

Ab AUSTRo

Newsletter of
Notre Dame Priory

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Priory update

The month of August culminates in the great feast of Our Lady's triumphal Assumption into Heaven. For us monks of Notre Dame, it was also the third anniversary of the purchase of Jerusalem Estate. This year the feast was marked by the solemn renewal of the consecration of the community to Mary Immaculate in communion with many traditional communities around the world. The hour is one of concern at so many levels, and so we entrust ever more to the Mother of Our Lord, not only ourselves, but also all those who are dear to us.

All the brothers have now moved into their new cabins, and we took advantage of the two-week school holiday to start work on the other six. Fr Prior has also moved, and his office is provisionally located in one of the cabins. Part of the job of finishing the interiors has been made easier by the recent acquisition of a second hand multi-function woodcutting machine. Br Patrick is a happy man (happier, should we say!). It will give him greater capacity for putting to good use his cabinet-making talent.

Cana Press has published three new titles: one great classic, namely St Catherine of Siena's *Dialogue*, a new edition of a well-known book on monastic life by Dom Germain Morin, entitled: *The Ideal of the Monastic Life Found in the Apostolic Age*, and finally a new book by Fr Prior on *Divine Providence and Human Freedom*. Cana Press has also decided to resume the sale of St Paul's Paper along with a variety of new

greeting cards portraying various scenes from the Gospel or saints. Upon popular demand, we have also decided to resume the Monastic Liturgical Wall Calendar. These will be available in November, but pre-orders placed now will get you a 25% discount.

Even though August seems to be the coldest month of the year, in these parts it is also lambing season. The bleating of these tender creatures can often be heard at this time. Along with the forerunner signs of spring time, such as the blossoming wattles and fruit trees, there is much hope in the air!

Winter would not be complete without the traditional outing. On 26 August the community went for a spectacular hike up Quamby Bluff and Liffey Falls. An extraordinary opportunity to glorify God in the beauty of His creation.



Finally, Fr Prior is happy to announce that he has received the welcome news of the grant of his permanent residency in Australia. Deo Gratias! This being said, the Star-Spangled Banner still flies in his office.... You can take the prior out of the country, but....

Brother Chronicler



QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





In the school of St Benedict

(Chapter Two, What Kind of Man the Abbot Should Be, 4-5)

Therefore the abbot ought not to teach, or ordain, or command anything that is against the law of the Lord; on the contrary, his commands and teaching should be infused into the minds of his disciples like the leaven of divine justice.

The image St Benedict uses here to describe the way the abbot's teaching should be received in the minds and hearts of his disciples is taken from Our Lord's words in Matthew 13:33: *The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.* Leaven mixes with the dough in such a way as to be inseparable from it, causing it to rise. So the word of God preached by the abbot should penetrate the soul of the monk in depth, helping it grow and blossom. St Benedict wants to stress that the work of the abbot is meant to facilitate the life of the monk. Goodness and virtue are things that are helpful to the soul, just as evil and vice are obstacles. This means that the abbot is for the monk, not against him, and this even when he must put the monk on guard against his vices or even punish him for his misconduct. As St Gregory says, the abbot's job is the *ars artium*, the art of arts, the most delicate and consummate art of guiding souls in the ways of perfection.

St Augustine, commenting on the passage of St Matthew quoted above, says that the leaven is charity, and the woman represents wisdom. The three

measures of flour are the three things which are found in man and which are expressed in these words: *Love the Lord with your whole heart, your whole soul, and your whole spirit.* Rabanus Maurus, for his part, explains

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that it is charity that is hidden in our soul and is destined to develop until it communicates its perfection to the entire soul, work which begins in this life, and is achieved in eternity. When the abbot considers his task as one that is destined to help his monks grow daily in love for God and neighbour, he is on the path to becoming a good abbot, and his monks are on the path to authentic sanctity.



We happily receive the details of anyone who might be interested in receiving our newsletter
via newsletter@notredamemonastery.org

Br Paphnutius discovers the liturgy

After Conventual Mass, Br Paphnutius, along with all the members of the community, spends around a quarter of an hour in giving thanks to the Lord for the gift of Holy Communion. This thanksgiving is done either in the church, in one's cell, or even, weather permitting, in the garden. Then follows another hour of study or class time, before the midday office of Sext, that is, the sixth hour of the day. Like Terce, Sext is one of the minor hours of the divine office. On Sunday and Monday parts of Psalm 118 are sung, but from Tuesday to Saturday, the same Psalms are recited everyday, namely the Gradual Psalms 122, 123 and 124.

The hymn of this hour, *Rector Potens Verax Deus*, chants the power of God of whom the sun, in the full force of the day's light, is the symbol. The thought of the sun's heat leads naturally to that of the passions, and so the hymn asks that their ardent flames be tempered. One is reminded here of a verse from the sequence of Pentecost, in which we proclaim that the Holy Spirit is refreshment in summer – *in aestu temperies*. If God can calm the ardors of the sun, so can He calm the flames of our passions.

One cannot fail to think here of the oration for the feast of St Lawrence which the Church invites her priests to recite after Mass: *We beseech Thee, Almighty God, grant us to quench the flames of our vices, even as Thou gavest blessed Lawrence grace to overcome his fiery torments.*



Roasting on his grill, the holy martyr overcame the flames by remaining faithful to the end, consuming his life for the One he loved. The hymn then goes on to pray for peace of soul. Indeed, if the body resists its passions, the soul remains at peace.

O God of truth, O Lord of might,
Disposing time and change aright,
Who clothes the splendid morning ray
And gives the heat at noon of day:

Extinguish Thou each sinful fire,
And banish every ill desire:
And while Thou keepest the body whole,
Shed forth Thy peace upon the soul.



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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

In our survey of the main themes of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we come to one which has never been popular, namely that of hell, the state and place of damnation for those who die willingly deprived of God's grace. The reason it has never been popular is obvious: nobody is comfortable with the thought of burning forever without ever being consumed, separated from God in absolute hatred of all that is good and wholesome. The visions some saints have had of the reality of hell is indeed terrifying.

But the question immediately arises: does its awful existence allow us to ignore it, especially when we know that God has revealed it to us, the Lord Jesus having been most repetitively explicit on this point? The saints did not think so, on the contrary. St Benedict teaches his monks to "dread hell" (Rule, ch 4). He also reminds them that, at this very moment, hell burns for their sins those who scorned God (Rule, ch 7).

In a full 30 day retreat, St Ignatius wants his retreatant to spend no less than seven full hours taking a very close look at what hell is like. All the senses are engaged: sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling. It's all bitter and terrible. It's somewhere you do not want to go. For the saints, the best way not to go to hell is to think often of it, and of the fact that each of us could go there if we die without God's grace.

Pope St John Paul II wrote that for many souls the serious perspective of losing God forever is the only motivation strong enough to keep them from sin and lead them to conversion. Is this not the whole idea behind punitive measures? What keeps us from crossing over the line in the middle of the road if not the real danger of death? What makes us stop at the red light if not that we might lose our driver's license, or worse, die? Everyone understands that. But what if losing your license were just a threat, but never really happened? What if no one ever died on the road? Would people respect the driving code? I should think not. Here we see the folly of such talk as: "there is a hell, but let's hope it's empty". The Son of God certainly did not think so. He does not use the conditional, but the future tense when He speaks of those who *will go into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (Mt 25:41). He also said that we must strive to enter by the narrow gate, *for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter and shall not be able* (Lk 13:24); and again: *Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and*

broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it! (Mt 7:13-14).

St Thomas Aquinas teaches that there is a relation between the virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gift which he pairs with the theological virtue of hope is the gift of fear. How so? "We fear, not that we may fail of what we hope to obtain by God's help, but lest we withdraw ourselves from this help. Wherefore filial fear and hope cling together, and perfect one another" (*Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 19, a. 9, ad 1). In other words, without the fear of the Lord, hope wanes. What happens if there is no more fear? Hope itself weakens and is lost. In this way we can understand why the saints considered that by preaching on hell, they were really fulfilling their mission of bringing souls to Heaven. "Tell them to stop before it's too late". So did Jesus and the saints. So must we.

But what if you don't believe in hell? I'll let Sister Lucia of Fatima answer that one: "There is no shortage of unbelievers in the world who deny these truths, but they are no less true for being denied. Their disbelief does not save unbelievers from the horrors of hell, should a life of sin lead them there. ... At Fatima, (God) sent us His Message as one more proof of these truths. This Message recalls them to us, so that we do not let ourselves be fooled by the false doctrines of unbelievers who deny them, or of deceivers who distort them. To this end, the message assures us that hell is a fact, and that the souls of poor sinners end up there" (*Calls from the Message of Fatima*, ch. 14).

