

Newsletter of the Cistercian Monks

TARRAWARRA

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December 2012

New Abbot



Dom Steele and Dom Richard

We have an Abbot! Steele Hartmann. For those who are technologically savvy, this is probably old news accessed from our website weeks and weeks ago. Others of you would have it from that much older communication tool, the grapevine. But we hope we can still tell you things you don't know.

Dom Steele has lots of letters he can put after his name but the most treasured, we

suspect, are FNQ. Yes, he is not just a Queenslander, nor even a North Queenslander, but a Far North Queenslander. These, you had better believe, are important distinctions. He was born to Campbell Hartmann and his wife Bridget Mary Quinn at Cairns in 1953. Two of his three siblings survive today and were present, with their spouses and other family members, at his Abbatial Blessing: Cam the Second, and Lorraine Marsden. Steele was baptised and confirmed in

St. Monica's Cathedral, Cairns. His early education was with the Sisters of Mercy, then with the Marist Brothers at St. Augustine's in Cairns before going on to the Marist Juniorate in New South Wales.

At tertiary level, Steele completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree and Diploma of Teaching at the University of Queensland (UQ). When he became a chalky at the blackboard he discovered

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New Abbot

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teaching kids wasn't his cup of tea after all. So he made the wise decision to become a Cistercian monk in 1983. He took his first vows in 1985 but left us in 1988 before finals. On the basis of "when in doubt study for another degree", he returned to UQ, St. Lucia and its glorious jacaranda drive, and did a Degree in Commerce. Tarrawarra welcomed him back in 1991. His Solemn Profession took place in 1993 and he was ordained priest in 1997. Since then he has taken a Master of Theology Degree at London University, spent a Sabbatical period at University of Leuven, Belgium, and, amongst other things, attended the 2011 Monastic Formators' Programme in Rome and Assisi.

At the time of his election as Abbot, Steele was our Bursar (ah! that providential, and handy Commerce degree!), Novice Master, and Sub-Prior. The Tarrawarra Associates Group, men and women interested in absorbing a Benedictine-Cistercian spirituality, was his initiative. The members gather with him for prayer and reflection on Benedictine values and practices on a monthly basis. He has spent a stint working in our guesthouse as well as in the dairy prior to its closure in 2000. One early morning he came close to becoming a farm fatality statistic when a big square bale of hay fell on him and all but squeezed the breath of life out of him as he lay under it for some considerable time. If he hadn't been found when he was by one of the community who wondered why the station-



ary tractor's engine was running for so long, he would not have survived much longer. He has considered every day since then as definitely a gift.

Under the presidency of Dom Richard Purcell, Abbot of our motherhouse, Roscrea, Steele was elected at a morning Chapter on 3 November, for an unrestricted term, as third Abbot of Tarrawarra. Before the election Dom Richard was the Principal Celebrant at the Mass of the Holy Spirit which sought God's light for the community's decision. The event itself was smooth and peaceful and filled us with joy and confidence for the future.

The election requires the confirmation of the Abbot General. He was tucked up in bed in a French monastery while we were making momentous decisions Down-Under so it was late afternoon before Dom Richard rang him. (St. Benedict has inculcated the wisdom of doing things at an opportune time!). The Abbot General, Dom Eamon Fitzgerald, has been to Tarrawarra on a number of occasions and so was able to give the green light from personal knowledge.

The following day Dom Richard announced the election result to our friends who had gathered for Sunday Mass (joyful applause!). On Sunday afternoon Richard installed Steele as Abbot in the context of Vespers. As part of this ceremony, each of the community members renewed his obedience into the hands of the newly elected Abbot. The installation confers the abbatial authority on the newly elected.

Archbishop Denis Hart joined us on 8 December, the Solemnity of the Im-

maculate Conception of Mary, for the Abbatial Blessing. His homily for the occasion is included in this issue of the Newsletter.

Dom Richard Purcell, Abbot of Roscrea and Father Immediate of Tarrawarra, and Dom David Tomlins, Abbot Emeritus of Tarrawarra were assistants to Dom Steele. The ceremony of Blessing is situated between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In addition to the various forms of community

prayer for the Abbot, the Archbishop offered the Prayer of Blessing and presented Dom Steele with the Rule of St. Benedict, the ring, and the crosier saying:

"Take this Rule which contains the tradition of holiness received from our spiritual fathers. As God gives you strength and human frailty allows, use it to guide and sustain your brothers whom God has placed in your care.

"Take this ring, the seal of fidelity.

Wear it as the symbol of constancy and maintain this monastic family in the bond of brotherly love.

"Take this shepherd's crosier and show loving care for the brothers whom the Lord has entrusted to you; for he will demand an account of your stewardship".



Dom Richard, Dom Steele, Archbishop Denis, Dom David

Excerpts from Dom Steele's Address at the Blessing

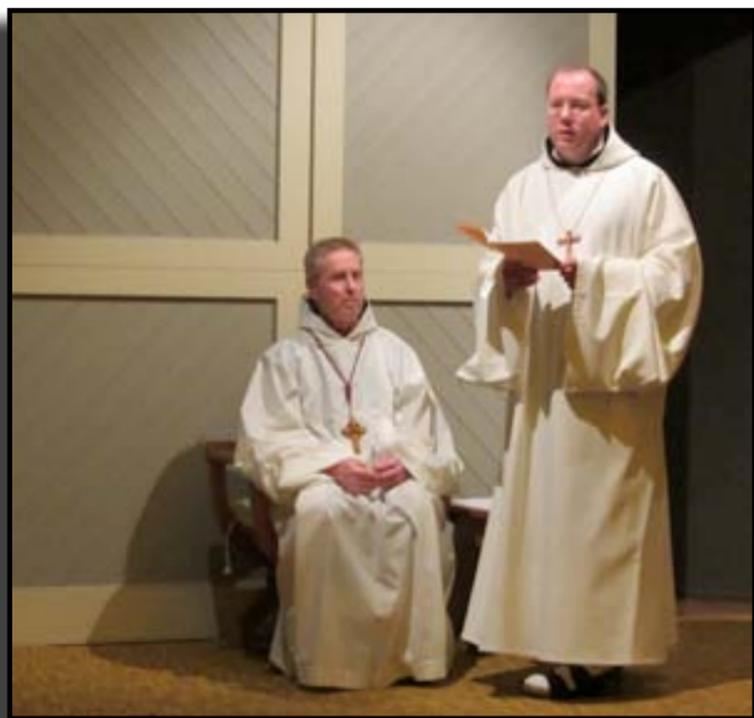
Ah, what a great day! You get to hear two homilies for the price of one. Let me start by thanking you all for coming today. Since my election I have been overwhelmed by all the loving support that has been coming my way. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Archbishop Denis. When I was elected, to get things organised for today, among other things I needed to buy a mitre. Well, where do you get such a thing? I ran into Fr. Julian, our parish priest, and I asked him if he knew where I might acquire one. He said, "I know just the place. I'll email you the details". The next thing

I get a message from Julian saying he has been in touch with the Archbishop, who just happens to have a spare one that I could have. So once again, thank you, Your Grace, for such a wonderful gift.

Well, it's amazing where you can end up! I began my working life at the City Council in Cairns, listening to people's complaints about parking tickets – it's probably a good training for this job! After that I went to Teachers' College and taught for five years in Government High Schools in Queensland – the worst five years of my life: discipline was

not my strong point. When I couldn't take it any more, I quit and went off and did an Arts degree, majoring in Religion and Politics; I used to win all the arguments at parties. Well, Religion got the better of me and so I came down here. After I had been here for about five years, I decided that here was not for me. My temporary vows were just about to run out, so Dave, who was my Student Master then, asked me if I wanted to extend my vows, "just in case I wanted to come back". "No," I said, "been there; done that!" So, off I went and did a Commerce Degree.

When I came back, Dave, who was Abbot by then, made me Bursar of the community – nothing is ever wasted!



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Here at the monastery I've milked cows and built fences. Somewhere along the line I did a welding course; the little pedestrian gate at our front entrance is one of my creations. Before becoming Bursar, I was Guest Master for a while. Novice Master has also been one of my hats. And now, here I am, literally with a new hat, as Abbot. Amazing!

After I was elected, I took my shock with me in prayer: "How can this be?", I said, and as God said to Mary in today's Gospel, the word I got back was: "Well, nothing is impossible to God". God does have a sense of humour, you know. There in prayer, the main image that came to me was from the Book of Numbers, where at the end of his life, Moses prays to God, "May YHWH, God of the spirits that give life to all living creatures, appoint a leader for this community, to be at their head in all they do, a man who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the community of YHWH may not be like sheep without a shepherd". In this passage God tells Moses to lay hands on Joshua, and then take him to Eleazar the priest, who will make inquiry for him before YHWH – something perhaps not unlike what happened here today.

So, I am to be leader of this community. It has always puzzled me how Moses was able to stand up before the people and strike the rock when they were demanding he find them water; how could anyone do anything as ridiculous as that! Now I find it is me who is pushed to the forefront of the community. With a sense of panic rising up in me, I asked myself, "Can I do that? Umm..." Then I said to myself, "Where shall I go/where shall I lead them?" I have always just followed the way that opened before me; now it is me who is to open the way! (Exodus 14:15-16). It occurred to me that

4 Moses led the People and they wandered in the wilderness for

40 years. I said to myself, "I guess I could manage that".

The Exodus journey, though, is really a paradigm for the spiritual life. At one end is all that has held us back, that we struggle to be free of. At the other end is the Promised Land, however we envisage that: eternal life, heaven, fulfilment, the Kingdom of God... whatever. In between is 40 years of wandering, a lifetime really. As I thought about all that wandering, it occurred to me that "Where?" is really the wrong question, and I began to appreciate Jesus' word to Thomas at the Last Supper. Jesus had just finished telling the disciples that he was going away to prepare a place for them, and then he would come back to take them with him. And then he said to them, "You know the way to the place where I am going". This prompted Thomas to say, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus said simply, "I am the Way" (John 14:3-6).

My job, as I see it then, is not unlike Andrew, one of the Lord's first disciples. He and another were followers of John the Baptist. When John said to Jesus, "Look, there is the Lamb of God", these two started following Jesus. When Jesus said to them, "What do you want?", they replied, "Where do you live?" "Come and see", said Jesus, and they went and stayed with him. Early the next morning Andrew found his brother, Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah", and he took Simon to Jesus. (John 1:35ff). Well, in Jesus I have found my Messiah, and all I can say to each and every one who would follow me is, "Come and see".

Where we shall go, of course, is out into the wilderness! I remember, when I first saw the wilderness in the Holy Land, thinking to myself, "If Jesus wants me to follow him out there, I'll wait here till he ge-



back!" For it is such a barren, desolate place: there is nothing there, not even a last vestige of vegetation; there is just nothing. Its barren emptiness is enough to challenge any who would go there. (Mark 1:12-13) Why should we go there? It is only there in the wilderness that we come across Mt. Sinai, the place of encounter. (Exodus 19) There, on the Holy Mount, we shall see Jesus and know him as he is. (Mark 9:2ff) And we need to know this, for only then will we know where we must go to reach our Promised Land, for we are to be like him. (1 John 3:2) This is why, since earliest times, monks have always gone out into the desert.

How shall we get to this place of encounter? As St. Benedict suggests: "Let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see him who has called us into his Kingdom". Thus, along the way there will be much praying of Scripture – that most excellent and adult way to pray, and favourite pastime of monks: lectio divina; this is the only way I know to get there. So, to all who have ears to hear, I simply repeat Jesus' invitation, "Come and see", and reiterate with St. Benedict the words of the Psalm, "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue 10-11). And as I said when I started: You never know where you might end up!

Once again, Thank you for being here with me to help me celebrate this day!

Abbatial Discernment



John Little with Dom David

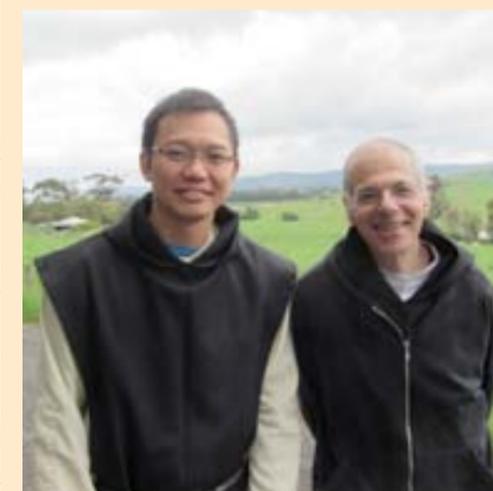
Successful abbatial transitions don't just happen. Preparation of mind and heart are essential elements. We, therefore, invited our friend John Little to assist us to do what we could to be prepared for a sound discernment. John has facilitated a number of important decision-making processes with us over the past fourteen years. Our experience with him on those occasions gave us confidence to have him journey with us again from June to October. John facilitated six sessions, each of one or two days' duration, in his usual competent, sensitive and friendly manner. He had us review significant trends over the past twenty-four years in society, in the Church, and in the Tarrawarra community. A fascinating Photolanguage exercise surfaced insights, truths and values about our monastic living. We identified the many relationships the community has locally and globally with our fellow Australians, the Church and Cistercian Order. This historical review enabled us to recognise major forces affecting monastic life today and into the foreseeable future. We next attempted to list the community's perceived strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats to

our life that events and developments in the larger society and within the Church present to us. This was a basis for anticipating the major challenges that lie ahead. Attention was given to the theme of change and the way we handle it personally: "change begins with me".

In preparation for the focus on "leadership", John supplied us with a number of models of discernment. We didn't end the programme with nominations or policy speeches, but with a list of points about our expectations of leadership in a monastic context. The final question for personal responsibility in approaching the election was: "In deliberating about who we are, and where we want to be, and together with our new leader: what does this community have to get right in the coming years; and given our understanding of what challenges may face us, how best do we support our new leader?" Having elected Steele, we are staying with this question. We thank John (and his wife Mila, left behind on the farm while he tilled the soil of our minds and hearts up here!) for much valued assistance in an important time for us.

Retreat

Our annual community retreat, 21-28 October, was intended this year as one of the final steps of preparation for our Abbatial Election. The retreat director was Dom Bernardo Bonowitz, Abbot of the Cistercian community of Novo Mundo, Brazil. He is a delightful character who has a fascinating life story to tell. Dom David explained that he had asked him for a focus on the theme of "the mystery of Jesus in our lives" and had felt that Dom Bernardo, given his history, probably had a fresher take on Jesus than many others would. Why? He began life in a New York Jewish family. In his late teens he embraced Jesus and Christianity at our monastery of Spencer, Massachusetts. He had a desire to enter the monastery and did so eventually, but with a decade or so in the Jesuits, the Society of Jesus, in the interval. After years of service at Spencer, including that of Novice Master, he was chosen by Novo Mundo first as Superior and later as Abbot. He has a fund of stories which were always to the point, and sometimes quite moving. He fashioned each retreat talk around what he named as "commandments" in the Gospel of Matthew: "Repent... Come... Take and eat..." His Jewish resources threw lots of light on texts which sometimes become rather too familiar. His smile and humour were very engaging. Thank you, Bernardo.



Fr Joseph and Dom Bernardo

Fr Andrew Fennessy

Our Fr. Andrew Fennessy died on 16 June, just too late to be reported in our mid-year Newsletter. Someone in Melbourne's Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages seems to have wrongly scrolled down to, and highlighted, "Glasgow, Scotland, UK" as his place of birth. Several weeks of paper warfare and "we value your call" fun-and-games eventually got that corrected to "born in Dublin on 13 April 1935" to Ellen Murphy and Andrew Fennessy. Andy entered our mother-house, Mt. St. Joseph, Roscrea, Tipperary on 15 August 1952.

He made his profession there and was ordained in 1959 before arriving at Tarrawarra on 21 August 1960. His gregarious nature was well suited to many years of service in our guesthouse, first as side-kick to Fr. Malachy Mara, and then as the one in charge from 1982 to 1991. For health reasons Andy lived and worked in the Melbourne Archdiocese from Novem-



Fr Andrew celebrating mass.

ber 1991. He remained a non-resident member of the community during the 20 years to his death. He celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood with the community on 13 May 2009.

He also threw a "fifty years in Australia" party for some of his many friends the following year. The list had to be pared down from 300 to 100 for obvious reasons! Ellen and Pat Hanley, his sister and brother-

in-law, represented the family at the funeral Mass and burial here on 19 June. A large crowd joined us on that day. Tarrawarra experienced a sizeable earthquake that night and we asked ourselves what it meant. Andy once made the outrageous remark that "there are no characters left in the monastery these days". We knew that while Andy was around there always would be! Till we meet merrily in heaven, Andy!

DIAMOND JUBILEES



November brought us the joy of two Diamond Jubilees of Profession, that of Fr.

Mark Ryan on 5 October, followed by that of Br. Joachim Devlin on 15 October. Mark was one of the founding group which travelled to Melbourne on the S.S. Esperance Bay, arriving on 31 October 1954. He was a youthful 22 year old and in first vows at the time. His Solemn Profession, on 7 October the following year, was the first at Tarrawarra. Joachim accompanied Dom Camillus Claffey by air, arriving on 23 November 1958.



Fr Mark renewing his vows



Tarrawarra was raised to Abbey status a few days later and both Mark and Joachim changed their promise of stability from Roscrea to Tarrawarra with the rest of the founders on November 28. In Joachim's case, that was a trial

period of five days! He had been brought out as a replacement cook for Br. Finbarr Salmon who had died earlier in the year. He cooked for the next 44 years, and was also bursar along the way. Jim and Mary Ryan visited Mark from Ireland around Easter of this year. Sister Eileen and nephew Tony Devlin came from Dublin to be with Joachim in October. Ita Hendron, Br. Celsus' sister, also came from Northern Ireland in the weeks around the Abbatial Blessing.



Br Joachim renewing his vows

Visitors

We are happy to be blessed with our share of monastic visitors from year to year. 2012 has brought us from the Cistercian world: Dom Augustine Mc Gregor, Mt. Melleray Abbey, Ireland, 18-23 July; Dom Richard Purcell, Mt. St. Joseph, Roscrea in both November and December; Dom Bernardo Bonowitz, Novo Mundo, Brazil; and Dom Brian Keogh and Br. Tony Brown, Southern Star Abbey, Kopua, New Zealand, for the Abbatial Blessing. Fr. Biju, Indian Sylvestrine Benedictine spent a few days with us at the end of his studies in Sydney. We were most grateful also for the presence of the Prior of the Sylvestrines at Arcadia, Fr. Bernard McGrath, at Steele's Blessing.



Dom Augustine and Br John



Dom Richard



Br Tony

Homily at the Blessing of Dom Steele Hartmann as Abbot of Tarrawarra



As part of the fifty-eight years of continuous presence of the Cistercian monks at Tarrawarra I am honoured to be with you to welcome and bless

Dom Steele Hartmann as the third Abbot of Tarrawarra, following Father Cronan Sherry as the first Superior, the thirty years of Dom Kevin O'Farrell and the twenty-four years of Dom David Tomlins.

As we thank God for the work of Abbot Derance at La Trappe from 1664 and the formation of the Reform Trappists approved as an independent monastic Order in 1892, we have all experienced the prayers, work and example of the Cistercians here at Tarrawarra.

Consider it particularly fortuitous that despite an original request by Cardinal Gilroy of Sydney, Father Eugene Boylan on visiting Australia was joined by Dom Camillus Claffey and Father Carthage O'Dea to acquire this land for the monastery.

Saint Benedict's conception of a monastic community was that of a spiritual family. Every individual monk was to be a son of that family; the Abbot its father and the monastery its permanent home. While the Abbot as the father of the family has responsibility for government and direction of those who are committed to his care, a paternal solicitude should characterise his rule.

Saint Benedict says in his Rule: "An Abbot who is worthy to have charge of a monastery ought always to remember by what title he is called and that in the monastery he is considered to represent the person of Christ seeing that he is

by Archbishop Denis Hart

called by his name". (Rule of St. Benedict, ch.2)

While the whole government of a religious house depends on the Abbot, as the Rule says: "Nothing is to be taught, commanded or ordered beyond the precepts of the Lord". We ought understand, of course, that the whole purpose of the leadership of an Abbot is to draw the members of the community to be one in Christ.

It is singularly appropriate in this Year of Faith, where we are being led to a deeper personal experience of Christ, that it is not only incumbent on the Abbot to be Christlike, but on each of us to remember how the door of faith is open to our lives, so that with the leadership, guidance and care of the Abbot, the gifts of the members of the community will grow and flourish in obedience to Christ and always for the welfare of the brethren.

An Abbot unites in his person the threefold office of father, teacher and ruler, with the charge of seeing that all is done wisely in the house of the Lord.

Today as we celebrate the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady and her total acceptance of the mission given her by the Lord, and as we remember the strong Marian flavour of Cistercian communal prayer and invoke the intercession of Our Lady of Tarrawarra, we propose Mary, as the servant of the Lord open totally to the Lord's invitation, as the model for the Abbot who in what he does and is proclaims always the greatness of the Lord, "for he who is mighty has done great things to him and holy is his name".

May this blessing bring down upon the new Abbot the rich graces of the constant love of God, the strength of God's word and sacrament and the love of his community so that he may fulfil the truth, devotion and love the ministry given him in service of God, his Church and the brethren entrusted to his care. May Jesus live in our hearts forever.