



Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

April, 2019

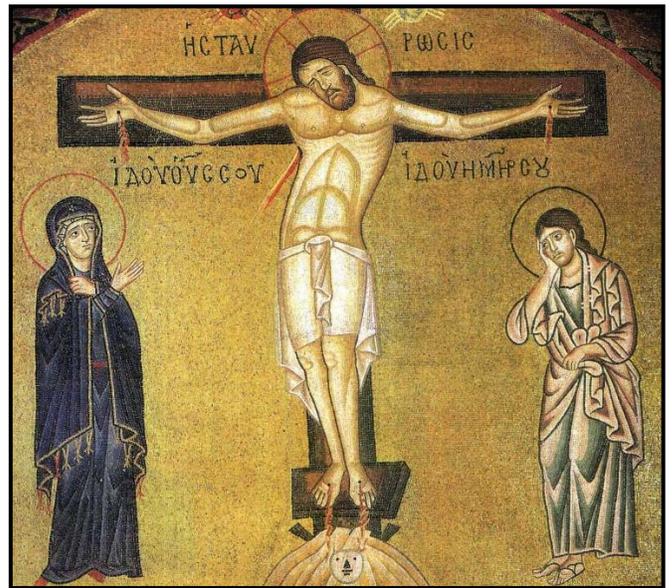
There will be no Oblate meeting in April because of Easter. The next Oblate meeting will be May 19.

REV. KIERAN A. NEILSON, OSB

Fr. Kieran passed away just after the newsletter was completed and mailed last month. The official biography is enclosed with this newsletter.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME

It is not only remarkable but astonishing that all during the tortures of the scourging, crowning with thorns, and the carrying of His cross, no word of complaint or resentment fell from Our Lord's lips, no frown was seen on His sad but holy face. Surely He was "as a sheep being led to the slaughter, as a lamb dumb before his shearer, and he opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). Why was this, since He was human as well as divine? Love explains it all—love for His heavenly Father whose will He was doing, and love for His brethren of the human family for whose sins He was atoning. Love can stand anything; it endures all things, it outlasts all things, it is stronger than death. The reason we complain about our crosses and resent them is twofold: a) we lack a strong and vivid faith in the supernatural value of suffering patiently borne, and b) we lack a burning love of Him who suffered so much for us and of our human brethren whom we should love as ourselves.



We see every day what privations, hardships, and pain the children of this world are willing to endure for temporal rewards, for the mere fame and glory of reaching the poles of the earth, or of climbing the highest mountains, or of exploring the floors of oceans, or of winning in some contest, the prize for which may be but a fading garland. Is it not our shame, we who profess to be followers of Christ but who are willing to do so little and to suffer so little, even for the greatest rewards? We shall do well frequently to recall the words of the Master Himself: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke IX. 23).

Charles J. Callan, OP and John F. McConnell, MM
Spiritual Riches of the Rosary, pp. 86-87

ST. AUGUSTINE ON LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio divina aims not so much to obtain knowledge of the truth that is as exhaustive as possible — a task proper to speculative theology — as rather to reach a direct contact with God, to be with and to listen to God speaking personally here and now, to every person who opens the Scriptures with faith.

God actually speaks to us. Even more, God's heart is open to us and invites us to enter in, to scrutinize it, to get to know it. St. John Chrysostom describes the monastics of Antioch as "bound to their books," completely immersed in the world of the Bible. "Some take Isaiah and converse with him; others speak with the apostles." And in another place: "The monastics literally speak with the prophets and adorn their souls with the wisdom of Paul; at every step they can pass from Moses to Isaiah, and then to John or someone else." But the same John Chrysostom says again: "Each one believes that through the lips of the prophets we hear God speaking to us." That is the important thing, what truly inter-



ests, what is desired above all. According to St. Gregory the Great the praying of the psalms — one of the ways of practicing lectio divina — is the place of intimate encounter between us, who go toward God, and God, who comes to us. "Where else do God's words direct themselves if not in our heart? And what do we do in reading the Scriptures but to study the heart of God?" Gregory certainly reveals one of the essential aspects of lectio when he writes "*Disce cor Dei in verbis Dei*" (Learn the heart of God in the words of God) — an expression that doubtless reflects personal experience.

Here you have the complete text. Gregory had been ambassador at the court of Constantinople. There he got to know the noble Theodore. They became close friends. Gregory turned into his spiritual director. Then Gregory returned to Rome and was elected pope. Theodore, on his part, rose to become the emperor's physician. Grego-

ry writes him a letter exhorting him to read the Sacred Scriptures assiduously.

"I must direct a complaint to you, illustrious son Theodore. Freely you have received from the Most Blessed Trinity intelligence and temporal goods, mercy and love. But you are immersed in material occupations, obliged to travel frequently, and you fail to read daily the words of the Redeemer. Is not Sacred Scripture a letter from almighty God to creation? If you were separated for a time from the emperor and received a letter from him, you would not rest or sleep till you had read what an earthly emperor had written. The Emperor of heaven, the Lord of humanity and angels, has sent you a letter regarding your life, and you fail to read it fervently. I beg of you, apply yourself daily to meditating on the words of your Creator. Learn to know the heart of God in the words of God, so that you may tend with greater ardor to things eternal, so that your mind may excite itself to greater desire for heavenly joys. Because then alone we shall attain the greatest rest if now, for love of our Creator, we do not allow ourselves any repose."

Garcia M. Colombia, *Reading God*, pp. 42-44 "If Christ has not risen, then idle is our preaching, and idle is your faith" (1 Cor. XV. 14).

ORDO AND NECROLOGY

APRIL



- 7 5th Sunday of Lent (Week I)
- 14 Palm Sunday (Week II)**
- 18 Holy Thursday
- 19 Good Friday
- 21 Resurrection of the Lord**
- 28 Second Sunday of Easter (Mercy Sunday)**
- 29 Catherine of Siena. Memorial

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

- 13 Br. Xavier Segerer (1903)
- 16 Br. Richard Kleiner (1940)

Kieran A. Neilson, O.S.B.
July 2, 1932 – February 27, 2019



Father Kieran Neilson died peacefully in the Lord at Belmont Abbey on Wednesday, February 27, strengthened by the sacraments. Alexander Patrick Neilson, known as Paddy to his family and friends, was born on July 2, 1932 in Charlotte, NC, the son of the late Alexander J. and Catherine Jones Neilson. He attended O'Donoghue School in Charlotte for his elementary and secondary education, testing the patience and skill of the Sisters of Mercy, to whom he remained devoted throughout his life. He graduated from Belmont Abbey College in 1954 and entered the novitiate, receiving the name Kieran in honor of his Irish heritage. He was professed on July 2, 1955. After studies at the Belmont Abbey Seminary, he was ordained a priest on May 26, 1960.

In North Carolina, Father Kieran served at various times as Subprior and Formation Director in the monastic community, as Chaplain at Belmont Abbey College, Instructor at Sacred Heart College and Parochial Vicar at St. Michael's Parish, Gastonia, NC. He was assigned to St. Benedict Priory in Richmond, VA, from 1960-65, and again from 1976-89, serving at St. Benedict's Parish, Benedictine High School, and as Chaplain at McGuire Veterans Hospital. When the Richmond community became independent in 1989, Father Kieran returned to Belmont Abbey and his family in Charlotte.

Growing up in the small Catholic community in Charlotte, Father Kieran was acquainted with the monks of Belmont Abbey from his youth. After God, Father Kieran loved his large, extended family, his Irish heritage, and Notre Dame athletics. Father Kieran cherished a life-long love of automobiles, which he indulged on a daily basis. At one point, he had a car donated for his personal use, which he parked at a discreet distance from the monastery — a happy situation which met with an infelicitous end when it became known to the abbot. He was an outgoing, friendly man with an extensive circle of loyal friends. His wide-ranging travels and gregarious nature made him the abbey's best-known monk and good will ambassador. He had a nickname for everyone and was not shy with his comments and remarks.

In addition to his parents, Father Kieran was preceded in death by his brothers Joseph and John. He is survived by the monks of Belmont Abbey, by his sisters, Kathleen Potter, Mary Ann Frantz and Patricia Neilson, and by his large extended family. His body was received on Friday evening, March 1, at the abbey. The funeral was celebrated on Saturday, March 2, at St. Michael's Church, Gastonia, NC, with burial following in the abbey cemetery.

In your kindness, please remember our confrere, Father Kieran, with the customary suffrages for the deceased monks of our Congregation.

The Monks of Belmont Abbey

Alliance for International Monasticism

AIM USA 2019 Lenten Appeal

An Appeal for God's Calling

On the First Sunday in Lent in the reading from Romans we hear,

*“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek,
the same God is the God of all and is generous
to all who call upon Him.”*

It is not membership in the correct religious group but genuine faith that justifies us. It is in faith that monasteries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America are calling upon God and us to help finance education and formation programs for their members. Scripture, the Rule of Benedict and theology are the spiritual foundation of their lives. Studies in these areas shape monastic communities in their growth and development for the future.

Please hear their call! Your contribution helps:



Cistercian
nuns attend an
International
Congregational
Institute of
Theology in
Vietnam



Two sisters
from South
Africa study
social work
and nursing in
Chicago and
then return
to serve their
people in
Twasana



✠ An association of monastic superiors
gather in Taiwan

✠ A priest from Cuernavaca, Mexico study
Sacramental Theology in San Anselmo
in Rome

✠ To renovate and adapt the monastery
building for a Center of Formation and
Spirituality and an apostolate of the
community in Guatamala

As you make your Lenten offering to AIM-USA recall the many ways God has led you to study and learn the faith that lives in you. We are grateful for your generosity and interest of monasteries around the world.

Thank you for hearing their call!

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB

Sister Ann Hoffman, OSB
Executive Director, AIM USA
director@aim-usa.org

THE RESURRECTION IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAITH

If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:14)

This is as true now as it was when St. Paul wrote it for the Corinthians nineteen hundred years ago. The resurrection of the Lord is the foundation of our faith. We do not preach simply Christ crucified, but always in the same breath Christ risen from the dead. The resurrection put the final and necessary seal of God upon Jesus. Had the tomb remained occupied by the body of Jesus, there would be no Christianity, no Catholic Church. For the Apostles themselves it was the resurrection which gave them the key to be used in order to understand Christ. They would never have preached Him as Son of God and unique Mediator between God and men had He not triumphed over death.

"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." (1 Cor. 15:56). It was sin that gave death its power over man. By the death of Christ death lost its power, because Christ by dying and rising conquered sin and death. "Death has been swallowed up in victory." Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55). Now that Christ has conquered death, it is possible and even easy for us to believe that He also triumphed over sin, and that in Him and through Him we can share in His triumph.

Charles J. Callan, OP and John F. McConnell, MM *Spiritual Riches of the Rosary Mysteries*. Scriptural quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*)

DOROTHEUS OF GAZA: EASTER

So today, Easter Day, is the 'Passover' of Christ, a day of bright feasting, the day of the Resurrection, the day when He nailed sin to the Cross, died for us and then rose. Let us offer ourselves as sacrificial gifts and whole burnt offerings to the Lord, rather than dumb animals which Christ doesn't want. Because 'You did not desire the sacrifice and offering of dumb beasts, and are not pleased

with burnt offerings of sheep and calves.' And Isaiah says: 'What do I care for the multitude of your sacrifices says the Lord' and so on. But the Lamb of God was sacrificed for us, according to the Apostle who says, 'Our Passover is Christ Who was sacrificed for us, to take away the sin of the world'. And, as the Scriptures say, He has become a curse for our sake: 'Cursed be the man who hangs upon a tree' in order to 'redeem us from the curse of the Law' and that we might be adopted by Him. This is why we ought, on our part, to offer Him a gift that will please Him. So what gift or what sacrifice ought we to offer

Christ in order to please Him on the day of His Resurrection, given His aversion to the sacrifice of dumb animals?

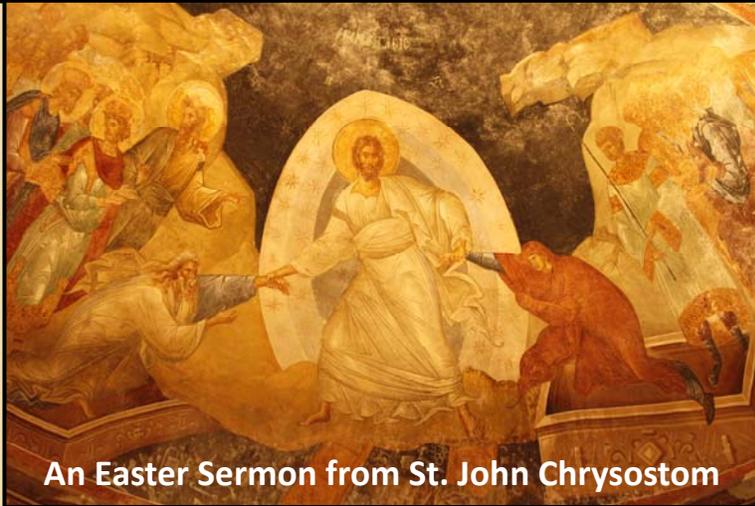
In his teaching, the Saint tells us the answer, because, after saying, 'It is the Day of the Resurrection', he adds, 'Let us offer ourselves as first-fruits'. The Apostle, too, instructs us; Offer up your own bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.'

How then should we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy to God? By no longer following the desires of our flesh and our own ideas, but by walking in the spirit and not fulfilling the desires of the flesh. This is mortification of our earthly members. This is what is meant by a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God. But why a

living sacrifice? Because a dumb animal led to sacrifice, dies at the very moment that it becomes a sacrificial victim. But the saints who offer themselves to God, offer themselves alive, every day- as David says, 'For your sake we are put to death all the day long, we have been reckoned as sheep for the slaughter'. This is what St. Gregory means by

'Let us offer ourselves as first-fruits', that is, let's sacrifice ourselves, let's die to ourselves all the day long, as did all the saints, for the sake of Christ our God. How did they put themselves to death? By not loving the world or what is in the world- as it says in the Catholic Epistles, by rejecting the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, that is, hedonism, avarice, and vainglory, and by taking up the Cross and following Christ and crucifying the world to themselves and themselves to the world. About this the Apostle says, "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." This is how the saints put themselves to death.

Dorotheus of Gaza, *Ascetic Works*, Teaching XVI



An Easter Sermon from St. John Chrysostom

Is there anyone who is a devout lover of God? Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival! Is there anyone who is a grateful servant? Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord!

Are there any weary with fasting? Let them now receive their wages! If any have toiled from the first hour, let them receive their due reward; If any have come after the third hour, let him with gratitude join in the Feast! And he that arrived after the sixth hour, let him not doubt; for he too shall sustain no loss. And if any delayed until the ninth hour, let him not hesitate; but let him come too. And he who arrived only at the eleventh hour, let him not be afraid by reason of his delay.

For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first. He gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour, as well as to him that toiled from the first. To this one He gives, and upon another He bestows. He accepts the works as He greets the endeavor. The deed He honors and the intention He commends.

Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord! First and last alike receive your reward; rich and poor, rejoice together! Sober and slothful, celebrate the day!

You that have kept the fast, and you that have not, rejoice today for the Table is richly laden! Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith. Enjoy all the riches of His goodness!

Let no one grieve at his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Death of our Savior has set us free. He has destroyed it by enduring it.

He destroyed Hades when He descended into it. He put it into an uproar even as it tasted of His flesh. Isaias foretold this when he said, "You, O Hell, have been troubled by encountering Him below."

Hell was in an uproar because it was done away with.
It was in an uproar because it is mocked.
It was in an uproar, for it is destroyed.
It is in an uproar, for it is annihilated.
It is in an uproar, for it is now made captive.
Hell took a body, and discovered God.
It took earth, and encountered Heaven.
It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see.

O death, where is thy sting?
O Hades, where is thy victory?
Christ is Risen, and you, O death, are annihilated!
Christ is Risen, and the evil ones are cast down!
Christ is Risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is Risen, and life is liberated!
Christ is Risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead; for Christ having risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Him be Glory and Power forever and ever. Amen!