



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

April, 2015

Dear Oblates and Friends,

At the Easter Vigil, we read the account of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. The key event is presented as a triumphant victory over Pharaoh and his chariots and charioteers. Moses and the Israelites march through the Red Sea on dry land “with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.” In our response, we join with Moses in singing:

And I will sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously triumphant;

horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.

My strength and my courage is the Lord,

and he has been my savior.

He is my God, I praise him;

the God of my father, I extol him.

The Exodus story is told year after year: “And on that day you will explain to your son, ‘This is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ It will be like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead, so that the teaching of the Lord will be on your lips: with a strong hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt” (Ex 3:8-9). Yet it is only the beginning of the story. Its aim and conclusion happens on Sinai with the giving of Torah, which is celebrated fifty days after Passover.

So too, year and year, we tell the story of Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection. On Good Friday, we listen to the passion narrative and reverence the cross, the instrument of torture. On Holy Saturday, we wait in silence as Jesus lay in the tomb and went down into the depths of the dead. The catechism quotes an ancient homily to explain the deep mystery of that quiet day:

Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. . . Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him - He who is both their

God and the son of Eve. . . “I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. . . I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead.” (http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p122a5p1.htm, paragraph 635)

Then, on Easter Sunday, we leave silence behind and rejoice in celebrating Jesus’ resurrection. “Christ is risen from the dead! Dying, he conquered death; To the dead, he has given life.”

Like Passover, Easter is only the beginning of the story. The aim and conclusion of Easter is Pentecost, which is its culmination. After the fifty days of Easter we celebrate the outpouring of the Spirit, which forms us in Christ’s Body, the Church.

Saint Paul tells us how to witness to Christ’s death and resurrection by living according to the Spirit:

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” Rather, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.

(Rom 2:9-21)

Saint Benedict alludes to this passage in Chapter 72, in which, like Saint Paul, he tells us how to live according to the Spirit:

Just as there is an evil zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal which separates from vices and leads to God and to life everlasting. This zeal, therefore, the sisters should practice with the most fervent love. Thus they should anticipate one another in honor; most patiently endure one another's infirmities, whether of body or of character; vie in paying obedience one to another -- no one following what she considers useful for herself, but rather what benefits another --; tender the charity of sisterhood chastely; fear God in love; love their Abbess with a

sincere and humble charity; prefer nothing whatever to Christ. And may He bring us all together to life everlasting!

Now the news:

Clyde oblates mark your calendars! The next weekend will be June 5-7, 2015. June 7 is Corpus Christi, so it is a marvelous time to be at Clyde. The topic will be *The Fear and Love of God*.

Sand Springs oblates meet on Sunday, May 3. The group has chosen *In the Heart of the Temple: My Spiritual Vision for Today's World* by Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, as the next book to read and discuss.

Sheridan, Wyoming, oblates meet monthly from September to May under the able leadership of one of their members, Cel Hope. The group is reading and discussing Sr. Maria-Thomas Beii's *Study Guide for The Rule of St. Benedict with Reflections for Oblates and All Who Seek God*.

St. Louis area oblates are meeting monthly. Meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month from 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 at St. Rose Philippine Duchesne School. Meetings are held in Room 1, which is accessible from Door 1 at the east end of the school.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah, O.S.B.