

Ab AUSTRo

Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

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Priory update

Dear Friends,

Along with the welcome return of spring, the month of September has brought a few long-awaited developments at Jerusalem Estate. On 3 September, feast of St Pius X, Fr Prior spent part of his onomastico (name day) in Hobart attending a public hearing at the seat of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, along with our planners, Emma Riley and Associates. Our application for a specific area plan over the estate was discussed. This will allow for the construction of a traditional monastery, guest house and workshops. The commissioners asked for a few modifications to the application, and this having been done, we now await the outcome with a hopeful heart. Please keep this one in your prayers as all future works on the property are dependent upon it.

Meanwhile, things continue to progress around the Old House to implement the planning approval received last year for our provisional site. Work on the chapel is nearly complete. A beautiful large crucifix formerly in St Vincent's Hospital, Toowoomba has been installed. It came to us thanks to some fantastic teamwork between Patricia Fisher, Ellen and Anselmo Morosini and Chris and Christine Tyrrell. As regards the stained glass windows, a number of which had been broken, we decided that we wanted to create something beautiful for God, and so invited expert Gavin Merrington to propose a solution. The result is a dignified setting which soothes the mind and heart, making it a beautiful space for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. Another project underway for the church is the installation of microphones and camera for continued livestreaming of our Masses and Offices and also for future recordings. Finally, a new roof is going on this week. It has been decided that the edifice will be henceforth called Immaculate Conception Church. We are hoping inaugurate it on, if not before, its patronal feast, 8 December.

Another piece of exciting news: work on the monk

accommodation cabins is now full swing! On 15 September, feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, the concrete footings were poured. The floors, which were prepared last year, have been put into position, and now Males Builders are proceeding with the construction.

All the community has been working hard on these projects, especially Brothers Francisco and Patrick. Br Gregory, in addition to working towards developing a sustainable vegetable garden, has produced under the auspices of Cana Press two more titles: Fr Martin de Cochem's *Four Last Things*, and Fr Prior's abridged and popular edition of his doctoral thesis, entitled *Whilst It Is Day - Shedding Light on the Eternal Stakes of Life*. On Our Lady's Birthday, our new hard-cover edition of the Spiritual Exercises and retreat prayerbook arrived, the fruit of many months of labour. Br Bede, in addition to his usual administration work, has recently learned the important task of mowing the lawns, filling in for Br Joseph who is on the mainland till the reopening of borders. As for Fr Prior, he has somehow been finding time to computerise our small, but growing library. He figures it's better to do things when we are relatively small. In this way, any new arrivals can easily be put into the computer, and thus a file is at hand for anyone who needs a particular book. Even though most of the monks seem to have enough books to keep them busy, Fr Prior seems always to be in need of more!

Brother Chronicler





In the school of St Benedict

(Prologue continued, 33-34)

Wherefore the Lord also saith in the Gospel: He that heareth these my words and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock. The floods came and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

No extensive knowledge of the Scriptures is required in order to recognise in this text the concluding exhortation to the Sermon on the Mount (St Matt. ch. 7). After having laid out the essence of the New Law, the “Law of the Gospel” as St Thomas calls it, the Saviour addresses these final words to His hearers, and through them, to us. St Benedict applies them suitably to the monastic life. The Rule, which according to our tradition, is the quintessence of the Gospel, is for the monk the surest way of walking in the footsteps of the Lord.



But these words concern anyone who is serious about building up the edifice of the soul. If we build the house of our spiritual life on His teaching, then we are building on solid rock, for we are building on Christ Himself, who is the cornerstone. There shall be plenty of wind (temptations of the evil spirits), and plenty of water, both from the clouds and from the rivers (trials sent from God and enticements coming from the world); all shall rush in upon the house with intense fury – but to no avail. We have all seen stone promontories or lighthouses on the sea coast. Huge waves beat against them for hours and days, and this has

been going on for millennia – all to no avail. They are built on stone, they will not move till the end of time.

These words are designed to give us courage in the midst of the tribulations that no human being can avoid. Suffering is the lot of all, and persecution, of necessity, comes to those who follow Christ: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*, writes St Paul to Timothy (2 Tm 3:12). This is the normal path, and so it should not surprise us when it happens. Our faith must be tried like gold in the fire: *Gold and*

Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.

silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation (Sir 2:5). Otherwise, we run the risk of being like *children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive* (Eph 4:14).

The authentic Christian life, like the authentic monastic life, is not to be reinvented with every generation. While it admits of some adaptations to changing circumstances of the world, its essence remains ever the same; it is the Holy Gospel, the norm of our faith, the rule of our conduct, ever old and ever new, immovable as stone, and all-pervasive as light. Let’s ever allow ourselves to be shaped by it, and never seek to adapt it to ourselves. It is rock, it doesn’t move; if you try to move it, you get hurt. *Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder* (Mt 21:44).



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Br Paphnutius discovers the liturgy

Last month, Br Paphnutius discovered how St Benedict prescribes the recitation of Psalm 66 every day at the beginning of Lauds. Now he discovers that there are a number of other psalms in this category. St Benedict likes repetitions. At Matins, Psalms 3 and 94, at Compline, Psalms 4, 90 and 133. Lauds is the most repetitive of all the hours of the Divine Office, given that of the nine Psalms (this includes the canticle and the Benedictus), six of them are repeated everyday. Undoubtedly, the most famous of the Psalms which are repeated at Lauds, with the exception of feast days with proper antiphons, is Psalm 50. This is the Psalm of David after his double crime of adultery and murder, when the Prophet Nathan reproached him for his sin. Tradition tells us that the king, upon hearing the scathing reproach of the Prophet, immediately confessed his sin and began to weep and fast. This Psalm, one of the most beautiful prayers ever written, was the fruit of his penance. The most famous of the seven penitential psalms, it is a summary of all the dispositions of a soul who returns to God after having sinned.

A number of factors have contributed to making this Psalm a favourite, not only of monks who quickly learn it by heart, but of anyone who takes the time to consider his own sinfulness. The sorrow there described is poignant: *I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me. To Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee... for behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me.* But the Psalm does not leave it at that. Touching sparks of hope surge up from the depths of a heart that is moved by grace to hope in the return of joy: *Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. To my hearing Thou shalt give joy and gladness: and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice.*

The grace of the Holy Spirit is invoked with the trio of verses, evoking the Holy Trinity: *Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right Spirit within my bowels. Cast me not away from Thy face; and take not Thy Holy*

Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect Spirit. That is not all. In its post-conversion experience, the soul now reconciled with God, having come to know how good He has been to her, can only be filled with zeal to bring others to that same bliss: *I will teach the unjust Thy ways: and the wicked shall be converted to Thee.... O Lord, Thou wilt open my lips: and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.*

In this way, Br Paphnutius starts to understand why it is that so many of the monks in history became apostles, why it is that they could not hide their lamp under a bushel, but wanted to share their joy. The monk, like everybody else, is a sinner; but he is a converted sinner, one who has found the source of joy in his heart, a joy which seeks to burst forth in praise, but also in teaching. All these reflections leave Br Paphnutius wondering about all those souls out there who are in need of conversion—in his family, among his friends and the monastery supporters, among those, both near and far, who do not know God... He wants them all to come, to experience something of his own happiness. And so each day as he recites the *Miserere*, he finds himself praying it not only for himself but also for others. “Have mercy, O God, give them Thy Holy Spirit and with Him eternal joy.” And so, even though he will recite this Psalm almost every day of his life, he knows he will never tire of it. *For behold Thou hast loved truth: the uncertain and hidden things of Thy wisdom Thou hast made manifest to me.*



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

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JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

Last month, we began to reflect upon the angels, and we mentioned that up to a third of them failed the test that would have opened up to them the beatific vision of God. We concluded by announcing some reflections on what the sin of the angels was. The angels are pure spirits, and therefore they are capable of only spiritual sins. St Ignatius captures the essence of their sin in these words: “they did not want to make use of the freedom God gave them to reverence and obey their Creator and Lord, and so falling into pride, were changed from grace to hatred of God, and cast out of heaven into hell” (Sp. Ex. #50).

“They did not want to.” The opportunity was theirs. Truth, goodness, holiness, happiness were all within their grasp, being offered by the Creator. Through His gifts, it was ultimately Himself that He wanted to give. That is precisely where the fallen angels failed. They did not want to receive, for if they had accepted, they would have had to acknowledge their dependence on God, and that they refused.

What does this mean? It means that these angels rejected being creatures. They did not want to admit that they were not God, that they were in need of

someone else. They voluntarily blinded themselves to reality, and chose to pretend; they chose to live a lie, a lie which for them would become an eternal lie, the lie that somehow they could do without God, for they could be their own god. Such a sin is irretrievable, for it rejects the very source and principle of the life of grace.



Instead of opening themselves to the eternal light and love, they chose to lock themselves up in the tiny box of their own angelic powers, distorted now and severed from their life-giving source. Their very existence became an unbearable burden, but one which they would have to live with forever. They had been given freedom in order to choose God, to choose the good. This they rejected, and were thrown out of God’s presence, into the hell which was created for them, in which they would be tormented forever, and to which they would seek to bring others to share in their woe. The sin of the angels is the prototype of every sin, for every sin in some way is the rejection of God’s offer of love. Next month, we will consider human sin.

Let’s conclude for today by remembering that if a third of the angels fell, that means that two-thirds did not; these accepted God’s plan and were beatified. Among them we honour especially the archangels, Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, and also our Guardian Angels. Let us invoke them and remember that one good angel is more powerful than all the demons of Hell combined, for he has the very power of God Himself. With them we are in good company.

