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CHANGING SEASONS

Since our last Newsletter went to press we have moved through Spring and Summer, and are now welcoming Autumn to the Yarra Valley.

October filled the air with the scent of citrus blossom from the orchard. The covered way leading to our refectory supported its annual lavender cascade of wisteria. Our chanting of Lauds and Mass at six each morning blended with the song of blackbird, magpie and (delightfully but at a stretch) kookaburra. (The gang-gangs and white cockies sing their own praises but are definitely a bit too idiosyncratic to incorporate into ours). As the sun warmed up, our resident blue-tongue lizards warily crept forth to recharge their cold-blooded batteries. Local Balloon Companies gave their passengers early morning peeks into a monastic cloister as well as superb panoramas of mountains, river, vineyards and plain. The Valley,

with a prodigal showing of wattle and cape weed, once again lived up to Melbourne novelist Martin Boyd's characterization of it as "sunshine and yellow flowers". There were some ridiculously early "total fire ban days", alternating with spells that caused Br John to demand, "whatever happened to global warming?!"

Br Hausia, and Leon, the farm manager – not to mention the cattle – rejoiced in the lush pastures. The hay season was more than satisfying. Then the cattle sales in mid-January put a smile on their faces. Stock and Land reported: "Weaner winners at Pakenham! Congratulations to Tarrawarra Abbey, Yarra Glen, and their Charolais-Red Angus Cross steers for winning the best pen of weaners at the Pakenham Sale on Thursday 14 January 2016". We are sorry if you had to pay a little (a lot?) more for your steaks around that time! ■



VISITORS

Brothers Bernard and Luke, with a little assistance from some others of the community, have cared for the steady flow of guests.

Some were here for the first time; some have been coming for years or decades. They have enjoyed the environment, the hospitality, the opportunity to share in the community prayer, and the fellowship with other guests. We thank them all for the dimension they add to life at Tarrawarra.

Despite our distance from most other monasteries, we continue to be blessed with visits from monks from faraway places. There have been three in recent months.



Dom Bernardo Bonowitz, abbot of the Cistercian community in Brazil, spent 8-12 September sharing with us his insights into the five Advent Sermons of our twelfth century Cistercian writer, Abbot Guerric of Igny. This was Bernardo's second coming among us. In 2012

he responded to our request that he conduct our annual retreat which also served as immediate preparation for our election of a new abbot. He stayed on, as one of the two witnesses, on that occasion to see that the ballot wasn't rigged! His presence is always enriching – and great fun.



Dom David Lavich, a member of our Abbot General's Council in Rome, graced us with a friendly visit from 28 October to 5 November on his way back to Rome after preaching the annual retreat for the Cistercian community of Kopua in New Zealand. David

is American, a monk of St Joseph's Abbey, Spencer in Massachusetts. Prior to becoming a Cistercian he had belonged to a missionary congregation and worked with them for many years in Japan. His facility with the Japanese language later brought him back to Japan as chaplain of the Cistercian convent at Tenshien in Hokkaido. His services,

as interpreter between the Japanese speaking communities and the English speakers of our Oriens Region in Asia and the Pacific, have been invaluable. He continues this role on the Abbot General's Council. Various of our community members have known David for many years, but it was a joy to be able to have him spend time with all of us. He spoke to us on two topics - which we presume were not related! The first was the work of the Councillors in Rome; the second that of martyrdom, in particular, the twentieth century martyrs of our Order. Twenty or so died during the Spanish Civil War and were beatified last year.



Br Bernard (left) and Fr Maximilian (right)

Fr Maximilian Krenn, an Austrian Benedictine, our latest monastic guest, is spending three months of sabbatical leave at Tarrawarra. He has been Prior of his community of Gottweig, an eleventh century foundation on a rise overlooking the Rhine. It has a staggering weight of history. Given that our present abbot is Dom Steele Hartmann, we were delighted to note, from the literature Maximilian has made available, that Gottweig's first superior was Abbot Hartmann (1094-1114) – surely our man isn't that old!; and a subsequent one, during the difficult World War 2 period, Abbot Hartmann Strohsacker. Maximilian has a good command of English, but his vocabulary is being expanded by the Aussie English to which he is being subjected, as well as the Shakespearean insults Fr Brian makes available daily. The latter come from a date pad Brian won in our Lucky Dip at Christmas. ■

BENEDICTINE UNION

The Benedictine Union of Australia and New Zealand is an association of religious institutes following the Rule of St Benedict.

The Union was inaugurated at a meeting of Benedictine superiors in April 1969. The Second Vatican Council, in October 1965, had encouraged, or urged, institutes or independent monasteries, especially if they had almost identical constitutions and customs, and the same spirit, to form such unions. Tarrawarra has been a member community since the Union's outset. The Union is a blend of Benedictine, Cistercian, and Good Samaritan men and women, Catholic and Anglican, Australians and New Zealanders! Through the Good Samaritan Sisters, the Union also has a toe-hold in Japan (long-standing), and Kiribati (more recent). Over the decades we have done many things to support each other in living the gift of Benedictine spirituality in the Church.

The Union holds an Annual General Meeting of its superiors. Dom Steele Hartmann, our Abbot,

and Br Bernard Redden, Coordinator of the Union, were participants at this gathering which was hosted in 2015 by the Benedictines of Holy Trinity Abbey, New Norcia, situated 132 kilometres north of Perth on the Great Northern Highway. It is the oldest of the communities in the Union, founded in 1846 by two Spanish Benedictines, Dom Joseph Serra and Dom Rosendo Salvado. New Norcia is a fascinating and unique destination, the only monastic township in Australia. Many from far and wide find their way there: "grey nomads" in their retirement caravans en route to everywhere; and those interested in the historic buildings, the art gallery and museum, and the displays of local aboriginal art, culture and history. But many also come to share the monks' prayer and spirituality in the guesthouse, making private or directed retreats, or just enjoying the peace and tranquility of the countryside. ■

KEEPING FIT FOR LIFE

Kerin Caldwell, a Good Samaritan Sister, conducted a morning workshop with the community on 22 February. It was entitled "Keeping Fit For Life", an investment in growing older gracefully, as opposed to ending up grumpy old men. No, she did not begin with the question: "Is not your voice broken, your wind short, your chin double, your wit single, and every part about you blasted with antiquity?" You are thinking of Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part 2. She did ask:

"How do you know when it is time to 'hang up the car keys'?" A picture of a terrified dog sitting in the front seat beside a grimly determined-looking elderly woman driver, reminiscent of Ruth Cracknell of the Aussie T.V. comedy, Mother and Sons, was her answer: "When your dog has this look on his face!" Kerin helped us – with regular doses of humour - to look at the developmental challenges and invitations for growth presented by the advancing decades of our life's journey. ■



STUDY DAY

A Study Day, open to the public, normally takes place at some time during the Union AGM. In 2015 the New Norcia Institute for Benedictine Studies took responsibility for this day. On 29 August they presented a Special Event, "Light and Darkness: Truth and Meaning in the Universe", to mark the 100 years since the publication of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The speakers and their topics were: Professor Philip Matthews, "Meaning in the Universe"; Rev. Dr Denis Edwards, "The Extraterrestrial Jesus"; Dr Angela McCarthy, "Light and Meaning in Art"; and Dom Robert Nixon, O.S.B., "The Music of the Spheres". ■

WRITERS' WORKSHOP

New Norcia was also the venue for the Benedictine Union Writers' Workshop, mounted 19-25 October.

Our Fr Michael Casey was on hand to provide a bit of spit and polish to what is hoped to be a bunch of emerging writers who will provide articles for the Union's journal, Tjurunga, and other monastic periodicals.

Michael is well qualified for such a role. He has authored a dozen or more books and a plethora of articles. His command of the language is widely admired. He has also wielded the editor's pen over many years. ■

REFLECTION DAY

The Good Samaritan Sisters hosted a reflection day at Santa Maria College, Northcote on 1 August: "Celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life: Benedictine Spirituality Today". Dom Steele and Fr Joseph Chua were two of the four speakers, the other two being Deborah Barker, Principal of Santa Maria College, and Marie Milne, an Oblate of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Deborah shared a little of her insight into the influence of the Benedictine spirituality on her and how it shapes her leadership at the College. Marie became an

Oblate ten years ago. She has now retired from teaching in Catholic education, but her life is still lived with a passion for ongoing adult-faith formation, social justice and building community through conversation. Joseph's talk was entitled "Re(claiming) Benedictine Mysticism".

Words from Pope Francis' 2014 Letter for the Year of Consecrated Life inspired the reflections: "... Look to the past with gratitude... Live the present with passion... Embrace the future with hope". ■

MOTHER RITA MARY RIP

Two former superiors of Benedictine Union communities have gone to God in recent months. Mother Rita Mary Posa died on 16 October. Dom Steele and Br Bernard attended her Requiem Mass in the Chapel of Our Lady and St John, at St John's Village, Wangaratta on 23 October. Rita Mary began her religious life in the Anglican Community of the Holy Name at Cheltenham, Melbourne. She and some of the Sisters were eventually granted permission to live an enclosed contemplative life within the parent community. Later still they were invited to live on a property at the time owned by the Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta. They became a separate community in 1993, under the title of the Community of Christ the King, which was formally inaugurated by the Bishop in Holy Trinity Cathedral on 10 February 1994. Then, on 31 July 1997, in the presence of

their Visitor, the Right Reverend Paul Richardson, they adopted the Benedictine Rule and added the vows of Stability and Conversion of Life to those already taken. Mother Rita Mary was an active member of the Union in the years that followed. An interesting bit of information is that she has a niece, Carmel Posa, a Sister of the Good Samaritan. ■



Photo used with permission. Courtesy of Fr David Chislett SSC

SR JOAN MOLONEY RIP



Photo used with permission.
Courtesy of Mary Bevis

Sister Joan Moloney, who for twelve years was Prioress of her Benedictine community at Lammermoor, Yeppoon, Queensland, died after a short illness on 21 December.

Joan had an experience of God when still a child that convinced her that she was called to be a nun. By the age of sixteen she had discerned that her call was to a life of prayer. She entered the Benedictine Monastery of the

Presentation of the Lord, then at Subiaco, Rydalmere in Sydney. This community, founded in 1849, moved to Pennant Hills in 1957, and, still later, in 1988, to Jamberoo on the South Coast of New South Wales. In 1975 the Pennant Hills community was asked to help the small group of Sisters of Reparation at Croydon in Melbourne work towards attaining canonical status in the Church. Joan was one of the nuns who went on this mission and was our valued neighbour, "down the road", for six years. Soon after her return to Pennant Hills she was sent to the foundation at Lammermoor, and when the community became independent in 1993 she was elected as their first Prioress. She and her community hosted the Benedictine Union AGM at

Lammermoor some time in the 1990s. In 2003 she oversaw the transfer of her community to its present site at Tanby, Yeppoon. Both sites look across lovely bush and open plain to the sea and Great Keppel Island. During her monastic life she worked in many different areas, the kitchen, vestments, the infirmary. She was an adaptable and willing worker. Her Sisters have said of her that she was the first to step forward if there was a difficult job to be done or a difficult person to be worked with. (Do difficult nuns exist? Maybe once upon a time but not any more!). Her obituary reported: "Of her it could be said, that she never did anything great, except to be kind and in that she excelled". We could add that she was always good fun. ■

SCHOOL FOR ABBOTS & ABBESSES

Dom Steele was overseas on business of the Order during the whole of January of this year. From 1-14 January he was in Kerala, India for the Regular Visitation of our daughter-house, Kurisumala.

From there he went on to Rome for the rest of the month to participate in the School for New Abbots and Abbesses – our equivalent of what is somewhat irreverently referred to as "the School for Baby Bishops"! Given that he was elected three years

ago, his schooling was a bit retarded. He, so to speak, had already learnt quite a lot on the job! These courses are organised every five years and have tended to be for a particular linguistic group

each time. This time it was "all in together this sunny weather" – actually, Rome in January wouldn't be too sunny! Seasoned Abbots and Abbesses arrived at regular intervals to give of their experience and

wisdom. In addition, being thrown together for a few weeks with thirty or forty of one's peers who have to struggle with similar situations back home, cannot but help. Not to front would surely be masochistic! Potters have the consolation of being able to try again if their product isn't shaping up as



they would like. But re-inventing the wheel over and over again when there is someone who can show you that it has already been done, and this is how you do it, may suggest that you are bit silly! ■

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Dom Steele was one of more than 50 Leaders representing diverse faith groups – Christian, Muslim, and Jewish – who met at Parliament House in Canberra with 15 Members and Senators from the Liberal, National, Labor and Greens parties on 15 October to call for a solution that would restore the human dignity of refugees and asylum seekers. The forum was the initiative of Catholic Religious Australia, CRA (the peak council of Catholic Religious Congregations) with the support of other Christian denominations and other faiths. The President of CRA, Sister Bernice Loch, RSM, and Sr Anne Lane, PBVM,

spoke on behalf of CRA. Other speakers were Rabbi Alon Meltzer (National Jewish Memorial Centre); and Hafez Kassem (President of Australian Federation of Islamic Councils).

The forum was co-hosted by Anna Burke MP (ALP), Russell Broadbent MP (Liberal), Cathy McGowan MP (Independent) and Senator Janet Rice (Australian Greens). A 5/5 working group of five politicians from different parties and five cross-denominational religious leaders was created to continue the dialogue in an effort to change the political and public narrative regarding asylum seekers and refugees. ■

SPANISH MARTYRS

In August 2015 Pope Francis signed an Apostolic Letter authorising the beatification of eighteen Spanish members of our Order, "Pio Heredia and his seventeen companions", otherwise known as the "Martyrs of Viaceli". The beatification ceremony took place at the Cathedral of Santander in the north of Spain on 3 October last year. They were all martyred, in seven separate episodes, in late 1936 during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

Sixteen of them were monks of the monastery of Santa Maria de Viaceli, Cobreces, 35 kilometres from Santander. Two were Cistercian nuns of the monastery of San Bernardo at Algemesi, near Valencia. Three other monks who died could not be included on the list for procedural reasons and lack of sufficient documentation.

At the outbreak of the war, a series of unjust and violent outrages were launched against numerous religious communities. The Cobreces community, then numbering about 60, was, from the outset, subject to an arbitrary ordinance of the local Committee of the Popular Front. An endless series of registrations and searches ensued. Then on August 20, 1936, the feast of St Bernard, a decree was communicated and published declaring the closure and suppression of Catholic worship in par-

ishes and monastery churches. On September 8, the feast of the Nativity of Mary, in a surprise raid, all who remained in the community were arrested and immediately transferred to prison in Santander. The monastery was looted. The monks were released shortly after and proceeded to seek shelter in private homes. Fathers Eugenio Garcia and Vincente Pastor were killed on the roadside near the monastery on 21 September. Then the other

monks residing in Santander were finally arrested again on 2nd and 3rd of December. After suffering humiliation and cruel interrogation, they were beaten and mistreated, and transported in two groups to the bay of Santander in a prison ship from

which they were thrown into the sea.

Mother Micaela Baldovi Trull had been arrested in July. After suffering humiliation and torture, she and her sister were killed on 9 November. Another nun from the Algemesi community, Maria de la Natividad Medes Ferris, was discovered dead the next day.

The youthfulness of the group is striking. The average age for the eighteen martyrs is less than 35. The youngest was 19, six were in their early twenties, and five in their early thirties.

The community of Viaceli lives on. ■



YOUTHFUL OLD AGE

Br Joachim Devlin and Fr Carthage O’Dea gave us a very plausible excuse for celebration on 2 November.

Joachim chalked up 95 years, and Carthage, who is “a mere child”, 88 years. They are both recently luxuriating in new beds and chairs which, at the press of a button, assume a variety of elevations, slopes, and sleep-inducing shapes. Carthage has given broad hints that he may be so comfortable that he may often fail to hear the buzzer summoning him to prayer times.

Joachim is still devouring big fat books which may yet earn him an honorary doctorate from some prestigious university. He is also a

very self-motivated twice-daily challenge to others of us who are “couch potatoes” as he roars up and down the covered ways exercising on his wheely-walker. A spectrum of birds – parrots, magpies, noisy miners, and top-knot pigeons – clock in outside his glass sliding door each morning for the breakfast he provides. Have you picked up any clues for a youthful old age? ■



Fr Carthage



Br Joachim

ST BENEDICT’S LEGACY ON WORK continued from p8

Work is not relieved of its burden of the harsh clash of forces, but a new interior impulse is added to it. The monk is united to God not in spite of his work but through it, because ‘while working with hand or mind he continually raises himself to Christ’.

Thus it happens that even lowly and insignificant work is done with a certain dignity, and becomes a vital part of ‘that sovereign effort by which God alone is sought in solitude and silence, so that to such a life is added the vigour of continual prayer, the sacrifice of praise, celebrated and consummated together, under the influence of cheerful fraternal charity’.

Europe became a Christian land chiefly because sons of St Benedict gave our ancestors a comprehensive instruction, not only teaching them arts and crafts but also infusing into them the spirit

of the Gospel which is needed for the protection of the spiritual treasures of the human person. The paganism which was formerly drawn over to the Gospel by the many hands of missionary monks is now spreading more and more in the Western world, and it is both the cause and the effect of the loss of the Christian way of esteeming work and its dignity.

Unless Christ endows human action with a constant lofty meaning, the worker becomes the slave – a special kind of slave unique to modern times – of profit and industry. On the contrary, Benedict affirms the urgent necessity of giving a spiritual character to work, enlarging the purpose of human labour so that it can escape the excessive application of the technical arts and the excessive greed for what is useful to one’s self. ■

ST BENEDICT'S LEGACY ON WORK

(An excerpt from Pope St John Paul II's 1980 Apostolic Letter for the Fifteenth Centenary of the Birth of St Benedict)

Man's face is often wet with tears impelling him to pray, but these tears do not always spring from sincere compunction or excessive joy. For often tears of sorrow and disturbance flow from those whose human dignity is disregarded, those who cannot achieve what they justly desire, and who cannot do the work that suits their needs and talents.

St Benedict lived in a civil society deformed by injustices. The human person frequently counted for nothing and was treated as a criminal. In a social structure drawn up in orders, the most wretched were segregated and reduced to slavery. The poor grew poorer, while the rich grew richer and richer. Yet this remarkable man willed to found the monastic community on the prescriptions of the Gospel. He restored man to his integral condition, no matter what social order or rank he came from. He provided for the needs of each according to the norms of a wise distributive justice. He assigned significant duties to individuals, duties which cohered aptly with other duties. He considered the conditions of the weak, but left no room for easy laziness. He allowed space for the cleverness of others lest they feel hemmed in, or rather, so that they might be stimulated to give their best. Thus he removed the pretext of a light and sometimes justified murmuring, and brought about the conditions of true peace.

Man is not reckoned by St Benedict as a kind of nameless machine, which someone uses to get the maximum profit, providing no moral justification to the worker and denying him a just wage. It should be noted that in his time work was usually done by slaves who were denied the status of human beings. Benedict considered work, however it happens to be done, as an essential part of the life and obliges each monk to it, making it a duty in conscience. This labour is to be borne 'for the sake of obedience and expiation', since indeed pain and sweat are attached to any truly efficacious effort. But this distress has a redemptive character when it purifies a man from sin, and it ennoble the things



St Benedict

carefully worked on and also the environment where the work is done.

St Benedict, leading an earthly life in which work and prayer were properly balanced, in this way happily inserts work into the supernatural way of considering life. By doing so, he helps man to know himself as God's fellow-worker, and truly he becomes such when his person, acting with a certain creative energy, is enhanced in an all-round way. Human action is carried out in a contemplative manner, and contemplation attains a certain dynamic quality. It influences the work itself and throws light on the ends proposed for the work.

Work is, therefore, not performed solely in order to avoid the idleness which enfeebles minds, but also and indeed chiefly, to enable a man to grow gradually as a person mindful of his duties and careful about them. Also, talents perhaps concealed deep inside the person may be discovered, and brought to fruition for the common good, 'so that in all things God may be glorified'.

...continued on p7