

PAX – WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE
LENT 2022

The Lenten Journey is a spiritual journey, given to us each year as a time of renewal. Let us think about be-coming better people, more grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the challenge of Lent.

SECTION ONE: READING AND REFLECTION

Theme: Restraint of Speech, Rule of Benedict chapter six.

Benedict uses Proverbs 10:19: “In a flood of words you will not avoid sin.”

Benedict also uses Proverbs 18:21: “The tongue holds the key to life and death.”

Last Sunday, (8th Sunday in Ordinary Time), the first reading was from Sirach 27:4-7. It was about words: “The kiln tests the work of the potter. The test of people is their conversations.”

And: “The orchard where the tree grows is judged on the quality of its fruit; similarly, the words of people betray what they feel. Do not praise people before they have spoken, [because this is the test of their worth].”

Benedict adds a verse from Psalm 38, to reinforce his teaching: “I said, I have resolved to keep watch over my ways that I may never sin with my tongue. I was silent and was humbled, and I refrained even from good words (Psalm 38:2-3). In verses 7 and 8 of chapter six, Benedict says: “We absolutely condemn in all places any vulgarity and gossip and talk leading to laughter, and we do not permit a disciple to engage in words of that kind.” Laughing at the expense of another is a horrible thing. If we have ever done this, we need to ask for the forgiveness of God. An Oblate once confided in me that when she was in the sixth month of her third pregnancy, she was coming home from shopping. She caught the bus and got off at her usual stop. As she came closer to the house, she saw her husband sitting and drinking with his mates. Unfortunately, she fell in the gutter, trying to carry all the groceries. Her husband and his mates laughed at her. They didn’t get up to help her. She died many years ago now, in her old age, but I have never forgotten this story: laughing at the expense of another is crude, boisterous and hurtful.

Sr. Joan Chittister says that “silence is a cornerstone of Benedictine life and spiritual development, but the goal of monastic silence is not non-talking. The goal of monastic silence, and monastic speech, is respect for others, a sense of place, a spirit of peace. The Rule does not call for absolute silence; it calls for thoughtful talk. Benedictine spirituality forms us to listen always for the voice of God.”

Sr. Joan addresses our own inner “tapes” which drown out the voice of God. She also addresses “unrestrained talk”, “loud and boisterous talk”, making light of everything, “when nothing is spared the raillery of a joke...”

We have work to do. May we read and reflect on this teaching, as we would were we at *Lectio Divina*. All of us will fit somewhere into Sr. Joan’s teaching: thoughtful talk, listening to God, respect for others, a sense of place, a spirit of peace.

Take for *Lectio Divina*, James 3:6-10.

SECTION TWO: FURTHER READING AND REFLECTION

First of all, some Desert Wisdom.

Benedict has said, quoting the Wisdom Literature: “In a flood of words, you will not avoid sinning.”

This short story is told of Isaac the Theban: “One day Abba Isaac went to a monastery. He saw a brother committing a sin and he condemned him. When he returned to the desert, an angel of the Lord came and stood in front of the door of his cell and said, ‘I will not let you enter.’ But he persisted, saying, ‘What is the matter?’ and the angel replied, ‘God has sent me to ask you where you want to throw the guilty brother whom you have condemned.’ Immediately he repented and said, ‘I have sinned, forgive me.’ Then the angel said, ‘Get up, God has forgiven you. But from now on, be careful not to judge someone before God has done so.’ We use words to condemn and judge others – “In a flood of words, you will not avoid sinning.” Judging and condemning others is sinful. The Rule of Benedict calls for thoughtful talk.

On the subject of silence and speech, Br. Hugh Feiss has some wisdom to offer us. Of chapter 6, he says: “Listening requires selectivity. We should avoid gossip and chatter, flattery and deception, detraction and slander. Putting down others so that one might rise is a much-used strategy, and one that leaves speaker, listener, and victim violated...speech should be at the service of truth.”

We have hard work to do this Lent. So, firstly we must slow down, practise mindfulness, cultivate a listening heart, refrain from words which may be good, but not sensitive in certain situations.

SECTION THREE: ABOUT THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

Chapter 49: The Observance of Lent.

Prayer, reading, compunction of heart and self-denial – these are expectations in the observance of Lent. (49:4). Self-denial is spelt out more specifically in 49:7:

Food

Drink

Sleep

Needless talking

Idle jesting.

All in moderation is the Benedictine way.

Sr. Joan Chittister teaches us that “this chapter (the Observance of Lent), reminds us that the purpose of personal restraint is to develop us, not to ravage our energies or confuse our perspective on life.” (The Rule of Benedict, 136). Sr. Joan’s words are of the utmost importance because Benedict was not interested in extremes.

In our monastic community of the present time, a nun must get permission from the abbess to do more fasting than the usual Friday fast which we do together. (49:9) Those who don’t have the joy of good health, are not encouraged to take on extra fasting.

Every one of us takes a book for Lent, or the Abbess may supply a book for all. Last year she purchased "Grace on the Journey to God" by Fr. Michael Casey, ocso.

SECTION FOUR: COMMUNITY HISTORY

In 1851, our sisters opened a boarding school for young ladies, as a means of income. The religious life of the Subiaco School (Subiaco was the name of our first monastery at Rydalmere west of Sydney), was formal. Our nuns taught the pupils to learn by heart the Gospel for each Sunday. A three-day retreat on return to school after the Christmas vacation was given, usually by Archbishop Polding or a Benedictine monk from St. Mary's in Sydney. A three-day retreat was given before First Communion and before the girls received the Sacrament of Confirmation. The "call" bell was rung every morning at 6.30 a.m. The headmistress called each girl individually. Then the Litany of Loreto was recited while dressing. The Head Girl gave out the Litany and the other girls responded appropriately. The girls walked in procession to the school, reciting the hymn "Ave Maris Stella" in English. The girls then knelt for Morning Prayer and sat after that for spiritual reading. Mass followed and then breakfast was taken in silence. The girls also took part in liturgical processions.

For board and a Course of Education, which will comprise Instruction in the English and French languages, in Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, and the Use of the Globes, History, Plain and Ornamental Needlework: 40 Guineas per Annum. In the case of two or more Sisters, a deduction will be made.

Washing: Five Guineas per Annum; Piano Forte: 8 Guineas; Harp: 12 Guineas; Drawing: 8 Guineas; Dancing: 8 Guineas; Singing: 12 Guineas; Italian: 8 Guineas. German: 8 Guineas; Latin 8 Guineas.

Uniform:

Plain Blue Cotton, for Summer; Dark Blue Merino, for Winter – white dresses are also requisite

Vacations:

Winter: June 21st- the fourth Monday following.

Christmas: 20th December – 13th January

This kind of boarding school also existed in the Anglican and Presbyterian traditions in Sydney.

SECTION FIVE: LITURGY

OUR LITURGICAL CALENDAR IS AS FOLLOWS:

March 2: ASH WEDNESDAY

March 6: First Sunday of Lent.

March 13: Second Sunday of Lent.

March 17: St. Patrick

March 19: St. Joseph

March 20: Third Sunday of Lent

March 21: Passing of St. Benedict
March 25: The Annunciation of the Lord.
March 27: Fourth Sunday of Lent.
April 03: Fifth Sunday of Lent.
April 10: Palm Sunday of the passion of the Lord.

HOLY WEEK

April 14: Thursday of the Lord's Supper – beginning of the Sacred Paschal Triduum.
April 15: Friday of the Passion of the Lord.
April 16: Holy Saturday.
April 17: Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord.
April 17-24: Octave of Easter.
April 24: Octave day of Easter, and Divine Mercy Sunday

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

Two death notices:

Beryl Topliff's Pax booklet for Advent and Christmastide was returned to sender with the message that Beryl had died. No date was given. Beryl was a patient in a nursing home.

December 20, 2021: Kevin (Francis) Vicary. Kevin made his oblation on 12th June 1994, with his wife Isabel, and his daughter, Debi.

February 16: Oblate Fr. Henry (Bernard) Byrne). Fr. Henry Byrne's annual anniversary of Oblation is 21 February, so would have been noted in this edition of Pax.

Anniversaries of Oblation:

March

5: Donn (Gregory) Corcoran
7: Nazin (Hildegard) Atalay
8: Julie (Frances) Redican
15: Ian (Godric) Thomas
16: June (Benedicta) Jenkins
19: Bernard Quinn
20: Fr. John (Ignatius) Anderson
21: Cecilia (Teresa Thomas) Larkin, and Carol (Mary of the Cross) Xuereb
25: Elizabeth Mary Hildegard Muntz, Jennifer Ancilla Shirvington, Mark (Maurus) Hamilton
29: Elizabeth (Beth) Teresa Montgomery, Maria Matilda Curtis

Solemn Profession Anniversary:

March 2: Sr. Mechtild Crawford

FEAST DAYS DURING LENT. Happy feast day to:

Donn Gregory Corcoran, for March 5. **St Gregory.**

Maureen Frances Williamson, Catherine Frances Turek, Isabel Frances 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

07.03.2004 – Oblate Bernie Daniel Fitzgerald

09.03.1984 – Sr. Mary Cecily Bourke

11.03.95 - Sr. Mary Jones

16.03.1877 – Most Rev. John Bede Polding O.S.B.

17.03 – Oblate Peter Bernard Smith

18.03.1913 – Sr. Margaret Gallagher

20.03.1888 – Sr. Mechtilde O'Grady

21.03.2008 – Oblate Sidney Stephen Long

21.03.1997 - Sr. Maria McKenzie

22.03.1960 – Sr. Bridget Kelly

25.03.1997 – Sr. Marguerite Burke

26.03.1910 – Sr. Mary Clare Gabriel

28.03.1878 – Mother Mary Magdalen le Clerc, Founding Mother.

28.03 (year unknown)- Oblate Mary Gertrude Connors.

APRIL

03.04.1969 – Sr. Mary Hildegard Doyle

07.04.1956 – Sr. Mary Monica Hardie

10.04.1959 – Sr. Mary Aelred Bradshaw.

17.04.1983 – Sr. Mary Editha Thompson

23.04.1915 – Mother Mary Ignatius Harnett

SECTION SEVEN: SAINTS

St. Antony of Egypt is called the father of monasticism. And we know that he was a desert father. About the "tongue" he says: "The Spirit teaches the tongue its own purity, since the tongue is very sick...but the mind is strengthened by the Spirit; first it is purified, then it learns discretion in the words it delivers to the tongue so that they are free of hypocrisy and self-will."

SECTION EIGHT: FOR REFLECTION

Louis de Blois, in the "Spiritual Mirror" does not spare our feelings when he says: "In speaking, be circumspect, polite, restrained, and without fault. Love reasonable silence. Do not say things that are utterly vain or useless, and that arouse unbridled

laughter...Avoid excessively sharp and biting words, and abominate the vice of detraction and slander...Also, do not affirm as certain anything that you do not know for sure...If it should happen that you hear someone saying mocking or wicked or unkind words, end the conversation politely, or even modestly and discretely correct the one who was speaking.” (Br. Hugh Feiss has incorporated this quotation in his “Essential Monastic Wisdom”, page 78).

Br. Hugh Feiss also quotes Esther de Waal: “Speaking is something that must be undertaken reverently and responsibly. If I reflect on what Benedict is saying, I find guidelines for my own situation. This is not a call for absolute silence. Silence can, after all become an instrument of the passive aggressive, and it can be isolating, and hurtful. [As St. Benedict teaches], it is a call for a restrained, disciplined, and thoughtful approach to speech. (Esther de Waal, “A Life-Giving way”)

Please note there is a book launch here at the Abbey on March 12. Br. Terry Kavenagh from the Benedictine m\Monastery at Arcadia is giving the introductory speech. The book is the result of 25 years of research on the part of the author, Br. Rory Higgins, fsc. The title of the book is “The Woman of Many Names”. It is an extraordinary story about one of our early nuns, Sr. Mary Bernard Hawthorn. All oblates are welcome at the book launch at approx. 10.00 a.m. Mass is at 9.00 a.m.

Please email me if you will be attending: oblatedirector@jambeerooabbey.org.au
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