

## English Benedictines gather on Sunday to discuss future



Members of the English Benedictine Congregation (EBC) are due to meet tomorrow for a specially arranged gathering to discuss how to best foster new life in their monasteries.

The EBC is composed of 13 autonomous houses of monks and nuns, with 10 based in England and three in the United States. These include Ampleforth, in North Yorkshire, and Downside, in Somerset, Worth, in West Sussex and St Benedict's, in Ealing, West London all of which oversee independent secondary schools.

The Extraordinary General Chapter will take place at Buckfast Abbey, in Devon, from Sunday until next Wednesday.

This week members of the “English Benedictine Congregation Forum”, made up of members of different monasteries, particularly younger Religious, have been meeting. A key question facing the houses is how to boost numbers. In 1973, there were 506 monks and 136 nuns, whereas today the figure stands at 279 monks and 35 nuns.

Abbot Richard Yeo, the Abbot President of the EBC, explained that the meeting had been called by the Ordinary General Chapter – made up of Abbots and Abbesses and monastery delegates – which met last year. The ordinary chapter meets every four years. He said the meeting would look “at the challenges facing all our monasteries, in particular how to promote renewal of the monastic life in the coming years, how to foster new life in our monasteries, and how to make our communities ready to receive and form new members.”

One of the English Church's most notable figures of the twentieth century, Cardinal Basil Hume, was a pupil and monk of Ampleforth while alumni at the schools include former Cabinet Secretary Lord Hunt, Lord [Chris] Patten, Chancellor of Oxford University and John Varley, former Group Chief Executive of Barclays.

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