



The Procopian Oblate Newsletter

Oblates of Saint Benedict affiliated with Saint Procopius Abbey

December 2008

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Oblation Prayer

God, most holy and loving, strengthen me in my commitment to follow you in the way of Saint Benedict. Through my daily prayer and work may I be inspired to live in Christ and to bring his love to the world and his peace to all hearts. Amen.

Oblates and the Liturgy of the Hours

First in a Series

Most oblates are drawn to the monastery because they are attuned to the monks praying the Office, the Opus Dei, four times each day. Indeed, many oblates pray some part of the Liturgy of the Hours each day, Lauds, Vespers or Compline. In this way the oblate participates in the prayer life of the monastic community. It is a recognized principle, for Benedictines at least, that the Liturgy of the Hours is really the font of the monk's spirituality and the chief ordering principle of daily life. The monastic life is scheduled around the Liturgy of the Hours and Benedictine spirituality is rooted in the Opus Dei.

Most religious communities find their inspiration and spirituality in the charisms of their founders. The Franciscans, for example, are rooted in Francis' own life of poverty, love of nature and spontaneity. He is the font of Franciscan spirituality. For Benedictines it is not a person, not even Benedict, but the Liturgy of the Hours, the psalms and scripture that are

the inspiration. Is this why Benedictines seldom appear exciting, dramatic, and attractive? We do not have a founder known for his charismatic personality and focus.

Benedict makes the liturgy the sole font of the spiritual life. In Chapters 8-20, the largest single block of material in the rule, St. Benedict sets forth how the Opus Dei is to be done - what and how to go about days and nights of praying. He is giving these chapters preeminence of place. Having just finished his chapters on monastic spiritual discipline, he now presents his teaching on prayer in common. Herein he expects his follower to discover the principles of life. Two things stand out: liturgy is the wellspring of the spiritual life and liturgy is the ordering principle of daily life.

Now, St. Benedict makes the gathering together for liturgy almost as important as what you do in the liturgy. Simply coming together for prayer is very important in Benedictine life. The Latin *congregare in unum*, gathered together into one, is a phrase Benedict likes. It almost seems that once the monks have gathered together for liturgy there is some one present who is more than the sum of the assembled. It is something beyond the gathering: it is the presence of Christ. The gathering into one makes Christ present. The whole sense of liturgical spirituality is grounded in a deep awareness of what happens when people are truly gathered in Christ's name for prayer. You become a sign, a sacrament, of Christ's presence. Benedict is aware of this in a thoroughly practical way. He insists on allowing as much time as possible for the assembling. He waits for the assembly to happen. He even says that the first psalms should be stretched out so that people have time to arrive. Once there, the gathering constitutes the sacramental sign of Christ's presence. However, St. Benedict demands that those who come late should take a place apart. They have broken the sign; they have excluded themselves from the assembly.

Is this communal sense of gathering important for oblates when they say the Office alone? To know that your Benedictine community is gathered, is manifesting a presence of Christ, allows the oblates to participate with the monks who are praying at the same time. Benedict recognizes that sometimes the monks may be away from the monastery at the time of certain Hours of Prayer. What does he say? Strive to say the Office with the community, even when you are away, as best you can. St. Benedict seems to understand that there are ways of participation from afar. This is beautifully exemplified historically when the lay brothers did not come to choir yet they would kneel in the fields as a sign of participation. The oblate must find some identification with his or her monastic community as it gathers for prayer. In this way they share in the assembly of monks who together confess the presence of Christ in the Opus Dei.

The early Church was aware that when they gathered for liturgy their prayer became the prayer of Christ. In the Opus Dei Christ speaks to the Father. The idea of praying in one voice was not to ensure that everyone in the choir would sound pleasing. Rather it was the Church's belief that in the gathering, with Christ present, it was Christ who was speaking and uniting the voices. The Church had to pray with one voice and the one voice was Christ's. The gathering creates the sacrament of Christ's presence and it sustains this presence in the psalmody and readings, in the hymns and prayers. It is not so much the monk or the oblate who prays; in the deepest sense it is really Christ in the community who is praying. The same dynamic exists in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. When we gather for Eucharist, the gathering

becomes the sign of Christ who is present and what is Christ doing there? He is uniting everyone in order to speak the prayer of praise, to offer the sacrifice of praise, to the Father. The whole of the Eucharist is Christ's prayer of praise to the Father. It is the same with the Liturgy of the Hours.

In the Opus Dei the psalmody becomes the words that Christ addresses to the Father. The gathered are privileged to eavesdrop on the words that Jesus speaks. Even though we are saying the words ourselves, it is not so much that they are our words or even that our mouth is sounding them for they are really Christ' words. He is the real voice who speaks to the Father. This is especially true of the psalms. They become the intimate language of the man Jesus speaking to his heavenly Father. The intimacy here is a sharing of hopes and desires, expressions of pain and sorrow, of joy and thanksgiving of the great longings of the human spirit. In return, Jesus and we hear the Father, just as intimately, speaking of his longings and giving us assurance that he is the Rock of our salvation our strength and our refuge. Psalmody takes on conversational intimacy between the Father and Jesus. We should not overemphasize the meaning of this or that word in the psalms. What we want most is to become attuned to this intimate conversation between Jesus and his Father. It is a private conversation, but one in which the whole body of Christ participates, all who belong to him and are with him in any moment of prayer.

In John, Chapter 17, we have a good example of Jesus at prayer and we are listening in as Jesus is praying with all his heart that all may be one and that all may know the Father and love one another. Chapter 17 appears to be Jesus' prayer, yes before he dies, but also at the moment of his Ascension. He returns to the Father in exaltation and this is his prayer. We truly listen in on Christ prayerfully reporting and petitioning the Father to fulfill everything he has accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is the testimony of the heart and of that kind of conversation that goes on between Jesus and his Father. The psalms express something of the same thing - what is close to the heart of Jesus and what is close to the heart of the Father. We can only listen to such conversation in silence, awe, hesitancy, and humble reverence. If you have not prayed or listened to Jesus in prayer, it is really very difficult to give good testimony to Jesus. It is important to strive to be the faithful eavesdropper on Jesus at prayer. When we understand that the words we use in liturgical prayer belong to Jesus more than they belong to us, our whole attitude towards those words changes - the words themselves now become the sacrament of Christ speaking. It is his voice, his prayer, and his action. What we do in liturgy is join Jesus in prayer.

When I answer the phone and recognize the person by the voice, I sense who the person is, the nearness of the person, the presence of the person. The moment I recognize the voice, I recognize the person, I greet not the words only but the person speaking. This is exactly what happens in Liturgical words; the words become the vehicle for carrying Christ to us, for sensing the presence of Christ. One of the reasons why liturgical prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, is tied to scripture is because we believe the Bible to be the word of God. By means of scripture's words, I recognize the One to whom these words belong. It is not what is being said as much as that these words are the words of God, of Jesus. When the participants in the gathering are actually using words, they are sounding forth the words that most especially belong to Christ. In liturgy, when you speak you participate in the speaking of Jesus with the Father. The goal of choral recitation is to come to know the presence of

Christ in the words. The words are important, but more important is the One who owns the words, God.

Father Simon O'Donnell, O.S.B.

Valyermo Chronicle, summer 2001

(We wish to express our gratitude to Abbot Francis Benedict, OSB and Fr. Simon McDonnell, OSB for their kind permission in allowing us to reprint this article for our oblates.)

Oblate Calendar December 2008

M	1	John Beche , OSB, Blessed, Abbot of St. Werburgh, Martyr Constantine , Abbot of Javron
Tu	2	
W	3	Francis Xavier , SJ, Presbyter, Missionary (<i>Feast</i>) (Patron of the Diocese of Joliet)
Th	4	John of Damascus , Presbyter, Religious, Doctor of the Church
F	5	Sabbas , Hermit, Abbot of Mar Saba, Archimandrite of Palestine Galganus , OSB Cist, Hermit at Monte Siepe Gerald , OSB, Abbot of Braga
Sa	6	Nicholas , Bishop of Myra Gerald , OSB, Abbot of Soigny
Su	7	Second Sunday of Advent (<i>Psalter week 2</i>)
M	8	Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (<i>Solemnity</i>) Romaricus , OSB, Abbot of Habendum Gunthildis , OSB, Abbess of Thuringia
Tu	9	Balda , OSB, Abbess in Jouarre

		John Roberts , OSB, Monk at Compostella, Missionary in England, Martyr
W	10	Guitmarus , OSB, Abbot of Saint-Riquier Florentius , OSB, Abbot of Carracedo
Th	11	Damasus I , Pope Cian , Hermit Fidweten , OSB, Monk of Redon
F	12	Our Lady of Guadalupe (<i>Feast</i>) Gregory , OSB, Monk of Terracina Colman , Abbot of Glendalough Finian , Bishop of Clonard
Sa	13	Lucy , Virgin, Martyr Edburga , OSB, Nun of Lyminge Odilla , OSB, Abbess at Hohenburg
Su	14	Third Sunday of Advent <i>(Psalter Week 3)</i> Oblate Sunday <i>(Abbey Refectory – 2:30 PM)</i>
M	15	Sigfrid , OSB, Blessed, Abbot of Bonlieu Paul , Hermit on Mt Latros
Tu	16	Ado , OSB, Archbishop of Vienne Beoc , abbot of Lough Derg
W	17	Wivina , OSB, Abbess of Grand Bigard Sturmius , OSB, Abbot of Fulda

Th 18 **Samthan**, Abbess of Clonbroney
Flannan, Bishop of Killaloe

F 19 **Macarius of Würzburg**, OSB, Blessed, Abbot of St. James Monastery
Urban V, OSB, Blessed, Pope

Sa 20 **Dominic**, OSB, Abbot of Silos

Su 21 **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
(Psalter week 4)

M 22 **Adam of Saxony**, OSB Cist, Blessed, Monk of Loccum Abbey
Jutta, OSB, Blessed, Abbess of Disenberg

Tu 23

W 24 **Caranus**, Missionary Bishop of eastern Scotland
Charbel Makhoulf the Maronite, Hermit
Adela, OSB, Abbess of PFalzel

Th 25 **Birth of the Lord (Christmas)** *(Solemnity)*

F 26 **Stephen**, Deacon, Protomartyr *(Feast)*

Sa 27 **John**, Apostle, Evangelist *(Feast)*

Su 28 **Holy Family** *(Feast)*
(Psalter week 1)
Holy Innocents (Feast)

M 29 **David**, King of Judah and Israel, Prophet, Psalmist
(Nameday of Fr. David)
Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, Martyr
(Nameday of Fr. Becket)

Tu 30 **Ralph**, OSB, Abbot of Vaucelles

W 31 **Peter**, OSB, Blessed, Abbot of Subiaco, Martyr

Monks of the Abbey celebrating December Namedays:

29 Fr. David Turner, OSB St. David the Prophet

29 Fr. Becket Franks, OSB St. Thomas Becket

Please remember in your prayers the deceased members of the St. Procopius community who died in the month of December. May they rest in peace.

1	1946	Abbot Procopius Neuzil, OSB
6	1974	Fr. Benedict Bauer, OSB
10	1936	Fr. Lawrence Vesey, OSB
11	1965	Fr. Raymond Koman, OSB
11	2003	Abbot Thomas Havlik, OSB
14	1918	Br. Lawrence Tremel, OSB
15	1971	Fr. Mathias Kucera, OSB
17	1950	Fr. Leonard Gerl, OSB
18	1968	Fr. Procopius Koukal, OSB
19	1970	Fr. Justin Spoden, OSB
20	1961	Br. Paul Pesko, OSB
21	1968	Br. Andrew Havlik, OSB
21	1986	Fr. Mark Walz, OSB
22	1949	Fr. Bartholomew Kvitek, OSB
23	1961	Abbot Ambrose Ondrak, OSB
24	1967	Fr. Stephen Srahulek, OSB

28 1926 Br. Ulrich Dostalek, OSB
29 2004 Fr. Jerome Dobry, OSB
30 1945 Fr. Ildephonse Brandstetter, OSB

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

*What are you reading?? Send your recommendations to us at:
st_procopius_oblates@yahoo.com or mail them to the Abbey. We look forward to
hearing from you.*

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

God our father,

you gave us your son Jesus to be our Shepherd.

May we listen attentively to his voice

as he guides us on our journey toward a life of service.

Bless our Abbey of St. Procopius and our families

with men who will generously respond

to your call of service as monks and priests.

Help us to recognize the signs of your Spirit

and to encourage our young people

whatever their vocation may be.

We ask this in the name of Jesus

and in the power of the Spirit.

Amen.

ABBEY PRAYER SCHEDULE

Effective August 2008

Sunday		Monday - Friday	
Lauds	6:25 AM	Lauds	6:00 AM
Conventual Mass	11:00 AM	Noon Prayer	12:00 Noon
Solemn Vespers	5:00 PM	Conventual Mass	4:50 PM
Compline	7:00 PM	Vespers	7:00 PM
Saturday			
Lauds	6:25 AM		
Conventual Mass	7:00 AM		
Noon Prayer	12:00 Noon		
Vespers	5:00 PM		
Compline	7:00 PM		

We are invited to pray with the monks at any of these times.

Announcing an upcoming Abbey event

Advent at the Abbey

December 13, 2008

9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle

This is an extra event provided to us by the Abbey and the University. The December Oblate meeting is, as usual, on Sunday, December 14. Hope to see you on both of these days.

PRAYERS FOR EVERYDAY USE

For Humility

O God, who does withstand the proud and bestows your grace on the humble, grant us the virtue of true humility, of which your only begotten Son showed in himself a pattern to all the faithful: that we may never anger you by our pride, but rather in lowly submission receive the gifts of your grace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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