

NOTRE DAME PRIORY Newsletter

JANUARY 2018

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

NO. 11



PRIORY CELEBRATES FIRST PATRONAL FEAST... TWICE...

The commemoration of Our Lord's first miracle in Cana of Galilee, inasmuch as it is one of the major manifestations of Our Lord's divinity and mission, has long been celebrated by the Church in connection with the Epiphany and the Baptism of Our Lord. In the traditional Latin rite, the Epiphany is celebrated on 6 January, the Baptism of the Lord on the 13th, and the Wedding Feast of Cana on the 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany. There has never been however, a proper feast to celebrate the third of these events.

Being placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Cana, it was our desire to celebrate a specific feast in her honour, and the best date seemed to be the Saturday within the octave of the Epiphany. And so this year for the first time, we celebrated it with joy, making use of proper texts taken from tradition and submitted for approval to the Archbishop of Hobart.

That same day we were pleased to welcome Fr Christopher and Br Drasko from the Emmaus Monastic Community just down the road from us. They both joined us for the office of Sext, then shared lunch and recreation with us.

The next day, as we once again read the Gospel of Cana and extended as it were our patronal feast, many friends from the Latin Mass Communities of Hobart and Launceston came to celebrate with us at our High Mass in St Patrick's, Colebrook, after which we welcomed them to our new premises in

Rhyndaston. Everybody brought something to eat along with chairs, tables, etc. to treat the monks for this first patronal feast of our nascent community.

Striving to see the presence of Christ in all our guests, as our Holy Father St Benedict so strongly exhorts us in the Rule, we consider both these visits to have been a great blessing for us, and we give thanks to Our Blessed Lady, who continues to open doors for us and to make possible what sometimes seems impossible.

There remains much to be done, but this first year of existence has seen many proofs of God's care for us, and this care comes through people like you who follow what's going on and show your interest in it.

Please keep us in your prayers as we prepare to face the other hurdles along the way!

Brother Chronicler

*Please take note of our
new mailing address:*

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



JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

Beloved Friend in Jesus and Mary,

After a two month interruption due to the November clothing ceremony and the feast of Christmas, let us return this month to our reflections on the degrees of humility as found in the Rule of St Benedict. In October, we started looking at the first degree, the fear of God which moves the soul to have God always in one's mind and heart, leading to keep a watch over one's thoughts and actions and thus avoid sin. Today, let us pursue our study of this first degree by reading the rest of this clear-sighted text:

“We are, indeed, forbidden to do our own will by Scripture, which saith to us: *Turn away from thine own will*. Moreover we ask God in prayer that His will be done in us. And rightly are we taught not to do our own will, since we dread that sentence of Scripture: *There are ways which to men seem right, but the ends thereof lead to the depths of hell*; and since we fear also what is said of the careless: *They are corrupt and have become abominable in their pleasures*. And in regard to the desires of the flesh, let us believe that God is always present to us, since the prophet says to the Lord: *All my desire is before thee*. We must be on our guard, then, against evil desires, for death lies close by the gate of delight; whence Scripture gives this command: *Go not after thy concupiscences*. So if the eyes of the Lord behold the good and the evil, and the Lord is ever looking down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God; and if our deeds are daily, day and night, reported to the Lord by the angels assigned to us: then, brethren, must we constantly beware, as the prophet says in the psalm, lest God some day behold us falling into evil ways, and turned unprofitable, and spare us for this present time, because He is merciful and awaits our amendment, but should say to us in the future: *These things didst thou do, and I was silent*.”

“Be on guard against your own will”: a counter-cultural affirmation if there ever was one! I suspect, as I write these words, that most of our contemporaries would not have a clue as to what this means. In our day, the will of the individual is supreme: “do *your* thing”; “all that matters is what *you* want”; “it’s all about *you*”... Don’t we hear such expressions every day? So how can we understand this teaching? Does it really make sense, and if so, how?

I suggest that, in order to understand it, we need to do a bit of philosophy first. Man is a limited, finite creature, endowed with intellect and free will. This will is, by nature, oriented towards and drawn by the good, since it is ultimately destined to be appeased with the possession of the absolute Good which is God. But everything that exists is, in some way, good; otherwise it would not exist. In this life, the intellect often perceives only a partial good and fails to see its evil consequences; likewise, the lower faculties of man are drawn to particular goods that are sometimes in contradiction with reason, and this attraction inclines the will to pursue these apparent goods which, in reality, cannot fulfill the purpose of his existence, but leave him empty and lead to his destruction and damnation.

This was true of our first parents in the state of original justice, and that is why they sinned. But it is even more true of us, due to the fact that we are born with concupiscence (the attraction to sensual pleasures contrary to reason) and ignorance (a darkness of the intellect making it difficult to see where the true good lies).

This is why St Benedict, and all authentically Catholic spiritual authors, insist upon the necessity to not follow one's own will. One's own will always runs the risk of pursuing a particular good and of leaving aside the general and ultimate good of our nature. The only way to prevent this from happening is to discipline oneself to ensure the rectitude of the intellect and will, and the safest and easiest way to do this is to follow the ordinances laid down by an authority that speaks to us in God's name. And that is the reason for which every authentic spiritual pursuit of God passes through the mediation of a creature, ultimately in one way or another, the Church.

But if this is so, then someone who is advanced and has a solid spiritual life would be able to do their own will, because they have become accustomed to doing what is good, right? Wrong, says St Benedict, backed by Holy Scripture: *there are ways which to men seem right, but the ends thereof lead to the depths of hell*. Many have been led astray by following their own light, resorting to their own devices in the spiritual life. Whereas the saints tell us that even *they* need a spiritual guide and someone to obey, the evil spirit tries to persuade souls to be self-sufficient, to forge their own way to God; for this is precisely what he tried to do: he wanted to be like God in *his* own way, he refused to acknowledge the limits of his own created intellect, and imagined he could climb to the throne of God by relying on *his* own strength. In the end, that is the very essence of every sin.

And that is why, as St Benedict says: "we ask God in prayer that His will be done in us", which is nothing less than a reference to the Our Father in which we pray: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven*. But when we recite the Lord's Prayer, we insist not so much on not doing our will as on doing God's will. Here too we need to pause for a moment: what's so great about doing somebody else's will? Many would argue today that it is much more noble to do one's own will than that of another. And yet, even in human society we can readily perceive that this will not always be a good thing. Most people would acknowledge that, for the sake of peace and harmony, it is better to accept someone else's way of doing things. But that's not at all what we are talking about here. When we say *Thy will be done*, we are speaking to the Eternal Creator whose will is, always, everywhere and in all things, perfect and ideal. Whatever God wills is, by its very nature and simply because He wills it, not only good, but best for all involved. God has an infinitely good plan for each of us, and if each of us followed that plan and lived fully up to it, then the world would be an exceedingly happy place in which everyone would be perfectly happy and content, for all would be concurring together to the good of the whole: the Creator would be glorified, and the Creature fulfilled beyond his wildest dreams.

But few are those who understand this and accept its discipline, and that is why the world is a mess... May our holy Father St Benedict and all the saints intercede for us and help us to realise this in our daily lives.

When you receive this, our retreats will be underway at Hartzler Park. Please keep us and the retreatants in your prayers, that we and they may in all things find ourselves in perfect uniformity with the Holy and Sweet Will of God.

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

As of this printing, we will have spent nearly a month in “Bethlehem”. It has been a good month. We are getting to know the land and the area. The setting is absolutely gorgeous; the wallabies are legion; a friendly echidna makes his appearance every now and then, Brother Wind is never far off, and even Sister Rain has been there to make sure that our eyes can rest on luscious green pastures. The weather has a few challenges, for sure; being much higher in altitude than Lindisfarne, it is a few degrees cooler up here, even though it also gets warmer on nice summer days. The hubbub of the city seems lost in a distant past, even though the train that passes under Rhyndaston through a tunnel built in the 19th century, reminds us every now and then of the world and its affairs — this is certainly a good thing, for it prevents us from forgetting to pray for all those in need. It is actually highly symbolic: as the train comes and goes under the hill, the monks above sing the eternal praises and take part in the Divine Motionlessness — something like what the Carthusians express in their motto: *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis: The cross stands while the world turns*. All in all, it is a blessed development.

Now that we are nearly settled in, we can turn our attention to the more pressing matter of a permanent structure to live in and to the ways in which to profit from our surroundings. As you might imagine, this remains, after the spiritual and intellectual formation of the novices and postulants, my main concern. Our present situation is temporary; we need to build a monastery in which the conventual life can be lived without having to be constantly adapting ourselves to the moving sands of sheds and caravans, and driving down the road to church each morning. Mind you, it is really a treat to have daily Mass in Colebrook: I find myself wishing that Star Trek were true, and we could just “beam” the church up to Rhyndaston... But such things unfortunately happen only in movies.



*Archbishop Porteous signs
the decree of erection*

As we had neither space nor time last month, I've included on this page a couple photos of our meeting with Archbishop Porteous on 20th December for the erection of our community as a Public Association of Christ's faithful. It was a very special day for us all, one that will long be remembered as the day we actually began to have an official, public existence in the Holy Catholic Church. Until then, we were just an “experiment”, but now the Church acknowledges that we have a role within her bosom, a role that She respects and approves. Of course, we now need to obtain further approval as a house of monastic religious life, but as Our Lady has opened all the doors till now, there can be no doubt that she will come through again when she, in her maternal care, knows the time is best.



*The Archbishop with
our Community*

For the moment, we prepare ourselves to welcome two more aspirants to the community, one next week, the other early February. By the time you receive this, four of us will be in NSW, holding two retreats at Hartzler Park Centre, one for men, one for women. When we return, we will be accompanied by Fr John de Britto Dupré, my longtime confrere from Flavigny who will spend about 10 days with us, giving classes to the novices. It will be a real treat — perhaps a moment for a holiday?! — to have another experienced monk around to help with the challenge of teaching these fine young men how to be monks. We count, as ever, on your prayers and support, and would like to assure you of ours for you and all those dear to you, through Mary Immaculate,

Father Prior

To keep up with Notre Dame Priory, visit our website at www.notredamemonastery.org
To contact us, please send an email to: info@notredamemonastery.org

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