

# Ab AUSTRo

## Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

February 2020

No. 33

### *This issue:*

- † Profession of Br Francisco Maria
- † Tonsures conferred
- † Visit to Botanical Gardens

## *Priory update*

Dear Friends,

On 22 February, feast of the Chair of St Peter and third anniversary of our foundation, we had the great joy of witnessing the simple profession of Brother Francisco Maria De Brito. From Western Australia, Brother entered the community on the eve of Palm Sunday 2018, and began his novitiate last year on the feast of the Epiphany. Even though he brings to the monastery some serious winemaking skills, up to now, the many needs of the community in getting off the ground have not given him any leisure to think about planting a vineyard. The closest he has come is a small apple and pear orchard which was planted at Jerusalem Estate in the weeks following the purchase. Until we can start making wine, Brother is mostly kept busy with the monastery kitchen of which he is Prefect and many other jobs indispensable to the good functioning of the house and grounds.

Coming back to the profession ceremony, the most moving moment is undoubtedly the “Suscipe”. This is a verse from



Psalm 118 which St Benedict prescribed to be sung by the newly professed monk immediately after pronouncing his vows. Standing with arms outstretched, he chants the first part of the verse: “Receive me, O Lord, according to Thy mercy, and I will live”. Then kneeling, with arms crossed over his chest, he continues: “And let me not be confounded in my hope”. This ritual is renewed twice, three times in all, each time on a higher tone. Then the choir chants the Gloria Patri, thus showing that the monastic profession is a total gift of self which glorifies the Most Holy Trinity. This is also symbolised by the fact that the chart of profession, after having been signed, is placed on the altar, just under the corporal on which the Divine Sacrifice will be offered, thus uniting the oblation of the monk with that of Our Lord Himself.

The day of Profession was a splendid one, the Tasmanian summer sun shining brightly over Colebrook. A number of friends were present for the occasion, including the Little Eucharistic Brothers of the Divine Will.

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Simple profession of Br Patrick Mary Hobbs  
St Patrick's Church, Colebrook,  
Easter Tuesday, 14 April, 2020 at 10 AM.  
Refreshments to follow at the Priory  
(2495 Colebrook Road; on Google Maps, search  
for “Jerusalem Estate, Notre Dame Priory”).





## In the school of St Benedict

22 February 2020, Chair of St Peter  
Homily at the Simple Profession of  
Br Francisco Maria De Brito

*Who do you say that I am?*

Dear Brother Francisco, Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Three years ago today, in this very same church, we celebrated the inaugural Mass with which our monastic community dedicated to Our Lady of Cana came into existence. Today we gather to witness to the commitment of one of our brothers who, for the first time, is pronouncing his religious vows to God. The date is significant. Today the universal Church honours the memory of the Apostle St Peter, upon whose faith the Church is built, and who remains, throughout the centuries, the point of reference for those who believe in Christ. The keys to the kingdom of Heaven, today promised to St Peter, are kept by the successors of Peter whose task it is to keep watch over the faith of the Church. As Benedictine monks, we are dedicated to living out within the Church our consecrated life in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome. In this way, we are inscribed in the very heart of the Church, and by means of our life of prayer and work, the sap of divine grace reaches the very extremities of the mystical Body of Christ.



Today's liturgy presents us with the great question Our Lord put to the apostles, "Who do men say that I am?" A number of answers are given, none of which are satisfactory. They all tend to equate Our Lord

with one of the prophets, making Him the equal or even the inferior of the great men through whom God spoke in centuries past. Peter, inspired by the Eternal Father, proclaims: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"

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**If we tend with all the  
energy of mind and  
heart to the eternal  
homeland, we will arrive**

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That inspired answer, upon which is based the faith of the Church, is one that you, dear Brother Francisco, can make yours today. Years ago, you heard the voice of the Lord calling, beckoning, inviting you to leave everything and come follow Him. You knew who He was, but your knowledge of Him has continued to grow. You do not have the advantage Peter had of seeing Him in the flesh; yours is a life of faith, but it is full of hope, the great hope which the same St Peter wrote of in his first epistle:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of (your) faith, the salvation of your souls (1Pet 1:3-9).*

Although you have not seen Him, you love Him. Such, my dear brother, is the glorious program you are given today. With the eyes of our flesh it is not given us to see Him, yet. For now, our journey lies in faith. But the visible absence should only increase our love, for as the saying goes, "absence makes the heart grow fonder". Although you have not seen Him, you love Him. Your love for Christ should be second to none, for as our Holy Father St Benedict tells us in the Rule, the monk must "prefer nothing to the love of Christ". Let Him be your companion, your goal, your all.

In this journey of the religious life to which you vow

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yourself today, you are also accompanied by Our Blessed Lady. She, who is truly Queen of our small community, has called each of us here, gathered us around her Son's altar. She it is who reminds us each day to "do whatever He tells us". You are also accompanied on this path by St Francisco Marto, your chosen patron, who had the immense privilege of seeing Our Lady with his own eyes, but not hearing her voice. May his example inspire you, especially his thirst for self-sacrifice and his love for Mary. With the eyes of faith we know the path, and we move forward, even if our ears are sometimes deaf to the inspirations that come our way. If we tend with all the energy of mind and heart to the eternal homeland, we will arrive. Like St Paul, we do not think that we have already reached the goal, but one thing we do: *"Forgetting the things that are behind and we stretch forth to those that are before"* (Phi 3:13).

But let's return for a moment to St Peter. With John and James, Peter was also present at the decisive event of the Transfiguration. He it is who, seeing the light-some face of Christ, taken up with His eternal beauty, cries out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here". So you, dear Brother Francisco, you too have been taken by the beauty of the face of Christ. You too have let yourself be seduced, according to the word of the prophet Hosea: *Behold I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart* (Hos 2:14). You too have said to Him: It is good for me to be here, on the mountain, in Thy presence. It is good for me to dedicate my life, my entire life to Thee without reserve. Just to be with Jesus, to spend time with Him, to be among those He considers His intimate friends: such is the grace given you through monastic profession. It is a grace well worth the sacrifice of material goods, of spouse and family, of personal ambitions, all of which you sacrifice today through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

St Peter was involved in another event I would invite you to reflect upon today, namely, the walking on the water. With amazing faith, Peter, seeing our Lord, and wanting to go to Him asks Him to give a command. The Lord says the word, and on the spot Peter jumps

out of the boat, and begins to walk on the water. What extraordinary faith! With eyes fixed on the Saviour, he knows he can do anything. He walks fearlessly on the waves, symbolising the moving and fleeting realities



of this world. He is oblivious of all that passes, and moves on to his God. But then, for a brief moment, he lets his attention be caught by the wind. The wind! What danger was there in the wind? None, of course. It was the water that was the danger. As much to say that we, like Peter, so often allow ourselves to be distracted, distraught, sometimes terrified by passing



realities which do not deserve our attention. The solution, and one which we as monks must always employ, is to keep our gaze fixed on Christ. St Elisabeth of the Trinity invites us to do just this. She writes:

"I'm going to give you my 'secret': think of this God

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who lives in you, whose temple you are (cf. 1 Cor 3:16); Saint Paul is the one who speaks thus, we can believe him. Little by little, the soul gets used to living in His sweet presence, she understands that she bears in herself a little Heaven where the God of love has settled himself. Then it's as if it were a divine atmosphere in which she breathes, I would even say there is nothing else but her body on the earth, her soul dwells beyond the clouds and the veils, in the One who is Unchanging. Do not say that it is not for you, that you are too miserable, for that is on the contrary an extra reason for going to the One who saves. It is not by looking at this misery that we will be purified, but by looking at the One who is all purity and holiness. Saint Paul says that 'He has predestined us to be conformed to His own image' (Rom 8:29). In the most painful hours, think that the Divine Artist, in order to make his work more beautiful, uses scissors, and remain in peace under that Hand that is working on you. This great apostle of whom I am speaking, after having been taken up to the third Heaven (cf. 2 Cor 12:2), felt his weakness and complained of it to God who answered: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor 12:9)".

My dear Brother Francisco, and all of you hear present, this I say to you, and I ask you to meditate upon it every day of your life: life is short, tomorrow we will die, and the only thing that will matter when we die is our love for Christ. Keep your gaze fixed on Him, love Him intensely, give yourself without reserve, say to Him each day: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God, put your footsteps in His, "following the paths of the Gospel," as the Rule says. "Never swerving from His instructions, but faithfully observing His teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in His kingdom. Amen."



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On 27 February, the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, the community was blessed with another significant event: His Grace Archbishop Porteous came to confer the clerical tonsure on our three scholastics: Br Bede, Br Gregory and Br Joseph. During the ceremony, the bishop, while removing bits of hair on five parts of the head in the form of a cross, says with each candidate the verse: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: it is thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me" (Psalm 15). By taking this step, these brothers continue to discern a possible calling to serve in the monastic priesthood, under the guidance of the Church, from whom alone the call can come.

In between these two blessed events, the community enjoyed a half-day outing to the magnificent Hobart Botanical Gardens. This relaxing afternoon gave us plenty of ideas for our future monastic garden and cloister. On the way home we stopped for a walk around the old Lindisfarne presbytery on the bay in which we began our conventual life three years ago. It was a welcome moment of fraternal time together as we made ready to enter the great Lenten observance, which will take us to Easter and our next edition of Ab Austro. Happy Lent to all!

**Brother Chronicler**

