



Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

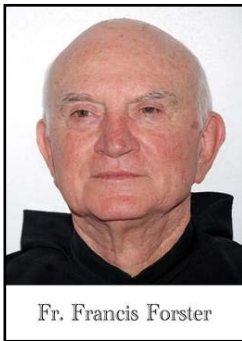
September, 2014

A NEW YEAR AND A NEW FORMAT

One of the items on the agenda for a couple of years now has been the newsletter. It always seems to get out later than we want but we hope the new format will help. Let us know what you think and any suggestions you may have to improve the content as well as the looks.

CELEBRATING THEIR GOLDEN JUBILEE: FATHER FRANCIS AND FATHER ARTHUR

On May 24, Benedictine Father Francis Forster and Benedictine Father Arthur Pendleton celebrated the 50th year of their ordination to the priesthood at Belmont Abbey.



Fr. Francis Forster

Aside from their duties within the monastery, Father Arthur and Father Francis have both been active in the academic life of Belmont Abbey College for many years.

Father Arthur began teaching chemistry in 1963 and continued to teach part-time after his retirement from teaching some years ago. A native of Rhode Island, he arrived at the monastery in 1958 at the age of 28 after studying textile chemistry and coloring at the Rhode Island School of Design.

"I thought about being a priest at several stages in my life," he recalls "I considered the priesthood when I was in grammar school, high school, etc. The only problem is that I couldn't imagine myself standing up

in front of a crowd of people and preaching. That eventually changed."

Father Francis, who once served as the college registrar, came to the monastery fresh out of the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. He felt the call to join the monastic community while still in active service.

"I got the call, you could say, when I was serving in Korea. I worked with a chaplain there. Later, I visited the abbey while I was stationed nearby here in North Carolina. When I got out of the service four years later at the age of 24, I came right over to join the monastery."

It was the "community life" of the monastery that drew him to settle here, he explains. "I knew that I wanted to be a priest, just not a parish priest – I didn't want all the social, public interaction; and to be a monk at that time, one had to be ordained." Answering God's call was an easy decision to make, he says.

Recognizing a 50-year milestone is important in anyone's career or personal life. For a monk, it is an opportunity to share with friends and family the fruits of one's commitment to God and a monastic spiritual life. How do these two monks feel about reaching this anniversary in their lives? Both men take a decidedly humble, understated approach.



Fr. Arthur Pendleton

"I'm pretty much at peace about it," says Father Arthur. "Four years ago, the monastery celebrated the 50 years' jubilee of monastic profession (which is different than the jubilee of ordination). I will, of course, be there at the Mass, but I'm not inviting people deliberately. Some people



NOVENA TO THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

Heavenly Father, Your infinite love for us has chosen a blessed angel in heaven and appointed him our guide during this earthly pilgrimage. Accept our thanks for so great a blessing. Grant that we may experience the assistance of our holy protector in all our necessities. And you, holy, loving angel and guide, watch over us with all the tenderness of your angelic heart. Keep us always on the way that leads to heaven, and cease not to pray for us until we have attained our final destiny, eternal salvation. Then we shall love you for all eternity. We shall praise and glorify you unceasingly for all the good you have done for us while here on earth. Especially be a faithful and watchful protector of our children. Take our place, and supply what may be wanting to us through human frailty, short-sightedness, or sinful neglect. Lighten, O you perfect servants of God, our heavy task. Guide our children, that they may become like unto Jesus, may imitate Him faithfully, and persevere till they attain eternal life. Amen.

may hear about it, but I can't get too excited over it."

Father Francis agrees: "A monk is a monk," he says, with a shrug, "whether it is 40 years or 50. I'm also not inviting anyone or making a fuss about it."

Despite their mutual desire to keep a low profile, Benedictine Abbot Placid Solari believes both men are deserving of the recognition they receive.

"Father Francis and Father Arthur have both served the monastic community and college community quietly, each in his own way," Abbot Placid says. "When Father Francis was serving as the registrar, he used his technical skills to repair anything electronic around the monastery, going about his business and not seeking any notice. He was the 'go-to' person whenever something needed to be fixed or taken care of. Likewise, Father Arthur has an amazingly keen mind and breadth of intellectual interests. He has served as prior in the monastic community perhaps more often than anyone in the community's history."

After spending so much time within the confines of Belmont Abbey, both men have certainly garnered a great many memories that come to mind for them during this celebration. Not surprisingly, for Father Francis, it is the memory of his ordination.

"That was the capstone," he says, thoughtfully. "That was

the purpose for my coming to the monastery."

Father Arthur remembers finally getting over his fear of public speaking – a crucial element for being able to give homilies.

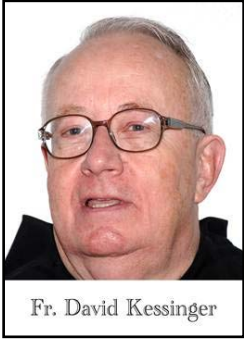
"All along, I had dreaded preaching in front of people. Every time I thought about the priesthood, I could not imagine myself doing that. I was a bit timid. We practiced giving homilies here at the monastery during our training and we had to do so without notes – just memorization. And when we did so, the audience wasn't all that interested in what you had to say. Eventually, after I was ordained, I had to give a homily. So one day, I get up into the pulpit (this time with notes), and I see all of these people smiling at me. If you want to talk about nice experiences, that would be it for me, because I knew they were all so happy to see me there."

At the ages of 81 and 84, respectively, both men are at the stage in one's life when advice is usually dispensed to and sought after by young people. For those seeking guidance with discerning a religious vocation, they counsel: Consider attending a seminary, go on discernment visits and retreats, and give some thought to what God may be calling you to do.

"Give it a try," they both say.

— Emily Williams, Correspondent
Catholic News Herald

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF PROFESSION



Father David Kessinger, O.S.B., celebrated his 60th anniversary of his profession as a monk of Belmont Abbey. Over the years, Father David has made numerous contributions to not only fellow members of the monastery, but also to Belmont Abbey College and the greater community.

A native of Clifton Forge, Virginia, Father David first came to Belmont Abbey in 1949, joining the freshman class of Belmont Abbey Junior College and graduating in 1951. He continued his education at Mount Saint Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Pennsylvania, from which he graduated in 1953.

But it was his contact with the monks that led him to discern his own calling to monastic life and enter the community at Belmont. Following his novitiate at Saint Bernard Abbey in Cullman, Alabama, Father David made his monastic profession on July 2, 1954. Later that fall, he began studies for the priesthood in the Belmont Abbey Seminary and was ordained by Bishop Stanislaus Waters of Raleigh, North Carolina, at Belmont Abbey on May 31, 1958.

Father David began teaching career when he was assigned by Abbot Vincent to teach plane geometry in the preparatory school at Belmont Abbey. Subsequently, he also taught at Benedictine High School in Richmond, Virginia and at Benedictine Military School in Savannah, Georgia.

With a degree in library science from The Catholic University of America, along with his professional skill and personal love and appreciation for the library, Father David had maintained and developed the College's library holdings for a number of years serving as its librarian.

Perhaps best known and loved for his gentle and unassuming manner, Father David has served as chaplain at Holy Angels Nursery and at Sacred Heart Convent. He has generously assisted in parishes around the state whenever needed, and is always solicitous in his care for the sick and infirm. He was a dear friend and invaluable assistant to Abbot Walter Coggin for many years. Father David continues to take special care of the perpetual adoration chapel located on the Belmont Abbey College campus, and is advisor to the campus chapter of the Legion of Mary.

FORMATION AND BOOK FOR THE YEAR

The reading for the Oblates this year will be *Strangers to the City: Reflections on the Beliefs and Values of the Rule of Saint Benedict* by Fr. Michael Casey OCSO. This is available in either printed or ebook format from Paraclete Press, Amazon, or Barnes and Noble. A limited number have been purchased for our Oblates who are reluctant to order through the internet.

IMPORTANT: The Formation team is reviewing options for the program and a consensus has not been reach. The program is suspended for the next few months and will resume as soon as we are certain we will be developing the best program possible.

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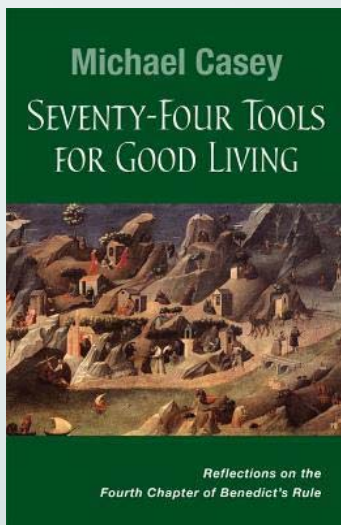
September

- 21 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week I)
- 23 Pius of Pietrelcina (*Begin Novena to the Guardian Angels, Patron of the Congregation*)
- 27 Vincent De Paul
- 28 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week II)
- 29 Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels
- 30 Jerome

October

- 1 Thérèse of the Child Jesus
- 2 Guardian Angels, Patron of Congregation. Feast
- 4 Francis of Assisi
- 5 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week III)
- 6 Bruno, Priest, Hermit, Religious Founder. Memorial
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary. Memorial
- 11 John XXIII (*Note: This memorial has not been published in the latest ORDO of the American Cassinese Congregation but has been designated a Memorial by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops*)
- 12 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week IV)
- 14 Callistus I
- 17 Ignatius of Antioch
- 18 Luke, Evangelist. Feast
- 19 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week I)

FR. MICHAEL CASEY, OCSO: SEVENTY-FOUR TOOLS FOR GOOD LIVING



“Half a century ago, when I was a novice, a venerable old monk (whom I now realize was only in his late forties) held up a diminutive copy of the Rule of Saint Benedict and proclaimed, "You will find all the wisdom you will need to live a good monastic life in this Rule." At the time I thought he was exaggerating. Fifty years later I am of a different opinion. There is much more in Benedict's Rule than meets the superficial eye.

“To begin with, as Benedict's final chapter indicates, the Rule does not stand alone. It was intended as a practical gateway to the more extensive and richer tradition that preceded it and that animated most of its provisions. By living according to Benedict's Rule, we not only move into the world of John Cassian and Saint Basil but also are invited to go further back to the scriptural basis of all Christian and monastic living. Benedict's hope is that ultimately we pursue our spiritual journey by the guidance of the Gospel (RB Prol 21).

“The more time I spend with the Rule the more I become convinced that it yields its deepest meaning only to those who are prepared to engage with it through close reading. This means reading very slowly; considering every word, every phrase, and every sentence; and trying to comprehend not only what is expressed but also the hidden meanings that lie beneath the words, in the space between authorial intent and written text.

“For close reading to be more than arid pedantry, we need to allow the text to enter into the dialogue with our lives. Drawing from our experience, we learn to appreciate more fully what Benedict is saying and, sometimes, why he is saying it in the way that he does. Conversely, the text may illuminate our own experience by helping us to understand elements of our unique past and offer guidance concerning our future. If we so choose, reading the Rule of Saint Benedict can be life-changing and life-enhancing. . . .

Fr. Michael Casey, OCSO

From the Preface, *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living*



WISDOM FROM THE DESERT

When Abba Anthony thought about the depth of the judgments of God, he asked, 'Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme old age? Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?' He heard a voice answering him, 'Anthony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgment of God, and it is not to your advantage to know anything about them.'

**The October meeting of the Oblates will be on the 19th at 3:30
unless otherwise announced.**