



LCSB FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

July 2025

St Benedict Week Special

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St Benedict Week 2025

Dear Friends,

Our third **St Benedict Week**—a nine-day celebration running from the Saturday before the feast (11 July) through to the following Sunday—has just drawn to a close, and it has been a rich time of encounter, celebration and reflection. Thank you to all of you who helped make this happen and to those who joined in. In this special newsletter we share highlights, reflections and photographs from across the week.

Why a whole week?

Lengthy celebrations have always formed part of the Christian liturgical traditions, and many saints are commemorated in the days surrounding their feast days. This St Benedict Week gives us the very Benedictine quality of time and space to celebrate the heritage of our Holy Father St Benedict.

A family celebration

This year's programme stretched across the Benedictine world:

- **Kylemore Abbey** hosted a series of public events.
- **Ampleforth oblates** prepared reflections.

- Fifteen Benedictine and Cistercian communities—Roman Catholic and Anglican, monastic and lay—gathered at **Worth Abbey** for a study day on 11 July.
- On 12 July LCSB members gathered with 300+ others at Worth Abbey to join in the monastic celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the church, at which **multiple Abbots and one Abbess** from all over the country were present.
- LCSB members prayed at **Chilworth Abbey** and **Malling Abbey** in St Benedict Week.
- Many different communities contributed to our **blogs and podcasts**.

Our hope in the LCSB is eventually to disappear from St Benedict Week! When every Benedictine house spontaneously marks St Benedict Week, our work will be done and we can quietly step aside.

Stories and reflections

Sue Greener, a Seeker with the LCSB who first encountered Benedictine spirituality during last year's celebrations, offers an inspiring overview of the week. You will also hear from Lucy Jardine, our new Head of Communications.

Study day at Worth Abbey

We organised a study day for **Abbot Primate Jeremias Schröder OSB** while he was over in the UK, and we brought together participants from across the Benedictine family. He wanted to listen to ideas for the Jubilee of Benedictine Life in 2029, marking 1,500 years since St Benedict founded Montecassino. He left deeply encouraged by the enthusiasm he encountered.

He gave a keynote talk on 12 July, and summaries of his talk, and of talks by LCSB members **Dr Charles Insley** and **Baroness Sheila Hollins**, are included in this newsletter. The full recordings are available online <https://www.lcsb.uk/st-benedict-week-talks>.

Young Benedict sculpture

You will see images in the newsletter of the beautiful young Benedict sculpture, which was installed earlier in July in Worth Abbey Church to celebrate the 50th anniversary and to honour the long friendship between the Worth community and the LCSB. You will also be able to read a beautiful appreciation of the sculpture by Abbot Jeremias.

Podcasts and blogs

Visit [lcsb.uk/blog](https://www.lcsb.uk/blog) and [lcsb.uk/podcasts](https://www.lcsb.uk/podcasts) for a wealth of fresh material, including contributions from:

- Sr Laurentia Johns OSB (Stanbrook Abbey)
- Abbot Cuthbert Brogan OSB (Farnborough Abbey)
- Neil Zoladkiewicz (UK Oblates)
- Canon Jane Winter (Malling Abbey Oblate)
- Abbot David Charlesworth OSB (Buckfast Abbey)
- Fr Brendan Coffey OSB (Sant'Anselmo)
- Fr David Foster OSB (St Gregory's & Sant'Anselmo)
- Various LCSB members

Pray with Benedictines

A new initiative encouraged parishioners to visit their nearest Benedictine monastery during the week. We advised thirty parishes in the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton that they are within half an hour of Worth Abbey, Chilworth Abbey or the Brighton 'Monks in the City'. Bishop Richard Moth and the three monastic superiors warmly endorsed the project, and several parishes advertised it in their newsletters. It is a modest start, but we would be glad to extend the scheme nationally in future years.

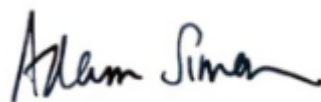
Looking ahead

LCSB Summer Gathering – 22–25 August 2025 at Worth Abbey. All are welcome. Details: [lcsb.uk/summer-gathering](https://www.lcsb.uk/summer-gathering)

St Benedict Week 2026 – Saturday 11 July to Sunday 19 July 2026. Planning begins now! Volunteers and collaborators are very welcome.

Thank you for your friendship and support.

With every blessing,



Adam Simon

Leader, LCSB



Impressions of St Benedict Week 2025 - perspectives from a Seeker

It's only a year ago, but my first taste of the Lay Community of St Benedict was in St Benedict Week 2024. Attracted by the talk given by Dr Rowan Williams, speaking of the echoes of Benedictinism in Madeleine Delbr el, the LCSB website drew me in to listen, and then to listen to other talks by Dr Scholastica Jacob on English Benedictine nuns, Fr Chad Boulton on making community work through the principles of the Rule, and Jerome Beards giving personal witness to his view of the rootedness of faith. I was hooked. I explored the site, discovered online Divine Office and a welcoming crowd of people of different flavours of faith.

How does this compare with this year's St Benedict Week? If last year was a well into which I could sink a bucket to find spiritual depths, this year was a fountain, splashing every aspect of contemporary life with St Benedict's influence. This year we had Benedictine impact on the history of English kingship from Dr Charles Insley, radically connecting monastic faith with lay society. We had inspiration from Baroness Sheila Hollins, who launched Benedictine principles at today's challenges of social care and the need for compassion to overcome rejection of the other, at AI and sound digital health, and at social media and the post-truth society and mental health. It was a tour de force rooted in the practice and promise of the Lay Community. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of St Benedict as Patron of Europe we were also treated to the Abbot Primate Jeremias addressing the LCSB with gentle authority from Worth Abbey Church on its own 50th anniversary. He introduced a paradox, a dilemma and a mystery, beautifully constructed to weave the Rule for humble folk into the rebirth of European civilisation. This talk is worth listening to more than once.

But I talked of a fountain: we not only had talks, but a whole series of daily blogs and podcasts which offer insights into monastic life, its highs, lows and its relevance to a secular world. All can be revisited and treasured for much longer than a week, as can the lovely celebration mass from Worth Abbey Church, which included my favourite anthem, Bruckner's *Locus Iste*. The written word was celebrated with the publication, edited by Mike Woodward, of Dom Stephen Ortiger's manuscript on Dom Victor Farwell, first Abbot of Worth. Here is the history of Benedictinism seen alongside personal challenges of the religious. Here is a teaching on prayer which cuts deep into my daily practice. And there was further art in this week—the sight of the simple beauty of sculpture by Richard Watts for the Lay Community within Worth Abbey Church, a sculpture of young Benedict quietly inspiring others in faith.

So this outpouring of history, political realities, digital offerings, monasticism, art and the Rule has fed the waters of faith, has indeed become an enduring stream to feed us through the year. We not only engaged online, we also met in groups around the country, sharing fellowship, fun and food as well as the inspiration of prayer and *Lectio Divina* with each other as the community, a notion so important to St Benedict, continues to grow. My joy- and faith-filled meeting of local LCSB members in St Mary's Abbey, West Malling, was a sunlit reminder of gathering in places old and new, physical and online, which will sustain me in the day to day.

Sue Greener
Seeker in the LCSB



Head of Comms introduction

A word from Lucy Jardine, our new Head of Communications.

I'm delighted to introduce myself as the new Head of Communications for the Lay Community of Saint Benedict (LCSB). I stepped into the role in early June, and what a rich beginning it's been—especially with the inspiring energy of St Benedict Week.

Throughout the week's events—talks, reflections, blogs, and podcasts—I've had the privilege of listening to many voices from the Lay Community and Benedictines from across the UK and beyond. Even as a newcomer, I am struck by the depth of and commitment to prayer, and members' desire to truly live the Rule of St Benedict as lay people in our world. Abbot Jeremias' emphasis on Benedictine communities' role in fostering reconciliation, commenting that peace should be more than a monastic slogan, was thought-provoking and inspiring.

Though I'm not a Benedictine myself, the balance of prayer, work and community life we learn about through the Rule is part of what brought me to the Community. I come with a background in communications and programme management, including time at CAFOD working alongside communities in Latin America facing harsh realities, and more recently, serving my local parish in various leadership roles. My work has always been grounded in listening and sharing stories with care and respect.

With the Lay Community, I look forward to sharing more about St Benedict and how his rule inspires us today, through this and other newsletters, with those of you who are closely involved, and with others who are drawn to Benedictine spirituality in different ways. Whether you're exploring this tradition, are inspired by its values, or simply want to stay connected to the life and rhythm of the Community, I hope that you find plenty in this newsletter to encourage and nourish you.



St Benedict Week study day

On 11 July 2025, thirty-two people, guests of Abbot Mark Barrett and the Worth monks gathered at Worth Abbey for a study day organised by the LCSB, focusing on the upcoming 2029 Benedictine Jubilee. The participants, representing 15 diverse communities, included Roman Catholic and Anglican monks, nuns, oblates, and lay people from the Benedictine and the Cistercian orders. The day was centred on listening and reflection, facilitated through discussions, 'Conversation in the Spirit' breakout sessions, Lectio Divina, and a shared Emmaus walk.

The vision: Places of hope since 529

Abbot Jeremias presented the vision for a global, year-long jubilee in 2029, marking 1,500 years since the founding of Montecassino in 529. With the working title '*Locus iste*: places of hope since 529—a jubilee of Benedictine monasticism', the celebration aims to be both reflective and legacy-building. Drawing lessons from past jubilees, the plan emphasises a decentralised approach, with the Benedictine Confederation providing resources while individual monasteries will serve as central hubs for events. "We are happy with anybody who comes up with the idea that he can connect with the jubilee of this 1,500 years of Benedictine life", Abbot Jeremias stated.

During the Emmaus walk, Esther de Waal, a renowned interpreter of the Rule of St Benedict, lit the spirit of the jubilee, inspired by the wedding feast at Cana where the water jars were "filled to the brim". She urged that the celebration should not be "tepid," but should "overflow with abundance and energy... like a heavenly banquet".

Future legacy and participant feedback

Several key legacy initiatives are already being explored, including a new critical edition of the Dialogues, an updated four-volume Benedictine martyrology, and an open-access digital library of core Benedictine texts. An academic committee is in place, and collaborations with museums and libraries are being pursued for potential exhibitions.

Participants responded enthusiastically to the 'places of hope' vision. Recurrent themes that emerged from discussions were brought together at the end by Abbot President Christopher Jamison, and included:

- **beauty:** in Benedictine liturgy, monasteries, and the dedication of a life to God
- **peace**
- **digital presence:** attendees stressed that a stronger online presence is "absolutely essential" and called for more Benedictines to be active in public and digital spaces.

A call to transformation and a look ahead

There was a strong consensus on the need to look outwards and address current cultural needs. The discussion highlighted the importance of offering inclusiveness, kindness, and welcome in an increasingly machine-driven society. The need for a global perspective was also noted, questioning, "What does the Jubilee mean in Peru?".

Abbot Jeremias expressed gratitude for the energy of the study day, and confidence that monasteries can address today's societal challenges by serving as "places of hope". In his closing remarks, Abbot Mark Barrett noted, "what has happened today is only a beginning... We have seen enthusiasm and energy, willingness and commitment, and the need for focus".

The next step, which will take place after further consultation, is the formation of a working group to develop the ideas discussed. Abbot Jeremias encouraged the Benedictine network in the British Isles to act as a "creative think-tank", highlighting its unique platform for bringing together diverse Benedictine men, women, and lay people.

Adam Simon



Impressions of the St Benedict study day

It is always good to mark the feast of St Benedict with other Benedict fans. And spending the day with nuns, monks, oblates and members of the Lay Community certainly ticked that box.

But this year for me, the feast day felt like much, much more.

Firstly, we know from the Rule of St Benedict that it is important to listen carefully. And so this study day was constructed around a structured listening session in small breakout groups. Who knew that listening could be such hard work? Having to concentrate and focus on what others are saying, without immediately replying with the first thing that comes to mind—I found this to be quite intense. It is somewhat counter cultural to listen so actively, but very enriching.

Secondly, I really enjoyed the mix of experience of living with St Benedict present in the room. Each person I spoke to seemed to share admiration for what St Benedict brought to their way of life, as well as having some unique take on how, in their role/community/geography, it worked. My takeaway from this is that St Benedict and his Rule, rather amazingly, have a lot to offer us 21st century dwellers.

Thirdly, after the listening session, we did some Lectio and discussed the bible passage in different small groups whilst strolling outside. I am always interested to see the range of insights that scripture can generate. Lots of views to ponder in our hearts!

So overall, I felt very lucky to be a part of such a wonderful day. A fabulous presence from different countries (UK, Ireland, Germany), young and not so young, and all present striving to explore how we can live with St Benedict. It left me full of hope for how we might develop the way towards the jubilee in 2029 and share the Benedictine magic even more widely. Many thanks indeed to those who took part in the day.

Patrick Cleary

Member of the LCSB and Chair of the LCSB Trustees

Reflection on the St Benedict study day

I felt quite honoured to be sitting in the Unity Room in Worth Abbey on St Benedict's feast day, in the midst of 'such a cloud of witnesses' to his charism and therefore to Christ. The LCSB are to be commended on gathering together 32 representatives from 15 different communities, both religious and lay, and for being so welcoming. It was also an honour to have the opportunity to meet with and listen to our new Abbot Primate, Jeremias. His opening talk was quietly dynamic as was the study day itself.

Sitting there, I also felt at home among my Benedictine sisters and brothers. I was very much aware of an aura of attentive listening in the room, and it was that attentive listening which appeared to pervade the entire day. Perhaps it is attentive listening which is the root of "the spirit of Benedictine freedom" that Abbot Jeremias mentioned in his opening talk to us.

It was also the root of the synodal listening or 'Conversation in the Spirit', which we practised in our breakout groups, when we were asked to reflect upon monasteries as places of hope and to discuss what we would like to celebrate in the 2029 Jubilee Year of Benedictine Life. I had never experienced the practice before and immediately saw its benefits: ensuring individual reflection in group discussions, making sure individuals stop and think before contributing. I think it would be an excellent practice in online group meetings.

The practice was continued in our Emmaus Walk around the grounds afterwards when in groups of three we discussed our individual Lectio Divina on the wedding feast at Cana in St John's gospel. Again we stopped to reflect. I was in a group with Abbot Jeremias and had the chance to talk to him about life as an oblate.

At the end of the day I was greatly enthused by his confidence in the group and his decision to use future St Benedict Weeks as a platform and its participants as a creative think tank for preparations for the 2029 celebrations. I was also heartened that he sees that oblates and lay Benedictines will be very much part of those celebrations.

His final talk left me inspired and keen to take part in the future preparations. It is quite a challenge, which, like Abbot Jeremias, we are perhaps quietly anxious about. We will be celebrating 1,500 years of Benedictine life in all its myriad forms. Hopefully in exploring that life so as to celebrate it, we might find seeds for its future. And we must remember that we are part of that life ourselves and are trying to live that life.

It is as if we will be polishing a huge stained-glass window ready for 2029. But all our polishing will have no effect until the Sun of Righteousness shines through, which I pray He will through the power of His Spirit.

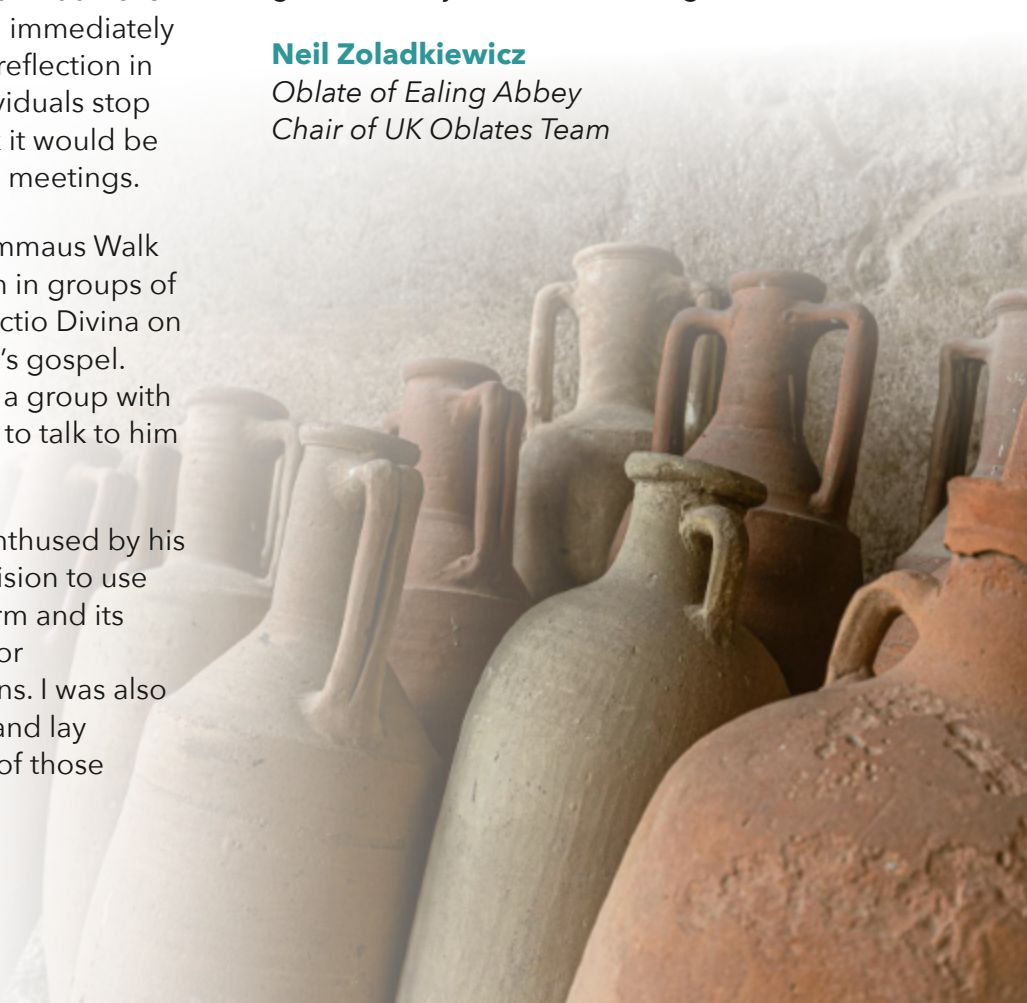
In my own Lectio, I reflected that we are always water in the jar and only the touch of Jesus can turn us into wine, the best wine, making us joyful and free, opening our hearts more and more as our Holy Father Benedict promises us in the Prologue to his Rule.

I have been asking myself what is our way forward in this challenging enterprise. Our way forward is the way we have begun, the way we have made a good start. By attentive listening.

Neil Zoladkiewicz

Oblate of Ealing Abbey

Chair of UK Oblates Team



The young Benedict sculpture

The young Benedict sculpture commissioned by the LCSB to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the Worth Abbey Church, and our friendship with the monks of Worth Abbey, was installed at the beginning of July. You can see it as you go from the narthex into the church.

The inspiration came from Mike Woodward, former leader of the LCSB, who wrote a blog for St Benedict Week 2023. In it, he wrote:

"My attraction is less to the august, bearded patriarch atop Monte Cassino; more to the drop-out student who felt a call, and went with it, away from the structures of Rome into the darkness of a remote cave, until he was ready to emerge with something to share."

This sparked the artistic flair of sculptor Richard Watts, member of the LCSB, who was moved to draw a model of a sculpture called 'Young Benedict' and use words that come from the Dialogues of St Gregory. In July 2024 we presented this model to the monks who unanimously liked the project.

The formal blessing of the sculpture will take place in August during the Summer Gathering of the LCSB at Worth Abbey. In the meantime, during the 50th anniversary celebrations, it was admired by many people, notably for the way in which it fits into the church so beautifully. One parishioner commented to Abbot Mark that she thought it had always been there. Abbot Mark had been wondering how Francis Pollen, the church architect, might have responded to this new element added to his abbey church concept. Pollen wanted a building to look as though it had "just happened"! This parishioner's response showed that the job had been done.

One of the admirers of the sculpture was the Abbot Primate, Abbot Jeremias Schröder, who gave these words of positive feedback to those gathered for the study day on 11 July:

"The sculpture of St. Benedict is not a figure that shouts, 'look at me!' It's a carving that almost hides in the wall and becomes part of the place, and leaves space for that which is

supposed to happen in front of you. I find that so beautiful and touching, that you have created a piece of art that leaves space for others. Benedict steps back and says, 'There's a Rule, you can learn a lot here, follow that Rule and you will do well.' He leaves us space to grow and to develop, and that's part of the inner freedom that I recognise in Benedict which comes from his discretion, gentleness and almost reticence. I really take this artwork here as a beautiful image of that."

Members of the LCSB hope that this young Benedict will be an inspiration to those who come to the church for the next 50 years and beyond.



The Rule of St Benedict and the making of the English state

– 4 July 2025

In the first public event of this year's St Benedict Week, we were treated to a talk by Dr Charles Insley, member of the LCSB and Senior Lecturer in Medieval History, University of Manchester. His talk opened up the 10th century—a Benedictine century—and its links into culture and society.

In his talk, Charles presented the reign of King Edgar (959-975) as the crucible in which Benedictine monastic reform, liturgical innovation and the consolidation of an English polity were fused into a coherent political-religious programme. He argued that the *Regularis Concordia*, the English Benedictine monastic agreement (c. 970), and Edgar's second coronation at Bath in 973, were intentionally crafted moments of public theology in which royal authority was recast as pastoral service, and monastic practice was mobilised to underwrite state-building. By tracing the liturgical and ideological continuities from Edgar's court to the coronation of Charles III (2023), Charles demonstrated how a tenth-century synthesis of Benedictine spirituality and royal governance became key elements in English and British constitutional culture.

The best way to appreciate this is to listen to and watch the talk, which you can find at <https://www.lcsb.uk/st-benedict-week-talks>. Many thanks to Charles for this tour de force linking the heritage of St Benedict to our secular culture.



St Benedict at 60:

A monastic vision lived by lay people in a fragmented Europe - 7 July 2025

The second talk of the week was given by Baroness Sheila Hollins, a member of the LCSB since 1976.

Marking the 60 years since Pope Paul VI proclaimed Saint Benedict a Patron of Europe, she argued that the Benedictine way—anchored in prayer, work, listening, hospitality and community—is carried by lay people into homes, workplaces and even digital spaces, supplying Europe with a desperately needed “soul infrastructure.”

Starting with her first experience of development work in Nigeria/Biafra, moving to today's compound crises—geopolitical tension, fragile care systems, spiralling mental-health needs, AI's ethical unknowns and an erosive post-truth culture—she showed how the Lay Community of St Benedict exemplifies a life inspired by the Rule. She identified five arenas in which lay Benedictines can have the greatest impact, which she named the frontiers of relevance of the Rule: transforming social care through relational belonging; ensuring technology and AI serve human dignity; cultivating wisdom that counters disinformation through deep, transformative listening; creating authentic digital communities rooted in monastic rhythm; and protecting mental health via balanced daily practice expressed in the GRACES mnemonic, which encourages us to see how we can bring compassion into our daily interactions with others.

She spoke of the leadership of Abbot Victor Farwell and Fr Stephen Ortiger (very timely given the recent release of the biography of Abbot Victor Farwell), and presented leadership as an attentive presence that draws out others' gifts and resists authoritarian drift.

Concluding the talk, Sheila called policymakers, church leaders and citizens alike to adopt community-based care, inclusive AI policy, structured listening, rhythm-centred digital formation and Benedict-inspired daily habits, asserting that Europe's fractures can heal through communities that listen, welcome and live humane rhythms shaped by the Rule of Saint Benedict.

To hear the talk go to:
<https://www.lcsb.uk/st-benedict-week-talks>

A paradox, a dilemma, and a mystery:

*St Benedict's message for Europe in 2025
- Worth Abbey, 12 July 2025*

The final talk of this year's St Benedict Week was given by Abbot Primate Jeremias Schröder. It was an outstanding talk that merits further study.

The talk explored the contemporary relevance of St. Benedict through three concepts: a paradox, a dilemma, and a mystery.

The Benedictine paradox

The central paradox is that St Benedict had no intention of transforming Europe; his aim was personal solitude and a spiritual life away from the world. Yet, the way of life he established had a profound impact on Western civilisation, succeeding where more intentional, culturally-focused efforts, like those of his contemporary Cassiodorus, did not. Abbot Jeremias suggested that the Benedictine monasteries became microcosms for cultivating life giving relationships and structures, which could then be applied on a larger scale.

The Böckenförde dilemma

The 'Böckenförde dilemma' posits that "The liberal, secularised state lives by prerequisites which it cannot guarantee itself". These prerequisites include a shared moral culture, social trust, and institutions of civil society. Abbot Jeremias argued that Benedictine principles offer valuable tools to strengthen these foundations in a post-Christendom era:

- **The Rule of Law:** The principle that everyone, including the leader (abbot), is subject to the same rule.
- **Human dignity and co-responsibility:** The Rule allows for a monk to question an impossible order, promoting shared responsibility rather than blind obedience.
- **Living with diversity:** The abbot is described as the "servant of this diversity" (*servire multorum moribus*), a timely antidote to modern narrow-mindedness.



The mystery of paschal hope

The final part of the Abbot's talk moved beyond socio-cultural contributions to the theological virtue of hope, which he distinguishes from mere optimism. This "paschal hope" is rooted in the Easter experience of death and resurrection. It embraces suffering and even extinction, trusting in God for a new beginning. The history of English Benedictinism serves as a prime example, having faced extinction in the sixteenth century and experienced rebirth through exile and subsequent transformations. This willingness to let go of past models in the trust of rebirth is presented as a deep contribution that Benedictines can offer.

By living out this paschal hope, Abbot Jeremias concludes, Benedictines can provide the ethical foundations that society needs, thus continuing the "Benedictine paradox" where a deeply personal and spiritual commitment helps to transform the wider world.

To hear the talk please visit: <https://www.lcsb.uk/st-benedict-week-talks>. We are full of gratitude to Abbott Jeremias for coming to the UK for St Benedict Week and for giving us this talk.



Be cured - a reflection on St Benedict Week

Jerome Beards

This past St Benedict Week has given us a deep and rich look into the influence of St Benedict on the history of Europe.

From talks by history lecturers, abbots and politicians, to podcast interviews with those in the UK and abroad, to blog posts written by members of our very own community, we've all been given a vast range of insights into just how one man was able to make such a difference to the lives of so many.

As someone who has little knowledge of history beyond what I learned at A Level I certainly didn't need a degree to figure out what the true message of this week has been for me.

If you listen to Abbot David's interview on St Benedict, you'll hear him compare the saint to other historical figures who attempted to unite Europe such as Charlemagne, the Holy Roman emperors and Napoleon. Two key differences in their approaches stand out: Benedict's was one of peace and community, the other one of force, often physical.

I like to do Lectio Divina on a little part of Luke's gospel each day. Earlier today I read a passage in which a man with leprosy falls at Jesus' feet saying "If you want to, you can heal me." To which Our Lord's response is "I do will it. Be cured!". These comforting words of Jesus - combined with his willingness to reach out his hand and touch a leper - struck home an important point to me, one that helped me to understand what it really is that has allowed Benedict to stand out in European history in the way he does.

We had a wonderful series of blogs touching so many areas this past week. "Does Benedict have a word for us today?" questions Sr Laurentia in the first blog post of the week. "Peace would certainly be one" is her answer. As human beings, it is so easy for us to believe that everything is up to us. That we have to

make everything work, and it has to be us who does it, because otherwise it just won't happen. With that kind of worldview comes a whole load of stress and anxiety. Might this have been the worldview of a Napoleon, or a Charlemagne, or a Holy Roman Emperor?

It's a question worth asking, I think, even though it would seem that most, if not all of these people, believed in God. The question is not whether or not they believed, the question is whether or not they listened; one who doesn't listen out for God's voice and respond, is not following God's guidance, they are following their own. "It's all up to me" becomes the mantra, and then one must resort to force, because being peaceful surely isn't going to help you get anything done. I can't possibly make any definite claims about how Charlemagne thought, or the pressures Napoleon put on himself, or how many of the Holy Roman Emperors were listening out for the words of a loving Father. The point is, I know Benedict was.

"Our English landscape is scattered with monastic ruins", says Abbot Brogan in our last blog post of the week. "The monks are long gone but the peace remains, and those who lack or long for peace often frequent these ruins in search of this elusive peace. But peace is not so far from our grasp." The way of St Benedict might seem for an outsider to be something outdated, even a relic of the ancient world; but anyone who has read The Rule will tell you otherwise. It isn't some immensely complex formula. This is a call to listen, to listen to the voice of God, and to trust that what he asks is not only right, not only fulfilling, but powerful enough to change a continent—and even the world.

Podcasts: www.lcsb.uk/podcasts

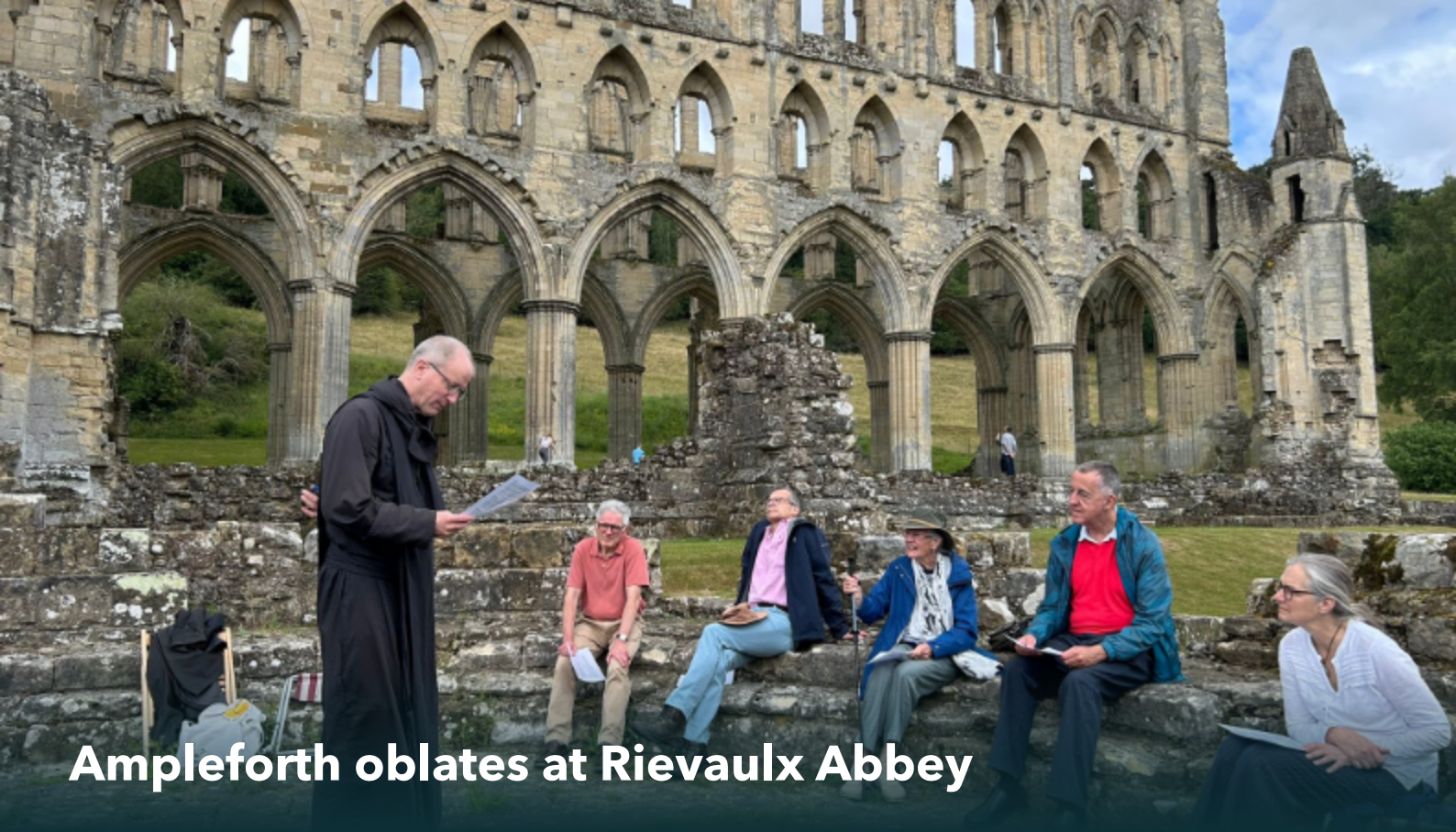
Blogs referenced:

www.lcsb.uk/post/the-voice-of-peace

www.lcsb.uk/post/peace-amongst-many-voices

For the rest of the blogs, please visit:

www.lcsb.uk/blog



Ampleforth oblates at Rievaulx Abbey

On 6 July, during St Benedict, a small gathering of Ampleforth oblates met and moved through six different spaces in Rievaulx Abbey. As they did so, they each reflected on different aspects of oblate life. The quotations are from various sources: the *Rule of St Benedict*, Basil Hume OSB's *In praise of Benedict* [GBH], and notes from the Oblates Congress in Rome in 2023. The reflections have been brought together by Fr Chad, the Oblate Master.

IN THE CHOIR

With the cross he taught the primacy of prayer.
[Paul VI]

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere...but beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office...Serve the Lord with fear...Sing praise wisely... let us stand to sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices. [RB19]

You can catch a glimpse of the mystery of God as a gentle glow, a glow that already hints at the brilliance of the light that is at present hidden...Times with God are golden moments snatched from a busy schedule with compelling insistence. [GBH 67, 91]

How do I pray regularly? How do I pray continuously?

THE CHAPTER ROOM

As often as anything important is to be done in the monastery, the abbot shall call the whole community together and himself explain what the business is; and after hearing the advice of the brothers, let him ponder it and follow what he judges the wiser course... the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger. The brothers, for their part, are to express their opinions with all humility, and not presume to defend their own views obstinately. [RB 3]

The dialogue of the chapter house can so easily degenerate into grumbling in the cloister. [GBH 23]

Just as many medieval monasteries reclaimed physical marshland in their farming, so today monasteries can reclaim the cultural environment from its toxicity and pollution, the marginalisation of God and of neighbour. Monasteries and oblates are called to be places and people with God and fraternity at the centre. [Benedict XVI]

How do I engage with my communities - family, church, work?

How do I listen? How do I contribute?

THE DAY ROOM

With the book he taught the pursuit of learning.
[Paul VI]

Listen carefully my son to the master's instructions
and attend to them with the ear of your heart.
[Prologue]...Listen readily to holy reading. [RB 4]

Monasteries throughout the centuries have come
and gone...but the Rule remained...just be
yourselves, humbly confident of your heritage.
[GBH 61,54]

It was not the monastic intention to create a culture
nor even to preserve a culture from the past. Their
motivation was much more basic. Their goal was
to seek God. Amid the confusion of the times, in
which nothing seemed permanent, they wanted to
do the essential—to make an effort to find what was
perennially valid and lasting, life itself. They were
searching for God. They wanted to go from the
inessential to the essential, to the only truly
important and reliable thing there is. [Benedict XVI]

How does the Word shape my daily life?

THE INFIRMARY

Care of the sick must rank above and before all
else, so that they may truly be served as Christ, for
he said: I was sick and you visited me...Let the sick
on their part bear in mind that they are served out
of honour for God, and let them not by their
excessive demands distress their brothers who
serve them. [RB 36]

It takes some years of experience in monastic life
to recognise that consciousness of failure and
frailty must not lead to despondency, but rather to
complete trust and confidence in God's help.
[GBH]

Oblates know how to be not perfect, but happy, a
paschal spirituality that can embrace failure and
that can enable them to care for and heal the
wounds of others, rather than sprinkling on them
the salt of judgement that discourages and
belittles. [Oblates Congress]

How do I respond to the weaknesses of others?

WORKSHOPS

With the plough he ennobled and elevated human
toil. [Paul VI]

Idleness is the enemy of the soul., the brothers
should have specified periods for manual labor as
well as for prayerful reading [48]...the workshop
where we are to toil faithfully at all these tasks is
the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the
community. [RB 4]

Benedict said to the Goth monk whose sickle he
had retrieved from the lake]: 'there now work on
and be sad no longer'. Work on and be full of joy
for God is well pleased with our efforts...The doing
of ordinary things, day in and day out, out of love
for God, is extraordinarily important...Live the
monastic life faithfully and lovingly and you will
have something precious to say and to show. [GBH
48,67]

***How do I toil faithfully? How does work earth
me?***

IN THE GUEST HOUSE

All guests who present themselves are to be
welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a
stranger and you welcomed me...Proper honor
must be shown to all, especially to those who
share our faith and to pilgrims. [RB 53]

Oblates are called to listen patiently, attentively,
with humanity, without judgement...to be present
to others, to offer them a welcome, in a world
where often people feel unwelcomed, alienated.
This does not mean seeking the limelight, the
headlines: it means being inconspicuous, even on
the margins...this humility is a sign of outer and
inner freedom. Just as wild flowers in a meadow,
even if they are not directly admired by others, still
make the world more beautiful, so Oblates in a
discreet way show forth the joy of being disciples
of Jesus. [Oblates Congress]

How do I embody hospitality in my daily life?



Celebrating St Benedict with meet ups

The LCSB responded bigheartedly to the idea of meeting up locally around St Benedict's feast day.

James Westlake (East Anglia Group), and Rob MacKay (Northern Lights Group, joining from Scotland), started us off with a visit to Ely Cathedral on 19 June, followed hot on their heels two days later with a visit to the same cathedral by others from the East Anglia Group. Three enthusiastic attendees recounted the amazing Threads Through Creation exhibition with a recommendation that we visit it if we see it coming to our area: <https://www.jacqui-textile.com/bible/>

East Anglia had wonderful weather for a bring-and-share lunch, tea and cake later on, the opportunity for a couple to climb the beautiful Lantern Tower, and join the cathedral choir in the chancel for choral evensong.

At the end of June the Wolverhampton Benedict Way faithfully met up to share the Rule, Lectio and prayer, as they do every month.

On 5 July the Northern Lights Group enjoyed the Heslops' hospitality, with delicious home cooking, and a historical walk round the locality of Sale. Some fascinating facts about famous people were discovered. They enjoyed a beautiful time of prayer and reflection accompanied by music, led by three of the guests. There was yet more eating to round off what was described as a joyous and spirit-filled day. Mark and Anne lit a candle for each of their guests' intentions at church the following morning.

On 9 July we saw another first: Adam had contacted Chilworth Abbey, and a sizeable group of members and friends met at the monastery to attend Vespers and then enjoy the grounds with a relaxed picnic, where Fr John came to join them and extend warm Benedictine hospitality.

Two gatherings took place on 10 July! The Thames and Chiltern Group had lunch at the Abbot's Kitchen Café at St Alban's Cathedral and afterwards were treated to a Bach Corner organ recital before admiring more of the cathedral interior. Others had a lovely time in Bushy Park, benefitting from the shelter of an ancient tree whilst pondering the Rule of St Benedict, sharing their favourite passages with each other.

The Southeastern Group enjoyed a meetup at Malling Abbey, where a fellow fan of St Benedict, Reverend Jane Winter, an oblate of Malling Abbey, joined us. We learnt a great deal from her about Bishop Gundulf and the abbey's foundation. The sisters were praying for us as we chatted, prayed, lunched and went on our Emmaus walks in their idyllic grounds—a blessed day indeed.

And, finally, Alain and Nicole Anderton, from our Northern Group, went to Mass on Sunday 20 July at the Abbaye de Valognes, which is a French Benedictine Abbey for nuns about 20 minutes' drive from their house in France.

Isn't it wonderful that all these meet ups were inspired by one man 1500 years ago!

Image on previous page: Ely Cathedral



Mass in France



Northern Lights gather in Sale



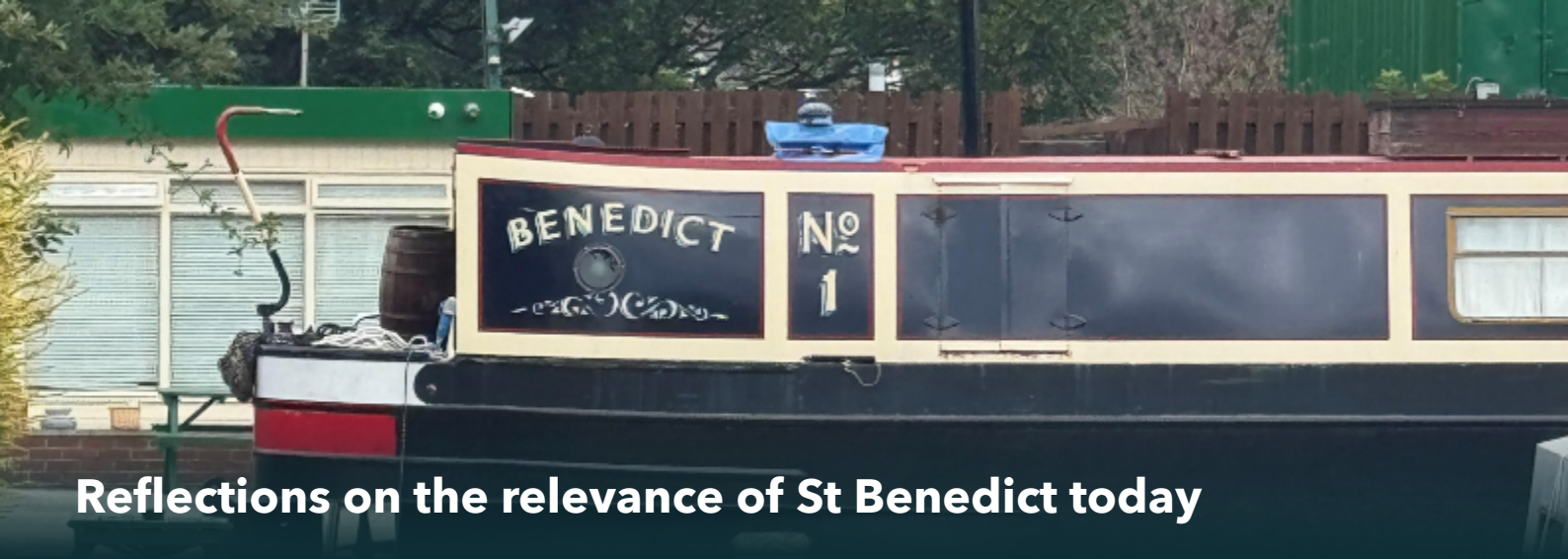
LCSB South East at Malling Abbey



Pondering the Rule in Bushy Park



Chilworth Abbey



Reflections on the relevance of St Benedict today

During St Benedict Week, the oblates of Ampleforth spent time considering St Benedict's relevance to us today. Here follow seven individual reflections.

Fifteen hundred years ago Europe was engulfed in uncertainty, fear, moral corruption, violence and warfare. In those dark times many felt their world had lost any moral compass.

Today, our world sadly finds itself in similar darkness. We are close to countries devastated by war; we witness violence and cruelty on an unbelievable scale; we live in a society where behaviour is increasingly amoral and traditional respected values are ignored; where at times life itself is no longer precious and the sick and the vulnerable not cherished; where for most belief in God is irrelevant, and for some it is something to be mocked and ridiculed.

St Benedict and his monastic companions, amid the confusion of their times, wanted to find a way forward that gave a meaning to life, a true compass. They were searching for God. Today so many are searching for something though they don't know what it is they seek. Something to rescue them from our current darkness.

What could be more relevant to these people today, than to hear the voice of St Benedict in his Prologue to The Rule, quoting psalm 33, crying out: "Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?" Deep down, there are so many today who would long to cry "I do!".

More than ever we desperately need the wisdom; the gentle, yet perceptively balanced, guidance; the faith-filled love of St Benedict in our lives today!

I was struck by the words from the gospel of a recent ferial day, and here paraphrased:

Jesus welcomed them and then preached.

Jesus' welcome enabled their receptivity to the word.

Those words reminded me of Pope Francis' statement to Benedictine Oblates gathered in Rome in September 2023, saying that they were/are "models of welcome". This I believe is what we as Oblates can offer to the church and to the world; a welcome that invites the listener to discover Christ who is at the heart of that welcome and to whom our welcome points. Others can then sow seed in the ground that we have tilled by way of welcome.

May we always be conscious of the importance of the welcome that we extend to everyone, whoever they are and in whatever situation in life they are to be found.

I feel St Benedict is relevant to the church today, as his rule is still one of relevance and guidance to our pursuit of a godly life. His rule encourages us to think of others and their needs before our own. Christ's love shines through in the way he guides his followers to behave and is an example appropriate to Christians today. His Opus Dei still offers a structured prayer life and is a great help (hopefully) to Christians using their days to both their secular work and God's work in the Opus Dei.

In our Western world dominated by consumerism, materialism and extremism, I believe Benedict's emphasis of balance and moderation to be crucial. These qualities are essential for human community and our flourishing.

St Benedict marked European culture more than he would ever have realised. The Rule of Saint Benedict proved to be a foundational text that not only helped build and preserve religious communities through the centuries, but which has many useful lessons for laity today as well. The world in general needs more respect for the variety of gifts people have. Some people are able, active and outgoing. Think, for example, of migrants. Others have different, even contrasting, talents. They may be quiet, reflective and caring of needs close to home. Think, for example, of isolated rural communities. A community, or world, that thrives will be one that is respectful of all differences and varieties of talent. Another rule that Saint Benedict advocated was balance. He recommended balance between prayer and the study of scripture, on the one hand, and manual labour, on the other hand. He suggested that the daily rhythm during the course of a year be varied, or balanced, according to both the liturgical year and the passing seasons. Saint Benedict inspired communities founded on respect and balance. The busy, competitive world of today would surely benefit from more of both.

One area in which St Benedict is relevant today is in his stress on hospitality: "all guests are to be welcomed as Christ" (RB 53,1), which is relevant particularly to how we see refugees, asylum seekers, and more generally, people who are different from us in any way, whom we might see as "other".

Another way in which the Benedictine way of life is important as an example to the wider world is in the stress on simplicity and frugality, which is much needed these days, in view of the increasing need to share the earth's resources more equally and to reduce the use of fossil fuels. (cf. Basil Hume, *Searching for God*, IV, 5, p135)

Benedictines don't really have a cult of St Benedict, we focus on his Rule. And yes the proclamation acknowledges the spread of the Rule across Europe as vitally shaping our civilisation, but I know Holy Mother Church doesn't institute such things purely retrospectively. There has to be some forward-looking purpose. And so from the proclamation, I would say that "*Pacis Nuntius*" is something that Europe, nay the world, needs right now. From the Rule, St Benedict gives us the image of the humble ruler in the Abbot, someone who listens to the thoughts of all, even those who would normally be overlooked, before making his decision, remembering that he must answer to God for his community. How much we need that kind of leadership! That radical hospitality to the ideas of others! That concern that we should come all together to eternal life (or even good in this life).



An Unlikely Cornerstone

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Full Index

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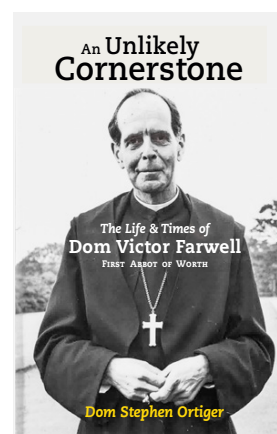
FR STEPHEN spent years working on his 'magnum opus,' an exploration of the life and times of Victor Farwell, who led the Worth monastic Community for 31 years. Abbot Victor was as understated as he was creative and effective; his impact is clear in the boldness of the Abbey Church, the Peru foundation, Lay Community and other initiatives.

However his depths lay hidden from most. Stephen brings out Victor's unpromising start and struggle with depression which deepened both his empathy and people skills for the challenges ahead: his vocation was entwined with the second World War, rapid social change and the impact of Vatican II.

Stephen's lively style adeptly weaves individual characters and experiences into a fascinating narrative that informs and entertains, bringing out the context and origins of the Worth Community of today, and the seismic changes in monastic and church life during the 20th century.

Stephen shows how Victor's personal commitment to prayer shaped and fed him as he dealt with challenges that have many parallels in our own time of flux and turmoil.

Stephen has left us a rounded portrait of Abbot Victor and a compelling story of the monastery where they made their home.

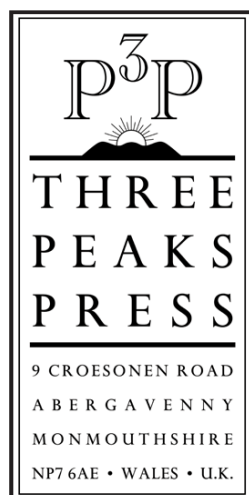


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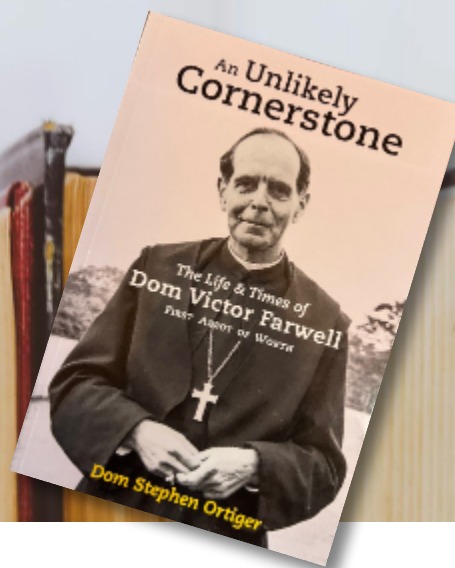
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Book review

An Unlikely Cornerstone by Dom Stephen Ortiger



This book is a biography of an individual as well as a community. In telling the life and times of Abbot Victor Farwell, Stephen Ortiger also charts the history of Worth Abbey from its foundation. As a tribute to Abbot Victor, it also serves as one for Dom Stephen whose voice, while never dominating his subject, is heard clearly through the narrative of his own times too.

The first abbot of Worth Abbey was, in many ways, an elusive figure; quiet and seemingly serious. Ortiger uses his personal knowledge to bring to life the man behind the abbatial mask. We see here St Paul's maxim lived out that God chooses what is weak by human reckoning. In the young Farwell's novitiate at Downside Abbey his peers included Bernard Orchard and Illtyd Trethowan, both Oxbridge graduates, and Victor was to experience the sense of being "a minnow amongst the Intellectual Tritons" (p. 30). It is clear from the book that Downside was not a good match for him.

His own struggles with depression and lack of self-worth gave him empathy for those who were finding life difficult, and his pastoral gifts came to light particularly during his time at Worth Abbey, first as housemaster and later as headmaster. It was here that his gifts as an innovator were fully developed; "forward looking, pioneering and original" (p. 49): Victor Farwell very much fitted the Worth mould. And it was at Worth that he was to flourish. As well as picking out his strengths, this narrative does not shrink on the 'wilderness years' and the mental health breakdowns that Abbot Victor suffered. Ortiger treats these with compassion and honesty. He also provides insight into another, more hidden aspect of the Abbot's life, that of his deep commitment to prayer and contemplation: here we are very much introduced to the 'private' monk.

This book is also of interest as a wider history of the English Benedictine Congregation and English monasticism during the portentous years following Vatican II. *Sui generis* as all the EBC houses are, the unique characteristics of Downside, Ealing and Worth Abbey can be discerned in the narrative. The book also charts some of the momentous changes the Congregation underwent in the period. One of Abbot Victor's pioneering actions as abbot president was to facilitate the, long overdue, attendance of the EBC nuns at General Chapter in 1969. Chapter 21, on the entrance of the nuns, describes his recognition of the contribution the nuns would bring to the Congregation and to the EBC Commissions. This is a particularly valuable chapter outlining nun-monk collaborations, not least the now often forgotten 'Little Worth' scheme. The latter is just one example of how Abbot Victor was sometimes ahead of his time in his innovative initiatives.

Written in an engaging and accessible manner, the short chapters make it easy to follow the history although sometimes the shifts in chronology can be confusing for the reader. Stephen Ortiger left the book unfinished on his death in 2024, and Michael Woodward has done a skilful editorial job in presenting his text together in a coherent and accessible style.

It is wonderful that Dom Stephen's long labour on this 'memoir' has now been published. The volume will have an important place not only on the shelves of those who knew Abbot Victor but all who are interested in Benedictine spirituality, prayer and English monastic history.

Dr Scholastica Jacob

Herbert Kelly Institute

Honorary Fellow Durham University



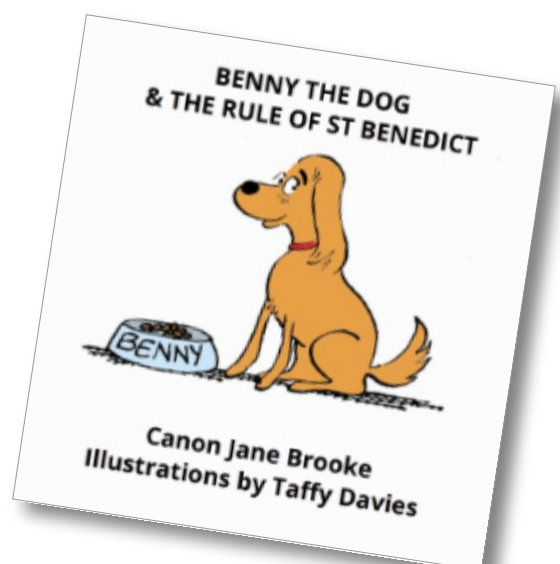
Benny the Dog Review by Anastasia Cassidy

Anastasia is eight years old and came with her family to Cefn Lea this Easter. At Cefn Lea all the youngsters in the family group were given a copy of 'Benny the Dog', which is now or will imminently be available for download on the website for all families. Anastasia kindly agreed to write a book review which you will find below.

Benny the Dog was written by Canon Jane Brooke, a good friend of the LCSB, who wrote to us and said she had created a character in the form of a dog, in order to offer stories demonstrating the Rule of St Benedict to children aged under 11. We accepted very positively, even more so as Canon Jane asked a friend of hers, a distinguished book illustrator called Taffy Davies, to do the illustrations. We are hugely grateful to Canon Jane and Taffy.

"One of the best books of teaching! It taught me that teaching can be turned into a story and I felt closer to the Lord, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And I learnt a lot about the Benedictines and St Benedict. In rating I rate it ten out of ten! I recommend it for Catholic children at the age of 7+ and grown ups just starting to love God."

Anastasia Cassidy



Upcoming events



Summer Gathering

Worth Abbey

22-25 August 2025

The theme for our Community gathering this year is 'Pilgrims in Hope'; we shall explore how we all can become pilgrims of hope. There will be a variety of activities and workshops for all ages, including bedtime storytelling, a people timeline creative workshop, telling the bible in 60 minutes with all ages, reading the psalms as poetry, storytelling for all ages, and a workshop on engaging the senses and engaging everyone when thinking about stories in the Bible. The booking deadline is **1 August**, so do book here: [Summer Gathering \(22-Aug-2025\) · ChurchSuite Events](#) or complete the booking form on the [website here >>>](#)

Teens summer camp - Living Legends

Worth Abbey

25-28 August 2025

The Teenage Week in August 2025 is a residential event at Worth Abbey, run by the Lay Community of St Benedict. Non-residential places are also available if you live locally.

There will be inspiring talks, powerful prayer, walks, games and so much more! It will run from Monday 25 August-Thursday 28 August for anyone in Year 7 or upwards. We will be exploring legends of faith—biblical heroes and incredible saints of the past—and how their stories impact ours so that we too can be living legends in our journey with Jesus. Cost: £150. Non-residential rate: £15 per day (including lunch), or £25 per day (including lunch and supper). Subsidies are available. Please get in touch for details (Sharon: admin@lcsb.uk), or [sign up here](#).

Season of creation

1 September-4 October

We shall be marking the season this year with specially themed Sunday evening services; with a special prayer at Morning Prayer and Vespers; and with creation-themed Lectio Divina sessions during September. Bishop John Arnold (Bishop of Salford), will speak to us online on Sunday 14 September (6pm) and we are excited that the Ecological Conversion Group <https://theecg.org/> will also be speaking at an online talk on 23 September. More information will be on our website shortly.

Looking for the Light retreat

Ulverston

14-16 November 2025

Janet Lees and her team are inviting us to a truly ecumenical, inclusive and exciting weekend at Swarthmoor Hall, the home of the Quaker Movement. We shall explore early dissent in post Civil War England in Cumbria; visit some Quaker meeting houses; engage in bread making and eating and consider what it does for us when we make and share it; walk in Cumbria; enjoy silence in worship; enjoy a lovely place, friendship, and good food. Cost: £80 per person, including all meals. For further details and online bookings please go to [Looking for the Light \(14-Nov-2025\) · ChurchSuite Events](#)



Pray with Benedictines!



- 1 Pluscarden Abbey
- 2 Largs Convent
- 3 Rostrevor Abbey
- 4 Kylemore Abbey
- 5 Glenstal Abbey
- 6 Stanbrook Abbey
- 7 Ampleforth Abbey
- 8 Community of the Resurrection
- 9 Curzon Park Abbey
- 10 Colwich Abbey
- 11 Turvey Abbey
- 12 Mucknell Abbey
- 13 Belmont Abbey
- 14 St Gregory's
- 15 Prinknash Abbey
- 16 Buckfast Abbey
- 17 Salisbury Priory
- 18 Quarr Abbey
- 19 St Cecilia's Abbey
- 20 Edgware Abbey
- 21 Ealing Abbey
- 22 Tyburn Convent
- 23 Douai Abbey
- 24 Farnborough Abbey
- 25 Chilworth Abbey
- 26 Worth Abbey
- 27 Grace and Compassion Convent
- 28 Malling Abbey
- 29 Minster Abbey

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