

# Ab AUSTR0

Newsletter of  
Notre Dame Priory

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This issue:

- † St Patrick's Pilgrimage
- † Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary
- † New Stations of the Cross

## *Priory update*

Immaculate Conception Church has made yet another step towards completion with the installation of Stations of the Cross from St Vincent Hospital Chapel in Toowoomba. As we approach the holy commemoration of Our Lord's sacred passion, this is a most welcome feature to our monastic church. To commemorate this event, we are making this a special edition, featuring photos of the stations along with a reflexion by one of the monks.

Another significant event this month, on 16 March, was the 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing to eternal life of Archbishop John Bede Polding, the great Benedictine monk who did so much to establish the faith here in Australia. Sadly, the annual Polding Walk in Sydney, which Fr Prior joined two years ago, was again cancelled due to Covid complications. We pray that next year it will go forward and that some monks will be able to attend. Speaking of pilgrimage walks, the annual St Patrick's pilgrimage led by the Archbishop from Richmond to Colebrook made an unexpected halt at the Priory on Sunday 20 March (see photo).

One last news item: on the feast of the Annunciation, the monks were happy to join in the consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The community prayed the consecration twice, once after Mass on the feast, and then again at the start of Matins the next day, which was the exact same hour the Holy Father was making the consecration in Rome. May Mary Immaculate be pleased with her children and grant peace and conversion to the whole world.

Brother Chronicler





# Meditations on the Stations of the Cross

by a Monk of Notre Dame Priory



## I Jesus is Condemned

Being condemned is hard. Being condemned unjustly is agonising. Sinful creatures condemning their spotless Creator is beyond reckoning. But that is exactly what happened. The crowd prefers Barabbas, the rioter and murderer, to Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, who did good to all. The awful reality is that there is rarely any justice in this life. The condemnation of Jesus continues today in the condemnation of so many innocent people, who are given the challenging role of uniting their unjust treatment and humiliation with that of our Blessed Saviour. Let us keep in mind that sweet and gentle acceptance of the Lord, who hears in silence the unjust sentence, and sees through the cowardly decision of Pilate the decree of His heavenly Father to die for the salvation of the world. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Teach us silence. Teach us to acquiesce to the Divine Will when we are mistreated.



## II Jesus takes up His Cross

St John tells us explicitly that Jesus bore His own cross. It is an important detail. Beyond the reality that it was a terrible torture – yet another one inflicted upon the sweet Saviour – it shows us how we are to embrace the cross and tribulations that come our way, even when, and especially when, they are undeserved. If, as the liturgy tells us, St Andrew exclaimed many years later his joy in seeing the cross that was prepared for him: *O Blessed Cross, so long have I desired thee!*, then how much more must our blessed Lord have been content to see, to kiss, to embrace this terrible instrument of torture, which He knew would become, thanks to His generous sacrifice, the symbol and the instrument of every grace. Henceforth, all grace would come to the world thanks to our Saviour's loving embrace of the cross. Lord Jesus, teach us how to embrace all our sufferings with the same love Thou didst show to us in accepting to carry Thy cross to Calvary.



## III Jesus Falls the First Time

Tradition commemorates three falls of Jesus under the cross. Each of them tells us how painful this way of the cross was. Jesus was a strong man. He was a trained carpenter. But today, He has already been through two

tortures, the Agony in the Garden and the barbaric scourging at the pillar followed by the cruel crowning with thorns. Had it not been for sheer will-power, He would probably have died already. He will not stop, however, until He reaches Calvary. Each fall, as it renews and aggravates all the wounds of His sacred body, atones for our sins and obtains for us the grace to rise again. Lord Jesus, help us to always get back on our feet when we fall. May the fruit of Thy sacred falls obtain for us the grace to stand firm in Thy grace, and to not be moved by the power of temptation. But if we fall, raise us up again by Thy loving mercy.



## IV Jesus meets His Sorrowful Mother

The presence of Mother Mary on the way to Calvary bears witness to her love for her Son, but also to her fortitude. More than that, it reveals her as the co-redemptrix. Just as Adam had Eve as his companion in the beginning of our woes, so Jesus has Mary as His companion in our redemption. For Mary the cup was bitter. The Hour of which her Son had spoken at Cana of Galilee, when He said *My hour has not yet come*, has now arrived. The hour has come for His precious blood to be poured out for us all, to atone for our sins. The hour has come for the wine of Cana to become the Blood of the Lamb given to the Church to be the forgiveness of sins. Mother Mary, let us walk with you as you accompany Jesus to Calvary. Let us stand with you as you bear the sins of the world with your Son. Accept us for your children, and allow us to console your maternal heart.



## V Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

When the soldiers saw that Jesus would not make it to Calvary, they chose a victim to carry the cross for Him. Happy victim, Simon of Cyrene! He does not realise it at first, but his forced closeness to the Saviour gradually opens his heart to the mystery at his side, a mystery that will be gradually revealed. Being close to Jesus in suffering is always a grace. Suffering itself is often the path to conversion. How many souls will owe their salvation to a heavy cross that brought them close to the Saviour, drew them into the mystery of redemption and finally made possible the victory of grace in their souls. Jesus also gives us a lesson of humility in this mystery, for He does not disdain the help of His fellow man. He accepts to be helped, and

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gives us a much-needed example of how to let others do things for us, how to step aside and accept that we can't do it all. Lord Jesus, give us the courage and love to help others carry their cross, and the humility and meekness to let others help us carry ours.



### VI Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

What a brave woman was Veronica! How did she get so close to Jesus, surrounded as He was by a cohort of Roman soldiers? How did she find the courage to show such compassion to a condemned man, risking being condemned and scorned with Him? Veronica's gesture is full of feminine attentiveness and strength. On the surface it is simply to give Him a bit of relief. His face is gravely wounded, full of blood and spittle, a most uncomely sight. He who is the most beautiful of the sons of men is now disfigured by our sins. Veronica teaches us compassion and care. The face of Christ today is seen on the face of the Church, His Mystical Body—it too disfigured, this time by so many sins of the members of that Body. Like Veronica, let us seek by the intensity of our love to wipe away the sins of the Church, that she may once again shine with the beauty of grace before all nations.



### VII Jesus Falls the Second Time

The second fall of our sweet Saviour renews all the wounds of His sacred body, wracked with the jolt of falling to the hard ground under the weight of the heavy cross. It is more painful than the first fall, and it is harder to rise. If we can consider the first fall to be in atonement for all our voluntary imperfections and our indifference to God and to love, this second fall atoned for all our deliberate venial sins. Venial sin does not separate us from God, but it does cool off our charity and weaken our soul. That is why Our Lord wanted to give us the example

of this second rising in order that we may know how our venial sins hurt Him. As he revealed to St Margaret Mary, the sins of indifference, especially of consecrated souls, hurt Him so deeply. Lord Jesus, give us the courage to step on our sensuality and self-love, and to resist those attitudes of self-complacency that deprive us of energy in Thy service.



### VIII Jesus Speaks to the Women of Jerusalem

Once again, women are there to offer their support. Where are the men? Where are His apostles, who had just been bragging they would die for Him? They are gone, and they had just been made the first bishops.... These brave women do not fear to show compassion, to weep for the greatest injustice in history, regardless of the consequences for themselves. And they merit to hear from the sacred lips of the Saviour the words: *Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children.* Indeed, the Lord's pains will be short-lived and He will be in glory, but the real tragedy is sin, sin that destroys lives and relationships, that brings on unbearable tortures that nevertheless will never end. Lord Jesus, teach us to weep for the right reasons, for our sins and those of the world, now, while we have the time.



### IX Jesus Falls the Third Time

The final fall of Jesus under the cross is the worst of all. This time, He is literally crushed to the ground by its weight. He no longer has the strength to alleviate the shock. In all His body He is shaken with the most violent of torments. The devil this time thinks he has triumphed. But no, once again, the sweet Lord rises, slowly, painfully, and continues His walk to Calvary. This third fall atones for all our mortal sins, for each and every one of those times when we cross that line we know is a serious one and choose the creature over the Creator, when we act

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against the infinite goodness and deprive ourselves of the life of grace. Lord Jesus, by this third fall, give us the grace to pray to Thee in times of temptation, that never again may we seriously offend the Divine Majesty.



#### X Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

Having finally arrived at Calvary, the executioners prepare to nail our Lord to the cross, but first they inflict upon Him yet another humiliating torture: before the unfriendly gaze of the crowd, the most pure Lamb of God is stripped of His clothes. His sacred flesh, now so disfigured by so many wounds, is laid bare. Oh! what an awful sight. That body which is the very flesh of the Word Incarnate, conceived miraculously in the womb of Mary, is now no pleasant sight to see. Disfigured, like a leper, a man of sorrows, from whom people turn their gaze, too awful to bear, our sweet Saviour is exposed to the mockery of the hostile crowd. Lord Jesus, strip us of all affection to worldly goods, lest our hearts be ensnared and overcome by human respect.



#### XI Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Before being lifted up, the Son of Man undergoes the most agonising part of the passion. The spikes are pounded into His sacred hands, those hands which were accustomed only to bless, and into those sacred feet, those feet that went around doing good. The Lord did not need to be nailed. He was going nowhere. He wanted to stay on the cross for our sake. We are the ones who need to be nailed, fixed to our duty of state which is our path of salvation. For us, the nails are our sacred vows and commitments, either to priesthood, religious life, marriage or to our professional life. We bind ourselves lest we run away. Lord Jesus, nail us ever to Thy most holy will. Do not let us flee. Hold us tight forever.



#### XII Jesus Dies on the Cross

At long last the hour has come. The Son of Man is lifted up on the cross that all may see and believe. Like the bronze serpent in the desert, He is there, visible to the eyes of all. Ever since the crucifixion of the Son of God, the world will never be the same. The Crucified One is there, whether we choose to look at Him or not.

He rules over the whole of history. All other events converge upon Calvary. At the end of time, it is with the sign of the cross in the heavens that the Son of Man will come to judge the living and the dead. Lord God, from Thy throne on the cross, Thou dost speak to the world words of love and mercy. Is it possible to fix our eyes on Thee without being moved to the very depths of our being? Lord Jesus, never let us turn away, for we know that in Thee lies our salvation.



#### XIII Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Having breathed forth the Spirit and given His soul to the Father, the body of our Blessed Lord, still united with the divinity, is taken down from the cross and placed in the arms of Mother Mary. On Christmas she had given us her newborn babe radiant with joy. Today we give Him back to her – dead. We have put Him to death by our sins. The sorrow of our Mother's Heart is as great as the sea, but she has won, as co-redemptrix with her Son, our eternal salvation. Let us ever turn to her, confident that all graces pass through her immaculate hands for us her children in the Spirit, to whom she gave birth on Calvary.



#### XIV Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

Burial is the ultimate humiliation for a human. Jesus is, like every man, taken to be hidden away, behind a stone, wrapped in burial linens. With Jesus we are buried through our baptism. We have died to sin, to the world, to ourselves. His Resurrection, which we await with hopeful hearts, obtains for us the grace to rise from our sins to a new life of grace. Lord Jesus, grant us this grace: to understand those mysterious words of St Paul: *For you are dead: and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory* (Col 3:3-4).

*A plenary indulgence is granted, under the usual conditions, to those who piously make the Way of the Cross. To gain the indulgence, the prayers are in principle to be done before stations of the cross legitimately erected. The common practice consists of fourteen pious readings to which some vocal prayers are added. Those who are "impeded" can gain the same indulgence if they spend at least one quarter of an hour in pious reading and meditation on the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ. (cf The Enchiridion of Indulgences §63)*

