



Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey

August, 2009



September Meeting

The next Oblate meeting is on September 27, the *fourth* Sunday of the month, and will begin at 3:00 in the Abbey Church with Mass. Abbot Placid will be principal celebrant and will receive the new Oblates' and Novices' Oblations. Oblates who are present will also renew their Oblations at that time. Oblates who cannot attend because of health and distance need to send in the enclosed Oblation renewal form to maintain their name on the mailing list. There will *not* be a meeting in August due to the start of classes at the College.

Fr. Raymond Geyer

As many of you may already know, Fr. Raymond Geyer, OSB, passed way peacefully on July 26. We will all miss this kind monk and priest, pastor and confessor and the man who served faithfully as Oblate Director for so many years.

Abbot Placid gave the homily and was kind enough to pass it on to the Oblate community. It is published below for those who have not already read it on the Oblates website:



We have come together today to give praise and thanks to God for our dear brother, Father Raymond, who served God faithfully as a professed monk of this abbey for sixty-six years, and served the church tirelessly in his priestly ministry for over sixty years. We have come together today to support one another, and especially to be with Father Kenneth, in our loss. Our sadness is not for Father

Raymond. Our sadness is for

ourselves, that we must continue without his encouragement and energy. None of us remember a Belmont Abbey without Father Raymond, who was the senior professed monk of our community. The monastery is going to be a somewhat quieter and certainly less colorful place. We are here as the disciples of Jesus to build one another up in our faith, which can be shaken in times of loss, and to proclaim boldly and with joy once again the good news that Jesus lives and death is vanquished. We come in obedience to the Lord's command to do this in his memory, to receive his true body and blood, our pledge, the down payment given us by Jesus, of our resurrection and everlasting life.

In an endlessly marvelous way, the inspired word of God in the Scriptures speaks as directly to us today as it spoke to those to whom it was first addressed. It speaks directly to us who, in consternation, helplessness and sorrow accompanied Father Raymond through these final stages of his monastic journey, as we saw him almost daily diminish, and watched helplessly and with sadness as his legendary energy vanished seemingly overnight.

Father Raymond, as we all know quite well, was always in charge, always in control. He had a seemingly inexhaustible store of energy and was constantly on the go. All that changed suddenly, seemingly overnight, when his heart attack last fall suddenly exposed the disease which had silently and insidiously been constricting that big heart of his. Seemingly without warning, his energy and strength vanished and – the bitterest of all – in one fell stroke he had to give up driving.

This was all very difficult, and for perhaps the first time, Father Raymond seemed overwhelmed. As the signs of approaching death grew daily more insistent, Father Raymond was uneasy. I suspect that, in his prayer, in those times when you would catch him looking out into the distance, the words of Lamentations may well have been in his heart: I have forgotten what happiness is; I tell myself my future is lost, all that I hoped for from the Lord... Remembering it over and over leaves my soul downcast within me. And yet Father Raymond was not one to remain downcast for long. I suspect that those following words fairly quickly came to console him, as they must console us: The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness... Good is the Lord to one who waits for him, to the soul that seeks him. And indeed, the Lord was good to Father Raymond and renewed once again His mercies towards him. Little did either of us suspect that Communion on Sunday afternoon was truly viaticum, food for the journey – a journey that was imminent not in terms of days or weeks, but in minutes. And we trust that the Lord, in his fidelity to Father Raymond, disposed things in such a manner that his own words could be fulfilled in a marvelous way: This is the bread that came down from heaven... whoever eats this bread will live forever. I hope, too, that for Father Raymond as a monk, it was also a grace of Providence that he could hear from his abbot literally minutes before his death that he need not be afraid, that he was going to see Jesus, and that he had done much good

work in Belmont, Savannah, Richmond and at Saint Michael's. He knew he was loved and appreciated, and this, too, is a gift from the Lord that we are to give to one another.

We are taught, likewise, by the Apostle today. For we watched as Father Raymond seemed almost to shrink before our eyes, as his body gradually failed. So it is well that we today can be reminded by Saint Paul: We know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven. The great temptation is always to be pulled to conform ourselves to the values and views of the world – to lose trust in the good news of the gospel, and to view death as the ultimate disaster. What a treasure we have in faith to take comfort in the sure and certain hope that Father Raymond does indeed have a dwelling now eternal in heaven. Yes, we, too, as he, must be always courageous, we must walk by faith. We believe in this faith that Father Raymond, like all of us, must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Yet precisely here is the consolation of our faith, for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help. Father Raymond, a faithful monk and priest will appear before this merciful high priest, painfully aware, as we all will be, of his sins. Yet he also arrives with innumerable exhibits of that good which the grace of that very same high priest Jesus Christ has accomplished through him, and therein will he find his

forgiveness and his life. For the one who, as we have heard in today's gospel, did not hesitate to stretch out his hands and endure the agony of the cross for our sins, will not hesitate to embrace with those same arms the one who comes seeking mercy.

Most especially is the word of God addressed to us today in the words of the two men in dazzling garments, addressed then to the

frightened women at the tomb, addressed today to us gathered in our loss: Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised. We have brought Father Raymond's body here for burial, the body washed by the saving water of Baptism, the body nourished with the body and blood of Christ, the body anointed with holy Chrism in Confirmation and Ordination, the body offered willingly to the service of God in monastic profession. It is indeed a holy temple. But it is not Father Raymond. In the same way that he followed the one who said, Father, into your hands I commend my spirit, so also now does he reign with the one who, first among the dead,

rose glorious to everlasting life. We are simply taking our leave, offering our affectionate farewell, in anticipation of our own entry into that wondrous mystery of the Communion of Saints.

At the conclusion to the Prologue to his Rule, Saint Benedict tells us: "Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom." Father Raymond did that, faithful to his vows. We confidently trust that the Lord, in his turn, will faithfully uphold him, according to his promise, and has not let his hope be in vain.



Reviving Our Faith in Our Own Resurrection

For Mary, much more than for St. Paul, to live was Christ, but to die was gain (Phil. 1:21). When death overtook her, her thoughts were on Christ, as they always were. She owed no debt to death, for she had been conceived without sin. She had been exempted from bearing the guilt of Adam, and might have been exempted altogether from the experience of death. But because her Son passed through death in order to win salvation for us, he wanted to share this final experience of our humanity, and, in her own way and degree, to lay down her life for His friends. Nowhere more than in His death did Christ come close to us, and His Mother too seems closer to us for having submitted to the condition of our mortality.

We have no details about her death. No doubt St. John and his mother were at her side. It is likely that she was buried after a short interval. The earliest and most reliable tradition asserts that she died at Jerusalem, in or near the upper chamber where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper. Over this site the Benedictines have built a church and monastery called the Dormition or Falling Asleep of our Lady.

In Mary's case, as in the case of our Lord, death proved weak; it was as powerless to hold her as it had been powerless to hold Him. For a short period, perhaps about as long as Jesus, she remained in a state of death. No mortal eye witnessed the wonderful reunion which took place between her beatified soul and her glorified body. Perhaps for a time no one on earth suspected the victory of life. But very early it



was believed that her body had been glorified and translated to heaven. Stories were circulated about this event, stories which served to illustrate the faith of the Church in her Assumption which was soon expressed in the great feast celebrated on August 15. The solemn act of the present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, at the end of the Jubilee of 1950, by which he infallibly defined that the Blessed Mother of God was elevated to heaven in body and soul, only added solemnity to what was already believed and taught in the whole Church. Since 1950 it is simply more clear that no one can be a Catholic if they refuse to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has already transformed her lowly body and made it like His glorious body, in virtue of the energy by which He is able to subject all things to Himself (see Phil. 3:21). . . .

Our Mother's Assumption brings before us the thought of the final destiny of her children. We are not meant to enjoy the Beatific Vision merely as separated souls. One day we too are to live before God in body as well as soul, in a body spiritualized and glorified by the power which flows to it from the soul's vision of God as He is in Him-self. The Holy Father, in defining the Assumption of our Lady, wanted us to honor her anticipated resurrection. But he also wanted to revive our faith in the resurrection of our own bodies, for this belief is a great trial to the reason of the natural man and is therefore a precious test of the seriousness of our acceptance of the revealed word of God which so clearly teaches it.

Charles J. Callan, OP and John F. McConnell, MM
from *Spiritual Riches of the Rosary Mysteries*

Oblate Website

The Oblate Website has been completely re-done and has been moved to it's permanent web location: <http://www.OblatesOSBBelmont.org>. The revamping of the site has been received well with a three-fold increase in site visits. Before the site revision we averaged 25-40 hits per days. On the first day of the change the site showed 121 hits and the second day 179! The change can be contributed to the new design which "opened up" the web site content and made it easier to navigate. Please visit the site and read some of over 300 articles that have been posted there over the past nine months. Please email any comments or suggestions to gkcobb0428@gmail.com.

Oblation

Abbot will receive final and temporary oblations on September 27, 2009. Family members are welcome to attend the Mass and ceremony and will be followed by a reception. Mass will begin at 3:00. Please mail the enclosed form to the Monastery as soon as possible.

There was some misunderstandings concerning Oblation that needs to be cleared up. First, it is no longer customary

for Oblates to select a name. Second, the "test" or survey given at the last Oblate meeting and the letter of request is more for you than for George or the Abbot. Many of you have spent a year or more in formation and they are both meant to get each of you to think about the formal promise that you are asking to make to the Abbot and to God. The last thing you must include is the date of your Baptism. Since this is an ecumenical program any Christian may belong, but they must be Baptized. You are not required to be confirmed, but a brief sacramental history would be nice to have as part of your record. For example:

- Date of birth
- Date of baptism
- Date of First Holy Communion (not required)
- Date of Confirmation (not required)
- Date of Matrimony (not required)
- Date of Holy Orders (if applicable)

Lastly, the letter you are to submit to the Director of Oblates should be a brief summary of your intention to make final Oblation and should include a brief explanation of why you believe God has called you to be an Oblate at Belmont Abbey and how you intend to follow the Rule in your daily life. This is a change from the meeting since the Abbot has expressed his desire that this letter be sent to George unless there is extenuating reasons.

Who Is Called to Be an Oblate of St. Benedict ?

It is suggested that those seeking to make their Oblation should prayerfully reflect on the following paragraphs taken from St. Vincent Archabbey's *Manual for Oblates*.



Being invested as an Oblate novice or making full Oblation is not a matter of entering a religious order. Deciding whether to seek novice Oblation or Oblation would, therefore, not ordinarily require the long, ponderous discernment that a Christian might undergo to make a long-range vocational decision to enter a religious community or take religious vows. However, Oblation does involve a serious and normally lifelong commitment; so the decision should be made with some careful discernment.

Manual for Benedictine Oblates (1962) states, "The Act of Oblation is not a vow and thus does not carry with it the binding force of monastic profession, nor does it bind under sin. Its obligation need not be lifelong; it can be terminated at any moment by the monastery or the Oblate. On the other hand, it should not be looked upon as of no

consequence, since it involves the giving of oneself to God in a solemn way" (pp. 4-5). As in all matters of Christian decision, one should basically be asking, "Does God want me to do this?" In this specific case one should ask, "Does God want me to become an Oblate (novice)?" In other words, "will becoming an Oblate (novice) draw me closer to Christ and the Church, given my state in life and other responsibilities?" A genuine desire to grow in holiness and a sense of gratitude for the gift of contact with the Rule and/or Benedictines can generally be interpreted as a sign of God's call.

St. Benedict gives us some helpful criteria to make this decision. He says that a candidate for monastic vows should "truly seek God" and "show eagerness for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials" (RB 58:7). We can explore these four criteria in terms of the commitment of every Christian:

- **truly seeking God:** All Christians should seek God above all else and seek to grow in discipleship of Jesus Christ. Oblates should seek to intensify their daily commitment of faith to making their journey of life in Christ and with Christ.
- **being eager for the Work of God:** Oblates should have a desire to enter more fully into community prayer and, in particular, the "Divine Office" as prayed by the monastic community. Normally, this desire will be expressed by a frequent praying of the Office from a breviary of the Oblate's choice.
- **being eager for obedience:** Listening for God's word in every person and every situation is a fundamental goal and an ongoing task of the monk. Oblates should long for growth in attentiveness to God's word and in loving, faith-filled response to God's word, whether spoken through Scripture and liturgy or through the ordinary people and experiences encountered in daily life.
- **being eager for trials:** "Becoming obedient to death" in imitation of Christ can be a heavy yoke indeed, and yet it is a yoke that becomes light when shared with Christ. Psychologically healthy people do not welcome trials for the sake of hardship itself; however, monks and Oblates come to realize that God can speak to us and transform us in a special way through trials. A patient, faith-filled response to trials can lead the Christian to deeper identification with Christ and greater compassion for others in their suffering.

Desert Wisdom



How can a person know that his prayer is acceptable to God? When a person makes sure that *he does not wrong his neighbor in any way whatsoever*, then let him be sure that his prayer is acceptable to God. But if someone harms his neighbor in any way whatsoever, either physically or spiritually, his prayer is an abomination and is unacceptable. For the wailing of the one who is being wronged will never allow this person's prayer to come before the face of God. And if indeed he does not quickly reconcile with his neighbor, he will certainly not go unpunished his whole life by his own sins, for it is written that whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.

Becoming Fire, ed. By Tim Vivian, pp. 234-235

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://oblatesosbbelmont.org/ordo/>.

AUGUST

- 20 Bernard, Abbot, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 21 Pius X, Pope. Memorial.
- 22 The Queenship of the Virgin Mary. Memorial.
- 23 Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (Week III)
- 24 Bartholomew,* Apostle. Feast.
- 27 Monica, Married Woman. Memorial.
- 28 Augustine, Bishop, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 29 The Martyrdom of John the Baptist.* Memorial.
- 30 Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week IV)

SEPTEMBER

- 3 Gregory the Great, Pope, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Feast.
- 6 Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week I)
- 8 Birth of the Virgin Mary. Feast.
- 13 Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week II)
- 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Feast.
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows. Memorial.
- 16 Cornelius,* Pope, Martyr, and Cyprian,* Bishop, Martyr. Memorial.
- 20 Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. (Week III)
- 21 Matthew,* Apostle, Evange-list. Feast.
- 23 Pio of Pietrelcina, Presbyter. Memorial.
- 27 Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary (Week IV)