

## Oblates of St Gregory the Great and St Frances of Rome Meeting Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024

We met at St Benedict's Church and Hall in Stratton on the Fosse on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November for our Advent meeting and for the Oblation of Anthony Speaight. Richard Mills preached at the mass on the feast of St Andrew. The Oblation and the Renewal of the Oblates' promises took place at the Midday Office. Fr James highlighted the key points in the Prologue: the importance of listening and praying before we undertake any task. We must encourage one another and keep our hearts open, bringing the light of Christ to others. Living in community St Benedict reminds us to keep our tongue from evil and to turn away from wrongdoing, always seeking after peace. This is a lifetime's work; it requires patience and perseverance.

On the eve of Advent, we reflected on the meaning of this holy season and what St Bernard wrote in an Advent sermon: *This middle coming is like a road that leads from the first coming to the last. At the first, Christ was our redemption; at the last, he will become manifest as our life; but in this middle way he is our rest and our consolation.* In this middle way, the Lord is our rest and our consolation.

Advent is a time of prayer. The Lord seeks us out: *If anyone loves me, he will keep my words, and the Father will love him, and we shall come to him.* Dame Maria Boulding of Stanbrook Abbey many years ago described this as the Sacrament of Advent and wrote as follows, *What we are celebrating is God's desire to give himself to man in fellowship, his effective offer of love in Christ, the preparation of mankind by God to receive the gift, and our continuing need to be open to him in our personal, communal and global life. Since Advent is the sacrament of this meeting, it reveals something of both parties concerned.*

We turned to Chapter 19 of the Rule – *Our Approach to Prayer*- to help and guide us in prayer. St Benedict tells us that we pray the Divine Office before the majesty of God with his angels: we look forward with anticipation to the heavenly liturgy, doing what the angelic powers do; we are companions and imitators of the angels. He teaches us that we are in the presence of God and in company with the angels. Let us pray with faith and conviction, paying attention to the words of the psalms and Holy Scripture, keeping in mind the importance of our interior attitude so that the words we sing / recite will be in harmony.

We spent time in lectio, dwelling on the gospel passage for the First Sunday of Advent: our liberation is at hand. We have no reason to fear the second coming of Christ if we allow God to teach us how to grow in holiness. We ask him to help us to love one another with generosity and integrity.

Fr James reminded us that the new Liturgical Year was the year of St Luke. He shared some passages from St Luke's gospel on prayer and gave us a copy of an image of St Luke painted by *El Greco*. It was a pleasure to welcome Patrick, Mark, Chris and Seb for the first time.

**Fr James Hood**  
**Oblate Master**