

July 2010



Prayer and Its Fruits 2010

By Sister Maura Beckman, OSB

Spring and summer time invite us to ponder the mystery of creation. Trees which for many months appeared dead, or at least dormant, begin to put forth buds. Buds begin to blossom into flowers and finally into leaves and beauty emerges as we watch and wait in awe. Gardeners till the soil in preparation for planting and God sends the rains to soften the clods. Eagerness and anticipation abound as all await the fruits of seed sown. This scenario provides an apt analogy for a life of prayer.



Building on this analogy let us turn to the Rule of St. Benedict for some sage advice. Verse 4 of the Prologue of the Rule instructs as follows, "First of all every time you begin a good work, you must pray to God most earnestly to bring it to perfection." (Do we propose to do anything that is "not good"?) Then all our daily actions can be fed and nourished by prayer. This practice of turning to God in prayer permeates the Rule. A simple prayer of many Benedictines is, "O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me."

With the help of God's grace through prayer, one is enabled to: Love one another, give up one's own will for the sake of the others, treat all the goods and tools of the monastery as the sacred vessels of the altar, welcome guests as Christ himself, serve the sick as Christ, pause in the midst of work

Continued

“...How important, then, to lay our petitions before the Lord God of all things with the utmost humility and sincere devotion. We must know that God regards our purity of heart and tears of compunction, not our many words.”

— Rule of Benedict Ch. 20



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(Continued from page 1.)

to praise God, pray for enemies out of love for Christ. These calls to conversion of life also occur throughout the Rule.

Like the gardener who prepares the soil and plants the seed, then awaits the fruits of that labor, so it is with the person who prays. Benedict further outlines a plan of praying the psalms in common each day. Praying the psalms daily furthers the work begun by the short prayer described above. He also designs specific times in the day when the monks are to be occupied in private prayer. Setting aside a specific time for prayer each day allows one to cultivate the soil of one's soul and plant the fruit-bearing seeds. The repeated practice of spending time pondering and praying God's Word in scripture each day prepares one's mind and heart for the grace needed for the fruit of prayer — putting on the mind and heart of Christ!

For most of us this conversion occurs gradually and with continued effort on our part, together with an openness to the grace of God. As we live the prayer practices outlined by Benedict they become like a three-part harmony flowing throughout the days of our lives.

“To put on the mind and heart of Christ”! To be changed!

How are we to be changed? We can easily become discouraged at the challenge of remaining faithful to the daily practice of prayer when we look for fruits and fail to find them. Perseverance and patience with oneself contribute to growth in prayer.

As I pray to know how to understand someone I find difficult, I am changed and softened in my approach to the other. As I struggle to persevere in prayer daily I am drawn to love prayer. As I praise God for all his great gifts and the wonders of God's love for me, I am nourished in spirit and



enabled to share that love with those I live with, meet or work with. In responding to the call to mid-day prayer, which takes me away from whatever work I am engaged in, I am reminded of the sacredness of work and how this life of prayer is drawing all people closer to God. When I pray for a sick person seeking healing, I may learn that healing can take place at many different levels. When I reflect on my own sinfulness and seek God's mercy, I am invited to learn to be merciful toward myself and all other fragile human persons.

Lest these ideas frighten you away from the task at hand, listen further to the Prologue, Verse 29 — “Those who fear the Lord, do not become elated over their good deeds, they judge it is the Lord's power, not their own, that brings about the good in them,” and Verse 41, “What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of His grace.”

As you read and pray with the Holy Rule look for the many ways that Benedict invites you to seek and find God. Learn how to discover God in the ordinary everyday events of life.

At the conclusion of his Rule, Chapter 73, Benedict humbly declares that by following this little rule we can show that we have some degree of virtue. In my experience I can say, this “little rule” holds enough wisdom to challenge us to a lifetime of “putting on the mind and heart of Christ.”

The new season of Oblate happenings begins with a picnic/social event scheduled for **August 29, 2010**. A special announcement of the event and a request for reservations are included with this newsletter. Help us plan well for everyone who wants to participate. Please give the information by mail, by a phone call to the office, or by online registration.

Thank you!

Pray for deceased community members and loved ones of our Oblates:

Sister Leta Zeller

Anthony J. “Tony” Belli, father of Oblate Lynn Belli

John Bercier, brother of Oblate Dolores Gourneau (Belcourt)

Elнора Dowell, mother of Oblate Theresa Bauer

Bernard Duenne, father of Sister Catherine Marie Duenne

Monastery Moments and Oblate Offerings

July 27-31

Community Meetings — The sisters will participate in meetings about and for the community Tuesday evening-Saturday morning. On Saturday morning, the sisters will be “missioned” or sent to their ministries for 2010-2011.

August 29

Oblate Picnic — The annual Oblate picnic is planned for this Sunday. Meat and drinks provided by the sisters. Oblates bring a covered dish for 10-12 people. A reservation form is found in this newsletter.

September 19 (*Tentative*)



Sister Karen Joseph will be officially received into the Ferdinand religious community. Sister Karen is transferring from the Benedictine community in Clyde, Missouri.

September 26

Oblate Meeting — Sister Karen Joseph will present “St. Benedict and St. Scholastica — Life and Miracles.” During midday prayer at the meeting, new Oblate Candidates will participate in the Rite of Reception.

October 1

First Vespers for Perpetual Profession The religious community will celebrate with Sister Jeana Visel on the eve of her perpetual profession.

October 2



Perpetual Profession — Sister Jeana Visel will make her perpetual profession. Family and friends of Sister Jeana are invited to attend.

October 15-17

Come & See Weekend — Young women who are discerning a vocation to the religious life spend time at the monastery. They participate in the life of the sisters and have the opportunity to ask questions.

October 17

Oblation Day — Rite of Oblation and Renewal of Oblation will be a part of Morning Prayer at 9:30 a.m. EDT. Oblates will then attend Mass and the Sunday noon meal with the sisters. All Oblates, candidates, and inquirers are encouraged to attend. There will not be an afternoon presentation on this date.

October 30

Concert by Angelus Ensemble — An outstanding vocal group dedicated to the performance of sacred music of various historical periods will offer a free concert in the monastery church at 7:30 p.m. EDT. To hear a clip of the group’s music, go to www.mvhsperformingarts.com and click on Angelus tab.

October 30-31

Community Meetings — Community members gather for their fall meetings.

October 31

Diamond Jubilee Celebration — Three sisters will celebrate their 70th anniversary of monastic profession: Sisters Wilma Davis, Mary George Kissel, and Theresita Schenk.



Sister Wilma



Sister Mary
George



Sister
Theresita

November 19-21

Christkindmarkt — The town of Ferdinand, including the monastery, celebrates Christkindmarkt each year. Preparations begin several months prior to the event. All volunteers are welcome to work with the sisters during the preparations and the actual days of celebration. Please contact Sister Mary Philip at 812-367-1411, ext. 3515, if you are willing to volunteer either to prepare for Christkindmarkt or to assist during the November event.

Oblate Birthdays

August

1 — Paulette Campana, 5 — Olivia Adler, 9 — Craig Howerton, 10 — Evelyn Berube, 14 — Valerie Scott, 19 — Mardee Edelstein and Mary Agnes Willegal, 20 — Mary Etta Kiefer and Lucille Vinson, 21 — Judy Luebbehusen, 23 — Carolyn Kohler, 27 — Theresa Walker, 29 — Pauletta Jeter



September

2 — Lee Garrity, 6 — Barbara Nonte, 8 — Christy Dumont, 9 — June Goforth and Brenda Padgett, 12 — Victor Begle, 15 — Gloria Hasler, 25 — Shirley Azure and Sheila Walker, 26 — Mary Metz, 30 — Gary Adler

October

1 — Mary Thale, 5 — Martha Hester and Rose Wilkie, 7 — Jerome Schmitt, 9 — Laurreta Verkamp, 11 — Derrick Dixon, Clarice Kroll, Katherine Tennis, and Donella Vondrak, 19 — Rev. Gerald McCarthy, 22 — Madeline Keplin, 23 — Frank Keller, 31 — Adelaide Trapp

May Oblate Birthdays

Sister Barbara Ann, who prepared the birthday lists for the last Oblate newsletter, sends her apologies to the many May celebrants whose names she inadvertently omitted from the list. Very belated “Happy Birthday” to all of you. Hopefully everyone has been included in the following list:

6 — Linda Doyle, 7 — Rita Langer and Barbara Poitra, 8 — Mary Eileen Fritz, 10 — Phyllis Claycamp and Debbi Vickers, 16 — Ed Johnson, 20 — Sharon Kilpatrick, 23 — Bridget Tierney, 27 — Julie Beck, 28 — Linda Begle, 31 — Gail Trotter

In the future if you find yourself or anyone else omitted or named for an incorrect date, please let Sister Barbara Ann know. Thank you!

Reflection

Reflection for the Feast of St. Benedict

“We have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?”

Like Peter, how many times have you found yourself asking a similar question? I know that I have, and I suspect most of us usually want to know what we will get out of something — especially when we put our energy, time and talent into achieving it, or invest ourselves wholeheartedly as we do with our commitment to monastic life.

When we start our exercise program, we need to have a good image of the benefits, if we want to stay with it.

When we take classes, music lessons or any other self-improvement course, we want to know what the benefits will be. We are likely to ask ourselves “What Will I Have?” We want to know if the outcome is worth what it requires of us.

In response to Peter’s question, Jesus tells Peter and he tells us, “You will receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life.” What an outcome this is!! ETERNAL LIFE — happiness, joy, peace forever — no more suffering, pain, no problems, no irritations from others, the temperatures will be just



**St. Benedict painting
by Sister Gregory Ems, OSB**

right! We will be Home. We will see God face to face. We will be with Jesus, Mary, and all our relatives and friends. All will be exactly what we are longing for.

This Gospel reading comes after the story about the rich young man who approached Jesus and asked what he should do to gain eternal life. Jesus listed a number of the Ten Commandments. Significantly, all those mentioned by Jesus refer to relations with other people. Jesus pointed out that there had to be love, sharing and compassion in our relationships.

St. Benedict, filled with the spirit, took this Gospel text very seriously, indeed. Benedict in the Holy Rule shows us the way to eternal life through sisterly love.

In the Prologue, Benedict states, “If you desire true and eternal life, and wish to dwell with God: Be a sister who walks without blemish and is just in all her dealings; who speaks the truth from her heart and has not practiced deceit with her tongue; who has not wronged a sister companion in any way nor listened to slanders against her neighbors.”

In Chapter 72 Benedict tells us, “It is good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life.” Sisters should each try to be the first to show respect to the other, supporting with the greatest patience, one another’s weaknesses of body or behavior.

Most of us can be loving and understanding for a short time, but when we are called to do this day-in and day-out for a long time, it gets difficult. We may lose sight of our goal. How do we persist in our commitments over a long period of time, despite setbacks, disappointments, and dealing with our own and other’s weaknesses?

Perhaps we sometimes feel like the sister who often prayed before the statue of St. Theresa the Little Flower — a saint who died at the age of twenty-four. One day another sister overheard the sister

by Sister Jane Will



saying to the statue, “If you had lived as long as I have, you wouldn’t be a saint either!” This story makes an

important point. Perseverance in virtue day-in and day-out is difficult.

It is true we cannot do this by ourselves, but with God all things are possible.

We are able to do good, by remembering we are loved by God. We are made in the image and likeness of God, who is love. God is the eternally patient one, who is forever pursuing us to convince us of God’s love and to grace us with the ability to love our sisters and brothers as God loves us. God will help us to persevere in the one thing necessary: love

God will help us to keep our eye on our goal, and will lead us to want it bad enough that we will make the necessary self-surrenders to bring it into being.

Sister Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, in an address to the Leadership Conference, talked about the power of Jesus’ resurrection in our lives. She said, “God will have the last word in our lives as indeed God had the first, and it is the same word, “Let there be life.”

Brother David Steindl-Rast once said in a conference I attended about thirty years ago, “Death is such an important part of life; it is too bad that we wait until the last minute to do it.”

I think that he went on to say we don’t wait until the last minute when we model our lives on the pattern of Jesus, who surrendered his life to God’s will, even through the difficult times.

This promise of life — eternal life — is for all of us, so with St. Benedict, “Let us prefer nothing whatever to Christ and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.”

Oblate Meeting Calendar

August 2010 — May 2010

August 29, 2010

Oblate Picnic — St. Gertrude Hall
Lunch at 11:45 a.m. (EDT).
Reservation form and details in
summer issue of *Oblate Newsletter*

September 26, 2010

1 p.m. (EDT) St. Gertrude Hall
Rite of Reception of Oblate
Candidates during midday prayer.
Program following: "St. Benedict and
St. Scholastica – Life and Miracles"
Presenter: Sister Karen Joseph, OSB

October 17, 2010

Oblation Day — 9:30 AM (EDT)
The Rite of Oblation and Renewal of
Oblation will be held during morning
prayer in the monastery church.
*Presider: Sister Kristine Anne
Harpenau, OSB (Prioress)*
10:30 a.m. (EDT) — Mass in the
monastery church. Dinner will follow
Mass in the monastic dining room.
There will be no regular Oblate
meeting in the afternoon.

November and December, 2010

- Opportunities for Oblates to participate in monastery events:
- Christkindl mart (November 19, 20, 21)
- Evening Praise for Blessing of Advent Wreath/First Sunday of Advent (November 28)
- Volunteering in Simply Divine Bakery during November/December
- Participating in evening praise during celebration of "O Antiphons" from December 17 – 23
- Participating and/or volunteering in Christmas Eve Mass and reception (ushering for Mass or assisting with serving at the reception for all visitors after Mass)
- Visiting the monastery during the Christmas season. (See website or Newsletter for details.)

January 16, 2011

1 p.m. (EDT) in St. Gertrude Hall
St. Gertrude of Helfta (The Great)
Presenter: Sister Jenny Miller, OSB

February, 20, 2011

1 p.m. (EDT) in St. Gertrude Hall
St. Hildegard of Bingen, Abbess,
Mystic, Preacher, Writer
*Presenter: Sister Barbara Lynn
Schmitz, OSB*

March 20, 2011

1 – 4 p.m. (EDT) in St. Gertrude Hall
Oblate Retreat Afternoon:
"Benedictine Spirituality for the
Frazzled"
*Presenter: Jane Tomaine (Author of
St. Benedict's Toolbox)*

April 17, 2011

1 p.m. (EDT) in St. Gertrude Hall
Windows Reflect the Light of the
Saints
Presenter: Sister Carlita Koch, OSB

May 15, 2011

1 p.m. (EDT) in St. Gertrude Hall
St. Frances of Rome, Patroness of
Oblates and St. Henry, Supporter of
Oblates
*Presenters: Oblates Patti and Mel
Schroeder*

Oblates is published four times a year by the Oblate Leadership Team: Sisters Kathy Bilskie, Mary Victor Kercher, and Barbara Ann Offerman.

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Book Review

Inhabiting the Church: Biblical Wisdom for a New Monasticism

By Jon Stock, Tim Otto, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove; Foreword by Christine D. Pohl, Eugene, OR; Cascade Books, 2007.

Reviewed by
Sister Carlita Koch, OSB



Inhabiting the Church caught my attention among the newly accessed books displayed in St. Benedict Library. Consisting of four lengthy essays by three "new monastics," the book contains the message that the threefold Benedictine promises of obedience, conversion, and stability help to find ways to root in Christ and in God's covenant with Israel. New Monasticism has been described as "a sprinkling of Protestant groups experimenting with the kind of communal living that had previously been the province of Catholic orders."

In Chapter 1, John Stock identifies the monastic vows and life in community as a witness to the steadfast love (*hesed*) of God. In the chapter on obedience Tim Otto tries to show that obedience is an essential and deeply biblical component of discipleship. Obedience in community is Benedict's way of life.

There are two dynamics in conversion, writes Wilson-Hartgrove — *metanoia* (the renewal of ourselves from inside out) and *shuv* (turning toward God through our life together in community). "Our minds are changed so that we might have the mind of Christ. Our bodies are turned toward God so that we might become members of His living body." (p. 31)

Stock asserts that "Ultimately stability is a matter of learning to love.... The Benedictine vow of stability is prophetic in our age of consumerism, restlessness, and frenzy." (p. 91)

The authors hope that their book can make a contribution to a monastic spirit of community and solemn promises. Their hope is that this book and the lives of each one point to the true gospel in a world full of false gospels and good news for people who are dying for lack of good news. (p. 122)

Note that none of the authors come from a Roman Catholic tradition but rather from the evangelical Protestant tradition. Their understanding of the Benedictine promises from their own experience of living in an intentional community can enrich readers — both professed monastics and Oblates.

Oblates

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Getting To Know the Oblates

Ellen Stanton

Summer morning praise, the psalms of birds in choir. Call, one tree to another: Sing praise! Sing praise! Tell how good, Gods' plan.

Once while camping in a distant land, we offered time for a Vespers psalm. Peace filled an unknown space; the message seeded its place. The invitation would not fade. A call had been heard: Balance work with prayer; live praise because of God's love.

A wedding celebration in Evansville led us along I-64. Again, the good news invited my song. Within a rest stop brochure, a call from the monastery in Ferdinand, I heard: "Seek God in the everyday 'with us'." I knew they could teach me a psalm. Through their hospitality, the book: "Work of God" Benedictine Prayer, soon I found my own.

I live in Ohio, a distance, between my husband's family and mine. Drafting's my trade for the auto industry. I stay on the buckeye north coast, part time. Blown with the Spirit of God's Will, life can be a dissonant chord. When I give ear

to my voice alone, then cry out with psalm: 'Open my heart to Your song'. Let me rejoice in you alone.

Many angels have helped me along, sing with gratitude a servant's psalm, parish ministry, coworker, family and friend. Life is unwrapping, unfolding, us, too. Thank God, the source of all song. I returned to the monastery in the brochure. Sing of the hearts' pilgrimage, fueled by the servants' psalm, that homes for Your touchstone within.

Desire instruction, anchor hearts in peace. Rejoice to serve God alone. Many voices sing one love, our strength, Oblates and Sisters offer lives sung. Sing joyfully the score of St. Benedict's Rule. With grace, hear the harmonious choir. Be God's love to one another and together we will be God's song.

