Spirit & Life

Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Clyde, Missouri

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From Sister Dawn Annette

The raising of Lazarus was the last straw for those who opposed Jesus. Why was this so? This wasn't the first time Jesus had raised the dead. He had raised the little daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow in Nain. Lazarus, who was dead and buried for four days, seems to be the last straw.

This is a rather frightening idea. What if all those things we thought we had safely buried were no longer safe in their tombs? We have all buried things. Some things we are proud of burying. We have buried grudges; we have buried hatchets; we have buried hurts. Indeed, we have buried feelings of all kinds: proud feelings, angry feelings, lonely feelings, sexual feelings, and crazy, giddy, and childish feelings. We have buried memories, often unpleasant memories, about family, friends, and ourselves. At least once, we couldn't keep these memories in check and remain at peace. We may even have said that the past is dead and buried, but what if the past isn't safely buried? What God wants the graves to be opened?

Past events brought about choices. Our choices brought about events that have brought each of us to the here and now of our lives. We are who we are because of where we have been, what we have done, and what we have learned in the process, including our relationship with God. Faith is a gift, but trust is learned through experience. We can trust God to take care of tomorrow because we saw what God did with yesterday.

Contemplative prayer is quietly sitting in the now, being aware of the divine presence. It is a matter of letting God take over our lives so that we no longer need to keep things buried. Sometimes buried things pop up in prayer. Sometimes they break through like volcanoes. At other times, it seems that an inner stone moves, and a tomb is left standing open.

How do we face an open tomb? Four days or forty years after death, I am still concerned about the stench. Fortunately, God does not share my prejudices. The God we believe in knows what it's like being left in a tomb.

In John's Gospel, Jesus tells us that he is the resurrection and the life. Whatever is brought to life in Christ is brought to Christ's life, healed, whole, and made new. We who stand at the door of long locked tombs have no more cause to fear or grieve. We have only to prayerfully unbind ourselves and let go.

Sr. Dawn Annette Mills
Prioress General

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Who We Are

The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration are a contemporary monastic community with a distinctive dedication to the Eucharist. We serve the Church through our contemplative prayer, and witness to God's presence in our world through community life, hospitality, and a ministry of the word, in ways uniquely appropriate to our monastery.

Spirit&Life

Volume 118:6 March-April 2023

6

12

15

FEATURES

3 **Every Person Has a Story**
Sr. Mary Jane Romero, OSB

6 **Goodbye and Hello, Alleluia**
Mary S. Sheridan

8 **Innocence, First Communion, and the Bread of Life**
Rev. John Hagemann, OSB

10 **It's Time**
Sr. Laurentia Doyle, OSB

12 **Sacraments and Grace**
George Hall

15 **Psalms for Jews, Christians, and Muslims**
Rabbi Allen S. Maller

DEPARTMENTS

From Sr. Dawn Annette
From the Editor
Book Reviews 18
Community News 19

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FROM THE EDITOR

When I was a small child, there was an empty lot around the corner from our apartment building. Although the lot was full of broken glass and weeds, it became our pet cemetery where hamsters and parakeets were given proper burials. Funeral services for goldfish were held in the bathroom, and their burial was by sea.

The empty lot, now an apartment building, was also our happy hunting ground for insects of various sorts. Once we tried to make a pet of a praying mantis, but our mother strongly objected. We thought that inchworms were cute. We liked the ladybugs best. If one landed on us, we recited the nursery rhyme:

Ladybug! Ladybug!
Fly away home.
Your house is on fire.
And your children all gone.

We did not know the second stanza, which I've learned from googling:

All except one,
And that's little Ann,
For she crept under
The frying pan. (www.dltk-teach.com/rhymes)

Wikipedia tells us that the rhyme may have been sung in England as a warning at a time when Catholics were persecuted. Alternatively, the rhyme may be related to a story that, after prayer, Our Lady brought ladybugs to destroy a plague of insects that was destroying crops (en.wikipedia.org).

In recent years, Missouri has been infested by Asian beetles. These beetles closely resemble friendly ladybugs, only they bite. Ladybugs eat aphids and are not destructive. There are more than six thousand species of ladybugs, and some have no spots.

All of this makes me think of variety and change. I enjoy the change of seasons. I was born and raised in New York; I have lived for many years in Missouri, and for shorter times, in Arizona, Oklahoma, and Wyoming. I look forward to spring, dread summer, and await fall. For the most part, I tolerate winter. God is sovereign over all change, but he is a constant in my life. I think of Psalm 18:

I love you, Lord, my strength,
Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer,
My God, my rock of refuge,
my shield, my saving horn, my stronghold!

Rocks are hard and last a long time. In that, they are reliable.

Sometimes, we think that things will never change. The Book of Ecclesiastes says:

What has been, that will be; what has been done,
that will be done. Nothing is new under the sun!
Even the thing of which we say, "See, this is new!"
has already existed in the ages that preceded us.
(Ecclesiastes 1:9-10)

The prophet Jeremiah asks, "Can a leopard change its spots?" We are inclined to say "no." The prophet means that a person who is accustomed to doing evil will find it difficult to do good.

We all have basic characteristics and patterns of behavior that are difficult to change. But the Lord Jesus calls to change. The kingdom of God is one of repentance and forgiveness. To repent is to forsake sin and evil; to forgive is to release feelings of resentment and the desire for vengeance. Repentance and forgiveness require change. Saint Paul says we are to "be transformed by the renewal of our minds" (Rom 12:2). As we observe Lent and celebrate Easter, let us pray to be transformed in Christ's image.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

Every Person Has a Story

Sr. Mary Jane Romero, OSB

Our sisters have fascinating stories on how they came to northwestern Missouri, to a place called Clyde in a hill country. Clyde is barely a speck on some maps. Some sisters came from Europe, as did our founders, Mother Anselma and her four companions, who came from Switzerland. Others came from Germany and Ireland. After them, in our history of 148 years, women came to enter the monastery from many different states and from Mexico, Canada, Newfoundland, Vietnam, South Korea.

Each one sister a story. This article will highlight four of our sisters who reached the age of one hundred years or more.

Sister Mary Cunigunda Eikelmann
Born: March 12, 1872
Died: March 31, 1972

Anna Eikelmann was born at Saint Helena, Nebraska. She was fifteen when she entered Clyde. Four of her sisters also entered at Clyde: Sisters Mary Antonia, Bonaventure, Salome. and Columba. At profession, Anna became Sister Mary Cunigunda.

Born and raised on a farm, Sister Mary Cunigunda was accustomed to hard physical labor and served the community generously. For twenty-five years she provided the community and the orphanage that was staffed by the sisters with homemade bread. For this task, she rose at 3:30 in the morning to get wood and coal for the stove in the basement.

Sister Mary Cunigunda had a beautiful alto voice and contributed much to the Divine Office and Eucharist. She loved to sing short German songs and hymns at recreation. In her later years, the sisters said that she resembled Pope John XXIII, both in appearance and personality.

In 1923, her long career in the altar bread department began at our Mundelein convent. Even in her nineties, she helped with sorting altar breads. She faithfully kept her daily hour of adoration in the infirmary, chapel, and prayed the Stations of the Cross for as long as she was able.

Sister Mary Cunigunda is the pride and joy of the Congregation as the first member to have lived a full one hundred years, eighty-five of which were spent in the religious life. She died peacefully on Good Friday, March 31, 1972.

Sister Mary Juliana Bresson
Born: December 9, 1904
Died: October 17, 2007

Alice Callista Bresson was born in Akron, Ohio. She wrote, "My first experience of Clyde was through our magazine, which my mother subscribed to. Since I knew about sisters, I wanted to be

one. After two years of high school, I told my mother I wanted to go to Clyde. I was not quite sixteen at the time and the sisters hardly knew what to do with me. They sent me to our academy. Then they sent me to our printery, where I was initiated in setting type, one letter at a time in the stick."

Sister Mary Juliana was very aware of our ministry through the printed word. She persuaded Father Lucas Etlin, who was chaplain at the time, to upgrade the department. She learned to set type in three different ways: first by hand, then with an intertype, and finally with an IBM composer. After this she was assigned to library work, where she acquired book knowledge and the skill needed in each stage of record-keeping. She described her work as an in-house dental assistant, "I learned to take, not only dental x-rays, but also pictures of lungs, hands, feet, and so forth."

Many sisters credited Sister Mary Juliana's good health to her daily walks. She wrote of this activity, "For many years, I walked a mile and a half nearly every day as I prayed my rosary. I've been known to walk outside on days when it was only two degrees." Not only did Sister Juliana love to pray the rosary, she also devoted herself to making rosaries.

A highlight of her life was a trip taken during her golden jubilee year, which she described as, "a gift beyond my wildest dream, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We saw Athens, Cairo, Memphis, where I even rode a camel, Jordan, and from there, into the Holy Land. Every minute spent in that holy place was an inspiration."

Sister Mary Juliana died a few weeks before her 103rd birthday.

Sister Mary Natalia Barela
Born: July 8, 1908
Died: December 25, 2013

Sofia Elizabeth Barela was born in Rancho de Albuquerque, New Mexico. Sofia started school before she knew a word of English. She went to public school and Saint Vincent Academy, from which she graduated in 1926. "I don't remember where I heard about Clyde. The very name, 'Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration' thrilled me. I just knew that is where I belonged."

Sofia left for Clyde in September 1929. She enjoyed the postulancy, and wrote of these first months, "I enjoyed being a postulant; I wasn't surprised at anything. I did not know Latin and the Divine Office was in Latin; I also didn't know German and many of the community prayers were in German, but I was not bothered by this. I was in love with God, and this is where he wanted me to be."

At profession, Sofia became Sister Mary Natalia. She was transferred to Tucson where she lived for twenty-one years. She joined the contemplative prayer group and became an avid reader of Saint Teresa of Avila. She would say impishly, "Spanish mystics have to stick together." She said, "I no longer have a set time for personal prayer. God is always with me, and I just enjoy his presence all the time."

Sister Natalia moved to Clyde to Our Lady of Rickenbach in 2001. As the years passed Sister Natalia expressed her readiness to join our Lord and wondered at why he was "delaying in coming." On December 24, the sisters kept vigil throughout the night, and she was welcomed into heaven on December 25, her name day.

Sister Natalia holds the record for longevity in the congregation at 105 years and 170 days. She was in the eighty-second year of her monastic profession.

Sister Mary Priscilla Trost
Born: August 12, 1916
Died: September 22, 2016

Emily Mary Trost was born in Hamilton, Ohio. The family struggled after their father was sent to prison for trying to rob a bank. Their mother and family moved to Pittsburgh. She wrote about the years of the Great Depression, "Times were hard, and the weather was cold in Pennsylvania. Mother caught frequent colds and developed tuberculosis." When Emily was eleven, she and her two brothers, Bill and Harry, became wards of the state. When she turned eighteen, Emily went to Cincinnati to be close to her mother.

Emily had been baptized a Methodist, and taught Sunday school. She met a Catholic priest whose explanation of Catholicism inspired her to convert at age nineteen. Emily found a job as a housekeeper and nursemaid to a Catholic family. She took care of a child, Stephen, until he was four years old. Stephen contacted Sister Priscilla when she was ninety-three to thank her.

Emily learned about the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration from the booklet, Eucharistic Adoration. She wrote, "It was the truth of the Real Presence that inspired me to embrace the Catholic faith." She applied and entered on December 7, 1941: "It was Pearl Harbor Day. I have been happily wedded to Christ through war and peace, through thick and thin, through love ever since." At her profession, she received the name Mary Priscilla. Sister Priscilla lived in several communities. Her tasks included the altar bread department, sacristy, and sewing. One of her favorite projects was refinishing the niches that housed the relics in the Relic Chapel. She wrote, "What an exhilarating joy it was when all 144 niches were back in the Relic Chapel, and the saints' relics could be venerated again."

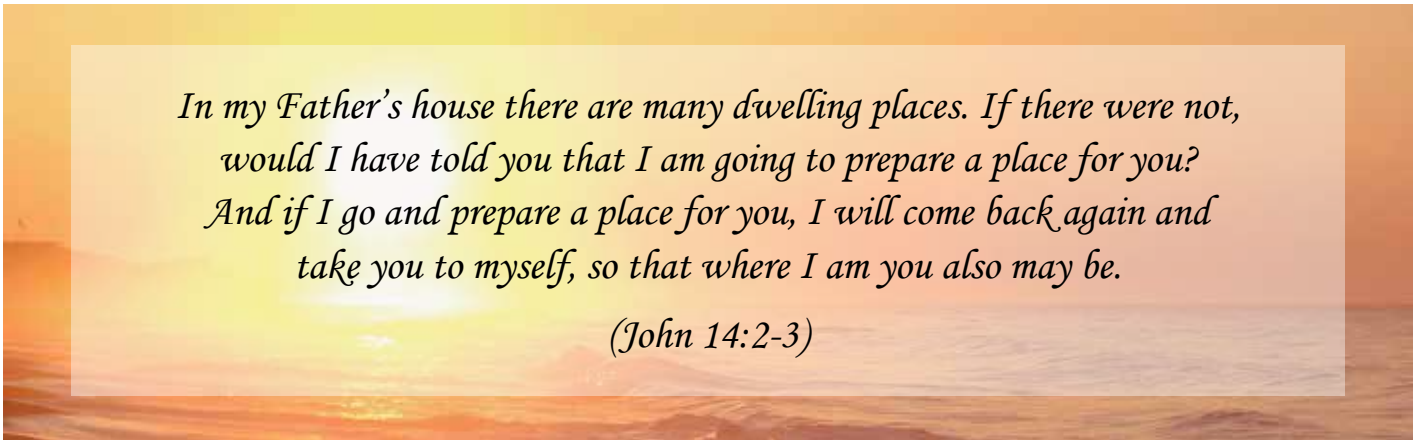
In 1978, Sister Priscilla joined Sister Pascaline in Oklahoma where they wanted to create an atmosphere for contemplative prayer. Sister Priscilla was a member of Osage Monastery+Forest of Peace until it closed in 2008. She then transferred to Our Lady of Rickenbach and died there at the age of one hundred years.

CONCLUSION

I am amazed at the way God led us all together to Clyde. Whenever I ask my sisters, "How did you hear of Clyde? What was it that attracted you?" I find that everyone has a story, mysterious, and every story connects to the wonderful events of our own, like Shakespeare's Hamlet said:

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.

Editor's note: Sister Mary Jane died on August 27, 2022. A former editor of ***Spirit&Life***, she was a frequent contributor to our magazine.



Goodbye and Hello, Alleluia

Mary S. Sheridan

> Such words as amen, hallelujah, glory, and others of like sacred association are repeated endlessly and meaninglessly in the apparent belief that they have in them some strange power for good. This can be no more than high grade magic. It will pay us to search our own hearts thoroughly to discover just why we use these words.
>
> Aiden Wilson Tozer

If we pay any attention to the liturgy at all, we notice that there are times of the year when *alleluia* is said and times when it is not. When it is not said, and some lengthy substitution takes place, there is always that person who forgets at the top of their voice. Sometimes that person is us.

In his Rule, Benedict prescribed times when the *alleluia* was said as part of the daily Office; times when it was to be said more often, in the Easter season, and times when it was not to be said at all, during Lent. It is part of rejoicing in the Western church, and it is suppressed when Christians focus on the death of Christ. It returns triumphant with his resurrection. Today, we sing or say the *alleluia* at the beginning of the Office, before the Gospel, and at other times and places, varying with the season. Beloved hymns include *alleluia*, especially at Easter. It has even been used as a sign of hope at funerals. However, I wonder how often we have searched our hearts to understand its meaning.

It was not until I started volunteering with the Benedictine Sisters in Tucson that I witnessed the custom of saying goodbye to the *alleluia* before Lent and welcoming it back at Easter. The sisters had a beautiful *alleluia* banner with ribbon streamers. Sister Cecilia Rose solemnly carried it out of the chapel before Ash Wednesday and joyously brought it back in at the Easter Vigil. Sister Lenora told me that *alleluia* was inscribed on a football at Notre Dame and kicked out of the church. I have not seen this described elsewhere.

As Lent approaches, these memories lead me to a little more study. Where does *alleluia* come from? What does it mean? My own favorite definition is, "Hooray for God!" but that, I fear, is not exact.

Wikipedia tells us that *alleluia* means "praise the Lord" or a variant such as "praise ye the Lord." It is derived from the Greek form of the Hebrew "hallelujah," which comes from *hallel*, meaning praise, and "yah," an abbreviation of the name of God. *Hallelujah* and *alleluia* have the same meaning and are often used interchangeably. The word is found in both the Old and the New Testaments, primarily in the psalms and the Book of Revelation. For example, many psalms start with *alleluia* or sometimes "Praise the Lord." For example:

- Psalm 112: Hallelujah! Blessed the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commands.

- Psalm 136: Praise the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever.
- Psalm 146: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, my soul; I will praise the Lord all my life, sing praise to my God while I live.
- Psalm 147: Hallelujah! How good to sing praise to our God; how pleasant to give fitting praise.

In the New Testament, most references to *alleluia* are found in the Book of Revelation. For example:

> After this I heard what sounded like the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying: "Alleluia! Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments." . . . The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen. Alleluia." A voice coming from the throne said: "Praise our God, all you his servants, [and] you who revere him, small and great." (Revelation 18:1,4,5)

The word *alleluia* evolved through Greek and other translations over several centuries. It is most traditional and common in Christian use today while *hallelujah* is more common in Jewish usage. But there are many exceptions. For example, the Hallelujah Chorus in Handel's *Messiah*, based on Old Testament passages about salvation history leading up to Christ, celebrates the resurrection. How joyously we love to sing it!

In common language, *hallelujah*, *alleluia*, and "Praise the Lord" are often used as exclamations of joy and gratitude, sometimes consciously religious and sometimes nearly profane. But they can also reflect mixed emotions. A popular song by Leonard Cohen refers to a "broken hallelujah," the soul seeking to praise God even in the midst of grief and defeat. In another of his songs, *Anthem*, Cohen says that our brokenness is "how the light gets in."

Alleluia, says Gina Christian, "is both holy and defiant, and it is the only fitting response to a world divided, confused, cynical, addicted and hostile—because it attests to a God who is the source of everlasting life." She adds:

> Murmur it to your children as a lullaby, and whisper it to your old ones as they die. Howl it in your agony and mouth it even as you weep. Write it on your hands and in your hearts: Alleluia, for the Lord is risen, and with him we rise too; alleluia."

In a similar vein, Elizabeth Alexander has written of a "grateful alleluia," a "working alleluia," and a "healing alleluia" as we praise God and try to effect change in the world. Alleluias, we could say, are for all seasons, for the hope that "All will be well and all will be well and all manner of things will be well," as Julian of Norwich said. But *alleluia* is especially for the Easter season, for the promise of the risen Christ, the promise that, beyond all our imagining, God can bring life out of death and make a way where there is no way.

Let us know what we are saying and let us say it with joy. Let us understand what it means when it is gone and gladly welcome it back. When done consciously, when we have searched our hearts and discovered what it means, repeating the alleluia is not simply "high grade magic." It does have some power for good. After all, as is attributed to Saint Pope John Paul II, "We are the Easter people, hallelujah is our song."

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Innocence, First Communion, *and* the Bread of Life

Rev. John Hagemann, OSB

A few years ago, I traveled back to my home parish, Saint Michael's, in Albion, Nebraska, for the First Communion of a great-nephew, Aiden Nore, and a niece, Alison Hoppe. I had also baptized them approximately seven years before. I can't begin to recall the many memories that came back to me of my own First Communion in the same church and school where I was formed. At this time of the of the year, when many second graders make their First Communion, I would like to express some of my own memories of that special day in my life.

The first memory is the person who did the most to prepare me and my class for the reception of Holy Communion. That person is none other than the teacher I had in the first and second grade classroom. In the mid-1950s, one teacher had two grades in a classroom. Saint Michael's elementary school was a very new school in those years, and the teachers were all Benedictine Sisters from Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, South Dakota. My teacher for those formative years was Sister Adelaide Yeoman, OSB. She was incredibly young, only twenty-two when she was first assigned to Saint Michael's in Albion. She taught there from 1955-58. First Communions were in the fall of year, and preparation was already happening by the end of first grade. Because we had the second graders in our classroom, we were hearing the preparatory work of that class before our own prep time. I remember memorizing prayers and trying to develop the proper disposition to receive the Body of Christ. There was a lot of practice processing in and out of church and lining up properly at the communion rail. We all received Holy Communion on the tongue; there was no choice in those day. Our fast was not just an hour before receiving Holy Communion; we fasted from midnight until after the Eucharist the next day, which was at ten o'clock in the morning. It was quite common to see a classmate faint during such ceremonies.

All this training is not my most important memory. One of the most important memories is Sister Adelaide herself. I was very fond of this woman for lots of reasons. In full habit every time I saw her, she was always gentle and kind. Even at my young age, I had perceived that she was a young person. My class had to be one of the first classes that she taught and prepared for Holy Communion. The experience was other-worldly, spiritual, even romantic. She assured us that receiving Holy Communion would be the closest we would ever be to Jesus in our lives. I came to understand later that she probably had studied the sermons of Saint Augustine on the Eucharist. I am certain that she understood those great words of Augustine when he said, "Behold who you are, become what you receive." Those were the days before Robert Kreutz communion song, "You Satisfy the Hungry Heart," but Sister Adelaide already knew them in her heart and taught them. Sister Adelaide deeply touched me at my First Communion. For some reason, I ended up being right in front of her in my class photo that sunny day. I am in her shadow. I

have always wondered how this happened.

So, when I was back at Saint Michael's for the First Communion of my great-nephew and niece a few years ago, I decided to be a member of the congregation and to be an observer rather than a concelebrant during the action. I must admit that it was like watching myself as a seven-year-old. What struck me most was the feeling of total innocence. Watching those children taking the Body of Christ into their hands was another other-worldly, romantic, and spiritual experience.

Another incredible tradition at Saint Michael's in Albion was to have the first graders lead us in and out of the church, two boys and two girls. If you look closely at my class photo, you will see two boys dressed totally in white with black bow ties on the outside in the front row. Then in the very middle of the photo two girls in long white dresses with flowers in their hands. They were like angels leading us all the way. I must say that this tradition was another wonderful experience of receiving holiness and innocence. It was like feeling Christ within in a very natural way. Holiness was already inside these first graders; they were the epitome of innocence.

To be honest, I thought of the years in literature class teaching William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. But mostly I thought of the most important song of the *Songs of Innocence*, "The Lamb." The gentle lamb ends up being none other than Jesus in Blake's *Songs of Innocence*. Blake's "The Tyger" in *Songs of Experience* contrasts the gentle lamb of innocence in "The Lamb." The tyger is used as an image that conveys violence and cunning on the prowl. The tone is acting from a preconceived thought or plan, not acting from innocence.

I wondered about these young children becoming adults and eventually becoming people of experience and how important the Eucharist would be to them as they grew older. The romanticism and other-worldliness of First Communion does not last forever.

All humans grow up. Childhood eventually gives way to adulthood. Jesus' childhood gave way to a very violent ending of his life as a human, but Jesus' experience of violence ending won for us a victory over violence, sin, and death. Jesus became the Bread of Life, both the victim and the priest.

The Eucharist is the very center of everything Christian. It is not a bad thing to reminisce about the days of innocence in our lives, and in the reality of it all, we can come back to that state of innocence every time we receive the Body of Christ. We ought to be grateful to popes like Pius X who made it possible for children to begin receiving the Body of Christ at an early age. The spiritual writer Ronald Rolheiser always encourages us to never stay away from the Eucharist even if we are estranged from the church for some reason or other. Keep coming back!

The Eucharist is our source of life. The Eucharist makes us innocent again.

The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee

—William Blake
(www.poetryfoundation.org)

It's Time

It's time, Jesus.
It's time to let go,
to let go of the hurts,
the rejections,
the mistakes of the past.

It's time to acknowledge,
to realize,
to accept,
that you, Jesus,
are the love,
the friend,
I long for.

You have searched, Jesus,
in the song of the bird,
in the simplicity of a tiny flower,
in the splendor of a mountain,
in the strength of a mighty oak.

You have called
in the wisdom of an elder,
in the laughter of a friend,
in the smile of a child,
in the joy of a shared meal.

You have waited
in the music of the wind,
in the darkness of the night,
in the dawn of a new day,
in the awe of a sunset.

Your words, Jesus, have opened my heart:
"Let anyone who is thirsty, come to me and drink."
receive life, receive love,
know your will, know you yourself.

"I will be with you always."
What words of comfort,
whether in joy or sorrow
you are with me sharing that moment.

"Do not be afraid."
What beautiful words
from Someone who loves me.

It's time, Jesus,
To give myself to your overwhelming love
To your love that has searched,
To your love that has called.
To your love that has waited.

It's time, Jesus,
To accept a love freely given,
given by Love,
By One whose name is Love.
A love that cannot be purchased
by words or works,
only known in my heart,
yet affecting my every word and work
A love ever present in its fulness;
seeking, calling, waiting,
only to be loved in return.

It's time, my soul,
to give your heart to the One
who has loved you without measure,
to the love that cannot be understood,
only accepted,
to give your love to the One
who seeks to fill you with his love,
to the love whose depths
can never be reached.

Surrender, my soul,
to the love who has
called you from all eternity,

Be still, my soul,
In the love that waits
To give his all.

It's time, my soul,
To delight in the love and mercy
you have received throughout your life.

Sr. Laurentia Doyle, OSB

Sacraments and Grace

George Hall

Without a doubt, sacraments have always been the dominant feature of the Catholic faith. Sacraments have also been central for Orthodoxy and for the Anglican Union. Combined, that's at least seventy-five percent of Christendom. The focal point of the Mass, of course, is the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist with the other six sacraments commonly, but not always, administered during some Masses. What exactly is a sacrament? The common description is "an outward sign of an inward grace." Those are lofty words, but do they carry any meaning to everyday living? For that matter, what is grace?

Arguably, the Church and every parishioner could benefit from an understanding of sacraments that appeals to the soul as well as the mind. Any such understanding must perforce be anchored to Church traditions and avoid controversy, which immediately raises the issue on why it hasn't been recognized before. At least one candidate has been recognized, albeit going back sixteen-hundred years, and that is the very source of the word "sacrament" in an ecclesiastical context. When in circa 400 CE Saint Jerome translated the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament into the first Latin bible, he had difficulty with the Greek word transliterated *mysterion* from Ephesians 5:32 which refers to the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage. In the end, he settled on the Latin word *sacramentum* which at the time was the name of the token a Roman deposited to mark his commissioning as an officer in the Roman legions (en.wikipedia.org).

Over time, the Catholic church adopted this term to describe various rites. Those rites have varied in number over time. For example, marriages were first marked by a blessing at the church door circa 900 CE, then elevated to a sacrament circa 1000 CE. There have been a kind of lesser sacrament known as sacramentals. Indeed, in Orthodoxy, the preparation of icons is itself considered sacramental if not a de facto sacrament. Sacraments, then, are

an outward mark of commitment. That is obvious in baptism, confirmation, marriage, and ordination. It is also applicable to reconciliation in that the commitment is to amend one's way of conduct. Doubtful? Consider marriage. To perceive taking out the garbage per se as a sacrament is ludicrous, but to consider it as part of a commitment to willingly carry out the mundane tasks of maintaining home and family and do so without complaining is altogether a different perspective. This leaves the Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick.

The Eucharist, of course, dates to Christ himself at the Last Supper. Is it a sign of commitment? The Eucharist marks a mutual commitment of God to man, woman, and child. Witness the doctrine of transubstantiation. Each parishioner accepts it, at least in part, as a commitment to God to continue maintaining their good way of life. It is more than this, yet that additional import does not detract from the sense of mutual commitment, be it individually or collectively.

That leaves the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. In pre-Vatican II times, this sacrament was limited to extreme unction: that applied to a person who was on the verge of dying or had just recently passed away.

While perhaps only a minority of parishioners ever avail themselves of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, it is the one that bears the strongest potential for understanding grace. Why? Because the batting average for miraculous healing is abysmally low, keeping in mind that the sought-after intervention of God in the process of healing that would otherwise occur by medical practice and autonomous healing would constitute a miracle. Doubtful? Of the tens of millions of the faithful seeking a miraculous cure at Lourdes, exactly sixty-nine cases have been attributed to a miracle. The vast balance are attributed to medical assistance or autonomous healing. Moreover, of those sixty-nine cases, more than fifty are old and were not subject to rigorous analysis.

The point is that it might be better to think of this sacrament as a mark of commitment to pursue available medical practice and the grace to bear patiently with the process of healing or to accept with equal grace a less than favorable outcome, even death. Yes, it is one thing to hope for intervention, yet more important to accept what may unfold.

Still, what exactly is grace? The late Nancy Mairs, who suffered from muscular dystrophy for more than twenty-five years until it finally claimed her life, addressed this question in her autobiographical book *Ordinary Times*. Nancy had endured a troubled life, including bouts of insanity for which she was hospitalized, infidelity on both her and her husband's part, and, as noted, the muscular dystrophy which eventually left her a quadriplegic. In trying to understand grace, she wrote:

> I am simply incapable of grasping an abstraction unless I can root it experientially, and nothing in my experience has revealed quite how grace works. Until now, the [unconditional] love and forgiveness I feel for George [her husband], themselves a gift of grace, unwilled and irresistible, [speak of] that grace whose nature had eluded me. . . . I always expect spiritual insights to shower like coins of light from on high.
>
> Instead they bubble up from the mire like will-O'-the-wisps. I am . . . startled, here, among these lies and shattered vows, sleepless nights, remorse, recriminations. Yes, precisely here: Grace. . . . Love is not love, forgiveness is not forgiveness, that effaces the beloved . . . by letting him drift . . . through the lives of those who claim him. That way lies lethargy, which is the death of love. (31-32)

Thus, while grace may come from within, that does not eliminate God from the scene. Far from it. Consider the dramatic case of Kay Redfield Jamison, an Episcopalian psychologist who taught at the medical school at UCLA. She suffered from clinical

depression and at least twice tried to take her own life. Then, she reached a turning point for the better, arising from her incomplete memory of an ancient five-line prayer from the Book of Common Prayer. In *Night Falls Fast*, she wrote:

> A few weeks after I nearly died from a suicide attempt, I went to a church across the street from the UCLA campus. I was a parishioner there [and] I thought I would see what was left of my relationship with God. . . . I went to the church early, my mind was still dull and everything in it, and in my heart, I was frayed and exhausted. But I knelt anyway, in spite or because of this, and spoke into my hands the only prayer I really know or care much about. The beginning was rote and easy: "God be in my mind and in my understanding," I said to myself or perhaps it was to God. Somehow, despite the thickening of my mind, I got through another line, but then I blanked out entirely, struggling to get through what had started as an act of reconciliation with God.
>
> I imagined for a while that my forgetting was due to the remnants of the poisonous quantities of lithium I had taken, but suddenly the last line came into my consciousness: "God be at my coming and at my departing." I felt a convulsive sense of shame and sadness, a kind that I had not known before, nor have I known since. Where had God been? I could not answer that question then, and I cannot answer it now. I do know, however, that I should have been dead but was not and that I was fortunate enough to be given another chance at life, which many others had not. (311)

What is to be made of this. For starters, the word grace is perhaps one that surpasses all others in the depth of one's soul. As such, it is not something to be understood so much as it is to be lived in concert with God. Why are sacraments so central to the faith? The answer lies within us.

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Thank you for your Will to Give

If you are reviewing your will or other estate plans because of tax law or other changes, now may be an ideal time to consider your charitable priorities. Be sure your advisor knows what these priorities are.

Your gift will support our life of prayer, and our prayer will be the gift we offer in return, to support you and your loved ones.

FORM OF BEQUEST FOR A WILL

I give, devise, and bequeath to the Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration, 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, MO 64432-8100, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Missouri ... (state here the amount of money or description of the property willed). For wills, bequests and estate planning, our legal name is: Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration.

Psalms For Jews, Christians, and Muslims

Rabbi Allen S. Maller

The Hebrew name of the Book of Psalms is *Tehillim*, which means "Praises." Similarly, the second verse of the first chapter of the Qur'an states, "all praise is due to Allah." However, the Book of *Tehillim*, the Gospels, and the Qur'an contain much more than simple praise of God. The one hundred fifty individual psalms are all different from each other: there are psalms devoted to praise, thanksgiving, lament, sorrow, illness, desperation, wisdom, history, and yearning for rescue and redemption. Likewise, both the Torah and the Qur'an include many different subjects, including history, law, advice, warnings of destruction, promises of paradise, and, of course, praise for God.

The opening of Book of Psalms is similar to the opening of the Qur'an. The name of the first sura is "the opening." Sura 1 starts:

> In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. The Compassionate, the Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment. You alone do we worship, and to You alone we pray for help; Guide us to the Straight Path; The way of whom You have favored; Not of those who have incurred Your wrath. Nor of those who go astray.

In comparison, Psalm 1 begins:

> Blessed is the man who does not walk
> in the counsel of the wicked,
> Nor stand in the way of sinners,
> nor sit in company with scoffers.
> Rather, the law of the Lord is his joy;
> and on his law he meditates day and night.
> He is like a tree
> planted near streams of water,
> that yields its fruit in season;
> Its leaves never wither;
> whatever he does prospers
> But not so are the wicked, not so!
> They are like chaff driven by the wind.
> Therefore the wicked will not arise at the judgment,
> nor will sinners in the assembly of the just.
> Because the Lord knows the way of the just,
> but the way of the wicked leads to ruin. (Psalm 1:1-6)

We can see that both introductory poems advise humans to take the path of other righteous people while avoiding the road of the misguided. The idea of picking the best way forward is important to both the Bible and to the Qur'an. Both books recognize that life is filled with choices and that we are better off when we choose to study and follow God's ways while rejecting the ways of people who do not respect the one and only God of unending space and time.

Although King Solomon's wealth built the Jerusalem

Temple, it is his father David's musical songs and chants that made the services very special. The Psalms of David, referred to as the *Zabur* in the Qur'an (Qur'an 4:163, 17:55, 21:105), often refer to the Jewish worshipper's love of the Jerusalem Temple, first as a sacred tent filled with God's presence, the *Shekhina*, in the desert and later as the courtyards of God's house on the holy mountain of Zion. For example, some scholars think that the words of Psalm 15 were inscribed on the doorposts or lintels of the Jerusalem Temple courtyards:

> Lord, who may abide in your tent?
> Who may dwell on your holy mountain?
> Whoever walks without blame,
> doing what is right,
> speaking truth from the heart;
> Who does not slander with his tongue,
> does no harm to a friend,
> never defames a neighbor;
> Who disdains the wicked,
> but honors those who fear the Lord;
> Who keeps an oath despite the cost,
> lends no money at interest,
> accepts no bribe against the innocent.

The Qur'an teaches us about Prophet David and his book, the *Zabur*: "And your Lord is best aware of all who are in the heavens and the earth. And We preferred some of the prophets above others, and unto David We gave the psalms" (Qur'an 17:55). The Qur'an informs us, "We made the hills and the birds to hymn with David. . . . And assuredly We gave David grace from Us (saying), 'O you hills and birds, sing the praises of Allah with David'" (Qur'an 21:79, 34:10). The Qur'an also states, "O David! Lo! We have set you as a viceroy in the earth; therefore judge aright between mankind" (Qur'an 38:26).

The *Zabur*/Book of Psalms is the third of the five longest books in the Hebrew Bible, the others being Jeremiah, Genesis, Ezekiel, and Exodus. Of the one hundred fifty psalms, almost half, seventy-three, are attributed to David. Twelve are credited to Asaph, David's worship leader, and eleven to three repentant descendants of Korah's family. Five are attributed to other writers and about fifty are not credited. The Talmud names David and ten other authors: "David wrote the Book of Psalms, including in it the work of the elders, namely, Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Yeduthun, Asaph" (B. Talmud *Baba Bathra* 14b.) Thus, the Book of Psalms is attributed to more authors than is any other single book of the Bible. This is to be expected since every Christian, Muslim, and Jew needs the ability to express and articulate both supplication and thanksgiving, from those desperately seeking help from the one God of all humanity to those expressing joy and gratitude to the one God who created the universe. These varied prayers have over the centuries frequently flowed from faithful hearts and minds.

The Book of Psalms is the only book in the Hebrew Bible that expresses words addressed to God by God- inspired men and women, together with words from God speaking to us, as well as words from God giving us a way to speak to him. Jesus quoted the psalms more often than he quoted from any other book in the Hebrew Bible. There were as many as fifty or sixty different prophetic authors included in the Book of Psalms; as the Qur'an states: "We already sent messengers before you; of some we have already related to you the story, of others We have not" (Qur'an 40:78).

David was one of 124,000 prophets in Islamic tradition. Some of the prophets were messengers, those who transmit divine revelation. It is narrated from Abu Dharr that one day he asked the Messenger of Allah: "How many prophets are there in all? He replied: One hundred and twenty-four thousand. He then asked: How many of them were messenger prophets? He replied: Three hundred thirteen from the above group. He asked: Who was the first of them? He replied: Adam…The first prophet among Bani Israel was Musa and the last of them was Isa; and they were in all six hundred prophets" (24).

According to Islam, the *Zabur* is the holy book of Dawud (David), one of the three holy books revealed by Allah before the Qur'an, alongside the *Tawrat* (Torah) of Musa (Moses) and the *Injil* (Gospel) of Īsā (Jesus) (Qur'an 4:163, 17:55, 21:105). The *Zabur's* collection of one hundred fifty Hebrew hymns and songs are often called *Dawud's Zabur* (Psalms of David), not because Prophet David wrote the entire *Zabur*, since the *Zabur* itself names several other Jewish prophets and holy men as having contributed to it, but because more of the *Zabur* is attributed to David than to any other prophet.

In Psalm 138, Prophet David professes the future influence of Christianity and Islam in spreading monotheism throughout the world:

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart;
in the presence of the angels to you I sing.
I bow low toward your holy temple;
I praise your name for your mercy and faithfulness.
For you have exalted over all
your name and your promise.
On the day I cried out, you answered;
you strengthened my spirit.
All the kings of earth will praise you, Lord,
when they hear the words of your mouth.
They will sing of the ways of the Lord:
"How great is the glory of the Lord!"
The Lord is on high, but cares for the lowly
and knows the proud from afar.
Though I walk in the midst of dangers,
you guard my life when my enemies rage.
You stretch out your hand;
your right hand saves me.
The Lord is with me to the end.
Lord, your mercy endures forever.
Never forsake the work of your hands!

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY CHAPTERS 1-11 by Bill T. Arnold. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 702 pp, $60.00 hc.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the desert for forty days (Mt 4:1-11), Jesus responded by quoting three verses from the Book of Deuteronomy (Dt 8:3, 6:16, 6:13) and two verses from Psalm 91 (Ps 91:11–12). Jesus obviously knew Deuteronomy and applied it to his human experience. We can easily understand why begins Bill Arnold his commentary by stating, "The book of Deuteronomy can rightly be called a compendium of the most important ideas of the Old Testament" (1). Deuteronomy provides a sort of summary of the major themes of the Torah and establishes the theological foundations of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Bill Arnold is a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, a school in the Methodist tradition in Kentucky. He earned his PhD at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Well-qualified in his area of expertise, he is the author of several books.

Arnold provides a thorough introduction to his original translation and verse-by-verse commentary. The introduction touches on such themes as the historical context, the unity of composition, text, theology, and major themes. He includes an extensive bibliography, indices, and maps. Arnold discusses the numbering of the commandments, the Sabbath, and the *Shema* in four excurses.

Arnold demonstrates the relevance of the Hebrew Scriptures and applies Deuteronomy to contemporary Christian life. I found this hefty volume fascinating as well as inspirational. Despite its weight, it is accessible to all interested readers and would be a welcome addition to any library.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

A HILL OF BEANS: THE GRACE OF EVERYDAY TROUBLES, by Valerie Schulz, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 152 pp, $16.95 pb.

Over the years, I have handled much of the correspondence received by the community, including many requests for prayer. Many requests concern serious health issues, family problems, unemployment, and moral dilemmas. I have also prayed for several elderly cats and dogs. Whether these matters are big and little, I turn over them all to the Lord and let him decide what to do.

Valerie Schultz is mother and grandmother who is a free-lance writer and the author of two previous books. Her work has also appeared in *Give Us This Day, America* magazine, and her regular newspaper column. With gentle humor, she tells us that praying for little things is not silly but sacred. The short, easy-to-read chapters of this little book deal with day-to-day problems and how to find grace in the ordinary events of daily life. The author discusses family, career, romance, aging, and loss. Some difficulties are, indeed, heavier: a daughter's addiction, a transgender child, a friend who undergoes an abortion. One particularly amusing chapter is entitled, "Failure High: My First and Last Year of Teaching."

Schultz has a gift for finding the presence of God in everyday events. With compassion and humility, she handles painful situations as well as occasions of joy. In her introduction, Shultz reminds us that Jesus asked his disciples, "Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God" (Lk 12:6). No worry or concern is too small for prayer.

A friend asked me for this little book. and I will gladly pass it on to her. I recommend it for all readers.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

WARRIOR, KING, SERVANT, SAVIOR: MESSIANISM IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND EARLY JEWISH TEXTS, by Torleif Elgvin, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 383 pp, $44.99 hb.

Torleif Elgvin is a professor in biblical and Jewish studies at NLA College in Oslo, Norway. He received a PhD from Hebrew University of Jerusalem for his work in Qumran studies. He is a member of the international team responsible for publishing the Dead Sea Scrolls. I have been interested in the topic of messianism for many years and was eager to read Elgvin's comprehensive survey.

We usually hear of Jewish messianism as the longing and anticipation of an earthly ruler. Messianism may have begun that way, but it is much more diverse and complex than we are led to think. While some scholars discuss messianism primarily in the Maccabean and New Testament periods, Elgvin begins with its emergence in the tenth century BCE, when it was represented by the promise of an heir to David's throne. Elgvin examines archaeological evidence, Egyptian and Mesopotamian traditions, and relevant texts, including 2 Samuel 7:5-16, and Psalms 2, 110, 21, and 72. After the exile, messianism became varied and often utopic. Other chapters discuss royal ideology in the northern kingdom, the end of the kingdom, the return to Judah, the upheavals of the second century BCE, the Dead Sea scrolls, and Jewish literature up to the seventh century CE.

Elgvin's volume includes an extensive bibliography, maps, illustrations, and indices. Excurses provide further information on Kings David and Hezekiah. This book would make an excellent text for high school or college courses. Clearly written, it is also accessible to the average reader who is interested in the topic.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

Oblates of Saint Benedict:

Adapting Benedictine monastic principles to one's chosen way of life

Who Are Oblates?

- Christian adults who are formally affiliated with a Benedictine monastic family to seek God more effectively.
- Women and men, who, in their own way of life, with their ordinary family and social duties, find support and ongoing growth in holiness through voluntary association with a particular monastic community or congregation.
- Persons focused on God through prayer, work, relationships, hospitality, study, and service in the spirit of the Rule of Benedict.
- Women and men who intensify their witness to Christ in the world through adapting monastic practices to their needs and abilities. By monastic practices, they are strengthened in worship reverence, humility, universal love, stability, and vital membership in their own faith community.

What Do Oblates Do?

Oblates shape their lives by living the wisdom of Christ as interpreted by Saint Benedict in his Rule. They seek God in their chosen way of life, becoming holy in the world through the integration of their prayer and work with their awareness that they are temples of the Holy Spirit.

As people whose lives are centered on God, they manifest Christ's presence in society by their word and example. The word "oblate" means that they offer themselves for the service of God and neighbor to the best of their ability.

Oblates are not vowed members of the Benedictine Order nor are they a third order in the Church. They do not take on additional prayers, required practices, or devotions. They do not live communally unless they choose to do so in conjunction with other oblates.

If they live near the monastery, they can attend oblate meetings and retreats. They experience the joy and support of sharing and growing together. Under the guidance of an oblate director, they deepen their understanding of the values and spirit of the Rule and its application to their daily life situation. They share in the prayer life of the community and in some cases volunteer their help with its ministries according to its needs.

Saint Benedict (480-547) and Oblates: A Brief History

Saint Benedict was born in Italy in the region of Nursia to a noble family who sent him to Rome to study. Disgusted with the decadent lifestyle he saw around him, Benedict abandoned his studies and went to live as a hermit in a cave near Subiaco. In time he acquired such a reputation for holiness and miracles that disciples gathered around him, and he founded several monasteries.

Later at the large monastery of Monte Cassino, Benedict wrote his Rule, which stressed the spirit of the Gospel and moderation while continuing the best Christian monastic tradition. Over succeeding centuries Benedictine monasteries flourished and spread, becoming centers of prayer, culture, and education all over the world.

Well into the Middle Ages, as the Rule and history indicate, children were accepted into monasteries where they received their religious training and education. They were free to make a choice of vocation when they grew to young adulthood. These children shared as they were able in the monastic routines and became known as oblates, meaning "one offered" or "made over to God." The name was also applied to adult lay persons who looked after the material interests of the monastery where they lived and were called claustral oblates. As time passed, lay persons living in their own homes asked to be more closely associated with the works and prayers of the monastics. They learned to apply the principles of the Rule to their life in the world, their families, their work, and to civic and social occasions. These oblates extended the spirit of the monastic community into areas where the community could not be present.

While there are no longer child oblates, and in most parts of the world no claustral oblates, the lay movement known as oblates of Saint Benedict is experiencing new growth. People are recognizing a way of life and values that nurture their Christian commitment to God's love, justice, and peace in the world.

About the Benedictine Sisters and their Oblates

As Benedictine Sisters, we live according to the 1,500-year-old Rule of Benedict with its balanced lifestyle of prayer, work, hospitality, solitude, and community, which places the love of Christ before all else. We take to heart the command to pray always. By our fidelity to our commitment, we exemplify stability of purpose and dedication to unchanging values in a rapidly changing world. We draw on the rich heritage of monastic tradition in our response to the needs of today.

Our adoration includes and extends beyond our hours of prayer in the eucharistic presence. Through reflective listening to God's Word, *lectio divina*, we realize our unity with all creation and learn to respect life in all its forms. From our deep interior life of prayer and the common life of the monastery grow the wisdom, love, and care that we strive to share with all who encounter us.

For those living too far from the monastery for regular visits and meetings, we have the congregational oblate program. The congregational oblate director assists the formation of the candidates by Internet. Their formal oblation is made locally. Although far from other oblates, they are united with all spiritually. They receive the same monthly oblate letter of ongoing spiritual formation. We offer our oblates a daily inclusion in our prayers and a warm welcome to our monastery when visits are possible.

How Does One Become an Oblate?

Having applied for acceptance as an oblate at the monastery or to the Congregation's oblate director, the candidate is enrolled and begins a one-year period of study in the spirit and values of Saint Benedict under the guidance of the oblate director or an appointed oblate mentor. When the director and candidate discern readiness for the next step, oblation, a ceremony of commitment is conducted in the presence of the monastic community or locally with several witnesses to share the oblate's joy. A certificate of oblation is given at this time along with the oblate emblem of our Congregation.

The oblation is not a vow but a firm resolve, accepted and confirmed in a sacred ritual. There are no dues and no penalties for withdrawing if an oblate, after prayer and discernment, decides to discontinue association with the monastery or to transfer the commitment to another monastery. In our mobile society, this is sometimes necessary for those who wish to stay with a meeting group of oblates.

Can Non-Catholics Become Oblates?

Monasticism is a way of life in which the desire and search for God is all-important. Its spirituality is a process

of transformation into Christ through self-emptying to be totally available to God. As such it is not necessarily tied to any single belief system.

Since it predates the separation of the Christian churches, monasticism forms an ideal basis for ecumenism in today's world. The main forces transcending all our differences are the love of God and of sacred Scripture

All Christians can be oblates and engage in scripturally based prayer, practice prayerful reading, seek contemplative union with God, and expend themselves lovingly for others. Anyone can practice this way of spirituality that is essentially the same as taught by Saint Benedict over 1,500 years ago.

Do you want to learn more about becoming an oblate?

Contact us:
Sister Kathleen Clare Lahl, OSB
(660) 944-2221 ext. 174
kathleenclr@gmail.com
www.benedictinesisters.org

Sister Ramona Varela was all smiles when updating new prayer books that the congregation uses for the Liturgy of the Hours.

Christmas provides season for celebrations and giving

Sister Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General, knows celebrating one's birthday during the Christmas season is special. In late December, she and her sisters gathered at A&G Restaurant in nearby Maryville, Missouri, to share a nice meal and spend time in fellowship.

See more Christmas images on following page.

PERIODICALS postage paid at Tucson, AZ

Christmas Celebrations (cont'd)

The Advent Season also provided opportunities to decorate the monastery, a reception for lay employees, the welcome of three women to the Monastic Experience, and the conclusion of the Third Annual Fall Fest that assisted two area food pantries.

Spirit&Life

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