

# NOTRE DAME PRIORY Newsletter

APRIL 2018

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

NO. 14



*Feast of the Annunciation,  
9 April 2018  
Clothing of Br Augustine Mary*

## CAPE RAOUL AND A NEW NOVICE

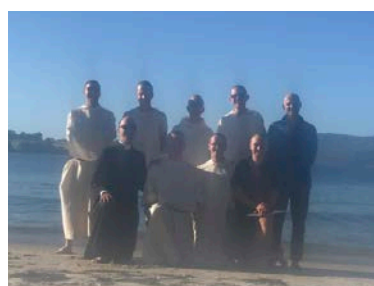
The month of April got off to a fantastic start with the “feast of feasts”, the Pasch of Our Lord Jesus Christ, celebrated with all due solemnity by our community in Colebrook. It would seem that word of our presence is spreading, as participants in this year’s Holy Week ceremonies were twice as many as last year’s.

But Easter also meant a bit more recreation—and the novices were not about to miss out on that! Contrary to a preceding quarterly outing, on which the weather afforded us an opportunity of uniting with the passion of the Saviour, this time all of nature seemed to be rejoicing in the Resurrection of Our Lord! It was Easter Wednesday when we set out early for the Tasman Peninsula, bypassing Port Arthur and taking a less trodden path to what is perhaps one of the most beautiful coasts in the world: Cape Raoul.

We were as if in a dream as we looked out over the majesty of



God’s creation, admiring the immensity of the ocean, and contemplating our own apparent insignificance, remembering with emotion that even though we are so small, it is to us that God sent His Son as the propitiation and paschal sacrifice. Thanks be to God for such a relaxing and enjoyable day, much deserved after the Lenten austerities.



But that was just the beginning of our feasting, for a few days later, on the transferred feast of the Annunciation, 9<sup>th</sup> of April, our community had the great joy of welcoming another novice, and this time a rather unusual one: a priest of 18 years. After Vespers, Fr Mark Withoos, who was presented as a postulant in last month’s newsletter, was received as a novice and given the name of Brother Augustine Mary. (For those who may be wondering, it is customary that priest novices be referred to as “Brother”. When they make profession, they are once again called “Father”.) In addition to a large number of family and friends, several priest friends were in attendance and several bishops had sent their warm wishes on this day (photos above).

With Br Augustine’s family and friends, we wish him every blessing as he sets out on this new form of dedication to the service of our blessed Saviour.

*Brother Chronicler*



## JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

*Lk 12:49*

**Exhortation given by Father Prior at the clothing ceremony for  
Brother Augustine Mary (Fr Mark) Withoos  
St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, 9 April 2018,  
Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

My Dear Brother,

“Let it be done to me according to thy word”. Those beloved words of Our Blessed Lady resound in our ears on this feast of the Annunciation. Once again we go in spirit to the humble house of Nazareth where we hear the discourse of the angel, and wait in awe for the consent of the Virgin upon which hangs the entirety of human salvation. We kneel in adoration as the Word takes flesh in the silence of her virginal womb, unknown to man. Today our salvation begins; today the power of hell is curbed until it is crushed by the Resurrection of the *Victor Rex*, the King who triumphs over death and lives forever.

As we contemplate the mystery of this day, we are moved to consider the relevance it has for you, dear Brother, as you take this new step in the Lord's service. In your younger days, you heard the call to the priesthood; configured to Christ the High Priest, and marked by the Holy Spirit, you mounted with joy the steps to the altar of God. That vocation led you to serve the Church in various ways over the past 18 years, including service to the Holy See and the Universal Church.

But today, another page opens in your life. For several years now, a void has been growing in your heart, a well has been dug, that only God can fill. The Lord seems to be beckoning you, calling you to something more. You have come to perceive the depth, the radical depth of a new call. And so, in a way, you can make yours those words of the great bishop of Hippo who applied them to his search for the true faith, but which apply to you in your search for the specific path in which He is calling you to serve Him now: “Late have I loved thee, O Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved thee. For see, thou wast within and I was without, and I sought thee out there. Unlovely, I rushed heedlessly among the lovely things thou hast made. Thou wast with me, but I was not with thee. These things kept me far from thee; even though they were not at all unless they were in thee. Thou didst call and cry aloud, and didst force open my deafness. Thou didst gleam and shine, and didst chase away my blindness. Thou didst breathe fragrant odors and I drew in my breath; and now I pant for thee. I tasted, and now I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I burned for thy peace” (*Confessions*, B. 10, ch. 27).

Today, dear Brother, you burn for that peace, you long to die to the world. Up to now, you have appeared to the world in black, testifying thereby to your desire to die to the ways of the world. Today, Our Lady clothes you with her mantle, making death to the world sweet, for denying the darkness of creatures you are called to live in the sweet light of Mary's *fiat* and become a light, an example of all the virtues to those you live with and meet. If black symbolises death, white symbolises the new life of holiness you are called to. Yesterday we celebrated the *Dominica in albis deponendis* when the neophytes were admonished, in taking off their white baptismal robes, to put on Christ and never let the old man regain place in their

hearts. Today, you will don the shining white of Our Lady's habit, placing yourself in a very special way under her Immaculate mantle.

In the Rule, Our Holy Father St Benedict warns the abbot not to readily receive a priest into the community. He admonishes the priest that he must not imagine his priesthood will avail him any special treatment. On the contrary, in the mind of our Holy Father, the priesthood holds with it the greater burden of responsibility for giving examples of humility, obedience and strict discipline, for the clerical life is already a step on the way to perfection. When you received the priesthood, the bishop prayed over you, asking the Holy Spirit to make you the model of a holy life. Today you seek to go further in the demands of that sacerdotal grace. If it is true, as St Thomas teaches, that the preaching of the priest ought to proceed from the fullness of contemplation (cf. IIa, IIae, 188,6), and if the priest truly takes to heart his role in the Eucharistic sacrifice and strives to imitate the One in whose Person he acts each day, the words of the *Imitation of Christ* take on all their momentum as you seek to add to the priesthood the monastic consecration: "Thou has not lightened thy burden, but art now bound by a stricter bond of discipline and obliged to greater perfection of sanctity. A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues and set the example of a good life to others. His conversation should not be with the popular and common ways of man, but with the angels in heaven, or with perfect men upon earth" (Bk 4, ch. 5).

A major part of that perfect life which we strive to live as monks is to sing the praises of the Divine Majesty. Seven times a day and once in the night, we come before the throne of the Almighty and offer, in the name of sinful and ungrateful humanity, the sacrifice of praise. We know that this is possible only if we love. To quote the Doctor of Divine Love: "Ament et cantabunt: let them love, and they will sing!"

But the program may seem immense, and it is. There may be days on which you think it impossible, but on those days, I entreat you to remember those other words of the Doctor of Divine Grace: "My whole hope is in thy exceeding great mercy and that alone. Give what thou commandest and command what thou wilt" (*Confessions*, B. 10, ch. 29).

That reliance on Divine Mercy must always lead you deeper into the ways of prayer, for the monk, if he is anything, must be a man of prayer. It is in prayer that he finds himself, it is in prayer that he finds God. As the greatest of the Latin doctors prays: "Let me no longer be distracted by many things, but gather me together to myself, and from myself to Thee, in such a way that my heart may always say to Thee: *My face seeks Thee, Thy face, O Lord, I will seek*" (*Soliloquium* 36, 5).

On this day, Mary conceives in her womb the Incarnate Son of God whom she will bring forth to the world on Christmas. Today you are, as it were, conceived in monastic life. May she give you to persevere and be born as a monk through monastic profession for the glory of Her Son and for the salvation of many souls.

And so my dear brother and now also, in St Benedict, my son, I say to you: "Stand with Him and you shall stand fast. Rest in Him and you shall be at rest" (*Confessions*, B 4, ch. 12).

*Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.*

# Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

As you will have surmised from page one, April has brought us many graces for which we must be thankful. The clothing of Br Augustine Mary afforded us yet another opportunity to experience how much the local faithful are close to us. Graces and challenges follow each other at a very fast pace. This whole undertaking amazes me more and more with each passing day. The men come, wanting to test their vocations as monks; they stay, for the most part, in spite of conditions that would terrify most young people today; closed doors somehow open when we least expect them to; and Our Lady continues her triumphal march to establish the reign of Christ the King on this gem of an isle that is Tasmania.



At the moment, another huge opportunity and challenge lies before us. Last year we acquired a piece of land in Rhyndaston. It is remote and has fantastic views, but it is small with very limited resources, and has proven to be insufficient for our needs. Trusted advisers have continually encouraged me to look elsewhere to secure a property that would not only allow the community to develop at leisure, but also provide an income. We have prayed unceasingly and asked Our Lady and St Joseph to show us the way. Interestingly, momentum picked up when we

started invoking St Regina of Alesia, a young virgin martyr from near the abbey of Flavigny, France, whom I have come to love over the years and who has followed me to Tasmania thanks to the first class relic that sits in my office.



After a novena to St Regina, on the transferred feast of the Annunciation, we were given what we took as a sign of divine intervention: a large estate in Colebrook known as “Hardwick House” that has been on the market for a couple years and which would be perfect for our needs, after being under offer, was once again on the market. All my advisers agreed that we needed to make a go for it. And so we put in an offer, and have been able to exchange contracts. The estate includes 2,710 acres of grazing land — much of which can be used for planting vineyards, fruit trees, and olive groves —,

two large houses and a number of sheds. The plan is to reserve a small portion of the property to build a monastery with the agricultural farm paying the Monastery’s debts and potentially providing opportunities for friends who would like to settle near the monks.

The practical challenge before us is that **we need to raise 3.2 million dollars in the next 60 days for the purchase of this property, as well as \$160,000 for stamp duty and another \$400,000 for sheep** to keep the land tidy. The contract is subject to finance, and so I invite you to consider making a contribution or a loan. There are a number of plans and endeavours that would provide income and allow us to reimburse loans, hopefully even before their due date. It is a leap in faith, and also a way of discovering Our Lady’s will. If she provides the needed money, then we will know for sure that this is of God. If she doesn’t, then we will know it is not, and we will continue our search. I can only entrust this to your consideration and more importantly to your prayer. “With God all things are possible”, we heard the archangel Gabriel say on the feast of the Annunciation. In faith and with profound trust, we move forward.

Through Mary Immaculate,

*Father Prior*

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