

St. Cecilia's Abbey

27th April 2009

Dear Friends,

Belated Easter greetings to you all! This comes with my hope and prayer that the joy of the resurrection of Our Lord filled your hearts at Easter and continues to be a source of hope and peace in those days of Paschaltido. I'm terribly late with this letter this year, -for which I send my apologies- and grateful that Mum & Dad are coming for a visit tomorrow and can take this back with them. There seemed less time than ever this year for writing letters -because in reality there was! The longer one lives in a monastery the more one is given little jobs and charges which make the postulancy look like a holiday! However, one also learns to cope better with all the demands and it's truly amazing how much you can do in a few minutes, once you set your mind to it!

We've gone green in the noviciate - as we are now responsible for growing the vegetables that help feed us. It's been a fantastic experience so far, and we are all so enjoying watching our seeds turn into baby plants and experimenting with different gardening techniques. My favourite so far has been sowing lettuce in eggshells. It's a bit fiddly to do, but makes the planting out so easy. We were all chuffed to be able to give everyone a radish - our first harvest! - on Easter Sunday and now look forward to aubergines, peppers, pumpkins and courgettes, along with beans and different green vegetables. I'm thoroughly enjoying the time outside, even in the rain - and don't mind having dirt under my fingernails! Katrine entered in January and we hope that Veronique who visited us at Christmas, will enter in the summer. There are at least two other girls coming for trials soon too, so we are very blessed to have more vocations. We'll be celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Profession of Sr Bode tomorrow (oops!), 50 years professed is quite an achievement & will be duly recognised and given thanks for. Then on the 8th May

Sr Mary Antonia makes her Final Profession, which is coming up fast. After much hooting I finally took the plunge and produced 2 decorated altar candles which thankfully she was delighted with. I just hope now that they'll behave and burn properly. I fear I'll spend most of the ceremony anxiously checking how they are doing. I also had to make the candle she carries at the start of the profession ceremony, but was so late with it, that it's now in the fridge trying to speed up the hardening process. We had exciting news about an apple we grow here. It seems to be an entirely new variety and is to be trialed by the RHS at Wisley. Watch this space for news of "Little Pax" as we've given that name to it. Our bees are doing very well, especially the hive with a Buckfast abbey queen - so we look forward to honey more often for tea.

I've also been doing more work in the infirmary, taking turns at night duty and helping 3 times a week to walk an elderly sister. She is getting quite hard of hearing and recently, after she misheard me 3 times I said to her "I think you're getting deaf" - to which she replied "I hope so, everyone has been praying for me"! What could I say to that?! She is a real delight to be with, and hopefully we'll be celebrating her 98th birthday in May. She is so looking forward to that telegram from the Queen.

We had a Canonical Visitation in February - a sort of inspection by our Abbot President and another abbot, and I'm pleased to say got a very good report from them. We all had to be interviewed and numerous languages were used - French, Italian, German, Spanish, English ... and Latin! No prizes for guessing which was my choice. I think me & languages are always going to be tricky. I have to say I really admire our Latin teacher for the level of enthusiasm she shows, despite our obvious slowness and inability to remember.

Before I go, I must thank all of you so much for all the cards & letters & gifts I received at Easter. It was such a joy sitting in our cell on Easter Sunday afternoon with a huge pile of mail and an Easter egg! I'm so, so grateful for all the news, prayers, love & support and send by return my love to all, and a prayer that we will all be drawn closer to one another in Christ. With much love, Mary ~~not~~.