

T Newsletter of the Cistercian Monks TARRAWARRA

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Solemn Profession



Br Luke and his family members

Br. Luke Rudd made his Solemn Profession as a Cistercian monk on 26 January, the Solemnity of the Cistercian Founders, Saints Robert of Molesme, Alberic, and Stephen Harding. Seventy or so of his family and friends joined the community at the Mass in which Dom David received his vows and conferred monastic consecration. It was a joyful occasion for Luke's monastic

family and for all who came to celebrate this important moment in his life.

Luke is a Melbournian to the core. He was born at Altona in 1980 to Barry Rudd and Josephine Cutajar. Josephine was called home to God last year after a faith-filled and courageous journey with cancer. Luke was able to be of assistance

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Solemn Profession

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to her during part of that time. He has an older brother, Daniel, and a twin sister, Sarah. His early sacramental life and Primary schooling were lived at St. Peter the Apostle parish, Hoppers Crossing. Then he went on to Mac Killop Catholic Regional School, Werribee, for his Secondary years. Family, parish and school, of course, are nourishing roots to a religious vocation which we gratefully acknowledge.

The first leg of Luke's vocational journey in the Church was as a seminarian for the Melbourne Archdiocese. During the years 1999-2003 he studied at Catholic Theo-

logical College, East Melbourne. Most of his Bachelor of Theology studies were pursued during those years. He completed the degree through the Broken Bay Institute some years after joining the monastery. He was given pastoral experience at Corpus Christi parish, Glenroy, in 2002, and at St. John's, Heidelberg, in the following year.

Along the way he held a number of jobs for longer or shorter periods: nursery hand at a Plant Barn, dockhand at a Gas Depot, cell processor at Borders Distribution Centre, and a labourer at The Ideas Company. Some there obviously were paid to have the bright ideas and others did the hard yakka!

Luke joined us here at Tarrawarra in February 2005 and was given the novice's white habit on the last day of that year. Did

he manage to get tomato sauce on it that day as novices are fated to do, or did he save it for red wine at New Year? His Temporary Profession took place on 12 January 2008, the feast of the twelfth century English Cistercian Abbot, St. Aelred of Rievaulx.

We were delighted to receive him as a fully fledged monk on the day on which we celebrate both Australia Day and the Cistercian Founders. Luke, we shared your happiness at the loving, supportive presence of Barry, Hazel, Daniel, Sarah, your lively ninety year old grandmother, Iris Rudd, and the Cutajar uncles, aunts and cousins who gathered for the Mass and subsequent guesthouse festivities. We, your monastic brothers, rejoice with you, Luke, and we pray for you as we journey on together.

"80 For Those Who Are Strong" (Ps 90:10)

Fr. John Pocock is a firm believer that the old sayings are best. One of his most quoted comes from Psalm 90: "Our span is seventy years, and eighty for those who are strong". He has repeatedly informed us: "And I was never strong". There's something amiss in what he has been implying because we celebrated his eightieth in mid-February. He got a word that day from Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado": "There is beauty in extreme old age - Do you fancy you are elderly enough? Are you old enough to marry, do you think? Won't you wait till you are eighty in the shade? There's a fascination frantic in a ruin that's romantic; do you think you are sufficiently decayed?" Now for the next decade, John.

Fr. Mark Ryan was born on 23.5.32. He has pointed out to those of us who are mathematically challenged that God was good to him in appointing this date for his one month premature appearance on the planet as it reads the same backwards and forwards. The bottom line, as you will have worked out, is that we have now enrolled him among our octogenarians! He grew up in the bottom half of a large Dublin family. In 1950 he entered Mt. St. Joseph Abbey, Roscrea, at the age of eighteen. Four years later he sailed as one of a group of eight of Tarrawarra's founders on the S.S. Esperance Bay. There was a lot of water between Dublin and Melbourne and not much expectation in those days of seeing the Liffey again. There has also been a lot of water under the bridges of both the Liffey and the Yarra since then. We are grateful to Mark for all that he has been to us as a brother, and done for us, in those many years. We were happy to raise a few boisterous "hip, hip, horrors" for him on 23.5.12.



Jubilee Celebrations



Fr David & Fr Michael

Fathers David Tomlins and Michael Casey became Golden Jubilarians on 17 March. The regular Tarrawarra Mass-goers produced a cake that called for speeches and the knife on the previous Sunday. (Take this as read for all the other Jubilees and Big "0" birthdays). The community occasion was advanced by four days, Michael and David renewing their vows at Lauds-Mass on 13 March and cutting the cake together at the evening refectory celebration. Conveniently, Michael is right-handed and David left-handed! The latter stoutly maintains that it is time an apology was offered to all molly-dookers. David then got more mileage out of his Jubilee by heading for North Queensland where he joined the Ayr Parish Centenary on St. Patrick's Day, and caught up with all his siblings and some class-mates he hadn't sighted since 1949. That old! Well, yes, he thinks the class-mates definitely were! Both Jubilarians expressed their gratitude to God and the community for the many graces of the past half century.

Fr. Carthage O'Dea launched what is shaping up as a year of frequent community celebrations. He was ordained a priest at our mother-house, Mt. St. Joseph Abbey, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, on 25 January 1952 and recalls that four inches of snow covered the ground that day. He tells us he was the first priest in his mother's family in four hundred years. His brother Joseph later also became a Cistercian monk and priest. One of Carthage's companions on that occasion has since died. The other, Dom Colmcille O'Toole was, for thirty-six years or so, Abbot of Roscrea. He is still flourishing there in retirement. Both communities remembered Carthage and Colmcille and celebrated their Diamond Jubilee of Ordination on 25 January on opposite sides of the world. The oils of ordination were still wet on Fr. Carthage when he accompanied Dom Camillus Claffey, in July 1954, to finalise arrangements for the foundation in Australia. They did the aerial milk-run of those days: Shannon, New York, San Francisco, Honolulu, Canton Island, Fiji, Sydney. The rest is history. We thank God for the grace of his priesthood and all that has flowed from it



Fr Carthage celebrating mass

in the past sixty years. Thank you, Carthage, for your many years of service to the community you helped to found.

New Novice

Ben Jackson entered the community as a postulant in late July last year and received the novice's white habit on 26 February. Ben is not an abbreviation of Benedict but of Benjamin, "son of the right hand, son of happy omen". He is the eldest of the five children of Stephen and Bernadette, and was Sydney born and bred. Ben received his Primary education at John Colet School, his Secondary at Marist College, North Shore, then went on to an Arts-Law degree at Macquarie University. We were very happy to have his family join us for Holy Week and Easter and look forward to many future visits. We pray for an abundance of blessings on your novitiate years, Ben.





(L-R) Dom Colmcille, Dom David, Dom Kevin
Photo taken in 1988.

Abbatial Transition Q&A

Almost twenty-four years have elapsed since Tarrawarra last elected an Abbot. In anticipation of this coming event here late in 2012, friends come up with questions along the following lines and we try to put them straight.

Q. Why does the Abbot have to retire?

A. Our Constitutions stipulate seventy-five as the age at which he is to offer his resignation to the General Chapter or the Abbot General. Except in unusual circumstances it is accepted.

Q. Isn't that a bit arbitrary? Some might be well able for the role at that age.

A. No, not really; it's objective. All the dictators of the world reach a stage when they are convinced they are indispensable. They're not! Furthermore, most in our twenty-first century society have long since sung with the Beatles: "When I am sixty-four..." - or at least sixty-five! and hung up their spurs.

Q. Is the next Abbot appointed by someone or elected?

A. The solemnly (finally) professed members of the local community elect him. Abbots of daughter-houses also have the right to vote, but can renounce that right. Tarrawarra has only one daughter-house, Kurisumala in India. The Abbot of the motherhouse presides at the election or delegates another Abbot to do so (a UN observer to see fair play!). He also installs the new Abbot in office.

Q. Are candidates nominated?

A. No. The election of an abbot is more about faith than about politics. However, a preparatory programme has a lot to recommend it. In 1988 we had Ronald Fogarty, a Marist Brother friend, assist us in the months leading to the election. This time we have asked John Little to accompany us. Their skill and previous work with the community prompted our choice. Bernardo Bonowitz, Abbot of our monastery in Brazil, has agreed to direct our annual retreat shortly before the election. We ask all of you, our friends, to contribute to our spiritual preparation by your prayers.

Q. Who can be elected? Does he have to be a member of the community?

4 A. No, he doesn't have to be a member of the community, though it probably helps not to have been parachuted into the unknown. There are benefits for the community and the one elected to have grown up to-

gether. However, anyone in the Order who is 35 years old and is at least seven years solemnly professed can be elected. He must also be a priest, or be ready, willing and able to be ordained soon after election. The Order hoped to change this latter requirement but the Vatican still insists. Other Abbots of the Order (except the Abbot of a daughter-house) and members of the Abbot General's Council cannot be poached.

Q. Didn't we read that Dom Richard, the present Abbot of your mother-house at Roscrea, was under the age requirement when chosen, and short of being seven years solemnly professed?

A. Correct on both counts! Go to the top of the class! Canon Law calls that postulation. Whereas an absolute majority will secure an election, a two-thirds majority is required for postulation. Then the relevant dispensations have to be sought from the Vatican and/or the Abbot General. Richard cleared all hurdles.

Q. What happens when a community can't reach a decision? Do they get locked up and starved until they agree, as the story goes for the election of a Pope?

A. No. Monks would probably cave in before lunch and that might be bad in the long-run. The president of the election can call it off, with the consent of the electors, after a certain number of inconclusive ballots. In that case, a superior is appointed for a period until work has been done to move the community into a more productive space.

Q. What is the term of office for an Abbot?

A. There are two possibilities and this is settled by vote prior to the election. He can be elected, or postulated, for an "unrestricted" term. Or if the community so decides, he can be given a "fixed term". This latter means six years, and it is renewable at a subsequent election. There are a number in the Order presently serving their fifth or sixth "fixed term".

Q. Are there ways in which a term can be fast-forwarded to an end?

A. Well, for the "lifers", that is those with an "unrestricted term", life, as already explained, ends at 75 at the latest. But, at any rate, in both cases, the official Visitation of the community every two years is a context in which the Abbot's service is reviewed. The Abbot himself, the community, or the Visitor can initiate a possible resignation. The subsequent dialogue at the Visitation can lead to an orderly transition.

Q. What would constitute grounds for such a step?

A. The state of the Abbot's physical or psychological health or energy levels might suggest it. Perhaps it has been discerned by the various parties involved that the present reality of the community requires a different leadership. Quite a few years may have elapsed since the previous election and, to borrow the Australian Labor Party's slogan from some decades ago, "it's time!"

Q. What is the Abbatial Blessing?

A. On the day of his election, or on the following day, the new Abbot is officially installed by the president of the election. This ceremony confers all the authority of his office upon him. At the same time each professed member of the community renews his obedience to his new superior. The Abbatial Blessing is a subsequent local Church event. In the context of a Mass the Archbishop presents the symbols of his pastoral care to the Abbot with appropriate words, and solemnly blesses him. Sometimes people confuse Abbots with Bishops. Wrong! Both exercise a pastoral role towards their respective communities. However, whereas Bishops receive sacramental ordination, Abbots are blessed – like meals, water, or pets, to be slightly (or outrageously) frivolous! But seriously, the Abbatial Blessing is God's assurance to the Abbot and community: "I am with you".

Q. Does the retired Abbot remain in the community?

A. Normally, yes. Cistercian monks have a vow of stability. This does not mean never again going beyond the barbed wire, but rather being a life-long member of the one community. So he returns to the ranks of his community. He may be encouraged to take a sabbatical in another community or elsewhere. This could have the advantage of allowing space for new dynamics to develop between the community and his successor.

Monastic Formators' Programme

Fr. Joseph Chua is in Italy for three months, mid-March to mid-June, attending the Monastic Formators Programme. The first half is conducted in Rome. Fr. Michael, once again, was one of the lecturers for part of the Roman period. Every week or fortnight fresh lecturers arrive from the various compass points to keep the riches, scholarship and wisdom flowing. From Rome the group move on to Assisi. This allows them to combine visits to sacred, historical and cultural sites around both centres, participate in Holy Week and Easter ceremonies in the Roman basilicas, as well as pursuing their studies and living with Cistercian and Benedictine monks and nuns from many traditions, cultures and countries. Joseph was given the privilege of being the principal celebrant the day the group concelebrated at the tomb of St. Peter. St. Catherine of Siena is one of his spiritual pin-ups, so, yes, you would be right in guessing that he visited her tomb under the high altar of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, and the places associated with her in Siena. Joseph will have a stop-over in Singapore on his journey back to Tarrawarra, a postponed home-visit following his ordination last December.



Participants from Cistercian monasteries with the Abbot General Dom Eamon

New Norcia Institute for Benedictine Studies

On Sunday 6 May Abbot John Herbert OSB officially inaugurated the New Norcia Institute for Benedictine Studies, before an audience of some 80 visitors. The Institute, under a Board of Deans comprising Abbot John, Good Samaritan Sisters Carmel Posa and Margaret Malone, and Dr. Katherine Massam of the United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne, aims to offer subjects for credit at tertiary level dealing with aspects of the Benedictine tradition. Apart from continuing the shorter programmes already established, the Institute will offer the possibility of periods of intensive research, with access to its unique monastic collection and study-friendly environment.

The opening address was given by Tarrawarra's Fr. Michael Casey, a member of the Institute's Advisory Board. He entitled his talk, "Integrity in Interpretation: Listening for the Authentic Voice of Saint Benedict". He emphasized the necessity of critical standards in interpreting the Rule of Saint Benedict and the tradition in which it stands, and the importance of serious scholarship which goes beyond the merely



Fr Michael

casual and inspirational reading of the Rule. Each of the Deans also spoke, outlining their vision for the future mission of the Institute. We welcome this bold initiative of the Benedictines of New Norcia and we wish it a fruitful and enduring future.

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Paul, "I know who it is that I have put my trust in" (2 Timothy 1:12). This was the faith of Abraham and Sarah who staked their lives on the humanly impossible "because (they) believed that the one who had made the promise would be faithful to it" (Hebrews 11:11). They believed in his power; they believed in his wisdom however inscrutable his ways; they believed above all in his love for them. On this basis they were able to abandon themselves to his dangerous word, his "impossible" word. The dark journeying tested Abraham's abandonment of himself to the truth of the living God beyond the constantly unattained Promised Land, beyond the prolonged years of expectant waiting for the child of the promise, to the very willingness to sacrifice this child of the promise at the word of the one who had promised.

Jesus, in today's gospel reading (Luke 12:22-32), reminds us who it is we have put our trust in. He calls us to trust in providence, to trust in the one who feeds the birds of the air so generously, clothes the grass and flowers of the field so magnificently. He concludes with those comforting and empowering words: "How much more will he look after you... There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom".

Take Mary as your model and companion. Her faith was a true abandonment of herself to the truth of the word of the living God. Pope John Paul said of Mary's living with God's mystery: "Mary, who by the eternal will of the Most High stands, one may say, at the very centre of those 'inscrutable ways' and 'unsearchable judgments' of God, conforms herself to them in the dim light of faith, accepting fully and with a ready heart everything that is decreed in the divine plan" (Redemptoris Mater, n. 14). Mary knew who it was that she had placed her trust in, and that "nothing is impossible to God" (Genesis 18:14; Luke 1:37). She was able to live in total

Take Mary as your model and companion. Her faith was a true abandonment of herself to the truth.

abandonment to God's word and will, a trust and abandonment which united her closely to the self-emptying of her Son, Jesus.

For us to be able to do likewise, to enter generously into a living of God's "inscrutable ways", we need to give ourselves daily to growing in relationship with the person who stands behind the word and will of God. St. Paul points us to this when he extols "the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus" (Philippians

3:8). Our father St. Benedict, in his "school for the Lord's service" (RB Prologue 45), has provided us with optimum conditions for attaining to this close personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, the one who loves us and gave himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

Luke, "planted and built on (the contemplation of God's) love" for you (Ephesians 3:17), you can confidently pray immediately after uttering your vows: "Receive me, Lord, according to your promise and I shall live; do not disappoint me in my hope" (Rule 58:21). In solidarity of faith, we will all repeat this prayer three times after you. You and we know who it is we have

put our trust in. As you kneel before each member of the community, we will promise you our lifelong, prayerful, loving support. You will receive the Church's monastic consecration in the name of God the Father, of Christ the Lord, and of the Holy Spirit. It will be a joy to clothe you in the white cowl, the visible sign of your communion with the whole Cistercian family through the ages, and to welcome you as a lifelong member of our community here at Tarrawarra. May our loving God bring to perfection the good work he has begun in you (Rule, Prologue 4), and may Christ bring us all together to everlasting life (Rule 72:12).

Visitors

Our guesthouse continues to welcome many old and new friends for a stay. Groups of day visitors in recent times have included the Latrobe University Pilgrims, the Ecumenical Vespers Group who were with us on the eve of Pentecost, and the three annual contingents of boys from Parade College, Bundoora, who joined us for a few hours to experience our way of prayer. Fr. Colin Blayney has also continued to accompany a manageable number from his Epping-Carlingford parish, Sydney, on retreat here.

Homily for the Solemn Profession of Br Luke Rudd

by Dom David Tomlins



Each time we come together to celebrate the Eucharist we do so conscious of the many reasons we have for gratitude to God. Today we have layer upon layer of motivation to rejoice and be glad and give thanks. In the contemporary world which knows so much turmoil and suffering, aren't we, as Aussies, so blessed with peace and relative prosperity. Each year on Australia Day we acknowledge the many benefits we possess through our citizenship and hear the call to re-commit ourselves conscientiously to the responsibilities which are ours. Then, as Cistercian monks, we also mark the memory of our Cistercian Founders, Saints Robert, Alberic, and Stephen Harding. In the words of our first reading (Ecclesiasticus 44:1.10-15), they were "generous men whose good works have not been forgotten". We recognize in them men who emulated the magnificent faith of Abraham and Sarah in the second read-

ing (Hebrews 11:1-2.8-16), a faith by which we too seek to live monastic life in our own time and place. The nine hundred year history of our Order surely exemplifies the words we heard in Ecclesiasticus: "In their descendants there remains a rich inheritance born of them" (44:11).

This year Br. Luke's Solemn Profession on this date adds one more reason for gratitude and joy. By a definitive and unconditional commitment, after seven years of trial, prayer and discernment, Luke comes to utter "the 'yes' of everlasting love and fidelity... in this hour of the final and irrevocable vow" (Fr. Karl Rahner, SJ). Such an act, the commitment of one's whole life, entails risk. There are still so many unknowns which lie ahead on the road of life. Many of our contemporaries, indeed, think it foolhardy to put one-self in the way of the risks involved in any kind of binding commitment. Certainly it is foolish if it is merely impulsive. But it

is equally impoverishing not to be able to give oneself in such a way.

Luke, I remind you of what I said to you at this time last year when you renewed your temporary vows. Approach this moment in the context of faith. Blessed John Paul 2 has given us a sentence which is surely worth much reflection and prayer. It reads:

“To believe means to ‘abandon oneself’ to the truth of the living God, knowing and humbly recognizing ‘how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways’” (Redemptoris Mater, n.14)

We always experience an element of risk when we consent to live any part of our life, let alone our whole life, by another's word and will. It is only possible to do so positively when we have a deep confidence in the person who stands behind that word and will, when, in other words, we can say with St.

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