

Notre Dame Priory Newsletter

MARCH 2018

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

NO. 13



A new postulant



Our "new" chapel inside and out



Some local "friends"



FROM BETHLEHEM TO NAZARETH (AWAITING CALVARY?)...

In last month's newsletter we gave thanks for the first anniversary of the foundation. We did not have the space to relate an important development that took place at the Priory on that same day.

Since our arrival we had been using a room of our main house "Bethlehem" (which is actually a nice carpeted shed) for a chapel, but as this was adjacent to the only other room of the house which is at one and the same time kitchen, refectory and work area, you can imagine that it had the disadvantage of being a bit noisy – not a very good thing for a monastery chapel!

On 22nd February we were able to relocate the chapel to a demountable named "Nazareth" (photos above middle). Even though small, it is a lovely quiet space in which to offer the Divine Sacrifice of praise eight times a day. We of course continue to offer daily Mass in Colebrook, and sure are looking forward to building a real monastic church some day...

Another event that took place just three days later was the entry as postulant of Fr Mark Withoos (photos above left). Fr Mark has been considering monastic life for several years, and he is now looking forward to his clothing ceremony which will take place, please God, on 9 April, feast of the Annunciation this year. Next month's newsletter will tell you more of that event. On 12th May we will also have the clothing of our other postulant, Dominic Swan – more about that in the May newsletter...

Just as for everybody else, the end of summer also means "back

to school". The brethren have resumed their somewhat intense study of Latin, still with the help of Dr David Daintree, as well as the study of the Psalms. As for the Holy Rule and Novitiate, that is ongoing at daily chapter after Prime and at Fr Prior's classes on monastic life.

Part of our recent adventures included our first walk down to the Coal River and amusing (though not necessarily for everybody!) encounters with some of the wildlife (such as leeches...) which abounds in this remote area.

As of this writing, Brother Sacristan, Brother Cantors and Brother Master of Ceremonies are getting geared up for Holy Week – well, actually we all are – with the hope that we won't be struck by an epidemic of the flu for the holy days like we were last year. May the Passion of the Lord be our strength as we look forward to the Resurrection.

Brother Chronicler

For your letter-writing, the monks have recently produced stationery called "St Paul's Paper". For details and how to order, visit: <https://www.notredamemonastery.org/monk-shop-1>



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,

This month's reading of the degrees of humility, as we turn our eyes towards the passion of Our Lord, brings us, quite providentially, to the fourth degree:

“The fourth degree of humility is that, meeting in this obedience with difficulties and contradictions and even injustice, he should with a silent mind hold fast to patience, and enduring neither tire nor run away, for the Scripture saith: *He that shall persevere to the end shall be saved.* And again: *Let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord.* And showing how the true disciple ought to endure all things, however contrary, for the Lord, it saith in the person of sufferers: *For thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* Then, confident in their hope of the divine reward, they go on with joy to declare: *But in all these things we overcome, through Him that hath loved us.* And again in another place the Scripture saith: *Thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou hast tried us by fire, as silver is tried. Thou hast brought us into the snare: Thou hast laid afflictions on our back.* And to show that we ought to be under a superior, it goeth on to say: *Thou hast set men over our heads.* Moreover, in adversities and injuries they patiently fulfil the Lord's commands: when struck on one cheek they offer the other, when robbed of their tunic they surrender also their cloak, when forced to go a mile they go two, with the apostle Paul they bear with false brethren, and they bless those that curse them.”

When we began this presentation of the twelve degrees, it was noted that St Benedict was not necessarily intending to describe the steps to humility in a chronological order, and that is why commentators have various ways of grouping them together. One is to consider the first four degrees as a summary of the entire monastic life. In the first, we learn how to have saving fear of God and live in His presence; in the second we are taught how not to live by our own will but that of the Lord; in the third, we go further in accepting that God's will is made known to us, not directly as a matter of course, but by other people and especially by our superiors. Here in the fourth degree, when one meets with all the hardship that the life of obedience demands, one is content with things being that way; one does not run away, but bears with it, confident that this is the path to true happiness in this life and the next. There can be little doubt that this degree is in many ways a summit, a “peak degree of humility”, one might say.

When one reads the text, there are a few episodes from the lives of some saints that might come to mind because they illustrate it so perfectly. Personally, I am reminded of the “perfect joy of St Francis”, that touching scene in his life where he is walking in the snow with Brother Leo from Perugia to Saint Mary of the Angels, suffering greatly from the cold. St Francis called to his companion: “Br Leo, if it were to please God that the Friars Minor should give, in all lands, a great example of holiness and edification, write down, and note carefully, that this would not be perfect joy.”

A little further on, St Francis called to him a second time: “O Br Leo, if the Friars Minor were to make the lame to walk, if they should make straight the crooked, chase away demons, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and, what is even a far greater work, if they should raise the dead after four days, write that this would not be perfect joy.”

Shortly after, he cried out again: “O Br Leo, if the Friars Minor knew all languages; if they were versed in all science; if they could explain all Scripture; if they had the gift of prophecy, and could reveal, not only all future things, but likewise the secrets of all consciences and all souls, write that this would not be perfect joy.”

After proceeding a few steps farther, he cried out again with a loud voice: “O Br Leo, thou little lamb of God! if the Friars Minor could speak with the tongues of angels; if they could explain the course of the stars; if they knew the virtues of all plants; if all the treasures of the earth were revealed to them; if they were acquainted with the various qualities of all birds, of all fish, of all animals, of men, of trees, of stones, of roots, and of waters — write that this would not be perfect joy.”

Shortly after, he cried out again: “O Br Leo, if the Friars Minor had the gift of preaching so as to convert all infidels to the faith of Christ, write that this would not be perfect joy.”

Br Leo, as you might imagine, was quite intrigued by all this and was wondering greatly where it was leading. When it had gone on for the space of two miles, he mustered up the courage to question the saint: “Father, I pray thee teach me wherein is perfect joy.” St Francis answered: “If, when we shall arrive at Saint Mary of the Angels, all drenched with rain and trembling with cold, all covered with mud and exhausted from hunger; if, when we knock at the convent-gate, the porter should come angrily and ask us who we are; if, after we have told him, ‘We are two of the brethren’, he should answer angrily, ‘What ye say is not the truth; ye are but two impostors going about to deceive the world, and take away the alms of the poor; begone I say’; if then he refuse to open to us, and leave us outside, exposed to the snow and rain, suffering from cold and hunger till nightfall — then, if we accept such injustice, such cruelty and such contempt with patience, without being ruffled and without murmuring, believing with humility and charity that the porter really knows us, and that it is God who maketh him to speak thus against us, write down, O Br Leo, that this is perfect joy.

“And if we knock again, and the porter come out in anger to drive us away with oaths and blows, as if we were vile impostors, saying, ‘Begone, miserable robbers, to the hospital, for here you shall neither eat nor sleep!’ — and if we accept all this with patience, with joy, and with charity, O Br Leo, write that this indeed is perfect joy.

“And if, urged by cold and hunger, we knock again, calling to the porter and entreating him with many tears to open to us and give us shelter, for the love of God, and if he come out more angry than before, exclaiming, ‘These are but importunate rascals, I will deal with them as they deserve’; and taking a knotted stick, he seize us by the hood, throwing us on the ground, rolling us in the snow, and shall beat and wound us with the knots in the stick — if we bear all these injuries with patience and joy, thinking of the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, which we would share out of love for him, write, O Brother Leo, that here, finally, is perfect joy.

“And now, brother, listen to the conclusion. Above all the graces and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ grants to his friends, is the grace of overcoming oneself, and accepting willingly, out of love for Christ, all suffering, injury, discomfort and contempt; for in all other gifts of God we cannot glory, seeing they proceed not from ourselves but from God, according to the words of the Apostle, *What hast thou that thou hast not received from God? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* But in the cross of tribulation and affliction we may glory, because, as the Apostle says again, *I will not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*”

And in those last words lies the secret of St Benedict and St Francis and of all the saints; therein lies the secret of religious life with its trials and humiliations: *I will not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

May this Holy Week help us to come to a deeper knowledge of the love of the Saviour who endured so much out of love for us. May it give us the incentive and the courage to bear with all things out of love for Him who loved us and delivered Himself for us.

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

Update from the Priory

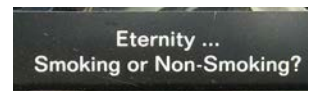
Beloved Friends,

As I write these words, we have just celebrated the feast of St Joseph. This saintly spouse of Mary is, as you know, one of the patrons to whom we turn specifically for our material needs. He who provided for the Holy Family of Nazareth looks after his faithful devotees with great tenderness. We have no doubt but that all the cares concerning the future of Our Lady's monastery are being looked after by his paternal gaze, even if sometimes we get the opposite impression. St Joseph is a man of silence, and he works in silence, and then one day you realise with great joy that he's got the job done. The secret to it all is to continue living the monastic life, entrusting all solicitude to him. The more we trust, the more we get.



With Fr Ashley Caldow

Shortly after the last update, I went over to the "mainland" (some call it "The North Island"...) for a brief time of solitude. I am grateful to Fr Ashley Caldow for having hosted me in Rochester, Victoria. I was inspired by a bumper sticker on his car which read "Eternity... Smoking or Non-Smoking?" which I thought was a humorous way of reminding people of the hereafter. You probably know me well enough by now to realise that for me the thought of eternity is the one thought that is most lacking in the world today, even in the Church. Making the world a better place should be the happy consequence, not the goal, of the Church's mission. Her mission is to lead souls to a blessed eternity in Heaven. We must never be ashamed to say that, adding that Heaven is not an automatic reward, for there is another place you don't want to go to. We must *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, as St Paul reminded the Philippians (2:12).



After a few days in Rochester, I went to Blessed John Henry Newman Parish in Caulfield, where I had been invited to give two reflections, one on the need for conversion and penance, the other on the passion of Our Lord. I was edified by the quality of the parish life, and was very pleased to offer a solemn Mass on the two days I was there. I was also grateful for the generous support I received from the



parishioners, many of whom are very interested in our foundation. More importantly, I felt that those who were listening to my words were taking them to heart. In sowing the seed of God's word, one can sometimes be tempted to wonder what good it is doing. But every now and then, the Lord sends along a soul who has clearly benefitted from what was said, and is now setting out on a new way of life that will lead to a happy eternity. God be praised for the consolation He gives!

Please receive the heartfelt greetings of all the brethren for a blessed Holy Week and a truly happy Easter.

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

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.