

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>.

February

- 2 | Presentation of the Lord (f)
- 5 | Agatha (m)
- 6 | Paul Miki & Companions (m)
- 10 | Scholastica (f)
- 14 | Cyril & Methodius (m)
- 21 | Peter Damien (m)
- 23 | Polycarp (m)

March

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



“A Boy on Holiday...”

During our discussion at the February meeting, when we were working together on *Life Lessons from the Monastery*, Brad shared a quote from Carlo Carretto in his book, *Letters from the Desert* (pp.15-17). We were asked to provide this quote for you. It's one to come back to often:

For many years I had thought I was “somebody” in the Church. I had even imagined this sacred living structure of the Church as a temple sustained by many columns, large and small, each one with the shoulder of a Christian under it...My own shoulder too I thought of as supporting a column, however small. Through repeating that God needed men and the Church needed activists, we believed it. The structure was a burden on our shoulders...

OBLATE FORMATION

Next Meeting: February 16

Novices :: 2:30 p.m.

Oblates :: 3:30 p.m.

Vespers :: 5:30 p.m.

FIRST YEAR NOVICES

READING ASSIGNMENT

Introduction to the Rule of St.

Benedict

Chapter 7 :: Step 4 - Humility

QUESTIONS

Which of the steps of humility present the greatest challenges for you? Which are easiest?

SECOND YEAR NOVICES

READING ASSIGNMENT

St. Benedict's Toolbox

QUESTIONS

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

OBLATES

READING ASSIGNMENT

Life Lessons from the Monastery

QUESTIONS

Chapter 9: Prayer and Work

What are the three elements of a balanced prayer life? Explain.

Why is it important to have daily personal communion with God and to be alone with God?

Chapter 10 | Lectio Divina: What is it?

What are Prior Guigo 2's 4 steps of lectio divina? Is it necessary to follow these steps in the exact order? Explain your answer.

With this mentality I was no longer capable of taking a holiday; even during the night I felt I was "in action." There was never enough time to get everything done. One raced continually from one project to another, from one meeting to another, from one city to another. Prayer was hurried, conversations frenzied, and one's heart in a turmoil.

As everything depended on us, and everything was going so badly, we were quite right to be worried.

In any case, now I was here, kneeling on the sand of the cave, which had taken on the dimensions of the Church itself; on my shoulders I could feel the small column of the activist. Perhaps this was the moment of truth.

After twenty-five years I realized that nothing was burdening my shoulders and that the column was my own creation - sham, unreal, the product of my imagination and my vanity.

I had walked, run, spoken, organized, worked, in the belief that I was supporting something; and in reality I had been holding up absolutely nothing.

The weight of the world was all on Christ Crucified. I was nothing, absolutely nothing... The discovery that I was nothing, that I was responsible for no one, that I was a man of no importance, gave me the joy of a boy on holiday. Night came, and I could not sleep. I left the cave, and walked under the stars above the vast desert.

"My God, I love you. My God, I love you," I shouted to the heavens through the strange silence of the night.



Oblate Formation (Oblates - continued)

Is lectio free and adaptable to each person's prayer style? If yes, explain what this means.

As an oblate, explain if and how lectio has woven itself into your entire day.

Chapter 11 | Lectio Divina: What Is It For?

Is Lectio an intellectual exercise like scripture study? If not, what is it? Mention the analogy they use and why it is effective.

What does it mean that Lectio Divina aims at the roots of our spiritual eyes, which are in our hearts? Why is the heart important in prayer?

Chapter 12 | Overshadowed By A Cloud

When you sit down to pray, do you feel as if you are sitting under a tree of monkeys? What happens to you if you try to stop the monkeys? What happens if you don't pay attention to them, and just focus on spending time in the presence of God?

Is it easy to not focus on distractions during prayer? What are ways that you use to keep yourself focused on your prayer, and not on the monkeys in the tree? Has this gotten easier over time?

Explain how distractions are not a blessing but a curse in prayer.



The Cell as Mentor

“A brother came to Scetis to visit Abba Moses and asked him for a word. The old man said to him, ‘Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.’”

We are so afraid of missing something. Our cell phones, email, iPods, Blackberries, and pagers keep us always accessible. We crave entrainment and constant activity. Everywhere we go we find music, talking, and opportunities for information and visual stimulation. This is the age of information. We do not want life to be empty or to miss opportunities. There is nothing wrong with communication, conversation, entertainment, and opportunities for education and employment. At the same time it is possible to fill our lives with so many things that we empty life of its richness. In the midst of so much noise we may lose our ability to listen to each other and to life itself. We don't need experts to help us. We need some quiet and some time to listen. Where is your cell? Find a place where you can be still and wait for wisdom.

- taken from *Desert Banquet: A Year of Wisdom from the Desert Mothers and Fathers*, the reading for February 1

Take A Moment With God

an anonymous prayer taken from *the Laudate*

Dear Lord, I thank You for this day. I thank You for my being able to wake once again, to see and to hear this morning. I'm blessed because You are a forgiving God and an understanding God. You have done so much for me and You continue to bless me. Please forgive me every day for anything I have done, said or thought that was not pleasing to you, and I ask now for Your forgiveness.

Please keep me safe from all danger and harm. Help me to start this day with a new attitude and plenty of gratitude. Let me make the best of each and every day to clear my mind so that I can hear from You. Please broaden my mind that I can accept all things.

Let me not whine and whimper over things I have no control over. Let me continue to see sin through God's eyes and acknowledge it as evil. And when I sin, let me repent, and confess with my mouth my wrongdoing, and receive Your forgiveness.

And when this world closes in on me, let me remember Jesus' example—to slip away and find a quiet place to pray. It's the best response when I'm pushed beyond my limits. Continue to use me to do Your will.

Continue to bless me that I may be a blessing to others. Keep me strong that I may help the weak. Keep me uplifted that I may have words of encouragement for others. I pray for those that are lost and can't find their way. I pray for those that are misjudged and misunderstood. I pray for those who don't know You intimately. I pray for those that don't believe.

And I'm grateful that you are in my heart.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

