

**PAX - WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE
EASTERTIDE, 2020**

Theme: IMMANUEL – GOD IS WITH US.

SECTION ONE: READING AND REFLECTION

Just before Holy Week, Abbess Hilda called a meeting to share a letter containing this Biblical truth: Immanuel – God is with us. We then reflected on the letter and shared our responses. We need to hear this truth in the “now” of our lives. The Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order has used “Immanuel, God-is-with-us”, in a letter sent to us in late March: “All [of us] are living through a time of unprecedented change in so many aspects of our lives. We have all come to see that the best attempts at planning for events, good-will endeavours to be of service to others, and arrangements for community celebrations can come to a halt in a matter of moments. All our efforts to eat and live in a healthy way seem suddenly useless when the virus enters our community and our homes. With the collapse of travel and commerce, many of our sources of income from our monastic guesthouses, our academic courses, our small business ventures have gone down or even disappeared. While all this can be disappointing, discouraging, worrying and frightening, our faith reminds us that all people, all things, and all events are in the hands of a God who loves us, cares for us, and provides for us. [The name of God, given in first Isaiah] is Immanuel, a divine name that stands true each day of our lives: indeed, God is with us. We cannot just say that we have to believe it and put it into practice in ways that are life-giving for ourselves and for those with whom we live and serve.”

Last Tuesday at Vespers, we prayed Psalm 125. There is a beautiful verse in that psalm which gives us an ancient truth that is still pertinent for us today. The text reads in verse 2, “Jerusalem! The mountains surround her; so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forever. What a powerful image for us to reflect on. In effect, the Psalmist tells us that we live move and have our being in the embrace of God’s loving care. God’s life-giving protection and care surround us, even when we do not feel it. But like the mountains that stand firm in their place, encircling Jerusalem, God’s steady, stable and strong arms remain a force that guides the course of world events, including the one in which we all now stand.”

The Abbot Primate then reminds us of Benedictine Obedience: God speaks to us through those dedicated men and women of our Governments. God also speaks to us through the leaders of our Church who have told us to follow the restrictions and guidelines that the medical profession has given to our governments. These laws have been put into place to halt the spread of this debilitating virus, to preserve lives, and to keep safe those who are most vulnerable, and really, all of us.”

SECTION TWO: FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION

The Abbot Primate’s letter continues with a story, a story told by a doctor to a journalist: “Nine days ago, a 75-year old pastor came to us for medical help. He was a kind man, he had grave respiratory problems, but he had a bible with him and it

impressed us that he was reading the bible to the people who were dying and he was holding their hands. We were all tired, discouraged doctors, psychologically and physically spent, and so we found that we were listening to him. Now we must admit as human beings we have reached our limits, there is nothing more we can do, and more people are dying every single day. And we are exhausted. Two of our colleagues have died and others are infected. We realize that we had reached the limits of what humans can do. We need God, and we have begun to ask for his help. We speak among ourselves and we cannot believe that we who were fierce atheists are now seeking for interior peace by asking the Lord to help us to resist so that we can take care of the sick. Yesterday the 75-year old pastor died. Despite the fact that in the last three weeks we have had over 120 people die in our unit and we are all exhausted and feel destroyed, he succeeded, despite his own condition and our own difficulties, to bring a PEACE we no longer hoped to find. The pastor went to the Lord, and soon we will follow him if things continue like this.

I have not been home for six days, and I don't know the last time I ate something; I realize my own worthlessness on this earth, and I want to dedicate my last breath to helping others."

SECTION THREE: About the Rule of St. Benedict.

RB Chapter Four, 'The Tools For Good Works' and Chapter Five with its reminder to obey, are texts we could pray with this Eastertide. The last time, there was an Easter like this, was at the height of the Second World War. Back then, people did not dare disregard the curfew. And yet at this time of stress and horror, some citizens disobey the policies of the Government. Hopefully all of us who are Benedictines, do the right thing out of love for our brothers and sisters in the greater human family.

In addition, we can all gain from reading the Pope's Letter to the world – addressing the virus from another viewpoint. It is on the Vatican Website.

SECTION FOUR: Community History

Most of us are sad that we are deprived of the Mass, or of whatever services we attend at Easter, so the following story from our history seems appropriate.

"In October, 1847, H.M.S Ship "Saint Vincent" left Liverpool England, bound for Sydney, Australia. On board was Archbishop Polding, monks, and those wanting to be part of the Australian Benedictine mission. Our two foundresses were also on board. Late in December, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the seas were so rough, that most of the passengers were ill. Sr. Scholastica Gregory, in her Diary, describes the pitching and rolling of the ship. The Cuddy was full of water. A wave, estimated to be over 70 ft. high was headed for the ship, and Captain Young knew that the ship would go under. About ten feet from the ship it broke up, and the nuns said the saints had saved them. The nuns (our two foundresses) had been praying the litany of the Saints over and over. The Archbishop was ill with seasickness and flu. He was confined to his cabin. The sea was so rough that he couldn't celebrate Mass. He sent a message to his little flock to go to their cabins and pray the Mass in spirit."

Today, while we cannot have the Mass, nothing is stopping us from sitting quietly with our Missals and praying the Mass. When I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s there was a prayer called a Spiritual Communion. We can still pray that prayer.

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 12, until the Second Sunday of Easter, April 19, 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 19: Second Sunday of Easter. Divine Mercy Sunday
 - April 21: St. Anselm.
 - April 25: Anzac Day
 - April 26: Third Sunday of Easter
 - April 28: St. Peter Chanel
 - April 29: St. Catherine of Siena
 - May 02: St. Athanasius (Memoria)
 - May 03: Sts. Philip and James (Feast)
(Omitted this year because it is the Fourth Sunday of Easter)
 - May 10: Fifth Sunday of Easter
 - May 13: A day to honour Blessed Julian of Norwich
 - May 14: St. Matthias, Feast
 - May 17: Sixth Sunday of Easter
 - May 24: The Ascension of the Lord.
 - May 25: Our Lady Help of Christians. (Solemnity).
 - May 31: Pentecost Sunday.
- This Is The Official Conclusion Of Eastertide.

I have taken the next week also, since it is the week following Pentecost. The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary isn't celebrated this year.

- June 1: St. Justin, martyr.
- June 3: St. Charles Lwanga & companions, martyrs.
- June 5: St. Boniface, Memorial

SECTION SIX: Your Community

Death Notice From the Missionary Benedictine Sisters:

Our Congregation has had the first death from Covid-19. Sr. Maria Gratia Balagat was a Filipino Sister who was the superior of our community in India. She had to return to Spain to renew her visa and while there contracted the virus. Please pray for her and for her community in India...and for the whole congregation during this difficult time. Our sisters in Korea are on the front lines in their hospitals and clinics, as are the sisters in the Philippines, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Namibia, Brazil and India.

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 Sisters at the Abbey are not taking a holiday this year, along with probably all Australians.

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, for St. Catherine of Siena
May 4: Mother Hilda Scott, (Solemn Monastic Profession).
May 13: Patricia Julian Morgan, Colleen Julian Hines, Sandra Julian Cooper
Therese Julian Proctor, Rev. Catherine Julian Eaton, Jean Julian Reid,
Margaret Julian Crooks, Sr Julian Barbara Garwood, Brigid Julian Inder.
May 24: Amanda Mary Hickey
May 25: Alan Bede Hickey, Heather Bede Thompson, Cheryl Bede Townsend,
Patrick Bede Quinn, Antonio Bede Zaragoza, Fr. Kevin Bede Walsh.
May 30: Brenda Joan Payne.
May 31: Josette Elizabeth Wickens, Sr. Elizabeth Funder, 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, Rev. 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**

- 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 (1854)
29 - Sister Mary Ann Hogan (1876)
31 - Dame Mary Clare Bocher (1966)

SECTION SEVEN: Saints

From the teaching of St. Augustine: “In the total voice of Christ, in the Psalms, there is the voice of the whole Church, of which I am a member. There is also the voice of all humanity who await deliverance.”

SECTION EIGHT: For Reflection

Under our present circumstances, I think it is time to visit Mother Benedicta's teaching on the Psalms: *In praying the Psalms, I make of my life an act of loving prayer, a commitment to pray from the heart of this land, Australia, and its people; from the heart of the whole world, the voiced and unvoiced prayer from the depths of humanity. I give expression to the praying heart of my country and my world. I am the living prayer of my people, through Christ, with Christ and in Christ.*

A word of thanks to all our Oblates who are responding to our Facebook page at this time of desperate need.

Let us PRAY, PRAY, PRAY.