

# English Benedictine Congregation Newsletter

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**INSIDE: P. 2,** Our Missionary Vocation **P. 3,** Meeting of Novice Masters & Mistresses at Ampleforth **P. 5,** An Introduction to Mariavall **P. 6,** Playfulness, Laughter & Understanding **P. 7,** Servant of God, John Bradburne - the next English Saint? **P. 9,** News of Benedictines in Peru **P. 11,** English Monks as Brave Missionary Pioneers **P. 13,** 20th Anniversary of Saint Hilda's House San Jose Community, Patagonia **P. 16,** Tempus fugit: Obituaries **P. 18,** Abbot President's Diary **P. 19,** Ampleforth Abbey in May

*Tubilate Deo omnis terra: servite Domino in laetitia*

**FRONT COVER:**

Belmont Abbey  
Photo: Michael Davies

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## Our missionary vocation

When the content for this late-summer edition of the EBC Newsletter was being prepared and edited, a full-page story appeared in the international pages of The New York Times on May 25. It was headlined, “Peru’s Security Forces Face Little Scrutiny As Protesters Die.” The sub-heading was equally gripping: “Excessive Force Investigations Rarely Go to Trial, Undermining Faith in Authorities.” Nine days later, an e-mail arrived from Prior Alex Echeandia, superior at Lurin, in Lima, Peru. I had first met him in 2014 during an end-of-term visit I made to St. Benet’s Hall at Oxford and was very impressed with his



gentlemanly manner and spirituality. Attached to this recent e-mail was the story I had invited him to submit for this ‘missions’ issue about their community life at El Monasterio de Santa Maria de la Santissima Trinidad. I believe you will find his report most engaging, along with news of Mariavall in Sweden and the Manquehue Apostolic Movement (MAM), the lay Benedictine apostolate based in Santiago de Chile.

The most recent of my four visits to MAM was in November 2019 on a trip I made with Fr. Benedict Allin of St. Louis. The news of the Peru protests reminded me that on our journey through Chile, from Santiago to the Patagonia and back again, we saw many disturbing defacements of public monuments, commercial storefronts, and private property stemming from protests against economic and political inequities. Looting and arson was widespread in the month before our visit, leading to the declaration of a state of emergency by the country’s president. News stories reporting any kind of election irregularities (as in Zimbabwe most recently), violence or atrocities throughout the world serve as chilling reminders of the inherent perils and danger of going on mission, whether close to home or farther afield. In 2022, the noted scholar, papal biographer, columnist and prolific author, George Weigel, in a visit to the Diocese of Providence, ended his talk by saying, “Everyone in the church is a missionary, every place is mission territory. We all should understand our missionary vocation.” It brought to mind a sign less than a mile from my monastery as one departs the 1891 Christian non-denominational Portsmouth Camp Meeting grounds. It warns, “You are now entering the mission field.” The Daily Roman Missal tells us on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary that, “Our Lord reserved for her the highest mission ever entrusted to any creature.”

### Our missionary vocation

By Br. Sixtus Roslevich, O.S.B.

Editor



# Meeting of Novice Masters & Mistresses at Ampleforth

The beloved patron Saint of Sweden, Sigfrid, monk of Glastonbury and missionary-bishop of York, came a thousand years ago to convert Sweden. He arrived together with his three nephew-novices, all English Cluniac monks, Unaman, Sunaman and Vinaman, whom we celebrate as martyrs. In art you can identify Sigfrid by the barrel with three heads that he carries close to his heart, always praying for his beheaded protégés (excluding the macabre details)!

Now, however, I was heading in the opposite direction, back to the region where people once had risked their lives to bring Christianity to us. I was to attend the Novice Master and Novice Mistress meeting at Ampleforth, to be part of “*Strengthening the Vine*”, the title of our meeting.

With the EBC’s Formation Consultor, Father Gabriel, we were going to be twelve disciples gathered on

May 22-26. After a long break from in-person meetings due to the pandemic, the time had come to see each other in three dimensions, after some meetings via Zoom. We received the ambitious schedule in advance from our two organisers, Sr Josephine, and Fr Chad. Paired walks with fixed topics of conversation – the role of the Novice master and our vocation story – this appealed to me as a devoted hiker, though not a sarabaite!

As Novice Master, I looked forward to the talk given by Lucy Becket on Aelred of Rievaulx, and the subsequent visit to the ruins of his monastery. When I walked through the impressive stone vaults I wondered if Unaman, Sunaman and Vinaman could have lived here or at Old Byland? No, actually it was built a few generations after them, so they never had a friendship with Aelred. But the Novice Masters and Mistresses of the EBC got to know each other better, thanks to this excursion. With a festive

meal in Stanbrook’s courtyard and a convivial recreation in Ampleforth’s calefactory, we did in fact taste the fruits of the strengthened vine!

As the meeting evolved, Sr Josephine enlightened the monks about Cor Orans and the discussions which the EBC Novice Mistresses have shared on Zoom since General Chapter in July 2022. Fr Martin of Ealing prophesied that the document may lead to similar time changes for the men. The Runner (a good book, by the way) has to slow down, not in order to find *An Infinity of Little Hours* (an even better book), but to get more time to discern the path forward.

Abbot Robert and Fr Gabriel led a lively discussion on the progress and development of the period of Shared Formation, in its revised form it may allow for nuns, too, at least for a shorter time. This would bring about a different dynamic.





## Meeting of Novice Masters & Mistresses at Ampleforth .. *continued*

The lay community from Manquehue, in Chile, also based in Downside and with strong ties to Ampleforth, sent four members to tell us about their method of accompaniment. In their wider circle is Mary Townsend, who leads a group for lectio divina according to the Manquehue method. She talked about the spiritual needs of young people today. Her smile and beaming eyes were a testimony in themselves to what she has found.

After a rich sharing of resources, experiences and teaching tips, Fr Leo opened the Bible at random (in the manner of Manquehue). Ezekiel 25 spoke to us of a destitution that leads to an understanding that the Lord is God. Despite the few novices we now see in the EBC houses, we keep on working in his vineyard and rejoice in the presence of our Vinedresser, walking and working among us.

These days together have given us new inspiration. We keep on praying for the ones our Lord put into our care in our hearts, and for one another. Just like Sigfrid, we are also on a mission and the wine is worth waiting for!





# An Introduction to Mariavall

Our monastery is situated in the southern Swedish province of Skåne.



Community and commission

**It is in the countryside surrounded by a forest. Less than one hour's drive to the south, though, there is a port for ships to Poland and Germany. An hour's drive to the west lies the capital of Denmark, Copenhagen, with its international airport, Kastrup. Even though our location can seem to be isolated, it is very easy to travel to and from Mariavall to places near and far. We have German friends who enjoy walks in our surroundings. EBC monks and nuns have already found their way here.**

people have arrived, coming by car or bus from different places in Skåne. Our church is quite crowded on these days and the singing is joyful and powerful.

As the weather usually is sunny and warm, the visitors can enjoy their picnics on our lawn or rather, as it can be quite hot in the sun, among the trees that surround part of it. It is an occasion for us sisters to meet old and new friends as we walk among the different groups of visitors. A family belonging to Mariavall's Vänner often prepares some musical entertainment which is highly appreciated by all. The celebration ends in the church where Bishop Anders gives us a solemn blessing.



Pilgrims arriving at the monastery

At Mariavall we celebrate our Holy Father Benedict with a pilgrimage in mid-July. Our Bishop Anders Cardinal Arborelius has made it a tradition to celebrate this feast with us. The day is organized by Mariavall's Vänner, an association created to support the monastery in practical ways.

This time of the year we are immersed in greenery, and loud and varied bird song fills the air. Every year a crane couple nests on a tiny island in the middle of a tiny lake nearby and most mornings their characteristic call is our call to get up. The winter season is quite different but there is a solemn beauty in the landscape of naked trees and silence. We have not experienced a really cold and snowy winter for some years, only the odd day with sparkling white snow in sunlight. As the seasons change, the office and its chant also change and, going through their cycle, we celebrate our stability and faith in Him that gives us life. In trusting Him and in communion with our sisters and brothers in the EBC, we open ourselves to the future He is leading us into.



Musical entertainment

The day starts with a small pilgrimage from a nearby medieval church. A group of 20-30 people, led by Fr Ingmar and Br Jonathan, walks through the woods praying the rosary and singing hymns to Virgin Mary. As they approach the monastery, we hear the singing coming closer and closer. That is the signal for us to gather in front of the monastery to welcome them and as they arrive at the monastery as Bishop Anders greets them with his blessing.

The climax of the day is the Pontifical Mass. When the Mass begins, more



Pilgrims met and blessed by the Bishop

## The climax of the day is the Pontifical Mass





# Playfulness, Laughter & Understanding

Sr Josephine Parkinson from Stanbrook was the first to venture on a trip to Mariavall in preparation for the visitation that Abbot President Christopher, with Sr Madeleine Fredell OP as co-visitorator, held in November 2021.

A few weeks ago, the Commission for Continuous Formation had their first face-to-face meeting at Mariavall. All of a sudden, our community expanded by two sisters and three brothers from all over the world. When we were received into the Catholic Church, we experienced the wonder of becoming a part of the worldwide church. Our membership in the Benedictine Order made us a part of the Benedictine community, a tree with roots that go back to early monasticism. This tree has a wide canopy where we are a tiny, tiny shoot. And now, as members of the EBC, we have been given a context where all the riches of the Church and of the monastic life can open up to us in new ways. By sharing with you, our sisters and brothers of the EBC, the hope and visions as well as the difficulties and trials of those who live in monasteries and serve under a rule and an Abbot, we gain encouragement and strength in our desire to live our Benedictine life as faithfully as we possible.

The decision of the General Chapter that the Abbot President's Council and the different Commissions should schedule their meetings at different monasteries to promote inclusivity and deepen the experience of belonging to the congregation is a truly splendid idea. That the whole of our community could be present when nuns and monks from other EBC monasteries shared a bit about their lives and experiences drew us all together both as a community in its own right and as a member of the congregation. To sit down with the commission and listen to their visions and wishes, and to be able to enter into a dialogue with them, helped us to better understand the congregation and appreciate its openness to changes and developments. To be able to spend time together in a relaxed way also gave us an opportunity to see some of the playfulness of the others as the sharing and conversations were interspersed by laughter.

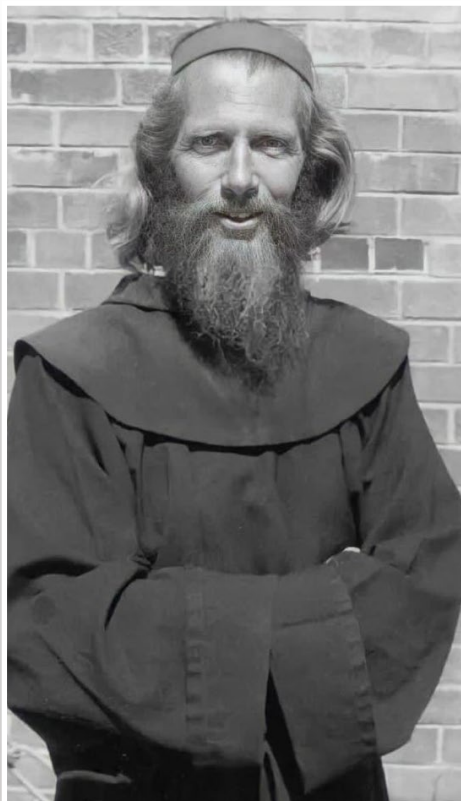




# Servant of God, John Bradburne-the next English Saint?

On June 10th 2023 ,Buckfast Abbey hosted a celebration by the John Bradburne Society in what would have been his 102nd year.

He was born in 1921, the son of an Anglican priest and educated at Greshams school, Norfolk. When war broke out in 1939 he joined the Indian army (*his mother having been born in Lucknow*) and was posted to the 2/9th Gurkha Regiment. His days in India inspired him with a love for the poor and downtrodden.



The celebration was of great significance for the Abbey because in the Spring of 1947 John felt drawn to the Catholic Church and came to Buckfast Abbey where he received instruction into Catholicism. Whilst here he helped the monks in the garden and the upkeep of the cemetery; in the production of tonic wine; cutting marble slabs with Dom Norris and spending long hours with Brother Adam learning more about beekeeping. He was received into the Catholic church on the Feast of Christ the King, 1947. The ceremony took place in St Anne's chapel (*now known as St Michael's chapel*) in Buckfast Abbey.

He contemplated becoming a monk but the two year wait to become a postulant proved to be too much and after travelling throughout England, Italy and the Middle East he went, in 1969 to help in a leper colony in Mutemwa, Zimbabwe. As soon as he saw the lepers he knew that God had finally found him his true vocation. Conditions in the colony were atrocious. John gave the lepers hope, food, love, and dignity. He became warden of the colony which antagonised the local people who plotted to get rid of him. He was ambushed and murdered on 5th September 1979. After the shooting three extraordinary events took place. A small group of people tried to approach John's body. Firstly they heard people singing, like a choir but there was no one there. They tried to approach the body again and saw a huge, white bird hovering over the body as if to protect it. Finally, they returned to see three beams of light ascending from where the body lay. Eventually a missionary priest took the body away for burial.





Servant of God, John Bradburne-the next English Saint? .. *continued*

Several miraculous events have been linked to him which started at his Requiem Mass in Harare Cathedral when a pool of fresh human blood formed beneath the coffin during the service, yet no blood was found when they reopened the coffin. Since then many other unusual events have been reported in relation to his name and many people pray for his intercession. In 2019 a movement was started in support of his Cause for Sainthood.



The Mass was attended by people from all over the world and Abbot David Charlesworth was the celebrant. It must be the first time in this Abbey church that the recession at the end of the Mass was accompanied by the exuberant singing of a Zimbabwean choir.

A buffet lunch followed accompanied by the Haldon Quartet playing music inspired by John's writings. Talks about his poetry and music were given by academics who have studied his works and the postulator, who is guiding the judicial processes required by the Roman Catholic Church for someone to become a saint, gave us an update on its progress. The Zimbabwean Catholic Community's choir in England and Wales rounded off the celebrations with an amazing repertoire of traditional music.





# News of Benedictines In Peru

**One of the greatest riches of our Benedictine monasteries is their great diversity; no two monasteries are identical, even within the same congregation. Each of our monasteries has a different character, different works and activities, a different Divine Office and even a different way of living the same rule of Saint Benedict.**

When three monks from Belmont Abbey in England came to Peru to found a monastery a little over 40 years ago, they were well aware of this characteristic of the Benedictines, and they asked themselves what kind of monastery should be founded. This was a very important question, because it was going to set the course of the foundation. The words of one of them are well-remembered:

“When we came to found the monastery, we wondered what kind of monastery we could found. Throughout history the Benedictines have dedicated ourselves to a great many activities, always focused on what the Church needs most. And we wondered what the Church of Peru needed, something it lacked and that we, the Benedictines, could contribute...If it is the apostolate, there are many communities dedicated to the mission and evangelization, as well as to education and the social services; however, something that the Church of Peru lacked was a monastery of male contemplative life, and therefore we decided to found such a monastery, a monastery more or less like that of Saint Benedict himself”.

In some ways the kind of work that a monastery does shapes it in a special way. It is true that the Benedictines are characterized by a special dedication to the Divine Office, but it is also true that the other works end up modifying the forms and times of the Divine Office and, with it, the monastic life itself.

Our monastery is dedicated to prayer, both public and private. Our main mission is to celebrate the liturgy, both the Eucharist and the Opus Dei, the public prayer of the Church, with care and dedication and, through them, sanctify the Church. We do not have pastoral activities outside the monastery walls.

But our founders were not wrong, because a monastery of this type is what the Peruvian Church expects of us, and that is the image that people have of monks. Although it is true that here is a fairly positive image of monks, it is a rather idealized image, and the idea of a Benedictine is mainly associated with enclosure and silence, Gregorian chant, libraries, and ora et labora. When by chance an acquaintance meets us on the street, they say with surprise: “Oh! What is a monk doing outside his monastery?!”

Although it is true that it is not a matter of the monastery having to meet the expectations of the people, but of consciously living the Christian life, these images set a direction to live our monastic life because, as Saint Paul says: “We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited” (2 Cor. 6.3).

In Peru there was never the experience of a Benedictine-style monastery of men; in colonial times the so-called masculine “contemplative orders” were prohibited from founding in Hispanic America. That is why Benedictine-style liturgy and the public celebration of the Divine Office are so unknown, and for all who come to us, it is a new

and enriching experience that encourages faith. Today our monastery has become a benchmark, a place where both religious and lay people come, in search of a deeper encounter with God, through liturgy and prayer. In a certain way it is what the local Church expects of us and, with the grace of God, we hope to provide.

One of the main concerns of monasteries today is the economic issue, since it is not always easy to find activities profitable enough to support our way of life, and it is even more difficult for cloistered monasteries. However, work is not only a means to earn money, but an asceticism, as Saint Benedict says: “Idleness is an enemy of the soul” (R.B. 48.1). For this reason, in our monastery, we also gladly carry out multiple manual works that help both for the support of the monastery and for the human growth of our brothers.

Our guest house is one of our main activities. Not only is it our prime source of income, but above all it is a very Benedictine activity, since it allows us to carry out our apostolate from the cloister: “all guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ,” (R.B. 53,1). We give retreats, we offer spiritual direction to those who need it, or simply provide an environment of peace and prayer that favors a personal encounter with the Lord.

Together with the guest house we have developed a very important commercial activity. In our monastic shop we offer products that we make ourselves: jams and bread, candles and wine, icons, and many other products. For Easter we were painting Easter candles, and for Christmas we bake panettone. We also have an orchard of Lucumas, (a Peruvian fruit tree), a small chicken farm, and we have recently started an art restoration workshop, an activity in high demand in Peru. Thus, throughout the year, we have different products that we make and sell.



## News of Benedictines in Peru .. *continued*

All these products and activities help a lot to support the monastery, especially these days when there is a general increase of the cost of living, and it is more difficult to pay the bills, not only due to the international context of the war and the post-pandemic, but also due to the political crisis that our country has been experiencing for the past five years. But we keep going, trusting in the Lord who says: *“seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

Saint Benedict said that monasteries had to be self-sufficient, and it is because only in a climate of stability can a monastery grow and plan for the future. One of the biggest challenges for our foundation has been to find this climate of stability. It is well-known that we have moved the foundation and are currently in our third house.

The foundation started in Piura, in northern Peru, in 1981, but due to the remoteness of the place, the lack of basic services and the impossibility of developing a sustainable economy, we decided to move the foundation to the capital, Lima, in 2006. There, it is true, exists better access to services and a better quality of life, but that life is much more expensive. We also did not have a proper monastery to live in, and the project of building one from scratch was becoming unrealistic due to the great cost that it would imply.

Thanks be to God’s providence, in 2018 we were invited by the Cistercian nuns of Las Huelgas, Spain, to live in their monastery of Lurín, in the southern outskirts of the capital, Lima, which they had closed due to a lack of vocations. We are happy to live in this new house that, in many ways, has everything we dreamed of. We feel like the people of God who, after a long pilgrimage of 40 years, were finally able to enter the promised land, flowing with milk and honey.

Although it is true that monasteries are more than the bricks and mortar of the building, the buildings help to form the community, they provide a support, a framework, where the community can develop its life, its activities and its own identity. These 40 years that have elapsed since our beginnings have been a very valuable time, where the most important part of the monastery, the monastic community, was built, during these long years of pilgrimage. We have established ourselves as a family. We are not simply individual monks living a monastic life, but a family that has one heart and one soul.





# English Monks as Brave Missionary Pioneers

At the Novice Master and Novice Mistress meeting held at Ampleforth Abbey on May 22-26, I discovered how unaware Englishmen often are of their country's impact on the Christianization of Sweden.



Saint Ansgar, the French-German apostle whom most people associate with the conversion of Scandinavia, actually did not succeed in his mission. He only stayed a year in a limited area, and when he returned 21 years later, the little parish he had founded was long gone. He gave up and left our territory. There are no traces of mission from the east, either. Instead, Sweden came to be coloured by the western church sphere. Archaeological findings, the succession of bishops and other things confirm an early influence from, above all, England, and there are still traces of it in the design of the church year, in our calendars, etc.

The majority of our local Swedish saints are in fact English monks, who came as missionaries in the beginning of the 11th century, willing to sacrifice their lives. Although, it could be added, many of them were descendants of Vikings who had settled in England some generations back, which meant they probably had a 'hum' about the language – a great advantage.

The oldest evidence of a conscious Christian English visit to Scandinavia is the monk Willibrord's visit to the Danish king (circa 700). Remember that the entire southern part of Sweden (Skåne, Blekinge and Halland) were in union with Denmark and counted as east Denmark at the time. Three hundred years later, King Sven Tveskägg (died 1014) installed the Englishman Gotebald as the first bishop of Lund in Skåne (the region of Mariavall), but he is said to have been a missionary in other parts of Sweden, as well. Gotebald was succeeded by two other Englishmen, Bernhard and Henrik, for certain monks as well.

A request was sent to King Ethelred II (Mildred) of England, to send capable Christian priests to Sweden, which was the background of Saint Sigfrid (died 1058) crossing the Northern Sea with his three nephews, all Cluniac monks. Sigfrid himself was a monk of Glastonbury, assigned as missionary bishop of York, when he accepted the invitation to help Sweden. Sigfrid's name also indicates that he likely belonged to one of the Nordic families that had immigrated to England in the 9th or 10th century and adopted Christianity in their new homeland.

His nephews Unaman, Sunaman and Vinaman preached the Gospel in Småland, and eventually a larger Christian congregation could be formed in Växjö. However, Bishop Sigfrid went northwards to Västergötland and, when he returned, found that his relatives had suffered martyrdom, either beheaded or drowned. Miracles started happening and their heads floated upon the lake at Sigfrid's prayer. Their three tonsured heads still adorn Växjö's coat of arms. Sigfrid was successful and later had the first cathedral built in Växjö and founded Växjö Diocese.



Meeting of Novice Masters & Mistresses at Ampleforth .. *continued*

<sup>1</sup> He became very much acclaimed by the Swedish people, and when he left, chroniclers called him a saint.

Saint David of Munktorp is yet another English missionary on Swedish soil. He was, according to his Office of Saints, an English Cluniac monk who, together with Saint Eskil and Saint Botvid, was sent out by Saint Sigfrid to Christianize the middle parts of Sweden. When David heard that Sigfrid's nephews had suffered martyrdom, he set off for Sweden without fear. Their martyrdom did not deter him, but rather attracted him. David settled in Munktorp, where he built a church, among other structures. According to his Office:

*"Now he went about the villages and farms during the day, preaching the word of God, converting and baptizing, but at night he lay awake in prayer and with tears recommended himself and his many spiritual children to God's protection. He travelled from Britain to the land of the Swedes and there brought many thousands of people to the Christian faith, after which he moved home to paradise when he was full of years."*

Saint Botvid belongs to the category who became Christians in England and, after returning home, spread the Christian faith in their homeland. A slave whom he had set free murdered him. Together with Saint Eskil, an English bishop who was stoned in his missionary work, Botvid is called the apostle of Södermanland. Eskil lived in Tuna and when his relics were brought there and many pilgrims started coming, it became known as Eskilstuna.

Saint Henrik was also English-born and came from England together with the papal nuncio Nicholas Breakspear, later Pope Hadrian IV, as a missionary bishop to Uppsala. He undertook the first crusade to Finland at the end of the 1150's, together with the Swedish King Erik, and so became Finland's first bishop. His blood dyed the ice red on a frozen swamp and he cried to the heavens for the conversion of the Nordic barbarians.

There have been many more heroic English monks in our country, but the Christianization of Sweden is still shrouded in obscurity. Further research is needed, as the Protestants have had their focus on the reformation period, without real interest in or understanding of Catholic practices. But an article by a professor in religious history, recently found its way to publication in a daily Swedish newspaper, with the enlightening heading: *"Missionaries from the British Isles brought the faith to Sweden."*

They were the brave pioneers.



## 20th Anniversary Saint Hilda's House, San José Community, Patagonia



### Introduction

This year Manquehue's San José Community in Patagonia, in the remote south of Chile, has been celebrating the 20th anniversary of the foundation of its women's community house. In 2003, two celibate women oblates, Consuelo Verdugo and Macarena Garcia, started the house with the help of two other young members of the Manquehue Movement.

The men's house had started two years before and the arrival of the four women provided an extra injection of life for the emerging San José community project. The house was named after St Hilda, and since then the famous Abbess of Whitby has been a constant source of inspiration. The aim of life in San José is to be a lay, Benedictine community open to receiving mainly young people for an experience of formation for 4 months or for shorter periods of 10 days, while also being of service to the local parish, providing pastoral support, helping organise catechesis and Sunday liturgies.

San José is situated in a place of stunning natural beauty on the southern shore of the enormous General Carrera Lake in Chile's southern Aysén region, with mountains and rivers all around and glaciers spilling off the nearby Northern Ice Field. The isolation and solitude, combined with the experience of lived community in such a beautiful, though demanding, setting, make this a place where the Lord's presence and voice can be clearly perceived. Since its beginnings the core community at St Hilda's has always been provided by a group of women celibate oblates, who have made a life promise of stability, conversion of manners and obedience as part of the wider Community of Manquehue Oblates.

Over the last 20 years more than 100 young women (mainly from Chile, but a few also from the UK) have taken part in the four-month formation programme at St Hilda's, while some 450 six-form girls from Manquehue schools, over 60 teachers and 80 other adults, have been there for an experience of 10 days.



20th Anniversary Saint Hilda's House .. *continued*

Outline of the life  
which young people  
live at San José

“Our aim is to help people coming here to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, who is alive and risen, and is present in each person's life. The way in which they can do this is by living the spirituality of the Manquehue Movement, something which most (although not necessarily all) of them have had some experience of before coming to San José. This is the reason why shared *lectio divina* is our principal activity of the day together... God really speaks to our young people and they become strongly aware of his presence in their lives.

Community life according to the Rule of St Benedict is also central. The young people often find themselves making significant changes in their way of thinking, moving from self-centred thinking to having an open heart and mind. They find themselves asking more and more, ‘What does the community need?’ This change is almost impossible if it is not supported by faith. This community life is very intense and can often include lots of problems and sometimes frequent arguments, which may require caring fraternal correction and reconciliation, so we can live out what St Benedict says, ‘Rid your heart of all deceit. Never give a hollow greeting

of peace or turn away when someone needs your love.’ (Cf. RB 4, 24-26)

The Liturgy of the Hours builds up the community. By striving to become one voice together, we unite with the whole Church and we live the Paschal Mystery, offering with Christ a sacrifice of praise. Manual labour brings the young to discover that they are co-creators with God. What becomes important is not so much what sort of work they do, but the dignity of what they are doing as human beings. They collaborate towards supporting the community by working on the farm. *Acogida* (open-hearted availability) is vital to each person. It requires taking a lot of time to listen to everyone, to get to know each one's personal history, helping them to listen and respond to God who is speaking to them.

It is not necessary to be a member of the Manquehue Movement to take part in this experience.”

(extract taken from *A Cloister in the World*, a book written by Abbot Patrick Barry about the Manquehue Movement)

## Timetable at St Hilda's (Monday to Friday)

06:00	Get up. Light the fire. Prepare Breakfast.	14:45	Work ( <i>manual labour, further afield on the farm</i> )
06:20	Office of Readings		Once a week: Pastoral visits to homes in
06:45	Lauds	neighbouring	villages and ‘Tutoría’ session at
07:20	Breakfast	the local village	school
08:00	Lectio Divina (written scrutiny of Scripture)	18:00	End of work, return to shower.
08:45	Household chores	18:45	Quiet personal prayer ( <i>based on Lectio Divina</i> )
09:30	Guided conversation on a theme of spirituality	19:25	Vespers
11:00	Work ( <i>manual labour, generally near the house - daily server cooks lunch</i> )	20:00	Evening meal
12:15	Individual spiritual reading	20:45	Recreation
13:00	Prayer during the day	21:30	Compline
13:20	Lunch ( <i>with reading</i> )		



20th Anniversary Saint Hilda's House .. *continued*

## Testimonies

*"This wonderful week in Saint Hilda I have felt very much that God is with me, and I have come to know Him more through living in community. I have found myself learning and relearning all the time about God and how to give Him my life. I am learning all the time to accept his love, and the peace I have experienced here has only pointed me more to Him."* Mary Hirst (née Townsend), English University Student who, on graduation, returned for the four-month experience.

*"Life triumphs over death because Christ won the victory in order to change and renew my life."* Trinidad Hue, written concluding her four-month experience when she was 20.

*"I thank God for having brought me back to this house, which is a home to me; back to my first Tent of Meeting (cf. Ex 33,7-11) and for reminding me that everywhere, all the time, and not just when I am here, he, my Father, is looking after me, his daughter, like the apple of his eye."* Consuelo Thomas, when she was 20 and an assistant formator for younger girls on a ten-day experience.

*"All this was tailor-made for me; for my true self with all I have and all I lack; for my heart's desires and with my smallness and your greatness, oh Lord. You, Lord, brought me here to speak to my heart (cf. Hosea 2, 16) in order to speak face-to-face and to reach this heart of mine, which sometimes becomes hardened, or deaf, or blind. You have been able to fill my heart with complete joy, simply by my being in your presence. I leave with a mission: to learn to renounce self, and to learn to be thankful. Patricia Jara, Headmistress, Colegio San Lorenzo.*

*I discovered that it is God's will that I be mother to my children without having to renounce my being his daughter. He wants me to trust always in his perfect plan, just as I have been trusting here. He wants me to let go and to carry on letting go; to keep working, and to carry on praying; because he rescued me, he chose me and he loved me first. (cf. 1 John 4, 19)".* Ximena González, parent of Colegio San Anselmo.

*"I don't know how to write about such a big experience in so few lines. I learnt so many things here and I realised that Christ is alive today, and for me. I was helped to awaken from my dream-world in which I am supposedly capable of making all things new in the world. I was helped to open my eyes and escape from that self-centred view whereby everyone around me is there to serve my needs, and to realise that I live to serve theirs."* Ignacia Tampe, after a ten-day experience, when she was a sixth-form girl at Colegio San Benito.

*"I encountered God as eloquent, and I could perceive Him seeking me out in his Word, as He does not rest in his efforts such that I should encounter Him, and all this, simply because He wants to make me happy... He saves me from my daily lack of trust in Him. In his infinite generosity, He gives me a community where I can see him face-to-face all the time, and in that community, He cries out to me to tell me that He loves me, that everything is going to be alright, that I should not fear, because the only certain thing is today, and that today is filled with His infinite love for me."* Camila Mardones, on concluding her four-month experience when she was a 27-year-old teacher from a Manquehue School





## Tempus fugit: Deaths among the E.B.C. houses

Please continue to keep in your thoughts and prayers the monks and nuns of the E.B.C. who have passed from this earthly life.

We shall publish in each issue of this E.B.C. Newsletter the names of the recently deceased and, as space permits, to include a review of their lives. Submissions from the appropriate houses are greatly appreciated

**Mother Paula Fairlie – 25th Dec., 2021, Curzon Park Abbey, U.K.**

**Br. Mark Kammerer – 29th July, 2022, St. Louis Abbey, U.S.**

**Fr. Geoffrey Chase – 1st August, 2023, Portsmouth Abbey, U.S.**



### Br Mark Kammerer

29th July, 2022, St. Louis Abbey, U.S.

Eugene Michael Kammerer was born on November 5, 1948, in Peoria, Illinois, to Eugene and Doretha Kammerer. He was partially raised by his stepfather, Lyle Williams, and by his foster parents, Agnes and John Speck, remaining close throughout his life to their daughter, Catherine Bailey. While attending high school at Spalding Institute, he was baptized a Roman Catholic and became an active parishioner of the Cathedral of Saint Mary, Peoria. After attending Illinois Central College, he served in the U.S. military during the Vietnam War, then worked a variety of jobs including the operation of a pet store and grooming business and supervising a department at the Hiram Walker Distillery in Peoria before its closure in 1981.

In 1988 he joined the Abbey of Saint Mary and Saint Louis. He was professed as a monk on September 4, 1989, and obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Maryville University in 1998. He taught photography in the St Louis Priory School for almost thirty years, earning respect from his students for his expertise and meticulous attention to detail. One student recalls that in the '90s he was already predicting, "In a few years most pictures will be digital." Br. Mark always encouraged his senior boys in the school to consider creating a non-traditional thesis as their year-end project instead of the more traditional written thesis. He advised many in their initial choice of subject matter which required a consistent story line throughout the required six large-format black and white images. Students developed and printed their own photographs measuring 16" x 20". Finished projects were displayed for the entire school to see and ranged in a variety of topics from fables

(Little Red Riding Hood) to a visual survey of the interiors of historic theatres in the St. Louis area. Many of these works of student art continue to grace the walls of homes of the students' families, long after graduation.

In the monastic community Br. Mark was a source of information on a host of subjects of current interest. He was fascinated by outer space and would regularly tune in to live broadcasts from NASA Online. In his later years he suffered from diabetes and, after a year-long struggle with the disease, died peacefully at the age of 73 in the monastery on June 29, 2022, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Br. Mark is survived by his sisters, Linda Smiddy and Renee McIntyre. A funeral Mass was celebrated at the Abbey on July 6 and burial followed in the monastic cemetery, adjacent to the Abbey.







## Mother Paula Fairle O.S.B

25th Dec., 2021, Curzon Park Abbey, U.K.

Mother Paula, died on Christmas Day, 2021, at Curzon Park Abbey, in Chester. M. Paula was a respected and perceptive leader whose sensory faculties and spiritual awareness were keenly attuned to the mysteries of the natural world. Benedictines, she maintained, are taught to view creation as 'the good gift' entrusted to humanity to cherish and sustain. The world is sacramental, touched by God, and capable of revealing him.

For Mother Paula, Advent was always the most creative season of year. 'The darkness we enter is not like the inside of a hard shell but an enfolding darkness, a warm, creative darkness, the cover for our own being to become truly itself and then gradually burst out through this and grow. It is a form which allows our being to increase in capacity; it then has to break through, root and thrust forth like a seedling and come into the light.'

This motif of darkness and light played out in Mother Paula's own life. Born at Uetersen, Holstein, in wartime Germany, she grew up in a predominantly Lutheran environment, though her mother was a Catholic of Austrian-Polish origin. Family life was not always easy. The dominant memories of her early years were her moments of wonder at natural beauty, especially her passion for trees such as a silver birch and willow growing in her grandparents' grounds. She remembered the delight with which she saw a hedgehog, followed by a row of the tiniest babies with soft white spines moving among stacked wood. She loved seeing dust dancing in sunbeams and light shining on a huge chest of mixed grain. 'Dew-bedecked spiders' webs wove their own enchantment, as did raindrops dripping off roof-edges,' she recorded.

Moving to England in 1948, Mother Paula was educated at Wimbledon County Grammar School and trained for a teaching career at Gipsy Hill Training College, Kingston Hill. After working in a primary school at Hersham, Sussex, she read history at Bedford College, University of London. At the time, she was a person skeptical of faith. But one of her courses in political theory led her to study Plato, Augustine and Aquinas, while her contact with other 'brilliant minds of the west' made her realise that belief 'was not so nonsensical' after all. The more she read, the more she became convinced that faith and reason were not intrinsically in opposition. At the beginning of her final year, she was received into the Roman Catholic Church, the greatest blessing of her life, she later wrote. She sensed God had slowly brought divergent strands of her life into a unity and 'a thoroughly disintegrated personality' had been guided towards a measure of wholeness.

After graduation, she went to Florence and spent four years with a teaching order, the Sisters of Montalve, making her Simple profession in 1969, she later discerned that her vocation lay elsewhere in a more contemplative

environment. In 1970 she left Italy and returned to England, where she entered the Benedictine community at Stanbrook Abbey, Worcester. She received an excellent formation, but, circumstances changed for her in 1972 when she moved to Talacre Abbey, North Wales. During this time of transition, she entrusted herself to God, in spiritual darkness, her perseverance through her struggle was rewarded, and she made her solemn profession in 1976, when she desired to be entirely consecrated to God. This was a profoundly happy experience for her. On her solemn profession ring are inscribed the words 'Joy' and 'Hope' in Latin, because she believed her life to have been enlightened by these gifts of the Spirit.

Shortly after her profession, Sr. Paula was appointed novice mistress, and during a Visitation in 1984, was appointed Prioress Administratrix. In 1988, during her term of office, the community moved to Chester. Sr. Paula was elected Abbess, in 1989, a role she held competently for more than three decades. Every day she found the liturgy to be her chief source of spiritual nourishment. She would acknowledge unsettling periods of detachment during private prayer but found the value of interior quiet 'inestimable.'

Mother Paula was the first to recognise that leading a small community with members from different backgrounds could be sometimes like 'walking on eggshells' but, despite the relational challenges that can beset any leader, she endeared herself to her community, not least for her conscientiousness, generosity and loyalty, they described her as a humble woman, loving, brave and understanding, a considerate superior and a good teacher, deeply spiritual and poetic. Others noted her sensitive nature was complemented by a healthy sense of humour and an unmistakable streak of irony. An Abbess who was imaginative and insightful, supportive at times of crisis and unstinting in service, the Community also appreciated her creative gifts, such as designing and painting mandalas, her 'brilliant smile' and her passion for the truth.

Mother Paula, has left her imprint on the house and garden at Curzon Park, believing nuns and monks receive a spiritual gift - an awareness of something much more profound than the material world. She believed monasteries of nuns or monks, of whatever faith, could be lighthouses, keeping the flame burning through prayer and silence. Their enclosures could be experienced as havens of peace to visitors and guests, even though the sisters and brothers might feel 'the battering of the waves.' Her hope was that, as the globe seemed to shrink through rapid communication and travel, the interior world might reveal itself as larger and more mysterious.



# From the Abbot President's Diary...

August 29 – September 25

Conception Abbey in Conception,  
Missouri

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Abbot Christopher traveled to the American Midwest recently and was one of nineteen participants at the Synod of Abbots President. Conception is the home monastery of Abbot Primate Gregory Polan. Among the topics up for discussion on the agenda included the Ateneo Sant' Anselmo, which was said to be going very well, and the Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum and the developments regarding Benedictine women. In addition, individual reports were presented on the 19 congregations.

A visit to the nearby community of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, Missouri, took place on August 30 for Vespers and supper. The guests learned that in the aftermath of World War II, the Benedictines of Clyde were instrumental in helping many starving communities in Europe to survive.

The abbots departed with an appreciation of the Benedictine hospitality which they were shown at Conception, which one of the abbots remarked as being "one of the great monastic houses of our time." Abbot Christopher next traveled a relatively short distance of five hours to Saint Louis Abbey on the opposite side of Missouri to celebrate the annual end-of-summer American holiday of Labor Day with the community there.

As this issue of the EBC Newsletter goes to press, Abbot Christopher is conducting a visitation at Jamberoo in Australia before stopping in Santiago, Chile, for a visit with the Manquehue Apostolic Movement, highlighted elsewhere in this edition.



Please submit photographs of your monastery for inclusion in future issues



"Here is a place near me. You will stand on the rock, and when my glory passes by, I shall put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with my hand until I have gone past."

Exodus 33:22



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