

GRAND MASTER'S PILGRIMAGE REPORT
TO THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM NORFOLK UK
BY MONSIGNOR ANTHONY K. TOMS EGCLJ KMLJ
5TH – 8TH JUNE 2014

Since becoming Grand Master, the Most Honourable Don Carlos Gereda de Borbón, Marqués de Almazán, has introduced pilgrimages every two years to stress the spirituality of the Order. It is a special opportunity to embrace the ecumenism of the Order and enhance its fundamental spiritual nature.

The Australian Contingent comprised of the Grand Prior Chev Will Bailey and Mrs Dorothy Bailey, the National Chaplain Mons Tony Toms, Mr David Slater, Professor Charles George and Mrs Elizabeth George.

Heads of Jurisdiction, National Hospitallers, PRC Members and various officials arrived on Thursday afternoon in preparation for their meeting with the Grand Master on Friday morning and afternoon.

Friday morning was given over the address of the Grand Master to the 45 Heads of Jurisdiction. Mons Tony Toms led the Opening and Closing Prayers.

Friday afternoon was given over to the Grand Hospitaller's Report and discussion on Leprosy in the world today. Mons Tony Toms led the Opening and Closing Prayers.

Following the Grand Hospitaller's Report all members of the Pilgrimage met at the Anglican Shrine at Walsingham for Vespers led by the Shrine Administrator, Bishop Lindsey Irwin, originally from Camberwell Victoria.

Friday evening comprised of welcome drinks and a buffet supper in a grand marquee in the Abbey grounds dating to the 12th Century, only the massive main nave arch remains, following the dissolution of the monasteries at the time of the Reformation. Entertainment at the buffet supper was provided by a group of English a Capella singers.

Saturday morning was taken by two talks on leprosy the first by Rev Canon Pat Atkinson MBE and the second by the Rt Hon Ann Widdecombe DSG, Vice-President of The Leprosy Mission.

A part of pilgrimages to Walsingham is the Sprinkling at the Holy Well. Sprinkling is a healing service. Bishop Irwin gave a short address and prayers, and the pilgrims made their way to the well where they received a sip of water, were blessed by the chaplains by the sign of the cross on their foreheads and then had water poured over their hands.

After lunch was a Holy Mile Walk from the Anglican Shrine to the Catholic Slipper Shrine for an Ecumenical Service. I suggest that the surveyor who said it was a mile should be sacked! The Homily at the Ecumenical Service was given by Rev Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP.

On Saturday evening a celebratory Dinner was held in the Marquee in the Abbey grounds. The Grand Master in his address thanked Chev Claus-Peter Pokolm and his deputy Mons Anthony Toms of the PRC for their over of twelve years on the international website and the Public Relations Commission. The Grand Master also announced that he had re-constituted the Spiritual Advisory Council and that new members were Bishop Lindsay Irvin and Monsignor Anthony Toms.

Following the Dinner a candlelit procession made its way back to the Shrine from the Abby while singing the Walsingham Pilgrim Hymn and concluded with the night prayer of the Church, Compline, led by Bishop Irvin. A fireworks display concluded Compline.

On Sunday morning the Feast of Pentecost, the different Denominations went to their respected church services.

Following lunch the pilgrimage concluded with Vespers in the Anglican Shrine Church.

Anthony K. Toms
National Chaplain

8 June 2014