

**FR ABBOT'S LETTER**

Dear Friends,

On another page appears an obituary of Br John Ogilvie. He died on Monday 27th October and was buried in our cemetery three days later. His sister-in-law and two nephews were able to come up from England for the funeral. However glad one may be that a brother has reached his life's goal – beyond life – it is still sad not to see any more that hunched and faithful figure praying in the corner of the choir. Br John would never have realised what an encouragement he was to his brethren and to others – but he was. May he rest in peace.

Earlier in October we had the joyful celebration of Fr Maurus's golden jubilee of monastic profession. Many people joined us for this, including our Bishop. This coming year we celebrate the golden jubilee of our re-foundation. Fr Maurus is the sole survivor of the original five "pioneers" and remains his energetic self.

Usually we have our Community Retreat in October, too. This year it was given by Dom Augustine Roberts, Cistercian, for long abbot of St Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts and at present secretary to the Abbot General of his Order. With the Millennium in mind, he spoke to us of the experience of Christ mirrored in the New Testament and the Rule of St Benedict, re-centring us on the essential: "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:8). We also owe thanks to Fr Eddie Traynor, parish priest of nearby Buckle, and to Fr Frank Crosson, O. Carm., R.C. chaplain at Aberdeen University, for stimulating talks on the "deliverance ministry" and St Thérèse of Lisieux

respectively.

The Canonical Visitation of Prinknash Abbey and the General Assembly of the Union of Monastic Superiors summoned me south for a few days in October. To encounter other monasteries and monastic superiors is always beneficial, and these occasions were no exception. In mid-November, I spent a week's private retreat with the Bernardine Cistercians at Hynning, Lanes, and can only thank them for the hospitality shown me in that peaceful, restorative place.

Now we look forward to Christmas, to the 'Year of the Holy Spirit' and to our own golden jubilee. It is encouraging to have two postulants, and other applicants due. Hopefully this edition of Pluscarden Benedictines will reach you before the 25th December. Certainly it brings you our prayers and thanks for the feast itself, and every best wish for the year to follow.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Hugh, Abbot

## **THE EDITOR'S JOTTINGS**

Recently a visitor remarked that there have been very few Benedictine saints in modern times.

The lives of monks and nuns are for the most part hidden in the cloister. Also we do not form a centralised Order – each monastery is autonomous – so the promotion of the cause of the holy person rests, for the most part, with a particular monastery. Nonetheless, there have been canonisations and beatifications in recent years, for instance: The English Benedictine Martyrs, Bl. Joseph Benedict Dusmet (†1894), Bl. Ildephonso Schuster, Bl. Columba Gabriel (1994 – see later article) and Bl. Fortunata Viti (†1922).

There are a great many monks and nuns whose causes are

being considered. To mention only a few: Abbot Columba Marmion who came to the help of our own community on Caldey in 1913 (†1923), Dom Pius de Hemptinne (†1907), Br Meinrad Eugster (†1925) Fr Paul Moll of our Abbey of Dendermonde (†1896), Fr Luke Etlin, a monk of Engelberg and Chaplain to the nuns of Clyde, USA (†1927), Ven Adeodata Pisani (†1855 in Malta) and Placido Riccardi of Farfa (†1915).

Abbot Romanos Rios who was Abbot Visitor of our Province, compiled a calendar of our own saints and holy monks and nuns *Corona Sanctorum anni Benedictini - menologium OSB*. So for instance, on the day I write this, 12 November, he lists 14 names and there must be over 200 for each month. This book was published in 1948 at Ramsgate. Many more names could be added, for instance the martyrs in Africa, Korea and Spain.

I am grateful to Br Gabriel for translating the article about Bl. Columba Gabriel from the Italian and likewise the account of the Abbey of Grottaferrata. Bl. Columba was a contemporary of most of us, and the monks of our Curia in Rome are chaplains to her convent.

I have just been studying the latest statistics for the Congregation of Subaico which may be of interest.

We have 66 monasteries and 1265 monks. Our French Province has 308 monks, followed by the Italian with 255 and Spanish 211; in fact 107 of these are monks of Montserrat and of course they are Catalan. The “Anglo-American” Province numbers 108 and will soon be overtaken by the African-Madagascar Province with 90 monks in 5 houses. Vietnam has 68 monks in 4 monasteries. Praglia is the largest of the Italian Abbeys with 53 monks. Belgium has 4 houses and 95 monks, Germany 2 monasteries, 26 monks. The Philippines: 2 houses, 55 monks.

We have 40 houses of nuns affiliated to us with 1061 nuns. Most are in France, where three entire Congregations are aggregated: Calvary 84, the Immaculate Conception 268 and St Bathilde 160. The largest individual community is Dourgne, 83, which is one of four houses aggregated to the French Province

with Urt, Valogne and Venière. There are four houses in Belgium, 71 nuns; 2 in England, 28 nuns. There are six houses of nuns in Africa, 3 in Madagascar with 192 nuns. The largest community is in Nigeria with more than 100 nuns. Australia has 2 houses of nuns. In Italy where there are about 100 monasteries of Benedictine nuns, none of them is aggregated to our Congregation and the same is true in Spain. In the vast continent of India we have only one very recent foundation in Bangladesh founded by the Abbey of Praglia in Italy.

It is a privilege to belong to such a worldwide family – so many Brothers and Sisters – so many houses where we are always welcome.

Your Editor

D. Alfred

## **NEWS FROM ST MARY'S PETERSHAM**

There are four pieces of news: work on the monastery, erection of cross and icons in the church, new oblates and members of the community, visits from monks of other communities. During August, our oblate, Michael Sheridan, worked very hard at painting the new boards on the outside of the monastery. His task was not helped by the fact you had to be a ballet dancer to manage the ancient, rickety scaffolding we had, and that August was a very wet month. Each day Michael would end either covered in paint and sweat or rain water. He finished three sides of the building, and left the monks to finish the fourth side, which he had started. Needless to say, this fourth side remains to be painted!

At the end of June we had the great pleasure of seeing the icons of Our Lady and St John finished in gold leaf, and the erection over the altar of our Russian style cross. The latter is very large, and from the back of the church you have the impression of being part of the drawing of the small St Dunstan kneeling before

the huge Christ.

In the last six months we have received three novice oblates, and one oblate made his final profession. Our oblate Phil Zaleski, and his wife Carol (oblate of the Sisters) organised a very successful meeting of their *Communio Study Circle* held on November 9th at St Scholastica Priory. The theme of the meeting was the Pope's letter on the preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000. The speakers were Phil Zaleski, Br Gregory OSB and Mother Mary Clare OSB. On October 1st we welcomed Jim Leathery as postulant in our community, and during November we have someone living in the novitiate who is interested in our life: please pray for them.

In the past few months the following monks have visited us: the Abbot Visitor of our province, Dom Aldhelm Cameron-Brown OSB, Dom Gilbert Jones OSB (former Abbot President), Fr Volker Futter OSB of Christ the King Priory in Schuyler, Nebraska and Fr Claude Peifer OSB who is chaplain to the Benedictine nuns of Regina Laudis, Connecticut.

## **BR JOHN OGILVIE VAN OVERBEKE 1911 - 1997**

Br John Ogilvie's full name had a resonant ring: George Washington Albert Marie Joseph van Overbeke. Understandably, he was simply George to his family and Br John to us. One could not but be conscious, though, that there was something appropriate in the rich nomenclature. Br John was undoubtedly a special person. He was born in Brussels on 15th October 1911, his father Belgian, his mother Scottish (a Kinloch Smyth), the family having extensive estates in both countries. Fleeing the advancing Germans, they caught the last boat to England in 1914. It was the Jesuits who educated him, both in Brussels, whither the family returned after the Great War, and in Ireland. From them and from his family he inherited a convinced and devout Catholicism. It was

the guiding star of his life. Schooling completed, he settled on the family lands in Perthshire, being naturalised in 1937. There he lived and worked – caring for his father, running the house, poultry-farm and orchards – until applying to enter the newly-founded Pluscarden Priory in the early '50s.

This turn to the Benedictines was not so surprising, given that he had a great aunt at Stanbrook and a cousin at Maredsous. A sensitive nature and life's difficulties had led to him unfortunately contracting epilepsy. As a result, he was received at Pluscarden as a Regular Oblate rather than as fully professed – a lack of full belonging he found often hard to bear. There was, however, no lack of commitment in him to the monastic life. On the contrary. He was deeply convinced of the value of intercessory prayer, his choir books full of cards, mementoes, notes testifying to this. It was not by chance that the last book he was reading was Fr Francis Sullivan's *Salvation outside the Church?* He was devoted to the Mass, going twice a day as long as health permitted. He was a great reader especially of Christology and Trinitarian theology and followed the vicissitudes of the contemporary Church and world closely and prayerfully, counting much on the intercession of Our Lady. For many years he worked as Sacristan. His methods were at times eccentric, but his reliability never in doubt. He was very devoted to our late Fr Bruno Webb, his mentor in many things, and in the latter's last years would help him through his daily private Mass with unfailing attention. As Porter, he had the additional job of showing parties round the public areas of the church and monastery. His turns of expression could be quaint, his English being blended with French-isms, and conversely. Churchill would have been proud of him! He was also remembered for greeting a party that came to the door saying, "We've come to see the ruins", with the reply, "You can't; they're out for the day" – for the Community was indeed absent on a day trip. "When the cat is away, the mice they do dance!" he once whimsically commented during an abbatial absence.

The years of prayer, faithful work, and suffering sometimes

patiently, sometimes impatiently borne came to full fruition in the last 10 years of his life. The sense of grievance and a certain unrest and touchiness peeled away, and the humble, courteous, charitable, cheerful and very lovable man within came fully to light, despite the growing infirmities of old age. I can remember visiting him one evening to find him sitting on his bed smiling contentedly. When I remarked how cheerful he looked, he replied, “What else is there to be?” And the sight of him in his last years, on a brother’s arm, struggling painfully and doggedly to church for Mass and Vespers, will long remain with those who saw it. On the feast of the Visitation, 31 May 1994, the necessary dispensations having been received from the Holy See, he was able to make Solemn Profession. This was a great joy to him. Characteristically, he asked that there be rice pudding at the meal afterwards – his idea of a treat! As abbot, I had the task of ensuring that this profession was recorded in the register of the church he had been baptised in as a baby. This was in Brussels, and I have often wondered what the parish priest thought at being asked to note down that the G.W.A.M.J. van Overbeke baptised in his parish on 21 October 1911 had now, in 1994, made solemn profession in the north of Scotland at the age of 82!

His final illness came a little suddenly and required hospitalization in Elgin. It was typical of the man that the only thing he took into hospital was his rosary (wound round his wrist to the end); that the last thing he did before leaving the monastery was add his name to a Mass-card for his sister; and that his last word to the Infirmarian was, “Thank you”. He died, anointed and absolved, on the early morning of Monday 27th October, aged 86.

Fr Abbot

## SAINT ADOMNAN

Saint Columba has attracted a great deal of attention in 1997 because the 1400th anniversary of his death occurred this year. We rely on the earliest extant life of Saint Columba for much of our knowledge about him. The author of this life was the ninth Abbot of Iona, Saint Adomnán. He wrote it about a century after Saint Columba's death.

He wrote more than the biography of Saint Columba. In Medieval times, his literary reputation rested more upon his other known work *De Locis Sanctis* or "On the Holy Places". This is a description of the Holy Places in Palestine and the Near East. He intelligently transmitted the recollections of a Gaulish bishop, Arculf, who had visited them on pilgrimage. Adomnán was also an effective diplomat, who organised the first international agreement in Western Europe to limit the violence of war on non-combatants.

He was born in 624, 627 or 628, almost certainly in Donegal in Ireland. He came from the Cenél Conaill, the ruling family from whom Donegal takes its name in Irish (Tír Conaill). Columba too came from this lineage. Adomnán descended from a brother of Columba's father. This family was a branch of the wider Uí Néill family that dominated Ireland politically, and also provided most of the abbots of Iona.

We know little of his career before he became abbot of Iona. His writings display an excellent knowledge of the Scriptures and ecclesiastical writings. His was the time of the flowering of Irish Biblical studies. He presumably joined an Irish community, one of the network of monasteries making up the Familia of Saint Columba. Saint Columba founded other monasteries apart from Iona, and Iona had made foundations after his death. Adomnán does not record personal contact with any abbot of Iona before Failbe (669-79), his immediate predecessor. Perhaps he did not come to Iona until he was in his forties but this is not certain. As one qualified by holiness, learning and kinship, Adomnán may have been early marked out as a future Abbot of Iona. Failbe died



in 679 and Adomnán succeeded him in the abbacy. The book *De Locis Sanctis* belongs to the early years of his rule. The first of his diplomatic missions we know of occurred after the death of Ecfrið, King of Northumbria, at the Battle of Dunnichen Moss in 685. Ecfrið's half-brother Aldfrith, whom Adomnán describes as his friend, came to the throne. As envoy of the King of Brega in Ireland, Adomnán went to negotiate for the release of captives taken in a Northumbrian raid on Brega in 684. The Irish Annals tell us that he brought back sixty captives to Ireland.

He again visited Northumbria in 688. On one of these two missions he bought a copy of *De Locis Sanctis* and presented it to King Aldfrith. The King made the book available to those who wished to study it. These included Saint Bede who was later to use it as the basis of his own work of the same name.

Adomnán may have met the adolescent Bede, for he spent some time at Wearmouth or Jarrow on one of his visits. There was disagreement in the Irish Church about the correct date for celebrating Easter. Iona championed the older method of calculating the date. The Northumbrian Church, like the Southern Irish, followed the Roman method of dating. According to Bede, Adomnán accepted this method during his stay in Northumbria. Bede gives the impression that Adomnán returned North intent on establishing the Roman dating of Easter, was unable to impose it upon the monks of Iona and died only a few years later.

In fact Adomnán lived until 704. In these years he achieved the enactment of the Law of the Innocents, and also wrote the life of Saint Columba. The purpose of the Law of the Innocents was to protect women, children and churches from violence. In 697 kings and churchmen from all over Ireland gathered at an assembly at Birr. There they guaranteed the Law. Beyond Ireland, the kings of the Scots of Dalriada and of the Picts were among the guarantors together with bishops from their lands. The Law of the Innocents came to be known as the Law of Adomnán.

Sometime during these years Adomnán wrote the *Life of Saint Columba*. It is a classic of hagiography. It draws on the

tradition of the Lives of Antony, and Martin, as well as on St Gregory's dialogues in order to present a picture of a great monastic saint. Adomnán's Columba is above all a monk, seen against the background of his island monastery.

In Ireland Adomnán is the patron saint of Donegal. There are many places in Ireland named after him, but even more in Scotland. There he gives his name to as many as twenty places. This is a greater number than any saint other than Saint Columba. These dedications are widespread and mostly use the form "Eunan". They include Rowardennan on Loch Lomondside, the church at Forglen in Banffshire and other sites from Argyll to Fife and Aberdeenshire. Many of these dedications were in the land of the Picts. When Abbot Coelfrith of Northumbria wrote to the King of the Picts about the dating of Easter, he quoted Adomnán in favour of the Roman dating. Clearly he thought Adomnán's views would carry weight with the Picts.

The community of Iona did not conform to the rest, of the Irish Church on the dating of Easter until 716, twelve years after Adomnán's death: His life might be seen as a high point in the history of Iona. The Irish annals tell that in 717 the monks of Columba were expelled over the Spine of Britain from the Land of the Picts. What form this expulsion took is not clear, but clearly it meant a loss of influence for the monastery.

If we remember Columba today, it is because Adomnán drew his picture for us. If we look to international law to mitigate the effects of war, this owes something to Adomnán's Law of the Innocents. He played a part in defining the role of kings in the early middle ages through his depiction of Columba's interaction with them. He allowed the Christians of the far West to know something of the Holy Places. He made a deep impression in his day on the people of what is now Scotland. He deserves to be better known.

DMS

## BLESSED COLUMBA GABRIEL OSB

Janina Matylda Gabriel was born at Stanislawow of wealthy Polish parents on 3 May 1858. She was educated by the Benedictine nuns at Lvov (then under Austrian/Hapsburg rule and known as Lemberg). After completing her education she entered the community, being clothed on 15 August 1881, taking the name Sister Columba and making profession on 20 August 1882. She demonstrated all the monastic virtues showing especially remarkable charity to all and became successively Prioress and Abbess. In 1900 Sr Columba left the community and travelled to Italy living for two years with the Benedictines at Subiaco before moving to Rome where she opened the *Casa-Famiglia* for the young poor, a house still flourishing today. Her charitable endeavours were aided by a group of wealthy benefactresses led by the Princess Barberini. In order to give stability to her work, and with the advice of the Abbot Primate Hildebrand de Hemptinne, she founded the Benedictine Sisters of Charity in 1908 and the original apostolate has expanded to include children, the sick and the aged.

Sr Columba died on 24 September 1926 at the Congregation's Novitiate House in Centocelle, a suburb of Rome, and was beatified by Pope John Paul II on 16 May 1993. Her Congregation currently comprises 120 sisters in 20 houses in Italy, Madagascar and Romania, and her memoria is kept by them on 24 September.

DGP

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Introduction to the history of Exegesis, Vol 1, The Greek Fathers*, Bertrand de Margerie, SJ, St Bede's Publications, Petersham, 1993. 288 pp.

When, many years ago now, Pius XII and then Vatican II encouraged exegetes to adopt modern “scientific” methods of exegesis, they also called for a new appreciation of the exegesis of the Fathers of the Church, the great Christian writers and biblical commentators of the first Christian centuries. How far has that call been heeded? Much work still needs to be done. One who has put his hand to the plough is the French Jesuit, Bertrand de Margerie, and in this volume he gives us the fruit of his researches into the biblical exegesis of the Greek Fathers from St Justin Martyr to St Cyril of Alexandria. The book is to be commended, and can help us to appreciate the theological seriousness of our ancestors in the faith.

DHG

### **The Whole Hogg – *Analecta Cartusiana***

The latest volumes received show the breadth of this multidisciplinary series of Carthusian Studies edited by Dr James Hogg. There are three volumes of *The Urbanist Chartae*, covering the years 1380 to 1410, painstakingly transcribed by John Clark with help from the Grande Chartreuse. These *Chartae* are records of the General Chapters of the Carthusian Order during the Great Schism of 1378-1429 when the houses of the Order were divided according to which Pope their country supported.

**Gregor Reisch e la sua *Margarita Philosophica*** by Lucia Andreini is a study of this work by the German Carthusian Prior and encyclopaedist Gregor Reisch (c.1470-1525), a man on the border between the mediaeval world and the modern. It includes a

section on Reisch's cosmography and is illustrated with maps.

***Vicente Carducho in El Paular*** by Werner Beutler is an illustrated study of a remarkable series of 54 large paintings of the life of St Bruno and the history of the Order, produced by the Florentine artist Carducho for the Spanish Charterhouse of El Paular. They were originally in the Gothic Cloister of the monastery but were removed in 1836 and deposited in various museums. This work is of particular interest as the monastery was recolonised in 1954 by monks of our congregation from Valvanera. They share the splendid buildings with an hotel.

A different type of Work is ***La poésie latine chez les chartreux***, an anthology with French translation by Dom Augustin Devaux. It is published with the permission of the Prior of the Grande Chartreuse. The poets included start with St Bruno and run through Hymnographers and Humanists to the Baroque Age. The seventeenth century English Carthusian, Dom Robert Clarke of Sheen Anglorum, features in this last section and the final poet in the book is another Briton, David Jones, who was a Carthusian for 7 years. Volumes of Jones's poetry in other languages have been published by Hogg who is as famous as a publisher in poetic circles as he is amongst devotees of Carthusiana.

Although there was never a Carthusian Polish Province, there were Charterhouses within the fluid borders of the Polish State. ***Prosopographia polono-cartusiana*** by Raphael Witkowski is a list of all known monks and *hospites* from other houses who dwelt in these cloisters in the period 1360-1831. The author uses a very wide range of sources and gives an extensive bibliography for the Houses. One of the monks, D. John Mroczkowski, acted as chaplain to Polish Fighters during the anti-Russian uprising in 1830-31. The date of the Uprising gives a clue to the reason for the *terminus ad quem* of the work.

We have also received volumes 13 and 14 of *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians*. As with other parts of the series, which is based on a 1995 Conference, the papers cover areas beyond the bounds of the title. There are, for example, articles on Michelangelo and the Carthusians at Rome, Bohemian Architecture of the Order and the Zips Carthusians and Poland, as well as others which are more mystical.

*Chartreux: hier et aujourd'hui* by Jan de Grauwe is a collection of studies on the inhabitants of Charterhouses. The author lists monks and nuns from the Low Countries, Jesuits who became Carthusians and provides studies of individual monks. Among these latter is one of Dom Sebastian Maccabe (1883-1951) listing his publications. Many of these appeared in **Pax** under the pseudonym Henry Chester Mann.

A study of another British Carthusian connected with our Community, Dom Edmund Gurdon, appears in *Die KartAuser und ihre Welt - Kontakte und Gegenseitige Einflüsse. Band 1*, which contains papers from the 1992 Congress of the same name. Here, among a wealth of other papers, Dr Hogg chronicles Dom Edmund's friendship with Cristina de Artega, a Spanish noblewoman who was instrumental in restoring the Hieronymite Order in this century. The article concludes with a moving account of Dom Edmund's death, at which time it seems that he had applied to leave his Order to assist with the Hieronymite revival. This final volume concludes with a list that shows the truly monumental size of the Hoggian collection. One should say collections, as he is also responsible for hundreds of volumes on English Literature in addition to the over 220 volumes of Cartusiana.

DAM

## **PROGRESS ON THE NEW ORGAN**

Work has begun on our new pipe organ at the workshop of Tickell and Company. Since the contract was signed at the end of September, all the working drawings for the construction of the instrument have been completed, materials have been purchased and work is in progress on the wooden pipes, the mechanical key action and the casework. At present, July still seems likely for the time of completion.

In the meantime, we have received more information about our present organ, for which we plan to find a new home next year. Hitherto, we have been aware that the organ's builder was a man called James Graham from Carnoustie; but we knew nothing whatever about him. Recently, however, the present owner of James Graham's house in Carnoustie wrote to us about him. It seems that organ-building was only one of the interests of this Victorian polymath, who as a retired engineer had a laboratory and observatory in his back garden and also cast sculptures in bronze. Our organ was installed in the first-floor drawing-room of his house, and there are accounts of concert parties held there. We know of no other organs built by him.

As the work continues, further donations towards the cost of the new organ will be most welcome.

## **MONASTERIES OF THE EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES NO. 5** **The Italo-Byzantine Monastery of Grottaferrata**

Just 20 km south of Rome, at Grottaferrata, one of the famous Castelli Romani in the alban Hills, there is a unique monastery of Byzantine rite with an eventful history spanning almost a millennium.

The monastery was founded in 1004 by St Nilus of Rossano. He was a Greek from Calabria which at that time fell under the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Constantinople. A

cultured man, a rigorous ascetic, calligrapher and composer of hymns, St Nilus is considered to be one of the most important figures of Byzantine southern Italy. Since it was founded in 1004 one can say that the monastery had half a century of life before the tragic events of 1054, and therefore is a testimony to and expression of the undivided Church. So, this Byzantine monastery is Catholic today not because of a “union” made with Rome at some stage in history but because of the *communion* existing from the date of its foundation which has never been broken. Our Orthodox brothers – and not a few visit each year – also feel at home at the monastery.

A characteristic feature of Grottaferrata is the unique liturgical tradition, called Italo-Greek. Standing apart, it is quite different for example, from the Orthodox Church liturgy found in Greece, not due to the phenomenon known as *Latinisation* but because in essence the liturgical tradition of Grottaferrata today is that of the 11th and 12th centuries. Its library holds more than 500 Greek manuscripts and generations of liturgical scholars have come to utilise this resource and to follow in the monastic choir this ancient liturgy. The Orthodox view this ancient liturgy with great respect and a certain favour, expressing as it does genuine Tradition. The monastery has its own proper liturgical calendar, proper hymnary – and not only for its own saints days but also its own proper for Holy Week, and its own musical tradition.

Its canonical status is also rather unique. Grottaferrata is the only monastery *sui iuris* in all the Oriental Catholic Church with its own territory, even if only symbolical, with the Hegumen (Abbot) exercising ordinary jurisdiction as Exarch and, as such, being a member of the Italian Episcopal Conference. Essentially his jurisdiction as Ordinary dates back to 1024 when Pope Benedict IX personally consecrated the monastic basilica. The monks of Grottaferrata belong to the Italian Congregation of Basilian Monks, an institution created in 1570 by Gregory XIII for the reform and protection of Byzantine monasticism in Italy. The first generation monks were Hellenist but by the time of St



Bartholomew (d 1050/5) the fourth successor of St Nilus, the ethnic base was broadening. Ethnic diversity continues today, with the conviction that monastic life is the anticipation now on earth of the future Kingdom: isn't it the case that the monastic habit is referred to as *angelic*? Today the majority of the monks are Italo-Albanians, others being Italians and Ukrainians, and one Romanian – twenty monks in total.

Daily life revolves around the Liturgy of the Hours celebrated in Greek and/or Italian. The monks run a school, with a minor seminary annex that Serves the halo-Albanian Eparchy (Diocese) of Calabria and Sicily. There is a workshop for restoring manuscripts and ancient books. The library is in daily use by students of Byzantine culture and by Eastern Christians from the state university - who come usually accompanied by their teachers. The church, which houses a 13th century icon of Our Lady, is in frequent use and the monks also exercise a ministry of reconciliation and spiritual direction.

The monastic community is currently concluding a period of discernment, under the guidance of the Hegumen, Archimandrite Mark, intended to determine the distinctive vocation of the monks of Grottaferrata. The three aspects historically identified with the monastery have been identified as:

- 1 Liturgical life in the halo-Greek tradition, the possible reform of which is the subject of the study by a special commission.
- 2 Stud and preservation of the spiritual patrimony of Byzantine monasticism in Italy: expressed primarily in the lives of the founders St Nilus and St Bartholomew.
- 3 The ecumenical aspect of offering hospitality to our Orthodox brethren, especially monks.

by Stefano Parenti

This article was kindly provided by *The Journal of the Abbey of Montevergine*, with a translation by a monk of Pluscarden.

The interested reader will find abundant material on the life, saints and spirituality of Italo-Greek monasticism in *Monasticism and Spirituality of the Italo-Greeks* by David Paul Hester (Anaiekta Vlatadon 55) Thessaloniki (Greece) 1992.