



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

May, 2014

Dear Oblates and Friends,

This is the Fifth Week of Easter. In two weeks we will celebrate the Ascension of the Lord. Even after the Ascension, we will continue to celebrate Easter a little while longer: the season concludes only with Pentecost, which is its climax. We know this not only by the dates but also by the tone of the weekday readings at Eucharist.

First Jesus tells his disciples what is going to happen. He is going away: “You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.” The disciples have experienced his risen presence in a variety of ways, but now he is leaving. Jesus tells the disciples that they will not be left desolate. He promises them: “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name— he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.”

The disciples are dismayed and confused. What are they to do in Jesus’ absence? Thomas asks, “Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?” Judas, not the Iscariot, inquires: “Master, then what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” As is his wont, Jesus tells them not to be afraid. They may not see him anymore, but he will still be with them; they will remain in him. Jesus teaches them: “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.” Again he says: “As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.”

The pace seems to quicken with the passage of time. Before he departs from their sight, Jesus tells his disciples what will happen next: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

If we are to remain in Jesus, whom we cannot see in bodily form, we must be open to receive the Holy Spirit. This is what St. Benedict tells us in the Prologue to his Rule:

Let us open our eyes to the deifying light, let us hear with attentive ears the warning which the divine voice cries daily to us, “Today if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Ps. 95:8). And again, “Whoever has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:7).

Benedict continually urges us to listen. We are all called to listen: to God, to the prioress, to the elders, to the juniors, to everyone. For this reason, the community is called to council. Benedict writes in Chapter 3 of the Rule:

Let the Abbot call together the whole community and state the matter to be acted upon.

Then, having heard the brethren’s advice, let him turn the matter over in his own mind

and do what he shall judge to be most expedient. The reason we have said that all should be called for counsel is that the Lord often reveals to the younger what is best.

And this is what the Congregation is about to do. Our General Chapter is being held from June 8-19. Our Constitution states: “Each General Chapter celebrates and reflect our unique charism—as a memorial of the past it affirms what has been, it accepts the present with its challenge to read the signs of the times and it moves into the fullness of time—all under the guidance of the Spirit.” Please keep us in prayer as we discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit in order to determine the Congregation’s goals for the next six years and to elect our leadership.

And now the news:

The fall retreat at Clyde is scheduled for Sept. 26-28. This will be open to all oblates. The theme will be “The Road Not Taken.” Mark your calendars!

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

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.