



Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey

September, 2009



September Meeting

The next Oblate meeting is on September 27, the *fourth* Sunday of the month, and will begin at 3:00 in the Abbey Church with Mass. Abbot Placid will be principal celebrant and will receive the new Oblates' and Novices' Oblations. Oblates who are present will also renew their Oblations at that time. Oblates who cannot attend because of health and distance need to send in the enclosed Oblation renewal form to maintain their name on the mailing list. There will *not* be a meeting in August due to the start of classes at the College.

Two Examples: Fr. Raymond and Betty

Over the summer I was privileged to attend two funerals, Fr. Raymond and my mother-in-law, Betty Ray Canipe. Why would I connect the two? It is quite simple. Betty passed away on Saturday and Fr. Raymond passed away on Sunday.



So close together I could not help reflect on parallels between the two of them which I will hope you will not mind me sharing.

The first is the peace of both families in the firm belief that there is a Resurrection and that the end of the earthly life is not the end of life. I watched Fr. Kenneth peacefully bless his brother in parting just as if Fr.

Raymond was going to bed for the night. I watched my father-in-law part with his wife of 61 years in sorrow, but also with a firm belief that he will be with her again. Both passings were a reminder of St. Benedict's admonishment to always *keep death before our eyes* [RB 4:47] and to *always hope in God's mercy* [RB 4:74].

Listening to both eulogies another parallel stood out. In both, their lives were remembered because of their hospitality. They greeted all as if they were Christ. Most of what they did was behind the scenes, unobserved except by those who happened to be aware. As a member of St. Stephen's Ministry, Betty spent years caring for the homebound, cooking meals and visiting. Fr. Raymond also spent years as a Pastor and Oblate Director helping others and caring for their needs. I think most Oblates would be amazed at the amount of work he did before each Oblate meeting. But most importantly, both did this work not for recognition nor what they would get out of doing it. They did it from a sense of *hospitality*, something we are all called to do as Oblates.

And neither knew a stranger. Each person who joined the Oblates knew they could call on Fr. Raymond in what ever need there might arise. The same with Betty who was often the unofficial "hostess" of their Sunday school class at church. Do not be absent too often or soon there would come the concerned phone call asking how everyone is and see if there was need. They showed us by their example how to live St. Benedict's call to *welcome all as Christ* [RB 53:1].



Both were faithful in prayer. If we are honest with ourselves we often allow the day to day events in our lives to interfere with the Work of God. The monks, however, stop what they are doing multiple times a day to participate in the Liturgy of the Hours – not for one or two years but for 30, 40, 50 and 60 years. I knew when Fr. Raymond was ill – he was not in choir. Every time I looked across the choir there he was, his powerful voice recognizable as he prayed the Psalms. Betty was also faithful to the Work of God. One of her greatest regrets was her inability in later life to read the Scriptures as she faithfully did for many years. Only with the onset of the blindness caused by glaucoma did she stop her daily Scripture reading.

Those who know Fr. Raymond better than I could expand the list of his strengths as could those who knew Betty. We consider ourselves blessed to have know just one person as has been described above. I was blessed to have known both. One was Catholic, another Baptist, but both exemplified, in my mind, what it means to live a Benedictine life.

The Angels in our Lives

We hear of them, we work around them, but how many people really know the blessing these people are? I am speaking of hospice workers. They come into our lives usually during the most difficult times in life. They care for our loved ones when we are no longer able. They dedicate their time and energy to care for the truly helpless and are mindful of the dignity of that person. They come into our lives and then they are gone when they are no longer needed. They are Christ-like in that they support us when we cannot walk the journey alone. Or perhaps the better example is Simon the Cyrenne who carries the cross – but unlike



Simon, they do it without being compelled.

There are many of these angels but let me speak of one in particular, Geraldine. She not only cared for Betty's needs, but also gave rest to the family. What particularly stood out, however, was her own personal prayer life was integrated into her job. She truly made her job into a ministry. Often, when other

family were asleep, she was there watching and praying. She has taken it upon herself to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for every person in her case load. Personally I will never forget her and I ask each of you to pray for her and all "angels" that care for the sick and the dying.

Desert Wisdom

(Abba John) related with regard to another old man living in the desert, that he had asked God to grant him never to become sleepy during a spiritual conference, but, if someone uttered slanderous or useless words, to be able to go to sleep at once, so that his ears should never be touched by that poison. This old man also said that the devil, enemy of all spiritual instruction, works hard to provoke useless words.



He used the following example, "Once when I was talking to some brothers on a helpful topic, they were overcome by sleep so deep, that they could not even move their eyelids any longer. Then, wishing to show them the power of the devil, I introduced a trivial subject of conversation. Immediately, they woke up, full of joy. Then I said to them with many sighs, 'Until now, we were discussing heavenly things and your eyes were heavy with sleep, but when I embarked on a useless discourse, you all woke up with alacrity. Therefore, brothers, I implore you to recognize the power of the evil demon; pay attention to yourselves, and guard yourselves from the desire to sleep when you are doing or listening to something spiritual.

Web Site

The new web site design has had a major impact on visits to the site. In the month of August there was almost 1,700 page hits from 10 different countries and 28 different states. If the September trend holds we will top over 2,000 hits. I would

encourage you to take advantage of the variety of different articles, many of which would normally be in a larger, printed newsletter.

Just as a reminder. The web site was never meant to be a personal "blog." If you find material that you think the other Oblates may be interested in, please submit a comment post, email, or mail it in to the Abbey. The criteria for submissions are:

- either directly or indirectly relates to Benedictines or Benedictine spirituality (any branch of the Benedictine community)
- fits under one of the categories at the top of the website
- is authoritative; i.e. is not theologically controversial
- if the material is copyrighted please include the source and author so they may be properly credited

When submitting an article please remember the Oblate community is ecumenical and welcomes all Christians. Articles should "*promote justice and truth, concord and collaboration, as well as the spirit of brotherly love and unity*" (Decree on Ecumenism, Second Vatican Council). As St. Benedict and St. Paul instructs: They should each try to be first to show respect to the other (Rom 12:10). "Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life." (RB 72: 11; RB 1980; Trans. Timothy Fry, OSB,)

The Ordo

Listed are the Feast days and Memorials that are observed at the Monastery and follows the Ordo of the American Cassinese Congregation. You can also see the observed feast days by going to: <http://oblatesosbbelmont.org/ordo/>.

SEPTEMBER

- 27 **Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary** (Week IV)
- 29 Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels. Feast.
- 30 Jerome, Presbyter, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.

OCTOBER

- 1 Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Virgin, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 2 Guardian Angels, Patron of Congregation. Feast.
- 4 **Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time.** (Week I)
- 6 Bruno, Presbyter, Hermit, Religious Founder. Memorial.
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary. Memorial.
- 11 **Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time.** (Week II)
- 15 Teresa of Jesus, Virgin, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 17 Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop, Martyr.
- 18 **Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time.** (Week III)