



CROSSINGS

SAINT JOSEPH'S MONASTERY

SPRING 2007

Prior's Reflection

by *Br. Vincent Ignatius, OSB*



Resurrection Joy

As Christians we are people of the resurrection— we are filled with joy and wonder at the miracle and gift of Our Lord's rising from the dead as the first fruit of the resurrection that will be for all. Through the liturgys of The Paschal Triduum we traveled with Him through His passion and death. On Maundy Thursday, we were given a most powerful lesson in love and humility in The Maundy (washing of the feet), then we celebrated the great Mystery of the Eucharist— Christ's giving of Himself to us in a most special and awesome way to be our Food and dwell with us. On Good Friday, we mourned with those at the foot of the Cross— looking on in horror at the sight of Jesus slowing dying- and we were moved to a deep empathy for his Mother knowing that her heart was pierced through with deep pain and anguish, just as Simeon had prophesied at the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. On Holy Saturday morning, we, like the disciples and other followers of Jesus, found ourselves uneasy and “out of sorts” as He lay in the tomb— the church empty and dimly lit. At the Great Vigil of Easter, as day gave way to night, the New Fire was lit and the Paschal Candle led the way into the darkened church— an awesome sight, the glow of that Light symbolizing Christ as it moved through the church glowing and dispelling the darkness. The Great Vigil is the climax of the Triduum and is full of joy and wonder as we proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus, welcome new members into the Body of Christ in Baptism, are reminded of and renewed in our own Baptism and sprinkled with water, and tears might even well up as the bells peal out as we sing that great hymn of praise again— Glory to God in the Highest! All things are renewed, refreshed, and made new!

We are challenged to live the remainder of the year in light of this little 3-day lesson. Life holds so many opportunities for us to “do-as-He-did” and be true people of the resurrection. In our relationships we find abundant, yet often overlooked, opportunities for resurrection joy and healing. It is unfortunately all too common for us to inflict hurt upon each other— to judge each other wrongly (usually based on our *own* fears)- to attribute the worst motive rather than assume the best— to think of ourselves first or exclusively. The lessons to be drawn from Our Lord's journey through Passion to Resurrection stand in contrast to these behaviors/reactions, for He modeled humility, love, obedience, and surrender for us— and it all led to Victory! The same is promised to us if we but follow His example.

St. Benedict offers guidelines in The Rule for people of the resurrection who want to follow Christ more closely:

- ◆ Cherish Christ above all!
- ◆ Take the Gospel as guide for your life.
- ◆ Do not prefer anything to the Work of God (the Eucharist, communal and personal prayer, spiritual reading)
- ◆ Work seriously, but balanced.
- ◆ See and receive Christ in all you meet.
- ◆ Love silence, restrain your speech so God can speak to you.
- ◆ Imitate the example of Christ
- ◆ Show respect to all others, supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behavior.
- ◆ Prefer nothing whatever to Christ!

May the joy of Eastertide be with you throughout the year, and may Christ be ever our guide along our earthly pilgrimage!

-Br. Vincent Ignatius, O.S.B., *Prior*





Welcome to our newest Oblate!

We were pleased to admit **Donna Harrison** as an Oblate Novice on Monday, February 5 during Vespers in the Monastery Chapel. Donna is a parishioner at Trinity Episcopal Church here in Natchez, sings in the choir, and lives around the corner from the Monastery. She is active in our monthly “Retreat Group” that gathers once a month for Vespers, Silent Prayer, a Meal, and spiritual Program. She also tends to dogs and cats when we are away on Community Retreat.



Might God be calling YOU to become a Benedictine Oblate?

We invite you to explore the possibilities with us! Come and walk the way of St. Benedict with our monastic family!



For more information on the Oblate life, contact one of the monks or an Oblate. (also check out our Oblate page on the website!)

The Oblate Formation Manual, St. Joseph’s Monastery

It seems all my life has been a search. I have found much and yet I have always felt ‘there must be more.’ And truly it is so. It is of great comfort that I have come to realize I will never cease looking, delving, searching and that it is the path more common. The un-common aspect would seem to be its realization. With such enlightenment may come a deepening desire to experience the journey to its fullest as the goal or destination. My move toward Oblation has thrown open the windows of the train and surrounded me with a world I once only moved through and now I experience as His and “find Him more and more in all people, things, and events.”

I stepped out in faith and sought my association with St. Joseph’s Monastery, Natchez, MS, and have not looked back, but I have to give a lot of the credit for my reformation and assimilation into the Life of Benedict to the Oblate Formation Manual (OFM) as provided to me at the service of my Reception as an Oblate Novice. I was able to quite readily embrace the greatest values and precepts of the Rule of Benedict through the well-organized and clearly articulated text of this thin volume.

The Preface begins with simple statements of purpose and objective and then, very reasonably, list major sources for the text and abbreviations used throughout the booklet for each source. Simple and effective!

Chapter I, *General Statement Concerning Benedictine Life and Oblate Life*, begins with a succinct explanation, as such, of why one becomes an Oblate. I found this to be especially helpful for as soon as someone hears you are an “Oblate?” they ask, “Why?” To know that you are called to this greater devotion and a life dedicated to finding Christ in the world is one thing, but to verbalize this to the understanding – or at least the acceptance – of those questioning is yet another thing altogether! This first section makes the response so much easier and without it sounding like you took it from a formal text.

Rounding out the initial chapter is a thoughtful addition, *Oblates as “Monasticism’s Gift to the World,”* for it gives the novice, or I would suppose one considering Oblation, a reference point in the history of the Benedictine movement, a way to see how critically the Oblate was considered and how this has been encouraged and promoted, not just endured, by the order all around the world. I found this very helpful.

The second chapter is the nuts and bolts of the process to Oblation and like good pre-marital counseling does a worthy job of covering the “whys and conditions” of becoming an Oblate Novice and Full Oblation. Chapter Three introduces one to the Rule of St. Benedict and gives quite valuable insights into how to read the Rule and the weight to give to its disparate parts.

Chapter Four, *Benedictine Values for Oblates*, sets the stage for one’s new life as a Benedictine with a summary, quite thorough, of the values expressed and expected in the Rule. An Oblate’s life outside a monastery, as detailed here, is not ‘life as usual,’ but one of recognition and dedication to God in all we see and all we do. This is truly the meat of the text and by digesting this chapter, with the foundation of the others, one should be well prepared for what is their life’s journey. The extensive reading list and appendices give the Novice and the Full Oblate a veritable library of references for every appetite.

I can’t imagine how much more arduous my entry in to the process toward Oblation would have been without the aid of this small volume. I would highly recommend it for the Novice Oblate as well as those considering entry into the process.



- Bill Horne, n/OblSB
and Executive Director of Gray Center

Monastery Prayer Schedule

Monday—Saturday

6:00 a.m.	Vigils
6:30 a.m.	Lectio
7:00 a.m.	Lauds
9:00 a.m.	Chapter Work
12:00 p.m.	Midday Prayer– Lunch-Rest Work
5:30 p.m.	Vespers
8:15 p.m.	Silent Prayer in Choir
8:30 p.m.	Compline

Sunday

7:00 a.m.	Lauds
12:15 p.m.	Midday Prayer
5:30 p.m.	Vespers and Devotions
9:00 p.m.	Compline

Visitors to the Monastery

We have been blest with several guests in recent months. In November, just prior to the beginning of Advent, **Fr. Ed Scully**— Rector of St. James' Episcopal Church, Albion, Michigan, joined us for a 5-day retreat.

A wonderful group of twelve from **St. Alban's Episcopal Church**, Bovina, Mississippi visited the Monastery on Saturday, March 3, as a part of their day-trip to Natchez. We gave them a tour of our facility, spoke to them about our monastic life and schedule, entertained questions, and concluded with Br. Nicholas delighting everyone with a batch of our handmade soap! This is a wonderful way for Episcopalians to learn about the monastic life in our Church and we hope to have more parishes bringing groups to visit the Monastery in the future.



March 26-29, we were very pleased to have **Br. Bernard Delcourt, OHC** visit us from Holy Cross Monastery in Westpark, NY.

We are so blest to have established a relationship with our Benedictine brethren at Holy Cross. Br. Vincent will again be visiting Westpark this Summer as a performer in the Gary Schocker Flute Masterclass held there and stay an extra day afterwards with the community.



Maryella Sirmon from St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Mobile, Alabama made a special trip to Natchez on her way back from San Antonio, Texas in order to visit the Monas-



MAY
is
The
Month
of
Mary

The Month of May is traditionally set aside as a month of special devotion to Our Lady among Catholic Christians. At St. Joseph's we dress the statue of Our Lady in our chapel with a beautiful cope, and show our love for Mary in special songs and devotions throughout the month.

Mary— the Mother of Jesus and Queen Heaven— though often neglected by many Christians (or worse— ignored all together!), is a model for all who follow her divine Son, for she was truly his first disciple as well as his loving, nurturing mother. At the Annunciation she gave her “fiat”, her “yes” to God because she trusted Him as loving Father and awesome Creator. Her obedience to Him is instructive for us all when faced with difficult or seemingly impossible tasks before us. All we need do is trust in God who is all-powerful, all-loving, all-merciful— He wants only the best for His children, and, like Mary, we can trust in Him and be free to surrender our wills to His.





Memorial/ Special Prayer Cards Available

It is our pleasure to introduce to you our Memorial Cards wherein our community upholds a deceased person and their family in prayer, or dedicates a special day of prayer for a special occasion for someone special.

Each packet contains a beautiful memorial Card with a picture from the Monastery and a prayer card with envelope for you to send/give to the family as well as a form with return envelope to send to us with the name of the individual to pray for.

Suggested donation: \$10



Prayer Requests
Please use the enclosed envelope to send us your prayer requests Or, e-mail them to us at: prayerintentions@osbms.org



Visit our Website!
www.osbms.org
and see this Newsletter in color!

Incense— why use it?

We use incense in our worship at the monastery frequently, but why? Is it just to add a “catholic” flavor to things?- hardly! The idea that incense is somehow a “catholic thing” is utter nonsense! Incense is first and foremost Biblical– the Scriptures make mention of incense no less than 145 times– and the use of incense in worship comes to us from the Jewish temple tradition dating centuries before the establishment of Christianity. The smoke rising from the burning incense is a powerful symbol of our prayers rising to the heavens and presenting beautiful fragrance before the Throne of God. Worship that is the most effective engages all the senses– sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch– in our offering of praise and thanksgiving. Incense, unlike most any other liturgical element, engages three of these senses: we can *see* the smoke rising and enveloping the church in a mysterious cloud of prayer; we can *smell* the fragrant oils and resins as they burn and imbue the liturgy with the sweet smell of holiness and ‘other’; and we can *hear* the thurible click against the chains that hold it as the priest censens the altar at the Offertory. Incense engages our senses and adds a distinct air of sacredness and solemnity to the liturgy that speaks very clearly of our belief that “this is something special” - the worship of God is deserving of all the splendor and beauty we can muster!

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