



# GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE

GLENSTAL ABBEY, MURROE, CO. LIMERICK, IRELAND

ISSUE 23/24 SUMMER/AUTUMN 2024 [WWW.GLENSTAL.COM](http://WWW.GLENSTAL.COM) PHONE: (061) 621 000

Buttercups along the  
pathway on the back avenue  
at Glenstal Abbey.

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## GLENSTAL ABBEY, MURROE, CO. LIMERICK, IRELAND

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Prayer is the foundation of our monastic life and each day in the monastery is centred around times of prayer, together and in private. The backbone of our prayer is the Liturgy of the Hours – sometimes called the 'Divine Office' or the 'Work of God' – where the monks gather in the Abbey church to chant psalms and sing hymns to God, to listen to the Scriptures and to pray for the needs of the world. This daily round of worship consecrates the course of the day and night as the community gathers in the stillness of the morning, at the setting of the sun, and at the closing of the day.

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### W E E K D A Y S

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**6:35am: Matins and Lauds (Morning Prayer)**

**12:10pm: Conventual Mass**

**6:00pm: Vespers (Evening Prayer in Latin)**

**8:35pm: Compline (Monday - Friday: Night Prayer)  
Resurrection Office (Saturday)**

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### S U N D A Y S

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**7:00am: Lauds (Morning Prayer)**

**10:00am: Conventual Mass**

**12:35pm: Sext (Midday Prayer)**

**6:00pm: Vespers (Evening Prayer in Latin)**

**8:35pm: Compline (Night Prayer)**

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Liturgies are broadcast each day as per our daily timetable:

**[glenstal.com/abbey/webcam/](http://glenstal.com/abbey/webcam/)**

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**Welcome to** our Summer/Autumn edition of the Glenstal Chronicle. A major feature of this edition is to do with prayer. When the Glenstal Book of Prayer first came out it hit the Irish best-seller list. It shows the deep hunger for prayer that is out there, ultimately a hunger for God. A new edition is in preparation, and we include some of the introductory material, put together by Fr Simon. Continuing the same theme, Br Oscar reflects on the use of prayer beads, a practice which has been a feature of our faith practice, East and West, for many centuries.



Our profile article features our own Glenstal-trained fencing champion William Mac Donald Hughes. We applaud his recent victory, and we are proud of his achievement. We are proud of the fact that, while our school brings students to a significant level of academic excellence, it also nurtures other individual gifts and talents beyond the classroom.

From my perspective the focus on prayer in this issue is particularly apt, as I begin my mandate as the seventh abbot of Glenstal. The ultimate success of monastic life, and indeed of any life, is really the work of God in our minds and hearts, our thoughts words and actions. When each move we make comes from God then something beautiful happens. So I ask you particularly to pray for me and for the community at this time.

**Abbot Columba McCann OSB**



## Eastern Encounter

**This summer the monastic community welcomed Sr Agnes Yoshioka, a Trappistine nun of Holy Family Abbey in Japan's northernmost Hokkaido prefecture, who stayed some weeks in the cloister at Glenstal.**

Born in Nagasaki, Sr Agnes studied medicine in Kyoto before embarking on a two-decades long career in psychiatry. It was during a period of further study in England that the Buddhist-raised Agnes came to the Catholic faith when she was baptised at Saint Bartholomew's parish in Norbury, south London. Her plunge into Christianity owed itself not only to a specific experience of call and conversion during

her time in England, but also to her earlier upbringing when sent by her parents to a Catholic kindergarten. "Catholic kindergartens are a very popular choice for parents and their children in Japan. At the age of four I was taught how to pray the Lord's Prayer and to make the Sign of the Cross, and we went to church on special occasions. I remember liking our missionary priest very much. I started to pray at home, and even

**JUSTIN ROBINSON OSB**

though I went on to lead a life that had nothing to do with Christianity I still wanted to go to church and was always attracted to the Bible and to Jesus Christ", explains Sr Agnes.

Reading Hermann Hesse's novel *Narcissus and Goldmund* with its tale of two Cistercian monks and their search for meaning impressed Sr Agnes. "It had a big influence on me because it made me want to be a Cistercian monk!" she laughs, adding that "it was a dream, of course, and it sounds strange because I wasn't a Christian and could never become a monk. Many years passed, but it had some effect on me", she says.

The seeds of Sr Agnes' earlier encounters with Christianity were planted while she was studying treatments for eating disorders in London. During a difficult period in her life, she retreated to the North York moors and stopped to rest in a small village church not far from Pickering. "Sitting there, I had a very strange and shocking feeling, and felt that I was being called by Jesus", she recalls. "From that moment, I started to think about baptism and becoming a nun". Not

long after, Sr Agnes began attending a very active and diverse parish community in London where she was baptised before returning to Japan to continue her work as a psychiatrist in Hokkaido. Her heart was set on the monastic life, however, and she soon made the decision to leave her profession and enter the monastery in 2012.

Throughout her stay, Sr Agnes had a quiet and unassuming presence in the cloisters of Glenstal yet her conversations with the monks prompted a fascinating cultural exchange which spanned the spiritual traditions of East-West and revealed the intriguing history of Japanese Christianity.

Just one percent of Japan's enormous population of 125 million is Christian, as the vast majority of people subscribe (often simultaneously) to the Shinto and Buddhist faiths. Christianity has been marked by periods of growth, persecution, and resurgence in Japan, with the faith first planted by the Jesuits in the 16th century. It was initially tolerated until its growing influence alarmed the authorities who saw it as a threat to the traditional social

order. As a result, Christianity was outlawed in the early 17th century, inaugurating a long period of brutal suppression and persecution. It was not until 1873 that Japan lifted the ban on Christianity and foreign missionaries returned with new Christian communities beginning to emerge.

nese culture. Moreover, Sr Agnes explained that monks and nuns are uniquely placed for interreligious dialogue by interacting with monastics of other faiths: "I've found that Buddhist monks are very interested in talking with us. There are many Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines near my monastery". This presents an opportunity for both traditions to

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**Sr. Agnes' monastic witness represents a sort of bridge between Western Christian and Japanese spiritual traditions at a time when monastic practices like meditation and communal living find resonance within the Japanese culture.**

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Sr Agnes spoke about ways that the Cistercian approach to monasticism in the Christian west found a home in the Far East by adapting a Japanese flavour through a long and careful process of inculturation. Catholic monasteries such as her own represent a sort of bridge between Western Christian and Japanese spiritual traditions at a time when monastic practices like meditation and communal living find resonance within the Japa-

"talk and co-operate with each other and to improve our understanding of one another so as to make our society a better place".

Throughout the Summer months, Sr. Agnes allowed the monks of Glenstal to share in her fascinating story of call and conversion. This encounter between East and West helped to remind us of the resilience and adaptability of monastic life wherever it is found. ■

## Praying with Beads

For centuries, the use of prayer beads has been a means to facilitate constant prayer and meditation in monastic communities. Monks and nuns used beads to pray in keeping with the Rule of St. Benedict, which emphasised *ora et labora* (prayer and work). Prayer beads helped maintain focus during long hours of prayer, aiding in the contemplation of divine mysteries.

The repetitive nature of praying with beads mirrored the rhythm of monastic life, where daily routines were imbued with prayer and reflection. Beads provided a tactile and meditative method for monks and nuns to engage in contemplative prayer, bridging the gap between vocal and mental prayer. The physical act of handling the beads complemented the mental focus on each

**OSCAR MCDERMOTT OSB**



LIZ WEST, ROSARY BEADS, 2007.

prayer's meaning, creating a holistic spiritual exercise.

One of the most popular forms of prayer beads, the rosary, dates from the early Middle Ages. Aligned to the monastic tradition, the structured repetition of prayer in the rosary reflects an adaptation of the monastic practice of praying the psalms. Monks were expected to re-

in the thirteenth century, thanks to St. Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers. Tradition holds that the Virgin Mary appeared to Dominic in 1214, giving him the rosary as a means to combat heresy and promote faith. This account, while not historically verifiable, underscores the rosary's significance in Roman Catholic devotion. By the end of the fifteenth century, the structure

### The physical act of handling beads complements the mental focus on each prayer's meaning, creating a holistic spiritual exercise.

cite all one hundred and fifty psalms and for those unable to read, a simpler method of prayer led to the development of the *Paternoster* (Our Father) beads. This simple form of prayer evolved into the rosary. The term 'rosary' is derived from the Latin *rosarium* (rose garden), meant to suggest a collection of prayers that form a spiritual bouquet offered to the Virgin Mary. The configuration of the rosary as we know it today began to take shape

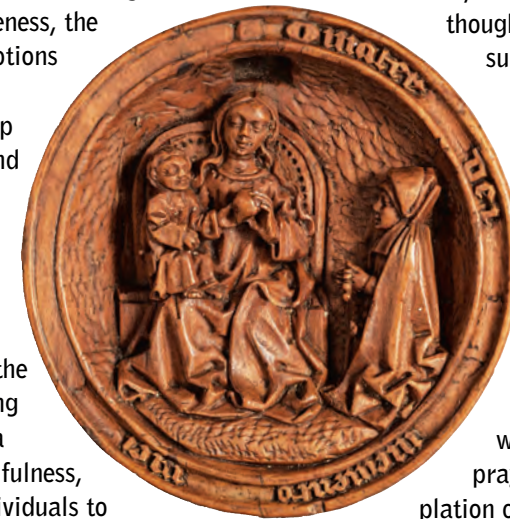
of the rosary was well established. Composed of ten Hail Marys (decades), each decade is preceded by the Our Father and followed by the Glory Be. Each bead on the rosary represents one prayer, helping those reciting the rosary to maintain the sequence.

I particularly enjoy making knotted rosaries for the monastery bookshop. The process involved when creating a knotted rosary can be

likened to the ancient monastic practice of basket weaving, where each thread or reed was woven with intention and care. Using soft cord or rope, this practice exemplifies the monastic virtues of patience and mindfulness. Requiring a precision and mindfulness that echoes the virtues of diligence and attentiveness, the repetitive motions and focused attention help quiet the mind and centre the spirit. Just as the rosary aids in spiritual meditation, the act of crafting can also be a path to mindfulness, allowing individuals to find peace and clarity in the process. Its enduring relevance lies in its simplicity, accessibility, and ability to connect the physical and spiritual realms, guiding individ-

uals on their journey of faith and self-discovery.

Today the concept of mindfulness has gained prominence as a way to achieve mental clarity and emotional balance. Mindfulness involves being fully present in the moment, aware of one's thoughts, feelings and surroundings without judgement. The practice of praying with beads, but most especially with rosary beads, can be seen as a form of mindfulness, where repetitious prayer and contemplation of the mysteries draws one's focus inward. Praying the rosary involves rhythmic breathing and a steady pace – key elements of mindfulness practice. Each bead and prayer serves as an



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK. GIFT OF J. PIERPONT MORGAN, 1917.

ABOVE: Half of a Prayer Bead (interior, boxwood and silver, early 16th century), depicting the Virgin Mary and Child Jesus with a figure praying the rosary.

anchor, bringing the mind back to a state of calm and concentration. This mindful approach to prayer can reduce stress and anxiety, fostering a sense of spiritual well-being. The mysteries of the rosary invite reflection on significant events in the lives of Jesus and Mary, encouraging practitioners to relate these events

into a deeper relationship with their faith.

Praying the rosary remains a powerful tool for spiritual growth and reflection today. Its accessibility and simplicity make it a versatile practice for people of all ages and backgrounds. The rosary can be



**Each bead and prayer serves as an anchor, helping to bring the mind back to a state of calm and concentration.**

PHOTO: AHMED HELAL, ISMAILIA, EGYPT. to their own lives. This reflective practice can enhance one's spiritual awareness and provide insights into personal challenges and joys, deepening the connection to one's faith and inner self. Like prayer, crafting rosaries can also be a communal activity, fostering connection and shared purpose among participants. Workshops and gatherings centred around rosary making can serve as opportunities for evangelization and spiritual formation, drawing people

prayed individually or in community, offering a sense of solidarity and shared faith. This adaptability allows it to be incorporated into various aspects of daily life.

Whether prayed during a commute, a walk, or in moments of solitude, prayer beads, and rosary beads in particular, provide a portable means of maintaining a prayerful mindset amidst the busyness of every-day life. ■

## Abbey Updates



### FATHER COLUMBA MCCANN ELECTED SEVENTH ABBOT OF GLENSTAL

PHOTO: DENIS HOOPER OSB. In his Rule, Saint Benedict writes that the abbot holds the place of Christ in the monastery where, as shepherd and teacher of the monks, he is to arrange everything so that "the strong have something to strive for, and the weak do not fall back in dismay." After months of careful preparation and prayerful reflection, the monks of Glenstal met in chapter where they invoked the assistance of the Holy Spirit before holding a discussion and election of one of their number to serve as abbot for the next eight years. The community elected

Father Columba as the seventh Abbot of Glenstal Abbey on 17th July 2024.

Father Columba was raised in Dublin and studied music at University College Dublin before training for the priesthood at Holy Cross College in Clonliffe. He was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1988 and, after further studies in Rome, taught liturgy at the Dublin diocesan seminary and various third-level institutions in the city. Father Columba served as master of ceremonies to the Archbishop before he entered the novitiate at Glenstal Abbey in 2004.

Since arriving at Glenstal, he has held a number of roles including organist, novice master and oblate director as well as serving as a chaplain, choir director and religion teacher in the Abbey School.

Abbot Columba's eight-year term of office began immediately upon his election. His abbatial blessing by Kieran O'Reilly, Archbishop of Cashel and Emly, is scheduled to take place at Glenstal on the Solemnity of All Saints, 1 November 2024.

## RESETTING THE CLOCK ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The conference *Resetting the Clock on Climate Change: An Exploration of Practical, Just and Life enhancing Responses*, was held at Glenstal on Saturday 18 May. Prof. Edward Burke, UCD Centre for War Studies, who graduated from Glenstal Abbey School in 2000, explored national and international security in the context of a deepening climate crisis, noting that environmental and energy security are key challenges to human wellbeing. The huge shift from fossil fuel use occasioned by the war in Ukraine gives some cause for optimism, that with sufficient governmental and societal support, radical choices could reduce emissions further.

Admiral Mark Mellett advocated a new meeting of science, technology, and theology, with society, communities, and individuals to play their part in responding to the climate crisis. The Admiral's two presentations laid bare the extent of the crisis but also provided avenues for reflection and action.

Prof Tobias Winright, Moral Theology, St Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth, drew from the Church's teaching especially since the Second Vatican Council to outline an ethical response to the crisis. Because the two speak-

ers come from a background in defence, their presentations raised questions not often considered, such as security during the increasingly common natural disasters, climate change as catalysts for conflict, the climate effects of war, the societal challenge of large scale migration for the incoming and receiving populations. While such topics might foster "climate anxiety", the presenters proposed practical, just and life enhancing responses that energised the conference participants. It is hoped to focus on agriculture and climate change at next year's conference (scheduled for 17 May 2025).

## JUBILEE OF ORDINATION

Congratulations to our recent jubilarian Fr Philip, who celebrated the seventieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood on 11th July. The traditional blessing *ad multos annos* is certainly being fulfilled with the generosity of God's providence and care.

## COMMUNITY SUMMER RETREAT

The community retreat at Glenstal is the yearly opportunity for the monastic community to come together for a time of more focussed prayer, reflection and fraternity. This year, the monks' own spiritual

insights were tapped into and shared with one another, as different monks were invited to contribute and share their thoughts, inspirations and ideas with one another. This helped the monks to discover more about each other and about the place which they call home at a time of change for the monastery.

Each day of the retreat began in the Oratory where, on successive days, Abbot Columba and Fathers John, Brendan and Fintan gave a short reflection. Later in the morning, one of the monks spoke about experiences which inspired them and which, in turn, might be a source of inspiration for the wider monastic community. Brother Oscar, for instance, spoke about his time studying in Rome, Father William on the steadfast-

ness of Ukrainians in their nation's defence, and Brother Justin on his Middle East encounters. In the afternoon sessions, Father Simon presented the monks with archival photos of the monastery. This collection of images offered a means to reflect on how the past informs the present and the future. Brother Timothy and Father Lino concluded the retreat with suggestions on how Glenstal might be represented in various objects as a way of demonstrating the fundamentals of the monastic life at the Abbey.

All the many contributions at this year's community retreat – and its departure from the usual format – thus became a blessed time of reconnection with God, with one another, and with our shared venture of monastic life at Glenstal Abbey. ■



PHOTO: DENIS HOOPER OSB





# Prayer: A World Alive with God's Grace

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FROM THE GLENSTAL  
PRAYERBOOK

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“Be slow to pray” the old masters counselled. A serious warning. Prayer is not a harmless, weekend activity: It is entering the very large world of God, a world far larger than we are used to, a world alive

**SIMON SLEEMAN OSB**

with God's grace. In prayer we open a portal into this deeper world of God, creator of the universe. We are brought alongside words that "break cedars, and shake the wilderness and strip forests bare", as the psalmist teaches us. So be slow to pray. Be prepared and be honest.

The difficulties we have with prayer are the difficulties we have with

something else, endlessly changing. Prayer is not a consumer activity, something we acquire, use and discard. It requires commitment and staying power, the essential ingredients for anything worthwhile.

While techniques aren't necessary, there is a rich Christian tradition of prayer we can draw from. At a risk of oversimplification, these can

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### To still the mind, to empty it of images and ideas; to experience the presence of God without interference.

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life. The challenges we experience in intimate relationships will be the same challenges in prayer. If we find it difficult to be vulnerable in relationship to a spouse or friend we will find it difficult to be vulnerable with God.

If we approach God with a consumer mind-set wanting to get something out of prayer, we will be disappointed and quickly move on to

be divided in two: The *kataphatic* (praying with eyes open) and the *apophatic* (praying with eyes closed). Neither one is better than the other. At one point in the day or of our lives, we may find one way suits us better. You can combine them. For example, reciting the Jesus Prayer (eyes closed) with an icon (eyes open). Praying with our eyes open: We use the psalms, icons, incense, candles, music. Praying with our

eyes closed: We still the mind, and empty it of distracting ideas, images, and sensations. This is what most people understand by meditation; to experience the presence of God without interference.

Learning prayers or poems by heart has real value. It is out of fashion; we want the experience of prayer, the experience of God. But restricting prayer to my experience leaves out too much reality and my experience is not always reliable. 'Learning by heart' and 'having the experience' don't have to be in opposition, but can complement each other. Prayers learnt, maybe a psalm or the Hail Mary, inform my vocabulary and provide a foundation for spontaneous, expressive prayer.

In life's difficult moments, we need a structure such as a prayer book but also a vocabulary, a language that has set in our muscle and bone; a prayer or prayers I can draw on in times of trouble. An example that I use is from Psalm 62: *O God,*

*you are my God, for you I long; / For you my soul is thirsting. / My body pines for you / Like a dry weary land without water. / So I gaze on you in the sanctuary / To see your strength and your glory.* Prayer is not just self-expression, pouring myself out before God. Mature prayer is about love and God, about being in communion with the living God. So we pray, 'Our Father'.

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### THE PSALMS

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The psalms are the 'gold standard' prayers for navigating the large world of God. These ancient prayer-poems, 150 of them tucked away in the middle of the Bible, are the Prayer Book of the Bible. They record for us the unfolding relationship between God and his people, with all its joys and sorrows. They are common to the Hebrew Torah and the Islamic Qur'an. Jesus prayed the psalms. As the church grew, the psalms became the foundation of the Christian Liturgy of the Hours. They remain at the heart of all Christian prayer.



WILLIAM LEE HANKEY, THE PRAYER, C. 1913, DRY-POINT.

Psalms prepare us to 'keep company with God'. They train us to pray. According to St. Ambrose, they provide "a sort of gymnasium for the use of all souls". They don't preach God. They teach us to pray to God, to the God who created Adam, the God who made a Covenant with Abraham, the God who

is at stake – and life too challenging – to rely solely on our own experience or methodology. Earthy, and raw, the language of the psalms may surprise you. Polished prayers they are not. The psalmist doesn't do pretty, 'cut-flower prayers'. Pain, joy, misery, the bewilderment of our lives; this is the stuff of psalms;

**In prayer we open a portal into this deeper world of God,  
creator of the universe. We are brought alongside  
words that "break cedars,  
and shake the wilderness and strip forests bare".**

led Israel out of Egypt and gave Moses the commandments at Sinai. The God who entered history. This God, we believe, speaks to us and so we answer, sometimes with anger and sometimes with praise. "Most scripture speaks to us", says Saint Athanasius, "the psalms speak for us". And how they speak! These well-seasoned prayers, like seasoned timber, are built to take the stress and strain of daily living. Too much

speaking the truth of our humanity with 'brutal honesty'. "They are" to quote John Calvin, "an anatomy of all parts of the soul". Our own self-taught prayers can feel tame and even meagre, in their presence.

If prayer is the technology for connecting with God, the psalms are the tools for maintaining that connection. U2, and especially Bono, revere the psalms. '40' (psalm 40)

is the closing song at many U2 concerts with fans screaming the refrain taken from psalm 6, 'How long?', not realising they are singing a psalm. Bono explains that "in the dressing room before a show, we would read [the psalms] as a band, then walk out into arenas and stadiums, the words igniting us, inspiring us".

a mitzvah. It is the longest of the commandments and the only one of the ten we are told to remember: "No working on the Sabbath; keep it holy just as God, your God, commanded you. Work six days and do everything you need to do, but the seventh day is a Sabbath, a Rest Day – no work: not you, your son, your daughter, your servant, your maid, your ox, your donkey

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### The slow, leisurely and meditative reading of scripture brings us into the large world of God's transforming word.

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#### THE SABBATH

The Shabbat or Sabbath, a day of rest, is the seventh day of the Jewish week. God rested and blessed this day. Genesis 2:3: "And God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy, because on it he ceased from all the work of creating that he had done". This fourth, of the ten commandments, is not a just an idea or a suggestion, it is a command,

(or any of your animals), and not even the foreigner visiting your town. That way your servants and maids will get the same rest as you. Don't forget that you were slaves in Egypt and God, your God got you out of there in a powerful show of strength. That's why God, your God, commands you to observe the day of Sabbath rest" (Deut 5: 12-15). The word sabbath means to stop – stop working, quit – a deliberate interruption of what we are doing, so we

ANDREI RUBLEV, SAVIOUR (FROM THE DEISUS CHIN), 15TH CENTURY, THE STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY, MOSCOW, RUSSIA.





car.

Sleep is when  
God's creative work  
continues apace.

Sleep is  
"God's contrivance  
for giving us the help  
he cannot get into us  
when we are awake".

ODILON REDON, SLEEP, 1898, LITHOGRAPH ON IMPERIAL JAPAN PAPER.

can learn what God is doing - a biblical defence against our graceless busyness. In Judaism, the Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends an hour after sunset or when three stars appear in the sky on Saturday. For Christians, the Sabbath begins on Saturday evening and ends on Sunday evening. Evening, night and morning are all part of a day in the Jewish and Monastic framework. This 'expanded day' reflects the refrain in the book of Genesis, "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day...And there was evening and there was morning, the second day ...and there was evening and there was morning" ...on and on, six times.

#### LECTIO DIVINA OR SPIRITUAL READING

'How' we read rather than 'what' we read is the concern of *Lectio Divina* or Sacred Reading. It is associated with reading scripture though not restricted to it. *Lectio* is not a theological analysis of a text. It is rather, taking a risk to let 'an-

other' influence us, allowing God's word to shape our lives. It is that simple and it is that demanding. *Lectio Divina*, the slow, leisurely and meditative reading of scripture brings us into the large world of God's transforming word. It provides time and space for the Holy Spirit to speak with us and guide us. Poetry requires a similar mind-set. We can't speed read scripture or poetry - both require a participatory rather than a predatory mind-set, an openness to the text rather than manipulating it or reducing it to notes or moral principles. Someone has compared it to letting a lozenge dissolve in your mouth rather than biting it and gulping it down.

*Lectio Divina* is sometimes divided into four stages. *Lectio*: biting off a word; *Meditatio*: chewing on it; *Oratio*: savoring its essence; *Contemplatio*: digesting it, letting it become part of your very essence. In *Shelter from the Storm*, David Hodges writes that during *Lectio*, *Time slows, / Waiting with the text, / Waiting / for the Word to come, /*

*Waiting for my heart /Wide open /  
For him to write / His pages there.*

## ICONS

Icons are treasures from the Eastern Orthodox Church and a rich resource for prayer. 'Icon' means image – images of Christ, Mary and many of the saints. They are 'written' rather than painted, hence they are a 'text' about the person or event depicted. Often written by monks and nuns, they remain anonymous as the artist is working in co-operation with the Holy Spirit.

In prayer, the icon becomes a place of meeting between the Divine and the human heart; a window allowing entry into the glory of what it represents. Icons are frameless, open to the infinite on all sides - holiness cannot be contained by a frame, and the halo often breaks through the frame. Another feature of many icons, is their 'frontality'. They look straight at you, inviting you to read the text. Because they are a visual text, the eyes are prominent while other senses are

reduced – a pinched nose, tiny ears. Because icons are texts, reading them is a form of *Lectio Divina*. We gaze at the icon, reading the image, and allowing it to read us – bathing in the mystery. A candle and incense may be lit before the icon. Before an icon we close our eyes, follow the breath and bring the mind down into the heart. Once settled, open your eyes letting them to rest on the icon, focusing on the presence of the Divine. In the Orthodox tradition, the "Jesus Prayer" is often said while praying with the icon.

## SLEEP

Sleep is part of this biblical day. Sleep is when God's creative work continues apace. According to George McDonald, the celebrated Scottish minister, poet, and novelist, "sleep is God's contrivance for giving us the help he cannot get into us when we are awake!" Asleep, I am not in control, and God has a chance to plant his message, his 'alive and active' word, in our hearts. ■

# Upcoming Events at the Abbey



LORENZO LOTTO, THE LEGEND OF ST. BRIGID (DETAIL), 1523-24, FRESCO SUARDI CHAPEL, TRESCORE, ITALY.

## IN PRAISE OF BRIGIT SATURDAY 9.45AM – 5PM 26 OCTOBER

This year marks the 1500th anniversary of the death of Brigit of Kildare, a figure who fascinates and inspires countless people to the present day. During this one-day seminar, the figure of St. Brigit will be explored by a number of distinguished scholars.

Dr. Bairbre Ní Fhloinn will examine her role in Irish folklore; Dr Tracy Collins will present the archeological evidence for her cult, while Dr. Elizabeth Dawson will examine the various surviving 'Lives' of the saint. Br. Colmán will discuss other female saints and intercessors. Fr. Luke will focus on the contribution made by the late Fr. Seán Ó Duinn, monk of Glenstal, to studies on Brigit. ■



## GLENSTAL TRAILBLAZERS SERIES

### WILLIAM MAC DONALD HUGHES (Glenstal Abbey School 2015-2021)



# Glenstal's Lasting Gift

Glenstal was a full experience from the off! Days spent at rugby, forestry, expeditions to the Congo, clutching at sleep in the dorms and even, on the rarest of occasions, studying. But Glenstal's lasting gift was in fencing. Compulsory in first year, the small primitive neuron gestating in my brain saw swords, became active and fell in love. On leaving school to attend university at Trinity I seized the opportunity to excel.

Since then and mentored by the incredible staff here, I've represented Ireland twelve times in the last year alone: at U20 European and World Championships, U23 European Championships, three U20 World Cups, two Senior World Cup Satellites, three U23 EFCs and on the Senior 5 Nations team. I also captained the university club to become Team National Champions, Intervarsity & Colours Champions and am myself two-



time Student National Champion and ranked No.3 in the country. In November I was awarded a Trevor West Sport Scholarship which was accompanied by sports rooms, two Trinity Trust grants and the Minchin Sports grant for academic merit and sporting prowess. Finally, at this year's sports awards, I was elected to Pinks, Trinity's highest sporting award.

The sharp words, 'precision William; you need precision!' uttered in no small moment of distress by the long-suffering Fr. John, my French teacher and guide through my later Glenstal days, ring in my ear to this day. In a sport where millimetres define a future, truer words seem hard to find. And hence comes the beauty of a Glenstal education; the

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**“Precision. You need precision!” In a sport where millimetres define a future, truer words seem hard to find.**

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I balance my admittedly insane training schedule with a full-time degree reading Philosophy and Economics, competing internationally weekly, working as a captain and coach at DUFC (Dublin University Fencing Club, the fencing club of Trinity College Dublin), funding myself by coaching at Trinity Sport (a local fencing club), and as a private coach. And with what little time is left – a college life.

development of a floundering boy into a precise man.

As I set my sights on the forthcoming first senior competition of the new season in Manama, Senior 5 Nations, World Championships, the 2027 European Games and the Olympic Games in 2028 and 2032, representing my country and showing a spotlight on fencing, precision is surely the tenet of my career. ■



## Glenstal Abbey Garden Cemetery

Glenstal Abbey Garden Cemetery provides a prayerful and peaceful environment for the interment of cremated remains. Each plot can accommodate one or two urns and is marked by a plaque of local grey granite for engraving individuals' names and dates.

Selecting a cemetery and space is an important decision. Advance planning gives you peace of mind and shows care and concern for your family for whom the final arrangements become less of a burden.

If you have questions or would like to arrange a personal tour, please email us at [gardencemetery@glenstal.com](mailto:gardencemetery@glenstal.com) or call the Bursar's Office at 061 621045.





# IN PRAISE OF BRIGIT

**SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER 2024**

2024 marks the 1500th anniversary of the death of Brigit of Kildare, a figure who fascinates and inspires countless people to the present day. This one-day conference explores her legacy and that of other Women of God through archaeology, history and folklore.



**9.45AM-5PM at Glenstal Abbey**

PLEASE EMAIL [events@glenstal.com](mailto:events@glenstal.com) FOR FURTHER  
INFORMATION OR PHONE **061-621005**.