

No. 31 December 2025

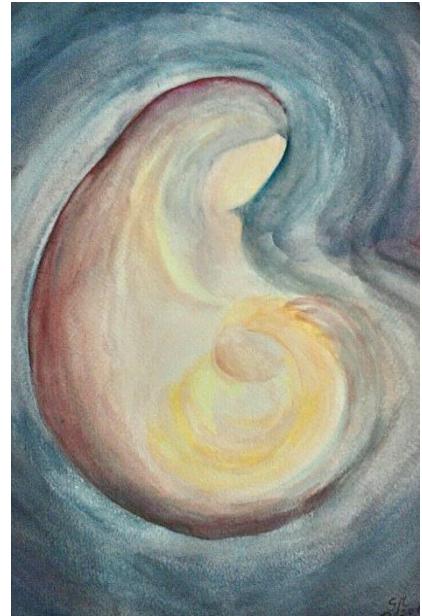
Editorial: Ann McNelley

Once again it has been a busy year at Sychar House. It is a place that continues to bless all those who attend its many and varied programmes.

In October we farewelled our beloved, Elaine, who led us with wisdom, understanding and love. She is greatly missed. We are, however, very blessed to have Moyalia as our new leader. She emanates love and enthusiasm. All those who know her have complete faith in her ability to accompany us on our journey of growth and change.

As we come into the season of Christmas may you be safe, happy and well.

May the Maker of all Creation grant you peace, hope, joy and love.

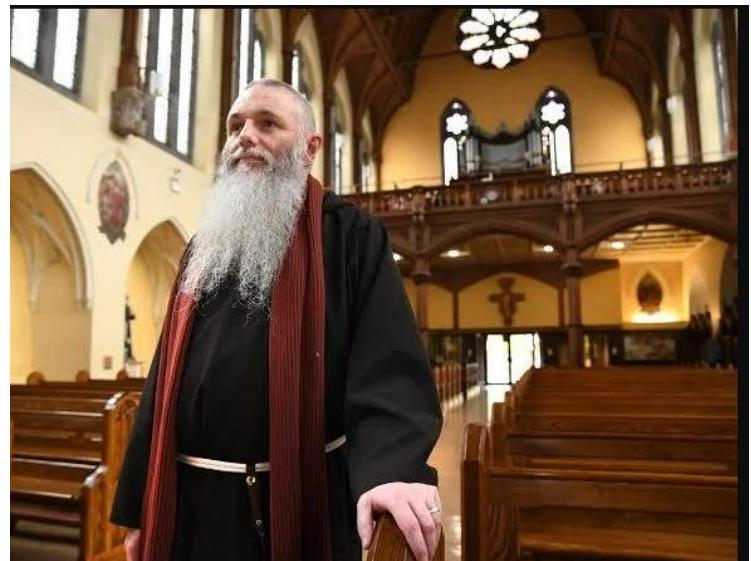


To fight the dark

by Brother Richard Hendrick (Capuchin Franciscan priest- friar and friend living in Dublin Ireland)

Here is how we fight the dark

We light lamps,
Lamps of understanding
Lamps of compassion
Lamps of respect
for one another
for the world we live in
for our different stories
So different and yet woven into
one great thread of life,
of love, of peace,
woven from one longing
for meaning, for light, for union.



Here is how we fight the dark
by bringing light into the dark places
the light of wisdom
the light of love

the light of truth
watching the darkness scatter and
the shadows that obscure the truth
of who we are
fade and fail into their own occlusion
as instead we fill the world with light
bowing before its presence in one another.

Here is how we fight the dark
by recognising those living sparks
who run towards the darkness
unheeding of their own safety
who fear no quenching of their light
but shine out and catch fire
plunging into darkness
and overcoming it like
a star shooting across the night sky
a graced wonder, these the
heroes and heroines of the light.

Here is how we fight the dark
by sharing light, by kindling candles,
by telling the oldest story of them all, told in every tongue
and every place that the first divine word spoken was
Light, by remembering that despite the dark in all its rage
and power down the old ages to this very day in the end
the Light will always shine.

Remembering all of those holding the suffering of terror,
war, and persecution in their communities today... our
Jewish brothers and sisters in Australia, here and
throughout the world, our brothers and sisters of Ukraine
and Gaza and Sudan and Nigeria, and so many, many
other places... May the light of faith, hope, and love shine
and bring peace and consolation to all+

Friends of Silence: The Hidden Work of God in Quiet Hearts

Every Friday Sychar becomes a sanctuary of deep and unbroken silence. This gathering, known simply as "Friends of Silence," is one of the most quietly powerful offerings of our contemplative life. It is undirected, unstructured, without teaching, without instruction. People enter as they are, take their place in the circle of stillness, and rest. Nothing more is asked of them.



For many, this is the hardest kind of prayer. There is no external rhythm to lean upon, no voices to guide us, no readings to carry the mind. There is simply the invitation Christ offered in the Gospel: "Come away to a quiet place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31).

Silence in the Christian tradition is not emptiness; it is fullness. It is the temple where the Spirit of Love breathes in us without words. The Fathers and Mothers of the Desert understood this with extraordinary clarity. Friends of Silence stands as a witness, a reminder that the contemplative life is not optional ornamentation but the well from which Christian life draws its authenticity. Where silence deepens, love grows. Where silence is honoured, people begin to hear God again.

May our Friday mornings continue to be a quiet sanctuary, a place where anyone can come, lay down their burdens, and rest in the Love that embraces All.

Entering into “the silent land”.

By Hilary Fogerty



“Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest awhile”.

Every Tuesday afternoon a small group gathers for silent prayer. We meet in a light-filled room with a large window that opens to us a view of the beautiful garden. We follow a simple practice that is embedded in our ancient Christian tradition, as well as in other spiritual traditions.

As preparation, we listen to sacred texts – from Scripture, Poetry and the writings of mystics, to show that there is a living tradition of wisdom and that “the saints and sages of the Christian tradition have shared and reflected on the very yearnings and struggles we all experience”. Martin Laird.

And then, we sit in silence and stillness for half an hour.

“But the silence of the mind
is when we live best, within
listening distance of the silence we call God...
it is a presence, then,
whose margins are our margins; that calls us out over our own fathoms.
From “AD” – R.S. Thomas

If you would like to deepen your spiritual journey by the practice of stillness, silence and simplicity, you are welcome to come and join us whenever you can.

“The truth is not only accessible to us, it is the ground on which all reality stands. To come to this reality, we have to learn to be simple, to be still, to be silent, to be attentive, attentive to what is. So, we must learn to stop thinking about ourselves. We must learn to be in the presence of the One who is. We need have no fear as we set out, as we leave self behind and set out to meet the other. We need have no fear. The spirit in our heart, the spirit that we open up to in meditation, is the spirit of compassion, of gentleness, of forgiveness, of acceptance, the Spirit of love.” John Main OSB “The Fullness of Being” in *The Hunger for Depth and Meaning*, Peter Ng (Singapore: Medio Media, 2007), p28

The Sychar Men’s Prayer and reflection group

By Peter Nolan

The men’s group continues to meet every Thursday night at 7.15 pm during the standard school term. The group is small but committed and welcoming of any who wishes to join.

We sadly miss our brother in Christ, Robie, who is remembered by a small garden and plaque on the path leading to the side entrance of Sychar House. His engaging smile and generous heart are an ongoing inspiration for us all.

The weekly format involves prayer and song, followed by reading of the Sunday hence Gospel. This is complemented with vigorous discussion. We try and cover a reading resource each term, and this quarter we have been reading the writings of Brother Lawrence on practicing the prayerful presence of God in every day life.

Next year we hope to continue the same program. Anyone interested in joining us in 2026 can receive more information by phoning Sychar House or Peter Nolan on 0405 595 911.



Community Corner

Monday is our volunteer day at Sychar. Krys Keryk continues to pour her heart into our garden. What she offers is more than the care of the earth it is the gift of herself.



Through her faithful tending, beauty takes root and the garden flourishes spilling forth with abundant new life. All who walk here in the garden are gently received and blessed.

Volunteering in Sychar's spiritual library may seem simple, sorting, cataloguing, dusting, arranging but in truth it is contemplative attentiveness. Every book touched holds wisdom. Every gesture becomes an offering. Quiet presence creates an atmosphere where seekers feel welcome to linger, browse, and rest for a while.

We give thanks for the faithful hearts who serve in this hidden yet essential ministry. Their kindness is part of the quiet light of Sychar.

We are always open to new welcoming new volunteers. If interested in joining with us please contact Sychar via mtokmak@twb.catholic.org.au.

Remembering Robie Jayawardhana

By Moyalia

This year, we chose to plant a tree in honour of Robie, whose gentle presence blessed the Sychar community and whose passing in May left a sadness among those who knew and loved him. The planting was simple, no grand ceremony, no speeches just a small group standing together in reverent silence, acknowledging the life of a man whose goodness touched many. Looking again with love, a tree is more than a symbol. It is a living witness; a witness to growth; a witness to the mystery of God who works quietly, steadily, and often unseen.

Robie lived in this spirit. He moved through life with a warmth and authenticity that left people feeling recognised and valued. Humble in spirit and generous in heart, he made space for others and his way of *being* became the gift. Like a tree, he offered shelter without announcing it, shade without asking anything in return.



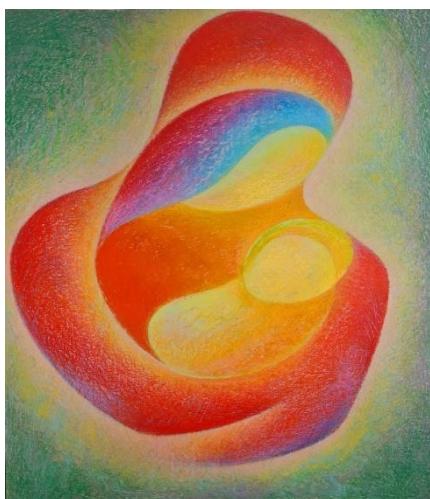
We chose a tree to honour his mother land, one that grows slowly and steadily, one that will extend its branches in years to come, offering beauty, shade, and a quiet sense of presence. It now stands near the path where many people walk. Some will pause and remember; others will pause without knowing why, simply sensing peace. In this way, Robie's memory will continue to bless people he never met.

The psalmist wrote: *"Those who trust in the Lord are like trees planted by streams of water."*

May all who stand beneath its branches know the tenderness of God who receives our loved ones into eternal rest.

We extend our love, prayers and Christmas Blessings to Bernadette and family.

Enhancing the awareness of oneness: The Prayer of Loving Kindness



May I be filled with loving kindness.
May I be peaceful and at ease.
May I be well.
May I be happy.
May we be filled with loving kindness.
May we be peaceful and at ease.
May we be well.
May we be happy.
May all be filled with loving kindness.
May all be peaceful and at ease.
May all be well.
May all be happy.

Sychar Celebrations

We recently gathered to celebrate Judith's 90th birthday, honouring a life rich in wisdom, faith and a fabulous sense of humour. Her jovial presence reminds us that a life well lived becomes a blessing for many. Judith, Thank you for the gift of your presence at Sychar. We love you. This year we celebrated with a delicious panettone.



Christmas in the Jubilee Year of Hope

This Christmas arrives in a world marked by violence, unrest, and deep uncertainty, felt across nations and close to home. In such days, the question before us is not how to escape the darkness, but how we are called to live within it.



For those who follow Christ, this is the call - to remain **rooted in love** when fear presses in, to choose tenderness when harshness dominates, and to bear witness to hope that does not depend on circumstances. This is not a sentimental hope. It is the costly, faithful hope of the Gospel. The Church names this a Jubilee Year of Hope, and in doing so invites us not toward denial, but toward trust. Toward a hope grounded not in what we can control or predict, but in the faithfulness of God.

This is my first Christmas writing to you as Coordinator of Sychar, and it feels right that it comes in such a year. Hope, as St Augustine wrote, is “a stretching of the heart toward God.” It is the virtue that allows us to stand in the present moment with all its incompleteness and trust that God is already at work in what we cannot yet see. A jubilee is not about achievement but about restoration, about being gently returned to what is true. Christmas, too, is like this. It does not demand readiness. It meets us exactly where we are.

Hope, in the Christian life, is not optimism. It does not deny the fragility of our lives or the complexity of our times. Hope is the quiet courage to remain open. It is the willingness to let the heart be broken open, even when we cannot yet see how things will unfold. The Gospel tells us that Christ is born not into comfort, but into vulnerability, not into certainty, but into longing. God does not wait for the world to be resolved. God enters it as it is. The Incarnation reveals a God who chooses closeness, who draws near to human life in all its beauty and brokenness, and who patiently works from within.

This is the heart of Sychar.

Sychar is a place where nothing extraordinary is required, and yet everything is welcomed as sacred. This is a place where silence is trusted, where listening becomes an act of reverence, and where the ordinary movements of the human heart are received as holy ground. People come not to be fixed, but to be met; not to escape their lives, but to discover that God is already present within them.

And so, the Christmas Mystery continues here each day.
A person learns to speak to themselves with greater kindness.
Another finds the strength to sit with grief without needing to rush past it.
Someone rediscovers a quiet desire to serve, to give, to love more simply.
Another encounters Christ not in answers, but in a moment of deep truthfulness.

These are not dramatic moments. They are incarnational ones. They are the slow, faithful work of God within the human heart.

As we enter this Jubilee Year of Hope, Sychar renews its commitment to this way of **BEING**.

May the Jubilee Year of Hope draw us all ever deeper into God who is always arriving. He comes in ways that ask us to slow down, to listen, and to receive.

May our hearts become Bethlehem.

May our lives bear witness to hope.

And may this Christmas be for all of us not only a season of celebration, but a season of deep, renewing grace.

Peace and every Blessing

Ever love

Moyalia x

Sr Elaine Morzone MFIC – A Gaze of Love that has shaped us.



We recently gathered to farewell Elaine and to give thanks for her years of faithful service. A woman of deep faith, wisdom (in buckets), integrity and deep fidelity to the Gospel and mission entrusted to her. Elaine has consistently held the balance of contemplation and action, prayer and responsibility, deep listening and compassionate leadership.

Her ways of leading have never been about drawing attention to herself, but about creating space for others to grow.

Many speak of Elaine's capacity to listen deeply and to what truly matters most. Through her grounded presence, people have felt welcomed, seen, encouraged, valued, understood and loved. This quality of attentive care has shaped the spirit of Sychar in enduring ways. She has modelled for us all a *form of leadership rooted in humility, courage and love* and in doing so, has shown us what it means to live as a humble disciple of Christ in every day life.

As we farewell Elaine, we do so with sincere gratitude and affection. We thank her for all she has given and for the legacy she has entrusted to the Sychar community. We hold her in our heart, our prayers and ask God's radiant blessing upon her as she walks out along the path into this new exciting chapter in Brisbane. We love you, Elaine, and will miss you; you too Kiki.

Christmas Reflection And Celebrations - Hope Rising From The Heart Of The Cosmos – When Eternity Bent Low And Glowed In A Manger.



We live inside a story still being written by God and creation together. Every act of love, every movement toward justice, every moment of contemplation contributes to the world's unfolding. Advent teaches that the future is not predetermined; it is co-created by divine love and human participation.

Everything belongs. Everything participates in the divine. Through Christ, the universe is revealed as a vast communion of being, interconnected, interdependent, and held together in love.

Advent widens our vision until we see ourselves as part of this sacred web of life. We are siblings to stars and oceans, kin to every creature, carriers of divine presence.

Scripture: That all may be one. (John 17:21)

Christ is the deep coherence of the universe, the magnetic pull drawing all things into communion. Through him we see the face of the One who holds all things together, galaxies, ecosystems, societies, hearts. Advent draws us into awareness of this heartbeat, reminding us that we live inside a Christ-soaked universe, sustained by divine energy at every moment.



A COSMIC BLESSING FOR CHRISTMAS

May the Light that flared at creation rise within you and renew your hope.
May the Christ who breathes through galaxies breathe peace into your body.
May this Jubilee Year of Hope restore your courage and deepen your trust.
May you recognise the divine nearness hidden in each breath, encounter, and moment.
And may Christ be born again in the quiet centre of your life,
transforming your gaze, your presence, and your love for the world.

May we let go and let God be God this Christmas. By Ilia Delio

May we awaken to the gift so generously given to us, the very breadth of our lives.
May we accept this gift in humility and recognise our fragile, wobbly lives are filled with grace.

For every single person, in the beauty of their skin colour, their language, their religion, their gender, every single person is loved into being by God. And if we could simply strive to return love for love each day, the love of mercy, the love of compassion, the love of forgiveness, the love of peace, the blessings of God would radiate like the brilliance of the sun rising up over the ocean of life.

So, this Christmas, may our faith in the power of God's love be renewed, for love alone can turn our sorrow into joy, our despair into hope, our fear into hope. Yes, Christ is born but the amazing wonder of Christmas is that Christ is born in you.

WHERE THE LIGHT BEGINS

A Blessing for Christmas Day



Perhaps it does not begin.

Perhaps it is always.

Perhaps it takes
a lifetime
to open our eyes,
to learn to see
what has forever
shimmered in front of us—

the luminous line
of the map
in the dark

the vigil flame
in the house
of the heart

the love

so searing
we cannot keep
from singing,
from crying out
in testimony
and praise.

Perhaps this day
will be the mountain
over which
the dawn breaks.

Perhaps we
will turn our face
toward it,
toward what has been
always.

Perhaps
our eyes
will finally open
in ancient recognition,
willingly dazzled,
illuminated at last.

Perhaps this day
the light begins
in us.

—Jan Richardson

from Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings
for the Seasons

Updated Payment and Donation Information

Sychar uses trybooking as a means of recording the names of participants and their contact details. However, we are not set up to receive payments via trybooking. Payments and donations can only be made via the options indicated below.

Advance Payment:

1. Electronic Transfer:

Note: Payments go into a special fund held for Sychar within the Diocesan Account, so please ensure that Reference details are properly filled in as indicated below.

Bank: NAB **BSB:** 084-961

Account No: 65 309 7284

Account Name: CRDOT

Reference: Sychar, “Session Title”,

2. Payment via Credit/Debit Card by phone

Payment on the Day

3. Credit/Debit card payment on the day via Elpos

4. Cash payment

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year