

**PAX - WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE
EASTER and EASTERTIDE, 2022**

SECTION ONE: READING AND REFLECTION

Theme: The Time is Now.

Our Community's Lenten journey has been one which led us into the depths of "mindfulness", that monastic quality which is too often replaced by dissipation, mindlessness and emotional upheaval.

The Dalai Lama said: "There are only two days in the year that nothing can be done. One is called yesterday, and the other is called tomorrow, so today is the right day to love, believe, do, and mostly live." Today is the day to be mindful.

Today is the right day to make that phone call, send that email, that card, pray for the people of the Ukraine.

We have been given the following prayer. Please, if you can, include it in your daily prayers, or as part of Lectio Divina:

Let us pray: "O Lord our God, look down with mercy on the Ukrainian people. Protect and save them from the unjust aggressor who seeks to subdue them. Grant them steadfast trust in your mercy and protection.

O Mother of God, who gave us your miraculous icon at Zarvanytsia, intercede for the Ukrainian people, who run to the shelter of your mercy in their times of need.

O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Grant peace and protection to the people of Ukraine. Give them strength and courage to defend what is good, right and holy. Keep them safe from harm and provide for all their needs, both temporal and spiritual.

Hear our Prayers, O Lord, and deliver us from distress, for you are merciful and compassionate and love humankind. To you we give glory: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen."

This prayer has come to us from "Aid to the Church in Need", an International Catholic Charity dedicated to the spiritual and pastoral support of suffering and persecuted Christians.

The Time is Now:

To think about what Benedict has to say in favour of peace: "Hate no one. Do not be jealous. Do not act out of envy. Do not love quarrelling." In the Prologue to the Rule of Benedict, Jesus is quoted using the words of Psalm 33:16 – Seek peace and pursue it.

It is in the light of these teachings that Sr. Joan Chittister says: "Benedictinism simply sets out to gentle a universe riddled with violence by being a peaceful voice for

peace in a world that thinks everything is accomplished by force. (Sr. Joan's Commentary on the Rule of Benedict). The use of "gentle" as a verb is a powerfully evocative way of setting Benedictine Monastics on the way of peace which gentles the universe. We need to carry instruments of peace not weapons of war.

SECTION TWO: FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION

MINDFULNESS:

Thich Nhat Hanh taught: "We are very good at preparing to live, but not very good at living. We know how to sacrifice ten years for a diploma and are willing to work very hard to buy a car, a house, [a boat] and so on. But we have difficulty remembering that we are alive in the present moment, the only moment there is for us to be alive. Mindfulness helps you go home to the present."

If you are in a relationship: with wife, or husband, or partner, resolve to spend time daily just being present to each other. It doesn't matter when, - it matters that you do it daily.

More teaching on mindfulness: "Most people are never fully present in the now, because unconsciously they believe that the next moment must be more important than this one. But then you miss your whole life, which is never not now." (Eckhart Tolle).

Recently, my niece planned a visit to her mother (my third sister). It was the first visit since Covid lockdowns. At the last minute the road closures took place in the north: Lismore, Ballina, Murwillumbah and surrounding areas. She lives in Casino. She had said to her mother about a week before: "Mum, all I want to do is be with you so we can talk and laugh together."

To be with someone you love; to talk together, laugh together, and simply be present to each other – if we did more of this, wouldn't our lives be more gentle, more peaceful?

Thich Nhat Hanh also taught: "When we are mindful, deeply in touch with the present moment, our understanding of what is going on deepens, and we begin to be filled with acceptance, joy, peace and love."

"Welcome the present moment as if you had invited it. Why? Because it is all we ever have." (Pema Chödrön)

SECTION THREE: ABOUT THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

Chapter 47: Announcing the Hours for the Work of God (the Liturgy of the Hours). Every call to the Liturgy is a "now" call, and one to be heeded.

In her Commentary on the Rule of Benedict, Sr. Joan Chittister says: "...when we all rouse ourselves to the sound of clock radios or a dozen other automatic devices and have no need for bellringers, the call to the hours is just as serious as it was in the time of Benedict. "The message under the message is that unless the group becomes more and more immersed in prayer and the Scriptures, giving them priority no matter what the other pressures of the day may be, the group [or the individual] will cease to have any authenticity at all. We will cease to develop. We will dry up and cave in on ourselves and become more museum than monastery."

Whenever Fr. Michael Casey comes to give a retreat or a series of conferences, the alarm on his wristwatch sounds mid-morning and mid-afternoon, the time for Terce, and the time for None. Each "hour" is a "now" hour. Let us be mindful of that. Each "Hour" is a "now" hour. He says that he doesn't want to be late for the Hours. They strengthen him and provide the opportunity to pause and become centered. Thich Nhat Hanh would say that they provide the opportunity to be mindful, in order to go home to the present. God is there in the "present".

SECTION FOUR: COMMUNITY HISTORY

This time, there is news about Benedictine history, and this affects all of us: Fr. Michael Casey, ocsa, who has been giving retreats and writing spiritual books for over half a century, has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Sant'Anselmo in Rome. Sant'Anselmo is the Benedictine headquarters. The Abbot Primate resides there. It hosts the quadrennial Congress of Abbots. It is also home to the Benedictine Pontifical Athenaeum, the College of Sant'Anselmo which serves the education of Benedictines from all parts of the world. Pope Leo XIII was mostly responsible for establishing the headquarters in 1893. At that time there was a gathering of the flock: The Solesmes Congregation (1837); the American-Cassinense Congregation (1855); the Beuronese Congregation (1868); The Subiaco Congregation (1872); The Swiss American Congregation (1887). All these Congregations were brought together under the Benedictine Confederation. The Confederation is not a governing body, just a large umbrella which binds us loosely together. The present Abbot Primate is Gregory Polan OSB from Conception Abbey in the U.S. He made a visit to Jamberoo Abbey before Covid. When he emailed with the news of Michael Casey, he said he had found us to be a very vital community of Benedictines.

It was to Hildebrand de Heptinne, the first Abbot Primate in the 1890s that our nuns had recourse over the abominable treatment they received from the Archbishops of Sydney. If my thesis is approved, it will be edited for a book, and all who want to, can have access to this history.

The most recent book by Michael Casey, is: "Grace on the Journey to God" (2018). If you know Michael and want to give him your congratulations, his details are: Michael Casey, ocsa, Tarrawarra Abbey, Yarra Glen VIC 3775
Michael also wrote "Strangers to the City", which we use as a textbook for sisters in formation, and there is an abundance of content in this book which would also nourish our Oblates. He also wrote: "The Road to eternal Life".

Michael is giving our retreat this year. When he was here in 2016, he helped me begin my thesis by introducing me to Heraclitus of Ephesus, and just one sentence of the wisdom of this man: “No one steps into the same river twice.” Michael cleared the debris which was in my way, and I was off on an accurate ride, even if it was a little bumpy here and there. These words of Heraclitus of Ephesus opened up the meaning of “tradition” and “charism” as I had never heard it before. Michael has written numerous journal articles on “tradition” and what it means and how it is applied, and how it colours the way we read the Benedictine Rule.

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 17, until the Second Sunday of Easter, April 24, no Feast or *Memorial* is celebrated because of this SOLEMN week of Liturgy. The Liturgical Calendar for the rest of Eastertide is printed here for your reference.

April 25: Anzac Day.

April 26: St. Mark the Evangelist (Feast).

April 28: St. Peter Chanel (Memorial)

April 29: St. Catherine of Siena (Memorial)

May 01: Third Sunday of Easter

May 02: St. Athanasius.

May 03: Sts. Philip and James (Feast)

May 08: Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 13: A Day to honour Blessed Julian of Norwich

May 14: St. Matthias, Feast

May 15: Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 22: Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 24: Our Lady Help of Christians

May 25: St. Bede of England

May 26: St. Philip Neri (Memorial)

May 29: The Ascension of the Lord.

May 31: The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

June 1: St. Justin, martyr (Memorial)

June 3: St Charles Lwanga & Companions, martyrs (Memorial).

June 5: Pentecost Sunday

SECTION SIX: YOUR COMMUNITY

Sad news for most of us: Our Chaplain, Fr. Paul Gurr, is leaving us after 31 years. He celebrates his last Mass with us on Saturday evening, April 30, and departs on May 1st. There are only six sisters who were here when he arrived. The others have died, and he, in his own words, “has buried them” – all our funerals have been celebrated by this very gifted celebrant. We will miss him.

God, in the meantime, has sent us a priest to take the place of Paul as Chaplain. He is an MSC priest from Kensington. Our community history has been enriched by the generosity and spiritual gifts of the MSC priests. In 1915, when Mother Mary Joseph Brady was elected Prioress, there was just £50 in our bank account. Pierre Treand, the founder of the MSC priests in Australia, and Mother Mary Joseph's spiritual director gave the community retreat for no cost. In fact, Fr. Treand gave six retreats from 1912 – 1924. From 1912 until 1956, all community retreats were given by MSC priests. Dr. Leslie Rumble gave 13 of the retreats. Most of us would be too young to remember Dr. Leslie Rumble of "Radio Replies".

From 1928 an agreement was reached between our community and the archbishop of Sydney that MSC priests would be our chaplains. Fr. John O'Connell was the longest serving chaplain (1933-1952). When we moved to Pennant Hills, the Arcadian Benedictines celebrated Mass for us and Diocesan priests were our confessors. After we moved to Jamberoo, Fr. Paul Gurr, a Carmelite priest became our Chaplain, and was happy to boast from time to time, that he had been here longer than everyone who entered from 1990 onwards.

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

Happy Feast Day to:

April 21: Tony Anselm Tarleton, Alfred Anselm Breznik, 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 13: Patricia Julian Morgan, Brigid Julian Inder, Rev. Catherine Julian Eaton, Colleen Julian Hines, Therese Julian Proctor, Jean Julian Reid, Margaret Julian Crooks, Sr. Julian Barbara Garwood, Sandra Julian Cooper

May 22: Laynie Rita Pullen and Doreen Rita Soballa.

May 24: Amanda Mary Hickey

May 25: Alan Bede Hickey, Heather Bede Thompson, Cheryl Bede Townsend, Antonio Bede Zaragoza, and Fr. Kevin Bede Walsh.

Happy Anniversary to:

April 16: Helen Seraphim Shorter.

April 19: Margaret Thomas More Whetham

April 19: Ewa Maria Teresa Komorovska

May 4: Abbess Hilda Scott, (Solemn Monastic Profession).

May 24: Ivan Benedict Fitz

May 25: Phyllis Magdalen Rodrigues, Clare Therese Sydenham, Rev. Jeanette Therese McHugh and Phillip John Wilson

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)

SECTION SEVEN: SAINTS

St. Teresa of Calcutta taught her sisters “mindfulness” in the way they handled and cared for the sick, because each person was Christ. When each dying person was brought into her hospital, Christ was brought in. When you next visit a nursing home be mindful of the fact that you are visiting Christ – mostly elderly and broken. When you are praying for the Ukraine, put yourself in the place of each wounded person: a pregnant woman pushed into a train with no room to breathe, a person in a basement without sanitation, water, food, a change of clothes – and surrounded by children who are hungry. It is Christ in each one – only Christ.

SECTION EIGHT: FOR REFLECTION

“The silence is deafening as the world waits for those on the edge of the crowd to speak up, to speak out. Until someone demands answers, the questions will go on being muted by the false gentility, for the sake of social approval, for a false public peace.”

Sr. Joan Chittister is coming to Australia. Go online to the Good Samaritan website, and there you will find details, and an enrolment form. Her day in Sydney is 28 May. Enrolments have to be in by 22 April.

She will be in other cities too. The information will be there on the Good Samaritan website.

THE ABBEY IS CLOSED FROM 1 – 29 May for the Annual Community holiday.

This is the end of this edition of “Pax, with the Gospel for your Guide”. The next edition will be post-Pentecost 1, and will cover three months: June, July and August.