

Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC February 2020

MEETING SCHEDULE

The Formation Committee will be meeting on-line in the next couple of weeks to look at possible ways the Oblate Community can meet. It is apparent we will not be meeting at the Abbey until possibly the Fall. The "two weeks to slow the spread" has gone to a year. While vaccines are getting out, it will still be several months before the majority of the vulnerable population is vaccinated.

We are currently looking into the possibility of doing meetings on-line, the method is to be determined. All the options to do this include both telephone and on-line options so, if you do not have the latest video camera it is not an issue. If you would be interested in participating in a on-line Oblate meeting please email George Cobb at gkcobb0321@pm.me. Please put "On-Line Meeting" in the subject line so it can be identified. Please let George know by Ash Wednesday, February 17.



ASH WEDNESDAY

While it is true that the taking of Ashes on the first day of lent is a reminder of not only of our own death, but also how passing all things in our world are.... that is not all of it by any means. It is not just about death, this taking of ashes. No, it is a call to begin seeking anew those things that lead to an ever deeper love and enjoyment of life. It is a call to let go of that which keeps us from having a deep and loving relationship with God. We are

asked to face life with courage and to drink deeply, without seeking to escape in ways that are destructive to that relationship with the Eternal, as well as with our own lives. For our seeking to escape from the burdens of life, only leads to ever greater weight to be borne.

Starting point: We can only start from where we are at. To wish to be somewhere else is foolish, if the present starting point is overlooked. Impatience to rush things can really slow the journey down, causing more missteps and hindrances. If the same starting place is arrived at everyday, well, patience is learned from perseverance and not giving up. Results in reality are secondary, since they can only come into being, after some new starting place is arrived at. Be at peace, our journey has meaning even if it is at times clouded by failure, frustration and temptation to despair. When in a dark place, then the choice to trust comes from a place deeper than the inner fog, storm or void. Grace works in ways we don't understand and cannot be contained by our plans or thoughts on how things should be.

Br. Mark Dohle, Holy Spirit Monastery



LECTIO DIVINA: ACCOMPLISHMENT

Collatio

Lectio divina, made in private, often finds a complement in the *collatio*, at least according to the early and medieval monastic texts. The word is expressive. It comes from *conferre*, in the sense of bringing together or comparing.

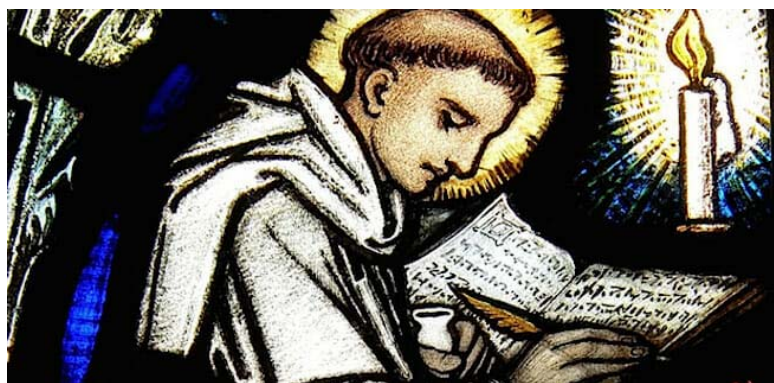
In what did the *collatio* consist? In a colloquy of strictly spiritual kind, in which the individual experiences derived from contact with the Word of God were discussed in common. In the colloquy each participant was free to explain what the sacred text, read and savored in the intimacy of dialogue with God, had suggested to him or her: ideas, sentiments, intentions, whatever served for the edification and enrichment of all. Often the purpose of the colloquy was nothing else than mutual assistance in resolving the problems which the sacred text had raised: what did this or that word mean, how was a particular text to be interpreted? And always there was a practical purpose: to fashion one's life better to the Word of God.

The term *collatio* immediately calls to mind the famous *collationes* of Cassian. However, the colloquies between Cassian and his friend Germanus seen both on the one hand and on the other, seen by some of the most venerated Desert Fathers of that time which the *Conferences* offer, are in reality pure literary artifice. Nevertheless, they have a basis in fact.

At that time the laity and inexperienced monastics sought the hermitages of Egypt and other regions in quest of "the word that saves," of enlightenment, of edification for their own spiritual life. Cassian's *Conferences* give us an idea of the structure, the object and the spirit of the genuine spiritual conferences of the early monastics; unfortunately, these were lost or, more likely, they were never consigned to writing. In fact, those that appear in the *Life of Antony* and in other monastic documents are most probably just as fabricated as Cassian's. Sometimes the most authentic traces of such conferences are found in a few apothegms that allude to them; they give us hints as to what occurred in them.

These conferences are also mentioned in some texts coming from the *Pachomian koinonia*. Thus, in the supplement to the life of St. Pachomius, which treats of St. Horsiest, we read, "From the very beginning they accustomed themselves every evening, after the work and the meal, to sit together and to discuss the Scriptures."

The interest and the benefit of such spiritual conferences for those who took part in them is evident. To share the personal experiences deriving from contact with Scripture, to contrast them with those of the other monastics could not help being a most powerful stimulus to continue further along the path of asceticism and in the assiduous practice of "reading God."



ORDO

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

FEBRUARY

- 2 Presentation of the Lord, Feast (Wk IV)
- 3 Blaze, Bishop, Martyr (Opt. Mem)
- 5 Agatha, Virgin, Martyr. Memorial
- 6 Paul Miki, Martyr, and his Companions, Martyrs. Memorial
- 7 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Wk I)
- 10 Scholastica, Virgin, Religious Founder, Feast
- 14 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Wk II)

LENT

- 17 Ash Wednesday, Memorial
- 21 1st Sunday of Lent (Wk I)
- 22 Chair of Peter, Apostle. Feast.
- 25 Walburga, Abbess, Secondary Patron of Belmont Abbey. Memorial.
- 28 2nd Sunday of Lent (Wk II)

NECROLOGY

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

FEBRUARY

- 3 Br. Eugene O'Neil
- 8 Fr. Kenneth Geyer
- 18 Fr. William Regnat
- 21 Fr. Arthur J. Pendleton
- 24 Br. Aegidius Seier
- 24 Br. Gregory Corcoran
- 25 Fr. Melchior Reichert
- 27 Fr. Kieran A. Neilson
- 28 Br. George Poellath

Eructatio

The word *eructatio*, from *eructare*, "to belch" -- so disagreeable to modern sensibilities -- belongs to the terminology of eating and digestion. A person who is stuffed, gorged, very full of food, belches. Probably the beginning of Psalm 44 in the Vulgate suggested the use of this term, "*Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum*;" we now translate it much more delicately, "My heart overflows with goodly theme." Or perhaps verse 7 of Psalm 145, "*Memoriam abundantiae suavitatis tuae eructabunt*," which we now hear as follows, "They publish the fame of your abundant goodness." It must be noted that these translations are not unfaithful to the original text, since *eructare* also signifies to utter or to express, and is used above all in speaking of the inspired language of the prophets.

What do the spiritual writers seek to communicate by using that word, a Biblical symbol of enthusiasm and love? Simply that our entire conversation, all our writings, ought to be nothing else than an effusion, a gushing forth of the superabundance and intensity of our thoughts and affections which *lectio divina*, *meditatio*, the assiduous, personal, intimate frequenting of the Word of God have engendered and accumulated in our spirit.

Abbot Hiperichius said, "Let the monastic overflow with words of goodness; let the words of the Most High gush forth from his or her mouth." According to St. John Chrysostom, the solitaries of Syria gathered from the reading of the sacred books "the honey of their prayers and of their conversation." These are beautiful thoughts and true. "The written Word of God provides us with "the words of the Most High," "the honey," that is to say, the best; after we have appropriated it to ourselves, we are able to return it to God in prayer and to share it with the brethren in our dealings with them. This is honey that flows spontaneously from the lips and from the bean, without premeditation, without effort, without giving us any account of itself. This is not pure imagination. Proof of it is found in the multitude of writings by men and women which are nothing else than a gushing forth, an irrepressible effusion of the best in their souls. That all of this was the effect of *lectio divina*, of *meditatio*, is shown indisputably by the continual citations, reminiscences, images, expressions and words from Scripture; they form the bean of such writings.

Summing up, it may be said that *lectio divina*, in which the Word of God is tasted, in which one marvels at the contact and communion with that Word, is possible only

in the interior space of the bean, the resonating chamber in which the echoes give life to meditation, a continual turning over in the mind the truth and life which they reveal and communicate to us. Just as Mary kept and turned over in her bean all the words spoken regarding her Son, so the faithful readers of Scripture will not cease to practice meditation, in order to fathom the Word of God, to appropriate it to themselves and to conven it into the substance of their own being. And then quite normally they will communicate it to their brothers and sisters; share it, as the liturgy of the Church sings on the feasts of doctors, "The mouth of the just tells of wisdom and the tongue utters what is right, because the law of God is in their heart." What the lips speak, the just have meditated upon at length and have lived it in their heart.

Regarding St. Augustine's preaching, F. van der Meer has written, "Hardly does he touch the texts when they open themselves like flowers to the morning sun. And when the texts touch him, they turn into fountains of water springing up to life eternal. Then, from the most hidden passages of Scripture, living water gushes forth from his lips." That is the *eructatio* of which the ancients speak.

From *Reading God* by Garcia M. Colombas, pp. 99-104

FEBRUARY 25: ST. WALBURGA,

SECONDARY PATRONESS OF BELMONT ABBEY

Born in Devonshire, about 710; died at Heidenheim, 25 Feb., 777. She is the patroness of Eichstadt, Oudenarde, Furnes, Antwerp, Gronigen, Weilburg, and Zutphen, and is invoked as special patroness against hydrophobia, and in storms, and also by sailors.

She was the daughter of St. Richard, one of the underkings of the West Saxons, and of Winna, sister of St. Boniface, Apostle of Germany, and had two brothers, St. Willibald and St. Winibald. St. Richard, when starting with his two sons on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, entrusted Walburga, then eleven years old, to the abbess of Wimborne. In the claustral school and as a member of the community, she spent twenty-six years preparing for the great work she was to accomplish in Germany. The monastery was famous for holiness and austere discipline. There was a high standard at Wimborne, and the child was trained in solid learning, and in accomplishments suitable to her rank. Thanks to this she was later able to write St. Winibald's Life and an account in Latin of St. Willibald's travels in Palestine. She is thus looked upon by many as the first female author of England and Germany.

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Scarcely a year after her arrival, Walburga received tidings of her father's death at Lucca. During this period St. Boniface was laying the foundations of the Church in Germany. He saw that for the most part scattered efforts would be futile, or would exert but a passing influence. He, therefore, determined to bring the whole country under an organized system. As he advanced in his spiritual conquests he established monasteries which, like fortresses, should hold the conquered regions, and from whose watch-towers the light of faith and learning should radiate far and near.

Boniface was the first missionary to call women to his aid. In 748, in response to his appeal, Abbess Tetta sent over to Germany St. Lioba and St. Walburga, with many other nuns. They sailed with fair weather, but before long a terrible storm arose. Hereupon Walburga prayed, kneeling on the deck, and at once the sea became calm. On landing, the sailors proclaimed the miracle they had witnessed, so that Walburga was everywhere received with joy and veneration.

There is a tradition in the Church of Antwerp that, on her way to Germany, Walburga made some stay there; and in that city's most ancient church, which now bears the title of St. Walburga, there is pointed out a grotto in which she was wont to pray. This same church, before adopting the Roman Office, was accustomed to celebrate the feast of St. Walburga four times a year. At Mainz she was welcomed by her uncle, St. Boniface, and by her brother, St. Willibald. After living some time under the rule of St. Lioba at Bischofsheim, she was appointed abbess of Heidenheim, and was thus placed near her favourite brother, St. Winibald, who governed an abbey there.

After his death she ruled over the monks' monastery as well as her own. Her virtue, sweetness, and prudence, added to the gifts of grace and nature with which she was endowed, as well as the many miracles she wrought, endeared her to all. It was of these nuns that Ozanam wrote: "Silence and humility have veiled the labours of the nuns from the eyes of the world, but history has assigned them their place at the very beginning of German civilization: Providence has placed women at ever cradle-side." On 23 Sept., 776, she assisted at the translation of her brother St. Winibald's body by St. Willibald, when it was found that time had left no trace

upon the sacred remains. Shortly after this she fell ill, and, having been assisted in her last moments by St. Willibald, she expired.

St. Willibald laid her to rest beside St. Winibald, and many wonders were wrought at both tombs. St. Willibald survived till 786, and after his death devotion to St. Walburga gradually declined, and her tomb was neglected. About 870, Otkar, then Bishop of Eichstadt, determined to restore the church and monastery of Heidenheim, which were falling to ruin.... This led to the solemn translation of the remains to Eichstadt on 21 Sept. of the same year. They were placed in the Church of Holy Cross, now called St. Walburga's.

In 893 Bishop Erchanbold, Otkar's successor, opened the shrine to take out a portion of the relics for Liubula, Abbess of Monheim, and it was then that the body was first discovered to be immersed in a precious oil or dew, which from that day to this ... has continued to flow from the sacred remains, especially the breast. This fact has caused St. Walburga to be reckoned among the *Elaephori*, or oil-yielding saints. Portions of St. Walburga's relics have been taken to Cologne, Antwerp, Furnes, and elsewhere, whilst her oil has been carried to all quarters of the globe.

The various translations of St. Walburga's relics have led to a diversity of feasts in her honour. She is represented in the Benedictine habit with a little phial or bottle; as an abbess with a crozier, a crown at her feet, denoting her royal birth; sometimes she is represented in a group with St. Philip and St. James the Less, and St. Sigismund, King of Burgundy, because she is said to have been canonized by Pope Adrian II on 1 May.... If, however, as some maintain, she was canonized during the episcopate of Erchanbold, not in Otkar's, then it could not have been during the pontificate of Adrian II.

Source: Catholic Encyclopedia. (edited for space)



Prayer: *St. Walburga, by your blessed life of love, God blessed you with the power to heal, to make whole the soul as well as the body. Beg for us what we cannot obtain for ourselves, and heal our world of sickness and sorrow. May God hear you, who lived so graciously for His glory, and send us the healing grace we*

need, through your powerful intercession. Amen.