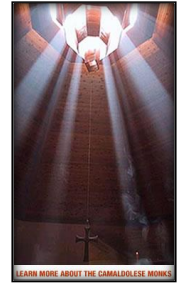




Speak Lord. *Your servant is listening.*

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



Chaplain's Message Fr Michael Mifsud Oblate OSB Cam

Different circumstances for all of us bring us to various crossroads in our lives; for me health issues, 40 year celebrations of ordination and the starting of the ageing process. Even the terminology of cross-roads is a significant one as we advance on life's journey. Recently I attended a Jungian dream workshop on facing the spiritual, emotional and physical challenges of later life, facilitated by highly acclaimed Jungian analyst, Joy Ryan-Bloore from New Zealand, run at Karith House of Prayer. I recently heard one morning, some classical music on the ABC, playing a very evocative piece [I missed the name] of caravan of camels out on the remote desert along the Silk Road. It conjured up the vast endless horizon, the mysterious people fading in the distance and it engendered an amazement at the courage and trials of those who entrust themselves to the Great Unknown, with trust in elders who previously passed that way and in surrender hopefully in faith to the Spirit Supreme. I am feeling somewhat like one of them at this this time of my life, except maybe like St Peter, being led where I would rather not go, than go forward to the unknown by choice. As I meditated this morning, now no longer being able to meditate as I would want, in the rare stillness, a word appeared in my consciousness, pilgrim. I immediately recognized that is who I am. I have been wondering more of late, who I am, and who I am meant to be and what am I meant to do in this emerging phase of my life and vocation. Glenn Wolter reminds me of Zen Master Basho's verse, *Sitting still, Doing nothing, Spring comes, and the Grass grows*. Despite being a so called hermit, itinerant monk or a contemplative in action, throughout my life I have still so identified who I am with what I have been able to do, create, serve, teach,



promote et cetera, that all of a sudden, I feel stripped of my capacities for much of these things. I am pulled up terrifyingly to consider my crossroad, where the directions are no longer visible. The experience is of being nothing, going nowhere, having achieved nothing with an unknown future, alone, forgotten, vulnerable to the elemental world around me – very much like a pilgrim in the vast desert of time and space. That is why, I suppose, the word pilgrim leapt out of the silence to me .At the same moment I realized that my identity is not something separate from my relationship with God, in fact my identity is [in] God, and in my relationships with everyone and everything. In a sense it is a very Trinitarian experience; I exist in my relationship and derive my identity there [I am because we are -Bantu]. I am not separate, I receive my identity as a gift [of love] I have no meaning outside of it and I can be content even if everything else is taken away from me. So it is all about the Inter relationship of everything, all in all. As I look back on my life and spiritual meanderings, the word pilgrim sums it up nicely, maybe outwardly and inwardly in the inner wilderness and desert. To be on the Way, journeying, open to learn, receive, meet others, to experience the wondrous grandeurs and beauty of creation and also to share with others, feel incomplete, an unfinished symphony, this is to be drawn, to change and to receive the New and unexpected, this is what it is all about. I am grateful to have experienced the goodness of others, the earth and God. All this seems to me to express my life and vocation, as one who loves nature, loves being with others and stands with others in looking towards the endless Great Horizon and infinite expansion of spirits pilgrims crossing the road in the footsteps of other

pilgrims trusting in the Future Hope which we are called to be prophets of to others in our time. Thanks for sharing in the journey now and into the future together.

Desert Retreat Ruth Harrison Oblate OSB Cam

Last month I spent six days at Koora Retreat, a base camp in Boorabbin National Park, in the Great Western Woodlands of Western Australia. For four of those days I four part in a desert retreat led by Belden Lane, a American teacher and writer who has spent much his life integrating the contemplative journey with what he has experienced in a life of walking and sleeping in the wilderness places of North America.

Koora Retreat has been established by two Anglican priests, Anna Killigrew and Peter Harrison, and is geared to enabling people, during their time there, to allow the desert be their teacher. We walked part of Hunt's Track. We were taken to land that was recovering from fire, and were amazed by the extraordinary colour and shape of the plants and trees. We spent a day by a huge dry lake, and walked alone in the surrounding country. We drank billy tea and ate wonderful home cooked food. We shared the outside a caravan-poustinia, where guests can stay for time completely alone in the desert. At night we talked by an open fire in a pit, under the stars.

Before going to the the retreat I read Belden's latest book, *Backpacking with the Saints*, which combines wilderness experience with seekers and teachers as diverse as John of the Cross, Thich Nhat Hanh, Rumi, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Dag Hammarkjold, and Thomas Merton. The experience of meeting Belden, listening to him, and walking the land with him, brought my my understanding

listening to the land to an entirely new level. As the days went on, Belden drew us, naturally and simply, into a way of seeing and being with the land that took us into deeper communion with God, with ourselves, and with each other. Anna and Peter's knowledge of the land and awareness of the first peoples, and their skill and care and warm hospitality helped form us into community.

On the third night and the following day Belden camped out in the bush alone, and one or two others also did this, each having found a spot which resonated with them. I met Belden just as he returned, and he told me, "It was wonderful. I can't talk about it, But God has been so very good to me." His gentleness, openness, spontaneous love and compassion, simplicity during the retreat, and above all the way gratitude and humility shone out of him as

he spoke to me then, made me feel that I was in the presence of a modern Desert Elder.

It was not until I returned to my hermitage-home in the Yarra Valley that I became more fully aware of how profound that time in the desert had been, and how much I had been

changed by it. At the time I was aware of a greater clarity, of decisions I had made being reversed, and new directions being placed before me; but as I negotiated the process of settling back into my former place and life, I found I was responding to things in a different way, I observed the daily pattern of my life subtly changing, day by day, and a profound gratitude the loving community of fellow-seekers with whom I share the land where I live.

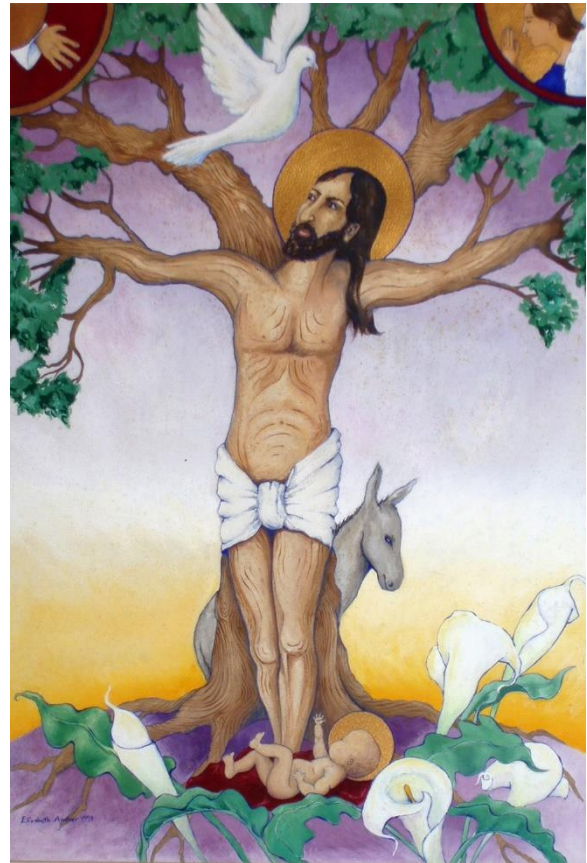


Easter Reflection 2016
Michael Dougherty Oblate OSB Cam

Celebrating Easter 2016
Elizabeth Amber

Life/Death
 are a piece
 We are called
 to hold the tension
 of the two.
 To walk a path
 that is real,
 there is a call
 to a constant
 dying to the unreal:
 to power over, control over
 to domination
 exploitation
 manipulation
 a dying
 to the false self.
 For a glass to be filled
 it needs to be empty.
 Be vigilant, be awake!
 Ask for an eager patience
 in the waiting.
 To receive life unfolding
 as complete gift
 moment by moment,
 the mystery of that
 and discover the love
 of it all.
 Jesus, the Christ, says:
 Don't be afraid
 Peace be with you
 Remain in me.

March 2016



On the shores of Galilee Andrew Hede Oblate OSB Cam



Oh Risen Lord
I thank You for allowing me
To tread the same paths You walked
Along these ancient shores
Of the Sea of Galilee
I am humbled by the thought
That after a lifetime of uncertainty
I have been able to follow You
Literally not just symbolically
Like my Apostle namesake
Whom You summoned from these
Very same shores
I know I cannot refuse Your call
These vast expanses of water
On which Your disciples laboured
And on which You Yourself walked
Now call me to inner stillness
As our fellow monks of Benedict
At Your Monastery in Tabgha
Continue with Your sacred work
Please gift me with Your presence



Sundry thoughts Anthony Sharpe Oblate OSB Cam

I was very interested in reading Cyprian's statements in his book about a possible new asceticism that incorporates a healthy diet and exercise. A very appropriate idea and one for our times. If only more people had access to the book. Copies for each parish.

*** ** *

Speaking of the body, speaking of diet. I have been reading a book called How Not To Die, by nutritionist, Dr Michael Greger MD with Gene Stone. I can thoroughly recommend it. 412 pp and AUD \$35. All about a whole-food-plant-based diet.

*** ** *

Further to my reading of Cyprian's books, I have started to look at steps I can take along the path of an integrated spirituality: Attending to my spirit by regular meditation. Attending to my soul by nurturing my inner self through courses run by the School of Practical Philosophy. And attending to my body by regular exercise and a balanced whole-food diet.

*** ** *

I really like the new layout of Camaldolese Tidings. Very contemporary. An apt vehicle to capture the attention of the modern reader. Check it out if you have not done so already. And if you have not received it – think about updating your postal address on our contact list.

*** ** *

I was struck by Br Bede Healey OSB Cam citing Blessed Columba Marmion OSB – *We read under the eye of God until the heart is touched and leaps to flame* – in his article in Camaldolese Tidings on Lectio Divina. The poetry of so few words.

Brief Introduction

Jim Curtin Observer – Victoria

As the latest postulant, exploring the oblate OSB Cam vocation, Anthony has suggested that I write something for the oblate newsletter, so I thought a brief introduction of myself to the community would be appropriate.

I'm 59 years old, and Vicki and I have been married since 1979. We have two adult children, Christina and David, and two grandchildren (from Chris), Hector and Athena. After some years serving in the RAAF in ground support roles, I was ordained a deacon for the Military Ordinariate in 1995, and two days later began ministry as a full time Air Force chaplain. This was a varied ministry, including counselling, teaching and leading worship, and included stints in the Middle East (2003-2004) and Timor Leste (2006). I left full time service in 2008, and incardinated into the Melbourne archdiocese in 2010.

I'm appointed (part time, non-stipendiary) to the parish of Ricketts Point in Melbourne, but my main ministry at present is as Director of Mission at St John of God Accord, a service that supports adults living with intellectual disability. Spiritually this has been wonderful for me as I am continually reminded of the beauty of people, of the willingness of so many to sacrifice themselves for others, and the sheer rewards of service. I work with people of many faiths and none, and often with people who have been through the humbling and difficult experience of living with disability.

In the last seven years I have made three 8 day Ignatian retreats that have been much graced, and helped me to discern that I was in the right ministry. Last year however I felt a need for a different style, and made a 7 day retreat in a hermitage on the ODC property in Minto. During this retreat it became clear to me that silence and solitude were important for me. Since then I have thought seriously about how I can best pray, and as I thought, prayed and read about this I discovered that the Camaldolese Benedictines

had an active oblate community here in Australia. I am grateful for the opportunity to discern whether this is part of my vocation as I move into my seventh decade, and to drink at the spring of wisdom that this tradition holds. All prayers received gratefully, and I look forward to meeting the community.

The Battle of Prayer

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and he himself, all teach us this: prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray. If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name. The 'spiritual battle' of the Christian's new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer.

In the battle of prayer, we must face in ourselves and around us erroneous notions of prayer. Some people view prayer as a simple psychological activity, others as an effort of concentration to reach a mental void. Still others reduce prayer to ritual words and postures. Many Christians unconsciously regard prayer as an occupation that is incompatible with all the other things they have to do: they 'don't have the time.' Those who seek God by prayer are quickly discouraged because they do not know that prayer comes also from the Holy Spirit and not from themselves alone.

We must also face the fact that certain attitudes deriving from the mentality of 'this present world' can penetrate our lives if we are not vigilant. For example, some would have it that only that is true which can be verified by reason and science; yet prayer is a mystery that overflows both our conscious and unconscious

lives. Others overly prize production and profit; thus prayer, being unproductive, is useless. Still others exalt sensuality and comfort as the criteria of the true, the good, and the beautiful; whereas prayer, the 'love of beauty' (philokalia), is caught up in the glory of the living and true God. Finally, some see prayer as a flight from the world in reaction against activism; but in fact, Christian prayer is neither an escape from reality nor a divorce from life.

Finally, our battle has to confront what we experience as failure in prayer: discouragement during periods of dryness; sadness that, because we have 'great possessions', we have not given all to the Lord; disappointment over not being heard according to our own will; wounded pride, stiffened by the indignity that is ours as sinners; our resistance to the idea that prayer is a free and unmerited gift; and so forth. The conclusion is always the same: what good does it do to pray? To overcome these obstacles, we must battle to gain humility, trust, and perseverance.

The Month of May Ordo 2016

Within the cycle of a year, the Church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ, from his incarnation and birth until his ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of the blessed hope and of the Lord's return...

In celebrating this annual cycle of Christ's mysteries, the Church honours with special love Mary, the Mother of God, who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son. In her the Church holds up and admires the most excellent effect of the redemption and joyfully contemplates, as in a flawless image, that which the Church itself desires and hopes wholly to be.

*** **

The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and of the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the centre

of the whole of Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. For in it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit.

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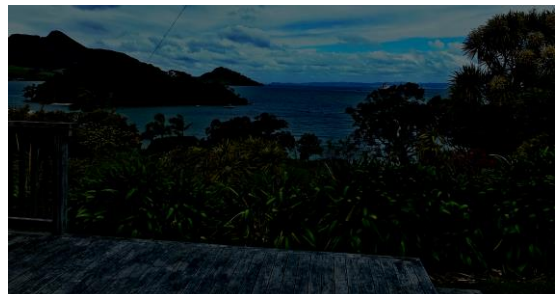
The Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church's power flows.

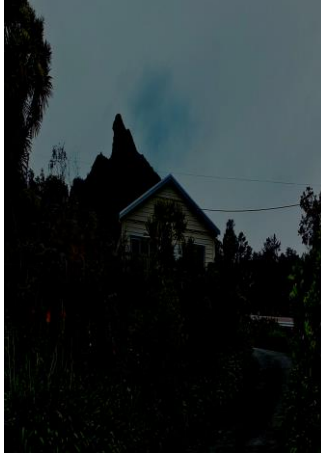
Cyprian's visit to New Zealand en route to Melbourne 17-22 September 2016

The three oblates in NZ are looking forward very much to their time with Cyprian. (John McKay, Phillip Saunders, Michael Dougherty) Unfortunately our fourth oblate John Broadbent, due to frailty and ill health, will be unable to join us. But it may be possible to have Cyprian speak with him by phone at some suitable time.

On arrival in Auckland on Saturday 17 September at 10 am, this first day will be a time for Cyprian to get over jet lag, relax, look around, get his bearings et cetera.

The evening of the next day we will all gather together to commence our retreat, Sunday evening to after lunch on Tuesday. The venue is quite idyllic, situated on its own harbour beach. We will have a house on this site to ourselves with all the needed facilities. We





will provide our own linen and food; Elizabeth Amber, Michael's wife, has very generously offered her services to cater for the cooking and food requirements.

We are hoping also to have Cyprian with us for our Chapter Meeting after the retreat. In the evening we will all go (including Elizabeth) to relax together over a meal in Whangarei City.

On the next day, Wednesday, Cyprian is invited to spend some time with senior students at Pompallier College. In the evening there will be an event in St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, the content and theme yet to be determined by Cyprian's creativity.



Hopefully the audience will have a wide attendance from various traditions and seekers from where ever.

There will be a similar event held in Auckland on the Thursday evening at the Papakura Catholic Church. This will be hosted by Fr Peter Murphy. Early next morning we will get Cyprian to the Auckland airport for his Qantas 152, 7 15 am flight to Melbourne. We are all very appreciative of having Cyprian in our midst.

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I dance in the morning Phillip Saunders Oblates OSB Cam

At the end of a meditation group meeting the subject of dance came up. We were trying to think of the person who wrote the hymn Lord of the Dance,



but it escaped us. When I returned home I looked it up, and of course Sydney Carter came up as the author, but what was so interesting to read was how he came to write this song and even more intriguing about his own faith journey.

Sydney Carter composed some of the most popular songs sung in schools and churches. Lord of the Dance, When I Needed a Neighbour, One More Step Along the World I Go, and many more.

In writing Lord of the Dance in 1963 he said that he saw Christ as *the incarnation of the piper who is calling us. He dances that shape and pattern which is at the heart of our reality. By Christ, I mean not only Jesus; in other times and places, other planets, there may be other lords of the dance. But Jesus is the one I know of first and best. I sing of the dancing pattern in the life and words of Jesus.* Sydney Carter was also inspired by a statue of Siva Nataraja which sat on his desk, whenever he was asked to resolve the contradiction; he would declare that he had never tried to do so.

He later said about Lord of the Dance: *I did not think the churches would like it at all. I thought many people would find it pretty far flown, probably heretical and anyway dubiously Christian. But in fact people did sing it and, unknown to me, it touched a chord...Anyway, it's the sort of Christianity I believe in.*

He was involved in Quakerism therefore aware of silent spirituality. He wrote Carol of the Creatures which is inspired by St Francis's Canticle of the Sun

and also Bells of Norwich inspired by Julian of Norwich.

He summed up his faith in the poem *So What do You Believe In?: Nothing fixed or final, all the while I travel a miracle./I doubt, and yet I walk on water.*

Born in London in the 1915, Sydney read history at Balliol College, Oxford, where he also started to write poetry and dreamt of becoming a painter or film producer. After graduation, however, he ended up teaching in a school. In the Second World War, as a committed pacifist, he joined the Friends Ambulance Unit, serving in the Middle East, and, in Greece.

After the war, folk music, both sacred and secular, was his inspiration. As with the song *One More Step*, his faith was a journey, he wrote:

Faith is more basic than language or theology. Faith is the response to something which is calling us from the timeless part of our reality. Faith may be encouraged by what has happened in the past, or what is thought to have happened in the past, but the only proof of it is in the future. Scriptures and creeds may come to seem incredible, but faith will still go dancing on. Even though (because it rejects a doctrine) it is now described as *doubt*. This, I believe, is the kind of faith that Christ commended.

Sydney Carter died on 13 March 2004. This poem he wrote could have been his epitaph:

My Believing Bones

*Swung by the rhythm of a yes and no
between the living and the dead I go.
The dance is in my bones and though I see
that every dancing bone will cease to be
I will believe my bones and learn to trust
my living and my dying ,for I must.
Coming and going by the dance, I see
that what I am not is a part of me.
Dancing is all that I can ever trust,
the dance is all I am, the rest is dust.*



*I will believe my bones and live by what
will go on dancing when my bones are not*

So Sydney Carter saw his faith as dance. Some time ago, I came across a piece written by our Oblate brother Rev. Dr. Meath Conlan on his *Diverse Journeys* website. It was a piece about Fr Bede Griffiths, gifting a statue of Shiva Nataraja to Osage Monastery, which also explains the Lord of the Dance Siva Nataraja and Christ. This is what Meath wrote:

When my old friend and mentor, Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine monk, visited Osage Monastery in 1978, he presented them with a statue of Siva Nataraja, saying that the Nataraja can also, in a sense, be a symbol of the risen Christ.

The meaning of Nataraja's Dance is expressed symbolically by his posture and attributes. Siva dances on the Demon of Ignorance: Human beings can only reach true wisdom by conquering the ignorance or illusion, which takes the phenomenal world as real, instead of seeing all as a reflection or manifestation of the Ultimate Reality underlying everything.

He dances within the flamed arch: The arch represents nature, the processes of the Universe and the Transcendental Light sustaining it. Siva dancing

within and touching the arch with head, hands and feet is the universal omnipresent Spirit. In one ear he wears a female earring, and in the other a male one: signifying that he represents both the masculine and the feminine energy in the Cosmos.

He has four arms: the upper right arm carries a drum, signifying Creation, the Creative Energy of Sound – the Divine Word. In the palm of His upper left arm he bears a tongue of flame, which symbolises Destruction, but also purification. The balance of the hands gives equal weight to both creation and destruction, as necessary for purification, evolution and transformation. Creation and destruction – dying and rising.

The lower right arm is placed in the ‘fear not’ gesture – the gesture of our angels – and the lower left arm is pointing to the lifted foot, indicating release from ignorance – Grace. All activities happen simultaneously – creation, destruction and the granting of Grace.

Staying with the Hindu tradition, this poem by Rabindranath Tagore is evocative of the lines in one of my favourite Charles Wesley hymns And Can It Be – My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

*Let the links of my shackles snap at every step of thy dance,
O Lord of Dancing,
and let my heart wake in the freedom of the eternal voice.*

*Let it feel the touch of that foot that ever sets swinging the
lotus-seat of the muse,
and with its perfume maddens the air through ages.
Rebellious atoms are subdued into forms at thy dance-time,
the suns and planets, anklets of light, twirl round thy moving feet.*

St Gregory of Nyssa wrote on dance: *Once there was a time when the whole rational creation formed a*

single dancing chorus looking upward to the one leader of this dance. And the harmony of motion that they learned from his law found its way into their dancing.

The St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco says on its web site: *St Gregory’s Church invites people to see God’s image in all humankind, to sing and dance to Jesus’ lead, and to become God’s friends.* Inside the church is a 3,000-square-foot icon of ninety dancing saints (and four animals), who wrap themselves in two large rings around the rotunda as they follow the lead of Jesus, the Lord of the Dance. The saints ranging from traditional figures like King David, Teresa of Avila and Frances of Assisi to unorthodox and non-Christian people like Malcolm X, Anne Frank, and Margaret Mead; represent musicians, artists, mathematicians, martyrs, scholars, mystics,



lovers, prophets and sinners from all times, from many faiths and backgrounds. The work is by iconographer Mark Dukes. The church’s founders, Rick Fabian and Donald Schell, commissioned the Dancing Saints Icon in 1997 to give visual expression to the theology of the church’s patron saint.

The focal point of this colossal piece is a twelve-foot-tall icon of a dancing Jesus (see above). Fabian and Schell describe the image:

Jesus, Lord of the Dance, leads our ninety saints, four animals, and all humanity in a great dance. He’s vested in the street attire of an Ethiopian Orthodox priest, a close parallel to teacher’s garb in the first century Mediterranean world and he wields his cross to lead the dancers, making the sign of suffering and shame into humanity’s invitation to joy.



The
Benedictine
Monks of
Weston Priory,
Vermont, USA,
contributed
several music

albums, as a way of sharing the faith, hopes and vision of their community. This is a poem called Dance! by Brother Alvaro, who first refers to a song Pilgrimage of the Heart.

*Let us set out on a pilgrimage of the heart,
Wandering in the wilderness,
Learning how to dance – from Pilgrimage of the Heart
© 2007, The Benedictine Foundation of the State of
Vermont, Inc.*

*I like to think that in these sixty years,
brothers here at the priory
have been engaged in daily learning,
a daily practice of a communal dance.*

*Not fighting, not dancing against the flow,
nor simply following the flow.
Not flowing in a passive repetition of the past,
nor rejecting the teachings of good dance traditions.*

*Not struggling to be unique or different,
nor searching to do what has always been done—
simply an alternative way of dancing,
a circle dance, and an open circle.*

*I saw the movement, listened to the rhythm,
and joined the dance.
That was ten years ago,
but every day we learn how to dance anew.*

Researching Sydney Carter was most fulfilling. This is just a sharing of what was found. It was an enjoyable dance, maybe you were able to join in! To finish where we started you might wish to contemplate
Sometimes, for a change I sing the whole song in the

present tense. I dance in the morning when the world is begun... It's worth a try. – Sydney Carter.

The Oblate Council Meeting – May 2016 Sue Wolter Oblate OSB Cam

Council members hooked up via skype on Sunday 22 May to work on the finer details for Fr Cyprian's visit to Australia. Talking to each other from as far away as Whangerei in New Zealand and Perth was a reminder of our diverse locations. Thanks to Chris Morris and Hans we worked through a packed agenda. The following is a summary.

- Registration for retreat to be with Sue Wolter by 30 June.
- First preference will be given to full oblates. However all interested are invited to contact Sue. Limited concessions may be available.
- \$2500 needed to cover Fr Cyprian's airfares. \$1020 sits in a/c now
- All donations welcome. We hope to be able to also give a donation to Cyprian for the ongoing work of the Camaldolese.
- All Cyprian's talks will be video recorded and made available through YouTube
- Promotion of visit in Catholic and Anglican newsletters in Melbourne
- Plans in progress for Fr Cyprian to be present at 2 other events in Melbourne

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At the Council meeting, it was also decided to offer one further opportunity for those who might like to respond to the reflection questions. An email request to this effect was subsequently sent to all oblates. Please find below the body of the original email with a date change and respond as best you can.

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 30 June 2016.

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 et cetera).

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).

The National Retreat 2016 The Oblate Council

Retreat details for the Australia leg of Cyprian's visit have been finalized and can be found in the flyer attached to the newsletter email. The retreat and registration details below have been emailed to all oblates.

Presenter: Prior Father Cyprian Consiglio OSB Cam

Venue: Santa Casa, 35 Flinders Street, Queenscliff, Victoria, 3225, (03) 5258 2661

Retreat dates: Friday 30 September 2016 (4pm onwards) to Sunday 2 October 2016 (after lunch)

Number of places: Limited to 20 persons, with preference given to full oblates

Cost: \$250 per person

To register: Contact Sue Wolter on (07) 5446 0158 or email her at waliwolter@bigpond.com.au

Registration date: 30 June 2016

Transport: Limited transport by car with local attendees; other ways of travel will be detailed later

Art Poem Glenn Wolter Oblate OSB Cam



Valleys and mountains
There is no difference
The way is intimate beyond speech.
One word is the Universe
Banksias are blooming
It is summer

Continuation of my Pilgrimage around Geelong and other things. Michael Bird Oblate OSB Cam

Last time in my contribution to the Oblate Newsletter I shared about my encounters in my immediate neighbourhood with the Eastern Churches and the people I met. I will continue to record some more encounters with the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the nearby Greek Monastery, Croatian community, an encounter with a Reformed Presbyterian Church in Geelong and some personal history.

I live in North Geelong which is part of the Bell Park parish. The whole parish forms a parish cluster of three churches including the: Holy Spirit in Manifold

Heights, St Peter and Paul's in Geelong West and the main centre, Holy Family in Bell Park: there is also a chapel in West Geelong called St Patrick's Chapel attached to the Catholic Primary School.

The Ukrainian Catholic Church called the Parish of the, 'Protection of the Mother of God', is in the Bell Park area of Geelong not far from our own parish Church of the, 'Holy Family'. For years I have heard the chiming of church bells around 9.20 on Sunday morning. I have only realized today that they come from this Ukrainian Church which has mass at 9.30 in the morning. I live a reasonable distance from the church so they must be very penetrating bells which call parishioners to attention over a wide area.

In my previous article I mentioned visiting the Ukrainian Catholic Church on a Thursday morning and witnessing a mass in progress. I was enthralled with the fantastic array of Iconography displayed on the walls, ceiling and every conceivable space inside the church. The Ukrainian Catholic Church still has strong influences from the its Orthodox roots but obviously had some modifications and influences from its being incorporated into the Catholic Tradition; such as the alter being visible during the mass even though the priest still had his back to the congregation. They also have services at 9.30 on Sundays the same time as Holy Family where I attend.

After the three boys and I had finished mass and socializing one Sunday morning at Holy Family we diverted to visit the Ukrainian Catholic Church, 'The Protection of the Mother of God'. It was closed up at the time but there was still a lady in the piety stall which was inside the 1000 year commemorative memorial building which was near the entrance of the Church. The lady was very friendly and insisted that we ask the priest to show us inside the church. The priest lived in a presbytery next to the church. Soon we were talking to Fr Ihor Bakay and Deacon Michael Kaminskyj. Fr Ihor Bakay could only talk very limited and stilted English. He explained how he was appointed directly from Ukraine to minister in the

Parish. It demonstrated to me how we really do have a slice of Ukraine right in the middle of own parish when even the priest struggled to speak fluent English.

Fr Ihor took the three boys; Timothy, Aaron, John and I inside the church and started to explain about the historical background and the nature of the Icons. It was fascinating to learn about the different Icons which decorated the interior of the beautiful church, 'The Protection of the Mother of God'. Fr Ihor explained how the Icons left a space for the viewer to enter into and become part of the image and participate in its activity. The Icon was in a way also looking back at us. There were some special Icons which were deeply imbedded in the history and spiritual legacy of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. One was of a St Nicolas who was famous in Ukraine and who had been attributed with many miracles connected to his grave memorial site where Ukrainian Catholics would souvenir soil from as a sort of sacramental. Fr Ihor told us also about the special golden medal Icon of Our Lady which was famous in Ukraine and was also attributed with many miracles through the intercession of Our Lady. The church had a large replica of this image. The miraculous was very real for the Ukrainian Catholics.

The conversation with Fr Ihor wandered onto the date for Easter used by the Orthodox Church. From my previous experience I knew that the Ukrainian Catholics followed the Orthodox Calendar for Easter Celebrations. Fr Ihor explained to me in his stilted English that the Ukrainian Catholics followed the Orthodox calendar because that is always the way it has been since their transition to communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Apparently in Canada the Ukrainian Catholic Church tried to change the date for Easter to the Roman Catholic Church Calendar and it caused a big stir. The Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada threatened to divide if they changed the date. Some Christians prefer their traditional ways. This sounded disappointing considering that the East and

Western Churches are trying to settle on a single date for Easter.

After a pleasant discussion and talk with Fr Ihor, the Deacon Michael Kaminskyj gave the boys and I a complimentary Calendar which displayed the beautiful Iconography in the church. We thanked Fr Ihor and the Deacon and headed on our way back home.

My next encounter was with the Orthodox Monastery in Lovely Banks Geelong. The name of the Monastery is Panagia Gorgoepikoos Monastery. I had heard a lot about this monastery and how they had an English service once a month on a Saturday morning at 9am. I made an effort to attend one of these services to experience a Greek Orthodox Eucharistic liturgy.

After following my directions from my GPS and crossing over the Princess highway I finally arrived at the Greek Orthodox Monastery. I noticed a large brick church in the process of being built immediately near the carpark where a number of cars had already been parked. I used my instincts and followed other people along the path to the rectangular building off to the left. I met and spoke to some friendly people along the way.

After entering the building, I observed there were some Sacred Icons which people are kissing. They are also placing candles in a sandbox before proceeding upstairs to where the service was to be held. I felt compelled to join them kissing, touching the Icons and lighting candles. This action of kissing Icons and lighting candles seems to form a large part of the Orthodox devotion. This touching and kissing of Icons continued in the corridor upstairs especially in regard to a large beautiful Icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the end of the corridor near the rectangular chapel. There is also a special book placed on a table in the corridor where people write their special intentions. The Greek Orthodox in this church have a healthy devotion in praying for deceased family and friends.

Suddenly there was a sister in a black habit and veil walking down the corridor with a dong signalling the beginning of mass and that we should gather into the rectangular chapel. I found a place up the back of the chapel but my vision of the Icons and of what was happening was obscured. I followed a man up towards the front of the chapel to the side where I had a better view and subsequently could see the Icons more clearly. More importantly I could observe the nuns singing and the priest celebrating the Eucharist. Most participants were standing for seating was a premium.

Most of the mass was chanted by the veiled sisters and the priest. I joked with one of the sisters after the mass about the great endurance she showed in chanting such long segments of the liturgy. It seemed to go on and on. The chanting was beautiful and filled the liturgy with a strong melodic mystical enchantment. Bells and Incense also added to the mystical experience of the liturgy. Two sisters were the main chanters and they shared the different hymns but one particularly had the lions share and demonstrated exceptional resilience. They are obviously used to this type of liturgy.

The language in the liturgy was very descriptive and the priest chanted a section about the Seraphim being six winged creatures with many eyes and hovering etc. At one stage some puddings and breads were brought into the chapel by a bent over sister and placed in a prominent position near the front of the chapel. They were to be shared later by the participants. They seemed to be an important part of the ceremony and represented some different traditions within the Orthodox Church such as the Romanian Orthodox. I tasted the Romanian Orthodox pudding after the service and it was delicious.

The Orthodox priest made it clear that only Orthodox members of the congregation were allowed to receive communion which they had under two species given with a spoon. We were allowed to go and take a slice of the special bread that was

presented in a basket which made me feel part of the communion.

The congregation left for a hall behind the monastery where coffee and refreshments were being served. I had a quick chat with the sister in the black habit with veil as she greeted the people after the service. Miraculously she could still speak after all that chanting and has heard about the Camaldolese Oblates.

I proceeded to the hall where a lot of books and Icons were laid out for sale. I had a quick browse through the books. Most of the books were written in Greek but there are some English ones as well. Two books which caught my attention one by John Chrysostom called: 'On Marriage and Family Life' and 'Marriage and Virginitly according to St John Chrysostom' by Archpriest Josiah B. Trentham. The Orthodox place a lot of their theology and practices about marriage on the teachings of the early Church Fathers.

The Orthodox bible's commentary on Mt 5:31-32 is interesting; I will quote it here:

"In contrast to the easy access to divorce under the Mosaic Law and because of the misuse of divorce in that day, Jesus repeatedly condemns divorce (19:8,9) and emphasizes the eternal nature of marriage. The possibility of divorce on the grounds of sexual immorality shows the marriage can be destroyed by sin. While recognizing divorce as a serious sin, the Orthodox Church allows divorce and a second marriage as a concession to human weakness and as a corrective measure of compassion when a marriage has broken down. A third marriage is permitted only under specific, limited circumstances and a fourth marriage is never permitted."

The New Jerusalem Bible translates sexual immorality as illicit marriage arguing a special case of incestuous marriages found among the Gentiles.

A further quote from the commentary Orthodox Bible Commentary for Mt 19:9 explains:

"The permissible reasons for divorce were expanded in the ancient Church to include threat to a spouse's wife or child's life and desertion, in all cases acknowledging the spiritual tragedy of such a situation."

It would seem from the above quotes that the Orthodox Church applies the Catholic Church's practise of Marriage Annulment in a more pastoral and subjective manner. The Catholic Church puts its members through an objective scrutinizing process before a formal tribunal with witnesses to prove that the marriage didn't exist in the first place. After the Marriage Annulment is given the members can remarry in the Catholic Church. Maybe that is why the Pope Francis 1 is trying to reintroduce the idea of Interior Forum originally supported by Pope Paul VI and the return to a more pastoral approach. The Catholic Version of the, "The New Community Bible" commentary on the above quotes treats the subject in a more pastoral manner giving an insight into the unique cultural and spiritual background of that time in Israel.

I had a chat and a cup of tea with the Orthodox Priest, Phillip the trainee priest and a lovely Greek Lady. The Priest who explains how he loves coming down from Melbourne to Geelong to celebrate Liturgy at the monastery. He is not married and intends to remain single so that he can become bishop. The women explained in some detail about a miracle of a flame coming out of the pillar in the Holy Cross Church in Jerusalem which supposedly somehow confirms the Orthodox date of Easter.

Next I will explain my experience with the Croatan Catholics in Bell Park Geelong. After coming out of the community centre after our cup of tea I can hear singing coming from the Holy Family Church. I am curious and have a peek inside and I am amazed to see the church absolutely packed with an enthusiastic congregation singing to their hearts content in Croatan led by their special Croatan Priest. They had a lot bigger attendance at mass than our 9.30 English

Mass. Last year the parish priest combined the special Solemnity of the Assumption mass with the Croatan Community and the English community. They got to sing there Croatan songs and some of the Liturgy was said in English. Again the church was packed with the Croatans making up the lion share of the congregation.

I was always curious about a Church in Geelong I would walk pass called the, 'Reformed Presbyterian Church', and would wonder about its origins. One day I met a lady working outside the church with whom I started up a conversation. She was very friendly and even indicated that she had descended from Ronald Knox who originally brought Calvinism to Scotland in the 16th century. This formed into the Presbyterian church. The friendly lady introduced us to the churches minister who lived in the classic looking presbytery next door. Rev Andrew Stewart was very friendly and invited us in for a chat. We covered a lot of topics pertaining to the Reformation and the uniqueness of his church. It seems that the Presbyterian Church split. The Reformed Presbyterian was the original church and withstood political government involvement. The Reformed Presbyterian remained aloof were as the Presbyterian Church became under the Government of Scotland's influence.

One interesting aspect of the 'Reformed Presbyterian Church' was how they only sang Psalms during their services and no hymns. Rev Andrew was interested in hearing about my involvement with the Camaldolese and how the monks at Tarra Warra Abbey near Yarra Glen nearly exclusively chanted Psalms during their liturgical hours.

Talking to a Lady in a Uniting Church (which was originally a Wesleyan Church) in Perth I found out that the Reformed Presbyterian Church remained aloof from joining the Uniting Church Movement. The interior of the old Wesleyan Church had strong Anglican aspects about its interior which was interesting. The Uniting Church is unique to Australia.

The Methodist church still exists in other countries. I have visited one in New Zealand. My father was brought up a Methodist but converted to Catholicism when I was at Primary school and did attend mass with the family.

My ancestors on my father's mother's side came out to Australia from Cornwall England and other parts of England around 1850 and joined the gold rush around Campbell's Creek near Castlemaine. The Methodist Church was important in Campbell's Creek and there was a strong attendance at this Church which must have included my ancestors. My dad's dad came out from London around 1900 as a Methodist and obviously linked up with my grandmother through the Methodist church in Melbourne. Dad talked about attending different services four times on Sundays up to the age of 16.

My mum's mum, Rebecca, was Irish Catholic and had her eight children secretly baptised in the Catholic Church because, William, her husband being a non-practicing Protestant wouldn't have anything to do with the Catholic faith. When my mum, Dorothy, was born when Rebecca was 48, William had relented and mum was able to attend a Catholic School in Fitzroy, probably St Bridgets. Mum was the only one to practise her Catholic faith in the family. It was amazing I finished up a Catholic.

I have learnt a lot about the different churches around Geelong by observing them and interacting with their members. I hope to do more so in future. I also hope to do more research into my ancestors.

Healing ourselves, healing the earth – Seminar on Meditation and the Environment – Sydney, 22–24 April 2016. Maureen Cooper Oblate OSB Cam

Sue, Glen and I attended this conference, not knowing what to expect, but being influenced by the broad range of presenters from different disciplines. The speakers included; Father Laurence Freeman (WCCM), George Browning, Anglican Bishop, Dr Vicki Grieves, Aboriginal historian, Professor David Tacey,

Dr Susan Murphy, Zen Roshi, Assoc. Professor Mark Diesendorf, known for his work in sustainable development and renewable energy, Rev. Linda Chapman, Anglican priest and founder of Open Sanctuary and Donna Mulhearn, activist and writer.

The themes of the seminar were: 'The Human Vocation: Keepers of the Space', 'A New Consciousness' and 'Meditation and Action'. All the speakers acknowledged the crisis we are facing and the need for immediate action.

On the first evening, Bishop Browning placed an emphasis on our interrelatedness with all of creation and our need to see our human vocation as taking action for the common good. Vicki Grieves expanded this idea by speaking of the consciousness of aboriginal people which embraces their interconnectedness with each other and their sacred land. She emphasised we have much to learn from indigenous people. Dr Susan Murphy spoke of the need for us to act with compassion in relation to each other and the land and to take up the challenges that face us.

Father Laurence emphasised that we have reached an ecological tipping point and we need a new global consciousness, one which sees us as an integrated part of nature, not separate from it. Our contemplative practice helps us foster this non-dual thinking. Professor Mark Diesendorf informed us of the science of climate change and acknowledged the need for urgent action.

On Saturday afternoon we were treated to a lively Q & A session led by Geraldine Doogue. The discussion included considering how the church has shaped attitudes toward the environment in the past and present, and the role Christianity has played in the development of western civilisation and disregard for the environment. David Tacey spoke of our need to face this 'shadow'.

On Sunday there was number of workshops we could attend. Within these we were able to share our

concerns, our personal stories and ideas for the future.

Meditation practice was an integral part of the seminar. Each session started with a period of meditation. The silence and stillness of over 300 people was powerful and doubtless enhanced the feeling of interconnectedness amongst all the participants.

This was truly a seminar that not only inspired and informed us but nurtured the feeling of belonging to each other and our land. We need to keep that feeling alive as we live each day.

