



## Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey

November, 2009



### November Meeting

The next Oblate meeting is on November 15 and will begin at 3:30 in the Gallager Room.

### Advent Morning Of Reflection

There will not be a meeting in December since it is so close to Christmas. Instead, Each Oblate is encouraged to attend the day of Recollection being held here at the Abbey on December 5 at 9:00 AM. Oblates and Oblate Novices are strongly encouraged to attend either this day of reflection or one that will be scheduled in Lent.

The reflection leaders will be Abbot Placid Solari, O.S.B., and Father Dwight Longenecker. Abbot Placid, of course, needs no introduction. Father Longenecker is a married former Anglican priest who converted to the Catholic faith in 1995 and was ordained a Catholic priest in 2006. He is the author of ten books, including *Listen My Son*, a daily Benedictine devotional book which applies the Rule of St Benedict to the task of modern parenting. He is also a very popular retreat leader. So attendees are in for quite a spiritual treat.

Admission is free to the public. However, donations to help defray the cost of the event won't go unappreciated! Seating capacity is limited so please register online by December 1. If you have any questions, please call Joan Bradley at (704) 461-6009 or email her at [JoanBradley@bac.edu](mailto:JoanBradley@bac.edu).

### On Daily Manual Work

There has been some discussion among the Oblates as to what is our calling when it comes to RB 48, On the Daily Manual Labor. It has been suggested by several that this should translate into volunteer service to the Monastery, doing some of the physical labor that is needed to be done. This might be well for those who can provide such service and the Abbot is aware of our willingness to help the Monastery in any way he might direct. But for many this is not possible either because of distance, age or, more importantly, vocation in life.

It is also important to remember we are not monastics living in a monastery. We are simply Christians trying to live by the Rule as best we can, living the vocation we have been called to by God. So, how should we understand our obligation concerning manual labor? First, we should take

seriously St. Benedict's warning that idleness is the enemy of the soul and we should discipline ourselves to be occupied with manual labor during specific times (RB 48:1). There is no underestimating the value of physical labor, but for Oblates might the emphasis be better placed where Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel thought: *So then, we exhort you, brothers, not to love idleness, but by sincere and unanimous agreement let each toil as he is able; but let a person who has been [idle] up to now cast off this vice and come ready for every work...*



Each of us are asked to give our talents first to our family and to our profession. We are then called to help in the community, first in our parishes, and then in the multitude of various service organizations that serve the needs of the community. Labor is a self-offering, a spiritual act as well as a physical act, "an opportunity for each person to offer his or her life to God and neighbor."

So, as we enter the time of Advent, let us re-assess the time we spend and determine if "idleness" has not entered into our lives. Are we honoring the intent of St. Benedict and staying busy as he instructed or has the world's values influenced our thinking. Second, we can re-assess our prayer life. Are we being faithful to our prayer life as well as Lectio or have we allowed over-valuing leisure and the festivities of the season to interfere with the Work of God. Finally, during this time of the year every charitable organization is strained to meet the material needs of so many people. Perhaps we can find a few hours to aid the parishes and other organizations working to meet the charitable needs of the poorest among us. And poverty does not just mean economic. There are those alone, those who are sick, and those in prison.

This is the work we are called to do. To live in the world and seek those in need, both spiritually and physically. Seek them first in your own family, then your parish and then the community at large. If we do our daily duty as our vocation in life calls, if we pray regularly, and if we see Christ in all we meet and seek to help those in need, we shall have no worry about avoiding idleness as St. Benedict instructs, and we shall have no concerns when we meet Christ face to face.

### Oblate Novices

We will be discussing the "Introduction" and "How Did I Get So Busy" from *Finding Sanctuary* at the next meeting. Please bring your personal bible as well as a notebook.

### Website

Please remember to check the website on a regular basis. It is an extension of this newsletter and there are various articles and news posted on a daily basis. The Oblate website crossed the 10,000 hit threshold October 7, 2009. Since then total hits have increased another 2,500. I could not help but note the threshold was crossed on a feast day of Our Lady and hope that she will continue to bless this ministry of the Oblate program through the years to come.

It is remarkable to see the reach of the site and how many people visit it on a regular bases. Not only do people come from almost all of the United States but we also have regular visitors from most English speaking countries. Thank you for your support.

### Desert Wisdom

Someone asked Abba Agathon, "Which is better, bodily asceticism or interior vigilance?" The old man replied, "Man is like a tree, bodily asceticism is the foliage, interior vigilance is the fruit. According to that which is written, 'Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.' (Matt 3:10). It is clear that all our care should be directed toward the fruit, that is to say, guard the spirit; but it needs the protection and the embellishment of the foliage, which is bodily asceticism."

### 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/>.

#### NOVEMBER

- 15 **Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week I)**
- 16 Gertrude the Great, Virgin, Religious. Memorial
- 21 Presentation of the Virgin Mary. Memorial
- 22 Christ the King. Solemnity. **(Week II)**
- 24 Andrew Dung-lac, Presbyter, Martyr, and His Companions, Martyrs. Memorial.

#### SEASON OF ADVENT

- 29 First Sunday of Advent **(Week I)**
- 30 Red Mon. Andrew,\* Apostle. Feast.

#### DECEMBER

- 3 Francis Xavier, Presbyter, Religious, Missionary. Memorial.
- 6 Second Sunday of Advent. **(Week II)**
- 7 Ambrose, Bishop, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 8 Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Solemnity.
- 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe. Feast.
- 13 Third Sunday of Advent. **(Week III)**
- 14 John of the Cross, Presbyter, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent. **(Week IV)**

### December Meeting

There is no meeting in December. The Oblates will not meet again until January 17, 2010. If you have any question please write:

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