

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

September, 2020

MEETING DATES

There will be no in-person Oblate meetings for the remainder of the year. After Christmas we will re-assess the COVID situation and make a decision when we will begin meeting on a normal basis

Novice Oblates will continue to meet on-line. The next ZOOM meeting will be September 20 at 3:00. An invitation will be sent the morning of the meeting. The subject will be "Silence" and the material will be emailed.



"Divine reading" contains various complements, of greater or lesser interest. We cite three: *meditatio*, *collatio* and *eructatio*. As these are technical terms, it is fitting to state them in Latin. (Editor's note: The last two of these interests will be covered in another newsletter)

Meditatio

The most important of the three elements, without doubt, is *meditatio*. It is so important that it forms part of *lectio* itself and frequently is identified with it.

The words *meditatio* and *meditari* are not easy to translate. Nowadays, because of long semantic evolution, the words "meditation" and "meditate" have come to signify something quite different from their original meaning. Conformably, the rational element, little by little, came to predominate in prayer and contemplation, with the result

that the meaning of *meditatio* suffered an important transformation until it was turned into a reflection on the truths of Faith.

In the beginning, however, and for many centuries thereafter, its meaning was different. "In reality, *meditatio* like *meditari* or *meditare* had various meanings and shades." In Christian antiquity and, above all, among the early monastics, the term *melete* (in Greek) and *meditatio* (in Latin) had above all two meanings. The first was to learn a text by heart -- sometimes the Gospels, regularly the Psalter -- by repeating it aloud. That was the only way of "reading" the Bible for the illiterate, but also those who could read learned the text by heart so that they might continue ruminating on it outside the hours assigned for reading. Secondly, it meant reciting determined text by heart or by reading.

Meditatio or *melete* was not an invention of monastics nor even of Christians. In antiquity, it was practiced both in the Gentile and Jewish worlds. Certain philosophical schools demanded [of] their followers that they learn certain sentences by heart, practice repeating them aloud. Jews, for their part, practiced -- and some continue to practice -- *meditatio* of the Bible.

Andre Chouraqui supplies some very interesting information on this matter. Psalm 1 says, "Happy the person who follows not the counsel of the wicked ... but delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law day and night." A person is not enamored of the law as such, but of the torah, whose original meaning includes everything that comes forth from God's creative Word and all it expresses and primarily the writings that reveal it. This desire of humanity -- it is better to translate "desire" than "delight" -- manifests itself in concrete attitude, namely, *haga*, a verb ordinarily translated "to meditate." In reality, it first signifies to "groan," "mumble," or "whisper," or "speak." It expresses the growling of a lion, the cooing of a dove, the groaning of a person.

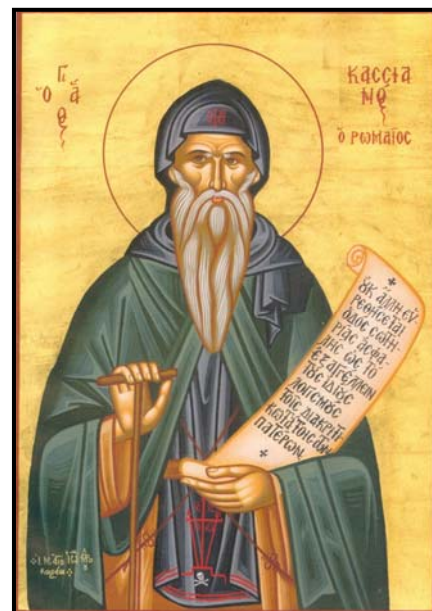
Only by derivation from its meaning can *haga* be translated as "to express," "to soliloquize" or, more remotely "to meditate," "to dream," "to imagine." With that we are already far from the original meanings, which are always concrete and immediate. Meditation is not made in the abstract, but implies an attitude: to open the torah of Yahweh, desired because it is loved, and to whisper the text day and night. These are not Oriental exaggerations. In truth we are dealing with a whispering of the torah without ceasing -- even while a person sleeps or eats or travels. Chouraqui confesses to have experienced it while he was translating the Bible into French. "Desire, born of love, calls forth an essential union of the lover and the beloved." The text suggests it: the torah of Yahweh becomes likewise "our" torah, the torah of all. We die to ourselves, as it were, and is reborn to the light of love; humanity has transformed into the torah of Yahweh and cannot do otherwise than to whisper it day and night. Not because we force ourselves to do it, but we do so freely, because the motion of love has penetrated so deeply."

The traditional methods of teaching the Bible "tend to wed humanity indissolubly to the torah of Yahweh." There is question of appropriating it for ourselves, of devouring it. This can be observed in the Yeshivot, the theological schools of Jerusalem, which carry on the inherited traditions of the Bible. Instead of a university hall, the Yeshiva is like "a battlefield, where everyone -- from sixteen to eighteen hours day -- does not whisper his torah, but shouts it out in an outcry difficult to conceive if it has not been heard. In that system the student gets to know his texts by heart very rapidly; for him the torah of Yahweh has become his torah, living like an obsession in his mind, constantly moving in the same direction."

These observations of Chouraqui are extremely enlightening in understanding what the early and medieval monastics primarily tried to do in the practice of *meditatio*. to assimilate better what they had read, to assimilate it completely by kind of chewing and digestion comparable to that of ruminants. In fact, both in the early authors and in those of the Middle Ages the words *ruminatio* and *ruminare* frequently appear as synonyms of *meditatio* and *meditare*. J. B. Lotz compares *meditatio* to a connoisseur who keeps and agitates a strong wine on his tongue until he has completely tasted its savor, drinking it in completely. A. Louf "thinks involuntarily of the quiet and interminable cud-chewing, ru-minating of cows" in the shade of a tree; "the image is somewhat commonplace, but eloquent; it 'calls to mind repose, quiet, total concentration, patient assimilation.'" F. Ruppert prefers *ruminatio* to *meditatio*, even though recognizing they are synonyms, because it better resists the danger of intellectual-

ism. According to him, *ruminatio* consists of two elements: first, frequent and even continuous, repetition of one word or one text; second, the interior savoring and assimilating of that word. The image of interior chewing, digestion and assimilation fits better the effect that is sought: to make the word of God pass not into the head, but the heart.

From the earliest days of monasticism *meditatio* appears among its most essential elements. St. Antony and the hermits, St. Pachomius and his disciples practiced it... The monastic masters advised it, imposed it, insisted on it, untiringly. An apothegm attributed to St. Antony in a Coptic collection asserts that the monastic must not be like the horse, which eats much and at all hours and immediately loses what it eats, but like the camel, which ruminates what it has eaten until the food penetrates into "its bones and its flesh."



Cassian taught: "We must seek to learn the divine Scriptures by heart and to ruminate them unceasingly in our mind. Such meditation will profit us in two ways. The first is that, while our attention is focused on reading and studying, we remain free of evil thoughts. The second is that, as we strive with constant repetition to commit these readings to memory, we have not the time to understand them because our minds have been occupied. But later when we are free from the attractions of all that we do and see and, especially, when we are quietly meditating during the hours of darkness, we think them over and we understand them more closely. And so it happens that when we are at ease and when, as it were, we are plunged into the dullness of sleep, the hidden meanings, of which we were utterly unaware during our waking hours, and

NOVENA TO THE GUARDIAN ANGELS
FEAST DAY OCTOBER 2
(BEGIN SEPTEMBER 23)



Heavenly Father, Your infinite love for us has chosen a blessed angel in heaven and appointed him our guide during this earthly pilgrimage. Accept our thanks for so great a blessing. Grant that we may experience the assistance of our holy protector in all our necessities. And you, holy, loving angel and guide, watch over us with all the tenderness of your angelic heart. Keep us always on the way that leads to heaven, and cease not to pray for us until we have attained our final destiny, eternal salvation. Then we shall love you for all eternity. We shall praise and glorify you unceasingly for all the good you have done for us while here on earth. Especially be a faithful and watchful protector of our children. Take our place, and supply what may be wanting to us through human frailty, short-sightedness, or sinful neglect. Lighten, O you perfect servants of God, our heavy task. Guide our children, that they may become like unto Jesus, may imitate Him faithfully, and persevere till they attain eternal life.

Amen

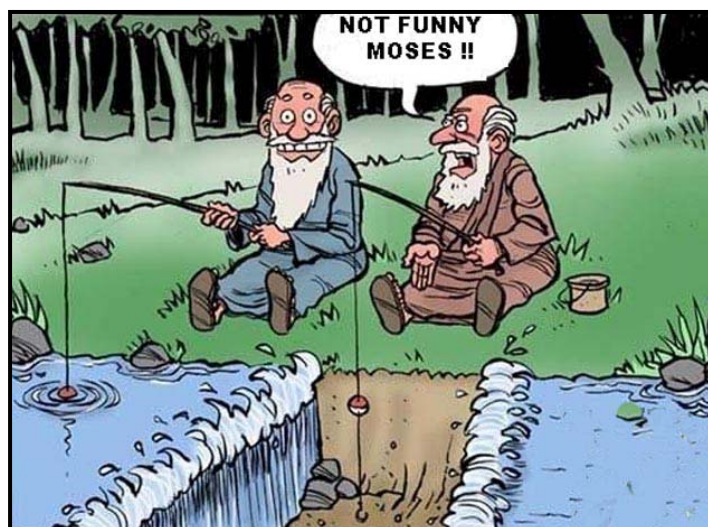
the sense of them are bared to our minds." In his Rule for Virgins, St. Caesarius of Aries exhorts them never to abandon "*meditatio* on the Word of God and prayer of the heart." And later he insists, "Whatever work you are doing, when there is no reading, ruminate without ceasing something from Holy Scripture." In his famous "Golden Letter:" to the Carthusians of Mont-Dieu, William of Saint-Thierry tells them, "It is necessary every day to choose a morsel from the daily reading and to commit it to the stomach of the memory -- a passage which is digested better and which, returned to the mouth, will be the object of frequent rumination."

These testimonies serve a samples of an uninterrupted tradition at the heart of early and medieval monasticism. Outside of this tradition, also among Protestants, a certain form of *meditatio* or *ruminatio* of the Scriptures was practiced. Luther himself encouraged it. And as we have seen in the preceding pages, Dietrich Bonhoeffer frequently for a large pan of the day meditated on a text of Scripture he had chosen for the week and tried to "immerse himself profoundly in it in order to understand the truth it really wishes to tell us. "

"Meditate, *ruminare*" - writes Jean Leclercq - "signify "to adhere closely to the phrase which one recites and to weigh all its. words in order to grasp its full meaning; "they signify "to assimilate the contents of a text by means of a certain chewing over which draws out all its flavor; "they signify to relish it "with the palate of the heart."

Now, *lectio divina* was frequently associated with *meditatio*, since for early and medieval monastics customarily it was not silent; in reading they pronounced aloud or in low voice or at least interiorly what they read. They persistently repeated certain texts in order to remember them and to convert them, in some way, into their own substance. In effect, they were practicing *meditatio*. And that spiritual activity, as is readily seen, was not only *meditatio*, but *oratio* as well. How could one relish and chew the Word of God without heartfelt response to that word which loves and saves? *Lectio*, *meditatio*, and *oratio*, they represent three concepts intimately related to one another; often they become synonymous. Guigo II, Grand Prior of the Chartreuse, as we have seen, adds contemplation to this triad as the fourth rung of the Claustral Ladder. "*Lectio* presents solid food, *meditatio* chews upon it... *oratio* savors it, and *contemplatio* is itself the relish."

Garcia M. Colombias, *Reading God*, pp. 92-99)





NECROLOGY

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

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Br. Aloysius Foerenbach (1914)
- 2 Fr. Bernard Rosswog (1999)
- 5 Br. Leonard Metzger (1941)
- 6 Fr. Julius Pohl (1924)
- 7 Br. Obl. John Morton (1952)
- 20 Fr. Gerard Pilz (1891)
- 24 Br. Francis Zwiesler (1929)
- 24 Fr. Cornelius Selhuber (1962)
- 25 Fr. Dominic Vollmar (1942)
- 25 Br. Stephen Schockling (1974)
- 25 Fr. Gregory Eichenlaub (1975)
- 27 Fr. Jerome Finn (1958)
- 30 Fr. Gregory Windschiegel (1912)

ORDO

SEPTEMBER

- 3 Gregory the Great, Pope, Doctor of the Church, Feast
- 6 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Wk III
- 8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Feast
- 13 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Wk IV
- 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Feast
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows, Memorial
- 16 Cornelius, Pope and Cyprian, Bishop, Martyrs, Memorial
- 20 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Wk I
- 21 Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, Feast
- 22 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Wk II
- 23 Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio), Priest, Memorial
- Begin Novena to the Guardian Angels*
- 27 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Wk III
- 29 Sts. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Archangels, Feast
- 30 Jerome, Priest, Doctor of the Church, Memorial

TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS, SEPTEMBER 14



“The Son of Man must be lifted up”, says Jesus to Nicodemus. And he says this with a view to his crucifixion: The Son of Man must be lifted up on the Cross. Whoever believes in him, whoever sees in this Cross and in the Crucified One the Redeemer of the world, whoever looks with faith on the redemptive death of Jesus on the Cross, finds in him the power of eternal life. By this power, sin is overcome. People receive forgiveness of their sins at the price of the Sacrifice of Christ. They find again the life of God which had been lost by sin.

This is the meaning of the Cross of Christ. This is its power. “God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved” (Jo. 3, 17).

The feast that we celebrate today speaks of a marvelous and ceaseless action of God in human history, in the history of every man, woman and child. The Cross of Christ on Golgotha has become for all time the centre of this saving work of God. Christ is the Saviour of the world, because in him and through him the love with which God so loved the world is continuously revealed: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son” (Ibid. 3, 16).

- The Father gave him so that this Son, who is one in substance with him, would become man by being conceived of the Virgin Mary.
- The Father gave him so that as the Son of Man he would proclaim the Gospel, the Good News of salvation.
- The Father gave him so that this Son, by responding with his own infinite love to the love of the Father, might offer himself on the Cross.

Pope Saint John Paul II

Feast of the Triumph of the Cross

Wednesday, 14 September 1988