



***Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC***

***March 2019***



James Tissot (French, 1836-1902). Jesus Tempted in the Wilderness

## READING GOD: SAPIENTIAL READING

*Lectio divina* does not pursue a scientific purpose; it does not seek to attain a goal that is purely — or even principally — intellectual. The Bible is not a theological tract study about God. It is much more: the magnificent message God has left us. Thus, *lectio* means to listen to and savor this message. It compares with sitting at the feet of Jesus, like Mary, and not permitting one word from his lips to be lost.

Ordinarily we are accustomed to read, not in order to read, but to have read. That is to say, in our reading we seek practical, utilitarian purpose to increase our knowledge, or whatever the reason may be. On the other hand, *lectio divina* is an entirely disinterested, gratuitous reading. One might say of it what St. Bernard asserts about love: "Love does not seek its justification outside itself. Love has its own value and its own recompense. Love is self-sufficient, pleasing in and by itself, it seeks no cause outside itself, no other result than itself. The fruit of love is love." He adds that this self-sufficient character of love follows from the fact that it has God as its origin and returns to God as its end, because God is

love. The same holds true of *lectio divina*. One reads God simply to be with God, to hear God's voice — reading for the sake of reading. For this reason *lectio* should be measured, free of all haste; the goal is more to savor than to know; to admire, not to speculate or question.

There is world of difference between "knowledge" and "wisdom;" the early monastics put it in relief. There is difference between knowledge of an academic or university sort and monastic knowledge; between intellectual knowledge and that which Newman called "real;" between impersonal knowledge of the order of "having" and existential knowledge of the order of "being."

*Lectio divina* surpasses merely human formation, purely scientific theological or pastoral work, as the Congress of Abbots acknowledged in 1967. Nowadays the monastics who have penetrated deeply into the reality of *lectio*

The next Oblate meeting will be March 17, 2019 at 2:30 PM in the Geyer (Oblate) Room in the old Music Building.

*divina* and are convinced of the urgent need to restore it fully in our monasteries insist on ideas such as the following: *lectio* and study are two distinct realities which complete and sustain each other. The objective of formation ought to bring it about that every monastic, according to his or her personal abilities and needs, encounter the proper method both of dedicating himself or herself to *lectio* and of applying himself or herself to study. *Lectio* and study should be considered as two complementary paths in the same quest for God, which calls for the dedication of the entire person, intellect and heart. Some go much farther and do not hesitate to affirm that the Bible ought to occupy not only the first place in monastic knowledge but the only one, in the sense that every other study ought to refer to it in some way, either as preparation, illustration or commentary. In this way all of the monastics studies will be at the service of his *lectio divina*. One may note also that no study is apt to facilitate and encourage this *lectio* except that which alone is done in the same conditions and with the same interior disposition. *Lectio* and study should never be opposing activities, reserving study for the monopoly of the intellect and *lectio* for that of the will. The study of a monastic should be in some manner a "divine reading," since it is ultimately a personal encounter with God. Study carried out as *lectio divina* gives a profoundly unifying result; ordinarily it unfolds in prayer and praise, like *lectio* properly so called.

Lectio divina is reading that is tasteful and relished. It is to savor the Word, to savor God, in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the letter and arouses in us (the readers) a secret desire to put ourselves in harmony with what we have read and to respond by our prayer and by our whole life to the Word of the God. It is an experience of God, since in it there is verified a communication of life, a participation, a communion.

Garcia Colomba, *Reading God*, pp. 40-42



**ORDO**

**MARCH**

3 8th Sunday in Ordinary time (Wk IV)

**6 Ash Wednesday**

**10 1st Sunday of Lent (Week I)**

12 *Begin novena in Honor of Our Holy Father St. Benedict*

**17 2nd Sunday of Lent (Week II)**

19 Joseph, Spouse of the Virgin Mary.  
Solemnity

**21 Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict, Abbot. Solemnity**

**24 3rd Sunday of Lent (Week III)**

25 Annunciation of the Lord  
(Solemnity)

**31 4th Sunday of Lent (Week IV)**



Abbey of Monte Cassino, Cloister, Bronze Sculpture 'St. Benedict at Death's Door' by A. Selva 1952

## NOVENA TO SAINT BENEDICT

**O** Glorious St. Benedict, sublime model of all virtues, pure vessel of God's grace! Behold me, humbly kneeling at thy feet. I implore thy loving heart to pray for me before the throne of God. To thee I have recourse in all the dangers which daily surround me. Shield me against my enemies, inspire me to imitate thee in all things. May thy blessings be with me always, so that I may shun whatever God forbids and avoid the occasions of sin.

Graciously obtain for me from God those favors and graces of which I stand so much in need, in the trials, miseries and afflictions of life. Thy heart was always so full of love, compassion, and mercy towards those who were afflicted or troubled in any way. Thou didst never dismiss without consolation and assistance anyone who had recourse to thee. I therefore invoke thy powerful intercession in the confident hope that thou will hear my prayers and obtain for me the special grace and favor I so earnestly implore (mention it), if it be for the greater glory of God and the welfare of my soul.

Help me, O great St. Benedict, to live and die as a faithful child of God, to be ever submissive to His holy will, and to attain the eternal happiness of heaven. Amen.



## NECROLOGY



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

### MARCH

- 3 Fr. Michael McNerney (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 Wiegeler (1928)
- 25 Fr. Patrick Dolon (1913)
- 28 Fr. Ambrose Gallagher (1946)
- 28 Fr. Richard Graz (1952)

## THE ANNUNCIATION: IT IS WHAT WE ARE THAT MATTERS

*(Editor's note: Though written over 60 years ago it is amazing how the issues the authors address below are still pertinent today.)*

Nazareth was an obscure and despised village; its people were regarded as inferiors. Yet such holiness was found in that small community that it became the place of the incarnation of the Son of God. Obviously, then, it is not so much where we live or what we do, but rather what we are that matters; especially is this so in spiritual things. Nor can it be said that in order to succeed spiritually we need material conveniences, comforts, and the encouragement and help of our fellows-relatives, neighbors and friends. Nazareth was not favored this way.

Surely God chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the strong, and the base and contemptible things of the world to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His sight (See 1 Cor. 1. 27-29).



There are various major delusions permeating society and families in our times. One of these has to do with the rearing of children. So many parents of our day, if they do not seriously neglect their children, go to the other extreme of overindulging them.

The children must have everything that the parental purse can afford-and often more than that. They must have endless toys, playthings, amusements in the home and out of it; no work or special duties; they must be transported to and from the nearby school; teachers must treat them very gently and never think of administering any discipline no matter how much it may be needed at times; they must be carefree and not required to help around the home; somehow they must be put through high school and college and receive a diploma, even though after it all they cannot speak or write their own language correctly; and so on. These parents say they want to do their best for their children. But the way of overindulgence of young people is not the best for them; it serves to make hothouse plants of them, soft and selfish. And we know what happens to hothouse plants when once exposed to the rough winds and storms, the cold and heat of the outer world.

No, it was not thus with the children, future men and women, who built our great country, or who built and spread over the world the Faith and Church of Christ.

Revs. Charles J. Callan, OP & John F. McConnell, MM, *Spiritual Riches of the Rosary Mysteries*, pp. 27-28 (1957).

## ANTIPHONS FOR LENT AND EASTER

For those Oblates currently using the *Oblate Psalter*, antiphons for use during Lent and Easter are available in PDF format from the Oblate website:

[http://oblatesosbbelmont.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Seasonal-Antiphons\\_revLent\\_Easter.pdf](http://oblatesosbbelmont.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Seasonal-Antiphons_revLent_Easter.pdf)

A link has been placed on the home page. It can be printed locally. Download the file and then print the pages as you need them. They are arranged by week so print two pages at a time (two pages will fit on one 8.5x11 piece of paper) and trim them so you can place them in the *Psalter*.

## AN OBLATE PSALTER

We are almost sold out of the second printing of *An Oblate Psalter*. We are preparing the texts for a fourth printing. If you would like a copy please email George Cobb at [gkcobb0929@gmail.com](mailto:gkcobb0929@gmail.com). The cost is \$15.00 a copy plus shipping if you want it mailed.

## THE VERY GREAT DIGNITY THAT MATTER HAS ACQUIRED THROUGH THE INCARNATION

It is clearly a prohibition against representing the invisible God. But when you see Him who has no body become man for you, then you will make representations of His human aspect. When the Invisible, having clothed Himself in the flesh, become visible, then represent the likeness of Him who has appeared. When He who, having been the consubstantial Image of the Father, emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, thus becoming bound in quantity and quality, having taken on the carnal image, then paint and make visible to everyone Him who desired to become visible. St. John Damascene, Oratio I, ch. 8



*venerate and respect all the rest of matter which has brought me salvation, since it is full of energy and Holy graces. Is not the wood of the Cross, three times blessed, matter?... And the ink, and the most Holy Book of the Gospels, are they not matter? The redeeming altar which dispenses the Bread of life, is it not matter?... And, before all else, are not the flesh and blood of Our Lord matter? Either we must suppress the sacred nature of all these things, or we must concede to the tradition of the Church the veneration of the images of God and that of the friends of God who are sanctified by the name they bear, and for this reason are possessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit.*

*Do not, therefore, offend matter: it is not*

*contemptible, because nothing that God has made is contemptible" (cf. *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, I, 16, ed. Kotter, pp. 89-90).*

John Damascene was among the first to distinguish, in the cult, both public and private, of the Christians, between worship (latreia), and veneration (proskynesis): the first can only be offered to God, spiritual above all else, the second, on the other hand, can make use of an image to address the one whom the image represents. Obviously the Saint can in no way be identified with the material of which the icon is composed. This distinction was immediately seen to be very important in finding an answer in Christian terms to those who considered universal and eternal the strict Old Testament prohibition against the use of cult images. This was also a matter of great debate in the Islamic world, which accepts the Jewish tradition of the total exclusion of cult images. Christians, on the other hand, in this context, have discussed the problem and found a justification for the veneration of images. John Damascene writes,

*"In other ages God had not been represented in images, being incorporate and faceless. But since God has now been seen in the flesh, and lived among men, I represent that part of God which is visible. I do not venerate matter, but the Creator of matter, who became matter for my sake and deigned to live in matter and bring about my salvation through matter. I will not cease therefore to venerate that matter through which my salvation was achieved. But I do not venerate it in absolute terms as God! How could that which, from non-existence, has been given existence, be God?... But I also*

We see that as a result of the Incarnation, matter is seen to have become divine, is seen as the habitation of God. It is a new vision of the world and of material reality. God became flesh and flesh became truly the habitation of God, whose glory shines in the human Face of Christ. Thus the arguments of the Doctor of the East are still extremely relevant today, considering the very great dignity that matter has acquired through the Incarnation, capable of becoming, through faith, a sign and a sacrament, efficacious in the meeting of man with God. John Damascene remains, therefore, a privileged witness of the cult of icons, which would come to be one of the most distinctive aspects of Eastern spirituality up to the present day. It is, however, a form of cult which belongs simply to the Christian faith, to the faith in that God who became flesh and was made visible. The teaching of Saint John Damascene thus finds its place in the tradition of the universal Church, whose sacramental doctrine foresees that material elements taken from nature can become vehicles of grace by virtue of the invocation (epiclesis) of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by the confession of the true faith.

Pope Benedict XVI

Wednesday, 6 May 2009

*Our Sunday Visitor*, May 20, 2017

**The April meeting of the Oblates will be on the 21st at 2:30 unless otherwise announced.**