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| <p style="text-align: center;">Pluscarden Benedictines No. 104 News and Notes for our Friends March 1995</p> |
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FR ABBOT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

I write some days before the beginning of Lent, hoping this newsletter will be with you by Easter. It is a peaceful time of the year, set between the celebrations of Christ's coming and of his return to the Father through his death and resurrection. Maximus the Confessor, a 7th century Greek theologian, has this to say on the succession of mysteries: "The mystery of the Incarnation of the Word contains, as in a synthesis, the interpretation of all the enigmas and figures of Scripture, as well as the meaning of all material and spiritual creatures. But whoever knows the mystery of the Cross and the burial, that person knows the real reasons for all these realities. Whoever, lastly, penetrates the hidden power of the Resurrection, discovers the final end for which God created everything from the beginning." May the journey from Christmas to Easter be a journey into greater truth for all of us.

Like Catholics everywhere and many other Christians, we keep the week of prayer for Christian Unity from 18th to 25th January. On the 23rd January, our local Church of Scotland minister, Rev. Ronald Scotland, gave us an interesting insight into his Christian community as well as into his own calling to the ministry.

Being a 13th century foundation, Pluscarden inevitably attracts many visitors. As mentioned in the September 1994 issue,, an imaginatively conceived information display now enhances the north transept. On the 24th January, this was blessed. The occasion also provided a chance to express appreciation to the many who, in the course of the last years helped staff our temporary shop in

Elgin. It was an especial pleasure to make presentations to Anita Milne and Jane Cameron.

What marriage is to the married and ordination is to the clergy, solemn profession is to the monk. On the 10th February, Br Dunstan Robertson made his solemn profession as a monk of this community. Br Dunstan is 30 and comes from Essex. On the 12th March, Br Gregory Phillips of our community of St Mary's, Petersham, Massachusetts will be making his solemn profession. This is a great moment for the small brotherhood there. Br Gregory is 42 and a native of Milwaukee. Please pray for these brothers, and that others will be moved to follow their example.

With every blessing for Lent and Easter,

+Fr Hugh OSB, Abbot

THE EDITOR'S JOTTINGS

The Roman year used to begin in March and this was also true in England until 1752. The legal year began on 25 March, Lady Day. Scotland changed the first month to January in 1598. In recent weeks many of you have sent donations for the newsletter either to me or through Fr Abbot, Fr Maurus or Fr Camillus. I am very grateful for all the support you give us.

In addition to Pluscarden Benedictines I am also responsible for the AIM Bulletin Inter Monastic Aid. This is a much more substantial publication and it exists to support the monasteries in the developing countries. It appears twice a year and I have just received No 57. It contains an article about the founder of AIM, Abbot de Floris, who died last year. I met him in Rome some years ago and he encouraged me to make Pluscarden a centre for the work. Over the years, with your help, we have been able to assist monasteries in Africa, India, Mexico, South America, and more recently the monasteries in the former Communist countries. It is an enrichment for any community to have these contacts and for individuals to experience the Church beyond the

narrow boundaries of our own parish or country. I would very much like to have more subscribers for the Bulletin. It costs £9 a year for two numbers – over 100 pages with several illustrations.

The current issue has three articles about Abbot de Floris, with others about monks and nuns in the Rwanda tragedy, an account of a pilgrimage made by a group of African monks to the Coptic monasteries in Egypt, “monasticism in the town” and a monastic pilgrimage to Tibet, together with Chronicles from monasteries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

If you are interested, I have a few back numbers which I will gladly send you.

I was in Mexico last October and stayed with the Benedictine Sisters who have joined our Congregation. Their Prioress has written about this in the newsletter and there are pictures of their beautiful new monastery and *Colegio Subiaco*. Incidentally there are four communities of Benedictine Sisters in Mexico City. I was able to visit three of them. Although Mexico is a Catholic country, it is illegal to wear clerical dress or the religious habit in public as you will see from the photographs.

Your editor,

D Alfred

NEWS FROM ST MARY’S, PETERSHAM

On December 8th, 1994, the Most Rev Daniel Reilly was installed as the fourth Bishop of the diocese of Worcester, which is the diocese in which St Mary’s is situated. On December 17th Frs Anselm and Bede went to a meeting of welcome for the new Bishop by the religious of the diocese. They met on their way into the meeting an Assumptionist Sister from Newcastle. She had recognised their English accents in the street. This did not amuse Fr Bede, who thought of the old Glasgow saying about people from Newcastle (Editor’s note: see article in the next Pluscarden Benedictines by Dom Barnabas Kerr OSB.) The meeting began with Vespers. Frs Anselm and Bede left shortly afterwards as they

had to return to the monastery for Vespers and the O Sapientia collation.

We have had a very mild winter, but the building work on the new church stopped as planned in early January. So far everything is up to date, and after the resumption of work on the building (mid-May) it is hoped that the church will be finished in early 1996.

Our other piece of news is of the forthcoming Solemn Profession of Br Gregory Phillips on March 12th, 1995. This is the Second Sunday of Lent, but in the old calendar it was the Feast of St Gregory. It is also the 60th anniversary of the Profession of one of the Pluscarden pioneers, Br Andrew Prescott, RIP, who died last July. Fr Abbot will be present with us to preside at the ceremony with our Superior, Fr Anselm as the homilist. Br Gregory was born in Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin. His parents still live in the city, and his four sisters and his brother-in-law all live in the neighbourhood of Milwaukee. It will not only be a great day for St Mary's Monastery, but also for all those members of Br Gregory's family who will be present. Br Gregory will be the first monk to make Solemn vows at St Mary's who entered here as a postulant, since the three original members of the community (professed November 21st 1987) had been monks before coming to Petersham to found St Mary's Monastery. Please pray for him, and that others will follow in his path.

ANDREW MACCALLUM'S *PLUSCARDEN ABBEY*

In our Chapter House hangs a large (about 4' wide and 3' high) oil-painting of Pluscarden, with a plate giving the title and the artist, and the number 260. It shows the Abbey in an eastern light, about six in the morning, the foreground is in heavy shadow, so it is not long before or after the equinox. On the left is a fine tree, painted with great care, catching the light on its massive trunk. In the right foreground, not immediately obvious, is a small group of seated

figures consisting of an adult male of venerable aspect, two small girls wearing Tam o' Shanters and a small, shaggy terrier. It is obvious that the ancient's powers as a raconteur are equal to Coleridge's ancient mariner; either for an uncaring attitude to his auditors' other priorities and comfort, or for long-winded narration; for their pose and position argue either a very early morning rise or an overnight session, combined in both cases with a cold seat in the wet grass. Possibly, on the other hand, it is only artistic licence, corroborative detail lending artistic verisimilitude.

The artist is Andrew MacCallum. Who was he and how did he come to Pluscarden, and what is the story of his painting?

Andrew MacCallum, though of Scottish descent, was born in Nottinghamshire, where his father was a merchant, about 1828. Local scenery aroused the desire to be a landscape artist, but his family opposed him, and he went into his father's hosiery business. His enthusiasm for art remained, and he practised in secret until he was twenty one, when he left home, penniless, to follow his Muse. Then he went to London to study in the Government School of Art, before teaching first in Manchester and then at Stourbridge. In 1853 he was sent to Italy by the Department of Science and Art, to make instructional copies of murals for use in the Schools of Art for one half of the time and to follow his own bent the other half; he remained there five years.

On his return he regularly sent pictures to The Academy, and so continued until 1886. His interest in and treatment of trees came in for approbation from the critics. In 1861 he was painting trees in the Forest of Fontainebleau, some of which found a place in the Paris Salon. This was only the first of a long series of dendrolatrial pilgrimages in foreign parts. His assiduity earned him the nick-name of "the English devil" from the French artists, who were struck by his habit of painting trees all through the winter and on the spot. His travels took him to Egypt and the Holy Land, Constantinople and the length of the Danube.

He had always enjoyed royal favour, with an apartment in Cranbourne Tower in Windsor Forest, where he worked a great deal, and was also commissioned by the Queen to paint five views

near Balmoral. This appears to have been about 1870, for in both 1869 and 1877 he exhibited Scottish subjects.

Dr Lindsay Errington, of the National Gallery of Scotland, opines that our painting is probably 1860s.

How did it get to Pluscarden? Our Annals for 10th April 1963 say, “Br Edward takes Br Gilbert to Blairgowrie to fix a window, repaired here, in position, also to collect an oil painting (19thC) of the Priory from the Earl of Southesk’s Kinnaird Castle, which now hangs in the front entrance. The picture was owned by the Duke of Fife.”

Joseph Peach, then Br Edward, recalls, “The Countess received us; we were entertained with delicious coffee and very fine sherry and shown something of the house.”

Lord Southesk confirmed its origins, “The picture did indeed come from here, although it belonged to my father, the Duke. He inherited it from his Aunt, Princess Arthur of Connaught who was also Duchess of Fife, and it must have been part of the collection of Duff pictures.”

It should be remembered that before the Marquess of Bute bought Pluscarden it belonged to the Earl of Fife, who married Princess Maud, one of Queen Victoria’s daughters, and thereafter was created Duke, thus uniting Balmoral, MacCallum and Pluscarden. Presumably MacCallum slipped in a visit to Pluscarden while at Balmoral, and devilishly undeterred by the prospect of painting outdoors in Moray, produced his canvas.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to trace the painting in any catalogue or inventory; those possessed by the National Gallery are too early, and none is among the Duff papers in the University Library at Aberdeen, though it is possible that more information may yet be discovered.

Whatever its precise origins, it is safe to say that MacCallum, who died in 1902, and whose work may be found in the Tate Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as his native Nottingham Art Gallery, produced a striking image of Pluscarden, one which remains very popular today, (going by the sales of our postcard which reproduces it), and an interesting

record of the Abbey's appearance at the beginning of the second half of last century.

DGC

THE 1995 PLUSCARDEN PENTECOST LECTURES

The Eucharist Makes the Church

by Rev. Paul McPartlan

Following the success of Fr Aidan Nichols' four talks on Jesus Christ last year, we have invited Fr Paul McPartlan to give a further series of four public lectures at the Abbey during the week after Pentecost (Tuesday 6th June – Thursday 8th June.) He has taken as his title "The Eucharist Makes the Church" and will be exploring the themes of the Eucharist as the heart of the Church and the practical focus of a lived Christian faith, and the nature of the church as "communion". These are both ideas rich in ecumenical significance and Fr McPartlan has done considerable research in recent years to show their importance for the theological dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics. His recent book (also entitled *The Eucharist makes the Church*) looked at these themes in the writings of two outstanding 20th century theologians: Cardinal Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas.

DAF

BOOK REVIEWS

The White Stone: The Spiritual Theology of John Henry Newman by Vincent Blehl, sj, 187 pp., St Bede's Publications, Petersham, Massachusetts, 1994. ISBN 1-879007-03-7.

"It is true that Newman never composed a formal treatise on spiritual theology, but the present work is based upon the conviction that his presentation of the truths of revelation and the

manner in which they determine how one should live a Christian life constitutes, when synthesized, a comprehensive and coherent spiritual theology.” So writes Fr Blehl in his introduction, and the rest of this competent and useful book establishes the point effectively. Vincent Blehl is the postulator of Newman’s cause, and, not surprisingly, one of those Newman scholars who has long been keen to elicit the spiritual centre of Newman’s Christian life and vision, rather than crab and confine him as the driving-force of the Oxford Movement or the Darwin of doctrinal development or the philosopher-apologist of the Grammar of Assent.

“Holiness before peace” was one of Newman's life-long axioms, and Hebrews 12:14, “the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” heads the first of his published sermons. Here indeed is the real Newman; one could say, the monastic Newman. And it is from this desire for holiness that there springs his famous unworldliness; his constant preoccupation with the economy of the incarnation and its issue in the gift of the Spirit; his conviction of the all-pervading presence of the unseen world; his commitment to unceasing prayer and constant intercession (“the more we pray, the holier will be our life; and the holier our life, the more we shall pray”); his evocations of the saints of Scripture and the Church. All this Vincent Blehl unfolds, the book gaining momentum as it proceeds and revealing the author’s sure and wide grasp of the Newman corpus. Some areas are handled extremely well, and there is a deft use of unpublished material. In note 1 to Ch. 2 and in the final section of Ch.3, the author clarifies the “limitations and ambiguities” of the Anglican Newman’s theology of sin. The entirety of Ch.9 is devoted to Newman’s angelology, a thoroughly justified proceeding. Similarly a whole chapter (12) is given to Old Testament Saints and Sinners, again doing justice to the evidence. This reviewer was only left wondering in what ways Newman's entry into the Catholic Church affected not simply various elements of his spirituality, but its tone and character. Newman's most famous trials befell him as a Catholic, yet the Catholic Newman seems a man of “enlarged heart” in comparison with his former self. And could one not find too, in Newman, a spirituality

of personal mission and particular vocation, e.g. for the priest or lay person?

Vincent Blehl is to be thanked for this addition to the literature on Newman. He has produced a simple and accessible work, which should stimulate its readers to the holiness Newman himself sought so consistently. Again and again, we are unobtrusively brought back to Newman's own words and to his love of Christ. What is meditation, he asks in one of his sermons? "It is to have Him before our minds as One whom we may contemplate, worship, and address when we rise up, when we lie down, when we eat and drink, when we are at home and abroad, when we are working, or walking, or at rest, when we are alone, and again when we are in company; this is meditating ... and this even the most unlearned person can do, and will do, if he has a will to do it."

DHG

VARIA CARTUSIANA

Capitula Generaha Cartusiae 1416-1442 edited by Jan de Grauwe, shows this series *Analecta Cartusiana* at its best, making primary sources more easily available to the historian. It is a transcription of a manuscript in the Belgian Archives Generales and in the "cartae" are many references to the English Province.

La Certosa di Pavia: Vol 1: text, by James Hogg, is a valuable addition to the series of descriptions of the buildings of the order and complements the pictures in Vol 2 (1992). It concentrates on the decorative programme of this most ornate of Charterhouses, which is the original home of the two large sanctuary candlesticks at Pluscarden

Particularités du temporal: Le temps pascal, and *Sanctoral:* Section II continue the study of the Carthusian liturgy by Dom Emmanuel Cluzet. At the end of the latter Dr Hogg notes that unfortunately the concluding volume to this series does not appear

to have materialised.

Four more volumes of *Scriptores Sacri Ordinis Cartusiensis* in the difficult handwriting of Dom Stanislas Autore have also been received. These conclude with anonymous authors Vols 14 and 15, and appendices Vol 16.

The Lyre and the Cross: incompatibility or symbiosis of the poetic vein and strict monasticism in the poetry of Alun Idris Jones, a Welsh novice monk, pp 353, by Eva Schmid-Morwald, is a maddeningly thorough study of the poet (born 1953) and his work. A typical extract is the following. The Trappist monk, “is bound to work in different areas. ‘Going to the bog (to dig turf, and coming back with four stitches)’ [title of a poem] reflects one of these necessary activities in a monastery. Of course ‘going to the bog’ has a double-sense in English speaking countries, but the note in brackets does not leave any doubt about what exactly is intended; apparently the poet had an accident that day, which involved being taken to the surgery.”

DAH

MONASTERIES OF THE SUBIACO CONGREGATION NO 66
The English Province No 12
Monasterio Benedictino de Nuestra Senora del Tepeyac
Mexico City

Founded in March 1970 under the Cardinal Archbishop Miguel Darío Miranda, of happy memory, the community was received into the Benedictine Confederation in 1973. We had been part of St Benedict's Convent (now monastery) here in Mexico City where we received our Benedictine training.

Since then we have led our Benedictine life together with the apostolic projection in the school according to the Benedictine tradition. The name of our school is *Colegio Subiaco* so we think it is providential that we are now aggregated to the Congregation of

Subiaco. We are most happy with this coincidence because we see in it the hand of God.

The Community has been aggregated to the Congregation of Subiaco, under the English Province. Father Abbot President Dom Gilbert Jones received the authorisation from the Prefect of the Congregation of Religious in Rome to grant his approval, which he transmitted to us on December 24, 1994.

We were received as cloistered oblates at the Monasterio de la Soledad in San Miguel Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico, which belongs to the Monastery of Christ in the Desert in New Mexico, USA.

We are deeply grateful especially to Father Abbot Gilbert Jones, to Fr Philip Lawrence, to Father Abbot Alfred Spencer and to Fr Ezequiel Bas, for the fraternal spiritual support we have obtained from the Congregation of Subiaco.

We would like you to join with us in the blessing of Cardinal Martinez Somalo, Prefect of the Congregation of Religious, who wrote: “It is my prayer that this aggregation may bring spiritual benefit to the sisters at *Colegio Subiaco*, and that they may grow in their fidelity to the monastic life and to the service of the Church.”

We also ask all our brothers and sisters in the Congregation to pray to God so that we may increase in number and that we soon receive the vocations which we are expecting. We are a small community and we need new members to reinforce our monastic life and our Benedictine work at school.

We put you all under the protection of our Blessed Lady of Guadalupe.

Sr Maria Teresa Fernández OSB, Prioress