

# Ab AUSTRo

## Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

Oct/Nov 2020

No. 40

### This issue:

- † Monk Cabin Progress
- † A Truce for Today
- † Adam's Apple

## Priory update

Dear Friends,

The charm and warmth of spring coupled with the continual coming and going of workers is making for some very exciting times here at the Priory. The landscape is changing daily as the builders do their magic – cabins literally popping up out of the ground in a day! We are happy to be able to share this news and some photos with you, with special thanks going to those who sponsored one (or two) of the cabins. Speaking of which, 14 have already been sponsored, so that leaves 4 to go. If you'd like to sponsor one of the remaining cabins, the idea is that for a donation of \$15,000 (yes, cost has risen due to some new building regulations...), the cabin will be dedicated to a saint of your choice and the monk who calls it home will pray to that saint for your intentions. Saints already put forward are: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St Anne, St Joseph, St Michael, St Lucy, St Benedict, St Francis of Assisi, St Anthony of Padua, St Thomas More, St Rose of Lima, St Therese of the Child Jesus, St Maximilian Kolbe, St Pio of Pietrecina, and St John Paul II.

As much as the monks are looking forward to when these cabins will be entirely finished and they can move in, the now imminent completion of Immaculate Conception Church is a cause for greater joy still.



As of this mailing, electricians are fitting in the lights and builders are sanding and polishing the floor. It is our intention to commence using the renovated church on 7 December before First Vespers of the Immaculate Conception with a simple blessing by Fr Prior. At the completion of the cabins, we plan to



hold an open house event (*maybe* some time around Easter...) at which we hope to have Archbishop Porteous come and give a solemn blessing to the church, monastic buildings and guest house. We will keep you posted.

Other news for this past month was a second retreat this year at Emmanuel Centre in Launceston. This one was for women, and had twelve in attendance. The retreatants had the pleasant surprise of the whole community coming up from Colebrook for the traditional sung Mass of the Prodigal Son/Daughter on the third day. The next retreat on our calendar is the first retreat at Jerusalem Estate. This one will be for men and will run from 27 December to 1 January. Unfortunately it is waiting-list only for this one, but there are still a number of openings available in Hartzer Park in January (Ladies 19-22 January, Men 24-29 January).

As Tasmanian borders open to the other states, we are looking forward to opening our guest house to friends and helpers. "Bethany" can now receive guests for personal retreats or to lend a helping hand to the community in this period in which the tasks to be accomplished are legion. Should you wish to come, either to make a retreat or to help the monks, please do contact us. We look forward to welcoming you!

Brother Chronicer





## In the school of St Benedict

(Prologue continued, 35-38)

*Having given us these instructions, the Lord daily expects us to make our life correspond with his holy admonitions. And the days of our life are lengthened and a respite allowed us for this very reason, that we may amend our evil ways. For the Apostle saith: "Knowest thou not that the patience of God leadeth thee to repentance" (cf. Rm 2:4)? For the merciful Lord saith: "I will not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and Live" (Ez 33:11).*

How often in our lives do we get the impression that we will never reach the goal? Life, especially in its earlier years, may seem to be unending. We have all our time before us. As we get older, however, we perceive with growing acuity that it passes so very quickly. And yet, even then it can sometimes feel like we will never get there. St Benedict, following St Paul, reminds us that if our life on this earth is lengthened, it is so as to give us the time to repent of our sins and turn to God.

The expression St Benedict uses – above translated as “respite” – literally means a “truce”. The thought is that, just as in battle there can be a truce allowing belligerent parties some respite in their fighting, so God gives us time to repent before He will come back to us and wage war against our sins. If we do not make use of that time to repent and humble ourselves, then we can be sure that we will have to pay, dearly. There can be no armistice with God, there can only be either loving surrender to His advances of love, or bitter obstinacy with accompanying remorse and ultimate defeat. God is a jealous lover; He wants our heart, entirely, and He has every right to it, for He made it. That is why He created the universe, that is why He sent His Son. That is why He founded the Church and gave us the sacraments. Each of these events is a sign of His love for us. What could be more grievous to the Heart of God than the indifference of those hearts He fashioned precisely to enjoy His love? Let us take care to not squander the precious truce we now have, and so let us prepare to receive His unfailing grace.

The Imitation of Christ gives us this salutary lesson which is consonant with today’s passage of the Rule: “The present is very precious; these are the days of salvation; now is the acceptable time. How sad that you do not spend the time in which you might purchase everlasting life in a better way. The time will come when you will want just one day, just one hour

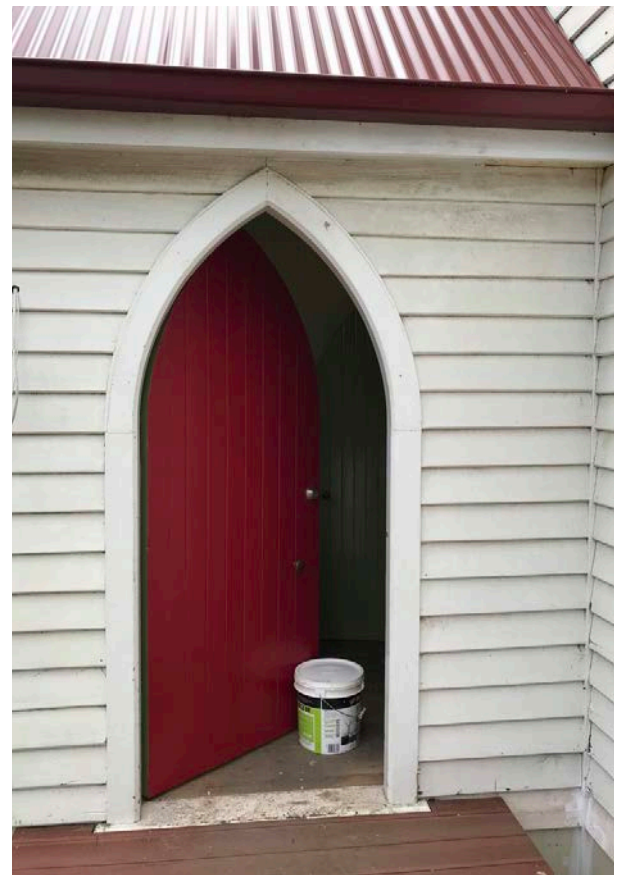
in which to make amends, and do you know whether you will obtain it? See, then, dearly beloved, the great danger from which you can free yourself and the great fear from which you can be saved, if only you will always be wary and mindful of death. Try to live now in such a manner that at the moment of death you may be glad rather than fearful. Learn to die to the world now, that then you may begin to live with Christ. Learn to spurn all things now, that then you may freely go to Him. Chastise your body in penance

---

**God is a jealous lover;  
He wants our heart,  
entirely, and He has  
every right to it.**

---

now, that then you may have the confidence born of certainty. Ah, foolish man, why do you plan to live long when you are not sure of living even a day?” (Book 1, ch. 23).



We happily receive the details of anyone who might be interested in receiving our newsletter  
via [newsletter@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:newsletter@notredamemonastery.org)

## Br Paphnutius discovers the liturgy

The office of Lauds takes its name from the “Laudate Psalms,” the Psalms of praise. The term refers in particular to the last three Psalms of the psalter: 148, 149 and 150. St Benedict, following in this the Desert Fathers, the custom of the Church of Rome, and a number of other ancient liturgies, has his monks recite each day these last three *Laudate* psalms. What is the point behind this repetitive tradition?

The key is to recall what St Benedict tells us in chapter 18, namely that the ancient fathers recited the entire psalter each day and night. The long night vigil in particular concluded with the office of Lauds and brought the psalter to an end with the *Laudate* Psalms. If such a historical explanation for the daily repetition of the *Laudate* Psalms is true, we can also consider the spiritual significance. These last three psalms of the Psalter can be considered to be a summary of the Church’s continual praise to the Creator.

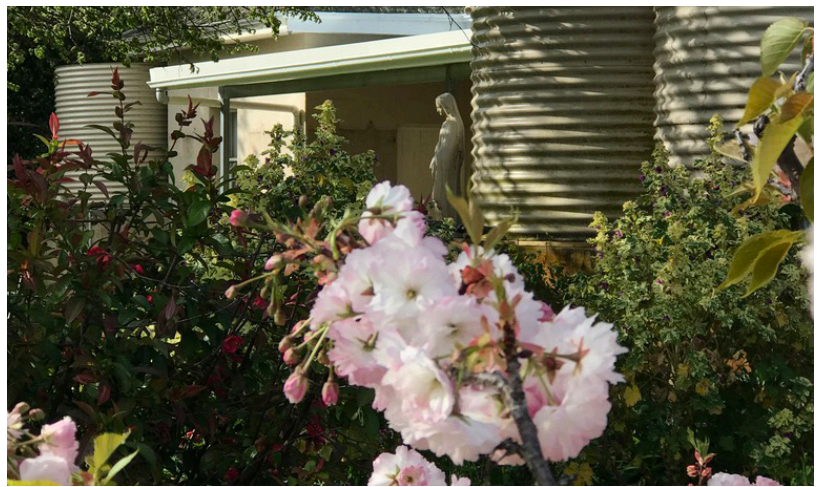
In Psalm 148, she passes in review all of creation: the sun, the moon, the stars, fire, hail, snow, ice, winds, mountains, trees, beasts and cattle, serpents and fowl, kings, princes and judges, young and old – in sum, all creation is summoned to give praise to the Almighty. The monk, as he pronounces these words each day, is conscious that he is lending his lips and voice to the entirety of creation, and that through him the song of praise reaches the Most Holy Trinity.

In Psalm 149, it is the Church which is invited to give glory to the Lord. The Church, the community of the holy ones, never ceases to glorify God and in so doing oppose the nations who resist God. With the sharp two-edged sword of the truths he sings each day at the Divine Office, the monk knows that he is at the heart of the combat for the glorification of God and the salvation of souls. It is truly a privilege to take part in the battles of God.

Psalm 150 is a prelude to the heavenly Jerusalem in which the angels and saints sing their love to Him according to the multitude of His greatness, with

trumpet and harp, timbrel, strings, organs and clanging cymbals. Every spirit is here invited to praise the Lord with all its might.

And so, Br Paphnutius realises in this way that as he sings these Psalms each morning at Lauds, he is opening a path for God among all the peoples of the earth and already living in communion with the heavenly choirs. To his amazement, he becomes conscious of the stupendous reality which is that monks do on earth what the angels and saints are doing in Heaven. Dear God, what a life, and it is yours, oh Monk of Jesus Christ!



**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**

[www.notredamemonastery.org](http://www.notredamemonastery.org)

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

### **POSTAL ADDRESS**

Notre Dame Priory  
PO Box 85  
Colebrook TAS 7027  
Australia

### **MAKE A DONATION**

Account name: Notre Dame Priory  
BSB: 067-004 - Account number: 1004 1427

Cheques payable to “Notre Dame Priory”  
Credit card - [www.notredamemonastery.org/helpus](http://www.notredamemonastery.org/helpus)

**USD** - by credit card or cheques made payable to  
“Notre Dame Priory Inc.” and sent to:  
Notre Dame Priory c/o 1202 Park Hills Court  
Louisville KY 40207 USA



## JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

The essence of every sin is to be found in the rejection of God's loving plan. We considered last month how, the first of all creatures, Lucifer revolted against reality and chose to turn against the Creator. We now turn our attention to the first human sin, that of Adam and Eve, known as Original Sin. We know the story: the garden, the apple, the serpent. The event is a historical one. It is not to be assimilated to the myths of other religions. It took place at the beginning of human history and involved our first parents.

God is exceedingly liberal in His gifts. There were innumerable trees in the garden, but only one of them was off-limits. This shows us that God promotes human freedom, desiring that we prosper and develop our talents in a world of beauty that offers countless possibilities. But the one tree is there to show that, however many options might be open to us, there is one that is not – the path of sin and rebellion against the order created by God. The one tree that is off-limits means that creatures, in spite of their vast, God-given potential, are not God. Even God Himself could not make another God. A creature can never be God, and to pretend to be one would be to live a lie, one that can only subvert the very being we do have. The one tree from which they are forbidden to eat is the symbol of the limitations of the creature.

What God was asking of Adam and Eve, then, was to simply embrace their place in the universe, as King and Queen of all creation, stewards of the eternal Lord of all things. If they had done so, all would have been well for them and their posterity. The splendid harmony of creation would never have been broken. The cosmos would not have known the natural disasters that cause so much grief to humanity; the plants and animals would never have been a cause of poison and death; man and woman would have lived in perfect communion; there would have

been no division, no separation, no wars. All would have been bliss.

Tragically, freedom was not enough for them. They fell for the temptation to create their own little world in which they could be “like God” defining their own existence and making their own rules. And that was a fatal move, for the very simple reason that the creature, without the Creator, vanishes. The creature that seeks to be independent of its Creator undermines its own existence. A world that seeks to ignore God tends to fall back into the chaos from which it sprang. Such is the essence of original sin, and it is not hard to see that every sin imitates the original sin in various ways.

As we look out over the landscape of our society, we can only be moved to pity for so many souls and even entire nations that pretend to have no need of God. God is considered a luxury that some can afford, or a pastime that makes you feel good. He is for many like an old book on a dusty shelf that will be taken down from time to time, and then returned to its forlorn place. Such a reality should bring bitter tears to the eyes of those who know that God is all, that without Him there is no life, no love, no hope, no anything.

As we strive to do all that is in our power to bring the world back to its senses, we also know that the first step is to make sure that we ourselves return to Him, that in our own lives we do not allow the attitude of Lucifer to hold sway. We all have that little tree in our garden with its comely fruit, but which we know, deep down in our hearts, is also a deadly fruit. It brings momentary thrills, but hardly have we begun to swallow it that it remains stuck in our throat. Our Adam's Apple reminds us that if we seek to consume for our profit, if we go beyond what is given to us by God, we will only come up with recipes for destruction, personal and collective.

