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*Laudetur Sacrosanctum et Augustissimum
Sacramentum in æternum*

*The eternal Wisdom become
Child! Day of love, day of
joy, day of blessing and of
glory!*

Mother Mechtilde



Tegelen, Advent 2022

To all with whom we are connected,

In our community retreat of the past year, led in an inspiring and surprising way by Fr. Anton Overmars, we were told several vocation stories from the Bible: from Adam to the apostles. These stories provided much food for prayer and also made us think about our own vocation story.

One of the vocation stories in this retreat was about Adam: "Adam, where art thou?" (Gen. 3:9) God who calls man; we too, every human being, are called by his or her name, to return to our loving God and Father. A calling is not a one-off. Every day we are called to say 'yes' to God as well as to our fellow sisters and other neighbours. A great adventure of the interior life that is by no means boring!

In the story of Creation we can read about God creating man (Adam) and making a helper for him that suits him. In the past year we too have received a lot of help from different people and from different corners. Scattered throughout this letter you will find beautiful examples of this, for which we would like to greatly thank all of you. The same thanks go to those who supported us by

financial contributions, whether or not resulting from our calendar action, to keep our house and garden livable. We pray daily for all our benefactors, who assist us in whatever that may be.

January 5th: at the end of Holy Mass in honour of Saint Charles Houben, whose Holy Year we celebrate because of his 200th Anniversary of birth, we received the blessing with the relic of the Saint. Father Karel (Saint Charles of Mount Argus) was from the Netherlands but worked in Ireland for a long time. He has a special place in our hearts as we have a growing number of vocations from Ireland. Chaplain Pierik gave his homily partly in English. Every day he gives a short word in English at the end of his homily, which is an encouragement to our English-speaking vocations, who, by the way, do their best to learn Dutch.

January 6th: we held a special celebration in the Chapter House on the occasion of the feast of Epiphany, during which the so-called “Three Kings” water was blessed. Afterwards, the rooms in the house were blessed with this water.

On February 28th, Mr Joep Habets held an impressive lecture on the Shroud of Turin with us. He showed a replica of the original shroud as well as a life-size image of the suffering Christ and a number of attributes relating to a crucifixion. With inner inspiration, he brought the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ closer to us, thus giving a fitting introduction to Lent.



In February and March, we contracted the corona virus; with one exception, most of us were fortunately back on our feet fairly quickly - albeit somewhat shakily. The sister who was more seriously ill fortunately recovered well after a few tense weeks.

It was an eventful period: one person succeeded the other. Fortunately, Holy Mass and the Divine Office could always go on, even if sometimes with only a

few voices, which had also lost much of their strength. The Perpetual Adoration was also able to continue, thanks to the help of several volunteers. Deo Gratias!

On March 1st, our beloved fellow Sister, Sister Simone, passed away. Due to Corona circumstances, the funeral took place in a restricted circle. Sister Simone was a sincere and warm-hearted Sister, who, even at an advanced age, still had much to offer, for example to the younger Sisters through her example of faithfulness and gratitude and her upright cordiality to each one of us. Sister Simone - despite the fact that she often had to work hard both at home and later in the convent - could give this beautiful testimony of herself: 'I am a child spoiled by God'. We will miss her in our community, but one day we will see each other again in heaven.

Our garden has undergone a major metamorphosis! Our garden volunteers helped us cut down and chop down the many conifers our garden had - quite a job! As in many places elsewhere, a large number of trees were affected by a beetle infestation resulting in their loss. We now hope to start the new planting phase soon. This will probably be completed next year .



During this period, we also received help from an unexpected source: from our brothers at Silverstream Priory in Ireland. We were delighted that Dom Mark Kirby was allowed to stay with us for some time. This also gave him the opportunity to inspire us and those who visited him through his gift of the word. His brothers not only came to visit him and help cut down trees

in the garden. They also offered help with night Adoration, washing dishes, painting around the house, and sometimes even choral prayers on some Feasts to give our (still sick) voices some support with the singing of Latin.

For our part, we help the Brothers of Silverstream. Several times a Sister went to help sew choir robes, habits and overalls that needed repair work.

With great gratitude, we celebrated Sister Bernarda's Silver Profession Feast on March 25th. Due to corona infections, it was uncertain for a long time whether the celebration could go ahead. Even the Bride herself was not spared the virus, but on March 25th the joyous: 'Suscipe me, Domine' sounded during the Holy Mass, during which Sister Bernarda renewed her Vows. Unfortunately, her family members could not attend.



On Sunday, May 1st, we celebrated 60 years of Sister Marie-Paul's profession! At Holy Mass she renewed her Vows. In the afternoon there was a festive recreation with songs, poems and a description (illustrated with photos) of the journey of her monastic life, which started at a Convent in Peppingen, Luxembourg.

On May 31st, at the Election of a Prioress, we re-elected Mother Immaculata for three years.

In the past year, we said goodbye to some (young) people who have lived with us from abroad for a few months or for longer periods. We were able to spend part of their journey together with the Lord, and we pray for the continuation of their journey with Him. It is a joy that we got to know each other and were able to live our Catholic faith and worship together.

In a modest way, in the past year, retreats have again been possible in our Guest House. Happily. Some of these retreats were led by Father Johan Debeer c.s.j., who knew how to animate his listeners. There was a family weekend at the end of August, led by one of our Oblates. It is a delight to see young people enjoying some meaningful days that offer relaxation at the same time.

Apart from volunteers working in the garden on various days throughout the year, in between, the sisters also work there as much as they are able. During this work, Sister Mechtildis was suddenly attacked by wasps, the moment she pulled a branch from a pile she wanted to chop. She ran away and fell,

sustaining a broken ankle. During the weeks she was not allowed to use her foot, she did her work riding around in an electric wheelchair. She is otherwise recovering well.



As in 2021, a lot of hard work was done on overdue maintenance in the house. Walls, corridors and rooms were painted. Our monastery is visibly improving. It



immediately gives us the opportunity to tidy up, because every room has to be cleared out, cleaned and redecorated. This is especially true of the priory with adjacent workroom, which has come out very well. Bearing in mind that - Deo Volente - the Confederal Assembly of our Institute will be held here in 2025, we are already making preparations wherever possible.

Our chapel is badly in need of a new paint job. Since 2025 will also mark the 150th anniversary of the foundation of our monastery, we intend to have this work done during the winter of 2023/2024. We have discussed several times whether we will have murals painted on the walls again, but as yet we cannot find anything appropriate. Is there anyone you know who would have a good idea?

On July 5th, Father Abbot Lenglet OSB came for his annual visitation day. We celebrated the Eucharist together and in the afternoon he held a fascinating conference on St Gregory of Nyssa: how this Church Father views Spiritual life. In recreation, cheerful and thankful, together we marked Father Abbot's 25 years of Ministry to our Institute.

We rejoiced to celebrate the Feast of Altar Dedication on October 29th. Since our Chapel was blessed but not consecrated, in the Foundation years, we were unable to celebrate the Feast of Consecration of our own Chapel. One of our sisters made the discovery that one can celebrate Altar Dedication - which, by

the way, is celebrated with the Mass formula of Consecration of a Church - and we seized the opportunity with both hands. With this feast, we celebrate the dedication to God of this place, where the daily encounter with our Eucharistic Lord takes place, something that fills us with intense joy and gratitude day after day. It was a richly blessed day with a communal hour of Adoration in thanksgiving in the afternoon, praying for forgiveness for our own shortcomings and for blessings for the future.

Our very elderly Sister Ancilla, aged 97, was able to look back on 40 years of Profession on November 21st. We celebrated this happy occasion in a humble fashion, with a special Eucharistic celebration with main celebrant Fr. Hamans, who lead her way to our monastery.



Our Mother's Name Feast is made a lively affair through song, poetry and performance. This year, the sisters staged the 'conversation' between Jonah and the big fish. The serious message of this Bible story was combined with infectious humour. Don't each of us sometimes recognise ourselves in Jonah?

A group of Belgian young people led by Dom Johannes OSB from the Affligem Monastery of Affligem were guests for a weekend focused on the Eucharist. The young people are part of an existing Adoration group at the Abbey and they are full of faith and fire. There were presentations, including one by our Auxiliary Bishop Mgr E de Jong; There was also communal Adoration, musically accompanied by the young people themselves. They helped in the garden and in the kitchen and participated in night worship. It is very encouraging to see such inspired young people.

In October, Sr Bernarda gave an English-language retreat on the Song of Songs for some of our Novices from Ireland. The young Sisters were inspired and uplifted by her conferences and, after the retreat, threw themselves into the monastic life of "Ora and labora" with even more fervour. Because of the success of this retreat, in 2023 (for the first time) we hope to offer a retreat led by a Sister to guests, on the theme of Spiritual Motherhood.

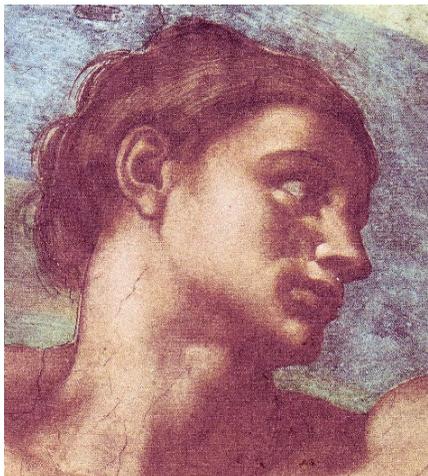
Pax! is the quintessential Benedictine blessing. All our life is a prayer, all our life is dedicated to peace: with God, among ourselves and within ourselves. But because of the ongoing war in Ukraine, we still want to give extra expression to our concern for peace: we pray a prayer for peace every day before Vespers.

The sisters are bravely trying to contribute their bit to reducing environmental pollution and wastage of drinking water. Therefore, we have purchased several large rain barrels. In addition, partly due to skyrocketing energy prices, so far, except in the guesthouse, the central heating is off when it is not freezing. We wear extra warm clothes, but it is quite a challenge, especially for the older sisters. However, we gladly sacrifice this inconvenience for people who are really cold because of the lack of any facilities.



We would like to end this newsletter with a beautiful quote from a homily by Romanos de Zanger, in which Father Overmars allowed us to share. May it help us to look forward with hope and joy to the Lord's coming at Christmas and to the New Year:

*God did not scorn him,
he who in paradise was robbed of his clothes by a ruse
and lost the garment woven by God's hands.*



He comes to him and calls out in his holy voice to the disobedient:

"Adam, where are you? Hide no longer from Me.

As naked and as poor as you are, I want to see you.

Do not be afraid, I have become like you. You wanted to become God and you failed. Now I have become flesh, because I wanted to. Come near, re-know Me and say, Thou hast come, Thou hast revealed Thyself, Thou the Unapproachable Light!

We wish you all a blessed Advent and Christmas season. Thanks again to all of you who assist us in any way. We pray for you; God's blessings for the coming year 2023,

In prayerful union,

M. Immaculata Franken OSB ap

Your Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament,

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