

THE DOMINICANS

Easter 2021

The Magazine of the Dominican Friars in England & Scotland



800

1221-2021

- At Table with St Dominic **Special Jubilee Food Issue!**
- The Earliest Image of St Dominic **Fr Peter Harries OP**
- The Joy of Cooking **Fr Richard Ounsworth OP**
- plus the friars share their food stories and favourite recipes!

Come celebrate with us!

2021 is a Jubilee year for the Dominican Order and for our Province. For in 1221, our holy father St Dominic sent a band of preaching brothers to England, and they set out from the university town of Bologna to the university town of Oxford. On the day they set foot on the shores of England, the 6th of August 1221, our holy father Dominic passed from this world, and, as it were, set foot on the shores of the heavenly realm. The Order, therefore, observes this year the 800th anniversary of the death and thus the 'dies natalis', the heavenly birthday, of St Dominic.

The theme for this Jubilee of St Dominic is 'At Table with Saint Dominic', inspired by the 'Mascarella table', the first portrait of St Dominic that survives. It is highlighted on the cover of this edition, and Fr Peter leads us in a beautiful reflection on this painting from c.1234. As the Master of the Order notes, this depiction of St Dominic shows that he is not to be seen 'as a saint alone on a pedestal, but a saint enjoying table fellowship with his brothers, gathered by the same vocation to preach God's Word and sharing God's gift of food and drink.'

This past year has been a terrible time of isolation, and the terror of the pandemic is not just death but its dehumanising effect as we have been prevented from sitting at table with our families, our loved ones, and even kept from our parish communities and friends. As



friars who live together and are classed as a household, we are aware of the tremendous blessing of our fraternal life which has been such a source of strength and hope for us in these difficult times. We are also mindful of the prayers and generosity and help given us by so many of our parishioners, friends, supporters and benefactors in these times that help us sustain our Dominican life and mission.

In this respect, little has changed over the past 800 years. As mendicant friars, we have been indebted to the goodwill

and goodness of our benefactors from the very beginning when we arrived on the coast of Kent in 1221, and we were invited to preach the Gospel, and then rewarded with a hot meal! Through this magazine, which begins our commemoration of the Jubilee year, we wish to share something of our table fellowship with you; to invite you into a spiritual communion of friendship with us, which we very much hope will be perfected through actual opportunities to celebrate in person during the following year in one of our priories in England and Scotland. From Pentecost 2021 to the feast of the Translation of St Dominic (24 May) in 2022, please join us in giving thanks to God for 800 years of his mercies, 800 years of the joy of preaching the Gospel, and indeed, 800 years of table fellowship with St Dominic and countless other holy men and women who have been inspired by his example.

– Fr Lawrence Lew OP, Editor

You can send any comments or feedback to me via magazine@english.op.org



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FRIARS ENGLAND & WALES
SCOTLAND

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Requiescant in Pace

We remember with affection and gratitude all the recently departed, including the following who made gifts to the Friars in their Wills.

- **Eugene Curley** (Holy Cross, Leicester, church fabric)
- **Ann Fitzpatrick** (Rosary Shrine, London)
- **Norah Jones** (Holy Cross Priory, Leicester)
- **Molly Pearson** (Province of England)

May they and all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Since 1221, gifts made in Wills have always played a vital part in sustaining the mission of the English Province. If you are considering leaving such a gift in your Will, visit www.english.op.org/legacies for useful information.





Fed by God's Providence

In 1536, Giovanni Antonio Sogliani painted a fresco in the refectory of San Marco in Florence, the Dominican priory which had been at the forefront of the Observant Reforms some hundred years earlier. He was commissioned to depict not the conventional scene for such a room – the Last Supper – but another meal, when angels had miraculously fed the hungry friars with bread and wine in answer to St Dominic's prayers. Indeed, this fresco may perhaps have replaced a Last Supper painted by his more famous predecessor, Fra Angelico. What explains this extraordinary commission?

We should start with the two stories collected for the canonisation of St Dominic which tell of a miraculous provision of loaves. As related by Brother Bonvisus, the miracle took place in the refectory at Bologna. When St Dominic heard from the rector that there was no bread to distribute at the meal, he prayed and two men at once entered, one carrying a basket of bread, the other a basket of dried figs. Told this way, the story simply insists on God's provident care for the friars, as mediated by their founder's prayers for them. But Sister Cecilia also related a more challenging version of this story set this time in Rome. Two friars had gone begging through the streets with little success. They had received only a single loaf with which to feed an entire community. Then, on their way home, they encountered

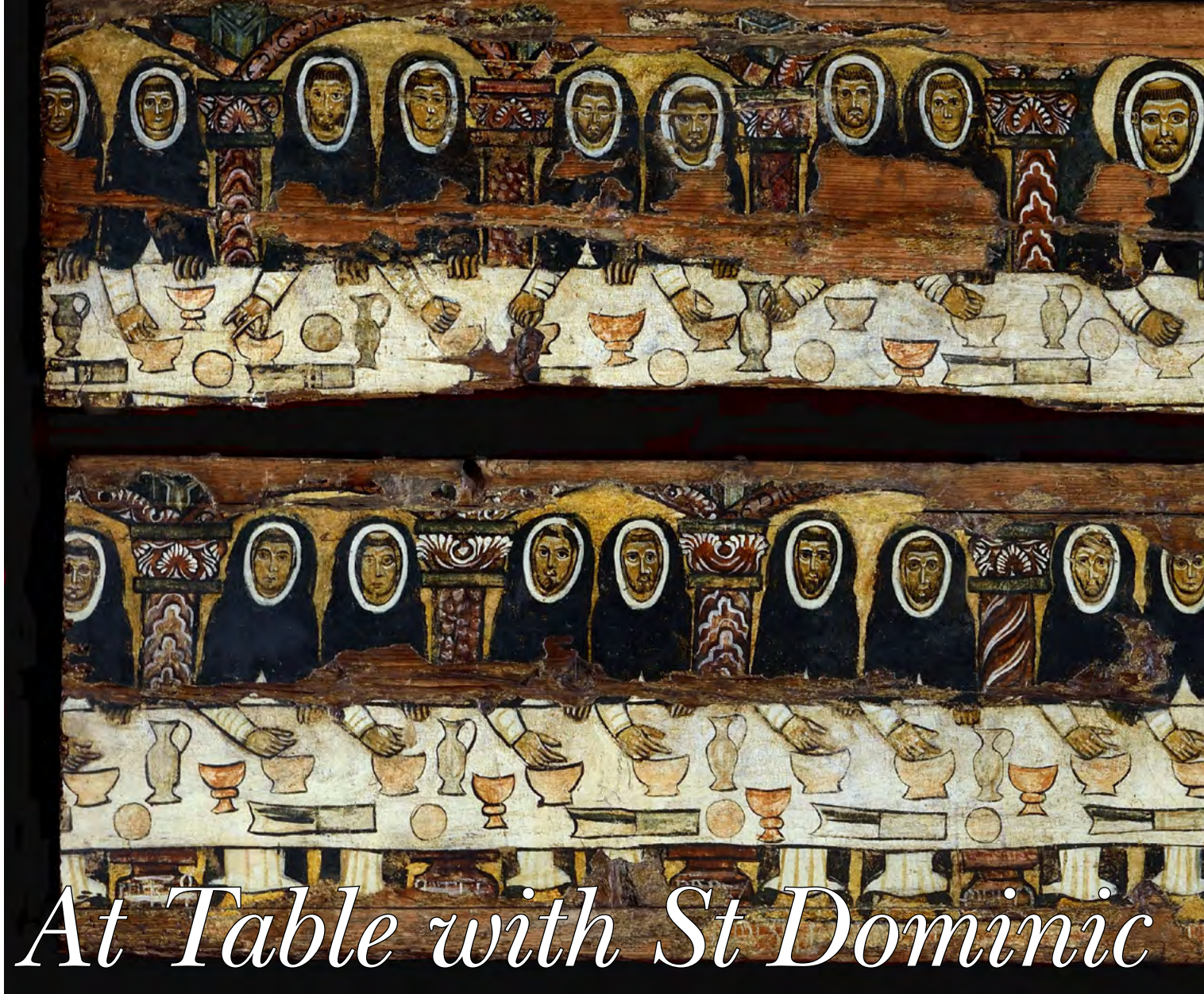
a beggar who asked for the loaf, which they relinquished with some reluctance before he mysteriously vanished. The friars returned empty-handed to the convent. When the community sat down to an empty table, St Dominic prayed and two young men appeared with baskets of fresh bread. Furthermore, as if to cap the miracle, a wine cask that had previously been emptied was now found to be full. St Dominic saw that the brethren ate and drank their fill, but then ordered that the left-overs be given away in alms to the poor. Told this way, the story stresses that God's provident generosity will both answer and prompt the friars' generosity towards others.

We can then consider the composition itself. The scene with St Dominic at the centre flanked by the friars is clearly modelled on the Last Supper, so that St Dominic becomes Christ-like and the friars become latter-day apostles, entrusted by the Church with the preaching of the Gospel. But the setting or backdrop is in fact another refectory. We see the two angels arriving resplendent in golden robes at the front of the table (their feet suggesting that they have just 'touched down'), but it's not clear that the friars can see them. To judge by their hands, the men appear to be too deep in animated conversation! God's providence is operative even when unnoticed, but is to be recollected. The principal wall of this refectory within

the refectory is covered with a further fresco – the crucifixion flanked not only by the Virgin and St John, but also by the kneeling figures of St Antoninus of Florence (identified by his pallium) and St Catherine of Siena (identified by her lily). The former was himself a member of the Observant Reform; the latter was honoured as the Reform's inspiration. God's blessing comes on those who radically depend on Him through prayer and through a strict voluntary and mendicant poverty. It is the context for a profound Christo-centric devotion or spirituality focused upon the suffering humanity of Christ, but contemplation for both saints led them to an active apostolate. For the sixteenth-century friars of San Marco, the fresco made their every meal a recollection and a living-out of their true vocation as Dominican preachers.

It might be possible, of course, to forget the beggar who received the one loaf from the friars in Sister Cecilia's account. He does not appear in Sogliani's fresco. As friars who continue to depend on the generous gifts of others for our mission, the two versions of the story, or the two miracles, point towards a real tension between the funds we need to preach – a *spiritual* work of mercy – and the demands of practical charity towards our neighbour – through *corporal* works of mercy. The challenge is ours.

– Fr Richard Finn OP



Fr Peter Harries OP, who enjoys sacred art and Dominican iconography, reflects on the 'Table of Mascarella' which is the subject of an exhibition in Bologna to mark the 800th Jubilee of St Dominic's death and heavenly birthday in 2021.

I have never seen this painting. Until a few years ago I had never seen any copies, and it lies outwith the traditional orbit of Dominican iconography. This is odd, as it was made and preserved in Bologna, the city where St Dominic died and his body is enshrined. It is painted on a long board, traditionally identified as the table where angels had miraculously fed the hungry brethren at St Dominic's prayers, although the painting does not depict this well-recorded miracle exactly. St Dominic is eating heartily, not praying! The current scholarly suggestions date

this painting to about 1234–50 by a local Italian artist, so it is probably the earliest surviving image of St Dominic.

Whenever I look at this image, my eyes are drawn to the table covered with a white (linen) tablecloth on which five items are repeated across its breadth: bowls, discs of bread, chalices, knives and jugs. Let's contextualise each of these, reflecting both about table manners and the iconographic references to the Last Supper.

Bowls: all but one of the brethren have their right arm extended conventionally, hand in bowl. A couple more bowls, all simple and identical, are shown. The brethren eat the same food previously presented to them. No evidence of picking and choosing from a selection of items. What was in the bowl? Most probably a thick vegetable stew with legumes/pulses. On feastsdays, meat or offal may have been added, otherwise

eggs or cheese might be on the menu. In Bologna, not too far from the sea and the Po marshes, fish would regularly be on the table. Fruit, like the figs of the miracle story, would be offered later.

Discs of bread: no plates for the brethren. The brethren break up their bread and use it to scoop up the contents of the bowl. Alternatively, people used a thick slice of bread instead of a plate, heaped their food on top of it and ate the lot. The white discs of bread remind us of the eucharistic bread that the brethren shared daily. It was finest wheat-bread that the angels distributed in the story of the miracle, not the coarser cheaper daily bread made from rye or barley.

Chalices: plenty of little chalices on the table. No individual glasses/cups – another century at least before such refinements. The brethren physically shared their cups with their companion(s). These chalices look just like the



ordinary chalices used at Mass. Here many chalices are shown, perhaps reflecting that most of the brethren are priests who offer the eucharistic sacrifice daily, in contrast to the one chalice shown in a Last Supper.

Knives: yes, those are remarkably large knives on the table, handy for cutting up bread, fruit, vegetables etc. Although laymen carried small sharp knives for cutting, chopping and killing, the brethren generally did not. No spoons on the table, so the bowls don't have either soup or some early form of Italian pasta in them. Could these large knives remind us of the sacrifice of Abraham which prefigures the sacrificial death of Our Lord on Calvary?

Jugs: what did these few jugs contain? *Water?* St Dominic and the early brethren usually drank water, though in medieval cities, water was often not safe to drink. The many chalices hint at a

more festive gathering. *Beer?* Unlikely in Mediterranean regions. *Wine?* Drinking diluted wine was usual at meals in Italy for all except the poor. Sick brethren did habitually drink wine not water. *Vinegar (wine that had gone off)?* The option for the urban poor most days. So does the wine remind us once again of the eucharist and our need for healing, or does the vinegar remind us of Jesus' suffering on the cross?

These same five items on a white tablecloth are found in contemporary images of the Last Supper, often along with fish and roast lamb on a platter. Upmarket depictions of the Last Supper are shown with spices served in an elaborate dish. No spices here, this is simple.

Jesus is pivotal in images of the Last Supper. Here, the focus is on the haloed (and recently canonised) St Dominic. Just as Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples, so St Dominic shares this meal

with his disciples, drawn from all parts of Europe as their facial features show.

So, eating with St Dominic is simple, adequate and dignified. Dignified: the tablecloth, appropriate crockery, and the frescoed pillars behind suggest a dignified yet not luxurious setting. Adequate: the brethren are all digging into their food, hungry, even if not showing modern hygiene standards. Simple, not socially stratified like secular meals in that very class-conscious urban society, and no 'show-off' spicy luxuries. So a meal with St Dominic has profound eucharistic overtones but is also a meal of fellowship around the table. The New Testament stories of Jesus tell of his table-fellowship, a table-fellowship characteristic of those who follow Jesus in the way of St Dominic.

Eating for Dominic

The most public functions of the Master of the Order are to be photographed and to eat. There are no records of St Dominic being photographed, but two of his best-known miracles concerned eating and drink. When the brethren had no food, he prayed and angels turned up with bread (see p.3). When he returned to San Sisto after a preaching mission and asked for wine with the sisters, the bowl never became empty. 'Bibite satis', he said.

The early Dominicans were known for their enjoyment of their wine. One General Chapter ruled that the empty bottles must not be left outside, so as not to scandalise the neighbours. The Dominicans of Toulouse felt a positive obligation to eat well since the Albigensian *perfecti* whom they wished to convert enjoyed a good meal.

My predecessor, fr Damian Byrne, ate little. At banquet at Blackfriars, Cambridge, he ate only an apple. The Postulator General, Innocenzo Venchi, told me with a glint in his eye, 'Brother Damian did not eat, drink or smoke, and he is dead. I eat, drink and smoke, and I am alive!' And indeed he was until last year.

I felt unworthy to succeed this holy brother, but at least, I thought, I can eat for Dominic. I hoped that my enjoyment of food would be an asset for 'when I am weak then I am strong' (2 Cor 12.10).

It was not so easy. On my arrival in Rome, I was given a banquet that lasted four hours. I spoke no Italian and the people on either side of me spoke nothing else. I began to sympathise with Damian. 'Will this never end?', words

often repeated during the years, as siesta after siesta was cancelled.

Local sensitivities must not be offended, and so I had three breakfasts on the same day in Naples, each with several courses and different wines, and two successive lunches in the Ukraine. When a desert father was visited by another, he

a succulent steak but was embarrassed to discover that everyone else was eating cow skin. The next day I asked for the same as everyone else. When I returned I was greeted with a banner with my own words: 'Cow skin for one; cow skin for all.' I had not realised that cow skin, *pomo*, is a luxury!



Generally I had a good go at anything that came my way. The secret, especially in Taiwan, was not to ask what the food was until the meal was over, having once made the mistake and discovered that I was eating fish bladders. Only a few times was I defeated. The Filipino delicacy is *balut*, a fertilised developing egg embryo which is boiled and eaten from the shell. I declined on the grounds that since it was Christmas I must honour the Christ-child by not eating something so near hatching. The next time I went there it was Easter. I had no excuse. We did have the most delicious suckling pig I have ever eaten. In Burma, I hid the chicken claws under rice, and turned down the roast spiders in Cambodia.

I had three lunches with Pope John Paul II. The sight of my habit always provoked happy reminiscences about Dominicans he had known, to the irritation of the bishops who were waiting for their turn

in the limelight. Twice he said to me, 'I must tell you a very amusing story, when we are alone.' I never discovered what it was.

When I returned to England at the end of my term, the results were obvious. Fergus Kerr greeted me as he took me out to lunch: 'You have grown fat, positively obese.' All for Dominic!

- Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP

The Joy of Cooking

This term I have been giving a new set of lectures for the Studium in Oxford, on Luke and Acts. Something that struck me as I was writing them is the importance of food in St Luke's Gospel, and especially of food-based hospitality. Biblical scholars like to speak of 'table-fellowship', or (if very pretentious) 'commensality', but what it amounts to is giving people dinner. For example, I can't believe it is mere chance that the Gospel has Jesus present at eight meals: the seventh is the Last Supper, when he invites his disciples to share with him a meal that interprets, and will for ever after make present, the meaning and reality of his saving death. The eighth is the meal he is invited to share with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, when they will come to know that he is risen and present among them in the breaking of bread. It takes place, of course, on the eighth day – Easter Sunday, the first day of the first week of the new creation.

Among other things, this emphasis in St Luke's writings reflects the importance of hospitality and sharing food in the early Church. We can see detect this in the Letter to the Hebrews (13:2) and in the Second and Third Letters of St John, as well as in various places in St Paul's writings, and it seems very likely that this early emphasis reflected Christ's own practice of making shared meals places where he taught by word and example – the giving and receiving of hospitality being a crucial way of making present the Kingdom of God.

One of the sorrows of the present lockdown is surely the impossibility of sharing a meal with friends and loved ones. I myself feel very grieved at not having been able to go for one more lunch at Pierre Victoire in Oxford before I moved to Leicester. I do hope that they are able to re-open, as they offer a classic French bistro lunch at ludicrously low prices, and I recommend the place unhesitatingly. However, a joy of moving to Leicester for me has been the opportunity to cook for the brethren far more frequently – once a week instead of a few times a year – and

in a very nicely re-done kitchen, one that has since I moved here become even more well-equipped, thanks to the Prior's generosity in allowing me to purchase one or two nice new toys. I have always loved cooking, and since moving here have developed a particular pleasure in baking bread and cakes. The tactile elastic pleasure of a well-kneaded bread dough as you set it into the loaf tin; the wondrous lightness of really thoroughly creamed-together butter and sugar as you carefully fold in the flour to retain the lightness and avoid developing too much gluten... But above all the joy comes in setting



these things before family, friends or, in my case, brethren.

Now of course every chef likes a compliment, but I hope that's not why I go to the trouble. I think it is the trouble itself, the putting-in of effort, going that little bit further to make sure that whatever we serve up is not just nourishing but joyous. Many of the ideas and techniques that I have used to add joy to my cooking I have learned from the numerous professional chefs and amateur cooks who have filled my YouTube recommendations in the last few years, and I thought I might share some of these with you so that you can enjoy them too – and I can take pleasure in passing on the joy. Space, alas, is

limited, so this will be only the tip of the iceberg. Not the lettuce, though Iceberg does have its place, especially in a really good prawn cocktail.

Pride of place in my view goes to J Kenji López-Alt, author of the wonderful book *The Food Lab*, who attaches a camera to his head so that we can see what he is seeing as he knocks up a quick meal for his wife and daughter. He explains with great clarity why what he does works, such as generously sprinkling meat with a mixture of salt and baking powder and leaving it uncovered overnight in the fridge before browning it. The salt will initially draw moisture out of the meat, which is not what we want at all, but then given enough time the meat will reabsorb the liquid with the salt, seasoning the meat from the inside and beginning to tenderise the fibres. The baking powder enhances the Maillard reaction, which is the browning that takes place when the meat is fried in fat, adding tremendous amounts of flavour as well as appetising colour.

Another favourite of mine is Chef John, from Foodwishes, an eccentric American whose appreciation of flavour is second to none. I urge you to try his Balsamic Strawberry and Goat's Cheese Bruschetta. I know it sounds peculiar, and the combination of sweet and savoury, very fashionable a couple of years ago, is often just perverse, but these are easy and amazingly delicious once you have mastered the art of reducing balsamic vinegar without ending up with a pan full of burnt-on goo.

Finally, I must mention Sorted Food.

Two professional chefs and their three 'normal' mates learning how to use a little bit of technique and a dash of imagination to turn home-cooking into something special. Among many other things, they taught me how to use condensed milk to make ice cream that doesn't need to be stirred as it freezes. Life-changing!

Today, I am going to try adding a splash of cornflour slurry and some finely cubed cold butter to my eggs before I scramble them. Next time I see you, I'll let you know if it worked. Meanwhile, do have a look at the sites I've mentioned, try something new for yourself and your loved ones, and spread the joy of cooking.

– Fr Richard Ounsworth OP



Five Steps to Cooking for Fifty

People are often amazed to learn that we cook for a community of twenty or more hungry friars. In the Oxford priory, which in my time has had a community ranging in size from 17 to 24 men, the friars cook for themselves at weekends and in holiday periods, and last year during the first lockdown we got used to cooking on a daily basis. Some of the questions people ask me are, 'Do you do it all by yourself?', 'How do you make sure there's enough food?', 'How do you cater for different tastes?', 'Do you really have to peel potatoes for all those people?', and, 'Do you worry you'll ever mess it up?'.

Here I offer five tips I have found handy in cooking, if not for fifty, at least for 20-something...

1) Have a Lackey

I had two last Christmas. Or, if you want to avoid dissension in the ranks, better call him a 'sous-chef'. 'Many hands make light work,' goes the saying. This is particularly important for dishes which require delicate and precise timing, or

several tasks to be carried out at once: if you have four pots on the hob and a joint in the oven and less than thirty minutes before serving, you simply can't be faffing around preparing a garnish. Have your lackey do it! Bear in mind, however, that people's good will is only kept if you are willing to play the lackey yourself once in a while.

2) Make the Most of Conviviality

When people are in a good mood, they are much more likely to be forgiving if the dinner is a little late. But you must make sure that the right conditions are in place, so that waiting is not a bore. Make sure, that is, that every one has a drink and a nibble. There is nothing more tedious than standing around making small-talk to while away the minutes on an empty tummy. A drink and a nibble is the ideal solution; in fact, the two go so well together, you might even call them a dribble. 'Will you have a dribble? Go on, you know you will.' What could be a more appetising prelude to the main event!

3) Be Forgiving of Other People's Food

The *quid pro quo* logic, you may notice, is a recurring theme. But it is a serious point: cooking for the community as a member of the community is not the same as providing a professional service. At least as important as the quality of the food you turn out is the kindness and care with which you do so; and that kindness also has to show itself in receiving other people's dishes, whether or not they are to your taste.

4) Never Knowingly Under-cater

It is always safer to err on the side of too much than too little: leftovers are often welcome at lunchtime the next day!

5) Plenty of Prayers to your Guardian Angel

There is always so much that could go wrong, it doesn't hurt to invoke the aid of a celestial assistant too.

– Br Bede Mullens OP



Hainanese Chicken Rice

The international flavour of the Province is reflected in the range of cuisines that we enjoy in our refectories.

Br Joseph Bailham explains: 'This dish is very popular across Malaysia where my mother is from, and is a dish I have had countless times growing up, either at home or when visiting relatives in Malaysia. Not being able to travel at the moment, this is one dish in particular that I miss from Malaysia, and was one I decided to cook during the lockdown.'

Serves 4 people

CHICKEN

Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken (1.5kg) or equivalent in chicken thigh pieces
- 1 spring onion stalk
- 2 slices of ginger (2mm thick)
- Pot of water large enough to cover the chicken

Preparation

1. Bring water to the boil.
2. Place the whole chicken (or pieces) in the boiling water and turn off the heat. Cover pot tightly and leave for 30 minutes.
3. Remove chicken, drain, and cut into serving pieces (if using a whole chicken).

RICE

Ingredients

- 2 cups jasmine rice
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 piece of ginger (3cm x 3cm approx.)
- 2.5 cups chicken stock
- 2 tsp vegetable/sunflower oil
- 1 tsp salt

Preparation

1. Wash and drain rice.
2. Heat oil and sauté lightly crushed garlic and the piece of ginger.
3. Add the uncooked rice and fry.
4. Bring stock to the boil, add the salt, and the rice with the garlic and ginger, and cook until the liquid is absorbed, reducing the heat so as not to burn the rice on the bottom of

the pan. Stir occasionally to reduce burnt rice at the bottom.

CHILLI SAUCE

Ingredients

- 6 fresh red chillies (medium heat)
- 3 tsp of chicken stock
- 0.25 tsp salt
- Dash of lemon juice
- Pinch of sugar

Preparation

1. Place chillies, stock, and salt, in a food processor and blend to make a chilli paste.
2. Shortly before serving, add the lemon juice and sugar.

GARNISH

Ingredients

- Half a cucumber
- 4 tsp dark soy sauce thinned with 4 tsp chicken stock with a pinch of sugar and a dash of sesame oil

Dish rice and garnish with the pieces of sliced chicken and slices of cucumber. Spoon soy sauce mix over the meat. Serve with the chilli sauce.

Br Albert's Trio of Recipes

Starter – Ricotta and Lemon Cestini with Hazelnut Pesto

Pasta is something which I usually make on holiday, mainly because it takes time to make, and in these hours of leisure, I've learned to play around with different types and flavours over the years. Usually I make some kind of ravioli or tortellini starter if friends have the necessary gadgets for it in their kitchens. Over the past few months I've also discovered a great blog, and cookbook, called *Pasta Grannies*, which records recipes from across Italy with old women (and men) offering their recipes. Each of the grannies shows off the distinctive cuisine of their region, but also shows how cooking is tied up with friends and family – it's a really charming YouTube channel. As this will be coming out towards springtime, a pasta stuffed with ricotta and lemon would be something I'd make around that time of year. I normally serve it with sage butter, but you could also make pesto – substituting the pine nuts for something like hazelnuts or walnuts.

For 4 people as a starter.

For the Pasta

- 300g OO flour
- 3 eggs

For the Filling

- 250g good ricotta (drained weight)
- 70g grated parmesan
- zest of 1 lemon.

Make a well with the flour, and add the eggs, scrambling them together with the

flour, mixing to incorporate. Knead the dough for at least 10 minutes and allow to rest for 30 minutes. Roll out the pasta either in a machine or with a rolling pin (more difficult!)



Combine the filling ingredients and dot teaspoons of the mixture across the pasta sheet. If you have the necessary gadgets you can make tortellini in the normal way, or you can make cestini by gathering the four corners of the sheet in one hand, and press the four seams together with your other hand to form a basket. Cook in boiling water for 3–4 minutes.

For the Hazelnut Pesto

- 100g blanched hazelnuts
- 20g of basil leaves
- Around 120ml extra virgin olive oil
- 50g grated parmesan
- clove of garlic
- pinch of salt

You can add all of these to a food processor and pulse until they get to the right consistency. Or you could try the traditional method – using a pestle and mortar to grind the basil, then the nuts (you'll need to chop these if you're using the traditional method) and parmesan, and finally gradually adding olive oil. The traditional method does give a fuller flavour because of the way that the basil leaves gradually release their oils. The faster the basil is chopped, the more bitter it becomes. If you use the pestle-and-mortar technique, don't bash the ingredients, but gradually grind down using a circular motion. It takes time, so be patient!



Main – Lamb & Sour Cherry Meatballs

On quieter days in Oxford, and when the shops are open, I sometimes go for a walk around town and browse bookshops for novels or cookery books. Last summer I picked up *Persiana* which, as the title suggests, is a collection of recipes from Iran and surrounding countries, and I've been making my way through the recipes ever since. This, I think, is probably the best recipe in the book, and very popular with the brethren in Oxford.

Serves 4–6.

- 500g minced lamb
- 1 onion minced or very finely chopped
- 2 large free-range eggs
- 2 large handfuls of dried sour cherries, pitted and roughly chopped
- small bunch of coriander, leaves picked and finely chopped
- small bunch of dill, leaves picked and finely chopped
- 2 tsp turmeric
- 2 tsp ground cumin

- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 4 tsp crushed sea salt
- black pepper freshly ground
- vegetable oil

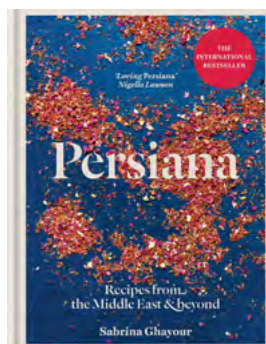
For the Tomato Sauce

- 700g plum tomatoes
- 1 large garlic bulb, cloves bashed and peeled
- 1 scant tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp caster sugar
- 400g can of chopped tomatoes

To make the sauce preheat a large cooking pot over a medium heat and add a good amount of oil to generously coat the base of the pan. Cut the tomatoes in half and add them to the pot along with the garlic cloves, stir well and allow to cook for about 10 minutes, or until the tomatoes begin to soften. Add the turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, sugar and a generous amount of salt and black pepper and stir well. Allow the spices to cook out for a further 10 minutes, then add the canned tomatoes and stir. Cover the pan with a lid, reduce the heat to very low and cook the sauce for 1½–2 hours. Stir the sauce every so often to ensure it is not burning. If it reduces too much, add a little bit of boiling water to the pan.

To make the meatballs, put all the ingredients, except the oil, in a large mixing bowl and, using your hands, mix everything together really well for 6–8 minutes, ensuring you break up all the clumps of lamb so that everything is combined and the mixture is smooth – this will make for light and smooth meatballs.

Preheat a large frying pan over a high heat, then drizzle in a little oil. As the pan and oil heat up, roll your meatballs into ping-pong-sized balls and then place them straight into the frying pan. Cook them for roughly 6 minutes on each side. The idea is not to cook them thoroughly but to create a nice brown crust on them to seal the meat. Once browned, place them straight into the tomato sauce and allow them to cook for a further 20–30 minutes before serving.



Pudding – Kanta Hirway's Mango Pie

For Lawrence asked me to suggest a starter and a main, but I wanted to suggest a pudding too. During lockdown, Samin Nosrat started a food podcast with Hrishikesh Hirway called 'Home Cooking', and it's really brightened up lockdown for me. It's well worth a listen, mainly for Samin's infectious laugh. Sadly, toward the end of the series, around about Thanksgiving, Hrishikesh's mother, Kanta, died. As an immigrant to the US she had adopted many American traditions but given them a distinctly Indian twist. Her Thanksgiving Mango Pie (in place of Pumpkin Pie) was a good example of this, and Samin asked listeners to make the pie in memory of Kanta. Just after Thanksgiving I was down to cook. I made a few curries from the trusty *Rick Stein's India* cookbook, and made the mango pie for pudding.



For the Biscuit Base

- 280g/10oz digestive biscuits
- 65g/2¼ oz granulated sugar
- ¼ tsp ground cardamom
- 128g / 4½ oz unsalted butter, melted
- large pinch sea salt

For the Mango Custard Filling

- 100g / 3½ oz granulated sugar
- 2 tbsp + ¼ tsp powdered gelatine
- 120ml / 4 fl oz double cream
- 115g / 4 oz cream cheese, at room temperature
- 850g tin Alfonso mango pulp
- large pinch sea salt

To make the biscuit base, finely crush the biscuits by putting into a sealed plastic bag and bashing with a rolling pin (alternatively, pulse to crumbs using a food processor). Transfer to a mixing bowl and add the sugar, cardamom and salt, stirring well to combine.

Pour the melted butter over the biscuit crumbs and mix, until thoroughly combined. Put half the crumb mixture in a 23cm / 9in metal pie tin, and press evenly with your fingers. Build up the sides of the tin, compressing the base as much as possible to prevent it crumbling. Repeat with the rest of the mixture in the second tin.

Preheat the oven to 160C / 325F / Gas mark 3. Put the pie bases in the freezer for 15 minutes. Remove and bake for 12 minutes, or until golden brown. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

To make the filling, pour 177ml / 6 fl oz of cold water into a large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix the gelatine with half the sugar and sprinkle over the water. Leave to stand for a couple of minutes.

Meanwhile, whip the cream with the remaining sugar to form medium-stiff peaks. Set aside.

Heat about a quarter of the mango pulp in a saucepan over a medium-low heat, until just warm. Make sure you do not boil it. Pour into the gelatine mixture and whisk, until well combined. The gelatine should dissolve completely. Gradually whisk in the remaining mango pulp.

Beat the cream cheese in a bowl, until soft and smooth. Add to the mango mixture with the salt. Blend the mixture using a hand blender, until completely smooth. Gently tap the bowl on the kitchen counter once or twice to pop any air bubbles.

Fold about a quarter of the mango mixture into the whipped cream using a spatula. Repeat with the rest of the cream, until no streaks remain.

Divide the filling between the cooled bases, using a rubber spatula to smooth out the filling. Refrigerate overnight, or for at least 5 hours, until firm and chilled.

Conradian Christmas Pudding

Fr Richard Conrad's Christmas pudding is something of a legend in the Province, handed down and copied in various priories because it's probably the best (and lightest) that we've tasted!

My recipe

My step-mother saw it as her duty, therefore her right, to do the 'ordinary' cooking, but I was allowed to indulge my fascination for chemistry by making 'extra-curricular' things – cakes and Christmas puddings. I inherited her recipe, which I guess came from one side of her Norfolk family, but supplemented it from recipes I found in cook books and newspapers, including one by Escoffier (he recommended adding grated apple to lighten the pudding). I was forbidden to include grated carrot, which revived memories of wartime hardship ('There's nothing so Poverty-Stricken as Carrot in Christmas pudding!') but added it after I joined the Order in obedience to Fr Malcolm McMahon when he was Provincial. Since Christmas pudding is sometimes called 'plum pudding' (because 'plum' used to refer to any dried fruit), and since one Christmas carol refers to 'figgy pudding', I tried adding chopped prunes and figs, which works well. My step-mother recommended muscat raisins, which are large and have a heady flavour; they disappeared from shops for a while until a seedless version, often sold as 'Lexia' raisins, became available. It was also her idea to obtain large pieces of candied peel, which can be cut into cubes of about 7mm; these give more of an explosion of flavour than the tiny pieces of 'cut peel' sold in most supermarkets. The right kind of candied peel, and some other ingredients, can be obtained

from www.buywholefoodsonline.co.uk. Soaking the dried fruit overnight in a mixture of port and sherry 'fortifies' and lightens the pudding; I have taken to using Tawny port and Amontillado sherry, which add a bit of 'bite' but not too much extra sweetness (fino sherry has too sharp a tang to meld well).

The ancestor of Christmas pudding (like the ancestor of mince pie) contained meat. That was when poor people couldn't eat much meat, sugar wasn't manufactured, there was no refrigeration, and it was difficult to feed animals properly during the winter; so you would slaughter an old sheep, say, and find ways of preserving some of the meat for the festive season. Mixing it with dried fruit and fat, and boiling it in an intestine, achieved this purpose; the spices (an imported luxury) countered any stale flavours. As England became more prosperous and people could eat decent meat more often, but imported dried fruit and spice remained a luxury, our sweet version of Christmas pudding evolved. Adding suet (as we also do to 'mincemeat') is a relic of the Mediæval version.

The pudding improves by being allowed to mature, even though one busy year I made it in a panic on Christmas Eve! It will keep for years, but if you make it a few weeks before Christmas the distinctive flavours of the different fruits remain discernible. The Collect for the last Sunday before Advent (*Excita, quæsumus, Domine...*) appeared in the Book of Common Prayer as 'Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord...' and served Anglicans as a reminder to stir the Christmas pudding. Catholics had a week's grace, because our pre-1970 Collect for the First Sunday of Advent also began *Excita, quæsumus, Domine...*



Ingredients for 6–10 people

- 170g Lexia raisins
- 145g sultanas
- 145g currants
- 60g chopped dried figs (can be bought ready-chopped)
- 60g chopped prunes (easiest if bought ready-stoned, but check for residual bits of stone)
- Medium amontillado sherry as needed (see method)
- Tawny port as needed (see method)
- 50ml brandy
- 105ml Guinness
- A few drops of vanilla essence
- A couple of drops of almond essence
- Grated zest and juice of half a small lemon
- Grated zest and juice of half a small orange
- 70g candied orange (or orange and lemon) peel (preferably bought in

large chunks)

- 30g flaked almonds
- 95g self-raising flour
- 105g Demerara (or light soft brown) sugar
- ½ level teaspoon mixed spice
- ½ level teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ level teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ level teaspoon ground ginger
- 130g fresh white breadcrumbs (easiest to buy thick-sliced white, cut crusts off, put in food-processor)
- 100g grated suet
- ½ tablespoon black treacle
- 30g melted butter
- 60g carrot
- 60g cooking apple
- 2 eggs

Method: the day before making the pudding

Chop prunes and figs, if necessary, discarding the figs' hard stalks and any bits of prune stone. Put them with raisins, sultanas and currants into a glass, china or plastic bowl. Pour over them a roughly equal amount of sherry and port, not quite enough to cover them. Cover with cling-film. Leave to soak overnight, turning them over a couple of times with a spoon so the fruit gets evenly soaked.

Method: the day you make the pudding

Prepare the pudding basin by greasing with lard or butter; have a steamer or boiler ready. You will need a 3-pint pudding basin, e.g. a Teflon one with a clip-on lid.

Put into a jug the brandy, Guinness, and essences. Wash the lemon and orange, and finely grate the zest (but not the bitter white pith) into the mixture (thus droplets of the juice that's in the zest goes into the mixture, so none gets wasted).

Squeeze the half lemon and half orange, and strain the juice into a separate jug.

Chop the peel, not too finely; put it in a large bowl with the almonds, sugar, grated suet, bread-crumbs, spices and flour.

Melt the butter and black treacle together gently (e.g. by one or two 20-second bursts in microwave on ¾ power); stir into the brandy-Guinness mixture so as to disperse it.

Peel carrot and apple; core and quarter the apple. Grate them into the brandy-Guinness mixture so they don't go brown through exposure to air.

Beat the eggs in a separate bowl.

Mix the whole lot together very thoroughly; the whole family can take a turn.

Put the mixture in the basin, leaving at least an inch of space for expansion. If the basin has a clip-on lid, put aluminium foil over the top, fold it down and scrunch round the side an inch below the join of the lid with the bowl, to stop water getting in. You can also use a glass or china basin with several layers of aluminium foil on top, scrunched around the side to make a seal.

Boil or steam the pudding, keeping the water topped up. If boiling, don't let the water get more than half-way up the height of the basins; the water can be very gently boiling. You need a slightly more vigorous boil when steaming.

The pudding will need 5 or 6 hours. Once the time is up, lift it out, taking care not to scald yourself, remove the lid and check there is no patch of still slightly sloppy mixture in the middle of the top. If there is, keep boiling/steaming!

Remove lid, cover pudding with a clean tea-towel till cool, dry away any moisture inside the lid. When the pudding is cool, replace the lid (if used) then seal with cling film and leave to mature in a cool and clean place.

Method: Christmas Day

Remove cling-film. Boil or steam the pudding again, as before, for a similar length of time.

Have a warmed dish ready, e.g. a quiche dish so that the rim contains the brandy used for flaming.

To flame, put 2–3 tablespoons of brandy (ideally something stronger, but with a compatible flavour, e.g. 43% rum) in a china jug covered with cling-film. Warm it, e.g. by standing it in a dish of very hot water.

Remove pudding from steamer. Remove lid. Loosen the sides of the pudding with a spatula; invert the warm dish over it, then turn upside-down so the

pudding falls out onto the dish. Carry it to near the dining room door, get someone to pour the brandy onto it and set light to it; carry to table.

The left-over pudding will keep indefinitely if covered in cling-film. It can be eaten cold, or gently warmed in the microwave, or even gently fried in butter as a friend used to do for breakfast.

Accompaniment: Brandy Butter

My step-mother, and her mother, knew that the proper accompaniment to the pudding is brandy butter. This can be made on Christmas Eve, and removed from the fridge to a cool place a bit before Christmas dinner.

I make it with equal quantities of unsalted butter and icing sugar. Warm the butter gently in the microwave so that it is soft but not fully melted. Whisk in the icing sugar – a balloon whisk is good. Then whisk in a bit of brandy, and a bit more... until you dare not try whisking in any more. This way I get more brandy into the mixture, and it is lighter, than by creaming it cold. If the mixture curdles, prepare a bit more butter-sugar mixture, then whisk the curdled mixture into it.



Merciful Meals

For decades the students and friars at St Albert's in Edinburgh have supported and collaborated with the Mercy Sisters who run an efficient and much-loved soup kitchen for the homeless. Laura Calnan, student organist at St Albert's reflects on the Lord's call to feed the hungry.

The concept and value of the corporal works of mercy were taught to me quite young: my mum, a children's catechist, introduced them to me through drawings and anecdotes when I was little. Later, whilst studying at a Dominican convent school during my early teenage years, I had to learn them by heart and discuss what they meant. I think that because of these influences, when the sisters from St Catharine's Convent Homeless Project came to St Albert's student Mass in search of new volunteers, signing up seemed like a natural thing to do.

I went every Friday morning and performed quite a wide range of tasks, which varied from bringing in bags of shopping to serving breakfast, and from pouring tea to draining tins of tuna. But my assigned job quickly became cleaning and filling up bottles of ketchup and brown sauce (indispensable necessities, I was told, which would be sorely missed at each table if I failed to put them back) followed by salt and pepper shakers. This could take up to an hour and until one of my chaplaincy friends joined me in the second semester, I did it mostly alone. Yet although it was not as hands-on as serving food, occasionally somewhat monotonous, and never failed to leave a funny smell on my fingers, I soon realised that I had begun to see it as my own little way of helping.

Going back and forth from the tables with the teapot or collecting the bottles of sauce, I grew to recognise many of the homeless people. I knew who sat together, and who liked which table; I knew the



group of grey-haired men whose conversations seemed to consist almost entirely of in-jokes, and the woman with the bright yellow eyeshadow who always smiled back at me. Some were easier than others: there were many who said 'thank you' each time I gave them their tea and who passed the bottles of sauce before I even had the chance to ask. However, there were also some who sent volunteers scurrying across the room with a bel-lowed: 'I said I don't LIKE baked beans!' And on especially difficult days, I had conversations like this:

'Please may I have your bottle of ketchup?'

'No.'

'But I need to clean it out.'

'No.'

'I'll bring it back as soon as I'm done, I promise.'

'No.'

'But I've got to. Sister said.'

'NO.'

If this type of negotiation failed and no one was able to help me, I would simply admit defeat, leave, and bring back a freshly refilled bottle to trade with.

One thing that stood out to me was how, beside providing food, warmth, and basic essentials for the people they served, St Catharine's also provided community. In that, they were rather like what I had found at St Albert's. My first year of university, right up until the first lockdown last March, was pretty much centred around the chaplaincy. I was often in the common room between classes and showed up for almost every event, which

included Wednesday's Midweek Meal and Friday's baked potatoes after the 1.15pm Mass. I made and cemented many friendships over food, whether that was at the table, in the kitchen, or simply during conversations over tea and biscuits.

Friday was one of my more active days last year: I would get up in the morning to volunteer at St Catharine's, rush off at 11 for class, and then cross the square to get to Mass afterwards. In the afternoon, I'd get some studying done and, being the organist for student Mass, I would do some last-minute practising on the common-room piano for that evening's choir rehearsal. Once we'd finished with all the hymns, we would usually sit down on the sofas and heat up the baked potatoes left over from lunch. Everyone is nice at the Catholic Students' Union and last year's choir got on particularly well, so those cosy evenings of community and friendship were something that I always looked forward to.

Just before the Christmas holidays, we decided to carry the CSU keyboard over to the convent and sing the homeless some carols during dinner. I couldn't be with the rest of the choir in the dining room due to the absence of a power socket and the keyboard wire being quite short, so I was installed in the hallway, a few metres from the door. Like with my sauce job, I was sort of on the periphery of the action again, but I knew what a difference it made and how glad they were that we had come. As I heard their delighted applause at the end of each song, I felt deeply grateful for the opportunities that had guided me there.



To celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Province and the arrival of the first Dominican friars in England, the friars at St Dominic's, London decided to restore and, for the first time, gild the altar of **St Thomas Aquinas** which had been the bequest of **Mrs Louisa Monselle** in memory of her five sons who, tragically, had all predeceased her; two of them had joined the Order and both died in their twenties.

We pray for them & all our benefactors over the past eight centuries.

Daily Livestreaming of Mass

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Oxford	9.30	7.30	7.30	7.30	7.30	7.30	8.30
Cambridge	9.30	7.30	7.30	7.30	7.30	7.30	9.30
Leicester	10.30	12.30	12.30	12.30	12.30	12.30	12.30
Edinburgh	17.15	17.15	17.15	17.15	17.15	17.15	12 noon
London	12 noon, 18.00 (Dom. Rite)	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00

Note: other regular and occasional services are also broadcast. Times may be subject to alteration, as restrictions change. Please check our websites for details.

Daily Mass from our priories is currently being broadcast on the following channels. If you are unable to attend church, why not join us?

- Cambridge: (audio only) [Radio Maria England](#)
- Oxford: [YouTube 'Godzdogz'](#)
- Leicester: [YouTube 'HolyCrossTV Leicester'](#)
- Edinburgh: [scotland.op.org/live](#)
- London: [YouTube 'Rosary Shrine UK'](#)

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Version: LIT-2

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A Joyful but Challenging Year

Few institutions in Britain make it to the ripe old age of 800 years! So this is a very special time for all of us who are associated with the Dominican Province of England.

Lessons from History

In recent weeks, I've been looking more deeply into the Province's history, and what has struck me above all is how its fortunes have waxed and waned over the years. In just its first 100 years, this province grew from a single house in Oxford to more than 80 throughout these isles; then in their second hundred years, the scourge of the Black Death would thin out their numbers. After a late-medieval period of prosperity, the desolation of the Reformation deprived the Order of all its British houses and most of its men: a mere handful of friars kept the Province alive for the next two centuries. Then in the modern era, after the confident Victorian age when great neo-gothic priories were built, the struggles of the later 20th century led to a leaner Province once more.

It has been a salutary lesson for me to read in a year when we have all had our worlds turned upside-down: somehow, in some way, the mission has always continued, despite many setbacks,

so we should never give in to despair. Throughout all these ups and downs, one of the constants has been the generous support of the friars' benefactors: a list that includes everyone from English kings to poor Irish immigrants! This is something that we can all celebrate together in the coming year.

A Birthday Gift for the Friars

As I am sure you all know, the friars' church collections have been hard hit in the last year, owing to the restrictions on gathering for Mass. But their income has also been hit in other areas, for example by the fall in student numbers at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, leaving us with a £170k hole in the Hall's budget this year.

This is a difficult time for so many people, but if you are able to help the friars get through it, they would be truly grateful to you. This certainly isn't the sort of birthday celebrations we had been planning for, but any gifts you are able to offer will be most welcome. Do feel free to contact me.

– **Richard Brown, Development Director**
development.director@english.op.org

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