

**PAX – WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR
GUIDE
LENT, 2015**

SECTION ONE

**Reading and Reflection: The Scriptures
and the Rule of St. Benedict.**

The Lenten Journey is not about “giving up things”, it is about be-coming more than we are. The Lenten Journey is a spiritual journey, given to us each year as a time of renewal. Let us think about be-coming more than we are, not about depriving ourselves of “things”. When we limit the Lenten Journey to a time of deprivation, we lose the whole meaning of the Season.

Listening to a Broadcast in January, during the school holidays, the Speaker ended by saying: “Welcome to the age of Me.” The Broadcast had been on “selfies”, which as we all know are photographs taken of “self” by “self”. The Speaker told the sad story of a teenage boy in the U.K. who had become so addicted to “selfies” that he was known to have spent ten hours one day trying to take the perfect a “selfie”. In the end, he committed suicide, because he just couldn’t get the perfect “selfie”.

I am challenging the words: “Welcome to the age of me.” For the age of “me” has always been there. Today, it can take the form of too many “selfies”, and a thousand other forms of concentration of self. We speak of “self-interests”, “self-preoccupation”, “self-absorption” and so on.

The age of “me” has always been there.

I suspect that the earliest human beings – cave dwellers – also had individuals who were “me” people, those who grabbed more of their share of the “hunt”, and skulked off quietly away from the group to enjoy it.

The Roman Empire was big on “selfies” – statues erected of leaders while the leaders were still living.

And then there is the age of portrait painting, when people were also big on “self” – portraits of “self” by famous artists, and portraits of artists painted by the artists themselves.

Today, we have the camera which takes “selfies” and now the camera on a stick which can take “selfies” from all angles.

But, the age of “me” is nothing new.

Jesus addressed the pitfalls of such a way of life.

Take Matthew 6:1-6 for Lectio Divina. Jesus addresses those who like to promote the “self”.

Read Matthew 23:1-15. Again, Jesus addresses hypocrisy in the Scribes and Pharisees.

In 1944, Aldous Huxley wrote: “There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving and that’s your own self.”

Lent is the time to do that – to become aware of one’s own “self” as part of a wide universe, and not the centre of the universe.

Read Luke 6:37 & 38 to see what Jesus says about “self” – that “self” is to forgive, to give and not to judge.

The French Philosopher Moliere wrote in 1666: “We should look long and carefully at ourselves before we consider judging others.”

St. Benedict also addresses the issue of “self”. Mutual Service replaces any selfishness.

The sick are to be served as Christ.

The sick in their turn are not to be a burden, not to be selfish.

The image of a “puffed up” person, can be found in 21:5 and 65:2.

Chapter One deals with the Kinds of Monks. All except the Cenobites are “self” persons,

who do their own thing, and wander from place to place, and never submit to a discipline which may save them from themselves.

So, pray with chapter One over the Lenten period.

Chapter 58, although dealing with monastics who take vows and belong in a Monastery, can also apply very strongly to Oblates who make promises to prayer and holy reading and who belong to a Monastic community. They cannot be faithful to holy reading without the Scriptures leading them away from self-centredness and into God-centredness.

Step 12 of humility is to be humble in heart and to manifest it. Humility will ensure that we keep far from self-centredness.

And so, these are just some of the texts from the Rule of St. Benedict, the Gospels of Jesus and a few extra pearls of wisdom through the centuries.

So, the age of “me” is not suddenly here. It has always been here, as long as human beings have existed on earth.

But there is a vital truth: One person can change it by doing one single good deed for another person.

One person can make a change by choosing the way of “interest in others”, rather than “interest in self”.

Let us concentrate on seeing “self” as part of a whole universe, a whole human family, instead of the centre of the universe, or the only “self” in the whole human family

SECTION TWO

FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION

Take a Book for Lent and read it prayerfully and very slowly, a little each day. Our Rule advises this practice.

WE ALSO SUGGEST THAT YOU PRAY WITH THE LITURGY READINGS FOR EACH WEEKEND. THESE ARE ON OUR WEBSITE FROM EVERY MONDAY MORNING IN ADVANCE OF THE COMING WEEKEND. THEY ARE AN HONEST SHARING BY SR. HILDEGARD. THERE IS A LITTLE BACKGROUND TO EACH READING, AND A SHARED RESPONSE TO EACH READING. THIS

EXERCISE MAY HELP, or you may prefer to go to *Lectio Divina* your way.

SECTION THREE

About The Rule of St. Benedict

Chapter 49: The Observance of Lent.

In her book, “Insights For The Ages”, Sr. Joan Chittister comments on the age of “me” without using those exact words. She writes: Into a democratic country and a highly individualistic culture, into a society where “personalism” approaches the pathological and independence is raised to high art, the Rule [of St. Benedict] brings a chapter on listening and wisdom. [Chapter 71]. The rule says that we are not our own teachers, not our own guides, not our own standard-setters, not a law unto ourselves. Monastic spirituality says that we are to honour one another. We are to listen to one another. We are to reach across boundaries and differences in this fragmented world and see in our differences distinctions of great merit that can mend a competitive, uncaring and foolish world.

This is only part of what Sr. Joan has written. If you have this book, please use it for *Lectio*

Divina. Pages 176 and 177 are the relevant sections for prayer. As we well know, Sr. Joan has a gift for saying things are they need to be said. She has lived a long life and at times suffered for her beliefs, and in the name of justice. Her writings are powerful witnesses of her long life.

SECTION FOUR COMMUNITY HISTORY

Giving a retreat to our community before 1920, Mother Mary Joseph Brady (Third elected Prioress – died 30th December, 1949) asked one important question: “What is the main causes of unrest in our lives? If one is honest, one will answer that “pride, selfishness and ambition are the main causes of unrest in any community, society, Nation.” (She hasn’t indicated a source for this quotation, but it is something she read before 1920).

Nothing has changed then, has it?
“Selfishness” is still one of the main causes of unrest in the lives of human beings. But each one of us has the power to move from “self” to others - in family, Parish community, workplace, sports’ club, social club, business corporation, government (State and Federal).

SECTION FIVE LITURGY

ASH WEDNESDAY: February 18th.

March 17: St. Patrick (Solemnity in Australia)

March 19: St. Joseph (Solemnity)

March 21: THE PASSING OF ST. BENEDICT (**Solemnity in our Community**).

March 25: THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD.

March 29: PALM SUNDAY

April 2: HOLY THURSDAY

April 3: GOOD FRIDAY

April 4: HOLY SATURDAY

April 5: EASTER SUNDAY

SECTION SIX YOUR COMMUNITY

Oblate Valerie (Mary Cecilia) Proverbs died on December 14th, 2014, after only about ten days in hospital. Valerie made her oblation on August 18th, 1996, and was a faithful and dedicated member of our Oblate community. Valerie was particularly faithful to Lectio Divina, receiving the leaflet every week since 1996 and often responding to it by mail. She is survived by her husband Bruce and her adult children and their

families. Please keep them all in prayer as they adjust to life without her.

Anniversaries of Oblation:

FEBRUARY

M. del Carmen Teresa Boharull-Vila – February 18th.

Christine Frances Angus – Feb. 20th.

Patricia Hildegard Benedict – Feb. 20th.

Fr. Henry Bernard Byrne – Feb. 21st.

Fr. Ronald Bede Harden – Feb. 23rd. Fr. Ron is in Palliative Care – please pray for him in your daily prayer for Oblates.

Robert Anselm Cashman and Colleen Augustine Cashman – Feb. 27th.

MARCH

Donn (Gregory) Corcoran – March 5.

Nazin (Hildegard) Atalay – March 7.

Ian (Godric) Thomas – March 15

June (Benedicta) Jenkins – March 16

Bernard Quinn – March 19

Cecilia (Teresa Thomas) Larkin, and Carol (Mary of the Cross) Xuereb – March 21

Elizabeth Mary Hildegard Muntz, and Jennifer Ancilla Shirvington – March 25.

Elizabeth Teresa Montgomery and Leo Thomas Montgomery, Wendy Mary Young – March 29.

Maria Matilda Curtis – March 29.

FEAST DAYS DURING LENT

Happy feast day to:

Peter Damian McElhone, Ira Peter Wilson –
for February 22nd, St Peter Damian.

Donn Gregory Corcoran, for March 5th.

Maureen Frances Williamson, Catherine
Frances Turek, Susan Frances Carter,
Isabel Frances Vicary, Kevin Francis Vicary,
Helena Frances O'Neill, Elizabeth Frances
Fahey, Denise Frances Hill, Julie Frances
Redican, Christine Frances Angus, for
MARCH 9, **St. Frances of Rome**.

Maria Matilda Curtis, and Kay Matilda Myers
for MARCH 14, **St. Matilda**

Rev. Ian Patrick Crooks, Irene Patricia
McAllister, for MARCH 17, **St. Patrick**.

Mary (of the Annunciation) Wyatt,
Bernadette (Mary) Maher, Jenny (Ancilla)
Shirvington, Sr. Ancilla Leech, Sr. Hannah,
Massy-Greene, for March 25, **The
Annunciation of the Lord**.

Necrology:

Sr. Mary Mildred Symthe, 26th February,
1931.

Oblate Bernie Daniel Fitzgerald, 7 March, 2004
Sr. M. Cecily Bourke, 9 March, 1984
Sr. Mary Jones, 11 March, 1995
Most Rev. John Bede Polding, 16 March, 1877
Oblate Peter (Bernard) Smith, 17 March, 2009
Sr. M. Margaret Gallagher, 18 March, 1913
Sr. M. Mechtilde O'Grady, 20 March, 1888
Oblate Sydney (Stephen) Long, 21 March, 2008
Sr. Maria McKenzie, 21 March, 1997.
Sr. Mary Bridget Kelly, 22 March, 1960.
Sr. Marguerite Burke, 25 March, 1997.
Sr. Mary Clare Gabriel, 26 March, 1910.
Mother Mary Magdalen le Clerc, Founding
Mother of our community – March 28, 1878.
Sr. Mary Hildegarde Doyle – April 3rd, 1969.
Sr. Mary Monica Hardy – April 7th, 1956

SECTION SEVEN SAINTS

The Rule of St. Benedict quotes the Gospel in numerous places. One such place is the following: “Above all, love the Lord God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength; then, your neighbour as yourself.” There is no room then for the age of “me”. It is all about treating others as I would want to be

treated: with respect, reverence, understanding, acceptance. I want to be affirmed and encouraged. I want to be loved and valued. All this then, is the gift I give to the other person, whoever that may be.

SECTION EIGHT: For Reflection

The following words of the Tao are quoted by Sr. Joan Chittister in her Book, "Insights For The Ages":

If you want to become whole
Let yourself be partial.
If you want to become straight,
Let yourself be crooked
If you want to become full,
Let yourself be empty.

Partial, crooked and empty will steer one away from a destructive path of "self".

"Partial" keeps us as one person is a vast human family.

"Crooked" keeps us adaptable and willing to be there for others.

"Empty" keeps us looking for the wisdom and beauty with which others can fill our lives. We are not complete. We don't have all the answers.