



Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

May, 2015

UNDERSTANDING CATHOLIC DEVOTION TO MARY

. . . it is not surprising that those who are not Catholic often have a completely wrong conception of Catholic devotion to the Mother of God. They imagine, and sometimes we can understand their reasons for doing so, that Catholics treat the Blessed Virgin as an almost divine being in her own right, as if she had some glory, some power, some majesty of her own that placed her on a level with Christ Himself. They regard the Assumption of Mary



into heaven as a kind of apotheosis placed in the Redemption would seem to be equal to that of her Son. But this is all completely contrary to the true mind of the Catholic Church. It forgets that Mary's chief glory is in her nothingness, in the fact of being the "Handmaid of the Lord," as one who in becoming the Mother of God acted simply in loving submission to His command, in the pure obedience of faith. She is blessed not because of some mythical pseudo-divine prerogative, but in all her human and womanly limitations as one who has believed. It is the faith and the fidelity of this humble handmaid, "full of grace" that enables her to be the perfect instrument of God, and nothing else but His instrument. The work that was done in her purely the work of God. "He that is mighty hath done great things in me." The glory of Mary is purely and simply the glory of God in her. and she, like anyone else, can say that she has nothing that she has not received from Him through Christ.

As a matter of fact, this is precisely her greatest glory: that having nothing of her own, retaining nothing of a "self" that could glory in anything for her own sake, she placed

no obstacle to the mercy of God and in no way resisted His love and His will. Hence she received more from Him than any other saint. he was able to accomplish His will perfectly in her, and His liberty was in no way hindered or turned from its purpose by the presence of an egotistical self in Mary. She was and is in the highest sense a person precisely because, being "immaculate," she was free from every taint of selfishness that might obscure God's light in her being. She was then a freedom that obeyed Him perfectly and in this obedience found the fulfillment of perfect love.

The genuine significance of Catholic devotion to Mary is to be seen in the light of the Incarnation itself. The Church cannot separate the Son and the Mother. Because the Church conceived of the Incarnation as God's descent into flesh and into time, and His great gift of Himself to His creatures, she also believes that the one who was closest to Him in this great mystery was the one who participated most perfectly in the gift. When a room is heated by an open flame, surely there is nothing strange in the fact that those who stand closest to the fireplace are the ones who are warmest. And when God comes into the world through the instrumentality of one of His servants, then there is nothing surprising about the fact that His chosen instrument should have the greatest and most intimate share in the divine gift.

The next Oblate meeting will be May 17, 2015 at 3:30 PM in the Gallagher Room on the first floor of Stowe Hall. Novices will meet at 2:30.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Mary, who was empty of all egotism, free from all sin, was as pure as the glass of a very clean window that has no other function than to admit the light of the sun (Son). If we rejoice in that light, we implicitly praise the cleanness of the window. And of course it might be argued that in such a case we might well forget the window altogether. This is true. And yet the Son of God, in emptying Himself of His majestic power, having become a child, abandoning Himself in complete dependence to the loving care of a human Mother, in a certain sense draws our attention once again to her. The Light has wished to remind us of the window, because He is grateful to her and because He has an infinitely tender love, it is certainly a great grace and a privilege, and one of the most important aspects of this privilege is that it enables us to some extent to appreciate the mystery of God's great love and respect for His creatures.

That God should assume Mary into heaven is not just a glorification of a "Mother Goddess." Quite the contrary, it is the expression of the divine love for humanity, and a very special manifestation of God's respect for His creatures, His desire to do honor to the beings He has made in His own image, and most particularly His respect for the body which was destined to be the temple of His glory. If Mary is believed to be assumed into heaven, it is because we too are one day, by the grace of God, to dwell where she is. If human nature is glorified in her, it is because Understanding Catholic Devotion to Mary (cont.)

God desires it to be glorified in us too, and it is for this reason that His Son, taking flesh, came into the world.

In all the great mystery of Mary, then, one thing remains most clear: that of herself she is nothing, and that God has for our sakes delighted to manifest His glory and His love in her.

It is because she is, of all the saints, the most perfectly poor and the most perfectly hidden, the one who has absolutely nothing whatever that she attempts to possess as her own, that she can most fully communicate to the rest of us the grace of the infinitely selfless God. And we will most truly possess Him when we have emptied ourselves and become poor and hidden as she is, resembling Him by resembling her.

And all our sanctity depends on her maternal love. The ones she desires to share the joy of her own poverty and simplicity, the ones whom she wills to be hidden as she is hidden, are the ones who share her closeness to God.

Thomas Merton, OCSO

ORDO

MAY

- 10 Sixth Sunday of Easter (Week II)
- 13 Our Lady of Fatima, (opt. Mem.)
- 14 Matthias, Apostle. Feast
- 15 Pachomius, Abbot. Memorial (*Begin Novena to the Holy Spirit*)
- 17 Ascension of the Lord (Week III)
- 24 Pentecost
- 25 Mary, Help of Christians, Titular and Patron. Solemnity
(*Begin Week I on Tuesday*)

ORDINARY TIME

- 25 Bede the Venerable, Memorial
- 31 Trinity Sunday (Week II)

JUNE

- 1 Justin, Martyr, Memorial
- 3 Charles Lwanga, and his Companions, Martyrs. Memorial
- 5 Boniface, Memorial
- 7 Corpus Christi (Week III)
- 11 Barnabas, Memorial
- 13 Anthony of Padua, Memorial
- 14 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week IV)

NOVENA IN HONOR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever to re-joyce in His consolation. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray. O Holy Spirit, divine Spirit of light and love, I consecrate to you my understanding, my heart, my will, my whole being for time and for eternity. May my understanding always be submis-sive to your heavenly inspirations and to the teach-ings of the Holy Catholic Church, of which you are the infallible Guide; may my heart ever be inflamed with love of God and of my neighbor; may my will always conform to the divine will, and may my whole life be a faithful imitation of the life and vir-tues of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be honor and glory forever. Amen.



*Please remember to pray for
the following deceased monks
of the Abbey.*

MAY

- 17 Fr. Leo Kuntz
- 18 Fr. Alphonse Buss
- 24 Fr. Hugh Hagerty
- 24 Fr. Matthe McSorley
- 26 Br. Andrew Huemer
- 27 Fr. Charles Kastner
- 30 Fr. Francis Meyer
- 31 Br. Joseph Maria Rabbani

June

- 2 Br. Bernard Geil
- 4 Br. Charles Eckel
- 6 Fr. Edward Meyer
- 7 Br. Xavier Hauman
- 13 Br. Altmann Alt
- 17 Br. Maurus Lobenhofer
- 19 Fr. Gabriel Stupasky



PRAYER THE HOLY SPIRIT

O divine love, O sacred bond which unites the Father and the Son, all powerful Spirit, faithful consoler of the afflicted, penetrate the depths of my heart, and make Your dazzling light shine therein! Pour forth Your sweet dew on this desert land, and bring to an end its long continued dryness!

Send the celestial beams of Your love into the very sanctuary of my soul, so that, entering there, they may kindle burning flames to consume all my weakness, my negligence, my languor! Come, then, come, sweet comforter of desolate souls, refuge in danger, and protector in distress! Come, You who cleanse souls from thin stains, and cure them of their wounds! Come, strength of the weak, support of the falling! Come, teacher of the humble, and vanquisher of the proud! Come, Father of orphans, hope of the poor, treasure of those who are in want! Come, star of navigators, safe harbour of the shipwrecked! Come, strength of the living, and salvation of the dying. Come, O Holy Spirit, come, and have pity on me!

Make my soul simple, docile and faithful, and condescend so kindly to my feebleness, that my insignificance may find favour with Your infinite greatness, my powerlessness with Your strength, my offences with the multitude of Your mercies! Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour. Amen.

St. Augustine



WHY THE PSALMS

It would be quite wrong to imagine that the prayer life of the Church is divided into two distinct halves, separated by a gap that is rarely bridged, as if the Psalter and the Missal were reserved for clerics and the rosary and other extraliturgical devotions were for the laity. The very fact that the rosary was originally referred to as the "Layman 's psalter" reminds us that before the Middle Ages the lay people participated in the divine office with the clerics, and chanted the Psalms with them. Other devotions arose only when the layman no longer understood the Psalms.

Of course it is quite clear that the rosary is the easiest and most accessible form of family prayer. His Holiness Pope Pius XII has told the whole Church that the rosary is one of the most effective remedies for the evils of our time, and his encyclical "*Ingruentium malorum*" expressed the desire to see the recitation of the family rosary spread more and more. Yet there is no reason why in the families of those who have a deeper liturgical sense and a wider background, the Psalms should not also form a part of family prayer.

Thomas Merton, OCSO

MAY 15: ST. PACHOMIUS, FOUNDER OF CENOBITIC MONASTICISM



Therefore, brothers, let us strive with all our heart, bearing death before our eyes every hour, and every moment imagining the fearful punishment. But these things the mind comes to perception and the soul is weighed down weeping, but it is also made contemplative and prepared to be turned toward God, undistracted by earthly things. And not only this, but once humility is worked out by these, the soul is persuaded to become compassionate and without vainglory, lowly and made a stranger to all worldly mentality.

Let the soul then, brothers, teach wisdom to this thick body every day when we come to our bed at evening, and say to each member of the body, "O feet, while you have power to stand and to move before you are laid out and become motionless, stand eagerly for your Lord." To the hands, let it say, "The hour comes when you will be loosened and motionless, bound to each other and having no motion whatever; then, before you fall into that hour, do not cease stretching yourselves out to the Lord."

And to the whole body let the soul say, "O body, before we are separated and removed far away from each other, and before I am taken down to Hades to receive everlasting fetters under darkness, and you

are changed into primal matter and dissolved into the earth, consumed in stench and corruption, stand boldly, worship the Lord. Make my perception made known by tears; make known to the Master your good service. Bear me as I eagerly confess God, before you are borne by others; do not condemn me to eternal punishment in your desire to sleep and to take your rest. For there will be a time when that most heavy sleep is going to overtake you. If you listen to me, we shall together enjoy the blessed inheritance. If you do not listen to me, then woe to me that you have been bound to me; because of you I also, wretched as I am, am condemned."

If you train yourselves daily in this manner, truly you will be a true temple of God. And since God is dwelling in you, what satanic wile is able to deceive you? For instead of having a myriad of teachers, the word of God is dwelling in you, teaching you more and making you yet wiser by his own knowledge. And whatever human speech cannot say, the all-holy Spirit teaches. For as it is said, we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself expresses our plea for us with groanings that cannot be put into words. If you train yourselves daily in this manner, truly you will be a true temple of God. And since God is dwelling in you, what satanic wile is able to deceive you? For instead of having a myriad of teachers, the word of God is dwelling in you, teaching you more and making you yet wiser by his own knowledge. And whatever human speech cannot say, the all-holy Spirit teaches. For as it is said, we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself expresses our plea for us with groanings that cannot be put into words.

St Pachomius, Armand Veilleux, trans.,
"*Pachomian Koinonia -- Volume II*," (Kalamazoo,
Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981), pp. 41 -
44

The June meeting of the Oblates will be on the 21st at 3:30 unless otherwise announced.