

Newsletter of the Cistercian Monks

TARRAWARRA

Vol. 42 No. 2

Tarrawarra Abbey, YARRA GLEN, Victoria, 3775

December, 2010.

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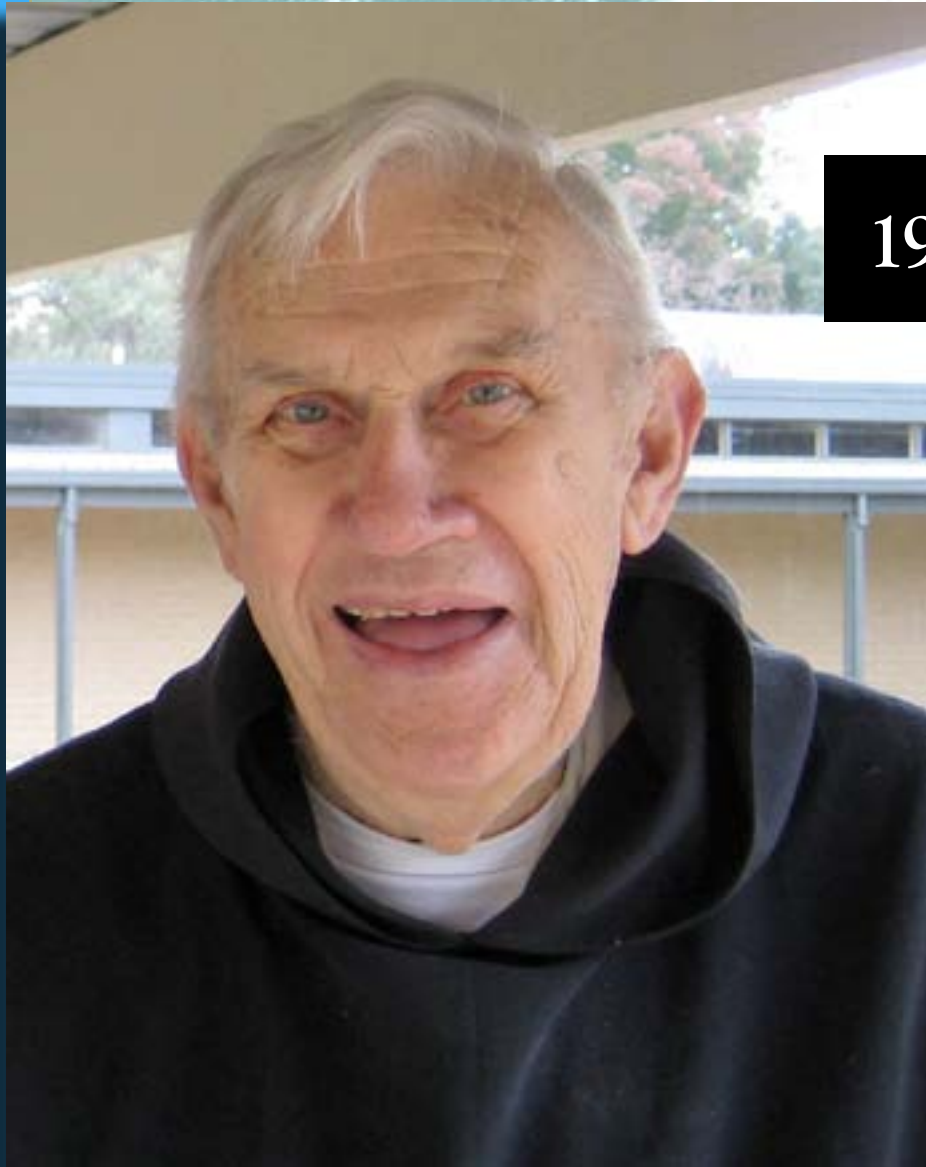
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Our Br. Gregory Curry, known to his family as "Uncle Noel", died in St. Vincent's Private on 28 August. As our regular readers would remember, he celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday just prior to Christmas last year. His parents, Madeline and Bill, didn't

stray very far from the streamers and the tinsel of the 1924 festive season in his January 1925 christening. His monastic superiors re-named him Gregory and he seemed to prefer that as he never reverted to Noel when the possibility presented itself. Greg had a fairly rough medical track record
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TLC (tender loving care) through his multiple medical adventures. On the morning of his death, when he was already unconscious, the newspaper was delivered to his door, and his tasty evening meal arrived just as he breathed his last - both with "gold card" love!

Greg entered the community as a lay-brother on 21 April 1957, about two and a half years after Tarrawarra's foundation. Although he wasn't the first Aussie to enter, he does go into the Book of Records as the first to enter and persevere until death. He celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his Profession on 1 November last year. Over more than half a century he served the community in a variety of positions including farm manager, bursar, and manager of the Eucharistic Breads Business. We pray in the words of St. Benedict: "May Christ bring us all together to eternal life".

in his last five years. One of his oft repeated sayings was: "If it's not one thing, it's half a dozen others!" As it happened though, he had only four days in hospital at the end. At his death bed was the faithful trinity: Br. Joseph Mc Ardle, his Infirmarian, Sr. Margaret Barclay and Dr. Greg Barclay, a niece and nephew.

Greg was what Fr. Malachy would have called "a Sydney sinner" - well at least Concord, Sydney born and bred! During the Second World War he served as a wireless operator in the army. The Veterans Affairs Department blessed him with a "gold card" as an expression of Australia's gratitude for saving us and followed him with

Saint Mary MacKillop's Spirituality

— Sr Lynette Young, Sister of St Joseph

Mary MacKillop was a woman "wrapped up in God". This was Father Francis Clune's memory of her as her Confessor in her later years. He said that, "her union with God was continuous; her life was one of prayer". (Process 10. "Positio", Vol.3, p.3, n.5).

Through her canonisation on October 17, 2010, Mary was offered as a Gift to the world. The Church's celebration of that event reminded us that the way she lived the Gospel as an Australian was being honoured.

When the Holy Father came to Australia to beatify her in 1995 he called her "the daughter of immigrants, (who) exhibited the best of Australian-ness". The characteristics that were highlighted in her life were: her genuine openness to others; hospitality to strangers; generosity to the needy; justice to those unfairly treated; perseverance in the face of adversity and kindness and support in suffering.

Pope John Paul 2 believed that a country and its culture develops its own unique expression of spirituality. Therefore each country should have a saint that symbolises that country's particular charism. The saint is carefully chosen to provide hope and an example in a time of such ferment.

Mary's spirituality developed throughout her life, firstly from the influence of her Celtic parents whose sense of the presence of God enabled them to see the loving hand of Providence in all that befell them. She wrote, "From my earliest childhood as far back as I can remember He gave

me such a sense of His watchful presence". (Ascension Day Letter 1873).

Her relationship with God was very real, open and honest. She wrote, "His presence is before me almost in everything, and I love to come to Him in prayer as to my dearest and only Friend". (ibid.).

When she had the opportunity of going on pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial, she was so excited to be in the shrine of the Sacred Heart that she wrote back to the Sisters in Australia, "I think I had the impudence in some way of reminding that Sacred Heart that Adelaide was consecrated to It before either Ireland or England. In this way it had a special claim upon It's Divine Master's Heart, so I said

"I dared not tell Our Dear Lord that I could not do what He asked, that it was too hard."

in my heart to It - but at the same time, thought not of Adelaide only, but of Australia, especially those places we most know and have most interest in..." (Circular to the Sisters 25/9/1873).

There were times when she found following God's desires for her and the young Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, very difficult. This did not stop her from sharing her difficulty with her Spouse. She would pray, "I dared to tell Our dear Lord that I could not do what He asked, that it was too hard, but the end of my prayer was that I would not cease to implore His Mercy for grace to do entirely His Will only, no matter at what cost, when he would require it

of me. But I felt that I could not from my heart then say that I did not feel it hard." (Ascension Day Letter 1873).

Mary MacKillop was given the title "of the Cross" by Fr. Woods when she made her First Profession in 1867. The Cross showed itself in her spirituality in three ways:-

Her family life was interwoven with suffering with the loss of five of her brothers and sisters and both parents before she was forty. Physical suffering from arthritis, endometriosis and finally a stroke when she was 60 left her incapacitated for the last seven years of her life. However, it was her mental and emotional suffering that caused her most pain. This suffering was caused by rejection, false accusation, betrayal and denial. At 29 she was excommunicated. At 34 she was held under house arrest in Bathurst. At 38 she was

forced to withdraw all the 46 Sisters from Queensland, and at 40 she was banished from Adelaide and her Sisters were refused permission to leave that Colony with her.

This suffering identified her with the Passion of Jesus. She did not go in search of suffering - it found her. She wrote to her brother Donald, a Jesuit priest, "Enough to say that the Cross has been and is very heavy and come from, and through, some whom I have loved most". (Mary to Donald, 1/9/1884). In her spirituality of the Cross, she searched for God's Will and tried to carry it out in wide-ranging service. She tried to see the bigger picture, which

Annual Retreat



Fr Tony with Br Peter

This year's annual community retreat was given by Fr. Anthony Mc Sweeney between 1-7 August. Anthony is a Blessed Sacrament Father based at that well known Melbourne landmark, St. Francis' Church, Lonsdale Street. In fact he was the Superior General of their Congregation for twelve years and, if you haven't bumped into him, it is probably because he lived a good three decades in Rome. We were very happy indeed that he was able to "take us on" for our retreat. We

normally don't celebrate the memorial of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers' founder, St. Peter Julian Eymard, but the exception proves the rule and we did so this year with Anthony preaching on him and his evolving vision. The main theme of the retreat, it will be no surprise in the circumstances, was the Eucharist. Anthony gave us wonderfully rich scriptural reflections on "the Word of God", "the table", "the bread", "the cup", and our personal transformation which is bound up with a genuine living of the Eucharist. At one stage he apologised for being a bit too autobiographical only to be told that it was so helpful that he was willing to be open in sharing his own experience. Many commented appreciatively on his conference on death. He also regularly entertained us with humorous wisdom stories from a Middle Eastern character called Nasrudin. You can Google the latter for a few tales! Thank you, Tony, for nourishing us on the journey.

New Australian Citizens



Br. Joseph Chua, who joined us from Singapore in July 2001, became our third new Australia citizen for the year in an evening ceremony at Kilsyth on 23 September. This was held in a ballroom which was able to amply accommodate the 62 from many national origins who were being naturalised together with as many family and friends as they could muster. Hausia, Chaminda, Samuel and David went along to wave the flag and sing the National Anthem. A range of politicians and councillors muscled in with speeches.

Br. Chaminda Thantrimudalige, with 25 others, became an Australian citizen in the Dandenong Immigration Office on 11 September. Due to space limitations each new Aussie was allowed a cheer squad of one! The abbot fulfilled this role with full throat! Saturday morning ceremonies seem to be “politician free”! Chaminda came to us from Sri Lanka in March 1999.



Br Joachim turns 90!

Br. Joachim Devlin turned ninety on 2 November, a Tarrawarra record. It was a slightly complicated day to keep the focus on such an important celebration. Liturgically it was All Souls’ Day. Australia wide it was Melbourne Cup Day, “the race that stops the nation”. In the end we managed to give due weight to all three events, never forgetting that when all was said and done it was really “Joachim’s Ninetieth”. Our Sunday Mass crowd celebrated with him two days early in the guesthouse with a large cake. On the big day Fr. Michael, “in homage of Br. Joachim”, produced a midday meal along the lines of favourite dishes from the days when Joachim was our cook. Then Br. Chaminda turned on a lovely evening meal and there was another cake and more speeches. For a very quiet man, the fuss had all been “what I had dreaded”. We hope it brought its joy and blessings too. He can relax now until the centenary!

Joachim entered our mother-house, Roscrea, in Ireland in 1950. He arrived in Australia on 23 November 1958. Tarrawarra was raised to the status of an abbey



five days later. With the rest of the pioneers he changed his stability from Roscrea to Tarrawarra that day. Was he even over his jet lag when he made this big leap and commitment? Over the decades he has faithfully toiled over a hot stove, been bursar and book-keeper at a time when the money was flowing out more than in, and been a wonderful man of prayer and community member. He had a visit back to Ireland and the family in 1974, after which he declared “my travelling days are over!” We love his sense of humour and inimitable turn of phrase.

Visitors



Dom Filomeno with Br Brendan

Since the Easter visit of Dom Yesudas, S abbot of our Indian daughter-house, we have attracted four more abbots, two Cistercian, two Benedictine. Dom Brian Keogh from the New Zealand Cistercian community took a three-month sabbatical, most of which he spent among us, his community of origin. Then Dom Filomeno Cinco, abbot of our community in the Philippines, graced us with his cheerful presence for a few days overlapping August-September. He and Br. Brendan Gaynor both entered our novitiate in 1970 so we availed ourselves of the opportunity to have a celebration of their forty years of monastic life. Later in the evening Fil gave a power-point presentation on his community and fielded questions. His first ten years as a Cistercian were at Tarrawarra, and though he has been back to us we hadn’t had the pleasure for seventeen years. Thanks, Fil, your visit was much appreciated, above all by Brendan.

Visitors

Timothy Wright, former abbot (1997-2005) of Ampleforth Abbey in Yorkshire, spent a few days with us in late July. He is presently based in Rome, involved in monastic dialogue with Islam. This was his topic when he addressed the community on the night of 29 July. He made the acquaintance of quite a few well-known Australians at the Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary - the koala and kangaroo, the wombat and platypus, the echidna and Tasmanian devil, the emu and various birds of prey. The lyre-bird performed an incredible repertoire of stolen bird song, probably more for its lady friend than Timothy, but he did appreciate being included.



Br Celsus with Abbot Timothy

John Klassen, the present abbot of St. John’s Abbey, Collegeton, Minnesota, came on a flying visit on 14 November. He managed to squeeze in Vespers and join us for our evening meal during which he was able to address a few words to us. Thanks, John.

Saint Mary MacKillop's Spirituality

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identified her with Christ. "It is under the Cross I love to be with Him". After the excommunication she wrote to her mother, "God has permitted it for some mysterious end; I hope our common sorrow has done us all good". (Mary to Flora, 26/2/1872). She never said that God sent sorrow.

Mary was a heroine whose strength and purpose came from her belief that she was loved by God, gifted and called by a Loving Providence to accomplish a specific work in the Church.

She listened with an inner awareness to the meaning of events in her life and times. In this way she struggled to live out what she termed "the Will of God", which was in effect "God's loving care of her", to which she entrusted everyone and everything.

Mary's beatification in 1995 was "a kind of consecration of the People of God in Australia. Through her witness, the truth of God's love and the values of His Kingdom have been made visible in this land - values which are at the very basis of Australian society".

Her canonisation brings these gifts to the world as lived by Australians. The people she served were Battlers in Bonnets who lived in this vast land in isolated villages, struggling to understand the land, lacking companionship particularly for women, lacking stable links to hold families together in such harsh conditions, but she created a church of the heart in herself and went out and created a Church of the heart in them. As she said, "The Faith is warm in their hearts. It is an Australian who writes this, one brought up in the midst of many of the evils she tries to describe". (Necessity for the Institute, October 1873).

"Do the best you can with the means at your disposal and leave all the rest calmly to God".

Our Congratulations

We all know that Australia has heaps of saints, but since 17 October Melbourne-born Mary Mac Killop has been the nation's first to be recognised by the universal Church. As the Down-under larrikins who made the pilgrimage to Rome for the great proclamation chanted: "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, oyi, oyi, oyi!" Our athletes won lots of gold in Delhi and gave us all much to celebrate. But we were proudest in the end of Mary Mac who pulled off gold at the Vatican just as the Games concluded! Fr. Michael donned gold vestments for the solemnity Mass we celebrated with our friends. His fine homily for the occasion will be found in these

pages. Our liturgy group worked hard on rich liturgies leading up to the canonisation and for the day itself. Mary's voice was often heard in Office readings. Bernie and Mark put us through a number of singing practices in the week leading to the great day. The text of one of our hymns, "O Gentle Lover of Christ's Lowly State", came from Fr. Michael's pen, and the tune was our deceased Fr. Stephen List's "Yarra Valley". Brothers Samuel, Joseph and Chaminda provided festive fare for the refectory. Then at the end of the day we were able to tap into the technology to be there in St. Peter's Square with the cast of thousands.

We share the joy of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Congregation founded by Mary, and that of all Australians at this significant time in our national history. A number of our community received part of their education in Josephite schools. The local parish of Healesville has been "Josephite" over the decades the monastery has been here and we have had many contacts with them and others of their communities, some of whom came for monthly prayer days for a dozen or so years, armed with lamingtons and other home-made delights. We thank them for their friendship. Thanks also to Sr. Lynette Young for her prompt response with an article on Mary's spirituality included in this issue of the Newsletter.

to the Sisters of St Joseph

Canonisation of Mary MacKillop

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present situation we are provided with all we need to reach our ultimate goal. Let us take a single instance. Although there are thousands of homilies being preached today, all of them more estimable than this one, you won't hear one more likely to lead towards your conversion than the one to which you are listening right now. (At least, I hope you are listening!) It is in the reality of the present moment that God speaks: both to comfort us and to challenge us, not in some faraway ideal world without edges or irritants.

This is not to say that we are merely the passive playthings of a capricious Providence. We are spiritual creatures endowed with intelligence to see beyond immediate sensations, and with free will, able to decide for ourselves whether to accept the gift of more abundant life or to be busy about other things. We have choices to make, options to take, paths to pursue. In our own small way we are called to do what Mary MacKillop did: where we see something that needs doing, let us do it, cheerfully, imaginatively, courageously, perseveringly. We do it because it is God's will, manifested to us in the reality that is all about us. Of course, sometimes, with the best of intentions, we make a mess of things, but life soon teaches us that mistakes are, almost inevitably, occasions for learning; they do no harm except to our vanity.

We all know that in Mary MacKillop's life there was plenty to shake her confidence in the proximity of God: misunderstandings, failure, emotional trauma, broken relationships, illness, spiritual darkness, persecution. But she was a great battler; she never gave up. Supported by her strong faith, her prayer and her trust in Providence, she made up her mind to see all that happened as coming from the hand of God and, thus, in a way beyond understanding, as an expression of God's love and concern. Undeterred by setbacks or opposition she persevered in her efforts to make her dream a reality, to embrace with all her heart the unique calling that was God's special gift to her, to be an icon of Christ's love in a largely indifferent world.



Mary MacKillop was a woman of faith, who sought God's will in all things and found it in the reality that surrounded her. When she looked around she saw more than others saw. In neglected children she perceived not only a situation to be deplored but an invitation to do something about it. And so, like Abraham, she went out from her own concerns to be at the service of others. She did it with such infectious cheerfulness that companions soon joined her and to these she communicated the vision entrusted to her of selfless service to others and

Love of God's little ones, trust in Providence, a cheerful embrace of God's will and a faith-filled acceptance of Christ's cross: these are the elements of Mary's holiness

wholehearted devotion to God. The mustard seed of her faith bore fruit and continues to do so.

Love for God's little ones, trust in Providence, a cheerful embrace of God's will and a faith-filled acceptance of Christ's cross: these are the elements of

Mary's holiness that each one of us can practise, whatever the situation in which we find ourselves. On this day when the whole country celebrates the life of this valiant woman, let us pray that, inspired by her example, we may become what our Creator intended us to become, honest to God people of faith, prayer, service and love. In this task we are not alone; God is with us; if God is with us who can stand against us?

Homily for the Canonisation of Saint Mary MacKillop



by Father Michael Casey, OCSO

What I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it beyond your reach. It is not up in the skies, so that you have to ask, "Who will go up into the skies to fetch it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it across the seas, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the seas to fetch it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. (Deut 30:11-14).

In 1959 the glamorous American film star, Ava Gardner, was in Melbourne making the film version of Nevil Shute's novel *On the Beach*. It was a depressing story about the world coming to an end as an effect of nuclear war. Yet I found the film exhilarating: not because of the plot nor for its conclusion, but because it was located in Melbourne. All the other films I had seen, up to that point, were about somewhere else; watching them was like being transported to a different world. But here the action occurred in familiar places which I had seen, through which I had walked, and which held their own cluster of recollections in my memory. The film was like a validation of the world I knew. Reality was not just in other places. Reality begins at home.

In a way, the canonisation of Mary MacKillop has a similar impact. I suppose many of us tend to think that saints come from somewhere else: Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, Assisi, Lisieux: somewhere as far distant as possible. Who ever heard of a saint coming from Melbourne? Can anything good

come out of Fitzroy? They don't even have a football team any more. Mary's canonisation is a reminder that it is as easy for sanctity to walk the streets familiar to us, as it was for it to tread the dusty desert roads of Egypt or the cobbled squares of Sienna. Reality begins at home; this is where God is to be found. This conviction is very strongly asserted towards the end of the Book of Deuteronomy:

Sanctity is not an exotic bloom, fit for admiration but beyond our imitation. The word of salvation, the call to holiness comes also to us, and it reaches us where we are: geographically, morally, emotionally. Because the word comes to us from the heart of God, it is spoken from within an eternal day, it is always current, the call is always contemporary. It changes its pitch to adapt to our present disposition. "Today if you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts."

There is, maybe, another voice that speaks silently within us, whispering, "If only things had been different..."; the voice of useless regret. We are easily led to think that we would have been capable of greater achievements if our genes had been better, if our personal history were not so spotty, if more opportunities had been offered and we had seized the moment. "If only things had been different..." We excuse ourselves from greatness and from great holiness because we

are convinced that such things do not happen in these circumstances.

The lesson Mary MacKillop teaches is that, in this, we are wrong.

God is active in our life through Providence. Our present circumstances, whatever they are, however complicated and confused they seem, are the best possible seedbed for growth in holiness – not a generic holiness, but the unique species of holiness for which we were created and which can be realized by us alone. Holiness is to be found where we are. You do not have to go up into the sky or cross the sea to reach God; God is here. In our

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