

PAX – WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE
LENT, 2020

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

Theme: The Power of One.

The Holy Spirit led me to this theme when I was watching the non-stop report on the New Year’s Eve devastation by fire and in the days ahead as fires ravaged human lives, homes, live-stock, flora and fauna.

“The Power of One” was the title of a film, starring Morgan Freeman.

The film revealed how the power of one man broke through the attempted destruction of freedom. Apartheid is not something we want to remember.

The bushfire devastation in our land brought to the fore the courage and generosity of one community in Sydney. This was the Sikh community. Their Temple is in Turrumurra, Sydney. This ONE community includes within its ministry, a “Mates helping mates” – this is their joint project. Their generosity at Ground Zero (Cobargo and surrounds) will be remembered. What they did by going to Ground Zero, was better than any interfaith dialogue. They helped others when a state of emergency was declared. The Muslim Community, also of Sydney gave 36,000 bottles of water. The power of one, of one community, one village, one town!

One small community on the NSW South Coast adopted a group of Muslim mates, who made a ten-hour journey there and back to cook for firefighters and bushfire victims.

And so, we reflect on the power of one: the one who first shared an idea, which would result in community service.

The death of more than one person proclaims to us: This one died fighting fires so that I am safe.

A helicopter fighting fires from the air went down with three American Fire Fighters. All three were killed, giving their lives to help the many.

We remember too, the strength of Shane Fitzsimmons, one man at the head of the RFS, who spoke day by day of the desolation, and destruction of the raging and relentless fires – fires not seen before in Australia.

The power of one was seen when the Mayor of Wagga Wagga, took the decision not to have fireworks on New Year’s Eve, out of respect for the firefighters risking their lives to save the lives of other Australians.

Away from bushfires for now. Let us focus on “the power of one” in other histories:

Rosa Parkes sat at the front of a Montgomery Alabama bus, on the same day that the Supreme Court **ban** on segregation of the city’s buses took effect.

It was a December evening, very cold – 1955. Her action triggered her arrest and changed the United States forever. All forms of segregation against African-American people were eventually (for the most part) changed for the better.

Greta Thunberg, a fifteen-year-old girl, addressed the world leaders on Climate Change. How did we feel as she spoke? She was courageous, passionate and accurate.

So, how does each one of us, Oblates of St. Benedict bring the “power of one” to our very broken world? Not like Greta Thunberg, not like Rosa Parkes, and certainly not like Morgan Freeman in the film, “The Power of One”, but we do it in our own Benedictine way.

When it comes to the power of one Benedictine Oblate, we look to our animals for example. All these examples took place during the terrible fires:

Sharing: One wombat was photographed ushering other small native fauna into its burrow. What did he say to them: “Hide in here with me until the fire passes over us. That way, we won’t be hurt.”

A koala and a border collie were filmed drinking water from the dog’s bowl. (Beautiful). Perhaps they forgot for a few minutes that they were different, and even enemies of each other.

An Echidna was filmed drinking from the dog’s water bowl in someone’s garden, someone who didn’t lose their home.

Benedictines are people who live in solidarity with others, according to the now ancient Rule of Benedict.

Let us take a look at Chapter 64. It is about the Abbot.

Since every chapter of the Rule is for every Benedictine, we need to take this chapter for Lent, and let the power of one (me), rule in our homes, workplaces, parishes, clubs.

- Our goal must be profit for others, not pre-eminence for ourselves. (vs. 8)
- We must always let mercy triumph over judgment, so that we too may win mercy. We must hate faults but love the brothers and sisters who commit them. When we have to punish someone, we should use prudence and avoid extremes; otherwise, by rubbing too hard to remove the rust, we may break the vessel.
- We are not to crush the bruised reed Isaiah 42:8.
- We are to prune away faults with prudence and love, as we seek the best for each individual.
- Lastly, we must strive to be loved rather than feared.

This is how the power of one, exercised within the Benedictine tradition, works to effect change in me and in those I am called to shepherd: family, factory workers, white-collar workers, farm labourers and gardeners; lawn-mowing and clean-up workers; my sewing group.

Everyone, everywhere, every day – let us try to use every opportunity this Lent to profit others, to show mercy, to be prudent, to strive to be loved, not feared.

SECTION TWO: FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION

Lent is the time when we choose a suitable book for reading and reflection. You may have a book that you haven't read for a long time, and would like to re-visit.

I saw the following book advertised in 'The American Benedictine Review' 70:4 November 2019

The Monk Within: Embracing a Sacred Way of Live, by Beverly Lanzetta (Sebastopol, CA; Blue Sapphire Books, 2018). The Paperback edition is advertised at \$19.00.

The following is a powerful reflection and so many of us may identify with it: "From my earliest youth, I have been a monk without a habit, a contemplative without a home, living between realms...I am a universal monk who would be bereft without the steady force that guides me, without the community that shares my heart's desire for a planet of peace and happiness...I am a monk because I was called and I answered, 'yes'."

We also suggest that you pray with the liturgy readings for each weekend. These are on our website in advance of the coming weekend. There is a little background to each reading, and a shared response to each reading.

SECTION THREE: ABOUT THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

Chapter 64, verses 16-19 form the second half of the chapter we have already noted.

A Benedictine is not to be excitable, anxious, extreme, obstinate, jealous or over-suspicious.

A person like this is never at rest (vs. 16).

On the contrary, we are to show forethought and consideration in what we ask of others, or to where we assign those under us. We are to be discerning and moderate. We must bear in mind the discretion of holy Jacob, who said: *If I drive my flocks too hard they will all die In a single day. (Gen.33:13.*

St. Benedict reminds us that discretion is the mother of all virtues. He goes on to say: "We must so arrange everything that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from."

SECTION FOUR: COMMUNITY HISTORY

On February 1, 2020, Bishop Brian Mascord celebrated Mass with us, and stayed until mid-afternoon. He had experienced the fires first-hand, as he visited the places of our Diocese – those where fire has destroyed lives and homes: Balmoral, Picton, Bargo, Hill Top, Bundanoon, then south to Milton-Ulladulla, Lake Conjola. He spoke of the courage of people who had lost everything, and a woman who represented the widow Jesus praises: this woman, who had lost everything in the fires at Milton, came up to the parish priest and gave him \$100.00. She had the needs of others in mind...

SECTION FIVE: LITURGY

Our liturgical calendar is as follows:

ASH WEDNESDAY: February 26

March 1: First Sunday of Lent.
March 8: Second Sunday of Lent.
March 15: Third Sunday of Lent.
March 17: St. Patrick
March 19: St. Joseph
March 21: The Passing of St. Benedict
March 22: Fourth Sunday of Lent. (Laetare Sunday)
March 25: The Annunciation of the Lord.
March 29: Fifth Sunday of Lent
April 5: Palm Sunday of the passion of the Lord.

HOLY WEEK

April 09: Holy Thursday
April 10: Good Friday TRIDUUM
April 11: Holy Saturday. TRIDUUM
April 12: Easter Sunday TRIDUUM
April 13-18: Octave of Easter.

Palm Sunday begins Holy Week, the most solemn week of the year.

The Sacred Paschal Triduum begins with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening.

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, (Thursday evening) and finishes with the Office of Compline on Easter Sunday night.

SECTION SIX: YOUR COMMUNITY

A number of our Oblates are ill at present. Some have gone into nursing care. As a result, they can no longer cope with the Pax booklet and so have asked us not to send it. What if more than ONE among us took it on board to pray for Oblates who are on the last lap of their journey home? I can't give names due to privacy but some are in their 80s and 90s. In many cases the dreaded cancer is claiming their lives. PLEASE PRAY...

Anniversaries of Oblation:

FEBRUARY

Robert (Anselm) Cashman, and Colleen (Augustine) Cashman

MARCH

Donn (Gregory) Corcoran – March 5.

Nazin (Hildegard) Atalay – March 7.

Julie (Frances) Redican – March 8

Ian (Godric) Thomas – March 15

June (Benedicta) Jenkins – March 16
Bernard Quinn – March 19
Fr. John (Ignatius) Anderson – March 20
Cecilia (Teresa Thomas) Larkin, and Carol (Mary of the Cross) Xuereb – March 21
Elizabeth Mary Hildegard Muntz, and Jennifer Ancilla Shirvington – March 25.
Mark (Maurus) Hamilton – March 25
Elizabeth (Beth) Teresa Montgomery – March 29.
Maria Matilda Curtis – March 29.

Solemn Profession Anniversary:

March 2: Sr. Mechtild Crawford

FEAST DAYS DURING LENT. Happy feast day to:

Donn Gregory Corcoran, for March 5.
Maureen Frances Williamson, Catherine Frances Turek, 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, for March 14, St. Matilda

Rev. Ian Patrick Crooks, for March 17, St. Patrick.

Necrology

MARCH

07 – Oblate Bernie Daniel Fitzgerald
09 – Sr. Mary Cecily Bourke
11 - Sr. Mary Jones
16 – Most Rev. John Bede Polding O.S.B.
17 – Oblate Peter Bernard Smith
18 – Sr. Margaret Gallagher
20 – Sr. Mechtilde O'Grady
21 – Oblate Sidney Stephen Long
21: Sr. Maria McKenzie
22 – Sr. Bridget Kelly
25 – Sr. Marguerite Burke
26 – Sr. Mary Clare Gabriel
28 – Mother Mary Magdalen le Clerc, Founding Mother.

APRIL

03 – Sr. Mary Hildegarde Doyle
07 – Sr. Mary Monica Hardie
10 – Sr. Mary Aelred Bradshaw

SECTION SEVEN: SAINTS

We have a number of saints in Australia at present. They are not numbered in the Catholic Church, but rather are the un-sung saints, who came to the aid of Australians who lost homes and businesses and live-stock, vehicles, bee hives – in the bush fires of this summer. The Muslims and Sikhs who went to serve their fellow Australians are saints. People like Andrew O'Dwyer, a volunteer fire fighter, who lost his life in the fight, is a saint. His funeral was

heart-breaking. He left a widow and small child. All those who lost lives in the fight! These are saints. And those who rushed to save injured fauna are saints. There were other widows left long before their time, still in the thirties, still with small children.

SECTION EIGHT: FOR REFLECTION

The Rule of St. Benedict manifests a certain liberalism and humanism, in the pristine sense of those terms. The author understands human nature, both its grandeur and its weakness. The author respects it and wants to facilitate its organic growth. He knows that human persons and their actions are of infinite variety and complexity, and that individual problems require individual solutions. (From RB 80, page 93). May we remember this always. One size doesn't fit all. If you find that you agree with this quotation, you are truly a disciple of St. Benedict.

