

# AMPLEFORTH ABBEY

## 4th SUNDAY OF YEAR (B) 29.1.2012

Jesus and his followers went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath came Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it shouted: 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God' But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new,' they said 'and with authority behind it...' (Mark 1:21-28)

### MASS TIMES IN THE ABBEY CHURCH

Sun.	29 January	<b>3rd SUNDAY OF YEAR (B)</b>	10.00
Mon.	30 January	<b>Feria</b>	12:35
Tues.	31 January	<b>FEAST: St. Alban Roe</b>	12:35
Weds	1 February	<b>Feria</b>	12:35
*Thurs	2 February	<b>FEAST Presentation of the Lord</b>	<b>09:00</b>
Fri.	3 February	<b>Feria</b>	12:35
Sat.	4 February	<b>Feria</b>	12:35

### FREEING OCCUPIED TERRITORY



Mark's Gospel is a work with many abrupt transitions, and a rough-hewn texture. Early on, we are reminded that Christ in his ministry not only cured illnesses of mind and body – but had to grapple with the power of evil. The encounter with the possessed man in the Capernaum synagogue is a natural complement to those miracles which show Christ's divine power over the natural world – as in the calming of the storm. The demons pay him the oblique compliment of acknowledging his identity – being silenced for this. Despite their distortion – and almost obliteration – of their victim's character, this does not deceive the One who can read hearts and minds. The victim is seen, recognised, and healed – rather than being eliminated. There may be lessons for each of us in our own – perhaps less obvious – healing ministries. One need not encounter a case of demonic possession to realise that we and our neighbour are on our individual lifelong journey of liberation from the narrowness of self to union with the will of Christ.

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## DYING OF LAUGHTER

Grace, St. Thomas Aquinas tells us, builds on nature, and does not destroy it. In considering St. Alban Roe, martyred in 1642 – on Jan. 21 according to the unreformed calendar – we might add that grace does not stifle laughter – but gives it a transcendent quality. The *Rule*, it is true, is unenthusiastic about laughter – although there is no outright ban. St. Alban (a monk of Ampleforth's first home in Dieulouard) ended as he had begun – gently mocking the crowds gathered to see the executions, and hailing as a prophet one who had predicted he should one day be hanged.



There was, however, a serious point to this. Among his fellow martyrs was Fr Thomas Reynolds, an elderly priest who found it hard to face the approaching ordeal with calm. Alban Woe's humour was, at least in part, a calculated device to ease his companion's nerves and help him to run the race they had both begun. Given Fr Thomas' own joke to the hangman that he wanted a well-tied noose as: "I have been a neat man all my life." It seems to have been a generous effort well-spent.



With January 25 being the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, Rodrigo Vidal and his seven companions from the Community of San Pablo in Santiago, Chile, invited the monastic Community to celebrate their patronal day with a celebration after supper in the Monastery Guestroom. This year marks the first time when one complete Santiago-based Manquehue lectio Community has travelled *en masse* to Ampleforth. Given that St. Paul was an inveterate long-distance missionary traveller, it seems very appropriate that 'his' group should do so. With his powerful intercession, may the remaining weeks of their stay be enlivened with many signs of the working of the Holy Spirit

## WEEKDAY MONASTIC OFFICE IN THE ABBEY CHURCH

6.00 a.m. Matins

7.30 a.m. Lauds

8.45 a.m. Little Hour

6.00 p.m. Vespers

8:15 p.m. Compline