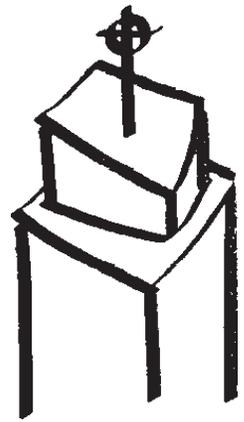


OUR FAMILY

NEWS

For Oblates of St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Illinois

November &
December, 2016



A REFLECTION ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The most blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God, and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin. On December 8, 1854, this official declaration was made in the name of the Church by Pope Pius IX, defining the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary as a divinely-revealed doctrine of the Church. The Fathers and the liturgy of the eastern Church had for many centuries called her the *Panhagia*, the “All-Holy,” that is, one who also remained free of every personal sin throughout her entire life. The Roman liturgy for the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception echoes this belief when it says in the orations, “You chose the Virgin Mary and kept her free from sin” and “You kept her sinless from the first moment of her conception.”

How can we imagine a human being who has never been guilty of any sin? It is unlike anything that we have known, for all our experience is marked with imperfection. Like the Virgin Mary, we too were once cleansed from original sin, though not from the first moment of our existence, as she was, but only later, at our baptism. Like her, we owe that initial deliverance to the redemption won for us by the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But unlike her, we did not retain that purity with which we had been blessed at least momentarily when we left the baptismal font, but we soon ratified by our own deliberate choice the same rejection of God’s will in favor of our own that had first been the disastrous choice of Adam and Eve.

All of us are called to holiness, and all of us have once been made holy by God’s grace. She alone possessed this gift of God from the very beginning of her existence in her mother’s womb, and she alone retained it through all the human joys and sorrows, elation and frustration that she experienced through all her childhood, her youth, and her adult life. I have known at least a few people in the course of my life who appeared to have achieved a state of extraordinary holiness, and you have probably had a similar experience. Did you find such outstanding Christians, no matter how admirable, to be completely satisfactory in every way? Such is not the experience of everyone; it is, in fact, generally acknowledged that saints are often quite difficult people to live with. There are still people alive today who lived for years with Padre Pio and Mother Teresa. I wonder whether they found in these contemporary saints things to annoy them, as all of us do in the case of those with whom we live. The Carmelite nuns at Lisieux were surprised to discover after her early death that Sister Therese of the Infant Jesus was being regarded as a saint, especially, I should think, that nun who did not much like her and used to splash water on her in the laundry room.

Did some of the women at the well in Nazareth find the young wife of Joseph to be a bore or an annoyance and sometimes snap at her, or gossip about her behind her back?

Perhaps. Her life must have been externally like that of all of us, and perhaps others made negative judgments about her, as we do about people whom we encounter. But her secret lay within. Her freedom from all sin, inherited or personal, consisted in her being always perfectly in tune with what God wanted of her. St. Bernard remarks in one of his sermons that this is what we pray for every day when we say the third petition of the *Our Father*: “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In heaven the angels make the Father’s will their own; all their joy and satisfaction consist solely in carrying out what he requires of them. On earth it generally is not so: we struggle and resist, or lag behind in our performance, even when we know perfectly well what it is that he wants of us. At other times it is not so clear, and then we grope in darkness. But even when we know what we should do we drag our feet. We lack that ultimate motivation of intensity of love that makes us want to do whatever it is that will please the one who is the object of our desire.

Let us ask the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin to give us the same kind of loving response to our Father in heaven that she provided. May she guide us in our pilgrimage of faith, making us ever more obedient and faithful to the word of God. May she accompany each of us on the path of conversion and holiness in our daily struggle against sin and give us a genuine love for truth and beauty and holiness. May she enable us to obtain peace and salvation for all of God’s children and work to solve the problems of our earthly city that become obstacles for so many of them. May she intercede with her Son to pour forth his mercy and love upon us all!

+ Fr. Claude Peifer, O.S.B.



Our Family News is published in the special interest of the oblates of St. Bede Abbey. Please send changes of address and comments to The Editor, Our Family News, St. Bede Abbey, 24 W US Highway 6, Peru, IL 61354.

We welcome your submissions to this publication, either instructive or reflective, whether prose or poetry. They should in some way relate to the **Rule of Benedict**, Benedictine spirituality, and/or the oblate program. The editor reserves the rights to choose material for publication and to edit as necessary.

SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held in the abbey church from
1:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2016
(Oblates Day)

- Sunday, December 4, 2016
- Sunday, January 8, 2017
- Sunday, February 12, 2017
- Sunday, March 12, 2017
- Sunday, April 9, 2017
- Sunday, May 7, 2017

NOVEMBER 13 OBLATES DAY SCHEDULE

- 10:00 A.M. Conventual Mass, within which oblates will renew their oblations
- 12:00 noon Midday Prayer with the monks
- 12:15 P.M. Lunch with the monks in the monastery refectory
- After lunch Gathering in the abbey church
- 2:30 P.M. Conclusion of meeting

Passage for *Lectio* at the December Meeting

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 9:10-13

Abbey Prayer Schedule

Visitors are welcome to join the monks for Mass and for the hours of the Divine Office. Conventual Mass is celebrated on the first level of the abbey church, the hours of the Divine Office on the second level. During the school year, the monks' schedule is as follows.

- 5:45 A.M. Morning Prayer*
- 7:45 A.M. Conventual Mass**
- 12:00 Noon Midday Prayer
- 5:30 P.M. Evening Prayer***
- * on Sunday, 7:00 A.M.
- ** on Sunday, 10:00 A.M.
- *** on Saturday & Sunday, 5:00 P.M.

