

# Ab AUSTRo

Newsletter of  
Notre Dame Priory

April 2019

No. 26

*This issue:*

- † *Holy Week in Colebrook*
- † *11th degree of humility*
- † *Some welcome visits and gifts*

## *Holy Week in Colebrook*



Even a casual observer without any expertise in chant could tell that Fr Prior was struggling through the chant of the Passion. What he might not have known was that all of the Holy Week ceremonies were threatened by the infectious cold that hit us the week before. But – it must have been a special Easter Grace – we made it through without curtailing anything, either in the ceremonies or in the chants.

To help you share in our Easter joy, we have provided in this issue a number of photos taken during these most holy days of the year. The washing of the feet



and the solemn Mass of the Lord's Supper, the altar of repose, are always moving moments as we contemplate the mystery of Our Lord who humbles Himself to become our servant and food. The adoration of the Cross on Good Friday reminds us of just how much God suffered for us. Finally the paschal



vigil and the Mass on Easter Sunday find us always a bit dazed by the lack of sleep, but overflowing with joy that the One we love is now beyond suffering and death.

A few thanks are in store for the success however: our beautiful paschal candle was donated thanks to the kindness of Donalee Murphy from Sacred Candles; David and Elizabeth Daintree once again made our Easter special by donating from their garden the gorgeous flowers that adorned the altars; last but not least, the presence of community friend Ronan Reilly helped enormously with the chant. Incidentally Ronan and his wife Beatrice became the first oblates of our community on Easter Sunday after Vespers.

Let it not be forgotten either how grateful we are to Archbishop Porteous and Fr Terry Rush for the use of St Patrick's Church, a true gem of Christian art. Undoubtedly, even when we have built our own monastic church, we will look back with fond memories on these days and be ever grateful, without forgetting those who, through the Pugin Foundation, restored it in recent years. God bless them all!

Brother Chronicler

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





## JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

My Dear Friends in Jesus and Mary,

“The eleventh degree of humility is that a monk, when he speaks, do so gently and without laughter, humbly and seriously, in few and sensible words, and without clamour. It is written: A wise man is known by the fewness of his words.”

In the ninth degree we meditated on silence and how it is that humility leads to silence. A monk, says St Benedict, need not speak until he is questioned. Here, in degree eleven, he seeks to make it clear that even when questioned or bound to speak for any other reason, the monk does so with characteristic parsimony of words. Instead of a river of words, a gentle trickle should flow from his mouth, something like a few drops of precious liquor, all the more precious in that it is rare.

I was once told of a fairly well-known priest in France who on one occasion went to a monastery for a day of retreat. Upon his arrival, the monk guest master led him to his room and ventured a question or two about the priest’s activities which were making the newspapers. To his dismay, the monk got this response: “Brother, you get paid to shut your mouth, so shut it!” A rather abrupt manner of putting the monk in his place, but also an illustration of what the monk should not do, that is, be curious about the sayings and doings of others.

St Benedict would probably concur, up to a certain point, with that affirmation. However, there is a lot more to it than that. Silence in the monastery is silence that is creative. The monk does not hold his peace for money, but he imposes silence on created tongues, his own included, to give optimal resonance to the Word of God. God speaks to us through Holy Scripture and therefore through the Sacred Liturgy which the monk is privileged to celebrate throughout the day and the night. As he chants his office, the monk speaks to God using God’s words and, by doing so, he is allowing God to reach the ears of those who are present. But we can go further and say that the recitation or the chant of the office gives God’s word a space to resonate spiritually in the world, in such a way that, even though no one but the monks may be there physically present, the Word is heard, and going forth from the bosom of God, through the monk’s mouth,

it inseminates the world, as it were, and prepares an abundant harvest.

God also speaks to us through events, and even through other people. The monk who has grown accustomed to seeing and hearing God in all things will ever be attentive to what others might

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say to him or ask of him. It is precisely because of his efforts to hear God that, when required to speak, he does so “gently and without laughter, humbly and seriously, in few and sensible words, and without clamour”.

This control over the tongue demands effort. Learning to keep silence is one thing. Learning to use few words to say what needs to be said is another, and is, in a way, harder. We have all experienced that there are certain things it is easier to abstain from completely rather than use sparingly. This is perhaps the reason that St Benedict considers it to be a higher form of humility.

When the monk speaks, the words that come forth should have been matured in long prayer and contemplation. If they are, they need not be lengthy. But that demands careful, attentive listening to God’s Word, it involves convincing oneself that, in the end, all that really matters is what God has to say. God, St John of the Cross tells us, has spoken once, through His Word, and in that Word He has said everything we need to know about Him. In a similar way, the monk should learn how to weigh his words, to limit them to those that are essential, to those that

will foster charity and the other virtues that will edify and console others. It also means coming to a deeper appreciation for the power of the spoken word. Speech is an extraordinary gift God has given to us, and we far too often take it for granted. A bit more contemplation will teach us the value of words.

St Benedict mentions not only the fewness of words, but also their manner. There are modes of speech that do not befit the monk. A boisterous, noisy monk would strike one as being out of place. A monk who would be prone to poke fun or to speak lightly of people and things would be out of place in monastic life.

So what application can we make to those who are not monks? How can the laity implement this degree without appearing to be taciturn or unsociable? For sure, there are certain attitudes that are proper in a monastery, that would be out of place elsewhere.

I would suggest one good way of going about it would be to try to convince oneself that what we have to say might not be that important. And also, that what others have to say might be just as important, if not more so. Apart from being often true, it is a sobering thought, likely to help us bite our tongue when we should. How many regretted words would be avoided if we would only take the advice given here by the patriarch of monks? The monk may “get paid to shut his mouth”, but everyone will be all the richer for learning the secret of silence and fewness of words.

Our model in this attitude is first and foremost Our Blessed Lady. Her words as recorded in Scripture are brief. She speaks only seven times, and if we leave aside the Magnificat, her hymn of praise, her words are always very brief. She does not waste time speaking about others, she has her duties, and she fulfils them as best she can. She is conscious that an abundance of words leads into many sins of the tongue. Besides she is too busy listening to the Eternal Word. If

she merited to receive Him into her flesh, it was because she had first received Him in the silent prayer of her heart.



To conclude, let's ponder St Elisabeth of the Trinity's expression, in her inspired prayer to the Trinity:

“O Eternal Word, Utterance of my God! I yearn to spend my life in listening to Thee, to become wholly docile, that I may learn all from Thee. Then, through all nights, all emptiness, all helplessness, I long to gaze on Thee always and to dwell beneath Thy lustrous beams. O my beloved Star! So fascinate me that I may never again withdraw from Thy radiance!”

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

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## Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

At last, we are almost over the final hurdle to putting in our planning application to the Southern Midlands Council. This is needed for approval to adapt the existing Old House at Jerusalem and add the needed sleeping accommodations as well as put in the chapel. The final hurdle includes getting a heritage assessment report. But the good news – assuming all goes well now – is that it all looks positive. The consultant tells us it's all very straight forward, and as our intended use of the house will not damage the building but enhance its characteristics, he is positive about the outcome. We will soon know for sure, so please keep this in your prayers. In the meantime, we have received donations for the construction of 9 monk cells (we hope to build 16 in all to provide for future vocations and guests). As soon as approvals come in, the cabins can go up – then it will be “All hands on deck!”

Our fleet of secondhand vehicles has now been supplemented by a “Troopie” donated by a very kind priest friend in NSW. Henceforth, the whole community (at least for the next few months...) can all fit into the same vehicle. This is useful when we drive to St Patrick's for daily Mass or when we go on community outings.



Another blessing this month was the donation of the triangular candlestick for the office of Tenebrae (also called a Tenebrae hearse) which is celebrated on the last three days of Holy Week. The candlestick holds 15 candles, one of which is extinguished after each of the 14 psalms said during this long morning office. At the end, one candle remains. It symbolises Our Lord rising from the dead, but also Our Lady who alone kept the faith during the dark hours of the passion. We thank Francois Piat who joined us with his family during the holy days and made the candlestick in record time.

A few miscellaneous bits of other news this month: On Easter Friday, His Grace Archbishop Porteous came out for a paternal visit, giving us an excellent talk on the profound link between Baptism and our new life in Christ which we, as religious, strive to live



out in as radical a way as possible. Our young philosophers have passed their first exams, and have started their next course, this time in Moral Philosophy. We were blessed early in the month to welcome Dr Peter Kwasniewski who was on an Australian speaking tour organised by the LMSA (Latin Mass Society of Australia). He gave a public lecture in Hobart on Gregorian chant and the Liturgy which was much appreciated by those who attended. He then spent two days with us during which he gave two other talks and fielded a lot of questions from the community. We are looking forward to his next visit already.

On one of the photos you can see a small weather station that we have set up on Jerusalem Estate near the spot where we are thinking of building the future monastery. This marvel of modern technology will give us lots of interesting data about temperatures, winds, humidity, etc. that will impact the position and make of the monastery.



Finally, a few of us are getting geared up for our first ever Victorian retreats at Pallotti College, Millgrove VIC at the end of this month and early June. Even though the women's retreat (3-6 June) is nearly booked out, there are still quite a few spaces for the men (27 May - 1 June). Please spread the word around you and if you would like to book, please go here: <https://www.notredamemonastery.org/retreats>.

Wishing you an abundance of paschal joy now and always, through Mary Immaculate,

Father Prior

Victorian Retreats  
have places available.  
Men 27 May - 1 June  
Ladies 3 June - 6 June

