



# Oblates of St. Benedict

## Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC January 2020

### NO CHANGE IN MEETING SCHEDULE

For the moment there will be no change in the meeting schedule for the Oblates. We will meet at 2:30 PM every third Sunday until further notice.

### INCLEMENT WEATHER



If a meeting is cancelled because of weather, notice will be put on the website as soon as that decision is made. Please also monitor local television stations for campus closings.

### NEXT MEETING

**Oblates:** The discussion will continue from the book *Monastic Practices* and will be covering the chapter on "Self-Discipline."

**Novice Oblates:** Review of the material distributed last month on Work. Please reflect on the questions in the handout.



### JANUARY 22: DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE LEGAL PROTECTION OF UNBORN CHILDREN

*A great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer.*

Pope Saint John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 100\*

The over 56 million abortions since the 1973 decisions of *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* reflect with heart-breaking magnitude what Pope Francis means by a "throwaway culture." However, we have great trust in God's providence. We are reminded time and again in Scripture to seek the Lord's help, and as people of faith, we believe that our prayers are heard.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 373, designates January 22 as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children": "In all the Dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion."

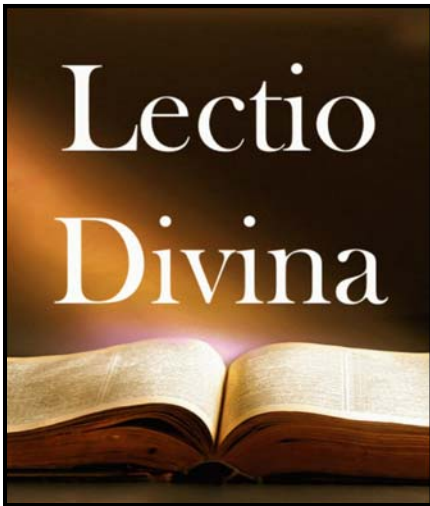
As individuals, we are called to observe this day through the penitential practices of prayer, fasting and/or giving alms. Another way to take part is through participating in special events to observe the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. Call your local diocese or parish to find out what events might be taking place in your area.

### LECTIO DIVINA: ATTENTIVE READING

The Bible is "the book of the God-seekers;" "divine reading" is the task proper to the God-seekers. Now, seeking always calls for an effort. However calm and restful it may be, "lectio divina" often requires notable and persevering application.

Once and for all the notion must be dispelled that lectio consists or can consist of a kind of "spiritual pastime," a light

The next Oblate meeting will be January 19, 2020 at 2:30 PM in the Geyer (Oblate) Room in the old Music Building.



pious recreation. That way of thinking reveals complete ignorance of the teachings of tradition. For the Ancients and the monastic legislators “divine reading” is a very serious, very grave, very arduous task. It is significant that in monastic rules divine reading occupies a place equal to physical work. St. Benedict says that outside the time reserved for the Divine Office “the brethren should be occupied at certain times in manual labor, and again at fixed hours in sacred reading.”<sup>1</sup>

Basically, lectio represents an exercise of the “inner person” — an exercise that requires without any exception the total attention, the energetic application of the soul’s power: memory, understanding, love. Lectio calls for great firmness of mind to scrutinize, grasp and comprehend the Word of God in the fullest sense of that term: “Word of God.” The reader must apply himself or herself — *proséchein* (to pay attention to), Origen writes — with persevering effort.

Now, fatigue, drowsiness, repugnance, laziness are only too human realities; at least occasionally they affect the reader. In the Latin collections of the *Apothegmata Patrum* we read, “The prophets wrote the books; the Ancients put them into practice; their successors learned them by heart; the present generation transcribes them on parchment and lets them sleep in the libraries!” With some exaggeration this apothegm reflects lack of collective interest. Without doubt the individual much more often is little disposed to read, above all with the attention and total dedication proper to lectio divina. Cassian depicts for us a small scene that must have occurred quite frequently in the prosaic reality of the desert: “Sometimes I desire to strengthen my heart by forcing myself to read Scripture. But a headache hinders me, and from nine in the morning I have slept with my head on the book.”

“At other times the soul feels submerged in the lethal drowsiness of acedia, and the reading causes aversion and disgust.” To persevere in it at any cost demands an almost heroic will. In St. Benedict’s admonition, “To listen willingly to holy reading,” the adverb “willingly” refers to the repugnance that certain minds feel toward reading. Our holy Father castigates such negligence.

To these difficulties of a rather subjective nature must be joined others of an objective character, derived from the very nature of Scripture. Let us not deceive ourselves: very many pages of the Bible are austere reading, and that for various reasons. One is its obscurities, the difficulties encountered in interpreting it correctly. The Gospel, too, contains them. The Benedictine Alonso Ruiz de Virues does no more than repeat the teaching of Cassian and of a great tradition when he writes: Christ “locked up and obscured in mystical words” the mysteries of the Gospel “in such way that they cannot be seen except only by those to whom he himself shall have given the key of knowledge, without which all the syllogisms and formalities learned in the schools avail little.” The reading of the Bible is austere because, as Scripture itself says, “God’s word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides the soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart.”

## ORDO



*Indeed, Nothing Is to Be Preferred to the Work of God. (RB 43)*

## JANUARY

- 1 Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
- 2 Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops (Wk I)
- 5 Epiphany, Solemnity (WK II)
- 12 Baptism of the Lord, Solemnity (WkIII)

## ORDINARY TIME

- 13 Begin Week I of the Psalter.
- 15 Maur and Placid, Disciples of Benedict. Memorial.
- 17 Anthony the Great, Abbot, Memorial.
- 19 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk II)
- 21 Agnes, Virgin, Martyr, Memorial.
- 22 Day Of Prayer For The Legal Protection Of Unborn Children
- 24 Francis de Sales, Bishop, Memorial.
- 25 Conversion of St. Paul, Apostle, Feast.
- 26 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk III)
- 28 St. Thomas Aquinas, Priest, Memorial.
- 31 John Bosco, Priest, Memorial.

## NECROLOGY



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

### JANUARY

- 3 Fr. Gerard Rettger
- 4 Fr. Herman Grones
- 5 Fr. Benedict Rettger
- 7 Fr. Paul Milde
- 8 Br. Benedict Marschall
- 9 Fr. Anselm Biggs
- 14 Fr. Maurus Buchheit
- 15 Fr. Matthew Graz
- 22 Br. Felix Keilhacker
- 24 Br. Obl. Fredrick Schleid
- 28 Br. Philip Lobinger
- 29 Br. Aloysius Buss

### *Lectio Divina: Attentive Reading (cont.)*

It lives like God, it contains the activity which is the activated power of God: it penetrates the most hidden and innermost parts of the being where the supernatural spirit joins up with our vital principle. And there, in our interior, it possesses an ability to judge and sentence, because it obliges us to take a position; before that Word it is impossible to compromise or pretend. Because of the judge within. As Father Besnard says: lectio divina is a "dangerous adventure." Practiced frequently, it may turn into a hand-to-hand combat with God, since God may assault us when we least expect it. Meeting God is often painful. All this pertains to the very nature of "reading God", since in it we seek God, and evidently we do that in order to meet God. At times God will console, at other times God will judge, at others — and that often — God will ask for this or that. Precisely because "the Word of God may today demand of me something which it did not yesterday," writes von Balthasar, "I must remain open and attentive to hear what it exacts of me."

From *Reading God* by Garcia M. Colombas, pp. 62-65

### OBLATE PSALTER

We are gearing up for a third printing of the Oblate Psalter. Please let George Cobb know if you have seen any mistakes that need to be corrected and if you would like a copy. The price should still be around \$15.00. You can email him at [gkcobb0929@gmail.com](mailto:gkcobb0929@gmail.com).



### FROM THE DESERT FATHERS



Two Fathers asked God to reveal to them how far they had advanced. A voice came which said, 'In a certain village in Egypt there is a man called Eucharistus and his wife who is called Mary. You have not yet reached their degree of virtue.' The two old men set out and went to the village. Having enquired, they found his house and his wife. They said to her, 'Where is your husband?' She replied, 'He is a shepherd and is feeding the sheep.' Then she made them come into the house. When evening came, Eucharistus returned with the sheep. Seeing the old men, he set the table and brought water to wash their feet. The old men said to him, 'We shall not eat anything until you have told us about your way of life.'

Eucharistus replied with humility, 'I am a Shepherd, and this is my wife.' The old men insisted but he did not want to say more. Then they said, 'God has sent us to you.' At these words, Eucharistus was afraid and said, 'Here are these sheep; we received them from our parents, and if, by God's help we make a little profit, we divide it into three parts: one for the poor, the second for hospitality, and the third for our personal needs. Since I married my wife, we have not had intercourse with one another, for she is a virgin; we each live alone. At night we wear hair-shirts and our ordinary clothes by day. No-one has known of this till now.' At these words they were filled with admiration and went away giving glory to God.



## JANUARY 22: ST. VINCENT OF SARAGOSSA

*St. Vincent, the protomartyr of Spain, was a deacon of the 3rd century. Together with his Bishop, Valerius of Saragossa, he was apprehended during a persecution of Dacian the governor of Spain. Valerius was banished but Vincent was subjected to fierce tortures before ultimately dying from his wounds. The saint's fame spread rapidly throughout Gaul and Africa - we have several sermons of St. Augustine given on his feast day. His feast day is January 22.*

"To you, said the Apostle Paul, it has been granted for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

Vincent had received both these gifts; he had received them, and he kept them. After all, if he had not received them, what would he have had? But he did have faithfulness in his words, he did have endurance in his sufferings.

So do not any of you be too self-assured when offering a word; do not be too confident in your own powers when suffering trials or temptations; because it is from him that we have the wisdom to speak good things wisely, from him the patience to endure bad things bravely.

Call to mind the Lord Christ warning and encouraging his disciples in the gospel; call to mind the king of martyrs equipping his troops with spiritual weapons, indicating the wars to be fought, lending assistance, promising rewards; first saying to his disciples, In this world you will have distress; then immediately adding words that would allay their terrors: But have confidence: I myself have vanquished the world.

So why should we be surprised, dearly beloved, if Vincent was victorious in him by whom the world was vanquished? In this world, he says, you will have distress; such that, even if it distresses, it can-

not oppress you; even if it knocks you down, it cannot knock you out. The world mounts a double attack on the soldiers of Christ. It wheedles in order to lead them astray; but it also terrifies, in order to break them. Let us not be held fast by our own pleasures, let us not be terrified by someone else's cruelty, and the world has been vanquished.

At each attack, Christ comes running to the defence, and the Christian is not vanquished. If, in this passion of Vincent's, one only gave thought to human powers of endurance, it would begin to look unbelievable; but if one acknowledges divine power, it ceases even to be wonderful.

Such hideous cruelty was being unleashed on the martyr's body, and such calm serenity was displayed in his voice; such harsh, savage punishments being applied to his limbs, but such assurance echoing

in his words, that we would have imagined that in some marvellous way, while Vincent was suffering, that it was someone else and not the speaker that was being tortured.

And indeed, my dearest brethren, that is how it was; undoubtedly that is how it was: someone else was speaking. Christ, you see, promised even this to his witnesses in the gospel, when he was preparing them for this sort of contest. For he said: Do not think beforehand about how or what you are to speak. For it is not you that are speaking, but the Spirit of my Father who is speaking in you.

So the flesh was suffering, and the Spirit was speaking. And while the Spirit was speaking, not only was ungodliness being confounded and convicted, but weakness was even being strengthened and comforted."

St. Augustine, The martyrdom and example of St. Vincent (sermo 276, 1-2: PL 38, 1256) .



**The February meeting of the Oblates will be on the 16th at 2:30  
unless otherwise announced.**