

<p>Pluscarden Benedictines No. 100 News and Notes for our Friends March 1994</p>
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FR ABBOT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

This is the quiet time of the year when Nature “sleeps”, but it has not been so quiet that there is nothing to record – and I am not referring simply to the vagaries of the weather!

On 14th December, Br Cyprian made his definitive commitment to the monastic life before God and His saints, his own brethren, parents and friends. It was a joyful and prayerful occasion, felt as such by all. At present, Br Cyprian runs our kitchen, when, that is, he is not chopping wood for the omnivorous boiler or cultivating bean-sprouts in warm cupboards. May he, too, flourish in his monastic life.

Advent also witnessed our annual carol service with the local Presbyterian community. This was led by the new minister, Ronald Scotland, and took place in our nearby “kirk”. Bad weather did not deter the congregation, either from coming or from singing.

After Christmas, I attended a Council Meeting of the Union of Monastic Superiors at Ealing Abbey, London. It is a long way for a 2 hour meeting, but it gave me an opportunity to spend a few days in Sussex with my mother who has just reached the venerable age of 80. It is always good to have a travelling companion too, and Br Martin Castor, a junior of our house at Petersham, accompanied me to London. He was kindly accommodated at Ealing Abbey and saw a good deal of the Metropolis in a short time. Br Martin had been with us at Pluscarden since August and returned to his own monastery on 26th January.

In mid-February, I briefly visited the monastery of Christ in the Desert, New Mexico, U.S.A. It was good to meet such a

joyful, multi-national and hospitable community living the monastic life in so beautiful a setting: the canyon valley of the R. Chama. I owe especial thanks to Prior Philip for inviting me, and to the Subprior, Br Christian, for looking after me so well.

Back here, our own new guest house nears completion. Inevitably, it has experienced some minor hiccups on the way, and we will only be able to appreciate its full bearing on our life with time and use. The auguries, though, are good. The building is graceful, compact, and harmonises well with what we already have. It will allow us to double our quotient of male guests. Hitherto, we have referred to it as the “West Wing”, but “St Benedict’s” is to be its final name, thus complementing our “St Scholastica’s” for lady guests. The official opening is set for Wednesday 27th April, the honours to be performed by Dom Gilbert Jones, the Abbot President of our Subiaco Congregation. May God reward all those who have made this development possible.

On the 12 February Br Dunstan, a junior who has suffered much from ill-health, renewed his simple profession for a further year. A new postulant, James Birrell, joined us on Shrove Tuesday. James has served as a diocesan priest for some 15 years. St Benedict invites the priests of the monastery to “make more and more progress towards God”. May the same be true of all of us as we prepare for the great feast of Easter, the foretaste of heaven, through the liturgy of the Church.

Yours in the Lord,

+Fr Hugh

THE EDITOR’S JOTTINGS

With this issue of the Newsletter we reach our centenary. Until the monastery became independent of Prinknash Abbey, Pluscarden shared the pages of their quarterly *Pax*. The first number of

Pluscarden Benedictines appeared at Whitsun 1968 in a cover designed by Br Gilbert featuring two evil looking Jackdaws. These birds hovered over ruined walls in those days and used to make much noise during the nest-building season. Inside this cover were eight pages which included an article on St Aelred whose 8th centenary fell that year. One hundred copies were printed by Br Symon on our old Gestetner. With the second number we increased to twelve pages, while illustrations appeared in number five. In the Spring number of 1971 the cover assumed its present form – the jackdaws flew away, as indeed they have ever since the chancel was restored.

From Winter 1972 Moravia Press in Elgin has produced the newsletter and we are very grateful to Douglas Grant and his staff for their excellent work.

There were extra illustrations for the Abbots' blessing in 1974 and again in 1992. In 1975 the future Cardinal Augustine Mayer OSB is shown with the community. The present Abbot appears as a novice. 1978 was the year of St Benedict and work on the restoration of the chancel began. Over the years the price rose from 10p to 30p, little more than the cost of a postage stamp, but we now print 1,400 and Pluscarden Benedictines finds its way to every continent, to Africa and Australia, South America and Asia – from the Vatican to Moscow. We do not pretend to be a learned journal, but simply a link with our friends. Thank you again for your support.

Dom Alfred

WEST WING NEWS

Throughout Britain, monasteries are responding to people seeking retreats. Our brethren at Fort Augustus are developing this apostolate, and you may have seen the advertisements of our Sisters at Fernham in Oxfordshire, who are happy with the numbers now using their St Gabriel's retreat building.

We are still hoping our new West Wing, to be known as St

Benedict's, will be ready for Holy Week. Apart from the oriel window and masonry of the front gable, the work is nearing completion, carpeted and painted. Now the process of furnishing and equipping follows.

Just as there is some distance to go in the building, so is there some ground to cover in fundraising, so one of the events we plan for 1994 is a repetition of the very successful 1992 "Messiah for all". This will be on Saturday 21st May, and should be an enjoyable way of celebrating the building's completion.

"Musick Fyne" will be making their popular annual visit on Saturday 18th June.

Those of you who took part in the memorable Gregorian Chant week-end led by Dr Mary Berry, to coincide with the St Margaret celebrations and the Diocesan Pilgrimage last June, may be interested to know that a digitally-recorded stereo tape of the Mass has now been produced.

Last year Leila Farrar came and stayed a few days at St. Scholastica's, and subsequently an article appeared in the *Scotsman's* Weekend section, recounting her experiences. Her article was illustrated with photographs by Ian Rutherford, and were among those later used by him in his portfolio which won the "Photographer of the Year" award. Congratulations!

BOOK REVIEWS

Analecta Cartusiana

Three more volumes have recently been received from the publishers of *Analecta Cartusiana* at the University of Salzburg, Austria.

Studies in St Birgitta and the Brigittine Order, volume one (pp 305) contains 16 essays on a wide range of subjects variously connected with St Birgitta, her life and work or the Order she founded. The international group of authors is as varied as the subjects they cover. Published last year, the volume had

been intended to be available to coincide with the celebrations to mark the sixth centenary of the saint's canonisation in 1991 but technical problems resulted in a number of delays.

Two illuminating essays on the lives of Birgitta and her daughter Karin (St Catherine of Sweden) are provided by a Bridgettine nun, Sr Patricia, and the subjects of other essays include; the Cistercian influence upon the Bridgittines; linguistic studies of aspects of the Revelations; the miracles of the saints, mother and daughter; Swedish foreign policy in the 1340s; Bridgettine architecture and the Vision of the Nativity.

"St Bridget's Social Activism: the Rome Years" is an intriguing essay by Mary Ann Rossi who concentrates on the last years of the saint's life, "placing a magnifying glass on the fruition of a life of prayer, contemplation and political activism which had already won the young noblewoman renown in her native Sweden" (p 49). She concludes that "if the mark of a hero is to rise above the societal constraints of her time to bring about change, Bridget's life provides a role model for the women of today, and she remains an exemplar of human achievement for all time to come" (p 60).

This is a useful volume of essays, opening up as it does the breadth of Bridgettine scholarship in Europe and North America.

Die Kartäuser and Ihre Welt, volume 3, (pp254) comprises five photo-essays in various European languages. Two are by Dr James Hogg, the Editor of *Analecta Cartusiana*; one concerning the work of the artist Antonio Calla (1946-), and the other reporting a visit to the Parisot "Carthusians" in 1993. The latter are a tiny group of hermits trying to live a primitive form of the Carthusian Rule in south-west France, led by Dom Ange Helly, formerly of the Grande Chartreuse, Selignac and Montrieux.

Also received was *Scriptores Sacri Ordinis Cartusiensis*, volume 4 (pp 159) by Dom Stanislas Autore. All volumes are available from the Editor: Dr James Hogg, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, A-5020 SALZBURG, Austria.

DGP

Heraldry in the Vatican

Archbishop Jacques Martin was born in France, studied in Rome and after ordination entered the service of the Holy See. He lived in the Vatican for more than 50 years and for much of that time was Prefect of the Papal Household under three successive Popes until his retirement in 1986. He accompanied Paul VI on his historic pilgrimage to the Holy Land and while on board ship on the Sea of Tiberias, the Pope made him a Titular Bishop.

Among his many duties was that of receiving distinguished visitors to the Holy See – Kings and Queens and Heads of State, among them our own Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales. He came to have a close knowledge of the buildings of the Vatican and especially of the heraldry of the Popes who lived there for so many centuries and this has resulted in a splendid book, *Heraldry in the Vatican*, richly illustrated and with many coloured plates. And as he says in the Preface “nowhere more than in the Vatican can the observer see so clearly how much heraldry is a complementary science to history”.

Our tour of St Peter’s and the other buildings of the Vatican takes us from the reign of Pope Eugene IV (1430-1447) who incidentally is regarded as the second founder of the Benedictine Congregation of St Justina with Bl. Ludovico Barbo of Padua, to the present Holy Father, John Paul II. Eugene IV was a reforming Pope before the Reformation began. His arms are severely simple. The Renaissance Popes were more luxuriant.

Dr Peter van Duren has edited this book. He is a Knight of St Gregory and is responsible for relations between the Orders of Knighthood and the Holy See. He is at present working on Orders of Knighthood and the Holy See by the late Archbishop Cardinale and he may include a picture of the Papal Knights which appeared in a recent issue of our own Newsletter when they were here for Fr Abbot’s Blessing.

In these pages we have five hundred years of history illustrated in art and buildings – times which witnessed the Reformation and the Council of Trent; the Counter Reformation,

the capture of Rome and the imprisonment of Pius VII by Napoleon; later still the loss of the Papal States when the Pope became the “prisoner of the Vatican”. Then the Lateran Treaty and the pontificate of the modern Popes from Pius XI to the present day.

The book contains a very useful detailed plan of St Peter’s and another of the Vatican City State. The publishers are Colin Smythe Ltd. 285pp.

D A S

Centred on Christ An Introduction to Monastic Profession

by Augustine Roberts OCSO, 2nd ed., St. Bede’s Publications, Petersham, Mass., USA; available in UK from Gracewing/Fowler, Wright, Leominster.

For some reason I never heard of the first edition of this book by the Abbot of the Cistercian Abbey of Spencer in Massachusetts until it was out of print. Then in a short time various people unconnected with each other quoted from it or recommended it, each finishing up by saying, “Of course I think it’s out of print now.” Therefore it was with some interest that I received this second edition to review.

In his subtitle, *An Introduction to Monastic Profession*, Dom Augustine describes what the book is, an introduction to the various elements which go to make up Monastic Profession in the Benedictine-Cistercian tradition. The title, *Centred on Christ*, gives the common theme which unifies the component parts of Monastic Profession. They all have a single goal, a life centred on Christ.

The author addresses his book primarily to those who are about to make profession in the Benedictine-Cistercian tradition. It is laid out as a textbook with questions for further reflection and a short bibliography at the end of each chapter.

After an introductory chapter on the meaning of Monastic Profession Dom Augustine looks in turn at each of the Monastic Vows, beginning with *Conversatio Morum* (translated as Fidelity to Monastic Life) which he sees as the “central core or axis of

monastic profession”. Because it is so fundamental, he treats of this vow first and at greatest length, devoting three chapters to it, chastity and poverty, which have a chapter each, being considered as aspects of Fidelity to Monastic Life. He then gives a chapter to each of the vows of obedience and stability.

The author’s approach might be called traditional, though not traditionalist, in that throughout the book he has a care to set every aspect of monastic profession in its place in tradition from Scripture, through the Desert Mothers and Fathers and Cassian to St Benedict and his disciples throughout the ages, up to Vatican Council II and beyond. He tries to anchor the obligations of profession in the reality of monastic observance but then to show how, going beyond external observance, the vows have deeper significance and act to draw one nearer to Christ.

In the two final chapters Dom Augustine turns from an analysis of each of the vows to an examination of the interaction of the vows with each other in spiritual methods leading to complete consecration of the monastic to God.

Though not always easy to read, this is a most useful book for those preparing for monastic profession. It arises from and is directed to those in the Benedictine-Cistercian tradition. I have been told that the first edition also proved popular with religious of other traditions. Perhaps this is because it is firmly rooted in its own tradition and thus in tradition itself.

The author does not oppose the letter and spirit of profession but shows how the obligations accepted in profession lead to a life Centred on Christ.

D M S

NEWS FROM ALTON

On the 31st December we sang the traditional Te Deum after Vespers. We gave thanks to God for all the blessings He has bestowed on us in 1993. Indeed, we had much to thank God for, as we stood in the little chapel of our new monastery.

Since our arrival on the 20th September, we have been busy adapting rooms to suit our needs. One of the most important tasks in the beginning was to adapt the sisters' large common-room into a suitable chapel. This has been done quite successfully. The altar is nicely dressed with the Brussels frontal – c. 17th century – gifted by the nuns of Teignmouth. The six candlesticks, in Florentine style, were given by our brethren at Pluscarden, along with some other useful sacristy items. The rather fine baroque tabernacle came from a friend in Coventry. While there is much to be done to the chapel to have it the way we would like, it has been adapted to make a very fitting chapel for our daily worship. For a domestic chapel it has witnessed some rather fine Pontifical liturgies in its short existence!

With the help of a friend Fr David has turned part of the cloister into our library. There is quite a good selection of books – mostly from a private collection belonging to a priest of the archdiocese. However, we hope gradually to build up the collection.

We decided on our Horarium early on so that we could get down to the day to day living of monastic life as soon as possible. Although at present we are only three monks our office and mass is sung in Latin, with the exception of Matins which is recited in English. The Psalms of Prime have been incorporated into the little hours of Terce, Sext and None.

On the 11th January His Grace the Archbishop made his first visit to the new foundation, accompanied by his secretary, Fr Corbett. The Archbishop concelebrated Pontifical Mass and preached a short homily. He stressed the importance of following the example of St John the Baptist, the patron of our monastery. After Mass, His Grace had lunch with the community, which was enjoyed by all. We are fortunate to have an Archbishop who is so supportive and encouraging.

It is our hope to embark upon our industries soon. With advice from our brethren at Pluscarden we now know everything there is to know about the wax polish industry. We also hope to encourage retreatants to come. We have seven guest rooms for

men. We also have facilities for groups wishing to make a day of recollection. In these early days of our foundation we have of course at the forefront of our minds the need to encourage vocations to our way of life. We would ask you to pray especially that God may bless us with many and good vocations.

DDH

MONASTERIES OF THE SUBIACO CONGREGATION NO 63

The Benedictine Abbey, Jamberoo, Australia

The Benedictine Community, now resident at Jamberoo, New South Wales, Australia, was founded by Archbishop John Bede Polding, a monk of Downside Abbey, on 2nd February, 1849.

The first two nuns, Dame Magdalen le Clerc of Stanbrook Abbey, England, and Dame Mary Scholastica Gregory of Princethorpe Priory, England, came to Australia, with Archbishop Polding on 6th February 1848, and lived at St Mary's in Sydney, until a suitable property was purchased by Archbishop Polding. A property of 700 acres, bounded by the Parramatta River on one side was eventually purchased for £5000. The property was owned by Hannibal MacArthur and his family. It was here, at Subiaco, as it came to be called, on the Parramatta River, west of Sydney, that the community lived until 1957. The beginnings of the community in some ways reflect the struggles of the English Benedictines working on the Australian mission and the English/Irish conflict of the Catholic Church in Australia during the first century.

In 1957 the community moved to Pennant Hills, west of Sydney, to escape the industry growing up all around them at Rydalmere on the Parramatta River.

The Prioresses of the community were: Scholastica Gregory (died 1850), Magdalen le Clerc (appointed by Archbishop Polding in 1856), Walburge Wallis (first elected Prioress – 1864), Ignatius Harnett (elected in 1902), Joseph Brady (elected in 1915), Mildred Potts (elected in 1945), Placid Wilson (elected in 1968) and Benedicta Philips (first Abbess – elected Prioress in 1980 and

Abbess in 1982 – the monastery was made an abbey during 1982).

In 1978 a foundation was made in Queensland, near Rockhampton. The monastery for this foundation was eventually built at Lammermoor. On 10th April 1992 this community gained its autonomy. Sr Joan Moloney was elected first Prioress on 12th June 1993.

Our move from Pennant Hills, west of Sydney, to Jamberoo, south west of Wollongong, was made in the year of Australia's Bicentenary, 1988. Mother Benedicta's vision for the future of the community was the inspiration behind this third move and the fruits of this move.

The Benedictine Abbey, Jamberoo, is situated on the Jamberoo Mountain, and has been built with natural materials harmonising in every way with the environment. A fuller description of the architectural features of the new Abbey is outlined in our Abbey Newsletters from 1987-89. At present there are 30 nuns living in the community at the abbey, and one nun living on the property as a Hermitess. There are nine sisters in formation. The Nuns earn their living in the spirit of St Benedict, by the work of their hands – in this case the making of "liturgical crafts" for sale to parishes and schools all over Australia.

At the Jamberoo Abbey there are four cottages for guests and three hermitages. The cottages are places of peace and prayer, accommodating 22 guests at one time. Guests are invited to pray the Liturgy of the Hours with the community and to attend the many weekends and retreats conducted by the community on: the Rule of St Benedict, Benedictine Saints, Christian Meditation, Lectio Divina, the Psalms, the Exercises of St Gertrude, and of course the many weekends for Oblates.

At this time, in January 1994, the community has 130 Oblates and Oblate Novices, who visit the Abbey regularly, some weekly, to simply take time apart and be with God. The community also offers spiritual direction, and directed retreats according to the Rule of St Benedict and the values of monastic life in other words, according to the monastic tradition. Oblates receive a booklet every few weeks, with suggestions for prayer,

community news, some guidance, information on the saints, and something for reflection. The community also offers Christian Meditation every week on Mondays and Fridays at 10.30 am and Lectio Divina every Wednesday at 10.30 am.

The community is undertaking a further extension to the present Abbey buildings, in order to accommodate an increase of vocations. The project is to begin early this year, 1994.

Jamberoo was aggregated with the Subiaco Congregation in November 1992, and the community is directly under the Abbot President.

Inculturisation is a priority for the Jamberoo community – creating Benedictine monasticism in Australia, for Australians, and letting our land teach us the depths of God, reinforcing our values of silence and prayer, love, beauty, reverence, renunciation, conversion, stability and obedience. We believe the monastic life is at home in Australia, as it is elsewhere, in its reality and truth.

A nun of Jamberoo