

Quarr Abbey Newsletter

Number 14 Spring 2016

*Early Spring
Blossom by
the abbey
buildings*



On Hospitality

It is good in winter to make a good fire in the grate. It is good to get together, talking loudly or listening quietly to the music of the logs. It is good to be there, as a family or a community, and to enjoy the comfort of unity and love.

It is difficult in winter to open a door and to let the stranger enter the house. If he is a friend, if he has his own house and his own fire, it's OK. But if he is unknown, if we cannot say how long he will stay, what he will need, what he might ask for, things are not so easy.

There are obviously practical issues and hospitality has necessary limitations. But a table for the poor, a bed for a few days, a place near the fire among us? The answer lies not outside, but within us. The door to be opened is in our heart. If the heart is open, the house will grow bigger.

Precisely during the Year of Mercy launched by Pope Francis on 8th December 2015, many newcomers knock at our doors. They have lost home, country, often even family. They dream of a new beginning among us.

To a very large extent, the answer is not ours. The unprecedented scale of the phenomenon generates many complex issues. Nevertheless something in us knows that a part of the

answer – probably the most important one – is ours too. If I am not the brother of the man or the woman in such need of help, then I am not your brother either. I lie when I say I love you if I do not recognise a brother, a sister in the one in need. Then, what can we do? Pray, of course, otherwise, maybe very little? We feel helpless.

Let me just recall here a few principles:

There is an order in charity. My first duty goes to those around me. I do not take the bread from my children to give it to strangers.

Charity is universal. It cannot exclude a single person. It includes even enemies.

The fire of charity must be shared with all, otherwise it dies.

Hospitality is not a luxury for the rich, but the privilege of the poor.

Hospitality is not about providing goods, but about opening one's heart.

Hospitality is infinite: if I welcome one, I welcome all. If I do the tiny gesture in my power, I touch God's very Heart: "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35).

"Let all guests that come be received like Christ", writes saint Benedict (Rule, ch. 53), who adds: "In the reception of poor men and pilgrims, special attention should be shown, because in them is Christ more truly welcomed". **Fr Prior**

Quarr Abbey Chronicle

Recent events in the life of the Abbey

December 11-19 The building of **the nativity scene** in the Church started a little earlier this year; the chronicler was feeling his age. The first day saw a trailer load of rocks being delivered to the nave and the establishment of the basic terrain. The dilapidated stable was built next; two alabaster columns of great size topped with a decaying roof of wood and slate. Further buildings were constructed of bricks and alabaster and the ground shaped by barrow loads of woodchip. Then the figures were introduced. All were placed so that they interacted with one another and each had a story to tell. A shepherd sleeps and is ignorant of the mystery unfolding around him; or is he dreaming, and penetrating even deeper than his companions into the heart of the mystery? A blacksmith shoes a donkey, and he too might seem oblivious of the Holy Child. Does he not realise that he will soon be called to shoe another donkey needed for a hasty flight into Egypt? After the figures, moss and branches complete the little world, a picture of the mystery of our salvation unfolding amidst the daily round. Many seem not to notice, but for all who have eyes to see, the Lord is here, to save, to sanctify, to direct all to ever new and ever more marvellous ends.

December 20 Quarr's **annual carol service** duly started at 2:30 pm., but so popular has it proven that the congregation began to arrive at half past twelve. As usual, Linda Filby-Borrett and her choir, "Voices of the Isle of Wight" joined the monks, for an hour of carols and readings. And as usual we could not find room for all the people who turned up. The service started with the Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" sung while part of the choir entered the Church in a candlelit procession. Other highlights were the first performance of Pere Yves-Marie's 4 part arrangement of the Gregorian Advent hymn "Conditor Alme

Siderum" and Nancy Borrett playing "Away in a Manger" in an arrangement for solo violin.

December 23 This afternoon, in the teashop, we threw our annual Christmas party for the staff and volunteers who help to keep Quarr Abbey going as a living enterprise. Lucy, Emma and the teashop staff provided a splendid spread of food and drink. And from 1:00pm. gardeners, beekeepers, carpenters, office workers, Friends of Quarr, and many others piled in. Fr. Prior expressed the appreciation and thanks of all the community to everyone who makes the continuation of our monastic presence at Quarr possible.

December 30-January 5 It is not often that a bishop is at liberty to stay long anywhere, and we were honoured and delighted to receive **Archbishop Robert LeGall of Toulouse** for a full week at Quarr. The Archbishop was abbot of our monastery of Sainte Anne of Kergonan in Brittany for many years. He knows Quarr well and was immediately at home with us. On the first afternoon of his visit he joined members of the community in the traditional Thursday afternoon walk. Fr. Prior drove a group to Brading Down on a blustery afternoon and we walked downhill, past Adgestone vineyard, to the valley floor. Our return was hastened by the wind which, growing in strength, propelled us uphill to the car again. And as the car doors closed, the heavens opened

During the course of his stay we learnt much of the challenges facing a diocesan bishop today. But with his manifest faith, his warm and sympathetic human understanding and a lively sense of humour, Archbishop LeGall inspired hope in us all.

January 30 Today the community received a visit from our own bishop, **Rt. Revd. Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth**. He arrived at

3:00pm. with his secretary, Fr. James McCauley, and first led us in a short service of prayer in the abbey Church. We then proceeded to the Community Room where he told us of his programme of visiting every religious house in the diocese in the course of the year dedicated to the Consecrated Life. Over tea and biscuits we discussed the role of diocese and monastery in the new evangelisation. The bishop spoke eloquently of his great desire to see every Christian grow in their sense of responsibility to bear witness to Christ, so that all in our society should have a real opportunity to encounter the good news of salvation.

February 2 The 2nd of February is the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord and this year also marked the conclusion of the year dedicated by Pope Francis to consideration of the place of the consecrated life in the Church. To celebrate this day in an especial manner, the whole community joined our sisters at **St. Cecilia's Abbey in Ryde for sung Vespers and Benediction**. The afternoon began in the great parlour with a musical feast to celebrate the 90th birthday of Mere Stephanie. The novitiate of St. Cecilia's sang a French canticle to Mary to begin. Fr. Prior followed this with two pieces of Bach played on the piano on our side of the grill. Individual members of the St. Cecilia's Band came next, singing and playing the viola, flute, violin and piano. The chronicler was eager to hear the entire band play an arrangement of Pachelbel's canon but he was outvoted and tea interrupted the flow of music; there was, nevertheless, time for everything before the hour for Vespers. In the Church, Fr. Prior presided from the sanctuary where the monks were seated. The hymn and psalmody was sung antiphonally: the monks' choir alternating with the nuns'. We had to be careful singing the antiphons; St. Cecilia's use the new antiphonal, and many of the melodies are slightly changed from the ones we are used to. But all went well and we look forward to continuing a tradition of shared Vespers which is now in its third year.

THE FRIENDS OF QUARR. Since our launch in May 2013, the Friends have worked hard to fulfil our aims of supporting Quarr Abbey, promoting and raising its profile and helping to maintain its historic buildings. The Friends are slowly growing in numbers and I am happy to report that new Friends Ian and Liz Stevens of Stevens Washrooms (Portsmouth) will be donating the new **“Changing Places “ toilet facility to Quarr Abbey**. There are only 3 such toilets on the Island and all are in Newport. Changing Place toilets offer greater space and enhanced facilities including a changing bench and a hoist.

Duncan Bird, also a Friend of Quarr, will be doing most of the preparatory work for this special facility, which will be located in the courtyard before the Visitors Centre. The chairman is donating the hoist, so this will be a project entirely funded by the Friends of Quarr. Duncan is also working on a small project of his own. He will be knocking through a section of the wall adjacent to the lawn in front of the church and re-instating the arch.

The Friends have raised over £18,300 towards the current project of the Walled Garden and need to continue fundraising for this project. The next event by the Friends will be a **concert of Sacred Music by the Orpheus Singers in the church on Saturday 14th May at 3pm**.

Entry is free and the retiring collection will be in aid of the Walled Garden project. For any enquiries please contact the chairman: chair.friends@quarr.org or Telephone number: 01983 882420 ext. 209.

Internships at Quarr Abbey are available for men aged 18-25. They offer an opportunity to participate in monastic life and learn about the Benedictine tradition for a couple of months. Details on our website: www.quarrabbey.org Contact: Father Luke Bell interns@quarr.org

Tom McCarthy introduces his new translation of an Old English masterpiece of verse and devotion

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“Krist waes on rodi”(Ruthwell Cross)
“Crist waes on rode”(‘The Dream of the Rood’)

The Ruthwell Cross was carved and inscribed in about 650 AD. On it is a poem describing the death of Christ, a mere fifteen lines in all, in the Northumbrian dialect of Old English but in runic form. ‘The Dream of the Rood’ (circa 950 AD) is 156 lines long. It contains those fifteen lines from The Ruthwell Cross, the runes now translated into Old English.

The identity of the short poem on the Cross and the longer text is certain but their relationship is a mystery. Yet the poem itself is a permanent treasure of English verse and speaks movingly of a faith which is common to Catholics now as then.

The Dream of the Rood

Listen! I’ll sing for you the sweetness of a dream
I dreamed in the deepest night
When the silent world was weary and at rest.
I saw it seemed so rare a tree
Lifting in air, all light around:
The sacred cross. This radiant sign was
Flooded with gold. Gems burned
Bright at its foot; five such jewels
Gleamed on the cross-beam. God’s angels,
Ever fair, gazed there. No felon’s cross this---
As humankind bowed, bright spirits sang:
All God’s gloriously created world.

This victory’s sign I saw, I sin-
Wounded, saw the wondrous cross,
Its banners streaming of cloth of gold,
Gems shimmering on God’s holy tree.
Yet I could see through all that gold
Human woes of former times when
On its right side it seemed to bleed.

I was suffused with every sorrow,
Afraid at this clear sight changing
In garb and colour: now white with sweat;
Now deeply red; now garnered gold.

Yet lying there a long while,
Musing in sorrow on the Saviour’s tree,
It seemed to me to speak,
This sacred rood began to speak.

“O it was years ago, yet I remember
I was hewn down, at the green holt’s edge
Uprooted. They, they struck me there,
Shouldering me up a steep incline.
Fastening me there, they charged me
To raise up evil-doers for passers-by
To mock, to scoff at. Yet then I saw
Our sweet Saviour, swift, undaunted,
Hurry here with arms to hold me.
With God’s strength I dared not break
Or bend when I felt the earth to shake.
I could have felled his every foe,
Yet I was steadfast. I stood firm.

I saw him, our calm champion, stripped
For contest, he, who was God Almighty,
Strong and stout of heart. High-spirited,
He rose above them, those standing by,
To set us free, to ransom humankind.
I shook when our Saviour enfolded me,
Though I dared not falter, dared not fall.
Raised as a rood, I lifted up
Our Lord Immortal, Heaven’s Lord.
They drove through me with blackened nails
Dints so deep, so clear to see, open
Wounds of hate. Yet none of them,
My tormentors, did I harm or hurt
As they mocked us, my God and me.
With his blood I was bedewed,
Blood flowing from his side
When he had given up his spirit.
I suffered on that hill much wretchedness:
I saw the Lord of Hosts stretched cruelly
As darkness enclouded God’s holy body,
The world’s light, and shadows moved
Deeply below the clouds. Lamenting death,

Creation wept. Christ was on the cross.
Now two came hurrying to our high-born
chief.
I saw them as with sorrow struck I bowed
And sank humbly to their hands. Sadly, down
From that torment they took their Lord.
I was left darkened with his blood,
The nail-marks clear and manifest.
They laid him down, weary-limbed there,
Standing at his head in sadness gazing
At the Son of God in death's bleak silence,
Lying lifeless after deep and bitter strife.
Sadly, too, his kind friends began to cut
A sepulchre from the whitest stone
To lay therein the Lord of Victories.
Then as darkness deepened those friends began
To sing their sorrow and, grieving, left
The Lord of Life. In death there now. Alone.

Stark emblems of agony on a low
Sky we kept our ground while
Voices faded, while his friends departed,
On the cold earth his bright body colder still.
Then we were cut down, a cruel fate,
Flung into the deepest pit, just as found.

But listen, after due time, other friends
And faithful followers found me and
With gold and silver girded me.

Now you know, most surely know, beloved,
The baleful deeds I bore, the deepest pains.
The time has come, Before all creation
I'll be revered from far away and wide
As a blessed sign. On me the Son of God
Suffered. Now I rise into the clear air
And comfort all who deeply honour me.

In former times I was loathed, was feared,
A thing abhorred, to all a bitter bane.
Now to humankind I unclosethe way to life.
Once Heaven's high glorious Lord exalted me
Above every tree in the green wood,
As he lifted up Mary, his dear Mother,
Above all women, blessed among them all.

Now I beg you, beloved, unfold this dream,
In graceful words reveal the tree of glory

On which the Lord Almighty atoned for sin
And for Adam's primal, deadly fall.
Here he tasted death but he rose again
With all his power to ransom humankind.
He rose to Heaven. He will return
In doomsday's dawn to greet us all.
The Lord of Power with his bright angels will
Requite each deed done in this fleeting life.
Nor may there be many among you unafraid
At the word of the Lord. Before us all
He will ask for those who for his sake
Suffered as he did on this bitter cross.
Then might you be full of fear and little think
What answer give to Christ. Listen now:
No one who wears the cross, this sacred sign
Need fear. Through this emblem every soul
Who seeks the Kingdom that is above
The world's ways shall reach a lasting home".

Alone, at once, when the vision faded
And light of heart I bowed and prayed.
Now I long to go, have lived through longing
Times; to find the cross is my lasting hope
And pay it homage before all humankind:
My mind is fixed, my fealty to the cross.
Good friends on earth I now have few,
But they have gone from this world of woes
And abide in bliss with our Father God.
Each day I hope the cross I saw on earth
Will free me from this fretful world,
Take me where Heaven's joy endures,
Where God's own people in lasting peace
Sit at the banquet. There may he set me
And in sweet glory dwell with all the saints.

May the Lord who suffered for all our sake
On the gallows-tree be my soul's true friend.

He was our ransom for our heavenly rest;
And hope rose high again with wild acclaim
For those led forward through the harrowing
fires.
With saints surrounded God's Son returned
Victory-crowned to God's own kingdom.
Angels greeted him. Saints in glory
All-hailed their Lord Immortal
When he came back to his own hearth, his
home.

Ash Wednesday 2016: Fr Prior's Homily

“You are merciful to all, O Lord”,
Misereris omnium, Domine.



These words were the very first at the beginning of our celebration. They were sung in the Latin Introit for this Mass. In this Year of Mercy, we cannot listen to them without paying a special attention to what they say to us. Lent begins with an affirmation of God's Mercy. By doing so, Lent prepares us for Easter. At Easter, we shall celebrate God's Mercy towards us sinners which manifests itself in the resurrection of Jesus. We shall receive anew God's Mercy from the One whom the Father raised from the dead. In a very fitting way, the Octave Day of Easter will be the Sunday of Divine Mercy.

“You are merciful to all, O Lord, and despise nothing that you have made”. These words come from the book of Wisdom. They are the fruit of long experience. To Moses, God revealed himself on the mountain as “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex 34:6).

How should we understand God's mercy? A first point: There is an infinite distance

between the world and God's perfect and unutterable sanctity; nevertheless, God cares for what He has created; He does not despise creatures; He does not hate them, although they sometimes disappoint Him by their infidelity; He always crosses the distance between Him and us; God knows our weakness, He understands our fragility, He forgives us our faults and trespasses.

We may add a second consideration: God is full of hope in our capacity to overcome evil. The Introit continues: “You overlook people's sins, to bring them to repentance”. God forgives. He sees further than our bad deeds. He sees the good we are able to do with His grace. Therefore He gives us a time when we can repair by our good works the wrongs we did and the sins we committed. Such is Lent: by the gift of God, grace is abundantly offered to us so that we may strive to do good, and make good the errors of the past; that is why we are invited to do the works of mercy: to pray, to fast and to give alms, to visit the sick and the prisoners, to care for all destitute and those in need. It is by being merciful that we make good the faults of the past, that we answer best God's mercy towards us.

We must keep in mind, especially during Lent, this view of God. God is full of hope; He sees the capacities for good in each heart; He gives us the chance of a new start; He invites us to see our brothers and sisters with the same positive outlook, full of hope and confidence in their capacities for doing what is good. The grace of Lent is precisely to see oneself and others in the light of God's Mercy and to make a new start in good works and in love. God's mercy graciously gives us a time for repentance and reparation. A single act of true charity covers a multitude of sins. There is a redemptive dynamic in good works. There is a real possibility to overcome our errors.

The last sentence of our Introit adds something important: “you spare them for you are the God our Lord”. The biblical text says precisely: “you spare them for they are thine”. He brings us back into the arms of the Father of Mercies.

The Parts of Quarr: the Chapter House



The Chapter House

gets its name because frequently it was a Benedictine custom to meet every day in the chapter house where a chapter from St Benedict's Rule would be read. At Quarr, this regular reading of the Rule occurs as part of the reading at meals. St Benedict does not mention a chapter house amongst his monastic buildings but, since he clearly envisages regular meetings of the community and that the oratory should be set aside for prayer and 'nothing else shall be done or kept there' he must have envisaged some place—perhaps initially the refectory—where communal discussion under the guidance of the superior could take place.

Early Christian monks lived as hermits or in small groups without complex organisation. You learned how to be monk often by being attached to some recognised spiritual father or 'abba' who could give counsel and whose example could be followed.

Sometimes, as in the Rule of St Basil, there were groups of 'elders' who could advise the 'abba' of the whole community but Basil was opposed to calling the whole community together. St Benedict was the first to give to the abbot the council of the whole community and that of the elders (whom Benedict calls 'seniors'). This counselling is not simply about temporal matters (as in some earlier Rules) but

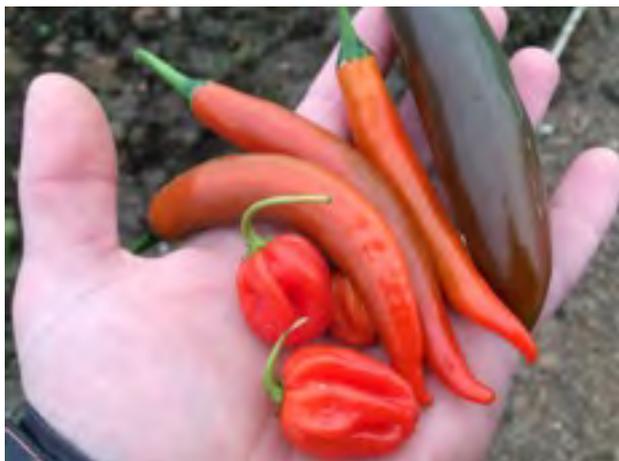
the whole life of the community. Benedict preserves a strong distinction between senior and junior monks, yet he goes out of his way to ordain that, though the day to day affairs of the monastery can be left to the abbot and senior advisors, when it comes to important matters, the youngest members of the community should be particularly listened to. He does not do this like some modern politicians lauding the younger 'progressive' vote, but rather because he wants the whole community to be receptive to the action of the Holy Spirit within it in discerning what should be done. Novices and postulants (not fully part of the community yet) cannot participate but everyone else can, for example for the election of an abbot.

The Chapter House at Quarr is a beautiful building in the traditional position, at right angles to the east cloister. It is in the same architectural idiom as refectory and church. Indeed it has been used as a chapel when, for some reason, the main church could not be used. The stalls for the abbot and brethren were expertly carved by Robert Thompson (a late work) of Kilburn, who also designed much of the woodwork at Ampleforth Abbey and college. Four examples of his famous signature mark—a wooden mouse—can be found here. Unfortunately, the Chapter House is not in regular use at present largely because it is unheated. Chapter business is conducted in the community room in the Old House. BB

Quarr's head Gardener, Matt Noyce, discusses Spring preparations for the coming year.

The signs of approaching spring are in abundance and strangely, have been for a while. With the unusually mild Island winter trailing behind us, buds are already swelling and the leaves unfurling.

Everything seems to be starting a little earlier this year, which is where it shows that no matter how much you plan, you have to be flexible and go with the moment. The milder weather (chillies still growing in January!) has coaxed many plants and shrubs in to a (possibly false) sense of security that it's safe to get back to business and grow.



[Early chillies growing before Spring]

Unfortunately, the pests and diseases get the same signal and without a harsh winter with low temperatures over a prolonged period there may be more about than usual this year, so be prepared.

Recently, our main focus has been on pruning for the year ahead and preparing the plants for the extra growth they will be putting on by applying a good feed. The orchards, many summer, late summer and winter flowering shrubs are all being pruned. We are also re-pollarding our Lime trees and although hedge

cutting stops at the end of February to allow for the start of the bird-nesting season, we have still been filling any gaps by planting indigenous hedging species such as hawthorn, hazel and blackthorn. Along with these, the grasses and perennials that were all kept both for their winter interest and to benefit wildlife are all pretty much spent now, so they have also been pruned down to make way for this year's emerging new growth.

We have also been making preparations for the

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To contact the Friends of Quarr, the address is chair.friends@quarr.org

produce growing season ahead too. Potatoes are chitting (the process of encouraging tubers to sprout before planting), the onion sets and shallots are ready to go in and some seeds are already being sown with heat and under glass. The plastic sheeting on the plot which has been suppressing the weeds over the winter has been lifted so we could add a generous helping of muck and rotavate.

In the borders, edging the lawn makes a tidy improvement and plants, such as daffodils, can be deadheaded but the foliage left to finish naturally. All things considered, a busy preparation period in the gardens here at Quarr.