

From the Heights: Monastic Musings from the Mountains

Newsletter of the Holy Monasteries of Our Lady and Saint Laurence

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Thoughts on Bright Friday

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Waiting. Watching. Wondering. Will these days ever end? Will life ever be normal again?

We Christians are used to waiting and watching and wondering about "the future." We have a whole liturgical season - Advent - devoted to these very activities! So, even though we are not in that season right now, but in a season of joy in looking "back" to an historical-yet-ongoing event, the glorious Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, this is a good time to draw upon the resources we have learned and used during the Advent season in which we are focused on preparing for Christmas as an event-yet-to-come (though in chronological time it has already done so).

For us, who know that Christ has come, has died, and is risen, there is no such thing as "normal" in this life, at least in the sense of it being stable, predictable, or ours by right. How can anything be "normal" after God became Man, after the God-man - the source and summit of human life - died upon a cruel Cross, or after that Crucified Life rose from the dead and granted us the opportunity to rise with him and partake of his Divine Nature?

If Jesus - in his earthly life and ministry - did not deem his equality with God something at which to

be grasped (cf. Phil. 2), who are we to grasp at worldly normality? Do we not claim to have our eyes on a prize that lies beyond this mortal plane, where the true "new normal," is to be found and enjoyed?

Hear St. Paul, who knew that nothing in this world was to be claimed as normal or his by right:

"Therefore, if you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

[Each day] is the day that the Lord hath made — with all its challenges, opportunities, sorrows, and joys --- let us rejoice and be glad in it! As we wait, and watch, and wonder, hoping for an "end" to our current trials, let give thanks that, as Christians, our gaze is focused beyond the "old normal," far beyond mere restoration of business, travel, and social nearness, and fixed upon the genuine restoration of all things in Christ Jesus, to whom be honor, glory, and dominion now and unto ages of ages. Amen.

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Benedictine Wisdom — Holy Rule, Chapter XXXVI

Before all things and above all things care must be taken of the sick, so that they may be served in very deed as Christ himself; for he said: I was sick and ye visited me; and, what ye did to one of these least ones, ye did unto me. But let the sick on their part consider that they re being served for the honor of God, and not provoke their brethren who are serving them by their unreasonable demands. Yet, they should be patiently borne with, because from such as these is gained a more abundant reward.



In the current, world-wide attempt to confront the Wuhan/Covid-19 virus, it seems appropriate to reflect upon this particular bit of our Holy Father's wisdom and advice.

We notice, firstly, that he recalls to us the words of our Lord to the disciples, admonishing them that our attitude and approach to the sick are, in truth, directed to him, for he is truly present to us in them. Our compassion, or lack thereof, reveal the state of our relationship with God,

himself. We are expected to care *in very deed*, not only by good thoughts or prayers. Of course, how we are able to do this will vary according to our proximity and circumstances. Let us think on those who, at home or in medical facilities, care for those who are suffering from the current, or any virus that is a danger to many, in an atmosphere of distancing and social distress. They not only need, but deserve our prayers and support, as they stand in harm's way not only for those abed with illness, but for all of us.

Secondly, let us note that St. Benedict also has an admonition for those who are ill and dependent upon others, *let the sick...not provoke their brethren who are serving them by their unreasonable demands*. When we are ill it is so easy, given our lack of control over our circumstances, to become demanding and expect all others to be at our beck and call. This state of dependence is frequently embarrassing, frustrating, and inconvenient. Sometimes, our legitimate needs won't wait for assistance, and yet they cannot be immediately met, especially in medical facilities. Our impa-

tience and frustration wear upon those who are genuinely trying to help, and tempt them to impatience and frustration of their own. This helps neither caregivers nor care-receivers, each of whom have their own, particular burdens with which to contend.

Thirdly, I believe we can hear in this Chapter of the *Rule* an echo of St. Paul's admonition to the Christians of Galatia, *Bear ye one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ*. Not a law of duty or demand, but the new commandment that Christ gave to his disciples, *Love one another, as I have loved you*.

Through the ages, countless Christians: laity, clergy, and monastics, have risked themselves to care for the sick, or have offered up their own sickness, in patience, as a willing, if involuntary, offering to God in union with the Passion of our Lord, confident in the resurrection and the glory that is to be revealed in the fulness of time. While not all can do this — for prudence on behalf of others with whom we are in contact remains a virtue — we can all find a way to do unto others as we would have them do unto us, inspired by him who did good unto others in spite of the evil they did unto him.

—Abbot Theodore



News and Events

Needless to say, **things have been quiet at the monastery** over the last few weeks, without the usual coming and going of guests. Our postulant-prospective had to delay his arrival for a while, and the groups that were scheduled were all cancelled or postponed. Like everyone, we await the decisions of State and Church regarding resuming our ministry of hospitality.

Although we had some snow in Holy Week and on Pascha, **spring seems to be taking a stronger hold here in the Front Range of the Rockies**. Green is starting to show amidst the brown, and it has often been pleasant enough to sit outside during the daytime. Nights are still chilly, and we have had light frost most mornings.

It has **yet to be seen** if we will be hosting our annual **Oblate Retreat** this July. The decision will be made by mid-May, after new guidelines from Church and State are available. The tentative dates are July 10 – 13.

May 3rd, Abbot Theodore was at long last be able to enjoy a Sunday “home” at the monastery. Fr. Demetrios Andrews covered St. Augustine in Denver, which continues it’s live-streaming of the 10:00 Mass until such time as we are able to reopen the temple.

Father has taken advantage of the weekend at the monastery to **move his official Office back to the lower level Scriptorium**. This makes it easier for people to find him during work time without having to climb to the 3rd floor where his cell is located. The monastic Chapter Room (meeting room) remains on the 3rd floor, along with a pleasant sitting area for private talks (since the Office is not very private).

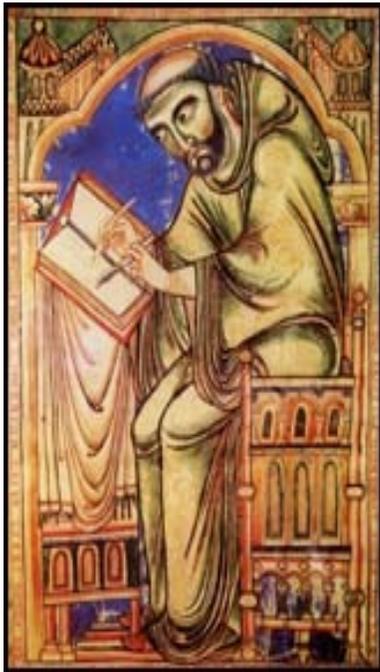
May 5: Br. John and Sr. Lucia Boston, oblate novices, resigned as Cook and Bookkeeper for the Monastery and Guest House, and began preparations to move back to Texas. We thank them for their service here and ask God to bless them as they continue their lives and pursuit of Benedictine Oblation.

Our trusty Caretaker, **Marco**, is gradually repainting all the cells in the monastery, adding some color on two walls in place of the egg-shell white. The results are quite lovely! In the various rooms, pale shades of green, blue, yellow, and lavender are adding a touch of cheer and warmth, without causing the rooms to be too dark.

Prayer to Our Lady of Glastonbury

(Said nightly after Compline)

Most holy and gracious Queen, Our Lady Saint Mary of Glastonbury: We implore thy powerful intercession, together with that of blessed Michael the Archangel, of blessed Joseph of Arimathea, and of all the saints of Glastonbury, that God would grant [_____ and] all things needful to our Holy Monastery, our Oblates, our benefactors and our guests; and that, by thy help and protection, we thy children may ever rejoice in health of mind and body to render fitting service to the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, now, and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.



The Oblate Corner

In the light of [the] conviction of our Holy Father that man's supreme purpose must be the service of God, he could not do otherwise than make what he beautifully calls the *Opus Dei* — *the Work of God*, the primary occupation of his monks. By the *Work of God* he meant waiting upon God, union with him by an uplifted heart, the performance of that service of joyful praise... For St. Benedict, then, whose supreme desire is to attain to God, there can be no more important occupation than the service of God here below. He therefore lays it down that nothing should be preferred to the Work of God (Ch. 43), and devotes thirteen chapters (Chs. 8-20) of the *Rule* to the regulation of the Divine Office, which is for him specifically the Work of God.

Abbot Alcuin Deutsch,
Manual for Oblates of St. Benedict,
St. John's Abbey Press, Collegeville, 1937; pp 94-95.

The *Opus Dei* is one of the foundational undertakings of an Oblate of St. Benedict. The commitment to put not our personal prayers, but the common, liturgical prayer of the Church and the monastery at the center of our life (something not every devout Christian undertakes) is, in fact, one of the primary points of union, of spiritual affiliation, between the monastery and its oblates.

Through the Psalms, in the context of the Offices (Hours), we not only work together to serve God, but allow God to serve us as persons and as a godly people, immersing us in the inspired words and wisdom of King David and the other psalmists, of the prophetic writers of the Canticles, and of the saints who wrote the hymns and collects, and arranged the orderly format of the various services. By participating together in this ceaseless round of psalmody and prayer we are enabled to experience Christian communion at a deeper level than that of mere physical proximity. This is why we allow our oblates to use whichever approved Rite — Eastern or Western — as is most conducive for them. It is not uniformity of text or tongue that accomplishes this, but rather becoming *of one heart and mind*, allowing our Lord Christ to open his Word to us and through it, draw us nearer to himself and each other.



[Lancelot Andrewes Press](#)

Your source for traditional Benedictine Liturgical Books, and the Holy *Rule* arranged for daily reading and reflection.

May none of God's wonderful works keep silence, night or morning. Bright stars, high mountains, the depths of the seas, sources of rushing rivers: may all these break into song as we sing to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May all the angels in the heavens reply: Amen! Amen! Amen! Power, praise, honor, eternal glory to God, the only Giver of grace. Amen! Amen! Amen!

— *Ancient Christian Prayer*

How you can help!

- Pray for the Monastery's well being, growth in holiness, and for zealous vocations.
- Schedule individual or group retreats at St. Laurence.
- Register with **Amazon Smile** for your online purchases, and designate the Benedictine Fellowship of St Laurence as the beneficiary of your support for non-profits.
- Give [Lancelot Andrewes Press](#) icons, books, or the 2020 Western-rite Calendar as gifts.
- Donate towards the support of the St. Laurence Center and/or the Monastery.
- Consider purchasing a plot in the St. Laurence Cemetery or a vault in the St. Sophia Mausoleum.
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Contact: [Father Abbot](#)

Active in Prayer and Prayerful in Action

