

2012

*75th Anniversary of
Refoundation of
Minster Abbey*



1937-2012 Minster Abbey

Dear Friends,

This past year has brought us many blessings and we would like to share some of our good news with you in this letter. In the coming year we shall be commemorating 75 years since the re-founding of monastic life at Minster! We are planning a number of celebrations to mark this jubilee (please see the end of this letter) and hope that many of our friends will be able to share these events and join us in giving thanks to God for his grace and providence throughout the years! As a special feature of this celebration we have made a DVD of the history of Minster; the soundtrack includes the singing of the sisters. We are also producing a jubilee series of photos of the early years of the community at Minster Abbey.

Sr. M Bernard celebrated her golden jubilee of monastic profession on 21st January, the feast of St Agnes. Abbot Laurence presided at the Jubilee Mass and the community feted Sr. M Bernard. The second part of the celebration was postponed to May, and in glorious sunshine we welcomed many of sister's friends to share our joy.

In February and March, Fr Marcus Holden, our Parish Priest, kindly agreed to give a series of talks on the history of the Old Testament to our Noviciate and Community. Some of us were also able to participate in the events of the first "Week in Celebration of St Augustine" which Father Marcus organised with the Parish at the end of May.

Through the kindness of friends we were privileged to visit the magnificent exhibition of sacred art, "Treasures of Heaven" at the British Museum in October.

In November, Sr. Mary Stephen and Sr. M Bernard travelled to Boarbank in Lancashire to take part in Sr. M. Placid's Diamond Jubilee of Profession. It was a lovely occasion with the chance to catch up with both Sr. M Placid and Sr. M. Lawrence, and friends of the Fernham Community.

Towards the end of the month our Benedictine brothers of St Augustine's Abbey, Ramsgate, re-located to their new monastery at Chilworth near Guildford in Surrey. It was Dom Bede Winslow OSB of St Augustine's who first made the community in St Walburga's, Eichstatt, aware of the property at Minster Abbey. The monks warmly welcomed and supported the founding sisters in 1937 and in the following decades, especially during the war years.

For many years the monks were parish priests in Minster and chaplains to our community. We wish Abbot Paulinus and all our brothers every blessing for the future! Once again we would like to thank our many friends and volunteers for their invaluable help over the course of this year, whether in the garden, the guesthouse, with general maintenance or chauffeuring. A very special "Thank You" to our friend Lewis who worked as our handyman for a number of years, but had to retire due to ill health. We are grateful for all your kindness and keep you all in our special prayers.

The Noviciate Sr. Aelred

We are blessed to have two young women in our novitiate. Sr. Lisa is now into her second year as a novice. Our abbey and guest House kitchens were kept well stocked with various exotic herbs from our little herb garden, to which she has given a new lease of life. Kirsty, who entered as a candidate earlier this year, began her postulancy on the first Sunday of Advent. She attended "Invocations", a weekend for young men and women discerning a vocation, and this was a real source of hope and encouragement for her. The sisters in the Novitiate work with the students from St. Anselm's School, who come to Minster for a "monastic experience" each month. We are now planning a Minster vocations weekend, Palm Sunday weekend 2012. Please spread the word for us!

Some Oblate News Sr. Benedict

We were grateful to Fr Stephen Horton OSB for leading our annual Paschaltide Retreat. The theme was „Art and Meditation“. Some of us attempted some sketching while others preferred to just meditate! We look forward to continuing the theme next year with Fr Stephen and Isabel Glover, an oblate of Ealing Abbey, who is an experienced teacher of meditation.

It was a real joy to welcome Frances Clare Bailess, Lesley Lucy Goldsmith, Maud Felicity Matley and Vincent Basil Matley as Oblates. We have come to know all our new Oblates over the years and each one brings a special gift. Our little Oblate Community is truly an extension of the monastic family“, living the Rule of St Benedict in a unique way.

In October, Christine Michael and I were invited to join part of the Oblate Retreat at Ealing Abbey. It was a blessing for us to share our Benedictine life and to meet another Oblate Community. Whilst in London Christine Michael and I were able to attend the Chaldean Catholic Mass celebrated by Fr Habib; we then went on to share a meal with a local Syrian community. We always feel very welcomed by these vibrant yet suffering Christians of the Middle East. Recently our Oblate Lesley Lucy, her friend Sarah Titchener and the Parish raised a large sum at St Lucy's Fayre here at the Abbey for a community of Catholic Coptic nuns near Alexandria

East West Meeting Sr. Benedict

In June around the feast of the Ascension of the Lord we hosted a conference which focused on the date of Easter. Most of you will know that, due to historical reasons based on varying calendars, the Orthodox East and the Christian West usually celebrate Easter at a different time, often weeks apart. In parts of the world this is a source of particular sadness, and for all of us it is a sign of division.

Professor Richard Price from Heythrop College led a day when we reflected on the origins of this diversity in practise. Sadly, due to the situation in Syria, our friend Archimandrite

Demetrios Charbak had to cancel his trip. Mother Nikola was able to make a presentation on his behalf, and although we felt his absence keenly, the need of our prayer for him and the people of Syria was made even more imperative.

Another topic of the conference was "Universal Restoration". Dr Sebastian Brock kindly joined us and presented the teaching from the writings of Isaac the Syrian. He emphasised St Isaac's firm belief in the mercy of God for even the worst of sinners. Stefanie Hugh-Donovan presented a well-researched paper on the thought of Olivier Clement. We are grateful to all our speakers and those who attended the meeting. It was particularly beautiful to celebrate the feast of the Ascension with our Coptic friends in Margate in the morning before our own Mass here. For many years, we have enjoyed the friendship of the sisters of St Elizabeth's Convent in Belarus. Sr. Maria spoke to us of the work done by her community and showed us a DVD of the origins of the community and their present work. It was very moving to hear her and to learn more of the charitable work for the most disadvantaged. We have their beautiful products on sale in our shop – please do come to see them when you are next in Minster.

Ongoing Formation Sr. Mary Magdalene

At the end of September, I went on a week's conference for Benedictine Monks and Nuns of the Subiaco Congregation in Europe, who had made their Solemn Profession within the last 5-10 years. The purpose was for on-going formation as well as getting to know others who are at the same stage of Monastic life. This took place at Monasterio di Bose, situated in the beautiful hills north of Turin near the mountains of northern Italy, which is an ecumenical monastic community of about 70-80 men and women that began in the 1960's. The theme was „Opening of the Heart“ with an emphasis on Spiritual Accompaniment. The participants were from communities in France, Italy, Spain, Belgium and England, ranging in age from 28 to 50, with an added mixture of nationalities, including African, Polish and Australian. The speakers included members of the Bose community, a Jesuit Priest, an Abbess from an Italian Benedictine Monastery, and a French psychologist. We also were very blessed by having Abbot Bruno Marin, the President of the Subiaco Congregation, with us for part of that time, in which we were able to engage in dialogue with him about many aspects of the monastic life. He very beautifully put everything we discussed into a very positive and dynamic spiritual context. We also met socially with the Bose community, including mealtimes when groups of 6 participants would be joined by 2 or 3 members of the community. This sharing of meals with the guests is a main part of their hospitality. Apart from lectures, dialogues and sharing in small groups, we also went on a pilgrimage to the holy place of Oropa, where we had Mass and climbed one of the mountains that towered above it. My time in Bose was a very enriching experience on many different levels, and I am very grateful to have been given this opportunity to participate in this conference.

Seminarians and Chaplains Sr. Mary Stephen

One aspect of Minster's monastic hospitality is our contact with the Diocesan Seminary. Several young men at various stages of priestly formation have joined us in prayer at the monastic office during retreats for Diaconate and Priestly Ordination and been accompanied by us: Fr Philip Smith, Fr David King, Fr Gerard Hatton, Oladele Craig and Kurt, to name some of them. We retain a special interest in them and welcome them back for 1st Mass with us and regular quiet days after Ordination. Another first Mass at Minster was celebrated by Fr Edward van den Bergh of the London Oratory, a friend (and former pupil) of Sr. M

Stephen. She was present at his Ordination at Brompton Oratory which was truly splendid.
So, another young priest to keep in prayer.
We pray particularly for all our Chaplains who help us greatly with their prayerful presence
and excellent homilies.

With our love and prayers, M Nikola and Community