



# GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE

GLENSTAL ABBEY, MURROE, CO. LIMERICK, IRELAND

ISSUE 27    SUMMER 2025    [WWW.GLENSTAL.COM](http://WWW.GLENSTAL.COM)    PHONE: (061) 621 000

Monks chanting the Liturgy of  
the Hours in the choir stalls  
of 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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GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE :: ISSUE 27 SUMMER 2025

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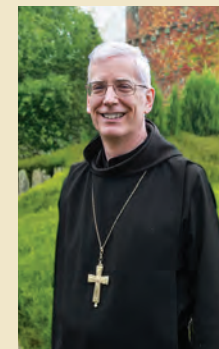
DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Emmaus O’Herlihy OSB

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**Welcome to** summer’s view of Glenstal and beyond. Our school features a number of times, including Fr William’s outline of our important new 5-day boarding offer, ex-Glenstal hurling legend Sam O’ Farrell, and student participation in our recent conference on aquathermal heating, part of our ongoing commitment to green energy.



Excellent academic results in our school should come as no surprise in a place marked by Benedictine tradition, where we cultivate a love for learning within a reverent way of being present towards one another. Br Colmán’s illuminating presentation (no pun intended!) on the current exhibition of Irish medieval manuscripts in the National Museum points to a tradition of learning deeply embedded in Irish monasticism over the centuries.

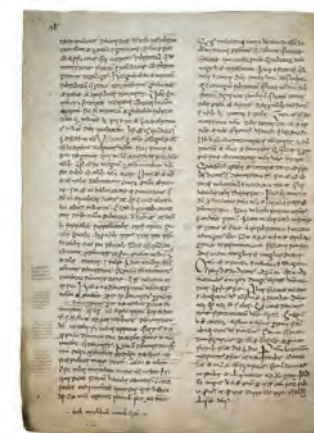
Reverent presence can cross many linguistic borders as seen by Br Justin’s reflection on Benedictine presence in the Middle East, as well as the happy account of the visit of our Egyptian friend Br Antonius. Being present to one another in a loving way becomes possible through the adventure of becoming more and more present to God and discovering the delight of God’s presence and constant love.

As you open your summer Chronicle I would like to thank you for your continued interest in Glenstal Abbey and your ongoing support, which is much appreciated. Let us pray for one another.

**Abbot Columba McCann OSB**



ABOVE: Fragment of a liturgical manuscript or sacramentary beginning *Peccavimus* ('We have sinned');  
 OPPOSITE: A folio from the mid-ninth century copy of the *Institutiones grammaticae* from St Gall Priscian;  
 PAGE 6: The second coming of Christ from late-eighth-century *St Gall Gospels*.



## Words on the Wave

On 29 May, 2025, Abbot Columba, Br Colmán and Br Michael represented the community at the official opening of the exhibition *Words on the Wave: Ireland and St Gallen in Early Medieval Europe*. This once-in-a-lifetime exhibition, which runs until mid-October, 2025, celebrates the work of Irish scribes and scholars, monks and

missionaries, both at home and abroad, between the eighth and the eleventh centuries. At the centre of the exhibition are eighteen remarkable manuscripts normally preserved in the magnificent baroque library of the former Benedictine Abbey of St Gallen or at the Abbey of St Maurice, both in Switzerland. Although these texts

**COLMÁN Ó CLABAIGH OSB**



have been exhibited together before, this is the first time that they have been displayed in Ireland and the staff of the National Museum, along with several Irish and Swiss scholars, have done a magnificent job of both curating the exhibition and producing an attractive, authoritative and accessible catalogue.

The manuscripts are contextualised by artefacts from the Museum's permanent collection, including the recently conserved early-ninth-century Lough Kinale Book Shrine, exhibited here for the first time. This was discovered in a waterlogged state near a crannog at Lough Kinale, Co. Longford, in 1986 and its conservation has been one of the most challenging projects ever undertaken by the Museum's



conservation department. Equally painstaking was the conservation work conducted on another exhibit, the early-ninth-century psalter, discovered by a turfcutter at Fadden More bog, Co. Tipperary, in 2006. Other items relating to literacy

and learning include the Springmount Bog tablets, a set of six waxed writing tablets used to teach a young scribe how to transcribe the psalms; a number of *styli* or metal pens whose flat heads were used as erasers and a small

inkwell, fashioned from the tip of a cow's horn.

However, it is the manuscripts that steal the show. These include the *St Gall Priscian*, a mid-ninth century copy of the *Institutiones grammaticae* of the sixth century Roman grammarian, Priscian (see p. 5).

This was the standard textbook for teaching Latin in the Middle Ages, but the significance of this copy lies in the 10,000 glosses that were inscribed between the lines of the text. Written in Latin and Old Irish, the Irish material played a crucial role in enabling scholars to decipher the grammar of the earliest form of the language. Among the scriptural works on display, the late-eighth-century *St Gall Gospels* takes pride of place with its striking depiction of the second coming of Christ (opposite). Equally exquisite is the fragment of a liturgical manuscript or sacramentary beginning '*Peccavimus* – We have sinned' (see p. 4). Among the lives of saints included in the display is the earliest copy of the *Life of St Gallus* dating to the ninth century and a slightly later version of the *Life of St Columba* by Adomnán. Gallus (d. c. 645) was a companion of St Columbanus (d. 615) who established himself at Lake Constance around AD 610 after a dispute with his master. The monastery of St Gallen later developed on the site and became one of the spiritual, intellectual and artistic powerhouses of the Middle Ages. The page on display from the *Life*

of *St Columba* holds a particular significance for Glenstal visitors as it depicts the earliest known image of St Colm Cille (d. 597) to whom the monastery here is dedicated.

The exhibition is accompanied by a detailed catalogue containing a short description of each exhibit and a number of concise essays by experts in various fields. These contain a plethora of revealing insights; ranging from how DNA can be used to determine where the vellum in each codex was produced to the amount of arsenic sulphide used in producing yellow pigments to the type of footwear these medieval monastic pilgrims wore.

In his introduction to the catalogue, Professor Emeritus Dáibhí Ó Cróinín shares the insight that having emerged from a 'Decade of Commemorations' marking the centenary of the often violent struggle for Irish independence, it is good to reflect on those countless monastic 'saints and scholars' who travelled as 'pilgrims for Christ' to far off lands and left these artefacts as testimony to their courage, skill and devotion. May their example in 'turning darkness into light' continue to inspire. ■

## Taking the Plunge

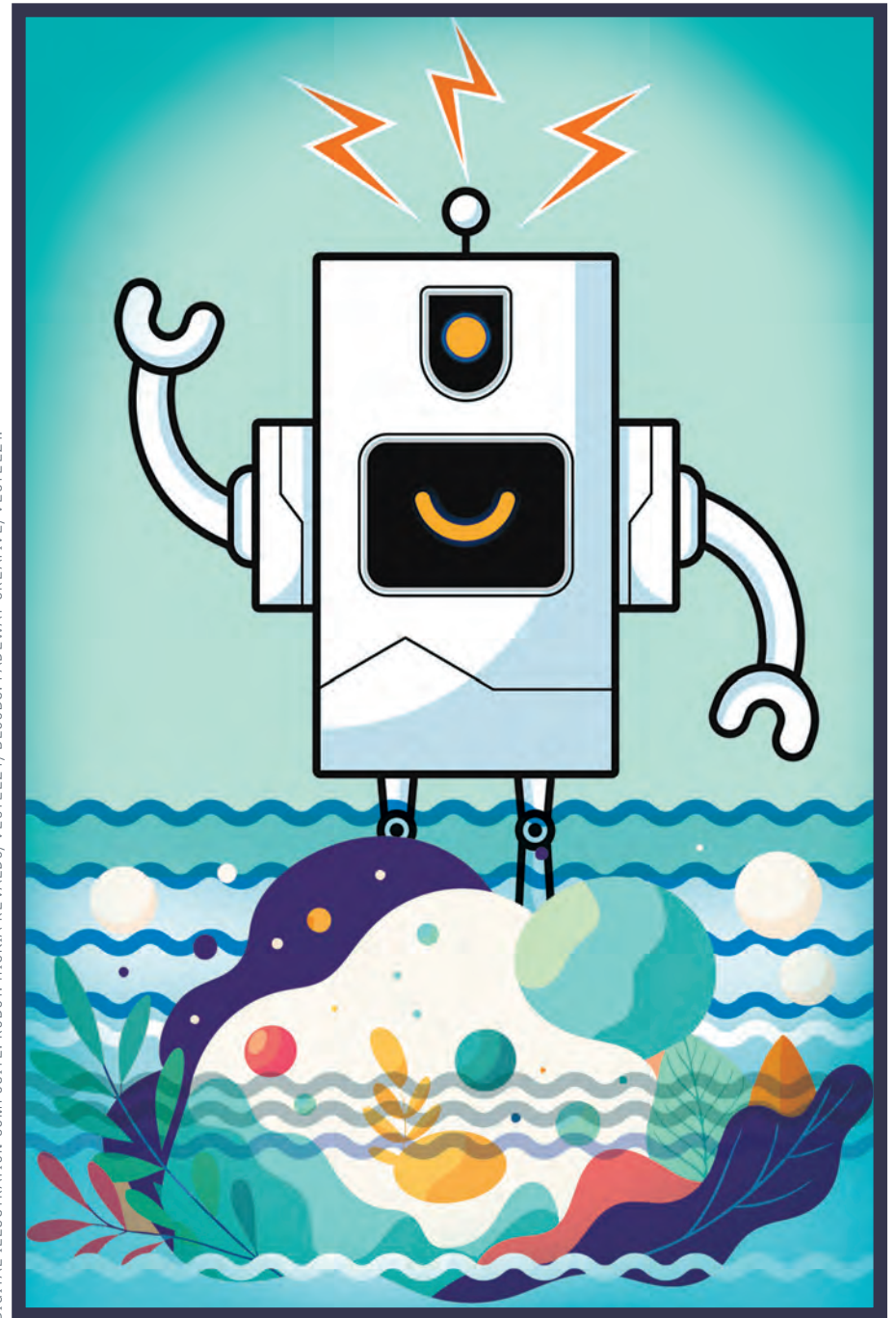
**Green ideals are easy to express; real change demands technical resolve. It requires persistence, precision, and a willingness to engage with complexity. Fr Luke invites us to take the plunge into the intricate workings of Glenstal's aquathermal system — where careful attention and long-term vision come together in service of a more sustainable future.**

Glenstal Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) has been a member of the AquaCom project since 2024. The AquaCom project aims to empower energy communities in North-West Europe to use aquathermal energy to sus-

tainably and efficiently heat their community. Aquathermal energy is the science of using water as a source of heat. The AquaCom group involves local development agencies in countries of North-West Europe, namely, Germany, the Netherlands,

**LUKE MACNAMARA OSB**

DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION COMPOSITE: ROBOT: HISKIA REVALDO, VECTEEZY; BLOOBS: FADEWAY CREATIVE, VECTEEZY.



Belgium, France, and Ireland and includes Extraqt, a specialist consultancy firm for aquathermal energy based in Leuven in Flanders. In addition twenty local community groups from these countries participate. The plan is to promote the use of aquathermal energy, given the proximity of so many communities to rivers, canals, and lakes.

#### CONFERENCE ATTENDEES AND PRESENTERS

The conference at Glenstal was attended by the local development agencies and consultants from Extraqt with local energy suppliers (Electric Ireland Smart Energy Unit) and communities (Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Clare). Glenstal SEC gave a presentation of the history and possible future use of aquathermal energy at Glenstal and then did a tour of the plant room, electrical installations, and the water source, namely the Chapel Lake. Four students in fifth year studies at Glenstal school — Peter Purcell, Aubrey O'Toole, Michael Lee, Logan O'Connor —

supported by their Physics' teacher, Eoghan Maxwell, presented along with Fr Luke. Glenstal's first aquathermal installation dates from 2004 so we were celebrating our 21st birthday!

#### GLENSTAL'S TWENTY-ONE YEAR HISTORY WITH AQUATHERMAL ENERGY

In 2004, Dr Paul Sikora of Dunstar installed a heat pump which used the heat in the water from the Chapel Lake to provide space heating to the monastery and library. The installation won a sustainable energy award in 2005. During the 2016 church renovation underfloor heating was installed with the aim of extending use of the heat pump for this zone. Under Fr Senan's direction, a system of coils was laid in the lake for heat exchange to occur locally. The coefficient of performance (COP) of the installation is 5.45. This means that for every unit of energy expended to run the system, 5.45 units are produced in return. The water source heat pump currently meets 25% of the campus heating requirements.

#### GLENSTAL'S PARTICIPATION IN AQUACOM

In September 2024 a quick scan was done of the lake to ascertain the possibility of expanding the aquathermal installation to draw heat for the School and Castle buildings. The results suggested that it was worth moving to a more in-depth simulation test

temperatures, but when high in January, a drop of only 0.2°C. The measured ingress water temperature in January was also 3°C higher than recordings from neighbouring rivers. The stream emerges from underground only 40 metres before entering the lake. This reserve of heat explains in part why the relatively small lake was shown

**In the spirit of *Laudato Si*, the late Pope Francis' encyclical on the care of the earth, our common home, Glenstal SEC is committed to moving to a sustainable campus.**

with the aquathermal consultancy firm Extraqt. The lake had to be accurately measured to ascertain its volume, the rate of flow of the stream and also the temperature at entry and on leaving the lake. The rainfall in the winter of 2024-2025 was about 50% lower than usual. When the stream's flow was low, there was a 3°C drop between ingress and egress water

to potentially meet also the heat demands of the School and Castle in the simulation test.

#### THE BUSINESS CASE

Finally, the analysis has moved to the business case. At the conference a partial cost benefit analysis of the current oil boilers, air source heat pumps and the proposed water



source heat pumps was presented. The civil engineering costs were excluded. While the water source heat pump has higher efficiency, it does involve the highest capital costs even excluding civils. The installation of exchangers in the lake and tracking up the piping to

Further detailed assessment of the business case is proceeding.

#### OTHER SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES

Currently we are exploring the possibility of using Combined Heat



a heat pump in the school would be fairly inexpensive but unfortunately the plant room of the 2012 school building is difficult to access.

and Power (CHP) microgenerators 2 x 20kw, one for the monastery and one for the school which could be run on biogas and would

DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION COMPOSITE: ROBOT: HALINTAR WIDHI, VECTEEZY; BLOBS: FADEWAY CREATIVE, VECTEEZY.

effectively provide 40kwh of electricity while also providing heat for the campus, reducing daily demand for energy from September through to May each year and reliance on the grid.

Glenstal has just completed a grant funded SEAI energy audit to assist in the assessment of this possibility. Were this feasible, the microgenerators could run and then air source heat pumps or water source heat pumps could be used as back up for the school and castle. The existing oil boilers would be retained as back up for energy security purposes.

Glenstal has a Building Management System (BMS) to manage campus energy efficiently since 2012. A BMS upgrade grant has been applied for with the SEAI to develop a closer energy monitoring and control system for energy use on campus.

Glenstal applied for the community climate action programme in 2024 for a combined air source heat pump and solar PV installation for the retreat house but was unsuccessful. Glenstal applied for LEADER fundings for an air

source heat pump for the guest house and a solar PV installation for the flat roof of the library. The result of this application is awaited.

In the spirit of *Laudato Si*, the late Pope Francis' encyclical on the care of the earth, our common home, Glenstal SEC is committed to moving to a sustainable campus. With the introduction of monitoring in various areas, it will be possible to show the effect of energy saving initiatives by monks, staff, and students and engender a healthy competitive spirit towards achieving net zero carbon emissions at Glenstal.

The plans are ambitious and include roof mounted solar PV installations on the flat roofs of the school and monastery. Together with the proposed microgenerators they will provide daytime electricity though the year. This will make the Abbey energy usage more sustainable and much less reliant on the grid. To achieve this ambition the Abbey is conducting careful studies to work out the most efficient approaches and exploring all grant support avenues and will also be linking with friends to assist as projects proceed. ■



## Egyptian Encounter

ANTONIUS TADROS OSB

**Glenstal Abbey recently welcomed Brother Antonius Tadros OSB for a period of monastic experience. A native of Cairo, Brother Antonius is a monk of a fledgling Benedictine community in Egypt's Ismailia governorate.**

Over recent months the monastic community was happy to host Brother Antonius Tadros OSB for an experience of life at Glenstal Abbey. Brother Antonius hails from Egypt, where the Cairo native is a monk of the Sankt Ottilien

Congregation's foundation in the Ismailia governorate. Founded in 2017, this nascent community lives on a forty-five acre farm abundant with mango, olive and date trees. Two of the monks there are Egyptian, whilst another hails

from India and one from Uganda. The community prays together in Arabic and celebrates liturgy according to the Coptic Catholic rite.

The past months at Glenstal were an opportunity for Brother Antonius to improve his English skills, to experience Latin rite liturgy and monasticism, and contribute to

didn't feel like a stranger during my time in Ireland, because I was among my Benedictine brothers at Glenstal Abbey," he added. His experiences at Glenstal contrasted greatly with life in Ismailia, where the small community still continues to find its feet. "Glenstal is a well-established monastery," explained Brother Antonius, "and

**"I was welcomed immediately and didn't feel like a stranger during my time in Ireland, because I was among my Benedictine brothers at Glenstal Abbey".**

a number of work projects in the monastery. "This was my first time travelling abroad, and it was an exciting experience", said Brother Antonius. Celebrating his 50th birthday soon after arriving at Glenstal, Brother Antonius admitted to feeling somewhat anxious about leaving his homeland for the first time. However, he quickly settled-in to life in the monastery: "I was welcomed immediately and

it has a large number of monks. I learned much from my time there which I have brought home to my community in Egypt."

The monastic community valued greatly the contribution which Brother Antonius made to our life during his time among us, and appreciate the encounter with the world of Egyptian monasticism which his visit opened up for us. ■





# LOOK TOWARD THE EAST

JUSTIN ROBINSON OSB



Emerging from the deserts of the Middle East and North Africa, monasticism has endured there—quietly and resiliently—through centuries of upheaval and change.

Though monastic communities have long been part of the region's spiritual landscape, its first specifically Benedictine foundation is believed to have been a Jerusalem hospice established by order of Saint Gregory the Great in the 7th century. There, Benedictine monks brought their hallmark ministry of hospitality to the East by welcoming and tending to Latin pilgrims in the Holy Land.

That early foundation vanished during the Persian sack of Jerusalem, and no further Benedictine presence is recorded until the reign of Charlemagne. A hospice, church and monastery were established by the emperor in the Holy City, with that great patron of Benedictine monasticism installing monks for the work of prayer, hospitality and study, with a richly endowed library for their use.

Islamic conquest brought mixed fortunes for monastic communities.

Destruction befell some monasteries, whilst others became settings for Muslim-Christian interactions. Caliphs were known to spend time in monasteries and hold court there, Muslim guests came to Christian feasts, and Benedictine monks served as emissaries between rulers of the Christian West and Islamic East.

The Benedictine presence continued during the Latin Kingdom, both in pre-Crusade houses and new foundations receiving patronage from crusading nobles and European benefactors. Though modest in number, these monasteries were often at biblical sites and became landowners, administrators, dispensers of charity and players in political society. But their fortunes were tied to the Crusaders, and Jerusalem's fall in 1187 brought their decline.

Once Islamic dominance was firmly established across the region, it was the mendicant friars who most often ventured into Arab and Islamic lands—their itinerant way of life better suited to such missionary undertakings than the more stable Benedictine vocation.

Although absent from the region for much of this period, the sons of Saint Benedict still had much to offer through the enduring gifts of their tradition—a stable monastic presence rooted in prayer, work, study, and hospitality. This recognition would give impetus to a renewed Benedictine engagement with the Middle East and North

Muslim wayfarers, and respected for their religious observance.

The Qur'an regards Christians as among those most gracious toward Muslims, noting that "there are priests and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant" (5:82). Another passage praises those among the "People of the

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**Benedictines seem specially well-placed for a life lived in contact with Muslims, something the late Pope Francis noted when speaking of how "the Benedictines have always been recognized for their commitment to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue..."**

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Africa, beginning in the early 20th century and continuing into the present day.

It must not be forgotten that Benedictines are uniquely suited to a life of presence, encounter, and dialogue with the region's predominantly Muslim inhabitants. Monks are often held in high esteem by Muslims, having appeared at key moments in Islamic history, admired for their hospitality toward

Book who are upright, who recite God's revelations throughout the night, prostrating in prayer... They are truly among the righteous" (3:113–114).

Benedictines thus seem specially well-placed for a life lived in contact with Muslims, something Pope Francis noted when speaking of how "the Benedictines have always been recognized for their commitment to ecumenism and interreligious

dialogue," encouraging them "to continue in this important work for the Church and for the world, placing also at her service your customary hospitality."

The return of the Benedictines to the Middle East and North Africa began in the early 20th century. While a sense of mission was undoubtedly their primary motivation, some communities also sought refuge from anti-clerical legislation in their home countries, while others became instruments — whether consciously or not — for extending the cultural and political influence of European powers in the region. This, at times, even gave rise to rivalry between monasteries of the same Order but of different national affiliations.

In 1900, monks of Belloc Abbey in the foothills of the Pyrenees arrived in the village of Abu Ghosh, on the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, to establish a community in the ruins of a Crusader church. The monks undertook a slow process of rebuilding and restoration of the church's structure, and the revival of monastic life at the place

believed to be the site of the Risen Lord's encounter with his downcast disciples at Emmaus. After 1948, the monks found themselves in an Arab Muslim village located within the new Jewish State of Israel, opening new possibilities for the monastic community.

Today, monks hailing from Bec-Hellouin Abbey tap into Christianity's Jewish roots and work to build cordial relations with Jews and the State of Israel there. In addition to a rigorous monastic life of prayer and work, they are engaged in theological dialogues, the learning of Hebrew and Arabic, the exploration of Christianity's Jewish roots and the building of amicable relations with local Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. In doing so, they hope to play a small part in healing the divisions which plague the Holy Land and damage the unity of our entire human family.

On the outskirts of Jerusalem's Old City, meanwhile, monks of La Pierre-qui-Vire in Burgundy arrived in 1903 to establish a Syriac-Catholic minor seminary at Ras al-Amud. Over the years they

trained around fifty clerics, and such was the trust placed in their work that the Benedictines were later invited to Charfet in Lebanon, to found a major seminary as well. Unfortunately, both institutions

a guesthouse and interfaith centre operated by Caritas France.

Around the same time, on a hill across the Kidron Valley, monks of Beuron Abbey arrived to begin



The International Meeting at Toumliline monastery in Morocco, c. 1960.

were forced to close in the early 1950s due to a shortage of personnel and financial constraints. The former seminary in Jerusalem now serves as the Maison d'Abraham,

monastic life at Dormition Abbey on Mount Zion in 1906. Located at the place where the Virgin Mary is believed to have fallen asleep in the Lord, the monks became custodians



of the holy place in addition to running the seminary of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Today the community welcomes pilgrims, organises concerts, exhibitions and



LEFT: Easter Vigil at Abu Ghosh monastery, Israel. RIGHT: King Mohammed V of Morocco meets Dom Denis Martin OSB of Toumliline monastery, c. 1957.

lectures, hosts a German-speaking theologate and engages in theological exchange with Eastern Christians, Jews and Muslims. The monks are also caretakers of the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes at Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee, with a special concern for receiving pilgrims and guests.

Heading to North Africa, it was in 1952 that monks from En-Calcat Abbey established a monastery, school, and dispensary at Toumliline in Morocco. Renowned for



their hospitality toward the local population, the monks soon began hosting annual gatherings focused on a variety of cultural and spiritual themes. These meetings gradually evolved into a series of ground-breaking interfaith and intercultural summer conferences, where hundreds of Christians, Muslims, and Jews engaged in open

yet respectful dialogue on a wide range of topics. Known as the International Meetings of Toumliline, they were held under the patronage of King Mohammed V, with Crown Prince Hassan II presiding over later sessions. The meetings continued until the monastery's closure in 1968, brought about by a combination of political pressure and financial strain.

A green shoot of monastic life has recently emerged in Egypt's Ismailia governorate, where monks of the Sankt Ottilien Congregation have founded a new community, offering Egyptians the opportunity to live the Benedictine vocation according to the Coptic Catholic rite. Situated within a complex religious landscape — among Orthodox Christians and at the heart of the Islamic world — their life is one of constant dialogue. As the community's founder once observed, the monks must not define their mission too narrowly, but simply live the monastic life faithfully and allow it to become a meeting point for Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims alike.

Across centuries of shifting empires, religious upheavals, and cultural transformations, the Benedictine presence in the Middle East and North Africa has remained modest but deeply meaningful. From the early hospice of Gregory the Great in Jerusalem to the foundations of recent centuries, Benedictine communities have borne quiet witness to the Gospel through a stable presence of prayer, work, study, and hospitality. Their vocation has given them a particular sensitivity to make spaces of encounter and dialogue, along with a disposition of openness — not only toward fellow Catholics, but also toward Eastern Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

The Benedictine way of life has long offered something vital to a region that continues to face upheaval, tension, and uncertainty. Its quiet witness has the capacity to cross boundaries and cultivate peace where division runs deep. In a world hungry for stability, dialogue, and meaning, the Benedictine tradition may yet have much more to offer the Middle East and North Africa today. ■



PHOTOS: DENIS HOOPER OSB



## Continuity and Change: Glenstal School Launches Five-Day Boarding

Starting from this August Glenstal Abbey School will add a significant new element to its educational offer. Some years ago Fr Martin as headmaster introduced a day-boarding option to complement the traditional seven-day boarding option. The school has sought to maintain a ratio of one-third day-boarders to two-thirds seven-day boarders. From this academic year a third offer to

families looking to send their sons to the school will be offered. It will now be possible to send a student for five-day boarding and the student will be able to return spend the weekend with their family. Parenting styles have changed significantly in modern Ireland and many parents find the traditional seven-day boarding option less conducive to the style of family life that they seek to enjoy and our

**WILLIAM FENNELLY OSB**

constituency of parents are no different. Boarding is less popular than it has been hitherto for a variety of reasons and so the school, led by the headmaster, Marius Carney, has sought to adapt our offer to the changed circumstances around us, and please God this adjustment will secure the future of the school. This will require us to discontinue

of activities that apply maths and scientific study in a practical and playful manner with activities such as building and designing drones. We have had the privilege of working with the *Academy* for many years as they used to hire the premises here for a summer camp and they have been working with our Transition Year Programme and assorted other activities down

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**The five day boarders will arrive at school on either Sunday evening or Monday morning, and then depart school on Friday afternoon. They enjoy all the benefits of boarding life, spending their weekday evenings in sports training, music tuition/practice, supervised evening study and recreation, without the midweek travel time.**

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Saturday teaching. Obviously we will have to put a robust academic programme together for the seven-day boarders who will be in boarding school for weekends and for these students from first to fourth year, we will have a programme of teaching in collaboration with the *Connemara Maths Academy*. This will be programme

the years. For students in fifth and sixth year (senior cycle) there will be additional tuition in Maths and English. There will also be a schedule of extra-curricular activities such as we already provide such as surfing trips or golf and for some weekends there will be rugby and other sporting activities.

The Sunday liturgy will continue to be the heart of the school week with the choir singing and the usual Sunday hospitality whereby parents and families join the boarders and school staff for light refreshments after Mass. The community of boys who join the monks for Sunday Mass will continue to be the heart of the school's culture from which all others draw strength and solace. Community life is a central aspect of the school's culture and purpose. The business of friendship among students and friendships with the boarding staff and monastic community has always been a defining feature of life here. Indeed these friendships endure long after the boys move on from school to university and beyond.

The five-day boarders will arrive at school on either Sunday evening or Monday morning, and then depart school on Friday afternoon. They enjoy all the benefits of boarding life, spending their weekday evenings in sports training, music tuition/practice, supervised evening study and recreation, without the midweek travel time.

There is flexibility to go home on additional evenings should circumstances require it. We have significant flexibility in the school already with the day-boarder option and these students arrive after 8 a.m. and have their breakfast and then participate in all the regular activities of the school day until the conclusion of first study at 7 p.m. when they go home. It has been our experience that students tend to convert from day-boarding to full boarding, as they progress through the school most notably in senior cycle and we anticipate that this will continue to be the case for the five-day boarders as the atmosphere of study for the Leaving Certificate is most appreciated by the boys themselves.

Implementing change of this magnitude has been a decision that has required lengthy consideration and much consultation with all partners in the school's life and we are very grateful to those who have been so generous with their time in sharing their wisdom and advice. We embark on these changes with faith and trust that God who calls us here will bless our endeavour. ■



## Abbey Updates



### SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION AT GLENSTAL ABBEY CHURCH

We were privileged to celebrate the confirmations of four students on 14 May. Abbot Columba celebrated the sacrament on behalf of Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly. The boys were Conor Lamarque (5th Year), Michael McCloskey (1st year), David Goode (5th Year), and William Waller (6th Year). The boy's motivations to go forward for confirmation were diverse and deeply

personal. It was a very moving day for each of them and for their families. In a religious landscape that can appear hostile to professions of faith in the public sphere at least, such a public profession of faith by four good young men is hugely encouraging.

### A LASTING TRIBUTE IN CEDAR AND SONG

On 16 April, a bench made of the wood of a Cedar of Lebanon from Baron's Court, Co. Tyrone, the seat of the Hamilton family and home to James, Duke of Abercorn and his wife, Sacha, was conveyed



### HURLING STAR, GLENSTAL'S PRIDE: SAM O'FARRELL TRIUMPHS AGAIN

Sam O'Farrell has crowned a stellar few years of hurling achievement after sweeping to victory with Tipperary in the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship final. A student of Glenstal Abbey School from the class of 2024, Sam's latest win completes a full set of Minor, Under-20 and Senior All-Ireland titles. Off the pitch, Sam studies medicine at the University of Galway after attaining a stunning seven H1s in the Leaving Certificate. Congratulations!

to the Abbey, to grace the garden of its guest house, where Sacha used to stay. Indeed, one of its bedrooms is familiarly known as the *Duchess's Room*, owing to its high ceiling and her graceful stature. Fr Patrick read a charming letter from the duke who wrote of the importance to Sacha of her connection with the monastic community and of his family's appreciation of that. Then, in the course of a brief but moving ceremony, Abbot Columba blessed the bench to the accompaniment of a singing of the *Beatitudes* by a group of the brethren and Nóirín Ní Riain. The bench is beautifully made and is as comfortable as it is substantial, a most welcome and worthy memorial to a very beautiful human being who graced the lives of many beyond her family.

### RECEPTION OF GLENSTAL OBLATES

On Saturday, 3 May, after a period of discernment and formation, several friends of the monastery became Oblates of Glenstal Abbey. Oblates are men and women who associate themselves with the monastery in a special way – committing to a rhythm of daily prayer, attending occasional retreat days and nurturing a close bond with the Abbey. The new Oblates made their oblation during Mass and spoke afterward of how deeply moved they felt to be welcomed into the Benedictine family. Indeed, they now are – and we accompany them with our prayers and encouragement. ■

## Upcoming Events at the Abbey

### **HISTORY LECTURE: THE HISTORY OF THE BARRINGTON FAMILY BY JOHN JENNINGS** **SUNDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 4PM**

The Barrington family's history spans four centuries during which they gained a baronetcy, built Glenstal Castle and played key roles in political decisions that

affected the citizens of Ireland. They also established a hospital to benefit the poor of Limerick and designed several bridges, homes and railways that contributed to society greatly. This historical talk will examine these aspects of the Barrington's legacy, paying particular attention to the role of Sir Charles Barrington. Admission is free to this event.

### **ADVENT RETREAT: PREPARE THE WAY** **SATURDAY, 29 NOVEMBER**

As Advent begins, this one day retreat prepares the way to celebrate the coming of Christ at Christmas. Beginning at 10.30 am with tea and coffee at registration, it consists of a series of lectures and reflections, Mass, a Holy Hour (with the opportunity for confession) and concludes with the celebration of the first Vespers of Advent at 6pm. Cost: €60. Contact: [events@glenstal](mailto:events@glenstal) or phone 061 621005 ■



## 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.



# ONLINE NEWSLETTER

Bringing you the latest news, views and events from the monks of Glenstal Abbey at the start of every month.

To receive your online newsletter, please complete the form on our website via this QR code.

