

# Notre Dame Priory

## Newsletter

AUGUST 2017

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

ISSUE SIX



*Postulants and aspirant at recreation*



*Office of Matins in Priory chapel*



*Snow for the Assumption*

### IN THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT....

Even though it's now full speed ahead to the summer solstice, Old Man Winter has been reminding us that he's still around. But that's alright, because the "new man created in justice and in the sanctity of truth" (cf. Eph 4:24) warms continually the hearts of those who seek God.

The major event of this month was 22<sup>nd</sup> August, the octave of the Assumption, feast of the Immaculate Heart of MARY. This day marked the 6<sup>th</sup> month since the beginning of the foundation, and Father Prior deemed it an appropriate day for the young community to take a new step in its life of praise and adoration. And so it was that we began to chant together for the first time the office of Matins, also called Vigils, or Nocturns, in the wee hours of the morning.

Our (provisional) constitutions (still in progress) remind us: "Ever since the birth of Our Lord *dum medium silentium tenerent omnia* (while all things were held in the silence of the night) and the resurrection of Our Lord when *nox sicut dies illuminata est* (when the night was enlightened like the day, Ps. 138), the hours before

sunrise are replete with profound symbolism for all Christians, even more so for monks. Early Christians prayed in the night waiting eagerly for the dawn, the rise of the sun from the East signifying the victory of JESUS the Light over the surrounding darkness. Making our own this significant tradition of the Church, we wait for the coming of Christ in night vigils consecrated to God by prayer and meditation."

Even though postulants and novices are allowed a time of

adaptation to this somewhat mortifying early rise — especially when room temperature is very low and bed temperature is quite warm! — the postulants have shown great enthusiasm for this time of praise, so becoming of the monk, and symbolic of his entire life.

The community was also blessed this month with the arrival of a new aspirant in the person of Dominic Swan, from Brisbane. The Queenslanders now make up half the community, a tribute to their courage in facing the reputedly austere (but, in reality mild — shht, don't tell them!) climate of Tasmania. Thanks be to God and to Our Lady for these brave young men!

Another point of interest: Father Prior's one-minute video (available under the "building appeal" button on our website) has aroused a bit — though not nearly enough — interest in the project, as has the "wish list". Little by little, we will get there. Rome was not built in a day, nor will *Notre Dame de Rhyndaston* be...

#### CD'S STILL AVAILABLE

We still have a substantial stock of the CD *Oriens ex Alto* recorded by the Australian Sacred Music Association for the feast of the Epiphany this year. This album contains 2 CD's with a total duration of over two hours of excellent Gregorian chant. It is available from the Priory for a suggested offering of AUD \$ 30, postage included.



## 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 JESUS and MARY,

The 20<sup>th</sup> day of August is one of those days in the year God seems to have blessed in a special way, receiving on it into His eternal abode some very great saints. I'm thinking of St Bernard of Clairvaux, St Bernard Tomolei, and St Pius X. Not everyone is familiar with the second of the three. St Bernard Tomolei is the founder of the Benedictine congregation of the Olivetans, and he died in Sienna caring for the victims of the plague, in 1348.

The other two come to mind today as I begin work on this monthly reflexion. The reason for this is that in thinking of St Pius X, whom I am blessed to have as heavenly patron, there comes to mind the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, in which St Paul gives us some very profound insights into his own union with Christ — the text was chosen as epistle for the feast of St Pius X. The lesson captures well the spirit of the holy pontiff, who strove to reproduce in his own life the example given by the apostle of the nations, St Paul. But as we shall see, it also leads us to think of St Bernard and some of his most profound words.

St Paul is writing to the Thessalonians. After having congratulated them on their faith, he goes on to make, as it were, an apology for his own conduct. *For you yourselves know, brothers, that our reception among you was not without effect. Rather, after we had suffered and been insolently treated, as you know, in Philippi, we drew courage through our God to speak to you the gospel of God with much struggle. Our exhortation was not from delusion or impure motives, nor did it work through deception. But as we were judged worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel, that is how we speak, not as trying to please men, but rather God, who judges our hearts. Nor, indeed, did we ever appear with flattering speech, as you know, or with a pretext for greed—God is witness—nor did we seek praise from men, either from you or from others, although we were able to impose our weight as apostles of Christ (1Th 2:1-7).* What is striking here is how St Paul insists on his having received the Gospel, and having the duty to transmit it, in all sincerity, without any trickery or flattery, and certainly not for any personal motives.

The Gospel is not preached in order to please people. St Paul actually tells the Galatians (1:10), that if he were to please men, he would not be a servant of Christ! A profound lesson for us all when we are tempted to adapt the Gospel in order not to offend or shock: the Gospel is a message that does not belong to us; it is to be conveyed in all its purity and with all the power of its own expressions: the language of the Gospel is normative, and it is for all ages; no one can make it any better than it already is. If this attitude demands great humility in the apostle, it also requires great courage, especially when we know of the resistance, and perhaps of the persecution that awaits us. So the first lesson here – and it should nourish our prayer in consequence –, is that, whoever we are, we are called to live the message of Our Lord and to share it with others, regardless of whatever, good or evil, might befall us. In our prayer, we must ask for the grace to always do so.

But the apostle goes on to qualify his preaching. *Rather, we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother cares for her children. With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us (1Th 2:7-8).* It would be hard to identify any passage in the New Testament in which the role of the apostle is expressed in more endearing terms. First of all, St Paul compares his action among the Thessalonians to that of children; the Vulgate actually says “we became little ones in the midst of you”, that is, we made ourselves so humble and gentle among you that our attitude was more one of little children than of a teacher. What a lesson! The apostle, who has received his mission from JESUS CHRIST Himself, along with the duty to preach it to all nations, instead of coming and imposing himself as teacher, first seeks to make himself small in their midst, to conquer by gentleness those whom he longs to bring under the sweet and gentle yoke of Christ.

But that's not all. He goes on to add that his care for them was like that of a nursing mother who has compassion on the babe she has brought into the world. Is not the apostle the one who gives souls existence as Christians? Yes, and that is why once he has brought them into the world of the Spirit, he must take care to nurse them, to feed them at first with the food they are capable of assimilating. The maternal heart and bowels are moved to pity before the needs of her little one, and so should the heart of every shepherd be touched by the spiritual needs of his flock. Just as the mother, who has given life itself, feeds her babe with her very substance, the milk of her own breast, the apostle must strive to give not only the life of grace through the gospel, but his very self as well: *not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well* (literally, our own souls), *so dearly beloved had you become to us*. Can there be anymore touching expression of affectionate love, when one strives to give not only life, but, inasmuch as one can, one's *own* life? Is this not what the Son of God did when He sacrificed His life for us in order to give us life? Is it not what He does in the Holy Eucharist, offering us, not just a token of His love, but His very self, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. St Paul has learned the truth of this at the school of the Lord Himself.

But whence comes this capacity to feed souls with one's own substance? How can one explain that the true apostle can continually give of himself in order to nourish the souls entrusted to him? There is only one way: through continual and fervent prayer. St Bernard, delving into the mystery of the soul which has become the bride of Christ, writes concerning the holy kiss referred to in the *Song of Songs*: "For so great is the potency of that holy kiss, that no sooner has the bride received it than she conceives, and her breasts grow rounded with the fruitfulness of conception; bearing witness, as it were, with this milky abundance. Men with an urge to frequent prayer will have experience of what I say. Often enough when we approach the altar to pray our hearts are dry and lukewarm. But if we persevere, there comes an unexpected infusion of grace, our breast expands as it were, and our interior is filled with an overflowing love; and if somebody should press upon it then, this milk of sweet fecundity would gush forth in streaming richness." It is the daily contact with the Lord in prayer that makes it possible for the man of God to always replenish with good things those who come to him. Were he to refrain from the holy kiss of prayer, the nourishment, the spiritual milk, would cease to flow.

But he does not leave things there. Making himself small and gentle, nourishing as a loving mother, is not all: the apostle is above all father, and as such his role is to guide and correct: *As you know, we treated each one of you as a father treats his children, exhorting and encouraging you and insisting that you conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory* (1Th 2:11-12). It's not always easy to give correction; it can sometimes be very hard. Actually it can be one of the most painful things a superior has to do, perhaps today more than ever in a society imbued with an exaggerated and misguided view of the capacity of the individual to know and choose what is best for himself. Well no, we don't always choose wisely, we don't always make good decisions. In the spiritual life, we are always children, and that means we must have the docility to accept correction. And if we have a role of authority, we must have the courage and fortitude to administer, like a good father, the saving correction that will put someone back on the right path. A personal memory comes to mind which will illustrate this: when I was a boy and deserved a spanking (sorry to say, I did quite often!) I will never forget my Dad saying, as he inflicted the punishment: "It hurts me more than you". At the time, I thought it was crazy, but now I know what he meant...

Such are just a few of the insights we can gain for our prayer life from a Scriptural passage the Church applies to some very great saints. Let us ask for the grace, through MARY Immaculate, to always pray with fervour and spiritual tears, in order to obtain the grace to be exactly everything that God wants us to be, and that others expect us to be.

#### Retreats 2018

You will have noticed that we have finally put together some brochures for next year's retreats. Please feel free to make copies. Alternatively, if you would like us to send you more copies, just let us know.

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

# Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

Each new month, each new week, and every single day, brings us renewed and intensified grace from the Almighty over our fledgling community. As you know, we are now in possession of the land on which we hope to raise an edifice to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity and in honour of the Immaculate Virgin. We have been working, in weekly sessions, to clear the ground of fallen trees, briars, and other undesirable objects. It has been a pleasure to do this work together, for it allows a healthy time of exercise for the young monks, and also affords their Prior the opportunity to teach them the essentials of monastic work, which is at one and the same time, a development of God-given talents for the good of the community, and a time of uniting one's humble efforts to the atonement which the God-Man offered through His daily work. Monastic work, accomplished in silence, and suffused with the grace which overflows from the hours of the Divine Office, unites us with the Saviour Himself who worked to earn His bread, and with the generations of monks who have gone before us.



*Burning off briars*

My foremost concern at this stage, is that of finding the cheapest and fastest way to get sufficient shelter built on the property. This involves lots of consulting with planners and builders, and then with the local council for approval. I think that we have identified the builder and type of construction we will be going for. This first stage will be an interim monastery destined to be used later on as a guest/retreat house. The idea is to do a staged construction which will allow us to put in the indispensable buildings and continue when funds become available. For the moment, we need to get the plans finalised and approved, and of course, find the funds to make it happen. You may have seen our "Building appeal" button on our website, along with a one-minute video where I explain our present situation. In many ways, it's incredibly challenging: I often do not know where to look for help. But then I go to the Divine Office or turn to Our Lady, and she opens a door to keep things moving along somehow. She is constantly reminding me that this enterprise is Hers, not mine, and that She is leading it at every step. Which doesn't dispense us from doing our part! It is therefore with renewed confidence that I address myself to you, dear friends of the Priory, to continue supporting Our Lady's monastery, first of all by your prayers — without these, all the dollars in the world will not suffice — but also by reaching out and spreading the word to potential donors. It's not every day you have an opportunity to build the first Benedictine monastery ever in Tasmania!



*Praying the office on worksite*



*Discussing building options*

In addition to the manual work, we are also busied with intellectual and pastoral work. The former, for the monks in formation, allows them to become familiar with the sources of our faith and learn how to teach and defend it. The latter is manifested for us mainly through our retreats. This month we were finally able to launch the 2018 retreats which will take place, as is our custom, at the beautiful location of Hartzler Park, in New South Wales. We are enclosing a provisional flyer. Feel free to make copies for distribution, or ask us for more. Queenslanders may be wondering about retreats in Brisbane. It has been deemed wise to not disperse ourselves too much in these early stages. To Queensland we share return!

I also want you to know that our community, eight times a day, remembers you and your intentions when it offers to the Divine Majesty the sacrifice of praise in the name of all humanity, using the very words that God Himself has given us, and that we know are most effective for giving glory to our Creator, and obtaining all the graces of which we stand in need. Finally, I would like to extend an invitation to any of you who might be coming to Tasmania: please come and see us, so that we can share with you more of our plans. May Our Lady of Cana bless and guide you and yours always.

*Father Prior*

**To keep up** with Notre Dame Priory, visit our website at [www.notredamemonastery.org](http://www.notredamemonastery.org)  
To contact us, please send an email to: [info@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:info@notredamemonastery.org)

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