



AMPLEFORTH ABBAY

Feast of St Benedict 2023

Not long after the monks from Peramiho Abbey in Tanzania arrived in 1957 to found what was to become the first 'all African' monastery at Hanga in Tanzania a young visitor came to their door. The then Prior asked the young man what he wanted and without haste the young man declared he wanted to be a monk. The Prior asked the obvious question: "*Why do you want to become a monk?*" The reply was as surprising as it was profound. The young man said: "*I was recently baptised, so I want to live out my baptism to the full.*" I think had I been that Prior I would have been tempted to take the young man straight to the Chapel and give him Solemn Profession, no need to spoil him with any formation program or *ratio institutionis*. In his simple response he had said all that was necessary. I want to live my baptism to the full!

With your presence among us Br Honorius Niima and this great blessing of receiving the renewal of your vows on behalf of Abbot Christian and your community of Our Lady Help of Christians, Ndanda, it means that we are linked to the three Abbeys of Tanzania: Peramiho, Ndana, Hanga and Mvimwa. It gives us a real opportunity to celebrate the international and global nature of our Benedictine charism. It is a living and tangible sign of how the wisdom and gift of St Benedict transcends culture, continents, colour, and language; because the Gospel and the Rule provides us with a common language and a common monastic culture that enables us to see one another as brothers – disciples of the same Lord. Br Honorius thank you for giving us this beautiful gift. "*Asante sana yangu mpendwa.*"

Equally God's providence has provided for us on this feast of our Holy Father St Benedict the opportunity to welcome Anne, Mo, and Barry as Candidates for oblation. Like Br Honorius, like the members of this monastic community, you have discerned that you want to live your baptism to the full and to nourish your Christian discipleship by becoming Oblates of St Benedict in association with this Abbey of St Laurance. You are more than welcome to join us in this school of the Lord.

Your presence and desire are a wonderful sign of how this little Rule of St Benedict has found an important place in the spiritual life of lay men and women throughout the world. A Rule written for monks and nuns but a Rule that is a genuine guide to Christian living – a framework for discipleship. If we want to live in union with Jesus, to become like Jesus, then we must live

like Jesus lived. He listened to the Father so that He could fulfil the Father's Will. He spent time immersed in prayer and in scripture learning from the Father to shape His choices. He surrounded himself with people with whom he could experience the communion that existed between His Father and Holy Spirit.

He knew that this intimate communion and participation in love would naturally lead to reaching out to those most wounded, confused and in need of hope and direction. Discipleship is inseparable from mission. So, Benedict in founding his monastery wanted to provide a school of encounter where all could learn to be moulded into Christ and then lead others to find that Christ is the only lens that helps us see clearly and correctly. Benedictines have been noted throughout history for transforming the culture and environment in which they are deeply rooted. As schools of evangelisation monasteries are always outward looking while drawing everyone and everything to the heart of God.

St Benedict through his love for God has given to us a new way of looking at life, a path that leads to happiness, as the first reading pointed out. He does this precisely because he learnt to put God at the centre of everything he did. He lived and breathed God because baptism had immersed him in the very life of the trinity, it had opened to him the inheritance of eternal life as the Gospel mentioned.

Br Honourable you will renew your vows and contribute and commit yourself to the great work that the Missionary Congregation of St Ottilien have and are doing in Tanzania. While Mo, Barry, and Anne, you will join us in our desire to make God known and loved in our country, you will be a seed of transformation in your local Catholic community and neighbourhood. You will through your prayer and reading of God's Word, through your growth in holiness make a difference, because that what Benedictine disciples of Jesus do. Why, because they want to live their baptism to the full.