



Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey

June, 2011



Next meeting: June 12

The next Oblate meeting has been moved to the **second** Sunday of June, June 12th, because Father's Day falls on the third Sunday when we usually meet. The oblate meeting will be held at 3:30 p.m. in the Gallagher Room. There won't be a meeting in July or August.

Novices: Meeting at 2:30 p.m. in the Gallagher Room. Both first and second year novices will be discussing "Step 7: Hope" starting on page 157 of "Finding Sanctuary" by Abbot Christopher Jamison.

Oblates: Meeting will begin at 3:30 p.m. in the Gallagher Room. Please read chapter 11 of "A Mystical Portrait of Jesus" by Demetrius Dumm. Questions from Dr. Marilyn Martin-Schwan will be emailed separately.

The Feast of the Ascension, June 2

On June 2, we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension, marking the day on which Jesus was taken up into heaven. According to the Acts of the Apostles, the event began at the Mount of Olives in the presence of the disciples: Jesus physically separated Himself from the Apostles to begin a new way of associating with them, which would be fully revealed in another ten days. So the Ascension serves as the prelude to Pentecost, when the power of the risen Christ came upon all believers through the Holy Spirit.

Scripture explains the purpose of the Ascension: St Peter says in his Pentecost sermon, *Exalted thus at God's right hand, he received the Holy Spirit from the Father as was promised* (Acts 2:33). St Paul says that *He ... ascended far above the heavens, that he might fill all things* (Ephesians 4:10). The writer to the Hebrews says that *it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens* (Hebrews 7:26) *now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf* (Hebrews 9:24).

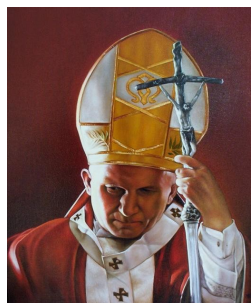
There are those who, although they themselves have never seen anyone ascending into Heaven, have chosen to disbelieve the Apostles' account of what they saw, on the grounds of "implausibility." After all, they say, astronauts do not report any sightings. But it was necessary for Jesus to be seen by His disciples to depart, otherwise they would have spent years searching for Him, instead of carrying out His Great Commission to *Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation* (Mark 9:15). Given the constraints of the physical world in which Jesus had chosen to dwell, there were limits to the direction of His departure from it: **up** seems as good a choice as any, and it has appropriate connotations for us. Consider how we speak of things "looking up," and of people "moving up in the world". The Ascension, like the Incarnation, is a God-drawn picture for us of our position in relationship with our great and gracious Lord. It is a witness and guarantee of our own bodily resurrection, as well as an invitation for us *to set our hearts and minds on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God* (Colossians 3:1-2).

So we pray, in the words of the Ascension Day collect, that we also may in heart and mind ascend to where Christ is, and with him continually dwell.

-Angie Forde

Pope John Paul II's new feast day, Oct. 22

Pope John Paul II's biographer welcomes the announcement of a new feast day for the beatified pontiff. The Vatican has declared that Oct. 22, the day he became Pope, will now mark the occasion.



"I think it's an entirely appropriate date, for this was the

day that Karol Wojtyla formally began his service to the universal Church and issued that ringing cry to freedom and evangelism: "Be not afraid! Open the doors to Christ," George Weigel said.

As is customary with beatified persons, the feast day will be inserted into the Church calendar of only those places where Pope John Paul II lived and worked – the diocese of Rome and the dioceses of Poland.

In other places, local bishops will have to formally ask the Vatican for permission to mark the feast day. The same restrictions also apply to the naming of churches for Pope John Paul.

In a break with custom, though, the Vatican is giving Catholics throughout the world a year to celebrate a Mass in thanksgiving for the beatification.

In an April 12 statement the Vatican said this is due to "the exceptional character of the beatification of the Venerable John Paul II, recognized by the entire Catholic Church spread throughout the world." The Vatican has also unveiled the specific prayer, or collect, to be used at any feast day celebration or thanksgiving Mass. It reads: "O God, who are rich in mercy and who willed that Blessed John Paul II should preside as Pope over your universal Church, grant, we pray, that instructed by his teaching, we may open our hearts to the saving grace of Christ, the sole Redeemer of mankind, Who lives and reigns." Pope John Paul was beatified on May 1 and was given the title "Blessed." "Beatification" is the second step in a three-stage process the Catholic Church has created for declaring a deceased person a saint.

Ancient books uncovered in Jordan may date to start of Christianity



One of the largest and best-preserved collections of ancient sealed books has been discovered in a cave in Jordan and is believed to be

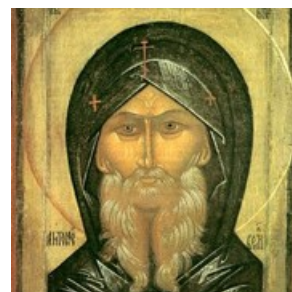
some of the earliest Christian documents, according to the BBC. The 70 tiny books could date back to the first century. Carbon dating

tests found that a piece of leather found with the scrolls was over 2000 years old. Experts say the books, made of lead and copper and bound by rings, may be more significant than the Dead Sea Scrolls, BBC reports. Read more:

<http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2011/03/30/ancient-books-uncovered-jordan/#ixzz1ICGB>

Desert Wisdom: Guard against spiritual delusion

Even a pious person is not immune to spiritual sickness if he does not have a wise guide -- either a living person or a spiritual writer. This sickness is called "prelest", or spiritual delusion, imagining oneself to be near to God and to the realm of the divine and supernatural. Even zealous ascetics in monasteries are sometimes subject to this delusion, but of course, laymen who are zealous in external struggles (podvigi) undergo it much more frequently. Surpassing their acquaintances in struggles of prayer and fasting, they imagine that they are seers of divine visions, or at least of dreams inspired by grace. The Holy Fathers armed themselves against nothing so fiercely as against this sickness -- prelest.



- *Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky*

September Meeting

Please mark your calendar for Sept. 18, 2011. Have a delightful summer and, if you have a computer and Internet connection, be sure to visit the Oblates of St. Benedict web site for the oblate program at Belmont Abbey, N.C. URL: <http://oblatesosbbelmont.org/>.

If you have questions, please write to:

George K. Cobb, OblSB
Oblate Coordinator
100 Belmont-Mt Holly Road
Belmont, North Carolina, 28012
(704) 370-3328 (w)
(704) 824-2971 (h)
gkcobb0428@gmail.com