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# UT DENUO REPLEAT GLORIA DOMINI DOMUM ISTAM

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THAT THIS HOUSE MAY BE FILLED ANEW WITH THE GLORY OF THE LORD

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✠ AN APPEAL FROM THE MONASTÈRE SAINT-BENOÎT ✠



The Medieval Commanderie of Saint-Christophe, near Brignoles, in Provence.

**O**UR MONASTERY FACES TWO PROBLEMS. The first, our current home, a large presbytery in the village of La Garde-Freinet, has become too small for our growing community and its vocations visitors and guests. Its small garden is insufficient. The beauty of La Garde-Freinet is not in question, but a monastery needs a larger, more rural environment in which to pray, work and welcome its guests.

The second problem is that we are a foundation of the vibrant diocese of Fréjus-Toulon, meaning that unlike many parts of Europe there are no suitable buildings standing empty: they are already in use in the service of the Church's life and mission.

But in God's Providence a solution has presented itself. Recently, the medieval Commanderie of Saint-Christophe, near Brignoles (in our diocese) has become available. Originally an 11<sup>th</sup> century chapel dedicated to St Christopher dependant on the Abbey of St Victor in Marseille, it became a Commanderie of the Knights Templar for pilgrim hospitality in the 12<sup>th</sup> cent., subsequently coming under the control of the Order of Malta. At the French Revolution the chapel ceased to be a place of public worship and the property has been in private hands since.

The current owner has worked diligently for forty years in restoring the chapel, refectory and other buildings. His desire now is to pass this heritage onto worthy custodians. He is very pleased at the prospect of it becoming, once again, a living centre of

conventual life. So too, the authorities responsible for historical monuments have been encouraging in their initial communications.

Whilst much more work needs to be done, buildings are habitable and the chapel usable. The extensive garden and 33ha of woodland await proper care and use. Our preliminary visits have revealed more and more potential for development as a monastery. Its proximity to an autoroute does mean some ambient noise but this is not overbearing inside, and measures can be taken to minimise its effects. It also means the property is readily accessible.

Therefore, with the encouragement and blessing of our bishop, we are appealing for your help to purchase and restore this property so that, after more than 200 years, this house may be filled anew with the Glory of the Lord and become a place of monastic prayer, work and hospitality. Your material aid – large or small – will be instrumental in this, as will your assistance in making our needs known to others who may be able to assist. And your prayers for the success of this ambitious, and yet we pray worthy, endeavor are indispensable. For whatever you can give towards this end, may God bless and reward you abundantly!

Dom Alcuin, Prior  
Ash Wednesday, 2019

*Further details are given inside and on the monastery website. Please do not hesitate to contact us as necessary.*

## A PLACE OF WORK

**M**ONKS “are truly monks when they live by the labour of their hands” St Benedict teaches (Rule, Ch. 48). There is no doubt that the organisation and restoration of and care for property will ensure that we shall have no difficulty in fulfilling this precept.



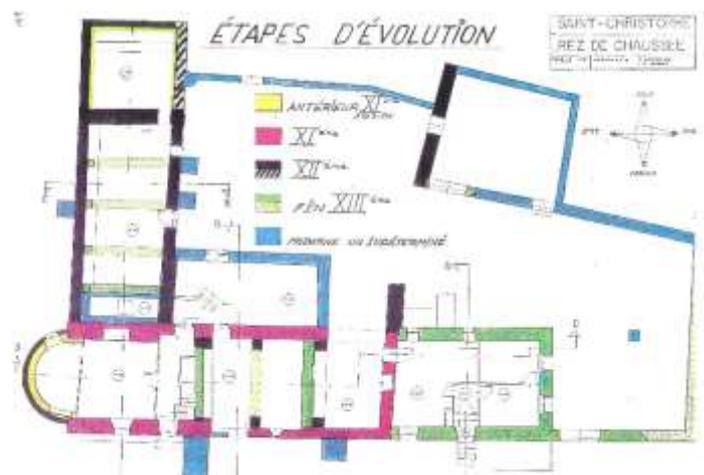
The chapel and refectory, which are in excellent structural condition, require flooring, lighting, heating and furnishing. Much of this will involve hiring and coordinating outside professional work to ensure a suitable and lasting standard of renovation, but there is more than enough work for monks, guests and willing volunteers to be getting on with also.



Other areas of the building, including dormitories and areas for guests require extensive internal work to provide cells that are sufficiently insulated from the winter cold and the summer heat, an adequate number of bathrooms in appropriate locations, as well as the necessary communal areas (a chapter room, calefactory, library &c.) Installing staircases is an urgent need: ladders are currently in use.



Some areas are in need of more extensive restoration. That pictured above will, we hope, become one part of an area in which to welcome guests outside the enclosure for seminars and especially for our annual summer school. The possibility of adding further accommodation on a second-floor will be explored.



As an historic monument that is listed (2<sup>nd</sup> class) any work involving the exterior of the buildings requires the authorisation of the civil authorities. Given that our intention is to restore the property to its original purpose, and to develop it along those lines, we do not foresee any difficulty here, just a lot of administrative work.



An appealing aspect of the grounds is the extensive and naturally private south-facing garden which is ready to welcome our chickens and bees. It also provides a discrete location for solar panels: an important investment. Planting and cultivation will be an early priority and a source of rewarding manual work.

## A PLACE OF PRAYER

**N**IHIL OPERI DEI PRÆPONATUR: “Let nothing be put before the Work of God” (Rule, Ch. 43). Whilst monastic life involves many tasks – all of which are in some way sacred – nothing can

take away from the place St Benedict and the Church gives to the Sacred Liturgy. The worthy celebration of the Divine Office and of Holy Mass is our primary vocation. Accordingly we are delighted that this property boasts a medieval Romanesque chapel, truly oriented, that has awaited the return of the rites for which it was constructed since the French Revolution.

Structurally restored by the current owner, the chapel needs preparation for monastic use by the delination of the sanctuary and choir and the installation of a grille to mark the monastic enclosure and to secure the choir and sanctuary so that the chapel

can be open to the public throughout the day. There is a gallery which needs some work. An initial artist's impression of the restoration appears below. The chapel needs to be furnished with a permanent altar, choir stalls, a confessional, statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Benedict and St Christopher, a central crucifix and other items crafted according to the highest quality and in harmony with the chapel's style, worthy of the worship of God. It is hoped to obtain a suitable pipe organ.

There is a spacious sacristy area which, once it has new doors, is cleaned, lit, furnished and duly organised will serve well.

At the rear a south-facing area which served as a pilgrim entrance once stood, of which today only ruins remain. The second phase of restoration will see the construction of a new chapel in this area, with an altar

dedicated to Saint Christopher, the chapel's patron. Providentially, a large piece of the medieval altar is extant and will be used in the construction of the new one. This will serve the liturgy on those occasions where another altar is required (e.g. Holy Week) and be an appropriate place for the celebration of Mass privately and for pilgrim groups.

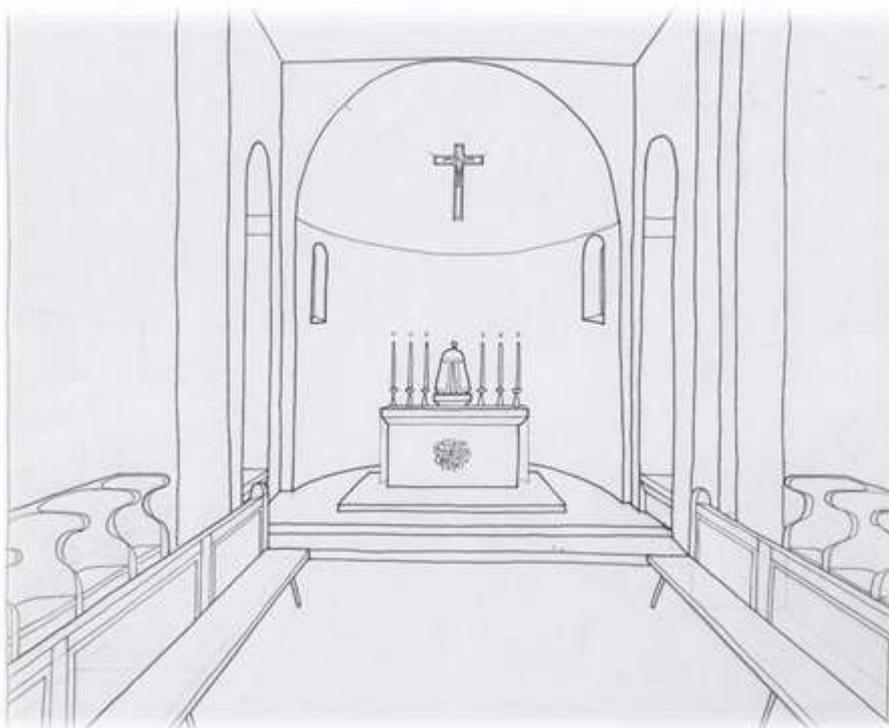
Whilst the praises of Almighty God shall rise up in the chapel as soon as we have moved in and have been able to clean it, it will take much work and many kind and very generous benefactions to ensure that this house of prayer may truly be filled with the Glory of the Lord once again. As in every element of this project we shall welcome with humble gratitude any help that is offered, but in respect of all that is necessary for the chapel there is the added joy of welcoming gifts made first and foremost for the

glory of Almighty God. Naturally, the names of benefactors of specific items shall be commemorated by means of a suitable plaque or notice, as they wish.

The restoration of the chapel to public worship according to the ancient rites will culminate in the

magnificent rites of the dedication of a church and altar. Together with the relics of the saints we shall place in the new altar the names of all who have contributed to this project, that thereby they may participate in the Masses offered upon it and in the prayers that shall arise before it day and night. The restoration of this property to ecclesiastical use is a worthy goal;

the restoration of its chapel to the public worship of Almighty God shall be its crowning jewel. May God bless and reward you and your family and all your loved ones if you can help us to achieve this!



## A PLACE OF HOSPITALITY

**S**AINTE BENEDICT knew only too well that guests “are never lacking in a monastery” and insisted that they “be received like Christ” (Rule, Ch. 53).



Whether it be to visit the historic chapel of Saint-Christophe or to pass some days at the monastery imbibing its liturgical life and sharing in its work, one of our first duties in this property will be to provide appropriate facilities for the welcome of guests.

Adjacent to the chapel the building has a natural ‘front door’ opening into an area that will serve well as a porter’s lodge, parlour and shop. Some internal work will be required immediately, particularly for the provision of toilets. Above this is space that would serve, once its interior refurbishment is completed, as a guest area for men outside the enclosure.



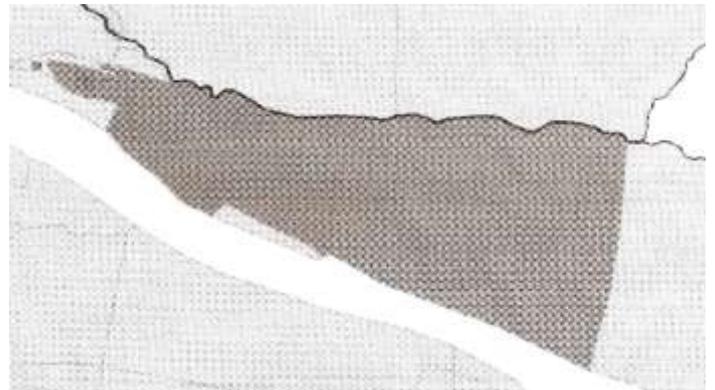
An immediate fundraising priority is the conversion and expansion of a garage – which does not form part of the historical buildings – into an external guest house, including for ladies and families.



So too the provision of suitable paths and shrines within the more than 30ha of woodland so that the monks and their guests can profit from this wonderful natural feature of the property, is a priority. There is much to be done in this respect. Once the property is purchased we will be happy to welcome individuals and groups to come and live and pray and work with us to help advance these goals.



With the appropriate authorisation we hope in due time to be able to add discrete hermitages, enabling the brethren and retreatants a greater measure of solitude in which to pray and rest amidst the calm and natural beauty this property affords.



To the north the woodland is bounded by the river Caramy, in which the locals fish and swim. This wonderful natural feature of the property – which also benefits from a natural water supply – will be a great consolation in summer, as well as a source for food. In the creation of paths, shrines and hermitages the river’s beauty will feature significantly.





Toulon, Jan. 15, 2019

My dear brother or sister in Christ,

On the feast of the Epiphany this year it was my pleasure to renew the statutes of the Monastère Saint-Benoît, a Public Association of the Faithful in my diocese, for a further three years. The monastery's life of prayer and work in the Benedictine tradition, centred on the celebration of the rich and beautiful more ancient liturgical forms of the Roman rite (the *usus antiquior*), has consolidated and grown with the arrival of new vocations in its present setting, the beautiful village of La Garde-Freinet. This augurs well for its future.

For that reason it is right that the monastery now seeks a permanent home of its own in a more suitable rural setting in which it can develop further and increase its capacity, not only to welcome new vocations, but also to have more ability to exercise the Benedictine charism of hospitality towards those who wish to spend time at the monastery and share in their life of prayer and work.

I am particularly pleased that the monks have identified the medieval chapel of Saint-Christophe (originally a dependence of the great Abbey of St Victor of Marseille) and its attendant buildings (subsequently erected by the Knights Templar as a pilgrim hostel) near Brignoles as a suitable location. These were lost to the Church following the French Revolution and are currently privately owned. To return this 11<sup>th</sup> century chapel to the public worship of the Church – indeed to the richness of monastic worship in the *usus antiquior* – and to return these buildings to religious use and the work of hospitality, would be a great witness to the vitality and importance of the Church and monasticism in our increasingly secular world today.

The monks need your help to achieve this. Financially, our diocese is like a very large vehicle that is run on a very small engine: we have so many clergy and communities and pastoral initiatives that each year that we must already beg a large amount of assistance to meet their basic needs. For new initiatives, such as the rare opportunity to purchase this unique property, we must again beg for further help.

Therefore, I urge you to support this appeal by the Association Monastère Saint-Benoît as generously as possible in a spirit of true Christian charity. I thank you for any help, small or large, that you can give to this worthy initiative.

Throughout history monks have relied on benefactors for assistance in establishing monasteries: in return they have undertaken to pray for their intentions in life and after their death. By helping to give a permanent home to the Monastère Saint-Benoît you and your family will share in the unceasing prayer offered by the monks. When, please God in the near future, I have the joy of rededicating this chapel to the worship of Almighty God and of consecrating its new altar, the names of all benefactors will be enclosed in it together with the relics of the saints so that they participate perpetually in the Holy Sacrifice offered upon it and in the prayers that shall rise up before it day and night.

May God bless you and reward you for your generosity!

+ Dominique Rey  
Bishop of Fréjus-Toulon

## THE FIGURES

**T**HE PROPERTY IS CURRENTLY ON THE OPEN MARKET: this creates some urgency in raising the purchase price of €795,000 – which we have been professionally assured, given that it is located in Provence, is very reasonable – together with the approximately €60,000 (7.2%) in required government taxes and notary fees. Naturally it is necessary that all donations be applied to the purchase price until that is covered and the property is secured. The property will be purchased by the “Association Monastère Saint-Benoît” – the French equivalent of a Registered Charity or Non-Profit Organisation – of which the monks are the Trustees.

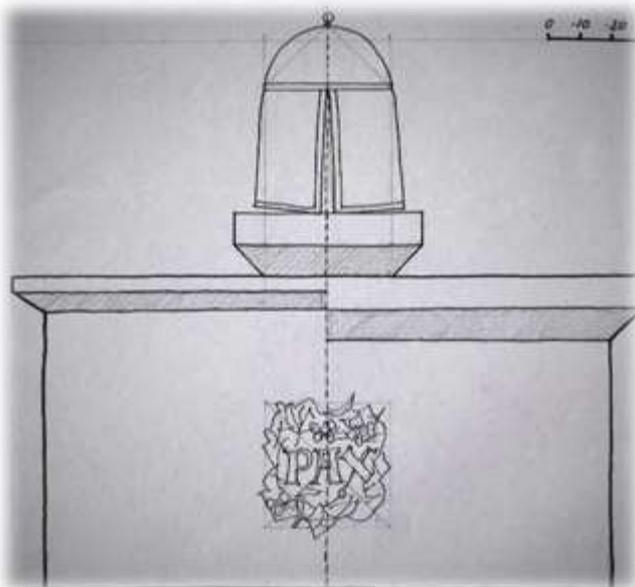
Once the purchase is achieved work on the property itself must begin in earnest, with the engagement of a French architect with experience in historic buildings, the immediate provision of staircases, sufficient toilets and bathrooms, the improvement of existing dormitories, the conversion of the garage into guest accommodation, the installation of solar panels, etc. The cost of the initial work is estimated in excess of

€250,000, not including the many smaller expenses of establishing a household and managing an estate as well as the annual Council taxes due on the property.

So too the basic work necessary for the chapel and refectory – flooring, lighting, heating – as well as worthily furnishing both, is expected to cost upwards of €150,000. We have begun speaking with firms capable of providing what is necessary and shall continue to seek competitive quotations. Quotations will be sought from appropriate builders once the purchase of the property is secured. Further stages of restoration shall be undertaken on the basis of the means available: some State assistance may be available once we have the property up and running.

Regular updates will appear on our website and on Facebook. No donation is too small, or too large. May

God bless and reward you for whatever you can do so that this house may be filled anew with the Glory of God! Your name and any names in whose memory you make your donation will be placed in our new altar.



## TO MAKE A DONATION

*IN FRANCE, CONTINENTAL EUROPE*

*AND OTHER COUNTRIES:*

### **Association Monastère Saint-Benoît**

2, Rue de la Croix, 83680 La Garde-Freinet, France

IBAN: FR76 1910 6000 1843 6638 8771 986 ~

BIC/SWIFT: AGRIFRPP891

*A tax receipt is available upon request.*

*IN THE UNITED KINGDOM:*

### **Friends of the Monastère Saint-Benoît**

(UK Registered Charity 1182277)

110 Fairfield Drive, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1JJ

*Transfers can be made to the bank account:*

Sort code: 40 52 40; Account no. 00032475

*If your donation is eligible for Gift Aid please return the enclosed form or contact us:*

[amici.msb@gmail.com](mailto:amici.msb@gmail.com)

*IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:*

### **Monastere Saint-Benoit Foundation USA, Inc**

9540 Garland Road, Suite 381-272,

Dallas, Tx. 75218, USA

*The Foundation will issue tax receipts for all donations received. Wire transfers can be made directly; for account details or any other questions please contact: [msbfoundationusa@gmail.com](mailto:msbfoundationusa@gmail.com)*

### **Donations by PayPal**

may be made through our website (below) or sent to: [monasteresaintbenoit@gmail.com](mailto:monasteresaintbenoit@gmail.com).

*Because of the commission charged we recommend using the methods above where possible.*

RETRIBUERE DIGNARE DOMINE, OMNIBUS NOBIS BONA FACIENTIBUS  
PROPTER NOMEN TUUM, VITAM AETERNAM. AMEN.

Reward, O Lord, with eternal life all those who do good to us for the sake of your name. Amen.

MONASTÈRE SAINT-BENOÎT 2 RUE DE LACROIX 83680 LAGARDE-FREINET FRANCE

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