

**Holy Cross Retreat**

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



9<sup>th</sup> February, 2024

## Letter 208

Greetings

### The year of the dragon



**Chúc mừng năm mới**



**Xin Nian Kuai Le**

**Chinese New Year** will be celebrated from February 10<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> this year.

**TET**, short for Tet Nguyen Dan (**Vietnam New year**) will be celebrated from February 8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> this year, but tomorrow **February 10<sup>th</sup> is the big day**. Given we have six Vietnamese members of our community, you can be sure there will be some serious celebrating. **JD** and **Tri** will return today, just in time.

**Coffee Cart Sunday** (Coffee after Mass) will be this Sunday.

### Carpark

There are a few issues in the carpark that we would like to correct.

1. Two sections of the concreted area of the car park have lifted and are now a **safety hazard** for people walking in that area. For the time being both areas have been marked with bollards. It may take some time to repair.
2. The original **markings** on the concreted area closest to the building protrude too far from the parking area. We are looking at a way of erasing those markings. In the meantime, it will help everyone if cars facing the building are parked up against the yellow coloured wooden markers and within the lines of one car width. This will make reversing far safer for people on both sides of the carpark.

3. Several people have asked if we can advise those parking to watch that their **doors** do not hit against adjacent cars.

4. We would like to **concrete** the gravelled area of the car park near the pathway to the chapel. This would be easier and safer for those with slight disabilities. We will investigate the cost and decide if it is possible.

### **Come Away Day**

The first Come Away Day of the year will be held at Holy Cross on **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February**. The theme of the day is **'Welcome the freshness of this new day'**. The day's program provides opportunities for prayer, reflection and group interaction in the beautiful grounds and facilities of Holy Cross. All are welcome. Just come as you are. BYO lunch. Registration is from 9.30am. The program concludes with a celebration of the Eucharist with a departure time of around 2pm. The cost of the day is \$25.00 or a donation according to your means. For any further details contact Sr Brigid cp on [bridget.m64@gmail.com](mailto:bridget.m64@gmail.com) . Brochures about the 2024 Program are available in the Back Porch of the Chapel.

### **Remembering February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009**



I drove from Sydney to Melbourne on what was to become known as Black Saturday. When I got out of the car to buy petrol at Wangaretta, the temperature there was 47 degrees. A week before the fires that broke out on February 7<sup>th</sup>, a significant heatwave affected south-eastern Australia. From 28–30 January, Melbourne broke temperature records by experiencing three consecutive days above 43 °C (109 °F), with the temperature peaking at 45.1 °C (113.2 °F) on 30 January, the third hottest day in the city's history.

On January 7<sup>th</sup> the temperature in Melbourne reached 46.4 °C (115.5 °F). Because power lines fell in high winds in Kilmore East and the Hume Highway was closed. Fortunately the ABC turned to full-time broadcast of the conditions and I was able to listen to that news that reported at one stage that there were hundreds of fires! We were diverted from the highway and directed to a safe route to Templestowe. 173 people died in those fires; 415 people were injured; over 1,000,000 wild and domesticated animals died; 450,000 hectares were burnt; 10,000 kilometres of fencing was over 2,000 homes were destroyed



## Hai's 32<sup>nd</sup> birthday



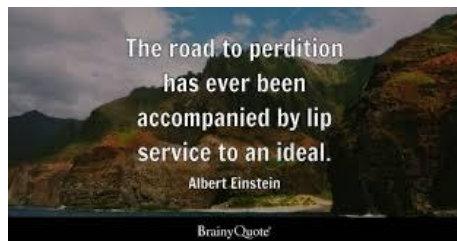
Birthdays are not celebrated differently in Australia from Vietnam. Above is **Thang, Hai (centre) and Cu'ong** and in the photo on the right, Hai dressed in a nice new tee-shirt. It is a Holy Cross custom to be given a tee-shirt on your birthday.



## Observations from Near and Afar (Tommy Hayden and Leo Traynor)

*Having worked in three countries in West and Central Africa since the 1970's, Tommy Hayden and Leo (no relation) their thoughts on their contrasting experiences of the church in Africa and Ireland*

In Ireland, formation for Church ministry and for mission from the 1960's to the 1980's there was a lot of emphasis on rules, regulations and maintaining vision and methods that had been the norm from time immemorial. True, there had been the Second Vatican Council in the early 60's, but it was felt that only lip service was being paid to what should have been a root and branch renewal of the Church.



It was often left to individual teachers of theology and pastoral methodology – and sometimes even to students themselves – to really mine the wealth in the Council documents. Again, it was often those same individuals who caught the new vision and insights of Liberation

Theology, emerging from the '60's onwards in the South American church and who made an attempt to incorporate it into formation. There was a feeling that there was more openness to this within independent missionary seminaries than in the mainline ones at the time.

This meant that we were more open to a church that was grounded in people, with a real social conscience, a strong commitment to justice and more collaborative in terms of leadership and pastoral practice. There was a sense that we received a grounding for mission that was not shared by the Church in Ireland.



And, what did we find in Africa? We certainly met a different church from the one we had left behind! We met participation with a capital "P" – Catechists; Prayer Leaders; Village Leaders; Choir Leaders; Women's Group Leaders; Parish Councils and lots more.

Collaboration between local communities and clergy and religious h ad led to a commitment to education, health projects and development which meant the pastoral side of our work was very connected to and involved ordinary people. Despite continuing to be a hierarchical church – and patriarchy being very deep-set in most African cultures – there was tremendous freedom. This was evidenced in a bodily way as we experienced African energy, dance movement and freedom of expression especially in liturgical celebrations. We felt overwhelmed by the sheer earthiness of it all.



The use of local languages and cultural sensitivity in all aspects of our work were major contributing factors to making the Good News more grounded and authentic. It encouraged us to learn local languages and understand cultures as best we could, so as to be part of what were real celebrations of people’s lives, their struggles and their hopes.

As we returned on leave to Ireland from time to time with these experiences fresh in our minds, there was a sense, even after a couple of years, that the model of church in operation there could not possibly h old. We couldn’t help noticing the lack of respectful collaboration between clergy and lay Catholics and that people in their Church lives had become domesticated. The gap, already there at the time of our leaving, had opened even wider.



In Ireland, away from the immediate demands of our usual work, we felt the need to have conversations about our world, to share ideas, visions and strategies. We had the benefit of ongoing formation where we experienced intercultural programs and ca me in contact with movements such as Training for Transformation (TfT).

We found ourselves gravitating, from the 80’s onward, towards groups such as Partners in Mission (later called “Partners”) and Partners in Faith, both of which had their origins in the thinking of Paulo Freire and the TfT approach. They were largely spearheaded by priests who were disillusioned with the Irish model of Church and had moved on to a broader and more inclusive ministry and by like-minded religious Sisters who had even greater reason to feel marginalized, given the way they were treated by the Church.

When these leadership figures were joined by open-minded and interested folk – and sometimes by official church people who were also searching for something



different – for workshops, prayer experiences and other learning events, the results were extremely creative and life-giving. We were fortunate to be around for some of these events and up to now we watch out for them when returning on leave.

In them, we find a great receptivity to ideas from many different spiritual sources and a search for a more open expression of the Christian faith and a more inclusive spirituality. Over the years we could never understand why this group of committed and thinking people were not permitted to continue in ministry in the official church. It is especially in this environment that we learned to carry our priesthood lightly, not relying on status and institution, but being more about solidarity and building from the ground up.

In the 90's the church in Ireland was among the first world to hit the headlines regarding the clerical child scandal. Almost overnight, the church came to a halt, membership numbers collapsing, very few people offering themselves for ministry and little or no candidates going on mission. This is the constantly declining church we continue to meet when we return from Africa.



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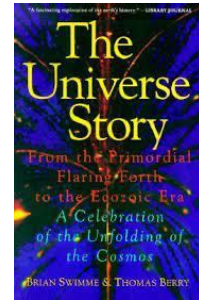
It is, however, the church that has had Pope Francis as its leader for the past ten years – and he has been no ordinary leader. Right from the moment he was elected, by his way of relating, his light grip on authority, his ability to analyse and



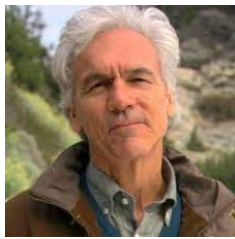
articulate, his willingness to be open, to accept criticism, to take on responsibility and make hard decisions, he has modelled a style of leadership for our time and for the future.

He has used the teaching aspect of his position in the best way possible to model and promote a different way of being a leader and also to highlight the Climate Change crisis – with its links to justice and the need for solidarity with all of Creation - as the defining issue of our time.

One could feel saddened by the present state of the Church in Ireland and in the West generally, but for those seeking spiritual meaning there are many signs of hope – not for the Church as such, but for a new reality of people freed from the shackles of hierarchy and patriarchy and energized by a spirituality that has its roots in their everyday lives and in an emerging consciousness linked intrinsically to the Universe Story, which has now begun to be shared and believed.



## The Universe Story



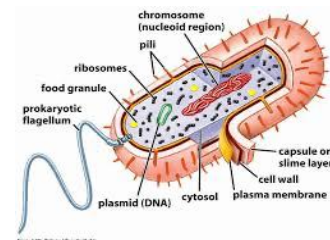
When Brian Swimme, co-author (with Passionist Thomas Berry) of the book 'The Universe Story' is asked for the short version of the Universe Story, he says, ““This is the greatest discovery of the scientific enterprise: You take hydrogen gas, and you leave it alone, and it turns into rosebushes, giraffes, and humans.” That in essence, is what has been discovered.

Life as it has unfolded explains that there is always a great future to which we are called, and that the universe provides the energy needed for accomplishing it. We can block this out if we lose the ability for awakening, for contemplation, for awe, for stillness, for listening, for being open and expectant.

Brian Swimme suggests that the sin against the Holy Spirit “is pursuing that which is repugnant to you and avoiding that which is fascinating” because by following this path, the mystery of the universe, God, is blocked and cannot get to us. The nature of creativity and what we know from the tremendous ongoing story of the universe, is that this attraction or calling we respond to, will be a ‘new order’, and will be nothing like what lead to it. We have to step out with confidence and allow God’s work to achieve what it is prompting us to see.



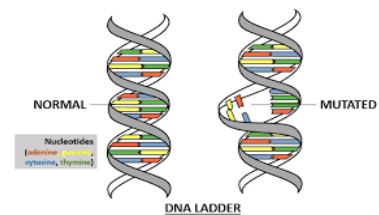
The earliest created cells such as bacteria, known as prokaryotes, remember what the early earth was like, because they still construct themselves in the way they did then, despite the enormous change in atmosphere and ocean conditions and the passing of over four and a half billion years! These cells remember how they were created billions of years ago, because they reproduce it. This vital gift for all life, to remember the past, was alive in the first cell.



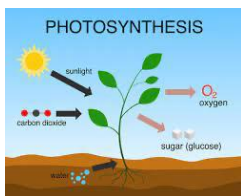
# MEMORIA PASSIONIS

We Passionists take a vow to promote and keep alive the living memory of the Passion of Jesus. A living memory is a part of every species. It highlights the connectedness with past and present forms of life. The earliest cells did not need the incredible energy used to create and sustain other forms of life. They learned and remembered a new way. In time the first cell's descendants multiplied, mutated and filled the oceans. Initially, they had abundant food in the chemically rich turbulence that had set life in motion. But as this activity slowed, so did the productions of compounds.

Danger existed for the cells and for the earth. If the food supply became exhausted, not only would the cells disappear, but the earth's ability to generate such life could disappear. Mutations (an alteration in the genes or chromosomes of a cell) overcame this difficulty! New forms emerged that could survive on the body parts or waste of other cells that had died. This created a circle of interconnectedness. The decaying body of one cell created life for another, just as a supernova created our solar system that in time led to life on earth.



In an incredible act of creativity perhaps a million years after the emergence of the first cell, these early cells developed a molecular 'net' that could capture packets of energy from the sun traveling at 300,000 kilometres per second, and convert them into structures for food (photosynthesis). This miracle of what we call photosynthesis is a classic example of the confidence we can afford to have, because the creativity of the universe is always prodding forward, offering solutions and never going back or repeating itself.



The second law of thermodynamics holds that within any system disorder always increases. Things run down and wear out. If there is no more energy applied there will always be deterioration to greater disorder, never the reverse. Without applying some energy, the death of Catholic life in some locations has and will occur. We have to decide whether to accept the inevitable, or to apply some energy.

Applying these various lessons from the natural world suggest that some approaches we take will be calculated as the outcome of deliberate strategic planning while others, following the chaos theory model, will begin without seeking a particular outcome, choosing instead to focus on strategic thinking and 'playing', seeing where it all leads.





This latter approach requires an attentive awareness to what is going on and what is being prompted. Little signs appear here and there, but who is noticing? Who is blocking? Resistance and caution can block the prodding of the spirit.

Every time we take a risk in response to this prodding, we are opening up further opportunities for the spirit to prod us further. Who knows what this might lead to? Do we trust this prodding or does pessimism blind us to God’s continual prodding and inviting?

Every time we can name it, point it out, acknowledge it, appreciate it, celebrate it and respond to it, our planning will become clearer, provided the planning is based more on a dynamic belief that the seeds of our future are already present



in the death or waste of the present. and that we get there by getting there. This involves experimenting, learning, adjusting and reflecting on what is happening and having others share what they see happening. Reading the signs of the times involves looking to the future and seeing its seeds in the present. Then, anything is possible.

**Everything is Connected...from the Nathaniel Report (November 2023)**

John Kleinsman PhD (*director of the New Zealand Nathaniel Centre for Bioethics*)



In his recent Apostolic Exhortation on the climate crisis, *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis notes that “the Covid-19 pandemic brought out the close relation of human life with that of other living beings and with the natural environment ... [thereby confirming] that what happens in one part of the world has repercussions on the entire planet.” This insight leads the Pope to a conviction that he acknowledges he repeats over and over again: “Everything is connected”. (*Laudato Deum*, n. 19)

In his 2015 Encyclical on Care for our Common Home, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis traces the interconnectedness of life to the interconnectedness of the divine persons of the Trinity: “The divine Persons are subsistent relations<sup>1</sup>, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships. Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships.



This leads us not only to marvel at the manifold connections existing among creatures, but also to discover a key to our own fulfilment”.

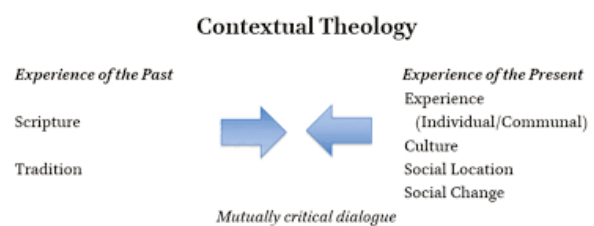


“The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which

God imprinted in them when they were created.

Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.” (n. 240) So, a “spirituality of global solidarity” becomes the paradigm for evaluating the way we humans are living and being in the world. What does a spirituality of global solidarity look like and how is it nurtured? It will flow from an “open theology” that is oriented to salvation for both people and creation within a synodal, missionary and open Church. As Pope Francis recently wrote in *Ad Theologiam Promovendam*, a short apostolic letter in which he offers revised statutes for the Pontifical Academy of Theology:

“Theological reflection is therefore called to a turning point, to a paradigm shift, to a 'courageous cultural revolution' that commits it, in the first place, to being a fundamentally contextual theology, capable of reading and interpreting the Gospel in the conditions in which men and women live daily, in different geographical, social and cultural environments, and having as its archetype the Incarnation of the eternal Logos, his entry into the culture, the vision of the world, the religious tradition of a people”.



Theologian Sr. Geraldina Céspedes Ulloa picks up on the theme of an open theology that reflects the conditions in which we are living daily.<sup>2</sup> Faith has to lead us to be better human beings, in solidarity with those who suffer and with the earth ... I try to do a theology that inserts the Gospel in the people's

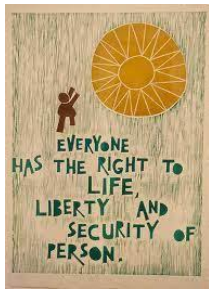
realities and culture — a theology that listens to humanity's cries. I live a theology that does not ignore the tremendous socio- environmental imbalance, nor does it ignore the crises within the church itself.



In a similar vein, Cardinal Cupich has recently called for Cardinal Bernardin’s *Consistent Ethic of Life* to be retrieved,<sup>3</sup> 40 years on from Bernardin’s Fordham address in which he famously linked the issues of abortion and nuclear deterrence.

Reading that 1983 address reveals that a key motivation for Cardinal Bernardin’s commitment to shaping a position of *linkage among the life issues* was his deep desire to develop “a significant defence of life in a comprehensive and consistent manner.”

Perhaps Cardinal Cupich has been reading the NZ Bishops’ latest teaching document, *Te Kahu o te Ora – a Consistent Ethic of Life*, a recently published revised version of a 1997 document based on Cardinal Bernardin’s *Consistent Ethic of Life*. In that document we read that “the ‘right to life’, properly understood, includes the right to flourish and develop according to our fullest potential. Anything that undermines the flourishing of God’s creation constitutes a tear in the seamless garment of life.” The bishops also note:



... the concept of the consistent ethic of life can act as a counter to the culture of domination (between humankind and by humankind over God’s creation) that is all too readily evident. Just as a kahu embraces all that is good and wholesome, so too the consistent ethic of life forms a canopy of non-violent moral teachings embracing the connections between all parts of God’s creation ... If practised, this ethic can help us to maintain, and where necessary restore, harmony and right relationships within humankind and between humankind and the rest of God’s creation.

At a time in our human history where the intensity of violence between humans is all too evident and the violence we humans are wreaking on our planet is reaching crisis proportions, the notion of a “spirituality of global solidarity” has never been more urgent.



To quote again from Cardinal Cupich: “All threats to human dignity are intertwined, not simply by logical consistency, but by reality itself, as diverse threats to life tend to reinforce one another.” Indeed, “everything is connected” and it is time we started thinking, praying and acting as such.

<sup>1</sup> The concept of a “subsistent relationship” comes from Philosophy. It is here being used by Pope Francis to make the point that the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity is a ‘necessary’ one that goes to the core of their identity.

<sup>2</sup> González, L D. (2023) Q&A with Sr. Geraldina Céspedes Ulloa, living a theology that listens to humanity's cries. Global Sisters Report.

<sup>3</sup> Cupich, B J. (2023). Cardinal Cupich on retrieving the *Consistent Ethic of Life*. America.

## Everything is Connected (Carl Sagan)

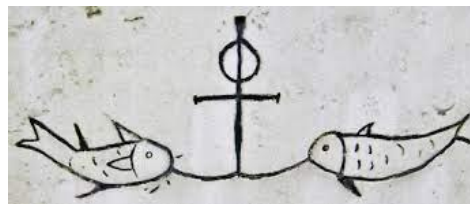
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGK84Poeynk>

## Feast of the Commemoration of the Passion (Friday before Ash Wednesday) 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2024



Paul of the Cross requested the Pope of the time (Pius 6<sup>th</sup>) to institute this feast on the Friday before Lent begins, as an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the joyful aspect of the Passion. We know that Paul believed the Passion was the most overwhelming sign of God's love, but so often in his time and in ours, the Passion is dramatic and the focus is on the horrible sufferings of Jesus and that his death on the cross was to pay for our sins.

In the very early days after Jesus death, his followers did not talk about the cross. It was not the primary symbol of being a follower, as it is for us today. The cross was scandal; a sign of failure. Instead, the fish and the anchor were the principal symbols. Paul eventually learned that speaking logic and philosophy to potential Greek converts did not work. So he switched to speaking about the scandal of the cross – a crucified messiah, and developed what became the Passionist moto; "We preach Christ and him crucified".



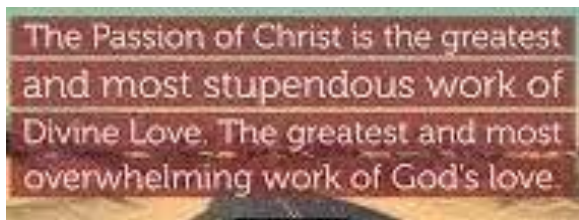
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Most of us grew up with sermons and rituals that put the emphasis on the physical sufferings of Jesus and the belief that Jesus death freed us from sin – yet we spent our whole life trying to avoid going to hell! Many of our prayers reflect this. I am very happy to sing 'Salve Regina', but I find it difficult to pray that prayer in English. When it gets to parts like... "to thee do we cry poor banished children of Eve". I don't believe we are that. Then "to thee do we send up our signs mourning and **exile** weeping in this valley of tears". And then... "after this our exile, show us.....Is this life an exile, or a wonderful gift that is an invitation to share in God's life.

Franciscan sister Ilia Delio is a Doctor of theology and science. She has said, *"Jesus taught us that salvation is about whole-making and healing. It's not the grace of being rescued from a depraved, fallen world. It's the grace of love, that heals us. I think that's what it means to be saved: to be healed and to be whole and to be sent on our way to be whole-makers ourselves. If Catholicity has shrivelled in our current milieu, it's because it has shrunken into a legalistic set of propositions and rules. Jesus made us whole by inviting us into his life"*.



Today as we give thanks for the self-giving of Jesus, and that he is the Way. He showed by the way he lived and the way he died, that trusting in God will bring us to the truth that "all will be well". What more could we want? We have seen that pattern throughout our lives – many of our greatest lessons and blessings have come through sadness, pain, suffering and loss. That is the rhythm of life. We have been touched deeply by God's grace, and our lens for giving thanks is that Jesus



gave his life to bring about what God wanted. His death was cruel and unfair, but he did not walk away from it. It is for us the most overwhelming sign of God's love, because Jesus saw it that way.

## Humour

1. One day in Contract Law class, the professor asked one of his better students, "Now if you were to give someone an orange, how would you go about it?"

The student replied, "Here's an orange."

The professor was livid. "No! No! Think like a lawyer!"

The student then recited, "Okay, I'd tell him, 'I hereby give and convey to you all and singular, my estate and interests, rights, claim, title, claim and advantages of and in, said orange, together with all its rind, juice, pulp, and seeds, and all rights and advantages with full power to bite, cut, freeze and otherwise eat, the same, or give the same away with and without the pulp, juice, rind and seeds, anything herein before or hereinafter or in any deed, or deeds, instruments of whatever nature or kind whatsoever to the contrary in anywise notwithstanding...'"

2. Farmer Joe was in his car when he was hit by a truck. He decided his injuries from the accident were serious enough to take the trucking company (responsible for the accident) to court. In court the trucking company's lawyer was questioning farmer Joe. "Didn't you say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'?" asked the lawyer.

Farmer Joe responded, "Well I'll tell you what happened. I had just loaded my favourite mule Bessie into the..."

"I didn't ask for any details," the lawyer interrupted, "just answer the question. Did you not say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'?"

Farmer Joe said, "Well I had just got Bessie into the trailer and...."

The lawyer interrupted again and said, "Judge, I am trying to establish the fact that, at the scene of the accident, this man told the Highway Patrolman that he was just fine. Now several weeks after the accident he is trying to sue my client. I believe he is a fraud."

The Judge was interested in Farmer Joe's answer and said to the lawyer, "I'd like to hear what he has to say about his favourite mule Bessie."

Joe thanked the Judge and proceeded, "Well I had just loaded Bessie, my favourite mule, into the trailer and was driving her down the highway when this huge semi-truck and trailer ran the stop sign and smacked my truck right in the side. I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie was thrown into the other. I was hurting real bad and didn't want to move. However, I could hear ole Bessie moaning and groaning. I knew she was in terrible shape just by her groans."

Shortly after that a Highway Patrolman came on the scene. He could hear Bessie moaning and groaning so he went over to her. After he looked at her, he took out his gun and shot her between the eyes. Then he went over to my dear dog, Mitzy who had a broken back and was howling. the Patrolman put his gun to Mitzy's ear and shot him. He then came across the road with his gun in his hand and looked at me. He said, "Your mule was in such bad shape I had to shoot her, and your dog too. How are you feeling?"

I said, "I've never felt better!"

### Ash Wednesday

Next Wednesday we begin Lent! Given the late summer, it seems unseasonal to be entering this penitential season. There will be Mass and distribution of ashes at Holy Cross on Wednesday at **9.30am**.

## Prayers

We remember those who have passed away recently and those whose anniversaries occur around this time, especially

**Fr Greg Manly CP** (Feb 9<sup>th</sup>)

**Kay Mithen** (11<sup>th</sup> Feb)

**Geoffrey Morgan** Jerome's brother-in-law (13<sup>th</sup> Feb)

**Maree Metcalfe** (19<sup>th</sup> July)

We remember **Bernard Metcalfe** who was married to Maree on this day 50 years ago.

We remember **Noel Spinks who is recovering from surgery**.

We give thanks for **Gary Perritt CP's** recovery from a lung operation and removal of a tumour.

We also remember the community of Cross and Passion sisters whose house in **Chile** has been completely destroyed by the raging fires.

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



Tony Tome, Maree Bartoli, Pam Storey, Paul Geogeghan, Carol Battistella, Peter McNamara, Peter & Bernadette Owen, Alexander Lim, Michael O'Callaghan Dawn Heffernan, Maeve & John Reardon, Shirley Barnes, Bronwyn Burke, Gerry Bond, Monique Hardinge, Helen McLean, Phil Drew, Mary Hackett, Pam Gartland, Patricia Keeghan, Errol Lovett, Greg Agosta, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Anne Jenkins, Kate & Mary Dunn, Chris O'Toole, Jeff Foale CP ,Gerald Quinn CP and baby Alfred Theodore in London.

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

Brian