

**PAX – WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE  
LENT 2018**

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. On the other hand, if giving up something helps us to become a better person, more Christian, more peaceful, gentle and so on, then that deprivation is positive.

**SECTION ONE: READING AND REFLECTION**

I have chosen the theme of “Reverence” for Lent 2018, as it is a long time since we have visited the teaching on reverence in the Rule of St. Benedict. There are a number of references to “Reverence” cited throughout the Rule of Benedict:

6:7, 9:7, 11:3, 20:1, 52:2, 60:7, 63:12, 65:16.

And there is one which may not stand out as being about reverence: 31:10.

It may not stand out for us because it is in the chapter on the Monastery Cellarer. However, we know that all of the Rule is meant for all of us.

We are all abbots, cellarers, guests, those in charge of the sick, and the sick themselves. We are all the artisans. We are all in need of teaching on humility and obedience, and on restraint of speech.

For the purpose of this edition of Pax, I want to concentrate on the reverence taught in 31:10, the chapter on the Monastery Cellarer. The Cellarer in a Benedictine Monastery or Abbey is the one who sees to the needs of the community. The Bursar, on the other hand is the one who deals with banking, and the grocer’s bill, butcher’s bill and so on.

Because every part of the Rule is there to teach us the way of St. Benedict, we are all monastery cellarers, and therefore, according to 31:10, we are to regard all the utensils and goods of the monastery (of the home, of the workplace), as one would regard the sacred vessels of the altar – the chalice, ciborium, monstrance.

In Appendix 2, the editors of RB 80 have written: “Material things are *sacramenta*, symbols that reveal the beauty and goodness of the Creator. Benedict can say that ordinary tools for work should be treated like the sacred vessels for liturgical use. It is only sin that has disfigured the beauty of creation, and diverted things from their purpose. The monastic life is an effort to restore the lost paradise and to regain the image of God in humanity – the image which has been distorted. Part of the restoration, the regaining of the image of God in humanity, is to take a whole-istic approach.” (Cf. Appendix 2, page 370 of RB 1980). Hence, all tools, utensils, linen, clothing, footwear, furniture, vegetables and flowers of the earth, beasts of the field, creatures of the sea, are to be treated with the same reverence as one would treat the sacred vessels of the altar, the *sacramenta*.

Sr. Joan Chittister sheds further light on this issue of reverence. She teaches us: “Planned obsolescence is not a Benedictine goal. Disposability is not a Benedictine quality. A Benedictine soul is a soul that takes care of things, that polishes wood and scrapes away rust and keeps a room clean; who never

puts feet on the furniture; who mulches the garden; who leaves trees standing; who treats all utensils and goods of the monastery like the sacred vessels of the altar (RB 31:10). The Benedictine heart practiced ecology before it was a word!" (The Rule of Benedict, Insights for the Ages, by Sr. Joan Chittister, osb. Page 106) So, let us think before we throw away an old pair of secateurs, or just something which is old and which we are sick of. The secateurs can be sharpened and then they won't take up space in land-fill. Nothing need take up space in land-fill, if we are living out "reverence".

As Benedictines we are up against what seems like insurmountable obstacles. How can we treat the cutlery and plates and garden tools with reverence when we are exposed day by day to the lack of reverence for human life. As I began to write this edition of Pax, I listened to the news of the Taliban taking responsibility for the deaths of 95 more people and for critically injuring many others. Then within 24 hours, another bomb was detonated.

On the same news was the suicide of a beautiful 15 year old girl who was the victim of cyber bullying; an 8 year old girl who was jeered at and mocked because the girl's mother had a double mastectomy, and therefore had no breasts and no hair (because of chemo-therapy). How can an 8 year old child cope with this shocking lack of reverence towards her mother who has already endured so much pain?

The Catholic Church, along with other churches, has been shocked by the lack of reverence which has resulted in thousands of cases of sexual abuse of children. Is not every abused child God's work of art? Is not every abused and profaned child a Temple of the Holy Spirit, and a Child of God. Jesus said: "Let the little children come to me."

**Reverence** is the topic for this Lent. How to make it practical is up to each one of us. I will start simply, by holding a door open for someone who is carrying things, by opening a door for an elderly Sister, by walking gently and slowly in our cloisters in order to keep an atmosphere of peace and reverence for others.

When in the shopping centers, why not pay more attention to others, and ensure that others aren't pushed and shoved, as they often are by impatient people?

An elderly shopper was recently pushed, and dropped the few purchases she had – I witnessed it in Woolworths. She was distressed. I stopped to help her regain her strength, and we repacked her bags. The person who pushed her was running, and continued to run- not a care for what she had done to the woman.

Another way of showing reverence is to call people by their names and respect who they are.

Another way is to remember. While this becomes more difficult as we age, remembering the anniversary of those who are dear to us and our friends. It means we could send a card, an email – just to say we are with them in their grief.

Recently, a couple who had come to the local area, and had just moved into their new home, woke the next morning to find graffiti on the fence. Someone

suggested that the person or persons who did this had never been treated with reverence and therefore had been on the streets for some years. This didn't help the couple who woke up to the mess.

So, it is up to each one of us as Oblates to change society. Let us make reverence our priority for Lent. Let us make reverence happen!

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

Lent is the time when we choose a suitable book for reading and reflection.

In our shop at the moment, we have "Between the Dark and the Daylight – Embracing the Contradictions of Life", by Sr. Joan Chittister.

"In God's Holy Light, - Wisdom from the Desert Monastics", by Sr. Joan Chittister.

"The Road to Eternal Life", by Fr. Michael Casey, ocsso.

"Conversations with St. Benedict: The Rule in Today's World", by Terence G. Kardong.

"A Not so Unexciting Life – Essays on Benedictine History and Spirituality in Honour of Michael Casey, ocsso., and edited by Carmel Posa, sgs.

"Monastic Table", by Sr. Aquinata Bockman.

Or: you may have a book that you haven't read for a long time, and would like to re-visit.

We also suggest that you pray with the liturgy readings for each weekend. These are on our website every week in advance of the coming weekend. 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**

The texts which speak of reverence have been noted in the first section of this booklet. The texts on reverence for God – they are texts which we take for granted. Of course we reverence God. But, do we? We can't say we reverence God while we despise one made in the image and likeness of God, or when we ignore another person who is sitting on his or her own at a gathering of friends and neighbours.

We cannot say that we reverence God when we ignore the Muslim woman sitting near us in the doctor's surgery.

We cannot say that we reverence God when we use our mobile phone in the church during Mass, or when the call of a text makes a "pinging" sound while the priest is holding up the Body of Christ.

We cannot say that we reverence God when we park the car so crookedly in the supermarket carpark, that no one can park beside us.

These are just a few of thousands of examples.

## **SECTION FOUR: COMMUNITY HISTORY**

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, this year, we celebrated 169 years in Australia, and 30 years since we arrived on our present property to begin a new phase of monastic life. Our move to Jamberoo was the second move in the history of our

community. It was our second move since we came to Australia in in 1848. Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1849 was our official foundation day.

At the beginning of First Vespers on February 1, 2018, we began that wonderful new venture which was advertised in the Pax booklet in 2017. Three Oblates signed on to live beside us, pray with us and work with us. In other words, they made a commitment to journey more closely with the community.

Most of us would have heard the news that our Bishop, Peter Ingham finally has someone to replace him. He is now 77 and has been a wonderful Bishop of Wollongong for such a long time. The Bishop-elect, is Fr. Brian Gregory Mascord, an Oblate of our community. Gregory is Brian's Oblate name, and it is on the invitations which have been issued. His Episcopal Ordination is on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. About sixteen of us will be going to this wonderful event. Brian was here on retreat recently, his first port of call being to his Benedictine community, as he expressed it – our brother in St. Benedict. This is history in the making. The Episcopal Ordination will take place at the Win Stadium, with seating for 2000 people. It promises to be a joyful and deeply holy celebration.

## **SECTION FIVE: LITURGY**

**Our liturgical calendar is as follows:**

### **February**

- 14:** Ash Wednesday
- 18:** First Sunday of Lent.
- 22:** The Chair of St. Peter (Feast)
- 25:** Second Sunday of Lent.

### **March**

- 4:** Third Sunday of Lent
- 11:** Fourth Sunday of Lent.
- 17:** St. Patrick – Solemnity in Australia
- 18:** Fifth Sunday of Lent.
- 19:** St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Solemnity).
- 21:** The Passing of our holy father, St. Benedict (Solemnity)
- 25:** Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord. The Annunciation of the Lord has been moved to April 9. Therefore, those who celebrate feast days on that day will be mentioned in the Easter edition of the Oblate Booklet.

**Palm Sunday begins holy week, the most solemn week of the year.**

The sacred Paschal Triduum consists of three days: Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

It begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening. and finishes with the Office of Compline on Easter Sunday night.

## **SECTION SIX: YOUR COMMUNITY**

Congratulations to our two Oblates who made their commitment on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017:

Matthew (Herman) Tague of Nowra.  
Ethel (Emmanuel) Paraiwa-Murray of Sydney.

**A notice for Oblates who live in and around Brisbane, Queensland:**

Oblate Hilary Scarce would love to gather and pray now and then with other oblates. If you are interested, the contact details are as follows:

Phone (07) 38652464.

Mobile Phone: 0411962901

Email address: [hilaryscarce@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryscarce@gmail.com)

A message from Abbess Mary Barnes: On our website under Oblates, we have a link called "Oblate Reflection and Resources" where we add anything that might benefit our Oblates. We invite any oblates who have anything to share with us and other Oblates, to please send it via email to Sr. Hildegard at:

[oblatedirector@jamberoobbey.org.au](mailto:oblatedirector@jamberoobbey.org.au)

Or directly to Mother Mary at:

[benedictineabbey@bigpond.com.au](mailto:benedictineabbey@bigpond.com.au)

**Anniversaries of Oblation:**

**FEBRUARY**

14: Benedetta Marina Di Mattia

17: Giovanna Scholastica Tesoriera, and Matthew Edward Dowsey

Vincenzo Gerardo Cappetta, Elaine Brigid Guy, Wendy Lucy Browning, Barbara Elizabeth Jamieson

18: M. del Carmen Teresa Boharull-Vila

Robert (Anselm) van Oort

20: Christine Frances Angus

Patricia Hildegard Benedict

21: Fr. Henry Bernard Byrne

27: Robert Anselm Cashman and Colleen Augustine Cashman

**MARCH**

5: Donn (Gregory) Corcoran

7: Nazin (Hildegard) Atalay

8: Julie (Frances) Redican

15: Ian (Godric) Thomas

16: June (Benedicta) Jenkins

19: Bernard Quinn

20: Fr. Johan (Ignatius) Anderson

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

25: Elizabeth Mary Hildegard Muntz, and Jennifer Ancilla Shirvington

Mark (Maurus) Hamilton

29: Elizabeth (Beth) Teresa Montgomery

Maria Matilda Curtis

**APRIL** – Easter Sunday is April 1, so anniversaries after that date will be mentioned in the Easter Booklet.

**Anniversaries of Solemn Profession:**

March 2: Sr. Mechtild Crawford

### **Feast days during Lent:**

Happy feast day to:

Donn Gregory Corcoran, for March 5<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>th</sup>, 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.

### **Necrology:**

Sr. Mary Mildred Smythe, 26 February

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, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1878. (Founding Mother)

Sr. M. Hildegard Doyle, 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1969

Sr. M. Monica Hardie, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1956

Sr. M. Aelred Bradshaw, 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1959

Sr. M. Editha Thompson, 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1983

### **SECTION SEVEN: SAINTS**

From a Sermon for the Solemnity of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, by Blessed Gueric of Igny:

*Do you light your own candles...those lamps which the Lord commanded you to have in your hands? Come to him and be enlightened so that you do not so much carry lamps as become lamps, shining within and without for yourselves and for your neighbours. So may there be a lamp in your heart, in your hand and in your mouth. Let the lamp in your heart shine for yourself, the lamp in your hand and mouth for your neighbours. The lamp in your heart is faith-inspired reverence; the lamp in your hand is the example of good works. The lamp in your mouth is edifying speech.*

Let us remember this Lent that the lamp in our hearts is faith-inspired reverence for God, for one another, especially for the stranger. It begins within our own hearts.

St. Gertrud the Great said: *When I return into my heart, I find You there.*

Bl. Gueric of Igny goes on to say: *In order to light all the lamps, approach the source of light, Jesus - and become enlightened. Then, when the lamp of this*

*life goes out, there will appear for you who had so many lamps shining within you the light of unquenchable life, and it will shine for you at evening like the brightness of midday.*

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

I repeat what I said last year, because it is so important:

Lent in its Latin context is adapted from: *lente* (slowly, without haste, calmly, leisurely). It is related to *lento* which means to make flexible, to bend. The great trees of our forests bend and sway with the winds of change, the storms of our land. They bend and sway and then when the storm is past, they stand tall again. By bending and swaying with the storms of this life, we will be sure not to snap. *Lento* also has the meaning of being compliant or flexible. This is important if we are to place our lives in the hands of God. We need to think about our ability or inability to bend, be compliant, take time. The call of Lent, 2018 is to choose calm, flexibility which will, in turn, lead to reverence. Haste makes us throw our tools into the garden shed, and rattle our crockery and cutlery. Why are we always in a hurry? It is time to slow down.

When we choose to live this way, we will find that we have more time than we've ever had!