

Ab AUSTRo

Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

February 2019 No. 24

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Second Anniversary

Notre Dame Priory is now two years old! Thanks be to God and to Our Lady, we have actually survived the first two years of our existence.

To celebrate the anniversary, we offered, as is customary, a Missa Cantata at St Patrick's Church Colebrook, after which we had the most delightful visit of our beloved Archbishop Julian Porteous who spent most of the day with us.



Arriving late in the morning, he first gave us an inspiring spiritual conference, insisting upon his conviction that this foundation is of God and his confidence that it will bear much fruit for Tasmania and Australia. "This new expression of traditional Benedictine life is an expression of what I believe is a grace at work in the Church today. It is one of those remarkable 'surprises of the Spirit'. Who would have thought that you Millennials would be attracted to such a way of life, fifteen hundred years old and yet strangely contemporary?"

With his long experience of souls and church movements, he also comforted us amid our difficulties: "Beginning anything is challenging and often demands great sacrifice. Things are far from ideal. And one can expect struggles and setbacks. It is not going to be smooth sailing. And I am sure the Devil will want to cause havoc where he will."



After his talk, His Grace took part in the Divine Office of Sext, had lunch with the community, and then made himself available so that all the brothers could spend some personal time with him. Finally we all had afternoon tea together. It was a grace-filled day, one that will long be remembered as foundational and formative of our identity as Tasmanian Benedictines.



Thank you, Your Grace, for being close to us and helping us along this path of fidelity to God's calling.

Brother Chronicler





JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

Beloved Friends,

Originally I had intended to resume this month the commentary on the degrees of humility according to St Benedict – we still have two to go. As I commenced, however, this brief exhortation on the feast of the Chair of St Peter – which happens also to be the second anniversary since our foundation – reading through the day’s epistle, it came to me that a few words about it would be appropriate. This epistle contains a number of lessons that apply to us here at Notre Dame Priory and, I think too, to our friends and benefactors both in Australia and abroad. Let’s first read the text:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Although you have not seen Him you love Him; even though you do not see Him now yet believe in Him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Pt 1:3-9).

The Apostle St Peter is here addressing the first generation of faithful who had been converted from paganism. Through the preaching of the apostle they had come to renounce their false gods, to believe in the One True God and in His only Son Jesus Christ. St Peter knows that these recent converts are going through a number of painful trials, to the point that their faith is sorely put to the test.

He begins by reminding them that the hope they have is not a worldly one; no perishable possession, no momentary satisfaction of the flesh or the ego, no passing thrill, such as those who do not know the True God attempt to make themselves “happy” with. No, the inheritance which awaits us is one that is imperishable and that

fills every desire of the rational creature; it is in Heaven, where the Son of God Jesus Christ lives in the glory of His Resurrection. As such, it can never fade away, be corrupted or lost.

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1 Pt 1:9

But it remains an inheritance. And just like any inheritance, there is a waiting period during which one must not lose the grace of the Father who is bequeathing such an inestimable treasure to us. There are people who lose their inheritance because they have a fall out with their own parents. That is very sad, but it cannot be compared with falling out with God through mortal sin or the refusal to fulfil the role He has destined for us.

As we await the moment when that heavenly inheritance becomes ours, we must be tried, like gold in the fire; we have to be tested; we have to be proven true to our destiny. Eternal glory in Heaven is not something that just “happens” to you when you die. No, everyone does not “die and go to Heaven”. That would be to turn God into some sort of divine vending machine, a false god for sure who is at our fingertips, that we leave up on a shelf and take down and use when we need him. That is not God. That is making oneself a god.

The True God tries His faithful servants, just as a true father puts his son to the test, imposing demands which always seem to the child hard

and unfair, but in reality are destined to make him grow, mature and deserve a reward. Later, only later, he realises this and is grateful.

This is reminiscent of what we find in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “*You have also forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons: ‘My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by Him; for whom the Lord loves, He disciplines; He scourges every son He acknowledges.’ Endure your trials as ‘discipline’; God treats you as sons. For what ‘son’ is there whom his father does not discipline?*” (Heb 12:5-7).

St Peter also tells us that the sufferings of Christ were announced in advance; they are part of God’s plan, the plan by which He wanted His only begotten Son who had taken our humanity upon Himself, to learn through suffering the obedience which makes perfect (cf. Heb 5:8-9). If God the Father chose that path for His Son, how much more for us. Let us not be surprised when we are put to the test, whatever might be the source of our sufferings. Nothing, nothing I repeat, escapes God’s Providence, and even the most painful events, caused even by loved ones, are not without meaning and significance in the eternal plans of a loving God.

We also find in this text the most fundamental motivation for perseverance, upon which it hangs, and which is its reward: *Although you have not seen Him you love Him*. What consoling words! The apostle who had the privilege of seeing Our Lord in the flesh, is here encouraging his fellow Christians to move forward in faith in the Incarnate God who had manifested Himself to chosen witnesses. He realises his own privileged role, the undeserved grace of seeing and hearing and touching the Word Incarnate, and so he arouses our generosity with words designed to stress that we will have a special reward: *Although you have not seen Him you love Him!* How consoling to hear the Prince of Apostles state that he knows we love Jesus! How does he know? How do we know that

we love Him? “*The love of God is this, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome*” (1 Jn 5:2-3).

So if we strive to keep His commandments – the Ten Commandments of course, as an expression of our love for God and neighbour – then we love God. And if we love Him, we know that we will see Him one day, after the clouds are dispersed, and the darkness subsides, and the rain is gone. When the short day of human history is over, then will dawn the unending day of a blessed eternity for all those who, in this life, love Jesus without seeing Him.

But is it true that we do not see Him? Do we not see Him in another guise? “*As often as you did it to one of these least of my brethren, you did it to me*” (Mt 25:40). “*Go and you do likewise*” (Lk 10:37). If we have a living faith, then we will see Jesus in the poor, the suffering, the needy, in those who are desolate, tempted or tried in any way. And if we reach out to help them here in the dark days of our life, we can be sure that Jesus Himself will appear to us in the end and lead us into the light.

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.



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Update from the Priory

Dearly Beloved Friends,

Every three months or so the community is treated to an outing. This past week we went to the Tasmania National Park and walked from Fortescue Bay to Cape Hauy. There is a fabulous four hour hike there that takes you up four thousand steps (beware if you are not trained – my old legs are still aching!). It was a time for community sharing and bonding, also allowing each of the brethren to admire the beauty of God’s creation and spend some time in serene walking and praying. We truly are blessed to have such spectacular scenery so close to our home. Deo Gratias!



Another noteworthy event this month was the arrival of altar-bread making equipment donated by the Poor Clare Nuns of the Monastery of the Holy Ghost, in Kennington, Bendigo. The sisters had been making hosts for decades, but unfortunately are no longer able to do so. By providential means we heard of their desire to pass on the equipment to another religious community, and so it has finally arrived, thanks to our sturdy five-meter tri-axle trailer which came back with a number of other items too that will be very useful for various needs. If you’re thinking of ordering altar breads, however, please don’t rush! It will take us several months at least before we are in a position to get the machinery into a decent working space, start making the altar breads, and then, more importantly, make them well enough to serve at the holy altar of sacrifice. Stay tuned and we’ll let



you know when you can start putting in your orders. And if you are an altar bread provider yourself, don’t worry: we don’t want to be competitors! There is one really good way, you know, of making sure we aren’t, and that is to increase the number of Catholic communicants – so let’s join hands in spreading the Good News of the Gospel to all!



Regarding our move to Jerusalem Estate, even though there are still a few hoops to jump through, recent visits with planners, architects and heritage officers (not forgetting safety inspections) have renewed our hopes. A lot has been done, we are certainly going in the right direction, and we hope to have some more detailed news soon. One good way of helping us finalise our move is to support the funding campaign for the building of “monk cabin cells”. Each cabin will cost us approximately \$10,000 and will be dedicated to a saint of the donor’s choice, to whom prayers will be offered for that donor. To date, four have been donated in honour of St Joseph, St Francis of Assisi, St Therese of Lisieux, and St Pio of Pietrelcina. So if you want to get your favourite saint a monk cell, now is the time.



The monks are most grateful for your support and would like to assure you of their prayers for you and all your loved ones, living and deceased, and for a very fruitful Lenten season and month of St Joseph.

Father Prior

