

DOUAI ABBEY

NEWSLETTER

December 2008

No 33

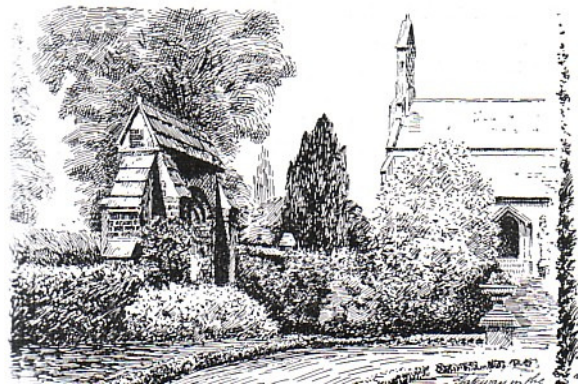
Homily preached on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception *by Fr Abbot*

Because Jesus Christ is the redeemer of the world, even Mary, his mother, although a human being, was also in need of redemption. What we celebrate in today's feast is Our Lady's redemption "by the grace of Christ," but in a more perfect way than that of other human beings. We are saved by sanctifying grace, she by divine grace.

It is appropriate that we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in Advent, because in Advent we reminisce about the mystery of God's plan and his revelation. That revelation, though promised, is not easy for us to comprehend in all its aspects. That is why Advent is a time of waiting and watching, and a time for picking up hints and being sensitive towards pointers, a time for turning towards the light and the truth through the darkness. Christmas is, in a sense, much easier; Christmas is about the concrete and visible, about incarnating and enfleshing.

And so, the doctrine of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception fits the mood of Advent, by taking up the story of the Old Testament, of Fall and Redemption, of sin and salvation, by taking up God's definitive promise that he would, in his own way and in his own time, prepare the way for salvation along certain grace-filled ways, of which Mary is one.

Our Lady's Immaculate Conception is the sec-



The archway into the garden, drawn by Fr Aloysius Bloor OSB, published in *The Douai Magazine* Spring 1926. St Mary's Church is in the background.

ond patronal festival of the abbey, since it was under this patronage that St Mary's College¹, Woolhampton, was placed in 1848, when the church of St Mary was opened by Cardinal Wiseman. I wonder how many of those who now live in *Avalon*², the island of the blessed, look up as they pass under that arch which leads into their garden and have any idea what those words '*Maria Immaculata*' which are carved on it mean. But they do enter a garden, a garden enclosed, which is for many writers the strongest symbol of the Mother of God. The Garden of Eden was an earthly paradise, but one where sin began and one in which the serpent could get in and cause mischief, and which had gates guarded by an angel. But this garden, Our Lady, is an enclosed garden adorned with all sorts of flowers of virtues, im-

continued at the foot of the next page.

Editorial

New Style

In our last issue we invited you, our readers, to comment on whether we should continue. Well, as you see, we are still in production. We thank those of you who replied to our request to let us have your views, whether by letter, email or verbally. The monastic community has decided that the *Douai Abbey Newsletter* should continue to be published in paper form three times a year, but to be produced 'in house'. That will lower our costs, but we hope to continue to bring you news of the community as we have provided in the past and which you appreciate. For the present we do not have a colour facility, but we hope with a future printing machine to be able to remedy that. The Newsletter will continue to be available 'on line' where the titles will be in colour as heretofore.

Some of you made suggestions as to how we could improve our service, and you will find some of the suggestions implemented in this issue. Moreover, we thought it time for a new look. We invite your comments and suggestions on the changes.

The Douai Magazine will continue to be published annually, and we are hoping for improvements in its design.◇

continued from the previous page

maculate, and into which no serpent nor sin could find access, but which was always a paradise.

As the earth brought forth at first, how it is not known,
So did this Garden, which was never sown
(Henry Hawkins SJ, *Parthenia Sacra*, 1633).

¹ St Mary's College was amalgamated with Douai School in 1903, when the monastic community came to Woolhampton.

² Avalon was the marketing name given to the former school buildings when they were being sold as apartments. ◇

Music at Douai

The concerts in the Abbey Church since September have had a decidedly liturgical character. The first given in September by *Concerto delle Donne* was a programme of music for Matins and Vespers, composed by Charpentier and others for the nuns of Port Royal, a community, which our monks would have known in Paris. *Choros* sang Victoria's *Requiem* appropriately on November 2, and *Singscape* gave a concert on St Cecilia's Day entitled *Faire is the Heaven* which included, among many items a world premier of a setting of *The Dream of the Rood* by Graham De Wilde. In December, we had another visit, after a gap of a few years, from the Konovets Choral Quartet, singing a programme of Russian, Georgian, Greek, and Serbian chant. Hearing these in the same programme enabled one to recognise how different were each of the styles. A memorial concert in September included parts of Brahms' *Requiem*, as well as motets by Bruckner, Morales, Guerrero and music by Parry and Tippett.

Recording

Richard Lester has recorded items from Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* on our Tamburini organ. All the pieces are composed for liturgical use at Mass. The CD will be available next year.◇

Advent Service

The Advent Service of Music and Reflections was held on the fourth Sunday. The music, which was entirely unaccompanied, had a strong Marian theme. Reflections were given by Frs Bernard, Alban and Oliver, and Fr Abbot gave the introduction and final blessing. This service provides for silent meditation and prayer before Christmas. The Christmas Vigil and Mass was well attended as usual. Earlier in the month local schools had come to the Abbey Church for their end of term carol services. ◇

National Oblate Retreats

Following a suggestion made by the Oblate Directors at their meeting last year, in December we organised two retreats, for oblates from monasteries throughout the country, one midweek and one at a weekend. Both were given by Mgr Richard Moth, Vicar General of Southwark and an oblate of Pluscarden. The theme for the retreats was 'Stability'.

The monasteries represented were Brownhill, Douai, Ealing, East Hendred, Edgware, Elmore, Grace & Compassion, Pluscarden, Prinknash, Ramsgate, Rostrevor, Stanbrook and West Malting.

By all accounts these retreats were considered a great success. It enabled oblates of the various houses to meet each other and while remaining loyal to their stability, to be enriched by their encounter with oblates of other communities, reflecting in a local way what the Abbot Primate has established for oblates world-wide in the quadriennial Congresses in Rome, the second of which is to be held next October. ◇

Launch of *The Oblate Life*

On the afternoon of Sunday October 26 *The Oblate Life* was launched in the Guest Refectory at Douai Abbey. The book is a symposium for the use of Benedictine oblates and is being co-published by Canterbury Press and Liturgical Press, the publishing house run by the monks of St John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota.

The book, which has been four years in the making, has been edited by Fr Gervase, the oblate director. It contains thirty-six chapters, written by monastics and oblates from both sides of the Atlantic and has an introduction by the Abbot Primate.

Copies can be obtained from the Douai Abbey Bookshop price £17.99 plus £2.13 postage. ◇

Dates for your diary

Dec 31 Broadcast on Radio 3 of Choral Evensong from the Abbey Church, sung by the *Rudolphus Choir*. 4pm (please be seated by 3.45pm)

Jan 1 Concert of seasonal music by the *Rudolphus Choir* 7.45pm +

10 Tuesdays beginning Jan 13, a series of lectures, Monasticism through the ages ~

Jan 31 Healing Workshop 9.45am *

Feb 8 Concert by *Bartholomew Consort* 7.45pm +

Feb 13 - 15 Retreat *Praying the Psalms* *

Feb 16 - 20 Silent Retreat *

Feb 21 Christian Poetry Dayschool ~

Feb 23 - 27 Retreat *Pancakes & Ashes* *

Mar 6 - 8 Retreat *Managing Conflict* *

Mar 7 Concert by *Thames Voyces* 7.45pm +

Mar 14 Day of Recollection for Readers, Communion Ministers etc 9.45am *

Mar 21 Concert by *Arion Orchestra* 7.45pm +

Apr 4 J.S. Bach St John Passion by *Vox Cordis* 7.45pm +

Apr 9 - 12 Easter Triduum Retreat *

Apr 10 Service of Music and Reflections, Douai monks and *Douai Singers* 8pm

* apply Pastoral Programme Office Douai Abbey douaiabbey@aol.com

+ apply Newbury Corn Exchange 01635 522733 boxoffice@cornexchangenew.co.uk

~ apply continuing-education@reading.ac.uk ◇

Death of Dudley Elwes

We have learned with regret of the death on October 7 of Dudley Elwes, at the age of 89. He had been senior classics master at Douai School from 1962 until 1984.

On retirement Dudley had continued to be a familiar figure at Douai, living for a time in Thatcham and attending Sunday Mass in the Abbey Church, often walking the six miles from his home. An obituary will be published in the next issue of *The Douai Magazine*. ◇

Community Notes

Fr Abbot

In September Fr Abbot attended the quadriennial meeting of abbots in Rome. Unfortunately he had to return early as his mother had an accident, from which she is happily recovering.

Towards the end of October he flew to Spain to give a lecture at the Royal English College in Valladolid on the thirty students of the College who became Benedictines in the seventeenth century. We hope to publish the text of this lecture in the next issue of *The Douai Magazine*.

In December, while visiting our foundation in Douai, France, he was able to take part in the celebrations for the silver jubilee of ordination to the diaconate of Robert Caremiaux. Robert is an old friend of ours, having been Headmaster of the *Institute-St-Jean*, the school in Douai, France, with whom exchanges were made with our former school in England.

Fr Paul

who teaches liturgy at the Benedictine Collegio Sant' Anselmo in Rome, has been nominated as a Consultor to the Office of the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff.

Fr Dermot

attended the annual conference of the British Association for the Study of Religion

at Bangor, Wales, in October.

Fr Hugh

gave a retreat to the Josephte Fathers at the Emmaus Centre at West Wickham, Kent, in October.

He has also become editor of A.I.M., the English Language Bulletin of the Alliance for International Monasticism, in succession to Fr Paulinus Greenwood OSB, who has been elected Abbot of Ramsgate.

Fr Alban

led a pilgrimage at the end of October, '*In the footsteps of St Francis and St Benedict*', to Assisi, and Norcia, the birth place of St Benedict and St Scholastica. There were twenty participants.

Novice

On November 25, before Compline, Mr David Banks was clothed as a novice, being given the name Br Damian. David had been visiting us for sometime and had spent several months as a postulant. He was born in Abergavenny, South Wales. While a student at Swansea University he became a Catholic. He spent two years with the SMA Fathers, after which he worked in Manchester and South Wales, primarily as a Support Worker, in hostels for the homeless, a hospital for people with schizophrenia and in the homes of clients with learning difficulties.

Postulant

In September we welcomed Mr Stephen Wilson as a postulant.

Library

The tenders for the building of the monastery library were received at the beginning of December. We hope to offer the contract to the chosen contractor shortly, and expect work to begin early in the new year.

In order to prepare clay for the rammed earth walls which will be used in the project, a sufficient quantity of clay was excavated from the northern side of the meadow at the beginning of November and placed under plastic in order to allow it to dry out.

Cottages

Between August and November the Cottages were closed for the first stage of refurbishment. A new damp course was inserted, and the entire ground floor renewed with new kitchen equipment, washing machine, and WCs. In addition new showers were installed upstairs. It is hoped to complete the refurbishment of that floor next summer. ◇

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