



The Procopian Oblate Newsletter

Oblates of Saint Benedict affiliated with Saint Procopius Abbey

February 2009

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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

(Third in the series, continued from the January newsletter.)

My vision of the Office, as people gathering together, is very much like a meal. Last time we talked about memory making the words alive, a sacrament of Christ's presence. In this article, I would like to look at two words that occur in the psalms. There are other dimensions to what we do with words than participating in Christ's saving activity. The words I want to look at are connected with psalms that have to do with the history of God's deeds and psalms that reflect on God's law or way of life. These are the historical psalms and the wisdom psalms.

In these psalms you find translations like these: I remember, I reflect, I hold in my mind, I meditate, I heed wisely, I consider, I turn over in my mind. These translations reflect two words frequently used in the wisdom and historical psalms.

The first word is to remember or put something into the mind. The other is similar but means to consider or think about. In Hebrew, these are two different words. They are loaded words and the first one "to remember" (zkr), and the other "to reflect" (scl) are found frequently in the psalms.

The first word comes from a root that means to dig. Part of what we are doing in remembering what God has done is that we are digging into the meaning of something. Why do we say psalms over and over again, even memorizing psalms—we do this because we want to dig into the meaning. In the Passover meal the assembled dig into the meaning of the food, remember, or get into the meaning of the food. We cannot just come to the Eucharist, take the Body and Blood of Christ, and reflect no more on it. However, this sense of remembering demands that we dig into the meaning of the food. We want to examine the food, the content. A second meaning is to share. We have no sense of this in our word remembering. Why did they

associate these meanings? Because when we gather for a meal, a feast, we would not simply dig into the food, but we would dig into the meaning and we would want to share the meaning of the food with others. For example, the manna of the desert experience, each would share what it tasted like for them.

To dig in and to share is like active remembering. When you hear in the psalms, “I remember the deeds of the Lord” it is not simply rehearsing what God has done, but digging into the meaning of what God has done and sharing the sense or experience that others have of the word. This happens in the communal office, when we are together. We examine what this really means and what it means if I test the word(s) with somebody else.

I think that this should help us understand that when we call the Eucharist a remembering of the acts of Jesus, part of that remembering is to go to the deepest sense of the words that are before us. Not in the sense of study or scholarship, but we try to get at the content. One of the best examples is psalm 119, that long psalm that is a continuous examination or digging into what the law means. What is it like, what does it mean? Go through psalm 119 and you will find many synonyms for the law and for what the law is doing for us: mandate, command, order and this law is wonderful and is a delight and a joy. Go through that psalm and substitute the word “Christ” for the synonyms for law, and you will find that your Christ is my love, my delight, and my joy.

The synonyms for remembering, reflecting, going over, mulling over, holding before my eyes are all synonyms for digging in.

The other word is reflection, consideration. I want to look at its root in the sense of gathering—to gather grapes from the vine, or fruit from the tree, or vegetables from the garden—that sense of gathering brings a deep meaning to reflecting or considering. You read in the psalms “let the wise man consider these things.” To consider these things is to find as much as you can know about God through the Bible and prayer. The psalms are meant to help you gather together, not simply your thoughts, but what God has done and is doing. So the sense of gathering things together is to go over them again and again. This means we bring together as much of what we can of our own or others’ experiences of God and his doings. You have a task of bringing on to your table as much as you can, your information about God. That is what the psalms are: the table of the journey, the *vademecum*, what I take on my way, what accompanies me on my journey. The Psalter is like that because the psalms have so many different experiences of God. The Psalter has gathered together what God has done or is doing.

The same word is also used to describe people gathered for a meal. When it is used to gather people at table the implication is that you invite as many as you can. Go out to the highways and byways and invite them all. The most inclusive table you can create is what is to be desired. It can also mean a table at which many dishes have been gathered together.

How do I use my thinking, my heart, when I am doing the psalms to find out or learn more about God? In my considering and reflecting I want to see all the God has done and is doing. In the Christian and Benedictine tradition, it seems to me that the Psalter is that tremendous resource in which I can spend all of my memory and consideration.

How do I use my imagination, my mind, and my heart when I am doing the psalms? In some way, it involves these two actions of remembering and considering. This sense is very dependent upon me. It is not simply an action of grace, but it is my effort and my application of myself in the recitation of the psalms.

In the psalms, I will meditate on the law of the Lord day and night. To meditate is to murmur the law day and night. In the Jewish (and Benedictine?) tradition to murmur is to provide a drone that accompanies the prayer, a humming of the words. The reason for the hours of prayer is that we all have time in the night and a time in the day to murmur the words of the Lord. When the good Jew is at prayer there is movement. This is important, we do not often move at prayer, but the essence of the movement is

that the whole personality, the whole body is involved in that murmuring; total involvement that shows the intensity of the remembering and considering, not simply an idle thought but a constant application of one's self to the words. I think that in the past there was much more a sense of the movement, total involvement, total presence, engagement, and the ritual movement for example. The action of remembering and considering involves choreography. It involves movement; it involves the body in rhythm with the words. At table for example we still experience things that are choreographed—blessings, toasts, seats we take and everybody does the same things, more than simply tasting the food. What we do in the Opus Dei does involve some choreography, and a total presence. It is not simply an intellectual act; prayer of any kind can never be that. Prayer that is involved in remembering and considering is not simply nostalgic remembrance, but it is being present to them, engaging in them.

There is something very objective about using the Psalter. The objectivity is that you are always using the words of the psalms as the means for remembering and considering. It is not like centering prayer or transcendental meditation. By objectivity I mean that we remember or consider the words printed on the page or memorized and these words are not our intervention, not our subjective statements. We are using words that are given. We are remembering the words on the page or considering the words on the page. We are considering actual words of another and this is one of the most difficult things today. Many people have very beautiful ideas about God and they are more magnificent, at least for them, than what is in the Bible. It is very much like at table, at Thanksgiving, the feast is prepared and you arrive with a peanut butter sandwich, it separates you objectively from all the others at the table. To sever the connection with the Psalter is to sever yourself from this objectivity. All that you consider are your own ideas. In psalmody you must be much more focused on the words. It is as if a script has been given to us. And this script is the words and the activity is the involvement with those words. The script is the Psalter, and fidelity to the text is where we receive such rich insights about God and us. The Psalter, the psalms, is sufficient for a rich entrée into who God is and what he is like. When I use the psalms as this rich source, what I am doing is confessing my own inadequacy about the knowledge and experience of God. That is very important for neither you nor I have adequate experience or words to tell the story of God. This involves an act of trust, no matter what else I study, if in my prayer I stay focused on these psalms. There is the potential to understand the abundance of God. Here I find more about God than if I consulted all the gurus in the world about God. The important thing here is to remain focused on the words. You do not flee from the words you have before you, but rather this demands of focus and a fidelity to the script.

If you stopped any one of us on a given day, we would have to admit that we have had no thought about God. But focusing on the Psalter in a faith way, over many very faithful days and faithful months and faithful years we come to a rich understanding of God and we are built up into strong tabernacles of God's living word. That is what these two words imply.

What this gives us finally is a common source for common prayer. It is very important not to discourage personal prayer, but the Psalter and the church's prayer of the Hours gives us something that we hold in common. It forms us not simply as individual Christians but as Christians together. It provides us together the riches of the experience of what God is and is doing. The Psalter holds for us what we have in common, in tradition, a way of sharing, and a way of holding onto the wonders revealed in Scripture. Then we remember and consider that we are always very close to the vocation that we will tell the story; I will tell others, I will proclaim how wonderful God is and how powerful are his deeds.

Indeed, in the Liturgy of the Hours there is a ministry, a vocation: to tell others the story of God and his works. When this is done faithfully, we are prepared for the ministry of telling the story to many others.

Fr Simon O'Donnell, OSB [Valyermo Chronicle](#)

(We wish to express our gratitude to Abbot Francis Benedict, OSB and Fr. Simon McDonnell, OSB of St. Andrew's Abbey, Valyermo CA for their kind permission in allowing us to reprint this article for our oblates.)

Oblate Calendar February 2009

Su	1	Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time <i>(Psalter week 4)</i>
M	2	Presentation of the Lord <i>(Feast)</i> Lawrence , OSB, Archbishop of Canterbury Marquard , OSB, Bishop of Hildesheim, Martyr
Tu	3	Blaise , Bishop of Sebastea, Martyr Berlinda , OSB, Nun at Moorsel, Hermitess Oliver , OSB, Monk at Ancona
W	4	Rabanus , OSB, Archbishop of Mainz Rembert , Archbishop of Bremen and Hamburg Vulgisus , OSB, Bishop and Abbot of Lobbe
Th	5	Agatha , Virgin, Martyr
F	6	Mel , Bishop of Ardagh, and Melchu <i>(Nameday of Fr. Mel)</i>
Sa	7	Amulwinus , OSB, Abbot and Bishop of Lobbes Luke the Younger <i>(or Wonder Worker)</i> , Hermit
Su	8	Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time <i>(Psalter week 1)</i> Oblate Sunday <i>(Abbey Refectory – 2:30 PM)</i>
M	9	Alto , OSB, Abbot of Altomuenster Ansbert , OSB, Archbishop of Rouen
Tu	10	Scholastica , OSB, Religious Founder, Abbess at Plombariola, Austreberta , OSB, Abbess at Pavilly
W	11	Benedict , OSB, Abbot of Aniane Ardagnus , OSB, Abbot of Tournus

Our Lady of Lourdes

- Th 12 **Benedict**, OSB, Bishop of Albenga
Goslin, OSB, Abbot of St. Solutor
Humbelina, OSB, Abbess of Julley
- F 13 **Ermengild of Ely**, OSB, Widow, Abbess of Minster
Gosbert, OSB, Bishop of Osnabruck
Huna of Ely, OSB Monk, Hermit
- Sa 14 **Cyril**, Monk, Missionary, and **Methodius**, Bishop, Missionary
Antoninus, OSB Abbot of Sorrento
- Su 15 **Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time**
(Psalter week 2)
- M 16 **Aganus of Airola**, OSB Abbot of St. Gabriel
- Tu 17 **Benedict of Cagliari**, OSB, Monk of St. Saturninus, Bishop of Dolia
Constabilis, OSB, Abbot of Cava
Fintan, Hermit and Abbot at Clonenagh
- W 18 **Angilbert**, OSB, Abbot of Centula
Colman, Abbot and Bishop of Lindisfarne
Simeon of Jerusalem, Bishop, Martyr
- Th 19 **Beatus**, OSB Monk of Liebana
Boniface, OSB Cist., Bishop of Lausanne
George, OSB, Bishop of Lodève
- F 20 **Eleutherius**, Bishop of Byzantium, Martyr
Eucherius, OSB, Bishop of Orléans
Wulfric of Haselbury, Hermit
- Sa 21 **Peter Damian**, Bishop, Religious, Doctor of the Church
Germanus and **Randoald**, OSB, Martyrs
Gundebert, OSB, Bishop of Sens, Abbot of Senones, Hermit

Su	22	Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time <i>(Psalter week 3)</i>
M	23	Polycarp , Bishop, Martyr Medrald , OSB, Abbot of Vendôme Milburga , OSB, Abbess of Wenlock Mildgytha , OSB, Nun in Northumbria
Tu	24	Betto , OSB, Monk at Saint-Colombe, Bishop of Auxerra John Theristus , OSB, Monk
W	25	Ash Wednesday <i>(EF)</i> <i>(Psalter week 4)</i>
Th	26	Matilda of Spanheim , OSB, Blessed, Hermitess Leo , OSB, Blessed, Abbot of Saint-Bertin
F	27	John , OSB, Abbot of Gorze
Sa	28	Romanus and Lupicinus , Hermits, Abbots of Condat

Monks of the Abbey celebrating February Namedays:

6 Fr. Mel Uzdrowski, OSB St. Mel

Thank you to those who have remembered our monks on their nameday in your prayers and with notes and phone calls. The listing for the month will continue to appear in each newsletter.

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

3 1935 Fr. Valerian Havlovic, OSB
7 1952 Fr. Deacon Eugene Utlak, OSB
8 1970 Fr. Hilary Jurica, OSB
10 1945 Fr. Clement Hrdlicka, OSB
12 1918 Br. Procopius Skolout, OSB
13 1942 Br. Bernard Bizik, OSB
15 1958 Fr. Athanasius Reszek, OSB
17 1937 Abbot Valentine Kohlbek, OSB

19	2002	Fr. Clement Sobr, OSB
20	1960	Fr. Bernard Haman, OSB
22	1958	Fr. Alphonse Biskup, OSB
26	1964	Br. Augustine Roubik, OSB
26	1982	Fr. Wenceslaus Michalicka, OSB
27	1924	Abbot John Nepomucene, OSB

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

A friend of the Oblates, Fr. Cris, suggests:

Because God is Real. Sixteen Questions, One Answer, Peter Kreeft, Ignatius Press, 2008

What are you reading?? Keep these suggestions coming. 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

Holy Father, look upon this humanity of ours, that is taking its first steps along the path of the Third Millennium. Its life is still deeply marked by hatred, violence and oppression, but the thirst for justice, truth and grace still finds a space in the hearts of many people, who are waiting for someone to bring salvation, enacted by You through Your Son Jesus.

There is the need for courageous heralds of the Gospel, for generous servants of suffering humanity. Send holy priests to Your Church, we pray, who may sanctify Your people with the tools of Your grace. Send numerous consecrated men and women, that they may show Your holiness in the midst of the world.

Send holy labourers into Your vineyard, that they may labour with the fervour of charity and, moved by Your Holy Spirit, may bring the salvation of Christ to the farthest ends of the Earth. Amen.

John Paul II

ABBHEY PRAYER SCHEDULE

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	Conventional 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.

Please remember in your prayers Ed Lesser. Ed was a former oblate. May he rest in peace.

PRAYERS FOR EVERYDAY USE

Prayer for the Abbot of our Monastery

Almighty and everlasting God, who alone works great wonders, pour down upon your servant, Abbot Dismas, and upon the flock entrusted to him, the Spirit of your saving grace: and, that he may please you in truth, Pour fourth upon him the continual dew of your blessing. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

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