



Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey



June, 2008

June Meeting

The last meeting for this year will be June 15th and begin with Mass at 3:00 PM in the Abbey Church with Abbot Placid as celebrant. The topic of discussion will be Gregorian Chant and the Liturgy of the Hours.

Hospitality and Prayer

“All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me* (Matt 25:35)” (RB 53:1). I think we all understand the importance of this passage from the Rule but I wonder if we think about it at any great depth? We often make room and time for the person who comes to our home for a visit, but how happy are we when we do so? Does it not often depend on who it is? Do we really treat all visitors the same? And do we see Christ in each visitor we entertain? As relatives and friends begin to visit during the summer, perhaps we can keep this part of the Rule in mind, particularly when it is not our favorite relative or the one who stays a few days longer than we prefer. Let us start this vacation season remembering that we are to greet all guests as Christ.

Let us also remember, as Benedictines, we should make time for the most important guest of all, Jesus Christ himself. Fr. Demetrius Dumm, OSB, in his book *Cherish Christ Above All*, reminds us: “... the essence of monastic witness is expressed in the words *vacare Deo*, that is “to make room for God (page 145).” For those of us old enough to remember,



we used to sing about “those lazy, hazy, crazy, days of summer.” Somehow summer has become even crazier than we remember over the past 20 or so years. People are constantly on the go during the summer. It was even observed by the late Holy Father, John Paul I, that we seem to come back from vacation even more exhausted than when we left (*Illustrissimi*, 1978). It is easy to let all the events that occur in the summer crowd out God in our daily life.

Fr. Dumm reminds us if Benedictines “... have a reputation for hospitality it is first of all because they are hospitable toward God’s mystery (Dumm, p. 145).” We must make

room, make the time, to spend with our Lord. Too often we let the busyness of the summer over-ride our obligations as host to Jesus, but he, too, requires our attention just as any other guest – more so when we remember “...Hospitality to other human beings and respect for their mystery flows naturally out of deep reverence for God’s presence (Dumm, p. 146).” So do not relax your discipline of Lectio and Liturgy of the Hours. Make sure the time set aside with Our Lord is unhurried, deliberate and special. Only then can we be truly good hosts to the guests we will welcome.

Eucharistic Adoration

While I am speaking of hospitality there is another way that Benedictines can welcome the stranger and that is by volunteering to spend an hour a week at the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel hosted by Belmont Abbey. Volunteers give an hour of their time so that others have the opportunity to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Even non-Catholics have found the chapel a place of prayer and peace. Often, it is the only chapel or church open when people are dealing with the tragedies and joys of life. It is open because many people volunteer just one hour a week.



Belmont Abbey is not the only church in our area that has perpetual adoration. You can go to the Diocese of Charlotte website, <http://www.charlottediocese.org>, and check the parishes within the diocese. Many parishes have some form of Eucharistic Adoration regularly scheduled and often they are looking for volunteers. So, if you are looking to set aside with Our Lord that is unhurried, deliberate, and special, volunteer for Eucharistic Adoration.

If you are interested in volunteering at the Abbey, please contact Marie Siebers, OblSB, at (704) 827-6734.

From Around the Monastery

Please welcome back to the Abbey Derrick Abbott, who is beginning his studies as novice, and Fr. David Kessinger, who is celebrating his 50th anniversary as a priest this month. Abbot Placid has appointed Br. Edward as the third member of the Oblate Novice team who will be working with Jim Day and Marilyn Martin-Schwan.

Wisdom from the Desert

Taken from *Paradise of the Desert Fathers*: We came from Palestine to Egypt and went to see one of the fathers. He offered us hospitality and we said, "Why do you not keep the fast when visitors come to see you? In Palestine they keep it." He replied, "Fasting is always with me but I cannot always have you here. It is useful and necessary to fast but we choose whether we will fast or not. What God commands is perfect love. I receive Christ in you and so I must do everything possible to serve you with love. When I have sent you on your way, then I can continue my rule of fasting. The sons of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them; when he is taken away from them, then they will fast."



Web Resources

The above story has similarities to other stories in the writings of John Cassian's writings and other monastics. St. Benedict recommended many such writings in addition to the scriptures as worthy of meditation (RB 73), but you do not need to buy a book of sayings. Many of them are in the public domain and can easily be found on the internet. Look for the story under "Wisdom from the Desert" at:

<http://www.coptic.net/articles/ParadiseOfDesertFathers.txt>.

Another site that is very useful is:

<http://www.osb.org/lectio/4th.html>. Do some web searches and find a few yourself. There are also several books that have been published and I will send out some suggestion in a future mailing. Try on line first and don't neglect the blogs. There are a lot of people out there pondering over these sayings and their thoughts are worth reflection. If you find some you want to share, write them down and let me know.

From the Scriptorium

Fr. Christopher Dumm is a Benedictine biblical scholar and prolific writer. His works are too numerous to list here but let me give you a few that I have found to be helpful to me. The first is *Cherish Christ Above All* which is an excellent introduction to Benedictine Spirituality. He teaches both Scripture and the Rule with simplicity and his book is highly readable. Plan on reading it twice and keeping it around. You will refer to it many times in the future. *Praying the Scriptures* is less a "how to" on scriptural prayer than an invitation to examine God's action through salvation history and in our lives. Finally, *A Mystical Portrait of Jesus: New*

Perspectives on John's Gospel is an excellent commentary, one that would compliment your *Lectio* of the Gospel, and encourage you to re-examine your own understanding of passages that perhaps have become familiar over time. All of these books are under 200 pages, easy to read, and excellent in their scholarship.

The Ordo

JUNE

- 24 Birth of John the Baptist. Solemnity.
- 28 Irenaeus, Bishop, Martyr.
- 29 Peter and Paul, Apostles. Solemnity.

JULY

- 3 Thomas, Apostle. Feast.
- 11 Benedict, Patriarch of Western Monasticism. Feast.
- 15 Bonaventure, Bishop, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 22 Mary Magdalene, Disciple of the Lord. Memorial.
- 25 James, *Apostle. Feast.
- 26 Joachim and Anne, Parents of the Virgin Mary. Memorial.
- 29 Martha, Mary and Lazarus, Hosts of the Lord. Memorial.
- 31 Ignatius of Loyola, Presbyter, Religious Founder. Memorial.

AUGUST

- 1 Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop, Religious Founder, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 6 The Transfiguration of the Lord. Feast.
- 8 Dominic, Presbyter, Religious Founder. Memorial.
- 11 Clare, Virgin, Religious Founder. Memorial.
- 14 Maximilian Mary Kolbe, Presbyter, Religious, Martyr. Memorial.
- 15 The Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. Solemnity.

July Meeting

There will be no meeting in July. Our next meeting will be August 17, 2008. If you need to reach me please write to:

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