

Ab AUSTRo

Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

March 2019

No. 25

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A new postulant, a new novice, a pilgrimage and some fraternal visits

This grace-filled month opened with the reception of a new postulant in the person of Xavier Piat. Xavier joined us in December and after his period of aspirancy asked to become a postulant. His jobs include being assistant bell-ringer, painter, and member of the *schola cantorum*.



On the feast of Our Lady's Annunciation, 25 March, Matthew Hobbs was clothed with the holy habit and received the name of Br Patrick Mary. The new novice, who is the younger brother of Br Gregory, completed his cabinet-making apprenticeship before entering. His skills have been most useful at Jerusalem Estate. Br Patrick is also in charge of the laundry, and is main bell-ringer. See Fr Prior's talk at his clothing on the following page.

If March is the month of St Joseph, it also brings the feast of St Patrick, and that means the annual pilgrimage from Richmond to Colebrook led by the Archbishop in person. This year, Fr Prior sent five of the brethren to join the group. The walk starts from Richmond after Mass on Saturday morning and makes its way through the Coal River Valley. In the evening there is an hour of adoration before everyone gets some sleep in their tents (the monks had swags...). On Sunday they arrive at St Patrick's Colebrook for the closing Mass in the late afternoon. A memorable experience for all who partook.



St Patrick's Day also brought us a fraternal visit from the Little Eucharistic Brothers of the Divine Will. They stayed till the feast of St Joseph. We were able to share insights from our reciprocal lives, both of which are devoted to prayer and adoration.



Fr Prior, in the name of the community, made brief visits to Tarrawarra Abbey in Victoria and to New Norcia Abbey in Western Australia. Having grown up not far from Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky and having benefited from the spiritual guidance of Trappists over the years, both in the US and in France, for Fr Prior the visit to Tarrawarra was a debt of gratitude. New Norcia and its founder Bishop Salvado were a major inspiration to Fr Prior when discerning our foundation. In both cases, fraternal bonds have been created between communities. In a country that counts very few monasteries, this has great importance. We hope that in the not too distant future, we will be able to render here in Tasmania the same hospitality to monks from both Tarrawarra and New Norcia.

Finally, Brs Bede and Gregory represented the community at the opening Mass for the new Carmel of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Mathoura NSW. The founding of a new religious community is always a memorable event, especially in our day and age. We wish the Sisters all the best, assuring them of our prayers, and begging for theirs.

Brother Chronicler

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

I am come to cast fire on the earth,
and what will I, but that it be kindled?

Lk 12:49

***Homily at the clothing of
Brother Patrick Mary Hobbs
St Patrick's Church, Colebrook,
25 March, 2019***

Matthew,

The month of March has given us a number of powerful examples to contemplate. St Joseph stands out as the humble, silent, hard-working, chaste guardian of the Virgin Mother of Our Lord and the mystery of the incarnation. The great pontiff St Gregory, who gave us the biography of our Holy Father St Benedict showed us, with his love for Sacred Scripture, the authentic spirit of monastic *lectio divina*. The monk finds in the meditation of God's word the incentive to be faithful to his calling. In a world that is becoming increasingly corrupt by listening to vain and fruitless jabber, the great monk turned pontiff leads us to shores of tranquil contemplation of all the beautiful words God has spoken to humanity. How blessed we are to listen to those words and keep them alive in our heart.

The feast of our Holy Father St Benedict last week renewed our devotion to our patriarch, and our love for the Holy Rule. Every word of the Rule is dear to the monk. During your



noviciate one of your tasks will be to transcribe it by hand in order to know it better and even consign it to memory. Throughout your monastic life you will constantly find therein incentive for living a holy life. As you take this step to enter the community as a novice, let's cull a

few of the treasures of the Rule, by considering a few of the verbs used by St Benedict.

Let's start with the beginning. "Obsculta - Listen". This is the very first word of the Rule. It gives us to understand that monastic life is

first and foremost an attitude of docility. A man can close his eyes. He cannot close his ears. He cannot, unless he is deaf, fail to hear. And God speaks to us at every moment in a number of ways. The attitude of listening to God is one that opens up a path of liberation, for the downfall

Listen to the Word, fulfil it, and you will find peace.

of man always comes through locking himself up in himself, pretending he is the centre of the universe. By opening our ears, by "tuning in our ears to God" to employ another expression of St Benedict, we acknowledge that only the will of God, made manifest by the voice of God, can set us free and give us peace. Throughout your religious life, always maintain that capacity to listen and be attentive to what God is saying to you. Listen to the Word, fulfil it, and you will find peace. Listen also to those whom God sends to guide you in the Church and in monastic life, for the Lord said to His apostles: "He who hears you, hears me".

"Excipere - Receive". The attitude of receptivity is fundamentally linked with the capacity to listen, but has a spousal connotation. The monk who hands over his life to God is united with Him in a mystical union, a mystical marriage. In that union, we are always on the receiving side. We are the poor, weak, lonely soul, always in need of God's grace which is offered, but must be welcomed. The monk is one who, from morning to evening and evening to morning, is prepared to receive from the overflow of the Divine Bounty, and that reception of God's gift teaches him to give in turn to God and to others. A great saint of our age, St Teresa of Calcutta, was fond of saying: "Give everything He takes and take everything He gives".

"Militare - Fight". The word is used at least twice in the Rule to refer to monastic life as a militia. We are at war. We must fight in order to

win. The whole idea of the militia, of the soldier, serves to remind the monk who spends most of his time in the tranquillity of the cloister, that there is a tremendous battle going on, and he is at its epicentre. The battle line is drawn right through the middle of the monk's heart. The fate of the world depends on his fidelity to the struggle. If the monk allows the voice of selfishness, of haughty personal views, of hard-headedness, of independence, to take sway over him, the battle is lost and with it, souls. But if he stands firm, not giving the enemy any ground or any entrance into his heart, and fights in communion with his brethren under the guidance of his Father in monastic life, then the tide turns for the world, souls are strengthened and saved. Never forget that, if you are to be a monk, you must be a soldier you must be prepared to fight, and you must win. The safety, that is the salvation, of the world is entrusted to you.

All that becomes possible only thanks to the final verb we will reflect upon tonight. "Amare - love". Love is the greatest of all virtues. It is necessary in every walk of life. In the Rule, St Benedict uses it to refer to the love of Christ. "Let them prefer nothing to the love of Christ" he writes. He uses it with regard to the abbot: "Let them love their abbot with humble and sincere affection". He also uses it to refer to the love of the brethren: "Let them love each other with a chaste love". All is contained in love. Love is the source and origin of our existence, it is the *raison d'être* of creation, because God is love and He is drawing us ever into the depths of His love. If monastic life is to be a blessed life, love must be its source, its inspiration, its summit.

All of these, of course, are summarised in today's feast. On this day, God stepped into our history, taking flesh in the Virgin's womb, but asking first for her consent, her listening, her receptivity, her love. It was only through her acquiescence that the Incarnation became possible, that the full

revelation of the Holy Trinity was made to the world, that the Messiah began to wage His war to snatch souls from Satan. It is only through the acceptance of consecrated souls today that God's victory in history can come about.

Through Mary's humble "Fiat" came Christ, the "Lord Christ" as St Benedict refers to Him, to whose love we monks must prefer nothing. As you make this step in His service, may Christ be ever in your heart.

With St Patrick, the patron saint of this church, we pray with you and for you on this day:

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.
May you arise today and every day,
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness of the Creator of creation.

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

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Update from the Priory

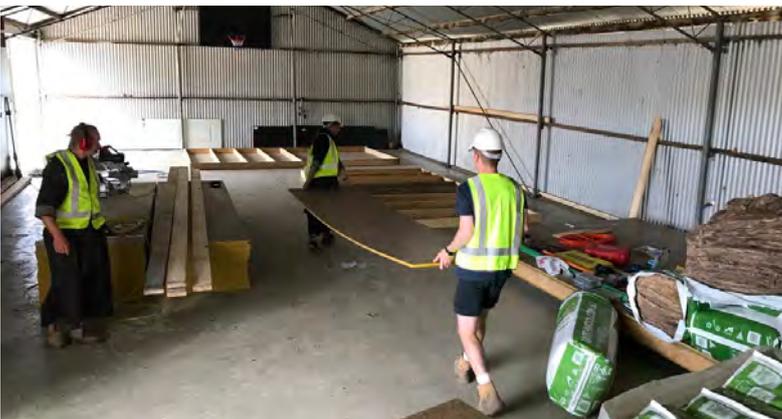
Dear Friends,

After some busy months and a few setbacks we are finally starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Many may be wondering why we have not yet been able to move down to Jerusalem Estate, but the reality is, like most renovation projects, there have been unforeseen challenges, especially given that the old house we are renovating is heritage listed and has had some fairly unique building techniques applied in times gone by. But we continue to make progress. This month we have begun the interior painting of the house and everything seems to be progressing smoothly.

We are currently waiting for a heritage report so that we can finalise our submission to council, which has been very helpful throughout the process. As you can imagine, a monastery does not fit into the normal rural planning scheme, so finding a way to fit in to it has been critical.

We are very aware that many of you have offered your time and talents in order to help us complete the necessary work and we are very grateful for it. Up to this point, we have not been in a position to accept many of your offers, mainly because we haven't had the facilities to house or feed volunteers, or the timing has not been right. But after Easter we should be in a position to start receiving volunteers so that we can speed up the necessary works.

One of our difficulties is knowing who is available to help and when, so that we can organise suitable projects accordingly. To that end, we are hoping to build a database of volunteers so that we can see the availability of people with various skills and organise ourselves around that. Some of the work requires skilled labour whereas some does not (e.g. helping us with the move down to Jerusalem Estate), so we are really looking for anyone who can help in any way.



Once we have accommodation sorted, we hope to be able to take advantage of your offers to help carry out this work of Our Lady. Generally we can't provide for travelling to Tasmania, but we will look after food, accommodation and travel once you've arrived here. However, if getting to Tasmania is your only problem, don't hesitate to let us know, and we'll see what we can do. Volunteers will be able to go to Holy Mass each day as well as the Divine Office. We are very conscious that this is not so much our monastery as Our Lady's and that she has many children whom she wishes to involve in this monastic adventure in different ways.

If you think you might be able to help, or you know someone that can, please let us know, either by filling in the form included and posting it to us, or filling in the form on our website (click on the 'Volunteers' tab) or sending an email to volunteers@notredamemonastery.org.

As always, we are incredibly grateful for all your support, in all its various forms, and your prayers. We pray daily for our benefactors, both living and deceased, in thanksgiving for all the blessings God has showered upon us through them.

I take this opportunity to wish you and yours a fruitful Passiontide and a glorious Easter. On behalf of your little monks,

Father Prior

