

# From the Heights: Monastic Musings from the Mountains

Newsletter of the Holy Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence

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## Knowing Peace, Glorifying God

“Glory be to God for all things,” exclaimed St. John Chrysostom, as he lay dying on a roadside in exile. Indeed, we are all given the opportunity to look for and proclaim God’s glory in the midst of trials and tribulations.

But how do we come to do this? How can such an affirmation well up from within the depths of our souls and break forth into praise for God in those times when it would seem more likely that, as the Prophet Job’s wife told him to do, we should, “curse God and die” (Job 2:9)?

While it’s true that some people may receive a flash of insight, I don’t think this is what happens with most of us. Rather, it is more likely that the will to give glory to God when we are troubled or in pain springs from having wrestled with ourselves and with God in prayer and reflection upon Scripture, of encountering the living Christ in Holy Communion, and of struggling to, “count it all joy...when you meet various trials for... the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (James 1:2, 3). Such steadfastness, we might say, perseverance, keeps us centered on a ‘God’s eye’ view of our life: a view that is not limited by our limited grasp of our true place in the Divine economy.

To grow into an honest and fruitful perception of our smallness in the light of God’s greatness; to intuit the truth of our Lord Jesus’ words, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6, 7); this is how we find, within our souls, the wherewithal to face terrible things with absolute confidence in the mercies of God.

Only in faithful, loving, interior union with God’s loving-kindness; only if we “evermore dwell in him, and he in us,” as it says in the *Prayer of Humble Access* of the *Liturgy of St. Tikhon*, are we granted the grace of *theosis*, that participation in the Divine nature that instills within us the “Peace of God, beyond all understanding” (Philippians 4:7), the only “peace” that enables us to perceive, embrace, and proclaim the true glory of God, which shines within us from the face of Jesus Christ, our suffering, risen, glorified Lord.

## In this Issue

Knowing Peace, Giving Glory	1
Benedictine Wisdom	2
The Not-so-lazy Days of Summer	2
News and Events	3
Oblate Corner	4
How You Can Help	4



## Benedictine Wisdom — Praying the Rule, Chapter 58



To him that newly cometh to change his life, let not an easy entrance be granted, but as the Apostle saith, "Try the spirits, if they be of God."



Thou hast, O Lord, opened the door to me.  
I am one of thy family: but is my spirit of thee?  
Let me examine my life and test myself!  
Have I, O Lord, persevered in my good purposes?

Have I now the spirit of patient endurance?  
Alas! How many graces I have wasted!  
What a rich seed-time, and what a poor harvest!  
Few of my generous purposes have been fulfilled: I am too selfish, dear Lord.  
I think too much of my own pleasure and pain.  
I think too little of thee.  
Make me braver in endurance, more persevering in effort.  
Grant me to forget myself and to think of thee.

Help me to serve thee faithfully, whatever my own inclinations may be. Amen.

—Adapted from a prayer by Dom Bernard Hayes, *The Via Vitae of St. Benedict: The Holy Rule Arranged for Mental Prayer*, p.286.

## The Not~so~lazy Days of Summer

We were blessed to enjoy a beautiful and fruitful summer here on the St. Laurence campus. Retreatants have been plentiful and we have met many wonderful, new friends and delighted in the company of old friends, too. It has been a great boon to both our monastic life and to our hospitality ministry.

The Annual Oblate Retreat this year was the biggest yet. Having them here to join in the Solemnity of St. Benedict was wonderful!

It was a joy to welcome two mens' retreats from two of our Vicariate's out-of-State parishes: St. Paul's in Katy, TX (who joined the Oblate Retreat and almost all became novice Oblates) and St. Patrick's in Bealeton, VA. It would be great to welcome other parishes to sponsor retreats here!

We were also honored to welcome two R.C. Benedictine Nuns on retreat for their Silver Anniversaries of Profession (one of whom is the Editor of *The American Benedictine Review*, and an R.C. Benedictine Monk for a time of rest and fellowship.



Above: Men of St. Paul's, Katy, Texas

Below: Br. Odo is clothed in the habit.





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## News and Events

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**August 1–5:** We were blessed to host a men's retreat from St. Patrick's Church, Bealeton, VA. This was a great opportunity to get to know more people from St. Patrick's, where our good friends Fr. Patrick Cardine (who was narrator for the video about Ladyminster) and Deacon David Lochbihler both serve.

**August 10–19:** Br. Mario Maria Ribot, a former Roman Catholic monastic in the Servite Order, who now lives and assists at the Shrine and Hermitage of Our Lady of Regla (Antiochian W.R.) in Miami, FL, visited us after two years of correspondence and conversations with Abbot Theodore. With the blessing of His Grace Bishop John, and the recommendation of Fr. Miguel Lobo of the Shrine and Hermitage in Miami, Father Abbot received Father Mario Maria as an Orthodox monk and as an Associated Monastic of Ladyminster.

**August 11–19:** Associated Monastic Rasophore Monk Daniel Ritty made his annual visit, and brought many things to donate, including books and vestments. Fr. Daniel has been a great help with our Library (having been a librarian in the world). He spent several years living at Christminster in Canada and New York, and was a steadfast caregiver for the late Abbot James (Deschene) of blessed memory.

**September 25:** Joseph Huckabee, a former catechumen and parishioner at St. Augustine's Parish, Denver, who now lives in Canon City was Chrismated in the Oratory of St. Laurence by Abbot Theodore; Br. Andrew served as his Sponsor. Joseph had been coming to the Monastery for instruction on Sundays. He plans to go to the People's Republic of China to teach English as a Second Language shortly after the beginning of the New Year.

**October 6:** An interview of Abbot Theodore by Brandon Booth, President and Spiritual Director of Signpost Inn, a Protestant ministry in Cañon City dedicated to strengthening Christian life through contemplative prayer, was posted online at <https://www.signpostinn.org/resources/podcast>. In the interview Father answers questions intended to introduce non-Orthodox to the tradition contemplative prayer in Orthodoxy and in the Benedictine tradition.

**October 6-9:** Dom Joseph-Marie traveled to Virginia, to lead a retreat at St. Patrick's Parish, Bealeton. He had been invited following the talk that he gave while the men from St. Patrick's were here in August.

**October 29–30:** We hosted a retreat for a Denver Mission of the Anglican Church in North America, where the wife of Rdr. Columba of St. Mark's Parish, Denver, is a member. While most of their program was led by their own priest, Abbot Theodore gave a presentation on an Orthodox, Benedictine perspective for living as a Christian in a post-Christian society.

**November 18:** Abbot Theodore tonsured, received, and clothed Jared Alexis Hirsch as a novice. He is now known as Brother Odo, after Abbot St. Odo of Cluny, whose Feast Day the brotherhood was celebrating. Brother was briefly here as an enquirer several years ago, then went on to explore other monastic houses, before asking to come back to Ladyminster.

**November 21-28:** The monastery and guest house is closed while the brotherhood goes on a field-trip/retreat to the Monastery of Our Lady of the Annunciation at Clear Creek, OK. This trip is intended to give our novices a glimpse into what the ethos and praxis of a large Benedictine monastery is like: something that, being so small ourselves, is hard to do here. Since the only other Orthodox Benedictine monastery in the world is in Germany and is also small like us, we chose to visit and stay in the guesthouse of a large, traditional Roman Catholic community in order to observe their services (which are very similar to our Latin-rite ones), listen to the style of chant, watch their relations with guests, and hopefully observe some other aspects of life in a larger abbey.



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## The Oblate Corner

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Let us give thanks to God for the tremendous growth we have seen in our Oblate Fellowship! In numbers, yes; but also in seriousness, depth, and support for the monastery and monastic life in general. It is astonishing that we have over 80 men and women involved as either novices or full oblates. This last summer saw a big influx—two thirds of one group retreat were invested as novices with the encouragement of their parish priest (who was also invested)! It was a particular joy to invest so many



novices and receive several oblations here at the Monastery. And it put us in mind to emphasize that Benedictine oblation is as relationship — first and foremost— with a specific monastic community. It is by sharing in worship and silence and fellowship with the monks that the real nature of oblation is nurtured in ways that are not otherwise possible. Of course, we know that not everyone can do this, and we made a conscious decision to not make physical presence here a requirement for oblation (PAX, Sr. Stephania!).

We place great hope in those who live near other oblates having local opportunities to gather. This goes, too, for the Monday Night Conference Call and Compline. Our hope is that such ways of joining relationally with other oblates will continue to strengthen the bonds between us and you, and you and each other.

It is impossible to quantify what the prayers and support of our oblates means to us, here in our little mountain valley. But it is not impossible to say that we truly feel the connection and value it as a mercy from God.

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### How you can help!

- Pray for the Monastery's well being, growth in holiness, and vocations.
- Schedule individual or group retreats at St. Laurence Center or invite Abbot Theodore or Dom Joseph-Marie as a speaker or guest preacher.
- Register with **Amazon Smile** for your online purchases, and designate the "Benedictine Fellowship of St. Laurence," as the beneficiary of their support for non-profits.
- Give [Lancelot Andrewes Press](#) icons or books as gifts.
- Donate towards the support of the Monastery; there is a Paypal button on our website: [www.ladyminster.com](http://www.ladyminster.com). You may also send donations to the address below.
- Consider purchasing a plot in the St. Laurence Cemetery or a vault in the new Mausoleum, currently being constructed.

**Contact:** [molslabbot@gmail.com](mailto:molslabbot@gmail.com)

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*Activa in Oratio et Orantem in Actionis*

