



Christmas Newsletter 2019

St. Benedict's Priory, The Mount, Cobh, Co Cork

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Dear Friends,

..."Our Lord has made me contemplate, in the Eucharist, his Holy Childhood. He told me I could adore him with certainty as if I were at the crib, because He is really there, in the tabernacle, a little Child, just as in the Crib. And by a marvel of His love, he gives a new extension to this presence by granting it spiritually to the soul who desires it and is unwillingly far from the tabernacle. This grace flows directly from the Eucharist..."

These words penned in a letter of our Foundress, the Servant of God Mother Marie Adele Garnier to her spiritual director in 1887, contain many answers to the question facing you as you walk down the high streets of our towns and cities at this time of year: What is Christmas really about? It is not about the FANTASY of creating happiness through material purchases, bright lights, loud music, and drama; the fantasy of borrowing in order to feel able to do so; the fantasy of everyone coming together to celebrate nothing in particular... Rather it is about REALITY. The reality of God With Us! The reality of his presence, and of a special gift of his presence at this time of year, because of the reality of his birth as man which he wants us to celebrate as the true cause of all our joy. This Christmas we ask Our Lord in faith to make our Eucharistic adoration fruitful by granting to all the faithful a deep experience of the coming of the Child Jesus into our world, and to those who do not believe a longing for the coming of the Prince of Peace.

At this time of year we also look back with thankful hearts, and love to share with you all that the Lord has done with and for us at St. Benedict's Priory. In our last newsletter we advertised our Day of Encounter with the Saints in June.

This day drew about 70 retreatants and was blessed beyond all our hopes and expectations. Most profound and thought provoking talks were given by Prof William A Thomas and a beautiful presentation by John O'Donovan on Little Nellie of





On display : artefacts belonging to Little Nellie of Holy God.

Holy God. The weather, on which practically speaking so much depended, was splendid. The early morning and late afternoon thunderstorms which were predicted made no appearance! Instead we enjoyed only gentle sunshine. Our staff were magnificent, helping us to cater with a barbecue and supplying food and drink throughout the day. Six good priests kindly made themselves available for confessions, and all who attended left spiritually refreshed and uplifted. Each participant went home with a second class relic of Mother Marie Adele. One lady soon had recourse to hers, and obtained what seems to be a miraculous recovery of a potentially cancerous

lesion which had been growing on her neck. Here is part of her testimony:

... "The lesion had become a nasty looking dome shaped growth by this time! The dermatologist said that because the growth was on sun damaged skin, that it could possibly be cancerous but that he would test when he removed it, he also said that it would leave scarring. He was due to remove it...I was very worried. I had in my possession a relic of Mother Adele Garnier and I said the prayer on the relic every night and even put the relic on my skin where the growth was. The day before the surgery I phoned the dermatologist's office to postpone the surgery as the growth was getting smaller and another appointment was arranged...but by this time the growth had disappeared and vanished.... I believe that it was the intercession and the relic of Mother Adele that cured me of this growth without the need of having to have it removed surgically."

Our Days of recollection guided by the spirituality of Mother Marie Adele continue to take place on the last Saturday of each month. Our next one will be on 25th January with the theme "Conversion and Evangelisation". Please contact us for more information.

Latest News on the Tyburn Monks

In our last newsletter we told you of the new venture of two Colombian Priests to be founding members of a new order of monks, closely linked to our Congregation and following the charism and customs handed down to us by our Mother Foundress. On 3rd October they formally began their Novitiate in the presence of our Mother General and Community at the Mother House. They have had some formation at a Benedictine Monastery in England, and will return to Colombia in February to begin establishing their first monastery in Colombia. Please God they will increase and spread abroad as Mother Foundress predicted. Please visit www.tyburnconvent.org.uk for more information.



Fr Benito Maria OSB and Fr Bernardo Maria OSB(L-R)
with Mother General

(The crib scene at the start of this letter was created by Fr Bernado Maria)

Visitors to St Benedict's

We have been very pleased to welcome diverse groups to our monastery including a large Parish group from Germany, a senior citizens' group from Tipperary, some American students on a UCC summer program, a Couples for Christ reunion of American and Irish members, and a group of European Catholic Scouting Leaders. While our retreat house only accommodates up to ten people, we are able to host groups of up to 50 for day visits and retreats. Activities can include Holy Mass, Adoration, one or two talks by the Sisters, walks in the Bible Garden, a sight of "the Admiral's View" from the retreat house balcony. Refreshments and simple meals can be provided. Some groups combine their visit with a tour of the Cathedral, sight-seeing in Cobh town or a trip over to Spike Island. Please contact Mother Prioress to arrange a group visit.

This past year also saw an increase in visits from First Holy Communion and Confirmation classes, and we are very pleased to offer them the opportunity to see faith in action as we speak to them about the choices we have made, why we consecrate ourselves to God, why we pray, and how we go about a life of service to God and neighbour. Our talks usually stimulate discussion about the truths of our Catholic Faith about which many young people are often unsure. We have also been touched to find that teachers have benefitted from the visits, discovering another side to their students and a source of support in trying to communicate values so often and readily rejected by those around them. Here is what one teacher writes:

"I am also grateful for the opportunity to visit your chapel for Adoration. It is wonderful that I can do this in a location that is so close to the school, as it means I can visit at some stage on most school days when I have a free class or a few minutes at lunch time."

Heritage Events

A variety of other events have also taken place over the last 6 months:

During National Heritage Week Tim and Ann McSweeney kindly gave one of their highly researched and interesting local history presentations: Down Memory Lane, Cove-Queenstown-Cobh. As always the audience was delighted by past photos of their beautiful hometown.

On another heritage note, Cobh Branch of the Organisation of National Ex-service personnel and the Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation organised the commemoration of 47 Irish soldiers sacrificed in peace keeping operations in the Lebanon. The ceremony took place on 28th September and centred on the planting of a Cedar of Lebanon in our Bible Garden, beside which a memorial plaque was unveiled. A large crowd attended including T.D. David Stanton and other public representatives.



The Commodore Choir took part as did the Cobh Animation Team. There were standard bearers on parade and the last post was sounded. Guy Jones representing the Lebanon gave an oration in which he thanked the Irish military and Irish Red Cross for their outstanding humanitarian assistance and also explained the significance of the Cedar of Lebanon, with its' many Biblical associations, as a National Symbol.

Bible Garden Restoration Project

Our Gardening group now has four volunteers and together with our staff are determined to complete the project of bringing the Bible Garden back to its' former glory! We are now privileged enough to have a professional horticulturalist and garden designer overseeing the work. The plan for the new year is to begin purchasing some of the Biblical plants which have failed over the years. Perhaps some of you would like to sponsor a plant in memory of a loved one? Please contact Mother Prioress for a plant list.

Progress of Our Appeal

This is the moment to humbly thank you our dear friends and supporters once again for your overwhelming response to our Grand Draw and appeal. We had a record number of tickets returned, with many accompanied by generous gifts. We were particularly touched by the many "widows' mites". The Heart of God was also touched as he saw your good will, and he has now blessed us with a very kind benefactor who, with his own resources and contacts is ensuring that we will have a new boiler installed very soon. This is a big chunk taken out of our fundraising burden, and the new more efficient boiler will make it much easier for us to save for the other restoration works needed on the building such as leaking roof and walls and window repairs. A second great blessing was the invitation of our local SuperValu store to join a community energy grant scheme, whereby our charity could benefit from energy upgrades taking place in the store. The result of our application was that all our light fittings have been changed to LED, which consume far less electricity. This is a big help!

All this has meant that all our appeal funds can now be directed towards the essential installation of a lift for our infirm Sister and guests. So far, again through some generous donations, we have €13,000 in our lift appeal fund. We are not sure yet of a final figure that needs to be raised but it is likely that a lift shaft will have to be built to house the lift, which is itself valued at around €30,000. This gives you some idea of the task still ahead of us. People are making great efforts to help us in different ways, volunteering and publicising the teashop, selling draw tickets, bringing food gifts, one good Priest has even printed 2000 beautiful calendars which he is selling on our behalf. To our benefactors we say: God sees all that you do in secret. If you are struggling financially yourself, please know that we pray for you daily, and that you can be part of our work by uniting your prayers with ours and making the presence of our monastery known among your friends and acquaintances.



Finally we wish everyone a most Blessed Advent and Joyous celebration of Christmas! We look forward to receiving news of your families, joys, and trials which we always enfold in our prayers before the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary.

The Tyburn Nuns at St. Benedict's Priory