

# AMPLEFORTH COLLEGE MASS

## ON THE SOLEMNITY OF ST BENEDICT 2024

The context of everything we believe and everything that we do as disciples of Jesus is a relationship of infinite love. A love affair between God and ourselves.

The very fact that you and I are alive, that we exist at all arises from this very fundamental truth-you are infinitely loved. When Paul therefore said in Colossians *'let the peace of Christ reign in your hearts.'* He was not suggesting something impossible; he was directing them/us to a reality. Earlier in the letter he said his call was to make God's word/message fully known. What was this word, this message *'Christ in you, the hope of glory'*. You are loved so much that whether you know it or not, whether you feel it or not and whether you believe it or not God has implanted in you His very presence, which is love – Christ in you the hope of glory.

Let that sink in. If you want to know where Jesus is at this very moment, He is right where you are. You live in Him. He is closer than the breath you are breathing. So, when Paul suggests that we should let the peace of Christ reign in our hearts he's suggesting nothing impossible, supernatural, or out of our reach because Christ is in you, we live in Him. It was this amazing truth that so overwhelmed St Benedict that looking around at how life was being lived he decided to seek this peace which could be found in Christ.

If we were created by God so that we can have and enjoy a relationship of love, then this fact alone is the most important basis upon which to enter into and understand the place of prayer in our life as a disciple of Jesus. As you may know Pope Francis has designated this year as a Year of Prayer in preparation of an importance year next year – a Jubilee Year- which will be dedicated to hope. St Benedict would give us a very simple and sensible piece of advice. If you want to find peace, if you want to live in hope then don't look for them outside of yourself, but find space, time each day to stop, to look and to listen.

Nothing will change in our life unless we choose to make it happen, we stop, we step off the treadmill and find a quiet space. That quiet space presents us with the more important space within our own heads and hearts. I find that the most exhausting thing in life is not so much the many things that are clamouring for my attention, it's the constant cacophony of noise inside my own head! The fears, the anxiety, the unrealistic expectations, and the deadlines I give myself but never meet. Stop.

Then I look, I give myself time to notice what I am feeling, what is concerning me most, where I am not at peace, and I talk to God about all this stuff so that it clears the path to focus on the most important thing - Christ in me, the hope of glory. I look at what direction my life is taking, and I look at where I am being invited to trust and change. I realise that He is the peace because he always speaks to my need. In fact, I've learnt that God wants more for me than I do for myself. God wants your happiness more than you do. So simply ask: Lord release within me your peace, your presence, let me experience your love now even in the midst of this mess, this confusion, this excitement.

Then listen. In the stillness we can hear his voice. Not audibly, but we get a word and image and reassurance. Once we prefer nothing whatever to Christ, once we realise that he cannot take his eyes off us. Then prayer becomes not about what I say, but about how I choose to relate to life. I pray my life because I choose to let His peace/presence reign in my heart.

I wish you a blessed St Benedict's Day. I pray that today you will make a commitment to stop, to look and to listen each day and find yourself overwhelmed by the one who has loved you into being. I pray that you yourself will become a living prayer to the God who wants your happiness more than you want it yourself.

Abbot Robert Igo, OSB

Ampleforth Abbey

21 March 2024