

## Oblates of St Gregory the Great

### Meeting Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at Downside Abbey

It was with great pleasure that we received an invitation from Abbot Nicholas to visit Downside just two weeks before the monks move to Southgate House, Buckfast, a stepping stone while they make a permanent decision about the future. This was also the first time we Oblates had met for two years.

On a blue sky, chilly winter Mendip morning some members arrived early enough to visit the monastery cemetery to pray for the souls of the deceased monks and others interred there. It was also an opportunity to remember and pray for the soul of Dom Alexander George, our former Oblate Master who had died recently after transferring his stability to Belmont Abbey.

The gathering commenced with a conventual mass with the Community, celebrated by our Oblate Master, Dom Boniface Hill. The theme of his homily was prayer and penance and provided essential guidance for the forthcoming season of Lent. Father Abbot then took us through our Oblate promises so that we could renew them in front of the Community and congregation. Intercessory prayers were offered for the Community at this time of change; for the Oblates, giving thanks we could meet again after the pandemic and for the international situation in Eastern Europe, especially the people of Ukraine.

Following Mass we adjourned to the calefactory for refreshments with the monks. It was helpful to have informal personal discussions about the future for the community and its Oblates (for whom the community offers daily prayers).

This led on to the Midday Office in the abbey church.

Lunch was taken in the monks' refectory with the community, a talking and chuckling meal with plenty of time to enjoy a delicious food with wine, to socialise among ourselves and with the monks.

We closed in the early afternoon and left for home, tinged with sadness at the prospect of change but also with optimism at the opportunities this decision offers. We have been assured that the Community values its Oblates and wishes to see the group flourish. Once the monks have settled at Southgate House it will be time to plan the future of the Community, including its Oblates. Meanwhile they are steadfastly in our prayers.

The Oblates of St Gregory are most grateful to the Abbot and his secretary, Ms Allyson Jones, to Dom Boniface and the Community for a memorable occasion, both spiritual and uplifting.

Timothy Chambers  
February 2022