

Ab AUSTRALIA

Newsletter of Notre Dame Priory

Paschaltide 2026 No. 81

This issue:

- ✠ Visit with Archbishop Ireland
- ✠ News Catchup
- ✠ On Purity and Meekness

Priory update

We are back! Some technical issues having now been resolved, we hope to resume the regular production of the newsletter. Since the last one was at Christmas, there is a fair amount of news to catch up on, and so this month's segments with Br Paphnutius and the Spiritual Exercises will have to wait...

First, a bit of community news especially for those who have been seeing photos, and may be wondering about a new face and also the absence of well-known faces. Br Francisco left the community in April last year and is now with his family in Perth. He assured us that he was very grateful for his time with us, that he had learned so much, but that he felt God was calling him to turn that page. We wish him well. Of course, he has not been easy to replace, especially at the vineyard, but more of that later. Fr Bede has requested a long leave of absence. His skills and involvement with most of the community's administration has meant that others have had to take on those roles. Our prayers accompany him during this time.

The new face is that of Br Evagrius, who is a professed American monk of the abbey of Norcia in Italy. He has been with us since March 2025 as he discerns the possibility of transferring his stability to our community. He brings a ton of knowledge and expertise in several domains. At the moment, he is finishing up work on a translation of St Albert the Great's treatise on the Mass. He has also been appointed cook and is a member of the schola. He seems quite happy to be a beardless 'white' monk!

Br Isaac and Br John are both hard at work with studies and their many jobs around the place. Br Isaac is grounds keeper and is cultivating his artistic talents, making some lovely drawings and clay sculptures, while Br John looks after the guests, the bees and the laundry and also directs the schola.

The most momentous event of the last few months was without a doubt the recent visit of our new Archbishop



Anthony Ireland. His Grace came to spend some time with us on the feast of St George, 23 April, accompanied by his Vicar General, Fr Shammi Perera, the Vicar Forane in charge of Clergy, Fr Mike Delaney, and Fr John Joseph Martin, member of the Little Eucharistic Brothers in Cygnet. This first visit of Archbishop Ireland to our community was a great encouragement to us all. We were able to share some substantial time in conversation with him and the other priests, and show them around the various developments at Jerusalem Estate, in particular a general overview of the sheep farm and the vineyard, as well as orchard and vegetable garden, and a visit to Cana Press and Our Lady of Fatima Gift Shop. They all left with a small jar of home-produced honey, a sweet souvenir of a lovely day, for which event the weather contributed, as it was a delightful Indian Summer day here in Colebrook.

Speaking of the vineyard, the work for the last year has been supplied by Peak Viticulture. We have been happy with their work, especially since by the time you receive this we will have made our first harvest of grapes. The wine will be made by a local vineyard. The quantity will be small for this first harvest, but please God we will have some bottles available for the 10th anniversary (already!) of our foundation, next 22 February (save the date!). So stay tuned, and leave some empty space in your wine cellar!

continued on page 3





In the school of St Benedict

Chapter Four on the Instruments of Good Works, cont'd

St Benedict says little in the Rule about the virtue of chastity. Along with the brief instrument in chapter 4 that we consider today – *To love chastity* –, there is another reference in chapter 72, in which he says that the brethren should ‘practise fraternal charity with a chaste love’. Both these expressions: *love chastity*, and a *chaste love* are designed to bring home the fact that what passes for love in the world often has nothing to do with the word. If love is real, it knows how to respect, to wait, to abstain. If it is not real, it has little chance of being chaste. By means of the simple formulation – *love chastity* – St Benedict invites us not just to ‘be chaste’, that is to say, to avoid actions and thoughts contrary to the virtue of chastity, but to actually want to be, to love the practice of the virtue, and to cultivate everything that goes into making it possible to have and to grow in this essential virtue, which is vital for all, celibate and married alike.

There is actually one other mention of chastity in the Rule, in the chapter on the appointment of the abbot, in which he says that the abbot must be ‘chaste, sober and merciful’. It seems to be no accident that in this place he joins mercy to chastity. It may have been a reminiscence of a conference by St John Cassian in which the story was told of a young monk who was tormented by impure temptations. When he went to seek the advice and support of an older monk, the latter showed no compassion at all but rather upbraided him for having such evil thoughts. Thereupon, the younger monk gave in to despair and decided to leave the monastery. He thought to himself: if I cannot be chaste, I might as well go back to the world and find a wife.

Divine Providence so disposed things that he would meet upon the way Abbot Apollos. This experienced elder, without being told, sensed something was wrong. He questioned the young monk, and got him to admit what he had resolved to do. Abbot Apollos reassured him and told him that what he was going through was quite normal. He even admitted that he himself was daily tried by the same pricks of desire and lust. Such is the lot of those who dedicate their chastity to God, for the devil tries by every means to snatch away such a glorious prize. The conclusion he gave to the young monk was that he ought not to give way to despair, nor be surprised at the violence of the attacks of which he would get the better, not so much

by zealous efforts, as by the mercy and grace of the Lord. He begged him to put off just for one day his decision to leave the monastery, and implored him to return to his cell, which he did.

Abbot Apollos then went to the cell of the harsh older monk who had upbraided the junior. As he approached, he begged the Lord to allow the young man’s temptation to take hold of the older one, so that he may learn to condescend to the weaknesses of others and to sympathise with the frailties of youth. The old monk was thereupon tormented with such violent temptations of impurity that he could no longer restrain himself, but began to hurry off in the same direction in which the young man had gone. Abbot Apollos went to him, and having forced him to admit the impurity of his heart, said: ‘Return to your cell, and at last recognise the fact that till now you have been ignored or despised by the devil, and not counted in the number of those with whom he is daily roused to fight and struggle against their efforts and earnestness — you who could not — I will not say ward off, but not even postpone for one day, a single dart of his aimed at you after so many years spent in this profession of yours’.

Two tremendous lessons are here given us. The first is that being put to the test by the demon of impurity is the lot of all. Instead of giving up the effort, one should keep in mind that it is only because the devil hates chastity which is so powerful against him, that he tries so hard to take away our prize. The second lesson is that the best way to obtain the mercy of God that will help us be chaste is to show kindness and compassion to those who are beset by such temptations. The impure demon is a cruel demon. By being merciful and kind to others, we dispose ourselves to the grace of perfect chastity.



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

Priory Update (Cont'd)

The retreats continue to be well frequented. The annual mens' retreat at St Clement's, Galong NSW, from 19 to 24 January was attended by 25 men under glorious sunny skies. On the way back to Sydney after the retreat, we made a stop at the Canberra War Memorial, joining our prayers for all those who served in the various wars Australia has been involved in the last 150 years. A second men's retreat was held at the Priory during Lent.

Those who have stayed at our Bethany guest house will be pleased to know that at the beginning of the year some neighbours in Colebrook gifted us a couple of beautiful lounge chairs that have now found their place in the common lounge area, making for an even more comfortable accommodation. The same neighbours gave us a beautiful Persian rug that is now in the chapter room.

A few days after Christmas, the community went on an outing to Mount Field, a gorgeous mountainous area about 90 km northeast of Colebrook. It was a time for fraternity in a majestic setting. Another summer outing took place early February in the Tasman Penin-



sula, and included overnight camping, with Brothers Evagrius, Isaac and John attending. Fr Prior chickened out... uh no, Fr Prior actually had flown to Melbourne, then caught a train to Mathoura, the objective being to relieve Fr Terence Naughtin for a week in offering Mass for the sisters at the Carmel of Elijah. Speaking of which, we were disappointed that none of us was present at the ground-breaking ceremony that took place for the Carmel's future buildings on 10 January. We were all the more touched that the sisters set aside for us a couple bottles of the extraordinary wine that had been offered for the occasion. Fr Terence, for his part, very much enjoyed his week with us, and took full advantage of his Tasmanian holiday.

On 28 January, Br Evagrius received the exciting delivery of our new flour mill. He had been baking bread for a long time, but now he is actually grinding the wheat as well. It makes for some very healthy and tasty bread. No orders, please!

On 2 February, feast of the Purification of Our Lady, which is also the day dedicated to prayer for those called to the religious life, we joined other religious from around the archdiocese for an event at which Archbishop Ireland encouraged us all to be faithful to our commitments, taking our inspiration from the Holy Family. It was an opportunity to get to know better the various orders and congregations who live their lives in the service of souls across Tasmania.

Out on the farm, Br John reports that this year's honey crop was minimal. He thinks it's due to the drought. By the way, please pray for rain at Jerusalem Estate! Our farm manager, Courtney Richardson, is doing a marvellous job renewing pastures and fences. The farm has come a very long way since we purchased it in 2018. But there is one thing no farmer can do without, and that's water. Fr Prior has been adding the collect *ad petendam pluviam* almost every day, so we are confident that it will come in God's good time.

Brother Chronicler

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

