



STANBROOK BENEDICTINES

Consolamini, consolamini



NO. 23 PENTECOST 2023



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Oblate Pilgrimage to Ripon Cathedral, 18 November 2022
(see centre pages)
Photo by a kind passer-by

Oxford Chaplaincy Retreat, Lent 2023 (see p. 6)
Photo by D. Philippa



Stanbrook Benedictines

No. 23 PENTECOST 2023

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FRONT COVER: WHOOPER SWANS flying north 26 March 2023
photo by John Green, Oblate of Stanbrook

BACK COVER: LEANING telephone box at Crief Lodges
©Marie-Line Burguière

Letter from Mother Abbess

In 1982, when Pope St John Paul II visited Britain, I was a member of the official choir at the Mass at Coventry airport on Pentecost Sunday (believe it or not!). I had travelled all night by coach, walked two miles from the coach to the choir stand next to the altar and sat all day in the hot sun. At the end, there was the same process to do in reverse. Yet, despite this, I did not catch even a glimpse of the pope. I heard him over the loudspeaker, felt the clapping of the huge crowd as he was driven round in the popemobile, and saw his helicopter arrive and depart – but I caught no sight of the man himself. My purpose in going to Coventry airport had been defeated – or so I thought. With hindsight, I realized years later that this celebration of Pentecost was deeply significant in my life.



Luke describes the first Christian Pentecost as marked by the sound of a sudden, powerful wind, which was accompanied by what seemed like tongues of fire. Were I to experience Pentecost like that, I would know immediately and never forget. But John speaks of Jesus handing over the Spirit quietly at the moment of death and by the simple act of breathing on the disciples in the upper room. Earlier, he had described to Nicodemus how the Spirit blows where he wills, how we do not know where he comes from or where he is going.

We receive the Spirit at baptism; he remains with us throughout life by virtue of baptism. What I believe happened to me that day in 1982 was the Spirit rousing in me again his ever-new life, discreetly, gently, slowly, such that even without recognizing it initially I remain firm to this day, thank God, in the Spirit who has been with me all along. The experience wasn't as dramatic as it was for the apostles, but it was, and is, every bit as profound and effective.

Please excuse this seeming self-indulgent piece of autobiography. It is sometimes recommended in spiritual accompaniment that a person review her personal history so that she see the consistent, faithful working

of God in her life. There may be times when we experience the Spirit as powerful wind and tongues of flame, but even for the apostles this was a one-off, at least at the level of observable phenomena. Their ongoing experience of the Spirit as they preached the Gospel to the ends of the earth, as they bore witness to it by their life, teaching and, often, death was of deep, inner, sustaining power, outwardly expressed in love.

Pope St Paul VI once famously noted that *modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses* (Evangelii nuntiandi, 41).

As we celebrate again the gift of the Spirit this Pentecost, may we know the deep joy of his life within us and be strengthened in the belief that his power abides and works through us and in us for a world in desperate need of that life.

Sr Anna

News

Just before Christmas we heard from Rome that St Mary's Abbey, Colwich, has now been officially fused with Our Lady of Consolation, Stanbrook. Dame Theresa Mary Hutton and Dame Benedict Rowell have been living at Wass for some time. Abbess [Emerita] Gertrude Baker and Dame Sheila Kearney are resident at Oulton Abbey Care Home. Abbess Davina Sharp is still tying up loose ends at Colwich. Please pray that this proceeds speedily and smoothly.

It is a great joy to us to be re-united with this community founded from our first monastery in Cambrai in 1652. Their presence and patrimony enrich life at Stanbrook and we give thanks to God for all the blessings he has channelled through the Colwich community for the Church and the world.

Abbot President Christopher Jamison has appointed Mother Anna as Administrator of Kylemore Abbey, now part of the English Benedictine Congregation, following the retirement after sixteen years of Mother Máire Hickey as Pontifical Commissar.

Stanbrook Benedictines – some changes...

A theme in this number is ‘anniversaries’ as we commemorate the sesquicentenary of the birth of St Thérèse of Lisieux (1873), the centenary of the death of Blessed Columba Marmion OSB (1923), the seventieth anniversary of the passing of Abbess Laurentia McLachlan OSB and the abbatial blessing of Abbess Elizabeth Sumner (1953) and the 80th anniversary of the death of the thinker and activist, Simone Weil (1943).

Later this year, we at Stanbrook will begin a year of celebration to mark the 400th anniversary of our foundation. Our Jubilee year will run from 31 December 2023, 400 years after the first nuns of our community received the Benedictine habit, and 1 January 2025 which marks the quatercentenary of their profession. In order to record the various events of the Jubilee we aim to produce a bumper edition of *Stanbrook Benedictines* in the early spring of 2025. There will be a slim-line edition at Advent 2023 and Advent 2024 with updates on the website round Pentecost 2024.



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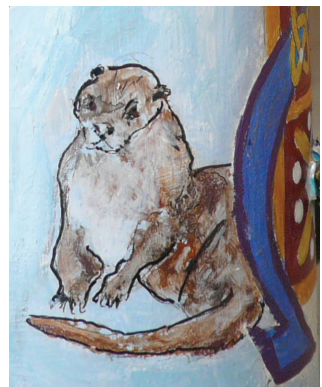
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‘Encounters’: House Chronicle Extracts

November 2022-April 2023



28th November 2022

Abbot Maksymilian Nawara, President of the Annunciation Congregation, whose monastery is in Ukraine, concelebrated Mass today and then, over coffee in the Conference Room, spoke to the community about the situation in that war-torn country.

At recreation Sr Lynn McKenzie, Moderator of the C. I. B., worldwide confederation of Benedictine women, shared a little about her own community in Alabama.

M. Anna collected Mother Franziska Lukas and Sr Monica of Dinklage from Leeds-Bradford airport this evening. They are staying here to attend the international monastic alliance – A.I.M. – meeting at Ampleforth/Stanbrook.

29th M. Anna, Sr Lynn and Abbess Franziska went over to Ampleforth before Mass for the A.I.M. executive committee meeting.

30th ST ANDREW: We pray that St Andrew, patron of Russia, Greece and Scotland, may intercede for peace in Ukraine. Today it was Stanbrook’s turn to host the A.I.M. delegates. About 20 of them joined us for Mass which was celebrated by Abbot Primate Gregory Polan. There were 8 concelebrants, including Dom Jean-Pierre Longeat, Director of A.I.M. Abbot Jeremias Schroeder, Abbot President of the St Ottilien Congregation, was among the other visitors. Despite a typically gloomy November day, Mass was full of joy and spirit, the ordinary (Latin IV) sung monks v. nuns.

Abbot Gregory preached on the power of the spoken word and the power of Jesus’ call which had brought us each to this moment. We were exhorted at the start of Advent to keep our hearts open to this transforming Word.

Fr Mark Butlin of Ampleforth, who has served A.I.M. since its inception, offered a touching bidding prayer of thanks for Stanbrook’s contribution to A.I.M., especially through the work of the late Dame Teresa Rodrigues at the Paris HQ over many years and Dame Hilda Wood’s editing and distributing of the A.I.M. Bulletin over 20 years.

Midday Office also took off thanks to the presence of our guests. A delicious buffet lunch, masterminded and prepared by D. Josephine, aided by Emma and the Team followed. This was a most enjoyable occasion. A gracious word of thanks from Dom Jean-Pierre signalled that

it was time for the delegates to return to Ampleforth but not before a visit to the Stanbrook shop.

May God continue to bless the work of this most Gospel-inspired organisation.

It was a particular joy for us to re-connect with Abbot Jeremias who, some of you may remember, was our Chaplain in Worcester in the early 1990s.

3rd March 2023 DD. Philippa and Benedict attended the Women's World Day of Prayer, now called The World Day of Prayer. D. Benedict writes:

D. Philippa and D. Benedict took part in the ecumenical World Day of Prayer service at St Mary's Anglican Church in Thirsk. This is an annual event, which takes place all over the world on the same day. This year the women of Taiwan wrote the service, on the theme of "I have heard about your faith" (Eph1:15-19).

There was a display at the front of the church, including a map of Taiwan and paper flowers. The service included hymns, testimonies, prayer and silence.

After the service there were refreshments, including pineapple cakes on a Taiwanese recipe. There was a good congregation of women of all ages, babies and some men.

10th M. Abbess is now in Montserrat for the C.I.B. meeting having completed her work as Co-Visitor at the Abbey of St Louis in the United States.

13th Heavy rain today to welcome the Oxford Chaplaincy Retreat, staying at the lodges:

Emily Gorton (St Hilda's, Medicine), Emma Rose Robinson (St Edmund's Hall, Chemistry), Rose Webster (Regent's Park, Theology and Philosophy) and Michal Harris-Edwards (Oriental, Philosophy and Politics). It has been some years since we've been able to receive this group, owing to Covid.

14th Sunshine – and snow today! The group from Oxford is certainly experiencing some Yorkshire weather. Their Chaplain, Fr Matthew Power SJ, celebrated Mass.

16th Mist today to add to the meteorological panoply.

Fr Matthew made an interesting comparison in his homily between the Martha and Mary story in St Luke and then the incident at Bethany just before the Passion in St John's Gospel. He pointed out how, in the second scene, Martha is still serving but seems to be far more peaceful about it, implying some spiritual growth. He encouraged us to do the same in our own station of life.

There was a touching 'thank you' on the behalf of the group given by Alvea Fernandes, Asst Chaplain, at Fr Matthew's invitation.

After a group photo the students departed. They have been most prayerful and interested: a delight.

9th April EASTER DAY

What a glorious celebration of the Lord's resurrection! Deo gratias!

Fr Chris Jackson, retired priest of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and a Stanbrook oblate, has preached magnificently, so personally and at the same time so universally and engagingly. Every word he has spoken has been clearly audible. This was especially so at the Easter Vigil fire which turned out to be magnificent after a slow and smouldering start.

Wonderful to have the largest number of attendees since we've been at Wass and a goodly mix of old and young faces as well as familiar and new. Many stayed for refreshments after the Masses.

All went well liturgically with strong singing in the psalmody especially compared with the last few years which have been affected by Covid and absences. Some good singers in the congregation certainly helped. D. Marian sang the *Exsultet* beautifully.

The Paschal Candle by D. Julian is a Celtic cross with Saint Cuthbert and creatures balanced by St Aelred holding his abbey of Rievaulx. Much intricate decoration embellishes this year's candle: a real work of art. You can see some of the art work in these pages.

Easter Thursday 13 April

Heavy rain and hail showers throughout the day but mercifully our Australian pilgrims managed to avoid a soaking. 27, including Good Samaritan Sisters Catherine Norman, Diana Law and Tibwau Matia (from Kiribati) and educators and support staff from Good Samaritan schools in New South Wales, arrived from their base in Ampleforth mid-afternoon and were welcomed by M. Abbess, shown the church and given a talk before tea with the community. The group was shown the Carmelite Relics from the time we shared a prison with the 17 Carmelite nuns in Compiègne who were martyred in 1795.

There followed some quiet time for prayer before joining the community for Vespers. It was good to re-connect with our Good Samaritan sisters and their co-workers, a link that goes back to our time in Worcester. We have much to learn from their forward-looking approach.

Prayers for a deeper faith...

O Lord, pour out your Spirit upon us, so filling us with his gifts that our thoughts may be pleasing to him and our lives conformed to your will.

Collect for Thursday Week VII Easter

*Lord of my origin, draw me closer to you;
Lord of my calling, give me strength to go on;
Lord of my faith, preserve me from doubt;
Lord of my hope, keep me from despair;
Lord of my love, let me never grow cold;
Lord of my past, may I never forget you;
Lord of my present, be near me always;
Lord of my future, keep me faithful to the end;
Lord of my life, let me live in your presence;
Lord of my death, receive me at last;
Lord of my eternity, bless me forever.*

Fr Eric Doyle OFM 1938-1984

In the twilight of life, God will not judge us on our earthly possessions and human successes but on how well we have loved.

St John of the Cross

Not where I breathe, but where I love, I live.

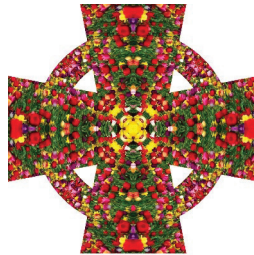
St Robert Southwell

*Would you know your Lord's meaning in this?
Love was his meaning.
Who showed it within you?
Love.
Why did he show it to you?
For Love.*

Julian of Norwich

Lord grant me, I pray you, in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, that love which knows no fall, so that my lamp may feel your kindling touch and know no quenching, may burn for me and for others may give light.

St Columban (Sermon XII)



Be joyful; keep the faith; and do the little things.

St David 6th Century

MY SOUL DOTH MAGNIFY THE LORD

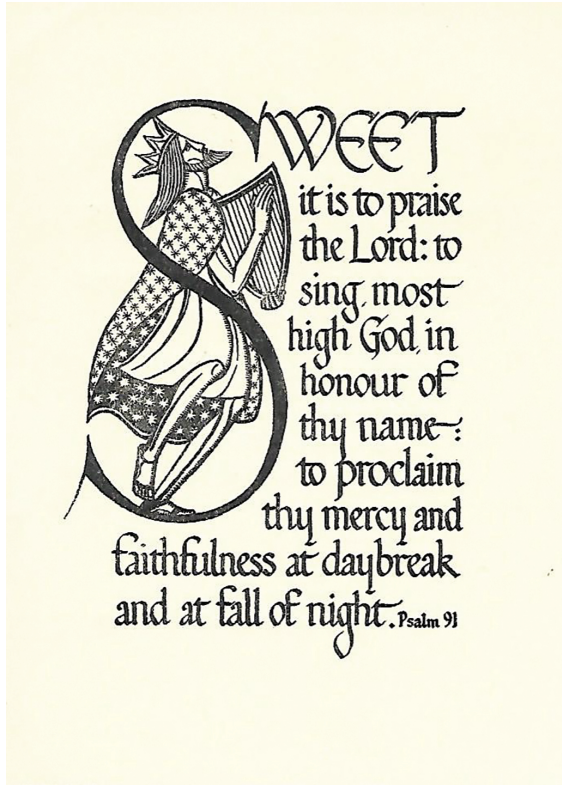
The best part of our being is the immortal spirit that we call our soul, made in the image and likeness of our Creator. Our Lady with her soul praises God, magnifies him, would, if it were possible, add to his goodness and majesty; and though he has no need of our goods, yet he allows us too to extol and exalt him above all for ever. Her words are like an anticipation of the Lord's prayer: *Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come*. How can poor human beings magnify the Lord and make him great? Our Lady's words are not mere empty praise; they are realizable in her and in us. She knew that she had been chosen from all the daughters of Eve, that she was blessed among women, and therefore she magnified God by giving him in return full possession of her soul and of her whole being. She magnified him also by the docility of her obedience in receiving the announcement of his will, by giving full scope to the action of the Holy Spirit, and by her co-operation with all that God had decreed to do for the world by the Incarnation.

She goes on to acknowledge the greatness of his gift: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me*, but even then she does not dwell on the gift as hers. She is so near to God, so filled with God, that she sees all things in the light of his truth, and that truth tells her that God is all and shows her how to take her place as his handmaid. We should not even marvel at her humility and selflessness; she was too close to God to have any but the noblest thoughts of him; the slightest self-assertion on her part was impossible. What grace is contained in this attitude of selflessness united with the greatest possible dignity!

This is Christian humility and self-forgetfulness. It is not a negative virtue, not a denial of the great things God designs for us to do for us, but, joined to the recognition of whatever natural or supernatural gifts we may have received, it is a deep conviction of the truth that they are not our own and must all be turned to God's glory. It was very easy for our Lady to attain to such a state but for us it is a laborious matter until we have learned, and we are always learning, how to give God the first place always and

everywhere, how to find our joy *at once* in giving a ready response to any call he may make on our love and service, how to imitate the handmaid of the Lord.

Abbess Laurentia McLachlan 1939
Conference ix in *The Way of Peace*



Obituary card for Abbess Laurentia McLachlan who died at Stanbrook, Worcester, on 23 August 1953 in her 88th year of age, 69th of religious life and 22nd as abbess. Printed by Stanbrook Abbey Press.

HOLY SPIRIT, sanctify me,
Holy Spirit, purify me.
From all evil deliver me,
From the power of the devil defend me.
In the hour of temptation save me,
In the hour of weakness strengthen me.
In the hour of sadness console me,
In the hour of gladness control me.
In the hour of darkness enlighten me,
In the hour of confusion guide me.
In the hour of death abide with me,
And grant that through eternity
I may adore and praise Thee,
Who with the Father and the Son
Livest and reignest eternally
One God, one Holy Trinity.

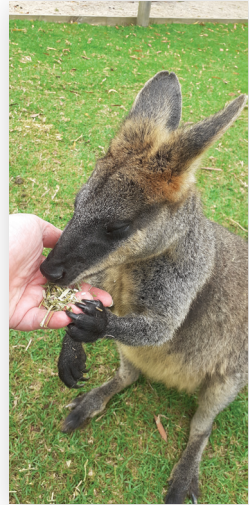
A. V. P.

Card to mark the 25th anniversary of the abbatial blessing of Abbess Elizabeth Sumner, 1978. The prayer is by A.V. Phillips, a subscriber of the Stanbrook Abbey Press by which the card was printed.

Travels ‘Down Under’: January 2023

What an unexpected gift, the opportunity to go to Australia and visit our sisters, our new EBC sisters, at Jamberoo!

When asked by the abbess if I would accompany Fr Gabriel (Ampleforth), new to his role as ‘Formation Consultor’, on this visit, I didn’t need to think for too long before saying yes! Travelling such a distance, especially in January, we decided to make it a 3-week visit. Who knows if we will ever have an opportunity to visit again? It is one thing to welcome new communities into the Congregation, quite another to be given time to spend with them listening, learning, and absorbing one another’s perspectives.



Flying over Australia gives some indication of the distances involved. New South Wales is a small corner of a huge country which took 6 hours to fly across: mind blowing really.

The welcome from the community was incredibly warm and generous and, having heard so much about them, it felt strangely familiar. In choir, in the refectory and around the monastery, everyone was kind, knowing we had work to do but making space to share something of themselves and the bigger picture of monastic life at Jamberoo. Three Stanbrook abbesses have spent time at Jamberoo and several of their own nuns have visited Stanbrook over the years, so our communities have some awareness of each other, but it was good to experience at first-hand what had been the travel tales of others.

Jamberoo Abbey is surrounded by Bush and Rainforest just waiting to be explored. M. Joanna on her sabbatical painted the distinctive bark of the gum trees that surround the abbey. As soon as I saw the colours, it was clear where she had taken her inspiration.

However, nobody told me about the leeches! Mid-January, the Australian summer, had not arrived in all its blazing glory, but the weather had been damp and humid, conditions leeches apparently love. Check your shoes for spiders and snakes, they said, but no mention of these blood suckers!

I was warned not to venture out alone until I’d been given instructions.

Thankfully, Sr Magdalen and Sr Julian came to my rescue and took me on my maiden adventure. Sr Mary Bernadette insisted I carry a jar of salt to dispatch anything that should become attached without having to pull it off my skin. I was desperate to explore but I'd be lying if I didn't say my anxiety levels started to rise, as every 15/20 mins Sr Magdalen would check around my socks and walking shoes and pull off the little wretches preparing to wiggle through my socks and up my legs! Thankfully, the view across the Jamberoo valley was more than worth it. After a spray and gel appeared outside my cell the next day, to repel the little horrors, I was never bothered again. The same can't be said for Jamberoo nuns working in their gardens.

Whilst the sun didn't shine as fiercely as I was expecting, the colours and the sounds of the birds told me I was somewhere exotic: the parrots and cockatoos just sitting in the trees like our blackbirds, and then the sound of the Kookaburra, or the Lyrebird, the great pretender who can imitate any sound, provided much entertainment.

On more than one occasion Fr Gabriel and I said to one another; 'Are we really here?'

Generously, visits were arranged to a Wildlife Park to see some of the iconic Australian animals. We all agreed the koalas are adorable with their permanent smiles but they did stink!

Before we departed, we had the opportunity to spend the day in the Blue Mountains, utterly breath-taking! Separately, we each took the opportunity to return to Sydney for a couple of days. I visited Sr Christine Manning, a Good Samaritan who had spent a sabbatical at Stanbrook, Wass, and I enjoyed another warm welcome from her Good Samaritan sisters at Glebe followed by some time with Sr Christine marvelling at the miles of golden sand and blue of the sky and the Pacific Ocean. Incredible!

The warmth of welcome and the song of blessing as we prepared to depart held between them three very special weeks, a greater awareness and love of our Australian sisters and a grateful heart for all that we shared and received. Three weeks were never going to be quite enough.

Sr Josephine



Above: 'THE THREE SISTERS' in the Blue Mountains
about two hours' drive south of Jamberoo

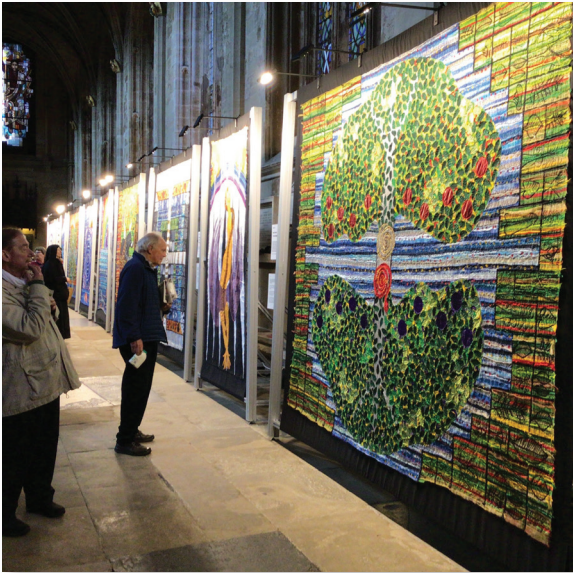
Below: FULL MOON viewed from Jamberoo

These photos and the Wallaby on p. 13 by D. Josephine



OBLATE PILGRIMAGE TO RIPON CATHEDRAL - NOVEMBER 2022

On a beautiful autumn day ten pilgrims made up of Stanbrook oblates and guests con-
the exhibition of needlework panels 'Threads through Creation' by Jacqui Parkinson
of great significance for Benedictines.



It was powerful to celebrate Midday Office in that place where St Wilfrid had introduced the Rule of St Benedict in the 7th century with the colourful images of the 'Threads through Creation' panels adding extra vibrancy to the psalms.

Sr Laurentia

What struck me most about the exhibition was the detail in the texture of each panel: from the very first panel depicting Day One of Creation the

artist has made it possible to trace in faint stitches, almost quilted into the fabric, the rich array of lifeforms with which the planet would be colonised.

Sheila Crabbe

As someone who attempts creative sewing on a less impressive scale, the size and detail of the hangings, the intricate construction and the embroidered detail, which you could see up close, were absolutely amazing. I particularly liked the hangings depicting the early days of Creation and loved the richness of colour, the repeated motifs and sense of movement. The shared Midday Prayer was reflective of the Creation theme and brought us quietly into one space, reminding us also of our 'absent brethren', of whom we were a small but hopefully representative group.

Mary Cockroft

For more information on the **Threads through Creation** exhibition, visit: www.creation
The exhibition is scheduled to visit the following cathedrals: 3 May-11 June, ST ALBAN PORTSMOUTH; 18 Oct-late Nov, WELLS and into 2024. Please check the cathedral we
Photos on this page by Sr Thérèse; planets frieze from Panel 5 of the Threads through

converged on Ripon Cathedral from all four points of the compass. The aim was to visit based on the Creation accounts in Genesis, and to pray together in a cathedral

Although I had previously seen pictures of the tapestries I was very impressed by the size, colour and detail. It was then wonderful to be able to say a 'Creation' midday office together while meditating on the intense and vivifying experience of seeing the exhibition.

Sr Thérèse

I spent quite a lot of time looking at the Creation story from the other side of the Cathedral as it was quite overwhelming close up...as God's Creation actually is! Like Lectio, I was taking in the 'whole'... I sat and let my eyes wander around, noticing and resting. A green square took my attention, it contained the black outline of a sycamore key...two wings and two seeds. The black and white scans of my son's unborn twins came to mind. Thanks be to God for new life.

Andrea Brewster

I was struck by the wonderful colours of the panels, some muted and some bright, in beautiful contrast to the soft grey of the ancient walls on which they were hung. Contrasting too was the range of design, some soft and flowing and spontaneous, others more geometric and ordered.

Bev Hallam

I was most deeply impressed and moved by the exhibition; its vision, power and philosophy and the skill of its craftsmanship.

Dennis Hallam



on-threads.co.uk

N'S; 14 Jun-23 Jul, ELY; 26 Jul-3 Sep, ROCHESTER; 6 Sept-15 Oct,
bsites for exact info.

n Creation exhibition ©Jacqui Parkinson.



D. Etheldreda (far right) with Abbess Joanna (centre), D. Margaret Mary McEvoy (far left) and D. Barbara Sumner returning from a visit to the Tororo nuns in Uganda, 1988.

D. Etheldreda in the parlour at Stanbrook, Worcester, c. 1990s

Dame Etheldreda Hession, 1933-2022

Birds, gardening, cricket, knitting, films, the English Mystics, scripture – all come to mind when thinking of Sr Etheldreda. She had a great love of the gospel of St Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, but did not like the gospel of St John – ‘he goes round in circles’! That comment showed the woman she was – she knew what she liked and what she didn’t. As Junior Mistress she passed on her love of the English mystics to the juniors.

Maureen Hession was born on 23 June 1933 – a date on which she would later keep her name-feast. Her father was Irish, a lapsed Catholic, and her mother was English, a fervent Anglican who taught her daughter to pray. Maureen longed for a baby brother but that was not to be. Her mother died when Maureen was nine years old. In 1944 she passed the eleven-plus and wanted to go to boarding school. Her father visited the Ursuline sisters at Brentwood and asked if they would take her. Hearing that Maureen should have been a Catholic, they welcomed her with open arms. In June 1945 she entered into full communion with the Catholic Church. Her Anglican godmother disowned her.

Maureen loved school and there made a life-long friend in Norah Fahy, later to become an oblate of Stanbrook. Also at school was Maureen’s cousin, Freda, another life-long friend. Maureen left school at 16 and returned to help her father in their newsagents’ shop. She later wrote it was quite a lonely existence, especially in the evenings. At 19 she exerted independence and joined the WRENS. She was in the Signals category. After a spell in the UK she was posted to Malta for two years which she loved. She left after four years and found secretarial work in London. During this time she felt nudges towards religious life and after her father’s death in 1963 she became more serious in her search. Maureen entered Stanbrook on 19 March 1964, the last entrance with the foot washing. She became Sr Etheldreda and was clothed on 21 September, being the last to wear a



white wedding dress. Her first profession was on 29 September 1966, and her solemn profession on the same date in 1969. She was given work in the infirmary (which she hated). Later she was sent to do a catering course at Worcester Tech with Sr Agnes. Work in the kitchen was hard – they did a seven-day week and had to bring coal and potatoes up from the basement daily, up nineteen steps!

In November 1980 she was elected to the abbess' council, a post she would hold for decades. At the same time she was appointed prioress and also habit-maker. At this time she contributed a chapter on 'Saint Hilda and Saint Etheldreda' to *Benedict's Disciples*, edited by Hugh Farmer. In 1988 she accompanied M. Joanna to Uganda, to do work on the Constitutions with the community at Tororo. She very much enjoyed her time there. In the 1990s she had a variety of duties: infirmary cook, assistant sacristan, portress, and later prioress again and sub-prioress. She was immensely discreet and had a true monastic sense.

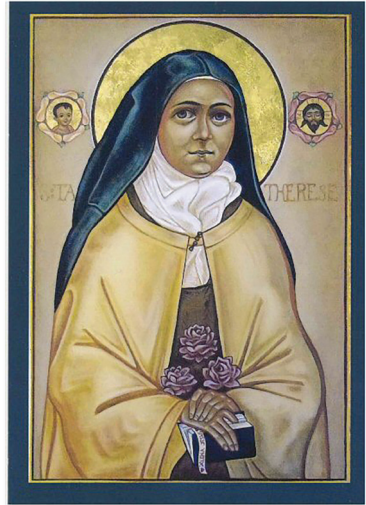
Sr Etheldreda found the move to Wass very hard despite being able to walk in the countryside and having a garden on her balcony. In 2019 she had a patch of bad health and we feared she would die. You could find her in her cell each day, eager to show you her latest knitting or share some news. In the summer of 2022 she became unwell and after a stay in hospital went briefly to Apley Grange. Once home she was bedridden for nearly three months, always being very grateful for all that was done for her. However, she could make her feelings known – we remember when she was following the coverage of Queen Elizabeth's death and funeral: woe betide anyone who wanted to interrupt her!

In the week leading up to Advent she became frailer. The Advent refrain was much in our hearts as we prayed for her: 'Come, Lord, do not delay'. She died on Sunday afternoon, 27 November, very peacefully crossing from us to the Lord. Her funeral took place on 7 December with her beloved community and her dearest cousin Freda, and Freda's family, present. May she live for ever in the peace of Christ.

Sr Benedicta & Sr Andrea

St Thérèse of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face

2 January 2023 was the 150th anniversary of the birth of Thérèse Martin in northern France. She is now known also as St Thérèse of Lisieux and The Little Flower. Thérèse was the youngest child in a family of five girls. At the tender age of fifteen she entered an enclosed Carmelite monastery in her hometown where two of her older sisters were already nuns. She remained there until her death of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four on 30 September 1897. As well as being



a popular saint and co-patron of the missions, she has been declared a Doctor of the Church, which indicates that she is an important teacher in the Church. This article is about her name in religion – Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face. (The second part of a Carmelite’s name, such as ‘of the Sacred Heart’ suggests a theme or subject for their lifelong meditation.)

From her childhood Thérèse felt a call to be a Carmelite and as a nine-year-old she thought about what name she would like to take. Fittingly, she wanted to keep her baptismal name which honours the foundress of the Discalced Carmelites, St Teresa of Avila. Ideally, Thérèse would have named herself Sister Thérèse of Jesus, but someone in Lisieux Carmel already had this name, and so, having a devotion to the infant Jesus, she chose Thérèse of the *Child Jesus*.

In a play she wrote for Christmas 1894, Thérèse displays her awe at the humility of the almighty God in taking the form of a little child:

*O Word of God, Glory of the Father, I have gazed on you in the Heavens/
Now I see you on the earth...Who indeed can grasp this mystery/ A God,
making himself a small child? He comes to exile himself on the earth!
Himself, the Eternal...the All-Powerful.*

Her contemplation of the childhood of Jesus was instrumental in her formulating the famous Little Way to God. In taking this Way one allows

oneself to be as small in one's own eyes as one is in God's eyes, and becomes conscious of one's own sinfulness, weakness and inability to save oneself. By embracing this weakness – as St Paul did when he wrote *When I am weak I am strong* – one allows the power of God to work within oneself.

As Thérèse's spirituality matured, and as she reflected upon the sufferings of Jesus, encouraged by Sister Agnes of Jesus, one of her older sisters, she cultivated the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus as seen upon Veronica's Veil, defaced by the sufferings and abuses of his passion. Thérèse's meditations included that prophecy of Isaiah which we hear on Good Friday *The crowds were appalled on seeing him – so disfigured did he look that he seemed no longer human*. In time Thérèse spoke and wrote about how our human suffering can be united to that of Christ, and how this can be redemptive for us and for the world, and she lived out what she taught. While she was dying of tuberculosis she said *All I have written about suffering is true*.

When Thérèse was clothed in the habit, she added the appellation 'of the Holy Face' to her name. To our ears, her name can perhaps sound over-pious, sugar-coated or flowery. Thérèse is a product of her age and culture, and her style of sanctity reflects this. Sometimes I think of her as St Thérèse of the Incarnation and the Cross, and this helps me plumb the deep wells of her teaching, which, as has been seen even in this short piece, draws heavily on Scripture and at its heart is profoundly Christocentric.

Sr Thérèse

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

'What a mystery friendship is! One of those subtle and beautiful forces that glorify life. And how strangely and delightfully different one's friends are one from the other...Some we have to carry, while others carry us. The perfect friend, to my mind, is one who believes in one once and for all, and never requires explanations and assurances. But I did not set out to write a treatise *De amicitia*.'

Dame Laurentia McLachlan

In a Great Tradition by the Benedictines of Stanbrook, pub. John Murray, London, 1956, p.179.

Greenwatch: focus on Crief Lodges

In March 2023 a dedicated recycling area was opened for the community's holiday home site, Crief Lodges. Informal recycling has been carried out at the lodges for some years but now there are proper facilities concealed behind a tasteful wooden screen designed by our creative maintenance manager, Ash.



The North York Moors National Park in which we are privileged to live has some of the darkest skies in the country. As the older site lights at the lodges wear out, having done sterling service for almost 35 years, they are being replaced by lighting which meets the standards recommended for dark sky areas.

Along pathways stone chippings are being replaced by eco-friendly wood chippings, and a gentler mowing regime has been introduced. This allows grasses and wildflowers to seed naturally and insects, such as butterflies, to complete key stages in their life cycle undisturbed.

On the domestic front, we are asking people to bring their own towels, as far as possible, in order to save energy, and there is an option for visitors to bring their own linens which reduces the tariff. As the saying goes, 'every little helps'. Reduced rates are also available out of peak seasons for individuals coming to the abbey for a retreat.

Check out our web page under 'Retreats':
www.stanbrookabbey.org.uk

Or contact Sr Laurentia: **crieflodges@stanbrookabbey.org.uk**
Tel. **01347 868931**

Sr Laurentia

PS Those who have not been to the abbey since late autumn 2022 may be interested to learn that that leaning telephone box has now been removed! A memento is on the back page of this issue.

Publications and Media Contributions 2021-23

March 2021, D. Andrea was involved in an online presentation and book launch at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome of Fr Daniel McCarthy's *Verbum ac Spiritum*, 'Word and Spirit', the fruit of many years work and for which D. Andrea had been invited to produce a preface.

May 2022, D. Andrea was one of the two keynote speakers at a C.I.B. Zoom Meeting. She spoke on 'Synodality and the Rule of St Benedict'. This will be published in a future C.I.B. publication.

October 2021, D. Laurentia took part in a day conference via Zoom organised by the Margaret Beaufort Association, Cambridge, on Catholic Ethical Leadership and Management, contributing a talk, 'The Rule of St Benedict: a Practical and Spiritual Model'.

She has hosted several webinars for *The Tablet*: Advent 2021 on the 'O' Antiphons; March 2022 on the Word of God and Lectio Divina; Advent 2022 on 'The Candle of Hope'.

April 2022, D. Laurentia led the UK Oblates' National online retreat on 'St Irenaeus of Lyons: Scripture, Unity and Synodality'.

September 2022, Abbess Anna was invited to speak on 'Transition' to the Annunciation Congregation via Zoom.

DD. Philippa, Agnes and Laurentia each contributed to an article on our move from Callow End to Wass for the Winter 2022 number of the online Margaret Beaufort Association Newsletter.

December 2022, Dame Hildelith Cumming (1909-1991), printer and musician, became the latest Stanbrook nun to be included in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. David Butcher contributed the article.

D. Philippa has contributed several book reviews to *The Catholic Herald* including *In the School of St Benedict: Benedictine Spirituality for Everyone* by Abbot Xavier Perrin and *St Benedict in his Community* by Richard Newman, both books pub. Gracewing, 2022.

April 2023, D. Josephine contributed an article to the EBC online Newsletter, 'A behind-the-scenes look at how the 2022 General Chapter was organised and reported'.

She led a service of healing at a safeguarding meeting for Religious Congregations in Motherwell in May 2023.

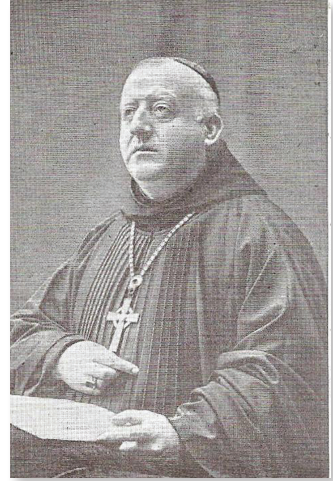
May 2023, D. Petra gave input by Zoom on the Psalms to the international Carmelite Novices' Formation Meeting at Ilkley.

From a Retreat Conference given by Abbot Columba Marmion OSB to the Stanbrook community 6-13 August 1910

The feast of the Transfiguration gives us a most beautiful plan for a retreat...

Our Lord was transfigured while he was praying. Now I wish these days to be days of prayer. I do not mean spend the whole time on your knees, but surround yourselves with an atmosphere of prayer. There ought to be no necessity for a specified time of prayer; for a Benedictine nun, the whole day should be prayer. The moments of greatest intensity are not always in church. God may show himself at any moment, in the refectory, at recreation. We must hold our souls in readiness – *paratum cor meum, Deus* – waiting for God.

Domine, quid me vis facere?/'Lord, what wouldst thou have me do?' Every meditation should have a moment when the soul, filled with love, gazes at God in sincerity and says: *Quid me vis facere?* Our whole retreat should have that attitude of readiness to do anything that will augment our love and seeking of God. Let us say our Office with more fervour, offer up our actions etc, but I do not advise you to multiply rosaries and other vocal prayers; rather to remain quietly in God's presence, waiting for him, for we know not at what hour or moment he will show himself. *Similes hominibus expectantibus*, etc., not waiting for your time, but for his. If, when he passes by, he finds us waiting, he will come and make us sit down, *et transiens ministrabit*, and will make good his promise, *Omnis qui reliquerit omnia...centuplum accipiet*, of a hundredfold in this life, and life eternal in the world to come.



From CONFERENCE I, 5 AUGUST 1910 (source: Stanbrook Archives)

***Literature and Catholicism in the 19th and 20th Centuries*,
ed. David Torevell
and *New Insights into Literature and Catholicism in the
19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Paul Rowan
and David Torevell**

Both vols pub. in 2021 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing

These collections of essays by American, Irish, Spanish and British academics share the conviction that great literature is revelatory, vital and transforming. They specifically deal with writers of faith who perceived the sacramental significance of events in daily life and counter ‘the implicit atheism at the heart of modernity’ (D. C. Schindler). Each book has a stunning cover, designed by Michael Torevell, in which sepia coloured literary figures merge with a stylised background of brightly toned book spines, inviting us to enter and explore the interplay between lived Catholicism and the arts. (See opposite)

David Torevell’s essay on Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) sets the ball rolling exploring the life and work of the greatest of all nineteenth-century poets. For Hopkins, Christ was the source of all beauty, a beauty which shone forth in sacrifice. ‘Can I face and act on what Christ wishes me to become?’ Hopkins’ struggle is minutely traced in both the joy and desolation of his life as Jesuit and poet, and we share its stages. We learn his poems should be read aloud, for they were written as an ‘utterance in answer to the Holy Spirit’. (Hence, the frequent exclamation ‘Ah!’).

Poet and priest: here an invisible thread connects with Czesław Miłosz (by Michael Kirwan SJ) and his status as ‘sacer vates’ (sacred poet) bearing witness to God against totalitarian inhumanity in his native Lithuania and Poland. He was not a priest but Kirwan balances his study with Karl Rahner’s study of priestly vocation, drawing parallels. Miłosz’ poetry has the power and meaning of prayer. Prayer ‘constructs a velvet bridge’ which we can walk seeking integrity in ‘dark times’.

We move to the Spanish Civil War in a study by Daniel Frampton of the complex figure of Roy Campbell who saw the Catholic Church as the ‘one fighting form of Christianity’. It was in Toledo that he witnessed the martyrdom of the Carmelite Friars he had known and admired. Here he experienced the ‘joyful science of martyrdom, founded most of all on prayer’. The Friars’ murder was a triumph of the Cross and Christ’s

Resurrection, and the catalyst of his conversion. He would later translate St John of the Cross. 'He could not have translated these most delicate and deeply theological poems had he not known what they were about', wrote Campbell's wife, Mary.

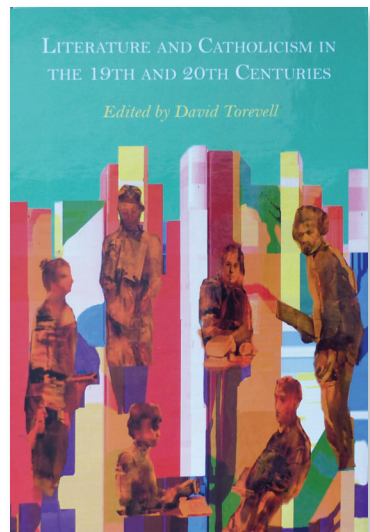
Now we must move to prose writers. Adam Schwartz gives two analytical panoramas of the literary scene which orientate us. Then, three delightful studies explore the benevolent Catholic genius of GK Chesterton. This 'jobbing journalist' exalts 'the splendour of being alive', and teaches that we learn love in our own locality or street, for the particular is a symbol of eternity.

We move to the experience of African Americans for Carolyn Medine's study of Toni Morrison. Saint Anthony, patron of both the author and lost things, is her key to Morrison's novels which explore the search for the innumerable lost slaves of African/American history. In Morrison's writing there are *kairos* moments where God breaks in and transforms what is humanly terrible with insight. In these moments the dead interact with the living and the past is redeemed. This study draws the reader into the complex and painful reality of Black identity and is deeply involving.

Mark Bosco compares Flannery O' Connor and Caravaggio, artist and writer shedding light on the chiaroscuro of each one's methods. Both challenged a comfortable religiosity of their times. O' Connor saw that 'reality was something to which we must be returned at considerable cost'. She violently deconstructs our preconceived notions of what is right and religious, using shock tactics. The insightful, detailed analyses of Caravaggio's painting and O' Connor's stories lead us to unfold the artistry of both. We see the 'shock of divine grace' working in unlikely places and among unexpected people.

Reading these essays made me feel as if I were part of a challenging interdisciplinary seminar where creative minds shared ideas in an atmosphere of friendship and faith. It is hoped the selection reviewed will give a flavour of the whole.

Sr Petra Simpson OSB



***The Grace of ‘Nothingness’: Navigating the Spiritual Life with Blessed Columba Marmion* by Dom Cassian Koenemann OSB; Angelico Press; pb, pp. xvii + 165; ISBN 978 1 62138 809 8; \$17.95**

This book by Fr Koenemann, a monk of St Louis Abbey in the English Benedictine Congregation, discusses Bl. Columba Marmion’s teaching on the mystical statement that one is nothing – which Marmion has described in terms of John 15: 5b – and applies it to the individual’s present-day spiritual growth. It explains three aspects of Marmion’s mystical teaching: ‘tend to God in Himself...accept your nothingness...have confidence in God’ (pp. xv, 81). So Chapter 1 describes how the idea of being nothing relates to Marmion’s understanding of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, and to Christian anthropology. Chapter 2 connects Chapter 1’s conclusions with wider Catholic understanding of mystical nothingness and related concepts. Chapter 3, ‘the heart of this work’ (p. xv) relates the previous material to the individual’s search for deeper trust in God and greater humility.

After the clear, succinct Introduction, Chapter 1 observes that, ‘in turning your insufficiency over to God, you accept to be overwhelmed by the power of God’ (p. 5), especially since Marmion ‘saw Jesus as the archetype for accepting our nothingness’ (p. 10), who himself receives all things from God the Father. Marmion also interprets the individual’s thoroughgoing dependence on God in terms of Rule of St Benedict, 4, 42-43, which teach that nothingness is a consequence of attributing the individual’s gifts and merits to God.

In Chapter 2, Marmion sees earlier writers’ responses to God’s grace in the context of Rule of St Benedict, 7, 51-54 and writes, ‘humility therefore presents the soul before God in its misery and in its nothingness’ (pp. 29, 32). People must allow Jesus to make up for their incompleteness before God the Father. Thus Koenemann examines the concept of nothingness with reference to early theology up to the second Council of Orange (529). St Bernard, Bl. Angela of Foligno and St Catherine of Siena are among the medieval writers he then scrutinizes, likewise St Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross and St Francis de Sales in the early modern period. Later, Koenemann notes Marmion’s debt to the French school of spirituality and – in both this chapter and Appendix 2 – proceeds to a more detailed study of St Thérèse of Lisieux’s influence on him.

Chapter 3 may well strike the reader as very different, since it deals with the application to one's own life of Marmion's Christocentric spirituality, ultimately rooted in the concept of the Thrice-Holy God who invites and leads people into union with him. Koenemann both notes Rule of St Benedict 7, 55 & 67 about how humility should accompany asceticism and uses insights from modern clinical psychology. A particularly important topic is the effect on St Teresa of Calcutta of Marmion's teaching on nothingness. Fittingly, a brief treatment of Presumption precedes the final climactic, extended discussion of confidence in God and of union with God, particularly through infused contemplation. This book justifies the careful reading which it demands.

Fr Nicholas Paxton, Manchester



Details of the 2023 Paschal Candle: left, St Cuthbert and a puffin; right, St Aelred and his abbey of Rievaulx. The otter on p. 4 and the puffins on p. 5 and p. 23 are from the same candle, inspired by the Northern Saints, designed, painted and photographed by D. Julian.

***The Subversive Simone Weil: A Life in Five Ideas* by Robert Zaretsky; University of Chicago Press, 2022; hb; pp. 181; ISBN 978-0226-54933-0**

Ninety years ago, on 30 January 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany and the infamous policies of the Third Reich against non-Aryans were initiated soon afterwards.

Not unconnectedly, eighty years ago, on 24 August 1943, a young French woman died in a sanatorium in Ashford, England: Simone Weil. It was the Feast of St Bartholomew or Nathaniel, the disciple whom Christ called 'an Israelite without guile', a fitting epitaph for Weil, a Jew by birth whose commitment to seeking and living the truth led to her untimely death.

This brief, yet deep and accessible book unfolds via five concepts central to Weil's writing: affliction, attention, resistance, the need for roots, and goodness/godliness. Given the congruity between her thoughts and actions – Zaretsky writes that Weil truly 'inhabited' the philosophy she espoused – this is a rewarding approach to a life which continues to fascinate, puzzle and inspire.

Born in Paris on 3 February 1909 into a non-observant Jewish family, Simone Weil was a woman of many parts who memorably wished for nine lives so that she might devote one of them to the theatre. She studied, taught, and above all, lived out that search for truth which philosophy is. Famously, she did not simply think about the de-humanising effects of industrialisation on workers in abstract; she took a job on the assembly line in the Alsthom factory in the industrial region of SW Paris. She organised union workers, worked on the land, fought alongside anarchists in the Spanish Civil War, and always she reflected on her experiences and wrote down her observations in an ever-increasing stash of exercise books. These were not for publication but were her workbooks, almost her laboratory, for clarifying and sifting thoughts.

Nine-tenths of this vast collection of note-books date from the last three years of her life 1940-1943 but they are far from war diaries; there is no mention of the dramatic events taking place in Europe all around her and anyone looking for a historical snap shot of the mid-twentieth century would be disappointed. Rather they reflect, in a personal, practical way, on the big questions: freedom, suffering, power, and how a person can live with integrity. Herein lies the universal appeal of her writings which were

edited after her death by friends, including Albert Camus, and published posthumously.

Weil is not, however, an easy read so the book under review is welcome both as a guide for those wishing to explore her writings for the first time and also as a source of fresh insights for existing devotees. The many overlaps with Benedictine themes in Weil's corpus of writings: stability, attention, waiting and prayer, for example, provide stimulus for disciples of St Benedict.

Solidarity, while not singled out as one of the five concepts chosen here, appears throughout the book and was central to Weil's life and thinking. She did not consider herself to be Jewish but the authorities would have thought otherwise and so she shared the fate of displacement from her beloved Paris when France was occupied in 1940, travelling with her parents to Marseille in Vichy France and then to the United States. Driven back to Europe by her desire to help in the war effort, she travelled to London in 1942 and joined the Free French movement but contracted tuberculosis before being able to be of active service. A refusal to eat adequately, out of solidarity with those suffering deprivation in Occupied France, was probably a contributory factor to her death from cardiac failure at the age of thirty-four. It has been said that whatever the medical cause, ultimately, she died of love.

One wonders how she might have contributed to the re-building of post-war Europe had she lived but, as Robert Zaretsky's fine book demonstrates, Simone Weil's thought has been feeding those seeking truth for the past eighty years: well over two thousand scholarly works on her have appeared since 1995.

When Mein Kampf exists only as a reference in history, Weil's *Waiting for God, Gravity and Grace* and other works will surely continue in print and her life will remain an inspiring model of integrity. Then, why 'subversive'? We are not told, but the truth always is.

Sr Laurentia Johns OSB

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

'Truth is the radiant manifestation of reality.'
Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*, p. 250.

The Back Page

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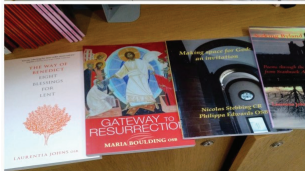
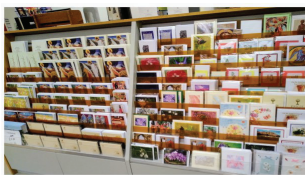
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2.30pm - 4.30pm



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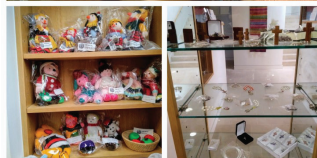
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