

Ab Austro

Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

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- † Community Outing
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Priory update

Excitement has been in the air of late at Jerusalem Estate: on 23 August, we had a new arrival in the “person” of Kolbe, our new Fujifilm printer, now comfortably installed in the brand new printery building we had been working hard on for several weeks. While the workshop is placed under the patronage of St Gregory the Great, the printer is dedicated to St Maximilian Kolbe to commemorate his monumental printing apostolate. St Maximilian considered himself to be a “missionary of the pen.” He used to say: “We desire to speak to every soul on earth, in every language, to make known all the graces that the Immaculata gives to souls, in order to urge these souls on to an ever greater faithfulness and more intense love.”

On the day of Kolbe’s arrival, Brothers Bede and Gregory spent several hours with the technicians learning the complexities of this amazing tool which, in short order, should increase our capacity to print all manner of materials for the spread of the faith and true devotion. Holy images, greetings cards, calendars, the newsletter and many other publications will, we pray, be Kolbe’s daily labour. Even though the generous benefactors who helped us get together the money we needed in record time for the purchase have been thanked, we take this opportunity to express once again our deep gratitude and our hope that their confidence will be rewarded by our assiduous Benedictine labour for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The month of August also saw two more winter retreats. Don Bosco Retreat Centre in Lysterfield welcomed 16 men from 5 to 9 August. We were happy to meet the new manager, Fr Shane Reade, SDB, who was very helpful in facilitating our retreat. We will return there in November for a women’s retreat. On the Jerusalem Estate front, 8 men were on retreat from 22 to 27 August. This one was a bit of an adventure, as copious rains made the walk from Bethany to the monastery an exercise in patience. Fortunately we had enough gumboots to give to all the retreatants!



The positive side, we can hope, is that Fr Prior is now resolved to get the duckboard installed – no more mud in the chapel! It might also be useful to inform retreatants that when they come to the Priory for the Spiritual Exercises, they would do well to prepare for some physical exercise as well!



Finally on the last day of the month, the community went on an outing with Fr Bachmann. Even though from Vancouver, he hadn’t seen the ocean in a long while, so we treated him (and ourselves!) to some of the breathtaking views of the Tasman Peninsula.

Brother Chronicker

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





In the school of St Benedict

(Chapter Three, Of Calling the Brethren to Council)

As often as any important business has to be done in the monastery, let the abbot call together the whole community and himself set forth the matter. And, having heard the advice of the brethren, let him take counsel with himself and then do what he shall judge to be most expedient. Now the reason why we have said that all should be called to council, is that God often reveals what is better to the younger. Let the brethren give their advice with all deference and humility, and let them not venture to defend their opinions obstinately; but let the decision depend rather on the abbot's judgement, so that when he has decided what is the better course, all may obey. However, just as it is proper for disciples to obey their master, so it is becoming that he on his part should dispose all things with prudence and justice.

In all things, therefore, let all follow the Rule as master, nor let anyone rashly depart from it. Let no one in the monastery follow the will of his own heart; nor let anyone presume to contend with his abbot in an insolent fashion or outside the monastery. Should he presume to do so, let him undergo the discipline of the Rule. The abbot himself, however, should do all things in the fear of God and observance of the Rule, knowing that he will certainly have to render an account of all his judgements to God, the most just Judge. But if the business to be done in the interests of the monastery be of lesser importance, let him use the advice of the seniors only. It is written: "Do all things with counsel, and thou shalt not afterwards repent it" (Ecclesiasticus 32:24).

After squarely founding the monastic life and its observance on the abbot and having reminded him with great severity of the obligations incumbent upon him in this office, St Benedict gives us a remarkable



chapter concerning the abbot's duty to take counsel and that of all community members to share the advice they are inspired to give.

**It is a community
of men of God who
seek His will and
who first question
Him in the silence of
their heart before
sharing outwardly**

The principle points of this chapter are: 1) the abbot must not decide important matters without taking counsel, for no one, however wise or perfect or experienced he may be, can have all the answers and always be right; 2) all the members of the community are to be consulted, for even though wisdom is usually found in the elders, God can inspire a young monk with His will in a given situation, as He has done in Sacred Scripture. In chapter 63, St Benedict will mention the specific occasions of Samuel and Daniel who, both very young, sat in judgment over unworthy elders; 3) all the monks should give their counsel in a spirit of humility, and not contend with anyone, neither with other monks nor with the abbot, for the monastic chapter has nothing in common with a parliament in which various factions struggle to impose their point of view. No, it is a community of men of God who seek His will and who first question Him in the silence of their heart before sharing outwardly and humbly any inspiration they may have received; 4) when the abbot has heard everyone, he must spend some time in prayer, and finally hand down a decision which all should then embrace as the will of God here and now.

Even though, over the course of centuries, Church legislation has established some decisions that depend upon a majority vote of the community, in most matters the simple procedure described above, which unites the advantages of what we could call democratic consultation with reverence for the divinely established patriarchy founded on the abbot who sits in God's place, has been a vital instrument for the stability and growth of monastic communities for 1500 years.

We happily receive the details of anyone who might be interested in receiving our newsletter
via newsletter@notredamemonastery.org

Br Paphnutius discovers the liturgy

As the day reaches its end, the monks gather in the chapter room following supper for a brief time of recreation. Fr Prior shares any news items and the brothers have the opportunity to tell about anything that happened during the day. Prayer intentions are also a common part of the evening chapter, as are *culpa*e, that is to say, asking a penance for having broken or lost something or disrupted in any way the life of the community. The session concludes with a few minutes of reading from a spiritual author, after which the community processes to the church for the final office of the day, Compline.

Those who have experienced Compline in the traditional Roman or Dominican rite are sometimes disappointed when they attend the office in a Benedictine monastery. The office strikes by its simplicity and its brevity. After the examination of conscience and *confiteor*, there are three psalms, the same ones every day of the year: Psalms 4, 90 and 133. The reasons for this choice are obvious. Psalm 4 is a prayer of deep trust in the Lord as we retire for the night. Psalm 90, which is also the great Lenten psalm, portrays the victory of the just soul over the demon, quite appropriate to ward off his nocturnal attacks. Psalm 133 reminds us that even though we have to sleep, our heart should keep watch and give praise to God even during the night. The “lifting up of hands in the night”, which this psalm exhorts us to do, will be fulfilled when the monks rise for the office of Matins.

The blessing given at the beginning of the office contains one of those remarkably concise and beautiful prayers, so common in the Roman Liturgy: *May the Almighty Lord grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end*, words which obviously remind us, as we go to our repose, that one day we will forever fall asleep to this mortal life. On that day, may our end be perfect before the Lord.

The only variable feature of this office is the concluding antiphon to Our Lady (*Alma Redemptoris, Ave Regina Caelorum, Regina Coeli, Salve Regina*), melo-

dious chants, rightly venerated among the Catholic people, which in most places have survived the demise of Gregorian chant. As we acknowledge the limitations of our frail bodies and retire for the night, how sweet it is to sing to Mother Mary and place ourselves under her immaculate mantle.



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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 third kind of humility is the most perfect. It consists in this. If we suppose the first and second kind attained, then whenever the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty would be equally served, in order to imitate and be in reality more like Christ our Lord, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches; insults with Christ loaded with them, rather than honours; I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world. So Christ was treated before me” (Sp. Ex. # 167).

There is only one way really to understand this third kind of humility, which can cause a bit of fright to certain temperaments, but once it has been understood, the fright becomes manageable. It is this: once you have come to know Our Lord, and by “know” we mean intimately, from the inside – who He is and what He has done for us – it is not too hard to figure out that no choices we could make can compare with the perfection of His. Now it is an indisputable fact that Our Lord chose poverty and humiliations. Neither the destitution of Bethlehem nor the hard daily labour in Nazareth nor the utter disgrace of Calvary happened by accident. No, He chose them all for Himself because He knew they were the means not only of achieving our salvation, but also of giving us the most powerful incentive to trample our vices under foot and embrace the practice of all the virtues.

There is, however, another reason for which we can aspire to this third degree. It is love. When we come to love Our Blessed Lord ardently, we find ourselves longing to be conformed to the image of His passion. Many of the saints experienced such out of this world desires that they were able to find not only peace but even joy in their sufferings, knowing that if such were the path chosen by Our Saviour, they must be the best possible path to take. Of course, and this is precisely the point St Ignatius is making by placing this consideration at the summit of the virtue of humility, one must set aside one’s own judgment and embrace totally that of Jesus. If only we can learn to do that, then the cross becomes not only bearable but desirable.

St John Henry Newman tried to express this in his own way in the following prayer, that we can make with him: *O my God, I will put myself without reserve into Thy hands. Wealth or woe, joy or sorrow, friends or bereavement, honour or humiliation, good report or ill report, comfort or discomfort, Thy presence or the hiding of*

Thy countenance, all is good if it comes from Thee. Thou art wisdom and Thou art love – what can I desire more? Thou hast led me in Thy counsel, and with glory hast Thou received me. What have I in heaven, and apart from Thee, what want I upon earth? My flesh and my heart faint, but God is the God of my heart, and my portion for ever.

