

## Holy Cross Retreat

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



## Letter 251

29th November, 2024

Greetings everyone,

### Master JD (Joseph Dominic)



Last Friday, during Yarra Theological College's end-of-year Eucharist, several students were honoured for completing their studies. Among them was JD, who has now finished his master's degree. His research focused on trauma through the lens of John's Gospel. While this recognition marks the completion of his studies, the final results are still pending. Nevertheless, there is every confidence that JD has passed.



The University of Divinity will host a larger graduation ceremony in March next year for all 2024 graduates. Once JD receives his results, he will consider whether to pursue a doctorate in Scripture. Who knows? We might have another Dr. Chris Monaghan in the making! Speaking of Dr. Chris, the president of YTU, he was present at the ceremony in his black and red doctoral robes to proudly congratulate JD. JD's brother, who recently made his final vows with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was also there to celebrate this milestone (see photos). Tri

attended the evening as well. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to JD on this remarkable achievement!



Meanwhile, the rest of the community gathered at home to share a meal with Brian Traynor in celebration of his ordination anniversary. Can you believe it? Brian has been ordained for 51 years! We give thanks to God for his faithful pastoral care, which continues to bless us all. Happy Anniversary Brian!

## End of the Year YTU Faculty Dinner and more – Chris Monaghan



Year after year, Chris (or as we sometimes mistakenly write, “Christ”), dedicates an entire day to preparing a special dinner to thank the YTU faculty and distinguished guests. The image offers just a glimpse of his efforts, as he did again yesterday; he sets up everything for the occasion all by himself.

It’s truly inspiring to see the president take the time to personally manage this work.

When we asked Chris why he does it, he explained that it’s his way of expressing gratitude to the staff for all they do for the YTU community. Remarkably, after the dinner, Chris spent several more hours cleaning up, finishing his tasks around midnight.

Chris is also currently collaborating with a fellow scripture scholar Merryl Blair, from the Church of Christ (yes, this one is spelled correctly), on an Advent program for both the Anglican and the Catholic dioceses of Sale. The bishops from both dioceses will also provide responses to the work Chris and Merryl develop. What an impactful ministry!

And there’s more. This Sunday, Chris will leave for Vietnam with Brendan Connell CP for the provincial council meeting and to run a workshop on *preaching the Passion*. Together, they will teach young Passionists how to find and utilise resources for preaching, drawing on both their cultural wisdom and the insights of St. Paul of the Cross. Chris plans to guide them in reflecting on these teachings in the context of their own culture and lives, making the Passionist charism relevant and meaningful for Vietnam.

And still, there’s even more! Upon returning from Vietnam, Chris will spend a week working at YTU before leading a retreat for the De La Salle Brothers in Queenscliff. Does he ever stop?

While much more could be said about Chris’ contributions, let us take this moment to give thanks for all he does - for our world, our Church, our congregation, our province, and especially for our Holy Cross community.

Thank you, Chris, for your tireless dedication. You make us Passionists feel both proud and deeply inspired.

## Come Away Day (Brigid cp)



Our Come Away Day participants gathered in mist and left in sunshine – fitting weather for our theme ‘Bring forth Light’! And just another sign that Melbourne weather is always changing like those of us who gathered – always open to surprise and challenge.



We had 22 people including the team for this, our final day for the year. We will soon be gathering as a team to evaluate the year and plan for next year. I take this opportunity to thank Pam Storey, Lien Thai, Kay Lewis and the Passionist community for the preparation, care and love that goes into these days and to all who have attended and shared their faith and spirituality by their presence. Watch this space for 2025 dates.

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## Grieving made gentler

As we approach the end of November and draw closer to Christmas, our hearts often hold the memories of losses we have experienced. This time of year, with its special moments and celebrations, can sometimes bring a mix of emotions, including sadness and longing.

Throughout my counselling course this year, I have been delving deeply into the subjects of grief, loss, and trauma. One of the things I’ve learned is that not all types of loss are widely recognised or acknowledged, which can sometimes complicate the grieving process and leave us with lingering questions.

While we often associate grief with the passing of loved ones, loss can take many forms - such as the loss of relationships, pets, careers, or places we’ve called home. I was struck by how essential it is to pay attention to how these losses impact us. Allowing ourselves to grieve and be vulnerable is crucial; otherwise, unprocessed grief can affect both our well-being and our relationships with others.

Each of us has experienced loss in some way or will face it in the future - it's a natural part of life. I believe we can all benefit from reflecting on how we navigate these experiences. Below, I've shared an article from the Grief Care team at Catholic Cemeteries & Crematoria that I found particularly insightful. I hope it offers you as much comfort and guidance as it has offered me.

In this season of reflection and connection, let us continue to hold one another in our prayers and hearts. Together, we are stronger and more resilient.

### 7 Ways to Treat Yourself With Kindness While Grieving



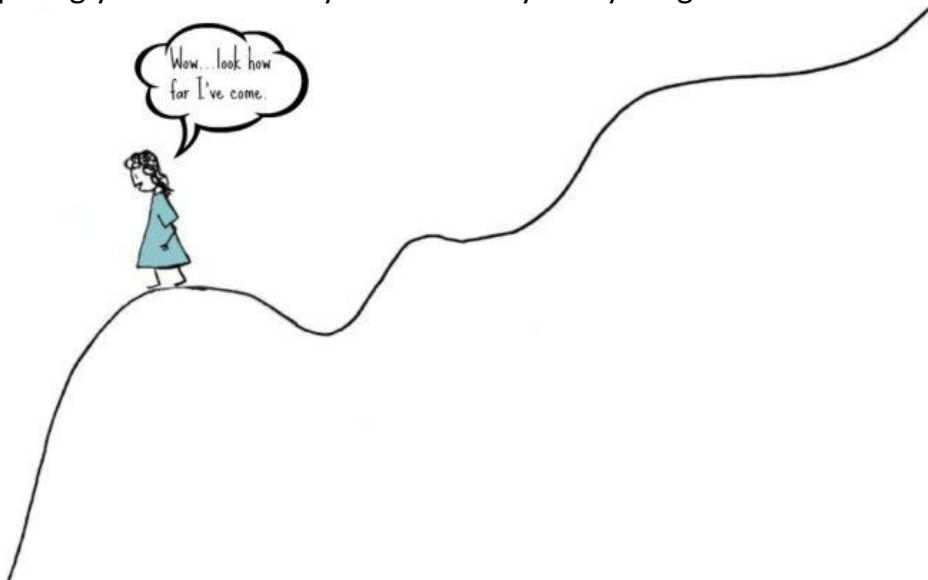
#### 1. Don't Compare.

First, try not to compare yourself to your expectations. In fact, it can be helpful to let go of your expectations about grief entirely. Throw things like grief stages, tasks, and timelines out the window because individual grief is unique and unpredictable. It is easy to see how scary it can be to look at grief as a complete unknown but, in doing so, you allow for a more flexible and accepting understanding of your experiences.

Second, learn what you can from the grief experiences of others, but don't compare. Comparing helps no one. Don't compare your methods of coping

because everyone copes with grief differently. And finally, don't compare your overall healing to your perception of how others are healing. Grief is a story without a true end and everyone's ups and downs happen at different times and in different places.

Finally, don't compare yourself to yourself. We've written about this in the past, but the gist of it is this: Oftentimes when people try to assess how they're doing in grief, they make the mistake of comparing themselves to the person they were before the loss (who, by the way, you'll never be again—and that's okay) or some idealised idea of who they will be "when they feel better". These comparisons aren't fair because they discount all the progress you've made in your grief. If you still insist on comparing yourself to yourself in grief, try comparing yourself to how you felt on Day 1 of your grief.



## **2. Accept That a Wide Range of Emotional, Physical, and Cognitive Experiences Are Normal in Grief.**

This refers to the implicit and explicit beliefs about how grief is *supposed* to be. In our society, people tend to think grief looks a certain way. Picture things like sadness, talking about emotions, "moving on" after one year, and so on. Some of these expectations evolve from outright myths and misconceptions about grief (i.e., grief timelines and the idea of moving on). Others simply reflect a limited understanding of grief. The reality is that most people don't know how complex grief is until they've experienced it themselves.

Having a narrow conceptualisation of what is normal in grief often causes people to feel like they're not doing as well as they ought to or, worse, like they're completely losing it. For this reason, It can be extremely helpful for people to learn about the long list of emotional, physical, cognitive, and

behavioural responses that are considered "normal" in grief. Though it won't necessarily make distressing experiences any easier, you at least have the reassurance of knowing *there's nothing wrong with you!*

### **3. Give Distressing Emotions and Experiences the Time and Attention They Need:**

This one might seem counterintuitive to many. Focusing on distressing emotions, memories, and grief triggers may seem like self-torture, not self-kindness...and sometimes it is. When a person perseverates on such experiences in chronic self-blaming and self-shaming ways, it isn't helpful. On the other hand, it isn't helpful to run away from these thoughts and emotions either.

Think about it the same way you would think about coping with a serious physical illness or injury. It wouldn't help you to ignore the malady. But it also wouldn't help you to stare at yourself in the mirror saying you're weak, stupid or to blame. The only thing that would help is to acknowledge the pain and find ways to take care of yourself and heal. The pain of grief is just as worthy of your self-care, and so your goals should be the same—to find constructive ways to heal where you can and to manage the pain where you can't (just yet).



### **4. Ask for Help/Accept Help:**

As simple as this may sound, we know asking for help is a tall order. Everything about it can be challenging: identifying what you need, reaching out and asking for assistance, and then actually allowing the person to do whatever it is you asked for without feeling guilty, apologetic, weak, selfish, burdensome, or as though you have to send ten follow-up texts saying "Thanks Again!".

Here's the thing though: You've experienced a major hardship and now is the time for you to let others take care of you. Someday when those people need taking care of, you will be there to return the favour (hopefully). And though their offers may be ineffective, quite often when people say they want to help, they mean it! this is often something that people struggle with so here are some posts in regards to the subject:

- [Helping your Friends Help You](#)
- [Thanks for the Offer, But I Don't Know What I Need](#)
- [Utilizing Your Support System: Support System Superlatives](#)

## **5. Focus on Basic Needs Like Breathing, Sleeping, Eating, Connecting, and Caring:**

The importance of meeting your basic needs is often overlooked when your entire world has been shattered to pieces. The scope of what you're dealing with is so ginormous, who can be bothered to think about something like getting enough sleep? But if you are able to meet some of your most basic needs, you'll be in a better position—physically and emotionally—to deal with your other more complex and nuanced stressors. Plus, in a world that now seems to lack rhyme or reason, taking care of your basic needs is often one of the few and/or first things you can manage.

## **6. Give Yourself a Break:**

Whenever we talk about finding ways to cope with grief, we also advocate for finding ways to take a break. As discussed in a separate post, [A Balanced Approach for Coping with Life After Loss](#):

*"While many people think coping with life after loss is only about confronting and coping with difficult grief emotions, we believe that coping encapsulates anything that helps you feel better and gives you a boost of positive emotion.*

Look, sometimes you just need to give your brain, body, and frayed emotions a rest!

## **7. Love the Person Who Died Unapologetically:**

More often than not, grieving people maintain a continued relationship with the person who died. But, for varying reasons, they may feel they need to keep their ongoing bond private. Let's face it, society has been known to give griever's the side eye when they share the ways they stay connected with their deceased loved ones. Rude!

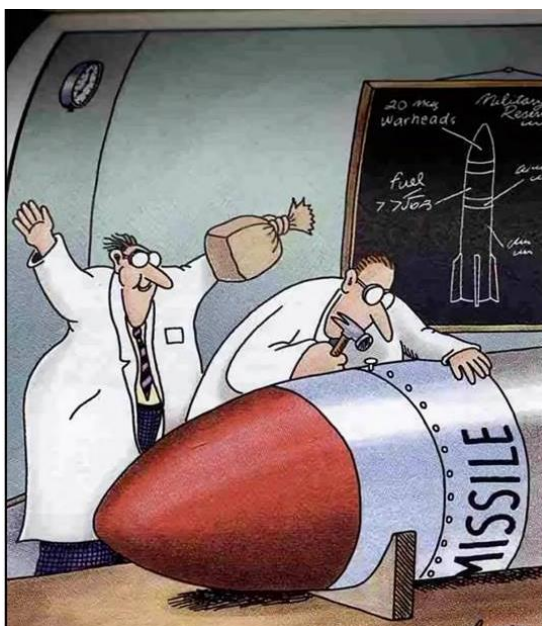
What we know about grief is that an ongoing love and attachment is totally normal. So go ahead and talk about your loved one as much as you want, do all the little things that keep you close, and, by all means, love them unapologetically.

Source: [https://whatsyourgrief.com/7-ways-to-treat-yourself-with-kindness-while-grieving/?fbclid=IwY2xjawGs-1JleHRuA2FibQixMQABHdLPNOC9AtL27zJtBMhv3LDJSSKRoj-jg3LGwHlalrIPNEhFA3kfp4QR7g\\_aem\\_LVI\\_4gdg0xhBkCBeBLAC3w](https://whatsyourgrief.com/7-ways-to-treat-yourself-with-kindness-while-grieving/?fbclid=IwY2xjawGs-1JleHRuA2FibQixMQABHdLPNOC9AtL27zJtBMhv3LDJSSKRoj-jg3LGwHlalrIPNEhFA3kfp4QR7g_aem_LVI_4gdg0xhBkCBeBLAC3w)

### Humour (sourced through Tom)

**Apparently you  
can't use  
'beefstew' as a  
password.  
It's not stroganoff.**

Finland has just closed  
their borders.  
No one will be crossing  
the finish line.



**WARNING**  
There is an email going around  
offering processed pork, gelatin  
and salt in a can.  
If you get this email, do not  
open it. It's spam.





Just bought a book from IKEA



This is what irony means. You buy an electric car to save the planet and a tree kills it!



**Police have confirmed that the man who tragically fell from the roof of an 18th floor Nightclub Was not a bouncer**



## Prayers

We remember the recently deceased particularly, Mario Canale, and those whose anniversaries occur this week especially:

Barney Cogle - 30/11, Carole Mernagh - 30/11, Lorraine Lovett - 4/12, and Albino Cavallo - 5/12.

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

We also remember those in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially: Bro Minh Toan CP, Peter Barry, Monica Sleeman (Fr Kevin's sister), Desley Reynolds, Rex Cambry, Sharon Williams, Doris Castro, Julia Cantone, Caroline Meade, Sophia Chung, Michael O'Callaghan, Peter McNamara, Pam Storey, Lorraine Gill, Adrian Woon, Maree Bartoli, Sandra Street, Paul Darbyshire, Luke Norden, Carol Battistella, Monique Hardinge, Kaya Lenic, John Reardon, Alexander Lim, Peter & Bernadette Owen, Gerry Bond, Mary Dunn, Bronwyn Burke, Greg Agosta Helen McLean, Phil Drew, Anne Jenkins, Pam Gartland, Patricia Keeghan, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Errol Lovett, 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

Erick

