

60 Years of Priesthood	1
Two New Novices	2
Farm News	3
Liturgical Life	4
Visitation & DVD Course	5
Laudato Si' & St Teresa	6
Monks and the Nature	6
Hearing the Word of God	8

Subscription: \$6 for two issues

60 YEARS OF PRIESTHOOD

Fr Mark Ryan afforded us the joy of celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood on January 3.

No doubt his imagination was flooded with memories of that Thursday morning in 1957 when Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne, Justin Simonds, ordained him in St Patrick's Cathedral. At least ten members of the monastic community were present with him, and eleven priests were in the sanctuary, four of them Dominicans (D. Fitzmaurice, E.J. Crawford, C.R. Oxenham, and J. Knowles) showing the flag for his Dominican brother Tom who was on mission in India for many years.

The Mass was served by a number of the younger fry of Tarrawarra, and seminary students from Corpus Christi College, Werribee. The Melbourne Catholic Male Choir, directed by Mr F. Mithen, and joined by others of the Werribee students, sang. Fr L. Henry was at the organ. A particular pleasure

for Mark was the presence of six of his Dublin school mates (including Fr Tom Foynes, Sean King, Pat Fleming and Tom Doyle – all good Polish or Chinese names!) who were living in Melbourne at the time, most having been recruited for the Melbourne Tramways.

Mark offered his first Mass the next day, Friday 4 January, in the newly completed abbey church. (Mark had been one of the labourers on the project. It was a mighty achievement within two years of the foundation here, with so many things to be done, including studies for the priesthood! We are not surprised to hear the rumour that a strike was called on one occasion!). His was only the second Mass celebrated there, the first having been Christmas 1956 when the furnishings were still for the most part lacking. It was a grace for the present day community to have Mark as the principal celebrant at the jubilee Mass on 3 January this year. *Ad multos annos, Mark.* ■



Fr Mark celebrating his jubilee mass.

TWO NEW NOVICES

Abbot Steele clothed two men as novices in our community on 8 December last. Both had been with us as postulants since May.

Simon Wang is from Malaysia, born at Labis, Johore in 1975. His tertiary education was in Computer Studies. He went on to work as a Web Developer. His skills are being put to good use in the renewal of some of our liturgical books.

Karel Duivenvoorden is a Queenslander of Dutch extraction, and an ordained priest. He spent some time with us in 2009, returned to diocesan ministry, and has now rejoined us for a second bite of the cherry. (Actually he has knocked our small orchard into a most respectable shape, and has grown a crop of tomatoes that really taste like tomatoes!). Karel (pronounced Karl as in Karl Marx) owes his initial education to the Mercys, Josephites, and Christian Brothers. He holds two degrees: a



From left: Fr Karel, Fr Joseph (Novice Master) and Br Simon

Bachelor of Arts (Community Studies and History), and Master of Social Planning and Development. He has held various positions in the Queensland Public Service.

We pray that both Simon and Karel will bloom where they are now planted. Welcome, brothers. ■

BR LUKE



Br Luke working in our archive

Br Luke Rudd is pursuing an online course in librarianship. During January he spent three weeks at the Franciscan library, St Paschal's, Box Hill, on a practical element of the course. He was employed in cataloguing. There, as in his other course units, he has done very well.

Luke and the community are grateful to the Franciscans for their hospitality to him during this period. ■

BR JAMES



Br James on Christmas Day

Br James Truong, a monk of our community in Hong Kong spent two months with us, 30 November to 27 January. James came with an international flavour. He was born in Vietnam, did some of his growing up in Switzerland, joined the Shuili community, and later Lantao community, Hong Kong, and has spent half a dozen years in the Cistercian community of Conyers, Georgia, U.S. We have contributed a dash of Aussie to the mix. We found James a willing participant in the various aspects of Tarrawarra life, and enjoyed his presence in our daily lives. ■

FARM NEWS



The farm has experienced a good season. Grass has been jumping out of the ground all over the Yarra Valley and beyond, so the hay season was a huge success.

Then on 12 January, 217 of our steers and heifers went off to market to an excellent sale outcome. Once again Tarrawarra was the Winner of the Victorian Region Charolais Society 2017 Silver Calf Competition. Leon Schreiber, our farm manager since late 2012, and Br Hausia, self-proclaimed jackaroo-in-chief, have been wearing big smiles. One of the steers decided to attempt to wipe

the smile off Hausia's face by giving him a good farewell ram to the right thigh in the cattle yards. Yes, Hausia did hobble off to the sale to gloat, then returned to take up crutches for a period of sympathy seeking. In a short time he enjoyed the benefit of a miracle, sang his "Alleluia", and retired the crutches to the infirmary store.

The farm cycle kicked off anew on 26 February with the first of 260 cows dropping a calf. There will be gangs of the young ones dashing around the paddocks, racing one another and kicking up their heels in the weeks ahead. ■



LITURGICAL LIFE

Liturgy, our community prayer, plays a central role in our monastic lives. St Benedict, indeed, wrote of it: "Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God" (Rule 43:3). Cistercians find themselves participants in this sacred activity at least seven times a day. It is a joy and a privilege – and sometimes a burden.



But it doesn't just happen of itself. Lots of input is required. Our present Liturgy Group – Bernard, Brian, and Samuel, in collaboration with the Abbot, Steele – have devoted a lot of time, thought and energy to renewing some of our choir books which had become tired and faded over decades. In some cases this has included texts. The most recent launch was a

collection of Mass Settings, along with 413 responsory settings for the Mass responsorial psalms. The version sent into retirement by this latest booklet had been in use since 1970 at the dawn of our vernacular era! Br Simon, who does the computer work, hasn't yet been overheard complaining – as the Emperor did of Mozart's music, or was it Scarlatti's, in the film Amadeus – "Too many notes!"

Booklets for the antiphons of various seasons such as Advent, Christmas and Easter are in the pipeline, being trialled and fine-tuned as we go. Over quite some months we have substituted the Vigils Readings gathered by the Scottish monastic community of Pluscarden in the hope that these will be more appropriate to our vocational situation and better nourish our monastic prayer. In all of this endeavour, of course, there has been an urgent demand for those among us who can be trusted as proof-readers. It is donkey-work and for those with an eye for detail. It is not everybody's gift!

"New wine, new wine-skins!"

Frequent singing practices have been a necessity as each new booklet made its appearance. Bernard, as cantor, supported by Brian on the small organ, put us through our paces. "Can we try that again? ... And again?" This has taken some of the pressure off at the time of the prayer itself. Practice makes perfect, though it may take a few Advents or Easters to really become comfortable and moving towards perfection.

Fr Mark and Fr Brian are our principal music-makers on the organ. Our friend, Paul Curtis, has generously joined this department, at least for some of the principal ceremonies such as in Holy Week, and alternating with Mark for Sunday Masses. It is an important ministry. Given the fact that our pipe organ has gone berserk in recent times and can sometimes suddenly sound like the last trumpet, at others like a riot of possums in the attic, it is a bit - (a bit?) – nerve racking for all concerned. One can only try to imagine what it feels like for the one behind and above the keys and the pedals.

continued on next page



VISITATION

Liturgical Life continued...

High points in the liturgical year - Holy Week as the stand-out - crank up the demands on a range of the brethren: the sacristan, Fr Carthage; the producers of the Order of Service booklets; the Masters of Ceremonies who have to assemble the requisite equipment and instruct those who have particular functions to perform; the organists who have to embrace once-a-year music; the cantor, Bernard, who competently, but at a price, takes on the more lengthy solo pieces such as the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the Reproaches on Good Friday, and the Exultet at the Easter Vigil; assistants to the cantor, Hausia, Samuel and Joseph, for the Agios of the Reproaches, and responsorials at the Easter Vigil Mass; and readers, servers, and homilists. Somehow it generally all comes together successfully in the end! Our wonderful friend, Wailin Galbraith, faithfully provides flower arrangements for the church all the year round, except in Advent and Lent when we take a more austere approach. ■



Dom Richard Purcell, Abbot of our Irish mother-house, spent the all-too-short period 30 September to 10 October with us for the official Regular Visitation of the community.

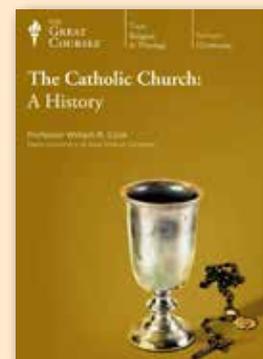
His is a familiar face at Tarrawarra as he has been here for Visitations in 2011, 2013, and now in 2016. Further, he came twice in 2012, for our Abbatial election, and for Dom Steele's Abbatial Blessing some time later. Richard went on to Kopua, the Cistercian community in New Zealand to conduct their Visitation also. Back in Ireland he had a lot on his plate into the bargain, so his diary was not exactly empty.

Dom Richard had personal meetings with each member

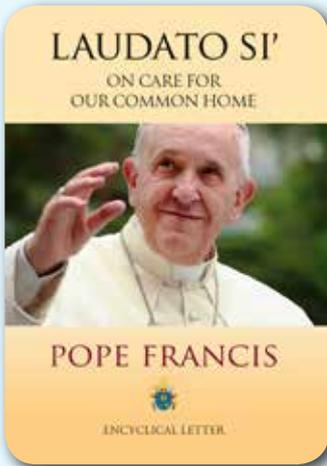
of the Tarrawarra community, followed by a number of community gatherings, before writing his Report. He noted the empty chairs left by the deaths of three more of the Irish founders – Brothers Joseph, Celsus, and Joachim – since his 2013 visit. “The changing generational face of Tarrawarra”. He rejoiced with us to see the younger men stepping up to take responsibility and carry the torch forward. Did we pass muster? Well, Dom Richard told our Abbot Steele and the community the night he closed the Visitation that he would be delighted to be left such a positive Report himself. He suggested a few challenges for us to work on over the next couple of years. He noted the work that we had accomplished on our House Customs, and the provision of safe refuge for the community in the event of another bushfire, and expressed confidence that we would bring a similar energy to the tasks left us on this occasion. Thank you, Richard, for your customary pleasant, competent and helpful review with the community. We know you aren't too keen on our summers, so we will be happy to welcome you in the spring again if that is more to your liking! ■

DVD COURSE

As part of our Ongoing Formation Programme, each year we make use of DVDs from the Great Courses produced in the United States. During 2017 we have Professor William R. Cook of the State University of New York at Geneseo lecturing on “The Catholic Church: A History”. There are 36 units so that will keep us busy. Br Peter Browne sets things up and presses the button at 5.20 pm precisely on Thursday afternoons. So, if you phone at that time and get the answering machine, that's our excuse!



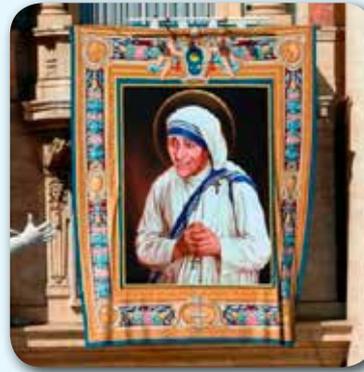
LAUDATO SI'



Annually we tend to take up a project for a series of our community meetings. The most recent one was to address Pope Francis' lengthy 2015 encyclical, "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home".

It is a rich and challenging document which we feel cannot be allowed to fall into the dustbin of history without some serious response on our part. Each week we encouraged one another to set aside time to read a chapter. Then we came together to share a number of insights we had received through the reading. These were gathered up and a copy of the collection given to each of us. Four principles underpinning what we discerned as our call to care for the earth, our common home, were distilled. The work is to continue in the months ahead, culminating in some concrete steps to implement what we see as the contribution we can make as a community to exercise this stewardship. ■

ST TERESA OF KOLKATA



On 4 September last, Pope Francis canonized a woman we all know – Mother Teresa of Kolkata (Calcutta). Here at Tarrawarra we felt a certain connectedness as she had graced

us with her presence on 7 March 1969. On that occasion, when she was chauffeured and accompanied by our friend Sr Leo, RSC, she left her signature in our guest book. Perhaps we could show it at the pearly gates as a gold pass in the hope of being ushered in, no questions asked. In our June Newsletter of that year, we reported: "Perhaps our best known visitor in recent months was Mother Teresa of Calcutta. We indeed felt most privileged to welcome to our monastery this wonderful twentieth-century 'Good Samaritan' who has fished babies out of dust-bins, and soothed the fevered brows of the outcasts of society dying in the old temple of the goddess Kali. It is overpoweringly consoling to find such an apostolic woman with a deep faith in the necessity for prayer and the contemplative life". Many of her Sisters in the Missionaries of Charity have visited us over the decades. We rejoice with them in this elevation of Mother Teresa to the altar. May she remember us before God in heaven. ■

MONKS AND THE NATURE



Br John

One of Br John's frequent exclamations is: "The beauty of nature". He is, on the other hand, totally unaffected by the philosophical question of "the nature of beauty". Anyhow, let's face it, you can't live in the Yarra Valley and not be moved by the beauty of nature.

Who doesn't have a possum – or a dozen or more – in their ceiling or backyard? But we have had a mother athirst for knowledge who brought her baby along to our library one night while she burnt the midnight oil over her particular area of research. When Br Luke gently suggested that it was time for her to leave, she gave him a scratch and an invitation to go and get himself a tetanus

injection. Then there is our pious wombat who has been digging in under the church. What a grub! We have had to insert mesh to exclude his excavations – perhaps related in intention to Donald Trump’s fence on the border down Mexico way. And there is that one night of the year when millions (perhaps billions) of flying ants spread their wings and insist that they absolutely must fly around the lights in the foyers until they drop with exhaustion.

Top of the list, however, is our co-habiting the Valley with the wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*). It is Australia’s largest bird of prey, with a wingspan of up to 2.8 metres (9 feet 4 inches). It had a bad press from the early settlers who accused it of killing lambs. Maybe it was



Acknowledgement:
Photo: Fir0002/Flagstaffotos
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wedge_tailed_eagle_in_flight04.jpg

sometimes guilty, but the extent of the punishment did not fit the crime. As a result the Yarra Valley lost all of these magnificent avian creatures. Several decades ago the Healesville Australian Wildlife Sanctuary bred some in captivity and released them into our skies again. We often see them, but generally high above us. They can soar to 1,800 metres (5,900 feet). On one of our wild windy days, a pair of them indulged us with breathtaking, low-flying aerobatics. For those of us who were privileged with the display, it was a Gerard Manley Hopkins experience of “my heart in hiding stirred for a bird – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!” (The Windhover). ■

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD: ST BENEDICT’S FOUNDATION FOR PRAYER continued from p8

love, the mind is often recollected before God: ‘nothing is to be preferred to the work of God’ (St Benedict: Rule 4:55-56; 43:3); liturgical prayer passes over into life itself and life itself becomes a prayer. This praying is enhanced, once the liturgy is over, by recourse to prayer made in private. In this way the major cycles of liturgical prayer are prolonged into the minor cycles of private prayer and into a stable attitude of a quiet, recollected mind, and so the habit of prayer permeates all the activity and every moment of the day.

As an eager student of the word of God, St Benedict does not read it only in the sacred Book but also in the great book of nature. When man contemplates the beauty of the creature, he is moved in the depths of his soul, and is recalled to him who is its spring and origin. At the same time he is induced to act reverently towards nature, enhancing its beauty and keeping its truth.

‘Where silence reigns, prayer is eloquent’. In solitude a person’s prayer acquires a certain richness, and this fact applies both to that wild valley of the river Anio where St Benedict lived alone with God, and also to the city crammed with clever gadgets but alienating souls, where men

and women of our time are often isolated and left to themselves. But man must be exercised in some kind of desert in order to have truly spiritual life. The desert prevents empty words and facilitates a new exchange with God, men, and things. In desert silence the elements which bind one person to others are reduced to what is sovereign and primary. When a certain austerity is added, the heart is purified, and the custom of daily prayer rising to God from the intimacy of the heart becomes available. This prayer is not offered to God in much speaking, but in the purity of a heart on fire and in tears of compunction (St Benedict: Rule 20:3; 52:4). ■



HEARING THE WORD OF GOD: ST BENEDICT'S

FOUNDATION FOR PRAYER

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

True and absolute love of Christ is shown significantly by prayer, which is the centre of daily action and of the whole Benedictine life. In Benedict's mind the foundation of prayer is hearing the word. Indeed the Incarnate Word speaks here today to individual persons living in their present unique conditions; he speaks through the Scriptures and through the Church's mediation which, in the monastery is exercised also by the words of the father abbot and the brothers in community.

In this kind of obedience of faith the word of God is received with humility and joy springing from its perennial newness, which time does not diminish but daily makes vivid and attractive. This word becomes an inexhaustible fountain of prayer because 'God himself speaks to the soul, suggesting to it the answers which His heart awaits. This prayer is spread over the different times of day, and like a subterranean stream of water nourishes the daily work'.

Indeed, through tranquil, savoury meditation, which is true spiritual rumination, the word of God gives to souls dedicated to prayer sharp insights which illuminate the day's course. This indeed is the 'prayer of the heart', the 'short and pure prayer' (St Benedict: Rule 20:4) by which we respond to the divine pressures, and at the same time urge the Lord to give us the never-failing gift of his mercy.

Therefore the word of God containing the inscrutable mystery of salvation, is daily heeded

lovingly and investigated carefully by the soul, acting with a certain vital enthusiasm, not for the sake of human knowledge, but for a wisdom having about it something divine. That is, we act thus in order to speak with God, to direct his own word to him, to think his own thoughts, and in short to live his life.

Christ's faithful one, by listening to the word of God, is led to understand the course of the many and different times and events which the God of providence has arranged so to happen in the human family that an ample showing of how

salvation is dispensed is given to the believer. So God's wonders are perceived by faith with open eyes and astonished ears (St Benedict: Rule, Prologue 9). The deifying light of contemplation strikes a spark, and silence mingled with amazement, a song of exultation and eager thanksgiving give a special tone to the prayer by which monks daily celebrate together the divine praises. Their prayer becomes like the voice of all creation, and in a certain way anticipates the lofty canticle of the heavenly Jerusalem. The word of God during this earthly pilgrimage makes every life to be seen as lying open to God's inspection, and the voices of those who now lack voice come together in prayer to the Father. Joys and anxieties, prosperous outcomes and disappointed hopes, the expectation of happy events somehow resonate there.

St Benedict is guided by this word of God especially in the sacred liturgy, but he does not contend that the community is only a group ardently celebrating divine things,

declaring in choral song its common experience imbibed in the Spirit, for he has much at heart the desire that an intimate affection correspond to the word of God pronounced or sung vocally. 'Let our minds be in harmony with our voices' (St Benedict: Rule 19:7). The Holy Scriptures known and tasted in this vital way are eagerly read, and the monks prostrate earnestly together in prayer. Moved by



*Artwork given to us by Camille
and Mario from Brazil*