

S.P.B. Priory
P.O. Box 7192
Maseru, 100 - Lesotho.

December, 1966.

Dear Friends,

This is the last time I shall have the privilege of writing this annual newsletter to you all, as my present 5-year term of office ends in September 1997, and we shall then be electing a new Prioress. Please pray we may be guided by the Holy Spirit in that election.

In mid-January this past year, the whole of Lesotho was shattered to hear of the death of our King in an accident on the mountain road. He had attended Mass in our Chapel only a few weeks previously, together with his driver who was also killed in the accident. Two months later some of us went to the Royal Residence at Matsieng, together with a group of CHN Sisters, to offer our condolences to Queen 'Mamohato and to pray with her. She welcomed us most graciously; and joined fully in a lengthy time of shared prayer; after which she ordered tea and cakes for us, and stayed to chat with us about her family. She expressed her gratitude for our sympathy and prayers, and invited us to visit her again.

In Lent we had a series of discussions on a book called "The Different Drum" by an American psychologist Scott Peck, on building up Community life. His theory is that true community develops through four stages: Pseudo-Community when everyone is being pleasant and avoiding disagreement, Chaos when the members are trying to heal and convert one another and conflict arises, Emptying, when they realise they must let go of their preconceived ideas and their need to control others, and so empty themselves of barriers to communication, and learn to listen; and finally true community. He points out that these stages do not always follow one after another smoothly; and that has been our experience too, but the discussions helped us to clarify some of our struggles in living together and understanding one another, when we come from such different backgrounds. A recent 3-day Workshop on further study of the "Enneagram" also enabled us to share with one another and recognise how different we all are. We know we cannot honestly pray for peace in the world if we are not growing in peace and unity among ourselves.

After Easter the Prioress went to England for six weeks to visit our Sisters at Burnham Abbey and also to visit her own family, including her 100-year-old mother (who has since died). She attended, with Mother Margaret Mary, a Conference for Leaders of Christian Communities at Ditchingham, on one day of which we were honoured by the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury who gave us an encouraging and challenging talk, and answered our questions in the discussion which followed. The Prioress also visited her former home-parish, Sr. Mary's, Horsham, and preached at the Eucharist there on the Feast of Pentecost. We are very grateful to the Horsham Churches for the financial help they send us regularly to enable us to give much needed assistance to some of our neighbours. A big thank-you, too, to so many of you who help us in many ways; and to those who share your prayer-concerns with us.

During the Prioress's absence overseas, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his wife Leah visited the Priory, together with a television crew who were making a documentary video about him. He was, (and is) under such tremendous strain in his work as Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that it was felt the section portraying him as a man of prayer should be filmed in the quiet of Masite, where he could relax for a few days. Some aspects of the life of the Sisters were also filmed; but we do not know if we feature in the final production.

Sister Camilla Mary continues her ministry of prayer and counselling at St. Monica's House of Prayer in Kimberley; and produces a prayer leaflet every month which is appreciated by many in the Diocese and far beyond. Her faithful helper, our Oblate Matilda Strong, has this year undergone major surgery for cancer and is receiving chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Please pray with us for a full recovery for her. Our Novice, Sister Agnes Mary, is also assisting Sr. Camilla, and is finding the experience of living in a very different culture from her home in Lesotho, of great benefit. Although we rejoice that the former Bishop of Kimberley & Kuruman, Winston Njongonkulu Ndungane is now Archbishop of Cape Town,

we shall miss his strong support of St. Monica's, and his warm friendliness. We pray for him and Nomahlubi in their new life at Bishopscourt. The new Bishop Itumeleng Baldwin Moseki, was consecrated on November 30th in Kimberley Cathedral and he has already visited St. Monica's, and we hope he will one day visit Maseru.

Our life in Community has been enriched this year by Mrs. Jill Hall who came and shared fully in our life and worship for five months; and we hope that others may feel called to come and live with us for a few months or longer, and so strengthen our prayer for the world and all its troubles as Jill has done, and also, we hope, find support and companionship in their own spiritual journey.

One sunny day in October, five of us went on pilgrimage to Thaba Bosiu, the great Chief Moshoeshe's mountain stronghold. We spent four hours on the mountain; and prayed for Lesotho at Moshoeshe's grave and at the grave of the late King. We prayed that our present rulers may be given Moshoeshe's spirit of wisdom and compassion and forgiveness of enemies. It was for us a deeply spiritual experience.

And now at the end of December we are preparing to bid farewell to Father David Wells S.S.M. as he returns to Australia. He has been our friend and Counsellor for over twenty-two years, and we do not know how to express our gratitude for what he has done for us. He will also be greatly missed by many others in Lesotho, and in the Province, not only for his valuable service in areas of Church finances, but also for his warm supportive friendship, his wise counsel, and his patient listening. He will leave a big gap in many lives. He will be held in the prayers of many many friends as he sets out to explore new ministries, after over thirty years faithful loving service in this Province. Fr. William Nkomo S.S.M. is also going overseas for 2 years, and we shall miss him greatly. Two other members of S.S.M. from England will be coming to the Priory in Maseru and hope to build up a Novitiate there. We look forward to meeting them.

Tennyson's words on the death of King Arthur have special meaning for us at this time: "The old order changeth, yielding place to new
And God fulfils himself in many ways

So, we pray for grace to see God's hand in upheavals and changes in our personal lives, but also in the changes taking place in the wider world. Sometimes we may feel submerged under all the confusion and violence and fear which weighs down on us in the prayer-battle against evil; but God is in it all, and the final victory is his.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

JOSEPHINE MARY

S.P.B.

Mother Prioress.

Thank you for coming to see us. It was so good to see you again. We kept the dates & sweets for Christmas, & have enjoyed them.

You will be cross with me for "fussing", but I do hope you have a good doctor you are able to consult about your health - and that there is someone who will help with the expenses - - - Life is not easy these days!

Sister Fulson is having a bit of heart trouble, though she is up & about & determined not to be an invalid. The rest of us are well; and today rejoicing in good steady RAIN. It's washing day, but we never grumble about wet weather. Love to you & ...