

TARRAWARRA

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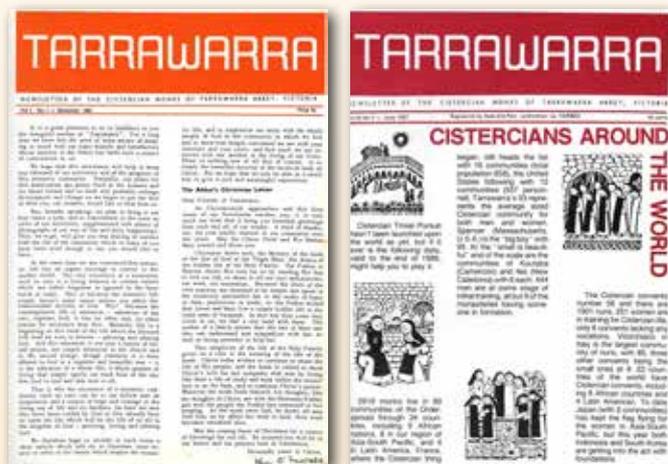
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Subscription: \$6 for two issues

TARAWARRA NEWSLETTER

The Tarrawarra Newsletter is celebrating a significant birthday. The first issue appeared in December 1967. Where has that half century gone? Well, for us, some of its memory is preserved in the approximately 800 pages of the Newsletter.

There was a prelude of sorts as Dom Kevin O'Farrell sent out a newsy Circular Christmas Letter in 1960. Br Luke recently unearthed this in the archives. If you are of a certain age, you might find your attic contains others from subsequent years. We would certainly love to hear from you if you do make such a discovery.

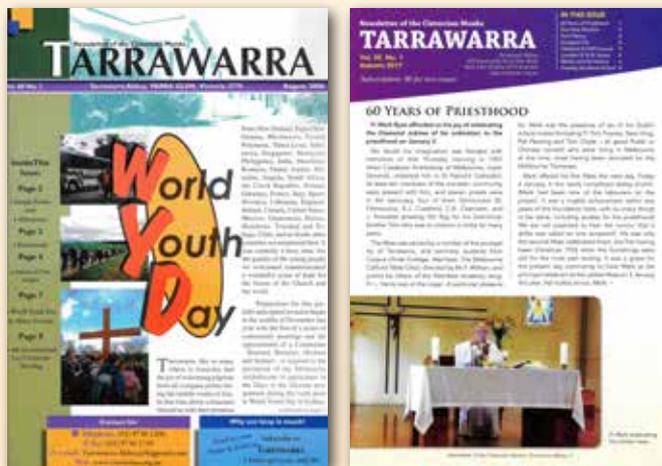


Early issues of the Newsletter appeared quarterly and ran to four pages. The price, you will agree, was exorbitant: 5 cents, a whole 20 cents for the year. Production and distribution was quite time and energy consuming when digital technology was so primitive. One thousand addresses had to be typed each quarter. A friend of the community, Con Burke, struck it lucky at the Melbourne Cup in November 1969 and, out of his winnings, generously provided an addressing machine. This streamlined the process of mailing out from March 1970 onwards.

The ever-upward spiral of postage charges and

the transformation of Registered Publication to the more expensive Print Post was the catalyst for the "new newsletter" due to appear at the reduced frequency of twice yearly. Fr Stephen, the editor, introduced the June 1994 letter thus: "We will be doubling the size of each issue – eight pages instead of four – so that you will still be getting the same amount of news and information, spiritual uplift, entertainment, inspiration, edification, transfiguration, bamboozlement and all the other good things you've been accustomed to seek or find in these pages".

Fr Stephen List edited the Newsletter from its beginnings in 1967 till his death in 2001, with a few exceptions. He was absent for studies in Rome (1969-1971), and convalesced at our motherhouse, Roscrea in Ireland (1971-1972) following serious health issues at the end of his Roman studies. During that time Fr Sean O'Toole, whose brainchild the project was, filled the gap. There was no Newsletter during 2000 due to the demands on Stephen during his cancer treatment. The last letter he edited was the first for 2001.



Steele took over at that stage, and colour arrived on the scene in the November 2001 letter in which Stephen's death was covered. It has become even more colourful since Samuel stepped into his

shoes. The two issues have now been nailed down to Autumn and Spring, reasonably rubbery time slots. And, of course, you can access it online. It probably descends from the Cloud, which is located somewhere this side of the seventh heaven!

Who reads it? Well, obviously you, but maybe no one else! It is mailed out to those who have filled in the form and paid up. Some even send anxious enquiries when they feel the time between drinks has been somewhat protracted. "Has my subscription expired?" We like that! It makes its way around monasteries of the Australian

and New Zealand Benedictine Union, Cistercian communities of our Asian and Pacific Region, and other monasteries where there is someone who can read English – or likes the pictures. The Tarrawarra Advisory Group suggested some years ago that a copy should be sent to each of the parishes and other customers who purchase from the Tarrawarra Eucharistic Breads business. We took that on board. Maybe some treat it as junk mail. Nevertheless, it is a reminder that we are here – and kicking – and intend to keep on keeping on! ■

FORMATION

Formation is the technical term applied to the process for the introduction of new members to a monastic community, and the fostering of their vocation. The Church and Order recognise its great importance for the future human, Christian and monastic growth of the new candidate, as well as for the ongoing spiritual health of the community itself. St Benedict was emphatic about the importance of this pastoral care for newcomers to the life. One sentence from his relevant chapter reads: "A senior chosen for his skill in winning souls should be appointed to look after them with careful attention". Our present Cistercian Constitutions devote fourteen of its eighty-six numbers to providing for this aspect of our life.

In our tradition, where we expect to spend the rest of our lifetime in the community we enter, formation takes place in that local monastic community. It is a big investment in personnel. However, it is seen as being very advantageous to the candidate growing into the particular culture that distinguishes one monastery from another within the over-all Cistercian family.

There is, of course, wider cooperation within the Order and between monastic Orders. Fr Michael Casey, for instance, has for many years made his contribution, along with others, to the Monastic Formators' Course in Rome where monks and nuns who are being prepared to take responsibility for the up-and-coming generation are given a couple of intensive months of training. Michael was there again, in a teaching capacity, for a few weeks in April-May. Some of Tarrawarra's present leaders

have participated with profit in the past.

On the regional level, Cistercian monks and nuns involved with novices and junior professed, get together every couple of years to share their challenges and talents, and to encourage each other in their special service to their communities. May 2017 saw such a gathering from our communities of Asia and the Pacific except the Japanese monasteries. Fathers Joseph Chua and Samuel Chua represented Tarrawarra. Mother Juliana and the nuns at Sujong, South Korea, ably and generously hosted the gathering. Samuel and Joseph took the opportunity to travel on to Japan to spend a little time at our nuns' community at Nasu, north of Tokyo. Samuel was busy with the camera during these visits, and educated and entertained us with a power-point show-and-tell when they returned.



Sub-Regional Formators' Meeting at Sujong, South Korea

On the home-front, our three men in formation – Simon, Karel and Mark – have been provided with a

full and rich programme for the year. Fr Joseph, as their novice-master, has regular personal spiritual direction encounters with each of them. Others are roped in to provide input covering a variety of areas. Joseph himself covered a number of scriptural topics: the Psalms, so central to our prayer life; and Passion and Resurrection Narratives, early in the year to enrich the period of Holy Week and Easter.

Monastic mini-courses abounded. David, over thirteen weeks, teased out St Benedict's own provision for the reception of newcomers and the careful attention to be given to their development prior to a permanent commitment. Samuel introduced Anthony, classically known as the first great Christian hermit. Anthony had the great good fortune to attract the services of a first-class biographer or hagiographer in St Athanasius. Later Samuel gave a brief coverage on St Benedict who wrote our Rule in the sixth century and introduced the writings of one of the great Cappadocian Fathers, St Basil the Great. Meanwhile, David provided material on St Pachomius, the fourth century founder of cenobitism, monastic life in community as opposed to lone wolfing in the desert. Pachomius probably hasn't come across your radar screen, but his contribution to the unfolding monastic scene was significant. Joseph returned to coax the Desert Fathers and Mothers out of their chosen cell in a wadi distant from the relative comforts of the Nile, to share – no, not their bread and salt, but their wisdom preserved in anecdotes

and wise old sayings. And yes, there were, in addition to abbas (spiritual fathers), some ammas, the latter being translated into Italian as something like "mumma mia" where you are probably on more familiar ground. Steele introduced one of the major writings of John Cassian, The Institutes. Michael had the brief to acquaint the novices with the twelfth century foundational documents of our Order and their implications for our living of the Cistercian vocation. He also presented Beatrice of Nazareth (not Jesus' home-town in the Holy Land, but the convent in medieval Belgium) in an exercise of Tarrawarra equal opportunity for Cistercian women. Brian uncovered and directed the musical talents of those in formation. Simon and Karel have been advanced, as a result, to sacred solos and duets.

Two of our friends from the Good Samaritan Sisters also contributed to the year's formation activities. Sr Colleen Leonard spent two days on the Enneagram, if you are familiar with that instrument for psychological self-knowledge. Sr Geraldine Kearney will run a three-day program, "Kairos", in November. Br Peter Browne continued to push the button to keep us moving, on the wider community level, with Professor Bill Cook's 36-part DVD presentation of his History of the Catholic Church. Bill's outrageously bright shirts and ties, his immense enthusiasm for his topic, and his accessible teaching style, kept our attention through this long series. ■

LECTURES ON ST JOHN'S GOSPEL

Fr Brendan Byrne, SJ, was with us once again on 10 March, assisting us to benefit from the Lenten liturgy. He delivered a lecture on each of the three great scenes from St John's Gospel which constitute the readings for the central Sundays of Lent: Jesus' attractive encounter with the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's well; his dialogues with the Man Born Blind and the truculent Pharisees; and his Raising of Lazarus from the dead, the catalyst for the fast-forward in the plot to bring about his own death. You need not utterly throw up your hands in envy of us as Brendan deals with each of these three in his excellent book *Life Abounding: A Reading of John's Gospel*. It is rich and readable. You would be doing yourself a favour by having it within reach on your shelf. Thanks, Brendan, for your years of work in making reliable New Testament

scholarship so accessible to those of us who are not expert interpreters of scriptural Greek, or German footnotes. ■



ANNUAL RETREAT

Elaine Wainwright, Sister of Mercy, provided the excellent input for our annual community retreat, 3-9 September. Sr Elaine is a scripture scholar. Her area of particular expertise is the Gospel of Matthew. She helped us to view passages from Matthew through an ecological lens. Our more accustomed perspective, as she said, is that of the human and the holy. She encouraged us to take on board another "h", habitat, paying attention to time and place in the stories, recognising how grounded Jesus is in his ministry and what that means for our own lives and the care for our common home, earth, to borrow Pope Francis' phrase. At the end of the week there was probably a bit of envy around as David had the benefit of a whole month in 2013 with Elaine lecturing on Matthew in Jerusalem. Thank you, Elaine. ■



BENEDICTINE UNION MEETING

The Australian and New Zealand Benedictine Union held its AGM at Tarrawarra this year, 16-17 June. Those who attended were: Sr Hilda Scott (Jamberoo Abbey), Sr Kym Harris (Tanby), Sr Clare Condon and Sr Jill O'Brien (Good Samaritan Sisters), Fr Niko Verkley (Southern Star Abbey, Kopua, NZ), Fr David Orr (Arcadia, Sydney), Dom Steele Hartmann and Br Bernard Redden (Tarrawarra). Sr Megan Kahler, Good Samaritan, addressed the group on the International Benedictine Educators Conference, scheduled to be held in Australia in 2019. Katharine Massam, co-editor of the Union journal, Tjurunga, was present to deliver the annual report on its activities, future plans, and finances. ■



COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT

John Little, a valued community friend who has facilitated our communal discernment on a number of important occasions over the past twenty years, joined us again for seven separate gatherings between 30 May and 24 August to enable us to discuss ideas for action over the next ten years.

Seven principal topics emerged from the community conversation: improving the quality of our life as contemplatives; issues relating to our income sources and economy; care for the community; attention to continuing personal growth; our stewardship of the Tarrawarra property, the environment; the guesthouse; and our witness and communications with regard to our way of life. There was a clear and central endorsement of

the contemplative vocation and the need for the community to give effective witness to this in ways that would speak to the contemporary generation and youth. There was also a recognition that the communal and solitary dimensions of our Cistercian vocation were always in need of refinement and adjustment. As the final report insisted: "This has not been a planning exercise but a snapshot of community thinking and sentiment during the period April to August 2017. This will undoubtedly shift and change in emphasis as further discussion and events impose their own influence and effect". The conversation has, however, positioned us to focus, in the time ahead, on the issues uncovered in this exercise.

John chose to overnight with us before each session. It did save him from the battle with morning peak-hour traffic getting here. But he does relish the opportunity to share in some of our liturgy. His

presence among us is always much appreciated. Thank you, John. Our gratitude extends also to his wife, Mila, for keeping the home fires burning while John was off singing psalms with the monks! ■

SCULPTURE OF THE ATLAS MARTYRS

Ernst Fries (pronounced 'freeze'), our neighbour (since 1986), friend and accomplished sculptor with six decades of creative output to his credit, earlier this year completed a small group depicting the Cistercian monks of Atlas/Tibhirine martyred in Algeria in 1996.

This piece, donated by a family, is mounted on the wall of the community room in Fountains, the attractive multi-purpose building constructed a couple of years ago. The Atlas community is shown gathered around the cross, with the crescent moon of Islam flanking the seven martyrs to the left. The two members of the community who survived the kidnapping and killing are included on the right. All nine had chosen to remain, in the face of great danger, in solidarity with their Muslim friends who were equally subject to the ongoing violence.

Ernst was commissioned a decade ago to provide a sculpture for our newly completed library. His "Four Elements" hangs in the central section. In addition, he has contributed, amongst other things, our Processional Cross, tabernacle lamp, and a pair of candle stands for the main altar.

Ernst was born in Wurzburg, Germany, in 1934, studied silver-

smithing in 1953 in Switzerland, before immigrating to Australia with his Swiss wife, Rosemarie, in 1959. He was President (several times) of the Association of Sculptors of Victoria, and from 1983-1988, and again from 1992-1997, was President of the Australian National Committee of the International Association of Art (UNESCO). In this capacity he attended world congresses in

Germany, Iraq, Spain, Japan and Mexico. His highlight in 2013 was creating the glass and concrete panels for the Black Saturday Bushfire Memorial, which was installed in the Mackenzie Reserve in Yarra Glen. (You can Google his name for more about him). Thank you Ernst for this worthy memorial of our martyred brothers of Tibhirine. ■



ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABBEY CHURCH



Archbishop Daniel Mannix blessed the newly completed church at Tarrawarra sixty years ago, on 8 September. Only three of the present community were there that day – Fathers Carthage O’Dea and Mark Ryan as monks, and Michael Casey as a schoolboy and monk-to-be.

Br Luke Rudd’s 2 September power-point lecture for the community on “The Blessing of the Church and the Relationships of the Community [with the Church and wider society] up to this Time (1954-1957)” was, therefore, a well-researched and much appreciated trip back in time for the majority of the community. Luke is our archivist and is pursuing archival studies. This lecture was the fruit of a project required of him by his course. There is room for lots more of the same. Included in his presentation was a short silent film of the actual day

of the blessing with appearances by many of the founders who are now in the cemetery, and friends who have also gone to God. The 1950s cars and the rushed and jerky bows, genuflections and processions provided an element of merriment, which went well with a cuppa and Simon’s cake, cooked for the occasion. ■



BUNYA PINE

An FAQ (frequently asked question) from visitors to Tarrawarra is: “What tree is that? Is it a monkey puzzle (*araucaria araucana*)?” They are referring to the large tree on our front lawn, almost the first thing to be seen on arrival. The Guestmaster, Bernard, who has to field this question more often than the rest of us, suggested this article of enlightenment to get him off the hook, and he even agreed to pose (rear view) with the tree and its fruit.

The short answer – which you will not get away with! – is no, it is not a monkey-puzzle – though “false monkey puzzle” passes muster. It is a Queensland Bunya Pine (*araucaria bidwillii*). It is found naturally in southeast Queensland and two small disjunct populations in northeast Queensland’s World Heritage listed wet Tropics. There are some rare old specimens planted by settlers in other parts of Australia. Tasmania, for instance, has about a dozen. Horticulturalists, historians and other

feeling people, were reported by the ABC in April of this year as being enraged (and why wouldn’t they be?) when a 170 year-old Bunya was chopped down in the Hobart suburb of New Town “due to safety concerns because of its dangerously large and heavy pine cones”. It had recently offended by dropping several cones onto parked cars “causing considerable damage”. Six kilograms dropped from a height tends to do that, so the



Br Bernard with pine cone from the Bunya Pine

Bunya Pine continues from page 6

secret is not to park or walk under a Bunya in the fruiting season! This occurs about every third year, or longer. Pollination takes place around September-October, and the cones fall seventeen to eighteen months later. The danger period is January to March, or April for good measure. We erect a "stay clear" perimeter tape when there is action from above.

The Bunya Festival was probably Australia's largest indigenous event. Diverse tribes – up to thousands of people – once travelled great distances (from as far as modern day Charleville, Dubbo, Bundaberg and Grafton) to the gatherings. They stayed for months, to celebrate and feast on the Bunya nut. These gatherings were important cultural events for ceremonies, dispute settlements, much trade exchange, and discussion and negotiations over marriage and regional issues. Aware of the importance of the trees to the Aboriginal people, the colonial authorities prohibited settlers from cutting down the trees in 1842. The resource was too valuable to the cash register and the Indigenous custodians were eventually driven out of the forests, deprived of their festivals, and the trees felled for timber and the land cleared for cultivation. How sad all round!

Bunya Pines grow up to a height of 30—45m (98-147 ft.) and can live for about 500-600 years.

FR PIUS

Fr Pius Chen, a monk from our Cistercian community of Shuli in Taiwan, spent six weeks with us from 10 July to 24 August. Pius had been a member of a Benedictine group in his native Taiwan. When his community returned to the United States, he opted to remain in his native Taiwan and transferred in 2011 to the small Cistercian community there. Pius was solemnly professed in 2015 and ordained a priest towards the end of 2016. His all too short a stay at Tarrawarra gave him an opportunity to experience Cistercian life in a larger community and another culture. ■



Tarrawarra's Bunya is probably something over 100 years old. It was part of the garden planted around the new house built by David Symes for his daughter Lucy Macalister around 1900. It was approximately half its present height when the monastic community arrived in 1954. ■

THE SILENCE OF THE INWARD SOUL continued from page 8

Silence is nothing else but waiting for God's Word and coming from it with a blessing. But everybody knows that this is something that needs to be practised and learned, in these days when talkativeness prevails. Real silence, real stillness, really holding one's tongue comes only as the sober consequence of spiritual stillness.

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German theologian, martyred by the Nazis: Life Together, pp 59-60)

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It is silence that keeps us from giving full rein to the empty imaginings and cruel commentaries always too fresh at hand in our narcissistic selves. "It is written", the Rule [of St Benedict] teaches, "in a flood of words you will not avoid sin"... As the Rule reminds us, "It is written, 'The tongue holds the key to life and death'"... It is silence that refuses to

let us use humour to wound or sarcasm to degrade or criticism to demean. "We absolutely condemn", the Rule teaches, "any vulgarity and gossip and talk leading to laughter". Instead silence lays us open to possibilities, to people, to ideas we would have otherwise forever scorned.

(Joan Chittister: The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life, pp. 41f.) ■



Photos by David Roberts

THE SILENCE OF THE INWARD SOUL

Dadirri is perhaps the greatest gift we [Aboriginal people] can give to our fellow Australians... It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call "contemplation".

When I experience dadirri, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees: even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need for words. A big part of dadirri is listening... In our Aboriginal way, we learnt to listen from our earliest days. We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened. This is the normal way for us to learn – not by asking questions. We learnt by watching and listening, waiting and then acting. My people are not threatened by silence. They are completely at home in it. They have lived for thousands of years with Nature's quietness, the great Life-Giving Spirit, the Father of us all. Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait. We do not try to hurry things. We let them follow their natural course – like the seasons.



Photo by Fiona Basile

Dadirri is also used as a prayer, a prayer in the sense that you just feel the presence of the Great Creator... Today, when I go out hunting in the bush I am often drawn to sit by myself among the trees, on a hill, by a billabong or by the river and be simply in His presence. To me this is the closest and deepest prayer.

(Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, Australian Indigenous woman of the Ngangikurungkurr people, Daly River, Northern Territory. Various sources: Compass magazine, volume 22, 1988; Aboriginal Women By Degrees, edited by Mary Ann Bin-Sallik)

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"Incarnate Word, in whom all nature lives... set pools of silence in this thirsty land".

(James McAuley, Australian poet.

From A Letter to John Dryden)

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Silence reveals itself in a thousand inexpressible forms: in the quiet of dawn, in the noiseless aspiration of trees towards the sky, in the stealthy descent of night, in the silent changing of the seasons, in the falling of moonlight, trickling down into the night like a rain of silence, but above all in the silence of the inward soul, - all these forms of silence are nameless: all the clearer and surer is the word that arises out of and in contrast to the nameless silence.

(Max Picard: *The World of Silence*, p. 26)



Photo by Fiona Basile

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Silence is the simple stillness of the individual under the Word of God. We are silent before hearing the Word because our thoughts are already directed to the Word... We are silent after hearing the Word because the Word is still speaking and dwelling within us. We are silent at the beginning of the day because God should have the first word, and we are silent before going to sleep because the last word belongs to God. We keep silence solely for the sake of the Word and therefore not in order to show disregard for the Word but rather to honour and receive it.