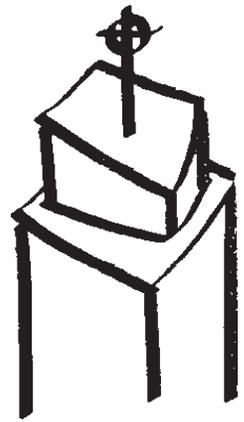


OUR FAMILY NEWS

For Oblates of St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Illinois

November &
December, 2018



***Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.***

The scene of Jesus' birth in a stable at Bethlehem and the following adoration of the shepherds and of the Magi has evoked countless efforts by artists to depict the events recorded by the evangelists. One needs only to look through the greeting cards that one receives at this season (after subtracting the Santa Clauses, reindeer, and plum puddings) to find a fascinating variety of conceptions of the Nativity. Some attempt to be realistic and imagine the scene as it actually may have happened historically, but many other artists wish rather to reposition Bethlehem in their own time and place. Thus we may find a Holy Family that looks Japanese, or native American, or Lithuanian, or Brazilian, or Tanzanian, in a stable that may resemble a classical portico or a Baroque sanctuary or a Midwestern barn. Among these various portrayals, one of the more curious comes from the late Medieval period and depicts the stable in which Jesus is born as a once-splendid palace that is now falling into ruins. One can still see signs of its former glory, but now the walls are crumbling, the roof has collapsed, and it is being used as a stable for animals.

What did the artist wish to convey through this image? First of all, I think, the historical reality that the whole affair was not very glamorous. The Old Testament speaks glowingly about the glory of the kingdom of David and Solomon. But in fact whatever glory it may have had was actually not very impressive by comparison with the great powers of the age, and after David's time his throne had been occupied by a long series of very second-rate monarchs. Subsequently it had fallen to the Babylonians, and since then six whole centuries had passed without the popular hopes for its revival ever being realized. The evangelists are anxious to show that Joseph was a descendant of David, but that distinction had become a rather empty honor. The house of David had long been in ruins.

But this does not mean that it was not still capable of glory. The mystery of Bethlehem was that David's kingdom was about to begin all over again, as the prophet Amos had long ago announced: *I will raise up the fallen hut of David.* The long-awaited Davidic heir is now making his appearance in a ruined palace, but he will rebuild the house of David, though in a very different way. His dwelling will not be in an opulent palace; rather, he will have nowhere to lay his head. His power will come not from horses and chariots, but from the persuasiveness of his teaching. The throne of this king will not be like that of Solomon, made of gold and ivory and flanked by twelve carved lions, but will be in the shape of a cross, and the poverty of his infancy will be reproduced throughout his life and above all in his death.

The ruined palace, I believe, may also symbolize his coming into our world today. That kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love, and peace, of which the liturgy speaks on the feast of his kingship, is far from realization. The recent horrors of so

many countries in Asia and Africa and the current explosions of violence in Europe and North America tell us that major sections of the kingdom of this world are in ruins all around us. Moreover, we now have reason to fear that we may have ruined the earth itself by appropriating more than our share of its natural resources and thereby producing a climate change that may bring havoc upon our descendants. Even on a global scale, there is still no room for the Holy Family except in a ruined palace.

These are sobering thoughts, but the mystery of Christmas is precisely that Jesus is here with us because God was willing to send his Son into the ruin that we human beings have made of our lives and of our world. And, even though unwelcome, he comes precisely to bring about its restoration. As Isaiah foretold, *The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt...and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up; “repairer of the breach” they shall call you, “restorer of ruined homesteads.”* Christ came to restore wholeness, dignity, and beauty to all of creation. For, as St. Paul tells us, *creation is groaning in labor pains even until now, that it may be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.* The angels sang at the birth of Jesus because heaven and earth have again come together through the Incarnation. *In hope we are saved.* Creation has been restored to its original purpose, so that we can join in the chorus of the angels in praise of God who has brought together *the length and the breadth and the height and the depth.* Therefore we sing: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.*

+ 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 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



NOVEMBER 11 OBLATE 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

Elijah traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

And the word of the Lord came to him: ““What are you doing here, Elijah?”

He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

1 Kings 19:8-13

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. 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.

