



STANBROOK BENEDICTINES

Consolamini, consolamini



NO. 13 PENTECOST 2018



Postulant, Alex Harrod, enjoys the snow
Photos by D. Mary Stephen



Mother Abbess with Mother Catharina Shibuya OCSO, former Superior
of Holy Family Abbey, Amari, Japan
Photo by D. Philippa

Stanbrook Benedictines

No. 13 Pentecost 2018

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Front cover: HONEYSUCKLE against green oak enclosure fence;
photo by D. Philippa

Back cover: COLLAGE of trees and flowers around Stanbrook;
photos by D. Philippa

Mother Abbess's Letter

Dear Friends,

The word *encounter* has been running through my mind in recent months. The community recently has been doing some very fruitful work on the theme of human development. The one word that keeps coming up is encounter. This has made me pause and think about the importance of this word in the living out of the life of our community.



We each of us encounter people every day, some of whom have a major impact on our lives and how we live it out, whether it be family members, friends or work colleagues or maybe even a chance encounter. Looking back on my own life, I can think of some very special encounters which transformed me. The most important one happened when I joined a prayer group formed in preparation for the youth gathering at Murrayfield during the visit of St Pope John Paul II in 1982. It was during these prayer meetings that I encountered Christ in a way that changed my life forever and, in the end, led to me entering Stanbrook to continue this encounter with Christ.

For many people today, life's encounters are not always ones that are life-giving. In fact, some are the complete opposite and just lead to a dead end. This type of encounter usually happens when we are seeking our own selfish wants and desires. There are many instances in the Desert Fathers and Mothers where they can be led astray by a demon and not the Lord. Abraham, the disciple of Abba Agathon, questioned Abba Poemen saying:

How do the demons fight against me? Abba Poemen said to him, The demons fight against you? They do not fight against us at all as long as we are doing our own will. For our own wills become the demons, and it is these which attack us in order that we may fulfil them. But if you want to see who demons really fight against, it is against Moses and those who are like him.

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers; The Alphabetical Collection, trans. by Benedicta Ward SLG, p. 148.

The encounter that does lead to life is the one we experience in meeting Christ in the Scriptures, in the Sacraments and in the people we meet.

I am writing this in the days after the Easter Octave when we are hearing all the Resurrection stories. The Gospels are full of encounters with Jesus but

one of the most important encounters is the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24). It is a story which many of us can recognise and identify with. We are told the name only of one of the disciples, Cleopas, but not the name of the other. We can name that disciple as you or me.

We are told the two disciples have left Jerusalem and are on their way to the village of Emmaus. This takes place just after the events of Jesus' passion, death and the discovery of the empty tomb. The two disciples are deep in conversation about all that had happened when they meet Jesus on the road, but do not recognise him. He asks them what are they discussing, only to be met by disbelief from the two disciples: there is only one topic of conversation at this moment, the events that had happened in Jerusalem. Disappointment oozes from both of them as they go on to tell Jesus of the expectations they had had of their Master who was going to be the one to set Israel free. It is when Jesus goes on to explain and open up the Scriptures for the disciples that things change for them. They then press Jesus to stay with them on reaching Emmaus. It is when they are at table that evening that they recognise him in the breaking of the bread. But they soon realise that their eyes should have been opened sooner to who he was when they say: *Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scripture?*

How often do we meet Christ present in each other? As Benedictines, in our search for God, we must listen to the Lord in his Word, in the Sacraments, but importantly we must hear him in each other.

We shall perceive Christ in others only if we realise that he is hidden in his Risen life; that we can discern him only with the eyes of faith.

One clue in our search is that he is working his secret miracles of love through workers who have nothing to show for their work, just as Jesus has nothing to show for his work in Nazareth...But the fact is that over and over again it is in just these people that the Risen Christ abides, hiding his glory in them, because it is only through such lives as theirs that he can reach those for whom he must work those almost unnoticed daily miracles of grace which prove that he is, indeed, 'alive after his Passion.'

Caryll Houselander, *The Risen Christ*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Andrea". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font. There is a horizontal line underneath the name.

From the House Chronicle November-December 2017

November

21st M. Abbess and D. Benedicta left early for London where they will attend the Union of Monastic Superiors' Council meeting, D. Benedict as secretary; returning this evening, Dv.

The House Chronicler has today potted up 3 cuttings: 2 crimson geraniums in memory of D. Cecilia who loved them and used to over-winter them in the sewing room all along the window sills, and a cheese plant for D. Anne. The resonance here is a little more abstruse. The original plant was given to the novitiate in the 1970s when it was based in the Old House at Stanbrook, Worcester, and D. Anne was Zelatrix [assistant Novice Mistress]. It grew prodigiously. There's a photo in the archives of novices and postulants involved in a great outdoor re-potting exercise. When the novitiate moved over to the main monastery in the 1980s the plant was too big for the new common room and so was re-sited in the cloister by OL of Consolation where it continued to grow prodigiously and eventually had to be removed, but not before a scion had been rescued for the novitiate by the then NM (D. Laurentia Johns). The cutting 'took' and grew, leaf by leaf, until it was once again a fine specimen. The move north necessitated another bit of plant surgery which was also successful. There's another photo in the archives of D. Laurentia exiting the bus on 21 May 2009 hiding behind its leafy cover from the 'paparazzi' of local journalists awaiting us. Sometime after this, when the plant was again in danger of being 'put out', D. Scholastica rescued it for the archives, and later for the infirmary where it eventually outgrew its welcome. Today the main plant has been put into the Blessed Sacrament Chapel where no doubt it will thrive but today's cutting is a back-up. The plant is now almost 50 years old and has acquired something of the mystique of the ravens in the Tower of London!

23rd At choir practice D. Julian introduced some Advent chants from the newly-produced Ampleforth Gradual. We hope to sing them next week.

26th Christ the King. Fr Ambrose (A'forth) preached very well, drawing on the Polish side of his family history to recount the great sense of liberation felt there when the Berlin Wall came down, and, by implication, how it is when the Kingdom of God advances against worldly tyrannies.

30th St Andrew. Rather unexpected, prolonged snow, rendering Wass Bank treacherous. D. Anna, with all her driving skills, narrowly avoided an accident. 2 visitors at the lodges had to walk down the hill, one leaving luggage to be collected at some future date.

Sarah Lamb, our main Infirmary carer, who lives at the eastern end of the county, has stayed overnight as it would be too dangerous to drive back on frozen snow.

December

1st More snow overnight but Wass Bank was gritted and open. Tony worked hard with the snow plough to keep our drive clear. Still, the visiting priest did not feel confident to drive so we held a Eucharistic service. D. Benedicta gave a lovely reflection on the eternity of the Word of God.

2nd No more snow, rather, a thaw but too risky for the priest to drive so another Eucharistic service, this time taken by D. Petra. Another very good reflection; the theme, the majesty of God.

8th Immaculate Conception

A beautifully crisp, bright day for the Feast which was heralded by a scintillating star, low in the south eastern sky last evening, like a glimpse of the Lord coming into the world at the darkest hour.

Recreation after lunch.

The oblates' evening meeting was cancelled on account of fears re the weather.

9th Today we held our annual afternoon where we write letters/cards to/for prisoners of conscience. There was a good sense of solidarity cemented by mince pies and freshly brewed coffee and the thrilling sight of a pair of deer grazing beneath the ash tree in the field before us.

20th M. Abbess gave the *Missa Est* Conference [where the abbess reflects each year on the Annunciation to Mary] which this year had a patristic tone, drawing on the writings of Justin Martyr and St Irenaeus.

We are progressing gently and expectantly through the Great 'O's.

Today, D. Raphael, now in her 83rd year, sang *O Clavis* [Key] as if in her prime.

21st Real darkness for the shortest day, thickened by mist but lit up by *O Oriens* [Rising Sun] sung by D. Agnes for the first time.

Another Choir Prac.

Christmas tree in place outside the calefactory but not yet dressed.

22nd Much quiet preparation going on in many corners of the monastery.

Fr Oswald (A'forth) preached eloquently, sharing his experience of birdsong on the shortest day several hours before dawn. He said it seemed as if the birds appeared to know that the light is now returning. St Benedict, he reminded us, has given us a mini Advent in Vigils each day where we can sing in expectation of the coming light.

23rd A stunning sunrise to greet *O Emmanuel* which fell to D. Stephen as heddom. this year – and most fitting in her Jubilee year.

24th Christmas Eve must have fallen on a Sunday before but it always seems like the first time! The MC's notice board was awash with instructions. All went without hiccup.

The Christmas Martyrology, sung by D. Josephine, was beautiful and, as ever, set the stage for the celebration of the Feast.

25th Christmas Day

Just before Compline, M. Abbess thanked everyone and all departments for their hard work in preparation for what has been an exceptionally lovely and peaceful celebration of the Lord's birth.

Fr Cedd (A'forth) presided and preached at Midnight, taking the theme of Light and suggesting, with Meister Eckhart, that we recognize the light in ourselves and others more by actions than words.

The music went v. well. Sadly, only 4 people attended but this was 100% increase on last year and included 2 local ladies.

A mild, windy day with the odd squall but a beautiful dawn with variegated grey/pink clouds.

The refectory was adorned with colourful, home-made stockings, filled with Stanbrook chocolates. The stockings were the work of the new Dorcas Room staff: Sr Marian and Alex. Novitiate members have also made some most tasteful cut-work crib figures which adorn the refectory windows most effectively [see p. 18].

Fr Luke (A'forth) presided and preached at the Day Mass. He spoke of Christ as bridging the gap between God and ourselves, and the manner of the Incarnation showing us something about the Divine nature: God could have saved us by a powerful command rather than through a weak baby.

About 15 people attended the Day Mass, most of whom, including our good friend John Perry from Worcester, joined us for sherry afterwards.

The traditional lunch was supplemented by a Chilean dish: sprouts roasted with olives, courtesy of our Chilean friend, Maca.

This evening at the buffet supper in the Calefactory many small gifts were distributed from kind benefactors, crackers were pulled, including some home-made ones.

Compline rounded off the day with thanksgiving for so many graces and the Christmas season launched.

News Items

On 12 April we were delighted to welcome Mother Catharina Shibuya OCSO, one-time superior of Holy Family Abbey, a Cistercian house in Amari, Japan (see photo inside front cover). M. Catharina plans to stay with us for six months.

M. Abbess was in Rome 17-22 April to attend the Jubilee celebrations marking the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the Benedictine Confederation and the College of Sant'Anselmo, the Benedictine International House of Studies.

We send congratulations to Abbot Primate Gregory Polan OSB and all at Sant'Anselmo.

For your diary and prayers, coming up on Saturday 30 June 2018, the English Benedictine Congregation plans to run an all-day event called 'Open' at Douai Abbey, near Reading in Berkshire.

Open to men and women aged 18-29, the day will explore the depths of the monastic tradition. Participants are invited to 'come and discover a wisdom that helps you make better choices and offers a way to God' via workshops, prayer and Mass, led by monks and nuns.

Our own D. Josephine has been involved in planning this event.

Please share with any young person you think might be interested.

For more information and to register (the cost is £5) see:

www.benedictines.org.uk/open

Cultivating the Inner Tree

I have seen a tree which was planted by the blessed St Dominic at Rome: everyone goes to see it, and is fond of it for the sake of the planter. In the same way having seen in you the tree of the desire of sanctity, which our Lord has planted in your soul, I cherish it tenderly, and take more pleasure in regarding it now than when present; and I exhort you to do the same and to say with me: may God give you increase, O lovely tree! Divine heavenly seed, may God grant you to produce your fruit unto maturity: and when you shall have produced it, may God guard you from the wind.

Letter of St Francis de Sales to St Jane de Chantal 3rd May 1604

Born through Water and the Spirit... (John 3:5)

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit
that my thoughts may be all holy.*

*Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my work, too, may be holy.*

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
that I may love what is holy.*

*Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
to defend all that is holy.*

*Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
that I may always be holy.*

St Augustine (d. 430)

*Almighty God, grant that we who have come to know the grace of
the Lord's resurrection may ourselves rise to newness of life through
the love of your Spirit.*

Collect of Friday 3rd Week of Easter

*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery, to fall back into fear; you
received the spirit of adoption-as-sons which causes us to cry out
'Abba, Father'.*

Romans 8:14-15

Hurry, then, to have a share in the Holy Spirit. He is present when you call on him, and, if you call on him, it is because he is present in you. He is the rushing river that brings joy to the city of God.

William of St Thierry (d. 1148)

Prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us into men and women of hope and prayer and enables us to keep the world open for God.

Pope Benedict XVI



There is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows what is needed in every time and place. This is what it means to be mysteriously fruitful.

Pope Francis 'Evangelii Gaudium'

A Reflection on St Barnabas

An adaptation of a conference Sr Anna gave to Benedictine nuns when in Nigeria 2012-13

Shortly after publication of this edition of *Stanbrook Benedictines* we celebrate the memoria of St Barnabas. You may not notice St Barnabas in the NT quite as much as you do Peter or Paul, or John, or even Judas Iscariot, but look at him carefully and you'll see a very attractive character, one who stands out as a rounded human being, whole and therefore holy. It is instructive and encouraging to look at him in some detail.

The first thing we learn about Barnabas is that he succeeded where the rich young man had failed. The rich young man had approached Jesus to ask how he could be saved. He had kept the commandments throughout his life, he said, clearly thinking he was doing all that was needed. He comes across as a prig, in fact! But when push came to shove, he could not give up his great wealth (see Mk 10.17).

But Barnabas did give up his wealth to follow Jesus. He had freedom of heart; he was one of the poor in spirit described in the Beatitudes. He sold his land in Cyprus, gave the money to the apostles (Acts 4.37), and then offered himself in service to the Church. Jesus loved the young man, the Gospel tells us, even though he refused to follow him. Think how much, then, he must have loved Barnabas. From the beginning Barnabas was committed, and this commitment, and his generosity, brought him freedom, joy, peace and courage, and for all these qualities he was respected and loved by his fellow believers. You can feel this whenever the Acts of the Apostles speaks of him. Perhaps that was why he was called 'Son of Encouragement' or 'Son of Consolation.' When Jesus called Simon, he changed his name to Peter, thereby indicating what his new apostle would become, the rock on which he would build his church. Barnabas, on the other hand, was always called Encourager, Consoler, because of the way he already was.

Barnabas is rather like John the Baptist. Before Jesus began his public ministry John had proclaimed that the Messiah was coming. When Jesus did come, John announced his presence, and having done all this he slipped into the background to die a martyr's death. 'He must grow greater; I must grow less' (Jn 3.30).

Now think of Barnabas in relation to Paul.

The story in Acts goes like this. Paul, the Church's one-time persecutor, had suddenly become a Christian – but no one believed or trusted him. It was Barnabas who had the insight and wisdom, even the compassion, to see Paul for who he now was and accept him in his new state. Just as Jesus himself

did, he accepted the outsider, the stranger, the one who threatened the status quo. It was Barnabas who encouraged Paul and consoled him, and then persuaded the Church to accept him. Like the Baptist, Barnabas had recognized the one who was to come, and announced him when he came. His humility, his transparency to God, gave him insight, perception – wisdom in the biblical sense, in fact. It was he who provided the necessary opening for Paul and his future mission. Without Barnabas, we might not have had the Church as we know it today. Barnabas' own conversion was deep and true; he integrated his faith and love of Jesus into his whole life, and this transformed him into a holy man of God. He had the courage, freedom, openness and wisdom to accept others in their spiritual journey, to see below surface appearances into the depth. A more unpromising, improbable candidate for apostleship than Paul at the beginning is hard to imagine. He needed a John the Baptist figure to prepare his way for him, and Barnabas was that figure.

With the missionary journeys we see the true greatness of the man; he had the humility to stand back, to cede the way to another. Barnabas and Paul travelled around the Mediterranean together preaching the Gospel. Barnabas, being longer in the faith and more mature, should have been the leader – but notice that it was Paul who made the impact. Once Barnabas had been the leader; now Paul takes over the role. But Barnabas didn't mind; there is no indication of jealousy, anger, bitterness, a sense of being slighted, overlooked or hurt. He just let it happen, not forcing himself forward. For him, it was the message of the Gospel that was important, not the self-glorification of the person proclaiming it, even if this came at cost to himself. If Paul was a better, more effective speaker than Barnabas, then Paul should take the lead (Acts 14.12). 'The Gospel, the Church, must grow greater; I must grow less.' Barnabas was free: he had no personal agenda; he could be used in any way the Gospel needed.

But Barnabas was no feeble coward; he stood up to Paul's powerful personality when necessary. Once, Paul dropped John Mark from the team, sacked him, since he had abandoned them both on an earlier journey. (Paul seemed to think it was neglect of duty, a betrayal of them as a team – though probably it was just the inconsistency of youth). Barnabas thought that was wrong and said so. He wanted mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation (Acts 15.37), perhaps just plain human understanding.

We see in Barnabas a mature human being – a model Christian. In a monastery he would be a good monk: humble, generous, poor in spirit, meek yet courageous, one whose sense of identity was not diminished under any circumstances, who knew his identity in Christ. 'I have come so that you may

have life to the full' Jesus tells us, and that life was Barnabas's to the full because he had surrendered completely. He was the complete man, the complete monk whom St Benedict sketches at the end of his chapter on humility (RB 7).

Our vocation is to become fully human, to become like Christ in whose image and likeness we are made. The more we become like Christ, the more human we become – and the more divine. St Barnabas presents us with a most attractive model of what it is to be human, and an inspiration to become so.

Sr Anna

Meditations on the Holy Spirit

We want you to follow the Spirit which we have sought to follow but which must be sought anew in every generation.

First generation Quakers, Balby, York, late 17th Century.

The angel brought me to the entrance of the Temple where a stream flowed eastwards from under the threshold of the Temple, as the Temple faced east...

He said, 'this water flows east down to the Arabah and to the sea. As it flows into the sea, it makes its waters wholesome. Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live. Fish will be plentiful, for wherever the water flows it brings health and life thrives wherever this river goes.'

Ezekiel 47.1, 8-9. See Maca's Prayer p. 24.

The Spirit came down upon the Son of God who had become the Son of Man and with him he became accustomed to dwelling with humankind, to resting upon human beings, and to making his home in God's creatures. In them he accomplished God's will and he renewed them, making them pass from their old ways to the newness of Christ.

St Irenaeus *Against Heresies* III, 17, 1.

Kairos Time

Some years ago, Sr Mary Whelan, Superior General of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God (SMG), invited Mother Joanna to paint a mural of their foundress, Mother Magdalen Taylor, expressing her personal charism and spirit living on in SMG communities. Through many years of friendship in God with the SMGs, M. Joanna had come to know them and their apostolic work well. She reflected, researched and prayed as she worked to capture this charism in paint, finally unifying her vision in the image of the True Vine: 'I am the vine, you are the branches', an image which, as you will see, expresses the foundress's inspiration.

Frances Magdalen Taylor (1832-1900) was the daughter of an Anglican clergyman. Courageous and compassionate, she nursed in the Crimea where the suffering and faith she saw changed her life. She became a Catholic and, returning home, used her great gifts of mind and heart in writing and service of the poor. Inspired by the Incarnation and in response to God's love for us, she founded the Poor Servants of the Mother of God to serve the physical and spiritual needs of the poor and destitute, respecting each individual as a child of God. By the time of her death in 1900 there were eighteen houses in England, Ireland, Rome and Paris.

On 13 June 2014 Pope Francis declared M. Magdalen 'Venerable'. Sisters today continue her work in many varied ministries and, whenever they pray the Angelus, they pause at 'The Word became flesh' to ponder the mystery of the Incarnation: the True Vine and its branches

In September 2017 M. Joanna was invited to the unveiling of her mural at the Kairos Centre at Roehampton, and I accompanied her to represent our Community. In this lovely house, surrounded by the warm hospitality of Sr Mary Whelan and her sisters, M. Joanna supervised the mounting and lighting of the mural. On 26 September friends of both the SMGs and M. Joanna's Benedictine community gathered for the ceremony of unveiling. It was a delight to share the day with all who had watched and prayed as the mural progressed and evolved. By 3pm we were assembled, a group of about eighty, in the front hall of the Kairos Centre, with the mural concealed behind a heavy curtain, M. Joanna seated to the left of her mural, and Sr Mary Whelan standing at her side. Kairos staff mingled with the guests, cameras in hand. The mood was of lively expectancy.

After welcoming all to the ceremony, Sr Mary graciously introduced M. Joanna, and explained the background of the commission. Then, Mr Kenneth Campbell, great-nephew of M. Magdalen, stepped forward and unveiled the mural in silence. As we watched, the mural was 'born' inch by inch.

On the left foreground stands M. Magdalen holding out her hands in wonder as she sees the fruitful branches of the vine of her Order's growth. A stylised vine with green leaves and grapes is crossed with bands of golden light enclosing vignettes of the sisters practising the works of mercy. The first, painted in a muted purple, portrays young Frances Taylor nursing in Scutari. The other vignettes move through time into the present day: past, future and present interpenetrate.

Fr Tom McHugh, parish priest of St Joseph's, Bromley, blessed the mural in a beautiful liturgy of thanksgiving, reflecting on the blessing God gives to artists by granting them a share in his creative Spirit. Prayers followed, led by Sr Margaret Doyle SMG. It was then M. Joanna's turn to tell the story of the commission and interpret her vision, simply and prayerfully. As she concluded, a round of applause broke out, and another, and another... followed by a blaze of photographers' flashing bulbs. Formality over, guests began mingling, congratulating M. Joanna and the SMG sisters, admiring the mural, sharing responses, until all were invited to a bountiful tea.

Throughout this buzz and joyfulness, the mural kept its silent but eloquent witness to the spirit of M. Magdalen and her sisters: it had begun its own apostolic life. May it bear lasting fruit!

Sr Petra

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

[Erratum: on p. 5 of the Advent issue it was incorrectly stated that the mural commemorated the centenary of the death of Mother Magdalen Taylor. We apologise for this mistake.]



Centrespread: MURAL by D. Joanna Jamieson OSB, Kairos Centre, Roehampton
Photo by Sr Mary Stephen Grindon-Welch CRSS



Macarena Garcia, oblate of the Manquehue Apostolic Movement
(see p. 24)

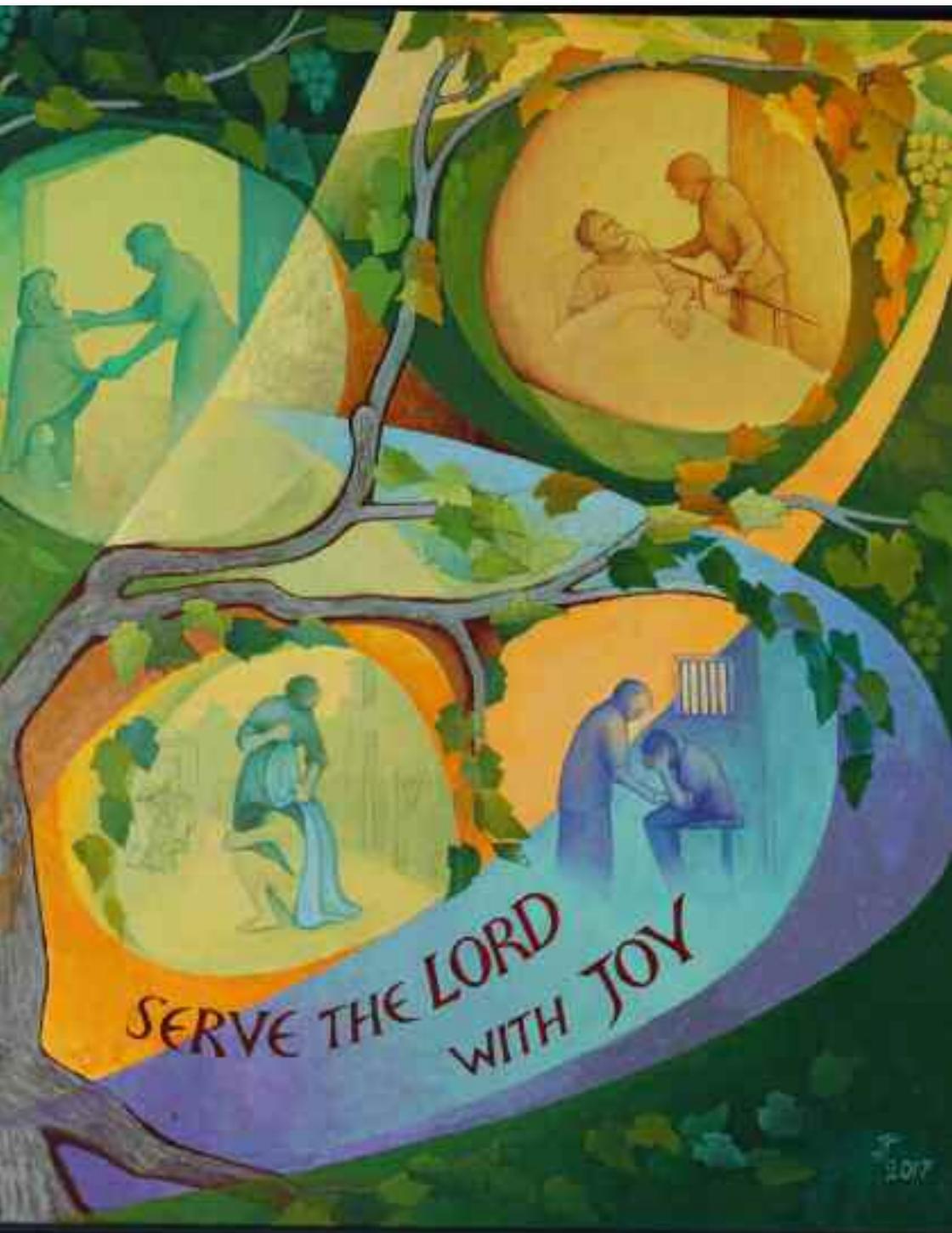
Photo by D. Philippa



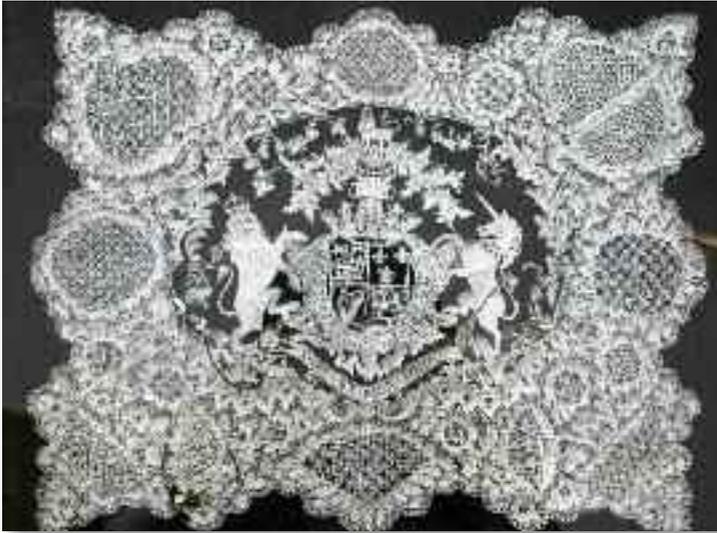
Philosophy Class, Ampleforth Abbey, 2017 (see p. 2)

L-R: Br Alberic Jones OSB, Br Benedict Donleavy OSB (Ampleforth); Br Augustine Primavesi OSB (Belmont); Sr Thérèse Murphy OSB (Stanbrook); Fr Paul Shaw of the Shrewsbury diocese.





SERVE THE LORD
WITH JOY



Cut-work English Coat of Arms, 17th Century, Cambrai, Flanders



Cut-work crib, Stanbrook Abbey refectory, Christmas 2017
A Christmas card of this scene will be available from the bookshop later in 2018

From the Archives: Paper Cutting Through the Ages

The craft of paper-cutting, where fine scissors or knives are used to cut paper into intricate patterns, was a popular hobby for ladies in the 18th and 19th centuries. It also provided a valuable source of income for enclosed contemplative religious as described in the Stanbrook Abbey Annals:

The plain needlework by which the nuns tried to eke out their resources was supplemented...by cutting pictures, lacework etc. from vellum. This curious art they may perhaps have learned from a poor man named Cadet-Rousell who earned his living [this way] and whose story is still remembered at Cambrai.

(SBA Annals vol. 1, part 1, p. 335)

One of the most treasured items in the Archives is a piece of 'cut-work' dating from 1793 depicting the English coat of arms. The piece is precious not only because it is one of the few items surviving from our original monastery at Cambrai (founded during penal times in 1623), but also because it tells the story of one of the most testing periods of the community's history, when the nuns narrowly escaped the guillotine in the French Revolution.

On 18 October 1793, a body of armed guards suddenly entered the monastery and arrested the nuns, giving them a mere 'half a quarter of an hour' (seven and a half minutes) to gather together a small bundle of belongings. In the unexpected shock and confusion, many of them left with only the clothes they were wearing, but one sister hastily packed the piece of cut-work into her bundle of essentials.

The twenty-one nuns were 'carted off' to prison, quite literally, in open horse-drawn carts, being fully exposed to the elements, and also to the abuse of hostile mobs, during the five-day journey to Compiègne prison. Over the next eighteen months, the overcrowded and inhumane conditions led to the deaths of four of them.

Sixteen Carmelite nuns, who were incarcerated in the same prison, were martyred at the guillotine on 16 July 1794, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Our Benedictine sisters feared that they would soon follow, but within a fortnight of the martyrs' deaths, came the fall of Robespierre and the beginning of the end of the 'Terror'.

Eventually, in April 1795, the nuns were released and were able to return to England, dressed in secular clothes which had belonged to the Carmelites in prison. The clothes became officially recognised as relics of Bl. Teresa and

Companions, Martyrs. Some fabric from these garments and, most poignantly, one espadrille, are now encased in a fitting reliquary.

Incredibly, the nuns managed to keep the piece of cut-work with them all this time. When they returned to England, they repaired it and added the following handwritten notice to the back of the frame:

This piece of cut-work representing the Arms of our Land before the union of 1801 was done with scissors by two Religious of the English Convent of Cambray, Teresa Partington and Mary Augustin Shepherd. It was finished in September 1793. On the 18th of October the same year, the Religious were surprised by a body of guards, who in less than half an hour turned them out of their Convent, not allowing them time to take either trunk or box, only a few small bundles which they hastily made up. The King's arms they conveyed with them to Compiegne prison, and in all their changes of habitation. The glass was unfortunately broken when they were carted away to prison and the work injured. It was not repaired without significant trouble. May it remain in its present state in testimony of our allegiance to King and Country!!! 1818

The Archives contain several other specimens of cut-work, including some small devotional picture-cards of saints, where a miniature picture is painted onto an oval central panel, and the surrounding paper is cut into decorative borders.

The nuns clearly enjoyed paper crafts for recreational purposes too. A rather fun example is a large replica model of Salford House, where the community lived from 1807 until they settled at Stanbrook, Worcester, in 1838. The house is made from folded and glued cardboard, and seems to be a fairly accurate model, while in the surrounding gardens, paper nuns walk among paper flowerbeds and even rows of paper vegetables!

In November 2017 local artist, Anita Bowerman, who has produced many fine pieces of cut-work, held a workshop here at Stanbrook, Wass, to help us revive this traditional craft. It inspired the novitiate to design a large cut-work nativity scene which decorated the refectory windows over Christmas. (See p. 18)

Sr Marian

Sr Marian also took the photos on p. 18

A first-hand account of the seizure and imprisonment of the nuns is available from our bookshop. See the review on p. 25

Pathways from Abraham

In November I travelled to Israel with a group of Jews and Christians. Our aim: to observe the divide between Israelis and Palestinians, and to listen. A few of my recollections of the visit follow.

Ophir, a policeman who works in Jerusalem, and his wife and daughter make us welcome with coffee and apple cake. Standing outside of their house we can hear the muezzin calling – the security barrier skirts the tight-knit community in which they live. They tell us that ambulances often bring people from the Palestinian side for medical care in the Jerusalem hospitals; the checkpoints deal speedily with all such emergencies. Ophir and his wife tell us that, despite constant threats to security, there is great joy in living in a community like theirs: ‘We know where our young people are; we know the others’ kids with whom they hang out.’ Reminiscent of growing up in Britain during the early 1960s. As we pause by the barrier a bus pulls up and we meet a group of British people who have come specifically to protest in Jerusalem on the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration which led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1949; here, in the only democracy of the Middle East, they are free to protest.

In Efrat the Mayor’s special envoy tells us of efforts his boss has made to engage with local Palestinians: invitations to the Jewish festival of Succoth were happily accepted by their non-Jewish neighbours but the Palestinian Authority was far from happy: it was made very clear to those who accepted the invitation that this was ‘fraternising with the enemy.’

At Hebron, a Palestinian city with a tiny Jewish community settled close to the tombs of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, we are guided by a charismatic young man from Brooklyn. He points to the burial places of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Rebecca and tells us that ‘these may be their tombs but for us they’re not dead: they are family. Awesome!’ He aspires to live in peace with his neighbours but in this place of great tension carries a gun in his back pocket.

At Rachel’s tomb an elderly man bids us welcome and asks if we’re from New York; he doesn’t appear to have heard of Newcastle but he has a daughter who lives in Gateshead and is overjoyed to know that it’s part of our territory.

Ian Mills who heads *Abraham’s Children in Crisis* tells us about the charity’s work: to care for children and young people whatever their need – medical care, housing, education, counselling. They have two simple guiding principles: ‘no religion and no politics.’

Over an early breakfast, Ismail Khaldi, the first Bedouin to become an Israeli diplomat, tells us his story. He speaks of his early years living in a tent, of disparity between the schools and infrastructure in Israel and the West Bank. He tells us about the Bedouin who was asked to arbitrate in a land dispute and made the two men involved wait while he pressed his ear to the ground: 'the earth has nothing to say,' he concludes, 'because the earth belongs to no-one.'

We visit Sderot, a city in the Western Negev less than a mile from the Gaza strip. In spite of being a constant target for rockets from the other side of the security barrier, new homes are being built here. We visit a children's playground which has secure shelters and wonder about the effect that this must have on the children. On the roof of a Yeshiva (house of study) students pore over their sacred texts while keeping watch.

After we have all prayed at the Western Wall, Rabbi Simcha Hochbaum guides us round the old city of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount; then he invites the Christians to talk about how and why this place is holy to us. We point out the different churches, explain the Way of the Cross and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; as we pass the Convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion we talk about their work in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Our Jewish friends listen with great interest but feel unable to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; in the end we Christians get no further than the doorway because of the crowds.

Conclusions from our visit? Readers may feel as though we only heard one narrative and that is largely true. Apart from Palestinians working in one of the supermarkets, one of the residents of Neve Shalom (a community of Jews, Christians and Muslims), and our own observation of the Palestinians living in Hebron, our visit was informed by Israelis. However, if we had gone under other auspices, maybe we would only have heard the Palestinian side. It has been said that in the UK 10% of the population is always pro-Israel, 10% always pro-Palestine, and the remainder sways between the two polar opposites. I have no qualms in admitting that I have always been pro-Israel and remain so: the terrible events of the Holocaust and the rise of anti-Semitism make me certain that the Jewish people must have a homeland. Many Israelis are extremely critical of government policy with regard to the Palestinians; the democracy in which they live, the only democracy in the Middle East, allows them to be critical. Our little group of three Jews and five Christians went to Israel as friends and returned with our friendship and understanding of one another made stronger. Sharing meals, talking and

laughing together and discussing all that we heard and saw rapidly made us into a family. Whatever may divide people of different faiths, everyone's aspiration is the same – peace for themselves and their family. If everyone can be encouraged to see 'the other' as part of the same human family and deserving of justice then there is hope. So in the words of the psalmist, *let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*

Fr Chris Jackson

Fr Chris, an oblate of Stanbrook, is a priest of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

The views expressed in this, and all articles in 'Stanbrook Benedictines', are those of the authors. We would be happy to consider any article which presents more of the Palestinian side. Eds.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Heart Speaks to Heart

Here we are, you and I, and I hope a third, Christ, is in our midst. There is now no one to disturb us; there is no one to break in on our friendly chat, no man's prattle or noise of any kind will creep into this pleasant solitude. Come now, beloved, open your heart, and pour into these friendly ears whatsoever you will, and let us accept gracefully the gift of this place, time, and leisure.

Opening of Book I of St Aelred's treatise *On Spiritual Friendship*

I cannot tell you all I would like, my heart cannot translate these intimate feelings in the cold language of this earth... But one day in heaven, in our beautiful homeland, I shall look at you, and in my look you will see all I would like to say to you, for silence is the language of the blessed inhabitants of heaven.

Letter of St Thérèse of Lisieux to her sister, Leonie, at the time a novice at the Visitation Monastery in Caen LT163, 20th May 1894

Thanksgiving by Macarena Garcia

During my four months at Stanbrook (Oct. 2017-Feb. 2018) I experienced a spiritual lung of the church. Now a profound thanksgiving for God's manifestation in my life springs from my heart. Ezekiel 47: 8-9 has sustained me throughout this time. Through prayer, lectio, silence, the love of the community, the peace and living presence of Christ, I have experienced the water flowing from the sanctuary, cleansing, healing, bringing life in abundance.

Father, I thank you for this community of women whose search for God through constant prayer in the liturgy, in lectio and personal encounter with the Lord has taught me to cherish Christ above all as St Benedict teaches.

Father, I thank you for allowing me to witness how this community shows love for each other through gestures, smiles, both in silence and with kind words. This has made me desire to live this love more silently.

Father, I thank you for the welcome of this community, both the older and the younger members and those who work here; for giving me precisely the words and gestures I needed.

Father, I thank you for the praise of this community in union with the choirs of angels, sustaining the apostolic work of schools, parishes, movements and preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Father, I thank you for enlightening me through your Word, and your manifestation in my life during my time here.

Father, I thank you for the daily Eucharist, your mystery becoming alive in the heart of the world, uniting yourself with me in the form of bread.

Father, I thank you for the living water which has purified me of my idols, ideas and my own will to be open to your Will. Thank you for manifesting yourself in the soft wind, in the hard winter, in the daily round of a timetable structured to search for you.

Father, I thank you for the perseverance of this community through their long history, including wars, imprisonment, moves. I ask you Father to bless them and fill them with your Spirit. May their prayer and precious presence in the Church rise like incense before you.

Macarena, 'Maca', (see photo on p. 15) is a member of the Manquehue Apostolic Movement, a Chilean community of lay Christians which has special links with the monasteries of the English Benedictine Congregation.

Book Review

A Brief Narrative of the Seizure of the Benedictine Dames of Cambrai, of Their Sufferings While in the Hands of the French Republicans, and of Their Arrival in England. By One of the Religious, Who Was an Eye Witness to the Events She Relates

and

Two Hairs & a Dish of Tortoise

by Dame Ann Teresa Partington, edited by Dame Scholastica Jacob; pub, 2016

If one subscribes to the idea that history is written by the victors, regardless of the true origin of that quote, then the publication of this slender but important first volume in the Stanbrook Abbey Historical Records Series will be an affirmation of that belief. That such an eyewitness account even exists of 'the Seizure' and 'of Their Sufferings' in the first place is remarkable given that this narrative was written within three years of the hardships endured by the Benedictine nuns at Cambrai. This account leaves little doubt as to the identity of the true victors.

This present series has been initiated to mark the Stanbrook community's forthcoming 400th anniversary of foundation in 1623 and is a most welcome addition to the canon of the English Benedictine Congregation. Although volume one does not delve into those earliest years of the 17th century, it rather elucidates for the reader what the book's introduction calls, 'arguably, the most dramatic episode in our long history.' The English Benedictine nuns had been ensconced on the Continent for well over 150 years in the Monastery of Our Lady of Consolation in Cambrai, at that time part of the Spanish Netherlands.

This community, along with many others, managed to exist peacefully on foreign soil despite earlier commotions which included the nationalisation of Church property in November 1789 and the abolition of monastic vows and the order for the dissolution of monasteries in February 1790. The boiling point was reached in the fall of 1793 when France declared war on England, paving the way for the seizure of the nuns' property.

Notwithstanding their expressed desire 'to remain prisoners in their Convent under a guard rather than be removed to any other place of confinement,' they were, several days later, transferred to the District of Compiègne.

Despite haranguing and abusive language suffered along the way, the nuns were treated with compassion by a detachment of Hussars on horseback, some of whom shed tears. In the manner of St Martin of Tours at Amiens, some Hussars 'lent their cloaks to those of the religious who were in uncovered carts, to keep them from starving.' [sic]

Throughout the ensuing winter, on average, eight or nine nuns were at any one time confined to bed, many suffering from fever proceeding, according to the attending doctor, 'from great hardships and chagrin.' Altogether, during eighteen months of deprivation, starvation and humiliation, four good nuns died along with their chaplain.

Later in the following spring of June 1794, the lives of the Benedictine nuns became fleetingly intertwined with those of 16 Carmelite nuns imprisoned in a nearby room at Compiègne. While the fate of the latter, sent to their martyrdom by guillotine in Paris, has been immortalized in Francis Poulenc's haunting opera, *The Dialogues of the Carmelites*, it may be a new fold in the fabric of the story for some readers to learn how the former, the Benedictines, came to inherit the clothes of the Carmelites. The facts are laid out nicely in the narrative and suffice it to say that it was the relics of the martyrs, in the form of Carmelite clothing, which the Benedictines wore upon their eventual return to England. So treasured are they, we are told, that '[w]e still keep them, a few articles excepted, which we have given to particular friends.'

Although previous versions of this manuscript have appeared in print (1834, 1906, 1913), they have not included the various addenda given here, such as a contemporaneous note, poem and dedication. The volume's editor, Dame Scholastica Jacob, has supplied judicious and concise footnotes, a list of key dates, and a helpful description of the physical manuscript itself. A total of six appendices are particularly illuminating and instructive.

This volume closes with a short five-and-a-half page transcription with a title nearly as long: *Two Hairs & A Dish of Tortoise, A Cellarer's Account Book from 1795-99, Extracts from Dame Ann Teresa Partington's Notebook*. The inclusion of this listing by the editor provides an appropriately leavening effect to the sombre proceedings dealt with in the main portion of the volume. Dame Ann Teresa Partington, authoress of both pieces, shows us that regardless of the travails of the mission abroad, the work of the house and community needed to begin forthwith, and thus the list-making began.

Sociologists tell us that in gathering oral histories, a single source is never enough and rarely reliable. For these accounts by Dame Ann Teresa, however, we are especially grateful and appreciative.

Dom Sixtus Roslevich OSB, Saint Louis Abbey, U.S.A.



Noticing Books

100 Days with Luke by Revd Alex Jacob, pub. Christian Publication International, 2018; pb; £6.00. ISBN: 978-0-9926674-8-1

This newly-published book by Revd Alex Jacob (brother of our Sr Scholastica) provides 100 reflections, rarely more than a page long, on the Gospel of St Luke. Written particularly for new Jewish believers in Jesus, it is an ideal guide wherever we are on the spiritual journey and will be especially helpful from Advent 2018 when we begin the Year of Luke in the Gospel three-year cycle.

We hope to include a full review in the Advent edition of Stanbrook Benedictines.

Excerpts from *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke

Penguin Classics, No. 103

23 April 1903

Sadness passes through us, alters us, like the future has entered us in advance and lodges there as the beginning of fullness.

To be an artist is not about calculating and counting but rather about growing and ripening like a tree which does not hurry the flow of its sap and stands at ease in the spring gales without fear that no summer will follow. It will come but only to those who are patient, who are simply there in their vast, quiet tranquillity as if eternity lay before them... Patience is all!

16 July 1903

If what is close is far, then the space around you is wide indeed and already among the stars.

The Consolation of Philosophy

‘Sr Thérèse, what do you think about studying philosophy?’

Well, until then I hadn’t really thought about it. An opportunity had arisen for the nuns to join with the Ampleforth junior monks’ philosophy classes. ‘You wouldn’t have to write any essays, you could just go to the classes. This would also build on the joint studies already undertaken in Scripture and Patristics so it would be good if we could say yes.’

I eventually found out that this course would last three years, meeting for one morning approximately once a month, and is equivalent to philosophy studies in a papal university, although we don’t actually get the degree.

So I gave it some thought. At that time (autumn 2015) I felt that an organised course of study might help me make better use of my time, and that accepting Ampleforth’s offer of collaboration was important, so I agreed to try it until Christmas.

I found myself in a small class (see photo on p. 15) taught by Fr Paul Shaw, a priest of the Shrewsbury diocese, with Br Benedict from Ampleforth, and Br Augustine who came up to Yorkshire from Belmont Abbey once a month for the course. In the second year we were joined by Br Alberic of Ampleforth. I had not realised that this was actually the second class of the course, and both my fellow students had written essays about the knotty problem ‘This sentence is a lie’. Much of the morning was spent discussing their work. Fr Paul seemed to have no idea that I was not planning to write any essays; he was using a tutorial model, in which students do most of their work by independent reading and writing. So I thought that, to be fair to Brs Augustine and Benedict, I should write some essays too. Also, I couldn’t see how I would learn very much otherwise.

Fr Paul’s objective in many of the classes, particularly during the first year, seemed to be to induce us to have an interesting discussion analysing almost any topic we raised, regardless of whether it was of direct relevance to the area of philosophy we were actually studying. I was challenged to look at where my ideas and opinions came from, and whether and how I could support or justify them.

I really did struggle with my essays. I would stare for hours at the computer, with very little beyond the question upon the screen. Anyway, I would eventually, and with great difficulty, complete the recommended two thousand words. Fr Paul asked me when my essays would graduate from ‘competent’ to ‘good’, and my unspoken answer was ‘never’. My mind was dull and paralysed. But in the late spring a most beautiful, slow-release

miracle began as long-standing health problems gradually ebbed away. Within a few months I became much more energetic and outgoing than I had ever been in my adult life. I rediscovered that liveliness of mind which had been dormant for over twenty-five years, now no longer the mind of a child or a young adult, but one richer in many experiences.

I began to complain about lack of time to write. I produced twenty-page essays, and could see so many sides to the question that I had to learn to prune my ideas to keep the essay within sensible limits.

Collaboration with both Ampleforth and Belmont has been a major benefit to all of us involved in the course. I have greatly enjoyed sharing the liturgy at Ampleforth on my visits there, joining the monks in the calefactory and getting to know Br Augustine and Br Benedict. Also, having discussions about monastic life has been valuable and enjoyable. As a cloistered nun, I could, to some extent, lose touch with daily life in the world outside so another big advantage has been, through our tutor, to have some real insight into what life is like in a parish, which informs my prayer for the Church.

Sometimes Fr Paul inquires as to whether we have had any 'light bulb moments' on the course, when there has been a sudden change of perspective, the dramatic opening of a new and previously unseen vista. Perhaps this has happened, but I prefer to liken my experiences over the last three years to the dawn. What is most glorious, perhaps, is that as it is still early dawn, I do not see very far ahead. The best is yet to come.

Sr Thérèse

The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things. I say that the heart naturally loves the Universal Being, and also itself naturally, according as it gives itself to them...

It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason. This, then, is faith: God felt by the heart, not by the reason.

From *The Pensées* of Blaise Pascal (d.1662), nos. 277, 278.

‘Sing a New Song’: Monastic Musicians Meeting 2-6 October 2017

This year’s meeting was held in the beautiful setting of Belmont Abbey in Hereford, home of a community of Benedictine monks. The venue was doubly enjoyable owing to the number of nearby ancient monastic settlements.

The input by all speakers was outstanding. Robert Sholl, Professor at the University of West London, gave us a day on the theory and practice of Arvo Pärt and Olivier Messiaen. Having performed the complete works of the latter, Robert was admirably suited to sharing his love and enthusiasm for this composer’s work. Messiaen was a French composer (1908-1992) and ornithologist, inspired by Japanese music, St Francis of Assisi and birdsong. It was said that his expectant mother could actually hear music within her and foretold that her son would be a musician. In WWII he spent time as a POW when he wrote ‘Quartet for the End of Time’ that imitated blackbird and nightingale songs. Much later he would risk life and limb on a quest to hear birdsongs and transform their melodies and rhythms into his music. He could ‘hear’ the colours of the birds and perceive colours when he heard certain chords (synaesthesia). For example, an E major chord evoked for him red with a dash of silver. His magnum opus was ‘Catalogue d’Oiseaux’ for piano, lasting two and half hours, utilising 77 different species of bird song.

The Estonian, Arvo Pärt (b. 1935), invented a compositional style named ‘tintinnabulation’ (sound of bells) influenced by his mystical experience of chant. His music is considered to be simultaneously on the borderline between the religious and the secular, symptomatic of one’s search for God. In his own words:

‘Tintinnabulation is an area I sometimes wander into when I am searching for answers – in my life, my music, my work. In my dark hours, I have the certain feeling that everything outside this one thing has no meaning. The complex and many-faceted only confuses me, and I must search for unity. What is it, this one thing, and how do I find my way to it? Traces of this perfect thing appear in many guises and everything that is unimportant falls away. Tintinnabulation is like this...the three notes of a triad are like bells. And that is why I call it tintinnabulation.’

There is silence, mourning, bells and death in his music which are transforming and help us to be still, touching something that is already within us. There is a shifting of colours as the left hand plays the line and the right hand arpeggios. It is the music of twins...This and that.

George Arthur Richford, Director of Music at Romsey Abbey, spoke on sacred choral music today and how to respond as director and composer. He was keen to encourage choir directors to exploit the strengths of their singers, drawing out their musicality through early training in pitch recognition. The key is to instil confidence in voices; so many were put off by harsh criticism when young. That said, one member of the group opined that church musicians themselves can 'be like snowflakes – likely to melt at any trouble'. When warming up voices, George would guard against using texts such as the psalms. The idea is not to get caught up in mistakes, but rather to work on voice production. Like a plait, the sound should be blended and there should be no split ends! The choir director provides the ingredients and the choir has to cook them. He said everything needs to be sung at least seven times before you like it or know it. Taking his cue from Messiaen, George encouraged us to observe birds in flight: they power up to the apex then drop, it is an organic movement, something which is inherent in plainsong.

Anji Dowson stepped up to the plate when a speaker had to cancel. She had us singing some magnificent Orthodox Chant.

We were all welcomed warmly by Dean Michael Tavinor of Hereford Cathedral, given tea and shown the chained library, the Mappa Mundi and the Hereford Breviary.

Finally, a mini pilgrimage to Kilpeck church, famous for its Norman carvings, and Abbey Dore, established 1147, were further highlights of the meeting.

Sr Julian

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Silence gives us the space we need to learn to open our minds in this way to God, the Trinity... We can begin to explore best of all in the silence of prayer that space whose dimensions are those of the Trinitarian God.

Deep Calls to Deep by Dom David Foster OSB, pub Continuum, Ch 4, p. 85



The Back Page

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We hope to have the **CALENDAR 2019** on sale in the summer, and some new Christmas cards

Stanbrook Benedictines appears bi-annually (Advent & Pentecost) and is distributed free of charge. Donations towards costs are gratefully received.

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