

Another step for Kiwi Monk

My novitiate with the Cistercians is drawing to a conclusion.

As I look back on the two years programme (one year at our own monastery and one year near Melbourne at Tarrawarra monastery), I know it's been quite a challenging time. I was comfortable living in a secular culture. The monastic culture is austere which might sound tough. Perhaps better put, it is uncluttered. My formation is helping me to understand the depths of that simplicity.

I've greatly appreciated the tradition of the Cistercian Order which goes back to the middle ages. I've been helped to unlock the wisdom that's there. I've come to appreciate the simplicity of our communal life which seeks to illustrate what's truly valuable in life.

My spiritual life has grown much quicker than I imagined it would. That means immersing myself in our life: reading the scriptures, prayer, the liturgy of the hours, Mass and also embracing the value and dignity of simple work. I've noticed the joy and peace I've gained, and thank God for that.

Solitude is part of the life of a monk. I know that sounds difficult. It isn't easy but I can say I've benefitted immensely from the challenges and rewards of solitude, which have involved some self-examination and correction.

Christ is all things to all people and in answering the call to monastic life, God has surprised me by providing everything I need in the monastery. While in many ways monks renounce the world, I now know we receive much too. I have been blessed with a generous increase in faith, in purity of heart, and focus on God and what is good in life. Within the balanced environment of the monastery the growth of virtues has been encouraged in an ongoing, and sustainable way.

The underlying purpose of my novitiate, with my two other novice companions, has been ongoing day by day conversion. Our aim is the hope that

being formed in our tradition we will become fully professed Cistercian monks in three years' time. Maybe you could pray for us?