

## Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

November, 2020

### FOR THE NEXT MEETING

**Oblates:** Due to CoVid meetings are cancelled until further notice. A decision will be made next month on future meetings.

**Novice Oblates:** Will continue to meet on-line. Next discussion meeting is November 15 at 3:00 PM is Hospitality. We will use the handout as well as pages 134-140 in *Spirituality: An Art of Living*.



### MEDITATIO

"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.

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 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, ruminating 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 intellectualism. According to him, *ruminatio* consists of two elements: first, frequent 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 *Reading God* by Garcia M. Colombas, pp. 93-97

## ALL SAINTS AND ALL SOULS: COMING CLOSE TO THOSE WHO ARE CLOSE TO US

In 609 or 610, Boniface IV received permission from the Emperor Foca to consecrate the already ancient building of the Pantheon in Rome under the title Saint Mary and all the Martyrs. (It should be understood that the first group of saints to be officially recognized were all martyrs in the formal sense, that is, they shed their blood for and with Christ. Only later were other categories added, because it was realized that is quite possible to give

## ORDO

### NOVEMBER

- 1 All Saints. Solemnity (Week III)
- 2 Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, Memorial
- 4 Charles Borromeo, Bishop, Memorial
- 8 32nd Sun. in Ordinary Time (Wk IV)
- 9 Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, Feast
- 10 Leo the Great, Pope, Memorial
- 11 Martin of Tours, Bishop, Feast
- 15 33rd Sun. in Ordinary Time (Wk I)
- 16 Gertrude the Great, Virgin, Memorial
- 21 Presentation of the Virgin Mary. Memorial
- 22 Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (Wk II)
- 24 Andrew Dung-Luc and Companions, Martyrs
- 29 1st Sunday of Advent (Wk I)  
*Begin novena in honor of Immaculate Conception*
- 30 Andrew, Apostle, Feast

## NECROLOGY

### NOVEMBER

- 2 Fr. Lawrence McHale (1957)
- 3 Fr. Albert Goetz (1935)
- 5 Abbot Vincent Taylor (1959)
- 5 Fr. Wilfrid Foley (1968)
- 7 Fr. Raphael Beer (1893)
- 8 Br. Gilbert Koberzynski (1920)
- 9 Fr. Boniface Hilgenboecker (1890)
- 9 Fr. Cornelius Diehl (1957)
- 15 Fr. Thomas Oestreich (1943)
- 21 Fr. Anthony Meyer (1928)
- 21 Abbot Oscar Burnett
- 22 Br. Willibald Marschall (1932)
- 24 Fr. Raphael Bridge (1996)

one's whole life for Christ without actually shedding one's blood and, indeed, this is the goal for most of the faithful). The subsequent feast commemorating this dedication of the Pantheon was soon widely diffused throughout the Western Church, but by the tenth century it had already taken on the connotations of a feast of all the saints, no matter whether they were martyrs or not. There is a similar feast in the Eastern Church, but on the first Sunday after Pentecost. It is an interesting characteristic of Catholic devotion, that it tends to take on more significance, and more components, as the centuries progress; so that, by our own time, it is often referred to by preachers as "our feast" — giving hope to those who are still part of the Church on earth, the "Church militant", that they will one day join the "Church triumphant" in Heaven. It is a healthy development for the faithful to be able to contemplate the thought of their own loved ones, who have passed on from this life, at peace and rest, and in eternal joy, with the Lord in Heaven.

The feast of All Souls or, more correctly, The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (because it is not a feast in the liturgical sense) is thought to have its origins with St Odilo of Cluny, who, in 948 A.D. instituted a commemoration of the faithful departed in his monastery. In the Benedictine liturgical books, still today, an Antiphon commemorates this fact on the memorial of the Abbots of Cluny, 11 May. (Interestingly, another antiphon refers to the Paschal Candle, whose use had obviously reached France by his time).

Naturally, for both these days, one could postulate a certain amount of pre-Christian influence. Most peoples of the world have some kind of commemoration or veneration for ancestors, and a concern to provide for their needs in the afterlife together with an, at times, exaggerated fear of their malign influence, if the behaviour of those still living should happen to be at variance with the ancestors' teaching and customs. The Church is always at its best when it knows how to welcome such customs and give them a fuller significance in Christ, while being careful to avoid anything that is harmful. This is, after all, how the feast of Christmas came into being, basing itself on the feast of the Sol Invicta; the unconquered Sun, who came to be identified with Christ, the Light of the World. With regard to All Souls, in my own monastery of

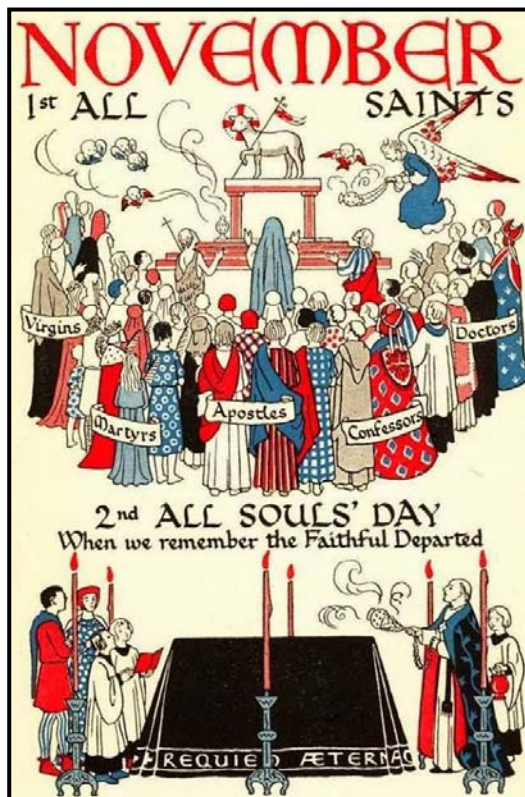
Prinknash, Gloucester, England, and in many other places too, we have the custom of lighting lamps on the graves of all the departed in the cemetery, on 2 November, and of going there, together with the lay faithful, at night, to say prayers. This is always a most moving occasion, and somehow also deeply reassuring, as we contemplate the fact of our shared life in Christ.

As the Second Vatican Council reminded us, any healthy devotion, any true liturgy, must base itself on the fact that we are baptized into Christ, and therefore share in his divine life and in his sonship with the Father. We are priests, prophets and kings. The celebration of our glorified ancestors in the faith, so to speak, should not be seen as a celebration of those far removed from us, but rather of those who are always our brothers and sisters, whose sole task is to glorify God by bringing us close to him. We should also remember that eternal life is not something that happens to us after we die, but something that begins the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, and enter the waters of baptism. There is, then, no substantial difference between us and the saints, or between us and the souls in purgatory — those who were not sufficiently purified from the vestiges of sin in this life and have need, therefore, of a time of purification before they can reach the full vision of God.

Perhaps the most helpful words on the subject of Purgatory come to us from the pen of the recently beatified John Henry Newman (1801-1890). Here he reminds us that there is always to be a healthy fear of offending God in us — a fear which is far from being terror; such terror has no part in the true Christian life — a fear which protects us in the time of temptation, and which is also a sign of heavenly bliss to come.

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Taken from:  
*L'Osservatore Romano*  
Weekly Edition in English  
2 November 2011, page 44





## NOVENA PRAYER IN HONOR OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created./ R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray: O God, who hast taught the hearts of Thy faithful people by the light of the Holy Spirit; grant us in the same Spirit to relish what is right, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort. Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

Virgin most pure, conceived without sin, all fair and stainless from thy Conception; glorious Mary, full of grace, Mother of my God, Queen of angels and of men, - I humbly venerate thee as Mother of my Saviour, who, though He was God, taught me by His own veneration, reverence, and obedience to thee, the honour and homage which are due to thee. Vouchsafe, I pray thee, to accept this Novena, which I dedicate to thee. Thou art the safe refuge of the penitent sinner; it is very fitting, then, that I should have recourse to thee. Thou art the Mother of compassion; then wilt thou surely be moved with pity for my many miseries. Thou art my best hope after Jesus; thou canst not but accept the loving confidence that I have in thee. Make me worthy to be called thy son, that so I may dare to cry unto thee, "Show thyself a mother."

Source: *St. Charles Borromeo Meninary Prayer Book*, 2006



### Election Prayer for Life

O God, we acknowledge you today as Lord,  
Not only of individuals, but of nations and  
governments.

We thank you for the privilege  
Of being able to organize ourselves politically  
And of knowing that political loyalty  
Does not have to mean disloyalty to you.

We thank you for your law,  
Which our Founding Fathers acknowledged  
And recognized as higher  
than any human law.

We thank you for the opportunity that  
this election year puts before us,  
To exercise our solemn duty not only to vote,  
But to influence countless others to vote,  
And to vote correctly.

Lord, we pray that your people  
may be awakened.

Let them realize that while politics  
is not their salvation,

Their response to you requires that they  
be politically active.

Awaken your people to know that they are  
not called to be a sect fleeing the world

But rather a community of faith  
renewing the world.

Awaken them that the same hands lifted  
up to you in prayer

Are the hands that pull the lever  
in the voting booth;  
That the same eyes that read your Word  
Are the eyes that read the names  
on the ballot,  
And that they do not cease to be Christians  
When they enter the voting booth.  
Awaken your people  
to a commitment to justice  
To the sanctity of marriage and the family,  
To the dignity of each individual human life,  
And to the truth that human rights begin  
when human lives begin,  
And not one moment later.  
Lord, we rejoice today  
That we are citizens of your kingdom.  
May that make us all the more committed  
To being faithful citizens on earth.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

by Rev. Frank Pavone, National Director, Priests for Life



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Find this prayer at [www.ElectionPrayer.com](http://www.ElectionPrayer.com)  
See more on what you can do for the elections:  
[www.PoliticalResponsibility.com](http://www.PoliticalResponsibility.com)