

## December 2023/January 2024 News from St Benedict's Priory

Having entered the monastic community on 15 July last year, Mpumelelo Khambule completed his six-month Postulancy and was clothed as a Novice in the habit of the Order on Saturday 20 January. The happy event was witnessed by numerous people from the residential and dispersed Volmoed community. John and Isobel de Gruchy also represented the Associates of the Order. Two members of the Community of Jesus' Compassion (CJC) in KZN, Mo Yeki and Sr Ntombi, travelled to Volmoed for the occasion. CJC is the religious community with whom Br Mpumelelo lived for a time before joining our monastic community. They nurtured his initial discernment of a monastic vocation, and so it was wonderful that they could be with us as he entered the next stage of his initial monastic formation. Mati Mzamo, a friend of CJC who used to spend time at our former monastery outside Makhanda (Grahamstown) in the Eastern Cape, has relocated to the Western Cape and it was lovely that she could also attend Br Mpumelelo's clothing ceremony.

In addition to the diligent application of himself to his vocational discernment and integration into the life of the monastic community, Br Mpumelelo has also acquired new skills in sewing. We give thanks for Isobel de Gruchy's generosity of time and effort in sharing her knowledge with him and enabling his growth in this area. A lectern banner that Br Mpumelelo crafted with Isobel's guidance was on display in the chapel during his clothing ceremony.

Br Mpumelelo made a home visit and also was on retreat with the CJC sisters before his Novitiate clothing. During that time, the monastic community here was on its annual summer retreat, a refreshing period of silence and reflection.

Before the festive season, Br Josias was able to deepen his relationship with the special-needs school in the Zwelihle township. He intends to continue his involvement there during the course of this year.

Br Edwin continues to be enriched by his time with the community at our Holy Cross Monastery in the USA. This has more recently included the opportunity to preach at a Sunday mass at the monastery and to visit churches and other places of interest in New York City. In the new year, there have been substantial snowfalls, which was one of the things Br Edwin was hoping to experience.

Br Edwin returns to us at the end of the month, and we are looking forward to having him with us again. Br Luc will accompany him on his return. Br Josias will take Br Edwin's place in the USA, to spend time living with the monastic community over there as his period in the Novitiate also comes to an end.

Our monastic community was blessed by visits from long-time friends during the past couple of months. It was very good to have them join us in prayer and to strengthen these relationships. We were pleased to have Canon Stafford Moses, the bishop-elect of the Diocese of False Bay, pray with us, together with his wife Yvette, the Methodist Bishop of the Western Cape, at the end of a couple of days' rest at Volmoed on their part. It was good to be able to make this connection. Rev Michael Battle returned to Volmoed with another Tutu Travel Seminar, and the group joined us in prayer while here. We were able to welcome numerous other Volmoed guests who came to pray with us as well, including a couple from Canada who are in the early stage of a sabbatical.

Br Roger and Br Scott both provided spiritual accompaniment and guidance to individuals during their times of retreat at Volmoed. Several of the Brothers continued their regular ministries of spiritual direction, whether in person or online, during the past couple of months.

Since the storm of September last year, the water supply has been challenging the Volmoed staff. We express our appreciation here for the extraordinary effort made to keep the household water flowing, especially during the festive season. We are grateful with them that a more sustainable solution has been developed that is less demanding on resources and time.