

Ab AUSTRo

Newsletter of
Notre Dame Priory

Oct./Dec. 2023 No. 69

This issue:

- † Our Lady's Vineyard
- † Of Truthfulness
- † The Omnipresence of God
- † Discernment of Spirits 2.1

Priory update

As the summer sun shines on the southern hemisphere, we are pleased to announce that, after just one year of delay, Cana Vineyard has finally been planted! We had two good excuses for the delay. The first is that abundant and frequent rains made it nearly impossible sooner. The second is that there happen to be a lot of Tasmanians who are getting into the business of winemaking, and so the professionals are up to their ears in meeting all the demands of installation. All happens in good time, however, and we are most grateful for this new step in our history. Now we all look forward to the day when it will no longer be true to say: *They have no wine!*

Visitors to the Priory have also noticed the addition of wooden enclosure walls and gates around the conventual church. These are of course a canonical requirement designed to preserve the monastic enclosure and space, ensuring that we can go about our life of prayer and work in peace without undue distractions.

A number of young men have spent some time with us recently, praying, discerning, and of course helping out with the many tasks around, both indoors and out. Please keep them in your prayers, especially those who may be called to the religious life or the priesthood.

Two retreats have taken place since our last newsletter. A group of 26 men (our largest ever in Victo-

ria) followed the Exercises at Don Bosco, Lysterfield in November. Another group of 16 women did the same at St Clement's, Galong in December.



Fr Louis Marie Leconte, monk of Flavigny, spent six weeks with the community from the end of September to early November. He assures us that he thoroughly enjoyed himself. During his time with us, he gave us a couple of talks, sharing his research on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in preparation for his licentiate in Sacred Theology with the Dominicans of Toulouse, France. We wish him much success as he prepares to defend his thesis. We did not let him go however without treating him to some of the breath-taking scenery of the Tasman Peninsula.

Fr Louis' presence allowed Fr Prior to make a trip to Italy where he visited some of the communities known to us, and of course spent a bit of time at a number of the great pilgrimage sights, including all three of the major scenes in the life of our holy Father St Benedict: Norcia, Subiaco and Monte Cassino. He had been to the first two on other occasions, but Monte Cassino was a first. He was blessed to be able to offer Holy Mass at the tomb of our holy patriarch, praying in that unique place for all our friends and benefactors.



Brother Chronicler

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





In the school of St Benedict

Chapter Four on the Tools of Good Works, continued

In our reading of chapter four of the Holy Rule on the Tools of Good Works, we have come to two tools that refer to speech. St Benedict says: *Not to swear, lest perchance one forswear oneself. To utter the truth from heart and mouth.*

Truth is the object of the intellect; it is also the object of speech. The tongue was meant to relay to others what is perceived as being true. This is why lying is wrong even if, as is the case with what are called “white lies”, speaking a falsehood does not seem to harm anyone. Falsehood is always wrong, because it is contrary to truth, for which the human intellect is made. This is not to say that every truth is good to say to everyone. No, there are some truths that it would be wrong to manifest in certain situations and to certain persons. If your neighbour comes to you in a rage, and asks for your shotgun so he can shoot his wife, you mustn’t tell him where it is!

But for the tongue to utter the truth from heart and mouth supposes that we have the truth first in our

heart, and that implies that we love and seek and cherish the truth, even when we would rather not know it, or when declaring it might entail some suffering for us.

The truth shall make you free (Jn 8:32)

St Benedict also reminds us not to swear. He is of course referring to these words of the Sermon on the Mount: *I say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God: nor by the earth, for it is His footstool: nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil* (Mt 5:34-37).

Our Blessed Lord here condemns the use of swearing for futile reasons. It is not appropriate to say “I swear” as a form of interjection. To swear is to bind oneself to the truth of what one says. It is to take an oath. Admittedly, there are some situations in human life in which oaths are required. Doctors take oaths because we need to be able to entrust our lives into their hands without fear. Political leaders take oaths when assuming office, because we need to be able to trust that they will not betray us. Witnesses take an oath in court because we need to be able to trust their words in judging an accused person. There is also a particular kind of oath called a vow, by which we publicly declare that we will fulfil the duties of our state in life. Spouses enter into marriage by swearing an oath to each other before God’s altar. So do pastors of souls when they take charge over their parish or diocese. We need to be able to trust them, and knowing the waywardness of human nature, people sometimes fail in their charge. The oath reassures us.

But outside of such cases, the language of the Christian should simply be “yes, yes or no, no”, and a Christian’s word should be true at all times. It should not even occur to us to lie to our own advantage, for that would be a form of enslavement to error and therefore to Satan, the father of lies. *You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free* (Jn 8:32).



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

Br Paphnutius Tours the Summa

Father Germanus opens today's lesson on the omnipresence of God:

“In our last class, my dear Brothers, we considered the goodness of God and how, in spite of much evil around us, we are certain that everything God does is good. Today, we are going to consider how that good God does not just create things and then go off and leave them. He is actually *in* the things He has created.”

“But, Father,” interjects Br Paphnutius, “how can God be in all things, since some things are pretty bad? Do you mean to say He is even in such vile creatures as spiders and snakes, in crooks and charlatans? How does that work?”

“Well, let's first look at what St Thomas tells us about God's presence in things. God is in all things, he says, as an agent is present to that upon which it works, in the same way that light is caused in the air by the sun as long as the air remains illuminated. As long as a thing has being, God must be present to it, according to its mode of being; otherwise it would cease to exist.

“Pope St Gregory the Great was the first to state that God is in all things in three specific ways: through His power, His presence and His essence.

“To understand this properly, we can consider that a king is said to be present in his entire kingdom by his *power*, although he is not physically present everywhere. He might be sitting in his palace, but by means of the laws of the realm and those who are instituted by him to rule in the various localities, he may be said to be everywhere by his royal power. Again, a being is said to be in other things by its *presence* in the way that things in a house are said to be present to someone in the house, even though they are obviously not in every part of the house at the same time. Lastly, a thing is said to be by way of *essence* in that place in which its substance actually finds itself at that moment.

“Therefore, God is in all things by His power, inasmuch as all things are subject to His omnipotence; He is by His presence in all things, as all things are bare and open to His eyes; He is in all things by His essence, inasmuch as He is present to all as the cause of their

being. And so you see now, my dear Brother Paphnutius, that God has to be in spiders and snakes, for if He were not, they would not even exist.”

“It might be better if they didn't,” retorts the budding theologian.

“Maybe we'd better let God be the judge of that. There are many things in the universe that we may not particularly like, but that nevertheless play an important role in the balance of the whole.

“As for the crooks and charlatans you mentioned, they obviously have made themselves evil. The really sad thing is that any rational creature that becomes a sinner and harms others, be they man or angel, is actually using the very gifts received from God. That is what we call the misuse or abuse of God's gifts.

“The fact remains that if God were not present in them, they would not exist and could not operate at all. What we really need to do – and that is part of our job as monks – is to pray for their conversion, that one day they will realise how much they have offended the Good Lord, and return to Him.”



NOTRE DAME PRIORY IS A PUBLIC ASSOCIATION OF THE FAITHFUL FOUNDED IN 2017 IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HOBART. YOUR DONATIONS GO TOWARDS HELPING THE COMMUNITY GET ESTABLISHED AS AN AUTONOMOUS BENEDICTINE MONASTERY

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.notredamemonastery.org

CONTACT US - info@notredamemonastery.org

POSTAL ADDRESS
Notre Dame Priory
PO Box 85
Colebrook TAS 7027
Australia

MAKE A DONATION
Account name: Notre Dame Priory
BSB: 067-004 - Account number: 1004 1427
Cheques payable to “Notre Dame Priory”

USD - via cheque, made payable to
“Notre Dame Priory, Inc.” and sent to:
Notre Dame Priory c/o 468 Locust Grove Road
Shelbyville, Ky. 40065 USA
Credit card - notredamemonastery.org/helpus



JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

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

Lk 12:49

In the case of those who go on earnestly striving to cleanse their souls from sin and who seek to rise in the service of God our Lord to greater perfection....it is characteristic of the good spirit to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This He does by making all easy, by removing all obstacles so that the soul goes forward in doing good (Sp. Ex. 315.2).

Just as we saw in the preceding part of this first rule that Satan favours those who live in the state of mortal sin, so now we are told that the good angels favour those who are in God's grace. The soul that is moving forward in the spiritual life, that is to say, who really is serious about God and wants to become more perfect in the practice of virtue, is on God's side, and therefore the good angels are going to do everything to encourage them in their pursuit of sanctity. St Ignatius identifies a number of ways in which they do this. They give "courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace." *Consolation* and *tears* will both be evoked in one of the upcoming rules, so we can leave them aside for the moment.

Courage and *strength* are clearly needed in any effort that is faced with obstacles. The cardinal virtue of fortitude comes to mind here, with its two principle acts which are to endure trials and temptations without giving in to revolt or to sin, and the positive undertaking of all that could lead to victory. Of all the cardinal virtues, fortitude is perhaps the one that is least spoken of in our day, and that comes as no surprise, since strength of character seems to be a rare commodity. A person who has fortitude bears up under all the challenges that it faces in the spiritual life. He stands firm in the face of temptations, even when these are repeated and last for long periods. A soul that gives in too quickly to temptation without a battle is lacking in fortitude. Furthermore,

fortitude not only helps resist temptation, but also makes it possible for the soul to accomplish those good works that it knows it should achieve for God's glory and the salvation of souls. Of this, almost all the saints give us abundant examples.

It is said that when St Lucy's judge decided to have her taken to a place where she would lose her virginity, she became immovable as a pillar, symbolising the fortitude of soul by which the saints refuse temptations at whatever cost. That is an example of the courageous endurance of trials. St Joan of Arc on the other hand was gifted with courage in battle which is ordinarily not given to young women. With it she marched at the head of mighty armies and won inexplicable victories, that to this day make us wonder. In both these cases, we see the good spirit at work in inspiring these saints and leading them to victory.

The *inspirations* St Ignatius mentions include the light to discern the path forward that leads to holiness and to God; often we need to make important decisions that will affect our spiritual lives. In such times, divine inspirations are crucial, and the good angel is ready to give them to generous souls.

Peace is defined as the tranquillity of order. The soul that is in God's grace is already in the order willed by God, and promptly obeys the good angel. Peace is also one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It reigns in a soul that is docile to God, and becomes in turn a peacemaker for others.

Such is the treatment of such souls by the good spirit. Next time we will look at how the enemy deals with them and how he seeks to oppose their efforts at becoming saints.

