



Oblates of St. Benedict Belmont Abbey

September, 2008



September Meeting

The next Oblate meeting is on September 21 and will begin at 3:30 in the Gallager Room.

Liturgy of the Hours (First in a Series)

Since the topic of discussion for the next few meetings will be dealing with more general topics of Benedictine Spirituality, perhaps it is best to begin the instruction on Liturgy of Hours through the newsletter. I know that many of you want the "nuts and bolts" of how, but perhaps we should start with some background first.

Christians are called to "pray at all times" (Luke 18:1), to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17), and "seven times a day do I praise You" (Psalm 118: 164). The Desert Fathers and Mothers attempted to fulfil the scriptures by praying all 150 Psalms every day — from memory no less! They prayed the psalms from the moment they arose until they went to sleep. They prayed while preparing meals, doing their daily work and when they traveled. As more and more desert Christians began to stay in community, it became important for them to have some system of praying the psalms

together. Each community developed their own method of praying the psalms, usually to be prayed over the week, which we now know as the Liturgy of the Hours.



There are many reasons for this division of psalms over several hours, but it "... is not to divide up the day

into certain periods of time which, when added together, will total the amount of time that should be consecrated to prayer. There can be no doubt that we have to consecrate set times to prayer, since it is not granted us to pray always (Luke 18:1) as we ought. This is why we pray at set times."

There developed two principle methods of dividing up the psalms in the Western Church; the cathedral (Roman) and the monastic (Benedictine). St. Benedict refers to the praying of the psalms at appointed times as the Work of God (RB 43:3). So important is the Work of God that St. Benedict admonishes the monks "Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God" (RB 43:3).

St. Benedict followed a traditional model of the hours for praying the psalms: Vigils (in anticipation of Sunday and major solemnities); Nocturnes or Matins (Predawn); Lauds (Dawn); Prime (before Terce); Terce (9:00); Sext (Noon); None (3:00 PM); Vespers (sunset); and Compline (before sleep). The Second Vatican Council ordered the revision of the Liturgy of the Hours so that the cycle of psalms would cover four weeks instead of one. It was also the intent of the Council Fathers that the Hours be "... arranged in such a way that not only clergy but also religious and indeed laity may participate in it, since it is the prayer of the whole people of God."

The Hours were simplified. The hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, and None were merged to a single Daytime prayer. Lauds and Vespers remain as the two most important offices since we open and close the day in praise of God. Matins became the Office of Readings and Compline remained the same. So the structure was simplified with primary emphasis on Morning (Lauds) and Evening Prayer (Vespers).

The Benedictine Confederation also revised the manner the Hours were prayed in 1977. While there is a wide variety of different schemas for the praying of the psalms within the monasteries, they mostly follow the new revised guidelines. At Belmont, the monks come together for the three main community prayers of Lauds, Midday and Vespers. (More next month).

Wisdom from the Desert

At that time a meeting was held at Sketis about a brother who had sinned. The Fathers spoke, but Abba Pior kept silent. Later, he got up and went out. He took a sack and filled it with sand and carried it on his shoulder; then he put a little sand into a small bag that he carried in front of him. When the Fathers asked him what this meant he said, 'In this sack which contains much sand, are my sins which are many; I have put them behind me so that I might not be troubled about them and so that I might not weep. And behold, here are the little sins of my brother which are in front of me, and I spend my time judging them. This is not right. Rather, I ought to carry my sins in front of me and concern myself with them, begging God to forgive me.' The Fathers stood up and said, 'Verily, this is the way of salvation.' Abba Pior

Web Resources

There are many resources on the Web concerning the Liturgy of the Hours. There are even a few sites devoted exclusively to providing an on-line version. The most noteworthy is the Liturgy of the Hours Apostolate at <http://www.liturgyhours.org/>. Another is Universalis at <http://www.universalis.com/> who even provide a version you can download to your palm pilot.

From the Scriptorium

The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors offers the following titles as suggestions for use by Benedictine Oblates.

Pray without Ceasing: Prayer for Morning and Evening. Joyce Ann Zimmerman;

A Shorter Morning and Evening Prayer by John Brook
Shorter Christian Prayer, Catholic Book Publishing

Christian Prayer, Catholic Book Publishing;

Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours, The Daughters of St. Paul;

The Liturgy of the Hours According to the Roman Rite, Catholic Book Publishing;

Benedictine Daily Prayer, Liturgical Press.

Work of God by Sr. Judith Suter OSB.



Novices should take the time to ask the other Oblates which volumes they found most useful to them. Quite a few have tried several different volumes before they settled on one. There is no rush. At our next meeting in October we could spend a little bit of time at the meeting and allow Oblates to bring their particular breviaries with them and the Novices can look and ask questions

The Ordo

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

SEPTEMBER

- 21 **Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Week IV)
- 23 Pio of Pietrelcina, Presbyter. Memorial.
- 27 Vincent de Paul, Presbyter, Religious Founder. Memorial.
- 28 **Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Week I)
- 29 Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels. Feast.
- 30 Jerome, Presbyter, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.

OCTOBER

- 1 Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Virgin, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 2 Guardian Angels, Patron of Congregation. Feast.
- 4 Francis of Assisi, Religious Founder. Memorial.
- 5 **Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Week II)
- 6 Bruno, Presbyter, Hermit, Religious Founder. Memorial.
- 7 Our Lady of the Rosary. Memorial.
- 12 **Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time.** (Week III)
- 15 Teresa of Jesus, Virgin, Religious, Doctor of the Church. Memorial.
- 17 Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop, Martyr. Memorial.
- 18 Luke, Evangelist. Feast.



October Meeting

Our next meeting will be October 19, 2008. If you need to reach me please write to:

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