

Mount St Benedict Newsletter

Christmas
2013



Monastic Community after Community Retreat in July 2013. Rev. Fr. Matthew D'Hereaux, Retreat Director, in front.

The un-expected and sudden resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and the subsequent election of Pope Francis in this year have thrown the momentum and direction of the Roman Catholic Church into uncharted waters. Like the martyred Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, Bergoglio did have a conversion experience when confronted with the reality of injustice and stark poverty in his diocese. His pontificate has been marked with passion and love for all. He describes the Church as “a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. ... And you have to start from the ground up.” Forget about the petty things! We need to get down to the business of healing each other, both within and outside the Church. The Church is a hospital and we are all in need of Christ’s love and mercy. Over the past year we have been coming to terms with this concept of the monastery as a hospital as we realise more and more the dire need for healing both of a physical and a spiritual nature. During the season of Christmas we celebrate the coming of Christ into the world precisely for this purpose. Jesus says, “It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick” (Matthew 9:11-13). We wish you a greater openness to God’s love and mercy at this time of Christmas. And we echo to you the words of Pope Francis: Heal the wounds! Heal the wounds! Heal the wounds! God bless you all!

Abbot and Community

2014 MILESTONES

Most Reverend Bishop Francis Alleyne, former abbot of Mount St Benedict, was ordained as Bishop of Georgetown, Guyana, on 30 January 2004. We congratulate him on his tenth anniversary in 2014. May God continue to bless him in his role as chief pastor to the people of Guyana!

Frs. Augustine Schreurs and Cuthbert van de Sande will both celebrate their sixtieth anniversary of priestly ordination on 24 February 2014. Later in the year, each will come to a significant milestone. Fr Cuthbert will turn 90 years on 18 August and Fr Augustine will follow him with the same age on 15 October 2014. The community continues to thank God for the many gifts that He has bestowed upon it through the witness of their monastic vocations. We wish them courage in their golden years and continued strength for the journey.

Bro Rupert Alexis will celebrate his sixtieth anniversary of monastic commitment on 10 July 2014. As one of our more recently installed octogenarians, we look forward to more years of monastic dedication.

Bro Paschal Jordan celebrates his seventieth birthday on 21 June 2014. He will be followed one day after on 22 June by Bro Marius Williams who would be seventy-five years of age. We wish them both happiness and good health to carry on their journey in the Lord. May God bless them abundantly!

MAYEUL AND HUGH HONOURED

Two new TAXIs were launched in August 2013 to improve the transportation of pilgrims to and from the Mount. These L300 Minibus DX Mitsubishi's have proven to be quite comfortable for the pilgrims. The service has been consistent and regular and more pilgrims are using the facility. The vehicles were given the names of Dom Mayeul and Dom Hugh as a way of honouring the founder of Mount St Benedict (Mayeul) and the

one who is often called the "Father of the Mount", Dom Hugh van der Sanden. These pioneers were the men who responded in a positive manner from the very beginnings of the monastery to the cry for help from the countless pilgrims who visited and continue to visit the abbey seeking peace, consolation and strength in God.



Dom Mayeul de Caigny

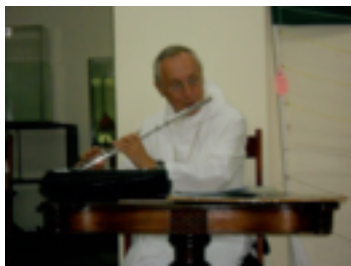


Dom Hugh van der Sanden

"Although you are no more our Superior, you will always be our FOUNDER..." Dom Hugh wrote to Dom Mayeul in 1923 expressing great shock at Dom Mayeul's resignation as Superior of Mount St Benedict.

ABBOT PRIMATE VISITS THE MOUNT

Abbot Primate Notker Wolf paid a visit to our abbey on 09 and 10 September 2013. His visit was a fraternal one and he offered much moral



support and encouragement. He shared his vision of leadership with us and entertained us with his music. We thank him

most sincerely and assure him of our prayerful support.

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF MONASTIC PROFESSION

Three young brothers made their triennial vows of monastic profession on 16 January 1963: Edward Theunissen, Christopher Theunissen and Maurus Superville. Fifty years hence, 16 January 2013 Fr Christopher (not so young any more) was the lone jubilarian to celebrate the golden jubilee of his monastic profession. How quickly those 50 years have passed, but also what wonderful years they have been! The celebration was one of great joy and gratitude. A simple celebration in keeping with the not-too-much-fuss lifestyle of the jubilarian, beginning with the greatest thanksgiving possible, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, during which Fr. Abbot, the chief celebrant, gave a beautiful allocution, comparing the jubilarian's baptismal name Henry with the monastic name Christopher from being ruler of the household to becoming a servant and bearer of Christ, after which the jubilarian renewed his monastic vows and received the "baculum senectutis", the cane to be a support in old age and a reminder to remain faithful to the commitment 50 years ago begun.

After the liturgical celebration all who were present were invited to partake of the refreshments provided.

Filled with joy, I wish to express my gratitude to Almighty God for being with me and strengthening me in good times and bad times; to

the many brothers (alive and even many more who have passed on) of my monastic family who have supported me with their love, friendship



and encouragement and last but certainly not least the many good and lovely people who have journeyed with me and have become part of my

life during the 25 years of pastoral service, especially in the Parishes of Carapichaima, St. John's Village and Mon Repos. U.I.O.G.D.

Fr. Christopher Theunissen, OSB

MAINTENANCE

This year we did some improvements to the Mary Garden next to the Pax Guest House. This area has been neglected for some time and with the help of Ms. Madeline Hagley and our contractor Mr. Joseph Monroe, we built a New Grotto for the statues of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Bernadette, both beautifully refurbished by Mr. Follette Eustace. We enhanced the entire area. A new monument has been built in the Abbey Cemetery to commemorate the deceased Monks who have been buried there for the past 100 years. This beautiful Memorial Wall was built by another of our Contractors Mr. Martin Jack and his crew.

The Abbey at Mount St. Benedict is open to all every day of the year. An average of over 200 persons visit daily, many more on Sundays and those who come on retreats. This calls for ongoing maintenance of the Church, the grounds and buildings. Most people have expressed their appreciation for the peaceful and beautiful atmosphere that they experience here.

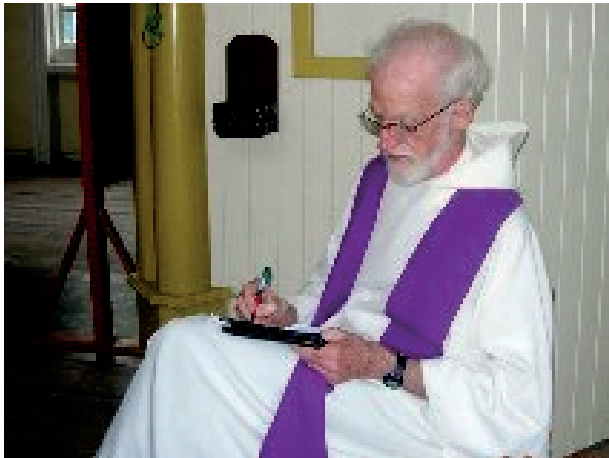
Our small maintenance team Anselm Theroulde, Julie Ramsawak, Sona Maharaj, Jeffery Almondoz, Calvin Cox, Eugene Henry and Curtis Morris who are dedicated, hardworking and loyal employees, do a great job. Their dedication is greatly appreciated and we pray that God will bless them and their families.

Bro. Tony Badri, OSB

DOM HILDEBRAND BIDS US FAREWELL

Tuesday 12 March 2013 was a time of sadness for all of us at the Mount as we mourned the loss of our dearly beloved Abbot Hildebrand Greene, OSB, the third abbot of Mount St Benedict and the first Caribbean born abbot. He passed away peacefully at the abbey on that day.

Born on 16 April 1938 in Georgetown, Guyana, Kevin Greene was educated at the Ursuline Convent School and St Stanislaus College before joining the Abbey of Our Lady of Exile, Mount St Benedict, Trinidad at the age of 18 years. He was given the name Hildebrand and made his profession as a monk on 15 January 1958. He was ordained to the priesthood on 02 August 1964. As a young monk he was sent to Rome to study sacred liturgy at the Benedictine Institute of Sant' Anselmo. Fr Hildebrand obtained an Arts degree at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine. Fr Hildebrand's versatility has been manifest throughout his varied monastic life. For several years he served as Novice Master at the abbey. It was as Chaplain of the University of the West Indies that he made a notable impression on many of the young students. Abbot Hildebrand taught courses in Liturgy and Comparative Religion at the Regional Seminary. He is well known for his work among the Prisoners as Chaplain of Golden Grove State



Prison. He continued this ministry in Bartica, Guyana, at the Mazaruni Prison across the River from the Mora Camp monastic settlement. At the Mount he did yeoman service in building up the Retreat Ministry of the monks. He has spent several hours counselling pilgrims to the Mount and has provided pastoral outreach in many parishes, particularly in Central Trinidad.

Fr Hildebrand has always felt strongly about inter-religious dialogue and his tenure as abbot from 1979 to 1995 enhanced greatly the reputation of the abbey as a place of welcome to peoples of all faiths. Even before he was elected as abbot, he had administrative responsibilities, not only as Novice

Master, but also as Sub-Prior and Claustal Prior, assisting the abbot as best as he could. His time at the monastic settlement in Guyana enabled him to share his talents with the people of Guyana and particularly with those in the neighbouring town of Bartica. He endeared himself to many persons throughout his varied monastic life, serving as pastor, friend, monk and confidant. His spirituality, although heavily monastic and Benedictine, was quite eclectic as he drew from sources which spanned the broad spectrum of mysticism. From John of the Cross to Thomas Merton, from Meister Eckhart to Simone Weil, he was always drawing from sources far and wide. His interest in Eastern Religion also impacted on his own understanding of God which he imparted to all and sundry in his discourses to monks and pilgrims alike. Thank you Abbot Hildebrand for your life as a monk! Thank you for your dedication and for your years of leadership! May you now enjoy the fullness of life in God's presence!



Reverend 2007 Fr. Hildebrand Greene, Abbot at Bartica Guyana. ©TDSB0007193



Statues of Our Lady and St Bernadette (see article on page 3)



On the left is the new monument situated in the abbey cemetery to commemorate the deceased monks buried there. Specially designed plaques with the names of the deceased monks are being prepared to place on the memorial wall. In the centre of the wall is a beautifully carved marble plaque of the pieta taken from one of the earliest altars of the monastery and which is no longer used as an altar. In January 1917, Dom Mayeul de Caigny applied to the government to have permission to have a private burial ground at the Mount. A site was chosen and the cemetery was blessed on 02 November 1917. The first person to be buried in the cemetery is a young Russian Jewess by the name of

Edith Dunaew, who was baptised by Dom Mayeul on the night of 18 February 1917, the day before her death.



LITURGICAL CONCERT AT THE MOUNT

Brother Richard Jones, OSB

On 11 October 2013 I held my first concert and album launch. "Music from the Mount: A Liturgical Concert" was a truly memorable occasion. The concert featured music for the new Liturgy in the first half of the show for which the book and CD was launched. The second half of the show featured four new releases of my songs in the contemporary gospel genre. The concert was a very successful one and I thank all who supported me in attending the event as well as those who contributed and were not able to make it to the concert. Much hard work and effort was

needed in order to make the concert and the launch of the book and CD a reality. The support from Abbot John and the monks, my music teacher Charles Brunner and my producer Lyndon Andrews and the whole team at 5Z1 productions was instrumental in making the project successful. On my part it was fulfilling to do something in which I could have contributed to the Church and worship. It was not easy to make this happen while being fully dedicated to the daily routine of monastic life and studies. Spending many late nights in studio sometimes not in the best of health recording the 37 hymns in such a short space of time was a miracle. The sleepless nights and tireless days was well spent and I am happy to have used my youth to accomplish this task all in service to God and the Church.

MOUNT LOSES A DEDICATED FRIEND

Mr. Dave Ian Sylvestre-Williams of The Pax Abbey Shop passed away suddenly on Tuesday 23 April 2013 at his home in Petit Valley. He had become a permanent fixture at the Mount for several years where he spent most of his time with his wife, Margaret, in their management of the Shop. He was well appreciated by the pilgrims, who often sought him out for words of advice and encouragement. He is very much missed by the pilgrims many of whom continue to speak about his many kindnesses to them. The Shop has lost a dedicated and an invaluable member of the management team and the Mount has lost a faithful and dear friend. He leaves to mourn his wife Margaret and their three children, Nathalie, who is now part of the Shop's management team, Rachel and David. The funeral service took place on Wednesday 01 May 2013 at St Finbar's R.C. Church in Diego Martin. Abbot John presided at the funeral Mass at which the entire staff of the Shop was present. Some of the monks and employees of the Mount were also present.



"Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace! Amen."

GHANA REVISITED: A sense of “coming Home”



small house in the vicinity of the Monastery) and (Right) rehearsing some of the Tamale seminarians.

Bro. Paschal Jordan went back to Ghana, West Africa, from 27 November 2012 to 28 February 2013 to compose music for the Liturgy of the Hours at the Benedictine Monastery of Kristo Buase, just outside Techiman. He also revisited the St. Augustine Millennium Seminary in Tamale, North Ghana, to work on Evening Prayer with the Seminary Community there. In both communities, there was great welcome and the sense of coming home.

The photos show him (Top left) with the Kristo Buase Community (together with Sr. Lucy, a Benedictine nun from Togo, who is beginning a

THEOLOGY CONFERENCE 2013:

Comment by Bro. Paschal Jordan, OSB

At the prompting of our long-term guest, Msgr. Patrick Anthony, Vicar General of neighbouring St. Lucia, I was invited to the 16th Conference on Catholic Theology in the Caribbean, held in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, from June 17 to 22.

Although I do not consider myself a theologian in any form or fashion, it was a stretching experience, and, in retrospect, I was happy to have been given the opportunity to document the impact of Vatican Council II on the Abbey. The abstract, quoted below, gives the gist of my presentation:



small house in the vicinity of the Monastery) and (Right) rehearsing some of the Tamale seminarians.



A two-part presentation: a 30-minute film introducing the Abbey at Mount St. Benedict and chronicling its one-hundred years of existence (1912 – 06 October – 2012), and a 25-minute reflection on four areas of the Abbey’s apostolate in the light of the Second Vatican Council:

- *Liturgy and Liturgical Music.*
- *Education for Leadership in church and civic life.*
- *Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue.*
- *Pastoral Ministry and Movements for Spirituality.*

These areas, existing in some form before Vatican II, took fire from the Council’s teachings and ran with them with the enthusiasm, skill and sometimes foolhardiness of certain members of the Monastic Community. A comment on the current monastic situation vis-a-vis these areas will be given at the end.

THINKING OF BECOMING A MONK?

Do you want to be a monk?
Do you want to be a Benedictine monk?
Do you want to be a monk in Trinidad?
Do you want to be a monk at Mount St Benedict?
Are you in good physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health?

Contact us at jacbp@live.com or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/mountstbenedicttrinidad?ref=hl>

What is a monk?

A monk is one who spends his life seeking God in prayer, in humble work, in community living and in solitude. **You** can become a monk. God may be calling **you** to live this way of life. The monks at Mount St Benedict follow a daily schedule of prayer, work, lectio and recreation. At regular times during the day, they pray the Divine Office, a series of psalms and scripture-based prayers and readings that follow the liturgical seasons. We invite you to spend a day with the Benedictine community at Mount St Benedict.



You can be part of the great movement of the Spirit by becoming a member of the monastic community of Mount St Benedict. If you feel called to live a life of prayer, work, study and community life, consider a call to the Benedictine way of life. St Benedict says: *The Lord, seeking a worker for himself in the crowds to whom he cries out, says: "Which of you desires life and longs to see good days?" (Psalm 34:13). If you hear this and respond "I do!" God says to you: "If you desire true and lasting life, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit; avoid evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it. When you have done this, my eyes will be on you and my ears will attend to your prayers; before you even invoke me, I will say: 'Hear I am!'" (Psalm 34:14-16; Isaiah 58:9; 65:24).*

A good introduction to Mount St Benedict and the life of the monks is provided in a 30-minute DVD produced to mark the centenary of the abbey in October 2012. The DVD gives an overview of the life, history and spirituality of the Mount. It is available at THE PAX ABBEY SHOP at the cost of TT\$100.00 and is entitled, "100 years of Benedictine Presence: Trinidad & Tobago 1912 – 2012". It underlines the two-fold life of the monk: Prayer and Work. In the photo to the right, Bro Rupert Alexis is seen during a time of quiet meditative prayer. Above, Bro Lancelot Herbert is at work attending to the grounds of the abbey.



"Ut In omnibus Glorificetur Deus" ("that is all things God may be glorified") – St Benedict of Norcia.

BUSINESS MATTERS: PAX YOGURT

The production of Pax Yogurt at Mount St Benedict is a story of innovation, ingenuity and the increasing interest of the monks to find new ways to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The incarnational spirituality of the Benedictine monks embraces all aspects of the human. Attending to the physical welfare of the person is an integral aspect of the spiritual. Health and holiness have often been mirrored each other, and in the Hebrew world-view an individual was considered blessed by God if he/she lived to a ripe old age. It is in this context that the continued churning out of several litres of this high-grade health product PAX YOGURT at the monastery must be seen. For not only can they obtain there the regular drinks and eats served in many cafeterias, but there is always an ample supply of the popular PAX YOGURT and HONEY.



Each day several litres of this popular product are distributed to the major supermarkets in Trinidad and Tobago and in several smaller outlets. It is also always available at THE PAX ABBEY SHOP at the Mount, where it is in great demand. The dedicated and hard-working management and staff of the company must be complimented for their determination to succeed in the midst of several challenges, not least being the increasing price of milk, one of the major ingredients of yogurt. Notwithstanding both foreign and local competition on the open market, PAX YOGURT has been able to hold its own. This is indeed a tribute to the ability of local industry to rise to the demands of the competitive business world.

In addition to promoting its own brand PAX, the product has done much to enhance the goodwill of the abbey. It creates useful employment for several persons and at the same time adds to the nutritional diet of the population.

BUSINESS MATTERS: THE PAX ABBEY SHOP

The Pax Abbey Shop at Mount St Benedict is a success story in every sense of the word. Not only is it a financially viable business venture, but it also lends to the promotion of the spirituality of the monks through its highly appreciated fare of Benedictine literature on offer. It is also often a first point of contact with the monastery for visitors to the abbey and the members of staff are often expected to supply information about the abbey to the public such as times of religious services, etc. The wide variety of religious items and books on sale is quite impressive. Many pilgrims actually come to the Mount precisely to visit the Book Shop and to be nourished spiritually and intellectually from what they can obtain there. It is now being used by several persons as a first choice outlet for the purchase of their Christmas and birthday gifts. The many pilgrims who come to pray at the abbey church often find in the Shop a source of encouragement for their spiritual growth. However it does not end there. The Cafeteria annex to the Shop is a place of physical refreshment for the pilgrims. For not only can they obtain there the regular drinks and eats served in many cafeterias, but there is always an ample supply of the popular PAX YOGURT and HONEY.



The dedication of the Management and staff of the shop is beyond question. The abbot and community are very grateful for the manner in which they have managed the business and pray that God will bless them and their families with good health and peace.



Srs. Jean and Nadine with Abbot Alcuin and Fr Pambo

OBLATES ATTEND WORLD CONGRESS

Two oblates from The Abbey of Our Lady of Exile, Mount St Benedict, Srs. Jean White, National Co-ordinator and Nadine Singh, Group Secretary, represented the Oblates at the 3rd World Congress of International Benedictine Oblates which was held in Rome, Italy. The Congress was convened at the Salesianum Hotel and Conference Centre from October 04 to October 10, 2013. Oblate groups associated with Benedictine monasteries from every continent were represented and reflected the global diversity of the oblate groups and by extension the oblate family. The theme of the congress was 'OBSCULTA – The Oblate Listening in the World' The congress programme was designed to allow for an address by the Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order, liturgical prayer, presentations on the theme by guest speakers - Sr. Mary Mananzan, OSB and Michael Casey, OCSO. Both speakers offered different perspectives in two very exhaustive, intellectually enlightening and lucid presentations. Sr. Mary focused on the practice of listening to God through lectio divina and listening to the cries of the distressed and marginalized. She exhorted oblates to become more involved and take action through acts of charity. Michael Casey, OCSO, on the other hand, brought a scriptural focus, drawing from biblical examples of listening, and the use of lectio divina in the process of listening to God. For him the Word which came from God became flesh and also became text so that those who received it will become agents of mercy, faithfulness, justice and peace - a direct and powerful message for

oblates to act upon. The discussion groups by language which ensued allowed oblates to exchange ideas, experiences and build new relationships.

A significant event at the congress was the opening mass followed by a procession to the auditorium for the 'Enthronement of the Word' ceremony. This is an important ceremony for the congress as it serves to establish the fact that the foundation of Benedictine life rests on the Word of God, and which is quoted profusely in The Rule of St. Benedict. There was also a statue of St Benedict prominently displayed near the podium to remind us of his presence.

Other activities included pilgrimages to Benedictine holy sites – St. Benedict's monastery at Monte Cassino and the Sacro Speco at Subiaco; a general audience with Pope Francis, and a visit to the Primatial Abbey of St Anselmo, the seat of the Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order. Here oblates participated in Vespers, and were entertained at a concert which featured the musical talents of the Abbot Primate and students of Sant' Anselmo. This musical treat and cocktail reception brought a fitting climax to time well- spent and a spiritually uplifting congress.

The presence of our Blessed Father Benedict was closely experienced by both oblates who attended the Congress, and the wealth of Benedictine knowledge gleaned was later shared with oblate members at a Retreat at Mt St Benedict during the weekend of Nov 29-Dec 1, 2013.

Sisters Jean White and Nadine Singh



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BENEDICTINE LEADERSHIP COURSE

The inaugural *Leadership, Management and the Rule of St Benedict* Course took place in Rome from 16 to 28 September 2013 at Sant' Anselmo. Abbot John attended the program which was quite intensive and enlightening. The program was an attempt to marry Church Wisdom, Monastic Wisdom and Secular Wisdom. It was a collaborative effort of the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland (a reputable Institute of Management Studies) and the International Monastic Institute of Sant' Anselmo in Rome.

There were 37 participants representing monasteries from all the Continents. The lecturers represented the world of business and the monastic world. The approach was more pragmatic than philosophical and was an attempt to equip monastic leaders with tools that would hopefully enhance their leadership skills. The lectures were interactive and encouraged a great deal of participation. The modules consisted of “Shaping Relations inside and outside the Community”; “Understanding and Shaping an Organization”; “Leading People”; “Managing Projects”. Abbot John is very grateful to have been given this opportunity to participate in the program. He hopes that his attendance would in some way benefit the community at the Mount.



Participants at the Leadership Course in Rome

BRO RICHARD IN ROME



Bro. Richard at the Congress of Benedictine Juniors

My trip to Rome in 2013 was truly a memorable one. There I attended the Congressus Iuniorum and Annus Fidei from 30 June to 08 July. The first part of the program was walking in the steps of St. Benedict where I visited the home where he stayed when he studied in Rome, Monte Cassino, Subiaco as well as other sites and Churches influenced by St. Benedict. It was a great privilege to stay at the Benedictine College Sant' Anselmo and to be part of the Benedictine way of life at the College. Meeting the other junior Benedictines from different congregations around the world was also very memorable. The second half of the program involved having an audience with Papa Francisco on the Saturday evening with all the other junior religious and seminarians throughout the world. It was very encouraging to see all these young people who have given their life to God. The atmosphere was one of hope, love and anticipation for the future. The program ended on the Sunday where we had Mass with Pope Francis who was the Chief Celebrant.

Brother Richard Jones, OSB

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The Abbot and community express sincere thanks and appreciation for the many ways in which you have shown your support and solidarity over the past year. They continue to give thanks to God for you. Thank you!



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