

Ab AUSTRo

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Notre Dame Priory

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This issue:

- † Travels and Retreats
- † The Tools of Fraternal Charity
- † The Good God
- † Discernment of Spirits 2.1

Priory update

During the second half of June the community was blessed with the presence of Fr Brian Harrison, O.S., well-known Australian theologian who, after spending most of his teaching career overseas, is now retired and back in his homeland. While among us, he gave us several wonderful talks on important topics for the Church in our day. He was replaced in the first half of July by Fr John Walshe who was with us for the second time this year. He too gave the community some excellent talks. Both priests were here to provide Holy Mass for the community while Fr Prior was away.

A twofold mission required Father to be away for several weeks. First of all, he gave two retreats in Maria Stein, Ohio, USA, the first to a group of 23 men, the second to a group of 27 women. This was the second time retreats were held at this location. We were delighted to see that our American retreatants and readers are on the increase.

While in America, Fr Prior was able to commence the second important phase of his travels, which was to visit monasteries whom we have come to know over the years and with whom we have important fraternal ties. There is a saying: "Far from sight, far from mind." That is why it is important to see each other now and then, to revive contacts and foster mutual support, especially when you live in Tasmania. The first community he visited was Clear Creek Abbey in Oklahoma, where he was able to admire the progress of construction and the growth of the community which will be celebrating next year its 25th anniversary.



Pluscarden Abbey



The community with Fr Harrison

sary of foundation. Fr Mark Bachmann, a monk of Clear Creek, has since returned to Colebrook to once again spend a couple of months with us.

After his American tour, Fr Prior flew to Europe where he visited his own monastery of profession in Flavigny-sur-Ozerain, as well as its recent foundation in Solignac. It was the first time he was able to confer in person with the new abbot, Dom Jean-Bernard, who is actually one of Fr Prior's classmates. From there he visited Silverstream Priory in Ireland, whose prior is a monk of Flavigny, Dom Basil, and then concluded his monastic tour by visiting Pluscarden Abbey in Scotland and Farnborough Abbey in England. In a world that has little esteem for the monastic life, we are grateful these fraternal bonds exist and have been strengthened.

Back here in Tasmania, on 17 June, a few of the brothers joined the Launceston Carmelites for a solemn Mass celebrated by Archbishop Porteous on the 75th anniversary of their foundation. Less than a month later, the whole community returned to Carmel for a First Solemn Mass celebrated by recently ordained Fr Nathan Pospischil, FSSP, who, the following day, also offered a first Mass for the community in Colebrook.

Brother Chronicler

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





In the school of St Benedict

Chapter Four on the Tools of Good Works, continued

Several tools for good works deal with problems surrounding fraternal charity which is always put to the test in any kind of human community, starting with the most fundamental of all, the family. St Benedict enumerates: *Not to yield to anger. Not to nurse a grudge. Not to hold guile in one's heart. Not to make a feigned peace. Not to forsake charity.*

As is often the case, recourse to the original Latin will help us understand better what lies under the letter of the text. Not to yield to anger in the Latin reads: *Iram non perficere*, which means not to give free course, not to give full vent to movements of anger. *Perficere* has given the English word perfect, and so what the saint is telling us is not to never get angry. Anger is a passion and passions of themselves are neither good nor bad. Furthermore, our bodies do not have the option of feeling the bite of the passions at certain times. If someone steps on your toe, there is an automatic sense of anger that rises, and that can easily lead to a harsh word, or at least a cry. This is not what St Benedict is talking about when he says not to allow anger to reach its perfection. He means that, when confronted with the movement that precedes reason, we need to keep it in check. A comparison would be the way a man trains his dog. Certain dogs are always ready to bark and jump at strangers, and even bite them. The master, as soon as he sees someone coming, must command the dog, or sometimes hold its leash, to make sure it does not bite the stranger. This is what our holy patriarch is getting at, and it is a valuable insight for our spiritual battle.

Some people are dismayed as soon as they feel some repulsion for someone or an angry thought about them, and if they do not have proper spiritual guidance, they might imagine that they are committing some awful sin. In reality, the thought, like the reac-

tion in our flesh when we are confronted with something we reprove or dislike, has no moral value at all. It's only once our will becomes involved that we can be guilty of sin or make acts of virtue. Let's keep that in mind and not yield to those solicitations that would take us off course, causing us to lose the spiritual benefits we may have put much effort into acquiring.

We cannot always feel love for all, but what we must never do is give up.

The same goes for the instruments *Not to nurse a grudge, Not to hold guile in one's heart*. It is not within the power of our fallen nature to never feel hurt and resentment, nor can we entirely avoid duplicitous thoughts, for one of the wounds inflicted on us by original sin is that of wanting to appear virtuous when we are not, and this can easily translate into guile, which is to pretend that we like someone while at the same time wishing them ill. Here too, we must hold firm to St Benedict's advice. Do not nurse a grudge, that is to say, do not set aside a time for taking revenge. Do not pretend to be nice while wishing evil on someone. Do not say "Peace" to someone while in our heart waging war and biding our time to show them up.



Refectory at Silverstream

In all things, we must never abandon charity. We cannot always feel love for all, but what we must never do is give up and abandon our efforts at having and showing authentic love. If we do, then all hope is lost, but if we don't, then anything is possible. We must not write anyone off ever, for God did not write us off when we were His enemies.



The Sanctuary at Solignac

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Br Paphnutius Tours the Summa

Father Germanus commences today's class:

“The French have this lovely way of referring to God. They call Him ‘*le Bon Dieu* - the good God’. It’s almost as if goodness and godliness were synonyms. God, by nature, is good, whereas we only partake in some small way in His goodness. God’s goodness is made manifest to us in the universe which He has made and which is good, and He continues to pour out goodness upon all creatures at every moment through the multiple signs of His presence.”

“But, Father,” interjects Br Paphnutius, “if God is good, why is there so much evil in the world, so many bad people and so many bad things happening?”

“That, my dear Brother, is a question that cannot be answered in a few words. Nevertheless, let me give you a few thoughts to set you out on the path of the right answer.

“1. Try for a few moments to block out of your mind all the bad things you have seen or heard of. Look only at the beautiful world we live in. Think of the countless marvels that creation provides us with. Recall the pure, lucid gaze of a small child, the warm, loving affection of a mother, the satisfaction we feel when we are able to enjoy a good meal after a long day at work, the refreshment we feel after a night’s sleep, the solace of a real friend in a time of trial. Think of all the good people you know and to whom you owe so much. If you give it a go, you will find yourself immersed in a meditation that could take a very long time, for the list of good and beautiful things in the world, in our individual lives, goes on and on, if only we are able to consider them objectively. Creation is good, and that points to a good Creator, a good God, *le Bon Dieu*.”

“2. Now consider briefly the bad things that have happened to you, or that you might have heard about in the latest news. Acknowledge the fact that, however awful it may be, it does not cancel out the good that

you just contemplated. The fact that natural disasters happen does not cancel out the objective order and beauty of the universe. The fact that some people are vicious does not cancel out the fact that there are so many good people around. The fact that there are innocent children who die or are exploited, does not cancel out the marvel of childhood itself. The fact that some of the planet’s resources are misused does not cancel out the fact that there is an abundance of them, much more than we actually need.

“3. Now, put those two things together, and read these words of St Augustine: ‘Almighty God, because He is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in His works if He were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself.’ If God allows evil to exist, it does not mean that He is not good, but that He wants to draw good out of that evil. How can that be, you might ask? Well, let’s return to some of the examples given above. If He allows people to suffer, it may be because He wants to give other people the opportunity to show greater love for their neighbour by coming to their aid, whereas if it did not happen, we might all run the risk of living sad, egotistic lives. Do you think Mother Teresa would have had that amazing smile on her face if she had not found poor people to serve in the slums? Maybe she would have, but those poor people brought out in her a love that would never have had a field of action had it not been for them. And ultimately, there is no greater proof of this truth than that the greatest evil in human history, which is the cruel death of the Son of God, has become the source of all goodness and holiness. God draws good out of evil. He is, most emphatically, a good God, *le Bon Dieu*!

“Brother Paphnutius, never forget it: God is good, He is goodness itself, and anyone who comes to know and love Him becomes good like He is good.”

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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

This month we come to the second of St Ignatius' rules for discernment. In the previous rule we had a look at souls who are living in sin; here, we consider souls 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" (S.E. # 315). For such souls, the method pursued by the spirits is the opposite of that mentioned in the first rule. Now that the person is going in an opposite direction, the good and the bad angels are going to have different perspectives on the situation. Whether you are friend or foe is going to determine the treatment you get. Ignatius writes: "Then it is characteristic of the evil spirit to harass with anxiety, to afflict with sadness, to raise obstacles backed by fallacious reasonings that disturb the soul. Thus he seeks to prevent the soul from advancing."

It is hard to overestimate the importance of this rule, for it is a common experience of those who truly seek to serve the Lord and advance in loving Him. The enemy leaves no stone unturned to prevent our advancing in such a life of dedication. One of his favourite tactics is to raise all sorts of obstacles. In this, the enemy shows little inventiveness. As one exorcist puts it, devils are boring, they are always saying and doing the same old things and resorting to the same old tricks. St Ignatius enumerates anxieties, sadness, fallacious reasonings. The enemy's goal is to keep the soul from advancing.

Sadness is a common experience which has numerous causes, some natural, some not. It is natural to feel sadness at the death of a loved one. We do not need the devil to make us sad in such circumstances. Even so, St Ignatius uses the expression "afflict with sadness", meaning that even if our sadness might have a natural cause, the enemy is quite capable of using it to keep us

from advancing spiritually. For example, he will continually bring to our mind the cause of sadness, especially when it is time for prayer, making us believe that things will always be this way and there is no way out. His first goal is to prevent prayer, because if he can prevent prayer, he is cutting off our supply of spiritual fuel.

The same goes for anxiety. The enemy "harasses with anxiety", meaning that he gives us no rest, no peace of mind. He knows only too well that a soul in peace is fertile ground for the seed of God's word to penetrate and bear fruit. By continually bringing to our minds the causes of our anxiety, he knows that he can prevent any serious effort at prayer, and when he prevents prayer, he has won a great victory.

Fallacious reasonings are thought processes that have an appearance of being solid and true, but at closer inspection, we can discover a fallacy. The devil, who is the father of lies (cf. Jn 8:44), excels in this art of fooling us, of making it appear that things are different from what they are in reality. In this way, a complete scenario can be built upon a fallacy that might keep us preoccupied for great lengths of time, during which we are not free to turn to the Lord in prayer.

In the following rules, we will go into how we are to react against these thoughts, but for now it is enough to keep in mind that we should not be surprised that such thoughts of sadness, anxiety and complicated reasonings occur to us when we are about to pray. The disturbance is a clear sign that we should pay no attention to them, or at least leave them aside for the time of our prayer. If we are able to do that, we are the ones who will be scoring points in the ongoing battle for the possession of our soul.



Women's Retreat Ohio



Men's Retreat Ohio

