

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pluscarden Benedictines</b> <b>No. 105 News and Notes for our Friends June 1995</b></p>
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**FR ABBOT'S LETTER**

Dear Friends,

In our last issue, I referred to the forthcoming solemn profession of Br Gregory Phillips, a monk of St Mary's, our dependent house in the U.S.A. This took place as planned on 12th March, the 2nd Sunday of Lent. The occasion was a happy one, as described elsewhere in this issue, and Br Gregory's family was well represented, having made the long journey from Milwaukee to New England. At solemn profession, a monk does not simply "take vows", professing stability, conversion of life and obedience. He is also "consecrated" to God through a solemn blessing given by his abbot. It is an impressive moment in the rite as a whole. The *consecrandus* or "consecree" (if the word can be forgiven) lies prostrate on the ground, surrounded by the solemnly professed of his own community (and, at St Mary's, also by the solemnly professed nuns of St Scholastica's). These add their own assent to the prayer of blessing. The Holy Spirit is invoked. Great gifts are asked for the new monk: faith, hope and love; a spirit of prayer; a heart free from care and attachments and attentive to God's word; a spirit of silence and solitude; simplicity and purity of heart, discernment, integrity and poverty of spirit. After this, he is clothed in the cowl, symbol of the new man, and handed the psalter, the weapon of prayer for the spiritual combat and the symbol of his ministry in the Church. We pray that the Holy Spirit will uphold Br Gregory in his choice of life. More recently, on Sunday 28th May, Br Bernard Osbaldestone of the same community made his simple profession. Br Bernard is 39 and from California.

On the home front, too, there is no lack of news. While I

was in America, Mother Mary St Michael, formerly prioress of the Carmelites at Kirkintilloch, spoke to the brethren about her Order, and about the newly-formed Association of British Contemplatives (ABC) in which she is a leading figure. On 21st March, we were happy to entertain the clergy of our diocese, as we do each year. On the 29th, we were given a stimulating talk by Dr Thomas Ward of the National Association of Catholic Families. On 1st April, Br Dunstan and I attended the Aberdeen civic reception of Scotland's new Cardinal, Archbishop Winning. This year the University of Aberdeen is celebrating the 500th anniversary of its foundation and, a few weeks later, on the 3rd Sunday of Easter, 16 of the community sung Vespers in King's College Chapel, Old Aberdeen. This was at the invitation of the University chaplain, Dr William Murdoch. Well over 100 people attended, which exceeded expectations. On the 5/6th May we had the pleasure and privilege of a visit from the Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order, Abbot Jerome Theisen. He was attending an ecumenical meeting in the north of England and took the opportunity to come further north still, visiting ourselves, Fort Augustus, the Tyburn sisters at Largs, and finally Ampleforth. He spoke to us about last year's Roman Synod on the Consecrated Life, on his experiences as Abbot Primate and his work on behalf of Sant'Anselmo, the Benedictine University in Rome. On Sunday 7th May, Br Benedict and I attended the VE service in the ruins of Elgin Cathedral. As the Cathedral filled, we heard the sound of familiar bells – a recording of our own! The following weekend, we were visited by Br Graeme Littleton of the Community of the Transfiguration in Breakwater, Victoria, Australia. The Community is some 25 years old, interdenominational and with members of both sexes. It has no Catholics. It gives an impressive testimony to the sheer insuppressibility of the monastic charism. The “form” is other than that of traditional Roman Catholic monasticism, but the “spirit” of prayer, asceticism and mutual charity would surely have been recognised as authentic by the great monastic founders. Br Graeme also spoke movingly, as a Baptist, of his progressive discovery of our Lady. We were pleased to establish this link.

At the time of writing, we look forward to Fr Paul McPartlan's series of Pentecost Lectures: "the Eucharist makes the Church".

We also look forward to the solemn profession of Br Augustine Holmes, set for 25th July. Br Augustine is from Kent. Please keep him in your prayers as he approaches his definitive consecration. With his profession, our novitiate will be smaller than it has been for a long time. We can only entrust this, as we must entrust everything, to the wise providence of God and the prayers of our friends.

With every blessing for the summer,

+Fr Hugh OSB, Abbot

## **THE EDITOR'S JOTTINGS**

In Easter week I went to Belgium for the meeting of our Abbot President's Council at the Abbey of Affligem. The Visitors from Italy, France, Spain, Flanders, Germany and England were present but because of distance and expense those of Africa-Madagascar, the Philippines and Vietnam were unable to be there. In addition to the reports from the President, we had to prepare for the General Chapter which will be held at Praglia in the north of Italy in September 1996. We also had the joy of celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Abbot of Affligem, Dom Jan Goetghebeur, when the other Abbots of the Flemish Province joined us for Mass and a festive lunch. They came from Dendermonde, Steenbrugge and Leuven. Affligem is the senior abbey by age, being founded in 1083. It was visited by St Bernard and a monk of Affligem founded the famous German abbey of Maria Laach. The church and the monastery were destroyed at the time of the French Revolution and in World War I. The present building is modern and the work of Dom Bellot who built the abbey of Quarr.

I returned to Ramsgate Abbey as our French Abbots were to hold their annual meeting in England – "to get to know the

Province". They arrived across La Manche in a minibus and spent a day at St Augustine's abbey seeing the life of the community – including washing up after supper! Ramsgate is of course close to France as the seagull flies and its busy harbour and noisy traffic around the abbey is a constant reminder of this. Moreover the famous architect who built the church and lived in the Grange – A. W. Pugin – was the son of a Frenchman. The abbots also visited Canterbury – built by their Norman ancestors from Caen stone – and also the Benedictine nuns at Minster.

On the way to Minster we stopped at Pegwell Bay to see the cross which marks the place where St Augustine landed in 597. The 1400th anniversary celebrations begin next year.

Incidentally, an unfortunate whale had been stranded on the beach just before we were there and in spite of efforts to save it, failed to survive.

As Visitor it was my privilege to welcome our French brothers to our Province, so I accompanied them to Farnborough Abbey – the mausoleum of the Emperor Napoleon III, the Empress Eugenie and the Prince Imperial. After Vespers the organist gave us a recital on the magnificent organ.

Monday afternoon saw us on the way to Prinknash and the beginning of a heat-wave. The Gloucestershire countryside was at its best. Here they spent three days for their meeting and shared the life of the community. Our early days at Caldey owed much to the monks of La Pierre-qui-Vire through Abbot Aelred's contact with the exiled monks at Buckfast and in particular Dom Gariador, a monk of Belloc who became Prior of Buckfast, and later, as Abbot General, received us into the Subiaco Congregation. The monks of Landévennec in Brittany were also exiles in South Wales at Caermaria near Cardigan and so not far from Caldey. The bell from this monastery – now a farm house – was recently returned to Landévennec through the kindness of Canon Cunnane the parish priest of Cardigan and is now in the monastery's daughter house in Haiti in the West Indies. Landévennec has many links with Cornwall and the Cardigan parish.

The Abbey of Fleury was the centre of a monastic reform

movement in the 10th century. SS Oswald, Ethelwold and Dunstan were English monks from this abbey and bishops of Winchester. So Abbot Etienne of Fleury later made his way to Winchester. I should also mention our visit to Gloucester Cathedral where as always we were given a very warm welcome. The first Norman abbot was Bl. Serlo, a monk of Mt-S-Michel.

Our centenary year will conclude on 11th July with Latin Vespers sung in Gloucester Cathedral which was once a Benedictine Abbey and also the owner of the manor-house and estate of Prinknash. Monks from all our monasteries will be there and Cardinal Hume OSB will preside.

In September our Provincial Chapter will meet at Prinknash when we look forward to meeting our brothers and sisters from the overseas houses.

Your Editor,  
Dom Alfred

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

Br Gregory Phillips' Solemn Profession on March 12th went very well. Father Anselm gave a homily full of wit and wisdom on the three Benedictine vows. Our Oblate, Philip Zaleski, read the first reading (1 Kings 19:4-9a, 11-15a) and Br Gregory's sister, Jacqueline Hofstetter, read the second reading (Philippians 3:17-4:1).

In the last few months we have had a number of visitors. In early March Brs Robert and Kevin, members of an Episcopalian group called the Servants of the Holy Family, visited us from Maine. On March 21st, Abbot Augustine Roberts (St Joseph's Abbey, Spencer) brought the superior, Fr Placido, of a Cistercian monastery of Venezuela to see us. As their community is the same size as ours (seven members), Fr Placido was interested in our industries – i.e. dogs and wax products. During the Easter Triduum we had many priest guests, including Frs Avery Dulles SJ (preacher at the Liturgy of the Passion on Good Friday), Brian

Daley SJ (main celebrant and preacher at the Easter Sunday morning mass), Tom Di Lorenzo, George Berthold Lanagan (from Australia). Br Gregory Carling, of Pluscarden Abbey, visited us May 14-17. His parents accompanied him.

Three other events of interest have been: firstly, the formation workshop of monasteries of New England held here and St Scholastica Priory on March 29. Secondly, on May 3rd at the same place was held the meeting of the Monastic Superiors of New England. Among those attending were Fr Anselm, Mother Mary Clare, Abbots Augustine (Spencer), Nicholas (Hingham), Matthew (Manchester), Frs Xavier (Still River), Romuald (Ephiphany, Camaldolese), Srs Agnes and Cecile (Wrentham). Lastly, as in England, there is in New England a strong tradition of Morris dancing. In the afternoon of May 13th, the Millers River Morris team danced for us. Two members of this group are friends of the community.

## **STATISTICAL THOUGHTS**

Every year our monasteries send a statistical report to the Abbot President in Rome. The figures for 1994 have just been published.

The Subiaco Congregation has 1,321 monks – 17 less than in 1993 – and in fact there has been a fall in numbers in each of the nine provinces. On the other hand there are 219 young monks in formation: 124 simply professed, 76 novices and 23 postulants. The largest province is France with 333 monks – 24 in formation – followed by the Italians 261 monks – 40 in formation. The Spanish have 212 monks with 35 in formation. The English are in fourth place with 118 monks and 28 in formation; closely followed by the African monks' 118 with 41 young monks and Flanders 106 and 6 young monks. The Vietnamese have 35 monks in Solemn Vows but 37 in formation. We have two German monasteries with 26 monks and the Philippines number 57. There are also a few regular oblates in some Provinces.

The fall in numbers would seem to be due to a) deaths and

b) young monks leaving so the biggest losses are in Africa – 17 where there are 41 Juniors, Italy 15 with 35 Juniors and Spain a loss of 14 out of 35 Juniors. The modest figures from our own Province give signs for hope especially with a quarter of the monks, young men in formation.

Unfortunately The Catholic Directory for England and Wales, unlike The Scottish Catholic Directory, gives no figures for Religious men and women. It would be interesting to compare them with Cardinal Gasquet's estimates at the time of the Reformation. Of course England was then a Catholic country with a very much smaller population (2.2 million in 1545, now about 52 million) and there was not the large variety of Religious Orders we have today. The Cardinal estimated a total of 8,081 canons, monks and nuns.

Order	Number of Houses	Number of members
Benedictines	62 (today 16)	1,408 (489)
Cistercians	40 (2)	596 ( 56)
Carthusians	9 (1)	134 ( 15)
Austin Canons	59 (3)	773 ( 12)
Norbertines	12 (2)	159 ( 11)
Gilbertines	20 (none)	151(none)

In addition the Friars – Black, White and Grey – numbered about 1,500 at the Reformation; nuns of various orders 1,560, and monks and canons of the lesser houses, 1,500.

Today the vast majority of Religious men and especially women belong to the, so called, more active orders, engaged in teaching, nursing and social work. This no doubt is a reflection on the change in the way of life of the country in general – from a mainly agricultural to an industrial land, with a concentration of the population in the big cities and the de-population of the countryside. There is an old saying: Benedict loved the mountains, Bernard the valleys, Dominic the cities and Francis the towns. The environment helps to produce the vocation.

DAS

## BOOK REVIEWS

**ADOREMUS: *Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament***, compiled and published by the Association for Latin Liturgy, 1993. 30pp £1.50.

This little pamphlet, neatly printed and bound in a card cover, intends to provide a stimulus towards the practice of the devotion known as “Benediction” and simultaneously facilitate its practise, by providing the necessary texts and other materials.

Via three short prefatory quotations, from Bishop Challoner’s “Garden of the Soul”, Archbishop Couve de Murville’s “Pastoral on devotion to the Blessed Sacrament” and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it endeavours to show the what and why of Benediction.

Then there is a brief specimen order of service for Benediction, followed by a selection of nine suitable hymns, which leans (with good reason) on St Thomas Aquinas’ Corpus Christi compositions. In a second edition, it would be good to include some of the Paschal classics, equally appropriate and venerable, and MUCH easier to sing! The editors should be commended for providing parallel English translations to Latin texts wherever they occur.

These are in turn followed by a selection of eight hymns in English, fairly described as old favourites (five are translations from Latin originals). The Latin and English hymns are numbered consecutively, making life easier for those in charge of hymn-boards.

The fourth part consists of the four Marian antiphons (familiar to Pluscarden Compline-goers), presumably for use after the exposition is finished. In an Appendix are four prayers in English, for England (!), for the nation, for the Pope and for the Church.

This is a legible and in current jargon “user-friendly” little publication. (For those more musically ambitious, the *Solesmes Liber Cantualis* at about £6, or the *Cantus Selecti*, around £8.50, are the next steps upwards). Reasonably enough, it leaves the



provision of Scripture readings, silences and other prayers to others: this is a skeleton on which to build, and in this it follows the official Latin and English liturgical books, merely indicating some of the options. We wish it every success.

DGC

***Liturgical Music in Lutheran Benedictine Monasticism*** by Dom David Nicholson, O.S.B., Monk of Mount Angel Abbey, Oregon, U.S.A., published by Mount Angel Abbey, St. Benedict, Oregon 97373, U.S.A. 1993, pp. 27, npg.

This handsomely-produced offering from Dom David Nicholson represents, it seems fair to assume, the final element in his survey of contemporary Benedictine liturgy, which has already embraced volumes on the monks (1986), the nuns (1987), the monks and nuns of the Cistercian/Trappist traditions (1988) and the Anglican Benedictines (1990).

In his latest work he continues his report, formed from responses to his questionnaire, on the state of liturgical music in the monastic world of St. Benedict's disciples, in the present work confining himself, as the title indicates, to its Lutheran exponents. This is a slightly specialised field, and covers but six communities, one in Michigan in the United States of America, two in Germany and three in Sweden. They vary in size and composition: in the United States St. Augustine's house, with but one professed member and a Fellowship of 400, while in Sweden the Sisters of the Holy Spirit have persevered since 1955, with admirable fidelity and apparently only two members (as do the Sisters of the Risen Saviour, founded a decade later), while the monks of Ostanbäck have grown despite the effects on their community of the problems in their Church. In Germany, the Community Casteller Ring is based near Rödelsee in northern Bavaria, with three small foundations and a total of 48 sisters, popularly called "Evangelical Benedictines", their work centres largely on spiritual formation. In contrast, at St Wigbert's Priory at Werninghausen, in what used to be East Germany, who have grown from their origins in 1967, through (State-inspired?) opposition and disbandment by Church

authorities, with a new beginning in 1973 and steady growth thereafter. There appear to be about seven monks at present, with a perhaps more traditional flavour to their life and liturgy. Despite the title, there is more of community history than Lutheran liturgical music (though that does receive due attention) in this interesting little work. The accounts of the houses are illustrated with a number of black and white photographs, which add greatly to the pleasure of the reader. It is pleasing to note how often it appears that the support of long-established Catholic Benedictine houses has been generously given and critical in the formation and growth of communities and members, bearing out St. Benedict's remark that wherever we campaign, it is the same one true King we serve.

Dom David has deserved well of liturgical historians for his labour of love, at a time when liturgical ferment has never been greater, in recording all that he has. It is to be hoped he has enjoyed the compilation as much as readers seem to enjoy dipping into it!

DGC

### ***Word & Spirit: A Monastic Review 16: The Monastery and the City***

Once again the nuns of Petersham have given us a cornucopia of contemporary monastic scholarship. The theme is approached from different angles, for example Adalbert de Vogüé gives a detailed analysis of the meaning of stability in early monastic texts and Archabbot Notker Wolf speaks of the experience of his Congregation of St Ottilien in Africa and Asia where settlements tend to spring up around the monasteries. Aidan Bellenger of Downside writes of the English Cathedral Priory, “a monastic city within the secular city”, from its origins to the modern experiments at Belmont and Westminster, and David Foster, also of Downside, focuses on Augustine in considering the desert-city tension in monastic theology.

One article, which explores a byway of monastic studies compared to the above, is of particular interest to us at Pluscarden.

René Kollar, using a section of his doctoral thesis, examines the early years of our community after its foundation in 1896 in the East End of London. This was a time when many Christian 'settlements' were being founded in the slums, and he shows Aelred Carlyle's brotherhood as part of this movement. It was not, however, where its future was to lie, as in 1898 they moved to the country and gradually D. Aelred's ideal became the establishment of "classical" Benedictine life in the Church of England, with no external apostolic works. It was far from the city, on the island fastness of Caldey, that this was to come to fruition. It is still of value as our community's first century draws to a close, to be reminded of those pioneering days and no doubt the first brothers would be amused to know that one day they would be the subject of serious historical scholarship.

All who are interested in the meaning and pluriformity of monasticism should buy this Monastic Review.

DAH

## **NEWS FROM ALTON**

The work on the chapel begun at the end of November was finished in time for Christmas and we moved in again for first Vespers on Christmas Eve. The former community room of the Sisters of Mercy lends itself very well to its new purpose, being large, lofty and well-lighted, but it required redecorating and fitting up with the appropriate furniture. The altar is now suitably raised above the rest of the flooring, and similarly the organ at the opposite end of the room. Some fine oak choirstalls from a former convent and the sanctuary lamps donated by friends complete the arrangements. At Midnight Mass our small choir assisted by singing the chants and other music.

This year is the 900th anniversary of the death of St Wulstan. The archdiocese is marking this with a Mass in Worcester Cathedral, but the parish of Wolstanton whose patron is St Wulstan kept their patronal feast on 19th January with extra

solemnity this year. Fr David was among the local priests who gathered there for the occasion.

On the feast of St Chad, 2nd March, another patronal festival took place at Sedgley near Wolverhampton and we were invited there to sing the solemn Mass. Sedgley is well known as an area where the Faith flourished right through the Penal Days and even today the parish has a “lively” congregation, an enthusiastic choir and a large team of servers; it was heartening to see them all in action.

On St Benedict’s Day we were assisted in the liturgy by several priest-friends who helped us at the altar and in choir (and one a culinary expert – even in the kitchen!) Fr Patrick Daly, Administrator of St Chad’s Cathedral, Birmingham, preached an excellent sermon at Mass. Also present was the Grand Prior of the Knights of Malta, Fra Michael Festing, brought over from Norbury by our friend Charles Wright.

On mid-Lent Sunday Michael Cross, whose family has formed a regular part of our congregation for the past four years, was received into the Church by Fr Andrew. A larger gathering than usual was held after Mass to congratulate him. Confirmation was held in the parish on 29th March and Fr Kearns, our parish priest, brought Bishop Philip Pargeter over to meet us and to look around the monastery. Fr David concelebrated with the Bishop and Fr Kearns at the Confirmation Mass in the evening.

Shortly before Easter four young priests from the Lancaster diocese came for a short retreat and Fr Andrew gave the conferences. A few days later the guest rooms filled up for the Triduum and as at Christmas we were glad to have help with the liturgy and chants.

DDH