

DOUAI ABBEY

NEWSLETTER

Profession of Br Anselm



On the feast of St Lucy, December 13, 2011, Br Anselm Strudley professed

vows as a monk of Douai for three years. Members of his former parishes at Blackfen and Folkestone were present as well as some of the oblates and three of the nuns from Turvey, where he had made his pre-profession retreat.

A monk makes temporary vows for at least three years before being permitted to proceed to Solemn, that is, life Profession. The mo-



Br Anselm pronounces his vows .



Br Anselm signs his vows on the altar, where the profession chart remained during Mass.

nastic vows are Obedience, Stability and *Conversatio Morum*, that is, conversion of life. By these vows the monk makes a solemn promise to God, to live the rest of his life as a member of a particular monastic community (not of an order), committed to a lifelong process of conversion, under obedience to his abbot.

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Profession of Br Anselm *continued*



Br Anselm kneels before the altar while the community prays for him.

Br Anselm was born in Sidcup, London, went to school in Welling, and studied at Christ Church University, Canterbury, where he gained BA with honours in music. He played the saxophone with various military bands, and worked for several years in retailing.

Br Anselm also plays the organ and is a cantor. He serves the community by baking bread and excellent cakes. Currently he is studying philosophy at Blackfriars, Oxford.◇

Music at Douai

There were fewer concerts than usual this autumn, as two bookings were cancelled.

One of the highlights of the Christmas season is the New Year's Eve Concert, which always attracts a large audience. This year, it was given by *Commotio*, a choir which performs contemporary music, directed by its founder, Matthew Berry.

Most of the works performed were settings of liturgical Christmas texts, a few were of poems and eleven of the sixteen pieces were composed in the twenty-first century, using a variety of styles.

On the eve of the first Sunday of Advent the Cecilia Consort gave a programme entitled *The Mystery of Advent*, mostly of music from the second half of the twentieth century.

Concerts planned for the next few months include the Bartholomew Consort on January 22, with a programme including Vaughan William's Mass; Music for Lent and Passiontide given by the Nonsuch Singers on March 10; the South Chiltern Choral Society performing Requiems by Duruflé and Fauré on March 24; and the Reading Bach Choir on April 21.

Information and tickets may be obtained from Newbury Corn Exchange 01635 522733 or boxoffice@cornexchangenew.co.uk ◇

The Crib

The crib, this year, was arranged by Br Gabriel. A new position was used, at the east end of the south aisle, which allowed people more easily to remain near the crib for prayer. The theme was the great 'O' antiphons, and a text was provided for meditation, with copies for people to take away. The text can be accessed on our website at: <http://www.douaiabbey.org.uk/crib2011.htm>



Closure of Maison St-Benoît

The Maison St-Benoît, our house in Douai, France, sadly is to be closed. There will be a celebratory Mass, at which the Archbishop of Cambrai, Mgr Francois Garnier, will preside, at the church of Notre-Dame on Saturday January 14.

We opened the house in November 2005, following an invitation made by the Douaisiens in 2003, when a group of monks had gone to Douai to commemorate the expulsion in 1903. The formal opening ceremonies took place over three days in February 2006, with Mass presided over by Mgr Garnier, who blessed the house, and a civil welcome was given by the Mayor and town authorities. Descriptions can be found in *The Douai Magazine*, for 2006.

The plan was to have a small monastic presence in the town, where daily office would be sung, and people could come for prayer and retreats, and also young people could come for a shared lunch once a week. This has happened during the past six years under the leadership of Fr Finbar and Fr Peter. Other monks went there for specific periods and for specific purposes, such as giving talks or conferences. The monks have also been involved with the local parish.

Lauds and Vespers have been sung, in French, each day, and Mass celebrated twice a week. There were always local people who came to join in these offices, and who will greatly miss the monks' departure.

Since Fr Finbar was sought by the Solesmes



Congregation to be superior at Quarr Abbey in the Isle of Wight in 2008, it has become increasingly difficult to find monks, at Douai Abbey or elsewhere, who were sufficiently fluent in French and who could be spared from other work. A letter was sent to monastic superiors in Europe, North America and elsewhere seeking a second monk. A number of monks from other monasteries have come for short periods, but, it has not been possible to find any monks to stay on a semi-permanent basis, and so with great sadness this monastic cell will close in January 2012.

Nevertheless, the link with Douai, France, will be kept alive, thanks to the William Allen Association. Hopefully, Douai monks will continue to go to Douai, France, to give talks and conferences, and a group of Douaisiens is already booked to come to Douai, England, in May for a retreat, and similar ventures will continue to be arranged in future years. ◇

Community Notes

Fr Alban

gave a retreat to the Carmelite nuns at St Helens, Lancs, during the first week of Advent. In November he attended the annual novice masters and mistresses meeting which, this year, was held at Belmont Abbey, Hereford.

Fr Abbot

gave a talk on the history of the Benedictines at Nether-ton, Lancs, in our former parish there in October, and he also took part in the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of our former parish at Blyth, Northumberland. At the beginning of October he took our two aspirants for the unveiling of a plaque on the apartment building which has replaced the recently demolished 'Railway Tavern' in Reading where Blessed Dominic Barberi, the Passionist priest who received Blessed John Henry Newman into the church, died in 1849.

Fr Romuald

who suffered a broken hip in September, returned from hospital in October, and is gradually recovering. He lives in the monastery infirmary.

Fr Louis

who also had a spell in hospital is happily recovering too.

Fr Dermot

gave a talk on Spirituality in the Workplace at Hemel Hempstead parish, Herts in September. In November he

attended a four day Young Leaders Forum in Buenos Aires attended by 250 delegates. Participants were drawn from all over the world including, Europe, China, Russia, the Americas and Middle East. The Forum organised by the BMW Stiftung Herbert Quant (BMW Charitable Trust) focused on the new models of entrepreneurship and micro financing for the emerging economies especially those in South America. A full report and photos will appear in the next edition in the next edition of *The Douai Magazine*.

Fr Hugh

gave a talk on the new missal at the parish of Kelvedon, Essex.

Br Anselm

led a workshop on baking at Sacred Heart parish, Flitwick, Beds.

Two postulants

Our two aspirants, Adam Fisher and Lawrence Koppe, became postulants on November 24.

Advent & Christmas

The weather was much milder this year than in previous years, so we had much larger congregations for the Christmas Vigil and Night Mass, and also for the Advent Service of Music and Reflections.

In addition to the usual Carol

Services for various local schools which take place in the Abbey Church each year, this year Beenham Primary School performed their Nativity play in the Abbey Church.

Retreats & Conferences

Besides the usual groups who come regularly for retreats and conferences here, this year we welcomed Catholic students from Kings College, University of London, the *Schola Gregoriana* of Cambridge and the Lay Associates of the Holy Child. A retreat for former pupils of Douai school and their spouses was held during Advent, at which several monks gave talks.

Coloma Choir

The choir of Coloma Convent school, Croydon, sang at Mass on October 16.

Fruit

This year there was a bumper crop of fruit. Because there were no early frosts, raspberries and blackberries continued to fruit until the end of November. Most of the fruit is made into jam by Fr Dermot. We also harvested several pumpkins, which we used for soup. ♦

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