

OBLATE NEWSLETTER

Oblates of St. Benedict | Belmont Abbey



THE ORDO

Listed below are the feast days (f), solemnities (s) and memorials (m) that are observed at the monastery. These dates follow the Ordo of the American Cassinese Congregation. These dates can also be found online at: <http://oblatesosbbelmont.org/ordo>.

March

- 19 | Joseph, Mary's husband (s)
- 21 | Passing of St. Benedict (s)
- 25 | Annunciation (s)
- 28 | Dedication of Belmont Abbey (s)

April

- 7 | John Baptiste De La Salle (m)
- 11 | Stanislaus (f)
- 19 | Election of Pope Benedict XVI
- 21 | Anselm (m)
- 25 | Mark (f)
- 29 | Catherine of Siena (m)



Lent - The Wondrous Loop

“There are two moments that matter. One is when you know that your one and only life is *absolutely valuable and alive*. The other is when you know your life, as presently lived, is *entirely pointless and empty*. You need both of them to keep you going in the right direction. Lent is about both. The first such moment gives you energy and joy by connecting you with your ultimate Source and Ground. The second gives you limits and boundaries, and a proper humility, so you keep seeking the Source and Ground and not just your small self.

The paradox, of course, is that you find yourself anyway: your Big Self in God and your little self in you. God loves

Oblate Formation

Next Meeting: March 16

Novices :: 2:30 p.m.**

**No 2nd year novice mtg. this month.

Oblates :: 3:30 p.m.

Vespers :: 5:30 p.m.

FIRST YEAR NOVICES

READING ASSIGNMENT

Introduction to the Rule of St.

Benedict

Chapter 58 :: Step 5 - Community

Which of the promises do you think will require the most work or greatest life change for you?

SECOND YEAR NOVICES

READING ASSIGNMENT

St. Benedict's Toolbox

Chapter 4 - Obedience

Read the toolbox questions and assignments at the end of each chapter & be ready to discuss.

OBLATES

READING ASSIGNMENT

Life Lessons from the Monastery

Chapter 13 :: Default Settings

In choosing a default setting, where does the freedom come from?

What do we use to develop a default setting that will enable us to live faithfully the vocation we have chosen and accepted?

As an oblate, what are the default settings in your prayer life? In other words, what prayers do you consistently do on a daily basis?

Chapter 14 :: Living from Decision

Why is the decision for a monk to become professed the most important decision in his monastic life?

Why are wedding vows and monastic vows similar?

them both. Saint Teresa of Avila summed it up when she said, 'We find God in ourselves, and we find ourselves in God.' With such a maxim, she did not likely need a therapist. Yet, I would add, that it is always much more like being found than actually finding anything! As Paul puts it, 'then I shall know as fully as I am known' (1 Corinthians 13:12).

So during these forty days of Lent, let's allow ourselves to be known! All the way through. Nothing to hide from, in ourselves, from ourselves, or from God. Allow yourself to be fully known, and you will know what you need to know. It is in this wondrous loop of divine disclosure, our own now safe self-disclosure, and a healing mutual acceptance—that we grow "in wisdom, maturity, and grace" (Luke 2:40). In fact, that is the way that all love happens, and the only way we grow at all."

- Excerpt from Richard Rohr. *Wondrous Encounters: Scriptures for Lent.*



Is it important to be serious about your vows? If so, will that affect any decisions you make in the future?

Is it important to take the promises you make to be an oblate important? If you do take the promises seriously, what is the effect this will have on your prayer life?

Chapter 15 :: Seeking God

When you come to the end of the day and find that you have not made room for God, what can you do to realign yourself with God?

Why is obedience the most difficult of all the monastic vows? Think of an example of how obedience was difficult in a particular life situation. How has being an oblate helped you to better deal with this and other situations involving obedience?

Chapter 16 :: Mutual Obedience

What two commandments does Benedict refer to when he ties monastic obedience to Gospel obedience?

What is the key word in these two commandments, and how does that allow you to be mutually obedient?

Explain why this phrase from the rule is so Christlike and essential for a loving, growing, healthy environment: "...supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body and behavior."

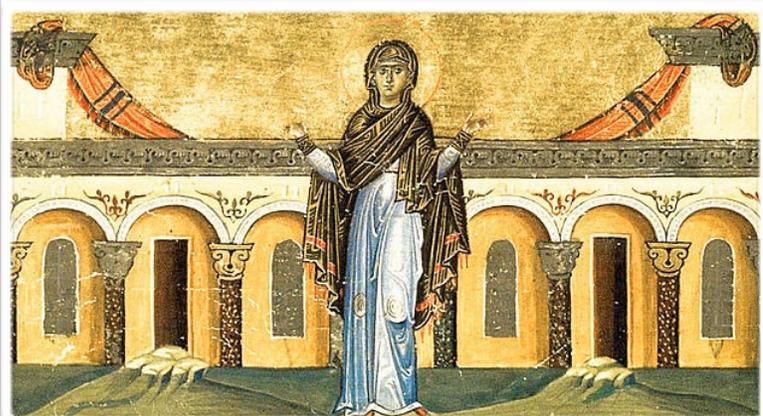
Why is mutual obedience so important in the family and the monastery?

Praxis is Not the Goal

Amma Syncletica said, "My children, all of us—male and female—know about being saved, but through our own negligence we stray from the path of salvation. First of all we must observe the precepts known through the grace of the Lord, and these are: 'You shall love the Lord your God with your whole soul, and your neighbor as yourself.' In these precepts the first principle of the Law is preserved, and it is on this Law that the fullness of grace depends. The expression of the principle is brief, indeed, but its importance in this matter is great and unlimited, for all advice to help the soul depends on these precepts.... Whatever people say by the grace of the Spirit, therefore, that is useful springs from love and ends in it. Salvation, then, is exactly this—this two-fold love of God and of our neighbor.... Well, what do we need for the present conflict? Obviously, austere asceticism and pure prayer."

The center of the desert elders' lives was the Great Commandment, "for all advice to help the soul depends on these precepts." Praxis is the servant of love and the soul's health. Syncletica spent a lifetime learning and sharing this advice. She grew up in the large and cosmopolitan city of Alexandria in a devout Christian family and in the shadow of the great Christian catechetical school. As a young woman she chose the solitary life in a "room in her home and when her parents died, she sold her property, gave the proceeds to the poor, and went to live in a family tomb on the outskirts of the city with her blind sister. Her whole life was a form of praxis, yet her focus was always the Great Commandment."

- Excerpt From: David G. R. Keller. *Desert Banquet*.



Some Helpful Questions

I (Brad Bellomy, 2nd year novice in our group) pastor at the Columbia First Nazarene Church, a member of the Church of the Nazarene, whose roots can be traced back through the Methodist Movement and Church of England to the Catholic Church. The following are self-examination questions that John Wesley routinely used, and encouraged others to use. They could have come straight from St. Ignatius' Examen. I find them helpful when practicing the Examen, and thought it might come in handy for some of you as you navigate the days of the Lenten season. Blessings.

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am?
2. Do I confidentially pass on to others what has been said to me in confidence?
3. Can I be trusted?
4. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
5. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
6. Did the Bible live in me today?
7. Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?
8. Am I enjoying prayer?
9. When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?
10. Do I pray about the money I spend?
11. Do I get to bed and get up on time?
12. Do I disobey God in anything?
13. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
14. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
15. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
16. How do I spend my spare time?
17. Am I proud?
18. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
19. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
20. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
21. Is Christ real to me?

