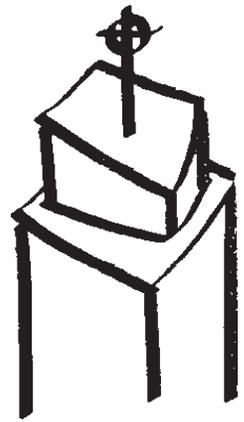


OUR FAMILY



NEWS



For Oblates of St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Illinois

Summer, 2014



CORPUS CHRISTI

A REFLECTION ON THE MEANING OF THE EUCHARIST FOR THE CHURCH

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. (1 Cor 10:16-17)

On October 7, 2004, Pope St. John Paul II addressed to the universal Church an apostolic letter entitled *Mane nobiscum, Domine* (cf. Lk 24: 29), in which he proclaimed that the year extending from October, 2004 to October, 2005 would be the *Year of the Eucharist*. He asked that during that year the entire Church give special attention to the mystery that God has bestowed upon us in the sacrament of the Eucharist, not so much through special observances as by penetrating more deeply and more interiorly unto the rich meaning of this mystery and into the purpose that Jesus had in instituting this sacrament. The observance of that year was therefore a contemplative endeavor, an effort to come to know the Lord more personally and more deeply in his presence in the Eucharist. The solemnity of Corpus Christi provides a special occasion for us *every* year to attempt to do this very thing by consciously and attentively taking part in the celebration of the Eucharist and then prolonging the celebration by continuing our adoration of the Lord's ongoing presence in the sacrament. And our experience will be all the richer if we first reflect upon the meaning of the Eucharist for the Church.

At the Second Vatican Council, the Church declared that the Eucharist is at the very center of the Church's life, for it is "the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Introduction, 2.). The solemnity of Corpus Christi follows upon that of the Trinity because it is through the paschal mystery, which is renewed in the Eucharist, that we are brought to a share in the life of the Holy Trinity. The genuine purpose of the Church is given clearest expression when she is celebrating the Eucharist. In this sacrament Christ most clearly realizes his presence in our midst, reminds us of what God has done in the past for our redemption, offers himself to us as nourishment, and draws us into the unity of his body. It is, then, as the council went on to declare, citing the liturgy itself, "a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us" (Ch. II, *The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist*, 47.).

These various elements find their place in every Mass. It is a memorial of the whole of sacred history, as is brought out by the public reading of the Old Testament scriptures. But above all we remember the climax of that history, when the Lord fulfilled Old Testament prophecy by his act of instituting the new covenant. This involved the gift of himself under the appearance of bread and wine, a memorial of his giving his life for us. And he commanded us to continue doing this in memory of him. When we recall what he did, we also give thanks for it; we "lift up our hearts" in gratitude for the entire work of creation and redemption, especially the paschal mystery, proclaiming that it is "right and just" that we should do so. Moreover, we believe that the sacrifice of Christ is again made present sacramentally in the Mass and that we can therein unite our own humble self-offering to that of our Lord, so that the Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Church as well as that of Christ. It is, then, the sacrament of his continued presence and

saving work among us and for us, a presence that is true, real, and substantial. This is the *mysterium fidei*, the mystery of faith before which we bow down in adoration at every Mass.

But the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, symbolized by the bread and wine, itself symbolizes and aims to bring about a further reality, namely, the incorporation of all of us into Christ. When St. Paul speaks about the Lord's presence in the bread, he immediately passes on to yet another presence. First he says, *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* (1 Cor 10:16). Here he is clearly speaking of the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine, and of our contacting it by eating of the bread and drinking of the wine, just as St. John says, *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you* (Jn 6:53). But Paul immediately adds: *Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf* (1 Cor 10:17). Now he is talking about something else: the "body" of which he speaks is no longer Christ present in the bread, but is what we call the "mystical" body, that is, the union of all who believe in Christ. The purpose of the Eucharist, of Christ's making himself present to us in this sacrament, is to draw us together more and more into a union of charity with the Lord and with one another.

We often use the term "holy communion" to refer to our reception of the sacred body and blood of Christ. What do we mean by it? "Com-union" means "union with." In our thinking we sometimes restrict this to our individual encounter with Christ. But we cannot have union with him unless we also accept and enter into union with all those who in faith accept him. That is why we use the same term, "communion," to signify the Church: the "communion of saints," the "community." It is through sharing in the same gifts in the Eucharist that we receive the grace to live together in "communion," in mutual charity. The Eucharist is the sacrament of charity, and the intensity of faith and devotion with which we participate in it will ultimately determine the intensity of charity that we manifest in our life.

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



We print the above essay posthumously. Fr. Claude, the seventh abbot of St. Bede Abbey, died in the peace of Christ shortly before Morning Prayer on May 1, surrounded in choir by his monastic brothers. Heretofore unpublished work of Fr. Claude will, however, continue to grace these pages.

The peacock is an ancient Christian symbol of resurrection and immortality.

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Editor: Vicki L. Gensini

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.

UPCOMING EVENT

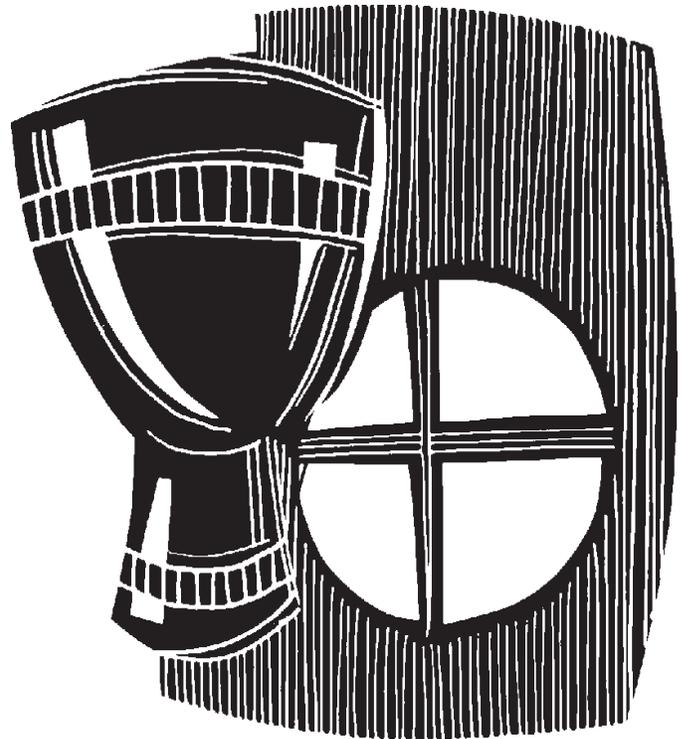
The annual oblate picnic is set for

Sunday, July 20,
from 12:00 Noon to 3:00 P.M.,

in the shelter across from the academy.

Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service and beverage.

Feel free to bring a lawn chair, a deck of cards, or anything else that you think might be enjoyable for yourself or for the group.



The 2014 Oblate Directory

Sincere thanks to all of you who helped in the compilation of the new oblate directory by providing updated information about yourselves. Quite understandably, because of age, health, geographical location, or some other circumstance, many of you are unable to “actively” participate in the oblate program at present. Nonetheless, you remain valuable and valued members of the St. Bede Abbey Oblates in the kind of communion of which Fr. Claude speaks in this issue of *Our Family News*. Let us all continue to be mindful of that fundamental unity that binds us together as members of Christ’s mystical body, but also of that unity that binds us together in a special way, in a more intimate network of prayer and good works, as members of the St. Bede Abbey Oblates.

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.

| | |
|------------|-------------------|
| 6:00 A.M. | Morning Prayer* |
| 8:15 A.M. | Conventual Mass** |
| 12:00 Noon | MIDDAY PRAYER |
| 5:30 P.M. | Evening Prayer |
| 7:10 P.M. | Night Prayer |

* on Sunday, 7:00 A.M.

** on Sunday, 10:00 A.M.

