

# Notre Dame Priory Newsletter

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QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

NO. 18



*Enthronement and consecration  
to the Sacred Hearts*



*Father Prior receiving keys to  
Hardwick House  
from Charles Morton*

## OUR FEET ARE NOW WITHIN THY COURTS, O JERUSALEM! (PSALM 121)

It's hard to believe, but Notre Dame Priory is now owner of Jerusalem Estate! The news became official just before 3 PM on the glorious feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady. The monks had just sung the office of None in which we always ask for the grace of a holy death. On this day, it bore particular significance as we considered the most precious Dormition of the Immaculate Virgin before her being elevated to the right hand of her Son in Heaven.

Father Prior and the brethren went down that very afternoon to take possession of the old sandstone building known as Hardwick House. This was done by enthroning the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate in prominent rooms of the house, accompanied by prayers and acts of consecration to both the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart.

So now what? Plans to move? The sooner the better, but there are a number of issues that need to be resolved before we can do

that. We are hoping for a date by the end of October. Time will tell.

Another very important event that marked the life of the community in the month of August was the visit of Dom Mark Bachmann, OSB, from Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey in Oklahoma. The main objective of his visit was to preach the first annual community retreat at the Priory. Dom Bachmann shared with us his long monastic experience and presented the monastic doctrine of Dom Paul Delatte, 3<sup>rd</sup> abbot of Solesmes. Toward the end of the stay, Father was joined by his confrere



from Clear Creek, Br James Middeldorp, originally from South Australia, who had just

spent some time there with his family.

Dom Bachmann was able to take part in our "autumn" outing (postponed from the preceding quarter) on 2 August. The community went for a fantastic hike up to snow-peaked Mount Hartz in the Huon Valley. In the afternoon we paid a visit to the Sisters of the Immaculata in Franklin, sharing lunch with them and getting together for a



photo. It was a joyful occasion for both communities. Sister Mary Immanuel made her solemn profession of vows on 15 August, at which event the community was represented by Br Bede and Israel.

*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*

Dearly Beloved Friends,

“The seventh degree of humility is that the monk should not only in his speech declare himself lower and of less account than all others, but should in his own inmost heart believe it, humbling himself with the prophet: *But I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people* (Ps 21). *I was exalted and have been humbled and confounded* (Ps 87). And again: *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me: that I may learn thy commandments* (Ps 118)” (*Rule*, ch. 7).

With this degree of humility, we have reached a still deeper level of the virtue. Whereas in the preceding degrees, one could, conceivably, go through the actions of accepting the outward humiliations — the opening of one’s heart to an elder, being given the worst of everything —, but without it necessarily bringing on a deeper sense of conversion, here it is clear that there can no longer be a façade, for all the masks have been thrown off. The monk who has achieved this level will willingly acknowledge that others are better than he, that he is deserving only of hardship and labour, and these words will be the honest expression of what really is deep down in his heart.

To highlight his teaching, St Benedict, as is his custom, has recourse to the psalms. By the way, the numerous quotations of the psalms in the Rule reveal a man who is very familiar with the psalter, but what would you expect of one who, along with almost the entire western tradition, mandates the recitation of the full psalter every week of the year? Three psalms are brought in to support the saint’s teaching here.

The first is the great Psalm of the Passion, Psalm 21, in which the Psalmist saw in a prophetic vision the sufferings of the future Messiah, His rejection by His people, the torments of His passion. As the text puts it, the Christ will be so disfigured that he will appear more as a worm than a man, one upon whom people trample out of scorn. The use St Benedict makes of the verse indicates that the truly humble monk is not only accepting of mistreatment (we saw that exemplified in the fourth degree), but that when it happens to him he is quite at peace because he truly believes in his heart that such is what he deserves.

The second is also a Psalm of the Passion, but it is the one Psalm that has a bad ending. All the other psalms conclude with hope of a future salvation and restoration. Psalm 87 ends in a form of profound desolation: “*Thy wrath hath come upon me: and thy terrors have troubled me. They have come round about me like water all the day: they have compassed me about together. Friend and neighbour thou hast put far from me: and my acquaintance, because of misery*”. But the verse quoted by St Benedict refers to a previous exaltation, and a subsequent humiliation, which seems to highlight the fact that monk should grow in a desire for humiliations. Whereas the natural bent of human nature is to increase in the esteem of others, the monk should seek to decrease. If he was once exalted, either because of his birth or his talents or his position before and after he entered the monastery, he wants to eventually be brought down and humiliated, and this is good. It’s a paradox, but the more the monk progresses in his monastic life, the more he should want to be and the more he should actually be, humiliated.

The third is the long Psalm 118, which sings the beauties of the Law of the Lord. The particular verse quoted by St Benedict immediately follows a reference to the persecutions suffered at the hands of the wicked who despise God's law: "*The iniquity of the proud hath been multiplied over me: but I will seek thy commandments with my whole heart. Their heart is curdled like milk: but I have meditated on thy law*" (vers. 69-70). As if to say that the monk might very well be brought low in humiliation precisely because of his fidelity to God's law. Even though one would not expect such a thing to happen in a monastery, it can come about that a monk be persecuted for doing good, even by other monks and his superiors. This does not mean, of course, that the superiors and other monks who would inflict such suffering are necessarily ill-intentioned, for sometimes even good souls can be led astray and be under the illusion that it is their duty to persecute a very good and God-fearing confrere. God sometimes allows this precisely in order to further deepen the monk's humility and total reliance on God, and thus lead him to the heights of sanctity.

We must admit that it's a somewhat daunting programme that we are given here by St Benedict. And yet, it is one which leads the monk to a level of peace which surpasses the capacity of worldly minded people. One of the greatest obstacles to real progress in the spiritual life is the cult of one's personality. It's only once you've left your ego behind that you are free to be entirely in the service of God's kingdom. It reminds one of St Ignatius' insistence upon asking for humiliations, in particular in the colloquy of the Two Standards. Such a prayer, made in the sincerity of one's heart and consistently, should lead to the seventh degree of St Benedict, for if you sincerely ask for humiliations, not only will you not be surprised when they come, but you will be happy with them, having descended to such a profound level of peace that all the turmoils of the world could not shake you.

What lesson might this hold for those who are not monks? Everyone of us is tried, put to the test, judged, and sometimes condemned, rightly or unjustly. If we have real humility, we will be able to face such trials in peace. We will speak words of peace, acknowledging that we actually deserve much worse. *With them that hated peace I was peaceable*, we read in Psalm 119. But how is that possible? Once again, it's a matter of reminding ourselves of the profound reality of our utter dependence upon God, and of our having deserved worse treatment still because of our innumerable sins. A single mortal sin is enough to send a soul to hell for all eternity, where it would justly be tormented forever and ever. If we accept this — and it is the crystal clear teaching of the Church with all its saints and doctors — then we can accept being slighted in this life. We will find it even normal that people put us down, and we will — marvel of Divine Grace! — be thankful to them for it, because through faith we will come to realise that they are actually serving the purpose of helping us to be free of our earthly ambitions, atone for our sins and achieve a higher level of glory in Heaven.

"*It is good for me that thou hast humbled me*". Let's not forget those inspired words. Humiliation is good for us, because it puts us where we belong, and it prevents us from falling into the greatest of all evils, the pride that leaves us under the illusion that we are something when we are really nothing. It is only once we have come to understand and accept our nothingness that we can give ourselves over to the practice of all the good works the Lord has in store for us, and this without risk of our attributing it falsely to ourselves. God needs free men and women to do His work in the world. Humility alone really sets us free.

May the most humble Virgin, exalted now to the heights of Heaven, teach us the secret of true and perfect joy which is grounded in the truth of our nothingness before God and men.

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

# Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

It is with great joy and gratitude that I address myself to you this month. After such a long campaign and untiring efforts on behalf of the brethren and so many dear friends, we are now owners of Jerusalem Estate. It is rather hard to believe. So many verses of the psalms come to mind, in particular Psalm 121:

*I rejoiced with those who said to me: let us go up to the house of the Lord. Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, which is built as a city, which is compact together. For thither did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord: the testimony of Israel, to praise the name of the Lord... Pray ye for the things that are for the peace of Jerusalem: and abundance for them that love thee. Let peace be in thy strength, and abundance in thy towers....*

For us, the abundance of the house of God is the immense spiritual treasure of the monastic life which it is our honour and privilege to bring to Tasmania, and through it, to the rest of Australia. The abundance is meant to fill the monks to the brim, as they each strive to reach perfection, and it is meant to overflow through the continual prayer that they send up before the throne of God, and also through the retreats which allow souls to share in that abundance in a more tangible way.



*Fr Bachmann and Br James admiring  
Jerusalem Estate*

As we send up praise and thanks to God and Our Blessed Lady, I must also take this opportunity to renew my personal gratitude and that of all the brethren to those who made this possible. It is only because there are so many out there who are genuinely interested in this foundation that we have come to this stage. I think in particular of all those who, in the period of our “pre-history” prayed and sacrificed for things to begin; I think of those, here in Tasmania, who prepared our initial installation in Lindisfarne and the move to Rhyndaston; I think of those who collected a truckload of items from all over Australia and drove them down here; I think of those who organised a 40 ft shipping container to be delivered, free of charge, all the way from Queensland; I think of all those who made monetary donations or loaned us money to make this purchase possible; I think as well of all those who at this moment are offering their services to make possible our impending move to Jerusalem Estate and the needed renovation of the house and garden. To one

and all, I promise the prayers of the monks. Of course, this is only the beginning. We will have to pay off the loans we have taken out, and we will have to build a monastery. But what has happened already is a sign of God’s sollicitude, and it is a pledge of future blessings.

In the immediate future, the move from Rhyndaston to Colebrook is not as easy as might seem at first sight, since the old Hardwick House is not big enough for us (it would have been when we started these negotiations, but we continue to grow, thank God!). The house also needs to be rewired, electric power needs to be upgraded, and sufficient plumbing needs to be installed. So we’re not there yet, and our fundraising campaign is just beginning. Please stay tuned! Finally, the perspective of settling on Jerusalem Estate opens up that of building a guest house which will allow us to welcome more souls who are truly in search of God. We look forward to seeing you there!



Through Mary Immaculate to whose maternal care we entrust you and yours, living and deceased. *Father Prior*

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To contact us, please send an email to: [info@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:info@notredamemonastery.org)

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