

# Ab AUSTRo

## Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

March/April 2020

No. 34

### This issue:

- † Profession of Br Patrick Mary
- † Polding Walk
- † Launceston Retreat

## Priory update

Dear Friends,

Someone remarked to us recently that, as regards social distances, we monks have got it right for centuries! And someone else, that the whole world is getting a taste of monastic life at the moment. Be that as it may, the trying events of the past few weeks have had little impact on our life in the monastery other than inspiring us to offer our Masses and Communion for those who are prevented from having access to the sacraments at this time. Each day takes part in the eternal present and brings us closer to the God to whom we dedicate our lives.

Speaking of which, the major event of these two months, namely the simple profession of Br Patrick Mary Hobbs, took place as planned on Easter Tuesday, in the radiant joy of the Lord's Resurrection. Due to travel restrictions, however, Brother's family were prevented from coming to the ceremony, and had to be content with following the Mass of profession through the live-stream which, incidentally, we started when public Masses ceased around Australia. Even though the celebration was rather quiet, Divine Providence sweetened the day with some very beautiful sunny, warm weather, which marked a contrast with the days that preceded and those that followed.

Br Patrick, who is the younger brother of Br Gregory, joins Br Francisco in the ranks of junior professed lay brothers.



Br Patrick is from Brisbane. He entered the monastery on 2 July 2018, beginning his noviciate last year on 25 March, feast of the Annunciation. Before entering religious life, Brother was cabinet-maker in Queensland, a skill which has proved useful to the monastery, and is likely to be a valuable asset in the future. Brother Patrick at the moment spends most of his time working on the renovation and building projects of the community, and is also in charge of the monastery linen and is helper to the sacristan. At 23, he is also the youngest member of the community, so we are counting on getting a lot of work out of him for the rest of this century...

Other marking events of the last two months include a five-day retreat held at Emmanuel Centre in Launceston. This retreat, which was given at the request of the Palavra Viva Community, in addition to being our first ever retreat in Tasmania, had also the particular characteristic of being open to both men and women. This was deemed necessary given the particular circumstances and lack of time to provide two retreats. The practice of holding retreats in separate groups of men and women is a proven one and we will certainly not be changing that in the future. The Palavra Viva Community have invited us to return, but we are waiting to see how long the lockdown lasts before we make any decisions. As it is, the Victorian retreats at Pallotti

*Continued on page 4*





## In the school of St Benedict

14 April 2020

Easter Tuesday

Homily at the simple profession of Br Patrick Mary Hobbs

Dear Brother Patrick, Dear Brothers, All Dear Friends who are joining us by digital means.

Today, on this third day of the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection, the tone is set by the Saviour Himself who, when He greets His apostles on the evening of that first Easter Sunday, speaks to them the words: *Peace be to you*. Our Lord's words achieve what they signify, and so when He wishes peace, He creates peace, unlike us who often make wishes for others that will never be realised. Peace be to you.



By prefacing His discourse with this greeting, Our Blessed Lord gives us to understand that peace is a fruit of His passion and death. St Paul, at whose basilica today's station Mass takes place and who speaks to us in the epistle, tells us that Christ made peace through the Blood of His cross, both as to the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven (Cf. Col 1:20). The apostle's meaning is that Jesus' sacrificial death obtains for all of humanity the grace to discover the gift of divine peace.

But what is peace? The philosophers tell us that peace is the tranquillity of order. It is when things are in their place that peace ensues. It is when the human soul has rediscovered its place in the Heart of God that it finds peace. St Benedict, in the prologue to the

---

### A Benedictine monk should be a man who radiates true and lasting peace

---

Holy Rule, quotes a passage from Psalm 33: *Seek after peace and pursue it*. And it is well known that PAX is a motto dear to Benedictines. We can therefore say that a Benedictine monk should be a man who radiates true and lasting peace. But that of course can happen only if he has peace to begin with.

Now the question arises: what in monastic life can be the source of that peace? Clearly, the monastic life as a whole, with its well ordered days, its punctual celebration of a beautiful liturgy, its wisely administered activities, its doors closed to the commotion of the world, is going to favour the acquisition and retention of peace.

Today, however we are gathered to witness an act of monastic profession of vows, and so we can ask ourselves how exactly monastic vows are conducive to creating peace. The answer is quite simple, for the first cause of man's inner turmoil is not so much the events that happen to be rocking the world. The initial and main cause of man's strife is the triple concupiscence: concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life (cf. 1 Jn 2:16). It is precisely to strike a fatal blow at the roots of this triple enemy that the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience were given to us by Our Lord.

The vow of poverty, by which the monk hands over his own possessions and gives up all material goods, is a most powerful means of overcoming the concupiscence of the eyes, that insatiable desire for more things and novel things that distract and distend the heart. For what is it that causes strife and wars if not the pursuit of material goods? The monk not only possesses nothing, but by his profession, he makes it clear that he wants nothing. God alone suffices.

The vow of chastity not only frees the monk from the passions of the flesh, but more than that, frees his

If you would like to receive your newsletter by email only, please get in touch via [newsletter@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:newsletter@notredamemonastery.org)

heart and fixes it in the Heart of God: no other love is to be pursued by the monk who effectively takes God alone for spouse, confident that the sacrifice of all human loves actually opens his heart to everyone, and brings an immense fruit of invisible but real, spiritual paternity.

The vow of obedience frees the monk from the fruitless pursuit of a thousand ambitions that can never satisfy. It gives him the certainty of fulfilling at all times the will of God; it suffuses his every deed with that divine immutable peace which the Lord brought to the world.

It might be objected, however, that is all very beautiful, and no doubt the young professed monk revels in it for a time, but will it last? Is it possible to devote oneself for a lifetime to such a lofty ideal that surpasses the strength of a frail human being? The answer is quite simple. No, it is not possible if we rely on our strength, for we have none. We monks are as weak as anyone else. We have the same frailties, we battle the same passions, we are enticed by the same ambitions. We rely not on any strength of our own, but on the power of God. And so, the answer was given to us in today's introit: *He gave them the water of wisdom to drink; it shall be made strong in them, and shall not be moved, and it shall exalt them forever* (Sir 15:3-4). The water of wisdom, that is, divine grace, will never fail the monk who, every day of his life, asks for the grace of perseverance in a calling which does indeed surpass the capacities of nature. That is why we need the divine strength which makes strong and shall not be moved. As St Paul puts it: *I can do all things through the One who empowers me* (Ph 4:13).

All this of course is not realised without effort, for the monk is nothing less than a sacrificial offering made over to God. This is why the profession is made during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; this is the reason the newly professed monk signs his vows on the altar and leaves them under the corporal on which the sacrifice of the New Covenant will be renewed. With Christ and in Christ the monk's life is made over to God, and that means he can expect to be configured to the mystery of the Lord's passion and death. The

monk himself becomes an altar on which he sacrifices himself in untold ways, most of which are visible only to the eye of his heavenly spouse, and will be revealed only at the end of time. At the end of his life, a monk should resemble the paschal candle: luminous, enlightening many, but stamped with the five wounds, those wounds which, while they are being inflicted are excruciatingly painful, but will shine brightly on the day of the resurrection.

Br Patrick, for many of your family and friends, you are and will remain a mystery. As we sang in the introit for Easter Sunday, the Lord has laid His hand upon you and His ways are become marvellous (Ps 138). As we heard in today's Gospel, the Lord has opened your mind that you may understand (Lk 24:45). So many see the marvel, they admire it, but they do not understand it; it remains an indecipherable enigma. And that is why, quite understandably, people who are sympathetic to the monks will find a variety of ways of justifying their existence. For some, we are useful because we give retreats or sing well; for others because we cultivate the land or produce wine or cheese; for some we are considered to be an interesting part of the landscape, reminiscent of past ages for which we can sometimes feel a certain nostalgia. But we know that when the Lord has opened the mind to understand what is really taking place here, then there is no need for any other justification than that of spending your life with and for God. To return to the image of the paschal candle, the life of the monk consumes itself slowly, silently, with hardly anyone noticing but God; aflame with divine love, his heart is at peace, for he knows the One in whom he has put his trust, and he is certain (cf. 2 Tim 1:12) with a certitude that surpasses any human certitude.

Brother Patrick, at the end of the prologue, our holy Father St Benedict tells us that by sharing in the passion of Christ through patience in the monastery, we will merit to be made partakers of His risen glory in His eternal kingdom. My wish for you on this day of your triennial vows is that the opening of your mind to understanding the ways of God may continue, that you will retain in your daily life and

*Continued on page 4*

NOTRE DAME PRIORY IS A PUBLIC ASSOCIATION OF THE FAITHFUL FOUNDED IN 2017 IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HOBART. YOUR DONATIONS GO TOWARDS HELPING THE COMMUNITY GET ESTABLISHED AS AN AUTONOMOUS BENEDICTINE MONASTERY

VISIT OUR WEBSITE - [notredamemonastery.org](http://notredamemonastery.org)

CONTACT US - [info@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:info@notredamemonastery.org)

**POSTAL ADDRESS**

Notre Dame Priory,  
P.O. Box 85,  
Colebrook  
Tasmania 7027, Australia

**MAKE A DONATION**

**NB New account details in Australian dollars**

Account name: Notre Dame Priory

BSB: 067-004 - Account number: 1004 1427

Or, in US dollars (tax deductible), via cheque, made payable to "Notre Dame Priory, Inc." and sent to: Notre Dame Priory Inc., c/o 1202 Park Hills Court, Louisville, KY, 40207, USA

*Continued from page 3*

allow to grow the effect of this second baptism, as the Fathers called the grace of monastic profession.

That is exactly what will happen if you remain close to Our Blessed Mother, Mary Immaculate, to whom you have consecrated yourself. From the joyful mystery of the Annunciation to the sorrowful mystery of Calvary and then on to the glorious mysteries of the Resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, she is present, and through it all she is the model of the one who listens attentively, who acquiesces to God's plan, who lets herself be consumed in His service, and who in the end is glorified with Him in His kingdom. Peace be to you.

*Continued from page 1*

College have had to be cancelled. The next retreats on our calendar are at Hartzler Park in August, and we are hoping for open borders by then. Time will tell.

A week after the Launceston retreat, Fr Prior flew to Sydney to take part in the annual Polding Walk. This pilgrimage goes from St Thomas of Canterbury Church in Lewisham, where Archbishop Bede Polding was originally interred (St Mary's Cathedral being at that time under reconstruction) to the crypt of the Cathedral, where it concluded this year with Solemn Pontifical Vespers presided by His Lordship Bishop Richard Umbers, assisted by Fr Prior and Fr Terence Naughtin. Dr John Bede Polding, monk of Downside Abbey in England, became the first Archbishop of Sydney in 1842. He dreamed of making Australia a huge Benedictine diocese. This alone is enough to explain our interest in this extraordinary man and why Fr Prior's presence on this pilgrimage was significant. We have since begun reading in refectory the two volume study on Bene-



dictine Pioneers in Australia by Dom Henry Birt, monk of Downside. History did not develop the way Polding hoped it would, but there can be no doubt that Benedictines played an important role in the initial evangelisation of Australia. In our own way, almost two centuries later, we hope to contribute a little something to the realisation of Polding's dream.

On the morning of Maundy Thursday, upon entering the refectory after early morning Tenebrae, the brothers were enraptured by a large reproduction of Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's famous painting of The Wedding Feast of Cana. This image was donated by a friend of the monastery, and Fr Prior had it beautifully framed in Hobart as an Easter gift to the brothers. Henceforth, Our Lady of Cana presides over meals, at which we hope she will never have to say to Our Lord: "They have no wine"!

Final bit of great news: we have received building permits from council and commencement of works order from building surveyor, so construction on the monk cabins should begin any time now. We have taken advantage of the delay to put the finishing touch on some guest rooms that will soon be available for when the borders reopen.

**Brother Chronicler**

