



Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC July-August, 2020



FRUITS OF LECTIO DIVINA

(continued from June)

An Experience of God

Even more, *lectio divina*, faithfully practiced, brings about an experience of God. In modern times the word "experience" has suffered abuse. In reality, it does not imply anything esoteric. It simply signifies the "grace of intimate prayer," the *affectus divinae gratiae* of which St. Benedict speaks (RB 20:4), the tasting and savoring of divine realities, as the constant tradition of the Ancients teaches. It is the certitude of being united with God through Christ in prayer.

Prayer, living and true prayer, which blossoms forth by contact with the Word of God, is one of the principal fruits of *lectio*. Or better, it forms part of *lectio*. So, too, meditation is a constitutive element of it. Through meditation we establish in our spirit a space where the Word of God can echo. L. Alonso Shokel summarizes Patristic and monastic tradition when he writes, "At the sound of the Word, in order for that Word to resonate, the space in our spirit should be enlarged to receive greater resonance. In that interior space God is present in the Word. And then our spirit takes another word of God in order to respond to God with hymn and prayer. Sometimes it lets the word resonate interiorly, so that the word, now ours, may touch God in that interior space. Thus the dialogue, the union with God, which is grace and salvation, continues that personal union in the Word which is truly divine and human. God, speaking in our language in a human way, has sought and met us; and, at God's meeting with us, we have met God in the mystery of the Word.'

Great Happiness

The monastery, writes Thomas Merton, is a school in which the monastic learns from God how to be happy. It is surely so. It is equally sure that *lectio divina* -- an essential monastic observance -- contributes to it in a pre-eminent, exceptional and unique way. Psalm 1 (NRSVCE) says so clearly:

Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.

Not only does God tell us in *lectio* how to be happy, but the *lectio* itself is our happiness. St. Jerome, the undisputed master of everything referring to "divine reading," has some very beautiful pages on the subject. He knew from experience the delights hidden in the Scriptures for those who know how to discover them. Writing to St. Paulinus of Nola, he says, "I beg you, dearest brother, to live among those things, to meditate upon them, to know nothing, to seek nothing outside of them. Does it not seem to you that this is to have already here on earth dwelling in the heavenly kingdom?" And to Paula, his faithful disciple in the ascetical life and in the reading of the Bible:

"What food, what honey can be sweeter than to know the providence of God, to penetrate God's secrets, to examine the thoughts of the Creator and to be taught in the words of your Lord. They are an object of derision to the wise of this world, but they are filled with spiritual wisdom. In the world, these others cling to their wealth, they drink from cups encrusted with pearls, they glitter in silk, they enjoy popular acclaim, and by reason of the variety of their pleasures they are incapable of overcoming their opulence. Let our delight consist in meditating on the law of the Lord day and night, to knock at the door that does not open, to receive the bread of the Trinity and, since the Lord goes before us, to despise the flesh-pots of that world."

Would it be wrong to assert paradoxically that the sweetest fruit of *lectio divina* is *lectio divina* itself? The



ORDO

JULY

- 3 Thomas, Apostle. Feast
5 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk II)
11 Benedict, Patriarch of Western Monasticism. Feast
12 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk III)
15 Bonaventure, Bishop, Doctor of the Church
16 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (opt. Mem.)
19 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk IV)
22 Mary Magdalene, Feast
25 James, Apostle, Feast
26 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk I)
29 Martha, Mary and Lazarus
31 Ignatius of Loyola, Memorial

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

- 3 Fr. Maurice McDonnell (1950)
4 Br. Lawrence Bittel (1946)
6 Br. Francis Buss (1944)
10 Fr. Bede Lightner (2002)
17 Fr. Obl. Bertrand Pattison (1992)
20 Fr. Stephen Dowd (1985)
22 Br. Philip Bernhard (1907)
22 Br. Vincent Melber (1946)
23 Fr. Raphael Arthur (1941)
24 Abbot Leo Haid (1924)
26 Fr. Raymond Geyer (2009)
27 Br. Obl. Jude Morris (1951)

27 Monica, Married Woman, Memorial
28 Augustine, Bishop. Memorial
29 Passion of John the Baptist. Memorial
30 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk I)



BONIFACE WIMMER O.S.B
(1809-1887)

FOUNDER OF ST. VINCENT'S ARCHABBEY, LATROBE, PENNSYLVANIA, AND OF THE AMERICAN CASSINESE CONGREGATION

In 1876, Benedictine monks from Saint Vincent Archabbey in Pennsylvania came to North Carolina and took possession of the former Caldwell farm. The following article is about the Abbot who had the vision monks to form what would become Belmont Abbey and to open Saint Mary's College.

From the perspective of the twenty-first century it may seem strange to discuss monasticism in America from the perspective of missionary activity. In the nineteenth century, however, the United States was considered to be an important mission territory. "During the First Vatican Council [and] among the authorities of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide)...missionary work was primarily understood to mean activities among the Christians of the Eastern churches and the Catholic immigrants in North America."³

The idea of a Benedictine "Mission" to America was the personal project of a Bavarian monk, Boniface Wimmer. Born in 1809, Sebastian Wimmer was ordained a secular priest in 1831, and served as curate at the Marian shrine of Altoetting in the Bavarian diocese of Regensburg. In 1830, through the influence of King Ludwig I, monastic life in the abbey of Metten which had been suppressed since the secularization decrees of 1803, was officially reinstated. The two aged monks who had agreed to return to conventual life at Metten hardly constituted a flourishing community, however;⁴ and the Bishop of Regensburg was asked for help in recruiting vocations. Wimmer was one of these. On December 29, 1833 he received the monastic name "Boniface"⁵ and became the second monk to make profes-

sion at Metten after the restoration. The first, Gregory, subsequently became Wimmer's abbot.

Sent as a professor to the newly-established Benedictine College of St. Stephen's in Augsburg, Wimmer soon won a problematic reputation among his colleagues as a *Projektenmacher* ("project-maker" or "visionary" here intended in the pejorative sense of "dreamer").⁶ Later sent as professor to Munich, he personally witnessed the beginnings of massive waves of emigration from Europe to the United States in 1842. In that same year he became acquainted with the plight of German Catholic immigrants in America, and he petitioned his fellow-novice Gregory, now abbot of Metten, for permission to go to America as a missionary. His former confrere refused, however, suggesting instead that Dom Boniface support the American Mission with his prayers.

Throughout the next three years Wimmer's conviction that he should go to America grew stronger. He urged his abbot to allow Metten to serve the Church by taking on responsibility for foreign missions as had the medieval English and

Irish monasteries: "We [the Benedictine Order] belong to the whole world. The heretics are spreading to all parts of the earth and we are keeping warm behind the stove."⁷ His notion of going to America as a solitary missionary underwent substantial revision during this time. Partly as the result of a meeting with a German-American priest, Fr. Peter Lemke, Wimmer conceived the idea of transplanting Benedictine monasticism to America.⁸

His abbot, however, remained unconvinced of the feasibility of Wimmer's plans. Thus in 1845 Fr. Boniface independently contacted the papal nuncio, Archbishop Charles Morichini, and submitted a request to be forwarded directly to Propaganda Fide in Rome. He asked for permission to travel to the American missions and "also laid before His Excellency the plan of founding a monastery on the property which Father Lemke promised to sell me."⁹

Wimmer subsequently received various unsatisfactory responses to his requests. His abbot eventually granted him permission to go to America; but the Chapter at Metten was unwilling to authorize an American foundation. They feared that Wimmer secretly longed for abbatial pontificalia, and that the proposal for an American foundation was merely a means for achieving his personal ambitions.¹⁰

In 1842, however, Fr. Boniface was able to win the personal support of King Ludwig I for his proposal. The wholehearted support of the nuncio rapidly followed.¹¹ Eventually he received authorization from his abbey to proceed with his plans; and on July 25, 1846 Boniface Wimmer set out from Munich with a band of theological students who eventually became the nucleus of the American-Cassinense Congregation, today one of the larger congregations in the Benedictine Confederation.

Wimmer's method of achieving his goal of a Benedictine mission (foundation) merits close attention. Unable to convince his monastic confreres or superior of the merits of his plan, Wimmer appealed directly to Rome through the person of the papal nuncio. When Propaganda Fide revealed its reluctance to interfere directly in the relationship between a Benedictine abbot and his subject, Wimmer was forced to seek the support of the King of Bavaria, which eventually proved essential for the achievement of his goals.

Wimmer's correspondence with his abbot during this period reveals a curious mixture of ostensible respect for the abbatial office ("I will take you at your word, which is holy to me")¹² coupled with a bullying attitude: "...I will not let you go so easily...you will have the choice [when I write to Rome] either of declaring me unfit for this mission...or admitting simply that you do not want to live up to your word."¹³ This unusual approach to the implementation of monastic goals may be seen in the lives of the other founders of missionary Benedictinism, Andreas Amrhein and Gerard Van-Caloen.

3. Jacob Baumgartner, "Missions in the Shadow of Colonialism", *History of the Church*, ed. Jedin, (London, 1981) p. 527.

4. Jerome Oetgen, *An American Abbot, Boniface Wimmer*, OSB (Latrobe, 1976) p. 23.

5. His choice of the name "Boniface" did not signify an early interest in the Missions: rather, he took the name of Boniface Urban, dean of the diocese of Regensburg; Oetgen, p. 23.

6. Oetgen, p. 35.

7. Oetgen, p. 39.

8. Oetgen, p. 41.

9. Oetgen, p. 43.

10. Oetgen, p. 52.

11. Oetgen, p. 51.

12. IBID.

13. IBID.

http://ldysinger.stjohnsem.edu/@texts2/1875_wimmer/00a_start.htm



ORDO

AUGUST

1 Alphonsus Liguori, Memorial

2 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk II)

4 John Vianney, Priest, Memorial

6 Transfiguration of the Lord. Feast

8 Dominic, Priest. Memorial

9 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk III)

10 Lawrence, Martyr. Feast

11 Clare, Virgin, Memorial

14 Maximilian Kolbe, Martyr, Memorial

15 Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

Solemnity

16 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk IV)

20 Bernard, Abbot. Memorial

21 Pius X, Memorial

22 Queenship of the Virgin Mary.

Memorial.

23 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk I)

24 Bartholomew, Apostle, Feast

27 Monica, Married Woman, Memorial

28 Augustine, Bishop. Memorial

29 Passion of John the Baptist. Memorial

30 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (Wk I)

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

3 Fr. Nicholas Gibilisco (1994)

5 Br. Fidelis Kuhn (1916)

6 Fr. Ignatius Remke (1944)

12 Br. Rupert Sebald (1953)

13 Br. Leodegar Ochsenkuehn (1973)

14 Fr. Martin Hayes (1992)

19 Br. Meinrad Buechling (1894)

31 Fr. Brendan Dooley (1964)

ST. BENEDICT

PATRIARCH OF WESTERN MONASTICISM

The Feast Day is celebrated July 11th. The novena to St. Benedict should start July 2. The novena prayer was published in the June, 2020 Oblate Newsletter.

Like a star in the darkness of night, Benedict of Nursia brilliantly shines, a glory not only to Italy but of the whole Church. Whoever considers his celebrated life and studies in the light of the truth of history, the gloomy and stormy times in which he lived, will without doubt realize the truth of the divine promise which Christ made to the Apostles and to the society He founded "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." At no time in history does this promise lose its force; it is verified in the course of all ages flowing, as they do, under the guidance of divine Providence.

But when enemies assail the Christian name more fiercely, when the fateful barque of Peter is tossed about more violently and when everything seems to be tottering with no hope of human support, it is then that Christ is present, bondsman, comforter, source of supernatural power, and raises up fresh champions to protect Catholicism, to restore it to its former vigor, and give it even greater increase under the inspiration and help of heavenly grace.

2. Among these champions shines out in resplendent light Our Benedict - blessed "by name and grace". In the providential designs of God he emerged from a dark century when the position and fate of civilization as well as of the Church and of civil society was in danger of collapse. The Roman Empire which had attained such a summit of glory and had joined with wise and equally tempered laws so many peoples, nations and tribes, so that it could be called more correctly the world's protector rather than its imperial master, this Empire like all earthly institutions had crumbled. Weakened and corrupt from within, it lay in mighty ruins in the West, shattered by the invasions of the northern tribes.

3. In such a mighty storm and universal upheaval, from where did hope shine? Where did help and protection arise in order to save humanity and what was left of its treasures from shipwreck? It came from the Catholic Church. All earthly institutions begun and built solely on human wisdom and human power, in the course of time succeed one another, flourish and then quite naturally fail, weaken and crumble away; but the organization which Our Redeemer established has received from its divine Founder unfailing life and abiding strength from

on high. Thus sustained and fortified the Church comes out victorious through the hostile fortunes of time and circumstances; amid their ruins and failures it is capable of molding a new and happier age and with Christian doctrine and spirit she can build and erect a new society of citizens, peoples and nations. . .

24. It is not only the bygone ages that had reason to profit from the benefits of this Patriarch; our own age has many important lessons to learn from him. Let those first of all who belong to his numerous family learn - We do not doubt that they do - to follow daily ever more closely in his illustrious footsteps and let each reduce to the practice of ordinary life the principles and example of his virtue and sanctity. Thus they who in obedience to a supernatural call followed a heavenly sent vocation to embrace the monastic life, not only will corre-

spond with it wholeheartedly and efficiently, seeking the peace and the calm not of their own conscience and their own eternal salvation alone, but they will also be able to labor with better effect for the common good of Christianity and for the promotion of God's glory.

25. Furthermore, all the classes of society, if they studiously and seriously examine the life, teaching and glorious achievements of St. Benedict, cannot but fall under the influence of his gentle but powerful inspiration; indeed they will spontaneously recognize that even our age troubled and anxious for the vast material and moral ruins, perils and losses that have been heaped up, can

borrow from him the needed remedies. But before all, let them remember and consider that the sacred principles of religion and its norms of conduct are the safest and soundest foundations of human society; if they are disregarded and compromised, everything that promotes order, peace and prosperity among men and nations, as an almost necessary consequence, gradually collapses. The history of the Benedictine Order bears clear testimony to this, as we have seen; and it was already clearly grasped by that cultured mind of ancient pagan times when he expressed the judgment: "You, Pontiffs, give greater security to the city by religion than by the encircling walls". Also, "when holiness and religion are removed, there follows a life of turmoil and great confusion; and I would venture to say that when devotion to the gods fails, then fail trustworthiness, human society, and justice - that most excellent of all virtues".

Venerable Pope Pius XII
Fulgens Radiatur

