



Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

June-July, 2016

A TIME TO CATCH UP

It's summer and the Oblates program is on vacation until September. You may have noticed that your newsletters have not been arriving on a regular schedule lately but the newsletter staff has been dealing with some health issues lately. Gail Warlick, who makes sure the issues are copied and sent out, has recovered from her car accident the end of May. The Editor and sometimes writer for the newsletter has almost recovered from his surgery and is well enough to get this issue done.

READINGS FOR NEXT YEAR. In the last issue a summer reading list was promised but first it is late enough in the summer we need to announce the readings for the meetings beginning in September. We will continue with C.S. Lewis' *Reflections on the Psalms* when we come back in September. Br. Edward will have the questions ready for the September newsletter. In addition, in a change to the meeting agenda, we will also begin the series *Alive in the Word*, just recently published by Liturgical Press. Through a generous donation the booklets will be provided free to Oblates attending the meetings. The scripture study is wide-ranging and includes a variety of topics in a unique series which include:

- Cloud of Witnesses
- Virtues for Disciples
- Seasons of Our Lives
- Liturgical Seasons
- Connecting with the Sacraments

- Gleanings from the Gospels
- Biblical Images

The theme we will begin this year is *Virtues for Disciples* which includes:

- Mercy
- Trust
- Hope
- Joy
- Surrender
- Justice
- Abundant Life
- Repentance
- Forgiveness

The meeting in September will begin with Mercy, in keeping with the Year of Mercy that is being observed by the Roman Catholic Church. This will be followed by Trust and then Hope. These are all short books (about 40 pages) and does not take a lot of time to read. But it is hoped it will be an aid to your personal study of the Scriptures. Each chapter ends with a set of reflection questions that you should ask yourself. The end of the chapter is always a challenge to carrying out your faith. Give yourself another challenge and reflect on how this also ties into St. Benedict's *Rule*.

It is hoped this is a welcomed addition to your own spiritual journey.

After we have finished *Reflections on the Psalms*, Br. Edward has asked we pick up a lighter reading: *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc, by the Sieur Louis de*



(Continued on page 3)



There is a great deal written about inner silence. Silence is important, to be able to quiet the mind which is often filled with compulsive and anxious thoughts, or ones of anger, worry,

etc. Inner turmoil keeps us from the present, from reality, which can only be lived 'now', for that is all we have.

I have given names to signify how I pray at different times during the day. There is the prayer of silent regard. A simple gentle awareness of the indwelling Trinity, of the constant love that is present communing with me in ways that I can understand, though at the same time hidden and obscure. It seems very ordinary to do this, just a simple awareness. I lose it for a time and gently bring the 'presence' back to mind.

I am often tired or even exhausted. I have always been low energy in many ways. I have never really understood it. Even when young and in good shape, I would find myself drained to the point that I could hardly bear it. As I age it is the same, possibly a little worse but not much. So now I have what I call the prayer of exhaustion. I may try to read when I feel that way but for the most part I just sit with it and that 'lack-of-energy' simply becomes my prayer. I sit with it, look at it, give it over to God and often fall asleep for a short time. I wake up with my head slumped down, and I simply go back to my prayer of exhaustion. One thing about this state, my mind is easy to keep silent in between dozing off for a few minutes. So I believe that this is an important way to pray. Most humans understand exhaustion, and many are like me, who for whatever reasons have low energy.

When my mind is racing, when I can't seem to focus, I use my beads, just sit and slowly say 'prayers', intent upon the words and at the same time rolling the beads in my fingers. This gradually allows the racing to slow down and focus comes into play. When I pray this way, and peace descends, time seems to go away and I am often surprised at how long I can be in this state. Some times peace does not come, but at least the desire to pray is there. Beads and rosaries of all sorts have been used not only by Christians but by others faith paths from time immemorial. When driving in the city, or at the airport filled with noise and people, this kind of gentle saying the words of the prayer, being aware of their meaning can actually focus ones thoughts. Better than the com-

pulsive ramblings that often happen if we just let our minds wander as they tend to do.

When anxious, which I find to be a very painful inner state, I have also found that it is good for me to simply use that energy as prayer, to sit with it, to offer it, and to let it go. I sink into it knowing that I am one with God and this is my 'poor' gift to him. In doing this, things settle down slowly. The energy is not scattered but directed towards the center of the Heart of God. I also join with all who are anxious and pray with them, be with them. Our connections are deeper than we can ever understand. The same can be said for anger or in dealing with sexual energy. It is all the same energy, we just experience it all in different ways and have to deal with it all, or it will deal with us.

Lectio Divina, holy reading, is a very important aspect of my prayer life as it is in the lives of many no matter what faith path or spiritual course they are following. To simply sit, to read slowly and allow the text to speak to us is a powerful form of prayer. It can be a difficult discipline for on many mornings or evenings, it may be difficult to focus ones mind, yet, with time the mind become absorbed with the text, or a deeper contemplation that the text draws one to. In other words *Lectio* is another way to let go of control and to allow grace to do its work.

The silent soul is capable of attaining the closest union with God. It lives almost always under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God works in a silent soul without hindrance. St. Faustina, Diary 477 (e)

Letting go is not easy. It is a paradox. In order to let go we need to focus and then not worry about results. We are not graded; we are called to be faithful not to be successful as Mother Teresa so wisely said. Prayer is a conscious communion with God, a dance of love with a great deal of inner struggle with oneself. The more one grows in trust, which is not easy, the deeper one can go in relationship with the Infinite, who I believe is revealed in Jesus Christ as love incarnate which points us to the Father. The more we seek, the more the Spirit of God will work with us. All we need do is to have the desire; grace will do the rest, though graces time table is not ours.

Br. Mark Dohle, OCSO
Holy Spirit Monastery

ORDO

JUNE

- 21 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week IV)
- 24 Nativity of John the Baptist. Solemnity
- 25 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week I)
- 29 Peter and Paul, Apostles. Solemnity

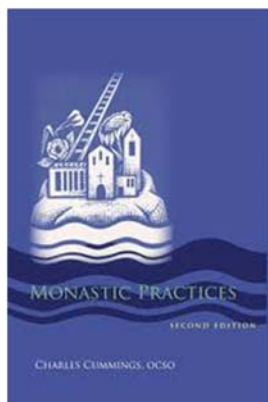
JULY

- 3 Thomas, Apostle. Feast
- 5 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week II)
- 11 **Benedict, Patriarch of Western Monasticism. Feast**
- 12 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week III)
- 15 Bonaventure, Memorial
- 16 *Our Lady of Mount Carmel (Opt. Mem.)*
- 19 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week IV)
- 22 Mary Magdalene, Feast
- 25 James, Apostle, Feast
- 26 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week I)
- 29 Martha, Mary and Lazarus, Memorial
- 31 Ignatius of Loyola, Memorial

A TIME TO CATCH UP (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

Conte is an 1896 novel by Mark Twain that recounts the life of Joan of Arc. While Twain is noted humorist, the *Personal Reflections* is considered by historians as a serious biography of the great saint. Twain considered it to be his greatest and most important work.

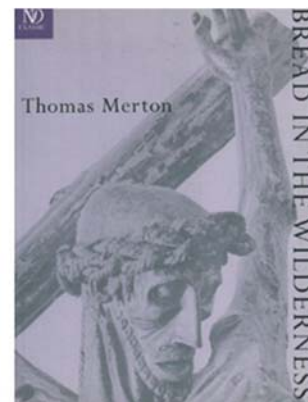
The book is readily available on-line and in local book stores in a wide variety of formats. It suggested that you begin the reading of the biography by the beginning of September since it is a fairly long book. Since the book is in the public domain you may download it from Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2874>. It can also be purchased at any on-line or local book seller.



PRAYING THE BIBLE

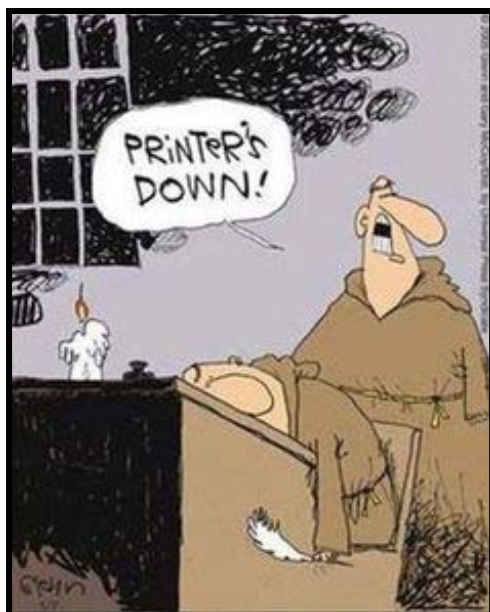


An Introduction to
Lectio Divina
Mariano Magrassi



ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR SUMMER:

Now, if you have more time on your hands you might consider *Monastic Practices* by Charles Cummings, OCSO. This has just been revised and re-released by Liturgical Press for \$19.95 (\$15.99 for the ebook). While it is mostly geared toward the Monastic Community within the monastery, there is much that an Oblate will find that is appropriate to incorporate into their own lives.



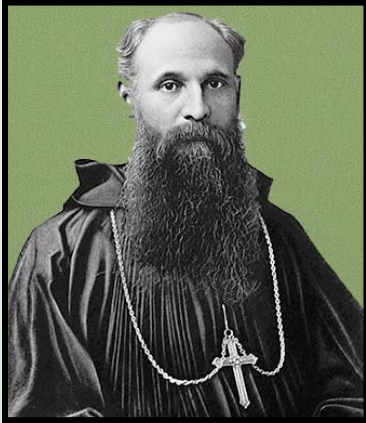
Another book that is dog-eared on this Editor's shelf is *Praying the Bible, An Introduction to Lectio Divina* by Archbishop Mariano Magrassi, OSB. With his vast knowledge of the Fathers and medieval monastic writers, Archbishop Magrassi synthesizes the unique and extraordinary experience of lectio divina. What is it? What are its key ideas? What are the necessary personal dispositions? What are the steps by which prayed reading is transformed into genuine contemplation? In *Praying the Bible* Magrassi answers these questions, providing a discussion that contains a healthy challenge and an invitation to grow.

A final recommendation for Merton lovers is *Bread in the Wilderness*. Carrying the Imprimatur of Francis Cardinal Spellman, *Bread in the Wilderness* sets forth Merton's belief that "the Psalms acquire, for those who know how to enter into them, a surprising depth, a marvelous and inexhaustible actuality. They are bread, miraculously provided by Christ, to feed those who have followed Him into the wilderness." Merton's goal in this moving book is to help the reader enter into the Psalms: "The secret is placed in the hands of each Christian. It only needs to be discovered and fulfilled in our own lives."



YOUR BENEDICTINE HERITAGE

As Oblates we need to know and appreciate the Monastic Community to which we belong. Starting with this month we will be printing in this section biographies and histories of the Abbey beginning with Bishop Leo Haid who we remember especially July 24.



BISHOP LEO HAID, was the first abbot of Maryhelp (Belmont) Abbey. Baptized "Michael" in 1849, he was to spend his entire life in proximity to the Benedictines. Michael was born in the Benedictine parish in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, where he was baptized by Father Celestine Engebrecht, part of the first company of Benedictines in this country. He studied at the Abbey of Saint Vincent, professed the monastic vows and was ordained there, then taught in the schools until he was elected abbot of Maryhelp in North Carolina in 1885.

Because of his popularity as a teacher at Saint Vincent, Haid was able to attract a distinguished band of young Benedictines to join him in the South, where their new abbey was quickly stabilized. Known for his optimism and good judgement, Haid promoted a sound monastic observance even in the pioneer days, and worked with special vigor on behalf of his college's library. For the students he encouraged activities that supported rather than distracted from their education, especially the forensic and dramatic arts.

In December 1887 he was nominated as Vicar Apostolic of North Carolina, and titular bishop of Messene (Greece). As bishop, Haid focused upon securing the faith of the state's scattered Catholics; he saw the strength and example of present Catholics as prefatory to evangelization. Throughout his life, Haid struggled to balance the needs of his monastery (where he reigned for 39 years) and his vicariate (where he reigned for 36 years). This led him to promote the abbey's elevation in 1910 to the status of a nullius 'diocese,' whereby he hoped to protect the Benedictines from outside episcopal influence.

In addition to securing the college at Belmont—where he offered everything from preparatory diplomas to graduate degrees—Leo Haid consolidated the Benedictines' commitments in Florida, Savannah, and Richmond as monasteries, each with a school, and founded a monastery and industrial school in northern Virginia. He also served as President of the American Cassinese Congregation of the Order of Saint Benedict, and in 1893 was instrumental in limiting the powers granted the new Abbot Primate in Rome.

Throughout his life, Haid was fascinated by pedagogical theory. He believed that the core of Benedictine education rested in a blend of virtue and scholarship, to which students were exposed and called to participate according to their faculty's example. Haid died in 1924, at age 75. In the funeral eulogy, the Abbot of Belmont was praised by Hugh Boyle, Bishop of Pittsburgh, as a man of "luxuriant mind" and "wealth of character."

NECROLOGY

JULY

JUNE

17 Br. Maurus Lobenhofer
19 Fr. Gabriel Stupasky
20 Novice Martin Linseisen
21 Fr. Sebastian Doris
26 Br. Placid Spoettl
28 Prior Felix Hintemeyer

3 Fr. Maurice McDonnell
4 Br. Lawrence Bittel
6 Br. Francis Buss
10 Fr. Bede Lightner
17 Fr. Obl. Bertrand Pattison
20 Fr. Stephen Dowd
22 Br. Philip Berhard

22 Br. Vincent Melber
23 Fr. Raphael Arthur
24 Abbot Leo Haid
26 Fr. Raymond Geyer
27 Br. Obl. Jude Morris