

# Ab Austro

Newsletter of  
Notre Dame Priory

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No. 74

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## *Priory update*

So much news to share this month! On Fr Prior's "onomastico" (name day), 3 September, feast of St Pius X, the community once again proved its theatrical talent by putting on yet another skit. Last year, it was the Three Little Pigs; this year it was Little Red Riding Hood, both narrated in Latin by Fr Bachmann and played by the whole community under the amused attention of Fr Prior.

For the nativity of Our Lady on 8 September, we gathered together after the office of Prime for the blessing of the renewed chapter house, and from thence we have our twice daily sessions, the first after Prime and the second in the evening before Compline.

Later that same week, responding to an invitation of Fr Fidelis, Fr Prior and Fr Bede joined some of the parishioners of the Richmond parish and shared



with them the story of our monastery and some of the details of our daily life.

From 14-19 October took place another retreat, this time the women's session in Galong, NSW, with 21 in attendance.

Fr Bede and Br Isaac represented the community at the annual Christ the King Pilgrimage which saw a record 750 pilgrims this year. Fr Bede is no stranger to the Pilgrimage, having often attended before he entered the monastery. For Br Isaac it was a new experience. On that same weekend, the community joined the Catholic Woman's League in early Sunday afternoon at St Patrick's Colebrook for Rosary and Benediction with Fr Ed Travers.

Finally, we are happy to announce that our community opened its doors to its first female member... our new pup, who fittingly received the name of "Dame". She is still learning the hard and difficult ways that lead to God, but in the school of St Benedict she is sure to arrive!



**Brother Chronicler**

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





## In the school of St Benedict

*To fear the Day of Judgement.*

*To dread Hell.*

*To desire eternal life with all spiritual longing.*

*To keep death daily before one's eyes.*

*To keep constant guard over the actions of one's life.*

*To know for certain that God sees one everywhere.*

We now come to a series of tools that deal with eternity and our preparation for it. The overarching principle is that God sees us at every moment, that at the end of our life we will be judged on all our thoughts, words and deeds while on earth, and that the good will be rewarded with eternal life and the wicked punished with eternal separation from God in Hell. That, in a nutshell, is the Catholic doctrine of eschatology (*eschaton* means the last, and so it refers to what tradition calls the four last things: death, judgment, Heaven and Hell).

The teaching is straightforward enough. Few people would not be aware that this is one of the most fundamental teachings, not only of Christianity, but of most religions: there are moral imperatives, and we must all give an account. If there were no reward for the good, God would be unjust, but the same goes if there were no punishment for the wicked. To suggest that those who do not keep the commandments will be rewarded just like those who do is to posit that God has no way of enforcing His Law, or that He was lying when He told us He would.

There are those who try to twist the words of Holy Scripture into a simple warning with no follow up, but there are several reasons for which this is not possible. First of all, when God speaks of eternal damnation,

He does not do so in the conditional tense, but in the future tense. At the end of the parable of the Last Judgment in Mt 25, the Lord says: These *will go* into eternal punishment, and the just into eternal life. He does not say: they *might go*, but they will go. Furthermore, as far back as St Augustine, it has been pointed

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out that if the punishment of the wicked is not really going to take place, then neither is the reward of the just. To abolish Hell is to abolish Heaven, which is exactly what the Marxists have been trying to do (with much success) for the last two centuries, moving the boundaries so that the only “sin” is the one that prevents the historical triumph of the proletariat, that is, the promotion of self under the guise of promoting the people, which of course is ultimately the sin of Lucifer, the first egoist who is constantly striving to infect us with the virus that ruined him for all eternity.

At the end of the day, salvation is obtained by those who, learning how to renounce themselves, embrace the true faith and practice love of God and neighbour, while damnation is the lot of those who live only for themselves, all the while pretending not to. Pretending might work to fool humans; it doesn't work with God.



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## Br Paphnutius Tours the Summa

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*Fr Germanus begins today's lesson in theology:*

“Today's subject takes us to what is certainly one of the most consoling truths of our faith: the providence of God. By this expression, we mean that there is nothing, absolutely nothing that has not been foreseen and willed, at least permissively, by the all good and almighty God. Since God is all loving, we can deduce from this teaching on providence that if something happens to us, it is ultimately for our good.”

Br Paphnutius interrupts : “But Father, how can you say that when there are so many awful things that happen in the world?”

“Awful things there certainly are, dear Brother,” replies the old monk. “That does not mean they are not for our good. When Joseph was sold into Egypt, it was a terrible injustice that was the cause of untold sufferings. But was it not for good in the end? If it had not happened, his own people would have starved to death in the famine that took place years later. It was the injustice of his being sold into slavery that put him in the position to save both Egypt and Israel. Holy Scripture actually says as much: ‘God sent me before, that you may be preserved upon the earth, and may have food to live. Not by your counsel was I sent hither, but by the will of God: who hath made me as it were a father to Pharaoh, and lord of his whole house, and governor in all the land of Egypt... Fear not: can we resist the will of God? You thought evil against me: but God turned it into good, that He might exalt me, as at present you see, and might save many people’ (Gn 45:7-8; 50:19-20.) Through the short-sighted plans of wicked and ill-intentioned men, it is in reality Divine Providence that achieves its own merciful designs over humanity”.

“This why the most definitive response to the question of evil was long ago formulated and summarised by St Augustine in this famous text: ‘For 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’ (*Enchiridion*, 11). It remains, however, that the human intellect finds itself engulfed in obscurity when it seeks to understand the reasons for which God allows certain things to happen. No created intellect can grasp the manner in which the freedom of man and the providence of God are harmonised. To quote an eminent Thomist of the last century: ‘It would be to see how infinite justice, infinite mercy and sovereign liberty are identical, without destroying each other, in the eminence of the Deity, in the intimate love of God, in the inaccessible light where God dwells (1 Tim 6:16), the light which is too strong for our weak eyes and which for us is dark’ (Garrigou-Lagrange).

“For those who remain skeptical, we can evoke the knockout argument with which St Thomas shows that, far from proving the non-existence of God, evil actually tends to establish it: ‘If evil exists, God exists. For, there would be no evil if the order of good were taken away, since its privation is evil. But this order would not exist if there were no God’ (*Summa contra Gentiles*, B. 3, ch. 71). This is another one of those simple truths that our apparently sophisticated world has lost sight of, but which remains rigorously unassailable: we would not even be able to detect evil, or give it a name, if there were no good, no absolute good, which is the measure of the goodness of all creatures.

“It was meditation on this truth that led St Charles de Foucauld to formulate this admirable prayer: *Father, I abandon myself into Your hands; Do with me what You will. Whatever You may do, I thank You: I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only Your will be done in me, and in all Your creatures – I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into Your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to You with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into Your hands, without reserve, and with boundless confidence, For You are my Father. Amen.*

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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

After having defined desolation in the preceding rule, St Ignatius now proceeds to teach us what to do when we are under its influence. The first and most important rule to keep in mind when under the dark sway of desolation is simply to stay put and not change our resolutions:

“In time of desolation we should never make any change, but remain firm and constant in the resolution and decision which guided us the day before the desolation, or in the decision to which we adhered in the preceding consolation. For just as in consolation the good spirit guides and counsels us, so in desolation the evil spirit guides and counsels. Following his counsels we can never find the way to a right decision” (Sp. Ex # 318).

The rule is unequivocal and readily grasped. It is similar to the reason for which mountain climbers set their barometer each day before starting their climb, or mariners follow their compass even though certain conditions might lead them to think it is wrong. No, if your preceding resolutions were taken in a spirit of prayer, especially during a retreat and with the help of a spiritual guide, they are guided by the good angel and they are good for you. If you feel inclined to change them because you find yourself in a hard spot, and don't see clear anymore, the absolute worst thing you can do is change at that time. It is simply not possible to make a good decision when under a dark cloud.

On the practical level what that means is, for example, that if you have made the resolution on retreat to spend 30 minutes each morning in mental prayer, you should not omit or shorten it because you are feeling spiritually dry or tempted or distracted or tired, etc.. That should never be done. At that moment you are not in a good space to make a proper choice.

This does not mean however that there is not something that needs to change. This is quite possible, because we change, as do our circumstances. For instance, you have resolved to do your mental prayer at a nearby adoration chapel. Something has intervened to change the situation and now it is not easy to meditate there. The decision to change this, however must not be made in a moment of desolation. One should wait to discern it carefully when the light has returned, when the soul is at peace. It may also be the case that getting some good advice first is important. In the meantime, carry on as before, and you won't run the risk of giving in to a diabolical effort to take you away from your prayer. You will have scored a momentous victory.

