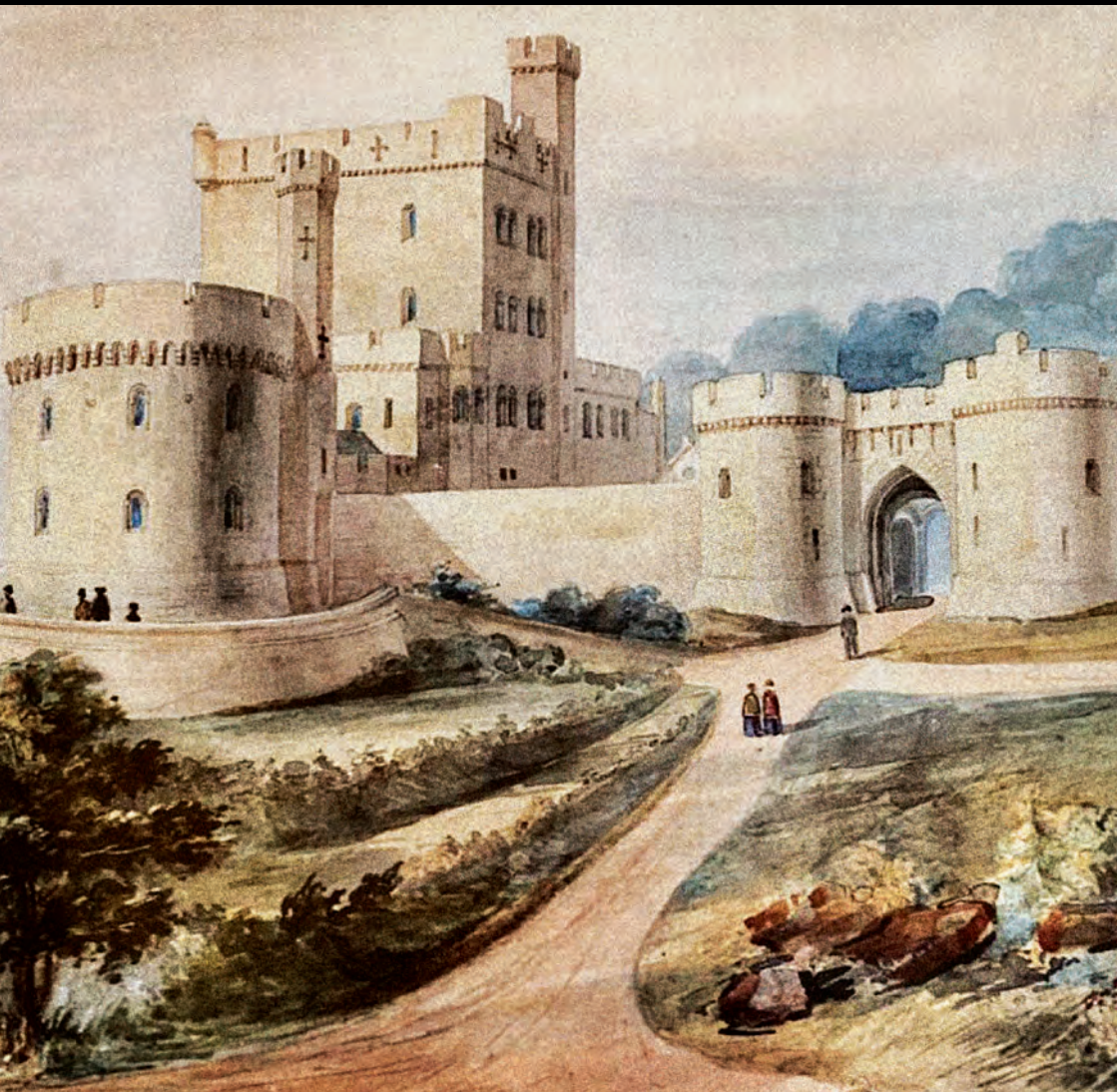




GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE

GLENSTAL ABBEY, MURROE, CO. LIMERICK, IRELAND

ISSUE 29/30 SPRING-SUMMER 2026 WWW.GLENSTAL.COM PHONE: (061) 621 000



GLENSTAL ABBEY, MURROE, CO. LIMERICK, IRELAND

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.

W E E K D A Y S

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)**

S U N D A Y S

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)

Liturgies are broadcast each day as per our daily timetable:

glenstal.com/abbey/webcam/

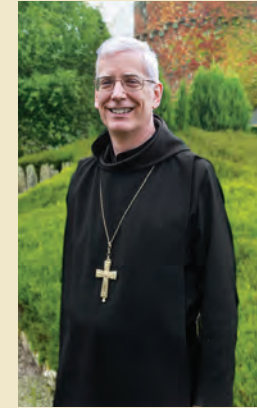
GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE :: ISSUE 29/30 SPRING-SUMMER 2026

DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Emmaus O’Herlihy OSB

www.glenstal.com phone: (061) 621 000

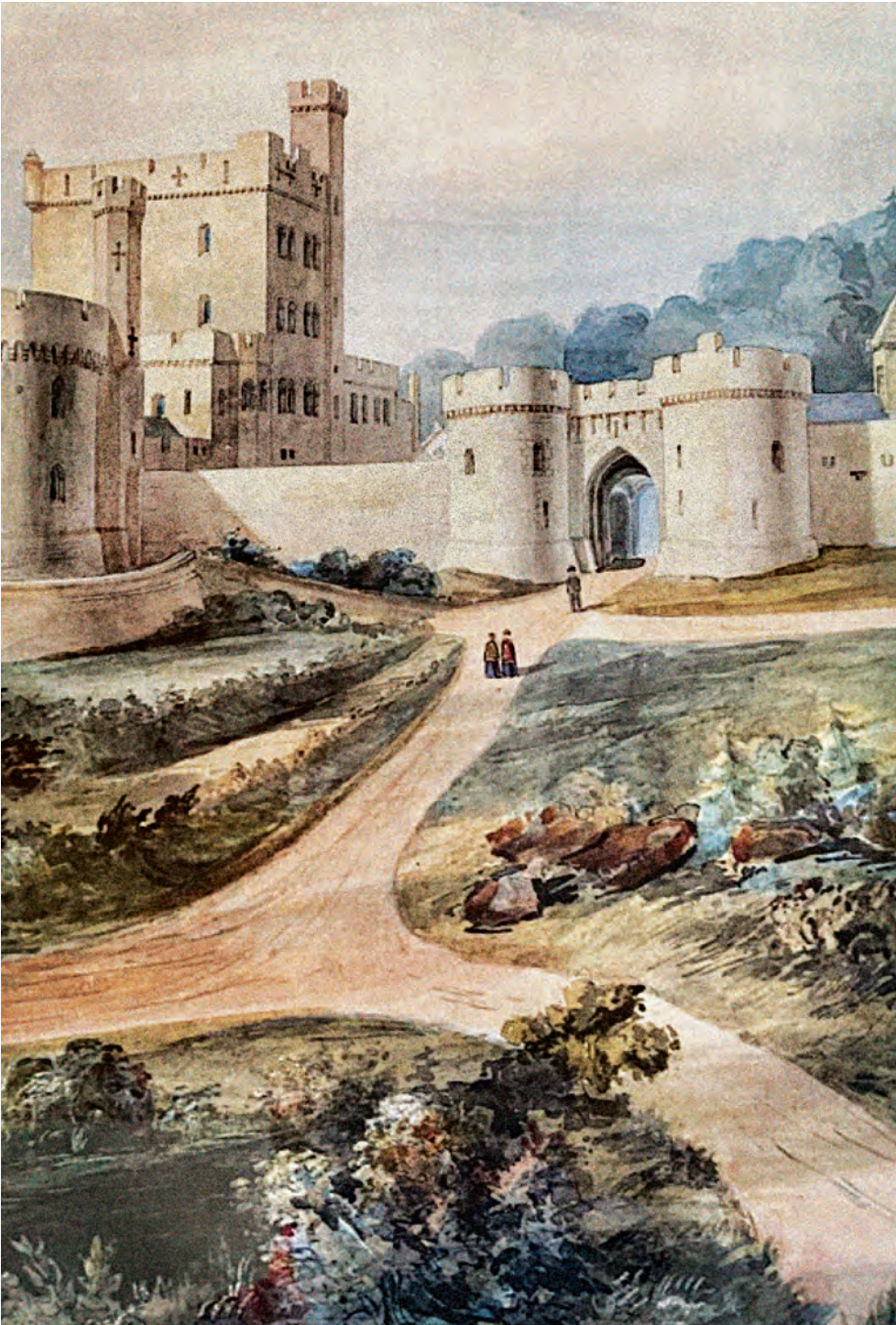
I sometimes think that

Glenstal Abbey looks its best at this time of year. Each season of nature, and of human life, has its own beauty: the freshness of spring, the deep rich colours of autumn, the shifting moods of winter, dark and brooding, or bright and crystalline; but early summer is brimming with emerging life. Nature echoes the season of Easter which draws to a close. The grounds are awash with colour and fragrance. Exciting journeys of growth are chronicled in this issue including, from the school, the Erasmus trip to the Burren and the third-year trip to Paris.



The monastery is now nearly a hundred years a-growing, and we look forward to new seasons, new monastic colours, new steps on the road that leads to life. St Benedict’s aim is in fact that we run on the path of God’s commandments, our hearts expanding with the indescribable sweetness of God’s love. It’s also an opportunity to say thank you to all who have supported us on our way, and aspire to a continued journey together.

Abbot Columba McCann OSB



Appeal for Help

As Glenstal Abbey approaches a century of monastic life, we invite friends and benefactors to help sustain this place of prayer, hospitality, and renewal.

CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY: THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Monks are people of place. Monasteries are deeply rooted in a particular landscape and history. Benedictine monks do not move from monastery to monastery,

but remain stable in the one place where their life-long encounter with the hide and seek of God unfolds. From earth, soil, and stone, a monastery receives its unique character: its pulse and personality shaped by monks daily listening for

PÁDRAIG MCINTYRE OSB

the voice of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The Benedictine Monastery of Glenstal Abbey is one such place. Located in the townlands of Garranbane and Capperullen, the Glenstal estate rests upon many layers of time: geological beginnings and natural history, generations of human settlement, the story of the Barrington family, and the later arrival of the Belgian monks. Rich and many-layered is the tapestry that has shaped Glenstal. This Monastery of Saints Joseph and Columba is the place we call home.

A CENTURY OF MONASTIC LIFE

On Sunday, 19 December 2027, Glenstal will mark one hundred years since the official beginning of monastic life here, though the Barrington estate had already been entrusted to the community in May 1927. Since those early days, successive generations of monks have responded courageously to the needs and signs of their times by building, developing, planning, and looking to the future.

The life and work of the community has touched many fields: liturgy, hospitality and education, ecumenism, spirituality, the arts, music, literature, research, agriculture, forestry, and renewable energy. Glenstal has long been a place of encounter, enrichment, and peace for countless people; a place of connection, belonging, and shared vision.

All that has been achieved over these hundred years is due in no small measure to the kindness, generosity, and support of so many people. For every gift given, every friendship formed, and every kindness shown, the monastic community is profoundly grateful. For you, we give thanks to God.

LOOKING TO THE NEXT HUNDRED YEARS

As we turn towards the next century of monastic life, we ask you, our friends and benefactors, to continue this journey with us. We ask you to continue believing in and supporting Glenstal Abbey.

We live and minister in a changing world where monasteries are needed more than ever. Many

people come here seeking stillness, prayer, reflection, and renewal; a place where mind and senses may engage more deeply with the mystery of themselves and of God. Others, unable to visit in person, remain connected through our webcam, the online Abbey Newsletter, and *The Glenstal Chronicle*.

As we continue responding to the needs of our time, both the built and natural environment of the estate require ongoing renewal and investment. We cannot do this alone. From modest monthly or annual contributions supporting the day-to-day life of the Abbey to larger project funding, there are many ways to help according to your means.

DONATIONS

Regular giving is the simplest and most effective way to support Glenstal Abbey, providing vital stability through monthly donations according to your means. Larger one-off gifts to the Glenstal Development Fund help us plan major projects, including future campus development, green energy systems, building upgrades, and hospitality facilities following the

recent restoration of the castle exterior.

Donations between €250 and €1M may qualify for tax relief under the Charitable Donation Scheme, allowing Glenstal Abbey to reclaim tax with your permission.

Support may also be offered through a bequest in your will or estate plans, helping sustain the monastery into the future. All support, in whatever form, is deeply appreciated. ■

If you have questions, or would like to discuss anything in more detail, please contact: Br Pádraig McIntyre (Bursar), Phone: 061-621000 email: bursar@glenstal.com.

You can also make a donation directly through our website: <https://glenstal.com/abbey/donate/>

CHARITY REGISTERED NUMBER: CHY4001
CHARITY NAME: Glenstal Abbey Trust
ADDRESS: Glenstal Abbey, Murroe, County Limerick, V94 TK61 Ireland



SAPLING VECTOR: ANASTASIA YELCHINOVA; LEAF BACKGROUND VECTOR: SABER HOSSEN

Woodland Renewal at Glenstal

**A new native woodland quietly deepens
the living landscape of Glenstal, continuing to shelter wildlife
and enrich the land.**

In February and March this year, a two-acre site was planted under the FT1 Native Forest Scheme. The application process – and the ecological assessment required because the land falls within the Special Protection Area for the Hen Harrier – was overseen by Sean Hoskins of Enfor Limited,

Sustainable Forestry Management. While the site lies outside the bird's nesting zone, which is centred around Slieve Felim to the north of Glenstal, it remains within its wider hunting range.

This new plantation sits to the east of the oak woodland established

LUKE MACNAMARA OSB

in 1999 by Fr William, what we affectionately call the Williamite plantation. To the west of that woodland, another two-acre site was planted in March 2023 under the Native Tree Area Scheme and is now visible from the front avenue. The oaks of the Williamite plantation already stand some thirty-five feet tall, while the 2023 planting has made a strong

over time, distinctive copses will emerge within the woodland, strengthening both its character and biodiversity. The site has been enclosed with forestry-grade fencing and a gate for access, protecting it from the neighbouring grazing cattle. Given the large local deer population, every sapling has also been fitted with a deer tube – an essential safeguard

These new plantings, together with smaller initiatives such as the planting of eighty American walnut trees by Fr Anthony and a further fifteen oaks by Br Odhran, play a significant role in shaping the future landscape of Glenstal.

start – both encouraging signs for this latest addition.

The new planting area includes a small copse of three mature oaks and has been enriched with a mix of native species: oak, birch, rowan, alder, hawthorn, hazel, and Scots pine. These have been arranged in clusters so that,

against browsing, as deer are particularly fond of fresh young shoots.

The work was very much a shared effort. Br Marc Abraham Babski, a guest monk; guests Robin Watson and Elias Peters; and neighbours from Limerick, Zhenya Tierney and Richard McNamara,

OAK LEAF VECTOR: NIKITTA OSKOLKOV; LEAF BACKGROUND VECTOR: SABER HOSSEN





TREE VECTOR: ANGGA PAMUNGKAS ; LEAF BACKGROUND VECTOR: MOHAMED SMINA

all gave their time to help with staking and tubing the young trees. Their contribution has helped establish a woodland that will extend the habitat of the species already thriving here, especially the red squirrels and the colony of lesser horseshoe bats – one of four such colonies at Glenstal.

new farm road linking the back avenue and Jackie's field. Well suited to the Irish climate, they are also valued for producing quality timber. Thirty oaks have been planted adjacent to the back avenue on the north side, and a further fifteen oaks were planted with Br Odhran. As with the new wood-

Including a small copse of three mature oaks, the new planting area has been enriched with a mix of native species: oak, birch, rowan, alder, hawthorn, hazel, and Scots pine. These have been arranged in clusters so that, over time, distinctive copses will emerge within the woodland, strengthening both its character and biodiversity.

Alongside the existing woodlands, it will also play a practical role in absorbing excess runoff water from the slope and help reduce flooding.

land, all these saplings have been staked and fitted with deer tubes to guard against the ever-present deer.

Smaller initiatives elsewhere at Glenstal have complemented this new planting effort. Eighty American walnut trees have been planted by Fr Anthony to the east of the

Together, these plantings mark a quiet but significant investment in the future landscape of Glenstal – one that will shelter wildlife, enrich the land, and, we hope, be enjoyed for generations to come. ■



A Journey Through Time and Culture

JOHN O'CALLAGHAN OSB

This year's Paris trip for Third Year students [1] was rich in history, culture, and spectacular sights, but it also included an exceptional visit to the site of the former Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Denis. Begin-

ning early on Friday morning, the tour started in the north of Paris with a 300-step climb to Sacré-Cœur, where we enjoyed panoramic views over the city. From there, we explored Montmartre, once

home to artists such as Monet, Van Gogh, and Toulouse-Lautrec, and sampled the first of many delightful crêpes. We continued to the magnificent Arc de Triomphe, Napoleon's monumental tribute to victory, and concluded the day at the Montparnasse Tower, taking in sweeping views of Paris and watching a short film on the city's architectural development.

The next day, we visited the Palace of Versailles, exploring the

and celebrated as a pinnacle of Gothic architecture.

Our final day included a visit to the Stade de France, where students explored the changing and warm-up areas and walked through the players' tunnel. The tour concluded at the Air & Space Museum, where they traced the history of aviation—from the earliest flying machines to Concorde and modern space exploration technology.

Paris in Three Days: Learning Beyond the Classroom

history of the French monarchy, with particular focus on Henry IV, Louis XIV, and Louis XVI. Students discussed key figures in French history and the Revolution, while admiring the opulent Hall of Mirrors. Later, after pausing at the Trocadéro for unrivalled views of the Eiffel Tower and at the Hôtel des Invalides, we embarked on a guided walking tour. We passed through the Jardin du Luxembourg, visited the Panthéon and the Sorbonne, and culminated at the iconic Notre-Dame Cathedral, recently reopened to the public

As the final day fell on a Sunday, we attended Mass at the Basilique Saint-Denis [2,3], concelebrated by Fr John. Thanks to our Benedictine connections, the students were warmly welcomed by the congregation into this splendour of Gothic architecture on the site of the former abbey. The crypt, which contains the tombs of many of the kings and queens of France, was opened especially for us. The students were able to visit the tombs of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, among others. It was, by any account, a remarkable visit. ■



Taking Root in Glenstal

AN EXTRACT FROM
THE GLENSTAL BOOK OF NATURE

And the Lord God took the man whom he had formed and put him in the orchard to till and keep it (Genesis 2:15). We, the monks of Glenstal, may bear resemblance to Adam as we were called to dwell in this place.

Within the liturgical space we can touch the highest level of mystery. Here what is material and what is good connect in a very symbolic

tree on the front lawn of our home, overlooking an ornamental lake in front of our house. The original tree, which was almost as wide as it was tall, is no longer standing. It was blown down in the great storm which accompanied my ordination to the priesthood on 8 December 2009. The farm manager there made me a wooden bowl from the fallen tree. I keep it in my bedroom.

The branches trail down like cut-off telegraph wires, never really swaying but metallically bouncing more or less gently in the almost never-ending breeze and dreeeping moisture from the almost never-ending rain or drizzle of County Limerick.

way with what is spiritual. Here what is transitory meets the eternal.

To my left, as I stand here facing that walled garden, there is a tree planted by my father in 1965, when I made profession as a monk in this monastery. It is a Turkish oak and it came as a tiny sapling which he had taken from a huge

The oak still dominates the forest of the Glen. They probably arrived in the seventh millenium BC from Spain with early settlers and have ruled here ever since.

In 1907 occurred the oak change with the appearance of oak mildew (*microsphaera alphitoides*) which so covers the leaves of little oak





seedlings on the forest floor as to tip the competitive balance in favour of ash.

The ash already have the advantage in their tolerance and enjoyment of moisture on the valley bottom. Up on top of the cliffs, the jays still sow acorns, and some of these may yet grow on.

In the garden of the forest floor, little weeding is required. Where the oak and ash canopy is dense and is supplemented by a lower canopy of shade tolerant and shade generating hazel, all the other vegetation seems to clarify and settle like old port, each at its own level.

Ivy in great curtains, swags and festoons, helps dim the light while Hart's-tongue fern touches the ground. When, however, a tree blows down, chaos ensues with a wild scramble of brambles in a

tangle of wood. Lesser Celandine and wood anemone will not be suppressed and arrive unexpectedly through the narrow window between winter and full canopied spring to do all their growing. Despite the range of different types of tree at Glenstal, it is still something of a surprise to find a Californian Redwood on the property. I haven't tried to

discover whether the tree is a *Sequoia sempervirens* or the more fully *Giant wellingtonia*: the *Sequoiadendron giganteum*. Its very existence is enough and exotic enough.



Here, sequestration means, not only captured but hidden, constrained, confined, but, nevertheless, not completely tamed. The tree could not be placed in a more inappropriate location, standing as it does beside the Chapel Lake at the monastery graveyard end of the bridge linking the main monastery-school complex with

the seventeenth-century terraced garden.

Standing on the bridge, I see the tree from half-way up the trunk, thus losing any sense of its real height. Hard to believe that it is one of the tallest trees in Ireland. Looking at the tree from below – and if I don't fall into the lake while doing so – I am overwhelmed by the sheer mass

the almost never-ending rain or drizzle of County Limerick. In the near-hurricanes that increasingly occur here in Winter, the branches crackle like a theatre claque while the tree itself, apart from the uppermost almost crew-cut like tufty crown, hardly moves.

There is a silence in the tree's solidity, a kind of forlornness about it as if it had wandered out

In the near-hurricanes that increasingly occur here in Winter, the branches crackle like a theatre claque while the tree itself, apart from the uppermost almost crew-cut like tufty crown, hardly moves.

of the lower trunk. It is almost impossible to see the tree for the wood.

Looking at the tree from the usual halfway-up position, the branches trail down like cut-off telegraph wires, never really swaying but metallicly bouncing more or less gently in the almost never-ending breeze and dreeping moisture from

of a forest of its fellows and finds itself with none other of its kind with which to speak. Like the tree, our life in this place is a foreign import but one that has taken root even if it has not quite lost its exotic allure. What you get at first glance is only part of the reality. There is much more under what you see and more again in what that more is. ■

Abbey Updates



POLISH COMMUNITY'S PILGRIMAGE TO ROME AND MONTE CASSINO

The Polish communities of Nenagh and Ennis were led on a pilgrimage to Rome and Monte Cassino by Jarek Kurek OSB in April. A moving part of the pilgrimage was a visit to Polish war graves from the battle to liberate the Abbey in 1944. Pilgrims were reminded that whilst Polish soldiers helped win freedom for the world, they did not win freedom for themselves: survivors were prevented from returning to their homeland during the Soviet occupation which lasted until 1989.

EASTER TRIDUUM RETREAT AT THE ABBEY

This year 114 people participated in the Easter Retreat, thirty-four of them attending for the first time.

One retreatant wrote afterwards that the rooms were "delightfully basic, clean, comfortable, and just enough simplicity to remind us that we weren't there for luxury but for something far richer. You managed to make even the essentials, a warm embrace of Benedictine hospitality. And the food: exceptional wholesome, and nourishing – a daily reminder that even in the midst of solemn liturgy and sacred silence, God clearly approves of good cooking. However, most of all, thank you for the profound way you helped us journey through the Paschal Mystery – the haunting beauty of the chants and solemn liturgies to the retreat talks and quiet moments of reflection. The Triduum felt alive and transformative in your care".

THE MYSTERY AND THE MUD

An exhibition of paintings by Emmaus O'Herlihy OSB recently took place at the Limerick Museum. 'The Mystery and the Mud' was officially opened by Brendan Leahy, Bishop of Limerick, in the presence of Mayor John Moran and assembled guests. It featured six paintings which, as Bishop Brendan put it, "bear the marks of struggle, trauma, messiness. Redemption is revealed in the vulnerable and the marginalised. The Incarnation is real". ■

Prometheus in the Burren

Students from Ireland, Germany, and the Czech Republic gathered in Glenstal this spring for an Erasmus exchange that became a memorable week of drama, cultural discovery, shared laughter, and unexpected reflection.

This year the school once again offered an Erasmus Plus exchange programme to Second Year students. Run in partnership with the Egbert Gymnasium in Münsterschwarzach in Franconia and the Archbishop's Grammar School in

Kromieriz in the Czech Republic, the programme is generously funded by the EU and gives students the opportunity not only to study together, but also to get to know one another while building a sense of shared European identity.

WILLIAM FENNELLY OSB



This year's theme was Prometheus. Michael Aust, theatre director from Münsterschwarzach, led much of the programme, encouraging students to engage with the story of Prometheus through drama. At first glance, it seemed an improbable undertaking: students with three different mother tongues grappling together with classical literature. Yet the exchange is designed precisely

ma, while the limestone landscape of the Burren itself made a memorable impression on all involved.

Alongside these excursions, students participated in a series of workshops led by Michael Aust. His focus was less on performance in the conventional sense and more on helping students become aware of their physical presence, comfortable in their own space,

The students visited Kilkenny Castle and Ormond Castle, gaining at least a broad glimpse of Irish history from the early medieval period through to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

to create such encounters, while also introducing students to each other's cultures and countries.

The week began with a trip to the Burren in County Clare, where our German and Czech visitors joined us at the Burren Activity and Training Centre near Ballyvaughan. Blessed with unusually fine weather, we enjoyed hikes to Corcomroe Abbey and Oughtma-

and attentive to others. To initially sceptical and uncertain eyes, it all seemed rather unlikely. Yet through rhythm, movement, singing, and repetition, this gifted dramatist gradually drew the students in.

Michael worked with Goethe's retelling of the Prometheus myth, alongside the memorable lyric from Michael Jackson's *Man in the Mirror*: "I'm starting with the man

in the mirror ... I'm asking him to change his ways." What began as a rhythmic chant to steady nerves slowly became a way into the larger themes of the project through repetition and reflection.

The story of Prometheus tells of the Titan who steals fire from Jupiter and gives it to humanity, only to be punished by being chained to a rock while an eagle devours his liver each day, the organ regenerating each night so the punishment can begin again. For the ancient Greeks it served as a warning against stealing from the gods; later generations, however, came to see Prometheus as a heroic and even martyr-like figure who suffered for the sake of humanity. Hero or victim, rebel or benefactor: what do students themselves see when they look in the mirror, and what change might they wish to make in themselves? These questions were explored in a surprisingly playful and light-hearted way.

We returned to Glenstal along the coast road where the Burren meets the Atlantic, stopping to search for the season's first gentians and

to scramble over jagged limestone rocks above the turbulent sea. The students also visited Kilkenny Castle and Ormond Castle, gaining at least a broad glimpse of Irish history from the early medieval period through to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Whether every detail held their complete attention is difficult to say, but they experienced remarkable places together and clearly enjoyed one another's company, which is one of the central aims of the programme. The fact that both our German and Czech partner schools are coeducational also encouraged our rugby-minded Glenstal students to see the world through a somewhat broader lens – an experience that did nobody any harm.

Among the many memorable moments of the week was a moving musical performance by Diana, a Ukrainian refugee studying in Kromieriz. One morning she played Chopin's Nocturne No. 20 in C-sharp minor at assembly to a stunned, silent, and deeply appreciative audience. Known to many as the piano piece featured in *The Pianist*, it was performed with such delicacy and sensitivity that its



atmosphere of silence, suffering, and hope deeply touched those listening.

As this account perhaps makes clear, it was a busy week: occasionally bewildering, ambitious almost to a fault, and filled with a remarkable variety of experiences. Yet the students from the three

foundations of long-standing friendships between the three schools. In the case of Münsterschwarzach, the relationship stretches back more than fifty years through language exchanges and monastic connections – a partnership remarkable not only for its longevity but also for the way successive generations of

It was a busy week: occasionally bewildering, ambitious almost to a fault, and filled with a remarkable variety of experiences. Yet the students from the three schools confounded expectations by getting on so well together and engaging so positively with the project.

schools confounded expectations by getting on so well together and engaging so positively with the project.

Particular thanks are due to Glendalough's Erasmus coordinator, Daniela Leahy, whose organisational gifts and communication skills held the entire programme together and kept it moving forward. The exchange itself rests on the strong

monks and teachers have renewed it over time.

The students benefitted greatly from the careful preparation of the project and the creativity of those who wove the exchange together. It introduced them not only to Irish history and Greek mythology, but also to one another, all in a context of friendship, fun, and unusually good weather. ■

Upcoming Events at the Abbey



PHOTO OF LODGE AT ENTRANCE TO GLENSTAL ABBEY: DENIS HOOPER OSE

ONE-DAY SUMMER RETREAT AT THE ABBEY

WEDNESDAY, 24 JUNE
THURSDAY, 25 JUNE

This one-day retreat is offered on Wednesday, 24 June and again on Thursday, 25 June. Registration, tea and coffee begin at 10am,

and the day includes talks, Mass, lunch, Holy Hour (with the option of Confession), and afternoon tea. The retreat day ends at 5pm but all are welcome to remain for Vespers at 6pm. The cost is €50. For bookings or more information please contact events@glenstal.com or 061-62100. ■

ONE-DAY
SUMMER
24 JUNE *or* 25 JUNE
RETREAT



AT GLENSTAL ABBEY

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.

