



*The Benedictine Oblate Letter*

*April, 2014*

Dear Oblates and Friends,

By the time you receive this letter, we will have celebrated Easter, but we will still be well within the fifty-day extension of the Easter season, which concludes with Pentecost. We need to celebrate and to be joyful for fifty days. This does not mean that we have to be giddy for fifty days. The Easter season is not just a big party, for we would soon tire of that. Rather, when Benedict speaks of the joy of the Easter season he is referring to spiritual joy. It is spiritual joy but it is not disembodied joy. The joy of Easter is spiritual because it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit: “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22). Produced by the Holy Spirit, spiritual joy arises in celebration and extends into our daily life.

I was struck by this statement on the website of the English Benedictine Congregation:

For St. Benedict Easter is pivotal. The monk or nun is either always preparing for Easter or striving to live in a way that reflects a life transformed by the salvation won for us by the passion of Christ. The whole monastery becomes permeated by the liturgical seasons, and none more so than Lent, Holy Week and Eastertide. (<http://www.benedictines.org.uk/monastic-life/worship/>)

The preparation for Easter is found in Chapter 49 of the Rule, “On the Observance of Lent.” Benedict writes: “From his body, he may withhold some food, drink, sleep, talking and jesting; and with the joy of spiritual desire he may look forward to holy Easter.” For Benedict, however, “the life of a monk ought to have about it at all times the character of a Lenten observance.” Although we try to offer something more than our usual measure during Lent, we are always preparing for Easter. This preparation does not conclude with the forty days of Lent; it has no end.

Benedict refers to the transformation of our lives through our participation in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. We find this theme in the last verses of the Prologue:

As we advance in the religious life and in faith, our hearts expand and we run the way of God's commandments with unspeakable sweetness of love. Thus, never departing from His school, but persevering in the monastery according to His teaching until death, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13) and deserve to have a share also in His kingdom.

While he does not refer directly to Easter in the Prologue, he is clearly speaking of the paschal mystery. We share in Christ's sufferings through our peaceful acceptance of our daily trials and hardships. We should not look for suffering; it inevitably comes our way. St. Paul spoke of this when he wrote in Col. 1:24-26: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past." We "offer up" our suffering in union with passion of Jesus, who suffered and died to redeem us from sin and death. This is the paschal mystery that we celebrate.

*And now the news:*

*The Congregation's General Chapter* is being held from June 1-14. Please keep us in prayer and we determine the Congregation's goals for the next six years and elect our leadership team.

*The next Clyde meeting scheduled for May 2-4.* There is still room. Please email me a sarah@bspa.us or call at 660-944-2221 if you wish to participate.

*An invitation is extended to all oblates* to attend the 7th Annual Monastic Institute, July 17-20, at Sophia Center, the spirituality center of Mount St. Scholastica Monastery, Atchison, KS. The speaker is Kathleen Norris. Space is limited and registrations will be taken as they come in. For information contact Sr. Mary Elizabeth Schweiger, OSB, at maryliz@mountosb.org or phone her at 913-426-7355.

*St. Louis area oblates are meeting monthly.* Meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month at the St. Rose Philippine Duchesne parish office. Anyone in the St. Louis area is welcome to attend.

Peace,

*Sr. Sarah, O.S.B.*