



Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

February, 2018

QUESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

From the last Meeting: Make an effort to pay close attention to the people around you. What do they appear to be hungry for? What draws them together and what concerns them? As a follower of Jesus, what gifts already in your midst might you share with these same people? Could you invite someone to come to church, Oblates or to Bible study as a way of helping address their hungers?

The Exercise of Hospitality

The readings are from Romans 12:9-13, 1 Peter 4:7-10, and Hebrews 13:1-2

1. Why do you think hospitality may not receive the level of attention given to other Christian virtues?
2. After re-reading Romans 12:9-13 ask yourself which of these instructions or directives might need more attention in your faith community?
3. How might we foster hospitality as a vital aspect of Christian discipleship?
4. List the ways that Christian love is made practical when you exercise hospitality.
5. How important is listening and conversation to the expression of hospitality?
6. What is your attitude toward those seen as strangers? When has a chance encounter with someone different been an experience of grace for you?
- 7.

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF LECTIO DIVINA

That not much is known about the exact nature of *lectio divina* may be explained by the fact that both its name and its practice generally fell into desuetude** several centuries ago. Nowadays, thanks to modern research, it

**a doctrine holding that a statute may be officially discontinued because of its long disuse .

is possible to know the broad outlines of its history. We shall review it briefly. ¹



THE FATHERS

Lectio divina finds its roots in the Jewish religion, in the usage of the synagogue, in the "If meditation" (*haga*) of the Bible as practiced by the rabbis and their disciples. But one must wait till the time of Origen, the famous Alexandrian teacher, before the practice of *lectio divina* (*thela andgnosis*) appears in dear and perfect outline.²

Origen, who most probably learned this method from his Jewish masters, considers *lectio divina* as the necessary foundation of the entire ascetical life, of all spiritual understanding, of all contemplation.

In reality, Scripture does not constitute one instrument among others that help one to progress in the life of the spirit, nor is the reading of the Bible simply a pious exercise. We must rather say that the spiritual life of the Christian *consists of* the reading of the Bible, meditated, understood and lived. The Bible, together with the Incarnation and the Church, is the sensible manifestation of the presence of the Logos in history; it is the very voice of Christ which directs itself to his faithful by

The next Oblate meeting will be February 18, 2018 at 2:30 PM in the Gallagher Room.

St. Caesarius ordered that after the two regular hours of reading, one of the nuns should read aloud for another hour while the rest worked. According to a document in the Augustinian tradition, the *Ordo monasterii*, this reading occupied the middle of the day, from noon till 3.00 p.m. The Rule of St. Benedict prescribes three hours of reading in succession only in Lent (from 7:00 to 10:00 AM. approximately); during the summer reading was prescribed from 10:00 AM till noon, that is, when the heat increased, and those who desired to do so were allowed also to read during the siesta (a long hour): in the winter the monastics dedicated the first hour of the morning to reading, namely, when they left choir after Lauds until nine o'clock, and they continued their reading after the meal, except for those who had to learn the psalter by heart (*vacare psalmis*), until Compline. Sunday was the great weekly day for *lectio divina*. The monastics gave to it all the time not occupied by the divine services, span from those assigned to particular tasks and to *negligentes* or *desidiosi* who could not or would not occupy themselves with reading or *meditatio*; such were given some work, lest they remain idle.



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)

In order to dedicate themselves to *lectio divina*, it was necessary for monastics to be able to read. Already Pachomius ordered that the novices had to learn to read, "though they might not desire to."¹¹ The *Regula ad Virgines*, 18, of St. Caesarius of Aries ordained: "Let all monastics learn how to read." The same disposition recurs in the *Regula ad Monachos*, 23, as well as in the *Regula ad Virgines*, 26, of St. Aurelian. The *Regula Ferioli* asserts more solemnly, "Everyone who desires to be called 'monastic' has no right not to know how to read."

According to the *Regula Magistri*, *lectio* is done in this fashion: the monastics "gather by tens and listen to a reader; everyone in turn reads from the same book. At the same time one of the *literati* teaches reading to the children and the illiterate, and those who do not know the psalter practice its recitation". St. Benedict, on the other hand, wants the monastics to have their own book and seek the place best suited for their reading. Why? One reason seems obvious: the ancients liked to read aloud. Ordinarily they did not read solely by sight, but with the lips and ears as well, listening to the words they were pronouncing. That is why they sought solitude, recollection. The fact that each monastic received a book shows clearly that for St. Benedict *lectio divina* was a strictly personal matter; community readings were held at other times. One or two elders were debuted to check the monastery during the time assigned for reading to see if perhaps some bored monastic, instead of being devoted to *lectio*, engaged in idleness or vain chatter. During the summer siesta those who wanted to read had to do so by themselves (*sibi*), lest they disturb the others; this means that they read in the dormitory while the rest slept or tried to sleep.

The medieval monastics remained faithful to the practice of *lectio*, at least to a certain point, since, judging by certain texts, the impression arises that *lectio divina* was being weakened, disfigured, transformed and even forgotten, at least in some circles. Still there were notable personal and collective exceptions: St. Anselm, Rupert of Deutz, Peter of Celle and many others, as well as, above all, the first generations of Cistercians. The so — called "monastic theology" which had nourished itself on *lectio divina* now went into a lamentable decline.

From *Reading God* by Garcia M. Colombas, pp. 17-22

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE BASED ON CHAPTER 4 OF THE HOLY RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

General

- ☐ Have I neglected to love the Lord God with all my heart, all my soul, and all my strength, and my neighbor as myself? If so, in what specific ways?
- ☐ In deed or in thought, have I killed, committed adultery, stolen, coveted, or borne false witness?
- ☐ Have I failed to honor all men?
- ☐ Did I do to another what I would not have had done to me?
- ☐ Did I prefer anything to the love of Christ?

Self-Denial

- ☐ Have I been self-indulgent instead of denying myself in order to follow Christ?
- ☐ Have I pampered my body or sought after delicate living, rather than chastising my body?
- ☐ Have I neglected fasting or abstinence?
- ☐ Have I overindulged in wine or other beverages, or verged on gluttony?
- ☐ Have I been drowsy or slothful?
- ☐ Did I immerse myself in worldly affairs rather than keeping aloof from them?
- ☐ Did I fulfill the desires of the flesh rather than hating my own will?
- ☐ Have I sinned against chastity, modesty, or purity?

Charity towards Neighbor

- ☐ Have I neglected, when it was possible, to relieve the poor, clothe the naked, visit the sick, bury the dead, help in affliction, or console the sorrowing?
- ☐ Have I gratified anger or harbored a desire of revenge?
- ☐ Have I fostered guile in my heart or made a feigned peace?
- ☐ Have I failed to utter truth from heart and mouth?
- ☐ Have I rendered evil for evil or done wrong to anyone?
- ☐ Did I feel or exhibit impatience when wronged?
- ☐ Have I hated my enemies or any man?
- ☐ Did I neglect to pray for my enemies in the love of Christ?
- ☐ Have I avoided making peace with any adversary before the setting of the sun?
- ☐ Have I fled persecution for justice's sake?
- ☐ Have I rendered cursing for cursing, rather than a blessing?

- ☐ Have I been guilty of murmuring or detraction?
- ☐ Have I indulged in excessive talk, vain words, or unfitting laughter?
- ☐ Have I uttered evil and wicked words?
- ☐ Have I been jealous or given way to envy?
- ☐ Have I loved strife?
- ☐ Did I give in to vanity?
- ☐ Have I been proud?
- ☐ Did I fail to reverence my elders in Christ?
- ☐ Did I fail to love those who are my brothers, juniors, dependents, or pupils?
- ☐ Have I, in any other way, forsaken charity?

Seeking First God's Kingdom

- ☐ Have I been lax in fulfilling each day the commandments of God?
- ☐ Did I neglect in my prayer the daily confessing of past sins?
- ☐ Have I faltered in putting my hope in God?
- ☐ Have I subtly or openly attributed the good that I see in myself to myself rather than to God?
- ☐ Have I run away from acknowledging the evil I have done, or tried to blame it on someone else?
- ☐ Have I delayed taking the steps necessary to amend my sins, negligences, and failings?
- ☐ Have I been remiss in smashing my evil thoughts on the rock of Christ the instant they came into my heart?
- ☐ Have I been lax in applying myself to frequent prayer or *lectio divina*?
- ☐ Did I fail to keep death daily before my eyes, with fear of the Day of Judgment and dread of hell?
- ☐ Have I not been desiring everlasting life with all spiritual longing?
- ☐ Have I failed to keep guard over the actions of my life by bearing in mind that God sees me everywhere?
- ☐ Have I not sought the counsel of my spiritual father when I should have done so?
- ☐ Have I hidden evil thoughts from him?
- ☐ Have I shown poor obedience to the commands of those who are placed in authority over me?
- ☐ Did I seek a reputation for holiness rather than holiness itself?
- ☐ Have I ever despaired of God's mercy?

**The March meeting of the Oblates will be on the 18th at 2:30 unless
otherwise announced.**