



*The Benedictine Oblate Letter*

*April, 2017*

Dear Oblates and Friends,

Each liturgical season brings its own gifts. During the Advent and Christmas seasons, we can kneel or sit in front of a nativity scene, with the infant Jesus lying in the manger. Mary and Joseph stand humbly at his side. The ox and the ass sit behind him. The shepherds, guarding their sheep, hear the angels sing. Easter is different. At Clyde, the chapel appears to be a garden, with white Easter lilies among flowers of every hue, but there is no scene on which to meditate. Easter seems less physical and more spiritual. Doesn't Saint Paul tell us that if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one (1 Cor 14:44)?

But Easter is all about Jesus' humanity and his physical appearance to his disciples and to us. All of our senses are employed: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. The apostles saw him and heard the words he spoke. Mary clung to his feet. Thomas put his hands in his wounds. Jesus' body had been anointed with fragrant spices. The smell of smoke and cooking was in the air, since Jesus baked fish for them on a charcoal fire. We can visualize the various scenes of his appearances, and place ourselves there.

On Easter Sunday, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, went to the tomb where Jesus was buried. There was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. The angel told them that he had been raised just as he said. As the angel instructed them, they went to tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him" (Mt 28:7). Then they ran to announce this to his disciples. "And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage" (Mt. 28:9-10).

These verses are unique to Matthew, but there are similarities between them and John's account of the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene: "Jesus said to her, 'Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (Jn 20:17). Both accounts refer to a touching of Jesus' body and a command

of Jesus to bear a message to his disciples.

It is not only the women who touched the resurrected Christ. When Jesus walked through the locked doors of the upper room, he showed the disciples the wounds in his hands and feet. Thomas will not believe until Jesus tells him, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe" (Jn 20:27). In John 21, Jesus prepared breakfast for his disciples on the edge of the Sea of Tiberias.

We can see Jesus in our minds and relate to him in our hearts, but of course we cannot really see Christ on earth. Christ is exalted in heaven. We can see Christ only in one another. It is only with others that we form the Church. We do not live for ourselves. When we pray, we pray not only for ourselves but for one another, and for the whole world. For it is only with others that we can be part of God's kingdom, whether in heaven or on earth. Even in heaven, we will be with one another. We need to prepare for that now. Let us reach out and touch one another by a handshake, a hug, or a pat on the back.

***And now the news:***

The International Congress of Benedictine Oblates will meet Nov. 4-10, 2017, in Rome. The theme is *A Way Forward: the Benedictine Community in Movement*. Sharon Hammond and William Joseph will attend the International Oblate Congress in Rome from November 4-10, 2017. Early bird registration is now closed, but it is still possible to register. If anyone is interested, let me know.

***Tucson oblates:***

Sister Mary Hope will be transferring to the monastery in Clyde at the end of May or early June. Sister Kathleen Clare will be the local Tucson Oblate Director. William Joseph is now one of the Tucson deans. The other deans are Betty Dickinson, Sharon Hammond, Mary Sheridan, and Jessie Zander.

The Prescott group is up to Chapter 29 of Michael Casey's book, *The Road to Eternal Life*. The East Valley and Phoenix Central groups are using the *Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict with Reflections for Oblates and All Who Seek God*, by Abbess Emerita Maia-Thomas Beil, OSB, of the Abbey of St. Walburga.

***Clyde oblates:*** The Clyde oblates enjoyed the March weekend on the theme *Images of God in Scripture*

*and in the Rule of Benedict.* We discussed God as father, king, and shepherd. The next weekend is scheduled for June 2-4, which includes Pentecost. The theme is *The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

***Saint Louis area oblates:*** The Saint Louis group has been discussing *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* by Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB. They have also been doing group *lectio* following *Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, “Lectio Divina Shared in Community” by Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB. Meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month from 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. at St. Rose Philippine Duchesne School, Room 1 (accessible from Door 1 at the east end of the school).

***Sand Springs*** oblates are considering which book to use for their meetings next year. Suggestions are welcome. Two books have been recommended thus far: *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr and

*Everyday Mysticism: Cherishing the Holy* by Fr. Anthony J. Ciorra.

I will be in Sand Springs from May 5-8. On May 6, I will give a renewal day on *Images of God in Scripture and in the Rule of Benedict.*

***Sheridan, Wyoming,*** oblate Jane Kidneigh Medved, 75, passed away on Friday, April 7, 2017, at the Green House Living for Sheridan after a protracted illness. Please remember her in prayer. Sheridan oblates meet monthly.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah