



GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE

Issue 8 - Autumn 2020



GLENSTAL ABBEY Murroe, Co. Limerick

www.glenstal.org www.glenstal.com

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Monastic Retreat

Our monastic retreat this year was conducted by the Abbot Primate, Abbot Gregory J. Polan, OSB. Until the very last moment we did not know if it would be able to go ahead. Abbot Gregory had to travel from Rome and everything depended on Italy making the “green list”. To our very great good fortune, Italy was listed among the countries from which travel was possible without quarantine and the retreat was able to go ahead.

Abbot Gregory was elected Abbot Primate on September 10, 2016, at the Congress of Abbots meeting in Rome. As head of the Benedictine Confederation, he is the unifying head of the worlds 7,000 Benedictine monks and the abbot of the monastery of Sant’Anselmo in Rome, where he resides. As Primate, Abbot Gregory also serves as the head of the Benedictine University located in Rome. He is the tenth Abbot Primate and the second abbot from Conception Abbey to hold this Office.



Garden Cemetery

The Garden Cemetery provides for the interment of cremated remains only. Each space can accommodate one or two urns. The internal plot dimensions for both the single and double plots are 7½ inches in diameter. Each space is marked with a plaque of local grey granite for engraving individuals' names and dates.

Selecting a cemetery and purchasing your memorial space is an important decision. Arranging the details in advance gives you peace of mind and shows thoughtfulness and caring concern for your family. With pre-planning the final arrangements become less of a burden.

Please contact the Bursar's Office at

061 621045

or email us at

gardencemetery@glenstal.com

with questions or to arrange a personal tour.



The Garden Cemetery is located beside the monks' cemetery, adjacent to the Lady Garden. It is a beautiful natural woodland location and has been designed to blend seamlessly and sympathetically into the natural environment.

The cemetery overlooks the Chapel Lake and the views across the lake towards the Walled Garden and beyond are stunning. Each different season brings its unique beauty to this very special place. There is an extraordinary quiet and a mystery here, which is difficult to put into words.

Choosing a cemetery and securing your memorial space is an important decision to make. Having made these arrangements in advance can give you a great sense of peace and relieves this added burden from your family at a very difficult time for them.

Each cemetery space can accommodate up to two urns. Each resting place is marked with a plaque for engraving names and dates of birth and death.



Madge Carey RIP



Margaret (Madge) Carey (née Mullally) went peacefully to God on 30th July 2020 at the University Hospital in Limerick. She had spent a lifetime working in Glenstal Abbey and is remembered with great fondness by generations of colleagues, students and monks who had the privilege of knowing her and working with her.

Madge was a very private person, but her dedication and hard work were always appreciated. By the time she retired she had touched the lives of many generations associated with Glenstal Abbey. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Madge spent her entire life living in the Murroe - Newport locality and was very well known and respected in the local community. As she grew

older and her health declined she made the decision to move to Millbrae Lodge Nursing Home in Newport.

The wider community of Glenstal Abbey join together in extending sympathies to Madge's sons Willie and Martin and to her extended family. May the Lord look down kindly upon Madge and reward her for a life well lived.

May she rest in peace.





Glenstal Abbey Artisan Chocolates specialises in the use of liqueurs from monasteries of Europe to flavour the fondants of chocolate truffles, in particular, famous liqueurs such as Chartreuse and Bénédictine. We also use a Mandarin Orange liqueur which we import from the Abbaye de Lérins, on an island off the coast at Nice, where St Patrick is said to have studied in the fifth century, and a walnut liqueur, Nocino, which we source from an Italian Cistercian convent. In addition our range includes an alcohol-free collection derived from desserts for monastic feast days. The boxes are in 260g and 130g sizes. We also have fruit-flavoured 75g chocolate bars with quotes from the Rule of Benedict in English and the original Latin.

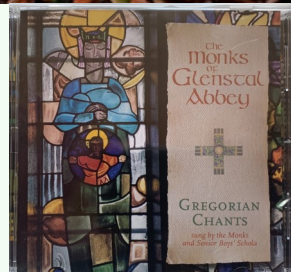
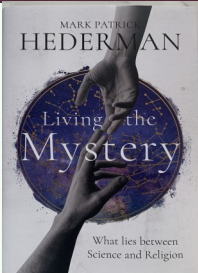
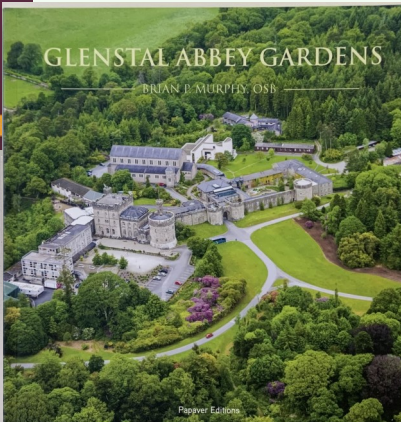
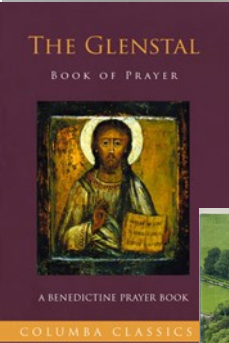
Enquiries welcome at chocolates@glenstal.com



ONLINE SHOPPING



Simply Glenstal Range
Glenstal Abbey Chocolates
Books by Glenstal Authors
Glenstal Prayer Book
Glenstal through the Seasons
Glenstal Altar Cross



The Glenstal Abbey shop is now online offering a range of monastic products and gifts.

www.glenstal.org

Reflections on the Pandemic

In these strange days my routine, like your own, has become somewhat different. The words from the Little Prince come to mind: “I have always loved the desert. One sits down on a desert sand dune, sees nothing, hears nothing. Yet through the silence something throbs, and gleams...” A question often asked in these days is what is really being asked of us in this situation in which we all find ourselves? There are many possible answers, but I think one of the clearest answers is the simplest – we are being asked to learn how to be alone. That is not a bad thing. Wonderful things can happen, if I learn to be comfortable in my own company.

I want to share with you two stories, very different from each other, but I find both very interesting and relevant to our newfound seclusion. For the last few months our reality has become a great deal smaller than we are normally used to. I began to think about people who have no choice but to live like this most of their lives. I’m thinking of people with disabilities that make travel difficult and who have a life experience which is very different to our own. I think the stories of such people can say something to us in our present reality.

In this regard, I started to read about a very interesting character, a Benedictine monk, called Hermann of Reichenau. Perhaps you have heard of him? You may know him as *Hermannus Contractus*. His parents were Count Wolverad II and his wife Hiltrud. They were a noble family from Upper Swabia. His noble birth probably saved his life as a child, together with the fact that he had very loving parents. He was born 18 July 1013 and died on 24 September 1054. He was extremely disabled from childhood, having only limited movement and limited ability to speak. He had a special chair made for him and he was carried around everywhere in it.

There is a lot of modern speculation as to what disability or disease

afflicted him. Some believe he suffered from motor neuron disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or spinal muscular atrophy. He also had a cleft palate. At the age of seven, he was placed in the Benedictine Abbey of Reichenau by his parents who could no longer look after him. They were not trying to get rid of their son, they genuinely felt he would have a better life in the monastery and they maintained a very good relationship with him. After he died he was buried with his mother, because he



believed it was she who saved his life as a child. To their eternal credit the monks of Reichenau took him in and looked after him. The island of Reichenau is about 5 km long and 1.5 km wide, it was the artistic and literary centre of south-west Germany during this period. This island became Hermann's entire world. The famous Benedictine monastery which had been founded there in 724, played an important role in scholarship, since it was a centre where manuscripts were copied.

Hermann was an extraordinary individual. He entered the Cloister School at Reichenau on 13 September 1020 and studied there under the famous

Abbot Berno (about 978-1048). The monastery was a centre of learning at this time, containing a fine library and a well-equipped workshop. Hermann decided to become a monk at Reichenau in 1043, later, and somewhat amazingly, he was elected Abbot of the Monastery after the death of Abbot Berno on 7 June 1048, at the age of 35. He was Abbot for the last 6 years of his life. Despite his disabilities, being confined to a chair and hardly able to speak, he was a key figure in the transmission of Arabic mathematics, astronomy and scientific instruments from Arabic sources into central Europe. He composed works on history, music theory, mathematics, and astronomy, as well as many hymns.

As a scientist, he is credited with building the first astrolabe in Europe. An astrolabe was used primarily to make astronomical measurements, typically of the altitudes of celestial bodies, but astute philosophers, astrologers and sailors devised hundreds of uses for the instrument. In short, this was a ground-breaking development. He made very significant mathematical advances. He was the first to make the lunar calendar of the Middle-Ages work. This was a huge scientific discovery and really changed people's lives for the better.

Hermann also wrote on music, considered as a part of mathematics at this time. His music teacher was the famous Berno of Reichenau who introduced the eight modes to the west and was probably the leading music expert in his day.

There are two things, apart from the obvious, that I greatly admire about Hermann. Firstly, very few people have ever heard of him despite his many claims to fame, he was obviously not interested in the limelight. Secondly, he lived a very full and by all accounts contented life. He wrote most of his hymns later in life after he went blind, as if he hadn't a sufficient number of difficulties to contend with in his life. Among the hymns attributed to him in the tradition are some that are very familiar, *Salve Regina*, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. He was Beatified in 1863.



Can you imagine someone today, that intelligent, making ground-breaking discoveries and writing hymns as popular as the *Salve Regina* and still managing to remain anonymous? The more I learn about him, the more fascinating he becomes. I think he's a very good patron for us in our own time of pandemic confinement. Someone who managed to do a huge amount despite being restricted in almost every way imaginable.

Then I got to thinking, what was his secret? How did he do it? Living in an age where he didn't have access to modern technology to help him with his disabilities, or make his life more comfortable. Whatever his secret, Hermann certainly lived a resurrected life. The gifts he received, he used, the limitations around him, he overcame. He's not the only person like this, there are many, it is our good fortune if we happen to know someone like him.

If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then the Church is a fraud, and faith is a sham. But if He really did rise from the dead, His message is true! Without the Resurrection, Jesus would have remained forever a good person who had met a tragic end. People would remember some of his teachings, and a handful of people might even try to live according to them. All the basic doctrines of Christianity are founded on the truth of the Resurrection. "Jesus is Lord; He is risen" (Rom 10:9) was the central theme of the preaching of the Apostles.

In this world of pain, sorrows and tears, Easter reminds us that life is worth living. I like to think that my new friend Hermann of Reichenau managed to figure this out at a very young age, because this makes all the difference. If you know this truth, then nothing else really matters. It doesn't matter how confined you are, how much money you have. Nothing matters except this, because this reduces everything else to dust and ashes.

The moment when one realises this is a moment never to be forgotten. I love how Anthony Bloom describes the moment he met the Risen Jesus. He was dragged along to a talk by friends. It was given by a priest and he was completely unimpressed, even bored and annoyed. He hurried home in order to check the truth of what this priest had been saying. He asked his mother whether she had a book of the Gospels, because he wanted to know whether the Gospel would support what was said in the talk. He expected nothing good from this reading, so he counted the chapters of the four Gospels to be sure to read the shortest, not to waste time

unnecessarily. And thus it was that he read the Gospel according to St Mark. I'll leave the rest to his own words:

“I do not know how to tell you of what happened. I will put it quite simply and those of you who have gone through a similar experience will know what came to pass. While I was reading the beginning of St Mark’s gospel, before I reached the third chapter, I became aware of a presence. I saw nothing. I heard nothing. It was no hallucination. It was a simple certainty that the Lord was standing there and that I was in the presence of him whose life I had begun to read with such revulsion and such ill-will.

This was my basic and essential meeting with the Lord. From then I knew that Christ did exist. I knew that he was the Risen Christ. I met with the core of the Christian message, that message which St Paul formulated so sharply and clearly when he said, ‘If Christ is not risen we are the most miserable of all people’. Christ was the Risen Christ for me, because if the One Who had died nearly 2000 years before was there alive, he was the Risen Christ. I discovered then something absolutely essential to the Christian message — that the Resurrection is the only event of the Gospel which belongs to history not only past but also present. Christ rose again, twenty centuries ago, but he is the Risen Christ as long as history continues. Only in the light of the Resurrection did everything else make sense to me. Because Christ was alive and I had been in his presence I could say with certainty that what the Gospel said about the Crucifixion of the prophet of Galilee was true, and the centurion was right when he said, ‘Truly he is the Son of God’. It was in the light of the Resurrection that I could read with certainty the story of the Gospel, knowing that everything was true in it because the impossible event of the Resurrection was to me more certain than any event of history. History I had to believe, the Resurrection I knew for a fact. I did not discover, as you see, the Gospel beginning with its first message of the Annunciation, and it did not unfold for me as a story which one can

believe or disbelieve. It began as an event that left all problems of disbelief because it was direct and personal experience.

Then I went on reading the Gospel and I discovered a certain number of things which I believe to be essential to the Christian faith, to the attitude of the Christian to the world and to God. The first thing that struck me is that God, as revealed to us in Christ, is everyone's God. He is not the God of a nation, or a confession, or of a denomination, or a more or less peculiar group, he is everyone's creator, Lord and Saviour. In him I discovered that the whole world had cohesion; that mankind was one; that differences and divergences were not final and decisive, because we were loved of God; all of us equally, although we were called to serve him in a variety of ways, with a variety of gifts, and with a very different depth and width of knowledge."

I believe this is true. In fact I believe this is **the** truth. I also believe that it is possible for every person on earth to come to know this truth. We are our own worst enemies, but God is infinitely patient. This I also believe to be true.

I believe this period of isolation is an opportunity. Use it well. Reconnect with the Risen one, if you need to; enjoy His company, if you can. Take my new friend Hermann as your patron in this period and trust in the Lord. Remember that the Risen Lord came to the apostles through a locked door and stood with them in that room of their seclusion on the first day of the week.

Abbot Brendan OSB





Kenya Update



In our last Chronicle we told the story of how €13,000 raised by Fr John and his “Kenya crew” was being used to fund the rebuilding of a classroom in Entasopia. The old classroom fell down in a storm two years ago and ever since the young people were being taught under trees. The classroom will be as good as the one we supplied at Oloika last year. Extreme rain conditions were followed by a Covid-19 lockdown and this delayed the work for many months. Finally things got underway.

The above photograph is a pictorial update on the progress made. Joel Shani and his men have been hard at work! We want to say a very big thank you to everyone who contributed to this very worthwhile project in Kenya.

Community Diary

Over the summer months the Monastic Community has continued living monastic life as usual. We have been operating with a skeleton staff, because of the COVID situation. Glenstal was effectively closed to the public last March. This is the first time in our history when we have closed our church to guests and visitors. We understand that this was a necessary and prudent precaution, but it was a very unusual experience for our community where hospitality holds a special place.

St Benedict in his Rule for monks says, “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me .” Closing our monastery to guests and visitors is something which goes very much against the grain for a Benedictine monk.

It was, therefore, a great joy for us when we were able to open our doors once more. On 29th June the Abbey Church re-opened for public worship following all public health guidelines. Under the current guidelines we can have a

maximum of thirty people present in the nave at the liturgy. On 29th June the God Pods reopened and on 6th July the guesthouse reopened with reduced capacity. The present situation is still very far from perfect, but at least we are moving in the right direction. It is our hope

and prayer that we are not forced back into another lockdown situation in the coming weeks and months.



The summer is always a quiet time here in Glenstal, but this year many of us were kept busy with preparations for our reopening to guests and visitors. This has also been a very busy time for the school as they have

been making everything ready for receiving back our students at the end of August.

Some students, from abroad, have returned early this year as they have to fulfil quarantine requirements before the start of the new academic year. This is a difficult time for everyone, but our visitors, students, dedicated staff and the monastic community have risen to the challenge and met it head on with good humour and hard work.

As this edition of the Chronicle goes to print work is about to commence on the church carpark and surrounding area. This area needs resurfacing, proper drainage, suitably marked parking spaces and safe access for pedestrians. Now that the church renovation project is complete, this is our next phase of development. We had hoped to begin this work after Easter, but the COVID lockdown and resultant situation meant that it has been delayed until now. It is our hope to complete this work before the winter sets in.



Br Colmán celebrated his Silver Jubilee of monastic profession on 11th July, Solemnity of Saint Benedict. In the present circumstances of COVID restrictions the celebrations were in-house with the monastic community. A few family members made a surprise visit for Mass on the day. It is important to mark these important occasions in life and to give thanks to God for his fidelity over the past twenty five years.

Br Oscar will make his first monastic profession on 3rd October, Feast of Bl. Columba Marmion. Br Oscar began his novitiate on 12th September 2019. He spent the last year living with the community, taking part in our monastic life, praying with us in the church and discerning his monastic vocation. During the year long novitiate a novice learns about the monastic tradition and the Rule of Saint Benedict. Br Oscar has decided that he wishes to continue this discernment by taking monastic vows for three years and so he will join Br Justin in the juniorate to further his monastic journey.

Regretfully we are still unable to conduct our usual courses, talks, retreats and workshops here at the Abbey and only limited numbers can join with us for liturgical celebrations. However, all our liturgies are live streamed on our monastery webcam and we encourage you to join with us in prayer. Details of how to do this and the times of the various liturgies are found on the inside back page of this Chronicle.

The COVID pandemic and the lockdown experience were difficult for all of us. This was a completely new and totally unexpected experience for us.



As a monastic community we have tried to respond to this situation as best we can. Some members of the community have been busy making YouTube video recordings which we have shared on the internet; Fr Simon's "Mindful Monk" series and Fr Luke's Icon Chapel videos have proved popular with many. All of these videos and recordings are available on our social media platforms and also on a link from the monastery website: www.glenstal.com/abbey

More YouTube videos are planned for the autumn, including some featuring the vocation stories of some of the community. Keep watching our website and





social media pages for updates.

As we face into the autumn and winter we wish all of you, our friends and benefactors, every blessing. In these difficult days it is important for all of us to remember one another in prayer and to stay in touch. With this in mind we have decided to change the format and frequency of our editions of the Glenstal Chronicle so that we can reach a wider constituency and keep in touch with all of you wherever you may be.

We hope to keep you informed about life here at the abbey and about what is happening in the wider Glenstal circle. While the present global pandemic may mean that we will not be able to meet in person as often as we might like, we can still keep in touch in this way.

Please remember to sign up for updates and mailings from Glenstal Abbey and keep this monastery and its monks in your prayers as we promise to keep all of you and your families in our prayers.

“Run while you have the light of life, lest the darkness of death overtake you.”

(RB Prologue V. 13)

Monastery Webcam

If you are unable to join with us in person in the coming weeks and months, please do join us via our webcam. All the liturgies are broadcast live and recordings are also available for one week.

www.glenstal.com/abbey

SUNDAYS

- 8.35 pm **Resurrection Office/Vigils** (on the preceding evening)
7.00 am **Lauds** (Morning Prayer)
10.00 am **Conventual Mass**
12.35 pm **Sext** (Midday Prayer)
6.00 pm **Vespers** (Evening Prayer – in Latin)
8.35 pm **Compline** (Night Prayer)

WEEKDAYS

- 6.35 am **Matins and Lauds** (Morning Prayer)
12.10 pm **Conventual Mass**
6.00 pm **Vespers** (Evening Prayer, in Latin)
8.35 pm **Compline** (Night Prayer – Monday excepted)

All services, except Vespers are chanted in English, with some Latin hymns and antiphons. While the Eucharist is celebrated in English, the ordinary and proper chants are sung in Latin. Please note that the timetable may change slightly on certain solemnities and feastdays.

