

The Oblate

News Magazine of the Oblates of Saint John's Abbey

October 2020

Volume 64 Number 3



Abbot John, center, meets with men in formation. L-R: Brothers Jeremy, Jacob, Abbot John, Brothers David, Félix, and Father John Meoska, formation director until the recent appointment of Father Lew Grobe to succeed him. On September 14, Brothers David and Félix made profession of first vows.

Abbot John Klassen, OSB, Tenth Abbot of Saint John's, Marks 20 Years as Abbot

Patsy Jones, OblSB, has written the following article on the life of Abbot John.



The abbot's office at Saint John's Abbey is one of warmth and welcome. Abbot John is himself a person of warmth and welcome. And so it was, in this open, warm and welcome atmosphere that he opened the door to offer us more insight as to how he came to be who he is today, the tenth abbot of Saint John's Abbey, now in this year 2020 celebrating his twentieth anniversary as abbot.

Born the second of eight children to now deceased Paul and Catherine (Wiechmann) Klassen, at age seven John was given the job of driving the 30-horsepower tractor. Because he was tall and had long legs, he could reach the pedals and make it work. He started so young because his father had developed rheumatic fever and had to relinquish a lot of the heavy farm work. Young John received new duties and responsibilities every year, giving him great pride and renewed sense of achievement.

Continued p. 6

The Challenge and the Grace of Pandemic

Abbot John Klassen, OSB

It has been four months since my last shared reflection with you. (I have many that are unshared!) As a country we have learned much about the virus we are fighting. SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a diabolically smart virus. It loves a party and shows up uninvited at weddings and funerals. It has hitchhiked rides on planes from Asia to Italy and then to the United States and many other countries.

From the standpoint of infectious diseases, SARS-CoV-2 is surely the most successful one of the past one hundred years. It has been able to amplify a few chance infections into a pandemic of close to thirty million confirmed cases so far, including 1 million deaths. Even though infectious disease specialists have long anticipated such a virus, they admit to being caught off guard by its capacity for deception and Trojan-horse behavior. For example, someone can have the infection for anywhere up to fourteen days and be asymptomatic. In the days before becoming sick, the person is most contagious, still unaware of being a carrier.

To confuse matters more, some individuals (particularly among the young) may get sick for about 4-5 days; others are sick for weeks and months, and some die. Overall, this virus is most deadly to the elderly, who may have some impairment of heart and lung functions, and who perhaps are not that mobile and energetic.

Since mid-March we have been urged to fight this virus by limiting our encounters in public, through social distancing and wearing a mask; by being careful about hand hygiene. Meanwhile, the scientific community is working fast and furiously to develop a safe and effective vaccine, which is probably the best tool to assure a final victory. However, no matter how this turns out, we will be in a “new-normal.” The world that we knew in 2019 will be fundamentally altered.

What else have we learned? Well, some of my confreres in parish ministry are a bit embarrassed to admit that



they enjoyed the time between mid-March and the re-opening of parishes in early June. For pastors, because of the dramatic interruption of their normally jammed schedules, they suddenly had some additional time for prayer, reading, reflection, exercise, in addition to reaching out to parishioners by phone and Zoom. Many of them immediately developed a practice of streaming the daily and Sunday liturgy, which proved to be nourishing to parishioners near and far.

We have learned much about our citizenry, how hard it is for us as a country to come to a consensus on even the most basic requirements for staying well. Some of our citizens immediately put the requirement to wear a face mask and to social distance into the category of personal rights. I wanted to ask: “Can you spell ‘common good’?”

I am left with other questions: How do we best tune our monastic life and witness to this to-be-revealed future? How do we respond as oblates and monks to this “new normal”? What new gifts of the Spirit will be revealed? What do we need to let go of? What do we need to reclaim?

Praise the LORD, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases Ps 103 (NIV)

Don't Be Afraid

Michael Peterson, OSB



I am sure many of us feel uncomfortable to admit that sometimes we are afraid to question God. Why, God? How? When? What?? I mean, isn't faith supposed to be about, "God, you're

awesome! God you always make everything clear! Also, the stars, the universe...super job. Thumbs up!" Exclamation point! But what about question-mark prayer?

Honest faith, honest prayer gives me permission to tell God exactly how I feel, even if I may cringe and am fearful at expressing it so raw and seemingly so untrusting of God. But questions are a way of clearing the air between God and myself when real doubts arise. Question-mark faith is, humanly speaking, very honest. What is more valuable in our faith and prayer life than honesty? Good prayer is honest prayer. God calls us "friends" and friendship is all about honesty. God can handle questions.

The Psalms, for instance, are the bread and butter of our Benedictine prayer life. I did a search of all 150 Psalms. In them there are 152 question marks and 200 exclamation points. If your own prayer has more question marks than exclamation points, fine. It's in the Psalms, after all, 152 times. That's good, honest prayer.

To be transparent, I question God also. Lately, my questions have been: Why is a close family member suffering from depression? Why did my sister have to go through chemo and radia-

tion because of breast cancer? Why, God, this pandemic?

What I hope is for none of us to walk alone in life. Life can be difficult. It's difficult to walk alone. You get lost. You get confused. You can walk the wrong path, or you can be walking around in circles, in a maze, or worst, you can stop because you get tired of walking in life. Always walk hand-in-hand with those who love you – with those who give you hope. And in turn, be a source of hope for others. Even in our questioning, especially in life's many ambiguities, let us choose love and show goodness to others. Don't be afraid!

Zoom has become an important medium during the pandemic. About 65 oblates have used Zoom to participate in each of the reflection days, summer retreat, and first Saturday conferences and discussions. Each First Saturday formation session begins at 9 a.m. CDT.

We encourage all oblates with access to the internet to connect with Zoom (it's free). Father Michael can help you sign up. Then you can join the group sessions.

Also, you can read some of the oblates' responses to our Zoom gatherings (see page 4).

Note that the next Day of Reflection will be on Sunday, November 15th. The conference will begin at 1 pm, with discussion to follow. This will be a Zoom event as we still cannot meet in person.

Oblates are welcome to view the live stream of daily abbey Mass, and Liturgy of the Hours on weekend evenings. Visit the abbey's website to live stream: saintjohnsabbey.org/live

Mark Your Calendar

November 15, 2020: Fall Day of Reflection

March 21, 2021: Lenten Day of Reflection

July 16-18, 2021: Annual Oblate Retreat

Given the uncertainty we all have about meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic, these events will likely be via Zoom.

Oblates comment on

Zoom Formation Saturdays

On minimalism (RB on possessions), I also think we need to hold this minimalism in tension with our belief in the goodness of creation. Jesus only had one outer garment... but it was a seamless one i.e. of very good quality. Sometimes it seems the emphasis on few goods/ sharing them shades over into an unbiblical/ unskillful denigration of the physical creation. Conversely, holding the world's goods loosely enables us to truly enjoy what we do have. Phil Boelter, OblSB

Thank you for your conference and all who joined the discussion yesterday. It's nice to have participants from all over as zoom-'community'. Paulina Whang, OblSB

Thank you for a very good conference this morning! I am personally very thankful for these conferences and replies from our oblates made possible with Zoom technology. Dave Zinz, OblSB

Thank you Michael for inviting me. Your presentation was great and good discussion followed. I am getting better at being part of a Zoom meeting. S. Virginia was here coaching me. If possible include me in the August meeting. Blessing always.

S. Mary Lou, OSB, St Paul's Monastery

Milestones

Candidates

During the pandemic most of the candidate investitures and final oblations were celebrated via Zoom.

Leif McLellan, Minneapolis, MN, June 8

Charles Miller, Sartell, MN, June 11

Jonathan Gregoire, Dallas, TX, June 27

Licia Morelli, Camden, ME, July 15

Benjamin Hansberry, Cambridge, MA, July 30

Ivan Maldonado, Stratford, WI, August 7

Jeffrey Parker, Brent, AL, September 3

Justin Lombardo, Chicago, IL, October 9

Oblations

Samuel Torvend, Lakewood, WA, July 25

Andrew Kovacs, Ballwin, MO, August 8

Mark Camp, Norman, OH, August 10

Sara Gavit, Calais, ME, August 11

Bill Alexander, Minneapolis, MN, August 12

Matthew Celichowski, Saint Paul, MN, September 5

Brian Smith, Des Moines, IA, October 25

Deaths

Oblate Ralph Opatz, December 5, 2019

Patricia Kercher, wife of Oblate Don Kercher, June 6

Terry McGuire, brother of Oblate Sheila Hannon, June 25

Oblate Carol Wolla, June 28. Husband Marty, OblSB, lives in Halstad, MN

*May the angels lead you into paradise;
may the martyrs receive you at your arrival and
lead you to the holy city Jerusalem.
May you have eternal rest.*

Retreat Reflection: Porter Spirituality

It was a wonderful oblate retreat in July. I did love the zoom presentations and the way it facilitated thoughtful comments from the audience. I also liked that I could take notes during the presentation much easier...and re-listen and review.

There were many good take-aways from this retreat, whose theme was "Resilience".

I liked all the sessions, but in this reflection, I will mostly consider the 4th presentation, the last one, on gratitude. What touched me mostly is the notion of "**porter spirituality**".

The porter, according to RB 66, needs to be a sensible person, available and ready to answer. As soon as anyone knocks, or calls, the porter welcomes the caller with gratitude (Thanks be to God!), and then "with all the gentleness that comes from the fear of God, provides a prompt answer with the warmth of love."

That is good hospitality practice.

But it is not just people who show up at our door. Life does. Good things, scary things, difficult challenges, gifts, epidemics, sudden changes.... As Fr. Bernardine Ness (a happy monk who traveled much) said to Father Michael: "Receive life with open hands." No matter what shows up. "Life," said Father Michael, "is saturated with the presence of Christ." According to Fr. Don Talafous as he was celebrating his 90th birthday, the secret of life is gratitude.

We have to welcome life. Resilience rests on the expectation that our attitude changes things.

If we welcome life, we don't hide from it or rush through it. "Doing our life," said Father Michael, "is a long, slow, attentive looking at the things of life." Stop and notice. Notice the sun going through the clouds this morning. Notice that my cantankerous son is actually hungry rather than angry. Treasure each new day.

Lucie Johnson, OblSB

Saint Anthony of the Desert, (or Antony the Great) said he lived each day as a new day.

A few months ago, I received the news of a cancer recurrence. I also had the opportunity to join a seven years' long Talmud study program. I thought: well, I may die soon, so this is not the time to postpone a decision. So I started... why not make this a "first day". It turned out to be a transformative choice that brought me (and is bringing me) many gifts of learning and joy. And the cancer? Well, I underwent therapy, and we'll know the results in a couple of months. But this difficult news actually opened the door to a time of renewal and joy.

It is true that God's presence is everywhere.

Today is the first day.

Every creature, says Saint Athanasius, is given a voice that harmonizes with creation.

Resiliency comes from great fullness. If we adopt a "porter" spirituality, we will also become better at noticing other "porters," the people who welcome us, serve us, teach us, help us: the store cashier, the restaurant server, the Uber driver. They too are the presence of Christ to us. Our response to them may transform us both.

Ed. Note: One of the finest illustrations of love, hospitality, forgiveness and *resilience* is Rembrandt's "Return of the Prodigal."

Having hit bottom in a pigpen, the son "came to his senses" and changed his attitude. The grace of resiliency brought him home to a resilient father who loved him and rejoiced to see him. The father, ripped off, wrote that off and gave a feast.



Abbot John Klassen, OSB, Tenth Abbot of Saint John's, Marks 20 Years as Abbot (Cont.)



Abbot John meets
Pope Francis in Rome
April 2015.

There was never a job that couldn't be done or a problem that couldn't be solved. This attitude, taught by father to son, has served Abbot John very well throughout the years. His father would use the term "Look under the hood. Find the problem. Fix it."

When John was eight years old, his father acquired an upright piano. It was a huge purchase at \$100 and required the help of many people to get it moved into their home. John's parents had a great love of music, and John took piano lessons from Benedictine Sisters for three years. As he got busier with duties and farm work, he set aside piano study. That experience, though, gave him a great love and appreciation of music.

It was important to Paul Klassen that his son attend Saint John's Prep School, and John came to Collegetown at age 14. Even at that young age, he believed strongly that this was the place he belonged. "I felt good, I felt right as a person."

His keen mind led him to pursue studies in chemistry. After college graduation in 1971, John had no idea what his career path would be. With a lot of encouragement from Father Jim Tingerthal, OSB, he taught chemistry at the Prep School. He didn't feel qualified but agreed to

teach one class for one semester with mentorship. He found his calling in teaching. "That short experience showed me that it was a perfect fit, that I could grow in the sense of who I am."

At that time John began to investigate the calling that he felt to join the Benedictine community. After one year as a novice, part of a group of nine, he knew it was the right place for him. He made his first profession of vows in 1972 and was ordained a priest in 1977. In 1985 he earned his doctorate in organic chemistry at the Catholic University of America.

He taught chemistry at Saint John's Prep School, Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict. He directed the university's Senior Seminar (applied ethics) and the Peace Studies Program. He also served as a faculty resident in student campus housing. From 1993-1999, John worked in Abbey administration as the director of monastic formation.

On November 24, 2000, the monks of Saint John's Abbey elected John to lead them in the new century with its challenges and opportunities. Bishop John Kinney of Saint Cloud Diocese bestowed the abbatial blessing on him on December 17, 2000.

Abbot John's role as abbot entails writing frequent articles for numerous publications: *The Abbey Banner*; *The Oblate*; *Conversatio*, to name a few. The abbot believes that he has learned some writing skills by being surrounded by "people who write really, really, really well." He has learned how to "Turn a phrase--to come up with something that flows."

Abbot John finds chapters 2 and 64 of the Rule to be "golden." Saint Benedict wrote from personal experience. He offers a positive example of humility. John looks to Saint Benedict for direction and support.

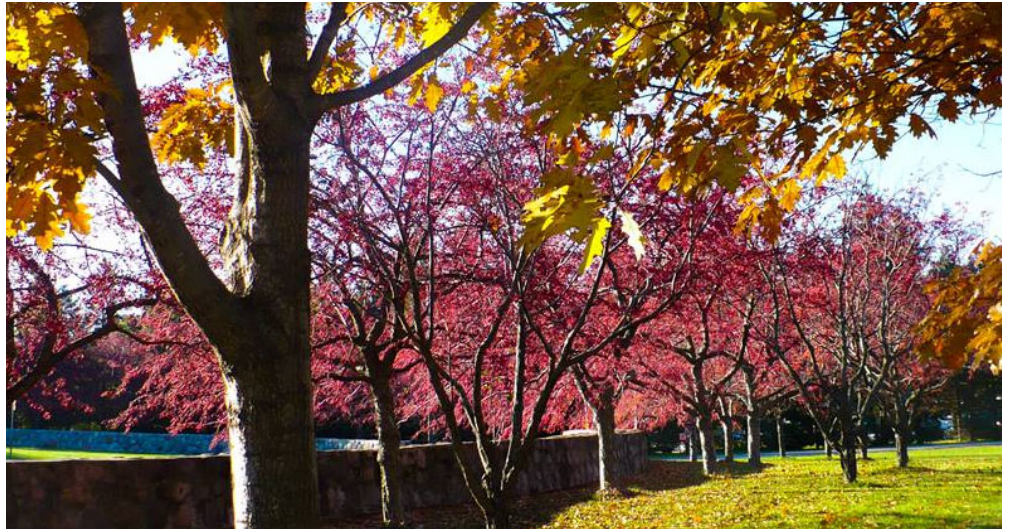
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Challenges and duties are numerous. In many cases the ideas, the input and support of fellow monks is highly valued. Abbot John meets weekly with his staff – daily during the pandemic. Every year he meets privately with each member of the community – a high priority. Everyone wants to be “abboted” in their own way, each having particular individual needs. When a challenge arises, he will confer with monks who know the person well.

Invaluable to Abbot John is his secretary. For 17 years Brother Kelly Ryan had this position. And since 2017 it is Brother Eric Pohlman assisting with keeping up with the calendar: the many responsibilities and appointments.

There are four young men in formation now (see photo page 1). The abbot is gratified by the commitment and development of spirituality that he witnesses. He sees flexibility allowed to each individual. He sees individuals developing a prayer life and a sense of what it means to be a human being. An important approach to prayer is to do what you are able, rather than make it “a huge thing.”

Abbot John looks to the future, in that oblates surely will develop more leadership of other oblates. They will become more localized, getting together for *Lectio Divina*, Centering Prayer, and shared experiences. He sees the oblates becoming small cells of spiritual energy, searching wisdom from the group, the strength of the volunteer program and being nurtured by the Saint John’s community. Cells will become strong and more important. There will be more recognition of the lay mission.



Actually, monastic life itself is a lay movement. A new strategy for the monastery in the future will be the nurturing of oblates. We function as leaven among skilled men and women in parishes. Lay people are needed to share spirituality, service, and financial resources.

Among the many challenges is the care of the elderly and dying confreres. There is also the significant cost of maintenance of the Abbey Church, the monastery and the guesthouse. Costly but necessary renovation of the Breuer monastery will be ongoing until summer 2021. The successful development and publication of the *Saint John’s Bible* has been a monumental undertaking, and the renovation of the monastery will provide a new larger space for its display and appreciation.

From the time he was a boy, each time John acquired a skill, he would move to the next level that would lead to growth and confidence. Being abbot has already fostered growth and confidence, and there will be more opportunities. Today, as Abbot John begins his twenty-first year as abbot, there is a lot to be fixed, as there always is and will be, in a living community. “Do the best you can,” he says. This attitude carries throughout life. If something isn’t working, “Look under the hood. Find the problem. Fix it.” Amen.

The Cross and Monastic Stability

Dominic Garramone, OSB



Editor's note: Father Dominic Garramone, OSB, is a monk of Saint Bede Abbey in Peru, Illinois, and is the head of the Religion department at Saint Bede Academy.

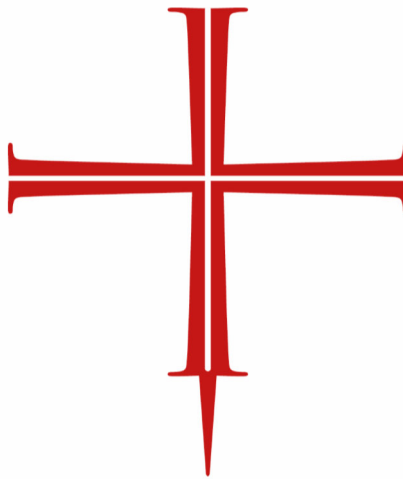
The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was observed on September 14, and its celebration in the Church

commemorated three different events: the finding of the True Cross by St. Helena, the dedication of the churches built over the Holy Sepulchre and on Mount Calvary by Emperor Constantine, and the restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem by Emperor Heraclius II.

After the Jewish Revolt (AD 66 to 70), much of Jerusalem was left in ruins by Emperor Hadrian, and pagan temples were built over many of the holy sites of Judaism and Christianity. After Constantine became emperor in 312 AD, he legalized Christianity, and his mother Helena converted about the same time. According to Eusebius, Helena travelled to Jerusalem in 326 on a pilgrimage with the intention of finding the True Cross. Assisted by Bishop Macarius, she directed excavations around the Holy Sepulchre and discovered the True Cross on which Christ was crucified. This discovery was confirmed by some miracles (although the details provided by St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, Rufinus, and other writers are sometimes contradictory).

In honor of this great discovery, Helena's son, Emperor Constantine, built churches at the site of the Holy Sepulchre and on Mount Calvary which were dedicated on September 13 and 14, 335. The anniversaries of these dedications came to be celebrated as the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Three centuries later, the Persians conquered Jerusalem, and their king, Khosrau II, captured the True Cross and took it to Persia. In 629, the Christian Emperor Heraclius II defeated Khosrau II, regained the Cross, and restored it to Jerusalem. This restoration of the relic also became part of the feast.

But the feasts of the liturgical year are never merely commemorations of historical events. The "exaltation" referred to is not solely the "raising up" of the Cross from the excavations, nor the building of the churches, nor the recovery of the Cross from a pagan ruler and its restoration. The cross is raised up for veneration, both at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and in churches throughout the world every year on September 14.



The cross is raised up as a call to repentance—like the bronze serpent for those Israelites who had been bitten by seraph serpents as a punishment for their unbelief—so that we might be confronted by the effects of our own sin. The cross is raised up from being a sign of shame and horror to be a sign of hope for all of humankind. What once was an implement of cruelty,

torture, and death is now exalted as the sole instrument of redemption and eternal life (Num 21:6-9). It is raised up before all the nations as a proclamation of the good news: “God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

As a monk, I see the cross raised up as a sign of my commitment to my community in monastic stability. For the monastic, the vow of stability means accepting one’s fellow religious, with all their faults and weaknesses. It means bearing cheerfully with the financial and physical limitations imposed by the realities of the community’s resources. Stability requires that one live in the community’s “now”, rather than chronically lamenting the passing of better days or focusing dreamily on a brighter future without attending to present realities.

For monastics and oblates alike, stability means a similar commitment to every community to which we belong: family, neighborhood, parish, the Church itself. It means to be at peace with the unavoidable and necessary limitations of our lives. This commitment is not the same as complacency or apathy — quite the opposite. Stability is the most flexible of all the vows, because it demands that we continually adapt to changing conditions and still “never lose hope in God’s mercy” (RB 4:74).

This stability is indeed a share in the cross. Every community, every family, every institution disappoints us, even wounds us sometimes, drastically and cruelly. Making a sincere and generous commitment to frail and sinful human beings, to imperfect families and flawed institutions, requires a crucifixion of one’s will, a pouring out, a kenosis, of pride in submission to the Lord’s command to “love one another as I have loved you,” with a love that lays down

one’s life for others. We allow ourselves to be fastened, fixed, even nailed to the very real, human, fallible, frustrating, gloriously loveable people with whom we live, the people for whom Christ died, making his cross the one stable point in a changeable world.

Let us worship the majesty we see in this glorious cross—the majesty of a God who emptied himself of his glory and power, who humbled himself unto death for our sakes—and imitate him in his humility, his compassion, and his willingness to give his life for others out of love. Let our lives be an exaltation of this cross, which is our only hope.

This article on the Cross and Monastic Stability originally appeared in *Our Family News*, the oblate newsletter of Saint Bede Abbey, Peru, IL. We are grateful to Br. Nathaniel Grossman, OSB, their oblate director, for permission to reprint it here. The feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross has special meaning here at Saint John’s, not only because the Cross is central to our faith but also because many of our monks have made their profession of vows on this day. This year Brothers Félix Mencias and David Allen have joined this group.

A good time for oblates to renew their oblation promises.

Peace! In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I renew my oblation and offer myself to Almighty God as an oblate of Saint John’s Abbey. I promise again, before God and all the saints, as my state in life permits: STABILITY OF HEART, FIDELITY TO THE SPIRIT OF THE MONASTIC LIFE, AND OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD, according to the *Rule* of Saint Benedict.

Oblate Writes from Wildfire Territory

We asked Rachel Wheeler, SOT alumna 2012 and oblate since 2014, how the wildfires affect her in Portland, Oregon. She replied:

Fr. Don, thanks for your email. We are struggling here in Portland due to the hazardous air quality for the past week. But rain is coming & that's a boon. I teach at the Catholic university here and classes have been online for a month now. My students have been wondrously flexible and in my spiritual practices class, I have been seeing the usefulness for students to be making time together to discuss and practice compassion and gratitude and lament. As an oblate, I have certainly been tested in my valuing of stability, feeling housebound without a car and not yet ready to use public transit again because of safety concerns regarding the pandemic...my husband and I have been sheltering in place since the middle of March. Before the air quality concerns, meeting with friends in our yard was a big treat. I'm growing to appreciate the little things in much smaller circle of reference than before: a tall tree in the yard across the street whom I greet in the mornings and at night before bed, the companionship of our cats who are a bit puzzled I think

but also I hope pleased that we're home so much these days, little walks in the neighborhood to campus and to local parks which we hope to resume soon. This has rather been a time of forced leisure, inviting us to reckon with our uses of time and resources. This morning, for instance, I find we have run out of coffee but with "hazardous" air quality we won't even be walking the 7 or 8 blocks to our nearby market to get some. I know so many others are dealing with far greater losses! Our governor said a few days ago that we are preparing for the fires to be seen as a mass fatality event, as many people are still missing; I'm thinking of the animal life, too, that's already been lost and thinking this is indeed a mass fatality event of tragic proportions. Faith community life of course has become virtual for us here but I am strengthened by my morning prayer time that is part of my life commitment as an oblate. It's funny that I don't often celebrate or focus on my life as a Benedictine oblate, but in assessing my current situation in this email I find there are still things about it that are relevant or even more relevant now. I pray all is well at the Abbey and with the community of oblates.



Above photos are from a series of news reports on the internet. We ask all the oblates and other readers of *The Oblate* to pray fervently and often for the generous and brave fire fighters, as well as for the people and wildlife living in danger areas. *Editor.*

Pope Francis Homily on the Ascension of Jesus

The concluding passage of the Gospel of Matthew presents the moment of the Risen One's final farewell to his disciples. The scene is set in Galilee, the place where Jesus had called them to follow him and to form the first nucleus of his new community. Now those disciples have traversed the "fire" of the Passion and of the Resurrection; at the visit of the Risen Lord they prostrate themselves before him, although some remain doubtful. Jesus gives this frightened community the immense task of evangelizing the world; and he reinforces this responsibility with the command to teach and baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (v. 19).

Jesus' Ascension into heaven thus constitutes the end of the mission that the Son received from the Father and the beginning of the continuation of this mission on the part of the Church. From this moment, from the moment of the Ascension, in fact, Christ's presence in the world is mediated by his disciples, by those who believe in him and proclaim him. This mission will last until the end of history and every day will have the assistance of the Risen Lord, who assures: *"I am with you always, to the close of the age"* (v. 20).

The Lord's presence brings strength during persecution, comfort in tribulations, support in the difficult situations that the mission and the proclamation of the Gospel will encounter. The Ascension reminds us of Jesus' assistance and of his Spirit that gives confidence, gives certainty to our Christian witness in the world. He reveals to us the reason for the Church's existence: the Church exists to proclaim the Gospel, for this alone! So too, the joy of the Church

is proclaiming the Gospel. The Church is all of us baptized people. Today we are called to better understand that God has given us the great dignity and responsibility of proclaiming him to the world, of making him accessible to all mankind. This is our dignity; this is the greatest honor of each one of us, of all the baptized!

On the Feast of the Ascension, we turn our gaze toward heaven, where Christ has ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father. We strengthen our steps on earth so as to continue our journey — our mission of witnessing to and living the Gospel in every environment — with enthusiasm and courage.

However, we are well aware that this does not depend first and foremost on our strengths, on our organizational abilities or human resources. Only with the light and strength of the Holy Spirit can we effectively fulfil our mission of leading others to know and increasingly experience Jesus' tenderness.

Christifideles Laici Award to William Barr

Catholics, by commitment, are pro-life. For some, it seems, that means little more than anti-abortion, but by official church teaching being pro-life means also the end of capital punishment and euthanasia, the positive care of every human being as well as the environment. On September 22 the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast gave the "Faithful Christian Laity Award" to William Barr, the U.S. Attorney General who this past July 17 reinstated capital punishment that has led to the execution of five men since July, more than were executed in the previous 17 years. The award was flanked by two executions, one Sept 21 and one Sept 23. Official church teaching condemns capital punishment.

Editor



The Oblate

THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED

NEWSLETTER OF THE OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT: *published three times annually (February, June, October).*

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Photo from Oblate Dennis Hanson — *From arid desert to mountain vitality*



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