

## March 2024 News from St Benedict's Priory

The highlight of the past month for us was certainly the Initial Profession of the Monastic Vow by Br Edwin, who has taken the religious name Br Aelred, by which he is now becoming known to us. The happy occasion took place during a noon Eucharist in the Volmoed chapel on Saturday 23 March. Having completed his novitiate, Br Aelred committed himself to live according to the threefold monastic vow of stability, conversion, and obedience, for an initial period of three years. Many of those from his family and friends in Worcester and other parts of the Anglican Diocese of False Bay, as well as from the Volmoed community, who had been present just over a year before to witness his Clothing as a Novice of the Order, were there to witness this joyful commitment. In addition to affirming his own sense of vocation to monastic life, and the fulfilment that comes from living into that vocation, Br Aelred 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.

Another significant event we were pleased to participate in was the celebration of John de Gruchy's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday, during the Thursday communion service that preceded it. This was an occasion for us to remember, amongst John's many contributions to the life of Volmoed, his role in bringing our monastic community here. It began with a retreat John and Isobel facilitated for us at our Eastern Cape monastery back in 2013 and continued through the welcome and encouragement we were given as we settled into our new home some six years later and discovered the contributions we can make here, assisted by the many and varied contributions John and Isobel have made to our life and work.

Br Josias is close to the end of his time with the community at our Holy Cross Monastery in the USA. He too has all but completed his novitiate, and we look forward to another celebration in late April, that of his Initial Profession of the Monastic Vow. Before he returns to us, Br Josias will be spending some time with family and friends in Gauteng, and will be making his pre-profession retreat.

Br Mpumelelo continues to have a productive sewing apprenticeship with Isobel de Gruchy. Together with Zenande of VYLTP, they crafted a beautiful Lenten banner for the lectern in the Volmoed chapel.

During his time with us, Br Luc has been steadily building relationships with various men who are discerning a possible vocation to monastic life in our community.

Guests at our chapel prayers have recently included more local people who have come from Hermanus and surrounds from time to time to pray with us, having heard about us by word of mouth. We were especially moved by the repeated presence of one family in particular who have been grappling with the sudden unexpected diagnosis of a serious illness.

It was good to have one of our friends from the Eastern Cape stop in at Volmoed for a few hours to visit us in our new situation.

As I write this, we are busy preparing for the holy days of the Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday), the observances of which will culminate in the celebration of the Easter Vigil, beginning in pre-dawn darkness and ending in the light of the risen sun.