



Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

February, 2017

BR. GREGORY MARSHALL, O.S.B. MAKES SOLEMN PROFESSION

Brother Gregory Marshall, O.S.B. made his Solemn Profession at the Conventual Mass on Sunday, January 15. Bishop emeritus William Curlin, priests of the Charlotte Diocese, and Br. Gregory's parents and family joined the monastic and college communities and oblates for the celebration.



Br. Gregory receiving the cuculla from Abbot Placid.

Abbot Placid reminded Brother Gregory, and all who follow the Rule of St. Benedict, that "...the words of John the Baptist in today's gospel (John 1:29-34) sum up for us succinctly the entire meaning and purpose of our monastic life: Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God. The entire way of life Our Holy Father Benedict has outlined for us in his Rule is centered on Jesus Christ, the Savior who takes away the sin of the world and brings us back to his Father in the power of the Spirit. At the very beginning of his Rule, Saint Benedict challenges us to return to Him from whom we have departed through the sloth of disobedience by taking up the "strong and noble weapons of obedience to do battle for the true King, Christ the Lord." In that

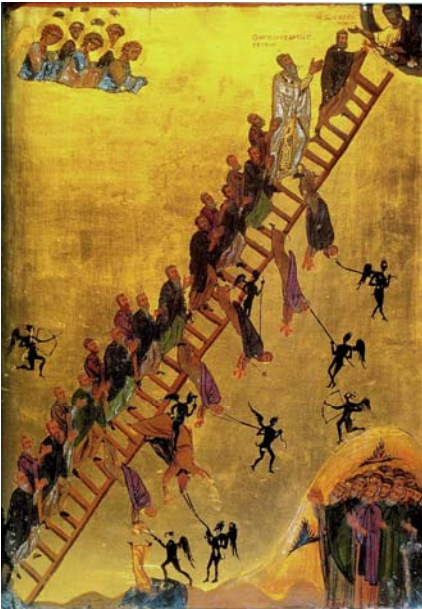
obedience, he instructs us to imitate the Lord, "of whom the Apostle says: He became obedient even to death," and urges us to "conform to the saying of the Lord: I have come not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. He challenges us to see Jesus Christ in those who are vulnerable, needy and weak; that is, in the guests who present themselves, especially the poor and pilgrims, in the sick, in the abbot. According to his Rule, We are to be so perfected in humility by the grace of Jesus Christ that we "will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear", so that the virtue we once labored to acquire with difficulty we "will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue." His final words in his Rule to us, his sons, are: "Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life."

QUESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

1. How does the use of symbolism and imagery help you to speak to God in prayer?
2. When has an appreciation for creation led you to a deeper sense that God is worthy of your trust?
3. What life events have made you aware of God as your guardian?
4. How has God provided shade for you in recent years? What does that mean to you?
5. Consider these connections between soul and breathing. Consider too that Genesis speaks of the Creator breathing the "breath of life" into the dust of the ground to create humans (Gen 2:7). How do these images speak to you?

The next Oblate meeting will be February 19, 2017 at 2:30 PM in the Gallagher Room.

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 rigueur* 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. This is indeed a book that should be read carefully and prayerfully. 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 and ponder them in your heart than to finish the book by Holy Week.

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>



WHY THE PSALMS?



... then it is clear that the Psalter is a school of contemplation which has no equal except the Gospels and St Paul. Yet, in a certain sense, the Psalms have an accidental advantage over the New Testament. We pray them. We chant them together. They form part of an action into which the whole Church enters, and in that action, that prayer, the Spirit of Love Who wrote the Psalms and Who communicates Himself to us in them, works on us' all and raises us up to God. To make the Psalms a preparation for contemplative prayer we must do all that we can. to pray them with pure minds and pure hearts, living out their meaning with a charity that praises God as they praise Him. There is no purer praise of God than we find in the Psalms. If we make that purity our own, we lay ourselves open as targets, which fire from heaven can strike and consume: and this is all our desire, and God's desire for us.

Thomas Merton, OCSO



ORDO

- 2 Presentation of the Lord. Feast.
- 5 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week I)
- 6 Paul Miki, Religious, Missionary, Martyr, and His Companions, Martyrs. Memorial.
- 10 Scholastica, Virgin, Religious Founder. Feast.
- 12 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week II)
- 14 Cyril, Monk, Missionary, and Methodius, Bishop, Missionary. Memorial.
- 19 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week III)
- 21 Peter Damian, Bishop, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 22 Chair of Peter, Apostle. Feast.
- 23 Polycarp, Bishop, Martyr. Memorial.
- 25 Walburga, Abbess, Secondary Patron of Belmont Abbey. Memorial.
- 26 Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week IV)

SUGGESTED READING CYCLE: FOR LENT: THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT

The readings are arranged around the Liturgy of the Hours but you could also easily consider a timetable 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.

NECROLOGY



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

FEBRUARY

- 3 Br. Eugene O'Neil (1986)
- 8 Fr. Kenneth Geyer (2012)
- 18 Fr. William Regnat (1953)
- 24 Br. Aegidius Seier (1973)
- 24 Br. Gregory Corcoran (1990)
- 25 Fr. Melchior Reichert (1940)
- 28 Br. George Poellath (1963)

MARCH

- 3 Fr. Michael McInerney (1963)
- 10 Fr. Vincent Campbell (1965)
- 14 Fr. William Mayer (1904)
- 17 Br. Christian Hierl (1930)
- 18 Fr. Florian Checkhart (1951)
- 18 Fr. Joseph Tobin (1978)
- 21 Prior Nicholas Bliley (1943)
- 24 Br. Celestine Wiegerle (1928)
- 25 Fr. Patrick Dolon (1913)
- 28 Fr. Ambrose Gallagher (1946)
- 28 Fr. Richard Graz (1952)

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



ST. SCHOLASTICA

On Feb. 10, the Catholic Church remembers St. Scholastica, a nun who was the twin sister of St. Benedict, the "father of monasticism" in Western Europe.

The siblings were born around 480 to a Roman noble family in Nursia, Italy. Scholastica seems to have devoted herself to God from her earliest youth, as the account of Benedict's life by Pope Gregory the Great mentions that his sister was "dedicated from her infancy to Our Lord."

The twins' mother died at their birth. When Benedict was old enough he left home to study in Rome leaving Scholastica with her father to tend the Nursian estate. In time, Benedict left his studies to live first as a hermit, and then as the head of a community of monks in Italy.

When Scholastica learned of her brother's total dedication to the Lord, she was determined to follow his example. It is not certain that she became a nun immediately, but it is generally supposed that she lived for some time in a community of pious virgins. Some biographers believe she eventually founded a monastery of nuns there.

The brother and sister communities were about five miles apart. St. Benedict seems to have directed his sister and her nuns, most likely in the practice of the same rule by which his own monks lived.

Unlike her brother, St. Scholastica was never the subject of a formal biography. As such, little is known of her life apart from her commitment to religious life which paralleled that of her brother. Pope Gregory wrote that Scholastica used to come once a year to visit Benedict, at a house situated halfway between the two communities.

St. Benedict's biographer recounted a story which is frequently told about the last such visit between the siblings. They passed the time as usual in prayer and pious conversation -- after which Scholastica begged her brother to remain for the night, but he refused.

She then joined her hands together, laid them on the table and bowed her head upon them in supplication to God. When she lifted her head from the table, immediately there arose such a storm that neither Benedict nor his fellow monks could leave.



"Seeing that he could not return to his abbey because of such thunder and lightning and great abundance of rain," Pope Gregory wrote, "the man of God became sad and began to complain to his sister, saying, 'God forgive you, what have you done?'"

"I wanted you to stay, and you wouldn't listen,' she answered. 'I have asked our good Lord, and He graciously granted my request, so if you can still depart, in God's name return to your monastery, and leave me here alone.'" St. Benedict had

no choice but to stay and speak to his sister all night long about spiritual matters -- including the kingdom of heaven for which she would soon depart.

Three days later in the year 543, in a vision Benedict saw the soul of his sister, departed from her body and in the likeness of a dove, ascend into heaven. He rejoiced with hymns and praise, giving thanks to God. His monks brought her body to his monastery and buried it in the grave that he had provided for himself. St. Benedict followed her soon after, and was buried in the same grave with his sister.

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The March meeting of the Oblates will be on the 19th at 2:30 unless otherwise announced.