



# BENEDICTINE ABBEY NEWSLETTER

ST MARK'S ABBEY • PO BOX 111 • CAMPERDOWN  
VICTORIA • 3260 • AUSTRALIA



## SUMMER 2007-2008



*View of the Abbey Church*

## ABBHEY NEWS

### CHOIRBOOKS — LITURGY OF THE HOURS

The task of resetting our Office books is under way. This process has included correcting spelling mistakes, re-inserting some parts of psalmody that had previously been omitted, and a general tidying-up.

Before Vatican II, all material for the Day Hours was contained in one *Antiphonale* and, for the night office of Vigils, there were two volumes. With changes that required greater variety of material, the number of books has grown. We now have nine volumes to complete the process; one for Vigils in Ordinary Time, two for Day Hours, two for the Sanctoral cycle so far with another on the way, and for the seasons — Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter — there are four.

It is now much easier to handle choir books that include all that is needed rather than to juggle with booklets and pieces of paper.

The end is in sight, Alleluia!

### CLOTHING OF NOVICE

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, Solemnity of St Benedict, Patron of Europe, Kate Massy-Greene received the habit of novice after Lauds. The ceremony was conducted in the Chapter Room as the first step along the way in monastic life. After two readings, some questions put to Kate, and a short homily, Father Abbot warmly welcomed Kate into the community.

Our new novice received the name of Sister Mary Emmanuel.

Conventual Mass for the Feast was celebrated at the later hour of 11.00am to allow guests and oblates, local and far away, to be with us.

At the beginning Father Abbot welcomed everyone and read a letter received that morning from Abbot Bruno Marin OSB, President of the Subiaco Congregation of Benedictines. The letter concerned our acceptance and aggregation to the Congregation which had been confirmed in Rome "by the unanimous vote of the Council of Assistants" on the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul. This is a significant development in the life of our community and was greeted with the applause of all present.

From now on, the 29<sup>th</sup> June will be a *dies memoria* for us.



*Fr Abbot with Sr Mary Emmanuel*

*The cover photograph of a view of the Abbey taken from Mount Leura was kindly provided by our oblate, Sue Rocco.*

Following is the text of the press release regarding the Aggregation sent to all Anglican media in Australia and overseas.

## **PRESS RELEASE FROM CAMPERDOWN BENEDICTINES**

For the first time since the English Reformation, a non-Roman Catholic monastic community has been recognised by the Vatican.

On the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, 29 June, 2007, the Anglican Benedictine Community of St Mark's Abbey, Camperdown, Victoria, in Australia received Aggregation to the Subiaco Congregation.

This is a historic moment for the monastic community, as well as for Benedictine life within the Anglican Communion.

Whilst retaining its membership of the Anglican Communion, the Camperdown monastery will enjoy full fraternal fellowship with the 77 other Benedictine communities throughout the world who belong to the Congregation.

The Subiaco Congregation is comprised of communities who, like the Camperdown Benedictines, lead a contemplative life according to the Rule of St Benedict.

Aggregation will allow this small community to be part of a world-wide Congregation, and to benefit from various opportunities for study and dialogue. It will also provide a greater sense of the contribution that Benedictines make to the wider Church.

Dom Michael King, Abbot of Camperdown, commented that this is a great step in ecumenism and a wonderful recognition of St Mark's Abbey in its life of stability and witness.

## **REFECTORY READING OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS**

*The Cross, A Pasture*, John Dalrymple, DLT, 1983

*Cluny: In Search of God's Lost Empire*, Edwin Mullins, Blue Bridge, 2006

*The Road to Oxiana*, Richard Byron, Picador, 1981

*A Monastic Vision for the 21st Century*, P. Hart (ed.), Monastic Wisdom Series, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, 2006

*Engaging Benedict, What the Rule can teach us today*, Laura Swan, Christian Classics, Ave Maria Press, 2005

*Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love*, Rowan Williams, Continuum, 2005

*Unfinished Journey*, Yehudi Menuhin, Futura, 1978

## **ABBAY LIBRARY**

We recently became the beneficiaries of a large collection of art books from the estate of our oblate Earle Backen, for which we are very grateful. Our library does not seek to specialise in any one particular category. We try to have resources that cover many subjects and which allow us to move over a wide spectrum including scripture, history — church and secular — music, dogmatics, spirituality, liturgy, biography, languages, literature to name a few.

Is there any room left? The answer is "Very little".

*Continued on next page*

*Brother Ephraem working in a corner of the new area*



## ABBEY LIBRARY *(Continued from previous page)*

Consequently, two long rows of back-to-back shelving units have been added to the library, but even with this additional accommodation, most of the available space will be utilised.

A large number of books were moved out of the library to allow carpenters in to assemble the new shelving — a big operation — and shortly, once the staining of the new units is completed, we will have to move the books back. However, the time is fast approaching when we shall have to carefully consider a plan for a new library building, purpose built for the future, as libraries generally expand, not contract.

One might ask what we shall do with our present library space, which is basically a large room. One possibility would be to create two or three more cells in this area. There are only two spare cells, and beyond that, in the event of more people coming to enter the Abbey, more accommodation will be needed. Perhaps next year we shall be in a better position to consider the matter and begin some preliminary planning.

Our immediate task is to get the new books, of which there are several thousand, catalogued and processed on the computer and placed on the shelves. The work has begun, but it will take some considerable time to complete.

## MONASTIC MISCELLANY

Amongst the many guests and visitors we have welcomed this year were Fr Benjamin from Prophet Elias Russian Orthodox Monastery at Monarto, South Australia, Bishop Richard Hurford of Bathurst, who made his life profession as an oblate during his stay, and Bishop Mabo of the Torres Strait who was staying with Fr James Bishop, the parish priest of Colac.



We also welcomed the Rev'd Canon Dr Scott Cowdell of Canberra who conducted our retreat this year with a series of addresses on the theme of "Rediscovering the Ten Commandments", which we listened to with rapt attention. Thank you Father Scott.



Father Abbot has conducted retreats in Benalla, in the Diocese of Wangaratta, Melbourne and Sydney, and also had a number of preaching engagements in Melbourne.

In July he preached the homily at the ordination to the priesthood of our oblate Fr Chris Talbot at O'Halloran Hill, in the Diocese of the Murray.



For the last eight to nine months, as time permits, we have been working on the maintenance of our buildings. Fortunately, when our buildings were designed, we asked that maintenance be kept in mind, so that the only parts that need any paintwork are fascia boards. It was a smart move, as we can handle this work ourselves, without having to hire scaffolding or workmen.

### FORM OF BEQUEST

I hereby bequeath to the Benedictine Abbey (Camperdown, Victoria) Inc. Regn. No. A0001714H, the sum of ..., free of all duties, to be used for its general purposes in such manner as its Committee from time to time sees fit. The receipt of the Abbot or other proper officer shall be sufficient discharge for this legacy.



## INTO GREAT SILENCE

*A review from Dom Placid*

A remarkable film entitled *Into Great Silence* was shown in Melbourne and other capital cities as part of annual International Film Festivals in 2006. It drew packed houses as it did in England where full page advertising caught the attention of the interested and the curious. Sitting through a silent film for three hours requires more than stoicism in a society where continuous noise, continuous flashing coloured lights, and continuous movement seems to be the norm for entertainment. But this film is not about entertainment, though it obviously strikes a chord in the hearts of many.

The minimalist cinematography used in this film — a meditation on the life of the Carthusian monks at Grande Chartreuse — was filmed in almost complete silence, apart from the opening and closing of doors, the sound of heavy boots on wooden floors, the great monastery bells being tolled for Office, and just a smattering of the chant of the monks.

Monastic life of any variety is a fairly rare vocation, and for those with eyes to see, and ears to listen, it is possible to recognise that God is in the still small voice, in the wind and in the repetition and rhythm of life — in other words, in the world around us. The film allows one to contemplate time, the changing seasons, leaves blowing in the wind, snow falling silently to the ground. There is no rush.

Monastic life cannot be explained away, and it needs no justification any more than love or marriage, or art or music. It may not even appear to serve a useful purpose, but then neither do the flowers of the field. Little vignettes of life, of which this film abounds, are often missed.

This film does much to shake our hearts and eyes and minds.

### CONTACTING THE ABBEY

**General Enquiries** (Guest House, Printery, Icons, the Abbot)

Telephone: 03 5593 2348

Fax: 03 5593 2887

Email: [benabbey@dodo.com.au](mailto:benabbey@dodo.com.au)

**Incense Business** (Incense Orders and Enquiries)

Telephone: 03 5593 2333

Fax: 03 5593 2399

Email: [abbeyincense@dodo.com.au](mailto:abbeyincense@dodo.com.au)

## CELEBRATIONS

We rejoiced with the Community of the Holy Cross, Rempstone, England, which celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their foundation on 3<sup>rd</sup> May this year.

Dom Placid celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his profession on 11<sup>th</sup> July, the Solemnity of Our Holy Father Benedict. He hopes to be around for a few more years yet!

## THE ABBEY ORCHARD

Strange as it may seem, we had a wonderful supply of zucchini and golden squash from our kitchen garden, in spite of the severe drought that hit Australia. The orchard also produced a bumper crop of peaches, pears and plums. The apple trees showed great promise, but a flock of ravens that appears on the scene every year without fail, stripped all the trees of their fruit.

Dom Placid has located a piece of horticultural history concerning the greengage plum, of which we have two trees. It all began in Suffolk, England, at the most interesting Tudor residence, Hengrave Hall, erected between 1525 and 1538 by Sir Thomas Kytson, a wealthy London merchant. One of his descendants, Sir Thomas Gage, brought the original cutting of a green plum from France. This was planted at Hengrave, became the ancestor of the present greengage, and is still growing there.

Since the 1990s it has also grown in our abbey's orchard and continues to provide the community with fruit for stewing and for jam.

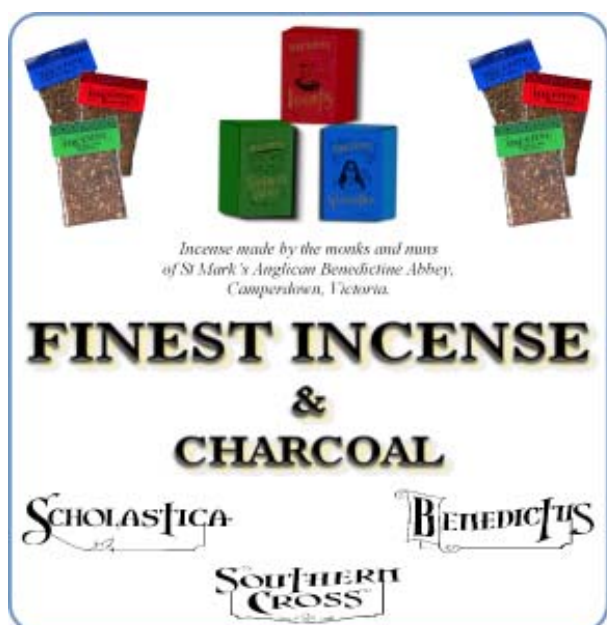
## HOMILY FOR FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION *(Continued from back page)*

place that she has within Christian devotion and Christian theology. We must never misunderstand the place that she has in our hearts.

When Jesus was on the cross of Calvary, and he was able to say to John, "John, this is your mother", he was saying to the world, "World, this is your mother". He was saying to her "This is your son", "These are your children". Mary is truly our mother. She is the mother of the Church and she is the mother of all Christians.

In Mary's assumption into heaven, we glorify God for his goodness to humankind. He gave us eternal life and we share in that eternal life with our Lady and with Christ and with the Blessed Trinity.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



## INCENSE ORDERS AND ENQUIRIES

**Telephone:** 03 5593 2333  
**Fax:** 03 5593 2399  
**Email:** [abbeyincense@dodo.com.au](mailto:abbeyincense@dodo.com.au)  
**Mail:** PO Box 111  
Camperdown Victoria 3260

500gm Boxes                      40gm Sachets

Presentation Box of 18 Sachets

Quick lighting charcoal

## CLUNY: IN SEARCH OF GOD'S LOST EMPIRE

Edwin Mullins, Blue Bridge, 2006

*A review from Fr Abbot*

A thousand years ago the French abbey of Cluny was the hub of one of the mightiest empires of the Middle Ages and the spiritual heart of Europe. Cluny was a Benedictine monastery in Burgundy, its church the largest and greatest ever built. Nearly 1500 monastic houses were subject to Cluny's authority, and its abbots, like Hugh the Great and Peter the Venerable, were confidants to countless emperors, popes and kings.

This fascinating account of the history of Cluny and its influence makes for a very interesting read for any interested in the history of monasticism, its influence on art and architecture, education and learning, agriculture, and the many ways in which the lives of the monks guided the life patterns of the day. But not only this. The story of Cluny is bound up in the political and religious milieu of the middle ages, in which the great abbots of Cluny played a major and significant role. The teaching of Hugh the Great and Peter the Venerable was not confined to the monastic communities under their guidance but touched the whole of western Christendom. The grandeur of the buildings of the monastic range was to influence the great and magnificent cathedrals and abbey churches of France and England, including Autun and Vezelay, Chartres and Canterbury.

Many know of the great pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, the Spanish shrine of St James. It is becoming increasingly popular in our own day but many may not know that without the influence of Cluny and Abbot Hugh there might well have been no pilgrimage at all.

Mullins writes honestly about the trials of Cluny as well as its glories. There were times of internal

strife and difficulty after the death of Hugh. His successor Pons was more interested in his own position and comfort, and after a time his taste for excess became obvious and eventually he was deposed from office. Peter was appointed in his place and life at Cluny began to return to some semblance of order, but not without some problems caused by his predecessor.

Peter the Venerable, during his thirty four years of abbacy guided Cluny with a firm and loving hand and seemed to be able to build on what Hugh had left. At the end of the eleventh century the foundation at Citeaux, of what was to become the Cistercian Order, gave Peter some headaches. The Cistercians wished to follow a very literal interpretation of the Rule of Benedict, following it in its most austere and simple form. Around 1115 Bernard was placed in charge of a new abbey at Clairvaux on the borders of northern Burgundy. From his new abbey Bernard now entered into dialogue with Abbot Peter over the issue of observance of the Rule of Benedict — the issue was: 'How should a servant of God best lead a Christian life?' Bernard maintained a life of the bleakest austerity against that of the relative sybaritic comfort and sophistication of Cluny. Remarkably Peter the Venerable handled the controversy with great skill and charity so that eventually the two became close friends.

This book will be of interest, not just to the historian or the romantic, but to all who value the contribution that Cluny made to the fabric and history of Europe, as well as to monasticism.

*Note: From 910–1157, almost 250 years, Saints Odo, Mayol, Odilo, and Blessed Peter the Venerable, governed the abbey of Cluny in France. Their feast day, under the title of "The Abbots of Cluny", is celebrated within the Benedictine Confederation on 11<sup>th</sup> May.*



CHRISTUS NATUS EST NOBIS, VENITE ADOREMUS.

Christ has been born for us; come let us adore him.

The Abbot and community pray that your Christmas and the coming year may be full of joy.

# HOMILY FOR FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

PREACHED BY FR ABBOT

15 August 2007

When we think about this Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we remember that Pope Pius XII declared this doctrine to be a dogma, an article of faith, in 1950 and there is some controversy about that matter. But people tend to forget that the Feast of the Assumption of our Lady dates from the 5th century. It was already a well-established article of belief in the church that Mary was taken up into heaven.

The Feast originated in the eastern part of the Church, and was accepted by the Latin Church in the year 826 — so it took about 400 years for it to filter through from the east to the west.

Gerald Vann OP, the Dominican theologian, writing in *The Water and the Fire* about the doctrine, likens it to the doctrine of humanity — that Mary is a type of humanity, and that God in his munificence brings Mary to himself at the point of her death as, indeed, he brings everybody to himself at the point of death. One of the things that we need to remember about this commemoration is that it is about life and death; and the inheritance that we have as Christians of the resurrection of Jesus. Mary was a partaker in the resurrection of her Son, which is the gift of eternal life that her Son gives to the whole of humanity. It is important to remember that. This feast is not in any way peculiar. It is celebrating the entrance into heaven of one who has died; but the one who has died is, in fact, so important that God takes her to himself, into his glory.

We need to place our thinking about Mary in the right context, and, as Fr Vann points out, we need to understand that the focus on Mary is essentially the focus on Christ.

It was in the year 431 at the Council of Ephesus, that the fathers of the church decreed Mary as Theotokos, God-Bearer, Mother of God. Why did they do that? They did that because Arius, a heretic, was saying that Jesus was not really God, he was just a messenger that God had sent. In order to establish, firmly and forever, the divinity of Christ, the church proclaimed Mary as the Mother of God, as the God-Bearer. The child she bore was not just a human baby; the child she bore was God incarnate, God made flesh. The church gives Mary the title “Mother of God”, not so much to honour her, although it does, but rather, to honour her son Jesus Christ, and to make sure that the doctrine of her son is kept alive and pure.

Through the centuries, devotion to Our Lady has been devotion which is focussed on her as bearer of God to the world. “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.” That particular phrase wasn’t added to the Ave Maria until the year 1568. Prior to that, the first part of the prayer which is from St Luke’s gospel (“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.”) was scripture turned into prayer. One could say this was the result of *lectio divina*. In the 16th century, the church added “*Sancta Maria, mater dei*”, “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the time of our death” — the petition.

We see Mary as the one who prays for us before the Father. We see Mary as the exemplification of all that human beings can be, and in this feast we honour her because God honours her.

People get so uptight about devotion to Mary. Yet, without Mary the process of salvation would not have happened. Without her *fiat*, without her “Yes”, God would not have been able to work out his plan that brings us into that close relationship through the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we honour Mary, she actually points us to God.

It is a bit like the story of the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. When they ran out of wine and the guests went to Mary and asked “What should we do?”, she pointed them to her son and said “Do what he tells you”. That is the message for us always. Mary points us to Jesus. “Do what he tells you to do.” She is the signpost for us.

Devotion to our Lady has been uppermost in the minds of Christians all through the ages. Shrines have grown up, people have visited those places, they have prayed and been healed. They have been touched by this young woman from Israel. If you have ever visited the undercroft of Canterbury Cathedral, you will have seen the chapel dedicated to Mary and seen the image of her Assumption. The Cathedral is dedicated to Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Feast of Dedication is 15<sup>th</sup> August.

Mary is, indeed, glorified in her Assumption. She is glorified by God, and in that glory she brings us into the realm of praise. Every night at Vespers we sing her song of praise: “My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”

Always, always, always, Mary points us to Jesus, leads us to him. We must never misunderstand the

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