



Benet Lake News

St. Benedict's Abbey

Benet Lake, Wisconsin 53102

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A Time to Remember!

There are really very few things that we can be certain about in life, very little in fact that we can be sure of from day to day. One event however that we all have to face and accept is that, whether soon or distant, life for us as we now know it will end. The heritage of our Catholic faith gives us hope that life will not end for us at physical death but will be transformed into an even richer and fuller existence in union with the Risen Christ. The reason for our confidence is our hope in the mercy and love of God. As the Rule St. Benedict tells us: "Never lose hope in God's mercy."

All Souls' Day, celebrated every year on November 2nd, reaches beyond grief and bereavement and beyond the confrontation with death and the triumph over our fears. It is also an occasion for remembrance. And by remembrance I mean the quiet awareness, and affectionate holding in our memory all of our deceased loved ones.

Of course the period of grief that immediately follows upon the death of a loved one is painful yet necessary. We cannot go around our grief but we must move through it. The Psalmist tells us, "Even were I to walk in the valley as dark



as death, I should fear no danger, for you, Yahweh, are at my side." Ps 23

As human beings we can't help but fear what we don't know, and dying and death are the great unknowns for all of us. All of us have wondered at times what life will be like beyond the moment of death since we have only a meager knowledge. St. Paul said, "Eye has not seen, nor has it entered into the mind or heart of man what the Father has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor.2:9)

Really we know only our hope in God's promise of eternal joy with Him or the fear of eternal separation from Him. Both our hope and our fear should motivate us to live a life worthy of the great promise to which we have been called by adoption as God's daughters and sons. None of us would be so bold or so proud as to claim with any certainty that we are assured of our sanctity and personal worthiness of the Kingdom. All of us would like to receive as much help as possible in turning our hope into reality by the manner of our lives.

If we live and act with love and mercy and obedience to the Lord, then we're on the right path. But even the most holy among us err and stray off the path now and again—maybe not too far off, but enough to know that we're not spotless.

In today's world we realize that we are a global community. We are dependent on each other. We realize most of the time that we need the help of others—their kindnesses and their prayers—to strengthen us on our way. We ought to remember, and this is what we often forget, that we can and should help others, mostly those who are no better or worse than we ourselves are, by



our acts of love and mercy done in the name of Christ. "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers or sisters, you did it for me." Matt. 25:40

For a number of years I lived among the mountains in the state of Colorado but after a while I did not even notice them. Their beauty and presence were all around me but I got used to them. I looked passed them and they became invisible. We all tend to get used to the people around us; at times we can almost act as though they weren't even there. If we can forget those with whom we live every day, how much more easily can we let drop from our thoughts those who have already preceded us to the grave.

Yet it is they who also need our love and concern. Once life on earth is ended, the chance and ability to merit is gone. These members of the Church, of Christ's Body, are dependent upon us for gaining God's mercy. We can do for them what they can no longer do: beg the Lord to let our prayers and sacrifices substitute for the punishment which their sins still deserve.

Scripture reminds us, it is good to pray for the dead. It unites us more deeply with them in the bond of Christ's love. It wins mercy for them and God's blessing upon us. In this month, of

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A Time to Remember

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November which the Church specially dedicates to the memory and aid of the faithful departed, we have a good reminder of our own future need for the prayerful generosity of others and the opportunity to be generous ourselves. The Church has consistently encouraged the offering of prayers and Masses for the souls in purgatory. The time and effort we spend in prayer and good works for the sake of the faithful departed will not be without its special rewards.

Jesus asked us to also remember Him. We remember that His presence and love did not end in the tomb but blossomed with His Resurrection and his sending us the Holy Spirit. So our love should not cease with the passing of others but should follow and support them on their journey to the Father.

Let us never forget those who have accompanied and loved us here on earth. By helping our loved ones and others who may have no one to pray for them to join the ranks of God's saints, we assure ourselves of special powerful intercessors who will not forget our charity to them when we too pass from this life to the world to come and life eternal. "May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy and love of God rest in peace!" Amen.

Pastoral Internship Program A First for the Abbey!



Abbot Edmund recently welcomed Ryan Ferguson as a Pastoral Intern at the Abbey. He is presently working on a Master of Divinity at North Park Theological Seminary, a seminary of the Evangelical Covenant Church, a descendent of the Swedish Lutheran tradition. When asked why he wanted to do his internship at a Benedictine Abbey he said, "Throughout my study at the seminary I became increasingly interested in the church's traditional forms of piety and discipleship as valuable guides to living faithful Christian lives in the modern world. As a result I wanted to find a way to utilize a portion of my internship to provide a living encounter with these traditions. As an intern at the monastery I will be working towards coming to a better understanding of St. Benedict's maxim *ora et labora*. I hope to do this by joining the monks in the Daily Office and will be engaging in work, prayer, solitude, contemplation and silence." Brother Donald will serve as his field supervisor. Ryan and his wife, Marina, live in Chicago.

OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY, PRAY FOR US!

The Five Joyful Mysteries Monday & Saturday

- I The Annunciation: Humility
- II The Visitation: Charity
- III The Nativity: Detachment
- IV The Presentation: Purity of heart
- V The Finding of Jesus: Obedience

The Five Sorrowful Mysteries Tuesday & Friday

- I The Agony in the Garden: Contrition for sin
- II The Scourging at the Pillar: Mortification of our senses
- III The Crowning with Thorns: Interior mortification
- IV The Carrying of the Cross: Patience under crosses
- V The Crucifixion and Death: Thy will be done

The Five Glorious Mysteries Sunday & Wednesday

- I The Resurrection: Conversion of heart
- II The Ascension: A desire for heaven
- III The Coming of the Holy Spirit: The Gifts of the Spirit
- IV The Assumption of Mary: Devotion to Mary
- V The Coronation of Mary: Eternal happiness

The Five Luminous Mysteries (New) Thursday

- I The Baptism of Jesus: Call of God in my life
- II The Wedding at Cana: Joy
- III The Proclamation of the Kingdom: Zeal
- IV The Transfiguration: Adoration
- V The Institution of the Eucharist: Source of Life

Hail Mary, full of grace...

The Church invites us in a special way to meditate on the life of Jesus by praying the Rosary. As we pray Jesus and Mary are our companions. In the rosary we meditate upon the mysteries of Christ revealed to us in the Gospels, from his Annunciation to his Ascension and the glory that is promised to each of us in the Assumption and the Coronation of Mary.

On October 16, 2002, Pope John Paul II promulgated his apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. In this letter we are asked to renew our devotion to praying the rosary and meditating on the life of Christ. Pope Paul VI taught that the Rosary is the "compendium of the Gospel."

There are many ways to pray the rosary. Often times it is customary to reflect on one of the mysteries of Christ's life as our fingers move from bead to bead and we pray the Hail Mary. It may be that the Holy Spirit may call us to a sense of silence as we are fingering each bead or maybe give a special insight or grace as we are reflecting on a specific mystery; if that is the case stay with that mystery. What is important is to recall and remain in the presence of God as did Mary who pondered all these things in her heart. Mary's attention was always upon her Son...in the crib...at the wedding feast...on the cross...and at the Resurrection! With Mary as our guide let us always focus



on Jesus. What is essential is our cooperation with the grace of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul tells us that all prayer is an expression of the Holy Spirit praying with-in us and with us. Let us join with Mary and pray "...be it done to me according to your word."

A Ministry of Letters and Phone Calls



"Dear Father Abbot-Thank you so much for your letter. It meant so much to me to hear from you and to know that the monks will be praying for ..."

Every day the mail arrives at Benet Lake, carrying messages of worry, hope, thanks and petition. From all over the world people write asking for a prayer, a kind word or

a medal of St. Benedict. As many as eight hundred letters might come in the mail in one day, all addressed "Dear Father Abbot." A soldier in Iraq asks for God's protection; a housewife in Texas asks for patience; a business man in New York asks for guidance to make the right decision; a farmer in Iowa asks for prayers for a good crop; or a secretary in an office in Chicago enrolls a friend in the Golden Book of Prayer.

Sometimes a letter will say "Will you please say a Mass for so-and-so? He is not a Catholic, but this is our way of expressing our sympathy to the family." Or, "please write a letter consoling the parents of this boy who was killed in the fighting at Najaf last week. They are wonderful neighbors and their loss is most painful. Please God help them."

Every letter is acknowledged; but how? How can Father Abbot acknowledge 800 letters? Well, if you sit down and figure it out, it would take a person almost a whole day just to open eight hundred letters.

Therefore it is necessary that Father Abbot have some help. But since some of the letters are written in strictest confidence and are personal to Father Abbot, Brother Martin and Brother Thomas first sort the mail in the local post office and all letters that are of a personal nature are given to Father Abbot. Other



letters are taken care of by Monks of the Monastery and by dedicated laywomen who work chiefly in taking care of Golden Book enrollments, filing and mailing and addressing the envelopes. These dedicated associates are a real blessing. It takes a lot of organization to respond in a timely manner to your letters, and the use of computers is also a real blessing in our ministry.

Sometimes, the information in the letter received requires a more immediate

response and Father Abbot asks Brother Stephen to make a personal phone call to the person. He takes seriously the prologue of the Rule of St. Benedict which begins with, "Listen, my son..." and that is what Brother Stephen does. He knows that it is not the solution



to all of the issues or problem that is most important but that there is a caring person who will give a willing ear and offer support and the prayer of all the monks here at the Abbey.

Writing letters and making phone calls are one of the apostolates of the monks at Benet Lake. Often people find it difficult to speak about their problems but they will take the time to write about them, seeking to express some of the deepest longings and needs of their hearts. It is the privilege of each monk here to pray daily for the needs of those who request our prayers. We trust that our letters and phone calls and our prayers will sustain them in the guidance and support that they seek.

The apostolate of letter writing and phone calls grew spontaneously. We all need each other's help, especially by prayers to God our Father who looks after us all. And when we want to say, "Thank you Lord," we also want some one to know that we appreciate their prayers. If we have a serious problem, sometimes we are able to solve it just by thinking about it or talking it over with a friend in whom we can confide. Many times such a friend is not at hand, or for one reason or another we just can't bring ourselves to do it. But Father Abbot is as close as your nearest mail box.

We monks at Benet Lake are thankful for your letters and gifts. We want you to know that. We appreciate your prayers and your kindnesses toward us. ***Please be assured your personal intentions and requests for prayers are remembered daily at our community prayer and daily liturgy.*** We value the trust you put in us. We are most grateful for your generous financial assistance. Without your continued support our work would be most difficult. If you ever wish to write, don't hesitate. **May God bless you!**

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- A hearty thank you from all of us here at the Abbey. The new well and water system are now complete and working. The old water system was in need of repair and was deficient in the capacity of water that it could produce and had to be brought up-to-date. Due to your generous financial contributions we were able to complete this very necessary project. **WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL!** Know that you are in the daily prayers of the Abbey community.

- The monastic community had their "canonical visitation," a process by which visiting monks, of the Swiss-American Congregation of Benedictines come to the Abbey to meet with each community members, review the prayer and work of the community. At the conclusion of their visit they met with the community and made some suggestions for our continued growth in the monastic life and also recognized the accomplishments and growth we have made since our last visitation. The visitors were Abbot Gregory Polan, O.S.B., from The Abbey of the Immaculate Conception at Conception, Missouri and Father Aelred Kavanagh, O.S.B., from St. Joseph Abbey at St. Benedict, Louisiana. We are grateful for their time and fraternal interest in us as members of the Congregation.

- **Father Abbot Edmund Boyce** attended the Congress Benedictine of Abbots in Rome during the later part of September. All the Abbots of the world meet there every four years to discuss matters of concern to the world-wide Benedictine Confederation.

- A number of the monks at the abbey have been busy conducting retreats and days of prayer and recollection. **Prior Henry Nurre** has been available for a number of private directed retreats, including men from St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, who will soon be ordained deacons. **Abbot Andrew Garber** may have put aside the administration of a pastor but he continues his pastoral activity with offering days of recollection for seniors. **Brother Donald Gibbs** has given retreats for deacons and their wives from the archdiocese of Chicago and also continues to offer his 24 hours men's retreat. **Father Lawrence Fedor** has assisted with a directed retreat for a deacon candidate from Sacred Heart School of Theology at Hales Corners. Please see the schedule for additional retreat opportunities in this newsletter.

Comings and goings

- The Association of Benedictine Retreat Center's Biennial Conference was held at Coury House Retreat Center at Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas. Abbot Jerome Kodell, O.S.B., was the main speaker. His topic was "Treating Guests as Christ: Opening a Door to Interior Freedom." Mr. George Freeman and **Brother Donald** attended this meeting for Benet Lake.

- Mount Angel Abbey near Portland, Oregon was the site for this year's Junior Monks educational gathering. **Brother Stephen Lattner**, attended. Along with finding the presentations informative and well presented he enjoyed meeting his peers in formation and members of the Mt Angel monastic community. This program is an annual gathering of junior monks from the wider Benedictine family that comes together to focus on some aspect of monastic formation. The

presenters this past summer were Father Terrence Kardong, O.S.B. and Father Anthony Ruff, O.S.B.

- The Abbey church was the site of a joyful celebration for **Abbot Robert Schoofs** who celebrated his golden anniversary of the profession of monastic vows, on September 8th. Family, friends and the monastic community joined him at a Mass of Thanksgiving. **CONGRATULATIONS** Abbot Robert! May God who has begun this good work in you bring it to completion in the day of Christ the Lord!

- Representing the Abbey at the local Milwaukee Archdiocesan priests gathering was **Father Kevin Murphy**.

- Plymouth, Michigan was the site for the annual gathering of women and men who are preparing for final vows into their respective religious institutes. For two weeks each year the National Religious Formation Conference makes available to religious congregations speakers on a variety of topics to assist these new members in the formation process. Brother Donald gave a series titled: "Tools for the Future: A Vibrant Spirituality".



• **Abbot Edmund** attended the Abbots and Priors education meeting hosted by St. Joseph Abbey near New Orleans, LA.

LOOKING FOR A CHALLENGE?

Be a Benedictine Monk

- + Single Roman Catholic men
- + between ages of 19 and 55
- + willing to live the monastic life

Pray and work in a contemplative community

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