

PAX – WITH THE GOSPEL FOR OUR GUIDE
LENT, 2024

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: Chronos Time/Kairos Time.

Chronos time is about looking at a clock or a wristwatch. It tells us that there are 24 hours in the day and depending on the time in each hour, we are bound to be somewhere, or doing something. The clock or wristwatch reminds us that it is time to catch the train or bus and set out for work. Or it is time to leave home to be at church on Sunday; it is time to watch our children or grandchildren play football against a rival team; It is time to take them to training. One man told me that most children play one kind of football, but his youngest son plays three kinds and he and his wife are run off their feet, taking him to practice after school. One woman told me that she seems to spend her life running. Up in the morning, quickly get breakfast for the family, off to work, ten minutes for a lunch break, back to work, finish at 4.00 p.m. and then off to her second job. This is the reality of chronos time. We've all been there and done that, and it begins again when our grandchildren need to be collected after school and taken to ballet, football, music lessons and so on. Their parents are working, so grandma and grandpa are called on to do the driving.

So, this is chronos time: 60 minutes in an hour, 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week, four weeks in a month, 12 months in a year. We even have the Yearly Planner, or the Five-Yearly Planner and have them on every device to remind us. Of course, sickness and death interrupt these wonderful plans of ours. A friend of mine is a physiotherapist. One Friday night, one of his children was sick with a high fever. He and his wife took the little one to Emergency. While there, they got a phone call to say that the mother of the husband, at home minding the children, had fallen, tripping over toys. An ambulance was called and she ended up in Emergency – and here they all were in Emergency. The rest of their weekend plans were scrapped!

TIME!

SECTION TWO

Further Reading and Reflection

What is Kairos time? Kairos time is God's time. Of all the meanings of kairos time, I like Matthew 26:18. "Go into the city to such a one, and say, 'The teacher says, **my time** is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.' The Lord says to us: **My time is at hand. I will feast with you.**

Revelation 3:20 takes this much deeper: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and feast with and you with me."

Kairos time is feasting with the Lord. Our part is to make time in each day, if possible: time for Meditation, *Lectio Divina*, quiet time. This morning, I was taking quiet time on a chair in my garden. My little dog was nearby. Our Abbey bees were busy in the flowers. Then came the song of the little wrens, flitting here and there between the pot plants. It was all I could wish for, and Jesus was feasting with me in the beauty of that 20 minutes.

SECTION THREE: ABOUT THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

Benedictine monasteries throughout history divided their day into seven “hours” – from this comes the ‘Liturgy of the Hours’: Vigils, 3rd hour of the night; Prime, at sunrise; Terce, mid-morning; Sext, midday; None, mid-afternoon; Vespers, evening; Compline, night. A bell was rung to call the monks to prayer at these Hours.

Writing in the 21st century, Sr. Joan Chittister says of bells: “The purpose of Benedictine bells is not to spell out the hour of the day at all; that task is left to horologists. Our bells...are there to wrench our attention back to what is really important in life: the memory of God in our midst; the memory of the purpose of life; the memory that time is moving on and so must we; the recognition that life today is different than life was yesterday, and we must not try to hold life back. **The bells jog the memory that there are actually more important, more meaningful, more demanding dimensions of life than anything ordinary we can possibly be doing as they ring.**” The Benedictine Rule asks that we stop what we are doing, without delay, and go to the church for the next “hour”, obeying the reminder of the bell. I am always inspired by the example Fr. Michael Casey gives when he is here teaching. Now and then, the sound of a small alarm is heard on his small clock, and he simply says, “That’s the reminder to go to Terce. (or Sext, or None). He works in the library and in his office, and so needs to be reminded of the time. If you pray one or more of the ‘hours’, do you have a reminder? A friendly alarm?”

SECTION FOUR: COMMUNITY HISTORY

For many years of our history, our nuns did not have watches. There were two clocks in the Monastery: a Chiming Mantel Clock, and a Long Case Clock. The Chiming Mantel Clock is a Gothic design, a walnut veneer over cedar. It was hand-carved in the 1860s. It was made by Brash and Macdonnell of Sydney, jewellers and clockmakers. It still functions. It can be viewed in our Heritage Centre. One must book an appointment.

The second clock was a Longcase Clock made by Thomas Dawson of Sydney, circa. 1840. The Longcase Clock was bought at auction by a collector in 1995. (Not our auction).

In addition to two clocks at our monastery (Subiaco, Rydalmere), there was a Sundial, which we still have on the Community Room lawn, and the seven-minute timer – one which the sand runs through from top to bottom. This timer was used to denote the seven-minute thanksgiving time which we used to have after Communion. At present it is only five minutes and is timed by someone’s watch – not quite the same!

I notice that John Gordon, the owner of the Long Case Clock, has quoted (in his history), the following words:

Time is – the present moment well employ;
Time was – is past – thou can’st not it employ;
Time future – is not and may never be;
Time present – is the only time for thee.

He also quotes A.W.Watts, in “The Wisdom of Insecurity” (1951): “you cannot compare this present experience with a past experience. You can only compare it with a memory of the past which is part of the present experience.”

SECTION FIVE: LITURGY

Our Liturgical Calendar Is as Follows:

February 14: Ash Wednesday:
February 18: First Sunday of Lent
February 22: The Chair of St. Peter, (Feast).
February 25: Second Sunday of Lent
March 3: Third Sunday of Lent.
March 10: Fourth Sunday of Lent.
March 17: Fifth Sunday of Lent.
March 18: St. Patrick
March 19: St. Joseph
March 21: The Passing of St. Benedict (Feast or Solemnity in Benedictine Abbeys and Monasteries).
March 24: Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
March 28: The Sacred Paschal Triduum begins with evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper.
March 29: Friday of the Passion of the Lord.
March 30: Holy Saturday
March 31: Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord.
April 1 – 7: Easter Octave
April 7: Second Sunday of Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday

SECTION SIX: YOUR COMMUNITY

Three death notices:

December 10, 2023: James Kim. 2 January 1946 - 10 December 2023.
James’s funeral was held at St. Philip’s Anglican Church, O’Connor, A.C.T. on Tuesday 19 December 2023. The story of James’s life was written by James’s husband, Brian McKinlay, and read by Chris Cheah.
The Psalm was led by the Rev. Jeannette McHugh, also an Oblate of our community. We look forward to catching up with Brian McKinlay on the Oblate weekend in March.

Alan (Bede) Hickey: 28 April 1935 – 9 December 2023.
Alan’s funeral was held at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Narrabeen. The Celebrant was Fr. Robert Borg.

His three children shared precious memories of their father, and Alan's grandchildren led the prayers of the faithful. Alan was our community's solicitor until about ten years ago. Before that, his father-in-law, Mr. Helmrich was our solicitor. Alan trained under Mr. Helmrich and once shared with us that as a young man, he was the one whom Mr. Helmrich sent to Cardinal Gilroy's office to deliver important letters. Alan worked closely with Mother Benedicta and Sr. Elizabeth during the relocation of the Abbey from Pennant Hills to Jamberoo. His honesty and integrity were outstanding.

It was Alan and his wife Amanda, who brought the Narrabeen Prayer Group to the Abbey Cottages from the time we settled here, until it became too difficult for many to drive the distance from the Northern Beaches to the South Coast. Many of those beautiful people were at Alan's Funeral, and we were happy to meet them again. Sr. Elizabeth was very sad at the news of Alan's death. One of us went to the Nursing Home to tell her.

John Edward Thomas, 6 August 1933 – 29. January 2024.

John Thomas was the father of Oblate Patricia (Benedict) Thomas, and the adoring husband of Shirley Patricia (deceased). John had been in care at Huntington Gardens, Bexley, where he entered eternal life peacefully. He was the much-loved father of Patricia, Timothy, Maryangela, Patrick (deceased), John, Edward, Simon (deceased), Kathy and Joseph.

Requiem Mass for the eternal repose of his soul was offered in the Mary, Mother of Mercy Chapel, Barnet Ave. Rookwood Catholic Cemetery, on February 9. At 11.00 a.m.

Last year I omitted the news of Freda Denny's death. Freda was the mother of Oblate Libby (Therese) Denny. Freda was in nursing home care and a dog lover. Libby bought a Cavoodle and called it Freda. And then the puppy (when ready) could visit Libby's mother in the nursing home. The whole idea was a great success, and Freda the puppy loves her home and her mum. She has been to the abbey on a few occasions, and played with Rafael (Raffa), Mother Mary's Cavoodle.

PRAYERS PLEASE FOR:

Maryangela, Patricia Thomas's sister, who has cancer of the liver, and for Patricia's sister-in-law Melissa, who has cancer of the brain. Such suffering for the Thomas family.

Congratulations to: Nicola Gooden, of Shellharbour City, N.S.W., who made her Oblation on 11 November 2023. Nicola took the name "Margaret Mary".

Michel Campos, of Melbourne, Victoria, who made his Oblation on 11 November 2023. Michel took the name "John".

Anniversaries of Oblation:

FEBRUARY

Colleen (Augustine) Cashman – February 27

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.
Anyone with a feast day or an anniversary on 25 March, will be celebrating on 8 April, the first available day after Holy Week and the Easter Octave.

Solemn Profession Anniversary:

March 2: Sr. Mechtild Crawford

Feast Days During Lent. Happy feast day to:

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

9 March: 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 **St. Frances of Rome.**

14 March: Maria Matilda Curtis, for **St. Matilda**

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

Necrology:

FEBRUARY

26.02.1931, Dame Mary Mildred Smythe

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., Founding Father of our community and first Catholic Archbishop of Sydney

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. Frances of Rome, Patroness of Oblates, and Patroness of Widows. She was born in Rome, in 1384. She belonged to a rich and noble family and was brought up in what one might describe as a holy house. She imitated her mother’s prayerful ways. She often accompanied her mother on daily visits to one of the many churches of Rome...their favourite was the Church of Sancta Maria Nuova, known today as the church of St. Frances of Rome.

It was also from her mother that Frances learned a love and respect for the poor, the underprivileged, the weak and diseased. Together, Frances and her mother spent many hours among these unfortunate people, bringing them help of one kind or another. Her mother was sharply criticized for exposing one so young to those situations. Today, this kind of charity would arouse admiration, perhaps even awe, but in the days of Frances, it brought much scorn from the upper classes of Rome. Her father was just as charitable as her mother. Later, a Benedictine monk, attached to the Monastery next to the church of Sancta Maria Nuova, became her confessor. He taught her to focus her efforts on the practice of a pure intention and the offering of all her occupations to Almighty God. She and her sister-in-law kept up charitable works and their fame spread in Rome and abroad. They had great influence on the women of Rome. Many women followed their example, and a community of women was formed. They did not take vows, but rather a promise of a simple offering to God. This community was called the “Oblates of Mary”, and still exists today. After her husband’s death, Frances joined the “Oblates of Mary”. She died at the age of 56, on March 9, 1440. (Cf. “Benedictine Miracles” – Benedictines for Benedictines and Others, Volume 1. Mona Rinear, Oblate of St. Benedict, St. Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, Indiana).

SECTION EIGHT: FOR REFLECTION

Time is the reef upon which all our frail mystic ships are wrecked. (Blithe Spirit,1941).

There is no past present or future. Using tenses to divide time is like making chalk marks on water. (Faces in the Water, 1961 by Janet Frame).

To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).

Some News: My book will be launched during the first two months of 2024. It is being published by Bolt Publishing under the editorship of Professor Peter Bolt of the Sydney College of Divinity. My book covers the first 100-year history of our community in Australia. The story has never been told before now.

Sr. Antonia has written a book on *Lectio Divina* for teachers and parish workers. It too will be launched soon. Bishop Brian Mascord is thrilled with it and will spread it far and wide.

Both these books are advertised in our 2023 newsletter which is only available on our website.

If you have questions about oblates or anything in the Pax booklet, please email me. I prefer email rather than the telephone.

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