

Ab Austro

Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

June 2021

No. 46

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Priory update

This month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been abundantly blessed. This year, we were joined in our annual bonfire on the Vigil of St John the Baptist by His Grace the Archbishop. What was the occasion? The Archbishop was here to confer the minor orders of porter and lector on Brothers Bede and Gregory. We entrust both brothers to your kind prayers as they continue their study of theology.

If the number of our porters and lectors has tripled this month, the number of our fully committed oblates doubled, with the oblations of Martine Watkinson (Sr Mary Scholastica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) on 11 June, and that of Ronan Reilly (Br John Bede Mary) on 22 June. We are delighted to welcome these two new oblates and we ask their prayers, as we commit to helping them look to St Benedict for guidance in the ways of salvation and perfection.

Fr Prior attended the Christopher Dawson Colloquium in Hobart on 25 and 26 June. This year's theme was "Passing on the Faith: the Challenge for Parents and Schools". On this occasion took place also the launching of His Grace Archbishop Julian's most recent book: *Foundations: Preparing the Church in Australia for the Plenary Council and Beyond*.

Br Antony Mary was joined by most of the community at the Southern Midlands Council Office in Oatlands for his citizenship ceremony. Brother, who came to Australia at the age of twelve, was born in Mauritius. We are delighted to have him as a full-fledged Australian, and now we are just waiting on Father Prior...



Finally, you are of course wondering about the cabins! Well, we are happy to announce that on the feast of Saints John and Paul (26 June) Brothers Gregory, Joseph and Antony made the move. By the time you receive this, it is quite possible that most of the community will have done likewise. You will recall that each cabin was financed by a donor who chose a patron saint for the cabin. The monk who lives there commits to praying for that donor especially through the intercession of the saint. Br Gregory's cabin, donated by Marianna Turlejski, is dedicated to St Francis of Assisi; Br Joseph's, donated by Joseph Mittel, is dedicated to St Joseph; Br Antony's donated by Soki Ping Cheong, is dedicated to St Benedict. More next month!

Brother Chronicler

Three monk cabins are still looking for sponsors (and patron saints). The construction of these will commence shortly, so we are trusting in Divine Providence to come through. If you would like to help, we calculate materials for each cabin at approximately \$12,500.



QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





In the school of St Benedict

(Chapter One, On the Kinds of Monks, 10-13)

The fourth kind of monks are those called Gyrovagues. These spend their whole lives wandering from province to province, staying three days in one monastery and four in another, ever roaming and never stable, given up to their own wills and the allurements of gluttony, and worse in all respects than the Sarabaites. Of the wretched life of all these folk it is better to be silent than to speak. So, leaving them on one side, let us proceed with God's help to provide for the strong race of Cenobites.

Worse in all respects than the Sarabaites: that's a terrible indictment, when we consider what was said about the latter. What makes the Gyrovagues so much worse is that, in addition to all the vices of their counterparts, they roam around from place to place, never putting down roots, taking advantage of what they find everywhere, but not staying long enough to contribute to the betterment of a community. Investing in a community, like founding and building a family, takes time, energy, fidelity, in good times and bad, for better or for worse, through fire and water. No wonder the soul who lacks the depth to stay put amidst the challenges not only does not grow, but recedes, and opens itself to all sorts of vices.

This is why St Benedict builds his Rule, which delineates the practices of the monastic life, on stability as the first of the monastic vows. A monastery is a spiritual family of brothers under the paternal guidance of a father. Just as one does not change natural fathers and siblings, so one does not change spiritual fathers and brothers. This demands that the monk have the maturity to understand that every community has its limits, as does every father, and that he be not overly scandalised by these.

Both spiritual and psychological maturity are required in order to be a stable monk, just as they are required to be a stable and faithful spouse. No marriage is perfect, but happiness in marriage can be realised only when both spouses accept the shortcomings of the other. Then, and only then, both can put down deep roots in true, lasting, self-giving and self-sacrificing love. When that does not happen, what St Benedict says of the vices of the Gyrovague can sadly be found in the man or woman who is unfaithful to their spouse. The common denominator of all – the Gyrovague monk or the unfaithful spouse – is that their life is all about themselves and this leads them to profit from others. They never learn how to sacrifice and give of themselves; they remain locked

up in the immaturity of the adolescent who thinks the world owes him something. Such a life is a recipe for destruction that leaves many damaged souls in its wake.

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But let us imitate St Benedict's discretion, and move on to considerations on what the monastic life is truly about, and how its teachings can also inspire the laity, in whatever state of life they may be. This we shall commence next month.



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 the first hour of class, Br Paphnutius prepares himself for the most important office of the day: the Conventual Mass which is preceded by the office of Terce, the “third hour” of the day, that is to say by our reckoning, around 9 A.M. We know, from St Peter’s discourse on Pentecost Sunday, that this was precisely the hour of the descent of the Holy Spirit, and this is why the hymn of this hour (*Nunc Sancte Nobis Spiritus*) calls upon the Divine Paraclete:

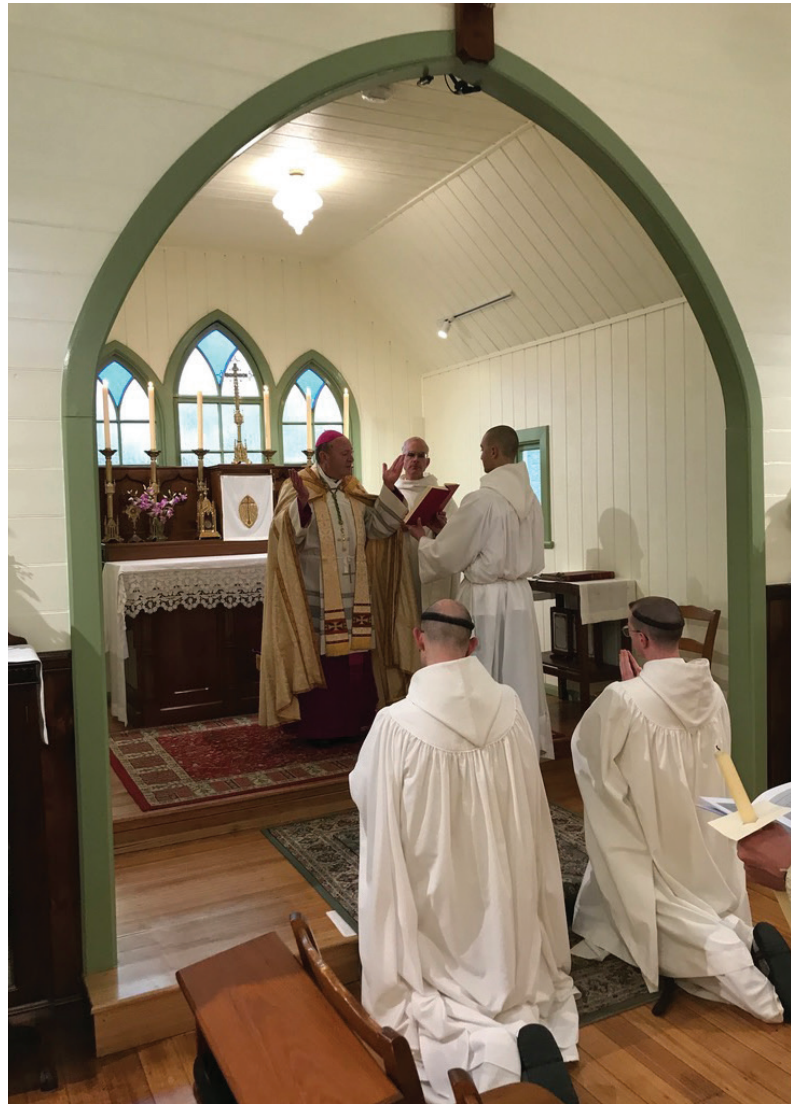
Come, Holy Ghost, with God the Son and God the Father ever One: Shed forth Thy grace within our breast, And dwell with us, a ready guest.

By every power, by heart and tongue, By act and deed, Thy praise be sung: In flame with perfect love each sense, That others’ souls may kindle thence.

The fire of the Holy Ghost is thus invoked upon the monks assembled for Holy Mass, and this is most fitting, since it is the Spirit who will both transubstantiate the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus and transform the hearts of those present into an eternal offering to the glory of God. The fire of the love of the Holy Spirit is thus set ablaze in the hearts



of all as they prepare for the offering of the divine sacrifice. Immediately after Terce, the celebrant, accoutred with maniple and chasuble, commences the prayers at the foot of the altar as the monks let rise through the vaults of the church the divinely inspired tones of the immortal Gregorian Chant.



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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 the Third Exercise, St Ignatius invites us to make a prayer which, at first sight, seems repetitive, but taking a closer look, we find that it is in reality a mosaic of fine nuances. We are in the context of examination of conscience, and having already acknowledged our sinfulness, in order to bring this truth home to us even more, the text encourages us to enter into conversation, first with Our Blessed Lady, then with Our Lord Jesus Christ, and finally with God the Father. The prayer we are invited to make asks for the triple grace of “1) a deep knowledge of my sins and a feeling of abhorrence for them; 2) an understanding of the disorder of my actions, that filled with horror of them, I may amend my life and put it in order; and 3) a knowledge of the world, that filled with horror, I may put away from me all that is worldly and vain” (Sp. Ex # 63).

Knowledge (or understanding) in the mind and abhorrence in the will are the thrice repeated points. But knowledge of and horror for what? First of all, for my sins themselves, secondly for their root causes in me (which he refers to as our “operations”, that is to say our innermost reactions and tendencies), and thirdly the inroads that the world and its spirit of vanity has made into my life.

Most people manage to acknowledge at least some of their failings, but feeling abhorrence for our actions,



and even more for our wayward tendencies and vanity, that's another kettle of fish. Oddly enough, in our brazen age which has by large lost the sense of sin, there are still a few things that horrify people and provoke indignation: concentration camps, slave labour, financial corruption, child abuse, to name a few. This is good, but it is not enough. One of the most precious fruits of the Exercises is this: to understand, to sense instinctively, that what is contrary to *any* of God's commandments is awful, no matter how many people say it's OK, lobby for its tolerance, or actually do it themselves. Evil is never to be tolerated when it can be prevented, and even though we cannot often prevent it in others, we can always prevent it in ourselves. And that is precisely the whole point. When sin becomes for us the horror it really is, then we flee from it as from a viper, for we know that “everybody does it” will carry no weight at the Divine Judgment.

It is a grace that we must ask through the intercession of Mary Immaculate. She, the sinless One, has no tolerance for sin, even though she loves sinners and welcomes them home when they have the courage to acknowledge their transgressions and turn back to their Saviour. In her Immaculate Heart there is only mercy and maternal solicitude. Let us allow our hearts to be touched by the pleas of a Mother.

