

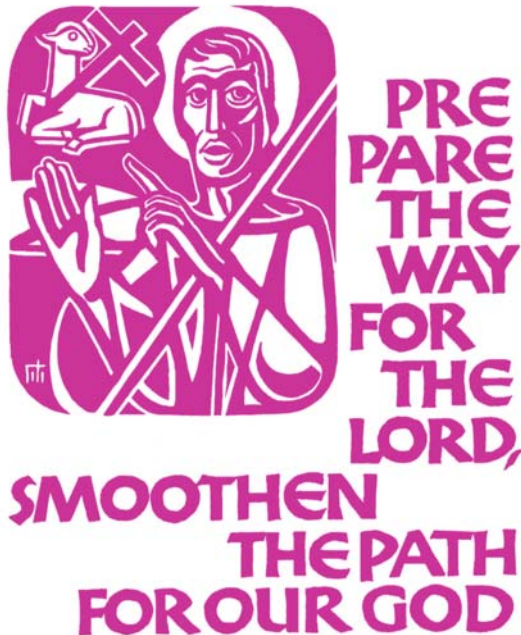


Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

October, 2018

FOR THE NEXT MEETING



No, we are not joining the rest of society jumpstarting Christmas but beginning at the October meeting we will begin the scriptural study of Advent. Because of the storm and the change of meeting dates many of you were unable to attend the September meeting but the study booklets will be available at the October meeting. In the mean time the title of the first section is: "Encountering God in the Incarnate Word." Please reflect on **John 1:14-18** and then answer the following questions:

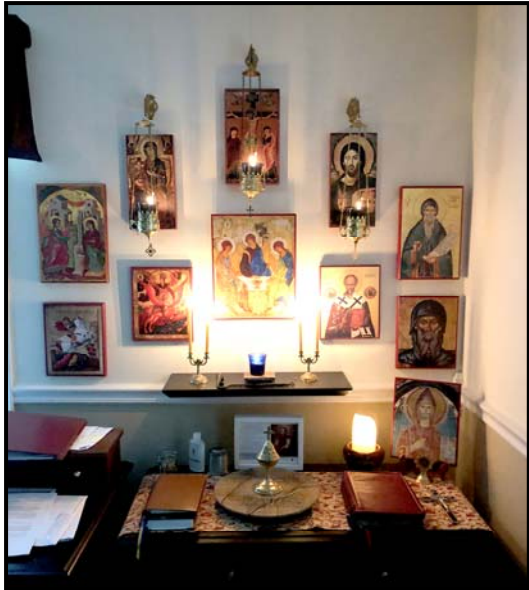
- Imitate the Israelites by recalling some of God's "mighty deeds" in your own past. How does this recollection help you to recognize God's presence in your past? What does it tell you about God? How does remembering help you understand the present and the future differently?
- In a prayer spoken near the end of his life, Jesus said to the Father, "Your word is truth." Jesus is God's Word. How is Jesus the central truth of your life?

How does his presence with you ground your life and give it purpose?

- How does the description of Wisdom from the book of Sirach (Sir 24:3, 6-9, 12) correspond with the incarnation of the Word? Can you hear echoes of the life of Christ in this ancient text that predates his birth?
- Recall a time in your life when words deeply impacted and enriched a relationship. How does Jesus as God's Word deeply impact and enrich your relationship with God? What has God said to you in Jesus?
- Every Advent, the Lectionary readings invite us to recall the ministry and testimony of John the Baptist. John said that he came to "make straight the way of the Lord" (John 1:23; see Isa 40:3). How can we imitate John the Baptist by being voices in the wilderness that "make straight the way of the Lord" in our world?
- John associates Jesus with the word "grace" (1:14, 16). Grace means gift. Jesus is a generous, voluntary, unexpected, and undeserved gift. How has this gift arrived (advenire) in your life? In what areas of your life do you most experience this grace?
- In what ways does Jesus reveal the Father to you? How can you renew your sense of encounter with the Father this Advent?



Since we are beginning to get into the mindset, when you come to the meeting October 21 please consider sharing the different traditions that you or your family practice during Advent to prepare for Christmas.



PRAYER CORNERS

"Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything." Abba Moses

In the July newsletter Michael Boggs wrote an article on prayer corners and encouraged us to write about our own. Since everyone seems to be reluctant to share I we could continue the discussion by inviting you to a very private part of my home and life. The recent storm reminded me of the value of a prayer corner my "cell." It is a special space set aside for only one purpose -- a retreat from the world. Whenever I am struggling with something I go to the this one place where God and I have spent so many hours together. Sometimes He is silent, but there is always comfort knowing He is near. And so, as the storm approached, I made sure the oil for the lamps were well stocked and the blessed candles were lit. Periodically I would stop there to calm my mind and pray -- quite literally a refuge in the storm.

But it is not the icons or the candles that makes this space special, but that it has become "hallowed" over time. It is "our space" where God and I have spent many hours talking together about other storms and beautiful skies as well.

And do know what I learned? There are very few "storms" in life -- mostly noise that keeps us from hearing what we need to hear. We must have a special place, a cell, where we can learn to filter out the noise and to feel the calm necessary to discern what God wishes us to do in this life on a daily basis.

Now, my prayer corner. As I think about it I have always had a prayer corner. Each one was different and reflected life at that moment. Each corner was special in its own way for its own special reasons. Sometimes it had statues but over time there were an increasing number of icons. The first serious icon I ever acquired is on the left, the Incarnation/Annunciation. It represented a new beginning in my life at that time. Going up and right is the icon of Mary, Queen of Heaven (Florentine); the Crucifixion with Mary and St. John (Sinai); Christ Pantocrator (Sinai); and (St.) John Cassian. The original source of this icon is unknown. On the second level is St. George (Byzantine); Archangel Michael of the Apocalypse (Byzantine, my patron saint); the Holy Trinity by Rublev (Russian); St. Nicholas (Byzantine and my wife's patron saint) and St. Antony the Great (Sinai?).

Just below the icon of St. Antony is a reproduction from the fresco at Sacro Speco Benedictine Monastery in Italy of Holy Father Benedict. Immediately in front of the image is his first class relic. The picture within the white frame is a second class relic of the Venerable Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. On the table is holy water, censer, prayer books, the Scriptures and a crucifix. The hanging lamps are oil lamps and the candles are blessed (see sidebar). I will add and remove icons during the year to be reflective of the liturgical season. But this is the corner I see almost every day.

Most people do not have the space for something this large. in my case, the icons were acquired over time -- each selected for a particular reason. When the children were small, home space was at a premium. Now that they are gone more space can be dedicated. But, big or small, it was always my "go to" place when things seemed out of control or God seemed far away. From the "nurturing" of my prayer corner came it's real benefit of a prayer space -- the real peace that comes from the knowledge that "the Lord is watching over us and in truth has compassion on us." (2 Maccabees 7:6).

The Analog Oblate

BLESSED CANDLES



Often blessed on Candlemas Day (February 2), candles for home use borrow symbolism from all the candles used in church and liturgy and bring it into the domestic Church of the home. Faith in things un-

seen can be bolstered by things seen-like a burning candle. Especially during a storm (including those within), forgetfulness of the Guardian threatens heart and home. And so popular piety would light a candle —blessed at Candlemas, of course-for protection, if not from the storm, then at least from the thunder and lightning of fear itself.

Several centuries ago in Ireland, during the suppression of Catholicism by the English persecution, priests were driven to visiting homes in secret, where the Eucharist could be celebrated at night. At Christmas time, the Catholic families would leave their doors unlocked and put candles in the windows to guide priests to their homes. Any soldiers noticing the open doors and lit candles were simply told that it was to welcome Mary and Joseph on Christmas Eve. The signal remained, as the soldiers dismissed the story as harmless superstition.

Source: *Catholic Source Book*, p. 322



NECROLOGY

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

OCTOBER

- 1 Br. Obl. Timothy Guidera (1951)
- 4 Fr. Paschal Baumstein (2007)
- 9 Br. William Murray (1926)
- 10 Fr. John Oetgen (2009)
- 12 Br. Boniface Schreiber (1928)
- 14 Fr. Charles Rettger (1916)
- 20 Fr. Augustine Ecker (1934)
- 24 Fr. Alcuin Baudermann (1975)
- 26 Fr. Lawrence Willis (2003)
- 27 Fr. Patrick Donahue (1994)
- 29 Fr. John Smith (1942)
- 31 Fr. Walter O'Brien (1932)
- 31 Fr. Stanislaus Bethel (1941)

ORDO

- 1 Therese of the Child Jesus, Virgin, Memorial
- 2 Guardian Angels, Patron of Congregation. Feast
- 4 Francis of Assisi, Memorial
- 6 Bruno, Memorial
- 7 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week III)
- 11 Pope John XXIII (opt. Mem), Pastors
- 14 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week IV)
- 15 Teresa of Jesus, Virgin Memorial
- 17 Ignatius of Antioch, Memorial
- 18 Luke, Feast
- 21 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week I)
- 28 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week II)

THE ESSENCE OF LECTIO DIVINA

*This is a continuation of a longer work on Lectio Divina: **Reading God**, by Garcia M. Colombas. If you would like to collect all the articles please download the 2018 April, June, and July newsletters from the Oblate Website.*

God spoke directly to chosen, privileged men and women, and through them to all his people, the whole of humanity. Those men and women were the prophets, in the wide sense of the word. They took dear cognizance of what God communicated to them in different ways, according to circumstances, when God willed and as God willed. They had the sensation that the Word of God seized them, even to the point of doing them violence. In other cases, especially where the wise men of Israel were involved, the Word of God manifested itself in ways apparently more in accord with normal psychology. Prophets and wise men, in direct communication with the living God, transmitted a divine message to us. God spoke by means of his intermediaries. Through the prophets and wise men and women God's will was manifested, revealed the meaning of things and of life, and promised and announced the future. God was revealed. This revelation reached its zenith in Christ Jesus. "At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, God has spoken to us through the Son. The Son God has appointed to inherit everything and through whom God created the worlds and the ages. " A power that is at work, a light that reveals, Jesus as Son reveals himself as the Word of God; he is himself the Word of God.

In the divine Library we encounter this Word of God. God-seekers hold fast to the book — the Sacred Scriptures. In the Bible they meet God. Because the Bible is the place God has chosen for this encounter with humanity. Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers some precious words on this subject:

" If it were left to me to determine where to find God, I would always encounter a God who is in accord with my manner of being. If, however, it is God who establishes the place of encounter, it will not be a place that panders to human nature, a place comfortable to my taste. That place is the cross of Christ, and anyone who seeks to discover him must come to the foot of the cross, as the Sermon on the Mount demands. That in no way appeals to our human nature; in fact, it is completely contrary to it. But that is the message of the Bible, not only in the Old Testament but in the New as well. And here I desire to reveal a personal confidence: ever since I have considered the Bible as the place of encounter with God, 'the place where I can meet God', day by day I discover marvel upon marvel. I read it in the morning and in the evening and often in the course of the day I meditate on a text I choose for the week, and try to immerse myself profoundly

in it in order to grasp truly what it tells us. I am persuaded that without it I could not truly live and certainly I could not believe."

That, formulated in modern terms, is "reading God." It is obvious that not all reading of the Bible can qualify as *lectio divina*. Thus, to peruse its pages superficially, out of mere curiosity, without any interest in the truth it contains is not *lectio divina*. The same is true of scrutinizing it for purposes of study. To read, to listen, to retain, to deepen, to live the Word of God contained in Scripture, to immerse oneself in it with faith and love -that is, essentially what *lectio divina* is all about.

OCTOBER 17: SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

On Oct. 17, the Roman Catholic Church remembers the early Church Father, bishop, and martyr Saint Ignatius of Antioch, whose writings attest to the sacramental and hierarchical nature of the Church from its earliest days. Eastern Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrate his memory on Dec. 20.

In a 2007 general audience on St. Ignatius of Antioch, Pope Benedict XVI observed that “no Church Father has expressed the longing for union with Christ and for life in him with the intensity of Ignatius.” In his letters, the Pope said, “one feels the freshness of the faith of the generation which had still known the Apostles. In these letters, the ardent love of a saint can also be felt.”



Born in Syria in the middle of the first century A.D., Ignatius is said to have been personally instructed – along with another future martyr, Saint Polycarp – by the Apostle Saint John. When Ignatius became the Bishop of Antioch around the year 70, he assumed leadership of a local church that was, according to tradition, first led by Saint Peter before his move to Rome. . . .

Ignatius led the Christians of Antioch during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, the first of the emperors to proclaim his divinity by adopting the title “Lord and God.” Subjects who would not give worship to the emperor under this title could be punished with death. As the leader of a major Catholic diocese during this period, Ignatius showed courage and worked to inspire it in others.

After Domitian's murder in the year 96, his successor Nerva reigned only briefly, and was soon followed by the Emperor Trajan. Under his rule, Christians were once again liable to death for denying the pagan state religion and refusing to participate in its rites. It was during his reign that Ignatius was convicted for his Christian testimony and sent from Syria to Rome to be put to death.

Escorted by a team of military guards, Ignatius nonetheless managed to compose seven letters: six to various local churches throughout the empire (including the Church of Rome), and one to his fellow bishop Polycarp who would give his own life for Christ several decades later.

Ignatius' letters passionately stressed the importance of Church unity, the dangers of heresy, and the surpassing importance of the Eucharist as the “medicine of immortality.” These writings contain the first surviving written description of the Church as “Catholic,” from the Greek word indicating both universality and fullness.

One of the most striking features of Ignatius' letters, is his enthusiastic embrace of martyrdom as a means to union with God and eternal life. “All the pleasures of the world, and all the kingdoms of this earth, shall profit me nothing,” he wrote to the Church of Rome. “It is better for me to die in behalf of Jesus Christ, than to reign over all the ends of the earth.”

“Now I begin to be a disciple,” the bishop declared. “Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shatterings of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ.”

St. Ignatius of Antioch bore witness to Christ publicly for the last time in Rome's Flavian Amphitheater, where he was mauled to death by lions. “I am the wheat of the Lord,” he had declared, before facing them. “I must be ground by the teeth of these beasts to be made the pure bread of Christ.” His memory was honored, and his bones venerated, soon after his death around the year 107.

Source: Catholic News Agency

Upcoming Meeting dates: October 21, November 18, and December 16