

# Quarr Abbey Newsletter

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*The cloister garden in full bloom this Summer*

## **Oasis (Fr. Prior)**

In our rich Western society where everything is available at any time, provided you are ready to pay for it, there seems to be a growing thirst for authenticity. It is at least what comes out from the portion of humanity we monks can observe in our numerous summer visitors. These seem to enjoy direct contact with animals and nature, a peaceful walk through the woodland, resting for a while on a bench in the garden, sitting in silence in the pilgrim chapel or the church and listening quietly to the inner voice, meeting a (hopefully) smiling monk who passes by. Nothing very complicated, really, but it seems to be a luxury to find places where God and man, nature and culture, people of all ages and backgrounds relate harmoniously.

A word kept recurring in a few conversations I had recently with guests or visitors: 'oasis'. As if people had found a spring of water in a desert where to quench a desire or a thirst. The discovery of this source results from a threefold attention.

Attention to nature and care for environment are realities we are getting more and more aware of. The voice of the Catholic Church has been strong in this area for decades, but the recent encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato si*, gives to this concern an unprecedented

importance. Many thanks to our friend Neil May for reflecting on this text in the present newsletter.

Attention to man himself, not with an egoistic preoccupation, but with a new sensitivity for the interior world within, and for others just near us, can be a second step. We easily forget the inner dimension of the human person if we do not have times when we cease jumping from this activity to that. We have a soul. We are a heart. Our true self reveals itself peacefully when we relax and do not feel obliged to play a role nor deliver a performance. Then, we become able to see others in a more considerate and loving perspective. 'Ecology of man' enhances respect for each man and woman as a unique person, created and loved by God, and whose very life is in itself a gift, independent of the benefits it provides or the loving support it requires.

Finally, attention to God emerges unsurprisingly as the heart of any quest for authenticity of life. In a sense we could/should begin with it. It may be a characteristic of our times that our urgent concerns for the preservation of nature lead us to realise the even more urgent need we have to foster the treasure of the human person and to encounter personally and without fear God our Creator.