



Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey



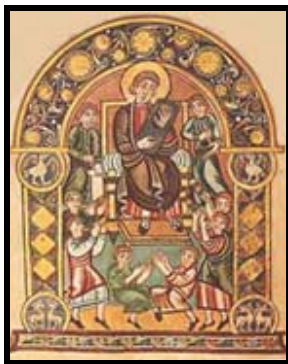
January, 2009

January Meeting

The next Oblate meeting is on January 18 and will begin at 3:30 in the Gallagher Room. If the meeting needs to be cancelled because of weather, it will be posted on the website at : <http://oblates.gastonhobbit.org>.

New Year Resolutions

We all learned the Ten Commandments growing up. Most people will remember "Thou shall not kill," and "Thou shall not steal." But according to a survey conducted by Kelton Research, more Americans remember the ingredients of a McDonald's Big Mac than the Ten Commandments (CNS, October, 2007).



Suppose we agree to make one resolution; if we do not remember all the commandments, let us learn them again. But perhaps it would be a better "New Year" resolution to learn one very well? Suppose we start with an easy one, say "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." All of the 10 commandments have taken a

beating over the years, but this one seems to have been forgotten all together. In the legal sense we still consider lying under oath a major crime and sin. Or do we? Have we not made exceptions to even this? How many court cases over the years have we heard the excuse "It was only a "little lie" under oath. It was not like they were hurting anyone, just protecting another. But David reminds us in Psalm 34:

¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.

¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

St. Benedict also reminds us of the importance of speaking the truth, even to the point of stating that those who do not will not "abide in the tent" of the Lord. He reminds us in the Prologue (22-27) of the teaching in Psalm 15:

¹ O Lord, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy hill?

² Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,
and speak the truth from their heart;

³ who do not slander with their tongue,
and do no evil to their friends,
nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;

So we can take it as a given we are not to speak falsely under oath, and should speak the truth from the heart. But what else does the commandment ask of us? Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel goes one step further in his *Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict*.

"False witness means that by which truth is made sport of, so that things done or said are said not to have been done....Every promise uttered with words only, and not fulfilled by works, is without doubt proven to be false witness." p. 170.

Upon reflection, how many of us can truly say we are innocent? How many promises lightly made were set aside for convenience and without good cause? Very few people have been called to court to testify, but how many have made promises to a person and broken them "for good reason?" A story comes to mind of a little boy who was promised by his dad to take him to the zoo. Friday comes along and he tells his son that he is sorry, but he has to work the next day and he cannot take him. Imagine the boy's disappointment. But think about how he felt when he watches his father put his golf bag in the car? The more "business savvy" people would say that this was ok, he was conducting business on the course. He is earning the money for a home and food on the table. But the little boy does not understand. Worse, it was his father's word that was broken.



We all feel, from time to time, that circumstances require us to break our word. But the Rule invites us to a deeper understanding of Our Lord's teachings, to follow Him along the narrow path, to examine our own lives and to allow Our Lord to convert our hearts. All Oblates have made at least one promise -- our Oblation. It is not just a promise, it is a solemn promise. We have given our word to:

"offer myself to Almighty God, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to our holy Father Benedict, for

Belmont Abbey, Belmont, North Carolina and I do promise, before God and all the Saints, the reformation of my life according to the Rule of the same most holy Father Benedict and according to the Statutes of the Oblates."

Can anyone offer a better New Year's resolution but to examine how they have fulfilled this promise and acted upon it in their life? Benjamin Franklin once said that we cannot hope to tackle all our faults at once, but must take them one by one until we have overcome each fault in turn. This was not original, it was also taught by St. Benedict and John Cassian as well. So ... "(l)et each one take into account that he is constantly observed by God from heaven and our deeds everywhere lie open to the divine gaze and are reported by the angels at every hour." (RB 7:13)

¹⁵ Turn aside from evil and do good; seek and strive after peace. (Psalm 34)

News around the Monastery

Abbot Placid has appointed Br. Anthony Swofford as Sub-prior. The sub-prior is assistant to the prior, Fr. David Brown. He will be the third highest superior in the abbey. Br. Anthony made his final profession last July. He lived and worked in South Carolina before coming to the abbey in 2003. Brother Anthony is a graduate of the Class of 2008 of Belmont Abbey College. Br. Anthony also is the 'socius' (overseeing work assignments of the other young monks) and the Procurator of the monastery.

Please remember Br. Anthony in your prayers as he takes on this new assignment.



Wisdom from the Desert

Some of the monks who are called Euchites went to Enaton to see Abba Lucius. The old man asked them, 'What is your manual work?' They said, 'We do not touch manual work but as the Apostle says, we pray without ceasing.' The old man asked them if they did not eat and they replied they

did. So he said to them "'When you are eating, who prays for you then?' Again he asked them if they did not sleep and they replied they did. and he said to them, 'When you are asleep, who prays for you then?' They could not find any answer to give him.

He said to them, 'Forgive me, but you do not act as you speak. I will show you how, while doing my manual work, I pray without interruption. I sit down with God, soaking my reeds and plaiting my ropes, and I say "God, have mercy on me, according to your great goodness and according to the multitude of your mercies, save me from my sins." ' So he asked them if this were not prayer and they replied it was. Then he said to them, 'So when I have spent the whole day working and praying, making thirteen pieces of money more or less, I put two pieces of money outside the door and I pay for my food with the rest of the money. He who takes the two pieces of money prays for me when I am eating and when I am sleeping; so , by the grace of God, I fulfil the precept to pray without ceasing.'

The Ordo

Listed are the Feast days and Memorials that are observed at the Monastery and follows the Ordo of the American Cassinese Congregation. You can also see the observed feast days by going to <http://oblates.gastonhobbit.org/ordo>

JANUARY

- 18 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week II)
- 21 Agnes, Virgin, Martyr. Memorial
- 24 Francis De Sales, Bishop, Religious Founder, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 25 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week III)
- 28 Thomas Aquinas, Presbyter, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 31 John Bosco, Presbyter, Religious Founder, Educator. Memorial.

FEBRUARY

- 1 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week IV)
- 2 **Presentation of the Lord. Feast**
- 5 Agatha, Virgin, Martyr. Memorial.
- 6 Paul Miki, Religious, Missionary, Martyr, and His Companions, Martyrs. Memorial.
- 8 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week I)
- 10 **Scholastica, Virgin, Religious Founder. Feast.**
- 14 Cyril, Monk, Missionary, and Methodius, Bishop, Missionary. Memorial.
- 15 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week II)

February Meeting

Our next meeting will be February 15, 2009.