



# GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE

Issue 13 - Winter 2021



GLENSTAL ABBEY MURROE, CO. LIMERICK

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# *Christmas Greetings*

Dear Friends,

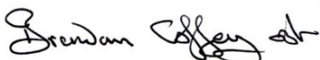
As we come to the end of another year and as we celebrate with joy the feast of the Nativity of the Lord it is our pleasure to be able to share with you some news of our Abbey and the wider Glenstal community.

In the monastery over the course of 2021 we have had the joy of celebrating the ordination of Br Jarek as a deacon. We have also continued to witness the extraordinary growth in our online ministry, with our church webcam, social media posts and videos. The various podcasts and videos have proven particularly popular and Br Justin has continued to produce these from his temporary base in Jerusalem, where he is engaged in his theological studies. Fr Denis is his more than able collaborator on site and Br Oscar has taken over management of our social media here. Your response to these initiatives has been overwhelming and most encouraging. It is a privilege for our community to continue to share our life of prayer and worship with so many of you despite lockdowns, Coronavirus and any other obstacle.

We are also delighted, in more recent times, to begin to welcome back guests and visitors and you can read about some of the events which took place here in these pages.

I am very pleased as always to be able to have this opportunity to wish you and all your family and friends every grace and blessing this Christmas. May the peace and love which the Saviour brought into the world on Christmas night dwell in your hearts and within your families.

With every Christmas blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brendan Coffey ab". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

# *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)

*with questions or to arrange a personal tour.*



# Edward Burke



Edward Burke (Glenstal Abbey School 1994-2000) was appointed in September Associate Professor in International Relations at the University of Nottingham and is Director of its Centre for Conflict, Security and Terrorism. Ed describes how his academic journey was fostered by the human and academic qualities of his teachers and the wider school and monastic community

at Glenstal, who provided both space and a scaffold for learning and growth. The open style of teaching encouraged independent thought and research, with the support of the high-quality library in the Great Tower. Following a History degree at Trinity in Dublin and a Masters on War Studies at King's College London, Ed completed a PhD in the Centre for Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews. The intervening years have been spent working in a prestigious list of think tanks in Spain and Britain, and on EU and international police missions in Afghanistan. Ed's doctoral research focused on the conflict in Northern Ireland, investigating the approach and response of British soldiers at the peak of the conflict in the early 1970s. The thesis was published as a book by Liverpool University Press in 2018: *An Army of Tribes: British Army Cohesion, Deviancy and Murder in Northern Ireland*. Through life experience and academic research, Ed has witnessed the depths to which humanity has sunk but also the wellsprings of hope in those depths. Ed has been summoned as an expert witness on international relations to both the UK and European parliaments. Having reflected much on the implications of Brexit, Ed has many very pertinent publications in this area since 2016. Ed married Lynsey Croft in 2016 who, together with their two children, Isla and Finn, provides another more immediate perspective on life. We look forward to hearing and reading more of Ed's thoughtful and reflective perspectives and wish him all the best with his future research.

# *Blessing of Path Sponsored by Class of 1978*

The class of 1978, friends of the class, and the families of the three deceased from the class, Paul Collins, Oliver Desmond and John Smyth, visited on Sunday 19th September. Mass was celebrated for the three deceased with



readings by Deirdre McCoy (widow of Paul), Philip Smyth (son of John) and John Egan, and prayers by Tom Gaffney, Ultan O’Nualainn and Johnny Fitzpatrick. Immediately after Mass, there was a short blessing ceremony of the new path. Sponsored by the class of 1978, the path runs from the church car park to the cemeteries and gardens. Former Abbots Christopher and Patrick, the School Captain Luke Nicholas and Vice-Captain Luca Forno all joined the group for the blessing. The sun shone to allow socially distanced refreshments outside the monastery reception



with Abbot Brendan and other members of the community. After the group had worked up an appetite walking the path in both directions, the group repaired to the local village restaurant, Rua, to share stories of past years with classmates and the families.

# *The Stone Man in a Blue Bin*

*Fr Mark Patrick Hederman OSB*

The man in the tower  
is sculpted rubble  
in a bin of cobalt blue  
Forlorn and quizzical,  
droppings of birds  
across his chest and face,  
could he be you!  
more hood than mail  
more monk than knight,  
the plastic tightness of the tumbrel  
Gaudily blue  
Squeeze into faintheartedness.  
His only arrogance was height  
sweet pigeons landing on his  
head  
apply the basics:  
eyes are all the purlieu needs  
drilled through stone.  
With one lacuna in the trees  
the sun shines over Galtee Mór  
at so precise an angle  
the turret turns theodolite:  
‘Watchman, watchman, builders  
wonder,  
‘What of the night?’



# *Letter from Rome*

*Fr Columba OSB*



I'm looking out at a bright blue clear sky from my room at Sant' Anselmo in Rome, where I am currently on sabbatical. Some readers may not be familiar with this place, located on the Aventine, one of the famous seven hills. Until the late nineteenth century, Benedictine monasteries were only rather loosely connected by the fact that they all

looked to the Rule of Saint Benedict, and that there was of often a kind of 'family tree', whereby one monastery could trace its origins back to another, from which it had been founded, and on this basis, different Benedictine 'congregations' emerged. Pope Leo XIII aimed for a more unified approach by uniting various Benedictine congregations into the 'Benedictine Confederation' which, although not as centralised as many more modern religious orders, did have an Abbot Primate, and an international house of studies, namely Sant' Anselmo, which was opened in 1900.

Here at Sant' Anselmo there are various degree courses in theology and philosophy on offer. In 1952 an Institute for Monastic Studies was also opened here and, in 1961, the Pontifical Liturgical Institute. This year there are ninety residents at Sant' Anselmo, both teachers and students,

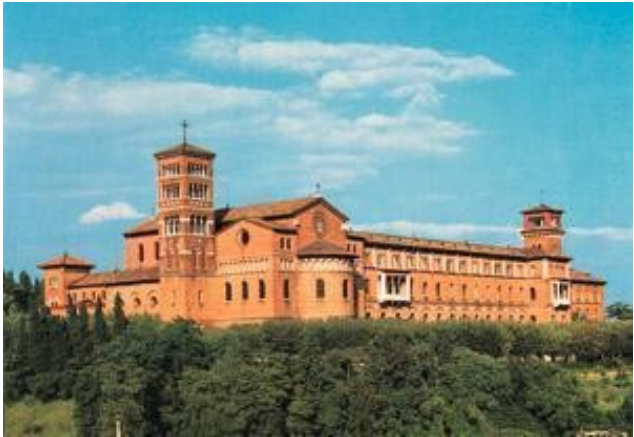


some of whom are teaching or attending courses in other Roman universities. The Abbot Primate also lives here and uses this place as his base from which he exercises a leadership role across the Benedictine world.

## **Liturgical Congress**

Since the pandemic started, the possibility of viewing and hearing liturgies online has become a new reality, indeed it was, for many people, their only contact with a liturgical celebration during lockdown. Earlier this year some online meetings were organised by the Irish Commission for Liturgy and also the Advisory Committee for Church Music, in order that people might share

their experiences of this new dimension, naming both the disadvantages and the blessings that it brought. In a few days' time the Pontifical Liturgical Institute here at Sant' Anselmo will be hosting a three-



day international liturgical congress: 'Virtual' Liturgy? By the time this goes to print (or online) the congress will have ended, but no doubt the discussion will have been enriched by input from around the world, and the proceedings eventually published. To give a flavour of the discussions, here are titles of some of the talks: *Homo adorans* in Times of Digitalization; Theological Perspectives on a Liturgical Anthropology for the Future; What have been the liturgical responses of the Church in times of epidemic?; Liturgy of the Hours and virtual gathering: praying the Liturgy of the Hours gathered virtually; Relationship between liturgical prayer and family prayer: the liturgy of the domestic Church.

## Worldwide Synod

Pope Francis officially launched the next worldwide synod some weeks ago. The topic this time is the idea of ‘synodality’ in the Church. The word, which is centuries old, comes from two Greek words meaning ‘together’ and ‘road’. It’s a matter of our journeying together on the road into the future, ultimately into God. Although the initiative came from the Pope, the actual process begins at local level, with listening, sharing and testimony in local parishes and dioceses. And so, a few weeks back, the Pope spoke to a representative gathering of the lay people of the local diocese of Rome about what it means to be a Church on the road together. The full text is available online but here are some snippets:

‘I want to emphasize this. This is an exercise of mutual listening, conducted at all levels of the Church and involving the entire People of God... Listening, speaking and listening. It is not about garnering opinions, not a survey, but a matter of listening to the Holy Spirit...’

‘The word of God journeys with us. Everyone has a part to play; no one is a mere extra. This is important: everyone has a part to play. The Pope, the Cardinal Vicar and the auxiliary bishops are not more important than the others...’

### **Commenting on synodal discussions as recounted back in the times of St Peter and St Paul, the Pope says:**

‘There was also the clash of differing visions and expectations. We need not be afraid when the same thing happens today. Would that we could argue like that! Arguments are a sign of docility and openness to the Spirit. Serious conflicts can also take place... Today too, there can be a rigid way of looking at things, one that restricts God’s *makrothymia*, his patient, profound, broad and farsighted way of seeing things. God sees into the distance; God is not in a hurry.’

## **Listening, for the Holy Spirit is important:**

‘Without the Holy Spirit, this would be a kind of diocesan parliament, but not a Synod. We are not holding a diocesan parliament, examining this or that question, but making a journey of listening to one another and to the Holy spirit, discussing yes, but discussing with the Holy Spirit, which is a way of praying.’

This involves listening to people who are distant or even antagonistic:

‘However we need to pass beyond the 3 or 4 percent that are closest to us, to broaden our range and to listen to others; at times they may insult or dismiss you, but we need to hear what they are thinking, without trying to impose our own concerns: let the Spirit speak to us.’

Inspiring words indeed! Let’s hope we can do some of this in our own country and in our own dioceses.





***This is our premium product. The chocolates in the de-luxe gold foil rigid box contain fondants flavoured with some of the oldest and finest liqueurs from the monasteries of Europe: Chartreuse, Benédictine, Lérins, Nocino de Valserena, and in addition there are four alcohol-free dessert chocolates. 16 hand crafted pieces totalling 260g. It can be purchased from our on-line shop.***

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





# ONLINE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Simply Glenstal Range

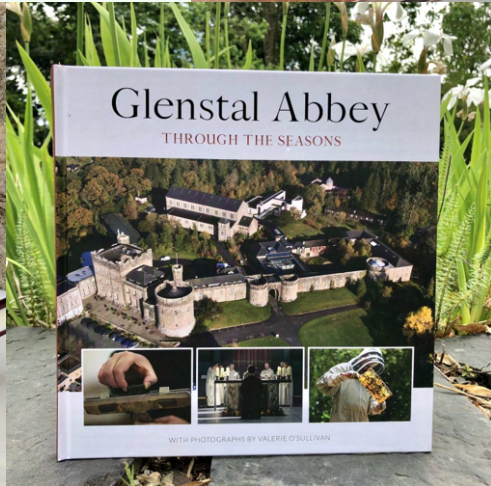
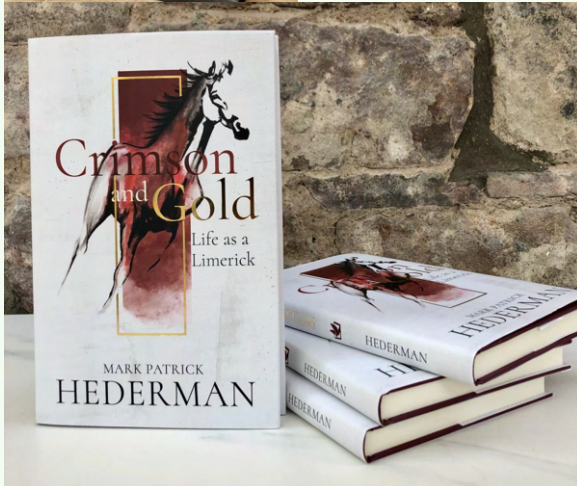
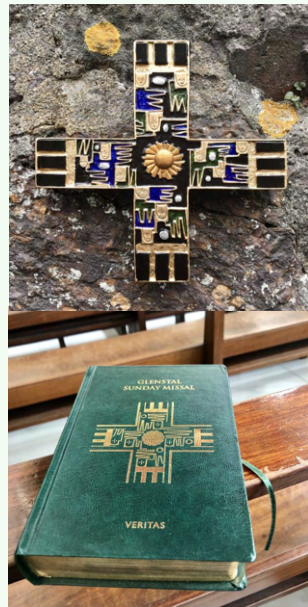
Glenstal Abbey Chocolates

Books by Glenstal Authors

Glenstal Missal

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)

# *Young Adults Retreat*

## *Tune into Prayer*

*Fr Luke OSB*



The “Tune into Prayer” retreat was held on Saturday October 23rd. As news spread on social media, people from farther afield wished to join and so accommodation was provided. There were 17 resident guests for the weekend from Newry, Dublin, Galway and Cork, and then a further 35 coming by bus from Maynooth, 22 from St Patrick’s Pontifical University and 13 from the National University, with members of St Catherine’s Society from each institution. The balance of the 60 participants came from Limerick, Tipperary and Clare. The day, the first after the official end of the lockdown, had something of a celebratory atmosphere. While Br Jarek and Br Oscar served the welcoming tea and snack, a guitar emerged and voices were raised in song. The opening talk

was preceded by the necessary COVID announcements – a pod system was in operation for the day in the school atrium which allowed for social distancing. Br Pádraig introduced the Abbot who spoke about Benedict and Prayer. The music of prayer, which he likened that of Orpheus, can steer us clear of false enticing melodies. Mass followed in the Abbey Church, and it was a joy to hear the responses sung in full voice by the assembled congregation. It was a welcome sound that has not been heard for some time.

After some photos on the church steps, the pods went to the refectories for lunch. Fr Luke gave an illustrated presentation of the icon chapel after which there was

a quiet hour for confessions, visits to the icon chapel or walks in the grounds. Fr Luke followed up with the final talk on praying with the scriptures using the example of the Transfiguration. Br Pádraig wrapped up the talks drawing on the words of Peter, “Lord it is good for us to be here” which really summed up the day. After a final snack the day visitors



departed. The residents joined the monks for Vespers and after supper there was another impromptu sing-song with piano and guitar in the Board Room of the school. After Mass on Sunday the residents had a guided tour of the icon chapel and later a tour of the grounds. We hope to run another youth retreat on Saturday 19th February and also welcome those from afar for the weekend.





# Golden Jubilee

Fr Christopher, Fr Simon and Fr Henry celebrated their Golden Jubilee of Monastic Profession with the community on Sunday 17th October. It was their wish to have a quiet celebration with the members of the community. We wish them every blessing in their life and work.

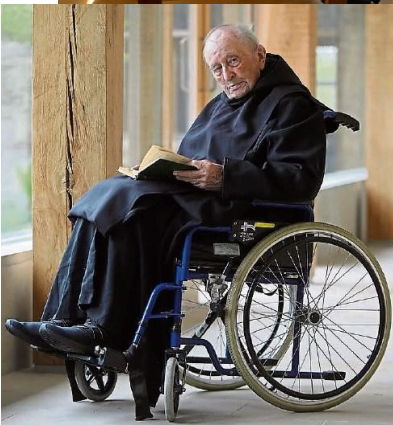
*Ad multos annos.*



# *Fr Placid 103!*

Fr Placid celebrated his 103rd birthday (7th October 2021) with the community after attending Conventual Mass. Fr Placid has enjoyed living a very long life and if you would like to hear him talk a little about his own story, you can listen to it here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9rRQ3ME8Uo&ab\\_channel=GlenstalAbbey](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9rRQ3ME8Uo&ab_channel=GlenstalAbbey)



# *Greener Glenstal*

## *Saving Energy at Glenstal Abbey School's Sports' Hall*

*Fr Luke OSB*

The Sports' Hall, built in 1985, had 20 ceiling light groupings at 300 watts, each including 6x50 watt bulbs. The cost of replacing the broken lights and fittings led to the decision in 2021 to replace all 20 light groupings with a single LED bulb at 98 watts, leading to a two thirds reduction in wattage. This expenditure will be recouped as the Sports' Hall lights run for an average of 16 hours per day in term time – or 8 hours per day over the year. The combined wattage has dropped from 6,000 to 1,960 watts. The expenditure for the new LED lights will be repaid within 1 years and 3 months. In addition, the lights are now on a push button system and turn off automatically after 40 minutes avoiding wastage by failing to turn off lights at night or at school breaks.



# *New Head and Principal of Glenstal Abbey School*



The Board of Management and Board of Governors are pleased to announce the appointment of Mr Marius Carney as Head and Principal of Glenstal Abbey School. A native of Belfast, Marius has been Principal of English Martyrs' School, in Leicester, England, for the past fourteen years. Under his leadership the school has become highly regarded for its academic excellence, musical life and strong Catholic community ethos. Having announced her intention to resign

some months ago, the current Principal, Ms Carmel Honan, will leave Glenstal at Christmas in order to pursue other professional interests.

Welcoming the appointment, Fr Martin, the current Headmaster, said:

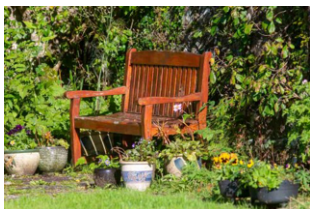
*"I am delighted that Marius Carney will be joining us in Glenstal and I look forward to working with him... I also want to acknowledge and thank Carmel Honan, with whom I served for the last three years, for all she has brought to Glenstal during her term of office and I wish her every happiness and blessing for the future."*

Marius will take up his new role at the beginning of the new term and will live on campus. Speaking about his appointment, Marius said:

*"I am very honoured to accept the post of Head of Glenstal Abbey School, and am excited to get to know my new students and their families. Glenstal is a unique school – well known for its fraternal spirit, academic distinction, sporting and musical life. I look forward to working together with the monastic community, the teachers and other staff, and all the parents and students, to continue to provide a world-class educational experience for many years to come."*

# *Guests at Glenstal*

*Br Oscar OSB*



We have reached the time of year when Christians all over the world prepare to welcome Christ who comes to us at Christmas time. St Benedict in chapter 53 of his Rule writes about the reception of guests. “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ”. As we celebrate Christmas I would like to reflect on how we offer hospitality to guests as Christ; God who comes to us as a little baby.

Christ came into the world quietly, without fuss, in very human circumstances. A baby, of course, has needs and Christ as a child had needs, very simple ordinary needs like food, shelter, comfort, tenderness and play. As monks we encounter Christ in Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist and in each other. Guests have a major part to play in ‘the other’ we meet. When guests come to the guesthouse they are met with a smile and a welcome; we are glad that you are here. We provide you with simple nourishing food, breakfast, lunch and supper. Many guests in the past have raved about Fr Christopher’s porridge and brown soda bread baked daily by the monks. Fresh fruit, tea, coffee and biscuits are also available from the guesthouse kitchen at anytime.

All our guest rooms are private, comfortable and warm. There is space to be quiet, read, journal, reflect and rest. Our welcome is gentle. As the Christ child slept in his mother’s arms, she held him gently, unquestioningly and in expectation. Likewise, we will not question your identity or background or your motivation for coming to Glenstal. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, young or old, right wing or left wing, introvert or extrovert, catholic or protestant, a person of faith or none at all. It doesn't even matter how many followers you have on TikTok! What matters is you are here with us, making our community

complete.

Time is given to play too. We are used to talking about God's work in the world, but I am quite certain the Christ child made time to play. While I wouldn't recommend guests jumping on the furniture, you can take time to explore the grounds, smell the sweet scents of the flowers in the gardens and listen to the gurgling of streams around the place. Guests can go for walks, jog, read, sketch and draw. We can tell you stories of this ancient and holy place; the mysteries of the forest; the beauty and grief of the Barrington house. We can tell you how a group of Belgian monks came to be here and we can tell you tales from our adventures in Africa.

We also have the story of our faith to tell; adventures in the desert, friendship, vulnerability, mercy, love and the victory over death. We can share with you stories of the saints and scenes of God's presence and love in our world through the icons in the icon chapel. All of these stories are here to feed your imagination and give a different slant on life.

You may wish to take some time to share your story too. Guests are welcome to meet with a monk and have their story heard in a safe respectful space.

There is opportunity to pray. Monks gather every day to sing the Divine Office and you are welcome to join us. Guests can follow the chant in books provided at the back of the Abbey church or you can simply let the words of Scripture sooth you, fostering peace and inspiring prayer.

So, if you are feeling tired and unclear, if you are honouring a special milestone, discerning an important decision, or wishing to spend some time apart with God, you are welcome. For Christ came into the world at Christmas and in this way, for us, every day is Christmas.

For booking enquires please email [guestmaster@glenstal.com](mailto:guestmaster@glenstal.com) or telephone 061-621000.

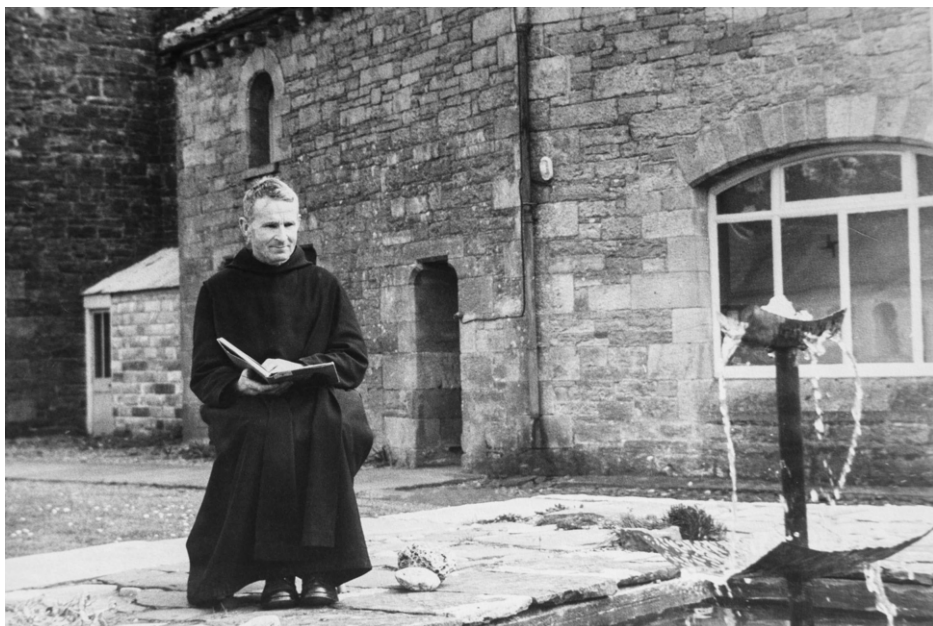
# *From the Archives*

## *Br Raphael 1915-2002*

*Fr Henry OSB*

John Kennedy was born on 20th March, 1915 in Carrigeen, Co. Tipperary. After attending the local primary school, he worked on the family farm and helped his father in the latter's small auctioneering business. He entered Glenstal on 7th June, 1944, at the then advanced age of 29, taking the monastic name of Raphael. He was professed on 6th October, 1946.

Used to heavy farm-work, Brother Raphael worked for most of his monastic life on the monastery farm but became increasingly interested in all aspects of the maintenance of the avenues and for years was a familiar sight, cutting back invasive laurels and rhododendrons, keeping the edges trimmed and repairing damage done by careless drivers.



Brother Raphael was never one to seek the limelight. For this reason, there are relatively few photographs of him in the archives – and in most of these he is attempting to hide behind someone else. If he were writing this, he would certainly not have gone beyond the opening paragraph.

But there is much more to tell.

Used to hard manual work from a very early age, Brother Raphael could not pass a day, except Sunday, without some useful physical labour.



Having imbibed from his novice-master a very serious, even solemn, *modus operandi*, he strictly observed the rule of no conversation and certainly no frivolous conversation during communal work. But prayer was permitted and when Brother Raphael was in charge, that prayer was the Rosary. The late Brother Benedict Tutty often told the story of a group of brothers sorting potatoes under Brother Raphael's supervision on a very cold day. Once the team had finished all fifteen mysteries of the Rosary with some of Brother Raphael's trimmings, he then enraged the already exasperated confreres by ordering, 'an extra decade for the



Reverend Mother in Doon'. To his shock, he found himself being pelted with potatoes and beat a hasty retreat.

Brother Raphael's devotion to manual work did not mean that he was anything other than faithful to spiritual reading which for all of his monastic life remained part of his daily routine. Although he never went beyond primary school, he was a model of the national education system in his time. One of the joys for those abroad, were the letters received from Brother Raphael: short crisp sentences in a limpidly legible hand, containing all the news.



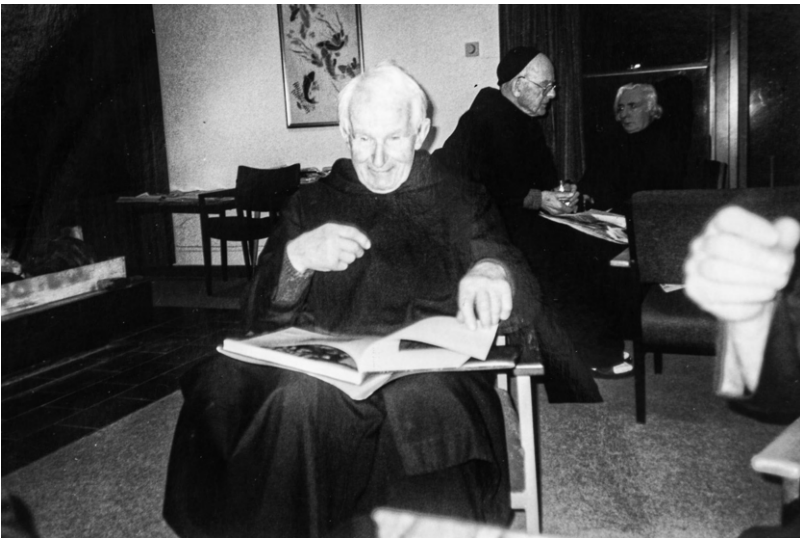
Afflicted by a life-threatening illness in the 1960s, he had even, on occasion, to be carried out of choir, which he insisted on attending even when unwell. Saying that 'Our Lady will cure me', he agreed to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes. To the puzzlement of his doctors and in confirmation of his own hopes, he was, if not medically completely cured, granted a remission that lasted nearly forty years and enabled him to continue his monastic life. Brother Raphael was certain that he had been

miraculously cured.

In most of the earlier surviving photographs, Brother Raphael is seldom seen smiling. In fact, he regularly suffered from bouts of depression, an affliction that was only recognized towards the end of his life. From time to time, he availed himself of the hospitality of the Cistercians of Roscrea Abbey who over the years showed him great kindness, which he greatly appreciated. But he was never one to take a proper holiday. Eventually, he had to be placed under obedience by Abbot Christopher to do just that. It was then that he discovered the convent of the St John of God sisters in Ballyvalloe, Co. Wexford. He fell in love with this house by the sea, was able to work as much as he liked in the extensive gardens and began to get used to being spoiled by the sisters. Every year for the last ten years of his life he went there with increasing enjoyment.

The last years of his time in the monastery were marked by a new-found joy. Realising that he was not only esteemed by the community, but also much loved, he blossomed into a smiling and relaxed confrere, still rather shy but sure of where he was and of where he was going.

He died after a long illness on 21st February, 2002.



# *Advent at the Abbey 2021*

## *A New Season of Hope*

Advent at the Abbey 2021 series runs for the four Sundays of Advent, beginning Sunday November 28th. Each afternoon includes a talk and a musical or artistic meditation on Advent, after which participants may attend Vespers. Advent will be explored through poetry, chant, instrumental music, icons and art. The programme runs from 3.30-5.40pm on each Sunday, except December 5th, which begins with the School Carol Service at 3.00 pm. Due to Covid regulations, registration (by noon of the preceding Friday for each Sunday) is through the website ([www.glenstal.com](http://www.glenstal.com)) – or by phoning reception (061-621005). The talks but not the meditations will be available online from the website.



