



Oblates of St. Benedict

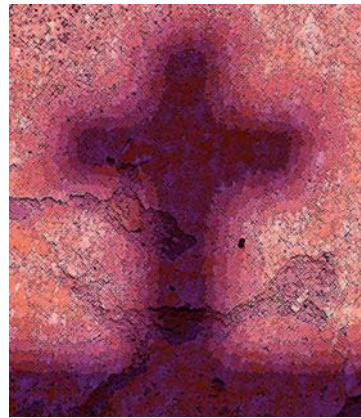
Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

February, 2015

THE MEANING OF LENT

The meaning of Lent is a time when we really stop and ask ourselves, What is the meaning of it all? Who am I? What are we called to? It is a time to ask the deep questions and begin to live in those deep questions and come to know the joy of life's meaningfulness. I'm sure that we each find a part of ourselves that does not want to ask the questions because the more we realize life's meaning, the more we have to live as a light for the world. There are little parts of us that want to hang onto this, that, and the other thing — our own little practices that somewhat clutter up our lives. We do not want to let everything go and become pure light, pure fire. But we have to have the humility to at least seek. To try to do the little things. To try to be with the awareness of the moment. To use the Lenten readings, the Offices, the prayers, and the example of each other to take the next little step. Then we can be sure that if we do, we shall find. We shall see our Lord Jesus as he is, and we shall be like him—this pure love, pure joy, and radiance.

What Lent invites us to is quite fantastic. *Eye has not seen or ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him* (cf . 1 Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:3). Holy Spirit makes it known to us. We have a great dependence on the Spirit. Come Holy Spirit, enlighten us, encourage us, strengthen us, illuminate us, bring us into the reality. Give us the courage, the gift of fortitude to go on. The gift of knowledge and the gift of understanding. Without him, we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5). With him, all things are possible (Phil. 4:13). Let us cry out. Let us seek. Let us hope. Let us pray. Let us enter into Lent as fully as we possibly can.



Let us, with great compassion, embrace our own weaknesses and struggles, and those of our brothers. But let us keep clear in our life what we are called to. Let us concretely and realistically move toward that as we encourage and support each other. Then we will come together to the fullness of Easter and eternal life.

Abbot M. Basil Pennington, OCSO
Listen with Your Heart, pp. 163-164

BY LOVE WE MAKE OUR JOURNEY

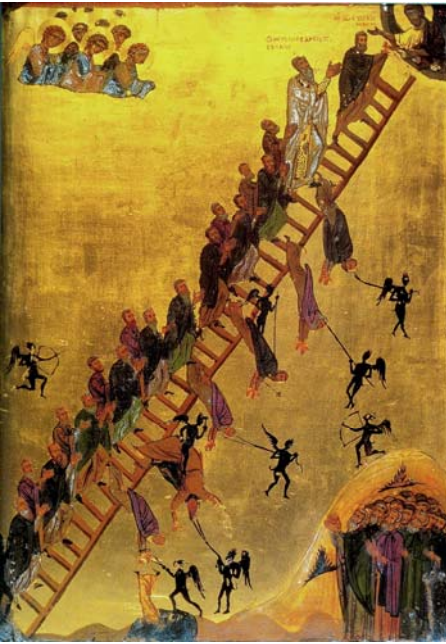
Eternal life is knowing the true God;
the true way to it is to love with one's whole heart.
Love, then, is the way, truth the life;
truth is the image, love the likeness;
love is the price, truth is the prize;
by love we make our journey, in truth we stand fast.

Moreover, since love will never come to an end, when truth is attained love is not at an end, but the life with the truth that comes of love and the love that comes of truth will be supremely satisfying and will never stop.

Isaac of Stella

The next Oblate meeting will be February 15, 2015 at 3:30 PM in the Gallagher Room on the first floor of Stowe Hall. Novices will meet at 2:30.

THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT



The Ladder (from which St John received the 'nickname' Klimakos - "ladder" in Greek) was written in response to another Abbot's advice on promoting health spirituality in his monastery. St John's reply proved such a thorough and clear exposition that it has become *de rigeur* Lenten reading in Eastern Christians monasteries all over the world. As St John's writings are also easily accessible to the average reader, it has also become a favorite among the Roman Catholic, Byzantine Catholic, and Orthodox laity as well. It is easily found in several English editions, the two most widely available being John Climacus: *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (The Classics of Western Spirituality) and as *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery. There is also a translation written by Archimandrite Lazarus Moore in the public domain that can be downloaded from the Oblate website for printing or ebook.

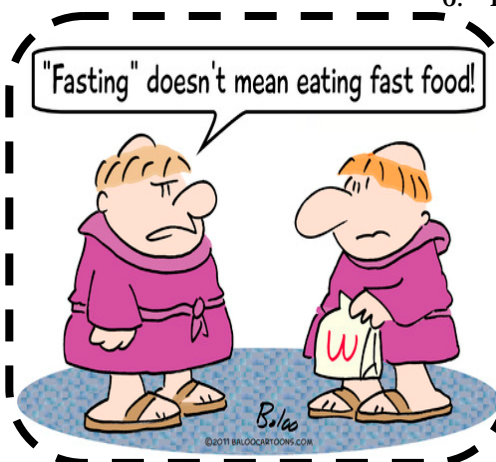
On the next page there is an arrangement so that a person can read the entire book during Lent. It starts on the Monday before Ash Wednesday (who says you have to wait until Ash Wednesday?) This is indeed a book that should be read carefully and prayerfully so do not feel you have to complete the whole by Palm Sunday. I have followed this schedule and, at times, felt like I was in a horse race. Take it slow and steady and use the weekends to catchup as needed. But it is far more important, as in *Lectio*, to sit with those passages that God suggests in your heart ponder than to finish the book.

Adapted from an original posting at [Byzantine Ramblings](#) and posted on the [Oblate website on February 7, 2013](#).

Downloadable copy: <http://oblatesosbbelmont.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/TheLadderofDivineAscent.pdf>

QUESTIONS FOR MEETING: CHAPTER 8-MUTUALITY

1. How does Casey describe a monk committed to the practice of mutual obedience? (1st par. page 1 Chap 8)
2. As an oblate how does mutual obedience come into play when we meet as a group?
3. When confronted w/ hundreds of opportunities to say "yes" and "no" to God, how difficult is it to say yes in many occasions?
4. What wisdom have you acquired as an Oblate concerning question 3?
5. Why is The Beatitude "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land (land translates to Heaven)", (Matthew Chap 5- 2, Sermon on the mount) so important when dealing w/ Mutual obedience? What reasons does Casey give supporting the statement "True community is built on self denial" (p.110 2nd par)
6. From the examples Casey gives, would you agree that self denial is something that will help an Oblate grow closer to God? If so, give examples from personal experience.



7. When creating a climate of mutuality in your lives, why does listening to others 1st (holding back my thoughts of assertion until I have listened to them), Being charitable, considerate, and humble create a space that allows others to enter into our common space?
8. Are we able to Welcome all w/ the love of Christ if we do this?
9. Casey states that the true genius of a genuine monastic community is switching roles. (top of last par. p.111) Sometimes I must graciously apologize to another and at other times I must humbly accept an apology. Do you apply this role switching in your lives? If so, explain how?

SUGGESTED READING CYCLE: THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT

The readings are arranged around the Liturgy of the Hours but you could also easily consider a time-table of "on rising", "after work" and "near bedtime"; or even combining selections of the individual daily readings as you choose. In any event, the *Ladder* is, after the Scriptures, an excellent choice for Lenten reading.

ORDO

Indeed, Nothing Is to Be Preferred to the Work of God.
(RB 43)

FEBRUARY

15 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week II)
18 Ash Wednesday (Week IV)
22 First Sunday of Lent (Week I)
25 St. Walburga (opt. Memorial)

MARCH

1 Second Sunday of Lent (Week II)
8 Third Sunday of Lent (Week III)
15 Fourth Sunday of Lent (Week IV)

Please remember to pray for the deceased Monks of Belmont Abbey

FEBRUARY

18 Fr. William Regnat (1953)
24 Br. Aegidius Seier (1973)
 Br. Gregory Corcoran (1990)
25 Fr. Melchior Reichert (1940)
28 Br. George Poellath (1963)

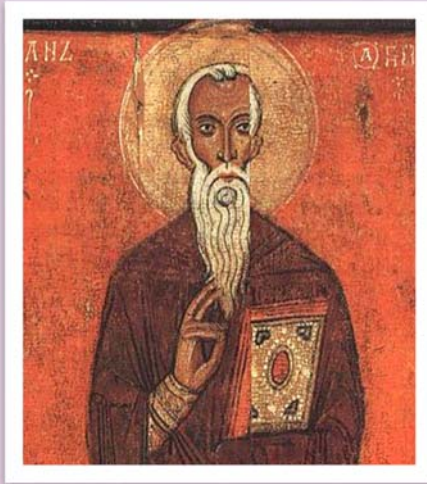
MARCH

3 Fr. Michael McInerney (1963)
10 Fr. Vincent Campbell (1963)
14 Fr. William Mayer (1904)

Week	Day	Date	Lauds	Daytime	Vespers
First	Mon.	16-Feb	1:1-7	1:8-18	1:19-27
	Tue.	17-Feb	2	3:1-15	3:16-29
	Wed.	18-Feb	4:1-10	4:11-15	4:16-22
	Thu.	19-Feb	4:23-26	4:27-30	4:31-34
	Fri.	20-Feb	4:35-41	4:42-57	4:58-71
Second	Mon.	23-Feb	4:72-91	4:92-109	4:110-112
	Tue.	24-Feb	4:113-126	5:1-12	5:13-18
	Wed.	25-Feb	5:19-23	5:24-28	5:29-42
	Thu.	26-Feb	6	7:1-16	7:17-31
	Fri.	27-Feb	7:32-47	7:48-56	7:57-70
Third	Mon.	2-Mar	8:1-18	8:19-29	9
	Tue.	3-Mar	10	11	12
	Wed.	4-Mar	13	14:1-23	14:24-36
	Thu.	5-Mar	15:1-16	15:17-29	15:30-41
	Fri.	6-Mar	15:42-55	15:56-65	15:66-75
Fourth	Mon.	9-Mar	15:76-81	15:82-90	16
	Tue.	10-Mar	17	18	19
	Wed.	11-Mar	20	21	22:1-28
	Thu.	12-Mar	22:29-46	23:1-18	23:19-37
	Fri.	13-Mar	23:38-52	24:1-19	24:20-34
Fifth	Mon.	16-Mar	25:1-9	25:10-29	25:30-51
	Tue.	17-Mar	25:52-69	26:1-16	26:17-27
	Wed.	18-Mar	26:28-50	26:51-69	26:70-88
	Thu.	19-Mar	26:89-109	26:110-123	26:124-139
	Fri.	20-Mar	26:140-153	26:154-170	26:171-189
Sixth	Mon.	23-Mar	26a:1-37	26a:38-65	27:1-16
	Tue.	24-Mar	27:17-28	27:29-40	27:41-56
	Wed.	25-Mar	27:57-70	27:71-87	28:1-16
	Thu.	26-Mar	28:17-29	28:30-50	28:51-64
	Fri.	27-Mar	29	30:1-19	30:20-end

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS

. . . Can the Ladder, a work written by a hermit monk who lived 1,400 years ago, say something to us today? Can the existential journey of a man who lived his entire life on Mount Sinai in such a distant time be relevant to us? At first glance it would seem that the answer must be "no", because John Climacus is too remote from us. But if we look a little closer, we see that the monastic life is only a great symbol of baptismal life, of Christian life. It shows, so to speak, in capital letters what we write day after day in small letters. It is a prophetic symbol that reveals what the life of the baptized person is, in communion with Christ, with his death and Resurrection. The fact that the top of the "ladder", the final steps, are at the same time the fundamental, initial and most simple virtues is particularly important to me: faith, hope and charity. These are not virtues accessible only to moral heroes; rather they are gifts of God to all the baptized: in them our life develops too. The beginning is also the end, the starting point is also the point of arrival: the whole journey towards an ever more radical realization of faith, hope and charity. The whole ascent is present in these virtues. Faith is fundamental, because this virtue implies that I renounce my arrogance, my thought, and the claim to judge by myself without entrusting myself to others. This journey towards humility, towards spiritual childhood is essential. It is necessary to overcome the attitude of arrogance that makes one say: I know better, in this



my time of the 21st century, than what people could have known then. Instead, it is necessary to entrust oneself to Sacred Scripture alone, to the word of the Lord, to look out on the horizon of faith with humility, in order to enter into the enormous immensity of the universal world, of the world of God. In this way our soul grows, the sensitivity of

the heart grows toward God. Rightly, John Climacus says that hope alone renders us capable of living charity; hope in which we transcend the things of every day, we do not expect success in our earthly days but we look forward to the revelation of God himself at last. It is only in this extension of our soul, in this self-transcendence, that our life becomes great and that we are able to bear the effort and disappointments of every day, that we can be kind to others without expecting any reward. Only if there is God, this great hope to which I aspire, can I take the small steps of my life and thus learn charity. The mystery of prayer, of the personal knowledge of Jesus, is concealed in charity: simple prayer that strives only to move the divine Teacher's heart. So it is that one's own heart opens, one learns from him his own kindness, his love. Let us therefore use this "ascent" of faith, hope and charity. In this way we will arrive at true life.

Pope Benedict XVI
General Audience
11 February 2009

The March meeting of the Oblates will be on the 15th at 3:30 unless otherwise announced.