

February 2023 News from St Benedict's

Life during the past month or so was unusually full for the Brothers at the Priory. Our monastic choir was also unusually full, with seven of us joining in song and chant during chapel prayers for much of the time.

The main feature was the visitation by Br Robert James, the Superior of our Order. He arrived from the US on Monday 23 January and stayed until Saturday 18 February. This was the first time he was able to return to Volmoed since the start of the pandemic, and it was good to have him with us in person for conversations about our life and work and about our future. While here, Br Robert taught novitiate classes on aspects of liturgy, and also had fruitful discussions with the monastic community on this topic.

Mpumelelo Khambule returned to us for a follow-up visit after his initial exploratory visit a few months ago. During his time with us, he participated fully in the life of the monastic community, and attended all the novitiate classes, including classes on church history in South Africa taught by John de Gruchy. Mpumelelo accompanied Brs Robert and Daniel together with Edwin Kriel on a pilgrimage to the District 6 Museum and the Tutu Centre in Cape Town.

Edwin passed another milestone by preaching for the first time as a member of the monastic community, and a fine sermon it was. He will soon be taking the next step in his initial monastic formation when he is clothed as a novice in the habit of our Order. We expect to have a significant number of his family and friends with us on that happy occasion. Having completed six months as a postulant, Edwin will continue his formation as a novice for a year. Please join us in prayer for him as he enters into this next phase.

Having just enjoyed a visit home to Worcester, Edwin will join Br Luc at the Andrew Murray Centre in Wellington for a time of personal retreat before his clothing ceremony. Br Luc will be on retreat in preparation for his upcoming life profession, which will take place on Saturday 18 March at our Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, NY in the US. Please join us in prayer for him as he makes this joyful commitment.

During the last weekend in January, Brs Scott and Luc facilitated part of the annual planning workshop for the organizers of the Volmoed Youth Leadership Training Programme, who also joined us for chapel prayers. The following week, young people attending the VYLTP Beloved Community workshop joined us for Vespers. We also welcomed some members of a World Vision retreat group to our chapel prayers.

More recently, Brs Roger and Daniel attended a meeting of the Benedictine Communities of Southern Africa at Inkamana Abbey near Vryheid in KZN. The host community was very welcoming and hospitable, and it was good to be with them and the other representatives from monastic communities in a variety of situations and contexts to share about experiences and perspectives.

We were privileged to host the Ash Wednesday observance together with Rev Wilma, attended by members of the Volmoed community and guests. We wish you a blessed and holy Lent.