



Friar Servants of Mary – Province of the Isles

LETTER TO THE FRIARS OF THE PROVINCE

PRIOR PROVINCIAL

fr Bernard M. Thorne OSM

No. 11 17 February 2011 SEVEN HOLY FOUNDERS

To the friars of the Province of the Isles



Message from Prior Provincial fr Bernard M. Thorne OSM

Dear brothers and all Servites,

Each year we keep alive the memory of the Seven Founders by celebrating their feast day on the 17th February. Happy feast day to all our Servite Family. For almost eight hundred years the Founders have inspired men and women to bear the name 'Servite' and to live a way of life that is faithful to the



Gospels. What is it that enables the Servites survive down through the centuries? What is the treasure we hold in these earthen vessels?

Today we are faced with change all around us and on every level. Most generations have to face up to change. The Founders lived in a city caught up in political and economic upheaval and a church that was in dire need of reform. Dal Pino tells us in his book 'Brothers and Servants' that the Founders "..... responded to the concrete, deep-felt needs of their society by pursuing a single-minded search for God".

Through discernment, prayer and service, this group of men were open to the promptings of the Spirit and risked radical change in their lives. Upon reflecting on the Founders today the question for us is whether we can, through discernment, service and prayer, be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the needs of our world and truly carry on the tradition and Spirit of our Servite Family. Our culture today calls us to discern in isolation and go it alone. Discerning together calls for great humility, honesty and a willingness to pray together. This way of life does not accommodate egos needing continual massaging. The Founders trusted God enough to allow themselves to be moved by his Spirit. Can we respond to the prompting of God's Spirit like Mary and say BEHOLD THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD, WE ARE HERE TO DO YOUR WILL.s

SOME NEWS CLIPS

Fr. Ignatius McCafferty has now moved into a home where he is very well cared for. It seems he may have taken on a new lease of life. Thank you Vincent for your generous service and care.

Benburb:

As in many other places Benburb experienced weeks of heavy snow and temperatures as low as -19°C. Fortunately there was a good weekend before Christmas when about 2,700 visited the Priory to meet Santa and raise some funds for the local crèche in the village.

Frozen and burst pipes cut off the water supply Christmas week when we had 27 young men on retreat here at the Priory. Thank God they were willing to carry buckets.

Fr. Chris O'Brien will be attending the treasurers' meeting in Perth in March/April. He will call into Swaziland on the way to visit with Gabriel Hooper. Gabriel is not in great health and we need to discern whether he should return to England for care.

Thank you to the Marley Community for hosting the month's mind Mass for Fr. **Frank Christie R.I.P.** Family and friends who were not able to attend the funeral in Australia were very grateful for the opportunity to come together and grieve the loss of Fr. Frank. They gathered in the Parish Centre after the Mass for a wonderful reception.

Fr. Dermot McNeice has arrived back in Ireland. We hope that his sabbatical will be a time of rest and renewal. His farewell at Fulham Road was a demonstration of how much loved he was by so many. Thank you Dermot for your 10 years of ministry in Fulham Road.

Fr. Paul Addison finishes his sabbatical at the end of this month. We are looking forward to having him back and hope he enjoyed his Marian studies.

Some of the older friars will *remember Neil O'Malley* who was with us for a number of years. He passed away at the end of the year in Belfast. Let us keep him and his family in our prayers.

We are delighted that **Fr. Hubert Moons** will give input at our Chapter 20th to 24th June at Benburb. A great deal of effort and money goes into making this gathering possible and we owe it to each other to be there.

Ash Wednesday will soon be here. May Lent be a time of renewal and blessing for all of us.

Australian Visitors:



Servite College Tuart Hill, Perth in Australia sent some visitors to London: The friars and Sister Dominic Savio OSM made them very welcome. Later they wrote:

“Hello Father

Our group was from Servite College, the only Servite school in Australia. Every second year we have a group of 15 and 16 year old students that travel to Europe to visit the Pories of the Servite order that our school pays tribute to. Our school is divided into six groups, each named after a Servite Priory including Annunziata, Senario, San Clemente, St Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes and St Anthony (the Australian Priory). On our European Pilgrimage we

visited the Pories and Parishes of San Marcello, Annunziata, San Clemente, Senario and St Mary, while also visiting the Servite school in London and Paris. The aim of the visit is for the students and staff to continue to develop the Servite charism and develop a deeper understanding of our College's origins. Throughout the College curriculum students are taught about the Servite order, its history and charism, and the pilgrimage is an opportunity for some students to see firsthand these origins.

We found the experience of visiting these places quite moving, giving us a sense of reality to all the stories we hear each day. Each place had its own sense of spirituality and awe while still holding that Servite charism. After discussion with the students, we all agreed that the experience has deepened our devotion and given us a sense of ownership of the story within our College. We would like to thank you and your whole Parish community for being so welcoming.

I have attached a photo I had, once I get all the students photos I will send some more.

Regards, **Ryan Wiles** Religious Education Coordinator Servite College

Farewell Celebration

For the farewell celebration for fr **Dermot MacNiece** OSM London, the Headteacher at Servite School, **Mrs Kathleen Williams** gave the address:

“The relationship between school and parish is crucial to the success of any Catholic education and the Parish Priest plays a vital part in that relationship. During the 8 years that I have been Headteacher at Servite Primary School I have been so incredibly lucky to have had the unfailing support of such a wonderful Parish Priest – Fr Dermot. Our school has always been a priority for Dermot. He is the first to congratulate at times of success and always there to support in our times of need.



His unique character and great sense of fun instantly appeals to both staff and pupils. He relates to the children with such ease and we always look forward to his visits. The children feel at home and relaxed in this church and door is always open to us. Fr Dermot has created that feeling of warmth and welcome. A feeling that doesn't exist in every relationship between school and parish.

Fr Dermot is a kind a generous man who relates to everyone regardless of their status or position within society. He has loved his time frequenting the Fulham Road. There is no doubt that he loves a taste of the finer establishments that this part of Chelsea offers, however equally he will never pass someone in need and on several occasions I have watched him sit a pass time with a man or woman sat in the street because they do not have a home. Dermot never lost sight of people in need and one of his great strengths is ability to serve, inspire and motivate people. He is also a wonderful delegator, finding volunteers is a particular talent and without even opening your mouth you could suddenly find yourself volunteering for an hour on the Parish Bazaar wheel of fortune.

Fr Dermot has an ambitious vision and we have watched many of his projects become a reality. He is a creative thinker and always looks for solutions that lie outside of the box. He has transformed many parts of the priory and I have rarely known a time over the past 8 years when a building firm van hasn't been parked in our car park. Someone said to me you know what? Over the time he has been at Fulham Road, Dermot has made that house into a home and it is true, he has.

To do that takes a big heart and we know that Dermot has a huge one. As a new head I have been so so incredibly lucky to have worked with him. He cares enormously for the individual and through his prayers and encouragement, he has helped me to make Servite School the successful place it has become. Through tough times and good times, he has been there for us and we will never forget that.

On behalf to the children and staff, I would like to thank you Dermot for being our friend, for the laughter, the prayers and support. We will miss you terribly but wish you every happiness as you begin your travels and your new role in Northern Ireland."

AUNG SAN SU KYI Recent release from house arrest (end of 2010) of **Aung San Su Kyi** in Myanmar has touched the world, with a hint of hope to match events in Egypt. We asked fr **Bernard Barlow** to write about his meeting with this iconic person while he was serving on the General Council of the Order:



"I met with Aung San Su Kyi in October 1997 during a visit to the Servite Sisters in Myanmar. Because of my interest in and visits to Burma, I had made contact with Dr. Michael Aris, the British husband of Su Kyi. He lived in Oxford as did I, and he had two Burmese religious Sisters from the diocese of Lashio living in his house and following courses in English, just as I had done with our Servite Burmese Sisters.

He came to visit me at Begbroke just before I left for Burma. Su Kyi had agreed to prepare a Conference for the Paul VI lectures series sponsored by CAFOD, but they had difficulty getting the text faxed to England. Would I go to see her during my visit and bring back the script?

Now, it wasn't as easy as all that! Aung San Su Kyi was under house arrest, and only specified visitors were allowed. Su Kyi herself had to notify the military if she was expecting a visit, and not all were allowed. However, Michael Aris said he would phone her and prepare that side of the visit.

In Yangon, I duly phoned the number Michael had given me, and Su Kyi gave me a time to visit. I had deliberately waited until the end of my visit to phone, in case the authorities decided to expel me from the country. Fr Singa Rayer, a very close friend of the Servites, drove me near to University Avenue where Su Kyi lived, but did not dare go too close. He dropped me nearby, and I walked the rest of the way.

I was stopped and questioned closely by the military, and eventually allowed to proceed. Su Kyi greeted me courteously, and we talked about Oxford and Michael, and how I had become involved. It was a most surreal moment for me talking with this person whom the Burmese called simply "the lady", and who had won a general election by a landslide amount, but who had been denied the opportunity of leading her people because of the military junta. She gave me the text of her talk, and then she asked me to pray with her. Su Kyi is a devout Buddhist, but her husband

Michael was a Catholic, so it was quite natural to pray with her. I managed to get some photographs with her and the other members of the Democratic Party, and then I left.

The exit from her compound was very scary. The military were always on the lookout for anything to use to accuse Su Kyi of "collaboration with the West", and her paper, although non-political, could have been one of these excuses. However, I had deliberately worn hiking trousers, with pockets everywhere, and I had hidden the paper in one of these leg pockets so that it was not obvious. The other tactic I decided upon was to head directly to

the Major in charge and distract him with questions. This I did, asking him where would be the best place to get a taxi, and he accompanied me to the main road and called a taxi for me. I told the taxi to take me to a hotel near the Sisters Convent, as Fr Singa had warned me not to mention my connection with the Sisters and not to return directly to the Convent. I drove to the hotel, went directly into the bar and ordered myself a double whisky.

The next day I left Myanmar with the text, and Michael Aris delivered his wife's Paul VI CAFOD lecture on 3rd November 1997

Bernard Barlow 26 January 2011

MARIAN PROJECT During a necessary Study-Leave **Paul Addison** has been working on a Marian Project. He writes,

"For 5 months I have been undertaking a *Marian Project*, with generous time available for continuous study. The remnants of Medieval Marian art in England has been my constant study since 1987, as I travel around old churches, museums and such like, county by county, whenever I get the chance, photographing anything remaining after the great destructions of the mid-16th and mid-17th centuries (Reformation and Puritanism). Such studies are nothing new: they've been happening since after the Napoleonic Wars and similar destructions in France – our officers brought back many treasures! English eyes were gradually re-opened to the heritage of the past.



Mary Fenestra Coeli
Window of Heaven –
Browne's Hospital Chapel
STAMFORD Lincolnshire

For my part, I started, logically enough, in the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, treasure-houses of knowledge and artifacts. With careful background study, I have slowly gone around Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire, Sussex, Essex, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Lancashire, and other counties with their cathedrals, museums and parish churches. My photographic data-base now numbers some 5,500 images, with many more yet to be processed and catalogued. I have given good extra time to visit York Minster, the other ancient churches of York, and to Lincoln Cathedral.

For this particular Marian Project, I studied the Norman invasion of southern Italy and especially Sicily, and I visited the Norman-Byzantine marvels in Palermo. The interplay of politics, culture, art and religion is so complex. One cannot be romantic about it. Yet the expressions of religious faith in the art and sculpture are amazing. Like Liturgy, the artifacts are a kind of "sacred memory" of what people considered important.

I also focused my studies on the Mother of Sorrows, as expressed in the art, the poetry and the street theatre of the Middle Ages. This took me into the Mystery Plays in old English, old French and good old Latin! And I found myself concentrating on the titles of Mary as "Gateway of Heaven" and "Throne and Chamber of God's presence", and especially "The Window of Heaven". I hope to write some articles on these subjects, connecting art, history and faith with the important aspect of *compassion* in the Servite charism. I met with the retired Master-Glazier of York Minster, Peter Gibson OBE, for a marvellous session in the Minster. Before March 2011 I hope to visit sites in Leicestershire and Rutland, and fulfill an invitation to view a special manuscript in Eton College Library. Then it will be back to spare-time, part-time study again..." - *Paul Addison OSM*

fraternally in Christ *Bernard Thorne OSM* Prior Provincial

Paul Addison OSM editor

