

**PAX - WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE
EASTERTIDE, 2018**

SECTION ONE: READING AND REFLECTION

Theme: PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

As most of you know, I am attempting a doctoral thesis with the Sydney College of Divinity. In a paper delivered at the Sydney College of Divinity on March 6, Professor Jim Harrison chose as his theme, “The historical Jesus as ‘Social Critic’.” He examined the reciprocity system in the Graeco-Roman world of antiquity, and the way that this system “shaped a range of relationships in the Gospels.” Reciprocity, as we know, means tradeoff, exchange, interchange, or mutual benefit. The reciprocity system “created networks of obligation that spanned the divine and human world.” I have chosen just one aspect of his brilliant presentation, the third section of the paper in which he examined Luke 6:27-36. In this text Jesus pushes the boundaries set in place by the reciprocity system:

Luke 6:27-36 is a powerful and dangerous pushing of boundaries: “But I say to you who hear, ‘Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To those who strike you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to all who beg from you, and of those who take away your goods do not ask for them again. And as you wish that people would do to you, do so unto them.’” All of this was against the reciprocity system.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?
For even sinners love those who love them. (The reciprocity system – mutual benefit)

And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?
For even the sinners do the same. (The reciprocity system – mutual exchange).

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you?
Even the sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. (Tradeoff)

And so, reading through these texts we can easily note the reciprocity system which was in place in the society of Jesus – a system of **exchange**. You give, but you also receive in return.

Professor Harrison was presenting Jesus as challenging the networks of obligation in the society of his time. In this regard Jesus is presented as a ‘Social Critic’.

We can simplify the reciprocity system by saying that it was a 'calculated' way of living. If something good was done to you, you were expected to do the same for the donor. If you gave away your coat, you expected to receive another coat. If you just love those who love you, so do the sinners or those tied up in the reciprocity system of the time.

Jesus pushes the boundaries: love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you. Give your coat and your shirt – don't expect anything in return.

Let us take Luke 6:27-36 for *Lectio Divina* over the next few weeks, along with the Easter Gospels which are given for each Sunday.

And let us follow Jesus Our Lord, as together with Him, we push the boundaries. First of all, we have to name the boundaries. We are all walled in, or boundaried in, because of visible or invisible laws, rituals, customs which keep us safe, and behind the boundary fence so that we are not challenged to go any further. Perhaps our parents, or grandparents have told us tales of the harm which could inflict us if we cross the boundaries, the rituals and the customs of our day, and of former periods in history.

Pushing the boundaries is just as difficult in our present age, as it was in the time of Jesus. My own father used to work at the Matthew Talbot Hostel in Brisbane three nights a week. He washed the men who came in from the streets. He helped serve meals to them. He was a committed member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society just as there are committed members among our Oblates who do the same work, pushing the boundaries as did Jesus. They don't expect anything in return, and they don't look for gratitude. Luke 6:27-36 echoes their dedication as it speaks also of the dedication of all Christians who do not count the cost when they give up something they need, in order to help the less fortunate. Washing and feeding and caring for the poor is, for Christians, a meeting with Christ.

Is there someone who needs your love this Eastertide?

What can you do?

How will you push the boundaries of time and place to give yourself to someone needy?

Coffee and cake at a nice shop is a practical way – especially when you are already pushed for time! You might have to say "no" to something you love doing in order to be there for someone needy.

Perhaps the "someone needy" is a disabled person whom we could visit or take to the shops or just chat to. It makes them happy but usually, we are the one who come away feeling so much the richer for being with them!

Perhaps you are unwell, or elderly and don't have the physical movement you once had. Why not push the boundaries and ask someone to take you to the shops? Come out of the boundaries of your isolation and independence. Perhaps those who would love to take you out are afraid to offer because of the boundaries you have set.

A woman I know well set up an unfriendly boundary between her and her daughter-in-law. Then one day after one or two years of coldness and unwelcome vibes, the daughter-in-law asked her help with some recipes she was going to use. For the first time, the fence came down as they sat together and shared. The fence has remained down. The key to removing the invisible boundary was to ask help from her mother-in-law, and accept the mother-in-law's advice on how to cook some special meals. Asking someone for help is a trusted way of breaking through boundaries. Asking someone who is surrounded by barbed wire, to pray for a special intention, is another way. Jean Vanier relates this in a story from his experience in one L'Arche community. No one could reach into one woman's heart, the boundary was so set! One day he asked her to pray for something, and she was a changed person.

SECTION TWO: FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION

Cardinal Walter Kasper, in his book "Mercy, the Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life", says that "Jesus' demand [of us] to love one's neighbor is not only central, it is also radical, so radical that it can take your breath away. Jesus goes beyond not only the Jewish tradition, but beyond every human measure. This is evident in the demand to renounce violence...he rescinds the so-called rule, "eye for eye and tooth for tooth", and establishes a different rule in its place: "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also..." (Luke 6:29). That transcends normal human power. It demands a human and Christian largesse (benevolence, or generosity) and restraint that breaks up the cycle of evil and the vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence, establishing peace in their place." (Cf. page 138).

SECTION THREE: ABOUT THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

Sr. Joan Chittister quotes the following episode in her commentary on Chapter One, The Kinds of Monks: The ancients say that once upon a time a disciple asked the elder, "Holy One, is there anything I can do to make myself Enlightened?"

And the Holy One Answered, "As little as you can do to make the sun rise in the morning."

"Then of what use," the surprised disciple asked, "are the spiritual exercises you prescribe?"

"To make sure," the elder said, "that you are not asleep when the sun begins to rise."

The Rule [we follow] prescribes directions that will keep us...awake until what we live, lives in us." ("The Rule of Benedict, Insights For the Ages", page 32). The Rule of Benedict pushes the boundaries of comfort and security:

- we are to listen with the ear of the heart, and make our response to the Word of God – our practical response, - our lived response. Listening to the Word of God, and letting it go in one ear and out the other keeps

us in a place of our own security and comfort. There's no pushing of boundaries and no challenge when we do this kind of Lectio Divina. IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER? NO, NO, NO!

- we are to run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love. Run, don't dawdle. Our hearts are to be overflowing with love, as we run.
- we are students in a school of the Lord's service, a school from which one doesn't graduate. That's a radical pushing of boundaries!

In Chapter 2,

- we are not to be sarabaites or gyrovagues, but rather the strong kind of monastic man or woman. The strong kind is grounded and doesn't wander around in a day dream – or worse, “What they like they call holy”.
- the Abbot/Abbess will have to give an account of how authentically they have cared for those entrusted to them.

The whole of chapter Four, anchored in the Gospel, is about pushing the boundaries as Jesus also pushed them:

- we are to “keep death daily before our eyes.” Surely this is a prime example of Benedict as social critic, and more than ever in the present age, when the sky is the limit.

Spend time with the Rule over Eastertide, noting all the places where Benedict pushes the boundaries, as Jesus pushed the boundaries when he was a “social critic”. Benedict too was a “social critic”. He lived in a society of non-Christian values, and sought God by living an eremitical calling in the cave at *Subiaco*. His teaching throughout the Rule is a teaching grounded in the Gospel. Benedictines travel “with the Gospel for their guide.” It is also Christological – it centred in Christ. Charisms like hospitality, positive words, listening to everyone, especially the youngest, respect for one another in mutual obedience, and so on. These values were contrary to the values of the society of his time.

SECTION FOUR: COMMUNITY HISTORY

We have all read diaries written into history. The following excerpt is from a fragment of a diary kept by one of our foundresses, Sr. Scholastica (Jane) Gregory.

Entry for Saturday, December 4th, 1848.

“The wind has changed, the clouds forebode an approaching squall, we applied ourselves to our duties as usual today. Towards midday the rain began to fall and so continued until evening. We were all anxious to have our cabin windows closed, it became so cold. The ship rocked to and fro and all were desirous to get to bed soon. His Grace (Archbishop Polding) is very poorly and has been so for some days. I fear he has caught cold. I did not get up the next day until 7.00 a.m. The sea was very rough and it was

impossible for us to have Mass. We had the divine office at half past eight as usual. All of us are more or less squeamish. At half past ten we had spiritual mass and the reading of holy scripture – I was sick and felt the same as if I had just come on board the ship. I had also a violent pain in my head. I did not go to the public table. I had the pleasure of a cup of tea in my cabin, tea which was upset all down my frock. – from pitching and rolling of the ship. The bread, butter etc were rolling in every direction which did not add to its delicacy or give us incredible appetites. After tea or supper, whichever you like to call it, his Grace endeavoured to amuse me by reading an interesting book in the west country dialect. He read it with so much humour that despite all my former miseries and temptations to impatience, I had a good hearty laugh.”

Sr. Scholastica died in October 1850, after only two years in Australia. Those who agreed to make a commitment to the Australian mission were brave people, as this excerpt from her diary proves. Brave, courageous people of every Christian faith did the same: came by sailing ship with their few belongings, the Sacred Scriptures, and their hymn books. In the case of our community, it was the Liturgy of the Hours which they brought with them. They broke through the boundaries of security and stability and comfort and set out in 19th century sailing ships. This was especially so with the poor of Ireland. Some of the Lay Sisters of our community were poor Irish girls, who, when in Australia, could get work as servants and housemaids, and therefore earn money of their own.

SECTION FIVE: LITURGY

We are now in Eastertide

The Octave of Easter ends with the Liturgy of *Compline* (Night Prayer), on the Second Sunday of Easter - but strictly speaking, each Sunday in Eastertide is considered as a ‘solemnity’ in the Church, and in Monastic communities. From Easter Sunday, April 1, until the Second Sunday of Easter, April 8, no feast or *Memoria* is celebrated because of this solemn week of Liturgy. The Liturgical Calendar for the rest of Eastertide is printed here for your reference.

April 8: Second Sunday of Easter. Divine Mercy Sunday

April 9: The Annunciation of the Lord

April 15: Third Sunday of Easter

April 22: Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 23: Anniversary of the Dedication of the Monastic Church of Jamberoo Abbey. Our Church was consecrated by Bishop William Murray on 23 April 1990.

April 25: Anzac Day

April 26: St. Mark (Feast)

April 28: St. Peter Chanel (Memoria)

April 29: Fifth Sunday of Easter. (St. Catherine of Siena is omitted this year.)

May 02: St. Athanasius (Memoria)

May 03: Sts. Philip and James (Feast)

May 06: Sixth Sunday of Easter.

May 13: The Ascension of the Lord.

May 14: St. Matthias, Feast

May 20: Pentecost Sunday

This is the conclusion of Eastertide and conclusion of the period of this edition of Pax.

SECTION SIX: YOUR COMMUNITY

Congratulations to Robert Van Oort, who made his commitment as an Oblate on Sunday, February 18, the Oblate Retreat weekend. Robert took the name "Anselm".

Prayers go out to all Oblates who are ill at present, and to those who are caring for siblings, and spouses who are ill.

Sr. Mellitus died on February 11. Despite failing health, she had been with us in community being cared for by our sisters. Just before Christmas, she had a fall which resulted in a hip replacement and the need for care in a Nursing Home close by. She died there very peacefully with Mother Mary, Sr Ancilla and Sr Magdalen at her bedside. Only a year ago, we had a great celebration for her 90th birthday on 15 April. May she rest in peace.

NB. The Community is away for our annual R & R from April 29 for three weeks. The Abbey is CLOSED during this time.

Happy Feast Day to:

April 9 - The Annunciation of the Lord (the date has been transferred from Holy Week this year).

Mary (of the Annunciation) Wyatt, Sr. Ancilla, Jenny Ancilla Shirvington and Bernadette Mary Maher.

April 21 –St Anselm

Tony Anselm Tarleton, Alfred Anselm Breznik, Robert Anselm Cashman, Robert, Anselm van Oort, and Kate Anselm Trevenen.

April 29 – St Catherine

Claire Catherine Devlyn, Marie Catherine Gleeson, Kathleen Catherine Daysh.

May 13 - Bl Julian of Norwich

Patricia Julian Morgan, Brigid Julian Inder, Rev. Catherine Julian Eaton, Colleen Julian Hines, Therese Julian Proctor, Jean Julian Reid, Patricia Julian Morgan, Margaret Julian Crooks, Sr. Julian Barbara Garwood, Sandra Julian Cooper.

Happy Anniversary to:

April 16 - Helen Seraphim Shorter

April 19 - Margaret Thomas More Whetham & Ewa Maria Teresa Komorowska

May 4 - Sr. Hilda Scott (Solemn Profession Anniversary)

Necrology

April

03 – Sr. Mary Hildegard Doyle

07 – Sr. Mary Monica Hardie

- 10 – Sr. Mary Aelred Bradshaw
- 17 - Sr. Mary Editha Thompson (1983)
- 23 - Mother M. Ignatius Harnett (1915)
- 27 - Sr. M. Magdalene Parkinson (1900)
- 28 - Sr. M. Placida Burrows (1859)

May

- 01 - Sr. M. Veronica Brown (1992)
- 02 – Sr. M Dolores Haselden (1951)
- 04 - Sr. M. Angela Regan (1859)
- 17 – Most Rev. Charles Henry Bishop Davis.

SECTION SEVEN: SAINTS

St. John Cassian taught that monastics must till the soil of the heart every day with the plough of the Gospel.

Are we doing this?

If so, we are being true to our calling.

SECTION EIGHT: FOR REFLECTION

If you are asked to go one mile, go two. (Jesus).

Blessings of light, peace and resurrection joy during these great 50 days of Eastertide to all our Oblates and friends! May we all continue to “push the boundaries”!

