

English Benedictine Congregation Newsletter

April/2023

Published three times per year at
Buckfast Abbey.

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FRONT COVER:

Good Friday - Buckfast Abbey

English Benedictine Congregation Trust:
Registered Charity Number 297880
Registered Company Number



Surrexit Christus hodie, Alleluia!

“Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!” What a relief and a joy it is to have the exultant refrain of “Alleluia!” once again ringing throughout our churches, our monastic choirs and our oratories. It has been a long Lent for many of us. In whatever part of the wide Benedictine world in which you are reading this, and during whatever climate and season of the year this finds you, we can all be secure in the knowledge that we join together as one, Catholic and universal Church, celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. A blessed Paschaltide to each of your houses.

The Latin lead-in to this second issue of our nascent E.B.C. Newsletter had its origins in a 14th century Bohemian hymn, according to some sources. Having descended from 19th-century immigrants who came to the U.S. from Poland and parts of the Kingdom of Bohemia, specifically the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, my family for generations has prided itself on its Eastern European heritage and culture. Some friends gently chided me for following a vocation into the English Benedictine Congregation but now, hopefully like you perhaps, I am pleased to be part of a congregation with such a far-flung international outreach.

In this issue of the Newsletter you will find interesting articles on the Brighton Mission of Worth Abbey and on the Abbey of St. Anselm in Washington, D.C., each written by monks of those houses. In addition, Sister Josephine Parkinson of Stanbrook supplies us with a behind-the-scenes look at her role as co-facilitator at the 2022 General Chapter.

Surrexit Christus hodie, Alleluia!!

By Br. Sixtus Roslevich, O.S.B.

Editor

We invite superiors to submit articles, or to suggest articles, for future publication, along with supporting photographs. These may be sent directly to me at brsixtus@portsmouthabbey.org. A list of recent monastic deaths is included in this edition, along with two tributes which were kindly submitted by the abbots of those houses. We would be grateful for additional obituaries to be sent in the future, keeping to a maximum of about 400 words each so as to allow as many as possible to be published, given our space limitations.

The 5th International Benedictine Oblate Congress will convene at Sant' Anselmo in Rome from September 9 through 16. Space is extremely limited atop the Aventine, as might be expected, and participating houses who wished to send a delegate were selected on a lottery basis. We wish them all a fruitful and prayer-filled gathering, guided by the Holy Spirit in the Eternal City.

The text of a letter from the Abbot President to all monks and nuns of the Congregation

NEWS OF EBC NUNS

The Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has now confirmed the aggregation to the Congregation of Kylemore Abbey, Jamberoo Abbey and Mariavall Abbey. Thanks be to God!

In addition, the Dicastery has agreed that Mother Máire Hickey may step down as Pontifical Commissary of Kylemore. Archbishop Carballo, Secretary of the Dicastery, has expressed his gratitude for her more than twelve years of service in that role. In accordance with the wishes of the Kylemore community, I have appointed Abbess Anna Brennan of Stanbrook as Administrator of Kylemore for up to two years while day to day leadership of the community is to be shared between Sr Karol O'Connell and Sr Jeanne Bott.

The situation of our monasteries of nuns in England has also been developing. Curzon Park is now affiliated to Stanbrook. The community remains in place and Sr Clare Collins continues as the local superior. The sisters of Colwich have transferred their stability to Stanbrook and the monastery has now been canonically suppressed by the Dicastery. The buildings and assets of Colwich remain the property of the Colwich Trust which is now working with the Stanbrook Trust to dispose of the property. This is proving to be a lengthy process involving planning authorities and local councils. As we welcome the new communities of nuns, let us pray for their well being and that of all our nuns.

Yours in Christ,

Christopher Jamison

NEWS

Monks in the City!

It is now a little over two years since three monks from Worth Abbey, D.Aidan, D.Gabriel and myself, were sent by the then Abbot of Worth Abbey, D.Luke Jolly, to live in Brighton. Our new home was to be a small, rented house some fifteen minutes' walk away from the city centre, adjacent to a road junction and on a busy bus route. On the one side our neighbours were students, and on the other, a convenience store open all hours (9am to 9pm).

Our arrival in Brighton followed a long association of Worth with the Wellspring Community – a community comprising 'promised' individuals and married couples inspired by the Rule of St Benedict. They work with the Catholic Parish of East Brighton to evangelise young adults and students in the City. One year prior to our arrival two other Worth Monks had lived alongside Wellspring members assisting in their formation and mission. One of these, D.Roderick, remains in Brighton as the Catholic Chaplain to Sussex University; he is a member of our small community although living 5 miles away on the University campus.

Living the Rule in a Less Formal Setting

Whilst a collaborative ministry to young adults, with Wellspring and the Parish, was an important aspiration, the scope of our vision was broader than this. It included a desire to experiment afresh in living the Rule of St Benedict in a less formal setting; to reach out to those on the margins of society; to provide a simple witness to the Gospel through a visible life of prayer, community and hospitality, and to live a more sustainable lifestyle. Finally, we aimed to share our experience and insights with the home community back at Worth.

Taking as our inspiration the Papal Encyclicals Fratelli Tutti and Laudato Si, together with the Congregational document, 'To prefer nothing to Christ', we aimed to spend the initial months orienting ourselves to our new surroundings and listening to the needs of our neighbours, discerning more clearly where God might be calling us.

Within a day or so of our arriving in Brighton the third 'lockdown' of the COVID pandemic came into force and the local Parish Church of St Joseph firmly closed its doors. One positive but challenging consequence of our

sudden and cramped incarceration, (on top of the challenge of living in a community of three), was that it forced us from day one to communicate more authentically with each other and to develop creative ways of working and living together. Cut off from our familiar monastic props, we had to rethink from first principles how to develop a horarium, mealtimes, liturgy, recreation etc. that were appropriate and meaningful in the new environment.

Seated together with our laptops in an office overlooking a set of traffic lights, we began to research the area, to explore what other communities offered on the web, to participate in webinars, courses and zoom meetings. This enabled us to network locally with different groups that aspired to work for the common good of those in the city and beyond.



Br. Anthony in church



Bishop Richard at Hub

*Monks in the City... continued***An Area with Significant Social Deprivation**

A major limitation of our new home was the lack of space to offer hospitality. This meant that the seasonal day retreats that we started to offer had to take place at a local convent. Thought was now being given as to where else we might offer liturgical hospitality. As we considered these questions more opportunities for service arose - we were asked to consider increasing our involvement in the University Chaplaincy, to move into Parish accommodation, and finally, to take on the curacy in the previously amalgamated Parish of St Josephs and St John the Baptist, East Brighton.

And so, it was (despite our vow of stability!) that last August we moved, for the third time in twenty months, into the Presbytery of St John the Baptist in Kemptown, Brighton – an area that is diverse and vibrant, close to the seafront and to a large hospital, and with significant social deprivation. Our new home offers us the potential to realise many of our original aspirations. Notably, it offers accommodation suitable for greater hospitality, the use of a beautiful Church for prayer and liturgical hospitality and a real opportunity to contribute to a new community outreach facility owned by the Church, The Fitzherbert Hub. This centre aims to reduce social isolation, tackle food poverty, and to build

Fr. Aidan outside the Hub and Church

community in the area. As the ‘curacy’, we are freed from the responsibility of ‘running’ the parish but are more integrated within it, having assumed pastoral roles such as chaplaincy to a primary school and care of the housebound.

With so much to celebrate, the challenges ahead should not be underestimated. Foremost is the on-going challenge of developing a sustainable way of life within a small community, one that succeeds in balancing pastoral demands with good monastic living. The purpose of our being in Brighton is to provide a monastic witness. It will require good listening, communication and collaboration to ensure that this witness is clearly seen and experienced within the Parish of East Brighton, by those it serves, and in the city as a whole.



Left to right is Dom Aidan Murray (Brighton Superior), Dom Anthony Brockman and Dom Gabriel Dobson

A behind-the-scenes look at how the 2023 General Chapter was organized and reported

To learn the answers to several questions which have come across our desk, the editorial staff of the E.B.C. Newsletter posed some topics to Sister Josephine Parkinson of Stanbrook Abbey in Wass, Yorkshire, in England. Sister served as one of two facilitators throughout the 10-day gathering at Buckfast Abbey in July 2022, along with Father Cuthbert Elliott of St. Louis Abbey in Missouri in the U.S. Together they performed yeoman's service and below are Sister's unedited responses.

1. Sister, in terms of your role as a co-facilitator at the 2023 E.B.C. General Chapter, was it an anomaly to have two people assigned those responsibilities, in this instance, over a period of 10 days?

The use of facilitators is only one of the ways the General Chapter 2023 was different from previous Chapter gatherings. Starting with the consultation of each community by the Agenda Committee, and then the year of preparation with the General Chapter Preparation Committee, this General Chapter sought to offer the opportunity to each monk and nun to have a voice in the work of the Chapter. It is easy to forget that General Chapter belongs to us all when only the superior and the delegate attend.

Why two of us? It is challenging work listening and holding onto the various comments and contributions in a way that can be reflected back as the Chapter moved towards decisions. Sensing the mood of the room, the order of the business to be attended to, it would have been difficult to manage alone. Just think how intense and tiring some community Chapter meetings can be, and this lasted ten days.

The decision for a longer General Chapter was to create enough space so that real listening and conversation could take place, with time to reflect and come back to the actions being proposed. This was a decision made by the Abbot President and his Council. It was in response to the question/feeling that if the General Chapter is indeed the time when the whole of the Congregation (or at least most of it), is represented, then it should be more inclusive and foster a sense of communion. Deep listening takes time, something we can be quick to forget when what we want is a decision. I was on the Monastic Formation Programme earlier in the year and it was said: 'If you want to move quickly, go alone; if you want to go together, you move slowly.' Hopefully the use of both Cuthbert and me helped strike a balance to use the momentum that was generated to keep up a creative pace whilst ensuring we weren't bamboozled into galloping on too quickly and leaving half of the Chapter behind. It was a meaty agenda...and it took some nerve to trust in the process and not be panicked into simply getting things done.

2. Were you and your co-facilitator, Fr. Cuthbert, able to decide for yourselves how best to divide the workload, or was that decision made for you by others?

The Abbot President and his Council decided on the agenda and, with the help of the General Chapter Preparation Group, this was arranged in an order that could be printed and distributed, so we didn't begin with a blank canvas in that sense. We divided the facilitation duties between us, with one of us engaging with the GC and guiding the session. But just as important was the silent partner, listening for what wasn't being said by a participant who needed to be encouraged to use their voice. This involved sensing the mood and strength of feeling in the room and knowing when to suggest a pause and, of course, to offer support and encouragement especially in the stickier moments. So, although it may have looked as though we took it in turns, in our facilitation, truthfully, our roles simply changed/alternated.

Prior to the beginning of Chapter, we arranged different work spaces, groups and changes of room. We arrived at Buckfast early to set this up and are hugely indebted to the team at Buckfast who set up all of the technical, live-streaming paraphernalia. The hospitality team looked after us wonderfully and provided everything that was necessary in the situation of the few cases of Covid that emerged during GC.

It's also worth remembering that if this was a new experience for the whole of GC, it was new for us too! Any facilitation I had undertaken in the past was on a much smaller scale and for an hour or two at a time. So, I'm certain we made many mistakes but they were honest ones and it was one of those situations where you suddenly realise just how much you don't know. Having to be prepared enough and think through the different directions a discussion may take, I'm sure a facilitator with more experience would do this automatically. At the same time, one must not be overly-prepared so that everything is held too tightly, allowing no room to be taken in a completely different direction.

That said, it was a grace-filled 10 days and it wasn't about how well we did or didn't do, but that the participants came to experience the dynamic of General Chapter in a different way and I think that, broadly speaking, was the case.

3. It was clear to all present that much of your work took place outside of the full group gatherings which met en masse or in smaller committee or breakout sessions. At any point did you ever feel overtaxed by the note-taking, the collection of data, the photocopying, etc.? Did you ever have to miss a meal?!

No, I don't think so, although the secretaries having to write up the minutes sometimes had to eat and work through the lunch break. At the end of each day, we would have a debrief and evaluate the sessions. Having 10 days and a 'free' weekend meant we had a mid-point to work to and from. This was helpful to be able, almost, to work both sides of the midpoint as separate entities; otherwise, it could all feel too much.

I think if GC is to retain this format, then those involved would have a much clearer awareness of what is involved and be able to decide if something really did fall outside of their role as facilitator. As I've already said, the support of the Buckfast infrastructure was crucial, so much so that we didn't have to worry about anything. But like anything you do for the first time, you realise you have been worrying about things you didn't need to worry about, but then are completely unaware of things to which you should have given more attention.

It was an intense 10 days! And by the time the day came to an end I was ready for bed and to recharge. GC happens in the context of the monastic day and Mass and, whilst there was not much time for extra prayer or reading, it was in context of prayer which, as we know, has the power to renew and revive.

Fr Brendan and Fr Jonathon were the secretaries for the GC and Fr Brendan has many years of experience of what is needed. We helped with photocopying and distributing what was needed for each session, but the official recording of each session was their responsibility. We worked as part of a team but the secretaries provided the minutes of the sessions. Our work obviously required preparation to think through each session, but it was more about holding the session and sensing the direction the Chapter was moving towards.

4. Given the expansion of the E.B.C. to a more international scope, was there, or does there need to be, consideration made in terms of the translation of our communications for quick and easy access into, for example, Swedish?

Perhaps this is a question we need to ask our Swedish sisters whose English is excellent. Certainly, in official papers that are circulated to all our communities, this may be something for consideration. I think more pressing is the need to develop ways to more fully involve our communities in the days of GC. The 2023 General Chapter began with the live-streaming of the Abbot President's

opening address and the daily postcards sent out by the secretary. Some delegates were fastidious about sending more detailed reports home to their monasteries most days, but I would hope this would be something that future Chapters will develop further.

5. Did the separation of duties have anything at all to do with the presence of representatives of the 3 women's communities at General Chapter in preparation for the vote on their aggregation to the E.B.C.?

No, not at all. It made sense to deal with the acceptance of the three new nuns' communities first of all. They had been invited to General Chapter in anticipation of the vote so that they could then be part of the remaining days of General

Chapter, if accepted. Whilst they did not have a vote at this stage their voice was heard and much appreciated. The nuns are joining the whole EBC, not just the nuns' section.



Do We Have an Identity Crisis?

(Brother Ignacio, a monk of St. Anselm's Abbey in Washington, D.C., since 2008, will be ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests, Deo volente, on May 6 by The Most Reverend Evelio Menjivar-Ayala, Auxiliary of Washington.)

In the wake of Fr. Boniface von Nell's passing on Dec 5, continuity within the Benedictine Tradition is something I am just beginning to appreciate. This is because when his health began to decline, Abbot James Wiseman named me Fr. Boniface's successor as Oblate Director here at St. Anselm's Abbey. Feeling very much out of my depth, as I brought the matter to prayer on how best to serve our Oblates, two questions came to mind to frame the monthly Oblate conferences.

These questions are based on an article I was required to read for my Basic Supervised Ministry course at The Catholic University of America earlier this semester. The article began with this question: "Does everyone have an identity crisis?" Later in the article was this additional question: "How do we become who we are?"

I think these questions are what each of us, as new and old members of the English Benedictine Congregation, can ask ourselves – both individually and collectively – and the questions are worth repeating: Do we have an identity crisis? How do we become who we are?

There will be as many answers to these questions as there are monks and nuns of our Congregation, but I think much of how we answer them might overlap with what we understand our Benedictine charism to be. What makes us unique within a Church that is two-thousand years old, in a tradition that is fifteen-hundred years old, in a congregation that dates back to the ninth century?

As I further reflected on these questions, the vows we profess came to mind. Ours are not the well-known "poverty, chastity and obedience," or "no money, no honey, no job" as a Franciscan once explained to me long ago. Our vows are more deeply rooted: stability, conversatio morum and obedience are what ground us as Benedictines and are unique to Catholic religious men and women.

And then as I thought on them more, it occurred to me that the first question about having an identity crisis is answered by our vow of stability. The second question about becoming who we are is answered in our vow of conversatio morum.

What do I mean? Many things about the ever-changing world in which we live are fixed. Some things just are, and this holds true both communally and individually. Within the beautiful diversity and distinctiveness of our own monasteries whose living of Benedict's Rule is locally-specific, there are still things that are fixed and unchanging. Each of our monasteries have pillars of prayer that sustain not only us, but the Church as a whole – beginning early in the morning, pausing at noon, praying in the early evening and concluding with the Psalms which Benedict says we must pray at the end of the day. And then we do the same the next day, and the next, and the next. In my own monastery, we have been praying in Washington, D.C., for 99 years, as our founding was in 1924. But this is nothing compared to the venerable monasteries in England and elsewhere whose roots are much deeper, some of whose communities are near the foundations of monasteries dating back hundreds of years. This consistent rhythm of prayer throughout the day reveals the imperceptible and continual breath of the Church. But are we aware of the gift we have been given to provide stability within the Church by what we do every day?

How do we become who we are?

Do We Have an Identity Crisis? ... *continued*

And there is also *conversatio morum* – an expression difficult to define. Pick up any commentary on the Rule of Benedict to see that translators cannot quite settle on what it means, so paradoxically it is more accurate to use the Latin phrase that Holy Father Benedict wrote fifteen hundred years ago. And the wisdom of the phrase is precisely because it is difficult to define “change” in a world that is constantly in flux. For the ancient pre-Socratic philosopher, Heraclitus, this was his only reality as he famously taught, “you can’t walk into the same river twice.”

So, what does that mean for men and women who follow the *Rule of Benedict*? I think it helps to answer the question, “how do we become what we are?” This question reminds me of a similar question asked of Pope Benedict XVI when he was still Joseph Ratzinger who headed the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. In the book, *Salt of the Earth*, Peter Seewald asks Ratzinger, “how many ways are there to God?” Ratzinger’s answer:

“As many as there are people. For even within the same faith, each man’s way is an entirely personal one. We have Christ’s word: ‘I am the way.’ In that respect, there is ultimately one way: and everyone who is on the way to God is therefore in some sense also on the way of Jesus Christ. But this does not mean that all ways are identical in terms of consciousness and will, but on the contrary the one way is so big that it becomes a personal way of each man.”

This, then, I think is the essence of *conversatio morum* – for each of us to make room for our brothers and sisters whose understanding of the Mystery of the Incarnation is individual and personal.

Within our monasteries, the stability of the monastic horaria which we follow provides the framework for each of us to “become who we are” by remaining open to the graces along the way of Christ that the Rule provides for us.

Space does not allow for the third vow of obedience other than to say that tension between stability and *conversatio morum* is quelled by this most difficult of vows. Personally, when I complain to the Lord who was “obedient to death on a cross” about how things are, as compared to how I think they should be, from the cross he answers with this question, “Are you here yet?”

¹ Benedict XVI: *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium — An Interview with Peter Seewald*, Ignatius Press, 2017, p.32.

Global Monastic Summit held at Ampleforth Abbey



In November 2022, The Alliance for International Monasticism (AIM) gathered at Ampleforth Abbey in the U.K. for a Global Monastic Summit continuing the work of the council which supports the work of the Secretariat in Paris.

The group consists of representatives from houses of Benedictine men and women, Cistercians, Trappists, all of whom have extensive experience in monastic matters around the world. Reaching beyond the boundaries of a specifically Benedictine purview, the meeting afforded leaders the opportunity to learn about recent “chapters and elections, crises and new beginnings,” as one participant phrased it. Of particular interest was news from places such as Ukraine, Nigeria and China. Fr. Mark Butlin, O.S.B., now 90 years old, has been instrumental through the years in coordinating Ampleforth’s support of AIM. Listening intently at one session pictured in the photo above were (l. to r.) Abbess Anna Brennan, O.S.B., Stanbrook Abbey; Abbot Robert Igo, O.S.B., Ampleforth Abbey; Abbey Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B., Sant’ Anselmo (formerly abbot of Conception Abbey in the U.S.); and Abbot General of the Trappists, Bernardus Peeters, O.C.S.O., Tilburg Abbey, Netherlands.



Global



Tempus fugit: Deaths among the E.B.C. houses

Please continue to keep in your thoughts and prayers the monks and nuns of the E.B.C. who have passed from this earthly life.

We shall publish in each issue of this E.B.C. Newsletter the names of the recently deceased and, as space permits, to include a review of their lives. Submissions from the appropriate houses are greatly appreciated

Fr. Matthew Burns – 24th April, 2022, Ampleforth Abbey, York, U.K.

Br. Mark Kammerer – 29th July, 2022, St. Louis Abbey, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.

Dame Etheldreda Hession – 27th November, 2022, Stanbrook Abbey, York, U.K.

Fr. Boniface von Nell – 5th December, 2022, St. Anselm's Abbey, Washington, D.C., U.S.

Dame Mary Groves – 8th December, 2022, Kylemore Abbey, Connemara, Ireland

Fr. Sebastian Wolff – 19th December, 2022, Buckfast Abbey, Devon, U.K.



Abbot Francis Rossiter

11th March 2022, Ealing Abbey, London, U.K.

So deep were Abbot Francis' connections with Ealing Abbey that they go back to his baptism. He was baptised Charles Anthony by Dom Benedict Kuypers who was the Prior and Superior of Ealing. Abbot Francis' connection with Ealing continued with his education at St Benedict's School. The Priorian magazine of September 1949 lists his many contributions to school life, from the academic to the sporting, from service in the CCF to service in the sacristy and as M.C. The same edition notes that he has been clothed with the habit. He made his Solemn Profession in 1953 to Prior Pontifex and was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Griffin on 11th July 1955.

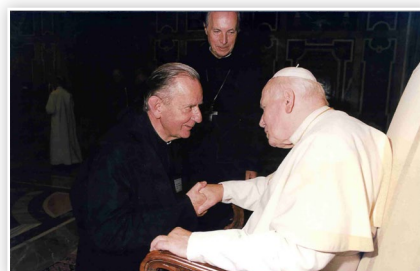
He got to know the wider Benedictine world when, after his ordination, he went to Sant' Anselmo in Rome to study for a Licence in Canon Law. On his return, he joined the teaching staff of St Benedict's Upper School, eventually becoming Second Master. He held this position for seven years, before being elected third Abbot of Ealing in 1967, at the age of thirty-seven even though there were many monks who had been more years in the habit than him.

This was a time of great change and challenge in the Church following the Second Vatican Council. There was the need to provide better facilities for St Benedict's School, the Parish and the monastery. This meant raising funds to support these projects. He also led the monastic community into making the decision in the 1980's to appoint a lay Headmaster. Abbot Francis' contribution to the life of the Church and monasticism stretched far beyond the monastery and Ealing. He served for twenty years as Vicar for Religious in the Archdiocese of Westminster and

was President of the Conference of Religious Superiors for five years.

In 1985, he was elected Abbot President of the E.B.C. and with that role came further responsibilities. Subsequently, he became Vicar to the Abbot Primate. When the Abbot Primate died in office, Abbot Francis became the Pro-Primate and took up residence in Rome. A photograph shows him greeting Pope St John Paul II at Sant' Anselmo on the last Ash Wednesday the Pope was able to take the traditional walk from Sant' Anselmo to Santa Sabina.

When he retired from the high offices which he held, he was very happy to serve the community in his typically humble way. He enjoyed gardening, working in the Parish, visiting the convents in the Parish and celebrating the sacraments. The Prologue of the Rule concludes with these words, 'As we progress in our monastic life and our faith, the heart expands and we run along the way of God's commandments with a delight of love that cannot be described; so that, never leaving his masterly guidance but persevering in his teaching until death in the monastery, we play our part by patience in the passion of Christ and so win our right to share in his kingdom.' Abbot Francis played his part, may he share in the kingdom.





Father Sebastian Wolff

19th December, 2022, Buckfast Abbey, Devon, U.K.

Father Sebastian, a monk of Buckfast, died at the age of 93 on December 19. Born Franz Joseph on October 4, 1929, he was the third of nine children of German parents. His father was Cathedral organist in Loughrea, Galway, so Sebastian learnt to play the piano from an early age. A leaflet about Buckfast Abbey led him to visit the community and in 1949 he was clothed and given the name Sebastian. His first vows as a monk were taken on January 28, 1950. Ordained a priest in 1955, the compassionate care and guidance he demonstrated are fondly recalled by his parishioners.

He continued his study of music with the organist at Exeter

Cathedral and was admitted as a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists in 1963. He wrote English compositions for congregations, a three-year cycle of Responsorial Psalms, as well as polyphonic settings of the Mass, and became musical advisor to the Bishop of Plymouth. He served Buckfast Abbey faithfully and spent many hours in his studio composing music and offering generous hospitality to all who came to call. He became Prior Administrator between 2000 and 2003 and, following this, was granted the title of Cathedral Prior of Winchester.



Father Christopher Wyvill

20th February, 2023, St. Anselm's Abbey, Washington, D.C.

Father Christopher Wyvill – 20th February, 2023, St. Anselm's Abbey, Washington, D.C.

Father Christopher, a monk of St. Anselm's, died on February 20 at Sibley Hospital. He was 92 years old and had been at St. Anselm's for 64 years.

He was born in Upper Marlboro, Maryland on October 9, 1930, and given the baptismal name Robert. After attending St. Mary's parochial school and Marlboro High School, he earned a secretarial certificate from Strayer College and, at age 18, enlisted in the Navy. He won an NROTC scholarship to Cornell University, majoring in chemistry. Upon graduating and being commissioned an ensign, he spent three years on active duty, including time on the U.S.S. Bearss, a destroyer in the Atlantic Fleet.

Near the end of active duty, he began discerning a religious vocation. With Msgr. Lawrence Gatti, pastor of St. Mary's, their first stop was St. Anselm's. Robert was so taken by the Benedictine life that he felt no need for further visits. He was accepted as a postulant and received the Benedictine habit as a novice in February, 1959. After his first vows a year later, he was ordained by Bishop John Spence on a snowy February night in 1965. Having received a master's degree in the teaching of science at the University of Wisconsin, he spent twenty years teaching chemistry, physical science, and algebra.

Even while teaching, he helped in the abbey's business office. After retirement, he became full-time treasurer of

both abbey and school. During this time Fr. Christopher served the community as cantor, kitchen master, guest master, receptionist, and gardener par excellence, providing the monks with vegetables and herbs during the summer.

Fr. Christopher spent a sabbatical period in 2007-08 at St. David's Parish in Swansea, South Wales, a parish served by Belmont Abbey. The abbot wrote to Fr. Simon McGurk, at that time superior at St. Anselm's: "Just a note to say how grateful we have been to have Fr. Christopher at St. David's. He has taken to it as a duck to water. He appears to be enjoying it enormously, and the parishioners love him to bits and think he is absolutely wonderful... Recently the parishioners asked if Fr. Christopher could remain as a permanent fixture. I did promise them that I would write to ask if his stay could be extended." The extension was granted, and Fr. Christopher retained the warmest feelings for the many people he got to know at Swansea.

Those words of Belmont's abbot capture much of what Fr. Christopher meant to many. As he neared death, one of the monks spoke of "much gratitude and love for his life, monastic calling, and friendship." He was a man of fervent prayer, joining his community at the Liturgy of the Hours up to the final weeks of his life, as well as praying the rosary daily. One of the last books he had checked out from the monastery library was Karl Rahner's Prayers for a Lifetime, a work of the solid theology and deep piety that also marked the prayer and life of Fr. Christopher.

From the Abbot President's Diary...

March 12

St. Mary's Abbey in Morristown,
New Jersey



On a visit to the U.S. in late February and early March which combined both E.B.C. business and social engagements, Abbot Christopher caught up with two friends on March 12 while at St. Mary's Abbey in Morristown, New Jersey. Pictured following Sunday Vespers and dinner, left to right, are Abbot President Christopher Jamison, O.S.B.; Bishop Elias Lorenzo O.S.B., previous president of the American Cassinese Congregation; and their current president and superior of St. Mary's, Abbot Jonathan Licari, O.S.B

Ongoing

Meetings of the Abbot
President's Council

At the request of General Chapter 2022, the Abbot President's Council is now convening in a different monastery for each of its meetings. The simple fact of sharing in a community's life and prayer enables Council members to learn about the different monasteries and themselves to become better known. So far, the Council has met at Ampleforth, Worth and St Louis. After the meeting, the Council spends time with the monastic community to share information about monastic life in the monasteries of the Council members and to answer questions about the Congregation. The Council is still exploring how to make the most of these visits but they are already enabling Council members to familiarise themselves with our monasteries. Over the quadriennium, the Council hopes to visit nearly all our monasteries. Together with the President, the members of the Council are Abbot Robert Igo, Abbot Gregory Mohrman and Abbot Nicholas Wetz, with Abbess Anna Brennan in attendance and with Fr Francis Straw as Secretary. The resolution of General Chapter to broaden the membership of the Council is now with the Holy See, pending approval.

21st Century Hospitality



Photo: Buckfast Abbey

Benedictine Hospitality at Buckfast Abbey has taken on a distinctively Italian flavour with the opening of San Benedetto's Pizzeria.

An old mill, complete with a working waterwheel, had fallen into disuse on our site until the Abbot had the idea of turning it into a Pizzeria. It has become a unique venue for people wishing to have a taste of Italy amidst the rolling hills of Dartmoor and should become even more popular in the Summer when we hope to extend the opening hours. Access to it is via a picturesque bridge over the original millstream pond. It is presently open from 4 pm on Thursday and Friday and from 12 midday on Saturday. Last orders are at 9pm and it closes at 10pm thus ensuring the peace and tranquillity of our site.

A choice of antipasti, pizzas with sides of garlic bread and potato wings are on offer followed by gelato. We also offer a takeaway service. The Pizzeria has become a welcoming venue with its brightly coloured check tablecloths, Italian posters on the

walls and a genuine Lambretta scooter in pride of place.

Buckfast and St Gregory's monks were the first to sample its wares when they visited it at their usual lunchtime and gave it their approval. As well as providing employment in the local area we pray that this outreach to those who would not normally visit a monastic site will demonstrate our love and Christian witness to all God's children.

Modern technology has made a welcome addition to our Grange restaurant with the installation of digital menu boards, designed by our media department, which are updated daily. The relaunched Sunday Carvery has become a big success with the 11am Mass congregation and visitors to the Abbey. We also have produced short films about special promotions such as National Pie Week.

Please submit photographs of your monastery for inclusion in future issues



Blue bells in spring, Devon, England

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

(Ps. 23:2, 3)



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Graphic Design: Native Multimedia Ltd.
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www.nativemultimedia.co.uk
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Buckfast, Devon TQ11 0EE

Published on behalf of English Benedictine Congregation Trust
Registered Charity Number 297880