

# Notre Dame Priory

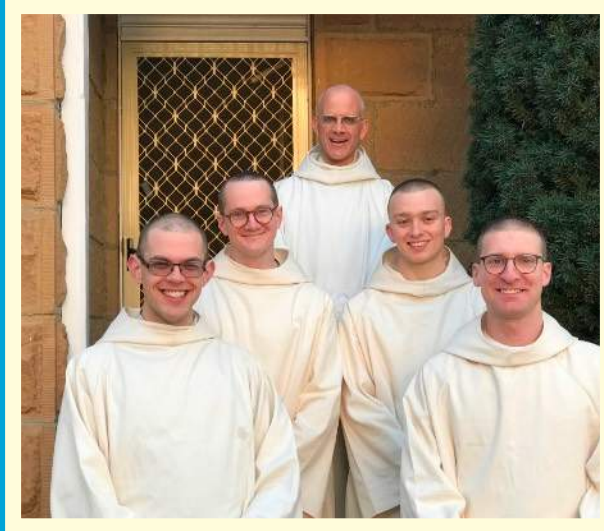
## Newsletter

JULY 2017

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

ISSUE FIVE

*“New look” at  
the Priory*



### ANGELICAM HABENT FACIEM, VEL HABITUM?... (OR BOTH?)

It is told that the evangelisation of England owes much to St Gregory the Great's providential encounter with a group of Angles who were being sold as slaves in a Roman marketplace. He is said to have exclaimed: *“Angelicam habent faciem, et tales Angelorum in caelis decet esse consortes — They have angelic faces, and so must be partakers of the angels in Heaven!”* Therefore they must be evangelised! And that is how the Benedictine monk Augustine (future St Augustine of Canterbury) was sent along with a large group of other monks to bring the Gospel to England.

Notre Dame Priory's four postulants may or may not (you be the judge...) have angelic faces, but one thing is sure: they have angelic new postulant habits, received on the solemnity of Our Holy Father St Benedict, 11 July. These short habits, which go down to below the waist, were put together by our good friend Yvonne Withington while Fr Prior was away in Europe, and so, upon his return, there was a brief ceremony in the chapel in which they were blessed and each postulant was given one to wear.

As one might imagine, the new garb elicits various reactions from the people we encounter, ranging from nearly ecstatic awe to the rather stunned, “What *are* you”, among others. The reply to this latter question usually goes something like this: “Well, in addition to *being* humans, we are *trying to be* good monks.” The reference to monks, more often than not, gives rise to other questions, such as: “Oh, so you are Buddhists?”, or “So you don't believe in harming animals?”, or “So you believe in reincarnation?”, etc. Sorry to say, in our

**A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**  
If you would be happy to continue receiving our monthly newsletter via email only, please send through a short note to us at [newsletter@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:newsletter@notredamemonastery.org). If you know anyone who might appreciate learning more about our community, or receiving spiritual nourishment, feel free to send us their details and we can add them to our mailing list.

neo-pagan world, few have any serious concept of what a Catholic monk is, or even that such a thing exists. So here's for pursuing our adventure of bringing monasticism to Tasmania!

The same day as the postulant “clothing”, Fr Prior proceeded to bless our new Fuji Xerox printer, whom you will recall has been baptised “Brigid”. Her first month on the job has been rather relaxed, but she knows it's just the calm before the storm...

During Fr Prior's time away, we were blessed to have two fine priests, namely Fr Steven Ledinich and Fr Damian Jellet, both from the Wagga diocese, and an emeritus Bishop, His Lordship Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett, stay with us. In this way, each week of Fr Prior's absence was “covered” for Holy Mass and spiritual conferences which were of much profit to the brethren.

Towards the end of July, the community had a bout with a virus of some sort. The battle was fierce—and to tell the truth, may not be entirely over—, but in the end the Priory was (shall be) victorious. *Christus vincit!*



## 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 in JESUS and MARY,

This is the first issue of the “Afire Circular” contained within the monthly newsletter of Notre Dame Priory. This new setting changes nothing as to its content. It will remain what it has been to now: trying to help retreatants be faithful to what they learned on retreat, and grow in fidelity to the Lord especially through the practice of mental prayer.

This month, I am writing on the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin MARY — an invitation, no doubt, from Divine Providence to reflect a bit on the role of Our Lady in our life of prayer, and in particular in our mental prayer. Most Catholics have a place in their life for Our Lady; it is, after all, part and parcel of the Church’s faith and the spiritual patrimony bequeathed to us. For most practising Catholics, saying the *Hail Mary* and the *Rosary*, the most common of Marian devotions, is part of their lives, though in varying degrees. Such a practice “touches the bases”, as it were, and allows one to fulfil one’s duty toward God and His holy Mother.

Some of the faithful, however, taking inspiration from the saints who were great devotees of Our Lady — I’m thinking in particular, though not exclusively of such giants of sanctity as St Louis Grignion de Montfort or St Maximilian Kolbe — give MARY a much greater place in their lives, for they have come to understand that she plays a vital, intimate role in the sanctification of each of the faithful. This reality was signified at the Wedding Feast of Cana where Our Lord performed His first miracle at the instigation of Our Lady. Had she not intervened, the miracle would never have been. And her intervention, as it appears to us in the account of St John, included “forcing the hand” of Her Son who had initially said His “hour was not yet come”, and who in the end, hastens the “hour” at His mother’s gentle but clear behest. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux summarises the spiritual momentousness of this when He says that “God has wanted us to have all things through MARY”. Along with the teachings of many other saints, this word of St Bernard is the basis for the Church’s belief — even though this is not yet a defined dogma of our faith — that MARY is Mediatrix of all grace, that is to say, that all graces that are given to every soul throughout the world pass through her immaculate hands.

When one comes to perceive the depth of that mystery, of necessity one feels inclined to get MARY more involved in one’s own life. Think of it: MARY is the Treasurer, as it were, of the Most High. She holds within her undefiled hands all the graces of which we stand in need. It follows that the closer we are to her, the greater the proportion of grace that will be given to us. “Ask and you shall receive”, says Our Lord. Ask MARY, and She will obtain for you an abundance of grace.

But does this greater devotion mean only saying more prayers to her and asking more frequently for her intercession? Is it possible to go further? Yes we can, and St Louis de Montfort has given us the “secret” to becoming even more the sons and daughters of MARY. That “secret” is that we consecrate ourselves entirely to her. It is not just saying more prayers to her, it is not just thinking of her more often and striving to imitate her virtues, which are both very good things indeed. No, it’s much more than that. It is making of one’s entire life, all that one possesses both in the material and spiritual realms, an oblation to MARY, giving her all our good actions, past, present and future, so that she may do with them as she sees fit. It is what is called the “total consecration”. One no longer has at one’s disposal the fruits of one’s spiritual life: they are given into the “Marian Bank” as it were, where they will reap quasi-infinite “interest” and become more precious still before God.

Such a consecration has its demands, for sure. It takes a good deal of humility and confidence in her maternal intercession. But that is precisely one of the most useful and powerful aspects of this consecration: it helps us achieve that spirit of childlike confidence without which we cannot be saved. Remember the words of Our Lord: *Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven* (Mat 18:3-4).

The more we advance in the spiritual life, the more we become conscious of our smallness, of our weakness, of our utter need for a mother. It's the exact opposite of what happens in the natural course of our lives in which the older we get the less we need our parents. In the spiritual life, the closer we get to the goal, the more we need our Mother. And the daily time of mental prayer is a privileged time to spend with Our Lady, becoming more and more conscious, at one and the same time, of our need for her and her love for us.

But how might we go about implementing this on the practical level? I suggest two routes. The first is contemplation of the Gospel scenes in which she plays a pivotal role, and which are essentially the mysteries of the Rosary, from the Annunciation to her glorification in Heaven. This imaginative contemplation on the mysteries of the Gospel is learned on retreat, but needs to be cultivated throughout the year, especially when the mysteries are presented to us in the liturgy of the Church. The second is by using the second and third "methods of prayer" given us by St Ignatius and using for that the Marian prayers that we know: the *Hail Mary*, the *Memorare*, the *Hail Holy Queen*, or Our Lady's own song of praise, the *Magnificat*, and others. For reminder, the second method of prayer "consists in contemplating the meaning of each word of a prayer... One may kneel or sit, as may be better suited to his disposition and more conducive to devotion. He should keep his eyes closed, or fixed in one position without permitting them to roam. Then let him say, "Father," and continue meditating upon this word as long as he finds various meanings, comparisons, relish, and consolation in the consideration of it" (Sp. Ex. 252), and so on with the rest of the "Our Father"... The third method of prayer "is a measured rhythmical recitation... With each breath or respiration, one should pray mentally while saying a single word of the *Our Father*, or other prayer that is being recited, in such a way that from one breath to another a single word is said. For this same space of time, the attention is chiefly directed to the meaning of the word, to the person who is addressed, to our own lowliness, or the difference between the greatness of the person and our own littleness" (Sp. Ex. 258).

Praying the Marian prayers in this way gives them an entirely new dimension; one thus comes to experience firsthand the maternal closeness of the Mother of God. Her role in our life becomes much more than that of the occasional prod in times of distress. She becomes the habitual companion, the sweet motherly eye that watches over our every need, the motherly touch that sweetens all things. Let's face it—in the spiritual life, we know not what is best for us, we are often oblivious to dangers and future needs, but She, the Mother, cares intensely for each of us, and is awaiting an invitation to get more involved in our lives. And believe me, the more She gets involved, the greater miracles you will see happening...

### **Upcoming retreats 2018**

The next retreats in Hartzler Park, Bowral, NSW will take place at the following dates:

Men: **22-27 January**

Women **29 January - 1 February**

Men: **16-21 August**

Women **23-26 August**

Fr John de Britto will be coming from Flavigny for these retreats. Please spread the word. We will soon have available flyers and posters for distribution. To register or to request flyers, send an email to

[retreats@notredamemonastery.org](mailto:retreats@notredamemonastery.org)

To her I entrust each one of you, all your struggles and efforts, and in particular, your prayer life, the all-important focal point of your progress. "To think of God with love", was Bl. Charles de Foucauld's definition of prayer. "To think of Mother MARY with love" is already to pray to her and invite her into your life.

Through Her I send you my blessing and prayers and ask yours for me and for all the brethren at Notre Dame Priory,

*Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.*

# Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

At long last we are now able to tell you more about the major event of this month, which will have lasting effects on Notre Dame Priory and on its friends. Thanks to the generous loan of a good friend and benefactor, 26 July, feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, was settlement day for the purchase of 64 acres of land in the small town of Rhyndaston, Tasmania, just 7 minutes north of Colebrook. This beautiful piece of land — referred to by the



community as “Margarita”, from the Latin word meaning “pearl” — was providentially brought to my attention. Even though it was not “on the market”, the owners, who had inherited it from a gentleman recently deceased, were wanting to sell it. They were delighted with the perspective of selling it to us. My first visit there was on Holy Saturday, 15 April, which, as Providence would have it — even though I did not realise this at the time — was exactly one year after my first visit to Colebrook and my first Mass at St Patrick’s Church. I returned there several times with the brethren and other friends to get their feedback, and a month later had made my decision. 515

Rhyndaston Road now belongs to Notre Dame Priory, and awaits its monks.

It will have to wait a bit more however, since the only building on the property is a very small house. Even though it will take some time for our plans to become firm, our intention is to get some low-cost (and probably transportable) housing set up, so that we can move out there within the next couple of months. This is very important, because our present location in Lindisfarne, with all its beauty, is not at all conducive to our monastic life. Once we are out there, the postulants will be able to commence a life that is more in line with traditional monasticism, having a bit of manual labour each day, in addition to their studies. The ultimate project is to build a complete monastery on the other side of the hill, from which a fantastic view shows Mount Wellington and other summits around Hobart. Work has already started with the local Council in terms of submitting a specific area plan for approval. I am also working with surveyors and architects to determine the best spot and the best way to go about building Tasmania’s first Benedictine monastery.



In many ways, this is very significant, as it means a giant step forward for us, especially at a time when we find ourselves in need of expanding and adding extra rooms for future postulants. At the same time, you can readily understand that the challenges ahead are enormous, both in terms of getting approval for our project, and then in financing it. It will take time, and much energy, and I hope I can count on your support to lead this endeavour.

On another topic, with this issue of our newsletter, you will have noticed that I have decided to integrate my monthly circular to retreatants (known as “Afire” and which is in its 9<sup>th</sup> year) into the Notre Dame Priory newsletter. There will also be a monthly update on retreats, even if in these early months there will not be too many things to say, as we are limited in the number of retreats we can give.

Please know that we think of you often and entrust your intentions to the Immaculate Virgin, especially as we approach the great feast of her glorious Assumption. May She bless you and yours always.

*Father Prior*

**To keep up** with Notre Dame Priory, visit our website at [www.notredamemonastery.org](http://www.notredamemonastery.org)  
To contact us, please send an email to: [info@notredamemonastery.org](mailto: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, 3 Bay Road (post box on Lowelly), Lindisfarne, Tasmania 7015, Australia

In US dollars, make payable to “Notre Dame Priory” and send to:  
Notre Dame Priory, % 1202 Park Hills Court, Louisville, KY, 40207, USA.