



Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

January, 2018

RECEIVING OF NEW OBLATE NOVICES

Fr. Elias will be present at the next meeting to receive new Oblate Novices. If you have attended three meetings and wish to make your first Oblation at the January meeting please contact George Cobb at gkcobb0929@gmail.com.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE NEXT MEETING



The Feeding of the 5,000 (Mark 6:34-44)

1. In your experience, when you feel the need to be "recharged," how have you reacted when your plans are interrupted?
2. If Jesus were to meet you right now, what "hunger" might he see in you?
3. What does this metaphor or image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd reveal about the kind of leadership he values?
4. In what area of your life are you being invited to trust God more fully?
5. How might you respond to Jesus' command to address the hungers of our world? Where do you begin?

6. Hospitality is not only about providing food. What are the treasures you have access to that could be multiplied to meet people's needs?
7. The next time you participate in your parish Mass, take note of the various ways we are invited to experience God's hospitality.

THE PROLOGUE OF THE RULE: AN EXAMPLE OF LECTIO DIVINA

. . . St. Benedict now confides to us, indirectly, how he himself practiced it. Or, if you will, it is we ourselves by means of his text who gather his manner of reading of God.

There is a question of a personality who attributes to himself the titles as of father and master — without doubt an abbot. The "loving father" directs to his eventual disciple a moving exhortation. His words overflow with tenderness and wisdom — a wisdom intoxicated with the Scriptures, the evident fruit of a long practice of "divine reading." Only daily contact with the Word of God could produce such marvelous pages.

The discourse has as its principal theme the monastic vocation. Around it he weaves texts, words, reminiscences of the Bible: God speaks and God calls us, personally and directly. Our father and master not only firmly believes it; he knows it by experience. "Let us arise, then, at long last," he writes, "for the Scripture stirs us up, saying, 'It is high time for us to arise from sleep.' (Rom. 13, 11.) Let us open our eyes to the deifying light, let us hear with attentive ears the warning which the divine voice cries daily to us, 'Today if you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.' (Ps. 95, 8.) And again, 'You that have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.' (Rev. 2, 7) And what does the Spirit say? 'Come and listen to me; I will teach you to reverence God' (Ps. 34, 11) 'Run while you have the light of life, lest the darkness of



death overtakes you.' (Jo. 12, 35)" These texts flow, they join together, they interlace quite naturally. It is obvious that the author has long meditated on them, pondered them in his heart, and assimilated them, converting them into the substance of his own being. And "from the abundance of his heart the mouth speaks."

The Lord — Jesus Christ — seeks "the workers in a multitude of people. This is the personal vocation which the author discovered in reading Psalm 34. Jesus Christ speaks to the workers heart to heart. After the

general invitation, "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord," he asks, "Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?" The reply comes, "I do." Thus the dialogue has been set. Jesus Christ, using the same Psalm 34 accepts the response to his call and says further, "If you desire true and eternal life, keep your tongue from evil and your lips that they speak no guile. Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it." Thus far the psalm has been cited literally. The continuation gets its inspiration from it and from Isaiah. (Is. 58, 9; 65, 24) The Lord goes on, saying, "When you have done all these things, my eyes shall be upon you, and my ears open to your prayers; and before you call upon me, I will say to you 'Behold, here I am.'"

What is more delightful than this voice of the Holy One calling us? See how God's love shows us the way of life. (RB, prol., 12 - 20.)

The way of life leads to the kingdom. But we are warned, "We must run to it by good deeds, or we shall never arrive there." Our father and master does not want us to rely solely on his word; he refers us to Jesus Christ. He says, "Let us ask the Lord." He has done the same by resorting to Psalm 15 with personal reading. Again we are doing "divine reading." Psalm 15 puts into the mouth of each one of us the question, "Lord, who shall dwell in your tent or who shall rest on your holy mountain?" And the author emphasizes, "Let us listen, brethren, to what the Lord responds to this question." Jesus Christ himself responds, replies to us, "Those who walk without sin and practices justice; those who speak the truth from the heart and have not practiced deceit; who have not wronged another in any way, nor listened to slanders against a neighbor ... " And the Lord continues speaking to his disciple with phrases from both the Old and New Testament — it makes no difference; it is always the Lord who speaks in both — on so transcendental a theme. This is the conclusion, "We have asked the Lord who will dwell in your tent, and we have heard what are the conditions to anyone who would dwell there." (RB, prol., 22 - 39.)

The Prologue of the *Rule of St. Benedict*, like so many works of antiquity and of the Christian Middle Ages, reveals to us how our fathers in the faith read the Bible.

Garcia M. Colobas, *Reading God "Lectio Divina"*, pp. 81-84

QUESTION TO PONDER:

"Lord, who shall dwell in your tent or who shall rest on your holy mountain?" And the author emphasizes, "Let us listen, brethren, to what the Lord responds to this question." And how did the Lord respond to you with this question?

ORDO

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

JANUARY

- 1 Solemnity of Mary, Solemnity
- 2 Basil the Great and Gregory Nazian, Bishops, Memorial
- 7 Epiphany, Solemnity
- 8 Baptism of the Lord, Feast

ORDINARY TIME

- 9 **Begin Week I**
- 14 **2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk II)**
- 17 Anthony, Abbot. Memorial
- 21 **3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week III)**
- 24 Francis De Sales, Bishop, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 25 Conversion of Paul, Apostle, Feast
- 28 **4th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week III)**
- 31 John Bosco, Priest, Religious Founder, Educator. Memorial

NECROLOGY



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

JANUARY

- 3 Fr. Gerard Rettger
- 4 Fr. Herman Gronos
- 5 Fr. Benedict Rettger
- 7 Fr. Paul Milde
- 8 Br. Benedict Marschall
- 9 Fr. Anselm Biggs
- 14 Fr. Maurus Buchheit
- 15 Fr. Matthew Graz
- 22 Br. Felix Keilhacker
- 24 Br. Obl. Fredrick Schleid
- 28 Br. Philip Lobinger
- 29 Br. Aloysius Buss

FEBRUARY

- 3 Br. Eugene O'Neil
- 8 Fr. Kenneth Geyer



Losing 20 pounds may be more dramatic, but other things will make a bigger impact on your life.

It feels like I'm starting from scratch over and over again. At the start of almost every new year I recommit to daily study. It's one of the few acts that truly makes a difference in my life the more I do it; I'm more centered and better able to see the big picture when I start or end my day with God's words. Even when sometimes they are difficult to swallow. Those Israelites I read about who seem to keep forgetting God's miracles and blessings in their lives? I cringe as I see myself in their complaints to Moses. In 2018, once again I'll dive in, hoping not to forget how this daily practice helps me.

As you, too, start a new year, take it as a renewed opportunity to set off on a path of spiritual growth and renewal by setting a resolution regarding prayer, obedience, service, example, scripture study, and forgiveness. Let the following quotes from the Bible guide you. It might be less dramatic than the goal of losing 20 pounds, but in the long run, these are the things that will make a larger impact on your life.

1. GET RID OF A PESKY HABIT

Maybe you haven't gone totally off the rails. But in quiet moments you can probably see where you could use a little improvement. The beauty of a faithful life is that we can be forgiven and try again. Arika Clark of Arizona, with a long history in her dysfunctional family of origin, realized that her goal of marrying a good man in a religious service wasn't where she was headed. She was dating a guy with radically different standards, someone who was taking her away from her faith rather than making her a better person.

"I realigned myself and committed again," Arika says. "Jesus Christ suffered so that we could be forgiven for the mistakes we make. I had to remind myself of this — there was no possible way that I was too far off the path, no possible way that I would not be forgiven. God loves us so much that He is willing to forgive every sin we commit, as long as we ask. That was my hardest challenge, I had to ask." Less than a year after this realization, Arika married a devoted fellow saint committed to the same kind of life she had always hoped for.

Whether you need to work on something small or something big, there is a way forward. Make this year the time to get rid of a pesky habit you know is keeping you from God.

2. BE MORE CONSIDERATE

The holidays may be when you most often think of volunteering and giving, but need isn't limited to one time a year. Figure out a specific, measurable goal for your efforts to reach out to the less fortunate. That may be financial — a set amount of money each month to a cause in your community. But if you can donate your time in addition to money, that's the best combination.

And remember that volunteering at a soup kitchen isn't the only way to do kind deeds. Sometimes it's just being more considerate of the people around you. Leah Gerling made a resolution to change the way she spoke to herself and other women in her life: to use diction that builds them up rather than tears them down.

"I noticed all these incredible, talented women in my life who speak so terribly about themselves. Why do we do this? They say such negative stuff that they'd never say to anyone else." I'm such a bad mother, Why can't I get in shape, I'm so ditzy. All the little comments her friends would say criticizing themselves. Leah made an effort to call people out on

their negative self-talk and remind them of all they do. It may not be immediately life-changing, but she's seeing a way to strengthen the women around her just by paying a little more attention.

3. SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

I always talk to my kids about being a good example. The job doesn't go away once you reach adulthood. Audrey Kern of Anchorage, Alaska, has seen how personal connections can make a big difference in the lives of others — especially the elderly.

"A lot of seniors have no human contact during the winter. They're cooped up at home and maybe only go out once a week or less, like a trip to the post office." With her five kids, she tries to make eye contact and smile at everyone she sees while they are out running errands. "People need connection," she says. Even if it is just for a moment. Imagine the light showing through the Kern family's eyes, reaching out with love and kindness to all around them.

You may not be comfortable talking about your faith, but the way you do things can be just as loud a message in glorifying God. Think of your everyday interactions and figure out a way you can shine your light.

4. LEARN A NEW VERSE EVERY MONTH

Liz Demke of Sandy, Utah, chose to learn a scripture verse each month of 2015. Her husband and two kids were less than thrilled about the memorization project, but it seemed manageable. John 3:16 started them out in January. Each night at dinner (or most weeknights at least) they'd practice the verse. On Sunday evening they'd talk about what the words meant and why there were important. "We can't do a new one every week — that would be way too much work. But I knew I could focus on just one verse that seemed important for our family." Verses about love have come in handy when sibling rivalry is a problem. The family planned to continue throughout the forthcoming years, and Liz may even let other members of the family select some of the scriptures to study.

5. PRAY A LOT

It is the most basic of God's commands — talk to Him. For some reason, we get complacent and only go through the motions. Until we're in trouble, that is. Then suddenly we revive our heartfelt prayers and yearn for the peace of connection.

Mother and writer Melissa Dalton-Bradford, after losing a child, quotes Pastor Dennis Lennon in a 2011 blog post at Segullah as she recognizes the necessity of prayer. "With powerful prayer, however — and with many endlessly sweet hours of powerful prayer, I should add — we are infused with living water and Christ's blood, which save us from spiritual anemia. It is then we learn for our-

selves the truth and beauty of what Lennon writes and what I know from experience to be true: 'What blood is to the body, prayer is to the soul.' "

6. FORGIVE SOMEONE

You've heard all the adages about how forgiveness helps you more than the person who wronged you. There are amazing stories about communities who come together to forgive one who has done evil in their midst. All that can be true, but forgiving is still really hard.

If you've been holding onto pain or anger, make 2018 your year to move forward and leave those feelings behind. For Andrea (who'd rather not share her last name), 2016 was her first year as a single mother. The previous 20 months costed her tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees, ripped her family apart, and destroyed the life she once knew. "My kids have been through hell. Now we have to move forward and rebuild," she said. Her divorce from her childhood sweetheart couldn't have been more painful. Now that she's in a new apartment with custody arrangements sorted out, she doesn't have the constant reminder of her ex-husband.

Forgiveness is a long road, one involving a lot of prayer and work. The peace it brings is well worth it, though, whether the burden is recent or far in your past.

Eliana Osborn, Published in *Aleteia*, Dec 27, 2017 .

HOSPITALITY AND DIRECTORY

A **Hospitality Committee** has been formally established. It's senior membership is

- Tina Lyon, tinalyon@gmail.com
- Gary Neilson, gary@garynielson.com
- Omar Mirabal, omar.mirabal@outlook.com

Please email them directly if you would like to help.

Directory of Oblates: Over the past several years we have asked several times if the Oblates would like to have a Directory. There as never been an agreement among those polled. Instead an informal directory is being created to aid in communication. For those who would like to be included in an informal Directory please email Omar Mirabal or George Cobb (gkcobb0929@gmail.com) to be included.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING OF THE OBLATES WILL BE ON THE 18TH AT 3:30 UNLESS OTHERWISE ANNOUNCED. IF WEATHER SHOULD CLOSE THE ABBEY A NOTICE WILL BE PLACED ON THE WEBSITE.