

## Quarr and Chile

### Fr Gregory tells the story of the French Congregation's foundation in Chile 1938-48

When Dom Tissot arrived at Quarr as Conventual Prior in March 1937 the possibility of a monastic foundation in Chile was being discussed, since there were two Chilean monks in the community. One of them, Dom Pedro, on visits his native land had been encouraged to further the enterprise. In spite of the fact that recruitment at Quarr had been good since the early 1930s, there was insufficient Chapter support to proceed with the matter. After discussions between Dom Tissot and the Abbot of Solesmes, Dom Cozien, it was agreed that the foundation should be undertaken by the French Congregation, as the present Congregation of Solesmes was then styled.

A rescript was obtained from Rome authorising the foundation, but stipulating that there should be a sufficient number of monks to ensure regular observance. So it was that within a few days of his abbatial blessing on 25th January 1938 Abbot Tissot and Dom Pedro Subercaseaux Errazuriz left Southamton for Chile. They made a brief visit to the monastery at Rio and ended their voyage at Buenos Aires, where they spent a short time at the Silos foundation of San Benito before taking the train to Santiago.

Dom Pedro's family and friends, all strongly Catholic, were enthusiastic about the foundation and a house and site had been offered which would allow a start to be made. Dom Tissot returned to Quarr while Dom Pedro remained in Chile to make preparations for the foundation. In due course he was joined by two monks of Solesmes, Dom Berard, who was appointed superior, and Dom Blazy, cellarer. Dom Desrocquettes, as related in the last QAN, arrived from Quarr and a lay brother from one of the Dutch houses of the Congregation completed the founding community. Dom Blazy had a little car, which greatly facilitated his business in the capital, but they had hardly established the regular life when the war broke out. Dom Blazy, a 'politecnicien' and an

artillery officer, was mobilised and set off for France only, once there, to find the war over for the French army.

Meanwhile the community in Chile adjusted as best they might. Life in the little community was less formal than at Quarr or Solesmes: when the refectory server spilled some food on the floor he simply opened the door, allowing the dog to come and lick it up, and then retire contented.

In 1943 The young Chilean monk of Quarr, Dom Eduardo Lagos, began his homeward journey via neutral Ireland and Portugal to reinforce the little community, but there were no candidates for the monastic life in Chile. This had to be reported to Dom Cozien by Dom Tissot on his return from conducting the canonical visitation in 1948. The news came just as preparations were being finalised for the foundation of Fontgombault: no additional commitments could be accepted. Hence, Chile had to be abandoned by the French Congregation. Dom Pedro, Dom Eduardo, and the lay brother were permitted to remain. Help, however, came to this beleaguered remnant from Germany in 1949. This occurred through the meeting in Brazil of Dom Desrocquettes with Dom Gordan of the great Benedictine abbey at Beuron.



*The present community in Santiago*

Benedictine monks are still in Las Condes, Santiago in an austere 'modern' concrete abbey built in the 1960s. It belongs to the Cono Sur (South American) Congregation. So the European connections with Solesmes and Beuron have long gone but they laid the foundation for Benedictine life in Chile.