

The Oblate

News Magazine of the Oblates of Saint John's Abbey

June 2021

Volume 65 Number 2

Heartened by Hope

Oblate Retreat July 16-18—Sister Michaela Hedican, OSB

In a time of chaos, confusion, and uncertainty, drawing from our Judaic/Christian heritage of hope is essential. Spending time with the Scriptures and our Benedictine tradition ensures that we are “Always ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks the reason for our hope” (1Peter 3:15).

Conference 1 Introduction - Hope in the Old Testament

Conference 2 Hope as found in the New Testament Letters

Conference 3 Hope as found in the Gospels

Conference 4 Hope in the Rule

The blessings in Sister Michaela's life began when she was born in Virginia, MN on September 4, 1945. The Benedictines from St. Scholastica Monastery in Duluth were her grade school teachers. When her family moved to Eau Claire, WI she attended the Benedictine-staffed Regis High School and joined the Sisters of Saint Bede Monastery during her senior year. She made her first monastic profession July 11, 1964, and her perpetual monastic profession in 1967.

Sister Michaela is a graduate of the College of Saint Scholastica, Duluth, with BA in education, and holds two master's degrees, one in religious education from Seattle University and the other in theology (Monastic Studies) from Saint John's School of Theology. She taught middle school/high school from 1966-1984. Over the years, she has held a variety of administrative positions. From 2003-9, she served as President of the Federation of Saint Benedict and as prioress of Saint Bede Monastery from 2008 until the sisters there

joined Saint Benedict's Monastery in Saint Joseph, MN on August 15, 2010. On February 27, 2011,

she was elected 16th prioress of Saint Benedict's Monastery and was installed on June 5, 2011. Sister Michaela completed her term as prioress in June 2017 and is currently Director of Oblates, as well as serving in retreat ministry and as a spiritual director. Among her sources of enjoyment are being with people, reading, music, movies and being in nature.



*“God offers us a future full of hope,
and human beings are the words God uses to tell the
story of grace.”*

Mary Catherine Hilbert, OP

Find retreat registration information on the back page.

Message from Abbot John Klassen, OSB

Love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12-17).

Many of you are familiar with an alternative naming of Holy Thursday as Maundy Thursday. Maundy is a shortened form for *mandatum* or mandate, which reminds us that it is within the context of footwashing that Jesus gives his new commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.”



Here, in this densely packed passage (John 15:12-17) we hear that *mandatum* repeated. In fact, it forms an inclusion as the opening and closing of the passage. We hear a number of powerful messages: The ultimate test of love is to lay down one’s life for one’s friend.

I no longer call you slaves (doulos) but friends because I have told you everything that my Father has made known to me.

God chose us first. This is not about us; it is about God and God’s love for us and for the world. The Father has our back.

For John the measure of God’s love is doing what God commands. John has a profoundly granular understanding of God’s commandments.

Work on forgiveness – of yourself and of each other. Live as a forgiven woman, a forgiven man.

Be fair to each other – perhaps even kind.

What a deal!

Don’t caress and feed anger. Step back from it and sort out what is really going on.

Help each other make it; none of us can do it alone.

Start close in. Follow God’s commands, especially the commandment to love, close to home. (David Whyte poem)

A new commandment, as new today as it was in that hot, sweaty room at the Last Supper: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

Message from Michael Peterson, OSB

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit (John 12:24).

In the summer I love to work in our abbey garden. Planting seeds is mysterious. You entrust the seed into the darkness of the earth – in the garden, the field, the orchard. Seeds need earth, water, oxygen, and proper temperature to germinate. When a seed is exposed to the proper conditions, water and oxygen are taken in through the seed coat. The embryo's cells then start to grow. Amazing! The seed is no longer a seed!



Jesus often used the language of creation in parables. Our life is like a seed. The simple seed is designed to become a plant. A seed must die to being a seed. So a seed is entrusted to the earth in mystery. And what I mean by mystery is not “I don’t know how a seed grows,” but rather, mystery is the reverence and the awe of life!

Our life is full of sacred mystery. The purpose of our life is not to solve the mystery but to deepen it. The focus of our life is mystery, the process of life is mystery, the outcome of our life is mystery. The reason is simple. Since the purpose of our life is to encounter God, who is the source of mystery, the nature of life must be mystery from start to finish.

We must entrust ourselves to mystery. To entrust our life is the seed of vocation. I understand vocation not as a goal to be achieved but as mystery to be received. Our vocation, our entrusting ourselves, our being a seed that dies, is not some fully formed thing that one hopefully finds and stays there. It's much more dynamic.

Whatever you do you can continually look anew at what you do and ask how it connects to other people, how it connects to the bigger picture, how it can be an expression of your deepest values.

To what do you entrust your life?

To whom do you entrust your life?

Oblate Milestones

◆ Candidates

Edward Ross, Midland, CA, January 12

Jerry Hudson, Broxton, GA, March 23

◆ Oblations

Mary Lou Lott, Edina, MN, April 12

George & Katie Smith, Rice Lake, WI, February 21

◆ Deaths

Michael Roussel, son of Oblates Beverley and Etienne Roussel, January 15

Nancy Joda, mother of Oblate Chris Kosowski, February 26

Jean Bradshaw, mother of Oblate Anita Bradshaw, March 21

Florence Hensel, mother of Oblate Darryl Hensel, March 25

Kathie Engel, mother of Oblate Jason Engel, April 3

Evert Schmidt, father of Oblate Gail Johnson, April 5

Oblate Thomas Carey, April 15

Oblate Jeanne Fraune, wife of Oblate John Fraune, April 29

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

In Memoriam Oblate Jeanne Fraune



Tom and Pam Keul, Lucy Fallon, and Sheila Hannon, friends of the Fraune family, offer the following thoughts of fellow oblate Jeanne Fraune.

Jeanne Pyzdrowski, a Bennie from a family of eleven, met John Fraune, a Johnnie, later a Gopher (UM), in the late 60s. They graduated and soon married. John's newly married college friend Tom Keul and wife Pam were among their wedding guests and now share memories of a lengthy friendship with Jeanne and John.

Jeanne's remarkable painting, their joint work at what was then called Bar None Boys Ranch in Anoka county, smelting in Duluth, and many other activities with family and friends, kept Jeanne and John hopping until they became the parents of their son, Christopher, who kept things lively. His birth was followed by the heartrending loss of their four-day-old baby girl, Stephanie. Some years later they adopted Amanda, Angela, and Chad, a choice that speaks to their generosity and loving spirits.

Tom and Pam's relationship with the Fraunes greatly deepened when they became oblates of Saint John's Abbey. "Before the Virus," said Tom, "we cherished our monthly trips to Collegeville in a packed SUV with the Fraunes and cousins Lucy Fallon and Sheila Hannon. That road trip fellowship, often with a preponderance of laughs, affixed to Mass, lunch and the oblate chapter meeting, made for a complete and exceedingly satisfying day."

Through her devotion to God and her family, teaching, painting, gardening, and in her longtime book club and many other ways, Jeanne spent her time on earth making this world a more beautiful, light and love-filled place.

Jeanne's unexpected death at M Health University of Minnesota Medical Center on the morning of April 29, 2021, leaves a large void for us and our Saint John's oblate chapter. That can't compare to the loss John and his family experience, but it is a very real loss.

We thank God for Jeanne and intercede for her eternal rest and for comfort and peace for John and every member of the Fraune/Pyzdrowski families, as well as for all those who love the Fraunes. That's a lot of folks. Fraunes are easy to love.

Profession of Vows and Jubilees

Thanks to or because of Covid-19, there was no celebration of jubilees in 2020, but Felix Mencias and David Allen professed first vows on September 14, 2020.

This year Abbot John announced that “with consultation I have decided that we have two celebrations: one on **July 11** with [solemn] profession, the 25s, the 50s, one 60, one 70, and one 75. Then the whole group of 1960 jubilarians will have their celebration on **August 1**, at the 10:30 liturgy, with all solemnity!”

For the celebration on July 11:

Jacob Berns		2018
Edward Vebeun	(25)	1995
Paul-Vincent Niebauer	(25)	1995
Makoto Paul Tada	(25)	1996
Isidore Glycer	(25)	1996
James Phillips	(50)	1970
Richard Oliver	(50)	1970
Bob Koopmann	(50)	1971
Stephen Beauclair	(60)	1961
Wilfred Theisen	(70)	1950
Kilian McDonnell	(75)	1946

For the celebration on August 1:

Luke Dowal	(60)	1960
Roger Klassen	(60)	1960
Blane Wasnie	(60)	1960
Michael Naughton	(60)	1960
Roman Paur	(60)	1960
J. P. Earls	(60)	1960
Mark Kelly	(60)	1960

Thanks to Angie del Greco for the Following

I offer for fellow oblates and the newsletter a prayer I wrote more than 40 years ago. I say it first thing every morning, when I awake, and I’m still in bed; and last thing at night, just after I get into bed for the night.

It is quite simple, and works for me. It has been one of the things especially in these pandemic times that I believe anchors, sustains me in Christ as the sun rises and after it sets.

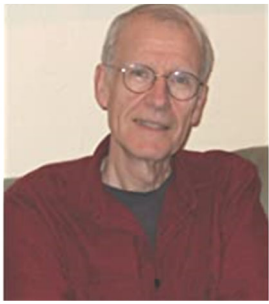
Hermit Angie’s Prayer on Rising

Lord Jesus,
Thank you for the Night so blest,
I awake now rested and refreshed.
Thank you for another day.
Your Presence as I work and pray.
I am open for your Love,
And share these Graces from above.
For your Glory, always and first,
Your Kingdom here on Earth, I thirst.

Hermit Angie’s Prayer on Retiring

Lord Jesus,
Thank you for the Day, so blest.
I go to sleep now, so to rest.
Thank you for this lovely day.
Your Presence as I worked and prayed.
How filled I am now with your Love!
And shared your Graces from above.
For your Glory, always and first,
Your Kingdom here on Earth, I thirst.”

Good Reading for Summer



We are pleased to announce that **Oblate David Keller** has published *Reconsidering Jesus of Nazareth*. It is written for persons who do not know much about Jesus as a devout first-century Jew and for others who for various reasons

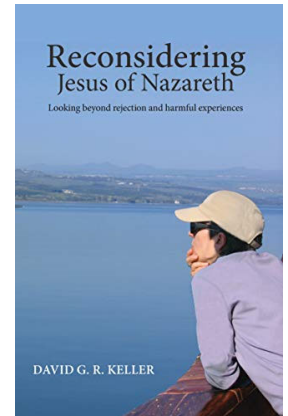
have lost interest in Jesus or rejected him without encountering his positive and transformative way of life. It is now available on Amazon.

David is an Episcopal priest who spent the first 20 years of his ministry with Athabaskan Indians and Yupic and Inupiat Eskimos in Alaska. He worked alongside Alaskan Native leaders in community development projects and developing training for local

people for lay and ordained ministries. More recently, and closer to home, David served as Steward of the Episcopal House of Prayer at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville.

He has led retreats throughout the USA and UK and taught in the Center for Christian Spirituality at the General Theological Seminary in New York City. David is the author of *Come and See: The Transformation of Personal Prayer* and *Lord, Teach Us To Pray: One Hundred Daily Reflections on Jesus' Life of Prayer*.

With his wife, Emily Wilmer, he directs Oasis of Wisdom: A Center for Contemplative Living. oasisofwisdom.net

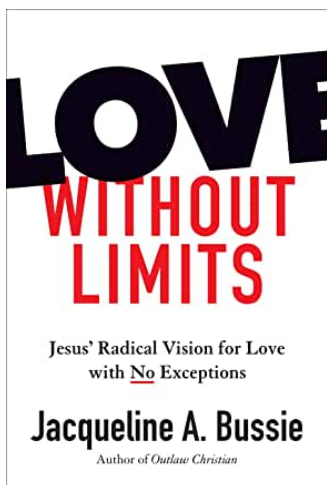


In mid-May the Saint John's Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research announced the naming of **Dr. Jacqueline A. Bussie** as director. Your editor met Dr. Bussie at a lecture she gave in Fargo roughly two years ago and was deeply moved by both the content and dynamism of her presentation. He bought the following book and recommends it eagerly, earnestly, and enthusiastically. It's more than just a good read.



love big enough to overthrow hate and heal our hurts. With courage, authenticity, and relevance, Jacqueline A. Bussie proclaims, "Yes! It's possible!" and urges readers to widen love's wingspan and to love as God loves--without limits or exceptions.

In *Love Without Limits*, Bussie imparts practical solutions for people of faith who yearn to love across division and difference in these troubled times. Through poignant personal memoir, engaging theological reflection, inspiring true stories of boundary-busting friendships, creative readings of scripture, and surprising shout-outs to some of love's unsung heroes, Bussie challenges readers to answer God's call to practice a love so deep, it subverts the social order; so radical, it scandalizes the powerful; so vast, it excludes no one.



Jacqueline A. Bussie, *Love Without Limits: Jesus' Radical Vision for Love with No Exceptions*. Augsburg Fortress: 2018. Available at Amazon and other booksellers.

The back cover comment states that every day, millions of people

lament the loss of civility, respect, and hope, and they wonder if it's possible to cultivate a

Book Review in Retirement

Eileen Wallace, OBlSB



Thoughts on *St Benedict's Rule, An Inclusive Translation and Daily Commentary*, Judith Sutura, OSB; Liturgical Press, 2021.

Delightful! Simply delightful. I have prayed and read Benedict's

Rule almost every day for 20 years which is 40% of my adult life. I realize that's just a raindrop in the ocean of monastic time, but there have been times when this part of my spiritual practice became tedious. I have primarily used the version of Joan Chittister, OSB, *A Spirituality for the (20th) 21st Century*, with daily commentary interspersed with *The Rule of St Benedict* translated by Leonard Doyle, OBlSB.

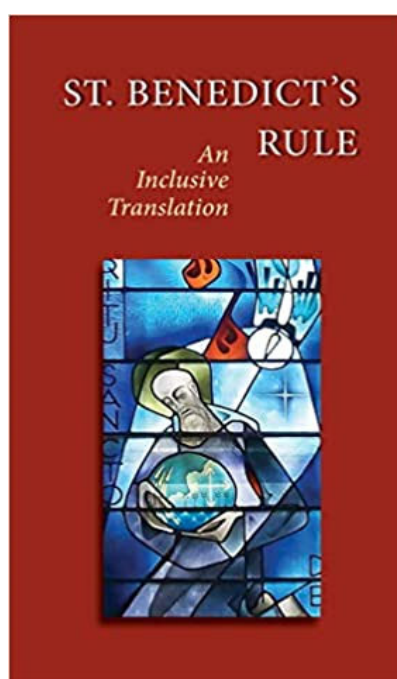
Then I started using Sister Judith's inclusive language version. Amazing! Now the ear of my heart is inclined and actually hears what is being said to this child instead of being distracted by my brain translating Abbot into Abbess or his into hers or struggling over the always awkward him/her, he/she, or Abbot/Abbess. It is hard to explain to those who don't experience it how difficult it is to listen to and read the masculine as a substitute for all peoples day after day, year after year, in worship and prayer. When I hear "men, he, him" my brain attaches gender and I am left out; and eventually, subtly, left out of God's love and my own. This may be the experience for anyone who does not identify with being a man, he, or him. Peter Block says that all transformation is linguistic. My experience is this is also true in spiritual transformation.

Sister Judith's inclusive translation removes all that brain interference and it's like reading the Rule for the first time again. I feel my spirit freed and soaring at the language, the teaching, the love, the structure, the freedom, the holiness of the daily and ordinary that I am so trying to learn right now. I am excited for each new day to hear what Benedict has to say to me. I can accept myself as a monastic among monastics, a beginner learning how to live in the Lord's tent preferring nothing whatever to Christ, and I now feel part of the community to which I've made a commitment.

The commentary with questions for prayer and contemplation is also a breath of fresh air. Sister Judith draws our attention to what may be obvious for those immersed in the Rule—like all the action verbs in the prologue or God needing patience with us or praying a cursing psalm with our evil inclinations in mind (instead of the person who cut us off in traffic yesterday, for instance)—but a wonderful exposition for us beginning beginners.

I strongly recommend Sister Judith's translation and commentary to anyone interested in another

translation of the Rule in light of humanity's growth and development and struggle toward inclusivity. It hit the mark for me and it's clear to me that the Spirit is at work here.



Oblate Keeping Busy

Ron Joki, ObISB



I am grateful to Fr. Don Tauscher, OSB, our Assistant Oblate Director and Oblate Newsletter editor extraordinaire, for inviting me to share a little of what I do with my time. This gives me an opportunity to share a bit about one of my favorite all-volunteer organizations, Mobile Loaves Twin Cities or MLTC (mobileloavestc.org) a food ministry that serves our sisters and brothers in homeless shelters and a variety of low-income residences.

Since retiring from paid employment I have come to believe that the Holy Spirit is calling me to live out my oblation to God and my beloved community of Saint John's Abbey in a few ways, one of which is serving as a volunteer food safety manager for MLTC.

The pandemic has necessarily changed our operational model for safe food prep and delivery. Because of COVID, the number of MLTC volunteers has significantly decreased even though the need has grown. Nonetheless we have been able to serve about 2,800 meals a month. Since April 2020, rather than delivery using our food truck, volunteers deliver meals in their own vehicles to 12 or more sites. The pre-packaged foods we now serve are more expensive than our previous model of making food from scratch, but with generous donations, we have been able to purchase a delicious variety of sandwiches, fresh fruit, cookies and chips.

We also provide some clothing and hygiene items which are greatly appreciated at homeless shelters. All of this is funded by private donations, small and large, and grants from a few companies. For instance, the company that makes Bombas socks has sent us thousands of pairs of high-quality footwear, but we are also grateful for individual, smaller donations of toiletries, new gloves and hats. Just as important, we depend on hundreds of monetary donations that allow us to buy the food we serve. Thanks be to the Holy Spirit who inspires the generosity of all our donors.

When I talk about MLTC, people often praise me for my generous offering of time and energy to feed the poor and disadvantaged. They say that I help to give the less fortunate a way to get on their feet and become productive members of the community. While there is some truth to this, in all honesty I give relatively little out of my abundance. It is they who should be praised who find a way to survive when they lose their home, their livelihood, their dignity, when their way of being productive members of the community is taken from them or never given them in the first place.

It is I who need to learn how to better become a productive member of the community. It is I who need to step back from my privilege and my ego to honor those who Jesus Christ through scripture and Saint Benedict's Rule say I am to serve. May we all learn our place and our call in this world community of communities from vast regions of the earth to the neighbors next door. And let us ask ourselves, as Jesus was asked: "Who is our neighbor?"

Risen Jesus: "Peter, do you love me?"

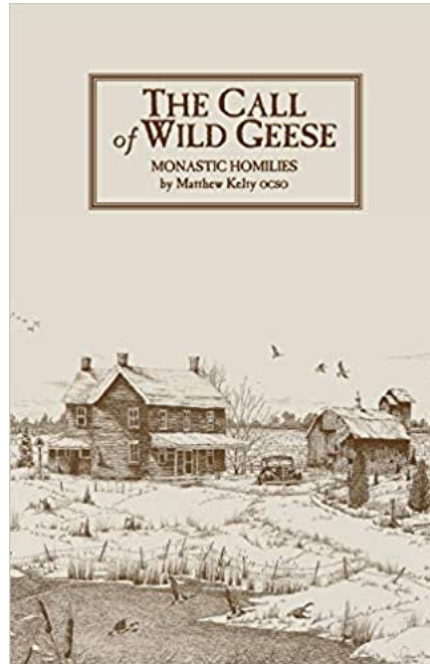
Peter: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Risen Jesus: "Feed my sheep."

Father Matthew Kelty, OCSO, on Forgiving God

“I ask you, can any greater harm come to the soul than by want of forgiveness? Let us think of forgiveness in three ways: forgiveness of God; forgiveness of our neighbor; forgiveness of ourselves. We may not perhaps be ready to see our need to forgive God, yet it is not at all unlikely that there is a large place for it in our hearts. There are many things in our life, in life around us, that are very difficult, if not impossible, to understand: war, pestilence, hunger, poverty, earthquake, tornado—any tragedy on a mass level. While we do not admit to blaming God for these things, they arouse in the human heart a log of wondering why these things are, why there is such colossal human misery quite apparently beyond human control and quite obviously within God’s. What sort of God tolerates such horrors? Theological explanations are all well and good, but when we confront these horrors in the concrete, the explanations tend to appear weak and futile, unable to curb a sense of resentment and even outrage against God. Nor is this rare. It is no small thing to maintain a faith in a loving God in the face of such overwhelming facts of life.

“On a personal level we confront a similar situation, but on a much smaller scale. The smaller scale does not mean that the suffering seems much less, for even global disaster is experienced only on the personal, individual level. Why am I who I am and why am I the way I am? Why are the components that have gone into my history so often poor and inadequate? In terms of my body, my mind, my soul, my size and shape, my childhood, my youth—indeed all my history: why are they what they are?



Cistercian Studies,
1996

“Without our even being aware of it, we hide in our deepest depths some resentment against God for making us as we are, our history what it is. This does not mean that we are a bundle of resentment, though some people are, but rather that some resentment may well be present, obvious to us once in a while, maybe in a passing moment of insight.

“So it seems necessary to forgive God. Sometimes, from a human point of view, we hold something against God, we have an argument. We need to face this and to answer it with genuine forgiveness. If we do not, we are bound to have surface in our lives, early or late, a bitterness that may sour many of our years, the more so if we do not know the source. It is very possible—I will not quite say likely—that we have wandering around in our own depths some sense of umbrage at the way God has treated us. I think it rather futile to try to come up with explanations, for they are not deep enough or divine enough to quell the sense of our fury at God for the way things are with us.

Continued next page

“Forgiveness is an act of faith rooted in Christ. It is not explanation. In the presence of something we cannot for the life of us understand, and which is and has been the source of anguish and suffering, forgiveness for Christ’s sake is the only way out. It is a superb act of faith in God. It is no small thing to forgive God what God has done to us. This is to speak all too humanly, yet human we are and we experience God in a human way—here below in any case.

“Forgiveness of our neighbor is a companion to forgiveness of God. It is of enormous importance. It is utterly necessary that we have absolutely nothing against anyone, living or dead, that we forgive all wrong done to us, literally, totally, and from the heart.... People think they can confine lack of forgiveness to a particular event, a special case. You cannot, not in the end. Forgiveness is total. There can be no exceptions. No matter how justified the case, lack of forgiveness is never justified. And you cannot get away with it. We bring on ourselves a terrible judgment, for every time we say the *Our Father* the agreement is struck: forgive as we forgive. If we do not forgive, the evil remains in us and can ultimately destroy us. When we are unforgiving we must pray continually for the gift of mercy.

“People are perhaps more unforgiving of themselves than of God or neighbor. This runs deep in humankind and is ultimately rooted in original sin, the subtle awareness that we are touched with evil, are unworthy of love, deserve to be condemned. ... There is a real need for mercy and compassion, indeed forgiveness, toward our own self. One says, ‘I can never forgive myself’ for some wrong done and yet such a statement is wholly unchristian. One must forgive oneself as one must also forgive others.

A merciless condemnation of one’s self for faults, failings, weakness, is heartless. In no sense is it humility, for humility is truth, and the truth is that no matter what we have done, what we are, we abide in God’s forgiving love. No one denies that we are gross sinners, but the truth also insists that our sins are forgiven and we are loved.

“... An emphasis on self-condemnation may indicate how much we need to grow in faith and trust in God. If we show mercy we will see it, give it; also to ourselves. For one of your neighbors is you and if we are bidden earnestly to show mercy to others, among those others is you. And oddly enough, though it is said of this one or that, ‘He was hard on himself and kind to others’, I do not believe it. Someone who is hard on himself will be hard on others; one is merciful or one isn’t. You cannot be merciful to one and hateful to another, nor love one neighbor and condemn another. Mercy is all or none. If you condemn yourself, you condemn your neighbor’s brother or sister.

“It is good to reflect on these truths. Being unforgiving toward God is not rare. Being unforgiving toward a neighbor is much more common. And I think being unforgiving to one’s self most common of all.

“We must enter the realm of mercy and dwell in its happy precincts. Mercy received and mercy given being the coin of the realm by which the wealth of God’s love becomes as riches available to all.”

This excerpt is from Matthew Kelty, *The Call of Wild Geese*, chapter 11, “Forgiveness.”

Our thanks to Father James Kilzer, OSB, oblate director at Assumption Abbey in Richardton, ND, for sharing it.

Pentecost Prayers for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Editor's note: Below find intercessions at evening and morning prayer in abbey Liturgy of the Hours. Included here as examples that oblates may pray throughout the year, use as models for their own prayers, share with friends and family, etc.

EASTER SEASON

Week 7 (between Ascension and Pentecost)

TUESDAY EVENING

Canticle Sentence: for Magnificat, Mary's song.

How great are God's riches. How deep are his wisdom and knowledge. To God be the glory for ever. Alleluia.

Litany (Intercessions):

Father, every good gift comes to us through your Son Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Confident that you always give us what we need, we say: (Rsp)

LORD, SEND FORTH YOUR SPIRIT.

- Give us Wisdom to rejoice in your saving deeds.
- Give us Understanding to deepen our faith.
- Give us Counsel to guide us on the right path.
- Give us Fortitude to conquer our weakness.
- Give us Knowledge to see you wherever you show yourself.
- Give us Piety to love and trust you as our Father.
- Give us Fear to revere and praise you as our God.

Grateful for all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, let us pray in spirit and truth as Christ taught us. (Lord's Prayer)



WEDNESDAY MORNING

Canticle Sentence: for Benedictus, Zechariah's song.

Through Christ Jesus, the blessing bestowed on Abraham shall descend on the Gentiles, enabling us to receive the promised Spirit through faith. Al-leluia.

Litany (Intercessions):

The Father has promised to breathe his Spirit upon us and fill us with the new life of Jesus Christ. With confidence, let us call upon the Holy Spirit and say: (Rsp)

ENKINDLE IN US THE FIRE OF YOUR LOVE.

- Holy Spirit, renew the power of the gospel in your church.
- Holy Spirit, intensify our faith.
- Holy Spirit, bring peace to all nations.
- Holy Spirit, comfort the afflicted.
- Holy Spirit, nourish the starving.
- Holy Spirit, lead us on the path to eternal life.
- Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
- Holy Spirit, raise up all who have died, including our confrere(s) (_____ who died in _____, and also _____). May they live with Christ for ever and ever.

With the power of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Father as Jesus taught us. (Lord's Prayer)

Imagine: no forgiveness

Imagine: no wild animals

**Imagine: no accountability
(ethics)**

Imagine: no Holy Spirit

Pope Francis Homily on the Ascension of Jesus

The concluding passage of the Gospel of Matthew presents the moment of the Risen One's final farewell to his disciples. The scene is set in Galilee, the place where Jesus had called them to follow him and to form the first nucleus of his new community. Now those disciples have traversed the "fire" of the Passion and of the Resurrection; at the visit of the Risen Lord they prostrate themselves before him, although some remain doubtful. Jesus gives this frightened community the immense task of evangelizing the world; and he reinforces this responsibility with the command to teach and baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (v. 19).

Jesus' Ascension into heaven thus constitutes the end of the mission that the Son received from the Father and the beginning of the continuation of this mission on the part of the Church. From this moment, from the moment of the Ascension, in fact, Christ's presence in the world is mediated by his disciples, by those who believe in him and proclaim him. This mission will last until the end of history and every day will have the assistance of the Risen Lord, who assures: *"I am with you always, to the close of the age"* (v. 20).

The Lord's presence brings strength during persecution, comfort in tribulations, support in the difficult situations that the mission and the proclamation of the Gospel will encounter. The Ascension reminds us of Jesus' assistance and of his Spirit that gives confidence, gives certainty to our Christian witness in the world. He reveals to us the reason for the Church's existence: the Church exists to proclaim the Gospel, for this alone! So too, the joy of the Church

is proclaiming the Gospel. The Church is all of us baptized people. Today we are called to better understand that God has given us the great dignity and responsibility of proclaiming him to the world, of making him accessible to all mankind. This is our dignity; this is the greatest honor of each one of us, of all the baptized!

On the Feast of the Ascension, we turn our gaze toward heaven, where Christ has ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father. We strengthen our steps on earth so as to continue our journey — our mission of witnessing to and living the Gospel in every environment — with enthusiasm and courage.

However, we are well aware that this does not depend first and foremost on our strengths, on our organizational abilities or human resources. Only with the light and strength of the Holy Spirit can we effectively fulfil our mission of leading others to know and increasingly experience Jesus' tenderness.





The Oblate

THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED

NEWSLETTER OF THE OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT
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Mark Your Calendar

July 16-18, 2021: Annual Oblate Retreat

Registration Information Online: <http://saintjohnsabbey.org/events/summer-oblate-retreat/>

Paper form: see enclosed with this issue



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