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VISITATION



(L-R) Dom Peter, Fr Michael and Br Peter

Dom Peter McCarthy, Abbot of Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey, Oregon, spent 7-17 September with us for our official Visitation. He was no stranger, having come as a Co-Visitor with Dom Kevin Daly of Roscrea in March 2009.

Visitations are scheduled for each community on a two-yearly basis. Three years have elapsed, for a number of out-of-control reasons, since our last one. Roscrea, normally responsible for our Visitation, has been without an elected abbot. The 2017 General Chapter delegated Dom Joseph Boyle, Abbot of Snowmass, Colorado. Joseph made no secret of the fact that Tarrawarra was the one house of the Order he really wanted to visit, and he would have been a most welcome Visitor. Unfortunately, soon after his delegation he was

diagnosed with the cancer that claimed him in October 2018. Next Dom Peter was chosen.

He went for a walk in the woods on New Year's Day, slipped on moss and was off his legs for an extended period. Eight months later, to our delight, he made it to us, limping.

Mass of the Holy Spirit opened proceedings. Dom Peter met with each of us personally, asking us to reflect with him on the blessings and challenges in our community life today. He also met with the whole community to share his preliminary impressions of our life together. He closed the Visitation on the evening of 14 September with the presentation of his report. Peter is insightful, joyful and humorous. His Visitation was definitely a grace. Thank you, Peter. ■

900TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHARTER OF CHARITY



Dom Mauro-Giuseppe

The Cistercian Order celebrates its nine hundredth birthday on 23 December this year. Yes, Cîteaux, the first Cistercian community was founded in 1098 and became the mother and grandmother of other abbeys in the intervening years. But it was on 23 December 1119 that Pope Calixtus II approved the document known as the Charter of Charity, the act that constituted the Order.

Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori, Abbot General of the

Order of Cistercians, the other major member of the Cistercian Family today, wrote a Pentecost Letter to commemorate the occasion. In it he noted that “our first Cistercian fathers... called this text Carta caritatis – The Charter of Charity, precisely so that this document could enable the nascent monastic family of Cîteaux to grow in fraternal communion, and thus to reflect in the Church and in the world the divine light of Trinitarian Love”.

The sixth century Rule of St Benedict has interpreted the gospel for monks through the centuries. The Cistercian founders recommitted themselves to this Rule as disciples of St Benedict. Their Charter of Charity has taken its place alongside the Rule and has guided the relationships between monasteries as the Rule of St Benedict guides the relationships between the members of every single community.

Dom Mauro-Giuseppe proposes this ninth centenary as an opportunity to be inspired afresh by the vision presented by the Charter of Charity. He sees it as a challenge to renew Cistercian life in the twenty-first century. “This heritage is also a field that we are asked to work. Every heritage remains alive if it becomes a task. We are heirs of a charism that asks us to build dwelling places, communities, to build together a family of monasteries, not museums or clubs of individualists. The Charter of Charity teaches us to embrace the gift of charity as a seed that wants to bear much fruit. It also teaches us to correspond to the fact that the charity in us can be nourished only in communion with the Risen Lord”. ■

Tarrawarra in Springtime



REGIONAL MEETING



The Regional Meeting of our communities in Asia and the Pacific was held, 14-22 May, at the Cistercian men's community of Our Lady of the Philippines. Nineteen communities were represented. There were 27 present (15 women and 12 men) drawn from Australia (Dom Steele), Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Macau, the Philippines and South Korea. Eighteen were superiors, seven delegates, one a member of the Abbot General's Council, and one the secretary for the meeting.

Our Abbot General, Dom Eamon Fitzgerald, wrote to the gathering: "In this year of the 9th centenary of the Charter of Charity, I see regional meetings as a real and contemporary expression of the Charter of Charity in its concern to be of service to others, rather than just being greedy and wanting to profit from them, but rather fired by a desire to care for souls and to help them to live the gift of vocation... Regional Meetings are a contemporary expression of the Charter of Charity today. Monks and nuns (Abbots, Abbesses and delegates) come together in service of the communities of the Region and of the Order... I wish you good listening, honest speaking and caring hearts".

Mother Martha O'Driscoll was attending the last of many Regional Meetings as Abbess of Gedono, Indonesia. She retired on 1 September, having

reached the canonical age. Mother Martha said: "If we are really aware of our mission in the Church, that gives energy, revitalization, not only in praying but also in living as a community in a world where there is very little community. We have to try to grow in love for one another – in our weakness, in our problems, in our sins... What revitalizes and invites people to come is when people see that 'they love each other, they forgive each other'. Like the early Church".

Br Cassant, the delegate from Rawaseneng, the men's community in Central Java, summarised his experience and responsibility: "Being a delegate made me see the Order from a different perspective. My horizons are made broader. I have become aware of what is actually happening to other monasteries... It is my responsibility as a delegate to share my community's contribution to deciding how my region will move forward".

New Regional Secretaries for Formation were elected to serve for a period of six years. Tarrawarra's Fr Samuel Chua will fulfill this role for the English-speaking sub-region, and Fr David Lavich for the Japanese.

Those who attended the meeting offered a big "thank you, Guimaras, for the very warm and generous hospitality". ■

ANNUAL RETREAT

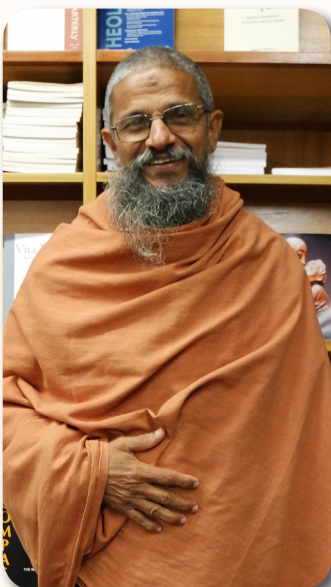


Austrian Benedictine, Fr Bernhard Echerstorfer, from Kremsmunster Abbey, conducted our annual community retreat, 21-27 July.

His theme was "Monasticism in a Time of Transition".

Bernhard is young (under 50), vivacious, open and balanced, with excellent english. He is his community's novice master as well as being involved in the school run by the community. Kremsmunster is worlds apart from Tarrawarra in many ways: it was founded in 777 whereas we came on the scene in 1954; the community is at least three times larger than our own; its buildings are enormous and full of historical and artistic treasures; it is involved in educational and pastoral activities through its school and parishes. But Bernhard's reflections on the scriptures, the Rule of St Benedict, Pope Gregory the Great's Life of St Benedict, and the signs of our times, rang a lot of bells for us in the twenty-first century Yarra Valley. His personality and style were very attractive. Some of us were tempted to a bit of monastic poaching, but we had to accept that St Benedict had already foreseen and forbidden such behaviour. Thank you, Bernhard. ■

DOM SEVANAND



Dom Sevanand Ennamprayil, abbot of Kurisumala, Tarrawarra's daughter-house in Kerala, India spent 5-9 May with us en route to the Oriens Regional Meeting of Cistercian superiors in the Philippines.

He gave us an interesting presentation on Kurisumala one evening before Compline. Sevanand

celebrated the first anniversary of his election as abbot during his days among us. Thank you for your visit, Sevanand. We hope to see you here again. ■

NEW NOVICE



Oliver Leahy entered our community on 1 July 2018, the date of the 1681 martyrdom at Tyburn of St Oliver Plunkett, his patronal namesake. He was clothed as a novice on 3 March. Oliver was born in the Spring

of 1982 at Drogheda, Oliver Plunkett country, "in the land of saints and scholars", fourth and youngest of the children of Oliver and Catherine. In his own words, he emigrated with his family to "God's country, the Sutherland Shire of Sydney". His formal studies included "culinary qualifications and a degree in Catholic theology". He is a lover of nature, works on the farm, and further can be found communing with the Lord whilst wandering around our tranquil property whenever he can. ■

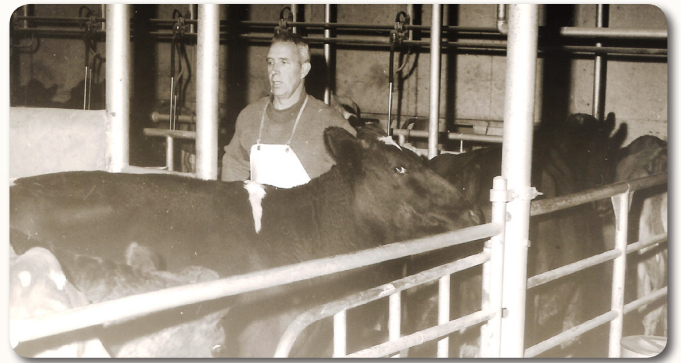
OLD OLD DAIRY



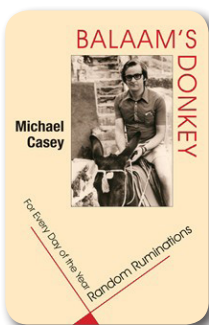
Qoheleth, the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, informs us that there is “a season for everything” and includes in his list “a time for building, and a time for knocking down”. Very soon after their 1954 arrival, our Irish founders built what we have referred to in more recent years as “the old Old Dairy” as the “new Dairy” succeeded it decades later, becoming in its turn “the Old Dairy” after we sold the dairy herd and equipment in 2000 in our restructuring of our economy. The “old Old Dairy” was the scene of much hard work in simpler times. Milking was done with the benefit of machinery, but cleaning the shed and yards was labour intensive. Perhaps the most physically taxing element was “mixing the feed”. Brewer’s malt and bran were emptied from hessian bags onto the concrete floor of the feed room and then shoveled back and forth to blend. The resultant cloud was suffocating to the lungs, and the monk creating the blend was

covered from head to foot with the settling dust.

For many years the shed has been used as an orphanage for poddy calves from the beef herd, and for storage purposes. The “time for knocking down” arrived in the second week of September. As with everything from the era of its building, there was asbestos involved. The Chilean chaps from the Asbestos Removal Company moved in dressed for a moon landing and removed the fibro roof and then attacked the substantial concrete walls and floor with a range of machinery. In a few days, “the old Old Dairy” was a thing of memories and photos. God bless the great men who built it and slogged away there twice daily, 365 days a year for decades, initially under Br Kevin Burke, and then Br John Pocock. ■



Br Kevin



NEW BOOK

Fr Michael Casey’s most recent publication, ‘Balaam’s Donkey’ (2019), might lead you to think that he has side-tracked into veterinary science. Is a donkey a ruminant? Anyhow, the subtitle is: Random Ruminations for Every

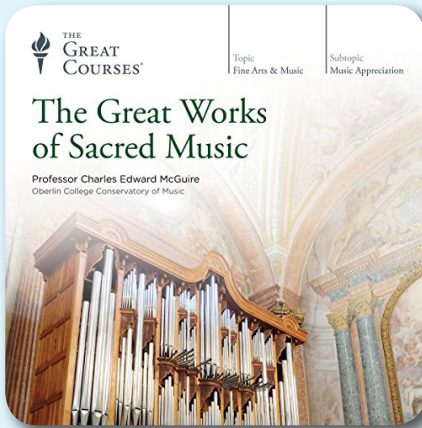
Day of the Year. Leap year hasn’t been forgotten – there are 366 ruminations! Old Testament experts among you will recognise the she-donkey in question as playing a humorous cameo role, with a serious intent, in the biblical Book of Numbers. Michael confesses: “I have always thought that the donkey-prophet is the perfect image for preachers of homilies, for they often unknowingly transmit a word that transcends their own competence and understanding”. He concludes with the wish: “May this happen here!” The donkey, on the cover, meekly carrying the author on a Greek Island nearly half a century ago, isn’t the biblical animal in question! Perhaps a descendant!

‘Balaam’s Donkey’ is a series of 366 daily reflections based on homilies preached over the fifty years of his priesthood. What remained of the original homilies was a large box full of index cards with a few talking points on each. He has re-created the homilies and re-cast them as short reflections, arranged randomly for each day of the year.

Abbot Brendan Freeman has commended the book in terms that hint more of culinary delights than our previous veterinary suspicions: “*Balaam’s Donkey* is the work of a creative genius. Who else but Michael Casey could take left-overs of fifty years of homilies, and serve up a splendid meal? As these words find an echo in your heart you begin to feel, more than see, the interconnectedness of the book”.

Bonnie Thurston’s taste buds were similarly stimulated: “Casey’s re-purposed homilies are the best fruit of lectio divina. Wherever you stick your thumb in, you pull out a spiritually wise and theologically thought-provoking plum. Engaging turns of phrase and energetic prose prompt reflection that is both sweet and sustaining”. ■

DVD COURSE



Music lovers in the community were treated to a feast in the latter months of 2018 as we viewed The Great Works of Sacred Music, part of The Great Courses

series. Our mentor, Dr Charles Edward McGuire, in a series of sixteen lectures explored the music of Western Christendom spanning a period of over a thousand years.

The scope of the course was vast but we were off to a flying start with the first lecture, "Hallelujah, Amen: The World of Sacred Music." After an overview of familiar hymns that are resplendent with alleluias, McGuire presented three examples from master works spanning the centuries: "Pascha Nostrum" an Easter hymn from the Middle Ages, "Hallelujah Chorus" from Messiah composed in 1741, and an excerpt from "The Dream of Gerontius" composed in 1900.

Later lectures presented us with three stages of development in sacred music: ritual music composed for religious services; the gradual movement of compositions that, while still serving ritual purposes, began to move from the church to the concert halls, and the continuing flux throughout the nineteenth century. In the process composers emerged from anonymity, publishing their works under their own names.

As history ran its course musical styles changed and much music gradually fell into oblivion. Some works endured because they represented the peak of a composer's output. Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Faure, Verdi and Elgar were the chosen composers.

The final lecture took us into the field of the ever-cherished Christmas Carol. And so we closed with "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and "Silent Night." Two ever greens.

The course left a few of us with a desire to attend live performances of these splendid composition. ■

SINGING MASTER CLASS

St Augustine is attributed with the aphorism: "He who sings prays twice". The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes him to that effect. It must be true! Elsewhere you will find instead, "He who sings well prays twice". That is more of a challenge! Cistercian monks sing at least five or six times a day. But auditioning as a chorister is not one of the prerequisites of a vocation to the Order. One of our community members, years back, was told, by a singing teacher we had hired, that he had only one note! Honest, but a bit brutal! The deceased monk has probably expanded his repertoire in the heavenly choir.

Paul Curtis, our friend and gifted liturgical musician, has been contributing, on the organ, to our Sunday Mass for some years. Recently, as a teacher, he forfeited part of his school holidays to assist us - young and old - to fine tune, or even tune, our voices. It looked most impressive on our Planner as "Master Classes". Paul took us on a tour of the various physical components of the wonderful instrument that is the human voice, and explained how to get the most out of it. He shared a few vocal secrets passed on by Joan Sutherland to Pavarotti. No, don't hold your breath for a CD or DVD! There were three days of four hours each within a fortnight in which he and we worked hard to make "a fuller, not louder" sound. That it was to be prayer was uppermost. Paul, being Paul, ensured that it was also a lot of fun.

Thank you, Paul. ■



one's life for the friend. When Christian de Cherge, as a young man, was a National Serviceman in Algeria, he had a friendship with a young Muslim called Mohammed. One day the two friends were walking on the street. A gang attacked Christian. Mohammed defended him. They both knew that what he had done had made him extremely vulnerable. The next day Mohammed was found murdered. Christian never forgot this experience, never forgot Mohammed's deed. Jesus' words at the Last Supper, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13), took on a profoundly personal meaning for him and became formative of his understanding of true human and Christian life. To be willing to lay down one's life for the other: for Christ, for one's brother or sister, even for the "enemy". This often appears in their reflection on the latest killing. For example, after the murder of the first of the Algerian martyrs, the Marist Brother, Henri Verges, Dom Christian de Cherge wrote to a group of friends:

"'There is no greater love than to give one's life for those we love', said Jesus in the gospel of this May 8, 1994. If this verse sounds so applicable to the life of Brother Henri, it is not because it describes the last day of his life, but because he was essentially 'given', even to the point of that perfect gift which is forgiveness. This perfect gift was already contained in the first recommendation that he had sent me for adjusting our community guidelines to the present situation. This was that in our day-to-day relations, we should openly be on the side of love, forgiveness and communion, against hate, vengeance and violence'".

The fact of the matter is, of course, that, barring a road fatality, most or all of us here this morning are going to die in a bed somewhere, and even of old age. The Algerian drama isn't likely to be ours. But I think today's gospel isn't suggesting that. "The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life". In another letter Christian wrote of Br Henri: "His death seemed to be so natural, just part of a long life entirely given to the small ordinary duties". As sheep who belong to Jesus, this is our call: to listen to him, to follow him by lives entirely given to the small ordinary duties. What concretely does this mean for each one of us as we try to live our Christian discipleship? I will end with the challenge Dom Christian put before his brothers in community

on Holy Thursday two years before they gave their ultimate witness to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, by taking up his example. He said:

"From experience we know that little things often cost a lot, particularly when we have to go on doing them day after day. It's alright to have to wash one's brothers' feet on Maundy Thursday... but how about doing it everyday? Or washing the feet of anyone who turns up? When Fr Bernardo (Abbot General) told us that the Order has more need of monks than martyrs, he was not, of course, referring to this type of martyrdom, which is in fact what shapes the monk through so many little things. We have given our heart to God once and for all, and we find it hard when he takes it piecemeal. Taking up an apron, as Jesus did, can be as serious and solemn an act as to lay down one's life... and conversely, laying down one's life may be as simple as taking up an apron. We should tell ourselves this when the everyday tasks or deeds of love weigh on us with this threat which also has to be shared with all.

"We know from our own experience that it is easier to give to one person than to another, to love one brother or sister more than another, even in community. Yet the professional conscience of the doctor, the oath he or she has taken, oblige him or her to treat all patients, 'even the devil', Brother Luke would add. And does not our 'professional oath' as religious (indeed as baptised persons to begin with!), oblige us to love all, 'even the devil' if God asks this of us? What do we do about it? ..."

The Good Shepherd calls us to create good shepherd communities. What do we do about it?



CREATING GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITIES:

HOMILY FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

By Dom David Tomlins

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Today we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Easter. In each of the three annual cycles, it is known as Good Shepherd Sunday. This is because at this stage of the liturgical year, the Church has us reflect on passages from chapter ten of St John's Gospel, a different section in each cycle. Jesus tells us in this chapter: "I am the Good Shepherd". He insists that as such he "came that they [we, his sheep] may have life, and have it abundantly". And he spells out what this entails for him: "The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep". This is always a consoling revelation for prayerful reflection.

And our response? In the gospel reading (John 10:27-30), Jesus says to us this morning:

"The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice".

We belong to him; we are his sheep. We are called to relate to our Good Shepherd. How? He says to us: You belong to me; listen to my voice and follow me.

On December 8 last year, nineteen men and women were beatified in Algeria, all of them martyred in a few years at the end of the 1990s. Seven of these were our Cistercian monks abducted and killed in 1996. You may have seen their story in the film entitled *Of Gods and Men*. We celebrated their liturgical memorial for the first time this past Wednesday, 8 May. In recent months I have found myself drawn to a deeper knowledge and appreciation of them. They have been a source of inspiration for me.

On 14 December 1993, twelve Croatian Catholic workers living and working 4 kilometres from the monks of Tibhirine, and worshiping at the monastery, had their throats cut. Ten days later the same armed rebel group came to the monastery on Christmas Eve and made three demands which, if responded to, would have involved monastic complicity with the rebels. Dom Christian, the Prior, courageously refused all three demands, and,

amazingly, prevailed. The first reaction of some of the monks was that they should leave immediately. Within a few days, in dialogue with each other and their bishop, they had adopted a wait-and-see, wait-and-listen policy.

Over the next two and a half years they listened on a daily basis for the voice of the Shepherd. They listened for God's will for them – in the psalms and readings of their liturgy; in their ongoing discernment together as brothers in community; in their interactions with their bishop in Algiers; in their membership of the much shrunken local Algerian church; in their relationships with the leadership of our Order; with their neighbours, the simple threatened Muslim people of their locality who, for so many years, had been their close friends, shared part of the monastery buildings as a mosque, and relied on Br Luke, the doctor, for medical attention. "The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice". The Shepherd's voice came to them from many sources. They obeyed Jesus: "Listen to my voice". They obeyed St Benedict: "Listen carefully, my son, and attend with the ear of your heart".

The fundamental message they heard was: "I lay down my life for my sheep". This profession of faith in "Crucified Love" (a favourite term) occurs over and over in their journals, chronicles and letters. Hearing this word became the rock foundation of their stability at Tibhirine. Violence and death surrounded them daily. They received news at regular intervals of the killing of eleven of the other twelve martyrs, their friends, not to mention so many others, Algerians and foreigners. But: "I lay down my life for my sheep". "I give them eternal life". "No one will ever steal them from me".

The complementary message was that those who belong to Christ, who listen to his voice, follow him. In its most extreme form, as in the Algeria of that time, it could mean being willing to lay down

