

# Ab AUSTRo

Newsletter of  
Notre Dame Priory

March/April 2023 No. 65

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## *Priory update*

In this joy of Eastertide, we would first of all like to extend our fraternal greetings and assurance of prayers in the Heart of our Risen Saviour. May He truly fill you with every blessing and grace of which you and your loved ones stand in need.

On the newsy side of things, we are thankful to Divine Providence for having allowed us to hold a retreat for men at the beginning of Lent here at Jerusalem Estate. Bethany Guest House was full for the event.



During that same week, Brothers Bede and Isaac represented the community at Sister Mary Teresa's funeral at the Carmel of Launceston. We were blessed to have met this much loved nun who served the Lord for over sixty years in religious life. May she rest in peace and may we imitate her fidelity.



Work continues to progress around the property. The project of planting a vineyard continues to take shape. Originally planned for last spring, it was delayed due to bad weather. This turned out to be a blessing, as it has allowed us to move forward at a more reasonable pace with the installation of the infra-structure required. The actual plantation is now being planned for the heart of winter, in July and August. Approximately 4,000 vines are being put in on the 1.25 hectares vineyard, so volunteer workers are welcome (as are donations to meet all the expenses)!

We were once again blessed with beautiful Holy Week ceremonies. You may recall that last year the altar of repose was in the shed that has since become an office area. This year, the barn that we call the "future chapter house" was prepared to be a humble but decent room for Our Lord's repose and the all night adoration. We hope that by next year the future chapter house will be simply a chapter house with an altar, which will make it much easier to install the altar of repose there each year.

During Easter week the community was able to go for a gorgeous outing to Ben Lomond National Park, admiring God's awesome creation and sharing some good fraternal time together.

**Brother Chronicler**

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





## In the school of St Benedict

### *Chapter Four on the Tools of Good Works, continued*

It is good to be reminded, after our Lenten mortification, that when it comes to fraternal charity and looking after those in need, there are no seasons. Every time of year we need to be on the lookout for good works to practice. This may be one reason for which, after presenting the tools that concern personal self-denial, St Benedict is quick to mention those that turn to the profit of our neighbour, and that our tradition calls the works of mercy. He mentions: *To relieve the poor. To clothe the naked. To visit the sick. To bury the dead. To help the afflicted. To console the sorrowing.*

Then come two other tools which throw light on these works of mercy: *To avoid worldly conduct and to prefer nothing to the love of Christ.* The “world” we are to avoid is of course understood here as the world inasmuch as it is turned away from God and promotes autonomy with regard to Him. It is the world of which Lucifer is the prince (cf. Jn 12:31), the world for which Our Lord said He did not pray during the Last Supper (cf. Jn 17:9), the world which St John tells us lies under the power of the evil one (cf. 1 Jn 5:19). The Latin text reads: *Saeculi actibus se facere alienum*, that is to say, *to become a stranger to the ways of the world.* What does this mean?

St John tells us that in the world reigns the triple concupiscence of the flesh, the eyes and the pride of life (cf. 1 Jn 2:16), and it is clearly all of this that the monk renounces. But this is not reserved to monks; it concerns every Christian, for since the world ruled by concupiscence is an enemy of Christ, the person

who wants to be His disciple, must be on his guard to not be too worldly, not to think and not to act like the world for which all that matters is pleasure, power and success.

That clearly is not going to be possible without the next tool, *to prefer nothing to the love of Christ.* If Christ

## Prefer nothing to the love of Christ

is the heart of our heart, if He is truly the one who gives joy to our life, then it will not be difficult to distance ourselves from the ways of the world, and then it becomes almost second nature to seek to help others by means of the works of mercy.

Here we see that ultimately it is the love of Christ alone that can prevail over the worldliness we all have in us. The love of Christ alone can teach us how to keep our flesh in check and how to reach out to others in their needs. The love of Christ unites these two aspects of the Christian life which are self-discipline and efforts to give to others. If we truly hold nothing up in comparison with the love of our Saviour, then it will be natural to us to live a disciplined life, to take from our own leisure and pleasure and give to those in need.

Let it be noted that in general the tradition of Benedictine monasticism has been faithful to the teaching of St Benedict. The monks renounce many things they could have had if they had not entered the monastery. At the same time, they are always ready to help those who come to them in need, be that need a material or a spiritual one. In former times, monasteries were places where the needy knew they would find food, clothing and shelter: the corporal works of mercy. Today, this is still usually the case, but primarily monasteries are places of predilection for those who seek the spiritual works of mercy; they are an oasis of silence, a place to retreat from the world, to pray and find spiritual guidance and support.

Let us not omit to express our gratitude to the holy patriarch St Benedict for having taught his monks – and through them the world – this twofold aspect of charity, which is grounded in the absolute love the monk pledges to Christ Himself.



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## Br Paphnutius Tours the Summa

*Father Germanus is just about to open the weighty old tome on his desk when Br Paphnutius blurts out:*

“Father, It’s Eastertide. Can we do something fun today?”

The old man raises his eyes in thought: “Yes... yes. Wonderful idea, Brother, to give your tired brains a wee bit of a rest. Very well. What better topic than that of the Resurrection of Our Blessed Saviour? Now, the Resurrection: was it necessary, Brothers?”

“I don’t reckon, Father,” answered Br Paphnutius. “Jesus atoned for our sins by His death on the cross. If He had stayed dead, we would still be reconciled with God.”

“Well, I am afraid St Thomas disagrees with you. He actually counts five good reasons for which the Resurrection inaugurates all the good that comes to us.

The first is simply a matter of justice. Our sweet Saviour humbled Himself out of love for and obedience to His Father, going so far as to die in an ignominious way on the cross. It was therefore only right and just that He be raised by God to a glorious resurrection, for *whoever humbles himself shall be exalted* (Mt 23:12).

Secondly, it was to help our faith. Since Jesus rose from

the dead, we are confirmed in our faith in His divinity, which would have been harder if He had not risen. It is in this sense that St Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *If Christ be not risen again, vain then is our preaching, vain too is your faith* (1 Cor 15:14).

Thirdly, it gives us hope, for when we behold Christ risen again, He who is our Head, we are confirmed in the hope that we too shall rise, as was prophesied by Job: *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God* (Job 19:25-26).

The fourth reason is that it confirms us in our Christian life, which is a life of newness in grace as opposed to the old life of death in sin. As we look at Jesus risen from the dead, it moves us to live in a truly Christian way, as St Paul exhorts the Romans (6:4): *Just as Christ has risen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.*

Finally, the resurrection completes the work of our salvation: *He was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification* (Rm 4:25).”

“That’s inspiring, Fr Germanus. Now I see better why we are right to sing with such eagerness the joyful *Salve Festa Dies* on Easter Sunday.”



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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

We have seen that when the enemy finds someone living in sin, he has a rather easy job of keeping him there by proposing continual pleasures that lead away from God. Today we consider how the good spirit—God the Holy Spirit, the Guardian Angel, a saint protector, or even a good person interested in our spiritual welfare—deals with this sort of situation. Ignatius writes: “With such persons the good spirit uses a method which is the reverse of the above. Making use of the light of reason, he will rouse the sting of conscience and fill them with remorse” (S. E. # 314).

The good spirit is dealing here with a soul that has turned away from God, and keeps turning away every time there is some pleasure to be had, some satisfaction not to be missed. Since this soul is going in the wrong direction, and is not on the good spirit’s side, then the latter has no option but to oppose the way of living of his client. This means a clash. It means opposition. It means head-on collision. It means war.

This is a very important point, in an age in which many people turn to religion in order to find peace of soul, but without realising that if peace is to be true, it comes at a cost. The cost is first and foremost the willingness to listen to God’s word and be transformed by it, to be led out of the illusion of selfishness and into the reality of self-denial. Quite simply it means that to obtain peace of soul, one must be willing to wage war with oneself and with one’s passions, to acknowledge one’s sins and take steps to change one’s ways. True religion has never been about making people feel good about themselves. It has always been about leading them out of Egypt into

the Promised Land, but not without going through the privations of the desert.

The prototype of this approach was given to us by St Peter on the very day of Pentecost. When the people gathered in Jerusalem hear the sounds of the rushing wind and the apostles speaking in tongues, they are intrigued, they are captivated, they want to be part of it. So what does Peter do? He pierces their hearts by pointing out the grievous sin they have committed, particularly with regard to the crucifixion of Jesus. And then he adds these words: *Save yourselves from this perverse generation* (Acts 2:40).

These words of St Peter are the paradigm for all preaching in the Church; they are normative. The call to grace and to God’s service and to peace of soul is first of all a call to sorrow for sin and conversion of heart. Only then can we be saved from the perverse generation that is all around us. A common expression nowadays is that we must “meet people where they are”. There is truth in this, on the condition that we do not leave them there. Christ came down to earth to meet us right here where we are, but He does not leave us in our sin; He lifts us up and demands that we leave our sin behind.

So, when someone comes to the Church in search of peace, if they are sincere, then they will heed the voice of the guardian angel spurring them on to leave behind sinful ways. St Ignatius uses the expression “sting of conscience”, which indicates an incisive remonstrance, that causes some pain and disturbance. There is no other road to peace, and the good spirit that pricks our conscience is doing us the greatest possible service, because he loves us and does not want us to be lost.

