

Oblates of St. Benedict

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

December, 2020

FUTURE MEETINGS

It appears that the vaccine will be coming out around Christmas but not soon enough for enough people to have been vaccinated in time for a January Meeting. We will reassess the situation after the holidays.

Oblate Novices will continue on-line. Next lesson is Stability and Community and the materials were emailed following the meeting in November. Date for the meeting is December 20 at 3:00 PM. Invitation to the meeting will be emailed the morning of December 20.

STELLAR CHRISTMAS SHOW

If the clouds do not ruin it we should be awarded with a magnificent site in the skies the night of December 21. The planets Jupiter and Saturn will appear to be a single "star." Often called the "Great Conjunction" because it happens so infrequently (every 20 years) and they are two of the brightest planets in the sky.

While you don't have to use a telescope to see the conjunction, if you do have one, or a pair of good binoculars, you should be able to see the two planets, Saturn's rings and some of their largest moons. But with or without a telescope, go out that evening and look in the south-western sky about 30 minutes after sunset. The last time the two planets appeared so close was in 1623. So starting on December 21 and lasting until about Epiphany you should have a "Stellar Christmas Show."



MEDITATIO (CONT. FROM NOVEMBER)



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 assents 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 happen 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 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 as 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 part 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* savor

Reading God, Garcia M. Colombas, pp.97-99 .

ADVENT TRADITIONS: ST. LUCY BUNS

These saffron-hued sweet buns, called *Lussebullar*, are a staple of the Swedish tradition of St. Lucia's Day, a winter-solstice celebration. The recipe is from Jennifer Jansch, whose children serve their parents the buns every Dec. 13, when the holiday is observed. Cooking time: 1.5 hours

Ingredients

6 ounces butter, melted
2 ½ cups lukewarm milk
¾ teaspoon saffron
1 cup sugar
1.7 ounces fresh yeast
½ teaspoon salt
2 pounds wheat flour, or as needed
Beaten egg, for brushing
Raisins, for garnish.

Preparation

Place the butter and milk in a medium bowl. Using a mortar and pestle, grind the saffron with a pinch of the sugar, and stir into the mixture. In a large bowl, dissolve the yeast in a little of the lukewarm butter mixture, then add the remaining butter mixture, the remaining sugar and the salt.

Gradually add enough of the flour (almost all of it) to make a workable dough, kneading for 10 minutes by hand or 5 minutes in a mixer with a dough hook. Shape into a ball, sprinkle with a little flour and cover with a cloth. Allow to rise in a warm spot for 30 to 45 minutes.

Transfer the dough to a floured work surface, and knead in additional flour if the dough is sticky. Shape as desired into buns, braids or lengths. Place on lined baking sheets, and allow to rise again for 30 to 45 minutes. Preheat the oven to 400.

Brush the buns with beaten egg, and press raisins lightly into the dough. Bake until golden and risen, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a bun comes out dry. Smaller buns may take 8 to 10 minutes; larger lengths and braids, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool the buns on a rack under a cloth. Makes about 30 buns

Source: NY Times <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1017039-st-lucia-buns>



ANTIPHONS FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

For those Oblates currently using the first edition of the *Oblate Psalter*, antiphons for use during Advent and Christmas are available in PDF format from the Oblate website:

http://oblatesosbbelmont.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Advent_Christmas.pdf

SIMPLE HOLIDAY EGGNOG

A great home-made recipe and easy to do. But warning, if you like to spike the eggnog this is not a winner. The original recipe includes mixing brandy or rum to taste but it is not recommended.

2 eggs
1/3 cup of sugar
2 cups milk (whole)
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup whipping cream
Grated nutmeg

Combine eggs with sugar, milk, and vanilla. Beat with wire whip until fluffy. Beat cream until stiff. Fold cream into egg mixture. Pour into punch cups and sprinkle with nutmeg. Makes about a quart. (*I usually double the recipe*).



ST. BERNARD'S CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Let Your goodness Lord appear to us, that we,
made in your image, conform ourselves to it.
In our own strength
we cannot imitate Your majesty, power, and wonder
nor is it fitting for us to try.
But Your mercy reaches from the heavens
through the clouds to the earth below.
You have come to us as a small child,
but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts,
the gift of eternal love
Caress us with Your tiny hands,
embrace us with Your tiny arms
and pierce our hearts with Your soft, sweet cries.

SEEING THE CHILD JESUS THROUGH THE EYES OF MARY

"As we gather about the crib of Bethlehem, we feel that we are in the presence of a new Paradise of Beauty and Love... and the name of that Paradise is Mary. And if we could have been there in that stable on that first Christmas night, we might have seen that Paradise of the Incarnation but we should not be able to recollect whether her face was beautiful or not. for what would have impressed us, and made us forget all else, would have been the lovely, sinless soul that shone through her eyes like two celestial suns. If we could have stood at the gates to that Paradise, we would have less peered at it as into it, for what would have impressed us would not have been any external qualities, though these would have been ravishing, but rather the qualities of her soul—her simplicity, innocence, humility, and above all, her purity... Christmas takes on a new meaning when the Mother is seen with the Babe. In fact, the heavens and the earth seem almost to exchange places. Years ago, we used to think of the heavens as 'way up there.' Then one day the God of the heavens came to this earth, and that hour when she held the Babe in her arms, it became true to say that with her we now 'look down' at heaven."

Bishop Fulton Sheen, *Manifestations of Christ*, (1932).

NECROLOGY

DECEMBER

- 1 Fr. Cuthbert Allen (1977)
- 5 Fr. Eugene Egan (1940)
- 6 Br. Albert Popp (1924)
- 7 Fr. Boniface Bauer (1974)
- 8 Fr. Philip Tierney (1971)
- 9 Abbot Jude Cleary (2005)
- 21 Br. Alphonse Schoene (1889)
- 23 Prior Willibald Baumgartner (1930)
- 25 Br. Louis Marschall (1945)
- 26 Fr. Jerome Dollard (1985)
- 27 Br. Obl. Thomas MacPherson (1955)
- 28 Fr. Mark Cassidy (1928)
- 28 Abbot Walter Coggin (1999)
- 29 Br. Joseph Ringelstaetter (1920)
- 30 Fr. Robert Brennan (1964)
- 30 Fr. Aloysius Wachter (1977)

ORDO

DECEMBER

- 3 Francis Xavier, Priest, Religious
- 6 **2nd Sunday of Advent (Wk II)**
- 7 Ambrose, Bishop, Memorial
- 8 **Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Solemnity**
- 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe. Feast
- 13 **3rd Sunday of Advent (Wk III)**
- 14 John of the Cross, Priest, Memorial
- 20 **4th Sunday of Advent (Wk IV)**
- 25 **Nativity of the Lord, Solemnity**
- 26 Stephen, First Martyr. Feast
- 27 **Holy Family. Feast**
- 28 Holy Innocents, Martyrs, Feast

1. "To us a child is born,
to us a son is given" (Is 9:5).

Today the **mystery of Christmas is renewed**:
this Child who brings salvation to the world
is also born for the men and women of our own time,
bringing joy and peace for all.
We approach the crib with emotion;
together with Mary we go to meet
the Long-Awaited of the Nations, the Redeemer of hu-
manity.

*Cum Maria contemplemur Christi vul-
tum.*

With Mary let us contemplate the face
of Christ:

in that Child, wrapped in swaddling
cloths
and laid in the manger (cf. Lk 2:7),
it is God himself who comes to visit us,
to guide our feet in the way of peace
(cf. Lk 1:79).

Mary watches him, caresses him and
keeps him warm,
pondering the meaning of the won-
drous signs

which surround **the mystery of Christmas**.

2. Christmas is a mystery of joy!

The Angels sang in the night:
"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among men with whom he is
pleased" (Lk 2:14).

To the shepherds they described the event
as "a great joy for all the people" (cf. Lk 2:10).
Joy, **despite** distance from home,
the poverty of the manger,
people's indifference,
the hostility of power.

A mystery of joy **nonetheless**,
for in the City of David
"to you is born this day a Saviour" (Lk 2:11).

The Church shares in this same joy,
surrounded today by the light of the Son of God:
the darkness can never obscure it.
It is the glory of the Eternal Word,
who out of love has become one of us.

3. Christmas is a mystery of love!

The love of the Father, who has sent into the world
his only-begotten Son,
to bestow on us the gift of his own life (cf. 1 Jn 4:8-9).
The love of "God-with-us", Emmanuel,
who came to earth in order to die on the Cross.
In the cold stable, wrapped in silence,
the Virgin Mother, with prophetic intuition,
already tastes the violent drama of Calvary,
the traumatic struggle between darkness and light,
between death and life, between hatred and love.

The Prince of Peace, born today in Bethlehem,
will give his life on Golgotha,
so that love may reign on earth.

4. Christmas is a mystery of peace!
From the cave of Bethlehem
there rises today an urgent appeal
to the world not to yield
to mistrust, suspicion and discouragement,
even though the tragic reality of terrorism
feeds uncertainties and fears.
Believers of all religions,
together with men and women of good
will,
by outlawing all forms of intolerance and
discrimination,
are called to build peace:
in the **Holy Land**, above all, to put an end
once and for all
to the senseless spiral of blind violence,
and in the **Middle East**,
to extinguish the ominous smouldering of a
conflict
which, with the joint efforts of all, can be
avoided;

in **Africa** too, where devastating famines and tragic inter-
nal conflicts
are aggravating the already precarious conditions of en-
tire peoples,
although here and there signs of hope are present;
in **Latin America**, in **Asia**, in other parts of the world,
where political, economic and social crises
disturb the serenity of many families and nations.
May humanity accept the Christmas message of peace!

5. Adorable mystery of the Incarnate Word!

Together with you, O Virgin Mother, may we stop and
reflect

at the manger where the Child lies,
to share your own amazement
at the immense "condescension" of God.

Grant us your own eyes, O Mary,
that we may understand the mystery
hidden within the frail limbs of your Son.

Teach us to recognize his face
in the children of every race and culture.

Help us to be credible witnesses
of his message of peace and love,
so that the men and women of our own time,
still torn by conflicts and unspeakable violence,
may also recognize in the Child
cradled in your arms
the one Saviour of the world,
the endless source of that true peace
for which every heart profoundly yearns.

Pope Saint John Paul II
Christmas, 2002

