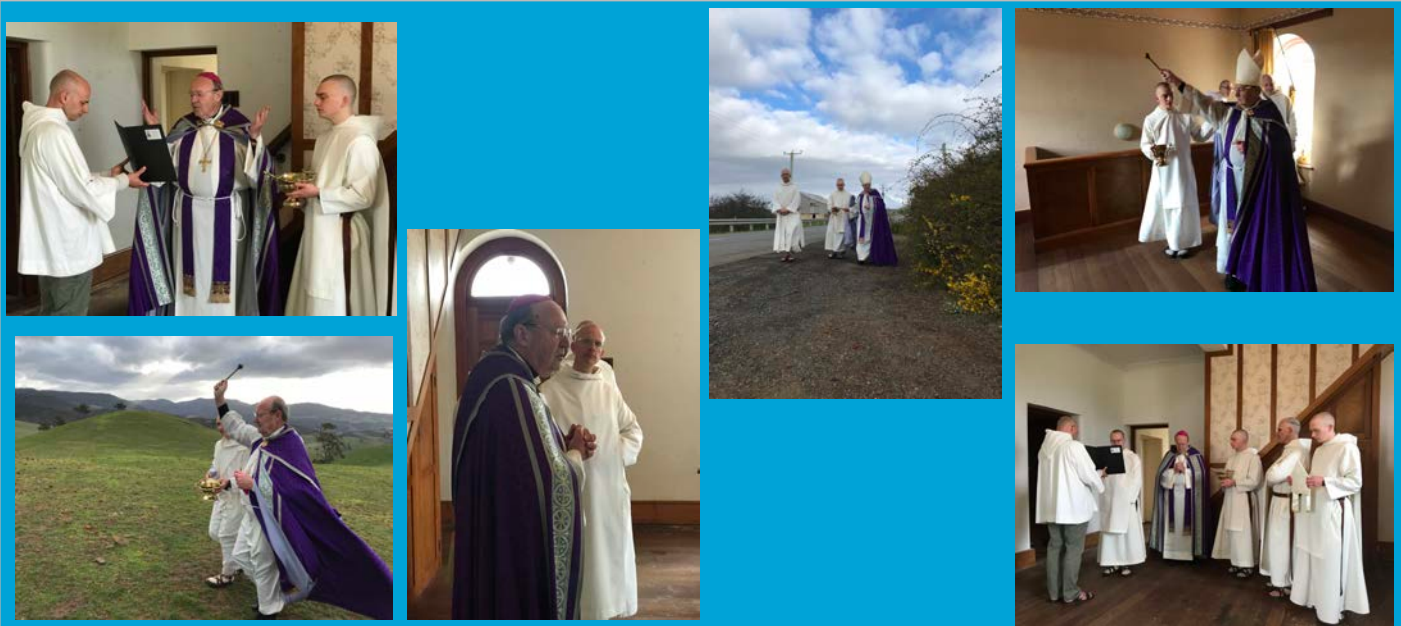


Notre Dame Priory Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2018

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

NO. 19



JERUSALEM ESTATE BLESSED BY ARCHBISHOP PORTEOUS

On Sunday 23 September, Jerusalem Estate received for the first time Archbishop Julian Porteous. His Grace was keen to bless not just the house, but the entire property – thanks to the ol' Patrol, a 4WD procession took place around the 2,700 acres, an abundance of holy water being sprinkled in every direction. No devils were to be seen!

It is our hope that this pontifical blessing will help us step up the pace of the needed renovation of the old house. The first job – an “easy” one, was the removal of the carpet and wallpaper. A few unexpected surprises left the monks wondering about some of the previous owner’s methods of house-wiring: under the living room carpet they discovered that the electric doorbell wire had been neatly inserted into a handmade groove carved into the lovely wooden floor.... (some patchwork is in store!)

A major event in getting things rolling at the property was the arrival of a trailer full of goods that had either been purchased or were donated to us on the mainland. It’s safe to say that the brothers are very

excited about the proceedings on the new property – so much to do! Future installments of the newsletter will keep you posted.

*** An overabundance of news last month did not allow mention of the two retreats held at Hartzler Park in August. 41 men made the Spiritual Exercises from 16-21 August under the direction of Fr Prior and Fr John de Britto, with Br Joseph serving as



assistant. This was followed by a group of 44 women from 23-26 August, Br Gregory serving as assistant, with the help of Brs Joseph and Maximilian. This was the first time we had held winter retreats at Hartzler Park. The brethren noticed that the temperature was about the same, if not colder, than in

Rhyndaston (so much for the myth of “cold old Tasmania!”). Fortunately the retreat centre is well-equipped with efficient gas heaters, so that even the large chapel was kept at a comfortable temperature.



In between the two retreats, Fr Prior and two of the brothers were able to pay a courtesy visit to the community of Silvestrine Monks in Arcadia, NSW. The Very Reverend Father Prior, Dom David Orr, and other members of the community welcomed the brothers to lunch and recreation. It’s always a blessing to make the acquaintance of Benedictine confreres, so we give thanks for this pleasant meeting, and wish the Arcadia monks well.

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,

In our study of the first seven degrees of humility as presented in the Rule of St Benedict, we were concerned with the interior dispositions of the soul. St Benedict knows only too well that if the heart is not first converted to the Lord, the external observances will matter little. But with the eighth degree we focus on how it is that, once true humility has taken root in the soul, it manifests itself in one's demeanour and actions.

“The eighth degree of humility is that a monk do nothing except what is commended by the common rule of the monastery and the example of his elders”.

The first thing we are told is to be on our guard against making ourselves stand out. It would seem that this is one of the first pitfalls of the soul who has recently converted and is still a novice in the ways of the spirit. There is a certain tendency to believe that one is going to be better than others, and this inspires one to pose, look for an effect, to present oneself as someone who has his own manner of thought and action, which of course is better than everybody else's. If one is attentive to externals to the point of wanting to do things differently from the way they are done in the community, then it may very well be that one is more preoccupied with self than with the Lord.

Pride has a way of manifesting itself even in what are the holiest of actions. One might make a big deal about the way one pronounces certain prayers, or about certain forms of art that one esteems as particularly suited to devotion, or about a certain way of taking part in the liturgy. All that can take one away from the centre of our faith and devotion, which is a sincere longing to be like Jesus and live in His company.

Dom Bernard Maréchaux writes: “The Christian should love in all things the simplicity which excludes every pretense, every affectation whatever it be”. This teaching comes straight from the Gospel. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord put us on our guard: *Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret, and thy father who seeth in secret will repay thee. [...] And when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret, will repay thee (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18).*

One of the first things that a newcomer notices when visiting a large monastic community is the uniformity. In the church, as he looks up towards the altar, the visitor sees rows of monks, all wearing the same choir dress, all with the same haircut, all folding their hands in the same way, all performing

the same actions: standing, bowing, sitting, kneeling, etc, in unison. No one stands out. No one tries to stand out. The monastic “reflex”, so to speak, the “default position”, one might say, seems to be to disappear in the mass of monks, to blend in with others without being noticed, and allow Christ to take centre stage at all times.

Of course, all this is wonderful for monks, but what about those who live out there in the world? What about those who live in situations where the environment is hostile? What about the man whose fellow workers make fun of the faith? Or the woman who wants to dress with Christian modesty in a context where all the others don't seem to know the meaning of the word? Or the devout person who wants to receive Holy Communion kneeling while everybody else stands? Does the 8th degree of humility mean that they should do like everybody else? Would it be virtuous to pretend not to have the faith or to dress immodestly, just because “everybody else” is doing it?

St Benedict's intention, following the command of the Lord Himself, is to ward off any desire to stand out, to blow a trumpet *as if one were better than others*. The aforementioned cases are all ones in which a fervent soul needs to stand out, not because of a desire to do so, but out of a necessity of conscience which makes it impossible for them to follow the crowd. However, as the Saint will make clear later on in the Rule when discussing Lenten penances, a devout soul will take care to ask the advice of a good spiritual father. This will ward off any temptations to vainglory, and will also give the soul greater incentive to persevere with keeping resolutions that may require swimming against the current.

But we might ask another question: When the disciple of St Benedict resembles the crowd of people that surrounds him, does that mean his soul lowers itself to ambient mediocrities? Is the effort not to stand out and not attract attention a kind of self-condemnation to being spiritually average? Certainly not! For if nothing distinguishes such a man in the eyes of others, his interior dispositions, intentions, supernatural spirit and loving union with God, will be truly extraordinary.

We could go even further and say that, paradoxically, it is precisely one's ordinary resemblance to others which allows the soul to achieve extraordinary prowess without being noticed. Attentiveness to eccentric externals, on the other hand, deprives the soul of its spiritual energy, depth and lustre. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the success of the monastic enterprise in history and the great influence it has had. Monks seek no influence; they seek, rather, to disappear in the eyes of the world, and this unassuming anonymity gives them unfailing strength to undertake amazing feats, for the very simple reason that they do not feel obliged to play a role. How tiring it is to play a role! How much energy is wasted in keeping up appearances!

So, my dear Friend, perhaps we can make a little examination of conscience based on this eighth degree of humility. How do I go about my life? Am I continually putting on masks, building up façades, passing myself off for someone I am not, but would like to be? If so, perhaps it is time I had a closer look at those long lines of hooded monks, their peace, their serenity, their joy, their amazing capacity to react to new situations. They know exactly who they are and feel no need to pretend.

In this way, I too can start to be unassuming, to not be concerned about making an impression by being different. I can discover the hidden joy that lies in being unconsidered and unknown. The bliss of humility is right there knocking at my door. Will I open and let it permeate my life?

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

“So when are you moving?”, I can hear you ask. As briefly suggested last month, there are unfortunately a number of issues surrounding the condition of old “Hardwick House” that oblige us to wait. The most important is that this very old house needs a complete electrical rewiring. Failing to do that work now would not only make it difficult for us to operate, but would even be quite dangerous. We have quotes from local electricians, and hopefully work will start soon. There is some major plumbing work to do as well.

As Brother Chronicler mentioned, the “easy” work of removing the carpet and the wallpaper is done. Now we need to sand and varnish the beautiful wooden floors and repaint the walls. The house itself is large, but not large enough for our growing community, hence the need to renovate the garage area and create cells there. This work should begin soon. But even with this, it looks as if, for the moment, the demountables still in use in Rhyndaston will be in demand either for cells or outbuildings. A large shed near the old house will be renovated to make place for the monastic refectory. What about a chapel, you are probably wondering? We will probably continue to offer the Holy Sacrifice daily at St Patrick’s Colebrook, which will be much closer than before, just a minute or two down the road. For our daily offices throughout the day, the diocese is hoping to put at our disposal an unused and transportable small wooden church located in the northern part of the island (transportation costs are on us!). This, of course, takes time, due to all the administrative paperwork around the “demolition” and “construction” of a church.... If it eventuates, it will be quite a nice provisional chapel, a huge step over our present tiny room in a chilly and lifeless demountable!



I must say that I am quite happy about another aspect of this project, which is that it affords the young monks a lot — really, a lot! — of manual work, always an important factor in a healthy monastic life, especially for the young (but we’re all young here, of course!). We hope that, when the house is ready for the community, we will be able to hold an open house and invite those who might be able to come for the event. By the way, every now and then we are asked about the 4,000 or so sheep on the Estate. Well, they were purchased by a local farmer to whom we are leasing out most of the acreage for the moment, which provides us with a tiny bit of much needed income!

But in the midst of it all, we mustn’t forget that this too is only temporary. The real goal is to build a full monastery. Where exactly? Our Sunday afternoon walks of late have been spent exploring the various possibilities. There are quite a few options, though several of them are ruled out by the presence of the railway that runs through the property from south to north. This actually narrows down the choices, and so makes our job easier.

As you might imagine, a major concern remains fundraising. The purchase was made possible thanks to loans. But the loans must be paid off. So now our fundraising starts! Thank you for praying for this intention, and for sharing any thoughts you might have about how to achieve the goal of paying off our debt and building a monastery for the glory of God and the salvation of souls here in the great southern land of the Holy Spirit.

As we enter the month of October dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, may I ask the charity of a Rosary for our intentions? You may be assured of our remembrance of you and yours to Mary Immaculate.

Father Prior

2019 Wall Calendar
The Monks of Notre Dame
Priory are now preparing next
year’s liturgical wall calendar.
Cost: \$17.50, postage included
for Australia.
shop@notredamemonastery.org

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

To make a donation:

Via bank transfer: Commonwealth Bank of Australia - Account name:
Notre Dame Priory BSB: 062-654 Account number: 1024 4562

Via cheque: In Australian dollars, make payable to “Notre Dame Priory” and send to:
Notre Dame Priory, P.O. Box 85, Colebrook, Tasmania 7027, Australia

In US dollars, make payable to “Notre Dame Priory” and send to:
Notre Dame Priory, % 1202 Park Hills Court, Louisville, KY, 40207, USA.