

Lord Patten of Barnes delivers major lecture on morals and politics at Blackfriars, Oxford



The Chancellor of Oxford University, Lord Patten of Barnes, addressed a packed lecture hall at Blackfriars, Oxford, on 20 October. His topic was the relationship between ethics and foreign policy: Can you have Christian moral principles and still be a politician? The former Cabinet Minister, Governor of Hong Kong and European Commissioner addressed a variety of issues, ranging from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan to arms control, and from terrorism to the drugs trade, arguing for the superiority of long-term policies based on Christian moral principles over mere short-term expediency.

In a speech after dinner in Blackfriars's refectory, Lord Patten expressed his appreciation and admiration for the contribution of Blackfriars Hall to the University of Oxford, commending all those who are supporting the friars in the invaluable work of the Hall.

Missed the lecture? Watch a video recording on <http://www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk>.

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General Visitation finds a 'very healthy' Province

The English Province has received its first 'General Visitation' from the Order since 2003. Two delegates from the Master of the Order, Fr Ed Ruane and Fr Javier Pose, travelled from Rome to visitate all the English and Scottish houses of the friars between 8 and 19 September. The purpose of a Visitation is to see that brethren are 'persevering in peace, assiduous in study, fervent in preaching, and faithful in regular observance'. In their concluding letter, the Visitators described the English Province as 'very healthy'. They also commented on a 'clarity of identity and mission' in the Province, which they said 'is fundamental for religious life to flourish today'.



Fr Javier (fourth from left) and Fr Ed (third from right) enjoy a healthy breakfast with some of their English and Scottish brethren

Dominican Pilgrimage celebrates 150th anniversary of Lourdes apparitions



Fr John O'Connor and pilgrims

This year's pilgrimage to Lourdes, led by the Provincial, Fr John Farrell, with Fr John O'Connor as Director, brought together the largest number of pilgrims yet, drawn from our congregations, from the Dominican Family, and from other friends of the Order. Many pilgrims received the Sacrament of the Sick, and one young pilgrim from London made his first Holy Communion during Mass in the Grotto. The sick were ably assisted by an army of volunteers. There were opportunities to pray the rosary, take part in the processions, and go to confession and socialise, as well as to benefit from talks given by the Provincial and other brethren. For details of next summer's pilgrimage, contact Fr John O'Connor, email our.lourdes@gmail.com or telephone 0141 332 4530.

London Friar launches *Cosmos*—a pioneering venture in preaching

A new work of sacred dance went public on 18 July to a full house at Notre Dame de France church in the heart of London's West End. *Cosmos* is a project begun by Fr Dominic White to reach out through the medium of music and dance to those who are not typically churchgoers but who are nevertheless attracted by spirituality. "Dance is now the second most popular entertainment in Britain," says Fr Dominic. "*Cosmos* draws on the cosmological tradition in Christianity, that Christ came to unite all things in himself and set creation free." Inspired in particular by Dominican chant, *Cosmos* is a cycle of dances for the liturgical year, and each rehearsal began with meditation before the Blessed Sacrament—*Cosmos* was conceived by Fr Dominic not as a performance but as something more spiritual and a means of preaching in itself. "Preaching without words opens the ears of people to the Word," reports Fr Dominic. "You could see this in how the experience generated questions from the audience." *Cosmos* brought together a whole range

of artists from diverse backgrounds, including a Sufi whirling dervish. Br Lawrence Lew OP was among the singers, and the music and dance were joined by a specially commissioned icon by Lay Dominican, Zlata Vrabc. *Cosmos* continues in January—for more information, contact Fr Dominic at St Dominic's, London.



Satya Dunning recalls the Assumption in the Sea Dance

News in brief ...

- Br Gregory Murphy has successfully completed his Master of Studies in Science and Religion at Oxford University. Fr Leon Pereira (see page 3) graduated Master of Arts on 25 October. Fr Tim Calvert, Prior of Edinburgh, has begun a part-time Master of Theology degree in Ethics at New College, Edinburgh.
- Fr David Goodill has left the community at Holy Cross, Leicester, to take up the position of Bursar of Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. Fr David, who also teaches in the seminary at Birmingham and is chaplain to the Dominican Sisters' school at Stone, succeeds Fr Benjamin Earl, who is now Provincial Bursar. Fr Peter Hunter has moved from Oxford to Leicester where he is Catholic Chaplain to the city's two Universities.
- Fr Denis Minns has returned to his native Australia where he has been appointed Prior of Sydney. Fr Denis, who was Prior of Oxford for six years and a lecturer in early Church history and theology, will be greatly missed by the English Province.
- Fr Rudolf Löwenstein of St Dominic's, London, was awarded the 'Spirit of the Dominican Institute for the Arts Recognition' at Columbus, Ohio, for this year. Speaking on behalf of the Board, Sr Jude Bloch OP said, "Rudolf's gifts are many, and the joy and warmth he exudes at our gatherings tell of his motivation to share everything that he is as a Holy Preaching. His passion for all arts is seen in his support for all our members and their work."

Interview with our doctor turned parish priest, Fr Leon Pereira OP

You've been Prior and Parish Priest at Holy Cross for six months now. Is Leicester a special place for Dominicans?

Since the brethren left Hinckley and Woodchester, Holy Cross is the oldest Dominican Priory established in Britain since the Reformation. Yet our range of activities reflects modern English Dominican life throughout the Province. We serve a large and busy parish, supply a Catholic chaplain to two universities, the hospital, and on occasion to the prison. The brethren have also taught in seminaries and colleges and continue to do so. Some of us are involved in local schools, as governors and priests. Some of us have written books, and others are writing books still. In the middle of a city like Leicester, Holy Cross is certainly a taste of something different: good preaching and good liturgy, a cathedral-sized beacon inviting people to pray, to discover or rediscover Catholicism.

How did you come across the Order?

I was told by a Benedictine monk, long before I'd met any of the friars, that I was a Dominican! The reason he said that was the interest I showed in theology and the Fathers of the Church. At the time I was a medical student. I didn't take him very seriously, but his remark must have made an impression...

So you trained for medicine then?

Yes. Before medical school I did national service as an infantryman in Singapore, where I was born. Then I went to University in Leeds, and immediately before I joined the Order I was working as a qualified doctor in the Leeds General Infirmary.

So the idea of being a Dominican hadn't left you?

I had been thinking about a religious vocation before going to University and during my training. A chance encounter with an old friend who had spent a year in South America with the Jesuits steered me towards the Order. She kept talking about her Dominican friends and insisted I met them. So the first Dominicans I met were in Glasgow, and they astonished me. I enjoyed their company, conversation, whisky and dedication so much that I knew that very night that I had to join them. The Order attracted me because—as I joked

at the time—there was an Order out there just like me! There was truth in the joke, though. Joining the Order felt extremely natural to me, and I've never doubted that this is where I belong.

So you must have been itching to leave the hospital for the noviciate in Edinburgh?

I enjoyed being a doctor a great deal and still miss some aspects of medical practice, but it was difficult to motivate myself for exams, when I'd only just decided on applying to the Order. The hospital had an old painting from when there was a Dominican house on Leeds's Infirmary Street in the nineteenth century. It showed friars receiving young men into the Order and I often looked at it, longing for the day!

What's the important thing for the Order's mission today?

Many in the world—both atheists and theists—are tempted by fundamentalism. People have become lazy about thinking, and appeal to false authorities to tell them what to believe. Atheists can be as fundamentalist as their theist counterparts. It seems to me that our great gift is our 'intellectualism', to urge people to do their own thinking! To do this we ourselves need to think with the Church—to borrow a maxim from the Jesuits.

You studied for the priesthood in Oxford and then studied in Rome. What part does study play in your life now?

I was taught that a Dominican without a book is not a Dominican. For Dominicans study is an asceticism, and for that we need time in our cells. Actually I enjoy reading, so find it hard to think of it as an asceticism! It is rare now for me to finish a book cover to cover. As a friar I need study, but as a parish priest I find I have less time for study.

So what are your priorities as parish priest?

To give priority to those who are



most vulnerable to being excluded from the life of the parish—the housebound and sick, the elderly and the young. Others who are likewise vulnerable are immigrant communities who may struggle in the practice of the faith without their native cultural accoutrements which may make that easier and indeed more fun! So for example we have a Novena to Our Lady every Saturday, which is popular with immigrants and locals alike. Related to this is my desire to foster devotion. I firmly believe that church buildings are the first catechism, catechisms of stone and glass, of smoke and bells, and we must shape the fabric of the church to be a dignified setting for the great work of the liturgy. Far from being functional halls, the building itself should draw us into the worship of God, and there is a need for that deeply implanted within all of us.

Is that need still there today?

I doubt if it has ever been stronger! One of my priorities is with the young. They are very rewarding to work with because they are open to enquiry, to truth, and are willing to change. I find myself zealous in preaching the Gospel to them, because I'm determined that they won't suffer a lack of decent catechesis and so fall away from the faith. I don't want them to miss out on the excitement of orthodoxy!

A NEW CHAPEL PLANNED

The Dominican community and parish of St Albert the Great, Edinburgh, have unveiled plans to build a new chapel adjacent to the priory in George Square.

The Order of Preachers first came to Edinburgh around 1230, when a priory was founded, almost certainly under the patronage of King Alexander II, who placed much confidence in the newly-arrived friars. On the eve of the Reformation the Dominican community was still praising God and preaching the Gospel in their church, which was set above Cowgate, enclosed by the Flodden Wall. Following the Reformation, church and priory were destroyed.

When the Dominicans returned to Edinburgh in 1931, they acquired 24 George Square, the house in which the community now lives and prays as a base for their work as chaplains to the University. The Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh had urged the Dominicans to acquire property in George Square, because he was convinced the University would grow and find its centre there. He was right, and today the Dominicans' chaplaincy is in the shadow of the massive University Library and is flanked by many other University buildings.

Fr Tim Calvert (*pictured bottom right*), who is not only prior but also chaplain and parish priest, says: "We are still in just the right place for a University chaplaincy and parish, right in the heart of the University campus. Many students, Catholic and non-Catholic, come to the common room and the 'café' to make themselves at home. A real student community comes together in the week for the daily lunchtime Mass, as well as for parties and the events arranged by the chaplains."

The chapel, however, can no longer meet pastoral need, and barely holds 100 people. Fr Tim continues, "Our present chapel is a beautiful space, with a large Victorian bay window, overlooking the greenery of the Meadows. Unfortunately, it is on the first floor, and not so easily accessible. It is also in a separate house from number 23, where the main social life of the chaplaincy happens. Our congregation has grown so much over the years, and the students' Mass on Sunday evenings is standing room only if you don't arrive more than five minutes early! We simply need a new chapel here in



The present chapel is located on the first floor of the house on the left



FOR ST ALBERT THE GREAT

George Square as a matter of urgency.”

The whole chaplaincy has been involved in the planning of the new chapel. Three general meetings have been held, and each has had a hand in improving the proposals. A number of architects who are regulars at Mass in George Square have also given their time and expertise to the project. Together with the prior, they have been working with the Edinburgh architects who are responsible for the project, Simpson and Brown, finding ways to apply the general points raised by brethren, students and parishioners to the specific plans under discussion.

The present chapel is an important source of inspiration, and Fr Tim is enthusiastic for what is to come: “The chapel is to reflect all that is loved in the Upper Room we have been using since 1931. It will be very light, with a large window behind the altar, facing onto the woodland garden. Local craftsmen will build a dry stone wall, which will resemble the garden wall and involve a large use of natural materials.

“Although we are bound by the city council only to build in a certain area, it is important that the building not feel like a box, but be an interesting space that can nurture prayer and contemplation. The chapel will be shaped from within, so that it has a barrel ceiling laid in unvarnished wood. With the stone wall and the garden beyond, there will be a real sense of the natural world being taken up into the worship of God.”

Plans have been submitted to the local council and Fr Tim is optimistic. The new chapel would hold 150 people, have easy access for wheelchairs, and would be linked to those parts of the chaplaincy where the students’ common room and the café are located.

Fr Tim says, “This would be a place not just for the community which has already been assembled. It would be a sign of a Catholic presence in the middle of a busy University city. We have a lively and vibrant apostolate in Edinburgh, and through the Catholic Students’ Union many young people are formed to be committed to the Church’s mission for their whole lives. Bricks and mortar are not the same thing as the living Body of Christ, but they do help form that Body among the people of our time.”





Ordinations



Four young Dominicans were ordained to the priesthood in the English Province in 2008. Fr Bruno Clifton (above, far left) was ordained in the chapel of the Convent of Mercy in Edinburgh by Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien on 20 September. A week later Bp Malcolm McMahon OP ordained Fr Alistair Jones (centre left) and Fr Benedict Jonak (centre right) in the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary and St Dominic in London. And, on 23 October in the Priory of St Michael Archangel, Cambridge, Fr Dominic Ryan (far right) was ordained by the Bishop of East Anglia, Rt Revd Michael Evans. While Benedict and Dominic continue with their studies, Bruno remains Assistant Chaplain to Edinburgh University, while Alistair will become Assistant Chaplain in the New Year at Fisher House, the chaplaincy to Cambridge University.

Three Oxford students also made their solemn vows in the Order this year. Br Thomas Skeats (below left, kneeling) and Br Robert Gay (below, far left) made profession at Blackfriars, Oxford, on 13 September, and Br Denis Murphy was one of three Irish brothers who made profession in the Dominican church at Tallaght, Dublin, two days later. Br Thomas is spending the current academic year pursuing his theological studies at the Angelicum, the Dominican University in Rome.

Brothers Gregory Pearson, Graham Hunt and Mark Davoren (below right, kneeling left to right) made their simple vows in the Order at Cambridge on 14 September. At this first profession, the Provincial blesses the scapulars of those professed with holy water. The same day, the Provincial, Fr John Farrell, also clothed two new novices in the habit.



Obituary: Br John Martin McGowan 1949-2008



Br John Martin died very suddenly of a heart attack on 16 June. He was aged 59 and had been professed as a cooperator brother for 27 years. John was born on 11 May 1949, just before his twin brother George, to whom he remained close his whole life. He lived his early years in Wishaw, north Lanarkshire, and before entering the Order trained as a plumber. He was the first Dominican novice to be clothed in Scotland since the Reformation. After his noviciate, his Dominican life was spent in Leicester, Glasgow, Newcastle, and finally Edinburgh. John Martin exercised a ministry of great compassion and was known wherever he lived as a true friend to those most in need of help and support. He also devoted his time to the fabric of priory buildings, and in his last years travelled the Province, ensuring the safety of their electrical equipment. His funeral was celebrated in Edinburgh's Convent of Mercy on 27 June in the presence of Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien.

Spotlight on Brother Vincent Cook



In July Br Vincent celebrated his jubilee of sixty years in Dominican vows. We asked him about his time in the Order and his calling to our life ...

“I’ve been blind all my life, but in the early years I could see just a little. When I was a boy I was sent to a specialist. Another boy who was there told me that the doctor gives one sweet to the boys who can see a bit, and two sweets to those who can’t see. The doctor gave me two sweets, and I gave him one back saying, ‘I can see.’ ‘No you can’t,’ he said, and put the sweet back in my hand!

“When I was a boy, my father said to me, ‘You’re going to be a priest.’ I said, ‘No, I’m not. I’m going to be a brother!’ So I always had this calling to religious life.

“I was part of a Catholic Youth Club and we used to have debates and discussions. So once I went for a few days to see the life of a Benedictine monastery, but it wasn’t for me. At the end of my stay there, the Abbot called me and said, ‘I don’t think you’re really suited to us.’ ‘Nor do I,’ I replied! But it was when I visited the Dominicans at Hawkesyard that I felt at home straight away. It was September, and a new crop of novices had just arrived, so I was told to come back in December when there would be room. So I did.

“The noviciate was a bit different from now! It was just after the war, so it was very full. It was fairly strict, but we did get up to some mischief, I’m afraid. Cigarettes were a great comfort, and we always found a way to get a smoke. Once I had a hospital appointment, and was given my bus fare. I got the bus for the appointment, and then decided to walk back. I spent the money on cigarettes. It was eleven miles’ walk back to Hawkesyard, but it was worth it.

“Most of my life has been spent in the kitchens of the Province. My speciality was preparing the vegetables - I had it down to a fine art ... I did work in the sacristy for a while, and in the early days I used to clean the priests’ rooms. There was one old priest who died in his nineties. He was blind, and I was put in charge of caring for him. Eventually, he wouldn’t accept help from anyone else but me.

“Nowadays I suppose I’m retired. At least, the prior doesn’t ask me to do any work! I like being in Oxford. I’ve been here for twenty years. I didn’t think I’d like it: I thought they’d all be snobs ... but they’re nice snobs! I might even become a snob myself! I think the community is very settled, and so I can see the Province getting stronger. There’s a great sense of enthusiasm, and it’s great to hear all these young voices filling the choir. It’s also good to have so many overseas people. It’s a great life if you give yourself to it. I hope they get as much out of it as I have!”

State of the art rolling stacks arrive in Oxford’s library

Blackfriars’s library enjoys ‘rolling stacks’ for the first time. After over 80 years of maintaining a specialist library in philosophy and theology, empty space on the bookshelves had become harder and harder to find. The fitting of new lighting and heating in the front part of the Oxford priory this summer gave the brethren the opportunity to remedy this tricky situation by the introduction of the new mobile units. To prepare for the installation of the new shelving, the brothers had to carry nearly 700 boxes of books from the library to the refectory to be stored for the summer, and then carry them all back to re-shelve them in time for the new academic year, under the direction of Blackfriars’s new Librarian and Research Fellow, Michael Black.

The second phase of summer works on the priory buildings are now complete, and fundraising by Blackfriars’s supporters continues apace. “David Firth generously ran in the London Marathon to support us, John Robinson delivered a fascinating public lecture in November about his Gunpowder Plotter ancestor,

while children from our 9:30 congregation gave a highly successful performance of ‘Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat’, raising more than £1,000,” reports the prior. Over £150,000 has also been received in grants from Trusts, and the Priory Renewal Fund is now over halfway towards its target of £700,000.



The Rosary our A, B, C, D and E ...



The Nativity of our Lord

The brethren at Leicester marked 2008 as the Dominican Year of the Rosary by blessing rosaries at every Mass on the Feast of the Our Lady of the Rosary. Fr Fabian Radcliffe reports: "We also handed out copies of a leaflet which gives a simple introduction to the rosary, showing it to be as familiar as ABCDE—Ancient, Biblical, Contemplative, Dominican and Effective!" A set of donated plaques illustrating the Mysteries of the Rosary have also been attached to the pillars of the nave of Holy Cross church as a visual aid to this powerful form of prayer.

This Newsletter is produced for the English Province of the Dominican Order by its Student Brothers at Blackfriars, Oxford, under the editorship of the prior, Fr Simon Francis Gainé OP. Please send your comments, suggestions and views to him at Blackfriars, 64 St Giles', Oxford OX1 3LY, or email the editorial team on newsletter@english.op.org.

**WE WISH ALL OUR READERS
A HAPPY AND HOLY
CHRISTMAS!**

News in brief

- Fr Aidan Nichols of Blackfriars, Cambridge, has recently published two books, *Reason with Piety* and *Hopkins: Theologian's Poet* (both Sapientia Press). The first examines the thought of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, the most eminent Dominican speculative theologian of the first half of the twentieth century, while the second looks at the work of the well-known Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins.
- Br David Barrins, a student for the priesthood at Blackfriars, Oxford, was part of the Irish Dominican presence at World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia, in July. He reports: "It was truly wonderful to see hundreds of thousands of young Catholics sharing their faith and their love for Christ and the Church with each other." The Dominican bishop who organised World Youth Day was permitted to recover from his exertions by taking a relaxing autumn sabbatical at Blackfriars, Oxford. Bp Anthony Fisher is no stranger to that priory, since he was formerly a member of the community when studying for his doctorate at Oxford.
- Our Lady Queen of the Universe, Black Rock, in Barbados, has returned to Dominican care with the appointment of Fr Ronald Holder as parish priest.



"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Las Casas Institute Launched

A new institute of Blackfriars Hall was formally inaugurated at Oxford on 25 November with a lecture on 'human rights in a post-socialist age' by Professor Conor Gearty of the London School of Economics, with Rt Hon. John Battle MP, a Fellow of Blackfriars, in the chair. The Las Casas Institute has been founded by the Dominicans as a focus for research, education and dialogue in the areas of ethics, governance, leadership, justice and faith. Under the directorship of Lay Dominican Francis Davis, its work is based on the Catholic and Dominican traditions of moral theology and social justice, and the Institute is named after the sixteenth-century friar, Bartolomé de las Casas, who defended the rights of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. The Institute is indebted to the generosity of the M. B. Reckitt Trust, CAFOD, and the Epiphany Trust for its initial funding.

- On 18 November, Fr Jean-Jacques Pérrenès OP of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo spoke movingly in Oxford of the life, death and work in inter-religious dialogue of his friend, Pierre Claverie, the Dominican Bishop of Oran who was assassinated in Algeria in 1996.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ...

two English Dominicans who have each lived sixty years of joyful profession in the Order. Br Vincent Cook (see *Spotlight*, page 7) was professed as a cooperator (or lay) brother on 24 July 1948, and Fr Gilbert Coxhead made his vows on 4 October 1948. Fr Gilbert is assigned to our priory in St George's, Grenada. Congratulations also to Fr Edward Booth, who celebrated his Golden Jubilee of priesthood on 19 September 2008. Fr Edward, who is chaplain to the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary of Stykkisholmur in Iceland, also celebrated his eightieth birthday in August.

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