

Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

December, 2018

*The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.
John 1:5*



READING PENETRATED BY FAITH

The primary and fundamental characteristic of *lectio divina* is the faith that animates it. Without a living, deep-rooted belief that God has written the Bible, that the final, principal and true author of Scripture is properly God, how is it possible to "read God"?

But it does not suffice to believe that God has written, that God has spoken. It is necessary to make an act of faith that God continues to speak. God's words are not read like the words of an author of former times. God is not dead, but is "the living God." God's word is alive.

"The Word of God is something alive and active." Without a firm conviction that "to open the Bible means to meet God," that "in the sacred books the Creator who is in heaven comes graciously to meet the children in order to speak with them," that "Christ is present in the Word," genuine "reading God" becomes entirely impossible.

God is present in Scripture; Christ is present in Scripture. For that reason Paul Giustiniani, the reformer of the Camaldolese, could write: "The monastic must approach the Word, not to be entertained, not to study, but as if he or she were going to the altar of God, with great preparation of soul and body, with the profoundest respect."

Reading God, Garcia M. Colombas, p. 34.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

All of us who have been baptized in Christ and have "put on Christ" as a new identity are bound to be holy as He is holy. We are bound to live holy lives, and our actions should bear witness to our union with Him. He should manifest His presence in us and through us.

We are supposed to be the light of the world. We are supposed to be the light to ourselves and to others. That may well be what accounts for the fact that the world is in darkness! What then is meant by the light of Christ in our lives? "What is holiness"? What is divine worship? Are we really seriously supposed to be saints? Can a man even desire such a thing without making a complete fool of himself in the eyes of everyone else? Is it not presumptuous? Is such a thing even possible at all? To tell the truth, many laypeople and even a good many religious do not believe, in practice, that sanctity is possible for them. Is this just plain common sense? Is it perhaps humility? Or is it defection, defeatism and despair?

If we are called by God to holiness of life and if holiness is beyond our natural power to achieve (which it certainly is) then it follows that God himself must give us the light, the strength and the courage to fulfill the task He requires of us. He will certainly give us the grace we need. If we do not become saints it is because we do not avail ourselves of His gift.

Life and Holiness, Thomas Merton,

The next Oblate meeting will be December 16 at 2:30 PM in the Geyer (Oblate) Room . We will also be having a small Christmas gathering and everyone is requested to bring a refreshment to share.



ADVENT TRADITIONS: ST. LUCY'S DAY



A distinctive tradition of Advent that is attentive to the coming Light is the celebration of St. Lucia's Day on December 13.

Lucia (or Lucy), whose name derives from the Latin root for "light," was martyred during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian around the year 303. For centuries the longest night of the year (according to the Julian Calendar) fell on December 13, and so it became customary to mark the occasion with a festival of light.

Lucia's triumph over the darkness is reenacted each year when a young girl, representing Lucia, dons a white dress and a crown of glowing candles, to deliver coffee and buns to all in attendance. Variations on the practice include "Lucia" leading a procession in which each processant carries a single candle.

Squeezing another event into our busy December schedules might seem difficult, but reclaiming Advent requires that we come to terms with the fact that many of the festivities we enjoy during Advent are better suited for the season of Christmas. The observance of St. Lucia's Day might be organized in lieu of a Christmas pageant or celebrated on the Sunday nearest December 13. As with the Advent wreath, St. Lucia's Day is well-suited for the home and can easily involve the entire family. When celebrated in conjunction with the Advent wreath, the theme of a growing light surfaces yet again. Consider drawing attention to the increasing hours of darkness and our great need of light. Lucia's story provides ample material for discussions of virtues such as faith, hope, courage, and charity. St. Lucia's Day is a distinctive tradition of Advent worthy of our consideration, for we are too often blind to the light that "shines in the darkness" (John 1:5a).

Distinctive Traditions of Advent By Amber and John Inscore Essick



ADVENT TRADITIONS: ST. LUCY BUNS

These saffron-hued sweet buns, called *Lussebullar*, are a staple of the Swedish tradition of St. Lucia's Day, a winter-solstice celebration. The recipe is from Jennifer Jansch, whose children serve their parents the buns every Dec. 13, when the holiday is observed. Cooking time: 1.5 hours

Ingredients

6 ounces butter, melted
2 ½ cups lukewarm milk
¾ teaspoon saffron
1 cup sugar
1.7 ounces fresh yeast
½ teaspoon salt
2 pounds wheat flour, or as needed
Beaten egg, for brushing
Raisins, for garnish.



Preparation

Place the butter and milk in a medium bowl. Using a mortar and pestle, grind the saffron with a pinch of the sugar, and stir into the mixture. In a large bowl, dissolve the yeast in a little of the lukewarm butter mixture, then add the remaining butter mixture, the remaining sugar and the salt.

Gradually add enough of the flour (almost all of it) to make a workable dough, kneading for 10 minutes by hand or 5 minutes in a mixer with a dough hook. Shape into a ball, sprinkle with a little flour and cover with a cloth. Allow to rise in a warm spot for 30 to 45 minutes.

Transfer the dough to a floured work surface, and knead in additional flour if the dough is sticky. Shape as desired into buns, braids or lengths. Place on lined baking sheets, and allow to rise again for 30 to 45 minutes. Preheat the oven to 400.

Brush the buns with beaten egg, and press raisins lightly into the dough. Bake until golden and risen, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a bun comes out dry. Smaller buns may take 8 to 10 minutes; larger lengths and braids, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool the buns on a rack under a cloth. Makes about 30 buns

Source: NY Times <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1017039-st-lucia-buns>

ANTIPHONS FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

For those Oblates currently using the first edition of the *Oblate Psalter*, antiphons for use during Advent and Christmas are available in PDF format from the Oblate website:

http://oblatesosbelmont.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Advent_Christmas.pdf



CHRISTMAS POINTS TO LOVE

As we turn our eyes on Bethlehem and away from the rich and busy world, we recall the following lines:

A little Child,
A shining star,
A stable rude,
The door ajar.

Yet in that place
So crude, forlorn,
The hope of all
The world was born.

If only the people of this world could be made to realize where lie the things that are to their peace! As long as they seek for happiness without the Child of Bethlehem, they will never find it. All they will find at best will be something akin to thrills, which quickly pass and leave behind them a sickening sense of disappointment and frustration.

Everything in the event and scene of Christmas points to love. The birth of Our Lord is the incomparable feast of love. There we see the adorable Infant, God clothed in human form; the most holy Virgin, spotless and pure in body and soul, who is also a pure and spotless mother; a chaste and holy guardian and foster father—all amid surroundings so poor, cold and lonely! Why all this, except to give to our world an exhibition of sacrificial love of which it could not have dreamed, to show the priceless value of human souls in heaven's eyes, to enkindle in us a return of boundless love of the divine source and bounty now so clearly and richly manifested in our behalf.

It was for love like this that we were made; for love such as this do we hunger and thirst, yearn and pine unceasingly, however obscurely we may apprehend the meaning and ultimate purpose of our appetites and' cravings; a love of which all other loves are but dim shadows, mere glimpses, far-off and broken reflections, limited and imperfect, fragile and frail; a love that is complete and perfect, infinitely purified, elevated and intensified, changeless and eternal, for which our souls were created, of which the love exemplified at Christmas is a foretaste, and without which we can never be satisfied and quiet in our souls.

Spiritual Riches of the Rosary Mysteries, Charles J. Callan OP and John F. McConnell, MM, pp.37-38

NECROLOGY

DECEMBER

- 1 Fr. Cuthbert Allen (1977)
- 5 Fr. Eugene Egan (1940)
- 6 Br. Albert Popp (1924)
- 7 Fr. Boniface Bauer (1974)
- 8 Fr. Philip Tierney (1971)
- 9 Abbot Jude Cleary (2005)
- 21 Br. Alphonse Schoene (1889)
- 23 Prior Willibald Baumgartner (1930)
- 25 Br. Louis Marschall (1945)
- 26 Fr. Jerome Dollard (1985)
- 27 Br. Obl. Thomas MacPherson (1955)
- 28 Fr. Mark Cassidy (1928)
- 28 Abbot Walter Coggin (1999)
- 29 Br. Joseph Ringelstaetter (1920)
- 30 Fr. Robert Brennan (1964)
- 30 Fr. Aloysius Wachter (1977)

ORDO

DECEMBER

- 2 **First Sunday of Advent (Week I)**
- 3 Francis Xavier, Priest, Religious
- 7 Ambrose, Memorial
- 8 **Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Solemnity**
- 9 **Second Sunday of Advent (Wk II)**
- 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe. Feast
- 13 Lucy, Martyr, Memorial
- 14 John of the Cross, Memorial
- 16 **Third Sunday of Advent (Wk III)**
- 23 **Fourth Sunday of Advent (Wk IV)**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord, Solemnity**
- 26 Stephen, First Martyr. Feast
- 27 John, Apostle, Feast
- 28 Holy Innocents, Martyrs, Feast
- 30 **Holy Family. Feast**

DECEMBER 13: ST. LUCY (LUCIA) OF SYRACUSE

We all need courage to face the trials of life. People who are blind and visually impaired are in special need of this, so as not to close with in themselves or assume the attitude of a victim. On the contrary, they must open themselves to reality, to others and to society in order to learn to understand and appreciate the abilities that the Lord has placed in each one of us, truly in everyone, without exception! This, however, takes courage, strength of spirit. Therefore, another value that St Lucy brings to mind is the fact that she was not alone, but she belonged to a community, she was a member of a body of which Christ is the Head, a stone in a building which has Christ as its the foundation. This aspect is also reflected in human terms. You are an association, and this is a value! An association is not the sum of individuals, it is much more. Today there is great need to experience the associative aspect with joy and commitment, because this moment of history is “at a low ebb”, and it’s not felt strongly. Be a group, work in solidarity, meet together, share your experiences, share your resources... this is all part of the civic heritage of a people. Often people who live with disadvantages or disabilities can say from their experience to everyone: we are not “monads”, we are not meant to be isolated but to form relationships together, to complete each other, help each other, stand together and support each other. The presence of disabled people prompts everyone to form a community or rather, to be a community, that we accept one another with our limitations. Because everyone has abilities, but everyone has limitations too!



Lastly, Lucy tells us that life is made to be given. She lived this out in the supreme form of martyrdom, but the value of the gift of self is universal; it is the secret to true happiness. Man does not become completely fulfilled by having or by doing. One is fulfilled by loving, i.e. by giving of oneself. And this can also be understood as the secret of the name “Lucy”: a person is “full of light” to the extent that he or she is a gift to others. In reality, every person is a gift, he or she is a precious gift!

Dear friends, living according to these values today can also bring about misunderstanding; it’s tiring to go against the current, but this is not surprising. Testimony always requires paying in the person.

Modern societies that focus chiefly on the rights of the “individual” risk forgetting the importance of the community and that of the free gift of self to others. Thus there is still a need to fight, relying on the example and intercession of St Lucy! I hope you do so with courage and with the joy of doing it together.

Pope Francis, 13 December, 2014

Collect

May the glorious intercession of the Virgin and Martyr Saint Lucy give us new heart, we pray, O Lord, so that we may celebrate her heavenly birthday in this present age and so behold things eternal.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. +Amen.

The January meeting of the Oblates will be on the 20th at 2:30 unless otherwise announced.