

# Ab AUSTRo

## Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

September 2021 No. 49

### This issue:

- † Some Good News
- † The Peril of Silence
- † Monastic Meals
- † Kingdom of Christ

### *Priory update*

There are a couple bits of wonderful financial news that we are happy to share this month. Way ahead of our Christmas deadline, our loan campaign has been successful. All the loan money has been received, and there is only some paper work to do before we can pay out the Catholic Development Fund and extend the mortgage to the major lenders. Also, we have received donations for the six final cabins, whose construction is well underway as several photos show. Heartfelt thanks to all who have helped us reach this goal!

On 17 September we were pleased to welcome His Grace Archbishop Julian Porteous for one of his periodic visits. These are always a joy for the community. This month he shared with us a number of recent initiatives within the archdiocese for formation and evangelisation, and also spoke of last-minute preparations for the Plenary Council which opens via Zoom in the next few days.

We are saddened to announce that our dear pet rabbit Norberta, due to a vicious attack by a feral cat which somehow reached through the cage door, has recently been in the competent hands of a veterinarian friend of the community. Having received a blessing for sick animals from Fr Prior, she seems quite happy in her new cage, which is much bigger and more comfortable than the previous one. Her favourite monk friends however are concerned that she is not yet out of danger...

With the onset of springtime, the Brothers are hard at work expanding the vegetable garden. This year we are aiming at producing as much of our own food as possible.

On the retreat front, Fr Prior and Br Patrick are presently in Queensland giving two retreats at Woodlands of Marburg. Pray that they can return without hindrance to their favourite island.

**Brother Chronicler**



P.S As this newsletter was going to print, we were saddened to discover the unexpected death of our dear Norberta.

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





## In the school of St Benedict

(Chapter Two, What Kind of Man the Abbot Should Be, 6-10)

*Let the abbot remember always that at the dread Judgement of God there will be an examination of both these matters, of his teaching and of the obedience of his disciples. And let the abbot realise that the shepherd will have to answer for any lack of profit which the Father of the family may discover in his sheep. On the other hand, if the shepherd have spent all diligence on an unruly and disobedient flock and devoted his utmost care to the amending of its vicious ways, then he will be acquitted at the Judgement and may say to the Lord with the prophet: I have not hid thy justice within my heart: I have declared thy truth and thy salvation; but they have despised and rejected me. And so at the last, for these sheep disobedient to his care, let death itself bring its penalty.*

St Benedict does not spare the abbot. Numerous times in the Rule, he reminds him that he will have to give an account before God, not only of his own soul, but also of his governance and decisions. He even warns that for any fault God finds in the monks, the abbot will have to answer.



The Scripture texts St Benedict here quotes are from Psalms, but there are reminiscences in this passage of God's stern words to the prophet Ezekiel: *So thou, O son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of*

**It is an awesome  
and fearful task to  
lead souls to God.**



*Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and shalt tell it them from me. When I say to the wicked: O wicked man, thou shalt surely die: if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his way: that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand. But if thou tell the wicked man, that he may be converted from his ways, and he be not converted from his way he shall die in his iniquity: but thou hast delivered thy soul (Ez 33:7-9).*

In a commentary on this passage St Augustine writes, concerning the shepherd who does not warn his flock when he sees them going astray: "You see how dangerous it is to keep silent? He dies, and rightly dies; he dies in his impiety and sin; for his heedlessness kills him. He might have found the living shepherd, who says, *As I live, says the Lord*; but since he has been heedless, no warning coming from the one appointed as watchman to give warning, he will justly die, and the watchman will be justly condemned." It is an awesome and fearful task to lead souls to God, one that must not be undertaken lightly or without a call from on high.

We happily receive the details of anyone who might be interested in receiving our newsletter  
via [newsletter@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:newsletter@notredamemonastery.org)

## Br Paphnutius discovers the liturgy

After the office of Sext the community processes to the refectory for its main meal of the day, lunch (*prandium* in Latin). This community exercise would not deserve a place in a presentation of the liturgy if it were not for the fact that it is endowed with a liturgical aspect. It's something you notice the first time you go to a Benedictine monastery. Everything is sacred, including meals. The layout of the refectory itself is reminiscent of choir: the tables are aligned as in church, the monks have their allotted place and do not sit just anywhere; the superior presides at a table in the middle, and the whole is under the gaze of the crucifix which everyone reverences before and after the meal.

Monks, of course, are not the only ones to pray before and after meals. What is different and can take one by surprise, is that Benedictine meal prayers are chanted as in choir, and they are rather long. A visiting monk from a monastery where they have simplified prayers wrote back to his abbot, saying: "The food here is very good, but you have to *pray* for it!" Yes, we *do* pray for it, grateful and ever conscious of those for whom the daily bread is not a given. We also pray for those who help us provide the daily bread, asking that in exchange for temporal goods, they may have eternal life. It's quite a good deal for them!

For most of the year, the verse sung before lunch is taken from Psalm 144. *The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord: and Thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature.* And at the end: *Let all Thy works, O Lord, praise thee: and let Thy saints bless Thee.* At supper the prayer before meals is taken from the great Psalm of the Passion (Psalm 21): *The poor shall eat and shall be filled: and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him: their hearts shall live for ever and ever.* And afterwards from Psalm 110: *He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord: He hath given food to them that fear Him.* These ordinary prayers are modified, however, during festal seasons, another

indication of the liturgical aspect of monastic meals. For example, at Christmas we remind ourselves that God Himself took our flesh and shared our meals: *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us* (John 1:14). And at Easter, the joy of the Resurrection rises from to the vaults of the refectory: *This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it* (Psalm 117).



NOTRE DAME PRIORY IS A PUBLIC ASSOCIATION OF THE FAITHFUL FOUNDED IN 2017 IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HOBART. YOUR DONATIONS GO TOWARDS HELPING THE COMMUNITY GET ESTABLISHED AS AN AUTONOMOUS BENEDICTINE MONASTERY

### VISIT OUR WEBSITE

[www.notredamemonastery.org](http://www.notredamemonastery.org)

CONTACT US - [info@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:info@notredamemonastery.org)

### POSTAL ADDRESS

Notre Dame Priory  
PO Box 85  
Colebrook TAS 7027  
Australia

### MAKE A DONATION

Account name: Notre Dame Priory  
BSB: 067-004 - Account number: 1004 1427  
Cheques payable to "Notre Dame Priory"

USD - via cheque, made payable to  
"Notre Dame Priory, Inc." and sent to:  
Notre Dame Priory c/o 1202 Park Hills Court  
Louisville, KY 40207 USA  
Credit card - [notredamemonastery.org/helpus](http://notredamemonastery.org/helpus)



## JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

The Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises opens with a meditation on the Kingdom of Christ. The logic of its place here is that, after having been purified of his sins, the retreatant is now called upon to be grateful enough for being reconciled that he will want to help spread the kingdom to which he has been mercifully admitted.

Somewhat anachronistically this meditation draws upon the imagery of chivalry and knighthood, concepts which were quite familiar in St Ignatius' day and which he, as a soldier, had been carried away with in his youth. If we leave aside that setting, the profound meaning of the exercise is not hard to perceive. God wants us to follow His Son, Jesus Christ, to imitate Him and, in so doing, work with Him in bringing souls to God.

Christ wants to conquer the whole world. He seeks to submit all to His sweet yoke. He wants to reign over all. For that, He wants all to enter His Church, which is the sole means of salvation. The language is far from being politically correct. Nowadays, even in the Church, it is not popular to say that the Church wants to conquer the world. And yet, God's plan over humanity has not changed. He sent His Son as the only Mediator, the only Saviour. "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Vatican II was quite clear about this: "All must be converted to Him (Christ), made known by the Church's preaching, and all must be incorporated into Him by baptism and into the Church which is His body" (Decree *Ad Gentes*, On the Mission Activity of the Church, no. 7).

But what are Christ's methods of conquest? In a famous homily that we read during Holy Week, St Augustine summarised it with his inimitable genius: "Christ conquered the world, not with iron, but with wood". Yes indeed, He conquers by allowing Himself to be conquered; He wins when He loses. And such is the unavoidable path of those who wish to be Christ-like. Being part of the mission of Christ then means living as He did. Living as He did entails the acceptance of hard work and sufferings, including humiliations and poverty. This is the great tradition of the *sequela Christi*, that is to say, the following of Christ. And that brings us face to face with a serious difficulty: the entire life of Christ, to quote the Imitation of Christ, "was cross and martyrdom". Following Christ means getting close to Him, and getting close

to Him means getting pricked by His thorns and sprinkled with His blood; it could also mean shedding one's own blood as He did.

And at the end of this exercise, we are invited to make this prayer: "Eternal Lord of all things, in the presence of Thy infinite goodness, and of Thy glorious Mother, and of all the saints of Thy heavenly court, this is the offering of myself which I make with Thy favour and help. I protest that it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice, provided only it is for Thy greater service and praise, to imitate Thee in bearing all wrongs and all abuse and all poverty, both actual and spiritual, should Thy most holy majesty deign to choose and admit me to such a state and way of life". (S. E. # 98). If that frightens us, it's normal, which is why we are encouraged to pray for "the grace not to be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish His most holy will" (S. E. # 91).

