

**PAX - WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE
EASTERTIDE, 2019**

SECTION ONE: READING AND REFLECTION

Theme: DIVINE LIGHT

An extract from, the “Life and Miracles of St. Benedict”: *Long before the night office began, the man of God was standing at his window, where he watched and prayed while the rest were still asleep. In the dead of night he suddenly beheld a flood of light shining down from above, more brilliant than the sun, and with it every trace of darkness cleared away. Another remarkable sight followed. According to his own description, the whole world was gathered up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light. (Chapter 35)*

Opening out this text:

1. Benedict is up and at prayer, long before the night office (the Office of Vigils).
2. While at prayer near the window of his cell, he suddenly beheld a flood of light.
3. It is without doubt the divine light,
4. Because of the light, every trace of darkness was “cleared away”. Only the divine light has the power to dispel the darkness.
5. Benedict, while remaining there in prayer, and in communion with God, beholds the whole world in “a single ray of light”.

What does this mean for us who are disciples of Benedict?

1. Fidelity to prayer, even if it means getting up from our beds before dawn, and communing with God in the dark of night – keeping vigil.
2. Being receptive to the divine light as it shines for us in the darkness of our lives.
3. Being receptive to the divine light so that it will dispel any darkness within us and around us. Depression is dark. Hurt is dark. Bitterness is dark. Negativity is dark. Rash judgments cover us in darkness. Wielding power over others in a ruthless way is dark. Racial prejudice is dark. Religious prejudice is dark. Despair and desolation is dark.
4. Only the divine light has the power to dispel darkness.

Easter and Eastertide proclaim loudly that the divine light of Jesus is shining – Jesus has conquered death and sin, and has arisen from the dead, so that we might live forever in the divine light.

Unlike the light of a room in our homes, where we just touch a switch to bring the light into the darkness, we cannot switch on the divine light.

The way Benedict is in the story at the beginning of this section, tells us that we need to be ready and watching to see the divine light, or “know” the divine light. “Knowing” in this instance is an “in-touch-ness” with the divine presence. St. Benedict also taught that the “divine presence is everywhere.”

5. Benedict (while in communion with God) beholds the whole world in a “single ray of light.” This “beholding” is a gift from God. The single ray of light symbolizes “harmony” or “unity”. This is how creation was made, and this is how we are exhorted by Benedict, to reverence every part of creation – from human beings, to flora, fauna, oceans and wetlands, domestic animals, flocks and herds. St. Hildegard of Bingen said that: “The vitality of earth’s elements comes from the strength of the creator.” Could we say also that the life breath of all animals and plants survive on the strength of the creator?

We are now in Eastertide. It is a new Liturgical Season.

Can we make just two resolutions for these weeks, leading up to Pentecost?

1. Can we remain faithful daily to *Lectio Divina*? *Lectio Divina* is a way of life, not a method of prayer. One does not have to sit in a fixed place for one or more hours. Once the Scriptures have spoken to us and called us forth respond, then we can go on our way, and carry the Word with us.
2. Can we place ourselves at the window in Benedict’s cell and see that all of creation is “gifted with the ecstasy of God’s light?” (St. Hildegard of Bingen). If we can do this, our lives will be changed forever. We will no longer use the terms: Christian, Jew, Muslim. We will learn to say “brother, sister.” (Pope Francis).

SECTION TWO: FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION

My suggestion this Eastertide is that we each keep a notebook, or make notes on our I-pads, recording our experiences of the divine light, while at prayer, in the night before the dawn. Or, if we don’t have the pleasure of early morning prayer, because we have small children, or because we are elderly citizens and in care, we can choose another time of the day. Whatever our circumstances, we need, more than ever, to spend time with God. Our world is becoming more violent, our Institutional churches appear to be crumbling, certain nations will not help stop the destruction of our planet. As disciples of St. Benedict, we have a responsibility to be a light in the darkness, because we have received the divine light at our baptism, and many times along the way. A gentle man came up to me in our church a few days ago. He said he had been to our shop and bought a number of Celtic crosses, and placed an order for an extra twelve. His reason was that he gives them to people he meets in various associations and fellowships – people who seem lost. He said, “I give them something to hold on to.”

SECTION THREE: ABOUT THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

Sr. Joan Chittister has something to say to us about the utter importance of prayer. It is hard to hear, if we are people who prefer to drift, rather than be accountable. Sr. Joan says: “Prayer [in the spirit of RB]...becomes a furnace in which every act of our lives is submitted to the heat and purifying process of the smelter’s fire; so that our minds and our hearts, our ideas and our lives,

come to be in sync, so that we are what we say we are. Prayer brings us to burn off the dross of what clings to our souls like mildew, and [prayer] sets us free for deeper, richer, and truer lives in which we become what we seek.” (p. 90, “The Rule of Benedict, Insights for the Ages”, Joan Chittister, O.S.B.)

SECTION FOUR: COMMUNITY HISTORY

As we are aware by now, Mother Mary Gertrud Barnes resigned her office at the end of 2018. Then there followed weeks of clearing out the Abbess’s office and leaving it as “new” for the next abbess. (Not as big as a change of Federal Government, but big enough!). Mother Mary left everything in perfect order, as she always does.

This took all of January. Other departments had to be attended to as well, in case appointments changed under a new abbess. This was quite exhausting for the community. But – there is nothing like a good clearing out! Do I really need this or that? No is usually the answer. So – give it away!

On February 5, we began a discernment, facilitated by a person qualified in this area.

The election of an abbess took place on February 11, and Sr. Hilda Scott became the third elected abbess of the community.

Mother Benedicta Philips was the first elected abbess, since the monastery was raised to the status of an abbey in 1982. Before that, the Superior of the community held the title of “Prioress”.

You will have received a letter from both Mother Mary and Mother Hilda.

Mother Mary, now Sr. Mary has gone away for a number of months as is the custom when there is a change of government. The former abbess goes apart, so that the incoming abbess can find her feet, and shepherd the community using the gifts God has given her.

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 in terms of ‘solemnity’ in the Church, and in Monastic communities. From Easter Sunday, April 21, until the Second Sunday of Easter, April 28, 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 28: Second Sunday of Easter. Divine Mercy Sunday
Anzac Day may be celebrated with flags and symbols, but not with the Liturgy this year.

April 29: St. Catherine of Siena

May 02: St. Athanasius (Memoria)
May 03: Sts. Philip and James (Feast)
May 05: Third Sunday of Easter.
May 12: Fourth Sunday of Easter
May 14: St. Matthias, Feast
May 29: Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 24: Our Lady Help of Christians. (Solemnity).
May 26: Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 31: The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
June 1: St. Justin, martyr.
June 2: The Ascension of the Lord.
June 3: St. Charles Lwanga & companions, martyrs.
June 5: St. Boniface, Memorial
June 9: PENTECOST SUNDAY

PENTECOST MARKS THE CONCLUSION OF EASTERTIDE AND
CONCLUSION OF THE PERIOD OF THIS EDITION OF PAX.

SECTION SIX: YOUR COMMUNITY

Death Notice: We were informed on Thursday, 28 March, that Oblate Mary Connors has died. Her daughter rang to tell us. Mary and her husband, Aubrey, made their Oblation on 22 August, 1993. Mary took the name "Gertrud" and Aubrey (who died some years ago), took the name "Patrick". Please include Mary's family in your prayer. Their son, Clive Connors, worked as a contract carpenter when our Abbey was being built in 1988-89.

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

THE ABBEY IS CLOSED FROM 28 APRIL for three weeks while the Community takes its annual holiday break.

Mail and email will be left unattended however, I will continue to send out Lectio Divina to those who receive it every week. Prayer doesn't stop just because one is on holidays. In fact I look forward to those long hours of prayer. What a blessing.

Happy Feast Day to:

April 21: Tony Anselm Tarleton, Alfred Anselm Breznik, Robert Anselm Cashman, Robert, Anselm van Oort, and Kate Anselm Trevenen,
April 29: Claire Catherine Devlyn, Marie Catherine Gleeson, Kathleen Catherine Daysh

May 13: 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

May 4: Mother Hilda Scott, (Solemn Monastic Profession).
May 24: Amanda Mary Hickey
May 25: Alan Bede Hickey, Heather Bede Thompson, Cheryl Bede Townsend, Patrick Bede Quinn, Antonio Bede Zaragoza, and Fr. Kevin Bede Walsh.
May 30: Brenda Joan Payne.
May 31: Josette Elizabeth Wickens, Sr. Elizabeth Funder, and Mary Elizabeth Locke,

June 5: Allen Boniface Flanagan, Jeff Boniface Smart, Arno Boniface Struzina, Rev. Cameron Boniface Freese.

Happy Anniversary to:

May 24: Ivan Benedict Fitz
May 25: Phyllis Magdalen Rodrigues, Clare Therese Sydenham, Jeanette Therese McHugh and Phillip John Wilson
May 30: Wendy Godric Orrock
June 1: Rev. Mark Aelred Podesta
June 3: Matthew Benedict Ransom
June 6: Lorraine, Mary Irmina Stilo
June 7: Ian Benedict MacDonald.
June 8: Brenda Benedicta Verbeek, Judith Catherine Brown, Helene Miriam Mackey, Rev. Catherine Julian Eaton

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.
29 - Sister Mary Ann Hogan
31 - Dame Mary Clare Bocher

JUNE

02 - Mother Mary Austin Marum
02 - Sr. Marian Bourke
04 – Sr. Mary Gertrude Flanagan
08 - Sr. Mary Scholastica Therry

SECTION SEVEN: SAINTS

St. Hildegard of Bingen has some wisdom for those of us who might be tempted to skip *Lectio Divina*: “When a tree does not blossom, it cannot bear fruit. Likewise a person cannot be fruitful without the greening power of faith and an understanding of scripture.”

SECTION EIGHT: FOR REFLECTION

How many of us set unreasonable goals at the start of every day: a list to get through? Sr. Stan of Dublin offers wisdom: *We are creatures of the earth, born to live in rhythm with nature, rise with the sun, sleep with the dark, work in light. However, we move through the day to the rhythm of timetables, caught up in the need to do what we think needs doing – another day’s unnatural rhythms.* (Stillness Through my Prayers, by Sister Stan, page 195, Townhouse Publishing, Dublin). Sr. Stan has written three beautiful books, well worth purchasing.