

JAMBEROO ABBEY
BENEDICTINE OBLATES



PAX

The PAX newsletter has a different author for Lent this year. Sr Hildegard is struggling with her health and I have offered to fill in for her with this newsletter. Sr Mechtild.

I am sorry this newsletter is a little late. It is paschal candle time and we have the license for the Pilgrims of Hope candles. So it is an exciting time and a busy time here at the Abbey. As a community we are in a time of change. Some would be aware that Mother Hilda has resigned being at the required canonical age to do so. This year we have Sr Catherine McCahill sgs, the Good Samaritan Congregational leader, as administrator readying our community for the next Abbatial election. It is different but there is hope, joy, willingness for renewal and lots of cooperation.

Lent this year has the special focus calling all of us to be Pilgrims of Hope. I think especially of Pope Francis who is struggling with his health. Pope Francis has most certainly been a pilgrim of Hope for our world and for the Church and he is man full of joy. As a Benedictine community, let us prayer for and with Pope Francis.

Let us pray for one another also, not only the needs of the Abbey community but for our oblate community. We need one another and, while we may not know and see the face of our oblate brother or sister, we are true companions, sharing a life of values and prayerful reading of the Gospel. It always inspires and encourages me to know that at every minute of the day across our planet earth there are Benedictine nuns, monks and oblates praying for the needs of all created beings, and God's people especially the poor. We are part of the cycle of 24 hours of continuous prayer through every earthly and liturgical season of the year.

I know, as oblates, with your hearts centered on the Gospel of Jesus you will be disturbed by what is happening in our world and the many decisions and actions of peoples, nations and leaders that are counter the values of the Gospel; decisions and actions that are bringing further suffering.

So I am encouraging you to have your focus for Lent on

Hope, Joy and *Conversatio*.

From the Rule of St Benedict.

We urge the entire community during these days of Lent to keep its manner of life most pure and to wash away the negligence of other time.... and by devoting ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and self-denial. During these days we will add to the usual measure of our service by way of private prayer and abstinence from food and drink, so that each of us has something to offer God of their own free will with the joy of the Holy Spirit....let each look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing. RB 49.1-7

As an oblate

what is your manner of life?

What is the usual focus of your Lent?

Is it about giving up? Or giving to?

Could I suggest you take on a book for your Lenten discipline?

Perhaps a specific book from the Sacred Scriptures or a spiritual book.

Why do we have Lent? Why do we fast and abstain?

I read these words in *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* by Olivier Clement and I offer them to you for your reflection.

The purpose of asceticism is to divest oneself of surplus weight, of spiritual fat. It is to dissolve in the waters of baptism, in the water of tears all the hardness of heart, so that it may become an antennae of infinite sensitivity, infinitely vulnerable to the beauty of the world and to the sufferings of human beings, and to God who is Love, who has conquered by the wood of the Cross. p131

Asceticism means exercise, spiritual combat. We take all that is our genetic inheritance, our psychological and social background, the struggles of our daily life. All that makes up who we are and with the Holy Spirit and the Gospel for our guide we transform, we create positively and lovingly the daily of our lives.

Asceticism then is an awakening from the sleep walking of daily life. It enables the Word to clear the slit away in the depths of the soul, freeing the spring of living water. ..It is the Word of God who acts, we have to co-operate with him, not so much by exertion of will power as by loving attentiveness. p130.

**What is it
that you could offer to God
of your own free will
with the joy of the Holy Spirit?**

Some Community History

I have chosen a snippet to share with you from the Memoirs of Sr Elizabeth Funder and her life at our *Subiaco* monastery Rydalmere.

As you know Sr Elizabeth died on December 13th 2024. She was the last sister in our community to have lived at all three monasteries in our Australian Benedictine monastic history. I hope you enjoy this.

These memoirs are an unpublished writing compiled in 2012.

“Our abbess here at Jamberoo, Mother Mary Barnes, has asked me to write my memoirs of the life, as we lived it, in those last ten years before we moved to Pennant Hills in 1957. They were my first ten years in the community. I certainly hope that this will preserve the community memory, understanding and even something of that spirit. I am writing primarily of course



for my own community, but also for sympathetic outsiders and friends of the community, some of whom still remember us back then, and who have in a way made the long journey with us because they still visit.

At first I had difficulty deciding how to approach this task and indeed there seemed to be difficulties with any approach other than a purely subjective one, and this is

how I have written.¹ The *Subiaco* experience is still very dear to me and my memories both of the life and of the community combine a deep sense of their holiness and of its very human wrappings. It seems to me that the value of these earlier expressions of monastic life under the Rule of St Benedict can never be judged by current standards of validity in both the social and the religious context. There is a vast hermeneutic at play here, of course, but I have in mind an old Latin tag *amor dat oculos* (understanding comes only when we love). But to start with the place itself ...



Introduction

“Subiaco” was the name given by Archbishop John Bede Polding in 1848 to a property known as “The Vineyard” on the banks of the Parramatta River, near what is now known as Rydalmere. He had purchased it from Hannibal Macarthur, of an illustrious local family, and received for

¹ The abbreviations used in the account that follows are those that were current at Subiaco in its last decade. Thus: D = Dame (the formal title of a choir nun; S = Sister; M = Mother or Mary. These last two are easily distinguished by the context, eg MM Joseph (Mother Mary Joseph) M Mildred (Mother Mildred), SM Elizabeth (Sister Mary Elizabeth).

his money a fine colonial mansion in the Georgian style, set in an estate of several hundred acres. The archbishop's ambition was to found there a community of Benedictine nuns, and this he began to do in the following year. He chose February 2nd 1849 as its foundation day - and what an appropriate choice – the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. He would have read at Mass on that day the words of the prophet Malachi :

The Lord God says this:

Look, I shall send my messenger to clear a way before me.

And suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his

Temple; yes, the angel of the covenant for whom you long is on his way ...He will take his seat as refiner and purifier;

he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and

silver, so that they can make the offering to Yahweh with

uprightness. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will then

be acceptable to Yahweh as in former days, as in the years of old. Mal 3: 1-4

My guess is that he would have made these words his prayer for the little community he was founding.”

And there is more to come
in the next edition
of
Pax

OUR LITURGICAL CALENDAR IS AS FOLLOWS

March 3rd	Ash Wednesday
March 9	First Sunday of Lent
March 16	Second Sunday of Lent
March 17	St. Patrick
March 19	St. Joseph
March 21	The Passing of St. Benedict
March 23	Third Sunday of Lent
March 30	Fourth Sunday of Lent
April 6	Fifth Sunday of Lent
April 13	Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
April 17	Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper
April 18	Friday of the Passion of the Lord
April 19	Holy Saturday
April 20	Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord.
April 21-26	Easter Octave
April 27	Second Sunday of Easter

YOUR COMMUNITY

ANNIVERSARIES OF OBLATION

February 27	Colleen (Augustine) Cashman
March 5	Donn (Gregory) Corcoran
March 7	Nazin (Hildegard) Atalay
March 8	Julie (Frances) Redican
March 15	Ian (Godric) Thomas
March 16	June (Benedicta) Jenkins
March 19	Bernard Quinn
March 20	Fr. John (Ignatius) Anderson
March 21	Cecilia (Teresa Thomas) Larkin, and Carol (Mary of the Cross) Xuereb
March 25	Elizabeth Mary Hildegard Muntz, and Jennifer Ancilla Shirvington
March 25	Mark (Maurus) Hamilton
March 29	Elizabeth (Beth) Teresa Montgomery
March 29	Maria Matilda Curtis

SOLEMN PROFESSION ANNIVERSARY

March 2: Sr. Mechtild Crawford

OBLATE FEASTDAYS DURING LENT

March 5	Donn Gregory Corcoran
March 9	Maureen Frances Williamson
	Catherine Frances Turek
	Isabel Frances Vicary
	Helena Frances O'Neill
	Elizabeth Frances Fahey
	Denise Frances Hill
	Julie Frances Redican
	Christine Frances Angus
March 14	Maria Matilda Curtis
March 17	Rev. Ian Patrick Crooks
March 25	Jennifer Ancilla Shirvington

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

26.02.1931	Dame Mary Mildred Smythe
07.03.2004	Oblate Bernie Daniel Fitzgerald
09.03.1984	Sr. Mary Cecily Bourke
11.03.95	Sr. Mary Jones
16.03.1877	Most Rev. John Bede Polding O.S.B., Founding Father of our community and 1st Catholic Archbishop of Sydney
17.03	Oblate Peter Bernard Smith
18.03.1913	Sr. Margaret Gallagher
20.03.1888	Sr. Mechtilde O'Grady
21.03.2008	Oblate Sidney Stephen Long
21.03.1997	Sr. Maria McKenzie
22.03.1960	Sr. Bridget Kelly
25.03.1997	Sr. Marguerite Burke
26.03.1910	Sr. Mary Clare Gabriel
28.03.1878	Mother Mary Magdalen le Clerc, our Founding Mother.
28.03.(year unknown)	Oblate Mary Gertrude Connors

03.04.1969	Sr. Mary Hildegard Doyle
07.04.1956	Sr. Mary Monica Hardie
10.04.1959	Sr. Mary Aelred Bradshaw
17.04.1983	Sr. Mary Editha Thompson
23.04.1915	Mother Mary Ignatius Harnett

We are aware that some of you have personal and family situations that are real struggles and we know that you would appreciate the prayer of the community.

So we invite you to email oblatedirector@jamberooabbey.org.au with any special requests.

put your ear
down by your
HEART
& listen
HARD

www.jamberooabbey.org.au

WITH THE
GOSPEL
FOR
OUR
GUIDE