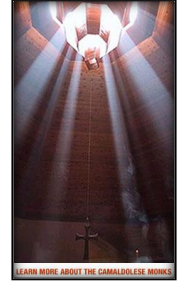




Speak Lord. *Your servant is listening.*

Newsletter of the Benedictine Camaldolese Oblates of
Australia, New Zealand and Mumbai
March 2016



Chaplain's Message Fr Michael Mifsud Oblate OSB Cam

Charism fits Lent, fits Life. I think our Camaldolese Three Fold Good is an apt Charism to reflect to us a true Lenten Spirit of Renewal. In fact it is a very apt charism for the whole of our life in the continuing spiritual conversion/renewal process of discipleship in the following of Christ. Lent offers us, as Oblates, a prolonged period [retreat in the Early Church] and wonderful opportunity to renew our awareness of and intensify our practice of the distinctive three fold good of Solitude, Community and Martyrium.

This is a very dynamic Charism we share in, one, if we truly make our own and consciously participate in, can release great power and energy for life and service.

The traditional three fold Lenten practice that Jesus announces in the Gospel of Secret Prayer, Almsgiving and Fasting are good mirrors and practices that throw light on our three fold charism.

I will not try and define but rather just relate and comment on the correspondences I see in the above two practices.

Jesus advises us to go to our "private", inner room [as Thomas Keating says few if any had a private room in

Christ's time] and pray to our Abba who is in that secret inner Place [the cave of the heart].

In that inner room we have the opportunity to be completely honest [truthful as Rohr says], before the One Person/Reality that really matters and sees all

that is in the secret of our hearts with Mercy and who will reward and deal with as is fitting. Solitude, to be alone with the Alone, is both shattering and liberating, overwhelming and underwhelming, attractive and terrifying, and many other seemingly opposite experiences simultaneously or alternating, which calls for total surrender and complete Trust in the Divine

Therapy and process of transformation.

This is nothing less than our Divinization and Transfiguration into the likeness of the mature Risen glorified reality of Christ. It is a process of Purification, healing and being made New in the Newness of the Christ Event [Bruno].

The three traditional stages of the spiritual life; Purification, Illumination and Transforming Union, also throw light both on the purpose of our charism and the Lenten "RETREAT" which leads to Easter New Life and Joy [Ananda] in the Spirit.



Community and Almsgiving go hand in hand [even if left and right don't know] in that awareness of and concern for and some relationship with others as persons is required of both realities. It takes conscious effort to foster and create even intentional [long distance, non residential] community; that is real commitment, as it does to help the needy and poor and to do so not just with leftovers but primarily as an act of Saving Justice as everyone and every being has a Divine right to exist and have a share in the common good and not just for our advantage.

Fasting and Martyrium have the “cutting edge” [Cyprian's Tassie retreat] in common in their practice. Both require a “Dying to self centredness” and a hungering for Self giving for others in service, Justice, Compassion and self forgetting and self giving Love beyond self preoccupation and concern just for my life. A true healthy asceticism is holistic and respectful of the tri - partite nature and understanding of the human person [body, soul, spirit-St Paul and Cyprian's book] and does not demean the body

but makes sure that both body and soul [mind included] are brought under the integrating influence of the spirit [and Spirit] which does not suppress but builds on, heals and enhances nature, bringing it to full maturity – and that is human nature and Nature/Creation in general. Asceticism sets us free from what binds so as to be free for life, love and service. it is not an end in itself but a means and therefore itself must be positive and wholesome and be directed for our and others good. Martyrium also puts us on the “edge” as it interfaces with the hard and difficult realities of life and our personal human condition. We bear witness in our own bodies to the death of Jesus in order that others may draw Life [Paul].



So Lent [springtime in old English [can be a time of renewal and deeper living of our Charism which makes us more deeply Christian and human and cosmic in our relationship as we find Paradise [the New Creation] in the solitude of the transformed Desert, as we discover everyone and everything is part of the Community of Beings [The Whole World became Romuald's Hermitage] and that the witness of Martyrium sets us free for self transcendence in love and service, like Christ, for all Creation.

PS: Thanks to all, especially Council members for their recent good exchanges and on going service to our Oblate Community, particularly in preparation for Cyprian's visit and retreat as well as for the support and efforts of all Oblates. Welcome to Ruth Harrison

and Phillip Saunders [recently received Oblate in NZ] for accepting nomination by Council as consultants to it. Welcome to Phillip and thanks for his support to Michael Dougherty and our whole community and the contributions, especially with regards to the Camaldolese literature

about our Forest Caring Heritage in Camaldoli and elsewhere.

Blessings for a happy and joyful Easter and look forward to seeing you at retreat, In Christ's peace and love.

Hear, O Israel. The Lord, our God, is the one Lord. And you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your hearts. And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise.

Contemplative prayer The Catechism of the Catholic Church

What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: *Contemplative prayer [oracion mental] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.*

Contemplative prayer *seeks him whom my soul loves.* It is Jesus, and in him, the Father. We seek him, because to desire him is always the beginning of love, and we seek him in that pure faith which causes us to be born of him and to live in him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.

The choice of the time and duration of the prayer arises from a determined will, revealing the secrets of the heart. One does not undertake contemplative prayer only when one has the time: one makes time for the Lord, with the firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter. One cannot always meditate, but one can always enter into inner prayer, independently of the conditions of health, work, or emotional state. The heart is the place of this quest and encounter, in poverty and in faith.

Entering into contemplative prayer is like entering into the Eucharistic liturgy: we *gather up*: the heart, recollect our whole being under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, abide in the dwelling place of the Lord which we are, awaken our faith in order to enter into the presence of him who awaits us. We let our masks fall and turn our hearts back to the Lord who loves us, so as to hand ourselves over to him as an offering to be purified and transformed.

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the child of God, of the forgiven sinner who agrees to welcome the love by which he is loved and who wants to respond to it by loving even more. But he knows that the love he is returning is poured out by the Spirit in his heart, for everything is grace from God.

Contemplative prayer is the poor and humble surrender to the loving will of the Father in ever deeper union with his beloved Son.

Contemplative prayer is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gift, a grace; it can be accepted only in humility and poverty. Contemplative prayer is a covenant relationship established by God within our hearts. Contemplative prayer is a communion in which the Holy Trinity conforms man, the image of God, *to his likeness.*

Contemplative prayer is also the pre-eminently intense time of prayer. In it the Father strengthens our inner being with power through his Spirit *that Christ may dwell in (our) hearts through faith* and we may be *grounded in love.*

Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. *I look at him and he looks at me*: this is what a certain peasant of Ars used to say to his holy cure about his prayer before the tabernacle. This focus on Jesus is a renunciation of self. His gaze purifies our heart; the light of the countenance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men. Contemplation also turns its gaze on the mysteries of the life of Christ. Thus it learns the *interior knowledge of our Lord*, the more to love him and follow him.

Contemplative prayer is hearing the Word of God. Far from being passive, such attentiveness is the obedience of faith, the unconditional acceptance of a servant, and the loving commitment of a child. It participates in the *Yes* of the Son become servant and the *Fiat* of God's lowly handmaid.

Contemplative prayer is silence, the *symbol of the world to come* or *silent love*. Words in this kind of prayer are not speeches; they are like kindling that feeds the fire of love. In this silence, unbearable to the *outer* man, the Father speaks to us his incarnate Word, who suffered, died, and rose; in this silence the Spirit of adoption enables us to share in the prayer of



Jesus.

Contemplative prayer is a union with the prayer of Christ insofar as it makes us participate in his mystery. The mystery of Christ is celebrated by the Church in the Eucharist, and the Holy Spirit makes it come alive in contemplative prayer so that our charity will manifest it in our acts.

Contemplative prayer is a communion of love bearing life for the multitude, to the extent that it consents to abide in the night of faith. The Paschal night of the Resurrection passes through the night of the agony and the tomb - the three intense moments of the Hour of Jesus which his Spirit (and not *the flesh [which] is weak*) brings to life in prayer. We must be willing to *keep watch with (him) one hour*.

They shall see the Lord face to face and his name will be written on their foreheads. It will never be night again and they will not need lamplight or sunlight because the Lord their God will be shining on them. They will reign for ever and ever.

May the God who gives us peace make you completely his, and keep your whole being, spirit, soul and body, free from all fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do not let resentment lead you into sin. The sunset must not find you still angry. Do not give the devil his opportunity.

Christmas Reflection 2015 Michael Dougherty Oblate OSB Cam

Despite
the distress
indifference
being unwanted
rejected
hunted even,
the human spirit
has the capacity
to receive
the joy
beyond these

For this
we came into being
beyond all imagining
all speculation
hubris even,
Despite ourselves.
*My spirit finds joy
in God
who is my Saviour.* – Mary

Luke 1 47.

Child embodying joy

Elizabeth Amber



Recommended reading

Fr Daniel Manger OSB Cam

Some people are receiving this list for the first time, and for others there are some additions. Fr. Robert noted that most of the books on our lists were not specifically about Camaldolese Spirituality. The proposed books Paula and I suggested were to be in addition to the books already read by Postulants. I am including those here as well.

Books already listed for oblates in formation to read:

Rule of St Benedict Recommended translation RB 1980

Peter-Damian Belisle, *The Privilege Of Love: Camaldolese Benedictine Spirituality*

Leno Vigliucci, *Camaldoli: A Journey Into Its History And Spirituality*

R Thomas Matus, *The Mystery Of Romuald And The Five Brothers*

Fr. Robert Hale, *Love On The Mountain*

Other books that may be appropriate for postulancy:

Br. Benet Tvedten, *How To Be A Monastic And Not Leave Your Day Job*

Esther de Wall, *Seeking God: The Way Of St Benedict*

Marsha Sinetar, *Ordinary People As Monks And Mystics: Lifestyles For Self-Discovery* (a more psychological look)

Brother Victor-Antoine d'Avila-Latourrette, *A Monastic Year: Reflections From A Monastery*

Paula Huston, *The Holy Way: Practices For A Simple Life*

Linda Kulzer, Roberta Bondi (Eds) *Benedict In The World: Portraits Of Monastic Oblates*

Lonni Collins Pratt and Fr Daniel Homan, *Benedict's Way: An Ancient Monk's Insights For A Balanced Life*

Peter-Damian Belisle, (translation, notes and introduction), *Camaldolese Spirituality: Essential Sources*

Fr. Cyprian Consiglio, *Prayer In The Cave Of The Heart*

This note is from Paula:

Now that I've got these down, I can see that most of them would be for the more experienced oblates.

Esther de Waal, *A Life-Giving Way: A Commentary On The Rule Of St Benedict*

Michael Casey, *Stranger To The City: Reflections On The Beliefs And Values Of The Rule Of St Benedict*

Roberta Bondi, *To Love As God Loves: Conversations With The Early Church*

Christine Valters Paintner, *Desert Fathers And Mothers: Early Christian Wisdom Sayings*

Harriet A Luckman and Linda Kulzer, *Purity Of Heart In Early Ascetic And Monastic Literature*

Columba Stewart, *Cassian The Monk*

Douglas Burton Christie, *Word In The Desert*

William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction To The Literature Of Early Monasticism*

Benedicta Ward, *The Lives Of The Desert Fathers*

Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos & Chapters On Prayer*

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Lent and Easter ORDO 2016

The season of Lent is the most appropriate time for celebrating the sacrament of penance. Already on Ash Wednesday the people of God has heard the solemn invitation, *Turn away from sin and believe the good news*. It is therefore fitting to have several

penitential celebrations before Lent, so that all the faithful may have an opportunity to be reconciled with God and their neighbour and so be able to celebrate the paschal mystery in the Easter Triduum with renewed hearts. The sacrament of penance is better celebrated before rather than during the Easter Triduum.

*** **

In the liturgy and liturgical catechesis of Lent the reminder of baptism already received or the preparation for its reception, as well as the theme of repentance, renew the entire community along with those being prepared to celebrate the paschal mystery, in which each of the elect will share through the sacraments of initiation. For both the elect and the local community, therefore, the Lenten season is a time for spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the paschal mystery.

*** **

Ember Days (from the German *Quatember* or *quarter day* or, as the Irish used to say, *Quarter Tense*) mark the beginning of each of the four seasons. Kept in the Roman Church since the fifth century, they are observed in Australia on the first Fridays of Autumn and Spring (March and September) as special days of prayer and penance. *On Rogation and Ember days the Church is accustomed to entreat the Lord for the various needs of humanity, especially for the fruits of the earth and for human labour, and to give thanks to him publicly.*

*** **

During Lent penance should be not only inward and individual, but also outward and social.

*** **

The Sacred Paschal Triduum of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord shines forth as the high point of the entire liturgical year. The Paschal Triduum of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord begins with

the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, has its centre in the Easter Vigil, and closes with Vespers (Evening Prayer) of the Sunday of the Resurrection.

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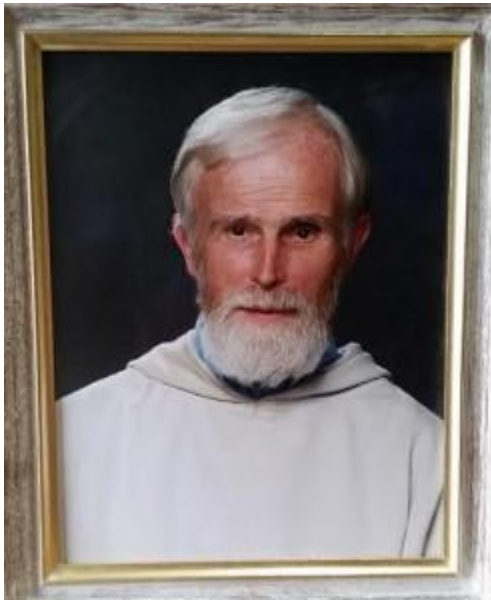
Easter Time: The fifty days from the Sunday of the Resurrection to Pentecost Sunday are celebrated in joy and exultation as one feast day, indeed as one *great Sunday*. These are the days above all others in which the *Alleluia* is sung. The Sundays of this time of year are considered to be Sundays of Easter.

*** **

Sing ALLELUIA! Augustine rightly says, *Singing is for one who loves*, and there is also an ancient proverb: *Whoever sings well prays twice over*.

Remembering Fr Bruno New Camaldoli Hermitage website

Sunday, November 29 (first day of Advent) – We tolled the bells this morning just after the wake up bell at 5:15 a.m. and gathered at Fr. Bruno's bedside



for a vigil. For those who hadn't heard, Bruno's health had been declining and he finally needed to enter hospice care at an outside facility for a short period of time. We had brought him home just Friday noon and he

died late Saturday evening. He had one of us with him the whole time and his dear friend Lynne had just arrived a few hours before. A momentous way to begin Advent! We will miss our beloved Bruno.

Born Arthur Paul Barnhart on April 10, 1931, in Long Island, New York, Fr. Bruno was the only child of Arthur Chamberlain and Julia Barnhart. Fr. Bruno received his B.S. in chemistry from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. He later received his M.A. in chemistry at Dartmouth, New Hampshire.

Fr. Bruno spent 2 years in the Navy where he worked in lab tech biochemistry at Bethesda Naval Hospital. During his lab days Bruno lost sight in one of his eyes during an accident in the laboratory. After visiting the Trappists of Spencer, Massachusetts and Genesee, New York, Fr. Bruno contacted Fr. Modotti at New Camaldoli Hermitage. He arrived in Big Sur on April 9, 1959.

Fr. Bruno professed vows in 1960 (simple) and 1964 (solemn). During the 1960's he studied in Italy, receiving a STL degree from Sant' Anselmo in Rome. Fr. Bruno served as prior of New Camaldoli Hermitage from 1969 to 1987, making trips to Italy every 3 years during that time to serve as a member of the Camaldolese Constitutions Committee. He has published several articles and five books (*The Good Wine*, *Second Simplicity*, *The Future of Wisdom*, *The One Light* (editor) and *Purity of Heart* (co-editor)). He has given many retreats, conferences and workshops over the years. Since 1994, Fr. Bruno has served as editor of *The Golden String*, the official publication of the Bede Griffiths Trust.

News from Mumbai, India Trudy Dantis Oblate OSB Cam

It's lovely getting the newsletter and other emails from Australia. We may have moved far away but we are still very much connected to the group there. Some quick news from here. We've relatively settled

in and had a busy Christmas season with family and friends. Alwyn has been very fortunate to get work in his field. He passed his Masters course with Distinction and will graduate in absentia in April this year. We had originally planned to make a trip to Melbourne for his graduation but now with his work, we're not quite certain we will be able to make it. Alwyn now works as Project Coordinator for the Office of Marriage and Family in the Archdiocese of Bombay. He helps coordinate and run the Marriage Preparation Courses and other post-marriage courses and programs of the office as well develop content for websites, write journal articles, etc. It's a steep learning curve! And given the population here, the pastoral work is enormous. Every monthly Marriage Prep course has about 85-120 couples and in the month of December there are usually three courses run to accommodate the numbers. But he's loving it and is looking forward to all the training courses he has to complete this year as part of his professional development.

It's been very hard for me to get work here because of certain restrictions the government has. I cannot do any research here unless I get permission from the Home Ministry since I am a foreign citizen. But I continue to work casual hours online for my previous office - the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Pastoral Research Office. I also do some occasional transcription work for another Australian colleague. I'm also writing the book that is based on my research work and PhD thesis. I will be helping out the Archdiocese here in their research work as a non-paid staff.

Meanwhile, life in India is good especially since we're around family and we don't have to worry about them now since they're just a short drive away. It's been very heartening for our parents to have us here. But we do miss the comforts of Australia and NZ. It's taking time getting used to things like minimal water supply and crowded roads and small spaces and high pollution but we're getting adjusted slowly. Our trip

around Australia (all 11,000 kms of it) before we left was absolutely amazing and we're so glad we did it. There's still a bit more to be done so no doubts we'll be coming back again to do it for sure!

The demon of acedia, also called the noonday demon, is the one that causes most serious trouble of all. He presses his attack upon the monk (meditator) about 10 am and besieges the soul until 2 pm. First of all he makes it seem that the sun barely moves, if at all, and that the day is 50 hours long. Then he constrains the monk to look constantly out of the windows, to walk outside the cell, to gaze carefully at the sun to determine how far it stands from 3 pm (the only meal of the day) to look now this way and now to that to see if perhaps one of the brethren appears from his cell. Then too he instils in the heart of the monk a hatred for the place, a hatred for his very life itself, a hatred for manual labour (a hatred for meditation).

Evagrius said: No other demon follows the demon of acedia. But a deep peace and inexpressible joy arises from the struggle. The Desert Fathers called the deep peace and inexpressible joy 'apatheia'. Apatheia is a deep imperturbable calm, a truly healed soul.

The Desert Fathers knew that apatheia or purity of heart was the prerequisite for being in the Presence of God.

Thomas Merton said: What the Desert Fathers sought most of all was their own true self in Christ. And in order to do this, they had to reject completely the false, formal self-fabricated under social compulsion in the world.

Our true self in Christ shines forth when the flow of thoughts and feelings has been stilled, when the ego and false images of self have dropped away and the emotions are purified.

Reflections

Andrew Hede Oblate OSB Cam

"LIVING WITH THE PAST"

The past

is a distant land,

Our personal histories

etched in the landscape;

Our former selves

lurking ghostlike
in the shadows.

Sometimes, we visit there

like a busy tourist,
taking in the sights blindly.

Sometimes, we shelter there

like a frightened child,
hiding from hurtful reality.

Sometimes, we live there

like a lost refugee,
escaping the tensions of
the present.

Sometimes, we grieve that

we cannot erase past sorrows,
we cannot recapture past joys,
we cannot correct past mistakes,
we cannot relive
experiences long gone.

But, deep down, we know that

we must let the past go,
we must not deny its permanence,
we must accept that
we cannot change it at all.

However, we can still journey in that far
country

like a pilgrim,
exploring paths not taken,
learning from memories
now fading,
searching for meaning in
symbols that endure,
striving to heal
the wounds that remain;
above all, striving for the Light...



"SEASONS OF THE SOUL"

At times in **bounty** -

Psychic pastures, fertile, budding with life;
Inner selves integrating, spirits soaring;
Dreams deepening, memories enriching;
Past-present-future flowing in
seamless unity.

Feelings of peace, joyfulness, stillness.

At times in **drought** -

Outer surfaces parched, scorched,
scarred;
Hidden recesses choked, eroded;
Reservoirs empty, drained of
nourishment,
Energy sucked up by relentless exposure.

Feelings of sadness, vulnerability,
even hopelessness.

At times in **flood** -

Emotions rushing, thoughts
totally engulfed;
Tides surging away all semblance of
rationality;
Debris flushed up from the repressed
past;
Ego plunged into the darkness of
the unconscious.

Feelings of panic, lack of control, helplessness.

At times on **fire** -

Embers of resentment, glowing,
ever-ready to flare;
Inferno of anger consuming,
burning, blinding;
Unresolved hurts welting under
pulsating heat;
Pretences of the persona all melting away.

Feelings of rage, regret, bitterness.

At times under **storm** -

Night terrors striking with
lightning-bolt force;
Shadowy demons thundering,
irrational fears evoked;
Hardship without respite,
weariness washing over;
Stress lashing in furies against
crumbling self-defences.

Feelings of dread, angst,
even uselessness.

Random cycles of fire, flood, bounty,
storm, drought:

the soul, like the earth, is ever changing.



Mourning Fr Ron Rolheiser

Fr Daniel recently passed on this column by Fr Ron.

Several years ago, while teaching a summer course at Seattle University, I had as one of my students a woman who, while happily married, was unable to conceive a child. She had no illusions about what this meant for her. It bothered her a great deal. She found Mother's Day very difficult. Among other things, she wrote a well-researched thesis on the concept of barrenness in scripture and developed a retreat on that same theme which she offered at various renewal centers.

Being a celibate whose vows also conscript a certain biological barrenness, I went on one of her weekend retreats, the only male there. It was a powerful group experience, but it took most of the weekend for that to happen. Initially most everyone on the retreat was tentative and shy, not wanting to admit to themselves or others the kind of pain the loss of biological parenthood was creating in their lives. But things broke open on the Saturday night, after the group watched a video of a 1990s British film, *Secrets and Lies*, a subtle but powerful drama about the pain of not having children. The tears in the movie catalyzed tears within our group and the floodgates opened. Tears began to flow freely and one by one the women began to tell their stories. Then, after the tears and stories had stopped, the atmosphere changed, as if a fog had lifted and a weight had been removed. Lightness set in. Each person in the group had mourned her loss and now each felt a lightness in knowing that one might never have a child and still be a happy person, without denying the pain in that.

Barrenness is not just a term that describes a biological incapacity to have children or a life-choice to not have them. It's wider. Barrenness describes the universal human condition in its incapacity to be generative in the way it would like and the vacuum and frustration that leaves inside lives. Karl Rahner summarizes that in these words: In the torment of the

insufficiency of everything attainable we ultimately learn that here, in this life, all symphonies must remain unfinished. No matter if we have biological children of our own or not, we still all find ourselves barren in that for none of us is there a finished symphony here on earth. There's always some barrenness left in our lives and biological barrenness is simply one analogate of that, though arguably the prime one. None of us die having given birth to all we wanted to in this world.

What do we do in the face of this? Is there an answer? Is there a response that can take us beyond simply gritting our teeth and stoically getting on with it? There is. The answer is tears. In mid-life and beyond, we need, as Alice Miller normatively suggests in her classic essay, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, to mourn so that our very foundations are shaken. Many of our wounds are irreversible and many of our shortcomings are permanent. We will go to our deaths with this incompleteness. Our loss cannot be reversed. But it can be mourned, both what we lost and what we failed to achieve. In that mourning there is freedom.

I have always been struck by the powerful metaphor inside the story of Jephthah's daughter in the biblical story in the Book of Judges, chapter 11. It captures in an archetypal image the only answer there is, this side of eternity, to barrenness. Condemned to death in the prime of her youth by a foolish vow her father made, she tells her father that she is willing to die on the altar of sacrifice, but only on one condition. She will now die without experiencing either the consummation of marriage or the birthing of children. So she asks her father to give her two months before her death to "mourn her virginity". Properly mourned, an incomplete life can be both lived in peace and left in peace.

Tears are the answer to barrenness, to all loss and inadequacy. Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, in her book, *A Faithful Farewell*, has this to say about tears: "Tears release me into honest sorrow. They release me from

the strenuous business of finding words. They release me into a childlike place where I need to be held and find comfort in embrace - in the arms of others and in the arms of God. Tears release me from the treadmill of anxious thoughts, and even from fear. They release me from the strain of holding them back. Tears are a consent to what is. They wash away, at least for a time, denial and resistance. They allow me to relinquish the self-deceptive notion that I'm in control. Tears dilute resentment and wash away the flotsam left by waves of anger."

Not insignificantly, tears are salt water. Human life originated in the oceans. Tears connect us to the source of all life on this earth, within which prodigal fecundity trumps all barrenness.

Hopes and Dream Phillip Saunders Oblate OSB Cam

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This prayer, the Collect for Purity from the Anglican prayer book seemed a suitable prayer to contemplate as I start this writing this article. It may be familiar, a similar version being part of the introduction in the Cloud of Unknowing.

Having made my oblation in Whangarei New Zealand in February, Anthony Sharpe asked if I could write about my "hope and dreams" as an oblate. I will try and lay this out as best I can and hopefully with humility.

I am on a journey as you will also be that is still taking me to places I am not yet fully aware of. Almost daily little windows of understanding open.

As with all journeys it had a beginning an "awakening" as Fr. Bruno Barnhart would have described it, when

I attended a Eucharist at and Anglican Church in Australia, the Vicar was on holiday and a young priest was taking the service. His presence and his words just struck me, as he spoke about the mystical traditions and other faith traditions with such honesty and clarity. I did not know anything about him at that time or that he was a Camaldolese oblate, an unknown world to me.

That priest was Hans Christiansen, it seemed strange to me at the time that there I was around sixty years old and only just becoming aware of this tradition. Now of course I can relate to St. Benedict's rule and listening to the young.

At my oblation I had invited a friend Rev. Bob Mortimore an Anglican Priest. As we chewed over the scriptures during the service, Bob talked about how do we share the faith and he used a phrase "Gossiping the gospel". After the event the oblates discussed this phrase and what it meant, the way I thought about it was how you bring the gospel into conversation.

This is of course very different for the destructive gossip referred to in St Benedict's rule and perhaps gossip is a bit uncomfortable as a phrase for Benedictines but it is a catching phrase for what perhaps could be referred to as conversing the gospel.

Meditation is a subject that can come up quite often, talking to someone doing Tai Chi or Yoga for example and the "gossiping" can happen. Fr. Lawrence Freeman's WCCM daily Lent reflections are sometimes good to share in this season.

I wondered how this "gossiping" also related to how our Camaldolese charism outside of our community. I looked to New Camaldoli who do this in some unexpected ways. Fr. Cyprian's music performance, a chance to story tell and gossip. Remarkably this gossiping seems to have taken a very contemporary turn with the New Camaldoli presence on Facebook and even more remarkably on Trip Advisor - ultimate modern gossiping tools. I expect direct opportunities

for gossip also arise with the visitors to New Camaldoli.

Conservation is a remarkably easy way to gossip the Camaldolese charism. One of our Aotearoa oblates John Mc Kay, has a vision of a Camaldolese connection with the planting of the Aotearoa Kauri tree. This is in the dream stage, but tied in with a comment Fr. Michael Mifsud made about the Camaldolese having the first ever conservation charter. Researching this I found that The Camaldolese Forest Code was used at a recent international conference on forest conservation in Italy, presenting this as a model for forest conservation for the world today!

What an amazing story to talk about. I have been a trustee of a conservation trust for some time and I find this story inspiring and will greatly enhance my own efforts in this area.

My hope is that gradually we can gossip (communicate) our Threefold Good, also the practices of liturgy and meditation so as to fulfil the Benedictine conversatio morum in both our own and others living and understanding of the monastic/wisdom tradition. That this way of being will enable others and ourselves to come to a deep relationship with God in a way that is both contemporary yet has strong roots.

National Retreat 2016 Anthony Sharpe Oblate OSB Cam

The Oblate Council has been busy preparing for Cyprian's visit later in the year. To make the most of Cyprian's presence among us, Chris Morris, in conjunction with Fr Michael and the Oblate Council, has formulated two questions which he emailed to oblates for response and return to him. On 8 March 2016, Chris wrote:

Dear Oblates

You are invited to respond to the two questions below. Please feel free to respond to them (or not) in any way you feel moved/called. You may like to respond to just one question or combine your response etc. The language contained in the questions is not meant to confine possibilities but rather to open them up. Please feel free to interpret them as you wish.

Please send your responses to the following email address: camaldolesedownunder@gmail.com by the April 30th.

[For those who would like to send their response to Chris by mail, his address is]:

*Chris Morris
Catholic Theological College
PO Box 146
East Melbourne Vic 8002*

Any response that are received will be collated in a summary response to be presented to Fr Cyprian at the retreat with the opportunity for further discussion. We hope that this will be the beginning of an ongoing discussion as a community about what it means to be Oblates today and in the future.

The two questions are as follows:

1. What is your dream for the Australia/New Zealand Oblate Community (for the next 10 years)?

(The word 'dream' is used here as an invitation to reflect and pray deeply without constraints - to imagine, intuit and wonder about the possibilities, potential, sense of call etc).

2. What is our vision for the Australia/New Zealand Oblate Community (for the next 10 years)?

(The word 'vision' is used here to compliment the word 'dream' and invites more concrete proposals for our community as we move forward).

Blessings to all

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