

Notre Dame Priory Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2018

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

NO. 12



A YEAR OF GRACE — THANK GOD AND THANK YOU!

You may remember that on the 22nd of February last year, our Tasmanian Benedictine adventure began with the Solemn High Mass in St Patrick's Church, Colebrook – it was our Foundation Day. A lot has happened since then. The chronicles of the last 12 months have kept you updated. We invite you to give thanks with us to the Divine Majesty for having led us thus far, and to pray that we may always be faithful to the grace of this foundation, allowing Our Lady to achieve her goal in and through us – and sometimes in spite of us!

Among the more recent blessings we have received we would like to mention the first Notre Dame Priory retreats at Hartzler Park. Fr John de Britto from Flavigny was present as usual to help Father Prior give the retreats. The first group consisted of 37 men, the second of 38 women. What was new about these retreats is that, being the first ones officially held

under the auspices of the new community (before they were "Flavigny retreats"), there were more than just two monks in habits: Brothers Bede, Joseph and Bernard were also there to ensure greater effectiveness and dignity in the liturgical

celebrations. More than one retreatant noted a greater respect for silence: perhaps the fruit of having more men of the cloth around...

After the retreats, Fr John drove (and sailed...) back to Tassie with the brethren; we then had the pleasure of welcoming *intra muros* for the first time a monk from another community. For Fr John however it was no holiday: he gave two hours of class each day to the brothers on the virtues of *lectio divina* in monastic life, and how to go about getting the most from this privileged time with the Lord.

The brothers thoroughly enjoyed having Fr John with us. In addition to his expertise in many domains, especially theology, he always has interesting stories to tell about his many travels around the world to give retreats and seminars. Thanks, Fr John, for coming our way. We look forward to next time.

Brother Chronicler

*Please take note of our
new mailing address:*

*Notre Dame Priory
P.O. Box 85
Colebrook, Tasmania 7027
Australia*

*Also, please be informed
that phone and internet
reception in Rhyndaston are
not always trustworthy. So
don't be surprised if we are
slow in getting back to you
when you contact us through
one of these means!*



JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

Beloved Friend in Jesus and Mary,

Lent is upon us, a time during which special graces are made available to better understand the mysteries of our faith and live them with greater spiritual fruit, in particular through contemplation of the Passion of Our Blessed Lord. St Paul tells us that the Saviour humbled Himself, taking on the form of a slave. Our reading of the degrees of humility in the Rule of St Benedict will help us enter more deeply into this awesome mystery of Christ's humility. This month we have come to the second, which I suggest reading along with the third. St Benedict writes:

“The second degree of humility is that a man love not his own will, nor delight in fulfilling his own desires, but carry out in deed the saying of the Lord: ‘I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me’. It is written also: ‘Self-will hath its punishment, but subjection winneth a crown’.

“The third degree of humility is that a man for the love of God subject himself to his superior in all obedience, imitating the Lord, of whom the apostle says: ‘He was made obedient even unto death’ ” (*Rule*, ch. 7).

Not to love one's own will; not to delight in fulfilling one's own desires; to be content to do someone else's will; to find satisfaction in submitting one's thoughts and desires to someone whose role it is to guide us. Not exactly fashionable! For sure. Only the gaze of faith can give us to understand the value of these attitudes, not just any faith, but faith in the Lord JESUS, utter confidence in the knowledge that the way He lived is the best way, the one that will profit us most for eternal salvation and perfection.

Christian perfection in fact lies in the imitation of the God-Man, JESUS CHRIST. Now, it is an aspect of His life that He consistently portrays himself as having come to obey. This is utterly astounding. If anyone was ever in a position to do his own will without the worry of it not being in conformity with the Divine Will, it was Our Lord. His human will was so perfectly in unison with His Divine Will that there was no possibility of any lack of fidelity to God and the demands of the perfect life. Nevertheless, He tells us He comes not to do His own, that is to say *human* will, but that of the Father. He will even go so far as to say: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me”. My *food*, that is to say, what nourishes me and keeps me moving. In other words, I just can't live without doing the will of my Father; I would accomplish it at any cost. Far from perceiving His role as one of self-affirmation, it is as if He wants to efface Himself before the will of the Father. *I do always the things that please Him* (Jn 8:29) — what love of the Son for the Father, what fascination for Him!

The Son knows the Father perfectly, being the expression of all that He is; He loves Him eternally as God. But His created human soul is so enamoured of the beauty of the Father that all He wants to do is fulfill His will, even though He knows that this will is going to have very high demands on Him, for it will lead to the Cross. As He reaches the end of His life, just before expiring, He says: *It is consummated* (Jn 19:30), and St John points out that these words reflect Our Lord's great desire to fulfill the prophecies concerning Him. He simply could not die until He had fulfilled each and every one, down to the last minute detail.

And this was the case from the very moment of the Incarnation. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, quoting Psalm 39: *Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not: but a body Thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me: that I should do Thy will, O God* (Heb 10:5-7). These words were recited by Our Lord; they were in His Heart even as He entered this world.

The lesson we can draw from this is that no number of great works, prayers, fastings, sacrifices of any sort are of any value whatsoever if they are the expression of self-will. All our sanctification lies not in conceiving and realising great plans that we think will be pleasing to God, but in embracing the Divine Will, in doing the will of the Other, the Eternal Other who has brought us into existence and in Whom Alone our life finds meaning and purpose.

Even though Our Lord brings this attitude to its perfection, it had already been taught in the Old Testament. When King Saul thought he was doing something good by offering only the firstfruits to God of the spoils of the Amalekites instead of offering everything as the Lord had commanded, he was told by the prophet Samuel: *Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams. Because it is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey. Forasmuch, therefore, as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee from being king* (1 Sam 15:22-23).

It is good for us to keep this in mind when we are inclined to do anything for God. We need to ask ourselves: is this really what God wants for me, or is it my own ego that is fooling me into thinking it is so? The way to resolve this dilemma is humility. A truly humble soul will always question itself on its deepest motivations and intentions; it will always be on its guard against self-will, for it knows that it can easily be led astray, and that by obeying, by submitting oneself to the guidance of another who commands in God's stead, one avoids the risk of departing from the path of salvation. *There are ways which to men seem right, but the ends thereof lead to the depths of hell* (Prov 16:25).

This attitude is one of humility, it is also one of love, for humility both leads to love and proceeds from it. It leads to it because when you have come to realise your own nothingness and how much you have received from God, you feel moved to love Him more. It proceeds from it, for once charity begins to grow in the soul, it deepens further the love we have for the Beloved. It is proper for love to want to lower itself under the beloved, as St Therese of Lisieux said so beautifully. This is perhaps what Our Lord tried to get across to His disciples when He said at the Last Supper: *That the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I. Arise, let us go hence* (Jn 14:31).

To close these reflections let us read the words with which St Alphonsus Liguori opens his marvellous little work on *Uniformity with God's Will*. He writes: "Perfection is founded entirely on the love of God: *Charity is the bond of perfection* (Col 3:14) and perfect love of God means the complete union of our will with God's: the principal effect of love is so to unite the wills of those who love each other as to make them will the same things. It follows then, that the more one unites his will with the divine will, the greater will be his love of God".

May each one of us, especially during the sacred season of Lent, progress in love for God, in true humility of heart, and when we do, we will certainly be on the path to sanctity and to true beatitude which begins on earth for those who truly love God.

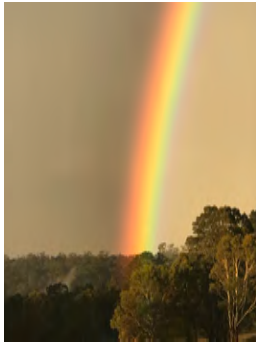
With my prayers and blessing always,

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

It's hard to believe, but yes, we have completed our first year of existence. God be praised! It's been a fascinating year, one in which we have been learning to trust in Divine Providence, and have come to know the meaning of the "daily" bread: the Lord gives us what we need one day at a time; there is no storing up a treasure for the morrow, just as the Hebrews were forbidden to gather more than a day's fare of manna. Each day we trust in Divine Providence, and each day, we are fed with what we need. Our Lady opens a gate, and we pass through, but we know not where the path will lead; and then, there is a great curve in the road and we find ourselves in uncharted territory; but what does it matter? We are in the hands of the Mother of Christ, and if she is there, all will be well.



Spectacular double rainbow after abundant rain on the feast of St Scholastica

Life at the Rhyndaston monastery is never boring. If one were to have a look at the monastic horarium and then consider that the daily rhythm is the same year in year out, one might be tempted to ask if it's not a bit monotonous. But it never is. Life changes, we are on a journey, the scenery evolves, and so do we. The same texts heard a year later take on an entirely new meaning, for we ourselves are attaining in greater depth to the great mystery of God. And then there are the natural wonders we are given to admire every now and then which leave us in awe of the Divine Majesty (see photo).

It has been a full month. Just before leaving for the retreats, we had the privilege of welcoming Jaan-Eik Tulvé, director of the Estonian ensemble *Vox Clamantis*. The group was in Australia to give concerts in Melbourne and Sydney. I have been acquainted with Jaan-Eik since my Flavigny days, and so I invited him to come and give a session on Gregorian Chant to our novices. They all thoroughly enjoyed it and learned very much about the chant and its history from a man who has a deep love for it and a great deal of experience, not only in the professional world but also in monasteries which he visits frequently.



Jaan-Eik Tulvé giving chant class



Pilgrimage to Sydney Cathedral

Our visit to NSW for the retreats also allowed us to make a couple pilgrimages: first, to the tomb of St Mary of the Cross, secondary patroness of our community whose protection we implored so that we can continue this work which, in certain respects, resembles her own; then to St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney which took us to the cradle of Benedictine monasticism in Australia. We prayed at the tomb of Archbishop Bede Polding, asking his intercession for the success of our monastic foundation.

We also enjoyed the visit of Fr Glen Tattersall who has been a great support since the beginning. His presence is always an encouragement, which is not surprising, as he was one of the early "pioneers" of the idea of a traditional Benedictine foundation in Australia.

As always we beg the charity of your prayers and assure you of ours as we now look towards Easter.

Through Mary Immaculate,

Father Prior

To keep up with Notre Dame Priory, visit our website at www.notredamemonastery.org
To contact us, please send an email to: info@notredamemonastery.org

To make a donation:

Via bank transfer: Commonwealth Bank of Australia - Account name:
Notre Dame Priory BSB: 062-654 Account number: 1024 4562

Via cheque: In Australian dollars, make payable to "Notre Dame Priory" and send to:
Notre Dame Priory, P.O. Box 85, Colebrook, Tasmania 7027, Australia
In US dollars, make payable to "Notre Dame Priory" and send to:
Notre Dame Priory, % 1202 Park Hills Court, Louisville, KY, 40207, USA.