

**PAX – WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE
POST-PENTECOST II, 2023.**

September, October, November.

Covering the period from 1st September until the first Sunday of Advent.

SECTION ONE: Reading and Reflection

Our annual retreat this year has been guided by Sr. Laura Swan, osb. Sr. Laura is from Seattle. She holds a Masters in Christian Ministry and Renewal, a Masters in Theological Studies and a Post-Masters in Spiritual direction from Seattle University. Her books include:

The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives and Stories of Early Christian Women (translated into eight languages); Engaging Benedict: What the Rule can teach us today; the Benedictine Tradition; the Wisdom of the Beguines.

On Day Five of the Retreat, she worked with a quotation from the Rule of Benedict, which I'm sure, most of us dislike intensely, skip over, and quietly ignore. We can find it in the chapter on humility: *The seventh step of humility is that people not only admit with their tongues but are also convinced in their hearts that they are inferior to all and of less value, humbling themselves and saying with the Prophet: We are truly worms, not people, scorned and despised by others.*

And RB 7:9: *The sixth step of humility is that monastics are content with the lowest and most menial treatment and regard themselves as poor and worthless workers in whatever task they are given.*

Sr. Laura focused on "Worm Theology". It was an exciting hour, if you have a good imagination or are prepared to be stretched. I asked her if I could share her notes with you and she was agreeable.

1. Worms work with what is available. They turn what is 'useless' into the soil that sustains life.
2. Worms receive sustenance and strength from their surroundings. They are faithful to their work without drawing attention to themselves. Worms are diverse.
3. Family, community, pastoral ministry, vocation is the soil where we toil; we can complain about what we must work with, or we can resurrect our allotted 'garbage' into the sustenance of life.
4. How do we become good worms?
 - (a) Through our daily commitment to *Lectio Divina* – both learning to read and then to savour the sacred texts.
 - (b) By working through relationships
 - (c) Through hospitality and prophetic hospitality.
 - (d) By remaining faithful to our journey into humility, which begins by discovering that we have a "self" and who this self is.
 - (e) Through maturing: from dependence to independence to interdependence.

We are seekers on a journey, a Benedictine monastic journey. So, we are monastics on a journey into humility. This journey into humility requires that we first discover who we are as distinct from those who have told us who we are. For many, this is a painful and lifelong struggle.

For many of us, the risk of the journey toward humility is about discovering and accepting the person created in the divine image, embracing our value and importance before God.

Humility is self-awareness, and self-knowledge. “The more we know ourselves, the more we discover we are lower than our image of ourselves. In knowing ourselves and those we know less well; we should be ready to do them any service or accept any assignment. Christ did the same.” (*Essential Monastic Wisdom*, by Br. Hugh Feiss)

Humility is a recognition that we are intimately connected with the created world. Humility means we are aware of our internal contradictions and motivations. Humility means that we speak liberating truth and do justice, just as worms quietly revolutionize the ecosystem.

Possible questions for reflection:

1. What kind of worm am I called to be? There is a compost worm, an earthworm (In Australia, there are 27 species of earthworms), and a root dwelling worm. How am I called, as a monastic, to transform the world around me? Faith means that I act but may never know the effects/results.
2. Do I recognize times when my life as a monastic seems “boring”, “irritating” or just “bland”? What might these realities be inviting me to?
3. How do I create “holy leisure”?

SECTION TWO: Continuing our Reading and Reflection.

Sr. Laura recommended a number of books. We may already have some in our home libraries:

Seeking the Hidden God, by Jane Kopas, Orbis Books, 2005.

The Circle of Life. The Heart's Journey Through the Seasons, by Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr, Sorin Books, 2005.

Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary by Terrence G. Kardong. Sr. Laura considers this the “best” as both an excellent translation of the Rule, closer to Benedict's Latin, and the work of a wise elder, having lived the Benedictine Monastic life for decades.

St. Benedict's Wisdom: Monastic Spirituality and the Life of the Church, by Luigi Gioia, osb. Liturgical Press, 2020.

The Blue Sapphire of the Mind. Notes for a Contemplative Ecology, by Douglas Christie, Oxford Press, 2013.

Radical Amazement. Contemplative Lessons from Black Holes, Supernovas, and Other Wonders of the Universe, by Judy Cannato, Sorin Books, 2006.

Field of Compassion. How the New Cosmology is Transforming Spiritual Life, by Judy Cannato, Sorin Books, 2010

From the Tools of Good Works to the Heart of Humility: A Commentary on Chapters 4-7 of Benedict's Rule, by Sr. Aquinata Bockman. This is a scholarly commentary, but worth pondering slowly.

Consolations. The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words, by David Whyte, Many Rivers Press, 2014.

Silence on Fire: The Prayer of Awareness, by William Shannon, Crossroads, 2000.

SECTION THREE: About (Concerning) the Rule of St. Benedict

Of the commentaries I have read on the Seventh Step of Humility, no one seems to touch the “worm”. Perhaps they don’t cope with “worm theology”, or don’t know about it. Sr. Laura Swan said that it was one of their Oblates who explained it to her, saying that the right worms can prepare a garden bed for you, a few garden beds, or even bigger. The worms will work away quietly at their task, so that you can plant the next season’s vegetables, flowers or whatever. Just leave the worms to do their work and it will be ready for you.

SECTION FOUR: Community History

Once the community was settled into its second home: Franklin Road, West Pennant Hills, they worked in the orchards and gardens with great enthusiasm. As a result, the first Mandarins were picked on 27 June 1963. In July and early August, Mother Mildred sent the Cardinal a case each of lemons, navel oranges and mandarins. In July also, she sent a supply of lemons, oranges and mandarins to the Brown Nurses at Coogee, together with a large carton of “woollies for the poor whom they nurse in their homes.” Lemons were also sent to Mt. St. Margaret’s at Ryde and to Lewisham Hospital.

There is also a note in our Chronicles to record that in one year (early sixties), 400 gladioli, carnations and gerberas were sent to the Mater Hospital in Sydney. This was organized by a Sr. Annette at the Mater. No surname is given. So, the tradition of gardening, whether it was flowers, vegetables or the orchard was a vital part of our story. I hope to highlight this in Part Two of our history, when I can find the time to begin!

SECTION FIVE: Liturgy

SEPTEMBER:

01: St. Giles. And it is also the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. – a day to reflect on the state of the earth, and its flora and fauna, on oil spills in the oceans, on nuclear testing, and on wars which desecrate the earth and human beings. This day was introduced by Pope Francis in 2015.

02: Spring Ember Day (A special day of Prayer and Penance).

03: 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

05: Mother Teresa of Kolkata.

08: Nativity of the Bl. Virgin Mary. (Feast)

10: 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

13: St. John Chrysostom (Memorial)

14: Exaltation of the Holy Cross. (Feast)

15: Our Lady of Sorrows

16 Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian. (Memorial)

17: 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A. St. Hildegard of Bingen is omitted this year.

20: Sts. Andrew Kim Taegon and Paul Chong Ha-sang and companions. (Memorial)

21: St. Matthew. Feast

23: St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Memorial)

24: 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

27: St. Vincent de Paul (Memorial)

28: St. Lioba. Feast.

29: The feast of the archangels Michael, Raphael and Gabriel.

30: St. Jerome (Memorial).

OCTOBER:

01: 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A. St. Therese of Lisieux is omitted this year.
02: The Holy Guardian Angels (Memorial)
04: St. Francis of Assisi. (Memorial)
07: Our Lady of the Rosary, and Blessed John Henry (Cardinal) Newman (Memorial)
08: 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
12: St. Mechtild von Hackeborn - Feast or Memorial in Benedictine communities.
15: 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A. St. Teresa of Avila is omitted this year.
17: St. Ignatius of Antioch (Memorial).
18: St. Luke (Feast)
22: 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
28: Sts. Simon and Jude
29: 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

NOVEMBER:

01: All Saints Solemnity.
02: Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day).
04: St. Charles Borromeo (Memorial)
05: 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
09: Dedication of the Lateran Basilica. Feast. The Lateran Basilica is the official Church of the Pope.
10: Pope St. Leo the Great. (Memorial).
11: Armistice Day. Also, St. Martin of Tours.
12: 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
13: All Saints Benedictine and Carmelite.
14: All Souls Benedictine and Carmelite
16: St. Gertrud the Great. Feast.
17: St. Elizabeth of Hungary.
19: 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.
21: Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
22: St Cecilia (Memorial)
24: St. Andrew Dung-lac & Companions, (Martyrs).
26: Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Last Sunday of the Church's year.
30: St. Andrew.

DECEMBER:

03: First Sunday of Advent. The beginning of a new liturgical year. The Sunday cycle is Year B. The Weekday Cycle is Year II.

This is the end of Post-Pentecost II. Hopefully, you have at hand the oblate booklet for Advent, Christmastide, Ordinary Time up until Ash Wednesday.

SECTION SIX: Your Community

We are sad to inform you of another death in our Oblate community: Fay Lewandowski, of Tasmania. Fay had been in Nursing Home Care for some time. We pray for her family. It is always those left behind who need prayer.

Oblate Clare Sydenham contacted me on August 1, to tell me of her dear mother's death at the end of July. Clare said, "She died peacefully at home with family...she is a saint who understood what it meant to be a servant of the Lord."

Oblate Therese Proctor has had a nasty fall and is now seriously considering: where to from here? Life changes when you fall and do damage to ageing bones. I can

vouch for that, and so can an Oblate on the Central Coast, and one on the Northern Beaches.

The 5th world Congress of Benedictine Oblates is about to start. We ask the Lord's blessing upon our oblates who will be attending, (from 9-16 September, 2023, at Sant'Anselmo in Rome).

Sr. Antonia has written a book on Lectio Divina, aimed at helping teachers and parents to bring this prayer to children. The input is first class. She has been directing online retreats for some time, and those of you who have registered for these retreats have often shared with me just how deep they were, and how challenging. Sr. Antonia has just celebrated her 80th birthday (August 23).

My own book: "A study in Benedictine Continuity of Charism and Tradition" will be available hopefully in December. It has been a long process. Bolt Publishing is seeing it through. It is the first one-hundred-year history of our community, from 1849 (foundation day) until the community moved from Subiaco Rydalmere to West Pennant Hills, in 1957.

Fr. Wayne Stanhope O. Carm is still with us, and we appreciate his enthusiasm in the liturgy, his acknowledgment of visitors who are present at Mass, his spirit of prayer and his genuine embracing of the Benedictine "thing", even though he is a Carmelite.

There are some Oblates we don't hear about because circumstances have changed for them. A significant number have gone into nursing home care. We must not forget them, - may they be in our daily prayer.

Please continue to pray for an end to the war in the Ukraine, for those on both sides of the fighting, killing one another with violent force, and counting on more weapons being supplied by the free world. We must pray for an end to this destruction of human life. We have, in the Illawarra, a Ukrainian woman with two small children. Her husband helped to get her out of the Ukraine at the start of the war. Now she is settled here in the Illawarra, and her children are attending school. Her husband now wants her to return! What a mixed-up situation. There are so many questions we could ask. To what is she returning? Destruction? A war zone? No schools, hospitals, medical centres, residential apartments, shops etc.?

And of course, there are Russian soldiers who don't want to fight or kill other soldiers. The Russians too have wives and children.

One of our nuns who entered in 1946, had a brother reported as "missing in action" in New Guinea during WWII. His mother was asked by a friend: "Do you hate the Japanese?" Her answer: "No. The Japanese have parents and families. Just the same as we do."

Blessings on your Feast Day:

SEPTEMBER:

01: Varcha (Giles) Sidwell, Jill (Anna) Grienke, and Rachel (Hanna) Emmitt.

03: Lenka (Gregoria) Melville, Donn (Gregory) Corcoran, The Most Rev. Brian (Gregory) Mascord.

04: Tristram (Moses) Ellicott

06: Wendy (Begu) Fisher-Hudson

06: Sr. Antonia Curtis (Our Lady of Solitude).

14 : Sr. Veronica Chandler, Sonia (Veronica) Pleines, Dorothy Veronica Guiliani Touzell.

16: Val Margaret Johnson.

17: Pam (Hildegard) Russell, Linda (Hildegard) Childs-van-Wijk, Patrick (Hildegard) O'Connor, Diane (Hildegard) Young, Beth (Hildegard) Muntz, Robyn (Hildegard) Wein, Mary (Hildegard) McCall, Elaine (Hildegard) Housen, Louise (Hildegard) McMahan, Anne (Hildegard) Morris Bannerman, Nazin (Hildegard) Atalay, Sr. Hildegard Ryan.

28: Rosie (Lioba) Jenkins, Gerardine (Lioba) Healy, Beppi (Lioba) O'Connor, Elizabeth (Lioba) Anderson, Rev. Sharon (Lioba) Baird

OCTOBER:

01: Jan (Therese) Clark, Fiona (Therese) Harris, Libby (Therese) Denny, Sr. Therese Gilmour.

03: Susan (Columba) Lambert.

04: Pope Francis, Christine (Frances) Angus, Diane (Frances) Greenway, Rose (Francis) De Angelis, Eva (Francis) Leppard, and Christopher Francis Capper.

12: Elaine (Mechtild) Alinta, Sr. Mechtild Crawford.

15: Carmen (Teresa) Lorente, Robyn (Teresa) Wynen, Elizabeth (Teresa) Montgomery, Maria (Teresa) Elisabetta Gambino, Ewa Maria (Teresa) Komorowska.

16: Vincenzo (Gerrado) Cappetta.

25: Wilf (Ambrose) Moon, Ken (Ambrose) Halliday.

NOVEMBER:

16: Sr. Mary Gertrud Barnes (Abbess Emerita), Joan (Gertrud) Dray, Irene (Gertrud) Bajda, Rita (Gertrud) Schembri, Joan (Gertrud) Eldaher, Christine (Gertrud) Phillips, Nereda (Gertrud) Blake, Debi (Gertrud) Russell, Toni (Gertrud) Jenkins, Laura (Gertrud) Moya, Maria Elena (Gertrude) Zaragoza, Christine (Gertrud) Simons

21: Kathryn (Mary) Proctor.

23: Patricia Julian Wait.

ANNIVERSARIES OF OBLATION:

SEPTEMBER

03: Maree Basel McGuckin.

08: Lyn Hilda Yates.

09: Helen Therese (no surname on the charter of commitment).

14: Rev. Andrew Aidan Doohan.

15: Maria Elena Gertrude Zaragoza, Antonia Bede Zaragoza, Monica Augustina Rodrigues, Geraldine Mary Benedicta Doyle.

16: Dean Bernard Godric Piryak.

21: Nicholas (Thomas) Gomez, Peter (St. Paul) Wrigley, Tony (Peter) Baynie, Charbel (Charbel) Khamis.

22: Elaine Hildegard Housen, and Harry Gregory Housen.

24: Daphne Anne Spelter, Douglas Thomas Fitzpatrick, Brian Barnabas McKinlay, Brenda Joan Payne, Anne Hildegard Morris Bannerman,

29: Chantal Mary Benedicte Jacquier, Debra Benedicta Vermeer, Claire Benedict Lanigan, Judith Magdalen Pickering

30: Lindsay Samuel Alban Roe, and Vivien Teresa Hilda Arnold.

OCTOBER:

05: Diane Frances Greenway

14: Louise Hildegard McMahan.

17: Rev. Dixon Serafim Kenney, Wendy Mary Kenney, Gudrun Majella Muling, Paul Bernard Muling, Lilette Monica Louise, Helen Therese Subramanian

22: Janet Therese (of Lisieux) Clark

27: Valerie Margaret Johnson

NOVEMBER

09: Diane Hildegard Young

11: Eva Francis Leppard, Matthew Hermann James Sebastian Tague and Ethel Emmanuel Paraiwa-Murray

14: Rose Francis De Angelis, Kathleen Catherine Daysh, Monica Augustine Hunt, Brenda Joan Williams, Robert (of Molesme) Hamilton, Felicity Benedict Giles.

15: Alan Bede Hickey, Amanda Mary Hickey, Pamela Hildegard Russell, John Antony Dunne, Irene Sutherland, Helena Frances O'Neill, Joan Gertrude Dray, Heather Bede Gorman, Mary of the Annunciation Wyatt, Claire Catherine Devlyn, Gerardine Lioba Healy, Pamela Henry Herrick, Ira Peter Wilson, Elizabeth Frances Fahey, Rita Romanus Gertrude Schembri, Linda Hildegard Childs-Van-Wijk, Jeff Boniface Smart, Margaret Hilda Watts, Denise Frances Hill, Ken Benedict Press, Rosie Lioba Jenkins, Brian Robert Brennan, Patrick Benedict Sleight.

16: Patricia Julian Wait.

17: Colleen Julian Hines and Victoria Rose Sultana

19: Helen (Anna) Howard, Lucy (Lioba) Sneesby-Tooth, Judith (Anne) Kendall

21: Christine Gertrud Simons, Patricia Benedict Thomas.

22: Catherine Anne Cecilia Milgate, Janet Therese Clark.

23: Majorie Teresa Carroll

24: Fiona Therese Harris

26: Therese Julian Proctor, Arnold Boniface Struzina.

SOLEMN PROFESSION ANNIVERSARIES:

OCTOBER:

11: Sr. Elizabeth Funder. Sr. Elizabeth will be 97 on the 26th October. She entered our community in 1947.

NOVEMBER:

03: Sr. Magdalen Mather

16: Abbess Emerita, Mary Gertrud Barnes.

NECROLOGY:

SEPTEMBER

03: Sr. Mary Patricia Kelly.

07: Sr. Mary Chanel Pechy

12: Fr. Maurus O'Connell, who was chaplain for a short time from 1888, following upon the death of Fr. Bonaventure Curr. (chaplain from 1874-1888). Fr. Maurus O'Connell was the first Australian-born priest. He left valuable furniture to us in his will. It can be viewed in our Heritage Centre.

15: Oblate Patricia Mary Atkins.

21: Sr. Fidelis Williams

24: Sr. Gertrude Hishon

26: Sr. Marie Therese Malone

27: Oblate Philip Francis Bruno Price

OCTOBER

Sometime in October, 2016: Oblate Enid Fleming.

04: Oblate Ann Gertrud Anderson

08: Mother Mary Scholastica Gregory (one of two founding Mothers), Kathleen (Lioba) Mason

09: Sr. Mary Aloysius Carroll, Sr. Mary Scholastica O'Loughlin.

10: Sr. Dominic Fitzpatrick, Sr. Mary Magdalen Brown.

11: Mother Walburge Wallis (first elected Prioress - 1864). Prioress Wallis died on 11 October, 1902.

11: Oblate Vivienne (Martha) Chiswell

13: Sr. Marie Vianney Loughnan

17: Fr. Bede Sumner. Fr. Bede lived at our monastery in the last years of his life. He freed our community from debt in 1864, and was therefore, one of our most generous benefactors of the early decades of our history.

18: Oblate Aubrey Patrick Connors

19: Sr. Mary Joseph Diamond.

19: Sr. Placid Wilson, fifth elected Prioress.

19: Jennifer (Benedicta) Morrow-Canty

24: Oblate Leo (Thomas) Montgomery

25: Sr. Mary Lucy Kirsch

26: Sr. Mary Patrick Emblem.

NOVEMBER

03: Oblate John (of the Cross) Delaforce

09: Sr. Mary Stanislaus Dwyer.

21: Sr. Mary Francis Macklin.

23: Sr. Mary Veronica Hennessy

24: Sr. Mary Gabriel Enge

25: Sr. Mary Teresa Diamond.

SECTION SEVEN: Saints

From the wisdom of St. Antony of Egypt: *The brothers praised a monk before Abba Antony. When he had received the monk, Antony wanted to learn how he would bear insults. When he saw that the monk could not bear them at all, he said to him, 'You are like a building that is magnificently decorated on the outside but pillaged within by robbers.'*

SECTION EIGHT: FOR REFLECTION:

From the wisdom of Sr. Joan Chittister: *St. Benedict wants us to realize that accepting our essential smallness and embracing it frees us from the need to lie, even to ourselves, about our frailties. More than that, it liberates us to respect, revere, and deal gently with others who have been unfortunate enough to have their own smallness come obscenely to light. (From her Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict).*

The next Oblate Retreat is on 11 and 12 November. Arrive on 10 and settle in.

Oblation Ceremonies on Morning of 11, during Mass. Talks on 11 And 12.

