

The Oblate

News Magazine of the Oblates of Saint John's Abbey

February 2020

Day of Reflection — March 15, 2020

Volume 64 Number 1



Michael Peterson, OSB

**Please see the back cover, page 12, for information regarding the Lenten Day of Reflection,
March 15, 2020.**

Psalm 105:2-3 (Grail)

O sing to the Lord, sing praise; tell all [God's] wonderful works! Be proud of God's holy name; let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice.

Psalm 95:1-2 (Grail)

Come, ring out our joy to the Lord; hail the rock who saves us. Let us come before God, giving thanks; with songs let us hail the Lord.

Entering into the Paschal Mystery

Lent and Easter are a time to integrate our spirituality more deeply into the Pascal Mystery: the dying and rising of Jesus, the ascension, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It has been enormously helpful for me to think of the two seasons of Lent and Easter as one, as ninety days, with Easter at the center. Because the Pascal Mystery is the central parable of our Christian lives, I wish to identify some of the ways in which we participate in this mystery. Taking a cue from Ronald Rolheiser in *Holy Longing*, we need to name our deaths, claim our births, grieve over what has been lost while adjusting to what is new, and accept the Spirit's gifts for the life we are living right now.

John Shea in *Stories of Faith* tells the story of a young man who is tending to his father, still fairly young and dying of terminal cancer. The disease is day by day wasting his father's body away. Each night after work his son comes to sit by the bed, holds his father's hand and watches helplessly as he suffers. Finally, one night the son says, "Dad, let go. Trust God, die. Anything is better than this." Within a short time his father grows peaceful and dies. The son realizes that he has just given voice to the important truth of letting go and trusting in God.

Death, our own and others', is certainly the most profound example of our participation in the dying of Jesus.

Sometimes this dying means standing in a different relationship to the changes made in the 1960s and 1970s. They were milestones in the life of the Church but now there are new needs. The men and women who are coming to the Church need a different kind of ecclesial expression. It is hard to stay supple, to trust God is working in the future, to trust the younger generation's need for greater clarity in who we are. This is not about being right or wrong. It is more about listening carefully to our times and hearing what is being said. I can cling to the Church of my younger days, but I will forgo the blessing of the past and the gifts of the Spirit that are given for now.

There is also new life, the experience of being born anew. An example is the birth of a new friendship with a person whose life has brushed up against ours but

Abbot John Klassen, OSB

circumstances have blocked further development. Something changes and the relationship clicks. We discover the satisfaction, the opening of ourselves, and the growth resulting from a new relationship.

Sometimes we discover that for one reason or another we haven't been very good friends to the people who have tried to love us. One person writes, "I fear abandonment and therefore its flip side, intimacy. I want the coin to stand on its edge. Don't go away. Don't get too close. I've had a hard time letting someone love me, although many good people have tried."

A woman shared *an example of ascension*. "My husband and I never fully understood what ascension and Pentecost meant until I had to have a double mastectomy. There was, at first, a lot of anger, a lot of grieving over what we'd lost. Eventually though we had to let go of a wholeness we once had. Now our relationship is great again in every aspect, but my husband had to learn to see me differently and I had to learn to see me differently too. We know now what it means to have a body float up to heaven so as to receive a new spirit." (*Holy Longing*, p. 153.)

For us as Christians the Pascal Mystery is not a theological abstraction but a lived experience. The above examples are meant to stimulate your reflection on your own experience of the Pascal Mystery.



The Gift of Divine Light



With eyes opened to the divine light, we hear with thunder-struck ears God's loud voice admonishing us daily, saying: "Today, if you shall hear God's voice, harden not your hearts." Prologue of the Rule citing Psalm 95.

Let me tell you about two people who experienced divine light. The first, a monk; the second, a scientist.

The monk is Thomas Merton, who in 1958 wrote in his diary: "In Louisville, Kentucky at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun. It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race, though it is a race dedicated to many absurdities and one which makes many terrible mistakes: yet, with all that, God himself gloried in becoming a member of the human race!"

The scientist and anthropologist Jane Goodall wrote: "Many years ago, in the spring of 1974, I visited the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. There were not many people around, and it was quiet and still inside. I gazed in silent awe at the great rose window, glowing in the morning sun. All at once the cathedral was filled with a huge volume of sound: an organ playing magnificently for a wedding taking

Fr. Michael Peterson, OSB

place in a distant corner. I had always loved music; but in the cathedral, filling the entire vastness, it seemed to enter and possess my whole self. It was as though the music itself was alive. That moment suddenly captured a moment of eternity. The impact was so powerful I suppose because it came at a time when so much was changing in my life, when I was vulnerable. When I, without knowing it, needed to be reconnected with God--or perhaps I should say being reminded of my connection that already existed."

Are these two examples out of the sphere of your own experience? I do not think so. Has there been light in your life? The amazing kindness of someone who valued you? Witnessing light filter through the tree canopy? A call of a loon on a lake? What about falling in love, your heart all a-flutter? Waking your child from sleep? That moving music that opened the gates of your soul? Add your own experiences. Sadly, a hardening of one's heart occurs when one chooses darkness over light. But when I hear God's word with the ear of my heart, God's own heart is opened to me. It is characteristic of Benedict that listening goes hand in hand with the heart. We are not dealing with external hearing but rather with an opening of our internal being — a contemplative way of life. To experience divine light is to be changed from within so much so that we become light to the world. 'Divine light' is also translated as 'divinizing light', which is closer to the original meaning of, 'the light that makes divine.'

In our life, circumstances of light do happen, and they do matter. For oblates and monks, Benedict strongly encourages us to be people who are open to the divine light of God and the amazing lengths to which God will go to get our attention. Open your ears, open your eyes, open your life. Be amazed at the divine light God gives you!

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life (John 8:12).

Of Many (and/or Various and Sundry) Things

New Candidates

Lisa Nolan, Albany, NY, 9.18.2019.

Mary Lou Ott, Edina, MN, 9.23.2019.

Jane Hagerman, Milwaukee, WI, 10.24.2019.

Oblate Deaths

Chet Mirocha, 89, oblate since July 1999, died November 14, 2019. Wife Donna is an Oblate.

Irene Hoffman, 91, oblate since July 2008, died November 30, 2019. She served for several years on the Advisory Committee.

Ralph Opatz, 95, oblate since June 1949, died December 5, 2019.

New Abbey Office Space

The new oblate office, along with many other abbey offices (Vocations, Latinx Ministries, Development, Benedictine Volunteer Corps, Communications) has moved to the newly renovated abbey quad area, space formerly occupied by the university health clinic which has moved to Mary Hall. Guests can find the abbey offices easily since it's just a left turn and down the corridor from the Great Hall. Having the abbey offices so close together facilitates more collaborative ministry between the offices.



Father Michael at work in the new oblate office

Continued Formation

As part of the ongoing formation of our Saint John's Abbey oblate community, we are happy to announce live, monthly, online conferences for

oblates, oblate candidates, and inquirers. Our first meeting was on December 7 and about 30 oblats attended. We met again on January 4. The plan is to meet regularly on the first Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m. CST and last a total of 40 minutes. These formation gatherings use Zoom as their online hub and will cover practical wisdom based on the *Rule* with time for Q&A after the conference. Each conference by Father Michael will be archived and made available for later viewing, for which a number of oblats have expressed their gratitude and compliments.

In this February issue of *The Oblate*, we include several articles for your inspiration and reflection, especially during Lent and Easter seasons, but beyond as well. Abbot John, page 2, draws us into consideration of the Paschal Mystery and Father Michael, page 3, reflects on the gift of God's light. Page 6 features a substantial report on the spirituality of work as presented by Br. Lucian Lopez at the November Day of Reflection. On page 7 Fr. Eric Hollas sets us up for Lent with portions of his weekly online blog: <https://monkschronicle.wordpress.com>. On page 8 Oblate Brian Hirt offers a reflection on peace, good for all seasons but a genuine goal for us during Lent. On page 9 Fr. Columba Stewart reminds us of another always relevant goal, humility. Page 10 has an Easter Vigil homily by Pope Francis, and on page 11 Father Don offers thoughts on the Holy Spirit and everyday spirituality.

In a Franciscan magazine, *St. Anthony Messenger*, a reader wrote: "I feel I understand and appreciate my faith so much more since I started reading this journal. I read all the articles over and over, and I'm inspired more each time."

Oblates are encouraged to read all the articles over and over, seeking more inspiration each time. Tell us what works for you — and what doesn't.

Fr. Don Tauscher, OSB

Mark Your Calendar

March 15, 2020: Lenten Day of Reflection [See back cover]

July 17-19, 2020: Annual Oblate Retreat

On January 11 the Fargo-Moorhead chapter met at 10 a.m. in the Prayer Center of Sacred Heart Convent, thanks to the hospitality of the Presentation Sisters. From *Radical Honesty* by Joan Chittister, OSB, Oblate Don Kercher focused on the first step: fear of God. If we forget the Presence of God then we forget who God is. Many have lost the "awe" of who God is. In our culture today people are very individualistic & self-centered. In February Oblate Judy Doll will continue with a discussion of humility. Judy also serves as contact person for this chapter ([email: doll-ja7@gmail.com](mailto:doll-ja7@gmail.com)—[phone: 701-280-1545](tel:701-280-1545)). On the second Saturday in March, Fr. Tom Feltman, OblSB, will lead a discussion of Chapter 57, "The Artisans of the Monastery." Because death, illness and other causes have led to a smaller group, it is hoped that more oblates from the area will participate in future gatherings.

The January 19 Collegeville chapter was cancelled because of bad weather. In February Oblate Peggy Stokman will lead the discussion of the 6th step of humility, with material from Sister Joan Chittister's *Radical Honesty*. Each month a member volunteers to lead a discussion of one chapter in the book.

The Joan of Arc chapter in Minneapolis, led by Oblate Ron Joki (contact: rejslp@aol.com), met on January 19 as the storm in the Twin Cities had abated sufficiently to permit travel. The usual practice is to begin with prayer, proceed to discussion, and share the refreshments brought by one of the members. Ron had sent the members a message to help prepare for their discussion. "From Chapter 4, 'The Tools for Good Works,' of the Rule of Saint Benedict we are instructed to 'relieve the lot of the poor, ... go to help the troubled and console the sorrowing' (Matt 25:36). Saint Benedict follows this immediately with: 'Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else.' If the love of our Lord is the foundation, the motivation and the inspiration for our generosity and good works,

aren't we more likely to do them without expectation of reward or expressions of gratitude? God's expression of love in sending us his son will never be matched; nevertheless, how can we do anything but love him in return as best we can?



Pictured here are some of the members of the Joan of Arc chapter. Top: Ron Joki, contact person; Middle: Jim Secord and Teresa Roberts; Below: Keith E.O. Homstad, Scott Wright and Bill Muldoon.



November 2019 Day of Reflection



Brother Lucian

November 19th was not only the Anniversary of the Discovery of Puerto Rico and the national feast of Our Lady of Divine Providence. It was also the date for our Fall Day of Reflection, attended by 40+ oblates and led by Br. Lucian Lopez, OSB.

Brother Lucian developed the topic of work in a dynamic

presentation of ideas founded upon the Bible and the Rule. He began by saying that detachment from the *results* of work is important so that we are open to do God's will at any moment and yet be open to another job and to prayer, which is why Benedict requires the monk to leave the work when it's time for prayer. "Let them prefer nothing to the Work of God" (*opus Dei*, aka Divine Office).

Work is neither our identity nor the measure of our worth. We need to detach from the sense of entitlement: "I deserve, I have a right to xyz."

Regarding entitlement, Brother Lucian poses the questions: What do I deserve? Who is the one who deserves anything? Who in this room deserves our love the most? What is my worth? What does Centering Prayer teach me?

We are taught to endeavor to be inclined to the hardest, to regard ourselves as the lowest, to be content with the lowest and most menial treatment, and to regard ourselves as poor and worthless workers in whatever tasks we are given (RB 7:49). Such harsh words in the Rule or from the ancient monks or mystics and even from Scripture are meant to point us to Good News: freedom, confidence, real worth, and to pry our eyes and hands away from things that are passing, things that ultimately leave us with suffering, bitterness, and torment.

Finally there is backwards love. Love is not how

much people love me, but how much I love people — the only thing within my realm of control. True confidence and fecundity is watching love pour out of me, unhindered by other's opinions of me. If I experience myself as courageous, if I see myself being courageous, that is how I gain confidence in my position and the value of my existence in this world. No one around me can give that to me. No one's opinion of me can grant that — not my spouse, not my kids, not my priest, not my boss, not the richest most powerful person I know, not the smartest person I know, not even the most spiritual person I know. They don't have access to that information. If they pretend to, they are con artists. Seeing love, courage, and good works flow out of me — that is the feeling of true worth.

For our prayer and reflection, we received a number of passages from Scripture, Rule, and mystics.

Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance (Col 3:23-24).

Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you (Jn 6:27).

Let all that you do be done in love (1 Cor 16:14).

First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to him most earnestly to bring it to perfection (RB *Prologue* 4).

At the first signal for the hour of None, all put aside their work to be ready for the second signal (RB 48:12).

The very pure spirit does not bother about the regard of others or human respect, but communes inwardly with God, alone and in solitude as to all forms, and with delightful tranquility, for the knowledge of God is received in divine silence (John of the Cross, *Sayings of Light and Love*, 27, 28).

If things against charity continue, such as little factions, or ambition, or concern about some little point of honor — when these things begin to take place, consider yourselves lost (Teresa of Jesus (aka Avila), *Way of Perfection*, 7:10).

Baptism Begins Our Public Ministry

The feast of the Baptism of Jesus marks the end of the Christmas season, and in churches of the Latin tradition the decorations come down. All the same, this action marks a new beginning. It's time to get on with the business of ordinary life. But we do so with a twist.

If the baptism of Jesus inaugurated his public ministry, does our own baptism not do the same for us? And if it does, what might be the nature of our ministry? To what kind of life does Jesus call us?

For those who think that public ministry is reserved to the ordained, it's time to think again. The witness to Jesus is actually the vocation of the baptized. To that creative witness Jesus invites us all.

In western culture today the practice of religious faith has become such a private exercise that sometimes one scarcely knows whether we're Christian or not. In fairness, part of this is due to our neighbors who share our values if not our baptism. But all the same, if the nature of our lives remains a cypher or a mystery to our neighbors, then it may be time to evaluate how we are coming across.

Jesus does not ask us to wear our religious conviction on our sleeves but that we rise from the baptismal waters and live with integrity and love. And he asks us to invite others to share in the new life that he offers. Our very way of life then should inspire curiosity in our neighbors, and therein begins our public ministry.

Then there is Lent

We slip into ruts from which we cannot escape so easily, and we end up missing so much that life has to offer.

Ash Wednesday has its somber side with the reminder that we came from dust and to dust we shall return. But that's not meant to depress or paralyze us. Rather, it's meant to be a clarion call to make the most of what God gives us — be it years, talents, and the capacity for growth. That sometimes can involve the need to step back and appreciate what others might see in us. But above all, it requires us to pause and inventory what God has invested in us and how well we are or are not using it.

In his chapter on Lent in the monastery Saint Benedict wrote that the life of a monk should be a Lenten observance. Of course monks in the 6th century had no patience for that, nor can modern monks be convinced of that either. But Benedict anticipated this, and so he prescribed some minor and distinctly non-showy things that monks could add as a Lenten supplement. On a general level he suggested "refusing to indulge evil habits and devoting ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and self-denial." He offered this not so that he could make life in the monastery drudgery, but so that monks could begin to anticipate the joys of Easter.

It occurs to me that one point of all this is the need to avoid the ruts that so easily stifle our personal growth. Tweaking a schedule or shaking up a day can be disruptive, but it's also a way to get a fresh perspective on our lives. That in turn can give us the insight to change and to grow and to experience Easter — not just once a year — but every day.

. . . Lent invites us to break free from our customary ways of doing things. As a time of renewal Lent encourages us to discover the possibilities in life that we've ignored all too often. It's a reminder that the point of Christian life is not the sobering reality of the cross on Good Friday. Rather, we look beyond the cross to the resurrection on Easter Sunday. That resurrection is something we can celebrate every day of our lives.

Fr. Eric's blog: <https://monkschronicle.wordpress.com/>



“Let peace be your quest and your aim” (RB Prologue 17). “Peace” is a Benedictine motto. This value, goal, invitation, this something to strive for is so simple and yet so difficult at times. Thankfully, the Rule instructs and guides us to peace with God on a personal level, in community, and the much larger world. The early chapters of the Rule deal with being at peace with one’s self and with God, and the later chapters with peace in community.



Let me start at the ground level, peace with one’s self and peace with God. Can these really be separate? Benedict points out humility, prayer, work, silence, hospitality, obedience, stability, community and more ways to reach this state. The key is to empty oneself so there is space for the “higher self.” Contemplative prayer can open the heart at its deepest core to the Presence of God. Being at peace with God requires being at peace with oneself, recognizing that God is always present and loves us as we are, faults included. The quest for peace involves repentance, trust, openness and grace. It recognizes the Divine in each moment. There are clues from scripture pointing to “peace.” I think of Psalm 130 and the image of a content and satisfied child which speaks to me of living in grace and peace and light.

“O Lord, my heart is not proud
Nor haughty my eyes.
I have not gone after things too great
Nor marvels beyond me.
Truly I have set my soul
In silence and peace.
A weaned child on its mother’s breast,
Even so is my soul.”

This peace, this relationship with God, is not meant as an end in itself for me alone but becomes a life-

long commitment and challenge, to take that stance in life. That relationship requires bringing peace into community and into the world, where it really comes to fruition. A daunting task to be sure; but do-able in each moment with a conscious intent.

Benedict speaks also of peace in community, where all things are worked out, where peace is established through justice. We are to

serve one another, treat each person as Christ, consider the weakness and infirmity of others, and be happy with less. A key commitment idea is to love and serve one another with humility. In RB 4:73 Benedict says, “If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with him before the sun goes down.” There is no room for murmuring (complaining), pettiness, or carrying a grudge.

Being peace and creating peace become the work at hand. Is it always easy? Absolutely not! Is it necessary? Absolutely yes! Fortunately, Benedict gives us the tools and the way to get there. It is the ongoing challenge of a lifetime.

In the world and culture at large peace is not always something to strive for. Sometimes peace is portrayed as cowardly. One needs tremendous courage to take the stance for peace in a world ravaged by violence, greed, discrimination, where nothing is sacred. But Benedict calls us to live in peace, truth, and light in community and to bring that into the world where it is sorely needed—a healing balm for a wounded world.

I think of a John Lennon song, “Imagine,” with the line: “Imagine all the people, living life in peace; you may say that I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one....” I like to think that Benedict was also that dreamer, but he left us a practical rule to guide us on the path to peace.

The Path of Humility

Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB



The heart of St. Benedict's spiritual teaching is the life-long cultivation and practice of humility. You won't find it among the four cardinal virtues inherited from Greek

philosophy (prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice).

Nor is humility on St. Paul's list of theological virtues (faith, hope, love). There's a reason: humility isn't a to-do, or a mark of attainment, but a fundamental stance toward God and other human beings that underlies and undergirds all those other virtues.

To be humble is to be acutely aware that God is God and we are not, and that any attempt to blur that bottom-line reality will always lead to trouble. Fundamental as it is, humility is not a starting point for spiritual progress, but its very path. St. Benedict refers to humility as a ladder (RB 7), coextensive with the path of the commandments that by God's grace becomes a ramp to heaven (RB Prologue). You decide: if you want to climb or run (or at least walk purposefully) towards eternal life, humility is the means.

But what is humility? It is the reality check at each stage of our spiritual journey. As we pass through challenges and suffering—imposed or self-inflicted—humility is the gift of insight received over and over again, the reassurance that God is with us and that our struggles have meaning and even purpose.

In the 7th Step of Humility, Saint Benedict uses a series of quotations from the psalms to describe the

devastating experience of hitting rock bottom:

"I am a worm and not a person" (that is how I feel in my shame).

"I was exalted, then I was humbled and overwhelmed with confusion" (this is what I brought upon myself).

"But it is a blessing that you have humbled me, that I may learn your commandments" (my humiliation has become humility, a place of learning).

Seeing God's mercy in our worst moments is not easy; learning to see mercy in the rearview mirror is a great blessing.

Dramatic suffering falls to all of us in some form: the death of loved ones, losing a job and not finding another, the devastation of seeing someone we love wrestle with a serious addiction. To some it is a constant trial: being displaced by war, reckoning daily with the effects of long-ago abuse, dealing with a chronic illness.

The cultivation of humility keeps us limber, ready to face whatever may come with at least a small reservoir of confidence that we can get through it. At the end of the day, humility is the most ordinary of things, for its salient characteristic is that it dissolves the need to be special or dramatically focused on the self.

The truly humble person, Benedict writes, simply is the same in church as at work;
the same at home as on a journey;
keenly aware of sinfulness,
but knowing not to wallow in any past failure
that God has already redeemed.

Father Columba, a monk of Saint John's Abbey since 1982, was ordained in 1990 and is an internationally recognized scholar on monasticism.

Father Columba is the Executive Director of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML), a Professor of Theology at Saint John's University School of Theology, and has published and lectured extensively in his research field of Christian monasticism.

Easter Vigil Homily by Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica

We began this celebration outside, plunged into the darkness of the night and the cold. We felt an oppressive silence at the death of the Lord, a silence with which each of us can identify, a silence that penetrates to the depths of the heart of every disciple, who stands wordless before the cross. . . .

It is also the silence of today's disciples, speechless in the face of situations we cannot control, that make us feel and, even worse, believe that nothing can be done to reverse all the injustices that our brothers and sisters are experiencing in their flesh.

Amid our silence, our overpowering silence, the stone before the tomb cried out and proclaimed the opening of a new way for all. Creation itself was the first to echo the triumph of life over all that had attempted to silence and stifle the joy of the Gospel. The stone before the tomb was the first to leap up and in its own way intone a song of praise and wonder, of joy and hope, in which all of us are invited to join.

Yesterday (Good Friday), we joined the women in contemplating "the one who was pierced" (see John 19:36 and Zechariah 12:10).

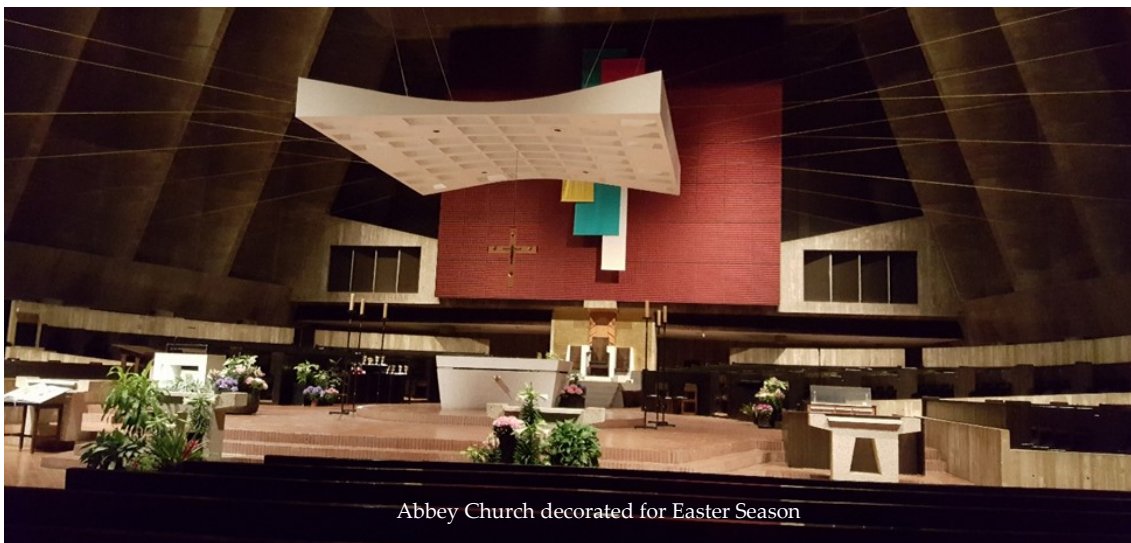
Today we are invited to contemplate the empty tomb and to hear the words of the angel: "Do not be afraid... for he has been raised" (Matt 28: 5-6). Those words should affect our deepest convictions and certainties, the ways we judge and deal with the events of our daily lives, especially the ways we relate to others. The empty tomb should challenge us and rally our spirits. It should make us think, but above all, it should encourage us to trust and believe that God "happens" in every situation and every person and that the divine light can shine in the least expected and most hidden corners of our lives.

He is not here ... he is risen! This is the message that sustains our hope and turns it into concrete gestures of charity. How greatly we need to let our frailty be anointed by this experience! How greatly we need to let our faith be revived! Christ is risen and he makes our hope and creativity rise so that we can face our present problems in the knowledge that we are not alone.

He is not here ... he is raised! To celebrate Easter is to believe once more that God constantly breaks into our personal histories, challenging our "conventions," those fixed ways of thinking

and acting that end up paralyzing us. To celebrate Easter is to allow Jesus to triumph over the fear that so often assails us and tries to bury hope.

Do not be afraid, follow me.



Abbey Church decorated for Easter Season

Everyday Spirituality: Pentecost and Ordinary Time

Fr. Don Tauscher, OSB

Ordinary time does not mean unexceptional or boring. It means time measured in ordinal numbers. After the seasons and feasts we move on under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what I like to call "everyday spirituality." So, who is this Holy Spirit?

1. The Holy Spirit is our **advocate** -- on our side, on our behalf, always uniting the members of Christ's Body, always active in all God's children, not just Christians. This is the principal work of the Holy Spirit: to be our comforter, our advocate, the life-force of God in us. Thus, the Holy Spirit gives us life in community. We live by the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

2. The Holy Spirit is our **teacher**. Jesus said, "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26). I think we all can -- or at least should -- appreciate how the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds so that we are able to find the faith to believe what God reveals to us. The Holy Spirit guides, directs, illumines, inspires, and increases our knowledge and love. Some theologians say that the Holy Spirit is progressively emerging from deep within us and letting God's light shine in the larger community.

3. The Holy Spirit **helps us pray**, not just by teaching us a few things about prayer, but by actually praying in and with us. Listen to St. Paul, that giant of the faith: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27). Hidden in this verse is the insight that the Holy Spirit "teaches us" to be quiet, to be still, to listen, to stop chasing words and ideas. To let go and let God. To practice Sabbath stillness for rest and restoration.

4. The Holy Spirit **strengthens us** in tough times of opposition or even persecution. Jesus repeatedly

admonishes his followers not to be afraid but to take courage. "When they bring you to trial and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say; but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mk 13:11).



5. The Holy Spirit **protects us in time of temptation** to sin. All sin harms the Body of Christ; all sin disrupts the unity of the community. In these days of global terror and divisiveness, the Holy Spirit must work unceasingly to overpower the human temptation to become separate, to exclude others, to discriminate against others as though they really were not equal or worthy. The Holy Spirit protects and supports our fundamental unity, our oneness in Jesus Christ.

6. The Holy Spirit **forgives sin**. By forgiving sins that wound and divide, Holy Spirit removes obstacles and barriers to the free and loving expression of our fundamental unity in the Body of Christ. Note that in the Rite of Reconciliation, the absolution formula includes the declaration that God, the Father of mercies, . . . has sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Remember the Gospel of John (20:22-23) where, on the night of the Resurrection, Jesus breathes on the disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. . . ."

7. Of course, by living within us, as in his Temple, the Holy Spirit **makes us holy**, transforms us more and more into the very image of the Lord God. This happens not by what we do but what the Holy Spirit does. That's why the Holy Spirit is called the **sanc-tifier**. We may call Holy Spirit "**the transformer**," changing us more and more into what God wants.



The Oblate

THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED

NEWSLETTER OF THE OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT: *published three times annually (February, June, October).*

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July 17-19, 2020: Annual Oblate Retreat

November 15, 2020: Fall Day of Reflection

March 15, 2020 Lenten Day of Reflection



Fr. Michael Kwatera, OSB, will lead the Lenten Day of Reflection on the Third Sunday of Lent.

Father Michael is a former director of oblates for Saint John's Abbey (2002-2011) and the abbey's current director of liturgy. He also serves as faculty resident on 2nd floor Saint Boniface/Saint Patrick Halls.

Topic title: A Trio of Lenten Saints: Patrick, Joseph and Benedict.

Description: A look at these popular saints and what makes them good companions on our Lenten journey to Holy Easter.

Registration Information

Registration by March 6 is necessary for our preparations. No need to fill out forms; just inform the oblate office that you will attend.

Email: oblates@csbsju.edu

Phone: 320.363.3022 (or 363.2018)

Cost: Free-will offering

Schedule for the Day

9:30 Arrival in Great Hall

10:30 Community Eucharist

11:30 Lunch in Q264

12:45 Group *Lectio Divina*

1:30 Conference

2:30 Discussion and Prayer

3:00 Departure

Abbot: John Klassen, OSB; **Oblate Director:** Michael Peterson, OSB; **Assistant Oblate Director/Editor:** Don Tauscher, OSB; **Production Assistant:** Josie Stang; **Printing/Mailing:** Beth Lensing; **Circulation:** Cathy Wieme.

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