with candles and Fr Tom proclaimed to all that she was “the Mother of the Monastery” a title that she graciously received and accepted.

### ***Q.2. What are some of your sorrowful and joyful experiences as a mother***

My most **sorrowful** experience apart from the death of my father, mother and sister, was learning to “let go” of each of our children and loss of their companionship.

**Joyful:** Apart from the day I married Michael in 1961, the birth of our four daughters and the joy of watching them grow into fine loving, caring women and good mothers. I say to them “You must have had a great teacher!!”

### ***Q.3. What message would you give to all mothers especially the younger ones.***

My message would be first of all not to over react when you disagree with a situation. There is no training for motherhood – the best we have is to learn from our own mothers. Sometimes this may not always be helpful. But if we can give our children lots of love and be sure to listen to them first with patience and understanding, it certainly is a good way to gain their trust.



**Conclusion: *What would you tell your mother now that you never got to tell her?***

I told my mother everything. There was a great trust and understanding between us. We had no secrets. There was a doctor looking after my mother, I raised a question to him and asked if in fact she was dying. “Would you like me to talk to her about it?” He said “Could you really help her to accept it?” And of course my reply was “certainly I can talk to her about everything” – and to this day I still talk to her about everything when things aren’t going well or I am feeling sad or just a little down in spirit.

I gently suggested to her that in fact she was probably dying and that she had lived a wonderful life of faith, hope and charity. She smiled, her beautiful face looking at me hopefully. And when I said that she would go straight to Heaven, her response was – “I hope so darling, I don’t think I’ve told a lie!!!” Her words of wisdom still ring in my ears often, especially if things weren’t going my way: *“Count your blessings for what you have got not what you haven’t got.”*

Four days later as my sister and I held her hand, she passed away peacefully on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August 1996, aged 93. Praise God for the life, faith and example of my mother.

**Jesus’ vision and PFG’s (Part 2)**



Jesus pointed out that God makes the sun shine and the rain fall on the just and unjust, so he learned to love the just and unjust, including his enemies and those who persecuted him. His experience of his ‘abba’ (Dad) included the awareness that God was a loving ‘abba’ to every human being. ‘Abba’ expresses intimacy. It is a warm, unconditional and totally dependable love with which God loves and forgives all men, women and children.

Jesus compared God's reign to that of a loving father who forgives his prodigal (reckless) son unconditionally. There is no retribution or punishment, no concern to hear what wrong his son has done. The father simply wants to celebrate with his family that they have been reunited. Jesus' image of God's kingdom was a happy loving household, not a conquering empire!

For this kingdom to emerge, it needs to begin from below, with the poor, sinners, lost and outcast. They can become sisters and brothers who care for and share with one another. To be a member of this family, Jesus challenged, one has to give up preference of one's own particular family that excludes others. An exclusive love for one's family is a form of group selfishness. The new community, Jesus promised will be made up of those who love one another.



He knew not everyone will respond, but they are always invited. This kingdom is a present reality, not something we sit back and wait for. It has arrived among us. It is like a mustard seed that will grow into something bigger.

Jesus was considered a failure by the religious leaders of his time, and no doubt by many others, but his willingness to fail revolutionised the spirituality of the time, because his failure became a triumph. He taught that 'anyone who saves her or life will lose it, and anyone who loses her or his life, will save it'. If we are unwilling to give up our lives for others, we are already dead to God's dream of life. When we give up our lives for others, we are truly alive.

**"We make a living  
by what we get.  
We make a life  
by what we give."**

It is obvious why Jesus could be considered a failure. He had been rejected by his neighbours, and some of his family thought he had gone mad. His disciples never seemed to understand his message.

To those who were devout he was irreligious; to the learned he was untrained; to the revolutionary zealots he was too idealistic and not anti-Roman. To the priests

**IT'S  
ALL  
OVER**

he was an interfering layman who threatened their authority; to the Romans he was a cause of unrest. In the world of that time, (not so different from the Middle East today) full of faction and intrigues, he eventually disappointed every group. He promised a great deal but he could not fulfil it in the way people expected. He had shown a glimpse of living another way, but with his death, it was

finished. He was betrayed, abandoned, condemned, humiliated and defeated. He suffered the horrible death of crucifixion.

Throughout it all he virtually remained silent. He had said all there was to be said! His followers gathered in fear and remembered what Jesus had said and done. They could only be consoled by the fact that his dream could never have worked anyway. They talked of their former lives. Peter said "I'm going fishing". He was going back to his old life.

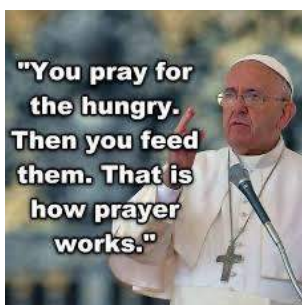
What happened then? We can never know, but it transformed them. They knew that Jesus lived - that His promise was true. He was alive. Jesus told Peter that he was finished with fishing; now he was to be a shepherd (John 21:17).



Who is Jesus for us today ? Anyone today who hears Jesus' voice hears the same invitation as those early disciples. It is a call to 'Follow Me'. Our question is not 'What are we looking for, but whom?' Like Peter, once you believe in that call, you can never return to what you were doing before! For many people this

has been their experience since belonging to a Passionist Family Group. They can never belong to the church in the same way they did before

Passionist Family Groups fit in clearly with Jesus' vision. He dreamed of people belonging together. He dreamed of there being no outsiders . His vision was that God was like the parent of a family that included everyone. Living that vision is not just about monthly outings. It is about who we are and everything we do. It even includes issues such as climate change. We have a responsibility to take care of others and that includes 'their' planet. We have an opportunity to 'make a difference' and we have to think broadly about the implication of Jesus' vision of a 'family for all'. Where does this family live?



Matthew's gospel sums up Jesus' teaching of our love of God and neighbour with a drama much like a courtroom. The criterion of judgement for those who appear, is how they have treated their fellow human beings. There are no questions asked about their attitude to God, their faithfulness to Sabbath laws or any other laws or customs. They are asked 'did you feed the hungry', 'did you welcome the stranger', 'did you visit the lonely', 'did you care for the sick', 'did you visit those in prison'?

This is how a person proves their love of neighbour. When a person has done these things... fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, visited the lonely, nursed the sick, visited those in prison, clothed the naked, Jesus said "you did this to God". He did say "it's like you did it to God". When a person has neglected to do these things, they have neglected to do them to God! St Paul was later to experience this when, in the midst of his persecution of early Christians he heard the voice 'Saul. Saul, why are you persecuting **Me**'?

In the courtroom drama, the judge identifies with the victims who are helped or not helped. 'Whatever you do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do to me'! Jesus invites us to take on the identity of the great self of the human family. God is one with every human being and we are one with each other, whether we are aware of it or not. Members of an extended family feel the solidarity of kinship. Jesus extended this kinship beyond any limits. "You have heard that you must love your neighbour and 'hate your enemy, but I say..."



We are one family, sharing one planet. Our ancestry is common. We belong together. If we see people as Jesus did, sisters and brothers, then we belong to each other. Jesus promoted the spirit of sharing by forming small communities who shared what they had in common. Judas held the common purse of Jesus' community with 'the twelve'. The rich young man was invited into this community, but he was not ready to share his wealth. The early Christian community got the ideas they had about sharing, from Jesus.

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.  
**Acts 4:32**



*"All those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he/she possessed was their own, but they had everything in common.*

*There were no needy persons among them. From time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need." (Acts 4:32-35).*





We need one another. We need to help meet each other’s basic needs of belonging, love and friendship. If there is no one to share with and no one to help us, our growth will be stunted. That is why Jesus visited small town communities and called people to be family to one another. These communities were the local seeds of the emerging kingdom. It was in these communities that his followers discovered their solidarity with one another.

We will best come to know what it is to be treated with dignity, respect and appreciation if we treat others in the same way in small family communities. Then we can reach out more broadly in solidarity and love. It may seem that what we are doing in Passionist Family Groups is small, and some people can’t see we are doing anything significant at all. But we are building the kingdom, and the kingdom is like a mustard seed!

That seed was planted in St Anthony in the Fields’ Terrey Hills, fifty years ago. We salute Peter McGrath CP and his co-founders and all those from this small parish who gave witness to his vision and enabled it to spread so far, allowing people to discover a whole new meaning to their faith and spirituality.

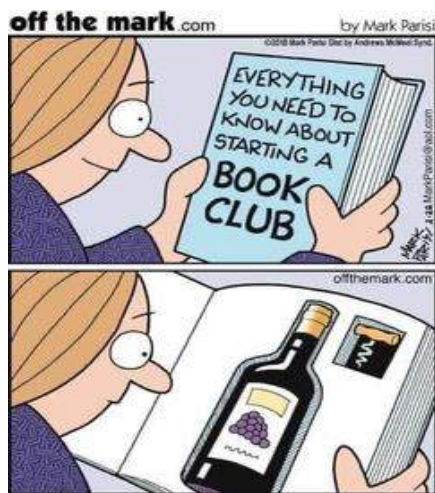


Today many individual Passionist Family groups are filled with aged members who have been family to one another for over thirty years – some, for fifty years! Families do not abandon each other because of ageing. At such a time belonging and connecting is vital. We are also seeing an increasing number of migrant families wanting to belong. If we recognise that in helping others to belong, other important aspects of faith, ‘behaving’ and ‘believing’ will grow stronger. If we try to do this in the reverse order, the belonging will rarely happen.



For all the belonging in hundreds of Passionist Family Groups, we give thanks that the original vision has grown from that small seed to a large tree, that has given new life to so many people and to their parishes, enriched their faith and helped them see the simplicity and beauty of Jesus’ message.

**Humour**



**I've found marriage to be very educational. For example, I had no idea there was a wrong way to put milk in the fridge.**

**Beware of a new Amazon scam. My husband ordered me some expensive jewelry, but motorcycle parts came instead. Thankfully they fit his bike...**



**A husband told his wife that he's going to "The Second Wife" for dinner. He didn't get the chance to explain that it was a restaurant. He is now in hospital recovering.**

## Prayers

We remember Ted Hallam, recently deceased, those whose anniversaries are around this time and their families, especially **Better Candy (20/5)**, **Leo Doherty (21/5)** and Kevin **Flew (23/5)**.

**I thank my God  
every time I  
remember you.  
In all of my prayers  
for all of you,  
I always pray with joy.**

Philippians 1:3-4

We also remember those in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially Fr Tom McDonough, Fr Gerard Quin, Fr Christopher Mithen, Pam Storey, Maree Bartoli, Bronwyn Burke, Gerald & Margaret Wright, Michael O'Callaghan, Lynda Chin, Gerry Bond, Cathy Petrocco's sister, Marissa, Alexander Lim, Maeve Reardon, John Lazzari, Des Grisell, Peter Owen, Helen McLean, Greg Agosta, Errol Lovett, Peter DeMarzi, Chris O'Toole, Angelo Vigilante, Pam Gartland,

Jim Monaghan, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Peter McNamara, Marg Casey, Mary Hackett, Patricia Keeghan, Anne Jenkins, Jerome, Mary and Kate Dunn.

The **Mass link** will be sent on Saturday, by Chris.

*With Peace,  
Erick*