



## Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey December, 2008

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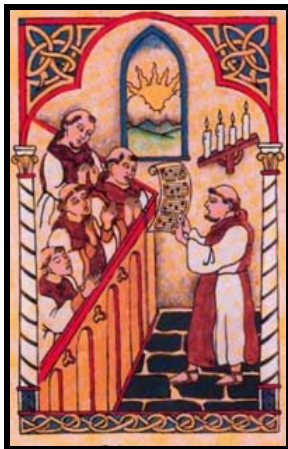
### December Meeting

There will be a meeting for the Oblates who are interested on December 21 at 3:30 PM. We will be meeting at Holy Grounds. The campus will be closed so it should be quiet. There will be soda and snacks. If you want something hot to drink, you'll need to bring it with you.

The topic of discussion is a question and answer period on the Liturgy of the Hours. If you plan to attend, please let me know at [gkcobb0428@gmail.com](mailto:gkcobb0428@gmail.com) and bring your volume(s) of the Liturgy of the Hours with you.

### Liturgy of the Hours (Second in a Series)

At our last meeting we were talking about stability and obedience. One thought that struck me is how many take up the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours because they are under a vow of obedience, The real reason for praying the Psalms is because it is essential to the stability of your prayer life. The Church has often referred to the Psalter – the 150 Psalms of the Bible – as the “School of Prayer.” All Jews at the time of Jesus prayed the Psalms three times a day, morning, afternoon (3 PM) and evening. The Church continued that tradition. For centuries Benedictines and other Christians have found this form of prayer the most beneficial for the developing a relationship with God.



It also provides structure to our prayer and reminds us of the importance of keeping the whole day holy. Remember that the most precious gift we can give to God is our time. In addition, the Psalms of the Liturgy helps us to

pray even when we do not feel like praying or cannot pray from the heart. But in this time when so many people are not at peace, where large percentages of the population are taking drugs for depression or various other stress related

issues, perhaps there has been at "treatment" that has been overlooked. By praying the Office every day, issues that were of crisis proportions seem to take on new relevance as we offer them over to a power greater than our self to manage.

We are also reminded in the Psalms that problems and issues we face are not unique or new. The Psalms reflect the emotions of us all from anger to grief, loneliness to jubilation.

Praying the Psalms persistently will, over time, develop a sense of calm and peace. But it also brings to the forefront issues that you would rather not have dealt with within your own person. Since the Psalms are from the Holy Spirit he will often use them to stir within you thoughts and perspectives that you may not have thought of before. This is not something to be avoided but embraced, pondering the meaning not only during the office but throughout the day.

Finally, by following the Liturgy of the Hours, particularly as outlined in the Rule, we come as close as we can to joining our prayer with the entire Benedictine order and the Church as a whole. So take the time and learn to use the breviary knowing you are doing a "work" that is as old as the Church – "a work" that is distinctly Benedictine as well as Christian – and as you do remember always... *Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.* (RB 43:3)

### From the Web

For those of you who missed the meeting, the Oblates have a new web site: <http://oblates.gastanhobbit.org>. This is a temporary location while the site is under development. Enough has been done, however, for you to be able to use the site. Please send me your comments and suggestions.

### Wisdom from the Desert

When the newsletter was started back in March this section was included. The reason behind it was not only were the sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers instructive but we are encouraged to read their sayings by St. Benedict himself.

“What book of the holy catholic Fathers does not resoundingly summon us along the true way to reach the Creator? Then, besides the Conferences of the Fathers, their Institutes and their Lives, there is also the rule of our father Basil. For observant and obedient monks, all these are nothing less than tools for the cultivation of virtues; . . . .” (RB 73:4-7). Andrew Louth also reminds us that:

They are not meant to be read systematically, rather their pithy, gnomic form are intended to provide many different points of contact with the very varied experience of humankind. Some sayings will strike home to one person, some to another; some will seem directed to my condition now, some will only become relevant later on. (Andrew Louth, *The Wilderness of God*, p.64.

Since many of us are reluctant to tackle a volume the size of John Cassian’s *Conferences*, shorter sayings are included in the newsletter. Larger selections can be found on the website and will be expanded over time. If you find one that you found fruitful and would like to share it please email it to me with a source. You may read one of these sayings and wonder why it was there or even why they are even put in the newsletter. But they are printed here based on the Rule and their value. With this advice in mind, the sayings printed in the newsletters will remain on the website so that you may freely go back and look up previous sayings.

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“A brother went to see Abba Silvanus on the mountain of Sinai. When he saw the brothers working hard he said to the old man, 'Do not labor for the food which perishes.(John 6:27) The old man said to his disciple, Zacharias, give the brother a book and put him in a cell without anything else.'

“So when the ninth hour came the visitor watched the door expecting someone would be sent to call him to the meal. When no one called him he got up, went to find the old man, and said to him, 'Have the brothers not eaten today?' The old man replied that they had. Then he said, 'Why did you not call me?' The old man said to him, 'Because you are a spiritual man and do not need that kind of food. We, being carnal, want to eat, and that is why we work. But you have chosen the good portion and read the whole day long and you do not want to eat carnal food.' When he heard these words the brother made a prostration saying, 'Forgive me, Abba.' The old man said to him, 'Mary needs Martha. It is really thanks to Martha that Mary is praised.'”

## The Ordo

Listed are the Feast days and Memorials that are observed at the Monastery and follows the Ordo of the American Cassinese Congregation.

### DECEMBER, 2008

- 21 Fourth Sunday of Advent (**Week IV**)
- 25 The Birth of the Lord (Christmas). Solemnity
- 26 Stephen, First Martyr. Feast.
- 27 John, Apostle, Evangelist. Feast.
- 28 Holy Family. Feast (**Week 1**)



### JANUARY 2009

- 1 Mary Mother of God. OA. Solemnity.
- 2 Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops, Doctors of the Church. Memorial. *The First Week of the Psalter begins*
- 4 Epiphany. Solemnity.
- 11 Baptism of the Lord. Feast.

### ORDINARY TIME

- 12 *The First Week of the Psalter is resumed*
- 15 Maur and Placid, Disciples of Benedict. Memorial
- 17 Anthony, Abbot. Memorial.

## January Meeting

Our next meeting will be January 18, 2009. I wish you and your families a most blessed Christmas and a happy and holy New Year.

If you need to reach me please write to:

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