



Oblate Program at Belmont Abbey, NC

September, 2021

MEETING DATES

Unless otherwise notified, the Oblates will begin meeting again in the old Music Building in the Geyer Room on the first floor. The first meeting will be September 19 at 2:00 PM. We will be discussing "Conversion of Life", Chapter 5, from *St. Benedict's Toolbox*.

The meeting October 17 will begin in the meeting room at 2:00 PM but we will all go over to the Abbey for Mass. At that time Abbot Placid will receive the final Oblations of the Novice Oblates who have been studying. In addition, those who would like to make their first Oblation will have an opportunity to do so at that same Mass.

Novice Oblates will continue formation on-line the last Wednesday of each month.



Dangers and Enemies

That *lectio divina*, like everything good, has enemies and dangers is self-evident. The ancients pointed out some of them. For example, vanity, which can make our efforts entirely sterile. Cassian notes that "it is impossible for the unclean of heart to acquire the gift of spiritual knowledge. Therefore be very careful that your zeal for scriptural reading does not, because of empty pretentiousness, prove to be a cause of perdition, instead of being for you the source of knowledgeable light and of the endless glory promised to humanity enlightened by knowledge." Evagrius Ponticus points out that danger may proceed from the spirit of fomication; St. Benedict does not allow the Heptateuch or the Book of Kings for the reading before the office of Compline, "Because it will not be expedi-

ent for weak minds to hear those pans of Scripture at that hour, but they shall be read at other times." The devil can use even the undue attachment to *lectio* to harm the monastic. There are, of course, other occupations the monastics must attend to. It is better to read less and to make one's living by the fruit of one's labor according to the command of Scripture, than to omit work for the sake of having more time to read. "Cassian much disliked people who said that they were too spiritual to work. Honest labor is part of the self-denial of a Christian. He liked to quote a proverb of the Egyptians: 'A monastic who works is tempted only by one devil. A monastic who idles is tempted by a host of devils' (Institutes 10,23) Even if the circumstances are such that there is no need to work hard, because food is easy of access and very cheap, you should still work. For work is part of the Christian life, and the Christian life is the field of prayerfulness."

Among the enemies of *Lectio* some typically modern ones merit attention. Dom Ambrose Southey lays special stress on the following four:

1. "The desire for quick results." We live in the consumer society in which everything is organized to produce more and more goods in less and less time." That begets a "utilitarian mentality," and for that reason "it is hard to devote ourselves to an exercise which does not seek for immediate results."
2. "There is such a proliferation of books that people are inclined to pass from one book to another, and there is a subtle pressure to keep up with the latest publications, so that reading habits have changed considerably."
3. "The modern insistence on intellectual processes to the detriment of the intuitive and affective side." People pay "little attention to feeling and emotion," to the point of considering "the affective aspect as inferior and even dangerous." Some monastics have gone so far as to ridicule *Lectio divina* as "pious emotionalism ... fit only for the weak, whereas solid study is regarded as meat for the strong."



ORDO

SEPTEMBER

- 3 Gregory the Great, Pope, Doctor of the Church, Feast
- 5 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Week III
- 8 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Feast
- 12 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Week IV
- 13 St. John Chrysostom, Bishop, Memorial
- 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Feast
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows, Memorial
- 16 Cornelius, Pope and Cyprian, Bishop, Martyrs. Memorial
- 19 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Week I
- 20 Andrew Kim Taegon, Priest & Martyr, Paul Chong Hasang and companions, Martyrs, Memorial.
- 21 Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, ,Feast
- 23 Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio), Priest. Memorial
- 24 *Begin Novena to the Guardian Angels*
- 26 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Week II
- 29 Sts. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Archangels, Feast
- 30 Jerome, Priest, Doctor of the Church, Memorial

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

4. "The examination system of education." University degrees and diplomas demand that the student pass many examinations. In practice, "a great deal of information must be gathered through means of rapid reading," which "tends to form habits which are difficult to change afterwards."

Dom Ambrose Southey also alludes to other enemies of "reading God, among them the passion for newspapers and television. To those might be added still other difficulties and hindrances. Even without radio, television and newspapers, every event of some importance is known immediately throughout the world, and the monastic begins his *lectio* assaulted by preoccupation's and ideas, images that make it difficult. Another enemy, possibly more fearful and weighty, is the agitated, unbridled pace of modern life, from which it is hard to withdraw. There is no time; urgent affairs absorb us; and if we snatch some moments for *lectio* we often enough experience a real interior vacuum.

Are we going to become disheartened and conclude that such numerous and powerful enemies are invincible? The ancients also had temptations and enemies that impeded their *lectio*, but they did not yield. Nothing is ever gained without paying the price.

A Favorable Environment

Enemies must be combated: by closing the door to those that come from without and opposing tenacious resistance to those we bear within ourselves; by striving, with the grace of God, to discover them, unmask them and overcome them. If we are really persuaded of the true nature of *lectio* and the important role it must regain in the life of every individual monastic and that of the community; if we truly seek to reestablish it, we tend at the same time to rediscover the value of the *otium* (leisure) of the cloister, that is, the importance of "free time" to dedicate to God and affairs of the soul. This is a decisive need that is making itself actually felt in many monasteries. In some, days of "spiritual rest" or "desert days" have been instituted — a helpful development. But clearly it does not suffice to dedicate an occasional day, even if it be done every week. We need to react valiantly against anxiety, against the inordinate urge to produce, against the habits which our consumer society imposes on us and which oblige us to devote extraordinary hours — always more common — to mental or physical labor. It seems indispensable that in the daily monastic horarium leisure must be allowed for slow, disinterested reading, penetrated by prayer, dedicated exclusively to the quest for God, to dialogue with God, to the study of God's heart.

"Divine reading" can flourish and be fruitful only in a climate of recollection, of peace, of prayer. That climate has to be restored if we want to restore *Lectio*. For no one can penetrate the meaning of the Gospel unless, like St. John, he has rested in intimate colloquy on the breast of Jesus," as Origen says. Who can deny it?

From *Reading God* by Garcia M. Colombas, pp. 122-124 (Used with permission)

GUARDIAN ANGELS, OUR DAILY GATE TO THE FATHER

“Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared.” Pope Francis chose these words, taken from the first Reading, as the basis for his reflection in the homily at the Mass for the feast of the Guardian Angels. They are the “special helpers” that “the Lord promises to His people and to us who travel along the path of life.”

Our angels are a compass to guide our journey

Life is a journey, along which we must be helped by “companions,” by “protectors,” by “compasses” that guard us against dangers, and from the snares we might encounter along the way. Pope Francis points out three specific risks:

There is the danger of not going on the journey. And how many people settle down, and don’t set out on the journey, and their whole life is stalled, without moving, without doing anything... It is a danger. Like that man in the Gospel who was afraid to invest the talent. He buried it, and [said] “I am at peace, I am calm. I can’t make a mistake. So I won’t take a risk.” And so many people don’t know how to make the journey, or are afraid of taking risks, and they are stalled. But we know that the rule is that those who are stalled in life end up corrupted. Like water: when the water is stopped up in a place, the mosquitos come, they lay their eggs, and everything is corrupted. Everything. The angels help us, they push us to continue on the journey.

The dangers of going astray, or losing our way in a maze

But there are two other dangers we face in our lives, the Pope continued. There is the “danger of going astray,” which can be corrected easily only at the beginning; and the danger of leaving the road to lose ourselves in a maze, going “from one part to another,” like a “labyrinth” that traps us, so that we can never escape. The angel, Pope Francis repeated, is there “to help us not to mistake the road, and to continue to journey along it” – but our prayer, our request for help, is needed:

And the Lord says, “Have respect for their presence.” The angel is authoritative; he has authority to guide us. Listen to him. “Hearken to his voice, and do not rebel against him.” Listen to the inspirations, which are always from the Holy Spirit – but the angel inspires them. But I want to ask you a question: Do you speak with your angel? Do you know the name of your angel? Do you listen

to your angel? Do you allow yourself to be led by hand along the path, or do you need to be pushed to move?

Angels show us the way to reach the Father

But the presence and the role of the angels in our life is even more important, because, Pope Francis said, they not only help us to journey well, but also show us our destination. In the day’s Gospel, taken from St Matthew, the Lord says “Do not despise one of these little ones,” because “their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.” In the “mystery of the guardianship of the angels,” the Pope said, “there is also the idea of “the contemplation of God the Father,” which we can only understand if we are given that grace from the Lord. Pope Francis draws the conclusion:

Our angel is not only with us; he also sees God the Father. He is in relationship with Him. He is the daily bridge, from the moment we arise to the moment we go to bed. He accompanies us and is a link between us and God the Father. The angel is the daily gateway to transcendence, to the encounter with the Father: that is, the angel helps me to go forward because he looks upon the Father, and he knows the way. Let us not forget these companions along the journey. (Gabriella Ceraso, Vatican News Service, 02 October, 2018)

NOVENA PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

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.

SEPTEMBER 14: TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

4. 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" (Io. 3, 17).

The feast that we celebrate today speaks of a marvellous 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.

5. From a human point of view, Christ's offering of himself on the Cross was a sign of contradiction, an unthinkable disgrace. It was, in fact, the most profound humiliation possible.

In today's liturgy, the Apostle Paul speaks to us in words that capture the mystery of the Cross of Christ: "His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a Cross. But God raised him high" (Phil. 2, 6-9).

Through his self-emptying on Golgotha, in the disgrace of the Cross and the crucifixion (at least in the human way of understanding these events) Christ receives the highest exaltation. In God's eyes, the Cross is the greatest triumph. The way of human judgement is very different from God's. God's judgement far surpasses ours. What seems to us to be failure is, in God's eyes, the victory of sacrificial love.

It is precisely this Cross of human disgrace that bears within itself the source of the exaltation of Christ in God.

"God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Ibid. 2, 9-11).



To the eyes of the Apostles this was revealed through the Resurrection of Christ. At that moment they understood that Christ is the Lord, that he has been given all power in heaven and on earth. At that moment their eyes and their hearts were opened, so that the lips of Thomas could profess: "My Lord and My God"! (Io. 20, 28). And once they had come to believe, through the power of the Spirit of Truth, they were ready to go forth into the whole world to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Cfr. Matth. 28, 19).

6. Yes, it is through the Cross that Christ is exalted. Today's feast of the Church speaks to us of this mystery.

At the same time, it speaks of Christ who by means of the Cross lifts up humanity, lifts up all humanity and indeed all creation. "For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved" (Io. 3, 17).

Being "saved" means that every man and woman can be healed of the sin that poisoned the human family and all history. Jesus says to his Apostles after his Resurrection: "Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven". And as he says it he shows them the wounds of his crucifixion, to let them know that it is precisely in the Cross that the power to forgive sins is hidden, the power to heal consciences and human hearts.

Generation after generation passes. And in the midst of this passing, the Cross of Christ remains. Through the Cross, God continuously proclaims to the world the infinite love which no created evil is able to overcome. Yes, the Cross remains, so that in it the world, indeed every human person, may find the way of salvation. For it is by this Cross that the world is saved!

Pope St. John Paul II
Homily on Feast of the Triumph of the Cross
Wednesday, 14 September 1988