

Ab Austro

Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

January 2020

No. 32

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Priory update

Dear Friends,

This first month of the year has been greatly blessed. Just a few days after Christmas, we went for our annual Christmas outing up north. Our traditional parlour with the Carmelites in Launceston was the highlight of the day. We were treated to the usual recreation time chatting and singing which bonds our two communities in our common desire to serve the Lord. It's something like the legendary encounter between St Benedict and St Scholastica, and for this we are grateful. We went away (once again) with a load of consumables from the nuns' garden. But this time we were also treated to a painting by one of the sisters depicting the community at Jerusalem Estate, held under the mantle of Mary Immaculate. We were all very touched.

The next day we received an extraordinary gift of four restored altar missals that had belonged to the late Fr Augustine Cummins and which Fr Terence Naughtin wanted us to have. They are a most welcome addition to our liturgical apparatus.

On 11 January, we celebrated our third patronal feast, in honour of Our Lady of Cana. We were blessed to have the brothers from the Emmaus monastic community join us for Sext, lunch and recreation. The next day we were honoured to have the visit of Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett who joined us for afternoon tea.



Three days later, the brothers set up a hermitage in a wooded part of the property. Henceforth, Fr Prior and any monks with heavy duties will be able to go for a day of solitude and spiritual repose – yes, even monks need retreats!



On Sunday 19 January, a good number of parishioners from the Latin Mass community in Hobart made their way out to Colebrook, Fr Suresh being away to see his parents in India. It's always a pleasure to have the locals at Mass.

The next day, Fr Prior, Br Gregory, Br Joseph and Br Francisco flew up to Sydney for retreats at Hartzler Park. 29 men and 34 women were present for these two retreats. Concerns had been expressed due to nearby bushfires, but thank God, Hartzler Park and surroundings have been preserved, even though there is dire need of water. The pond in the lovely garden is nearly empty....

The Help for Hectares campaign goes forward. We now have 57 hectares covered. This being said, our ongoing running costs are still there (roughly \$35 per day/per monk). In addition, three of the brothers are about to begin their studies thanks to a program put together with professors from overseas by video link. We will need roughly \$15,000 per year to cover giving these monks a good education in preparation for the priesthood. If you are able to help with that, Father Prior – and the rest of us, too! – will be ever indebted to your kindness.

Brother Chronicler

Simple profession of Br Francisco Maria De Brito. St Patrick's Church, Colebrook, Saturday 22 February 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

Prologue 14-20

“And the Lord, seeking his workman among the multitudes to whom he thus crieth, saith again: What man is he that desireth life and would fain see good days? And if hearing him thou answer, ‘I am he,’ God saith to thee: If thou wilt have true and everlasting life, keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips that they speak no guile. Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it. And when you have done these things, my eyes will be upon you and my ears open unto your prayers. And before you call upon me, I shall say to you, ‘Lo, here I am.’ What can be sweeter to us, dearest brethren, than this voice of our Lord inviting us? Behold in His loving mercy the Lord showeth us the way of life.”

The Lord is looking for helpers. Actually, according to the text He is looking for *a* helper, in the singular. Why is that? A personal touch no doubt. “I call them each by name and lead them” (cf. Jn 10:3). Each one is called by name. There is no blanket salvation for all. The call is personal – souls are saved one by one. We might add that the worker the Lord is looking for, one who is prepared to distinguish himself and give proof of greater love, is not that common. God often seeks in vain the helpers He needs for His work of salvation. When He finds one, He rejoices.

And how does He go looking? He cries out: “Who wants to be happy and see good days?” To this question, if we answer “I do”, then it is that God gives the recipe for happiness. He Himself is going to open up the path that leads to eternal life. So what must we do? First of all, hold our tongue. Second, do no evil. Third, do good.

Hold your tongue. It might come as a surprise to hear that the Lord’s first concern is for our tongue. We may be tempted to think that words are harmless. “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,” we learned as children. Unfortunately, we also know that this is not true. Words hurt, they can kill. If they rarely lead to death of the body, they are promptly fatal to the one who says them, dealing



spiritual death to that soul. They can also destroy the lives of others. A word of calumny, or even of detraction, and someone is dead. Their reputation, which is a man’s most precious possession, can be lost forever. Now we can see why St Benedict, following Holy Scripture, teaches that unless we can control our tongue, then we have not even made a start on the path to holiness. The prophet Isaiah had summarised it this

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way: For thus saith the Lord God the Holy One of Israel: If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and in hope shall your strength be (Is 30:15).

Turn away from evil. To turn away means an intentional refusal to do evil. Further, it means a refusal even to consider it as being a possibility. No compromises, no “ifs”, no “maybes”. Turn away from evil. This turn is fundamental. Our world has gotten so used to the spirit of “dialogue” that it seems to have lost the hatred of evil implied by this “turning away”. St John Henry Newman once wrote a poem entitled: “Zeal and love”. It goes like this:

And would’st thou reach, rash scholar mine, / Love’s high unruffled state? / Awake! thy easy dreams resign, / First learn thee how to hate:

Hatred of sin, and Zeal, and Fear, / Lead up the Holy Hill; / Track them, till Charity appear / A self-denial still.

Dim is the philosophic flame, / By thoughts severe unfed: / Book-lore ne’er served, when trial came, / Nor gifts, when faith was dead.

The gist of this beautiful poem is that it is impossible to do good until we have learned to turn away from evil. It is impossible to turn away from evil unless we hate it, for not to hate evil is to not love God. “*You that love the Lord, hate evil,*” says the psalm (Ps 96:10).

When we have assimilated these things, then we are truly with God. Even before we begin to pray, He is there, attentive to our every desire. How sweet His voice calling us to do good, to grow in the practice of the virtues, to sow love and generosity, so that we may reap as much, for you reap what you sow.

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Br Paphnutius discovers the liturgy

Our novice is now about to discover the riches of liturgical hymns, these gems of Latin poetry, composed in ancient times and conveying the mystery of salvation in language that is as delightful as it is instructive. The first hymn of the day is of course at Matins, and follows immediately the invitatorium. On Sundays and feasts it is chanted with one of the melodies that lifts the soul; on other days it is simply recited.

Outside of feasts and special liturgical seasons which have their own hymns, the hymns at Matins, Lauds and Vespers are consonant with the time of the day. At Vespers they contemplate the marvels of the six days of creation. Central to the hymns at Lauds is the theme of light and the illumination of hearts. At Matins, one often finds references to the interruption of the night by the praise of God and by the desire to be delivered from somnolence, phantasms, and the stains of the flesh incurred in sleep.

For example, on Fridays at Matins, Br Paphnutius learns the hymn *Tu Trinitatis Unitas* in which we ask the Blessed Trinity to hear the prayers poured forth

as we rise from bed in the quiet of the night. We acknowledge the wounds of our soul, and come to the One Who alone can heal them. We implore the heavenly power to wipe away the stains of impurity caused by the phantasms of the devil in our dreams. For indeed, we sometimes feel that, even though we have not offended Our Lord for not having been conscious, the ardour of the spirit is diminished and our hearts can remain cold and distracted. *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit: and the spirit against the flesh: For these are contrary one to another* (Gal 5:17).

If the Redeemer will but fill us with His light, we will shake off the numbness caused by sleep and the sensuality that has invaded our soul unawares, and we will set out on a new day with renewed vigour, preserved throughout the day from evil deeds.

*Ob hoc, Redemptor, quaesumus,
reple tuo nos lumine,
per quod dierum circulis
nullis ruamus actibus. Amen.*



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JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

Immediately after placing before our eyes the goal of life in the First Principle and Foundation, St Ignatius cuts to the chase. He had already pointed out, in the very first annotation, that the first form of “spiritual exercise” (as opposed to physical exercise), is examination of conscience. Somewhat lengthy considerations on examination of conscience therefore follow the First Principle. These considerations are of two kinds, first what he calls a “particular” examination, and then a “general” one. This month, we will limit ourselves to the particular one.

By “particular examen” is meant examination of conscience on what is called our predominant fault, that is to say, the besetting sin that we find ourselves falling into frequently. If we can overcome ourselves in that area where we are weakest, the door is then open to conquering all other vices and advancing towards sanctity. The first step then is to pinpoint what our predominant fault is. It is useful here to have the help of a good spiritual guide, a wise, holy, knowledgeable person who knows us well and can often put us on the right track. What areas do we need to look at? Many people nowadays instinctively bring up impurity. It is not a good idea to take impurity as the object of particular examen, for two reasons. The first is that the solution to overcoming lust is very simple: keep away from what entices the passion. The second is that if we examine ourselves on it, it is likely to arouse temptations, so better ignore it altogether and maintain the general principles of prudence and mortification of the flesh.

The predominant fault is best pursued in the realm of some form of anger, or sloth, or envy. Many times people do not realise that their attitudes take their source in anger. For example, if you are inclined to snap back at a particular person, or if you find yourself frequently putting someone down in your thoughts, these reactions trace themselves back to the passion of anger. If you never get your work done on time or if your parents have to remind you ten times before

you get things done, the passion of sloth is the cause. If you cannot stand certain people’s promotions or if you absolutely have to get the same things as your friends, envy is your enemy. It is important to pinpoint specific manifestations of a passion, for a general resolution will usually not be precise enough to hold our attention in a consistent manner.

Having determined the predominant fault, the tactic consists in a triple assessment each day. On rising in the morning, I firmly resolve to be on my guard against it, foreseeing as much as possible the occasions in which I can fall. At noon, I ask myself an account of my morning activities, especially in this regard. I take a close look at myself and see if I have fallen into that sin. If not, I give thanks to God. If so, I ask pardon. I renew my resolution for the second half of the day. In the evening, before retiring, I closely examine my conduct since noon, and once again, give thanks for my victories over myself and ask forgiveness for any failings. St Ignatius advises taking notes to keep track of oneself and see if one is improving. This is not imperative, but it can be helpful, at least initially, in order to ascertain if there is progress. If there is none, other spiritual tactics need to be envisioned.

In one of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits, St Ignatius explains why all this is important: “The conduct of our enemy,” he writes, “may be compared to the tactics of a leader intent upon seizing and plundering a position he desires. A commander and leader of an army will encamp, explore the fortifications and defenses of the stronghold, and attack at the weakest point. In the same way, the enemy of our human nature investigates from every side all our virtues, theological, cardinal, and moral. Where he finds the defenses of eternal salvation weakest and most deficient, there he attacks and tries to take us by storm”. A slight chink in the armour can be fatal, and so we must be on our guard against our weaknesses. Otherwise, the enemy who never sleeps, will inevitably find us off our guard and overthrow us.

