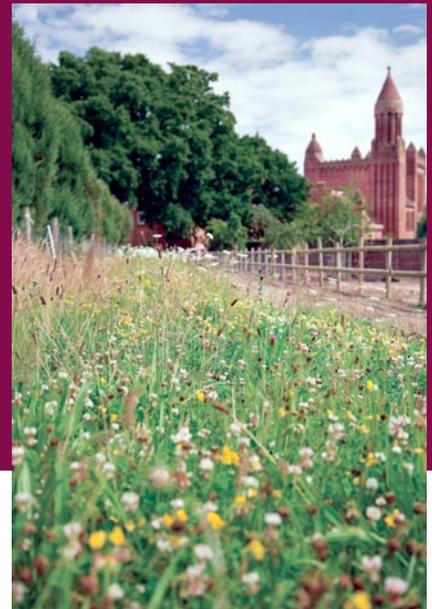


Quarr Abbey

NEWSLETTER

Issue 23
Easter 2019



The Power of the Cross

Jesus is on the cross as the One who loves, and that “to the end”. If it were not for this love, nobody would ever have looked at the cross. But beyond the unutterable suffering we can only gaze at with shame, we perceive the overwhelming love of Christ. He gave so much love, and such true love, that from His death a new life was made possible. The divine gift with which we unite ourselves in love on Good Friday is the seed which we entrust to the earth in hope on Holy Saturday and which we harvest in faith in the resurrection on Easter Day.

The power of the cross is the strength of love. Love makes of the cross the strongest reality in the world. It is far stronger indeed than all weapons of war because it is given precisely at the place where everything seems to be ruined and destroyed. The power of hatred stops with death and it dissolves in its silence. The power of divine love takes up from this very point. It passes through the whole process of death and it opens a way further. Like the first bird beginning to sing after the bomb in Nagasaki, the Resurrection is not the utterance of a loud cry, but the small sweet voice of love whose victory has no need to be noisy. Each time a voice begins to sing from the silence, it celebrates, in a sense, the strength of love, the power of the cross and the reality of the resurrection.

The power of the cross abides for ever. Once for all, love manifested itself. We can in any situation, at any time, connect with the cross and find in it the strength we need in order to fight and to suffer, to give and to be taken, to live and to die. We can rely on the cross as on the great sign given by God Himself that neither trials nor any other power will ever be able to separate us from His love.

This is true for each of us as individuals, but also for our families and communities. The Church relies entirely on the power of the cross. That is why persecuted Christians and martyrs, but also the sick and all those who suffer, are at the very heart of its life.

The peace of Quarr, which so many visitors are grateful for, has no other root than the love manifested on the cross. A visit to the abbey is not really complete if we do not let ourselves be challenged by the cross in what we think and believe; if we do not give ourselves a chance of encountering the power of the cross and the love of Jesus. So, let us be silent for a while and gaze at the cross which conveys to us the definitive word on God's love.

+Abbot Xavier

Friends of Quarr

The Friends have now raised nearly £8,000 towards The Accessible Paths Project and continue to fundraise for the project. The 2019 calendars raised £1,107.

The project involves scraping off the gravel from the paths that extend from the church to the Visitor Centre joining the Breedon Gravel that already exists on the path from the main car park. After discussion with the listing officer, the Breedon Southern Limited, Matt Noyce the head gardener and Groundsell Hard Landscaping the total project will cost in the region of £18,000.

We are pleased to report that we have raised nearly £11,000 towards the project.

Breedon Gravel holds a Royal Warrant and is costly but provides a finished surface that is not only aesthetically pleasing but makes it much easier for wheelchair users and pushchairs.

A board detailing the project is currently being designed and will be placed outside the church. The central bed in front of the church will be removed at the request of the Monastic Community and with the permission of the listing officer.

Please consider making a donation, as this will enable us to finish this project more quickly.

We are grateful to Orpheus Singers for their help in raising funds for the project by giving a concert in the abbey church on Saturday 6th July 2019, details will be publicised nearer the date.

Continued on next page

Friends of Quarr

Continued from previous page

We are also organising an Easter Retreat on Saturday 30th March; the programme for the Retreat can be viewed on the website, outside the church and on the Friends notice board in the Teashop.

The title of the Retreat is 'The Paschal Mystery'. The Retreat starts with Mass at 10am and Abbot Xavier and Br Duncan will be giving the talks. The Retreat on the 1st December 2018 was very well attended with 35 people from all over the Island and some from the mainland and we hope to welcome a similar number for the 30th March.

For all enquiries regarding the Friends and our events please contact: chair. friends@quarr.org

DECEMBER 11th The Advent ferial mass for today was replaced by a requiem mass for our dear friend Neil May. His recent death following major surgery was a great shock to all his many friends, but especially, of course, to his wife, Lili and their five children. Fr. Abbot and Fr. Brian were able to be present at his deathbed, and Fr. Brian also at his funeral. But the whole community wanted to remember him before God, and offer some solace to his family and friends. Lili and her son, Eddie were able to be present at Quarr today, together with many of our staff, oblates and friends with whom Neil had come into contact.

Quarr Abbey Chronicle

Recent Events in the life of the Abbey

Fr. Abbot presided and preached, and we all sang the traditional chants of the Roman Rite which implore eternal rest and perpetual light for the departed. After the Mass all proceeded to the Archway Meeting Room for refreshments, and the chronicler was struck by the admiration which Neil had aroused in so many people from such different backgrounds. But he was not surprised. Neil's last letter to the community bore witness, not only to his clear-sighted awareness of death's nearness, but also to a strong and unquenchable spirit of Christian faith.

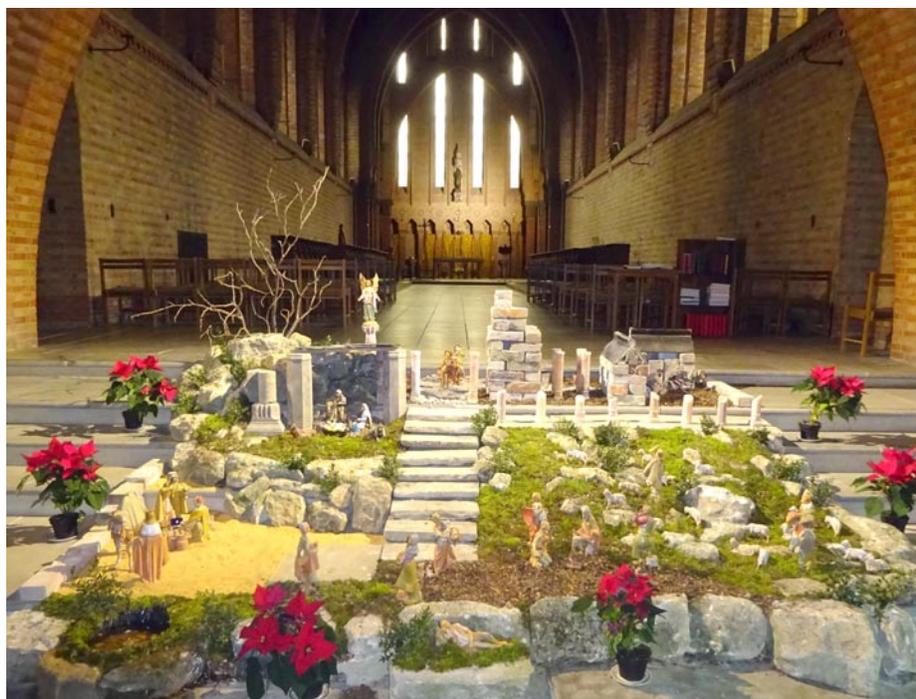
DECEMBER 18th The Christmas party for Quarr Abbey staff and volunteers is now so much an annual fixture that it is starting to acquire a quasi-liturgical form. It begins with the informal gathering at the Teashop at 1pm. It opens with words and a prayer spoken by Father Abbot. The discreet and ever helpful service of the Teashop acolytes under the watchful eye of Tracy as M.C. ensures that everything

is where it should be, when it should be. And then, of course, the ritual eating and drinking and lively conversation provides a good reason why the rite should be repeated again next year. It would seem only too predictable, only it isn't. It is a measure of how much Quarr owes to so many hard working people, that each year they come together to make such a friendly, cheering and festive celebration.

DECEMBER 23rd The popularity of our annual Carol Service led to some changes this year. Our musical director, Linda Filby-Borrett wanted to communicate more directly with those whose seats were in the nave of the Church and whose view of the singers was obstructed by a flight of steps and all sitting at choir level. We experimented with singers and musicians standing in different locations for different pieces, hopefully increasing the involvement of many who might otherwise have seen little. But there was no need to experiment with the music itself. Linda's professionalism ensured that her "Voices of the Isle of Wight" gave their best when she asked it of them.

CHRISTMAS The Nativity Scene which sprawls across the centre of the nave steps at Christmas is, more or less, the same each year. But the Chronicler does try to introduce a few variations on the well worn themes. So much depends upon what is left around in the farmyard and just happens to strike his eye. This year, some square paving slabs provided the idea of some steps and a terrace for the little town of Bethlehem, and they, in their turn, suggested a brick built tower next to the ruined colonnade and the blacksmith's shop. The farmyard also provided a good supply of moss, essential for a field of grazing sheep. But the figures were reassuringly the same; the young shepherd boy has just caught sight of his first angel, and shades his eyes to see the better; a wise man, too distant yet to see anything at all, leads his camel to water; and another shepherd lies down and sleeps, oblivious to all- or does his heart wake? This figure above all intrigues me! What does he mean?-is it forgetfulness of God, or idle dreams, or is it the most profound interior vision? It is a question we must ask of ourselves too.

FEBRUARY 6th It is always pleasant to receive monastic visitors who stay for a longer period. There is an opportunity to get to know them and something about



other communities, and an extra pair of hands is always useful. Joseph George is a familiaris at Clear Creek Abbey in the United States and he stayed four months at Quarr. We learned a lot about life at the flourishing foundation of Fontgombault lived among the heat and the cold and the teeming animal life of Oklahoma. Joseph didn't meet any rattlesnakes on the Island, but was able to keep many miles of our hedgerows in trim.

Fr. Beda is a Brazilian monk and priest of Egmond Abbey in the Netherlands. He stayed two months with us. He was a great help in choir, his quiet, but melodious voice providing steady support for all of us. His gentle and humorous presence at recreation was a tonic and prepared us well for a short visit from his Abbot, Rt. Revd. Dom Gerard Mathijssen in January, a lively and engaging man, who has been superior of his community for almost forty years. They all departed leaving the desire that they come again.

FEBRUARY 8th The Sacristy floor had certainly seen better times: decades of wear and worse had taken its toll. It was therefore a surprise to see that only two days rolled out a new blue carpet and introduced a ceremonial law instructing the thurifer to stand outside and await the blessing of incense there.

The Sacristy also now holds the magnificent sanctuary hangings made by our oblate and friend, Julia Trahair, a sempstress of rare and ingenious gifts. She is possessed of a spirit which is fluid, expansive, vari-coloured, evocative, graphic, imaginative, and truly Catholic and she has now produced six wonderful embroidered designs for use at the greater feasts of the liturgical year. We owe her a great debt of gratitude.

FEBRUARY 9th In the morning Fr. Abbot and Fr. Nicholas went to St. Cecilia's Abbey in Ryde for the Solemn Profession of Sister Anne, and in the afternoon the whole community went down to celebrate First Vespers of the Solemnity of St Scholastica, the sister of our Holy Father Benedict. We first gathered in the large parlour for a festive tea in honour of the newly professed sister. Our postulant, Rory, as the newest arrival was eagerly questioned by many of the sisters. Tea ended abruptly, with the bell, the signal for the Work of God, and all made their way to the church for the divine office.



The monks sat in the sanctuary, the nuns in their accustomed stalls in choir, Fr. Abbot intoned the solemn "Deus in Adiutorium" and Vespers began. It was unrehearsed, but the texts and melodies were largely familiar; only the alternation of low and high, masculine and feminine voices was unexpected, a refreshing summons to hear the ever new Word, given to mankind, given back to God.

FEBRUARY 9th – 20th The bookbinders took over the Archway Meeting Room for two days for a promotional event. February might seem an unlikely time

to choose, but a succession of bright Spring-like days brought a good number of visitors out and not a few brought books to be bound. Tracy, our commercial manager, created some attractive information panels for display, and Fr. Nicholas and Simon, our bookbinders were on hand to talk about their craft and accept commissions. Bookbinding intrigues a lot of people – we have all handled books and their bindings – and a selection of fascinating and beautiful bookbinding tools prompted many questions. This is an event which will surely be repeated.

FEBRUARY 23rd The Archway Meeting Room hosted a study day for three young poets, all of whom once took part in the Intern programme at Quarr. James Coghill, Blake Everitt and Sam Davidson honed the skills of their craft under the tutelage of James Arthur, the North-American poet who is currently a visiting fellow at Exeter College, Oxford. In the evening all four poets gave a public reading of some of their work in the Abbey Church. Some fifty or sixty people attended the event which was the first of its kind at Quarr. And the number of books sold at the end of the evening clearly showed that the poets had impressed many with their way with words.



On Tuesday and Wednesday, June 25 and 26 2019, Fr Ian Ker will give 5 conferences on the life and thought of G.K. Chesterton here at Quarr.

Father Ian is an emeritus Senior Research Fellow at Blackfriars, Oxford and a member of the theology faculty. He has taught both English literature and theology at universities in Britain and the United States. He is the author/editor of 20 books on Bl John

Henry Newman. His books include John Henry Newman: A Biography, The Catholic Revival in English Literature 1845-1961, G. K. Chesterton: A Biography, and Newman on Vatican II. He holds three honorary doctorates from British, Canadian, and American universities.

See website (www.quarrabbey.org) under 'New and Events' for registration and further details.

Requiem Mass for Neil May

Quarr Abbey, 11th December 2018

Homily by Abbot Xavier

“The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God”. About fifty years before Christ’s birth, a Jewish scholar with a Greek culture was meditating in the Book of Wisdom on the paradox of the death of righteous men. If they were righteous, should not they be especially cared for by God and so live long, if not for ever? - Yes, he answered. They do live for ever. They leave the present life as some point. But they have already reached a peace which goes beyond the boundaries of physical death. “Their hope is full of immortality”. They are “in the hand of God”. Jesus confirms this teaching. “No one” he says “is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (Jn 10:30). And when about to die on the Cross, He cries with a loud voice: “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!”

Our dear Friend Neil was using the same language during our last conversation just a few weeks ago, at the beginning of last November. He was at peace. He really was in the hand of God.

I met Neil on the very first day of my arrival at Quarr in 2013 and I had the grace to visit him, together with Fr Brian, on the last day of his earthly journey. The occasion we met in was a Finance Committee Meeting. This strange sport, on which we seem to be so keen at the Abbey and for which we gather every three months, consists in dealing with many figures and diverse plans and projects. Neil was not afraid of figures – even of pages of figures – but he was very good at looking through them and leading our gaze always further. He insisted: there must be a ‘vision’. Money, and the process of making it, must at no time become a master, or, worse, a god (or rather an idol) you become enslaved to. I guess he loved Jesus’ advice: “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” (Lk 16:9). Neil indeed preferred friends to money, and we used to joke that he was better at spending it – his and ours – than at making it. But he was so good at

making friends that nobody could bother him with that. And it is so rare, and so good, to meet someone with a “vision”, with the qualities of those the Old Testament called “seers” -which is another word for “prophet”. He had a message to deliver: about buildings, of course, but not only; it was about humanity and our future; about the sustainability of our enterprises and of the whole world economy and finances; above all, about the meaning we to give to the things we do, as individuals and as a society: Who are we working with? Who are we doing things for? How will what we intend to do bring life – more life, not more money?

It is the role of the prophet to speak and to exhort, and Neil fulfilled it faithfully. It was not boring or painful, partly because he was sensible, articulate, very convinced, and rather convincing, but mainly because he was friendly. He was very considerate: he had indeed a real ‘consideration’ for all; all felt ‘considered’ by him, esteemed, valued, and listened to. And this remarkable consideration, or attention, was the first step toward friendship. His heart was open to all. Friendship was for him the normal flourishing of human relationships – not a luxury for the happy few.

From this prophet and friend, it is impossible to say how much Quarr received over the years. He was the good friend of the difficult days and the good friend of the happier ones.

As a genuine friend, however, Neil would rather stress that he received much from the Abbey, which he first visited in 1981, and then on a regular basis from 2002, becoming very actively involved with projects and persons. What was the seer and the friend looking for at Quarr? What was this man of intense desire, great vision and deep expectation longing for? What, or whom did he find at Quarr? -I would say he felt at home in a Benedictine house, and rightly so. St Benedict insists we should verify that those who want to join the community and become monks “are really seeking God”. With all his soul, Neil



was a God-seeker. He was a man fascinated by God’s mysterious presence at the heart of human life. The mystical authors of the Christian traditions, but also those of India and Islam, were his masters and his gurus. He was indeed very much a disciple, ready to listen and to ask, with a great reverence for those who are called to dedicate their life to God – although I am confident he had no illusions as to the limitations and shortcomings of the monks. He felt at home in a place where seekers are welcome, where the certitudes of the faith do not impede the never finished questioning and the confrontation with the mystery. Is not God always beyond what we think of Him, what we do for Him, what we feel and understand of Him? And, at the same time, is not God always deeper, more intimate, hidden to us in ourselves, but continually beckoning, inviting, knocking at the door of our heart?

But what about evil, and suffering, and death? Was it possible to give to that too some form of meaning? Had they a place in a sustainable life and a global vision? The question was not an abstract one for Neil. Every day, he woke up thinking of his son Benny, missing Benny, taking on board the question mark of his early death. I have the impression that the last two years, which were so fraught with sufferings for Lilli and for Neil, but also received as such a gratuitous present, led Neil to a deep peace on this matter. He wrote to me in September :

While, objectively, my situation might be worrying, I feel no anxiety at all for most of the time and in fact rather the opposite.

I had a rather glum time towards the end of last week on my birthday, but then I realised very strongly as I was contemplating Death deeply and emotionally, that all my life God has been leading me and guiding me, and it is only because I am so stubborn and stupid that I have not understood this. This illness and this second time of dying are God's way of asking me to reconsider my life, to repent and to be born again, from above. I then decided to give up my work at UCL and start a new life, one in which I focus on the things that are most important, particularly my relationship with God and my family, but also a new way of living and working in the world. This work is about the unveiling of Truth or Being, something which I feel called and able to do.

When the women came to Jesus' tomb on the first day of the week, the Angel told them the good news of the resurrection. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" There is a new life. It is given us through a new birth towards which the Father does not cease to lead us, also through the passage we call death. So, we can put death -those of our loved ones, ours- into the hand of God who will care for that, too. When it is done -and we had better do it every day -, it just remains to live in the present time, with immense gratitude, to celebrate life in its beauty and with its limitations. Life received as a present becomes a presence: "the unveiling of Truth". Neil, I think I may say, was fully and simply present. This presence of his, made of receiving the gift of life as a new birth and looking at the One who gives life, was stronger than death, because this presence is the reality of what we call, with a word too much used but absolutely essential: love. And love is eternal. There are people who, by their lives, really give sense to the word: love. I think Neil was one of them.

Quarr Abbey is a Catholic community of Benedictine monks of the Solesmes Congregation. If you wish to contact us please write to guestmaster@quarr.org or Quarr Abbey, Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 4ES. Our website address is www.quarrabbey.org

Neil May (Sept 20 1962 – Nov 12 2018)

On November 12, 2018, one of Quarr's dearest and long time friends, Neil May died following a major operation on his aorta. He was only 56 and in his relatively short life he has made a profound impact on a wide variety of people, through his family and personal life, his work, his writings, his general challenging and loving engagement with people in so many sectors. One such sector was with us, the monks, guests, employees, volunteers and friends of Quarr Abbey.

Neil first visited Quarr in 1981 as a young 19 year old. Having completed his A levels in the Classics, in Greek and Latin, monastic life had a deep appeal for him. He travelled to India for a few months, during which he spent time at Fr. Bede Griffiths' ashram. While there, and again later at Heythrop College, Neil discussed his desire to become a monk with Philip Sheldrake, well known author and now professor of theology at Cambridge. Philip encouraged Neil to visit Quarr, which he did for the first time in May of 1981. However, he went to Oxford and read modern history. There he met Lilli, his wife to be, though after a gap of several years and another visit to India, this time as a Commonwealth Scholar to study Anthropology. He also became absorbed in Hindu thought, a religion which is always about God, man and nature. Although a Christian, Neil remained inspired by Hindu thought for the remainder of his life. For him "Nature and the world are not lifeless resources just for human consumption, but contain the knowledge as well as the beauty and the joy and the sorrow that we need to understand ourselves and grow as individuals and as a people, in fulfilment of our destiny here in this world". This is why Neil was so fascinated with natural materials.

After returning from India, he worked as a building labourer for 4 years, before setting up his own company – Neil May Builders – and later his company Natural Building Technologies. As a labourer, working mainly with his hands, Neil discovered he had a body of knowledge which he hadn't learnt through reason or reading, but by doing. In running NBT he gained an enormous amount of knowledge on buildings in general, both from scientific and philosophical perspectives, and their impact on the environment. He continued to develop

his understanding in particular of buildings, people and the environment. He was not at all against modern science – he and I once took the time to study Richard Feynman's little work on QED (quantum electrodynamics), and this connected with thoughts gleaned from the Catholic medieval Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart (medieval mysticism was another passion in his life – he was a member of the Eckhart Society). But he felt strongly that there should be a "more holistic and reciprocal understanding of the world and of nature." He opposed strongly any hint of an objectifying and utilitarian treatment of nature (along the lines of, eg Sir Francis Bacon) because, as he said, "once we start treating nature like that, then we start looking at other people also as resources to be controlled, manipulated, exploited for our human ends."

Neil and Lilli married in 1989 and were blessed with 5 children. However, he never lost his interest in monastic life. At Oxford he was known variously as "Renaissance Man" and the "Mad Monk"! In 2002, he began coming again regularly to Quarr Abbey. This was when I first met him. Filled with his interests in spirituality, theology, philosophy, science, the arts, music, buildings, nature, horticulture, woodland management, anthropology, monasticism, poetry, aesthetics, business and finance matters, energy considerations ... this list could be much added to ... Neil brought with him a tremendous force of enthusiasm and energy which is extremely rare in any individual. And of course he found at Quarr a ground well suited for his inspirational ideas. In fact, being a monastery, we were already living a kind of life style much attuned to his outlook. One of his constant refrains was for the need to "do things in a Benedictine manner." He engaged with us wholeheartedly, this despite his many other responsibilities - his expertise work on moisture in buildings, his involvement with founding or participating in the foundation of an impressive multitude of groups and societies, including the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance. He began by giving our community some talks, generally centred on nature and the environment. At the time we were endeavouring to develop our "Heritage Project" – which we called "The Two



Abbeys Project” – developing our site consisting of our monastic buildings and a ‘Scheduled Ancient Monument’ - the ruins of an old Cistercian Abbey dated to 1132 – and 200 acres of land some of which is woodland stretching to the north coast of the Isle of Wight. Serving on various committees – the Quarr Heritage Committee, Buildings Committee, Finance Committee and being very instrumental in starting the Friends of Quarr, the work culminated in the award of an HLF grant for £2.2million. Neil was keenly aware of the importance of learning from the past (as evidenced in his 2017 STBA paper “The Future of the Past”), maintaining values which today are being eroded – beauty, silence, important relationships between people, buildings and the environment, learning from nature, spirituality, hospitality, culture and the arts – and of course these are all proper to the values of a Benedictine monastery which we were eager to maintain and have flourish in our heritage plans. Throughout all this work, and indeed up until the time of his death, Neil has been like an ever present ‘father’ to inspire and support with his burning enthusiasm and insights, but never to dominate or control. Although Neil’s physical presence is no longer with us, his inspiration will continue to give new light and life, as we endeavour to make progress in our vision for Quarr that Neil so strongly believed in.

Two events had a most profound impact on Neil’s life and that of his family. The first of these was the tragic death,

following an accident at home, of his third son, 12 year old Benny (named after St Benedict), on May 10 2007. Neil wrote much of his feelings and experiences on their great loss. These few words cannot do justice to the beautiful profusion of literary and poetical reflections this elicited from him, some of which were written, amidst sorrows and joys, tears and laughter, during his stays at Quarr. Mostly, it made him realize how blessed he and his family were. Life became intensely more real for him, “that every one and everything is precious and worthy of being loved.” Everything was now put into a different perspective, that of the love and truth he and his family experienced through Benny’s death. Naturally this all helped Neil grapple with such questions as: “Why am I alive? What am I? What is the purpose of this creation? These are not questions to be answered in logic ... They have to be answered in every part of the self and in the timelessness of eternity ... I realize now that all sorrow comes from love. It is the great risk we take when we really care for others. It is the great price we pay for being fully human. But who would stop loving? Not me. The only way I can deal with this terrible burden of love is by seeking meaning, ultimate meaning.” This would be the trajectory Neil progressed on more intensely for the remainder of his life.

The second life-changing event occurred for Neil in November 2016 when he almost died from an aortic dissection. An emergency operation was not entirely successful, but gave him two more years

of life. During this time he withdrew a lot from his many activities and spent more time with his family, while resting, reading and writing. He managed to complete his STBA paper “The Future of the Past” on how we can learn from the past in particular with respect to buildings, sustainability and heritage. This was a culmination of thought over many years of work and research. The second paper entitled “The Delusion of Modernity and the Way back to Being” was a first draft of again many years of philosophical thought and his views on “how an individual or society is enabled to participate in Being, also understood as Reality or Truth.” He became more keenly aware of his own spiritual journey, to the extent that in the last months of his life he fully embraced the prospect of his death. His last visit to Quarr was on Oct 30th last year, staying for All Saints, and departing on All Souls Day, just 10 days before he died. We all found him in great spirits, full of joy, yet fully aware and even anticipating the likelihood of his death. This was evident too in his writings, especially his poetry, as the following lines on God’s Mercy illustrate:

In time we have to suffer to be saved,
To be dissolved entirely without trace
In the acid of life, in undiluted Truth,
So that finally, becoming nothing
We can enter at last
Through His mercy, His grace,
The infinity of God’s being
To which everything returns.

Neil will certainly be greatly missed at Quarr by all of us – monks, employees, volunteers, friends, guests, visitors – all who knew him, knew him above all else as a friend. At each of his visits, it was very clear that his time was for others, including especially his time for the Lord in prayer. His presence always fostered a unity among us. He would engage with us monks on theological, philosophical and scientific matters – Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, Heidegger, and Ibn ‘Arabi were his favourites - as well as on personal and family matters But he would also make sure to engage personally with our employees. They knew he had a brilliant mind, saw him as hard working and compassionate, making everyone feel important, right down to the person pushing the broom! Although Neil’s physical presence is no longer with us, his inspiration will continue to give new light and life.

Fr. Brian Kelly

A Monastic Bindery

Fr. Nicholas Spencer and Simon Norris

In the ancient world books as we know them now did not really exist. Written records were usually preserved on stone tablets or papyrus scrolls. While the book as we know it, the Codex, perhaps cannot be acclaimed as an invention of the Christian Church certainly the Church was responsible for the huge growth in the use of this type of book.

From the earliest times communities of Benedictine monks had libraries for the study of theology and philosophy was a key element in the monks life. Also of course there was the need for service books, at least a Bible and books for the monastic cantors. Most of these books were painstakingly copied in the monastic Scriptorium and then these were bound in beautiful leather bindings.

Thus throughout the so called Dark Ages and the Medieval period until the invention of printing the monasteries of western Europe were at the center of the bookbinding craft.

Even after the invention of printing the bindery was a very important part of the library. Printing enabled a great expansion in the number of volumes that a monastic library could hold but these volumes needed to be bound and kept in good repair.

When the Abbey of St. Pierre of Solesmes came into exile on the Isle of Wight they brought with them not only a big library but also the presses and tools needed to set up a bindery. The bindery was there to serve the monastic library, to bind journals and manuscripts and to repair

existing volumes. Generally the money for materials for the bindery came out of the library budget and it was the monastic librarian who instructed the bindery what books need to be bound.

This was the position at Quarr when Abbot Cuthbert Johnson was elected Abbot in 1996. He saw that the library budget was too small to cover the cost of new books and the repair needs of a big library. With great vision he separated the bindery from the library. He created our wonderful existing bindery and opened the bindery as a commercial business. By taking commissions from outside clients the bindery would be able to raise money so that the needs of the library could be met without taking money from the small library budget.

Until that point the bindery had been served by a series of skillful monk bookbinders. In 1996 the bookbinder was Dom George Henderson. Father George had learnt the craft partly by working alongside the binders of our sister monastery of St. Benedict at Vaals in Holland. Father George was a binder of great skill but in 1996 he was advancing in age and also held the very responsible job of monastic tailor. To help expand the bindery Abbot Cuthbert appointed Brother Nicholas to the team. Brother Nicholas knew nothing about binding and it soon became clear that Father George had too many other responsibilities to do much teaching. The bindery was very lucky in gaining the help of Mr. Malcolm Payne, a retired bookbinding tutor, who offered to come in three days a week to teach the craft. Later Brother Nicholas was joined by Brother Duncan. Over time several others joined the Bindery including another retired bookbinder Mr. Derek Peer. Both Mr. Payne and Mr. Peer became very good friends of the Community and their contribution to the bindery was immense.

Because of the nature of the bindery it was decided to concentrate on trying to attract commissions to restore old books rather than to bind journals. This fitted in well with the bindery's internal purpose to keep Quarr's own library in good repair. Over the years the Bindery undertook many interesting jobs. These included the

repair and restoration of books both in leather and in cloth but also the creation of new leather visitor books and albums.

Some of these books enabled the binders to decorate the books with gold decoration and leather onlays and inlays.

With the passage of time Mr. Payne died and Mr. Peer was not able to continue his very valuable work, although he is very much still a great friend of the Community. Also the Community is now smaller and both Brother Duncan and Father Nicholas have quite heavy responsibilities elsewhere, although Father Nicholas is still very much involved.

Again the Community has been very lucky. Mr. Simon Norris retired early from his career and has joined us as a contract worker in the Bindery. He has, already, become a bookbinder of great skill. With his entry into the bindery it was decided that Quarr should seek to undertake any usual bookbinding work. We still spend most of our time repairing and restoring old books for many people on the island and throughout the country. We also will create books to order according to the clients wishes as well as binding magazines and journals.

Since 1996 the Bindery has expanded from a small workshop seeking to serve the needs of the library to a larger operation which seeks to undertake all normal bookbinding work for anyone. Yet it is still a monastic workshop. All the work is done by hand and is very suited to the silent meditative nature of monastic work.

In the Bindery Quarr seeks to preserve the ancient craft of bookbinding, where it was largely developed, in a monastic setting.

We are very happy to hear from anyone who may wish to have a book restored, rebound or a new book created.

Bookbinding is a wonderful very satisfying craft and Quarr is very happy that we have been able offer this service to those outside the monastery.

You can contact the Bindery on bindery@quarr.org. The bindery team is always willing to discuss your needs to see if we can help.

If you would like to join the Friends of Quarr please email the Chairman, Dr Rebecca Ashton: chair.friends@quarr.org or you can download a membership form from the Friends' webpage on the Quarr Abbey website 'support' tab.





The Mingling of the Flesh and the Spirit: Saint Irenaeus on the Eucharist

Irenaeus was probably from Smyrna in Asia Minor, since as very young man he had known Polycarp, bishop of the city for many years. Polycarp, in his turn, had known the apostle John, and had been honoured by a letter from the great martyr Ignatius in the early years of the second century. Irenaeus himself probably spent some years in Rome, but had already been living in Lyons for some time when in 177 the persecution broke out which removed the bishop, Pothinus. Irenaeus had been sent by the church with letters to Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome, and on his return was elected to succeed Pothinus.

Like many of his flock, Irenaeus was a man of Greek culture: he quotes Homer and Plato in his extant works, but his pastoral work was mainly conducted in the local Celtic language. He used Greek for his magisterial writings against the heresies of his time and in his brief exposition of the faith: *A Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. Since the heretics are today known collectively as “gnostics”, ie “the knowing” it was vital that Irenaeus set out the credentials of the church for claiming that what was taught really came from Our Lord Jesus Christ through the apostles. Gnosticism is elitist: salvation is reserved for those who possessed a superior degree of knowledge. It is syncretist: it incorporates all religions into a single hotchpotch. It is dualist: it identifies the material with what is evil and attributes material and spiritual creation to different origins. Irenaeus saw that a true understanding of the divine plan of salvation was the antidote to these speculations. Irenaeus’ response to the heretics is realist: No human being can attain perfection except by continual

growth in the Holy Spirit. It is scriptural: he uses the Scriptures, with some 2,000 references to confute heresy. It is traditional: it accords with the teaching of the Apostles received from Christ.

Irenaeus states that ‘the oblation of the Church, which the Lord taught us to offer all over the world, is considered by God to be a pure sacrifice and is pleasing to him. He does not need our sacrifice, but one who offers is himself glorified by the fact of his offering, if his gift is accepted. It shows, after all, the honour and the piety we render the King, and it is the gift the Lord wishes us to offer in all simplicity and innocence: If you offer your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar and go and be reconciled first with your brother and then come and offer your gift.’ It is right to make God offerings, acknowledging we are creatures, and by our docility sanctifying what we offer. Irenaeus continues by asking: How can the heretics have the certitude that the bread of the Eucharist is the Body of their Lord, and the cup his Blood unless they say that he is the Son of the Author of the world. Again, how can they say that the flesh goes to corruption and has no part in life, while it is nourished by the Body of the Lord and by his Blood? As for us, our way of thinking is in accord with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist also confirms our way of thinking. For we offer to Him what is His own, announcing in a coherent way the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our

bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, since they have the hope of resurrection.

Later, Irenaeus returns to this central doctrine Our Lord took the bread, fruit of the earth, a product of material creation and proclaimed it to be his body. He took the cup which received the Word of God and became Eucharist to nourish our flesh and blood, preparing us for resurrection to eternal life. We do not have eternal life of ourselves, just as we do not have bodily life of ourselves. We know that our bodies have to be dissolved in the earth, but we believe that this utter ultimate humiliation of the flesh is only the prelude to the greatest of God’s gifts, eternal life. Eternal life is God’s gift to his children, to those who approach God with a right attitude, the awareness of our utter dependence on God at every moment.

Irenaeus alludes to the Eucharist as often as is opportune making practical applications of his theological insights. For all Christians are invited to the receive the Body and Blood of Christ, the greatest of the privileges of children of God. Elitism has no place. The elements of the Eucharist are taken from creation, they are material: they are offered to God as representing the whole of creation. Dualism has no place in Christianity. The incarnation and the Eucharist are the most powerful confutations of dualism. Syncretist? The Eucharist is specifically Christian.

Fr. Gregory Corcoran

Sister Anselma Scollard of St. Cecilia’s Abbey, Ryde has recently published a book of essays on Art entitled “Art, Truth and Time”. Writing after many years study of Art and the philosophy of Art Sister Anselma lays intriguing emphasis upon the role of the body in the creation of visual works of Art. “Artists need hands”, she says. The painting or sculpture is not the copy of an idea in the mind of the artist. It emerges from the contact of hand and matter, it is always more than the artist intends. This surely corresponds to the experience of all artists. Painters and sculptors are constantly surprised by their creations, which they can only receive as a gift.

“Art, Truth and Time: Essays in Art” is published by Luath Press Ltd. of Edinburgh, costs £12 and is available from the bookshops of St. Cecilia’s Abbey, Ryde, St. Mary’s Abbey, Quarr and elsewhere.