



# GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE

Issue 10 - Spring 2021



GLENSTAL ABBEY MURROE, CO. LIMERICK

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# *Message from the Abbot*

Dear Friends,

It is now one year since the first COVID restrictions were introduced around the world and we are still living with this new normal. So much has changed for all of us over the past year. Our daily lives have altered beyond all recognition, human contact has been reduced to an absolute minimum and participation in our liturgical celebrations has moved on-line for most people.

This extraordinary time is to remain with us for some months to come and there is very little any of us can do about it. For the second year in a row we are facing into Easter in this new reality. For some of us our present circumstances of isolation might mean that this is the very first time we have really heard the call to conversion in Lent, the call to turn towards God. Unlike last year, this time we know what to expect. As we journey towards Easter, we carry with us all of those who have been touched by this terrible pandemic and their families. We remember all those who are working so hard to keep us safe and we offer them our thanks and our prayers.

In many ways the last year has seemed like a continuous Lenten experience. There was a lot of time for reflection and the furious pace of life spluttered to a halt. The global has given way to the local, the importance of family and community have become very apparent to us all. We are also very aware that more than ever we need our celebration of Easter this year.

Easter says to us that there is hope; Christ is risen. Just as the earth itself is starting to rejuvenate out of the ashes of its winter, so Lent is inviting us to become a pilgrim people, on a journey to Holy Easter. This is our hope and our destination in these COVID times.

With every blessing,

*Brandon Coffey ab*



# *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](mailto:gardencemetery@glenstal.com)



# *St Benedict Outside-the-Walls:*

## *Benedictine Oblates*

In these days of lockdown we are more than ever aware of human connections. We can feel disconnected, but we can also discover, perhaps to our surprise, that there is a way of being connected that is much deeper than mere physical presence or face-to-face contact. One example of this is in the Oblate movement, connected with Benedictine monasteries of our time.

St Benedict wrote his rule for those who live in a monastery, where they serve under a rule and an abbot. That's a tightly connected community where the gifts and challenges of close community life are God's special tools for bringing about transformation in the lives of those who live there. But monasteries are not the only communities; there are parishes, families, workplaces, clubs, etc, and the basic dynamics of human flourishing and failure don't vary that much. Because of this, there has been a new appreciation in recent decades of the fact that the wisdom of the Rule of St Benedict has much to say in many different walks of life. Books have been written which apply the ideas of St Benedict to family life, to education, to business management, to parish life and to sport, just to name a few.

St Benedict has sound advice for those who find themselves 'in charge' of others, and plenty of wisdom about how decisions are best made in a community context. You could read his chapters on the abbot of the monastery if you were a parent, a teacher, a manager, a parish priest or a sports trainer, and find something helpful.

More importantly, the Rule of St Benedict has a particular distillation of the ingredients necessary to become truly Christian and, in the fourth chapter of his rule, presents the reader with a toolbox of over 70 items for daily use. St Benedict's 'workshop' is a place the Lord himself rolls up his sleeves and gets to work on us, if we are willing to co-operate. It's not a place for dramatic heroism or frightening asceticism, but a place of steady work, balanced, humane, and calibrated to open the human heart to life and to love.



Oblates are people who recognise the wisdom of St Benedict. They have found that what he has to say resonates with them and helps them discover the presence of God from day to day or, as one monk has put it, 'from now to now'. This discovery often happens as a result of visiting a particular monastery, where the life lived there strikes a deep chord. Oblates not only look to the wisdom of St Benedict, but they do so in connection with a particular monastery and in fellowship with other oblates. This usually involves opportunities for days of retreat, and other moments where oblates meet one another for mutual support and encouragement. Glenstal Abbey is no exception to this trend and, approximately six times a year, oblates are invited for a day of spiritual refreshment among us. Benedictine oblature is not for everyone. Each has their own path specially prepared for them by God. For this reason, when people express interest in becoming oblates, there is normally a year of gentle discernment to see if this is best, followed by a second year during which aspiring oblates are introduced to key elements of Benedictine spirituality, before making a final commitment.

The way in which the Oblate life is framed or conceived varies from monastery to monastery. At Glenstal the commitment of an oblate entails (insofar as personal duties permit) daily prayer in some form of Liturgy of the Hours and/ or daily scripture meditation (*lectio divina*), as well as an ongoing engagement with Benedictine spirituality as a guide to living the Christian life. How this works out will vary for each oblate, and the various sessions and meetings provided here at Glenstal are designed to help each one discover the most realistic and beneficial way of putting this into practice.

*Fr Columba OSB*



# *Kenya Project 2020*

The project in Kenya to construct a new classroom has been successfully completed. A very big thank you to all who donated in any way; it is very much appreciated.

The students no longer have to study under the trees in Entasopia. The old classroom fell down during a storm. The photos show the finished project and the new school building is now in use.





*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 75g chocolate bars with quotes from the Rule of Benedict in English and the original Latin and a range of fruit-flavoured 75g bars.*

*Enquiries welcome at [chocolates@glenstal.com](mailto:chocolates@glenstal.com)*





# ONLINE SHOPPING

**Simply Glenstal Range**

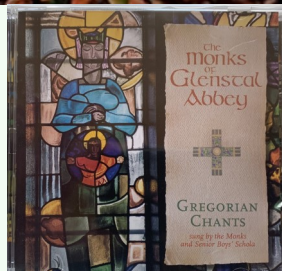
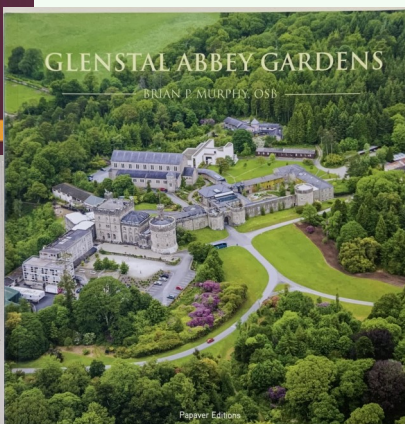
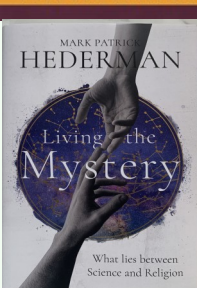
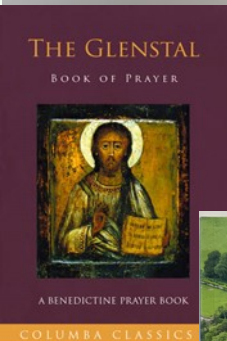
**Glenstal Abbey Chocolates**

**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](http://www.glenstal.org)

# *NUI Galway Announces 2021 Honorary Degree Recipients*



Ronnie O'Gorman is the Founder, owner and currently Chairman of The Galway Advertiser newspaper which celebrated its Golden Jubilee last year. A former student at Glenstal Abbey School, he studied Dramatic Arts in England where he also taught for a number of years before returning to establish the first free newspaper in Ireland which now enjoys the highest circulation of any regional newspaper in the country. He is a renowned historian and key to the restoration of Coole Park/Thoor Ballylee and he has been at the heart of the development of Galway through his promotion of

the West and the region culturally and historically. He is an indefatigable supporter of the Arts, a self-confessed bookworm, a genial host, a seasoned traveller and a wonderful family man.



# *A Short Stations of the Cross for Holy Week*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

**First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

We may have been condemned for no fault of our own. We may have been a burden on others. We may have been hurt, unwanted or lonely in this world. Let us give all these painful moments to the Lord.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

**Second Station: Jesus carries the Cross.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

We remember those who carry the cross of sickness, pain, loss, guilt, financial difficulty and any other suffering. Lord, help them in their struggle.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

**Third Station: Jesus falls the first time.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

When I fall into sin and move away from God, help me to seek conversion.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*



#### **Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Let us ask Mary our mother to be our help and protection on our journey through this life.

#### **Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his Cross.**

When our cross becomes too heavy let us pray that the Lord will send someone to help us.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

#### **Sixth Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Let us remember our family members and friends who were there with us to comfort us during the most painful times of our life.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*



#### **Seventh Station: Jesus falls for the second time.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Failure is something we can experience many times in life. Let us pray for those who find it difficult to get up and continue the journey of life.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

#### **Eight Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Let us be compassionate and merciful to the people around us. Let us open our eyes to the people suffering in this world.



*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

**Ninth Station: Jesus falls the third time.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Let us make our hearts strong and become closer to God during this Lenten Season, through Fasting, Prayer and Almsgiving.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*



**Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his clothes.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Let us invite Jesus to heal our wounds and surrender all painful moments of our lives to Him.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

**Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Let all our sins be nailed to the cross so that we can live a new life in Jesus.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

**Twelfth Station: Jesus dies on the cross.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*





Into your hands O Lord I commend my spirit.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

**Thirteenth Station: The body of Jesus is taken down from the Cross.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Jesus, you died for our sins and opened for us the way to eternal life.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*

**Fourteenth Station: The Jesus is laid in the tomb.**

*We adore you O Christ and we bless you: because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

Let us look forward to the Eternal Life that Jesus has offered us by giving his own life as ransom.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...*



# *From the Archives*

## **Father Winoc Mertens (1893-1978)**

Father Winoc was born in Belgium in 1893. He made profession at Maredsous, Glenstal's founding house, in 1914.

He was one of a group of junior monks from Maredsous who spent the First World War in Edermine House in County Wexford. At that time he did not think that he would be the first monk of the foundation group to arrive in Glenstal in 1927.

He was Headmaster of the Glenstal Artistic Crafts School throughout the twenty years of its existence, 1928 to 1948. Several of his own art works are still to be seen in Glenstal, notably the statue of Our Lady in the Lady Chapel, a large wooden crucifix in the *schola statio*, the limestone statue of St Benedict in the circle in front of the Castle and the limestone carving of St Joseph now installed between the two school refectories. In 1946,



with, John Haugh, an alumnus of the Artistic Crafts School, he carved the Stations of the Cross for what is once more called the Chapel Royal in Dublin Castle. This chapel, formerly the (Anglican) chapel of the Lord Lieutenant, was re-opened as a Roman Catholic military chapel in 1943, under the title of Chapel of the Holy Trinity, and served as such until 1983 when it was closed for renovations and subsequently deconsecrated.

Father Winoc was first chanter at Glenstal from the beginning of the foundation down to the early 1960s. In the 1940s he pioneered the monastery's first broadcast Masses in what was then *Radio Éireann*. During the heyday of the *Feis Ceoil*, especially in the 1930s, he was in great demand as conductor of the massed Plain Chant choirs as well as an adjudicator. He also visited many schools to promote vocations and was a much sought-after giver of retreats, particularly to sisters. During these retreats, his never-perfect command of the English language caused much amusement, an amusement he cannily used to advantage. Within the community he served as Novice Master, Junior Master and Subprior.

In late 1970, he suffered a severe stroke that left him partly paralysed and effectively deprived of speech. During his long illness he was cared for in an exemplary fashion by the late Brother Michael O'Connor.

Father Winoc died on 4th July, 1978.

*Fr Henry OSB*



# Easter

In this time of pandemic sales have been booming around the world for one of Pope Francis' favourite books, *Alessandro Manzoni's* two hundred year old classic, *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed). The novel is set during the great plague of 1630 in Milan and is a reflection on the human condition and what moral integrity implies in confusing times. Pope Francis recently urged us to copy the example of *Fra Cristoforo*, a Capuchin friar in this novel, who gives his life serving the poor and outcast during the plague.

Humanity has suddenly been reacquainted with its oldest travelling companion, our mortality, dressed on this occasion in the clothing of COVID-19. For the time being we are powerless against this menace as science scrambles to find an answer. This is a new experience for us in our modern age. Medically, culturally and psychologically, we are ill equipped on all fronts to deal with this pandemic. In a few short months we have gone from Wuhan to mayhem. We were fooled into thinking that this was something we read about in history books. Like the foolish people who built the Tower of Babel, we forgot that we are only human.

What we celebrate in the Easter Vigil has a lot to say to us about our current circumstances and we really do need to sit up and pay very close attention. The very long story of humanity's relationship with God, to which we listen during the Vigil, is a story of love, and down through the millennia Christians have found this relationship and this story, to be the most effective remedy for all of our difficulties.

In this Paschal Mystery, Jesus, the Son of God, gave up his life for our sake and rose from the dead. This selfless act of 'love of neighbour' is our vaccine. In the distant days of the Roman Empire, the early Christians acquired a reputation for themselves during the Antonine Plague of the second century. They cared for the sick and suffering around them at great personal risk, like *Fra Cristoforo*, because they cared for their neighbours. Their love of neighbour led to an explosion of the Christian population after the ending of that plague. People could see that this was the way forward. This was the remedy to our human dilemma.



Doing as Christ did, putting others first, living a life of love, resurrected life; this is the answer to the problems of our broken world. This is the earthquake which so terrified the guards at the tomb on Easter Morning, at the moment of resurrection; an earthquake which we all need to feel in our own lives. We cannot simply go on doing what we have been doing in the past; it doesn't work. The humble example of *Fra Cristoforo* and those like him challenges us in these days. Will we listen this time? They represent the second and more wonderful creation, brought about by the Holy Spirit in humility.

It's not so easy to embrace the humility of God, not so easy to wash feet and not so easy to embrace the cross. However, the humble person is not afraid, the one who seeks to dominate is always afraid. We need to relearn humility, because the path of domination is the path of disaster. Humility is the path Jesus trod; the path which led him through the cross to the resurrection.

Suffering remains a mystery, as does life and love and God and many other things besides. Every one of us must walk the full journey of life to discover the meaning of our own suffering. What we can know is that we are not walking alone. An ancient Easter hymn of the Syrian Church speaks volumes to us in our present plight and isolation. It cries out: "Take pity on us, O Son of God! Deliver us out of the darkness that fetters us. Open the gate for us that we may go out with you. We see that death has no hold on you. Deliver us also, for you are our Saviour!' And I heard their voices and I traced my name on their foreheads. Now they are free and they belong to me."

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη! (Khristós Anéstil! Alithós Anéstil!) Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

*Abbot Brendan OSB*





# 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](http://www.glenstal.com/abbey)

## SUNDAYS

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

## WEEKDAYS

6.35 am	<b>Matins and Lauds</b> (Morning Prayer)
12.10 pm	<b>Conventual Mass</b>
6.00 pm	<b>Vespers</b> (Evening Prayer, in Latin)
8.35 pm	<b>Compline</b> (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 feastsdays.*

# *An Online Cloister*



Saint Benedict's Rule reminds us that 'a monastery is never without guests.' Perhaps for the first time in our history, however, the monastery has been without guests for extended periods throughout this pandemic. Gone are those usually staying in the guesthouse, those attending retreats or lectures, those coming to visit the Icon Chapel or the grounds, and those coming to pray with the monks in the Abbey Church.

In response to our lack of guests, monks of Glenstal Abbey have been utilising the internet to reach out and offer some support to the many people who seek spiritual nourishment here. Opening our cloister to the outside world, monks have shared their life stories, provided various talks, offered supports for personal prayer and shared some of their expertise in fields as diverse as nature, psychology and spirituality – all on our YouTube channel.

Father Simon began a 'Mindful Monk' series to seek and share usable wisdom to help people live during this difficult time, whilst Father Luke shared insights into the icons of Glenstal Abbey. Some monks shared their 'Lessons from Lockdown', whilst others have been busy preparing

future videos and podcasts on Easter, prayer, art and the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Visit, watch and subscribe at:

[www.youtube.com/GlenstalAbbeyMonks](http://www.youtube.com/GlenstalAbbeyMonks)

[www.youtube.com/SimonSleemanMindfulMonk](http://www.youtube.com/SimonSleemanMindfulMonk)

## *Join us in Holy Week*

### **HOLY THURSDAY:**

**Mass of the Lord's Supper** 7.00pm

### **GOOD FRIDAY:**

**Liturgy of the Passion** 3.00pm

**Prayer around the cross** 7.00pm

### **HOLY SATURDAY:**

**"My body shall rest in safety:**

**Entering the Lord's Rest"** 2.00pm

**Easter Vigil** 10.00pm

*on the webcam:*

<https://glenstal.com/abbey/webcam/>



# *Conserving Glenstal Abbey Castle*



## **Custodians of the Abbey's Historic Buildings**

Glenstal Castle was built in 1836 in the Norman Revival style to architect William Bardwell's designs and is a 'protected structure', rich in history and heritage.

Now home to a community of Benedictine monks, we are reminded daily of the genuinely inspiring privilege it is to live here. With this honour comes the responsibility of ensuring we conserve historic and iconic buildings for future generations. Even with consistent maintenance and repairs, the ageing and weathering of materials from the 1800s has taken its toll on the Castle structure's integrity.

## **Conservation Survey**

The community wished to comprehensively understand the Castle's

condition and the remedial works required to prevent any further deterioration of the historic buildings. To this end, the community appointed conservation experts CONSARC in January 2020 to carry out a detailed condition survey of the Castle's external fabric. CONSARC focused on issues causing **water ingress, damp** in the interior, and the **risk of falling masonry**.

## **Report Findings and Urgent Works Required**

The report identified a series of urgent works that require immediate attention. These areas include:

- The iconic entrance arch which is experiencing significant water ingress
- The roofs of the semi-circular towers and the arch are at the end of life and are no longer weatherproof
- Deterioration of the pointing of the masonry of the arch and towers

### **Urgent Works to be addressed:**

- Replace roofs with pitched natural slate and lead perimeter gutters
- Refurbishment of the parapet coping stones with lead damp-proof coursing
- Extensive repointing to waterproof the walls

The community has made a grant application to the Department of Heritage. If successful, this will be welcome support; however, the works' scope will require significant additional funding to ensure the urgent and high priority work can be addressed.

We hope to share further information regarding this project over the coming months.





