




HISTORY



Dom Guéranger's Successors

Dom Paul DELATTE abbatiate from 1890 to 1921

After Dom Couturier's death, on October 29, 1890, the family of Solesmes had grown so much that the choice of a successor had to be made not only by the monks of Solesmes, but by the abbots of the congregation as well. The choice fell once again on the prior, by this time Dom Paul Delatte. The first goal of the new abbot was to form souls thirsting for God. Knowing only too well the necessity of having a cloistered place for any serious pursuit of the monastic life, re-entering the monastery grounds was his major preoccupation. So much so, that on the 23rd of August, the bells of the old abbey church could be heard ringing out once again.

Meanwhile, the priory house of 1723 had become too small for a community that in spite of everything, had constantly continued to grow. A grand building program was rapidly launched. The cornerstone of a vast edifice was blessed on March 21, 1896. In 1898 the monks inaugurated their new refectory. At the same time, two more groups left for yet more foundations: St. Michael's at Farnborough, England in 1895; the other, St. Anne at Kergonan, near Plouharmel (Brittany), in 1897.

These few peaceful years ended abruptly on the first of July, 1901. The law concerning "associations", in fact a law against all religious congregations drawn up under the Third Republic, gave Dom Delatte and his monks little choice but to go into exile. This time, the nuns of the congregation were included in the move to shut down religious houses. With real emotion, on September 20th of that year, everyone left Solesmes for the freedom that England offered them. The grounds and house of Appuldurcombe, on the south of the Isle of Wight, tendered the monks asylum, and the nuns found a new home at nearby Ryde.



Dom Paul Delatte
(1890-1921)

Meanwhile in France, the generous Marquis de Juigné who had become a fast friend of the community, purchased the abbey of Solesmes in the hope of better days. In the meantime, the house at Appuldurcombe was not well adapted to a long stay, Dom Delatte arranged to purchase the site of England's ancient abbey of Quarr, on the northern shore of the Isle of Wight. The community moved there in 1908, and soon afterwards, Dom Paul Bellot, a member of the community, began the construction of a new monastery.

So now the only thing the monks lacked was their homeland. They made the best of the silence and peace found on the Isle of Wight, profiting greatly from the teachings of their abbot, a first-rate theologian who was also a man of true contemplation. He was gifted in many domains: a brilliant intellect, cultivated manners, a profound goodness and a remarkable sensitivity, a youthfulness of soul and nobility of character, and a vigorous temperament. Above all, he possessed a truly amazing and supernatural gift of faith, a sense of the presence of God and His omnipotence over all His creatures. Obviously, a personality such as his contributed to troubles within the community from time to time. Yet, the abbot took true care of all his sons nonetheless.



