

DOUAI ABBEY

NEWSLETTER

Professions

On the feast of St Benedict, anticipated this year on Saturday March 20, Br Damian Banks and Br Gabriel Wilson made first profession at the Conventual Mass.

Br Damian comes from an Evangelical background in South Wales. Whilst at Swansea University he became a Catholic. After university, he spent two years with the SMA Fathers, before leaving to find employment. Most of his work involved caring for vulnerable adults in hostels, hospitals and in their own homes.

Following a pilgrimage to Assisi in 2006, he became increasingly drawn to explore whether he had a vocation. After a first visit to Douai in January 2007, he was clothed as a novice in November 2008.

Br Gabriel was born in Queensbury, Middlesex, and spent his childhood in Kenton and Harrow, where he attended All Saints Church and went to the local Catholic Schools, St Bernadette's Primary School and St Gregory's Secondary School. As a student in Liverpool he met Alistair Hood (later Fr Alban) who was a fellow student, two years his senior, and who in 1984 invited him to accompany him on his first visit to Douai. After graduating, he spent several months in Worth Abbey's Lay Community, while considering his own future. He became a student at Allen



Br Gabriel signs his vow chart on the altar while Br Damian and Fr Abbot look on.

Hall in Westminster Diocese for nearly three years, where he found the quasi-monastic atmosphere of seminary life congenial, and it fostered a devotion to the Divine Office.

However, he left and qualifying as a teacher at Digby Stuart College taught in Hertfordshire and Hampshire. Despite a successful and enjoyable career, the feeling that his primary vocation was to a life of prayer began to grow stronger, so in 2005 he sold his house, rented a bungalow and began to live a monastic rhythm centred on prayer. At a vocations weekend at Douai Abbey in May 2008 he made the decision to become a postulant the following September. ◊

Fr Leo Arkwright OSB 1924 - 2010

Fr Leo, was born in December 1924 in Wigan and baptised James. He attended St Patrick's School and was an altar server at St Patrick's Church, Hardybutts, Wigan.



In 1937 he won a scholarship to Wigan & District Mining & Technical College, and in 1943, joined the Royal Navy. Following training as an electrical Mechanic he was sent to Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands in March 1945, where he joined the base engineering staff, eventually being put in charge of the Electrical Department until demobilised in August 1946.

Meanwhile, he had approached Abbot Sylvester Mooney about joining the Community at Douai Abbey, his contact with Douai having been through relatives of Fr Philip Robinson and Fr Mark Ackers. So, after demobilisation, he went to Campion House, Osterley, to learn Latin and prepare for his entry into the monastery, where he was clothed as a novice in September 1948. Simple Profession took place on September 29, 1948, Solemn Profession following in 1952.

Immediately after Solemn Profession, Br Leo was sent to continue his theological studies at the University in Salzburg, where he was ordained priest on July 11, 1954, by Archbishop Rohracker in the Cathedral. Immediately after ordination, he returned to England and began 34 years of teaching Mathematics and later also Engineering Drawing in Douai School. He became the monastery printer, in succession to Fr Robert Richardson.

Fr Leo was always keen to continue studying, so in 1958, he began having organ lessons again at Newbury parish church, and also

studied piano for several years at Douai with Felicity Smith. He gave several Organ Recitals in the Abbey Church and used to play regularly at the School Music Society concerts. He also taught Piano and Organ. In August 1970 having passed the exams, he obtained an Amateur Radio Licence, and in December 1983 he was awarded a degree in Mathematics by the Open University after six years of study.

In August 1973, he was appointed Monastic Infirmarian - a post which he occupied for 10 years, and in March 1974 was appointed Economist of the Mission Fund, an office he held until going on the Mission in 1992. He also organised the restoration and re-hanging of the monastery's more valuable pictures and catalogued the coin collection.

In 1987, a major operation forced his retirement from school teaching. However, in 1992 he had recovered sufficiently to be sent as parish priest to Scarisbrick, Lancashire, where he remained until July 1996, when a couple of heart attacks and a heart operation forced his retirement back to the monastery. Arthritis was already affecting his knees, worn down by all the printing of the past forty years, so walking became a problem and other complaints related to old age also set in. He continued faithfully to take part in the choir office until forced to abstain after a series of small strokes. For the last few years he lived in the monastery infirmary, but continued coming to the refectory until January this year. He kept active mentally by doing the crossword every day. He also used his printing expertise to proof-read The Douai Magazine and this Newsletter, until the last issue in December. He suffered a stroke on the feast of St Benet Biscop, which necessitated a period in hospital. However he came home for the last week of his life and died on the feast of St Scholastica. May he rest in peace. ◇

A fuller obituary will appear in the next issue of The Douai Magazine.

Fr Alban at Lambach Abbey

In March I flew to Austria, to the monastery of Lambach, near Linz, at the invitation of Abbot Maximilian Neuling, who had read a paper on the internet, which I had written some years ago on the characteristics of a Benedictine parish. Monks of the Austrian Congregation also

work on parishes: ten monks of the monastery of Lambach have the pastoral care of seven parishes in its locality, with a total population of 10,000 people. Abbot Maximilian had invited the monks, and members of their parish councils, to attend an afternoon conference on the theme of 'Monastery and Parish,' at which I was to be the main speaker. The conference was held in the beautiful baroque summer refectory of the monastery and was attended by some 70 people. The afternoon began with a number of presentations by parishioners, who explained what being a member of a Benedictine parish meant to them.

Father Christopher Calascione, monk of Downside and Parish Priest of St Wulstan's, Little Malvern, was also present and spoke about his own parish situation. Both the presentations given by myself and Fr Christopher were simultaneously translated into German, and the translation in reverse, from German into English, enabled us to understand the questions and comments made by the parishioners.

In my presentation I spoke about six themes: Prayer, Liturgy, Community, Leadership, Formation, and how insights from the Benedictine Rule might guide the life of the parish and its relationship to the monastery. In my conclusion I spoke about the particular contribution Bene-



dictines can make to the meaning of 'church' and 'ministry' today.

There are currently nineteen monks in the Lambach community, of whom one is a postulant, one a novice and three are in temporary vows. They made Fr Christopher

and I very welcome and we were especially grateful to Abbot Maximilian who not only showed us around the abbey with its beautiful 11th-century frescoes and historic manuscripts, but also drove us to some interesting places nearby. We first visited the elaborate baroque 'Trinity' church across the river from the monastery, with its three entrances, three altars, three organs and three bells. On another afternoon we were driven to the basilica and former Benedictine monastery at Mondsee, which was the location for the wedding scene in the film 'The Sound of Music'; then we went to a former Benedictine nunnery by Lake Traun, which contained a famous 18th-century pulpit carved in the shape of a ship. It was also interesting to visit a newly-founded Benedictine community at Gut Aich, which runs a healing centre that provides various therapies including psychotherapy, and produces herbal remedies, liqueurs and beer.

These days in Lambach were very happy ones for me, and above all it was good to make connections with another Benedictine community that also has a parochial apostolate. The Abbot of Lambach has promised to make a visit to Douai, and has invited more of our monks to visit Austria, so we look forward to strengthening our European Benedictine links and to deepening our awareness of the breadth of the

worldwide Benedictine family. ◇



Fr Alban with Fr Christopher and some of the Lambach community.

Top: View of Lambach Abbey.

Community Notes

Fr Alban

spent January and February taking part in an intensive course on the Rule of St Benedict given by Sr Aquinata Böckmann OSB at *Casa Sancto Spiritu*, the Generalate of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing. In March he went to Lambach Abbey, in Austria, to give a talk on Benedictines working in parishes: his account is on page 3.

Fr Paul

gave a paper 'The Genius of the Roman Rite in the identity of the priest' at the 'Year for Priests - Clergy Conference Rome 2010' at *Domus Sanctæ Marthæ* on January 7. He has recently been made a consultant to the CDF.

Fr Dermot

led a workshop for the English-speaking Catholic community in Brussels at the end of January. In February he led a study day for the Colchester Anglican Deanery.

Fr Hugh

gave one of the Lent Talks to the Catholic parishes of Chelmsford on 'Hell'.

Br Christopher & Fr Ger-vase

attended a meeting of monastic guestmasters at Buckfast Abbey, Devon, in February. Br Christopher gave a presentation demonstrating our electronic booking system.

Abbot David Charlesworth gave a talk, explaining how the reception and welcoming of guests is real monastic missionary work.

Student workers

Benjamin Bongard, from Douai, France, came in January to practice speaking English, and to help us with various tasks. In March Bernat Kaposi, who had been a pupil in the school attached to Panalhama Abbey in Hungary, and who had spent two months with us in the autumn, returned. He has been a great help to the grounds staff with his capacity for heavy work.

Co-worker

Sadly, Janet Giles, who has been employed by us for 34 years in various departments, latterly as an assistant in the kitchen, has been forced to take early retirement due to ill health. We shall miss her cheerful presence, but happily her husband, Graham is still with us.

Visit to Elmore Abbey

On January 4, six of us, Frs Abbot, Prior, Gervase, Nicholas, Benjamin and Hugh visited our Anglican brethren at Elmore for Vespers, supper and Compline, as groups of us have done after Christmas for many years now. Sadly, this may well be our last visit, as the Elmore community are actively seeking a new home,

more suitable for their small numbers.

Sheep

Five lambs have been born to three ewes this winter, and all are doing well. They have been called Maurus, Placid, Benedict, Scholastica and Hildegarde.

Marie Endean

our neighbour and confrater, who had lived at Woolhampton Lodge since 1938, died at the age of 92 on January 9. She had been a good friend to the community. Her Requiem Mass took place in the Abbey Church and she was buried in her family plot in St Peter's churchyard.

'Step into the Picture'

was the title of a performance given in the Abbey Church by children from four primary schools, with Southern Sinfonia. The production was inspired by the paintings of Paul Forsey telling the life of Christ, which were exhibited in the Abbey Church in 2002. The production was created by June Boyce-Tillman of the University of Winchester, with music arranged or composed by Martin Reilly. It included chants by Hildegarde of Bingen. ◇

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