

NOTRE DAME PRIORY Newsletter

OCTOBER 2018

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

NO. 20



AN EMINENT VISITOR TO THE PRIORY

The few privileged souls to be present at St Patrick's Church, Colebrook on 12 October witnessed an event that Augustus Pugin may never have dreamed would take place in his little gem of a church: a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church offered a Pontifical Low Mass, assisted by two monks in formation, Br Augustine Mary, and Fr Henry Whisenant. After this Mass, His Eminence Cardinal Raymond Burke then presided in choir for the Solemn High Mass offered by Father Prior.

Since this was for several of the monks the first time they have met a Cardinal, it was a big day for them. After the Masses in Colebrook, we headed up to the Priory where His Eminence joined us for Sext in our small house chapel and lunch. After lunch the Cardinal gave us a beautiful spiritual talk on the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of consecrated religious.

Finally, concluding his 24 hour presence on Tasmanian soil, he visited Jerusalem Estate, posing for some photos with the community.

We are most grateful to His Eminence for making this detour

between conferences he gave in New Zealand and Confirmations in Melbourne to pay this private visit to the community and honour old friendships with some of the brethren.

The Cardinal's visit was preceded by two other significant events in



the life of the community: the entry of two new postulants. Matthew Hobbs, Br Gregory's younger brother, was received on 4 October, feast of St Francis, while Fr Henry Whisenant, a Texan ordained for the diocese of East Anglia, UK, was received on 10 October, after first Vespers of the feast of the Divine Maternity.

On a more down to earth note, Mother Goose announces the hatching of several lovely goslings. It goes without saying that we are looking forward to them putting on



some weight... In the meantime, with Thanksgiving just around the corner, it's the turkeys who are getting the attention...

Brother Chronicler



JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

Dearly Beloved Friends,

“The ninth degree of humility is that a monk refrain his tongue from speaking, keeping silence until a question be asked him, as the Scripture sheweth: *In much talking thou shalt not avoid sin: and, The talkative man shall not be directed upon the earth.*”

The Scripture verses here quoted by St Benedict are concerned with two things: avoiding sin and being guided by God in our decisions. The first of the quotations is from the book of Proverbs (10:19) and is worth quoting in full: *In the multitude of words there shall not want sin: but he that refraineth his lips, is most wise.* The second is from psalm 139, and it refers more to the guidance that one needs in one’s life.

So many sins are caused by the tongue. Probably the most incisive description of the evils of speech comes to us from the Apostle St James: *In many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man. He is able also with a bridle to lead about the whole body. For if we put bits into the mouths of horses, that they may obey us: and we turn about their whole body. Behold also ships, whereas they are great and are driven by strong winds, yet are they turned about with a small helm, whithersoever the force of the governor willeth. Even so the tongue is indeed a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members, which defileth the whole body and inflameth the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell. For every nature of beasts and of birds and of serpents and of the rest is tamed and hath been tamed, by the nature of man. But the tongue no man can tame, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison. By it we bless God and the Father: and by it we curse men who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth, out of the same hole, sweet and bitter water? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear grapes? Or the vine, figs? So neither can the salt water yield sweet (James 3:2-12).*

St Benedict mentions silence in other passages of the Rule. There is of course a whole chapter dedicated to it (ch. 6). But in chapter 4 which treats of the “instruments of good works”, he mentions: “To keep one’s mouth from evil and wicked words. Not to love much speaking”. (instruments 52 and 53). What is most informative is that these two are preceded by two others: “To dash down on the Rock (Christ) one’s evil thoughts, the instant that they come into the heart. And to lay them open to one’s spiritual father” (instruments 50 and 51). What this reveals to us is that silence of the tongue is only possible with silence of the heart, and that our fallen nature is more inclined to speak evil of others than to acknowledge our own sins.

Is it not an effect of diabolical pride that we are so prompt to speak ill of others and to proffer reprehensible words, but so terribly slow to open our mouths to our spiritual guide, to our confessor, revealing our sins and the wicked thoughts that come to us! The evil that we speak should be the evil against ourselves, acknowledging that we have deep down in us so many vices that are continually seeking to boil over and poison the world. If we have the courage and the humility to make such confession to our spiritual guide, then we will be much less prompt to speak ill of others.

The other aspect of silence implied by the second citation in the Rule is that silence not only preserves us from sin, it also allows us to discern God’s will in our lives. All spiritual masters agree on this point: the first step to being able to hear God’s voice in our heart is to make silence, to impose quiet on all created voices that

come from without, and even on that voice within, which is the voice of the “carnal man” of whom St Paul speaks, and who is regularly drawing us away from the calm, peaceful discernment of God’s will.

Might we not be here in the presence of one of the major causes, not only of sin in our world, but also of failure of so many, especially among the youth, to hear God’s voice in their lives, inspiring them with generous longings to serve others and work for the salvation of souls? Is it any coincidence that the 1960’s, which is the period from which the number of priestly and religious vocations dropped drastically in the universal Church, is also the period of the advent of so many devices that for the most part abolished the oases of peace: it became possible to fill the airwaves with human words and song, making it impossible for the soft breeze of the Divine Voice and the sweet melody of the Divine Symphony to be heard?

Is there anything more indicative of this than the tragic fact that it is becoming more and more difficult to find public spaces that are not bombarded by continual noise? Or what of the youngsters who go for mountain hikes with their iPod in their ears, or the worker who cannot build a house without the unceasing wave of savage rhythm coming from his radio? Something is seriously wrong here, and St Benedict has an answer: silence is bred of humility.

If this analysis rings true, then silence is the first step towards retrieving a more peaceful, tranquil pace of life, devoid of senseless noise. Create spaces of silence in your life. Do not be afraid of silence. Do you know why it is that people are afraid of silence? The principle reason is that they are afraid of being alone with themselves. They do not want to face the voice of their conscience for they know it will be one of remonstrance. These two competing voices are incompatible: the voice of conscience and the voice of the world. The world seeks to drown out conscience, and conscience will have no pact with the world. You must make your choice. If you are continually listening to the world and all it has to say, chances are you are not listening to conscience. And vice versa. If you take time each day to remain in peace with the Lord, not afraid of what He might be saying deep down in the heart, then chances are you are on His side. The Lord is a jealous lover, He will have all of your heart, He will not settle for half, nor will He share you with the world. If you listen to God every day, you are on the right path. You will avoid sin, and you will be guided into the ways of the Spirit, who seeks your true good, your happiness on earth and your eternal salvation in Heaven.

In Psalm 139 quoted above, there is another verse worth mentioning in this context. It reads, referring to evildoers: “the labour of their lips shall overwhelm them”. The *labour* of their lips! I remember in my early years of monastic life one of the elder priests pointing out in a retreat conference that it’s talking that demands effort, not silence. Be that as it may, it is so true that so many souls lose themselves through the hard, unceasing labour of the lips. The devil is a merciless slave-driver, and life with him is more like death. Let’s not exhaust ourselves with the labour of our lips.

Let us rather imitate the prophet Jeremiah, in a passage we read in Holy Week: “He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace: because he hath taken it up upon himself” (Lam 3:28). The Latin text of this verse reads: “quia levavit super se”, which can also be translated: “because he lifted himself above himself”. The idea is that by silence the soul lifts itself up above the petty considerations of mundane life, and also above the words of wicked or senseless people who seek to distract it and involve it in their gossip and futilities. Let us remember, in such moments, to rise above ourselves and hold our peace. If we do, we are progressing in that all-important virtue of humility, and are opening ourselves up to the Divine Peace that can resound in our hearts only inasmuch as our passions and emotions are calmed by the tranquility of union with God.

Such is my prayer for you. May I ask that you make it for me as well?

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

After a few days of retreat to recharge my own spiritual batteries, I was blessed to take part, for the second time, in the Christus Rex pilgrimage from Ballarat to Bendigo. Even though the pilgrimage starts on a Friday morning, there is an unofficial opening for those who arrive on the day before: a solemn Requiem Mass for deceased pilgrims. Praying for the pilgrims of the past reminds us that our life itself is a pilgrimage. We are not here to stay, only passing through. As St Teresa of Avila once wrote: "Life is a bad night in a bad inn". Well, it might not be bad all the time, though for some it's much less comfortable than for others, but the point is that we have to keep moving, whether we like it or not, for some time very soon the night will be over and we will wake to the reality of eternity. On that day, all that will matter is how we lived our relationship with God. That is what our community is all about. All our efforts to get this monastery started, to provide it with canonical status, to establish it in a place that is worthy of the divine praise (and not too uncomfortable for the young men who join us), to form the novices, and everything else: all is to be seen in the light of eternity, and it would not have any meaning at all were it not for that all-pervasive reality.

Being at the head of a monastic community, especially one that is just starting, and with very little resources at its disposal both in terms of help from other monks and financial aid — most monasteries receive both monks and funds when they start, we were bereft of both — can hold certain dangers with it, foremost among them being to allow oneself to be so immersed in material matters that the spiritual life of the community suffers. I am constantly aware of this danger, and strive by every means to avoid it. That is why from the start I have insisted that we chant the entire Divine Office in choir, even though we are few in number. It is why I remind the monks very frequently to nurture a strong interior life, especially by being faithful to the practice of daily mental prayer. It is why we spend hours reading Holy Scripture, the writings of the saints and studying sacred doctrine as presented to us by the Doctors of the Church and the definitive Magisterium. Without that spiritual side of things — the essential side —, none of the other matters that occupy us is of any importance whatsoever, for they take on meaning only inasmuch as they make that primordial one possible.

In that way, all those, like yourself, who support our community know what we stand for and what you receive in return: the monks pray for you each day, from before sunrise until evening, offering in your name the sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving and atonement to the Divine Majesty. One of our friends remarked to me that when God looks down over Australia, He must feel some special warmth coming up from Tasmania. I do not know if that is true or not. I hope it is. I hope that our community, as it grows and starts to take on a more monastic look on the outside, is truly maturing on the inside, and that in the hearts of these young men is kindled, and burns forever with every-growing intensity, a fire of love for Christ and zeal for the salvation of souls that will benefit you and your loved ones for decades to come.

This being said, we must reluctantly descend every now and then to practical down-to-earth matters, so *I will soon be writing to you personally* to update you on where we stand and what we need in terms of funds, materials and manpower. In a certain sense, it will be the official launching of a fundraising effort that we hope will achieve the very difficult task of building a beautiful monastery — the southern-most monastery in the world! — in Tasmania. Thank you for being part of it all!

Finally, an important bit of news is the first professions of monastic vows of our first group of monks on 8 December in Colebrook during the 9:30 AM Solemn Mass. If you can't join us please keep the novices in your prayers, and if you can come, let us know asap (professions@notredamemonastery.org).

Rest assured of our prayers for you and yours and, in particular during this month of November, for your deceased loved ones. 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:
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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.



Monk Shop
We have recently updated the
Monk Shop tab on our website.
Available at the moment are a
series of Christmas Cards
designed by the Monks and our
2019 Liturgical Wall Calendar.
Also, the Kitchen Rosary is still
available as a great Christmas
present.