

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

May, 2019

WHY THE OBLATES ARE IMPORTANT TO ME

Draw close to God, and He will draw close to you. — James 4:8

These words from the epistle of James succinctly describe why I became an oblate. I wanted God to establish a closer relationship between the two of us. At that time, I was living in Danville, Virginia, and Belmont Abbey was the closest monastery that had an oblate program. Fr. Raymond served as the Oblate Master, and I took my promises in private before him in the monk's small chapel on the first floor of the abbey. That was in 2004, and, to this day, I sense a closeness to God in that "thin" place.

In those days, I would drive down from Danville to attend the oblate meetings and would always take the opportunity to spend two or three days in retreat with the gracious monks. Early morning walks with Brother Edward (often Father Solanus Casey would join us in spirit), long intimate conversations with Brother Emmanuel, punctuated with lengthy periods of silence, and coffee over my morning Lectio Divina at the Caravan coffee shop in downtown Belmont were but a few of the many blessings I would receive during those monthly retreats. During those times, it was clearly evident that God was powerfully at work in my life.

Then ten years ago I moved to Columbus, Ohio, and the great distance prevented me from attending the oblate meetings every month, so I committed to attend every other month. And still, His gifts continued. I am convinced that becoming a Benedictine oblate with its commitment to the Rule which I, as a layman, attempt to follow with God's help, the daily Divine Liturgy which brings order and serenity to my life, and my unique marriage of Lectio with morning coffee which has become the highlight of each day have all combined to forge a deep and personal relationship between me and my God.

My continuing experience with the monastic life at the Abbey has vastly deepened the reservoir of my soul. I am a better Christian from this encounter. Belmont Abbey and its accompanying oblate program offer an immense spiritual treasury to the surrounding community. As Oblates, we are especially blessed to be able to take advantage of these unique opportunities. Our Lord is beckoning us, and it is our privilege and our duty to answer the Lord when He calls.

Richard Hansgen, OblSB,
Belmont Abbey

LECTIO DIVINA IS INTIMATE READING.

Scripture, the letter of God, permits us to know the heart of God. And that knowledge makes us desire to understand more and more, until we possess God "in the heavenly joys." Our heart must not give itself any repose," until it possesses the heart of God. The way to its depths are infinite. We can never exhaust the heart of God.

The biography of Cecilia Bruyere, first abbess of St. Cecilia at Solesmes, states that her most-beloved book was the Bible and that "she knew how to read it under the gaze of God, with the eyes of bride." The phrase is felicitous. The bride, in reading the letters of her bridegroom, discovers in them details, shades of meaning, depths, which no other person can glimpse.

"The heart of God," "the eyes of the bride": love clearly plays a great role, that of pro-tagonist, in "reading God." It is a question of reading which is not only personal, but intimate as well, and in intimacy love is everything. In

The next Oblate meeting will be May 21, 2019 at 2:30 PM in the Oblate Room on the first floor of the Music Building.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

the novel, *Christ Crucified Anew*, by Nikos Kazantzakis, Yannakos appears, a character reputed for his wise sayings. They ask him: "Tell us, Yannakos, are you King Solomon reincarnated?" He replies: "Old man, I do not explain that with my intellect, but with my heart: it is King Solomon!" And farther on the good pope Fotis declares: "You are right. We do not read the Gospel with the head; our intellect understands few things; we read with the heart. This understands all."

That is the opinion of a literary figure. Let us see what a man of science, Dr. Alexis Carrel, thinks. "We people of the West esteem reason much more than intuition. We much prefer intelligence to sentiment. The atrophy of those fundamental (non-intellectual) activities turns modern people into being spiritually blind." And in another place he says: "Simple people perceive God as naturally as they feel the heat of the sun or smell the perfume of flower. However, this God, so approachable by someone who knows how to love, hides from God who only knows how to understand."

The God of Jesus Christ, the only and true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, speaks to us in keno divina heart to heart, in an in-effable intimacy. The three divine Persons, as in the icon of Andre Rublev, seem to invite us to participate in their conversation. It is natural and comprehensible that the Christian encounters the word and the person of Jesus of Nazareth with greater frequency in Scripture. St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, thanks to her great love, discerned this unanswerable truth. "To keep the Word of Jesus is the one condition of our happiness, the proof our love for him. That Word, as I believe, is himself, because he calls himself the uncreated Word of the Father." In St. John's Gospel we read "that sublime prayer: 'Sanctify them by your word; your word is truth.' In another passage Jesus tells us that he is the way, the truth and the life. We know, then, what the word is that we must keep. We cannot, like Pilate, say, 'What is the truth?' We possess the truth, given that the Well-Beloved dwells in our hearts."

A Protestant theologian, H. Zahrnt, after quoting Schleiermacher's definition of Christianity — "a positive histori-

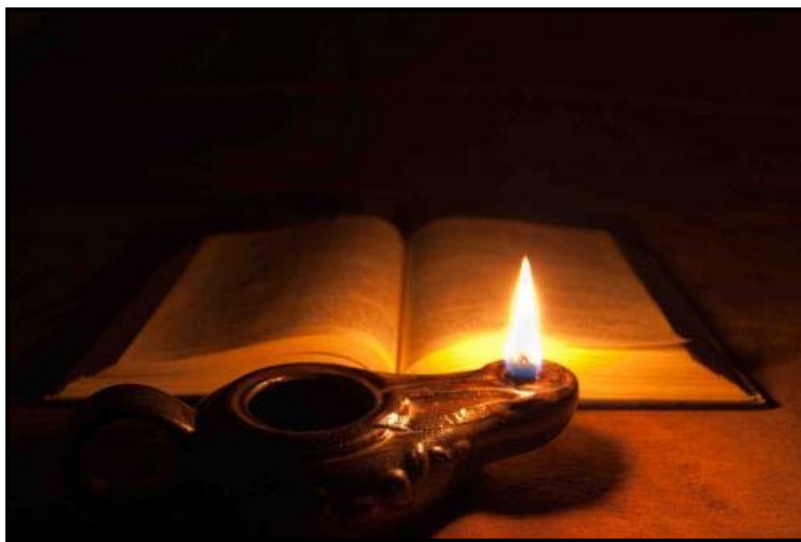
cal religion," which postulates as a condition a concrete person and a concrete book, Jesus Christ and the Bible adds these words: "The Bible is the source and the canon of the Church's life ... Be it well understood, it is not because Jesus Christ is in the Bible that it holds meaning for us, but the reverse is true: the Bible holds meaning for us because Jesus Christ is in it."

We profess the Christian faith. Zahrnt writes: "The Christian faith is faith in Jesus Christ. What else could it be?" And Paul Evdokimov, after citing the text of Simeon the New Theologian — "When Jesus presents him-self to us, we perceive the mysteries hidden in the Scriptures" - asserts quite rightly, "Heresy comes from reason arguing over an abstract and therefore dead word. Consequently, the whole meaning of tradition consists in discovering

Christ who by his presence fills all the forms of faith." St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "Faith not only introduces the arrow, but the Archer with it." The Archer is Christ. "Any other method, study or reading of the Scriptures," concludes Evdokimov, "has no other result than to immerse us in error." Above all, we meet Jesus in the sacred books. He opens to us the meaning of the Scriptures, as he did to the disciples of Emmaus. By communicating it to us,

he makes our hearts burn. *Lectio divina* is intimate reading.

Let us return to St. Theresa of the Child Jesus. Without possessing the abundance of means now at our disposal, the holy Carmelite lived and died in intimate union with the Scriptures, in continuous dialogue with the Word of God. The expressions and nuances of that dialogue are infinitely delicate. Thus, for example: "I turn to the Holy Gospel where the Lord " — not St. Matthew or St. Mark or St. Luke or St. John, but the Lord — "explains to me in what his new commandment consists." Jesus helped St. Theresa to maintain her entire existence in living contact with the Scriptures. The Carmelite succeeded with great difficulty in overcoming her bad temper; this imperfection grieved her. "I kept asking myself what Jesus would think of me when he addressed me with the words he had directed one day to the adulteress: 'Has no one condemned you?' With tears she replied: 'No one, Lord'. Why is Jesus so sweet to me?" And in another place: "I like nothing better than to fix my eyes on the Gospel; then breathe the perfume of the life of Jesus."



RENEWAL OF OBLATION

Every year each Oblate is expected to renew their Oblation. If circumstances and distance prevent you from attending the annual ceremony at the Abbey, this year on June 9th, you should make this Oblation in private. After renewing your Oblation, please complete this form and mail to:

Director of Oblates
Belmont Abbey
100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road
Belmont, NC 28012

Renewal of Oblation

I renew my oblation of St. Benedict for the community of Mary, Help of Christians Abbey and promise again to serve God and all people according to the Rule of St. Benedict.

God, most compassionate and loving, strengthen me in my commitment to follow you in the way of St. Benedict. Through my daily prayer and work may I be inspired to live in Christ and to bring his love to the world and his peace to all hearts. I make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Signature

Date

Name (Printed or typed)

ORDO

MAY

2 Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, Memorial
3 Philip and James, Apostles (Feast)
5 3rd Sunday of Easter (Week III)
11 Odo, Maiolus, Odilo, Hugh and Peter the Venerable, Memorial
12 4th Sunday of Easter (Week IV)
13 Our Lady of Fatima, (opt. Mem.)
14 Matthias, Apostle (Feast)
15 Pachomius, Abbot, Memorial
19 5th Sunday of Easter (Week II)
24 Mary, Help of Christians, Titular and Patron. Solemnity
25 St. Bede the Venerable, Priest, Religious, Doctor of the Church
26 6th Sunday of Easter (Week II)
31 Visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth, Feast



THE HANDMAID OF GOD



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

MAY

5 Fr. Edward Bissy (1969)
7 Fr. Ambrose Andelfinger (1889)
7 Fr. Adelard Bouvilliers (1950)
9 Br. Anthony Cahill (1985)
17 Fr. Leo Kuntz (1917)
18 Fr. Alphonse Buss (1951)
24 Fr. Hugh Hagerty (1979)
24 Fr. Matthew McSorley (2012)
26 Br. Andrew Huemer (1900)
27 Fr. Charles Kastner (1959)
30 Fr. Francis Meyer (1905)

“God has never made or formed but one enmity; but it is an irreconcilable one, which shall endure and develop even to the end. It is between Mary, His worthy Mother, and the devil,—between the children and the servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and instruments of Lucifer. The most terrible of all the enemies which God has set up against the devil is His holy Mother, Mary. He has inspired her, even since the days of the earthly Paradise, though she existed then only in His idea, with so much hatred against that cursed enemy of God, with so much industry in unveiling the malice of that old serpent, with so much power to conquer, to overthrow, and to crush that proud impious rebel, that he fears her not only more than all Angels and men, but in some sense more than God Himself. It is not that the anger, the hatred, and the power of God are not infinitely greater than those of the Blessed Virgin, for the perfections of Mary are limited, but it is, first, because Satan, being proud, suffers infinitely more from being beaten and punished by a little and humble handmaid of God, and her humility humbles him more than the Divine power; and, secondly, because God has given Mary such a great power against the devils, that, as they have often been obliged to confess, in spite of themselves, by the mouths of the possessed, they fear one of her sighs for a soul more than the prayers of all the Saints, and one of her menaces against them more than all other torments.”

St. Louis de Montfort, True Devotion to Mary

“If then we are establishing sound devotion to our Blessed Lady, it is only in order to establish devotion to our Lord more perfectly, by providing a smooth but certain way of reaching Jesus Christ.” St. Louis de Montfort

MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

The power thus put into her hands is all but unlimited. How unerringly right, then, are Christian souls when they turn to Mary for help as though impelled by an instinct of nature, confidently sharing with her their future hopes and past achievements, their sorrows and joys, commending themselves like children to the care of a bountiful mother. How rightly, too, has every nation and every liturgy without exception acclaimed her great renown, which has grown greater with the voice of each succeeding century. Among her many other titles we find her hailed as "our Lady, our Mediatrix," [3] "the Reparatrix of the whole world," [4] "the Dispenser of all heavenly gifts." [5]

Since faith is the foundation, the source, of the gifts of God by which man is raised above the order of nature and is endowed with the dispositions requisite for life eternal, we are in justice bound to recognize the hidden influence of Mary in obtaining the gift of faith and its salutary cultivation--of Mary who brought the "author of faith" [6] into this world and who, because of her own great faith, was called "blessed." "O Virgin most holy, none abounds in the knowledge of God except through thee; none, O Mother of God, attains salvation except through thee; none receives a gift from the throne of mercy except through thee." [7]

It is no exaggeration to say that it is due chiefly to her leadership and help that the wisdom and teachings of the Gospel spread so rapidly to all the nations of the world in spite of the most obstinate difficulties and most cruel persecutions, and brought everywhere in their train a new reign of justice and peace. This it was that stirred the soul of St. Cyril of Alexandria to the following prayerful address to the Blessed Virgin: "Through you the Apostles have preached salvation to the nations . . . through you the priceless Cross is everywhere honored and venerated; through you the demons have been put to



The venerated image whom Pope Leo XIII granted a Canonical coronation on 17 May 1903. The Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians, Turin.

rout and mankind has been summoned back to Heaven; through you every misguided creature held in the thrall of idols is led to recognize the truth; through you have the faithful been brought to the laver of holy Baptism and churches been founded among every people." [8]

Hence it is that the Church and the Fathers have given expression to their joy in Mary in words whose beauty equals their truth: "Hail, voice of the Apostles forever eloquent, solid foundation of the faith, unshakable prop of the Church." [10] "Hail, thou through whom we have been enrolled as citizens of the One, Holy, Catholic and Ap-

ostolic Church." [11] "Hail, thou fountain springing forth by God's design, whose rivers flowing over in pure and unsullied waves of orthodoxy put to flight the hosts of error." [12] "Rejoice, because thou alone hast destroyed all the heresies in the world." [13]

That the one self same profession of faith may unite the minds of Christian nations in peace and harmony, that the one and only bond of perfect charity may gather their hearts within its embrace--such is our prayerful hope! And may Mary, by her powerful help, bring this ardently desired gift into our possession! And remembering that her only begotten Son prayed so earnestly to His heavenly Father for the closest union among the nations whom He has called by the one Baptism to the one inheritance of salvation bought for an infinite price, will she not, for that reason, see to it that all in His marvelous light will strive as with one mind for unity? And will it not be her wish to employ her goodness and providence to console the Spouse of Christ, the Church, through her long-sustained efforts in this enterprise, as well as to bring to full perfection the boon of unity among the members of the Christian family, which is the illustrious fruit of her motherhood?

Pope Leo XIII
On Devotion to the Rosary