

Dear Friends,

It seems no time at all since I wrote my Easter letter, so I guess that means I'm getting old!! Time does seem to fly by, yet at another level here, there's a great sense of the eternal and all the hope for the future which the celebration of the Christmas mystery and the most wonderful gift of Our Lord have made possible. In whichever way and wherever you celebrated Christmas, I hope it was a truly joyful, peaceful and happy time for all of you and that the year ahead will be richly filled with many blessings.

So much has happened here over the past few months it's hard to know where to start with my news. We had the great joy of seeing not just one, not even two - but three of our junior sisters become solemnly professed this year. Sr Mary Joseph in May, Sr Madolaine in September and Sr Candance in November, all exchanged their white veils for black ones and received their cowls, ring and book at the most beautiful of days for each one, each with its own unique style and touches reflecting their individual personalities.

I felt very privileged that I sort of joined them by making my first profession of vows on the 21st November. First profession is a much simpler and less complicated service than Final, but very moving in its simplicity and I was just so happy to feel that I was ready to make that commitment to Our Lord, the Church and this community, and to be able to share it with so many of my family and friends who travelled down and even "flew the flag" by making sure there was a lot of torton or shar! I've been promised even more will wear their kirts for my final profession. I'm now a "junior", still in a white veil, but have a larger scapular and at least 2 more years in the novitiate before I'll hopefully move across to live with the "big girls" in community for the last year prior to solemn profession. Added to all that 2007 was the 100th anniversary of the dedication of our abbey church, marked by a major celebration in October, so it was a good year all round and it won't be too difficult to remember the date. I've always been grateful I was received into the Church in 2000 - makes the arithmetic much easier. I know I'm getting on when someone says 'how old are you?' and I reply 'what year is it?' and do some quick mental arithmetic! The odd thing, (well one odd thing about monastic life!) is that you forget life goes on outside and expect things/people/technology to be the same as when you enter. It was so funny recently to have "scooshie cream" in the refectory and see lots of sisters completely at a loss as to how to get it out of the can! Life is just so busy - even more so as now I have to work longer in the

afternoons - penalty of being a junior! - but to allow for that had to reduce the amount of study time for Latin and don't have to hand in as much homework - so every cloud has a silver lining! I'm so slow at Latin, but keep plodding away with an incredibly patient teacher and am now beginning to be able to translate parts of what I'm singing, while I'm singing which is a real bonus! My singing is better - not good yet - understand - but better! and for our Novate feast in November I didn't let the side down, for which I was so grateful that all the extra practising paid off. I still work a lot in the garden & kitchen and am learning just now about the orchard (over 100 trees, about 50+ different kinds of apples).

The novate celebrated Sr Elizabeth's 21st birthday in style with a Treasure Hunt and a talking tea with toasted campers in September. That was the same day community voted to accept me, so a double cause for celebration. Heather joined us on 1st October and Helen (another Scot) hopes to enter at the end of January. We had Ellen (from Chicago) as a longterm visitor since August, but she's heading back to the USA in January & we wait to see if she'll return or not.

By the time you get this the first performance of our play will have been completed - (Joan of Arc this year) and we'll be lying down in a dark room until it's all repeated for community at Epiphany (6th Jan.). Thankfully I'm not the lead so we finish with the burning at the stake & I don't think I'd be able to stop giggling. We're concentrating on using sound effects and the imagination as it's performed indoors and we don't want to have to call out the fire brigade! Although we've practised fire drills twice this year, so at least we could evacuate the place fairly quickly. I'm delighted to tell you pomdige is back once a week on the breakfast menu & haggis is next on the wish list! Thank you so much for all the cards, gifts & masses I received for the First Profession & Christmas. I'm sorry I can't reply individually, but do treasure and appreciate so much all the effort you put into keeping in touch & sharing your news with me throughout the year. Mum is so fantastic at keeping us all in contact & I'm so grateful. I was so pleased that both my brothers (Euan in Sep, Craig & his wife Fiona in Nov) visited this year, along with Aunt Sheena & Uncle Duncan and all commented on the joy in the community & warm welcome. So if any of you are in the area - please pop in for a visit! Lastly, please could you pray for my much loved aunt Betty who died suddenly on Dec 23rd & her family. She will be sorely missed by all of us. I wish all of you much health and happiness over this coming year and hope it will be filled with an abundance of blessings. With much love & prayers, Mary.