

## April 2024 News from St Benedict's Priory

The highlight of the past month for us once again was an Initial Profession of the Monastic Vow, this time by our Br Josias. Having two such happy occasions in a little over a month was a rare delight for the monastic community. Br Josias' Profession took place during a noon Eucharist in the Volmoed chapel on Saturday 27 April, celebrated as Freedom Day in South Africa, this one marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first democratic elections in the country. For Br Josias, it also meant embracing a different expression of freedom.

Having completed his novitiate, Br Josias committed himself to live according to the threefold monastic vow of stability, conversion, and obedience, for an initial period of three years. In addition to affirming his own sense of vocation to monastic life, and the fulfilment that comes from living into that vocation, Br Josias has strengthened the life and witness of the monastic community, by adding his own presence to the variety of ways in which we pray and hope that God's love will be made known through us.

Br Josias returned to us after a couple of months with the community at our Holy Cross Monastery in the USA, and then spending some time with family and friends in Gauteng before making his pre-profession retreat. Unfortunately, members of his family were unable to come to Volmoed to attend the Profession ceremony, but we were very pleased to have Rev Sikhakhane, the rector of Br Josias' home parish in Gauteng, with us for the weekend.

Br Luc began his observance of the Holy Week Triduum on Maundy Thursday by accompanying Rev Wilma to the Chrism Mass at All Saints Cathedral in Somerset West. Br Luc is now spending some time at the Order's house in Toronto, Canada. He will return to us in early June, in the company of a number of other members of the Order, for our annual Chapter gathering, which will take place here at Volmoed this year.

A particularly interesting guest at a recent Sunday morning Eucharist was William Barham, a man who has done extensive research for a biography of Sr Margaret, who was an artistic member of the Community of the Resurrection of our Lord in what was then Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape. The research included work on the large crucifix which is now in the smaller Volmoed chapel which is used by the monastic community for their daily prayers. William had been wanting to see the crucifix for himself for some years, and so it was a special moment when he was finally able to do so.

Br Roger accompanied several people in online spiritual direction and accompanied a guest who was making her retreat in person at Volmoed. He attended an online meeting of the leadership of Benedictine communities in southern Africa as well as of the Holy Cross School Trust (together with Br Scott) and a meeting in person of the Volmoed Council (together with Br Daniel).

A storm in early April threatened to have the same intensity as that which caused so much damage in late September last year. We are grateful that the result for us was less disruptive than it might have been, though we are aware that the winds did cause significant damage elsewhere. The lower level of the chapel building at Volmoed flooded, which affected the classroom used for monastic studies, so that carpet needed treatment afterwards. The Volmoed building maintenance staff have since taken action to reduce the likelihood of the building being flooded in future.