

THE MUSEUM

A Magazine of the Society of Christian Doctrine - Preca Community Australia

ISSUE 29 | 2026

Aspire to great things
to holiness.
Do not settle for less.
POPE LEO XIV

ACKNOWLEDGING
70 YEARS

PAGE 19



 **Preca**
COMMUNITY

The background of the page is a solid teal color. A diagonal band of three shades of grey runs from the top left towards the bottom right, creating a dynamic geometric design.

SAFEGUARDING OUR FAITH COMMUNITIES

The Society of Christian Doctrine - Precia Community values the dignity of every person. We are especially committed to ensuring the care, well-being, and protection of children, and adults at risk, in our faith communities.

THE MUSEUM is issued for friends and associates of the Society of Christian Doctrine in Australia. M.U.S.E.U.M. represents the first letter of a Latin prayer, Magister Untinam Sequatur Evangelium Universus Mundus translating Divine teacher, may the whole world follow the Gospel.

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The Museum: A Magazine of the Society of Christian Doctrine, founded by Saint George Preca

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THE POWER OF THE CROSS



Each year in Hobart, the city in winter becomes wide awake with a winter festival. One of the 'features' on display each year, are red illuminated crosses; some vertical, while others inverted.

Some of the young people I live with have taken exception to the inverted crosses, and have audibly displayed their grievance. A recent visit into the town of Hobart provided for me a reflection on the cross, and what it means to us in the Preca Community.

It is well known, and documented that St George Preca's spirituality, has a particular emphasis on the theology of the cross. We have always reflected that when someone is suffering, we are faced with the mystery of the Cross.

A recent retreat for the community in Australia at The Monastery in Adelaide, also gave an opportunity to reflect on the mission of the cross.

The Monastery is run by the Passionists whose spirituality is based on the 'power of the cross'. St Paul of the Cross, the Founder was convinced that that God is most easily found in the Passion of Christ. Although he may have not read the writings of St Paul of the Cross, St George Preca was definitely influenced by the lives, and writings of saints whom the Passionists hold in high esteem; St Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother and St Gemma Galgani, and by their biographer Fr Germanus Ruoppolo CP.

SIGN OF THE CROSS, A BLESSING

St George Preca often visited all the parishes of Malta teaching, counselling, strengthening, and radiating joy everywhere he went. He was willing to impart a blessing on anyone who approached him for it, and we are told that when this occurred, the beautiful expression of his eyes mirrored the purity of his heart. He prayed for the children who were presented to him that they may be protected from illness. He blessed them and often gave them sweets - three per child to represent the Blessed Trinity. He blessed rosaries, crucifixes and other sacramental objects for adults. He blessed water with which to wash those who were sick because, as he explained, blessed water had healing properties. "The sign of the Cross has infinite power", he often said.

OFFERING OF THE WOUNDS

In May 1930, when some difficulties were being experienced in Gozo, George wrote an encouraging letter to Rakele Camilleri, the leader of the women's movement in Gozo: "The Cross marks all the works which glorify God. Never lose heart. It's enough for us that God is glorified. Keep steadfast to the thought that God directs and governs everything to his own will ... Your methods should be silence and prayer, especially by offering the Wounds of Christ to God, and every trial disappears.... Carry out your apostolate quietly and prayerfully because God is on our side... Bring to mind the sufferings of the saints ... Oh, how Satan and his ministers hate the promotion of instruction! So courage, then! When a door is closed in our face, we seek to open another one and, if need be, we go underground in the catacombs like the first Christians."

St Josemaria Escriva said (in an address of 14 September 1969) that we should love the cross. "because where the Cross is, there is Christ with his Love, his presence that fills everything... It really bothers me when people use the Cross as a synonym for difficulty and mortification. The Cross is something positive, and has been ever since God chose to give us true life through the Cross. ... kiss the Cross, sincerely love it, because we no longer see in the Cross something we find or might find difficult, but the joy of being able to give ourselves, stripping ourselves of everything in order to find all the Love of God." So let us joyfully embrace what-ever cross the Lord gives us, trusting in his unfailing love.

This certainly adds another dimension to the Hobart red crosses.

HOBART'S TAKE ON THE CROSS

To return to Hobart's crosses. The cross is certainly a powerful symbol, and against the backdrop of the Hobart buildings; it leaves an impact. Does the inversion of the cross invoke rage?

The inverted cross reminds us of the suffering of St Peter who said he was unworthy to die in the same way as Jesus. Peter was killed by the emperor Nero for having an unacceptable faith in an intolerant culture based on power, and on intimidation.

Could the crosses be an opportunity to pray for a blessing on all the people of Tasmania, or even the world, for happiness, provision, and safety - regardless of their beliefs?

Could we embrace the 'publicity', positive or otherwise that may lead to the statement;

"O Holy Cross, I salute you!"

Peter L Judge
Preca Community



THE MUSEUM

- A VERY CURIOUS TITLE

On 7 March 1907, George Preca opened his first house in the village of Ħamrun in Malta. It was in this house, that he asked those present what the new group should be called. Silvio Muscat, who was present suggested the word – museum.

In the early days, the possessions were very frugal but Silvio said that while our possessions are miniscule, the most precious, is the Word of God, which we most definitely have. That evening, some of those present lifted Silvio up and he wrote the title MUSEUM on the front of the dwelling.

Although a source of humour at the time, Fr Preca, drew from the title M.U.S.E.U.M. and made it a prayer in Latin, Magister Untinam Sequatur Evangelium Universus Mundus translating Divine teacher, may the whole world follow the Gospel.

The name MUSEUM, though not an official one captured the imagination of the people. In the early days, the Church was uncomfortable with the name but in time, as it represented our mission statement, affection for it grew.

The SDC has been known by this name in popular terms ever since. For the sake of the record, the legally incorporated name of the SDC is the Latin, Societas Doctrinæ Christianæ.

Clearly this foundation based on the Word of God is the core of our work since 1907.

In Australia it was decided in a Chapter in the early days to not use this title. We are currently experimenting with referring to us as the Preca Community. While not officially endorsed, it provides some flexibility in who we are.

This magazine chose the masthead The MUSEUM to give due recognition, and appreciation to the early title that encompasses our tradition.

While some are still perplexed by the title The MUSUEM; it does at least provide an opportunity for an enquiring mind to seek answers.

*If you plant for a year, plant grain.
If you plant for ten years, plant trees.
If you plant for a 100 years, plant men.
If you plant for eternity, plant the Word - Unknown*

PRESERVING THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE SDC



Can you help? Someone may be able to assist us in identifying this picture; Peter Farrugia, John Micallef, Mgr Lawrence Patrick Moran, later ordained Bishop, and Joseph Sacco.



On 27.2.64, Publius Debastista, representing the General House visited all states in Australia. Arriving in Sydney on the TV Roma, the iconic migrant ship that brought many to Australia. On the ship, he took on the role of welfare officer.

† Verbum Dei caro factum est.

*A Happy Remembrance
of our Incorporation
with the
Society of Christian
Doctrine
M.U.S.E.U.M.*

29th December, 1957

*Maurice Borg
(Brompton, S.A.)*

*Anthony Caruana
(West Melb., Vic.)*

*Emmanuel Gauci
(Broadway, N.S.W.)*

*Faál Grech
(West Melb., Vic.)*

*First Incorporation
in Australia
Corpus Christi College,
Werribee, Victoria
Archdiocese
of Melbourne*

As we acknowledge our 70th year of foundation in Australia, we recall the first Incorporation Ceremony in 1957.



AGM Hobart, 1997. Gaetan Callus, Franco Zardo, Alex Pace, Archbishop Eric D'Arcy of Hobart.



Celebrating 60 years in Australia in 2016. Weekend held at Holy Cross, Templestowe facilitated by Fr Noel Connolly SSC.



A view of the Heidelberg Press at Dixon's Creek farm in the 1960s, under the care of Vincent Xerri.

RETURNED TO GOD

We hold them in prayer:

*May you see God's light on the path ahead
When the road you walk is dark.
May you always hear, Even in your
hour of sorrow,
The gentle singing of the lark.
When times are hard may hardness
Never turn your heart to stone,
May you always remember when
the shadows fall,
You do not walk alone.*

3.9.25 SALVATORE PRECA
28.9.25 WILLIAM MCMAHON
21.11.25 LEONARD MARIA TESTA
24.11.25 MARK CARUANA
20.4.26 CATHERINE PULLICINO
7.5.26 BERNIE MCFADYEN
28.5.26 ABRAHAM CENCHETTY
4.6.26 PATRICIA MCKAY
5.6.26 MICHAEL TATE
25.7.26 MARY ANNE DUNNE
4.8.26 YEN THI NGUYEN
23.8.26 BRIAN REILLY
6.9.26 DAVID CUMMING
11.9.26 JOSEPH FARRUGIA
19.9.26 ROSLYN HANIGAN

Disclaimer - While we make every endeavour to include those who have died and have been connected with the SDC, we apologise if we have missed someone.



Community in Adelaide visit the grave of Franco Zardo, RIP.

PRECA ACTION – SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE

Annual General Meeting 2026

The 69th Australian Annual General Meeting (AGM), held to commemorate 70 years of ministry in Australia, took place at the Mary MacKillop Spirituality Centre in Baulkham Hills, Sydney from 7–11 January 2026.

We were joined by Bishop Charles Gauci of Darwin, General Executive Council member Joseph Bonnici, and Alan Bonello, Council Member of the Delegation of Malta.

A significant highlight of the AGM was a pilgrimage to central Sydney, visiting the first sites where the SDC apostolate began in Sydney, Australia in 1956. This pilgrimage provided a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the origins of the mission and to give thanks for the past 70 years. A Thanksgiving Mass, presided by Bishop Charles Gauci, was celebrated at St Francis of Assisi, Paddington.

Walking together through story, place and tradition, while deepening our shared mission and identity.

The AGM was a memorable occasion, marked not only by gratitude for the past but also by a renewed sense of hope, and confidence for the future. During the gathering, SDC Members and formalised Associates renewed their commitment to the SDC mission.



During the AGM 2026, a video with Peter Farrugia, only surviving Member of the first six missioned to Australia, had a discussion with the Superior General, Roberto Zammit about the early days.



First stop; St Benedict's, Broadway. First Preca centre in Sydney.



Celebratory Mass at St Francis of Assisi, Paddington.



A significant stop was St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. Members who worked nearby attended daily Mass at the cathedral.

A Journey of Self-Discovery

On Saturday, 11 April 2026, the members of the SDC Centre of St Albans organised a day retreat for the youth and young adults who attend the centre. The theme of the day was *A Journey of Self-Discovery*. The retreat was attended by an encouraging number of young people.

The morning session was facilitated by Br Foua Peato SDB, a Salesian seminarian, who engaged the participants with an action song and spoke about the importance of confidence when facing life's struggles and challenges. Participants were also given the opportunity to share, through group discussions, how one discovers oneself, and commits one's life to God.



A presentation made to the facilitator, Foua Peato SDB.



Tenth Anniversary of Adelaide Precia Family Weekend

The SDC members of the Brompton SDC Centre in Adelaide, South Australia, organised the annual Precia Family Weekend from Friday 10 July to Sunday 12 July 2026 at the Dzintari Latvian Camp Site, Yankalilla. The chosen theme was *Loving Our Neighbour with Great Charity*.

The weekend began with dinner, followed by prayers, an introductory session and a movie night. Adults and children alike enjoyed watching *The Sheep Detectives*.

On Saturday morning, theme-based workshops were held separately for parents, young adults, and children. On Sunday, separate reflection sessions were organised for parents and young adults, while the children participated in a second workshop. The Maltese SDC Members who are currently visiting Australia led most of these sessions.

On Saturday afternoon, Delegate John Micallef facilitated a whole family session, where all family members were invited to take part in Conversations in the Spirit and reflect on the will of God for the family in this moment.

The programme also included time for prayer, silent adoration in a chapel specially set up for the occasion, games for young adults, and the celebration of the Eucharist. On Saturday afternoon, the Companions in Mission organised a treasure hunt for the teenagers, followed in the evening by a quiz night after dinner.

St George Precia Mass

The yearly Mass for the feast of St George Precia is held on or around 9 May. The Sydney group gathered with Fr Laurie Cauchi presiding.



Saints On Parade

During their family gathering, young people from Precia Centre, Altona Meadows highlighted the story of the saints to coincide with All Saints Day 2025.

PRECA ACTION – SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE CONTINUED



Annual Reflection Weekend

The Preca Community of the Delegation of Australia gathered at The Monastery, a retreat centre run by the Passionists in Adelaide (South Australia), from 3 to 6 July 2026 for the Annual Reflection Weekend. This year's retreat was led by the Secretary General, Ruben Pace who is currently visiting the SDC Centre in Adelaide together with two other SDC Members from Malta.

The theme of the retreat was Behold, Go Forth, Stand. Participants were invited to reflect on these three attitudes of a disciple of Jesus through three moments in the life of his mother, Mary: the Annunciation, the Visitation, and Mary at the foot of the Cross.

These reflections helped participants to contemplate Christ through Mary's gaze.



Catholic Religious Australia

Secretary, Peter Judge represented the SDC at the annual national assembly for Catholic Religious Australia. The theme of the meeting from 3 -5 August 2026 was *Our Adventure of Love, for the Life of the World*. There were over 140 religious congregations represented at this gathering in Melbourne.

Meeting George's Neighbour

During the feast of St George Preca at Holy Eucharist St Albans, we were introduced to a relative of George Preca who met with him before he migrated to Australia in 1957.

Alfred Spiteri recalled that, as a little boy, he was afraid of Fr George Preca. Whenever he saw Fr Preca walking along the street, he would try to hide or pretend not to notice him, sometimes even crossing to the other side of the road to avoid an encounter.

Shortly before migrating to Australia, Alfred experienced a moment he never forgot. Fr Preca singled him out and asked him to kneel before him to receive a blessing. With characteristic gentleness, Fr Preca told Alfred that he was aware of the many occasions on which he had tried to avoid meeting him. The remark surprised Alfred, revealing not only Fr Preca's attentiveness but also his personal concern for him. The blessing remained a treasured memory throughout Alfred's life.

Fr Preca also encouraged Alfred to recall the sentence '*Verbum Dei Caro Factum Est*' every day, assuring him that it would help preserve and protect him from dangers throughout his life.

In later years, Alfred often reflected on those words. He recalled a number of serious accidents and potentially dangerous situations that he had avoided in Australia and firmly believed that the protection he received was connected to Fr Preca's blessing and his faithful daily recitation of the *Verbum Dei*. For Alfred, this was not merely a childhood memory but a lasting source of confidence in God's providence and care.



Fr John Flader

Fr John Flader, author, and a former director of the Catholic Adult Education Centre in Sydney, has written Question Time for *The Catholic Weekly* since 2005. He completes his term in Hobart offering Mass at Preca House, Hobart, twice monthly.



Roderick, Carla Mastrangeli, Josephite affiliate, Johann, Ruben.

Catholic Youth Festival

Photographed in front of a seemingly content George Preca at St Patrick's Cathedral, young people from Adelaide assemble in Melbourne for Catholic Youth Festival in December 2025.



Gathering of young adults in Guilford Young Chapel, Hobart.

Visiting Delegation

Two SDC members from the Delegation of Malta, Roderick Spiteri and Johann Tabone, visited the centres of the Delegation of Australia from 29 June to 30 July 2026. The month-long visit provided an opportunity to experience the SDC mission in different parts of Australia and, to strengthen the bonds between the two delegations.

The Secretary General Ruben Pace, spent time in Adelaide, delivering the Annual Reflection Weekend at The Monastery.

During their visit to Adelaide, General Secretary, Ruben Pace, and Members from Malta, Roderick Spiteri, and Johann Tabone paid a visit to Mary MacKillop Spirituality Centre. Against the backdrop of a very young Mary MacKillop, and Julian Tennison Woods, they were able to grasp the favour in founding the Sisters of St Joseph.



Catholic Youth Festival participants, Adelaide, and St Albans.

PRECA ACTION – SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE CONTINUED

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS:

Demonstration of Baby Jesus

A number of families, children, young people and adults gathered in front of the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Valletta on Thursday, 18 December 2025, for the Demonstration of Baby Jesus. Following a welcome message by the Delegate of the Superior General, the Superior General encouraged those present to be true devotees of Baby Jesus by committing themselves to becoming more like him, since, as taught by St George Preca, that true devotion lies in imitation.

This Preca tradition continues in countries where we are present.



Incorporation of New Members

The Lord God has graciously blessed the Society of Christian Doctrine (SDC) with five new members on Saturday, 27 December 2025.

In his address, the SDC Member Mario Bezzina reminded these five young men, that the grace of the vocation, will bring about three changes in their lives. They will be marked by the virtue of meekness and gentleness, which will lead them to sincere forgiveness of one's neighbour. They will also be given the grace that, through a life of prayer as Members, they will have the opportunity to adore the Lord God throughout their lives. The third change is faithful living according to the Rule of Life, which from today will become their guide on the path to holiness.

The Superior General shared his message on this beautiful occasion for the SDC and offered his congratulations to those members who are commemorating the 50th, 60th and 70th anniversaries of their incorporation. We give thanks to the Lord God for them.

As we give thanks to the Lord God for David Abela, Jake Bezzina, Gilbert Borg, Wayne Borg and Joseph Mizzi, let us commit ourselves to praying for them, that they may live their vocation authentically and continue to do God's will through their calling within the Society.

Festival de la Comunión

On Sunday, 19 April 2026, the annual Festival de la Comunión took place in the Diocese of Lurín. Parishes and communities from across the diocese gathered to celebrate unity and to strengthen their sense of fellowship. The SDC centre of Lurín participated by setting up a stall offering books and religious items for sale.

During the event, Mass was celebrated by Bishop Carlos Enrique García Camader, President of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, in a vibrant and uplifting atmosphere fostered by the strong presence of young people.

Members of the SDC distributed leaflets about the Founder, St George Preca, and about the SDC itself, with particular emphasis on its apostolate and the events organised by the SDC centre of Lurín. This contributed to making the SDC better known by forming new connections.



In Cuba

Thanks be to God, the Society of Christian Doctrine (SDC) celebrated the Ceremony of Incorporation in Sagua La Grande, Cuba, on Friday, 24 July 2026, during which the candidate Yohansys Rojo Gonzalez became a full member of the Society.

Over recent years, Yohansys has received his formation within the Sagua centre and has been actively responsible for the adolescents' group at the same SDC centre, among other commitments.

The ceremony was presided over by the Superior General, while the address of the occasion was delivered by the member John Mifsud, who emphasised that every vocation is a gift given by God for the benefit of the community.

Those present included the Apostolic Nuncio to Cuba, Monsignor Antoine Camilleri; Monsignor Arturo Gonzalez Amador, Bishop of the Diocese of Santa Clara; the Parish Priest of Sagua La Grande, Fr Wilfredo Leiter Juvier; and Fr Stephen Magro, a missionary priest and parish priest of the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Santa Clara.

The children and adolescents of the centre, together with their parents, and the members of the St George Preca Group, attended this hope-filled celebration.

At the end of the celebration, the Superior General distributed copies of the book *Tras Los Pasos de Jesús*, written in Spanish by the Superior of the Sagua centre, Stephen Zammit, which reflects on the exemplary and inspiring life of Gilbert Simiana.

We give thanks to the Lord for blessing the Society of Christian Doctrine with a new vocation.



Jubilee of Catechists

The Archdiocese of Malta celebrated the Jubilee of Catechists on Wednesday, 12 November 2025, at the Auditorium of the General House of the Society of Christian Doctrine. The celebration was coordinated by the Lifelong Catechesis within the Archdiocese.

The gathering began with a time of prayer and reflections inspired by St George Preca. Afterwards, those present listened to the homily delivered by Pope Leo XIV during the Catechists' Jubilee Mass held in Rome on 28 September.

The celebration continued with the sharing of experiences from several catechists involved in the adult catechumenate programme (RCIA), the Kenosis Foundation, the Women's Section of the SDC, and the Post-Cresima experience within the Neocatechumenal Way.

In his message, Archbishop Charles J Scicluna expressed his gratitude to the catechists for their dedication within the Church and encouraged them to continue bringing Christ to others.



FEAST OF THE VIRTUES - RADICAL FORGIVENESS IN A LIFE OF SERVICE – THE WITNESS OF ST STEPHEN

There is a time to speak up and a time to remain silent.

Stephen's friends probably thought he should have shut up. He did not, and paid the ultimate price.

Stephen was a young man in the small community in Jerusalem that developed following the Pentecost event. He was also a good young man, one of the best. Luke says that he was 'filled with faith and the Holy Spirit'. He had a knack for service, and in a small community, this would have been obvious. The community, called 'the Way', was growing. The love and fellowship and promise of eternity it offered was attractive, especially to the dispossessed, the widows and the orphans. Service to the poor – the fruit of love - is one of the signs of Christ present among us. The needy were increasing and the need for service was growing.

This troubled the apostles. They were called to proclaim the gospel, to act as a leaven for the faithful of their community, but were being tied down by day to day practicalities. They needed hands for a specific kind of labour in the Lord's vineyard. So they sliced off one of their roles, that of serving the temporal needs of their community and delegated it to suitable candidates nominated by the community. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."* Mark 10:45.

Stephen was among the first. They called them 'diaconia (διακονία)', which in English we call 'deacon', because they did 'diaconia', that is, they served the community. It included some spiritual roles, such as teaching and pastoral work, as well as practical roles, such as the distribution of physical resources.

So Stephen leapt into the work. Joyfully. Fully.

In the course of his daily work, Stephen used the opportunity to talk about his faith, especially to ordinary people. At that time the community was growing rapidly - now having the new diaconia -and even a large group of priests converted and became part of the community. Stephen would engage Jewish men in discussion and was very effective in this, but one time this did not work out well. There were foreign

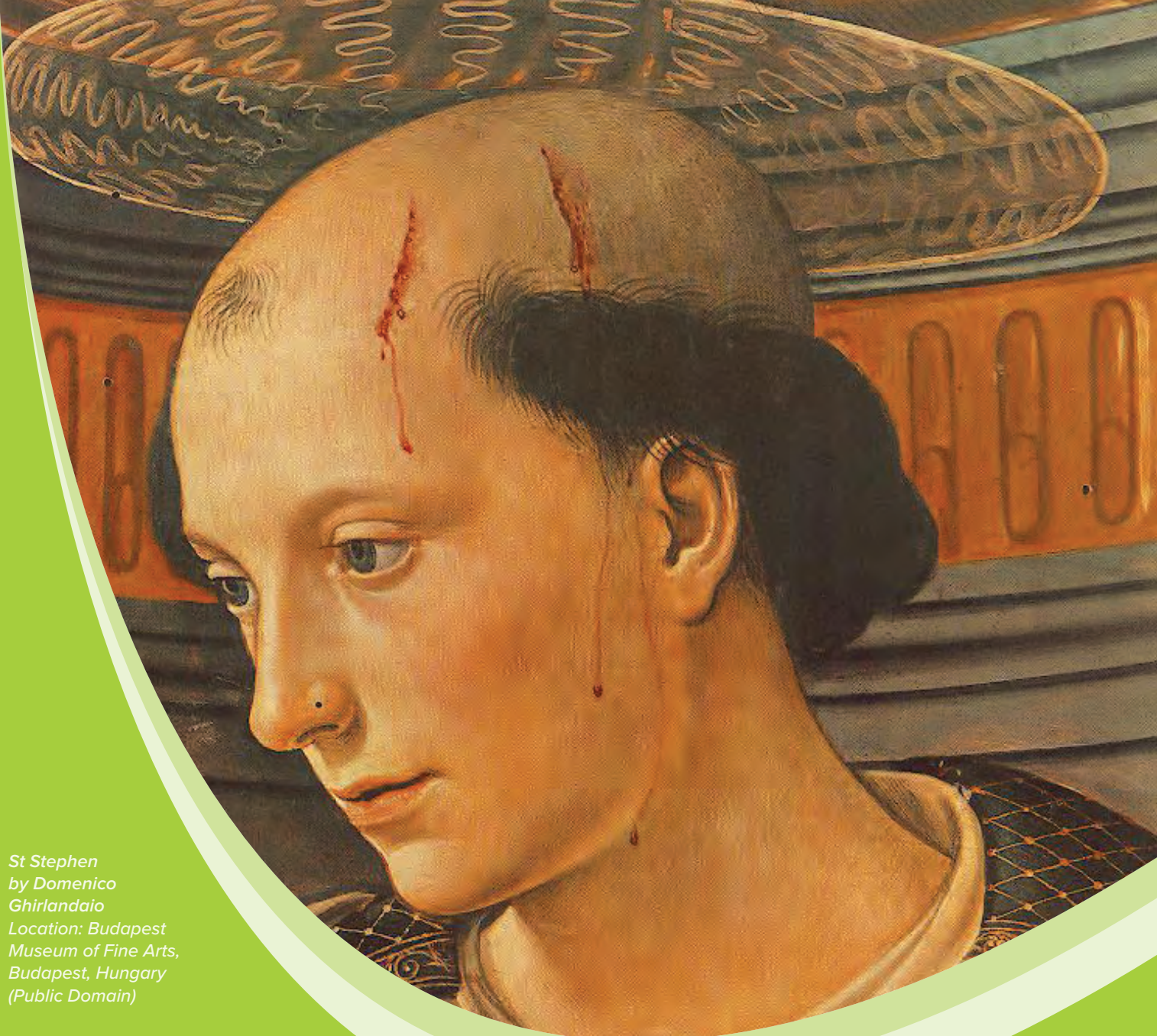
Greek-speaking Jews who had their own synagogue who were greatly put out by Stephen getting the better of them. They slandered him and accused him of blasphemy against Moses. So people were stirred up and took a complaint to the Sanhedrin 'where they presented false witnesses who said, *"This man never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us."*' Acts 6:13-14

Then comes the utterly brave and reckless part. True faith is reckless, for what is this life compared to eternal life? Instead of mounting a defense and countering the slander, Stephen conducted a catechesis. Even more, he baited the Sanhedrin. Acts chapter 7 gives an account of the trial. Luke writes it, and while it is not a verbatim transcript, it was related by Paul, who was there under his original name Saul, and took part, and approved of the final action. How he must have regretted it in later life, after his conversion!

Stephen's final words condemned him. He could have kept his mouth shut. Instead he baited and enraged the Sanhedrin. They were strong words *"You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as your fathers did. Which of the prophets did your fathers fail to persecute? They even killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One. And now you are His betrayers and murderers—you who received the law ordained by angels, yet have not kept it."* Acts 7:51-53

So they covered their ears, yelled out, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

How could he have done this? Why did he not simply remain silent? Jesus himself tells us *"When you are brought before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say. For at that time the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say."* Luke 12:11-12. So Stephen was so much in love with Christ his master, that he could not remain silent, and abandoned himself to the will of God, as Jesus did, and thus let God speak these words into the scriptures for all generations.



St Stephen
by Domenico
Ghirlandaio
Location: Budapest
Museum of Fine Arts,
Budapest, Hungary
(Public Domain)

But it did not simply end there. The great Christ-like action was not complete. It is his final words that testify to his greatness, and the reason he is held up for our example to follow. 'Falling on his knees, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.' Acts 7:60

Radical forgiveness. Possibly the greatest and most difficult sign of the presence of Christ among us. We call it meekness. It is the only vow that members make – and then only for 24 hours at a time, as it is so difficult. And our patron for the virtue of meekness in the Preca community is, of course, Stephen.

Stephen is also the patron of our candidates for membership. He is the example of what it means to serve the physical and spiritual needs of our

community, joyfully, fully, and in a fearless way, while living in the world and interacting with people who may oppose their call and way of life.

Dear Lord, meek Lamb of God, may all our community, especially the candidates, walk fearlessly in the way of radical forgiveness, never afraid to witness to you in the world and refusing to shut up in the face of evil and of opposition to your Gospel. Amen

Joseph Kielnerowski
Preca Community



I WILL COME TO YOU IN THE SILENCE

- SILENCE AND GEORGE PRECA

In a number of churches in Italy, and perhaps other parts of the world where tourists/pilgrims flock to famous shrines, a janitor occasionally requests silence with the expression; 'Silencio!'

In contrast there is an audible silence for a few seconds and then the chatter returns. This can especially be witnessed at St Francis church in Assisi.

For an outsider, it is quite a humorous moment which in the end it does not achieve its very purpose; ie. silence in the sacred space.

This reflection provides some insight to the value, and beauty of silence, not only in a sacred space, but in our everyday routine.

Since an early age, George Preca had a special devotion to Mary as Our Lady of Good Counsel; he was urged to do so by his confessor. On a wall of

his house he had a depiction of Our Lady of Good Counsel and every day, passing by the image, he would pray: Mater Boni Consilii, ora pro me; Mother of Good Counsel, pray for me.

*He attributed to her his habit of practicing *Serva silentium*; Observe silence, which he also imparted to the Members: *Servemus silentium, et silentium servet nos*; "Let us observe silence, and silence preserves us."*

In his writings, George Preca finds time for silence. A reflection to strengthen this concept, written by a now deceased Member in the 1970s, John Formosa is provided here:

Everyone knows about the need for silence in human life. In some American stores, there are machines where you insert a coin and they play a record you request from a provided list.

Someone thought of putting a 'blank' record on the list, which when "played", does not play anything! It was found that this "blank" record is chosen by many... because they want to stop for a little bit of quiet. However, many are afraid of silence, because silence, allows you to reflect.

George Preca was very convinced about the value of silence, often referring to it in his writings. He rarely missed an opportunity to praise its worth.

He devoted a chapter to this subject in many of his books, e.g.: The School of Bethlehem (Pages 1-3), The Great Book (Page XIX), The Spiritual Examination, The Voice of the Guardian (Ch. 4, when he speaks of Prudence), The Oration (Ch. 4) where he places silence as a preparation for the Oration), The Echo of the Friends (Ch. 2), the Spiritual Gymnasium (Ch. 4 where he suggests silence, and patience as the two oars for salvation), The Pulpit of Father Franco (Pulpit n. 2 etc.), Rules of the Saints (Ch. 33), Address to Children (Address n. 11). And this is in addition to the many references to it in his various writings.

Even in his meetings with Members, he reminded us of the scriptural verse:

"The cult of justice: silence" (Is 32,1 7) and would tell us that this means that whoever loves it lives without fault. Indeed, in the tract 'Five Things for a Good Confession' Traian says: "You will find little to confess if your tongue, and your eyes are moderated."

This idea seems to be taken from the life of St Thomas Aquinas in an episode that George Preca often repeated to us: Two young men who asked him what they had to do to live a perfect life? Thomas Aquinas replied: "Do not be curious and do not be foolish.

Why did Fr Preca give so much importance to silence? He liked to tell us that silence brings harmony and peace, as unnecessary words are always the cause of many conflicts, and disputes. He used to say that silence, especially internal silence, has the effect of reflection. He observed that the prodigal son, while he was in silence, reflected on his misgivings. (Luke 15) And as an example he would mention the church of Msida in Malta, which at that time was completely surrounded by sea. He would tell us that when the water was calm, you could see the reflection of the church building on the surface of the sea, but when there was even the slightest disturbance, the reflection would disappear.

During retreats, Fr Preca especially wanted them to take place in silence. The retreat is an appointment with God, and in it we stop from the fast pace of life to see what God wants to tell us, because God usually speaks only in silence. He would quote God's words through the Prophet Hosea: "I will take the soul in silence and there I will speak to its heart." (Hos 2,1 6). The Apostle of Retreats.

The Servant of God, Father Matteo Crawley (1875-1960), a Peruvian modern apostle of the Sacred Heart often said on retreats; "one more word on your part may mean one less word on God's part."

Silence brings many, many spiritual benefits. St Ignatius Loyola used to "measure" the spiritual progress of a community house by how much silence was observed.

Perhaps someone will say: But that was another day! But, even in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, as well as in those that came later to explain it, the need for silence and recollection is emphasised. Thus, for example, the Council, in para. 30 of the Constitution on the Liturgy, speaks of the need for moments of silence in the Liturgy. And in Pope Paul VI's document Evangelica Testificatio of 29.6.1971, we find at least two paragraphs (35,46) that speak clearly about the need for silence for those who are given to the work of the apostolate.

Fr Preca in The School of Bethlehem (Page 13) writes that the first lesson that Jesus gave to mankind when he entered the world was about Silence."The first lesson that Christ gave to the world is silence, and he showed that through silence, the kingdom of God enters the heart of man."

WHEN THE OTHER IS A BLESSING

Two episodes in the Gospel according to Luke show us how encounters with others may help us to know ourselves better. These are Mary's visit to Elizabeth (1, 39-56) and the episode of Zacchaeus (19, 1-10).

The first step in meeting someone else is to leave one's comfort zone and walk towards the other. To meet Elizabeth, her relative, Mary set out on a long journey. Like Mary who had to cross the hills and travel around obstacles, we must overcome any prejudice, false images we may project about others, and whatever else may inhibit our lives. It may be so easy to say: "He is difficult to be with" or "I don't have the time to share with others" or "It is hard for me to make this visit today."

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Mary entered Elizabeth's house and greeted her, and at that moment, the baby leapt in Elizabeth's womb. Through hearing her cousin's greeting, Elizabeth recognises the unborn baby as the Saviour in Mary's womb; at the same moment, she encounters what the Lord has done within herself. She truly recognises who she is: the blessed mother of the Lord's forerunner.

Successful meetings awaken our vitality. Something of which we were not aware blossoms within us and reveals itself. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and loudly speaks words of blessing, calling Mary "the mother of my Lord."

When such a momentous event in our own lives goes well, mirroring this prototype, we realise who the other person is and who we really are. The other person becomes a blessing to us, and we become a blessing to the other person. We are reminded of what Fr Ercole Monpalao once said to the Founder in the Floriana Mall: "Precia, you will grow up and people who love God will find their fortune with you, and you will find your fortune with them." At times we may feel we have been touched by something greater than ourselves. It is like heaven opening before us. We will be having the same experience that Mary had, as Elizabeth said to her: "Blessed are you who believed." It is a joyful experience of a meeting that has left such a fruitful legacy.

Suddenly, we feel in harmony with ourselves, something that engenders peace and deep joy, like that which Mary expresses in the sublime song of the "Magnificat". She recognises in this meeting that God is looking at her and being pleased with her. She is enlightened by the meeting with Elizabeth and understands what the Angel Gabriel had promised in his announcement.

OPENING ONESELF TO THE MYSTERY OF GOD

Zacchaeus, a rich man, was of a short stature, which was an inconvenience in his life. We must believe that he did all he could to compensate for his size, perhaps by becoming head of the tax collectors. But he was still considered a sinner. Whenever someone talked about Jesus, something touched his heart. He climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus without being seen, hidden among the branches and the leaves. As he approached him, Jesus "looked up." In certain languages, the term "sin" implies being set aside, excluded from society. Zacchaeus had been set aside by the community. Besides, "looking up" could imply that Jesus looked up to heaven and there he saw Zacchaeus. In him he perceived a person open to the mystery of God, recognising his sincere desire: that he was trying to be himself, that also others may see him and recognise this transformation in him.

Jesus does not preach to Zacchaeus; he does not talk to him about morals. He just tells him: "Zacchaeus, come down, for today I need to be with you." Jesus's look, seeing in Zacchaeus his dignity, as well as the way he spoke to him, all showing that he did not pass judgment on him, but rather offered him a relationship of compassion, which changed the outcast publican completely. Now, Zacchaeus no longer considered having a lot of money so important. Thanks to his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus was completely healed of his sin, finally discovering his real self.

WORDS THAT LIFT US UP

Luke uses the word "today" twice during the meeting with Zacchaeus and self-invitation for a meal with him. For Luke, accounts of a meal are always an image of the Eucharist. This repeated "today" suggests that every time the Eucharist is celebrated, what happened to Zacchaeus happens to us, too.



Jesus raises his eyes towards us, and within us He sees heaven, and he speaks words that do not judge, but on the contrary they lift us up. The Eucharist is also an invitation to meet others as our true brothers and sisters, as Jesus did.

Jesus invites us to try to see heaven in others instead of judging them. We should refrain from lecturing them, and, instead, do our best to find words that lift them up and encourage them. A true encounter always leads to inner freedom. There is no need to show off our righteousness in comparison to the other, nor to justify our wrongdoings to appear holy. It is enough to be contented with each other.

OUR GATHERINGS

Meeting other Members is a regular occurrence in the Society. It is part of our way of life. We meet often with a few Members in our respective Centres, but we also meet with all who gather on Wednesdays for our weekly General Meetings. Some of us come from nearby localities, others from further towns. We also enjoy visits from Members coming from Centres abroad. The least we can do is to wish each other a wholehearted greeting of peace which they would heartily reciprocate. But let us not stop there; many Members would also like to have a word with other Members. May we satisfy this desire by stopping for a while and sharing a few words with them. If they do not initiate an exchange themselves, let us do it ourselves. Let us not forget that we are members of a family. The least you can expect in a family is to have time for each other, to talk and to share. And without fail we will always find something interesting to talk about, considering that life is full of surprises.

It is understood that we mostly meet Members belonging to the Centre where we attend regularly for hours, day after day, week after week, and year after year. These occasions offer us an opportunity to share our stories, with their happy or sad memories. We enjoy the moment when we find someone listening to us. Cordial and informal encounters at the very least help us to understand each other and build up genuine interest in one another.

We should aim to communicate with every Member. We all understand that every person has his own character. Some may be open to others and always ready to communicate courteously, while others are more reserved. Then you must be the one to open yourself to them. But even in such cases, you often discover that you have much to receive from those who do not easily make their voices heard when in a group. It is different when you talk to people on a one-to-one basis, and they may offer pleasant and meaningful moments.

We should always keep in mind the exhortation of Saint Paul: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15). It is here that companionship among Members should stand out. God forbid that we stay cold or indifferent in the moments of joy or sadness that our friends go through. May we be sensitive as Mary was during the wedding at Cana. She noticed that wine had run out, and she did her best to help. When a friend is at ease, the group would notice why at once. But in cases of sorrow, it is another matter; not all want to talk about their sorrow. But the face is a mirror of the heart, and once we notice a colleague not behaving as usual, may we show our solidarity, using necessary prudence and without appearing to interfere where it is not our business. No Member should be left to bear a burden all by himself.

Taking Mary and Zacchaeus as our models, let us continue to cultivate this desire to truly meet one another, a characteristic so much evident in the lives of the first Christians. This should stand out also among the Members of the Society, as it was the Founder himself that instilled so well this openness to one another, repeating the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another."

Joseph Galea
Preca Community

ACKNOWLEDGING 70 YEARS

– REMEMBERING AND RECHARGING

Verbum Dei Caro Factum Est
SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE



Preca
COMMUNITY

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1956 - 2026

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We always seem to be celebrating milestones; some are missed while others have their fair share of notability. While we learn from the past, it is a mistake to dwell on the past without looking to the future.

The SDC was founded in 1907; this date is imbedded in our minds. In 2027, we will celebrate 120 years of foundation. This comment from George Preca himself sums up very aptly the sentiments associated with the foundation of the SDC;

On Sunday 1 May 1932, all Members, men and women, gathered in the Jesuits' church in Valletta and, together with the Bishop, they sang the Te Deum. They thanked God that after twenty-five years of patient work and humble perseverance, the Society was canonically approved in the Maltese Islands. On that occasion, Archbishop Maurus Caruana delivered an encouraging address following original reluctance in establishing the SDC so as to describe the Society as "his right hand". Fr Preca was present in the church; keeping a low profile, staying out of sight during Mass. However, at the end of the celebration he embraced Eugene Borg, the Superior General, and exclaimed: "Eugene, would you ever have thought what God had in store for the Society!"

RETURNING TO ORIGINAL SITES

It was quite amazing when during the AGM 2026, we visited the historical sites connected with the foundation in Sydney. Notably, all sites were inner city which are now prominent places in the Church in Sydney; St Benedict's, Broadway, and St Francis of Assisi, Paddington. St Benedict's established as a SDC centre in 1956, and St Francis of Assisi in 1966.

When we reached St Mary's Cathedral, we were rewarded with muffins bearing the 70th logo.



Brandon and Noel.



Station Pier, Port Melbourne

THE JOURNEY UNFOLDS

Station Pier, Port Melbourne was the point of arrival of immigrant ships. Maurice Mifsud, John Portelli, Joseph Sacco, bound for Melbourne on the MV Surriento in 1956. Peter Farrugia, arrives separately. Vincent Xerri and John Micallef arrive together. All chosen, and sent by George Preca.

Charles Azzopardi, Emmanuel Mifsud, also sent by George Preca for Adelaide arrive on the MV Argentina in 1957.

Prior to these official dates, there were Members engaged in various forms of ministry in Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney.

Malta, served as a strategic base for Allied forces during World War II. When the war ended Malta and the Maltese were physically and economically under heavy stress. Malta and Gozo were overpopulated and the unemployment was very high. Therefore, between 1948 and 1973 a large number of Maltese paid the Australian Government ten pounds, sold up their belongings and sailed for Australia under the Malta-Australia Passage Scheme.

Maurice Mifsud, now deceased was one of the six Members commissioned by the Founder to begin in Australia. Here in a document found in the SDC archives, he relates the beginning;

In January 1955, Fr George Preca called a meeting of those interested in spreading the mission of the SDC overseas. He was not satisfied with the preliminary activities which some Members, who had left Malta to seek employment overseas, were doing.

In the first meeting there were about fifty present. The number kept decreasing in later meetings, and in August of the same year he asked for Members, even those slightly interested, to attend a September meeting where he said that in November, he would choose those who were to go.

At the November meeting around eighteen Members attended, the Founder wanted to send twelve but those who had any doubt whatsoever were asked to wait for a later opportunity. He eventually chose six who were prepared to go no matter the circumstances.

The first daily Assignment in West Melbourne was held on 18 April 1956 sitting on beds. There was nowhere else to meet. Some days later, after presenting a letter from the Archbishop of Malta, Michael Gonzi, also signed by Fr Preca, and the Superior General, Eugenio Borg, to the Melbourne Archbishop, Daniel Mannix, we were granted permission to form boys twelve years and over. Later on, after acquiring the use of premises at St Mary's, West Melbourne, we expanded our activities.

The first Candidates ceremony in Australia was held at Broadway centre, Sydney, at St Benedict's School, Broadway on 16.12.56.

The first Ceremony of Candidates in Melbourne was held on Christmas Day, 1956, and sometime later we also had a ceremony where young men from Maltese, Australian, Italian, and other nationalities received the insignia of the SDC.



Maurice, early days in West Melbourne set for 'mission on wheels'. This form of ministry was a mainstay of the Preca Community for many years.



ST BENEDICT'S CHURCH, BROADWAY

In Sydney, things were progressing as well. St Benedict's Church, Broadway was consecrated in 1856. Like St Mary's Cathedral, it is designed by Augustus Pugin. Today it is administered by the Dominicans.

In 1956, Cardinal Norman Gilroy told Father T Licari a Maltese Carmelite, who became the chaplain of the Members in Sydney that the parish priest of St Benedict Broadway, Fr John Roche, 1911-1998, an ex-Australian Navy Chaplain was willing to welcome our group to his parish as catechists.

We were provided with two rooms in the Marist College, Broadway. Unfortunately, our occupancy there came to a sad end when the rooms we occupied were needed for the ever-expanding school. However, as the adage goes 'one door closes, another opens!'.



Fr John Roche



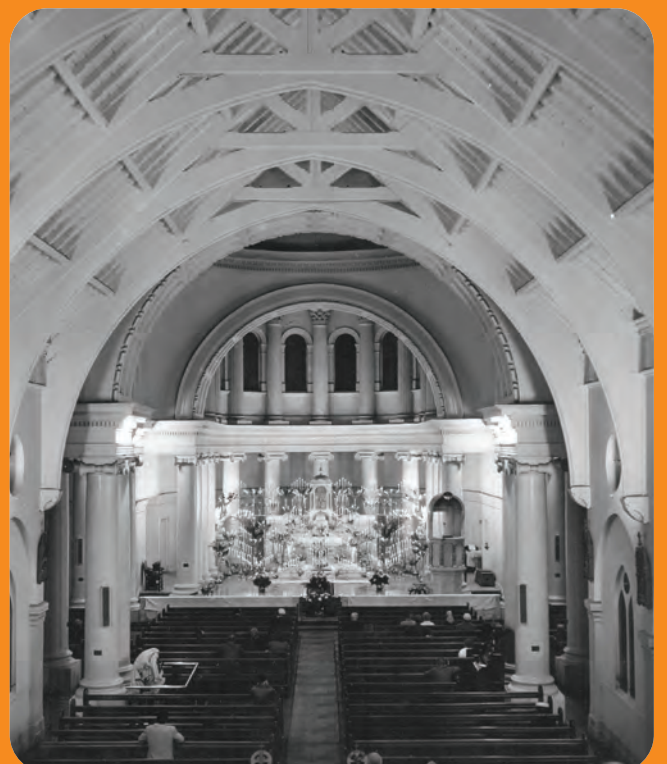
Hidden deep within the suburb of Woolloomooloo is the historic St Columbkille's Church which is administered by St Mary's Cathedral Parish. In the 1950s catered for newly arrived migrants from Malta and Italy.

ST COLUMBKILLE'S CHURCH, WOOLLOOMOOLOO (CHAPEL OF EASE)

Hidden deep within the suburb of Woolloomooloo is the historic St Columbkille's Church which is administered by St Mary's Cathedral Parish. In the 1950s catered for newly arrived migrants from Malta and Italy.

In 1955, we were also given the okay by Cardinal Norman Gilroy to begin catechism classes at St Columbkille's church, Woolloomooloo (meaning *place of plenty* or *Wallabahmullah*, meaning *a young black kangaroo*).

First catechism class by the SDC in Sydney conducted in this church in 1955.





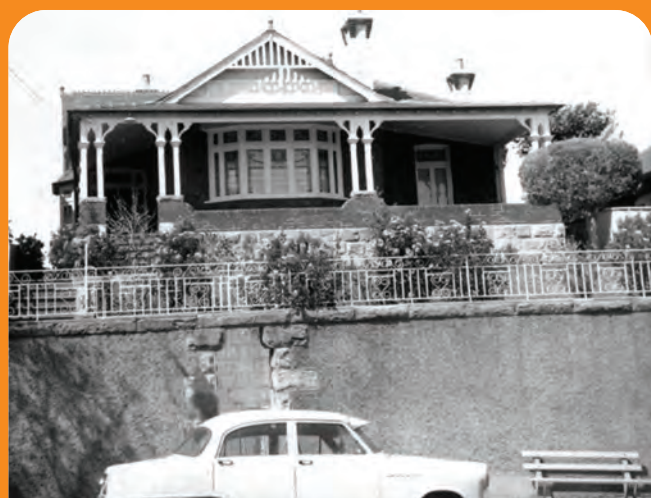
ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI CHURCH, PADDINGTON

Francis of Assisi Church is located along Oxford Street, in the inner-city eastern suburb of Paddington. This heritage listed church was designed by John Bede Barlow, and built in 1890 in a combination of Victorian Academic Gothic and Victorian Romanesque architectural styles.

It is currently administered by Franciscans, who were also present when we began in 1966.

In 1960 St Francis of Assisi' hall where we gathered each day was provided for us. The first meeting at Paddington was held in the Legion Room on 26.9.60.

It was here in this church of St Francis on 7.1.26 where Bishop Charles Gauci during the 2026 Annual General Meeting, held in Sydney, presided at a Mass to acknowledge 70 years in Australia.



Purchased for SDC use including community living by three Members who shared a first name of Joseph. Blessed on 8.12.66. Sold due to re-zoning of the area, and a dwelling/centre was purchased at Carss Park.

ST JOSEPH'S HOUSE, CENTENNIAL PARK

This is only a glimpse of our ministry in Australia. We acknowledge those generous Members who contributed to the beginning of our work in Australia.

Many battled under difficult conditions. We were often misunderstood, but only wished the best for all which is; 'Jesus be known, and loved'.



Preca Centre, Carss Park, 1990s.

A JOURNEY ABROAD

It was my privilege to participate in the Jubilee of Catechetics, and the Jubilee of Mission in October 2025. In between the two events, I stayed in the Prato district in Rome, travelling to Malta before, and after the Jubilee.

WATCH, REFLECT, ACT

On arriving in Malta, I found myself in the middle of a series of challenging films that were being offered to the public by the SDC on the theme of 'education'. Held at the DHS Conference Centre, the films were challenging, and highlighted the fine line between educational aspirations, and expressions of methodology in delivering education to the young people of today.

Each day, participants were invited to reflect on the values of justice and hope that we are called to recognise in children and young people today. Following the screening, the discussion on the theme continued during an informal gathering.

Catering for the film nights was satisfactorily provided for by the young Candidates. When serving the wine provided, I asked for the vintage of the wine that was served; much to their dismay. When warned by his confrère about my enquiry, I quizzed one young chap on the vintage of the wine; he was able to put me straight by saying that the wine was red! A hilarious moment all round confirming there is not always confusion in translating!

MALTA TRAVEL ON TO ROME

The hire car from the Samaritan House booked for 4.30 am bound for the airport did not arrive. Panic ensued, not by myself but with the ever-accommodating night staff who made sure that I was awake, ready, and off to the Luqa airport.

From Rome airport to our waiting coach, I was someone impaired as the distance was quite a stretch. This was not a good start to my time in Rome as my mobility was seriously affected throughout the trip. Nevertheless, I kept up the pace, and soldiered on.

DOMUS AUSTRALIA

There were a number of activities that we attended in Rome but the visit to Our Lady of Pompeii church attached to Domus Australia was a highlight. The chapel is where the image of St George Preca by Australian artist, Paul Newton is housed. Many of us thought that Domus Australia is in Australia. The house



George is in good company; Teresa of Lisieux, and Dominic Guzman.

caters for guests of all persuasions, and nationalities travelling to Rome, and has a definite Australian feel; serving vegemite for breakfast, and the occasional lamington.

Paul has granted us to use his picture with due acknowledgement related to artist, and location.



Jubilee of Catechists at final Mass.

PONTIFICAL URBAN COLLEGE, ROME

Founded in 1627, the Pontificio Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide (Pontifical Urban College for the Propagation of the Faith) aimed to prepare missionaries to promote Catholicism globally.

We were presented with a series of talks here in concordance with the Jubilee of Mission. While inspiring, my focus was the reason for the college to exist; with the Church investing a lot of energy into missionary activity. It reminded me of the early days of my formation in the SDC where films on evangelisation in overseas countries were shown to us. This was a tangible link for me.

We had the privilege of ascending to the roof which overlooked St Peter's; a truly magical moment!



Roberto Zammit, and Peter Judge over-looking the Vatican from the Urban College.

COMPLETION OF MEDITATION GARDEN

Dar il-Hanin Samaritan and Professor Richard England

I was fortunate to be present for an address at a General Meeting given by Professor Richard England; the designer of the meditation garden, conference complex, and home for the aged Members at St Venera.

I could never get my head around the verbose Dar il-Hanin Samaritan, and frequently referred to it as the Samaritan or the DHS which is the present verbiage. I never really understood why the term was not anglicised.

Nonetheless, the complex is quite impressive, especially at night with the lights, and the silhouette of the water fountains bouncing off the sandstone.

Richard England was eloquent and humorous in his delivery, with one Member later remarking to me; 'Did you appreciate the Oxford English?'



ST MICHAEL SCHOOL

A presentation was made at St Michael school to Year 9, and Year 10s. I was careful to conceal (if that is possible) the Aussie accent. Overall, the groups seemed engaged, but the lure of the recess bell was always at call.

I traced the foundation of the British founding Australia. In 1788, there was a chance of us being settled by the French for the early colonists could see up the river the French making their way to stake a find. Things would be quite different in Australia if this did happen!

My experience in the SDC was highlighted as well as some funny moments which I am not sure they were relayed all that well to the young audience. There is always a chance that the humour does not always translate. Nevertheless, this encounter was a worthwhile experience for the young audience, and myself.



AUSTRALIAN MEMBERS

My encounter with the ex-pats from Australia was relatively rewarding. I was able to interview Peter Farrugia who was among the first group of Members sent by George Preca to establish the SDC in Australia in 1956. Peter's story is interesting, and fulfilling. He has spent time as an internal Member at Dixon's Creek farm in Victoria, Australia, missioned with the SDC in Kenya, and retired gracefully at the Samaritan House at St Venera in Malta.

Peter L Judge
Preca Community

A MISSION THAT RENEWS US: *EVANGELII GAUDIUM* IN THE SOUTH OF LIMA, PERU

When Pope Francis published *Evangelii Gaudium*, he invited the whole Church to recover the joy of the Gospel and to enter a “missionary transformation.” His appeal began with an encounter: the encounter with Jesus Christ, whose love saves us, raises us up and sends us forth. The Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops at Aparecida in 2007, had already expressed this beautifully by calling every baptised person to be both a disciple and a missionary. We cannot separate the two. Whoever sits at the feet of Jesus must also rise and walk with him toward others.

This vision has a particular resonance for the Society of Christian Doctrine (SDC). The first time I read *Evangelii Gaudium*, I recognised in the profound hopes, dreams and desires of Pope Francis the charism and way of proceeding of the SDC. This brought me great consolation: the inspiration received by the humble George Preca was also reflected in the longings of the Pope for the whole Church. Long before the expression “missionary disciple” became familiar, Saint George Preca formed lay people to know, live and teach the Gospel. His prayer—*Magister, utinam sequatur Evangelium universus mundus!* “Divine Teacher, may the whole world follow the Gospel!”—is not merely a motto, but a fire entrusted to us. Every SDC Centre’s contemplative, formative, communitarian and apostolic dimensions remind us that prayer becomes formation, formation creates fraternity, and fraternity must overflow into mission.

In Lurín, on the southern outskirts of Lima, this fire takes flesh in a concrete people and place. Our surroundings bear the vitality, faith and generosity of Peru, but also the wounds of poverty, insecurity, fragile families and limited opportunities. Here, *Evangelii Gaudium* is not merely a document to be studied. It is a map that sends us onto dusty roads and teaches us to recognise sacred ground beneath our feet.

During every evening of the week, children, adolescents, young people and adults come to our SDC centre. We receive each person as he or she is, with a story that deserves to be heard. We offer catechesis, but catechesis cannot be reduced to

lessons or formulas. We seek to help in the creation of the encounter with Jesus: Jesus who knows their names, walks beside them and calls them to become protagonists in the Church. The young are not empty vessels to be filled; they are living soil in which God has already scattered seeds. Adults, too, come carrying questions, sacrifices, faith and wisdom. We evangelise, and at the same time we allow ourselves to be evangelised by them.

Our Sunday morning gathering opens onto the mission in Manchay. The “Jorge Preca Community” – the adults that attend the Fridays encounters – who receive formation are invited to give; those who are accompanied learn to accompany. Together we go out to share the Word and our lives with others. This is the Church “going forth” of which Pope Francis dreamed: not a Church preoccupied with preserving itself, but one willing to enter another person’s reality and get its shoes dirty. Mission is not colonising, imposing or arriving as if we possessed every answer. It is drawing near with humility, listening with patience and sharing the treasure we received without merit.

Aparecida insists that mission is not an activity added after discipleship, as though formation came first and service later. Mission belongs to the identity of the disciple. When a person, being precandidate, Jorge Preca group member or a parent from our centre accompanies us to Manchay, something changes. Faith moves from the notebook to the hands, from words to relationships. The Gospel acquires faces. The poor cease to be an abstract category and become friends, teachers and companions.

When I first arrived in Peru, an SDC member said to me, “How I wish that every member of the Society could have the missionary experience you are just starting.” More than ten years have passed, and I now recognise how wise and true his words were. Missionary zeal changes us. It opens what had become closed, renews what had grown tired, and gives new birth to all that it means to be Christian. It also teaches us the demanding joy of taking up the cross each day.

Mission does not romanticise hardship. The cross can be loneliness, misunderstanding, cultural distance, difficult relationships, personal struggles, fatigue, plans that fail, or the slow pace of growth. Yet the cross carried with Christ is never sterile. It strips away the illusion that everything depends on us. It teaches us to trust grace and to discover that the people to whom we were sent are often those through whom God saves us from self-sufficiency.

Our vision for the future is not simply to enlarge our activities, but to deepen this missionary culture. We hope to form children who become joyful witnesses, adolescents who discover a vocation of service, young adults capable of leadership, and adults who know that their experience is needed by the Church. We want our Centre to remain a house with open doors: a place of sound formation, sincere friendship, prayer, discernment and courageous sending forth. From Lurín to Manchay and wherever Providence leads, we desire communities that do not wait passively for people to arrive, but go out to meet them.

We must always remember that we are not simply one more organisation engaged in catechesis or social service. We have received a charism: a particular gift of the Holy Spirit entrusted to Saint George Preca for the good of the whole Church. As his spiritual children, we have inherited a distinctive way of following Jesus and proclaiming his Gospel. This precious inheritance is not something to preserve fearfully as though it belonged only to us. A charism remains alive when it is faithfully embodied, generously shared and allowed to bear fruit in new peoples and cultures. Speaking in July 1964 to a member leaving for Canada, Eugenio Borg expressed this missionary responsibility beautifully: “Blessed are you if, by the grace of God, you are able to spread the spirit of the Society, if you cause the spirit of the Society to germinate and grow in Canada... How much good you can do, how much good can be spread!... The Society has a special spirit. As soon as people experience the spirit of the Society, they are drawn to it—it is a wonderful thing. Therefore, my brother, I encourage you to go with this spirit and spread the Word of God in the country to which you are going.”

To go with this spirit means to proceed in the way Saint George Preca taught us: with simplicity rather than display, humility rather than self-importance, and meekness rather than force. It means serving with a joyful heart, doing everything for the love of God and in union with the loving heart of Jesus. We do not go on mission to impress others, seek recognition or make a name for ourselves. We go to serve, often quietly and unnoticed, trusting that the smallest seed of the Word can grow through God’s grace. Wherever an SDC member is sent, something of this family spirit should become visible: fidelity to the Church’s teaching, love for the Gospel, closeness to ordinary people, sincere fraternity and the desire to give freely what we ourselves have freely received. In this way, the spirit entrusted to Saint George Preca can germinate in new soil without losing the simplicity and evangelical beauty of its origins.

For this reason, I offer a heartfelt invitation to SDC members in other countries: come and share this mission, even for a few days or weeks. Do not wait until you have abundant time, perfect health or complete confidence. Bring what you are, and allow God and his people to complete what is lacking. A short missionary experience can leave a lifelong mark. It can restore the freshness of one’s vocation and remind a member why Saint George Preca placed the Gospel in our hands.

Lurín does not ask for heroes. It asks for SDC members and friends willing to listen, teach, pray, walk, laugh, struggle and hope with the people. The South of Lima is not only a periphery awaiting the Gospel; it is also a living Gospel offered to us. If we go there with an open heart, we may discover that the Lord was already waiting—and that, in sending us to renew others, he intended to renew us.

Tonio Agius
Preca Community

A JOURNEY THROUGH SOME ANCIENT DOORS

From ancient chants to rich liturgical traditions, we were reminded that the Catholic Church breathes with many traditions, yet one faith. “The Church must breathe with her two lungs!” (Ut Unum Sint #54) John Paul II

“Would you be able to support a crazy idea that I have got”? That’s how he started that call. I remember I was standing in the middle of Rundle Mall in Adelaide when my friend Brandon hit me with that question. I am genetically attracted to anything and everything that is crazy and wild- so he got me at ‘crazy’.

So this crazy plan that Brandon was proposing was a pilgrimage. It was inspired by the Pope’s Pilgrimage of Hope, but with a twist. While many pilgrims travel to ancient churches, we decided to journey through the ancient rites. Brandon shared the idea with the rest of the Preca community, and before long we found ourselves planning what would become our biggest project yet. When I later asked him what inspired the idea, he simply shrugged. But in John’s words (Preca member, Adelaide) It was the Holy Spirit. And I like to stick with John’s answer- for glamorous reasons.

I remember sitting in the university library with Brandon to formalise the master plan to execute this. We had never undertaken anything on such a massive scale. We spent weeks in the university library researching the six Catholic rites in Adelaide, gathering contacts, and trying to turn an exciting idea into a real pilgrimage.

I still remember how we called the first priest to request a face-to-face meeting. We were nervous and a chaotic mix of giddiness. To our surprise, we secured a meeting the day after. Unfortunately, we had some miscommunications during the meeting and he wasn’t sure whether we were serious enough about this. Looking back, I understand his hesitation. Two young people from a community he had never heard of were asking to organise something quite unusual. He suggested getting permission from the Archdiocese. Which was a total curveball- that too from the first church that we approached. As we walked away, it honestly felt like the pilgrimage had ended before it had begun.

For a brief moment, we seriously considered giving up.

Instead, we decided to give it one more try.

I’ve often heard that God’s providence comes in different shapes and sizes. For us, it came with human faces. That week we were casually introduced to Tracy who was standing at an event stall. She works in the archdiocesan office and also was doing the same thing with the rites. She emailed all the priests introducing Preca and our pilgrimage requesting them to welcome us warmly. In the pilgrimage that she was leading, they had one last rite left- Syro-Malankara. It was one of the hardest rites to organise since their priest occasionally flies to Adelaide from different states to celebrate mass. It was challenging to finalise a date with the rite. But I happen to speak Malayalam, the community’s language, which made it easy.

*Syro-Malankara
Catholic church*





Maronite Catholic church

Once the dates were finalised, we decided to combine both pilgrimages. One is ending and the next one is beginning. A perfect start that was way beyond what we were planning.

One thing that we kept in mind was that these rites are a very new experience to most of the pilgrims. And we wanted to make sure that they are not walking blindly into it. So before every rite, we arranged an informative session where the priest from that rite would introduce the rite, the differences and historical backstory of each unique rite. It was quite an eye-opener for me, as well as everyone who was there. Each rite had a story of its own. A story woven with deep cultural roots and spiritual experiences. I never thought the Catholic Church was so diverse and similar at the same time.



Melkite Catholic church



Ukrainian Catholic church

One after another, we completed five rites. We still got one more rite- Syro- Malabar, which we set as the last. So by the time you are reading this, we will probably have passed through our last pilgrimage door as well.

Before this pilgrimage, I thought I knew my Church. Six ancient doors later, I realised I had only explored one room of her home. Each, different from one another. One church echoed with ancient hymns dating back centuries. Another was covered in icons that whispered their own stories. Some liturgies were celebrated in languages I couldn't understand, yet somehow the prayers still felt familiar. Each church door opened another chapter of the Church's story, and with every visit I realised just how much of that story I had never encountered before.

Looking back, I see God's hands guiding us through each and every step of this journey. From helping hands to welcoming hands, he was guiding us through this one-of-a-kind pilgrimage. At the end of this walk, I felt as if I knew my Mother Church a bit better, a little more intimately. Delving into the different rites was truly a magical experience. If you ever have the opportunity to step through one of those ancient doors, take it. You may discover, as I did, that you aren't visiting someone else's tradition - you are discovering another beautiful room in your own home.

Deona Alby
Preca Adelaide

EVANGELISING EVEN UNTO DEATH

The unexpected death of Fr Michael Tate OA at the age of 80 on 5.6.26, left an imprint on many in the Preca Community in Hobart.

In 1996 when Michael Tate was the Australian Ambassador to The Netherlands and the Holy See, he was awarded with the Order of Australia for services to government, and the community.

Over the years he held positions in federal government, and was an expert in international law, lecturing at the University of Tasmania. He was ordained in 2000, considered to be a 'late vocation', although he referred to it as a vocation 'delayed'.

From the year 2000 through to 2014, Fr Tate has had steady contact with us, in the St Paul's parish, Bridgewater, incorporating the Preca catechetical centre at Old Beach, and Holy Spirit parish, Sandy Bay where we have a community.

In 2002, the Annual General Meeting was held in Hobart. Fr Michael presided at Mass, and joined us for dinner on the sea vessel Cartella navigating the River Derwent.

Never one to suffer fools, we always found Fr Michael to be generous in time, and most helpful when seeking advice. When the SDC in Hobart was in a transitional stage, he offered some helpful advice.

A beautiful hymn 'A Song of Cosmic Praise' was chosen at his vigil Mass, and at the funeral Mass. The words composed by Hobart poet, James McAuley adequately summed up Michael's appreciation of the cosmos. Australian composer Richard Connolly wrote the music.

The hymn exudes with praise to Christ and recognition of the natural world, highlighting the role of Jesus as the Lord of all Creation.

Besides the Huon Valley Comino pilgrimage, and his spiritual tracts found in the Tasmanian-based liturgyhelp, we have all greatly benefitted from his knowledge, and depth of spirituality.

A Preca formalised Associate in Hobart, Cody Harwood served faithfully at Fr Michael's altar in St Paul's, Bridgewater Mass for many years. There is a well-known anecdote going around the traps when



Michael Tate attends the Preca AGM in 2002; pictured with Ben Brooks.



The cortege leaves St Mary's Cathedral, Hobart.

following a Mass at St Paul's, Michael asked Cody what he thought of the carpet in the sacristy. Cody replied that 'it looks as old as you, Fr Michael!' This was shared many a time by Fr Michael, even with his family who was aware of it, and recalled it at the wake.

There is no doubt that Michael evangelised even unto death, for his faith reflected that of a 'man of god'.

The Preca Community in Hobart is grateful for the contact, and support. We are reminded by St George Preca that we are on an earthly journey and we pray that Michael be received by God with everlasting blessing into God's joyful dwelling. Amen.

THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF ETHICAL CARE

Dr Stephen Parnis is a Senior Emergency Physician at St Vincent's Hospital and the Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital in Melbourne. He has been associated with the Preca Community for almost fifty years. In 2025, he delivered the Annual Plunkett Lecture reflecting on the challenges of ethics in healthcare.

Dear Friends

The field of ethics is the branch of philosophy that studies moral principles, determining what is right and wrong, good and bad, and all shades in between. It is an area that has stirred my curiosity and commitment since my childhood, and it has been an important part of my personal and professional life ever since those days. I recall considering these ideas as a young man, in places like my primary and secondary schools, and within the Preca Community, and I have no doubt those experiences encouraged me to do so as a medical student and doctor.

In a professional sense, I have always considered ethics as the foundation of medical practice. They have been an essential part of my clinical work as a doctor since my graduation in 1992, and in the work, I undertook as a leader of the Australian Medical Association and beyond, on issues such as end-of-life care, public health and government policy during the Covid Pandemic, and in my advocacy for the innocent victims of war and violence.

In recent years, I have been an Honorary Fellow at the Plunkett Centre for Ethics at Australian Catholic University (ACU), and Chairman of its Clinical Advisory Committee. In 2025, I was honoured to be asked to deliver their Annual Plunkett Lecture, which is ACU's main public lecture on ethics.

I called my lecture "Ethics in Healthcare: Principles or Platitudes?", because my main contention is that our commitment to the ethical principles, we seek to live by are only really understood when they are put to the test, or seriously challenged.



I think it's easy to say that we are supportive of protection of the vulnerable, or that we respect human dignity. But I pay far more heed to those words when they are supported by actions that have faced adversity. In my lecture, I highlighted some of the key principles of applied medical ethics, and some of the lessons I had learned in my career, such as respecting the doctor-patient relationship, and the need for humility and humanity in our work. I spoke of when our ethics are put to the test and cited examples of doctors who have paid for their ethics by losing their jobs, or even their lives.

I spoke of the fundamental need for better training and understanding of ethics by doctors, and gave examples of wonderful teachers of mine whose words and actions have given me the courage to stand up for what I believe to be right, even at personal cost.

If you'd like to view the lecture, the link is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2xJbrchg28>

Please do not imagine that the principles of ethics apply only to doctors. There are important ethical principles for all who teach; for those entrusted with the care of children, and indeed for all of us who seek to live good, meaningful lives.

These ideas are not new. Twenty-five centuries ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle spoke of the idea of eudaimonia, also known as human flourishing. In this, we seek to live lives of virtue, excellence and the best use of human reasoning.

Dr Stephen Parnis



Verbum Dei

caro factum est