



Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey

May, 2009

May Meeting

The next Oblate meeting is on May 17 and will begin at 3:30 in the Gallagher Room.

Deny Yourself in Order to Follow Christ

On my desk is a small statue of Gollum, the hobbit-like character from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Those who have only read *The Hobbit*, when Gollum was introduced, only have seen an evil, angry little creature. But those who have read or seen *The Lord of the Rings* witnessed something else. Gollum was a soul in torment, obsessed with wishing to possess a ring of pure evil that slowly and literally destroyed him body and soul.



St. Benedict reminds us to "Deny yourself in order to follow Christ" (Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23). (RB 4:10).

Denying ourselves means an act of will, a deliberate choice to follow the example of Our Lord and not to follow our own will. But it also means denying ourselves those things that could corrupt our good intentions. "For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want." (NRSV; Ga 5:17)

Poor Gollum. Those who knew him pitied him. Why? Because they recognized the struggle within him and understood that same struggle within themselves. It is a common struggle, it is within our nature. All through the *Lord of the Rings*, both book and movie, the reader witnesses the soul wrenching struggle within Gollum as he journeyed with the others. On one side is the obsessive desire for the material (the Ring). On the other his desire to

break away from the influence of the Ring in favor of new friends who understand his struggle. *"Our inner self fights against the outer, and the outer against the inner. For flesh always desires useless and perishable things, the spirit seeks what is useful and always sighs for what is eternal."* (Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, p. 173)

When Gollum allowed others to help him, he was able to struggle against the power of the Ring. Frodo, the hero of the story and was the "Ring bearer", reached out to Gollum because he recognized and understood the struggle within Gollum. When Gollum chose to reject his friendship and turn his full attention to acquiring the ring Gollum failed. He eventually gave up the struggle and allowed the influence of the Ring to corrupt him. He turned against friend and ally all to possess the Ring, a golden, material object. Perhaps he was doomed to begin with. He killed his childhood friend to obtain the Ring. His obsession drove him away from family and friends until all he had in the world was the Ring, his "Precious." This is the result of all addictive behavior, but worse, this is the ultimate result whenever we deliberately and consistently turn away from a loving God toward the material world, the world of the flesh.

So why do I keep Gollum on my desk? It is a reminder to turn to Our Lord in the struggle to be more like Him but it is also a reminder of the importance of friends. With Jesus helping us along the way none of us are "doomed to begin with." Gollum reminds me of the importance of seeking out others in our own personal struggles against the "rings" in life. If we share our common struggle, we will find we are not quite as alone as we think. Gollum is also a reminder to me to remember to look for the good in all people and to see the face of Christ in each person I meet. So it is a reminder to always reach out to the Gollums of the world who may be struggling alone, and may ultimately fall, because they have been rejected by the society in which they live. But most importantly, Gollum is a reminder to turn to the one

person, the one friend, who understands our own struggles better than any other, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

From the Web

This newsletter cannot contain all the information and material that would normally be in a printed newsletter. With postage rates continuing to climb we are very conscious of the cost of mailing a large, bulking newsletter. Most monasteries have cut back to once a quarter but the web allows us to bring both Church news and Benedictine thought in a timely basis. Several Oblates have now made the website their home page. The temporary website is <http://oblates.gastonhobbit.org>. Over the month of April and part of May, the following is a partial list of the articles posted:

- World's oldest Benedictine monk dies at Saint Meinrad Archabbey
- Odo, Maiolus, Odilio, Hugh, and Peter the Venerable, Abbots of Cluny
- Do not exhibit your way of life
- Spirit of Reverence shapes Lectio Divina
- Which is Greater: The Word or Body of Christ?
- Humble and listening hearts are needed...
- You must first be trained in the "Practical Life"
- The Meaning of My Life
- The Nature of the Psalms
- Cardinal Mahony on Ministry
- Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker
- Loving Your Neighbor
- Life of St. Antony (video)
- We can conceive of no higher calling than that of being in the service of God
- Exhortation of the Mind to the Contemplation of God
- Benedictine Bernardo Tolomei Declared Saint
- Those who seek humility ...
- John Paul II's 'Rule' for married couples discovered
- The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler (text and video)
- Prayer to St. George
- Saint George, A Patron of Chivalry
- The economic crisis was born from greed, Pope Benedict says
- Pope honors wisdom of St. Anselm, commemorates 900th anniversary of death
- No one is good save God

As you can see, the site is regularly updated, usually daily, so make it a habit to visit it regularly. Also, if you see something you would like to share with the others, please let me know.

Wisdom from the Desert

Abba Peter said this about the holy Macarius: One day he came to the cell of an anchorite who happened to be ill, and asked him if he would take something to eat, though the cell was stripped bare. When the other replied, "Some sherbet," that courageous man did not hesitate, but went as far as Alexandria to fetch some for the sick man. The astonishing thing is that no one knew about it.

The Ordo

Listed are the Feast days and Memorials that are observed at the Monastery and follows the Ordo of the American Cassinese Congregation.

MAY

- 17 Sixth Sunday of Easter (Week II)
- 24 Ascension of the Lord. Solemnity. (Week III)
- 25 Mary, Help of Christians, Titular and Patron Solemnity
- 31 Pentecost Sunday. Solemnity

JUNE

- 1 Justin, Martyr. Memorial (Begin Week I)
- 3 Charles Lwanga, Catechist, Martyr, and his Companions, Martyrs. Memorial
- 5 Boniface, Bishop, Religious, Missionary, Martyr. Memorial.
- 7 Trinity Sunday. Solemnity. (Week II)
- 11 Barnabas, Apostle. Memorial.
- 13 Anthony of Padua, Presbyter, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 14 The Body and Blood of Christ. Solemnity. (Week III)
- 19 The Sacred Heart of Jesus. Solemnity.
- 20 The Immaculate Heart of Mary. Memorial.
- 21 Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week IV)

June Meeting

Our next meeting will be June 21, 2009. If you need to reach me please write to:

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