

# Southern Star Abbey, Kopua, New Zealand

## 2011



Dear Friends,

The Advent Antiphon - "Drop down dew, you heavens, from above, let the clouds rain down the just one." – leads us all to give thanks to God for the graces bestowed so generously over the past year. For what follows and for much more we are grateful.

**January** - Four of us attended the Christian Meditation Retreat conducted by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB which was held at Waikato University, Hamilton. Br John has committed himself to assisting parish groups to set up cells of Christian Meditation. Sarah was holidaying in Australia and experienced the devastation caused by the flooding in Victoria and Queensland.

**February** - Preparation work for the construction of the new Cells for the monks got underway: trees were felled, a new service road constructed and sheds were relocated. Karl Smith from Wellington joined the Companions for three months and later stayed on until September. Abbot Brian left for the Philippines to attend a Formators' Conference at our monastery of Our Lady of the Philippines, Guimeras, which was followed by a visit to Mindanao to conduct a seminar of the Rule of St Benedict for our sisters at the monastery of Our Lady of Matutum.

**March** - Graham and Sheila departed for overseas to celebrate Easter at Assisi and then to visit family and friends in Ireland and the United Kingdom. John Prescott celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is now one of the strong ones although his mobility and speech is becoming more limited.

**May** - Canon Peter Stuart, the co-ordinator of the Associates of Kopua, attended the International Meeting of Associates which was held at Dubuque, Iowa, USA. Fr Frank O'Loughlin was with us again for a series of lectures on *Continuity and Change; Continuity and Difference*.

**June** - first of three Retreats for Associates was held. The theme this year was on the exercise of *Good Zeal*, loving one another. *Bitter Zeal* also received some attention. The abbot was off again to Brisbane to attend the Annual General Meeting of the *Benedictine Union* and the *Conference of Religious Australia*.

**August** - Members of the community participated in the conference on Prayer, "*Let's Pray*", held at the Diocesan Centre, Palmerston North. The abbot together with Fr Anastasius Li of Our Lady of Joy, Lantau, attended the blessing of the Tyburn Monastery at Ngkuru in the Diocese of Hamilton.

**September** - The abbot left for Italy to attend a Sub Regional Meeting of the Order at Vitorchiano, followed by the General Chapter held at Assisi. He had the joy of celebrating his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday there. Illness within the community summoned him home earlier than anticipated. Karl Smith returned to Newtown after his time with us as a Companion.

**October** - The second and third retreats for Associates were held. Graham and Sheila returned from overseas. Anthony Williams was received into the community as a postulant.

**November** - On the Feast of All Saints Br John Pettit made his Solemn Profession. Family and friends joined us for the happy occasion. Br Kalolo celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Arrangements for our annual retreat had to be changed as Sr Verna Holyhead SGS, a dear friend, had died earlier in Melbourne. Sr Verna had conducted retreats for us twice in the past. The newly constructed cells were blessed and in due course the community moved in without a tinge of regret for their former abode. Daniel Morrow returned to the Companions for a third term of three months. Sadly Fr John died in the Hawkes Bay Hospital after a long illness. A large crowd of friends joined us for his funeral and burial.

### **Fr John Benedict Kelly OCSO, May 12<sup>th</sup> 1930 – November 17<sup>th</sup> 2011**

With the death of Fr John Kelly the community of Southern Star Abbey has lost its last living link with its founding house, Mount Melleray Abbey, Co Waterford, Ireland.

Born to Denis and Mary Kelly at Alleen near Tipperary, Fr John was strongly influenced by his mother's Christian faith and the sheltered life of a farming community.

He attended primary school at the Donaskeigh National School, with the remainder of his education being centred on Mt Melleray Abbey: the College from 1943-1947, the Minor Seminary from 1948-1950 and then the monastic community which he entered with the name of Br. Benedict.

After his monastic profession in 1955 Fr John continued his studies and was ordained a priest in 1958. In 1961 he gained a Licentiate from the Angelicum University in Rome, returning to Ireland in 1962 to become a teacher at Mt Melleray.

In 1967 Fr John came to Southern Star Abbey and played a significant part in the community as teacher, farm manager, bursar and abbot from 1992-1998.

The last decade of his life was very fruitful. He made himself available to visitors and was much sought out by those seeking counsel and guidance, and he relished this contact. He worked at his writing, which was characterised by a rational frame of mind but forged out of his experience, and for many years contributed articles on spirituality to the 'Marist Messenger'. He had three books published which are available from the monastery or can be accessed on our website. A brief autobiography was also completed before his final illness and this will be published next year.

During his last three weeks spent at Hawkes Bay Hospital, Fr John experienced a new form of monastic enclosure: one of simplicity, free from attending Choir seven times a day, no longer celebrating the Eucharist, unable to read, dependent on nursing staff and yet content and happy.

As a devoted disciple of the Lord Jesus, formed both by his family and his monastic community, his constant prayer to the end was "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus ...."

*As the season of Christmas approaches our prayer for you is -  
May the peace of God that is beyond all understanding  
guard your hearts and your thoughts  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

*The Brothers and Companions of Kopua*



John and his team of Carers at his 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday party



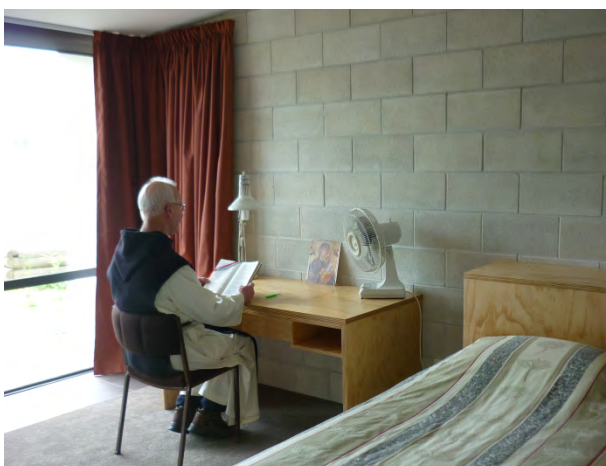
John Prescott celebrates his 80th Birthday



Abbot Brian blesses the new accommodation building.



John blows out the candles on his cake



Fr. Niko Verkley studying in his new cell



Part of the new accommodation for the monks



Abbot Brian addresses Brother John Pettit during the Solemn Profession ceremony



Abbot Brian clothes Br. John in the cowl



Br. John's father making a speech after the ceremony



The late Fr John Kelly as Abbot 1992 – 1998



Fr John Kelly celebrating his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday