

FR ABBOT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

This year, as well as being the first year of preparation for the Millennium, is also one of many anniversaries. I am thinking here of saints, especially saints who have played great historical roles in the making of Europe and its Christian soul. There is Ambrose of Milan (d.397), Martin of Tours (d.397), Adalbert of Prague (d.997), Thérèse of Lisieux (d.1897). Three of these anniversaries bring us nearer home: bishop Ninian of Whithorn (d.397), first evangeliser of the southern Picts; abbot Columba of Iona (d.597), evangeliser of the northern Picts, and Augustine of Canterbury, abbot and bishop, who landed on the Isle of Thanet the year St Columba died and initiated the conversion of the pagan Jutes and Saxons of southern and eastern England.

How many celebrations of these beginnings have been held and are to be! It was a great privilege for four of us from Pluscarden to be among the several hundred Benedictine monks and nuns who sang Latin Vespers in Canterbury Cathedral on the afternoon of St Augustine's day, beginning with the very antiphon he and his companions sang approaching the Kentish capital 14 centuries ago. It will be a privilege, too, to receive Cardinal Winning here for the pilgrimage in honour of St Columba coming to Pluscarden on 22 June.

Of course, as every preacher has said, any celebration of these memories must inspire continuation of the mission. We show our thanks to God for what we have received by passing it on in our turn. For all of us, and monks professedly, this means above all what it meant to St Augustine and company approaching the pagan city: prayer. Prayer always has the power to change the landscapes, inner and outer. But on the day following the memoria

of St Boniface, our own Fr Ambrose set off for a year of service to our Province's monastery in Ghana, Kristo Buase. And that too, we hope, is part of the same story. Please pray for him and that young community of prayer.

We owe thanks to those visitors who have recently "shared" with us: Sr Dominic Savio, a Newry Poor Clare, who spoke about her work in what, spiritually as well as materially, must be Europe's poorest country, Albania; Fr Ignatius de Pont who kindly returned to complete a nourishing series of talks on prayer begun last year; and Fr Tom Norris, lecturer in Dogmatic Theology at Maynooth who gave this year's much appreciated Pentecost Lectures, opening up "the breadth and length and height and depth" of God's revelation in Christ along lines traced by the Swiss theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar.

In March, our junior, Fr Martin, was kindly enabled to take part in a study session with our Cistercian brethren at Nunraw. After Easter, I visited our monastery at Petersham and was able to appreciate its new situation. And now the summer is ahead of us, and we look forward to receiving two postulants in the course of it.

Yours in Christ,

D. Hugh, Abbot

NEWS FROM ST MARY'S

On February 15th, Mark McCurn and Richard Shaw installed the circular stained glass window in the church. This was given in memory of Fr Cyril and Br Stanislaus. During that month our new refectory was built. This has a vaulted ceiling, which helps to make you forget that the refectory is housed in what, at present, is a metal warehouse style building. On March 25th, Fr Anselm attended the Vigil Funeral Mass for the Most Rev Timothy Harrington, retired Bishop of Worcester, who had been very good to us ever since we arrived in Petersham. In 1997, we have been

renovating the older monastic building which was constructed as a carriage house. This is in the New England style made out of stone, brick and boards. We had to put heating in some rooms, and one room was no use as a room for a monk – too large. As this was long and narrow, we had to be rather creative in how we made two rooms out of this long narrow room. We also changed the function of a large room so that it could be used for visiting monks. This involved reconstructing one of the room's walls. All the boards on the outside of the building had to be replaced. The boards had been pine, but we replaced them with cedar which withstands the weather better than pine. It had been intended that when Br Gregory finished his term at Weston (May 6th) he and Br Isidore would stain these new boards on the outside of the monastery. However, last August, when the community was moving buildings, our oblate, Michael Sheridan, came from New York City and helped us. He has just suggested that he come again this August. Therefore he is going to stain the boards. This frees Br Isidore to be in charge of the garden. The growing season here is roughly from June 1st to the end of September. We were pleased to have Fr Abbot with us from April 14th until May 5th. This visit was extended due to his catching the flu/virus which had been going round the community. This extension enabled him to meet the Rev Alberto Morales and Rev Louis Gonzalez, two of the members of an Episcopalian community in Peoria, Illinois, with origins in Puerto Rico, who stayed with us April 29th to May 1st.

COLUMCILLE OR COLUMBA OF IONA, c 521-597

A little after midnight on 9 June 597, on Iona before the altar of the monastic church, St Columba died. This year we celebrate the 1400th anniversary of his passing. About a century after Columba's death, Adomnan, ninth abbot of Iona, wrote a *Life of Columba*, the earliest extant biography. In his vivid description of the saint's last days he shows us the abbot moving around the island in a farewell, blessing the brethren and places where he has spent the last 34 years since he left Ireland. Even the white horse that carries the milk, aware of the saint's coming departure, sheds tears in its sorrow.

The final monastic day has its work: Columba copies a Psalter to an appropriate point, leaving the next part to his successor. Immediately after the bell for the midnight office of Sunday, the abbot goes to the church, followed by Diarmait, his servant, who finds him dying. St Columba dies in Diarmait's arms in the act of blessing his monks who have come to the vigil and now surround him. Adomnan portrays the passing of a monk in his monastery among his brethren. Cut off from the mainland by a storm, only the island community attend their abbot's burial.

An Irishman, St Columba was born about the year 521 in Donegal, possibly at Gartan. His kindred, the *Ui Neill*, were the most important group of kingly families in Ireland. They all reckoned their descent from Columba's great-great-grandfather, Niall of the Nine Hostages. Columba's monastic successors were mainly from his own family, Adomnan, for example, was descended from Columba's uncle. Such abbots were often kin to the most powerful men in Ireland.

The Irish Church was the first Western Church to grow up outside the Roman Empire. The Romans knew the Irish as *Scoti* or Scots. From the first arrival of Christianity in the fifth century, the Church expanded in comparative isolation and not according to a central plan or a pre-existing pattern. The Gospel made its way in a rural society made up of many small kingdoms. This affected Irish ecclesiastical organisation. Monasticism appeared early in the

sixth century and St Columba was part of the second generation of monks.

We know little about Columba's early life. He was fostered by a priest named Cruithnechan. As a deacon he studied under Gemman in Leinster. He was also deacon to a bishop called Finnbar, Finnio or Vinniau. The latter is a British form of the name.

At the age of forty-one, he sailed away from Ireland to Britain, choosing to be a pilgrim for Christ. This pilgrimage or *peregrinatio* was the defining event of his life. He is remembered as one of the great Irish pilgrim saints. The Latin word *peregrinatio* could mean living as an alien away from one's homeland as well as travelling to a specific destination. This was the most radical form of renunciation for the Irish, since by leaving their community they lost status, legal protection and assistance.

A dramatic explanation is often sought for a dramatic event. By popular tradition Columba went into exile in penance for his part in the slaughter of the battle of Cul-Drebene. This is a later tradition which has become more elaborate as time has passed. The earliest traditions make no mention of the battle, except as a time reference.

By tradition Columba left Ireland with twelve companions, many of them his own relations. He set up a monastery on the island of Iona to the West of Mull. According to the annals, Conal mac Comgaill king of Dalriada gave the island to the saint. Dalriada in Britain was an Irish or Scottic colony that stretched from Kintyre to Ardnamurchan or Morven on the West side of the watershed. Iona presumably grew speedily. This was Columba's principal monastery but he and his monks founded other houses during his lifetime, including Durrow in Ireland.

As a pilgrim, St Columba relied on kings for monastic sites and for protection. Yet paradoxically it was Columba who took kings under his protection and patronage. Adomnan portrays him as a prophet, not only because of his clairvoyance, but because, like Samuel, he foretold the accession of certain kings and revealed God's judgement on others. He had dealings with the

kings of his own family, those of Dalriada, the king of the Picts, the king of Strathclyde and many others. After his death he assisted Oswald, king of Northumbria. Like the prophets his effective power derived from his closeness to God rather than from political sources.

According to the *Ecclesiastical History* of Saint Bede, Columba came to Britain principally as a missionary to convert the Picts, Bede's informants may have been Picts. It seems that the Picts of Bede's day remembered Columba as their apostle, and indeed it is how many consider him today. An elegy written on Columba's death, the *Amra Choluimb Chille* says "His blessings turned them, the mouths of the fierce ones who lived on the Tay, to the will of the King." Yet Adomnan, who is generally more reliable on Irish history, makes little mention of the missionary or pastoral activity. He depicts his predecessor as a monk before all else.

He narrates the conversion of some few Picts by Columba. He also tells of a contest of power between the court magicians of the Pictish king Bridei and the saint. Columba won, yet Adomnan does not say that the king was converted. Here he differs from Bede. Both he and Bede agree that in their own day the monasteries in the land of the Picts looked to Columba as patron and founder. It seems that his influence was as a monastic founder. Again, the *Life* does not show Columba as a pastor, though he does perform a miracle to baptise a child: being in a district without water (Ardnamurchan!) he causes water to flow from a rock. Adomnan's stories all describe clairvoyance, miracles or supernatural visitations and he never shows the human efforts of the saint. However he does set the abbot against the background of Iona and the monastic life of the community. There we see the brethren carrying on their daily lives in the fields, workshops and the church of the monastery.

Being an island monastery, the sea, seafarers and ships figure largely in its life. Across the sea come pilgrims and penitents to the holy man, who shows them care and solicitude in their penitence and sternness in their obduracy. Saints also come to

him from Ireland. Although the *Amra Choluimb Chille* shows Columba particularly as a teacher, he is not responsible for the sanctity of the other saints. In Adomnan's picture, they are saints because of their own relationship to God and not because of their relationship to Columba.

After his death the family of Iona continued to expand. Though Iona was not itself a pastoral or missionary monastery, it made pastoral and missionary foundations, most notably in Northumbria, Oswald, as prince of Northumbria, had been an exile in Ireland. Later, before a battle against the Britons, Saint Columba appeared to King Oswald promising victory. The king looked to the community of Iona to provide missionaries. The saintly bishop Aidan eventually came south to undertake the evangelisation and founded the monastery of Lindisfarne,

In Ireland the network of monasteries owing allegiance to Columcille continued to exist until the Norman invasion of the twelfth century. In Britain the advent of the Norsemen in the ninth century disrupted the Hebridean monasteries. Monks of Iona suffered martyrdom, though the monastery of Iona continued to exist. In 849 the King of the Scots, Kenneth MacAlpin, who had taken over the Kingdom of the Picts about six years previously, brought a part of the relics of Columba to his church at Dunkeld. There they played an important part in the life of the new joint kingdom.

Columba's influence arose from his having left his kin and noble status to live in pilgrimage away from Ireland on a small island off the coast of Britain. Yet his influence endures to this day in Scotland, Ireland, England and beyond. For many Scots he is the representative ecclesiastical figure from the whole period from his leaving Ireland until the arrival of Saint Margaret in Scotland in 1066.

DMS

LETTER FROM POPE JOHN PAUL H TO CARDINAL HUME FOR THE 1400TH ANNIVERSARY OF ST AUGUSTINE'S ARRIVAL IN BRITAIN

This year marks the 1400th anniversary of the arrival in Britain of Augustine, the apostle of the English, whose work among the Anglo-Saxons laid the foundation for the whole later growth of the church in your country. The apostolate of the first Archbishop of Canterbury stands out as one of the principal chapters of the great missionary saga of the first Millennium, which saw the extension of the Gospel message and the *plantantio Ecclesiae* from one end of Europe to the other.

Evangelisation had already begun in Britain in the third century, but in the second half of the fifth century and during the sixth, Christianity in southern and eastern England had almost disappeared under the onslaught of invaders from abroad. To meet this challenge, my predecessor in the See of Rome, Pope Gregory the Great, chose the Prior of St Andrew's monastery on the Coelian Hill and sent him to evangelise these pagan peoples. As the Venerable Bede writes: 'Gregory, prompted by divine inspiration, sent a servant of God named Augustine and several more God-fearing monks with him to preach the word of God to the English race... Rightly can we and ought we to consider him our own Apostle.'

When Augustine and his companions arrived at Ebbsfleet in Kent in 597, King Ethelbert helped them to settle in Canterbury, the capital of the Kentish kingdom, and to launch their missionary endeavour from there, thus determining the prominent place which Canterbury still holds in English ecclesiastical life. Although Augustine's labour in England only lasted about seven years, they had the most significant consequences for the life of the Church in your island and beyond. Augustine's mission meant the consolidation of Christianity in Britain, giving it strong links with the see of Rome. He and his companions sowed the seed of a Christian people remarkably gifted from the beginning with saintly

men and women who spread civilisation and learning, provided schools, established libraries and produced a wonderful array of literary and artistic works. And quite soon that healthy tree bore fruits beyond England, and in the rise of major missionary ventures to other countries of Europe. The evangelising enterprise of Boniface and Walburga in Germany, of Willibrord in the Low Countries and later, of Henrik in Finland: all these in a very real sense followed from Augustine's labours.

These, in outline, are some of the historical facts surrounding the event which you are now commemorating. The anniversary of Augustine's arrival on your shores is indeed an occasion for you and your brother bishops and the Catholic faithful of your land to offer heartfelt thanks to God who in his Providence willed that the Gospel should be preached there through the instrumentality of his chosen servant. Through Your Eminence I also send my warmest greetings in the Lord to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, and the members of the Anglican Communion, as well as to all those belonging to other Christian denominations who likewise see this anniversary as a time for rejoicing in the common heritage of our faith in Jesus Christ. The commemoration presents an opportunity for all English Christians to recall how decisively the Gospel of Jesus Christ has contributed to the spirit and culture of the nation which slowly emerged from the conversion to Christianity and consequent cultural and social amalgamation of its peoples.

To pay homage to your forbear in the Faith is to deepen awareness of the message of salvation, reconciliation and peace among men which he brought. It is to reflect on the fact that the Gospel message of life and truth which St Augustine preached is as valid today as it was in his time. At the dawn of a new Millennium, this message constitutes the firm basis on which to build a society which upholds all that is good and just in human relations and seeks in every way to be truly worthy of man and of his transcendent destiny. I join you all in praying that the memory of the Apostle of the English will bring about a fresh enthusiasm in living the Christian life which in turn may serve to bring society

ever closer to the truth, charity, justice and peace which are God's gifts to those who love him. I pray that the memory of your common ecclesial heritage will lead all Christ's disciples in Britain to ever increasing ecumenical co-operation, in a constant search for that fidelity to God's grace which alone can lead to the unity without seam or tear which the Lord wishes for his followers. As Bishop of Rome I give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for the contribution made by English Christians in every age to the universal patrimony of the Bride of Christ, the Church.

Upon all joined in praising God for St Augustine's arrival in England 1400 years ago I cordially invoke the abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Johannes Paulus II

In recent months the Abbey has lost two good friends of long standing, both, in their different ways, responsible for the building-up of the Abbey over the years.

JOHN PURVES

The initials JTP appear on many of the architectural drawings for the Abbey's various projects involving Mr. W. Murray Jack as our Architect. Those initials were always a guarantee of scrupulous care and fine craftsmanship, for John Purves would be satisfied with nothing less. Like many who have been involved with the Abbey's projects, he found them a source of pleasure and pride, and enjoyed his visits here, which were on a monthly basis during our major constructions. His was a warm and attractive personality, and his practical and inventive mind was always ready with suggestions and solutions for the unforeseen difficulties of construction. He was respected and liked by the craftsmen whose work he oversaw and directed, and news of his death, after a very short illness, at the early age of 54 was universally greeted with regret. As Mr. Jack's right-hand man, he was responsible for

drawings, detail, minutes and *minutiae* and it is a tribute to him that these were always instantly available and accurate.

When I heard of his death, the quotation “Zeal for Thy house has consumed me” sprang to mind. John could not abide anything shoddy or second-rate, and became very broad in his indignation, “That’ll no dae!” or “That’s nae yeese!”, his face would redden, he would seize his clip-board, moisten a finger and turn over another page to record the dereliction to be brought to the delinquent’s notice.

I enjoyed working with him, cheery, frank. in differing but amenable to other views, honest and trustworthy, no time-server, but a man who took a pride and pleasure in his work. We extend our sympathy to his wife Betty, often his companion on his visits, and to John, his son, following in his father's footsteps, and whose academic success was to John a source of legitimate pride and pleasure.

DGC

MAJOR COLIN HUNTER, M.C.

Colin Hunter’s role in building up the Abbey was curiously complementary to that of John Purves, and neither would have been able to realize his contribution without the other, for while John dealt with (sometimes literally!) concrete building materials, Colin dealt initially with our investments, as our Stockbroker. In times of difficulty, this meant selling everything but the family silver, and over the years he saw dramatic ups and downs which would be the envy of a roller-coaster designer.

Colin, however, could not restrict himself to a mere spectator's part, but involved himself actively in helping the Abbey in more informal ways. He was a member of the Appeal Committee which successfully raised £100,000 in a year, to put a roof on and restore the Chancel for our 750th anniversary. It was he who originated the "Donate-a-slate" scheme, which encouraged people to engrave their names or their friends’ on slates for the

restored roof, raising tens of thousands of pounds in the process.

He harnessed his love for music for the Abbey's benefit, too, constituting himself as Impresario for the Abbey and attracting a series of memorable performances and performers, notably from the Aberdeen International Youth Festival, and initiating two hugely popular "for all" performances of *The Messiah* and one of the *Creation*, in all of which he sang in the choir. In this and other ways he was an active member of the West Wing Appeal Committee.

He so much enjoyed singing here that he encouraged the formation of a group to come weekly to the Abbey to sing together, purely for the pleasure, and very fittingly this group (augmented by Br Michael's bass), sang at his Commemoration Service at St Margarets Lossiemouth.

Colin's gallantry in the service of his country is a matter of public record. Personally, he was always remarkably simple, in the best sense of that word, unassuming, self-effacing and taking unfeigned joy in simple pleasures. He was never able to get his beloved asparagus to take root in the Abbey garden, but he has now done better than that: his ashes rest in our cemetery, to spring up to eternal Life.

We offer our sympathy to his wife Maureen and to Alistair, Sheena, Andrew and his wider family.

DGC

THE ROAD FROM ELGIN TO PLUSCARDEN

The road from Elgin to Pluscarden is not without interest. It has been travelled by Kings, Bishops and pilgrims for more than seven centuries. The forest on Heldon Hill was a royal hunting ground and no doubt on one of these expeditions from his castle in Elgin, Alexander II decided that the Vale of St Andrew was a suitable place for a monastery. The road to Pluscarden may be said to begin at the end of the High Street where it reaches Gray's Hospital and is clearly indicated as *Pluscarden Road*. It crosses the railway

which of course did not exist until 1858, and then the River Lossie at Palmerscross. As the name suggests, it was here that *Palmers* or Pilgrims crossed the river on their way to Pluscarden but originally there was only a ford here and then later a wooden footbridge for pedestrians. The present stone bridge of two arches was built in 1814. After heavy rain, the river rises rapidly and crossing it could be quite dangerous. In the floods of 1829 the present bridge was nearly carried away but fortunately was saved. About the same time as the Pluscarden bridge was built, a good substantial single-arched one was built over the waters of *Lochty* or the *Black Burn* which today is the boundary of the Abbey land on the south side. The Lochty is a tributary of the Lossie which it joins at Pittendreich. The water here rises with great rapidity and can be dangerous. The mill of Pittendreich, which is now a private house, belonged to the monastery in the Middle Ages. It ceased to operate as a water mill about 1970 and until then, we used to have our barley ground there. The farm at Pittendreich was also the birthplace of the Earl of Morton, Lord James Douglas, who for a brief period obtained illegal possession of Pluscarden in 1577. He died by the guillotine in 1580.

At a point a few miles further on, the line of the road was altered in 1821 at Ness End where a small bridge was built in 1821 to take the road round through Pluscarden Village. This appears to have been the work of the Earl of Fife who owned the Pluscarden Estate at this time and who rebuilt most of the farm houses and cottages on the estate. He had also planted in the same year the Hill of Heldon – an area of about 1000 acres – with Scots fir, larch and some hardwood. The hill had previously been bare heather. Before this new diversion the road had continued straight ahead at Ness End along the foot of the hill and of the forest and along the precinct wall right up to the monastery North Gate, which until that time had been the main entrance. Today only the archway remains but there would have been a gatehouse and there are still steps leading to a room over the archway and a small confined room, known as the dungeon, but more probably just a store place. The road continued on across the fields, along the edge of the

forest for another two miles before joining the Rafford Road. This old approach to the monastery was certainly picturesque but in winter when rain water courses down the hillside, it must have been very muddy and inconvenient and if it was in use today we would have the disturbance of traffic on our own doorstep.

On 20 January 1865 Elgin Council took on responsibility in terms of the Act of Parliament, for roads within the Burgh. Hitherto they had been in the care of the proprietors of estates and parish councils. So we have to thank the fourth Earl of Fife for the present road through the village. Indeed, Alexander Duff, fourth Earl of Fife, was a great benefactor of our valley and a very popular figure. He was an enlightened agriculturalist and said to have introduced the scythe to the glen and also grass seed. He intended restoring the Priory as a residence for himself and re-roofed the east wing; made the monk's dayroom the village Kirk, put in a fire place in the Chapter house while the open dormitory was given a spring hung floor and used for dances. On his birthday there was a bonfire on the hill and a supper in the Priory.

There were plans to restore the north gatehouse – or at least provide it with battlements and we have drawings of this by his factor, Mr Lawson. The archway was provided with wrought iron gates. The lodge at the end of the drive dates from this time. So too does the church building on the 'new' road through Pluscarden village. This road crosses yet another bridge, known as Paul's Bridge (who was Paul? Possibly the builder). The gates to the drive were surmounted by a stone arch with a cross on the top. It was too low for modern traffic and was removed some twenty years ago. Incidentally the Lodge is adorned with numerous crosses – so that a postulant arriving for the first time at Pluscarden thought it was the monastery. The yew tree field (so called because there are four Irish yews in the centre) was a nursery for the forest and some of our finest trees – copper beech, holm oak, a Wellingtonia and sycamores, all date from this period. Possibly also the avenue of limes which leads from the North Gate and a similar one which lined the main drive until a great gale in the 1950s.

So our mediaeval pilgrim would have set off thither on foot or on horseback from Elgin along the six and a half miles, forded the swollen waters of the Lossie and her tributary the Lochty Burn, made his way up along the side of the Monaughty Forest (oak trees rather than Sitka Spruce) and if it was dark might have heard the cry of the wolves. Our foundation charter allows us to hunt them, but not the King's deer. Arriving at the North Gate he would find the heavy wooden door shut, would ring the bell and after some time the Brother Porter would welcome him as the Rule provides. It is much easier today. The taxi takes 15 minutes, there are no fords to wade through, no wolves in the forest, but the same warm welcome at the monastery door.

DAS

NEW PIPE ORGAN: PROGRESS REPORT

In early May we were visited by Kenneth Tickell, whose firm is to design and build our new pipe organ. After discussions with us he has produced a preliminary design for our approval which is reproduced here. Although he has designed some very elaborate instruments, including the 35-stop organ at St Barnabas, Dulwich this year, which features 16 ft flamed copper front pipes, Mr Tickell thought that the simplicity of our choir required that the new organ be of quite a sober design.

The height of the proposed organ is about the same as the present organ, but there is a significant reduction in width and depth. The casework is of light oak, with mouldings similar to the choir stalls. The front pipes of polished tin are from the Open Diapason, which is the only rank of pipes not enclosed within the "swell box". Much care and ingenuity has gone into the layout of the pipes inside, in order to keep the organ as compact as possible. The list of stops remains the same as detailed in the last newsletter. The acanthus leaf pattern for the pipe shades is only a provisional design at present, as it is hoped that we might find a pattern which echoes some other feature in the church.

We have been greatly encouraged by the donations for the new organ which have come in so far. It seems that there is an enthusiastic interest in the project. All donations are very welcome, as it will be at least a year before the completion of the scheme. At present it seems that the organ should be ready in July 1998, well before the celebrations for our Golden Jubilee. It is worth noting that donations of £250 or over can be made as a gift aid, for which we can also claim back the tax, at no cost to the donor. We can supply the necessary forms for this.

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, CONSTANTINOPLE

Constantinople was once the Capital city of the Christian Empire and known as New Rome. In 1453 it was captured by the Muslims but even as late as the early years of this century the city was home to half a million Christians who made up half the population. Today it is called Istanbul. After decades of persecution only a few thousand Christians are left, although it is still the seat of the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople.

When Archimandrite Serge Keleher, a Greek-Catholic priest from Ireland, visited the City in 1996 he found only one Greek-Catholic Church (Greek-Catholics are Eastern Orthodox who are in full communion with Rome). Holy Trinity Church was in poor repair, the only Greek-Catholic priest in Turkey was dying of cancer and there had been no services for months.

When Fr Serge served the Liturgy at the Church a good number of local Greek-Catholics turned up, as did a community of Little Sisters of Jesus. He has since been given responsibility for the Church by the local Bishop and returned this year to celebrate Easter and organise the restoration of the Church. Vast numbers of people from the former communist countries, some of whom are Greek-Catholics, are coming to Istanbul and it is very important that the Church of the Holy Trinity continues to function. If it is allowed to close, the government would not allow another Church to be opened. There would then be no Greek-Catholic Church in

Constantinople, which is the cradle of the Byzantine Rite, or anywhere in Turkey.

There has been a good response to Fr Serge's initiative and pilgrimages are being organised by Greek-Catholics in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. It is also hoped to find a priest to serve the Church on a permanent basis. There is an urgent need for financial support. Readers of Pluscarden Benedictines who wish to help this excellent cause or who want more information should write to Fr Serge at one of the following addresses:

c/o Eastern Churches Journal.
PMP House, Gardner Road,
Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 7RJ
England

c/o Eastern Churches Journal
PO Box 146
Fairfax, VA 22030
USA

All who are interested in the Eastern Churches should subscribe to the *Eastern Churches Journal* (further details from the above addresses) and join "The Society of St John Chrysostom": 14 Macduff Rd, LONDON SW11 4DA.

DAH

MONASTERIES OF THE SUBIACO CONGREGATION NO 71

The Benedictine Nuns of Our Lady of Calvary, the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem. Affiliated to the French Province

In the 11th century, Robert D'Arbrissel founded the Abbey of Fontevraud in France for monks and nuns. The Abbess had complete authority over the monks. It remained so until the Revolution of 1789. A reform was begun by Madame Antoinette d'Orleans and the Capuchin Pere Joseph de Tremblay, which became the Congregation of Mt Calvary. The first house was at Poitiers and then others at Angers, Orleans and in Brittany. From the beginning the foundation longed for the recovery of the Holy Places, then in the hands of the Turks. The Congregation nourished these desires for three centuries.

In 1896 the foundation of a monastery at the Mount of Olives was authorised by Leo XIII - with an orphanage for Greek Melchite girls. At the end of 1892 Mgr Mallouk, Vicar General of the Melkite Patriarch in Jerusalem, visited the Calvary nuns at Angers to discuss the possibility of a foundation in the Holy Land. Property was bought in 1894. However an insurmountable obstacle appeared. The Latin patriarch had given his approval in principle but the Congregation of Propaganda refused permission on the excuse that there were too many religious houses in Jerusalem. Cardinal Lobsochowsky did not want another French foundation. The Superior General applied to the Melkite Patriarch who obtained authorisation on the condition that they open an orphanage for Melkite girls. The founders were received by Leo XIII who said, "my desire is that you work by this means (the orphanage) for the union of the churches." However, obstacles remained. Cardinal Rampolla came to Jerusalem and authorised the Latin Patriarch, Mgr Piavi to take the nuns under his jurisdiction.

The first mass was offered on 27 April 1897, so this year is the centenary. The orphanage was closed in 1977 and replaced by financial assistance for school children.

The nuns follow the Benedictine tradition of liturgical prayer, manual work, the reception of the poor and pilgrims. The iconographic workshop serves as a hyphen between the churches of East and West. There is also a programme of biblical and iconographic education for French-speaking nuns.

Today there are 15 nuns in the community of 7 nationalities. In France the Congregation of Calvary has houses in four places under the authority of a Superior General: St Jean-de-Braye; St Julien-L'Ars; Angers and Kerbénéat in Brittany which was formerly the house of our monks of Landévennec. Each house is autonomous under the care of a Prioress.