

FR ABBOT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

On the 28th October, Abbot Alfred laid down the office he has held among us for 26 years. These are years which have seen the Community not only pass from the status of Priory to that of Abbey, but also grow in numbers and influence, restore much of its architectural inheritance, and even adopt a daughter house in America. Such things are owed to the Lord, but the Lord makes use of human instruments, and, surely, we are indebted to Abbot Alfred for a great deal of the good things that have been given us during the time of his abbatial service.

The following day I was elected as his successor. Thanks to him, I could say with the Psalmist, "I have a goodly heritage."

Over the centuries, the election of an abbot has taken many forms. Nowadays, he is chosen by the solemnly-professed monks of the Community. He must receive at least two-thirds of the votes. But election alone does not make him an abbot. He must, of course, accept his election, and then ask the Abbot-President of the Congregation to confirm his election. In our case, the Abbot-President, Gilbert Jones, was in the chair anyway. He is bound to consult his own Council, but, thanks to phone and fax, this can be done swiftly. Our election was completed at 11.30 a.m. and the Abbot-President was able to give his confirmation at 4.30 p.m.

Once elected and confirmed, the abbot has full spiritual and temporal authority within his community. He is what the Church calls a Major Superior possessed of jurisdiction, that is, the mandate and the power to be a father to his brethren by teaching and governing them according to the Gospel and in full

communion with the Church.

Some time after, in our case the next day, the new abbot is installed. This is a private ceremony enacted in the chapter house and the church, and was conducted by the Abbot-President. The new Abbot makes a profession of faith, takes an oath of fidelity, is led to his seat in the chapter house, is given the seal and the keys of the monastery, and addresses his first words to the Community. Then all move to the church singing the Te Deum. The Abbot-President leads the abbot to his place in choir and gives him a simple blessing. There is record of the same ceremony being performed at Pluscarden in an almost identical fashion in the 14th century.

After all this, one may wonder what need the new abbot has of a further blessing – *the Blessing* – usually given by the Bishop of the local diocese. This Blessing does not *make* someone an abbot; it is not an ordination. But it is a powerful liturgical action, and a sign of the Church's valuation of the abbatial office. Indeed abbots and abbesses are the only religious superiors to whom the Church gives such a Blessing. It is a solemn prayer to God the Father on behalf of the new abbot; a public prayer led by the Bishop, Christ's vicar, and endorsed by the friends and neighbours of the Community, by layfolk, religious, deacons and priests, by monks of other monasteries and by the oblates of our own. It is the prayer of the Church.

Bless and strengthen your servant chosen to be Abbot of this monastery. May his manner of life show clearly that he is what he is called, a father, so that his teaching will, as a leaven of goodness, grow in the hearts of his spiritual family...

Strengthened by that prayer, it is my hope that this Community will continue to be a school of the Lord's service, a house of God and a house of prayer, a place of hospitality and of mercy.

May I thank you, our friends, for your kindness to us over these last months and may He, who dying in the form of a slave,

associates us with the cross, raise us up through his Resurrection.

Yours devotedly,

+Fr Hugh OSB, Abbot

THE EDITOR'S JOTTINGS

The editor of this newsletter was absent from Pluscarden during most of September/October so that the September number of Pluscarden Benedictines was produced by other capable hands. However our new Abbot has asked me to continue for the time being to be responsible for future issues. Why was I away? There was a meeting of the Superiors of the monasteries of our Subiaco Congregation in September at the Abbey of St Justina in Padua in the north of Italy. It was not a General Chapter but a fraternal meeting of the superiors only, without elected delegates, as there would be for a Chapter. I was there because at that time I was still Abbot of Pluscarden and Visitor (or President) of the English Province.

The Abbey is an ideal place for such a meeting and Abbot Innocenzo and the Community gave us the warmest of welcomes. The monastery has a history going back to the 52 century. The church is the largest in Italy, other than a cathedral, and there are no less than six cloisters. In addition to reports from our nine provinces there were papers for discussion and it is always a rich experience to meet monks from so many different monasteries in every continent. We gave a special welcome to Fr Stephen, the Prior of a house in Vietnam. It was thirty years since a monk from that land had been able to come to Europe.

The Abbey has an important Liturgical Institute associated with S. Anselmo in Rome. It also has contacts with the University of Padua and part of the buildings are occupied by students. A group of them gave us a delightful concert of music by Bach one evening in the large refectory. The sixth cloister is occupied by the

army.

The church has three choirs. One is in the north transept around the tomb of St Luke, where we had Vespers on 8th September. The Old Choir (1472) we used for the office. In the centre is the tomb of Bl. Ludovico Barbo, who as Abbot (1408-1451) brought about an important reform which spread to the other monasteries in Italy and beyond. English monks were formed here during the Penal days and returned to work as missionaries in England – among them Fr Augustine Baker whose spiritual writings are still important today.

The third choir behind the High Altar, we used for Mass. The 50 choir stalls were richly carved by a Fleming (1558-66) and the organ was the gift of an Englishman. The great procession of some 80 monks was very impressive and the singing, led by Fr Filippo was worthy of the occasion.

The Bishop of Padua, Archbishop Antonio Mattiazzo, came to lunch one day and stayed for the group photograph afterwards. He had been Nuncio in West Africa, so was especially pleased to meet our three African Superiors.

On the Sunday we made a pilgrimage to Venice where we have the Abbey of S. Giorgio on an island at the mouth of the Grand Canal. While waiting for the water-bus to take us across to the island, police appeared with riot shields and soon after a large boat sailed up, packed with football supporters – Venice was playing Padua – just like Glasgow. There is only a very small community here – most of the buildings belong to a cultural association – but we were given a tour of the fine library, cloisters and taken up the campanile to see a wonderful view over the city. Pope Pius VII, a Benedictine, was elected Pope here in the Chapter House where the Scottish Cardinal Henry Stuart, Duke of York, presided at the conclave since Napoleon had occupied Rome.

The next two weeks were spent in Rome for the Abbots' Congress where we elected a new Abbot Primate, Dom Jerome Theisen, Abbot of St John's Collegeville, U.S.A. The work in Rome concerns the whole Benedictine Confederation which has over 350 monasteries and more than 9400 monks. The Congress is

also responsible for the Abbey and University of S. Anselmo in Rome; for supplying professors, staff and students and the finance to support it. But the abbots are given a break with pilgrimages to Norcia (St Benedict's birthplace), Subiaco and Monte Cassino. I went on the first two and made a quick visit to St Peter's in Rome.

I left Rome on 26 September, and with Fr Philip, the Prior of Christ in the Desert, New Mexico, flew out to Ghana where Fr Philip gave the retreat at our monastery of Kristo Buase. Together we then made the Canonical Visitation. I enjoyed this visit to Africa and returned refreshed.

Ghana, once called the Gold Coast and the White Man's Grave, had no ill effects on me, rather the contrary. It is a beautiful country, by no means a desert, but rich in forests of fine trees and red earth. We drove up the main road from Accra to the monastery which is in the centre of the country. The main roads are tolerably good – the verges well-tended by young men with cutlasses – but the minor roads are a mass of potholes and gullies – often just red earth which is washed away in heavy rain. Everywhere there are people walking – women with huge bundles on their heads – *Market Mammies* selling fruit by the roadside and a variety of vintage cars and lorries with religious slogans painted on them. There was practically no street lighting, even in towns like Accra. Shops are open stalls and most houses have tin roofs. Goats and children wander across the roads.

The little monastery filled me with envy. It is well designed and attractive, simple, in good taste, nothing temporary or shoddy; and set in lovely surroundings the forest and the great outcrops of rock with their tunnels and caves. Within three years the monks have brought much of the 130 acres into cultivation. Pineapples, bananas, cashew nuts, paw-paws, etc. Have been planted. There are chickens and turkeys, two Chinese ducks, five sheep and two cats, while Br Richard has beehives among the orange trees.

The liturgy is prayerful and accompanied by the kora and drums. There are now three monks from England and four or five young Africans. I am sure this community will grow and flourish. They are very conscious of the support they receive from overseas

and every day benefactors are prayed for by name during the Office. It was good to hear the names of so many of you, whom I know as friends of Pluscarden and readers of this newsletter, mentioned far away in Africa.

We paid a ceremonial visit to the Chief, who received us in his palace with his elders, dressed in their toga-like robes. He repaid the visit some days later. The monks have established very good relations with the local people. We called on Bishop James Owusu and he came to see us and invited us to dinner at the parish-house in Techiman. He is very pleased with his monastery.

Br Bede took us over extraordinary roads to a number of places. We were given hospitality in several religious houses - the American sisters at Sunyani and Techiman hospital; Italian Conventual Franciscans from Padua at Sunyani and parish priests in other places. On our last journey to the airport we called at Divine Providence Monastery where Fr Antony and the Brothers gave us a warm welcome. We were there for the Midday Office and shared a meal with them, followed by photographs in the cloister-garth. They were building a guest house which, it was hoped, would be completed very soon.

The return flight from Accra to Amsterdam was not without incident as the plane was an hour late and we missed our connection at Amsterdam. However it saved me a long delay at Heathrow and I was delighted to find Br Augustine waiting to meet me at Dyce Airport, Aberdeen.

We delayed the December issue of this newsletter as we knew you would like to have an account of the Blessing of Abbot Hugh, which was a memorable occasion. Hence this March issue is a double number.

May I make a small request? If you change your address, or do not wish to continue to receive the newsletter, or wish to send a subscription, would you please write to me, The Editor. This will avoid the confusion which sometimes occurs. The Oblate Letter comes from the Oblate Master, while other brothers look after the P.K.E.R. and the shop. Thank you.

Dom Alfred.

THE BLESSING OF D. HUGH GILBERT OSB
AS SECOND ABBOT OF PLUSCARDEN
Feast of the Immaculate Conception 8 December 1992

As you will by now have gathered, we were successful in electing one of our number as our new Abbot, and he has been confirmed and installed by our Abbot President, and blessed by our Bishop.

I have been asked to write a few words about him and the blessing. The first may seem supererogatory to some, even many, but it is a fact that in our life, intentionally hidden, many of the brethren are quite unknown, in a real sense, even to those who know the community quite well, as occasionally and amusingly is made clear!

So the former Fr Hugh, now simply Fr Abbot (we refer to our retired Abbot as “Abbot Alfred”) has been with us since 1974, when he came to us after graduating with First Class Honours in History from King’s College of the University of London. Before that, he was at St Paul’s School. Although his family moved around a little, his loyalty is to east Sussex, where his mother still lives.

Like most of us in the monastery, he has been involved in many spheres of activity, including cooking, habit-making, the library, translation and the more mundane tasks of daily life. He can often be seen around the grounds, cutting off, cutting up or cutting down, with axe, saw or mower... He has been Novice-Master for eight years, Subprior for most of them, until becoming Prior a couple of years ago. That is to say he has been bearing considerable responsibilities within the community for several years. If you don’t know what he looks like, examination of the photos illustrating this number will supply that lack.

As to what kind of an Abbot he will be, no-one knows, including himself. He has to form his monks, and his monks will form him; as he grows he will change. The job-description is to be found in St Benedict’s Rule, especially in chapters two and sixty four.

The Blessing itself was prepared by a committee appointed by Fr Abbot. Br Benedict looked after the Liturgy, Fr Bede took care of invitations and accommodation, Br Finbar fielded culinary googlies, Br Ambrose kept up the Sacristan's end and Fr Mark was responsible for all the printed materials, dragooning his brother, Fr Michael Savage, into printing the very professional Mass-leaflet, with its cover designed by Br Cyprian, in a very short time.

As always, there were hitches: the ladies' loos broke down in Huntly, and could not be delivered, and the flower-arrangements were delivered two hours after the ceremony was over. There were constant remembering of people who ought to be invited, and hadn't been, and balancing of available space, people who hadn't yet replied, but might come, and further possibles. There were the imponderables, like snow on Drumochter or at Inverurie – what then? An early spring-clean tidied the place up, and carpet tiles were laid in the Chapter House.

By Monday, 7 December, guests were arriving and last-minute preparations were in full swing, and it was almost too late to do anything still undone. We had a full house, one way and another, and there were no slips 'twixt cup and lip, or airport and Abbey. The extra monks improved the Choir, too. We absolved our Brethren and Sisters from abroad from attendance.

Tuesday, 8 December, started bright and early, and fortunately remained bright. We had a solid elevenses laid on, knowing that lunch would not be until sometime after two o'clock, and nature is not alone in abhorring a vacuum! Guests were meanwhile arriving, vesting, or being directed into their seats by Br Cyprian, Br Augustine and Fr Bede. The sound system had been set up by Sandy Mellis, and tested, the closed-circuit T.V. was up and running, with a big screen in the Transepts for the over-flow congregation and a video being recorded for later. Soon the theory of our allocation of the space available was being tested by reality (we were right!), and all those involved in the entry procession were being marshalled in order by Br. Cyprian under the direction of Fr Dunstan, whom we'd imported from Prinknash, as Britain's most experienced M.C. in the matter of Abbatial

Blessings.

Maureen Woodhead was organist for the day, leaving Br Adrian free for other things, and Br Benedict led the schola. Once everyone was in, we had quite a forest of mitres, with Archbishop Keith O'Brien, our Metropolitan, Bishop Mario Conti, our own Bishop, with Bishop Vincent Logan of Dunkeld, and the auxiliary Bishops of St Andrews and Edinburgh, Bishops Rafferty and Monaghan, together with the Abbots of Fort Augustus, (who came with a car-load), Ealing, Douai, Elmore, Nunraw, plus the Emeritus Abbots of Pluscarden and Prinknash, Abbots Alfred and Aldhelm. Ampleforth was represented by Fr Edmund, and the Benedictine Yearbook by Fr Gordon. The Jericho Benedictines were represented by their founder, Fr James Ferguson, and one of his brethren. The Clergy and Religious of the Diocese turned out in force.

As well as the altar, the throne was represented by Grenville Johnston, O.B.E., as Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Moray, resplendent in his uniform as a KCSG, rivalled by Frederick Crichton-Stuart and Sir Archie Dunbar, both attired in their robes as members of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Lord and Lady Cawdor honoured us with their presence, as did Lady Lovat. At a time of year when weather is unpredictable, when the Liturgy imposes its own demands and diaries are often well-filled, a fair number of those invited were unable to come. The church was nonetheless full to capacity, with about sixty concelebrants in the Chancel, and an overflow congregation in the Transepts watching the ceremony on closed-circuit T.V.

The Mass unfolded with its wonted beauty, the voices of the congregation blending well together and gaining from the sheer numbers. Fr Abbot's brother, Brigadier Stephen Gilbert, R.E., read the first reading, and Deacon John Futers read the Gospel. After Fr Abbot had been presented to the Bishop by the Prior and Br Ambrose, as the senior and junior members of the Chapter, there followed the Bishop's homily on the subject of the day.

The ceremony unrolled, following its intended course, through the Litany of Saints, the prayer of blessing and the

handing-over of the Rule, the ring and pastoral staff and mitre, followed by the kiss of peace, exchanged with Bishops, Abbots and Brethren. Mass continued, sung with brio and concluding with “Lead, kindly light”, and the “Te Deum” sung as a recessional, out to the Night Stairs, where the photographic fraternity had their way.

A buffet meal in the Cloister and Chapter House was provided by the Mansion House Hotel in Elgin, thus relieving the Brethren of cooking, serving and clearing up a meal for three hundred. This conviviality lasted for quite some time, while old friends met once more, and new friendships were made. At length all those who had come for the day departed, and we were free to clear the decks and relax with a restorative cup of tea.

In the evening we had a quiet and informal celebration with Fr Abbot’s family and with the visiting brethren from other monasteries, forming a very pleasant coda to an epoch-making day in the history of our Community.

D.G.C.

WEST WING APPEAL NEWS

Since last you heard from us, great strides have been made, in that work on the site was started in January, clearing the topsoil (and bursting three water-mains!), ascertaining whether further archaeological surprises remained to be discovered (there was none) and doing preliminary landscaping. After that, our Quantity Surveyors, Messrs. Burnett and Wallace, received back the tenders for the work, and the contract has since been awarded to Robertsons of Elgin.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Moray, Sir Iain Tennant, K.T., who is an Honorary Member of our Appeal, has kindly agreed to inaugurate work on Easter Monday, 12 April, after Fr Abbot has blessed the undertaking. If all goes to plan, it is possible that the West Wing will be ready (just!) to receive boarders for Easter 1994.

We hope that the sight of the building going up will show that our plan is not an idle dream, and will encourage our friends to help us to reach the Appeal target.

Forthcoming Events

Over the weekend of 25-27 June we will host a Gregorian Chant Weekend led by Dr Mary Berry, a world renowned chant expert. Dr Berry will direct five workshop sessions which will culminate in participation in the annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Pluscarden, led by Bishop Mario Conti, at which over 500 pilgrims are expected.

The Pilgrimage forms part of the 800th anniversary celebrations which are being held all over Scotland this year in honour of St Margaret, Queen of Scotland, who died in 1093. It was St Margaret who introduced Benedictine monks into Scotland by founding Dunfermline Abbey. Pluscarden was originally founded for the Valliscaulians in 1230, but in 1254 was joined with the Benedictine monks of Urquhart, the other side of Elgin, thereby becoming a dependent house of Dunfermline.

All singers are welcome whether experts or beginners in chant. The cost is £36. For an extra charge accommodation is at the Abbey or in local hotels/B&B. Numbers are limited so please apply as soon as possible.

The Pilgrimage will be a busy day, for at 7.30pm on the same evening, Sunday 27 June, a concert is planned.

On 6 August, continuing our involvement in the annual Aberdeen International Youth Festival, a Polish group, the Poznan College Chamber Choir will be performing here.

JULIAN OF NORWICH

THE BENEDICTINE CONNECTION

On some unknown date towards the end of 1992 there will have fallen the 650th anniversary of the “first Englishwoman of letters” – Julian of Norwich. The only book she wrote, *The Revelations of Divine Love*, is an account of a series of personal visions beginning on the 8th May, 1373, when she was “thirty years and a half”. The revelations have come down to us in two versions, the Short Text (ST), which, it is thought, was written soon after the visions occurred, and the Long Text (LT), thought to be the fruit of more than twenty years of prayer and meditation on the content of the revelations.

Such is Julian’s self-effacement that we know very little about her personally – not even her name. She probably took the name Julian on being installed as an anchoress in St Julian’s church, Norwich. The last twenty years have seen a tremendous upsurge of interest in Julian. Many books and innumerable articles have been written about her and her book. Here we would like to take no more than a brief look at Julian’s Benedictine connections.

At some unknown point in time, probably between the writing of the Short and the Long Text, Julian dedicated her life to God as an anchoress. An anchoress vowed to live a solitary life of prayer, usually in a small house built against the wall of a church, with a small window through which the altar was visible. The church of St Julian was in the benefice of the Benedictine nunnery of Carrow. Whether Julian was a nun of this community has been much discussed. Current opinion considers it unlikely (cf. *Julian Reconsidered*, by Sr Benedicta Ward S.L.G., and *Julian of Norwich*, by Grace Jantzen). She may have been educated there, though, it is known that Carrow Priory ran a small boarding school for girls.

That Julian had some Benedictine connection is plain. The only direct, non-Biblical quotation in Julian’s work is found in Ch.5 of ST, and is taken from Ch.35 of Gregory the Great’s *Life of St Benedict* (Dialogues Book II): “For to a soul that sees the maker

of all things all that is made seemeth full little.” This is Gregory’s reply to another of Peter the Deacon’s breathless interjections, this time after hearing how St Benedict had seen the whole world gathered up in what seemed to be a single ray of light. In the corresponding section of LT Julian adds ‘one of the parts of the Revelation of Love most widely known and loved, what is generally called “the hazel-nut vision” (*Julian’s Way* by Sr R. Bradley): “He shewed me a little thing the size of a hazel-nut, which seemed to lie in the palm of my hand; and it was round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, ‘What may this be?’ I was answered in a general way thus: ‘It is all that is made.’” (LT, Ch.5).

In LT Ch.38, Julian is shown that the sins of the chosen shall be turned to joy and worship. One example given her is of St John of Beverley: “Our Lord shewed him in his exaltation for our comfort and out of homeliness, and he called him St John of Beverley, just as we do. At the same time he mentioned that in his youth he was God’s most dear servant. And yet God permitted him to fall, but he kept him mercifully so that he did not perish or lose any time. And afterwards God raised him to more manifold grace.” St John was a Yorkshireman who entered the Benedictine monastery at Whitby, then under the rule of the great Abbess Hilda. He was consecrated Bishop of Hexham and later translated to the See of York. He ordained the Venerable Bede. In 717 he retired to the monastery he had founded at Beverley, where he died in 721. Few native saints enjoyed a greater reputation in Catholic England. His shrine was one of the favourite places of pilgrimage until the Reformation, no doubt due, as Julian tells us, “to God working plenteous miracles around his body continually” (LT, Ch.38). There is no record of what St John’s “fall” actually was. His feast is kept on the 7th May. Julian’s visions, as already mentioned, began on the 8th.

Julian has never been officially canonised. However, she has a feast day in some Benedictine calendars, including that compiled by a monk of our own Congregation, the late Abbot Romanos Rios, *Corona Sanctorum Anni Benedictini* (1947), where

her feast day is given as 13th May. The Anglican Communion celebrates her on 8th May, the discrepancy arising from a variant reading in the Mss. between VIII and XII. 8th May is now widely accepted as the correct one.

There are four extant manuscripts of the Revelations, one of ST and three of LT. The survival of the latter is due simply to the “piety and learning of Augustine Baker and the spiritual school among the exiled Benedictine monks and nuns in the Low Countries and France” after the Dissolution of the Monasteries (cf. the introduction to E.T. Colledge and J. Walsh’s translation of the Revelations).

Of the LT Mss., two are in the British Library, the other at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. “It is possible that they were all connected with the work of the Benedictines of the Counter Reformation. Augustine Baker, while he was director of the English Benedictine nuns at Cambrai (now at Stanbrook), wrote to his friend Sir Robert Cotton, asking for copies of the devotional works of the medieval period. It is possible that the Paris Ms. came to France, or was made there, for such nuns” (Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Divine Love*, ed. M. Glasscoe).

Dom Serenus Cressy, a disciple of Augustine Baker, edited the first printed version of Julian’s work, using the Paris Ms., probably when he was chaplain to the community of Benedictine nuns at Paris (a foundation of Cambrai, now at Colwich). This appeared in 1670.

Julian’s message is first, and most obviously, one of optimism, and this must surely be THE message of her book for 20th century readers, our own time paralleling hers in many ways.

See, I am God. See, I am in all things. See, I do all things. See, I lead all things to the end I ordained for it from without beginning, by the same power, wisdom and love with which I made it. How should anything be amiss?
(LT, Ch.11).

D.F.B.

BOOK REVIEWS

***Word & Spirit* Volume 14**

The latest volume of *Word & Spirit* from St Bede's Publications, Petersham is *Aspects of Monasticism in America*. In 148 pages it presents 11 short articles dealing with a wide variety of the fascinating stages in the development of monastic life on the North American continent, whetting the appetite to discover more than can hope to be covered in these basic introductions. The authors, monks and nuns including several well known names, present for the most part topics connected with their own congregation or community or their own spiritual journey, thus giving a most personal touch to the articles.

Basil Pennington O.S.C.O. describes the establishment of the Trappists in America and various orders of nuns; Benedictine, Cistercian, Dominican, have their story told.

In an article by Terrence Kardong, a monk of Assumption Abbey in North Dakota, entitled "Benedictine Stability on the North Dakota Frontier" we discover how monks tried to live a stable monastic life, outside their abbeys in the Wild West at the turn of the century. "Pillars of stability in a quicksand of instability". We are told heroic tales of Bishop Martin Marty O.S.B. and his associates on the Indian Missions, with the conclusion that "at the final judgement his fidelity to the task will surely be counted as stability; his mess will be forgiven."

The authors account for the reasons why monastic life in America developed in a different style than it did in the European nations from where the monks and nuns originated, including historical circumstances, politics and the nature of frontier life. For example, the restrictions imposed by the Second Council of Baltimore, limiting solemn vows and enclosure of nuns in an effort to promote the active religious life at the expense of the contemplative communities, were not lifted until the 1950s.

The story of the first Bishop of North Carolina, the pugnacious Abbot Dom Leo Haid, is told in a lively manner by

Paschal Baumstein O.S.B. John Albert O.C.S.O. in “The Vigilance of Desire” gives an interesting account of the development of Thomas Merton’s monastic vocation.

St Bede’s published the volume in order to coincide with the celebrations of the quinentennial of the discovery of America. It is a fitting tribute to the men and women involved in establishing the monastic life on the continent and provides a useful starting point for us in Europe to come to understand our trans-Atlantic brothers and sisters realising that their historical evolution necessarily has resulted in a somewhat different view of the essential aspects of monastic life and of their own view of their role within the Church.

D.G.P.

Analecta Carthusiana

***The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes* Volume 99: 5-11**

This book review will change your life... if you are a door to door encyclopaedia salesman.

What? You have a different job? Coward. Such men deserve the V.C. for they are the S.A.S. of all salesmen. I speak from experience. I once had a job as a door to door salesman. My pride (and indeed my foot) still bears the scars of too many doors slammed in my desperately smiling face. I lasted two weeks in the job. My total sales? I was selling a central heating time-clock that cost (10 years ago) a “mere” £500. How many do you think I sold? None? How did you guess?

And selling time-clocks is easier than selling encyclopaedias. Imagine YOU are an encyclopaedia salesman (and murmur a grateful prayer if you are not); how would you get your 25 volumes on people’s shelves and their £100 per volume in your back pocket? I’m being serious. Stop and think. Any suggestions?

The training school for such salesmen teaches a simple (which does not mean the same as easy) technique, known, after a song of the 1950s, as “There are only three steps to selling”:

Step one: You persuade people that it is vital for them (and even more for their children) to understand the present.

Step two: You then show how it is impossible to understand the present without a knowledge of the past.

Step three: The final punch-line is a slogan guaranteed to have the customer reaching for his cheque book (or if it fails, your throat) “the past illuminates the present.”

I can see that all of you readers who ARE encyclopaedia salesman are now yawning. All this is old hat. Let me wake you up. Do you want to increase your sales by 500%? For a small-ish donation to our West Wing Appeal Fund we offer you a profound new insight, not “the past illuminates the present” but (cue fanfare and flashing lights) “the present illuminates the past.”

What’s all this got to do with six volumes, in Latin, of Carthusian Statutes from the 16th Century? Believe it or not, quite a lot. For the idea that “the present illuminates the past” does not only apply to selling encyclopaedias, it also helps you to understand church history. Oh yes? Well, here’s an example.

After the Council of Trent ended in 1563 the Carthusians updated their Statutes, the practical rules they lived by. Why? The bishops made no such request and the Statutes themselves give no short answer. 400 years and two more councils pass before there is a clear answer. It comes, as is often the case, from a pope.

In 1966 Paul VI wrote, “if the fruits of Vatican II are to come to maturity, religious institutes should endeavour to put the council's teaching and directives into effect. (...therefore their statutes should be revised. They should contain...) both spiritual and juridical elements to ensure that the statutes have a solid foundation and are permeated by a spirit that is authentic and a law which is alive” (*Ecclesiae Sanctae* Intro & 13).

So just as the Carthusians updated their Statutes after Trent, our own Subiaco Benedictine Congregation did after Vatican II. 400 years separate these two juridical acts but they have a common aim; both orders wanted to enable their members to “more and more live and think with the Church” (*Perfectae Caritatis* 6) And who lived and thought (indeed STILL lives and

thinks) with the Church more than Benedict?

His own rule is perhaps the best fulfilment of Paul VI's desire that "care should be taken not to produce a text that is either purely juridical or merely hortatory (*Ecclesiae Sanctae* 13). Benedict may call his text only a "little rule for beginners", yet he insists in Chapter 66 that it should be "read frequently in the community".

As you may remember, Chapter 66 is about the porter of the monastery. Benedict probably wrote it after a stormy session at the front door; a sixth century Gothic king was easy to deal with (cf Gregory's *Dialogues* Bk 2, Ch 14) but a Gothic door to door encyclopaedia salesman wedged not a foot but an axe in the door. His 20th century descendant simply shouts slogans through the letterbox; "the past illuminates the present" or (as we can now all recite in chorus) "the present illuminates the past".

"All very well for selling encyclopaedias", I hear you murmur, "but from the viewpoint of church history which argument is true?" Good question. What's your answer?

My answer? Both are true. Combine them and you get what the Church calls "Tradition". Since this review seems to have revolved around doors I can't resist quoting a hinge (i.e. a cardinal) to prove my point. So here's de Lubac; "Tradition is no more a thing of the past than of the present. It is a living and permanent force and cannot be divided into bits" (*Splendour of the Church* p 244).

These six volumes of *Analecta* illuminate a small part of that Tradition. They will never be serialised in the Sunday papers but they amply fulfil their editor's modest wish to "increase the availability and thus facilitate the study of the Carthusian Statutes" (Vol. 99:5 p vii).

Other new *Analecta Carthusiana* volumes: 35:13 *A book of uses of Syon Abbey*, Dr James Hogg; *Konrad von Harmburg* by Karl Fahrinmger. 35:14 *Carthusian Abstinence, Brigittine Legislation for Syon Abbey*, Lisbon, *Carthusian Annals* all by Dr James Hogg. 35:15 *Manasses I, Erzbischof von Rheims*, by Heinrich Gaul; *The Carthusians and the Temptations of Eve* by Dr

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All are available from Dr James Hogg, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, A5020, Austria.

D.D.R.