

from ABBOT CUTHBERT MADDEN OSB

To All Parents
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Dear Parents,

For the last five years I have spoken at Exhibition about the involvement of the monastic community in our educational enterprise at Ampleforth. In particular I have emphasised the importance of building up within the College the Benedictine and Catholic values which we believe will sustain your children in their future life. This year, you may recall, I spoke about our desire to foster self-knowledge among our students and the development of a true and deep friendship between each other and with Jesus Christ. Our determination to strengthen the Benedictine character of the College means that I am working closely with the headmaster to ensure this aspiration is translated into reality, and it also requires me to try to ensure that the necessary resources are available in the monastic community. Ageing has taken its toll, such that we have now reached a critical moment for our community and it is necessary to make changes so that our educational and other works can be sustained into the future.

Fr Chad and Fr Oswald will be stepping down from their housemaster positions at the end of the summer term 2011. They will be completing one more year in these posts. This decision clearly affects closely all those in these two houses, for whom there will be particular disappointment, but I am writing to all parents since from September 2011 there will, at least for the immediate future, be no monastic housemasters.

I have been led to this decision by careful consideration of the needs of the monastery and by the needs of the monastic involvement in the school as a whole. It is vital that Ampleforth has a strong monastic centre, and I must do all I can to maintain a vibrant community which is able to accept and nurture vocations to the monastic life. At the same time, the central chaplaincy we have been developing over the past six years can bring all the students in the school into contact with members of the monastic community.

I am asking Fr Oswald to assume responsibility within the community for promoting vocations to the monastic way of life. Fr Chad will concentrate full time on the work of the school chaplaincy. Ampleforth needs to build a strong monastery precisely in order to continue its historic involvement in education, in parochial work, and in pastoral work here at the Abbey.

I acknowledge that there is always pain and disappointment when a particular housemaster stands down to take on new work for the community. I know that Fr Chad and Fr Oswald will be much missed. Fr Chad has been housemaster of St Oswald's since September 2003 and Fr Oswald of St Dunstan's since September 2005, and in that time both have achieved much of lasting value. I acknowledge, too, that the tradition of

monastic housemasters at Ampleforth over many years has been a great gift and has brought many blessings to a great number of our students. Our more recent experience is that lay housemasters and housemistresses working with members of the monastic community can continue Ampleforth's strong spiritual and pastoral traditions and we are confident will further strengthen its identity as a distinctive Benedictine and Catholic school.

I will be taking a close interest in the appointments now necessary for St Dunstan's and St Oswald's, as well as in further building plans we will need to put in place for these houses as they pass into the hands of lay housemasters. The headmaster will be in touch with parents in these houses to outline what he will be doing to make the right appointments.

I assure you of my continuing prayers for you and your children,

Yours sincerely,