



COSTOCK CHRONICLE 2018



Sister Mary Bernadette with Bishop David and all the Oblates

Undoubtedly the high point of the past year was Sister Mary Bernadette's Golden Jubilee on the 10th February. "I want a quiet celebration" she said, "with just a few guests". As Sister had looked after the oblates and associates as well as the guests for nearly forty years there was no way we could restrict the numbers to just a few people. In the end the chapel was full and the convent looked like a florist's shop with all the flowers that were sent. The jubilee Mass was celebrated by our Visitor, the Rt Reverend Dr David Hope. Our Warden, Fr Gavin Kirk, was unable to be present as General Synod was taking place in London that weekend and coincidentally one of the subjects for discussion that morning was the religious life. When Fr Gavin was called to speak he mentioned that he should have been at Costock for Sister's jubilee which led to the Chair of the session, Bishop David Walker, giving Sister Mary Bernadette Synod's greetings when he came to sum up the discussion. That surely must be a first! I don't think Sister was left in any doubt as to the affection and esteem in which she is held by so many people.



SISTER MARY BERNADETTE WRITES:

I would like to try and express my gratitude to all who shared in my fiftieth anniversary of profession and for the effort made by my family and friends who have supported me in my vocation although they found it difficult to understand this particular calling. Thanks also to the oblates and



associates who have been such a privilege for me to serve and to share with in the whys and wherefores of each of our callings and commitments. A great surprise for me was the number of cards I received and the lovely flowers and other tokens of your affection. I am in my usual muddle trying to describe all this; maybe it's beyond all thoughts! God bless you all.

Bishop David Hope was with us again two months later for the Holy Week Triduum, the Holy Saturday Vigil and first Mass of Easter. Fr Gavin Kirk was here as well as his fellow archdeacon from Lincoln, the Ven Mark Steadman. A number of people from local parishes joined us for the Easter Vigil and first Mass of Easter.

Bishop David's next visit to us was an altogether sadder time. In last year's Chronicle I mentioned some health issues in the sisters. Unfortunately, Sister Mary Michael discovered at the end of November that the cancer she had lived with since 2005 had spread and no treatment stopped it. By the beginning of June she had become very breathless and was admitted to the City hospital on the 19th June where she died two weeks later on the 3rd July. Her funeral was held in our chapel on the 18th July and the chapel was full, with people sitting outside the west door and even standing in the garden. Yes, it was a sad time but there was also rejoicing at a life given to God. Please pray for her sister Heather and for Gaynor and Yvonne.

SISTER MARY MICHAEL CHC
RIP 3RD JULY 2018



Ruby Harriet Titherington was born in Liverpool on the 29th May 1937. Her early life was somewhat restricted as she was a posthumous child and her mother was rightly protective of her two daughters during the war. The family attended a parish church where the vicar encouraged her to consider becoming a missionary. Through a friend she began attending the very Anglo-Catholic parish of St Stephen's, Grove Street, Liverpool and after a visit to Community of the Holy Cross which was then at Haywards Heath, was strongly attracted by the Benedictine spirituality and the Community's commitment to working and praying for Christian unity. She entered on the 11th April 1961 and was clothed as a novice on November 21st, taking the name of Mary Michael.

Sr Mary Michael made her temporary profession on June 5th 1964, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, which by happy coincidence was the same date and feast as in 1959 when Pope John XXIII had given the then Warden Canon Donald Rea his personal breviary which is now in Lambeth Palace library and also blessed rosaries for each sister which we still have. Sister Mary Michael's solemn profession took place three years later, on the same date.

The community at that time was commissioning various articles on Christian Unity which were sent all over the world, Thomas Merton being one contributor, but by the 1970s the first flush of enthusiasm for unity had begun to fade and the leaflets were no longer being published. In 1976 Mother Mary Laurence asked Sr Mary Michael to revive them, and to write them herself--and write them she did, across a wide range of aspects--Methodists and Baptists, Roman Catholic and Orthodox, Pietists and Puritans, going on to embrace Judaism and other forms of spirituality. She would write up to 15 leaflets a year, not only about unity but also on the themes of turning loneliness into solitude and Faith on Earth. She was invited to speak on various aspects of ecumenism, for instance giving a paper in Westminster Cathedral on the concept of the Invisible Monastery in 2003, the 50th anniversary of the death of Abbe Paul Couturier and in the same year a paper on William Blake to the Traherne Society as well as attending a conference on Receptive Ecumenism at Ushaw College.

As well as her writings Sr Mary Michael was appointed Novice Mistress in 1972 and apart from a ten year gap, continued in that role until illness made it impossible. Having been diagnosed with cancer in 2005 she was in remission for eleven years but the cancer came back in August 2016. In June this year she was admitted to hospital where she died two weeks later, one of her last conversations being with an Orthodox priest to whom she spoke of ecumenism and unity, the Fathers of the Church and the renewal of priesthood. Almost her last words were “All in God’s hands”.

Mother Mary Luke’s brother died unexpectedly on the 19th December 2017, having been diagnosed with cancer only four weeks previously. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Colin Wise and for Maureen and Jane, David and their families.

We were distressed to hear at the end of June that one of the priests who celebrate for us was missing while on holiday in Scotland. Canon Jack Higham was known to us when he was a fellow Canon of Peterborough cathedral with our then Warden, Canon Thomas Christie. On his retirement, Canon Jack and his wife Pat moved to Nottingham and he not only celebrated for us regularly but also gave us some wonderful courses on Church history and art. Very fit, his hobby was climbing the Scottish hills. He had completed the ascent of all the Munros and had started on the Corbetts. It was on one of these breaks that he failed to phone Pat one evening and it transpired that he had had a heart attack while climbing on the 27th June. We miss an inspirational priest and scholar and ask prayers for Pat and their sons Tim and Hugh and their families.

Sr Mary Bernadette’s sister, Barbara Mary Elms, died on the 7th October after several years of ill health. Please pray for Sr Mary Bernadette, her niece Becky and husband Graham.

The Union of Monastic Superiors is an organisation which consists of all the superiors of communities which follow the Rule of St Benedict in the UK and Ireland. Anglicans are full members and the constitution states that there must be an Anglican member on the council. Mother Mary Luke is at present the Anglican member and last



year was approached by the Abbess of Stanbrook who invited her on behalf of the Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum (International Communion of Benedictine Women) to attend a symposium being held in Rome in September 2018. It is held every four years. She had been invited twice before but had been unable to go so this was third time lucky.



MOTHER MARY LUKE WRITES: I flew to Rome on the 4th September, two days before the symposium began as I wanted to go on the optional trip to Monte Cassino on the 5th. Most people probably know that the monastery, which is the one where St Benedict wrote most of his Rule and where he died, is on the top of a hill and was almost completely destroyed in the last war because of its strategic position. In the 1950s the abbey was rebuilt as an exact copy of the one destroyed by the bombing, complete with fabulous mosaics and tons of gold leaf. The most holy place is under the altar where both Benedict's and his twin sister Scholastica's remains are enshrined.

The participants in the symposium were housed mainly in the Pontifical Athenaeum of St Anselm which is an international Benedictine university on the top of the Aventine hill. The symposium proper began on the 6th September with an introductory address welcoming us all by the Abbot Primate of the Benedictines, Gregory Polan OSB. The theme of this symposium was "Receive everyone as if they were Christ". As our main work apart from worship is hospitality it was a theme dear to my heart. There were five official languages represented: English, Italian, French, German and Spanish. Translators were there to translate from any one language into another. On this first day the official language was English but at None each day a minority language was used so we had Offices in Swahili, Polish, Swedish and Korean.



On the 7th September the speaker was the former Abbot of Einsiedeln in Switzerland, Martin Werlen, who asked us to differentiate between Tradition and traditions. In the discussions in our groups afterwards it became clear that different countries have different traditions but the underlying reality was the same. We are to welcome those who don't fit in: we have to live in tension and be

open to visitors but have regard also to our own situation. Guest are not to be regarded mainly as a source of income.

The 8th September, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, was the high point of the stay for me. Two buses took all the participants to the Vatican and once there we passed through a security check and then waited until an official called us through and we climbed up many stairs to the room where Pope Francis was to give a Papal Audience. Just after 11am there was a flurry of activity and the Pope arrived. He gave an address in Italian of which we had been given a translation into English beforehand. He encouraged us to find new ways of evangelization in our monasteries, to pray for those who suffer, to contemplate the marvels of creation, administer God's good gifts and to continue in our work of hospitality, so showing a communion in diversity that expresses God's hope for the world.

We had been warned that when we went up to the Pope we were merely to shake his hand and move on, but the Pope had other ideas. He spoke to each sister individually and then gave her a rosary which he had already blessed. In his introduction to the Pope, Abbot Gregory mentioned that there was an Anglican and a French Reformed presence, so when I went up I said firmly: Anglicana. At this the Pope beamed and pressing my hands asked me in English to pray for him. I replied that we did so every day at Mass and also prayed for Christian unity. I had taken with me a rosary which was one that had been given to the sisters in 1959 by Pope St John XXIII (see the obituary for Sister Mary Michael) and so that has now been blessed by two popes.

Sunday was a free day so I got a taxi and went to Mass at All Saints, the Anglican Church in Rome. I was made very welcome by Fr John Kilgore and the resident members as well as meeting Anglicans from all over the world. After the service we had refreshments in the tiny garden next to the church. After lunch and a short



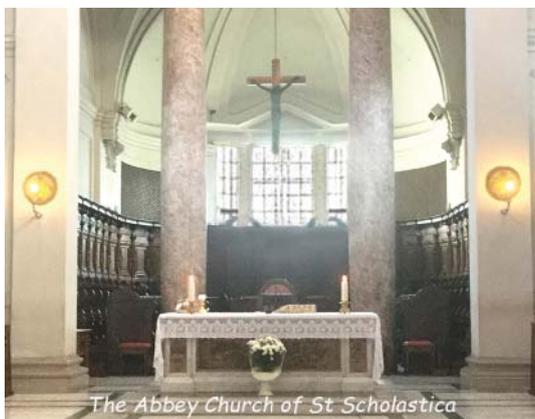
Praying at the tomb of St Paul

siesta some of us set out for St Paul's without the Walls by metro. It is staffed by Benedictines and one of the resident monks gave us a tour. It is fairly certain that St Paul's body is buried there and there is a stone taken from a sarcophagus with the words: 'Paul, Apostle and Martyr' carved into it. We were allowed into some areas not open to the public such as the sacristy and saw beautiful vestments and church plate. We joined the monks for Vespers before catching the metro back to St Anselm's.

Monday 10th was a quieter day with the symposium in full swing. Two sisters from Spain and the Philippines gave addresses on 'Hospitality within the Community': ie relationships with the sisters. These led to lively discussions afterwards. After lunch one of the resident monks gave us a tour of Sant' Anselmo which included the sacristy, library and the new building work. On Tuesday there were further addresses on 'Hospitality to those outside the Monastery' given by sisters from Brazil and South Africa.



St Scholastica's Abbey Subiaco



The Abbey Church of St Scholastica

Leaving Rome at 7.30am on Wednesday we arrived at the Abbey of St Scholastica in Subiaco at 9am and were warmly welcomed by the monks there who showed us round this very interesting monastery. It was twice destroyed by Saracens in the 9th century but was restored and became very rich and powerful. The monastery is arranged around three cloisters and in one area you

can see three arches each in a different style: romanesque, gothic and renaissance. We had Mass in the abbey church and all renewed our vows there, which was powerful. After a meal at a local restaurant we set off in a bus up the hill in a series of breath-taking hairpin bends to the Abbey of St Benedict and the Sacro Speco or Holy Cave.

The monastery of St Benedict is built into the side of the hill and there are three cave chapels, the lowest of which is the oldest and where St Benedict lived as a hermit for three years having been disgusted by the loose morals in Rome where he was studying. The cave complex is decorated with frescoes dating from the early 12th century including a famous one of St Francis painted in his lifetime when he came to Subiaco. There was far more sense of being on sacred ground than at Monte Cassino as it has escaped destruction by invading armies.

On Thursday the 13th I had to leave the symposium a day early as I wanted to be back home for Holy Cross Day on the 14th so I said my goodbyes to all the people I had met and set off for the airport to catch the flight back to Gatwick. So many wonderful memories which I will treasure in my heart and I thank especially the organisers of the symposium for inviting me. I was a guest and they welcomed me—an acted parable of the theme of the meeting. I also thank my



Mother Mary Luke with sisters from Germany and USA

sisters for letting me go to the symposium and for keeping going in my absence.

SISTER MARY HANNAH was with us for Sister Mary Michael's funeral. She is still involved in the parish on Jeju Island and the photograph shows her with the parish priest and members of the congregation.



As usual there are interesting events which happen throughout the year. Last December we had a visit from the Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf, Michael Lewis, who told us some of the enterprises taking place in his diocese. It is such a varied area and in some countries Christians have to keep a low profile but there are encouraging signs that there is still a vibrant Christian presence in the Middle East.

Another encouraging occasion was Sr Carol Elizabeth's life profession at Walsingham on 6th March. The previous weeks had been very cold with a lot of snow but by the 6th the roads were clear and everyone managed to get to Walsingham, including her mother who was celebrating her 90th birthday on the same day. It was a double family celebration.

On 2nd June Mother Mary Luke and Sister Mary Julian went to Edgware Abbey for Abbess Mary Therese's Silver Jubilee of election as Abbess. It was another lovely day and in the afternoon there was a concert of Gospel songs sung by the girls of a local school whose choir conductor, Karen Gibson, is the person who runs The Kingdom Choir which sang at the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's wedding.

The autumn months bring plenty of activity in the way of conferences etc. In September Sister Mary Catherine went to Oxford for five days to join a walking lecture tour led by Dr Peta Dunstan which visited the sites in and around Oxford connected with the Oxford Movement and the revival of religious life in the Church of England.

SISTER MARY CATHERINE WRITES: What a wonderful week we had at the conference at Oxford. We stayed with the Sisters of the Love of God at Fairacres who were wonderfully hospitable. We arrived in the morning of the 17th September and after lunch had a short introduction from Peta. That afternoon we visited Littlemore to which place John Henry Newman withdrew in 1842 where he lived a semi-monastic life with a few friends before he decided to become a Roman Catholic.



We also visited the grave of Marian Hughes, the first person to become a nun in the Church of England since the reformation.

On Tuesday morning we went to St Mary the Virgin where John Keble preached his Assize sermon in 1833 which started the whole Oxford Movement off. A lot of time was spent looking round graveyards remembering

those who were pioneers in the revival of religious life. We visited Pusey House, named for the third of the great Tractarians, Edward Bouverie Pusey; St Anthony's College, formerly the convent of the Society of the Holy and Undivided Trinity which was founded by Marian Hughes and St Thomas the Martyr which was where the Community of St Thomas was founded in 1847 which remained active until 1958.

On Wednesday we first visited the Church of St Mary & St John in Cowley. Many nuns are buried in the churchyard there showing the variety of religious life in welfare, spiritual and educational outreach. St Stephen's House where the first men's community, the Society of St John the Evangelist, was founded was the next stop; it is still in existence in England and the United States although St Stephen's House is now a theological college. A final stop on Wednesday was Bartlemas, a medieval leper chapel on the outskirts of Oxford. This was where Br Giles began his ministry to down and outs which later developed into the Society of St Francis. Mass was celebrated for us there by Fr Philip Ritchie.

Our final day was spent, not in walking round Oxford but visiting places by car, which was just as well as it poured with rain. We went first to Ascot Priory, the mother house of the Society of the Most Holy Trinity whose sisters responded to various needs, nursing in the Crimea and in the cholera struck areas of London, running orphanages and schools as well as developing the contemplative life in the Church. From there we went to Burnham Abbey, home of the Society of the Precious Blood, a contemplative community founded in 1905 which is still in existence. We looked round the buildings, some of which date back to 1266. The last place we visited was Nashdom Abbey, the former home of the Benedictine men's community now based in Salisbury. There we had a talk on Anglo-Papalism and its effect on religious life before going back to Fairacres. It was a most interesting and informative few days and I thank everyone who made it possible for me to attend.

On 18th October Mother Mary Luke was in York Minster for the consecration as bishop of Warrington of our oblate, Beverley Mason. We have known her for over 20 years since before she developed her vocation to the priesthood. We wish her every blessing in her new responsibilities to the people of Liverpool diocese.



Catstock Chronicle

We have found a wonderful new ploy to get extra food. When the staff put down the bowls, even if they contain food we really like, we pretend it is poison and walk away in disgust. After a while they tempt us to eat by adding a few biscuits or Dreamies and if there are enough we then condescend to eat.

THEA: One day in September I somehow twisted myself when jumping and tore the cruciate ligament in my left back leg. Oh! it did hurt. I was whisked speedily off to the vet who said it was a 'sports injury'! and gave me an injection of a painkiller and medicine to take daily on my food. I was confined to my bed and Summa came and sat by me to make sure I was okay. After a few days I could walk a bit with a limp and my bed was put in the window of the common room so I could see what was happening outside. I got very bored and took it out on Summa by swiping her across the face when I felt like it. Incredibly she didn't swipe me back but I'm not sure how long I can go on pushing my luck! The staff tell me I may have a limp for the rest of my life. That will really curtail my activities and I shall have to think of means of getting staff to do as I want.

SUMMA: She's now better but still playing the invalid in order to get sympathy. She's getting none from me now, as she abused my generous nature and used my kindness to get extra attention. But HA HA! I can jump higher than she can, so can escape if I



wish. And when she plays fussy with her food, I can often sneak in and finish it. The staff say I'm getting too fat. I'm just getting into trim for Christmas.

Christmas is a season of Joy. A child is born who will be the saviour of the world and if that isn't good news, what is? "The Gospel of Joy preached by happy lives is the best way of evangelising the world", said Fr Andrew, Society of the Divine Compassion. Yes, there are dreadful things happening in the world: the plight of refugees; the pollution of the oceans by plastic; financial and political instability which makes the poor poorer—one could make a long list and personal happiness seems to be selfish when there is so much suffering in the world. Joy, however is not incompatible with sorrow but observes from a different perspective. In his play 'A Family Reunion' T S Eliot wrote: "—now I feel quite happy, as if happiness did not consist in getting what one wanted or in getting rid of what can't be got rid of, but in a different vision". Underlying everything we do or say should be this different vision, this joy at knowing everything is in God's hands. Yes, we do have to work to rectify poverty, injustice and violence but we must never lose that deep inward joy which comes from looking at things in the light of the Gospel. Then our inner joy will radiate and show itself as love which attracts others to its source—God.

*And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The maker of the stars and sea
Became a child on earth for me?*

*No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Not all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single truth compare—
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.*

We wish you and all whom you love a very happy and joyful Christmas.