

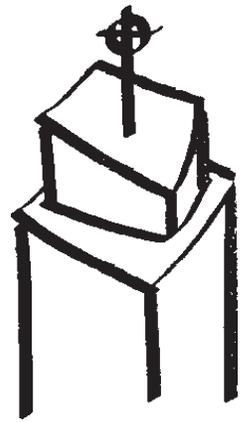
# OUR FAMILY



# NEWS

For Oblates of St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Illinois

September &  
October, 2018



*Although the feast of St. Jerome is superseded liturgically in 2018 by the Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, we nonetheless are proud to present a reflection on the man and his particular relevance to all who in some way share in the Benedictine heritage.*

## **Jerome: A Saint for All Benedictines**

September is a great month for those Catholics who have a fondness for the lives of the saints and enjoy celebrating their feasts. Several saints this month are especially beloved in the Benedictine tradition. September 3 is the feast of St. Gregory the Great, who sent Benedictine monks to evangelize England. On September 17 we keep the memory of the great Benedictine abbess and mystic St. Hildegarde of Bingen. Blessed Herman the Cripple, the Benedictine author of the two great Marian hymns *Salve Regina* and *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (still in regular use at Saint Bede at the end of Compline), is celebrated on September 25.

The feast of St. Jerome is September 30, and although he died some 60 years before the birth of St. Benedict, he deserves special recognition from monks and oblates alike. I shall not recount his entire life story here (although I encourage you to research it for yourself) but will instead offer some reflections on how various aspects of his life and ministry in the church demonstrate many of the virtues and values of Benedictine life.

Even at an early age, Jerome showed promise as a scholar, especially in rhetoric and languages, although it was not until he converted to Christianity at age 24 that he dedicated himself to theological studies, in particular to translating the works of the Greek fathers. His abilities in this work recommended him to Pope Damasus, who commissioned him to translate the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures into Latin. He spent much of his life on this *magnum opus*, resulting in what came to be known as the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible.

In the sixteenth century the great Council of Trent pronounced Jerome's Vulgate the authentic and authoritative Latin text of the Catholic Church. In 1907 Pope Pius X entrusted to the Benedictine Order the office of restoring as far as possible the correct text of St. Jerome's Vulgate, which during fifteen centuries of use had naturally become altered in many places. The Benedictine love of Scripture therefore makes Jerome one of our special patron saints.

But Jerome is also the patron saint of librarians, and our oblates are well acquainted with the herculean labor we are willing to undertake for the sake of our collection. The monks are aware of our oblates' contribution to the work of converting our card catalogue into electronic form and are grateful for your labors and your financial support. When the work becomes especially tedious, we ought to remember that Jerome assembled his early library largely by copying or translating the texts himself and copying them by hand! In later years he kept four secretaries employed to copy books and to transcribe his letters.

Jerome had a special appreciation for solitude and monastic simplicity, so much so that when Paulinus of Antioch insisted on ordaining him, Jerome made the condition that he would not be forced to be attached to a church so he could continue his monastic life and scholarship. His letters to Eustochium on the virtues of ascetic virginity are still standard reading in many Benedictine novitiates. The last years of his life were spent in a monastic community he founded at Bethlehem. He describes it as a kind of earthly paradise:

Here we find humble and wholesome food: bread and milk, the herbs we grow with our own hands, and all the delicacies of the countryside. Living thus, sleep does not overtake us in prayer, satiety does not interfere with our studies. In summer the trees afford us shade, in autumn the air is cool and the fallen leaves give us a quiet resting place. When cold winter comes and snow, we have no lack of fuel: I am warm enough when I sleep or keep my vigil. Let the Romans cling to their turbulent crowds, let the arena be filled with cruelty, let the circus riot . . . our happiness is to cleave unto the Lord and to put our trust in the Lord God (Jerome, *Epistolae*, LVII, 2).

Another Benedictine characteristic of Jerome's community at Bethlehem was its emphasis on hospitality. Pilgrims to the Holy Land regularly filled the hospice he built next to the monastery, so that "if Mary and Joseph should pass this way again, they should not go unprotected." When Alaric and his Goths sacked Rome in 410 A.D., Jerome set aside his commentary on Ezekiel in order to care for the streams of refugees: "For today we must translate the precepts of the Scriptures into deeds; instead of speaking saintly words, we must act them."

In spite of all these saintly characteristics, Jerome had what today we might call "anger management issues." He was not charmingly irascible but downright vitriolic in his opposition to anyone he saw as an enemy, a rival or a heretic. His letters spew invective against former friends, theological opponents and even other saints. He despised St. Ambrose of Milan and maintained a professional rivalry with St. Augustine. He hated the heresies of Arius, Origen and Pelagius, and he hated anyone who seemed to embrace them.

And he hated his own anger. He was harder on his own faults than he was on any heretic. Desperate to defeat his bad temper, he took to carrying a stone around with which to beat his breast in repentance for his rage. Jerome is often depicted in art as a hermit in a tattered robe, holding his rock as he pleads to God for forgiveness. Eleven centuries later, Pope Sixtus V was passing by a painting of St. Jerome with his jagged rock and commented, "You do well to use that stone, for without it you would have never been numbered among the saints."

Even in this great weakness, Jerome shows an important Benedictine characteristic: persistence in contrition. Most of us could never emulate him in his intellectual abilities: St. Augustine reportedly declared, "What Jerome is ignorant of, no mortal has ever known." But he does offer us an example of everyday penitence. He was no extraordinary sinner in his youth, had no need to be rescued from a life of extreme licentiousness—Jerome was just an ordinary guy whose besetting sin was a bad temper. He knew the vice of anger to be "the door by which all vices enter the soul," but was never truly freed from its grip. Still, he demonstrated Benedict's exhortation in the "Tools of Good Works": "Never lose hope in God's mercy" (RB 4:74). He sought forgiveness again and again, desiring peace and patience and humility when it was his nature to be anxious and impatient and proud.

The aforementioned chapter four of the *Rule of St. Benedict* has a number of verses addressing the ways by which we may combat anger (not to seek an occasion of revenge, not to forsake charity, not to render evil for evil, etc.). Inspired by St. Jerome's example, we might spend some time on his feast day reflecting on our own struggles with anger and how the Rule can guide us toward greater patience and charity with ourselves and others. Like him, let us love the Scriptures and study them diligently, offer hospitality to all, and pray for that "good zeal which separates from vices and leads to God and life everlasting" (RB 72:2).

---Fr. Dominic Garramone, 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, SEPTEMBER 16, 2018

Sunday, October 21, 2018

Sunday, November 11, 2018  
(Oblate Day)

Sunday, December 9, 2018

Sunday, January 13, 2019

Sunday, February 10, 2019

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Sunday, April 14, 2019

Sunday, May 5, 2019

## Passage for *Lectio* at the September Meeting

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

1 Corinthians 12:12.26

## Passage for *Lectio* at the October Meeting

I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21

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## 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. 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.

