

***PAX - WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE  
ADVENT/CHRISTMASTIDE (2014-2015), and  
ORDINARY TIME THROUGH TO ASH  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015.***

PAX-WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE IS SENT OUT TO OBLATES AND TO THOSE WHO ARE ENROLLED IN THE OBLATE FORMATION PROGRAM, **FIVE** TIMES EACH YEAR. THIS EDITION IS ALWAYS NUMBER ONE, BEING SENT OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH'S LITURGICAL YEAR. PLEASE TAKE YOUR DIRECTION FROM EACH EDITION OF "PAX – WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE".

**SECTION ONE: Reading and Reflection**

During the last week in September this year, Fr. Michael Casey, ocsa, Scholar, Teacher and Author of many books, gave our Community a Seminar. The topic: Monasticism: Past, Present and Future. Towards the end of the week, he addressed some of the adverse influences in society, which are also problems to be faced within Monastic Communities in the present. For the purpose of this teaching, I am using the term "Monastic" or "Monastics" as meaning Oblates, Nuns or Monks of the Benedictine Order.

So, - he notes (among many) two of the adverse influences to be wary of:

- Noise and compulsive communication.
- Spin and Weasel words.

I want to address the second of these in this edition of “Pax, With The Gospel For Our Guide”.

Firstly, for those of us who follow the Rule of St. Benedict, “with the Gospel for our guide”, Spin and Weasel Words have no place in our lives. I refer to Don Watson’s 2004 Article on Weasel Language. Watson says that in Shakespeare’s “As You Like It”, Jacques says he can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs.” As we are well aware, Weasels can suck eggs and leave the shells. Watson says that weasel words are words from which life has gone - just corpses. He uses the example of two world leaders in the early 21st Century at the beginning of the Iraq War. The President of the United States is to have said: “A search of Iraq has found weapons of mass destruction-related program activities.” He says that at the same time, the Australian Prime Minister asked us to recognize a distinction between “core” and “non-core”

beliefs. Both leaders had sucked the meaning out of words.

Weasel words are words that hide the truth. It is about the manipulation of our language by those with power. Watson quotes George Orwell: "Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." And he uses the example of the Newspeak of George Orwell's Novel, 1984. The Newspeak is an invention, but it is also a Satire on real States such as the Soviet Union where death from starvation and abuse in slave camps was recorded by Officials as a "failure of the heart muscle".

Today, weasel language is everywhere. It is, unfortunately, the language of INFORMATION. Watson adds: "A dead, depleted, verb-less jargon is becoming the language of daily life."

Watson also refers to a work called "Death Sentence: The Decay of Public Language". He quotes Morrison as saying "This language (weasel language) must be rejected, altered and exposed." Weasel language is used to deceive, or to avoid having to back up assertions. Weasel words are used to qualify a statement, and so weaken any real truth. An Australian

Fashion Designer, Jessica Wright on her website for May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014, notes that “every politician’s favourite book is the weasel Dictionary”. Whether we agree with her or not, is irrelevant. Our challenge as Monastics, is to combat weasel language and speak only the truth. Weasel language has no part in the life of a monastic.

In Ephesians 6:14-18, we are exhorted to gird ourselves with truth. Speaking the truth may make us the “odd ones” in the crowd. That shouldn’t daunt us. Weasel language would say: “I could come with you.” (That means you don’t commit yourself one way or the other).

Truth would ask: “Would it help if I come with you to your medical appointment?”

“Would it help if I come with you to assist with the work?” And mention the person’s name – that really pins you down.

If you are outside a bookstore and a sign says: “Save up to 50% or more...” That is weasel language.

If you are outside a bookstore and books are in a sale bin, and each one has a price on it (not a price that has been marked down) – that is truth. You know how much each one

costs and you can make a decision as to whether you want it and if you can afford it. The message of both Watson and Morrison in regard to weasel language is that we need to be vigilant.

As Monastics, **vigilance** is already a way of life for us. We keep vigil for the coming of Christ in our “every day”.

A text which we can take for Lectio Divina throughout this Season is: “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.” (Ephesians 4:6).

And: “Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured...” (Titus 2:7)

And: “The tree is known by its fruit. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person, out of good treasure, brings forth good...I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they have uttered. By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:33-37).

Alexander Pope wrote in 1711, “Words are like leaves; and where they most abound, much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.”

And before we used the term “weasel words”, Herbert Spencer wrote in his *Principles of Ethics*, 1879 “How often misused words generate misleading thoughts.”

Theodore Roosevelt, when President of the U.S. said in 1916 that the “tendency to use what have been called weasel words was one of the defects of the American nation.”

As Monastics, embarking once more on the Christmas and Holiday Season, let us resolve to say what we mean and mean what we say. When we come to sending out our Christmas Mail, may we write sincerely and honestly to family and friends, witnessing to our Monastic Life with its values of truth, honesty, integrity and preferring nothing to the love of Jesus Christ.

## **SECTION TWO: FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION.**

Chapter Six of the Rule of St. Benedict is the obvious place to start: Restraint of Speech. So, into our world of “noise and compulsive

communication” comes chapter six, “restraint of speech.”

The sins of the tongue are mentioned in verse 1.

Weasel words are often (not always) sins of the tongue.

Sr. Joan Chittister sheds the best light on this Chapter of our Rule in her Book, “The Rule of Benedict – Insights For the Ages”. She teaches rightly that “the goal of monastic silence is not non-talking. The goal of monastic silence, and monastic speech, is respect for others, a sense of place, a spirit of peace. The Rule calls for thoughtful talk. When talk is unrestrained (compulsive communication?), when gossip becomes the food of the soul, then the destruction of others can’t be far behind.” (pages 60 and 61).

We could add: When weasel words become the order of the day, and the empty jargon dominates our lives, then we become, as Watson describes, an empty suit or armour from which the Knight departed long ago! Is this what we want? We do have a choice when it comes to Speech.

### **SECTION THREE: ABOUT THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT**

G. A. Simon, in his Commentary on the Rule of Benedict, and in particular, on this Chapter notes: “The principles which inspired in St. Benedict the chapter on restraint of speech, are of a general order and are of value for every Christian ...the Holy Scripture long ago reminded us of the mischief of the tongue: “Death and Life – we are in the power of the tongue.” (Proverbs). The good deeds and the misdeeds of speech have become commonplace...we must belong to Jesus Christ or to the world.”

He also quotes the famous Spiritual Master, Dom Paul Delatte as saying: “It remains true that there are certain subjects, a certain coarseness, a certain worldly tone, which should never enter our conversation...there are matters which one should not touch, which it is wholesome to avoid.” (Pages 103-104).

The challenge now is to take this chapter into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and be vigilant to the use of Weasel Language which is everywhere, and dominates Information Technology. As Monastics we are to resist the deceit of this



Language with vigilance, and expose its deceit.

#### **SECTION FOUR: COMMUNITY HISTORY**

It may surprise us to read the following from a Spiritual Notebook kept by one of our Prioresses in the 1930s: “The want of connection between the great words of Christianity and those of everyday life has bewildered and discouraged all of us, at times. Christianity possesses the noblest words in language. Its literature overflows with terms expressive of the great and happiest dispositions which can fill the soul of humankind.” What would such a writer say today, as we are faced with the “jargon” of weasel words? So, let us claim the noble language of Christianity, and fight against the “dead, depleted, verb-less jargon which is becoming the language of everyday life.” (Watson)

#### **SECTION FIVE: LITURGY**

**Advent begins a new liturgical year: The Sunday Liturgy readings take Year B, and Weekdays take Year 1.**

**THE ‘O’ ANTIPHONS BEGIN ON DECEMBER 17th.**

**CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT MASS AT JAMBEROO ABBEY IS PRECEDED BY**

## **THE TRADITIONAL MONASTIC VIGIL AT 10.45 p.m.**

### **Feasts and Solemnities:**

December 8: THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

December 25: Christmas Day.

December 26: St. Stephen, first martyr.

December 27: St. John the Evangelist

December 28<sup>th</sup>: THE HOLY FAMILY

December 29: 5<sup>th</sup> Day in the Octave of Christmas.

December 30<sup>th</sup>: 6<sup>th</sup> Day in the Octave of Christmas.

December 31<sup>st</sup>: 7<sup>th</sup> Day in Octave of Christmas.

Vespers on this day is First Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

### **JANUARY:**

01: Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

02: Sts Basil and Gregory Nazianzen. (Memorial).

04: SOLEMNITY of the EPIPHANY of Our Lord.

11: BAPTISM OF OUR LORD (feast). This is a special DAY OF REMEMBRANCE IN OUR COMMUNITY, - the first Abbatial Blessing in 1983. St. Aelred of Rievaulx is omitted this year.

15: Sts. Maurus and Placid, Disciples of St. Benedict.

17: St. Antony of Egypt (Memorial).

18: Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

21: St. Agnes (Memorial)

24: St. Francis de Sales (Memorial)

25: Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. The Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul is omitted this year.

26: AUSTRALIA DAY (Solemnity)

28: St. Thomas Aquinas (Memorial)

31: St. John Bosco (Memorial)

### **FEBRUARY**

01: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

02: Titular Solemnity: PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE – the title of our Abbey. (165th Anniversary of foundation).

05: St. Agatha (Memorial)

06: Sts. Paul Miki and Companions (Memorial)

08: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

10: St. Scholastica (Solemnity)

11: Our Lady of Lourdes (Memorial) World Day of the Sick.

14: Sts. Cyril and Methodius (Memorial)

15: 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B.

18: Ash Wednesday, Day of Fasting and Abstinence.

### **SECTION SIX: YOUR COMMUNITY**

This edition of “Pax – With the Gospel For Our Guide” goes to the printing room in October, , so we will miss the next Group Ceremony in November.

**Our prayers go to all Oblates**

**Who are ill at this time – those in Nursing Home Care, those in Palliative Care, those coming through surgery for Cancer, and those with Chronic Illness.**

I have deliberately not mentioned names so that these Oblates keep their privacy.

**HAPPY FEAST DAY TO:**

Robert Arsenius Daly, for December 6.

Sr. Maureen Therese Woodhouse, and Oblate Wanda (Immaculata) Kwan, for December 8.

Oblate Catherine (Thomas) Corban, for December 10.

Oblates Doreen (Adele) O'Sullivan and Elizabeth (Adele) Quinn for December 24.

Obl. Robert (Stephen) Basham, Andrew (Stephen) Davies and Graham (Stephen) McCall for December 26

Sr. Joanna Bagot, Anders Gottfrid (Johannes) Nilsson, and Therese Veronica (Johanna) Nilsson, for December 27.

Fr. Nigel Thomas Wright, for December 29

Marie (Basel) McGuckin, for January 2.

Fr. Dixon Seraphim Kenny and Helen Seraphim Shorter, for January 2.

Oblate Rob (Aelred) Johnstone for January 11.

Oblates Aaron (Placid) McElhone and John (Placid) Limbourn for January 15.

Oblate John (Anthony) Dunne, for January 17.

Sr. Agnes, for January 21.

Brian (Robert) Brennan for January 26

Lynne Scholastica Middleton, Rhonda Scholastica Kinsela, Jacqueline Scholastica Collins and Cathy Scholastica Ransom. – for February 10.

John Gregory Wynen, for February 13.

Ira Peter Wilson, for February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Anniversaries of Oblation:**

December 3<sup>rd</sup>: Patrick Martin (Hildegard)  
O'Connor, and Beppi Lioba O'Connor.  
December 6<sup>th</sup>: Robert Arsenius Daly  
December 10<sup>th</sup>: Catherine Mary Thomas Corban  
December 11<sup>th</sup>: Irene Gertrud Bajda, David  
Alan Brendan Mumford.  
December 15: Kathryn Mary Proctor  
December 16: Rev. Kevin Bede Walsh  
December 16: Jeanette Magdalen Murray  
December 18: Deborah Martha Pike  
**Epiphany**: Sr. Carmel Mechtilde Leighton,  
Graham Stephen and Mary Hildegard McCall  
January 9: Elaine Mechtild Alinta  
January 11: Rob Aelred Johnstone and  
Elizabeth Aelred Sheppard.  
January 15: Donna Sturgeon, and John Placid  
Limbourn  
January 18: Joan Augustine Lorente, Carmen  
Teresa Lorente, Georgette Sharbel Najjar, and  
Peter Bernard Sheehan.  
January 21: Robyn Hildegard Wein  
January 30: Catherine (Thomas More) Lindsay  
February 3: Ingrid (Ruah) Cheng  
February 3: Therese (Anthony) Harding.  
February 4: Rev. Ann Clare Dittmar-McCollim  
February 8: Shirley Clare Basham and Robert  
Stepehn Basham.  
February 10: Ellen Woods  
February 11: Garry Benedict Gleeson, Marie  
Catherine Gleeson, Frances Mildred Cormack,  
Kathleen Lioba Mason, Peter (of the Cross) Guy,  
Ken Ambrose Halliday, Elizabeth Adele Quinn,  
Patrick Bede Quinn, Maureen Frances  
Williamson, Margherita Hilda Cappetta.

February 11: Russell Benedict Collins and Jacqueline Scholastica Collins, Patricia Julian Morgan

February 12: Sylvia Dymphna Honeysett.

February 13: John Gregory Wynen and Robyn Teresa Wynen.

February 14: Benedetta Marina Di Mattia

February 17: Giovanna Scholastica Tesoriera and Matthew Edward Dowsey.

February 17: Vincenzo Gerardo Cappetta, Elaine Brigid Guy, Pamela Dominica Rice, Sidney Michael Rice, Wendy Lucy Browning, Barbara Elizabeth Jamieson.

February 18: M. del Carmen Teresa Boharull-Vila

**ANNIVERSARIES OF SOLEMN PROFESSION:**

Sr. Maria Frances Slade, Sr. Hildegard Ryan, and Sr. Naomie Ruth Varnakulasingham, February 2nd.

Sr. Clare Gamble and Sr. Joanna Bagot: February 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Let us pray for those who anniversary of death occurs during this season.**

**DECEMBER:**

5.12.1913 Dame Mary Teresa Parkinson

6.12.1961 Dame Mary Winifred Price

7.12.1923 Dame Mary Romanus McKee

7.12.2013 Oblate David Aelred Russell

10.12.1911 Dame Mary Philomena Hay

11.12.1985 Oblate Carmel Condon

14.12.1998 Oblate Richard Damian Lequaietermaine

18.12.1855 Sr. Mary Gertrude Nagle

19.12.1969 Sr. Mary Benedict Walsh  
 21.12.1985 Sr. Teresa Gillin  
 22.12.1950 Sr. Mary Anthony O'Connor  
 23.12.2012 Sr. Immaculata Briglia  
 29.12.1908 Sr. Mary Martha Comyn  
 30.12.1949 Mother Mary Joseph Brady, third  
 elected Prioress of the  
 Community.

### **JANUARY**

02.01.2004 Oblate Elizabeth of the Trinity  
 Corcoran  
 07. 1. 1882 Mother Mary Bernard  
 Hawthornethwaite  
 10. 1.1985 Sr. Moira Bradshaw  
 12. 1.1923 Sr. Mary Catherine Connolly  
 17. 1.1923 Sr. Mary Baptist Schahill  
 20. 1.1913 Sr. Mary Placid de Castella  
 20. 1. 2008 Oblate Dr. Carney (Bede) Fisher.

### **FEBRUARY**

02. 2.1899 Mother M. Benedict Lett  
 08.02.1973 Sr. Mary Bernadette Hughes.

## **SECTION SEVEN: SAINTS**

While not the Apostle James, the James of Jerusalem, who is supposed to have written the Letter of James is attested to in Scripture as the “brother of the Lord”. This James has something earth-shattering to say in James Chapter 3:6-12. In the era of Weasel Words, the tongue is surely that “restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

**Collateral damage** is the weasel term for the slaughter of innocent citizens in war time. All up

in the long war in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, the United Nations estimates that 174,000 people have been killed – innocent citizens. This does not include the men women and children (non-combatants) who have been left maimed for life.

### **SECTION EIGHT: FOR REFLECTION**

“A language is a dialect that has an Army and a Navy.” ((Weinreich, 1968).

Building upon this image, let us pray that the Army of Weasel Words be confronted at every turn by the Navy of truthful, sincere words, spoken from the abundance of the Christian/Monastic Heart.

**May we keep all weasel words out of the Christmas Season. May we speak words of sincere Peace. Try to avoid Christmas Cards with the message: “Season’s Greetings”. This avoids the real meaning of Christmas. The word “Christ” is omitted. Christmas is about Jesus Christ and the Mystery of the Incarnation.**

**Maybe our New Year’s resolution could include vigilance against weasel language.**



**PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING DATES FOR OBLATE MEETINGS AND FOR OBLATE RETREATS in 2015. This is the only notification. You need to keep these dates in your Diary**

**OBLATE RETREATS: 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March.  
7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of November.**

**GROUP OBLATION CEREMONIES:**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 8th.  
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7th.**

**OBLATE MEETINGS BEGIN WITH PRAYER AT 2.30 P.M. AND CONCLUDE WITH AFTERNOON TEA AT 4.00 P.M. IF YOU ARE ABLE TO STAY ON, VESPERS IS AT 5.00 P.M.**

**OBLATE MEETINGS:**

**May 23rd  
July 11th  
September 13th  
December 12th**

