

OBLATE NEWS

Queen of Angels Monastery
Mt. Angel, OR 97362

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Lent, 2010



Message from the Prioress:

Greetings to all of our Oblates,
Candidates and Inquirers!

May this coming Lent be a time of
renewed holiness for you.

You will be in my prayers.

Sr. Donna Marie



**Greetings to you, my dear Oblates,
Candidates and Inquirers!**

It is 2010 and we are about to begin again the journey of Lent. I find, in my readings, that Lent is often portrayed as a journey, from one point of time to another point in time. It is a journey that is measured from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday.

It is not only the time that is important but the experience of the journey for a full appreciation of what is being celebrated. Hopefully, each one of us will experience this journey as a process of spiritual growth. Benedict gives us some ways to engage in this journey: devoting ourselves to *lectio divina*, to prayer, and to ways of self-denial. Each component tried and tested will bring the spiritual traveler to the joys of Easter. Another way of describing this journey is that we "...seek to conform our lives to Christ and look forward to Holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing (RB 49)."

As we approach Lent, I ask you to prayerfully consider the Lenten practices you will share with our Prioress, Sr. Donna Marie, when you receive the *bona opera* form she will be sending you soon.

In Christ,

Sr. Antoinette

Oblate Director



Saint Scholastica

Submitted by

Sister Jeanette von Herrmann, OSB, Ph.D.

Christians remember holy women and men because their lives are models of Gospel discipleship, showing us how to translate the words and actions of Christ into our own daily lives. These holy lives give us a deeper message, one that is more than simple history or biography. Their example issues a call bidding us to become virtuous, to live with faith and charity, and in turn to communicate that invitation to others. St. Scholastica is among these holy ones and her life and virtues can inspire us to wisdom, prayer, love, and single-hearted devotion to God.

We actually know very little about St. Scholastica. What we do know comes from two sources: tradition and Book II, chapters 33 and 34, of the *Dialogues* of Pope St. Gregory the Great, written in 593 CE.

According to tradition, St. Scholastica and her twin brother, St. Benedict, were born into a wealthy family living in Nursia [in the mountainous area of central Italy] in the year 480. Benedict, after living in a few other locations, founded a monastery in Monte Cassino, about 60 miles south of Rome. Also according to tradition, Scholastica either founded or joined a monastery for women in Plombariola about 5 miles south of Monte Cassino. Other scholars insist that instead she was part of a small convent at the base of Monte Cassino. In either case, we know something of her personality and gifts from the *Dialogues*. Gregory portrays Scholastica as having been dedicated to God from her youth, who, as will be seen below, was a strong woman, holy and prayerful. She is shown to be willing to assess situations in new ways and take risks with her words to both God and her brother.

The context of Gregory's chapter on Scholastica is worthy of note. He refers to St. Paul's three requests to God that are denied [2 Cor 12:7-9] and then states that Benedict also had a desire that went unfulfilled by God. Since Gregory refers to Benedict as a "man of God," this comment makes us curious. Why wasn't Benedict heard when he appealed to God? Gregory doesn't reveal the answer immediately, but continues the story recounting how Benedict

and Scholastica met outside the Monte Cassino grounds [as they did yearly] for holy conversation and prayer. As the day comes to a close, Scholastica requests that Benedict stay with her and continue speaking of God. Benedict responds that he cannot stay outside the monastery for any reason, the implication is that this was one of the monastery's rules. Though the weather was clear, Scholastica repeats the request but this time to God directly instead of to the man of God. A fierce thunder and lightening storm occurs immediately in response to this prayer. According to Gregory, Benedict was annoyed, but Scholastica tells him "I asked you, but you were unwilling to listen to me, I asked my Lord and He listened to me. Well, then, go if you can. Leave me and return to the monastery." It sounds almost like she is daring Benedict to leave when God so obviously wants him to remain. According to Gregory, Scholastica was heard by God, "by the greater strength of her love." This is the love of a woman who had spent a lifetime both talking and listening to God as God has spoken and listened to her heart.

The lesson of this encounter of Scholastica and Benedict is reinforced by the two Gospel readings suggested for the feast of St. Scholastica [February 10th]: Matthew 25:1-13 and Luke 10:38-42.

Matthew tells us of ten women who were waiting. Five are described as "foolish" and five are referred to as "wise." The foolish have to go off to get more oil while the wise are prepared and can meet the bridegroom when he appears suddenly. This is not a "boy scout/girl scout story." It is not about "always being prepared," and its message is not "Be practical, look ahead." It is about wisdom, but not in the sense of being smart or knowing the right thing to do.

The Hebrew Scriptures, especially the Wisdom Literature, help us with the imagery of this story. The foolish are the sinful people, those whose folly leads them away from God, turning away just at the time of God's presence. Conversely, the wise are those who follow God's Word, and being virtuous, they are led towards God. So these wise women show us not practicality but readiness and openness to follow Christ whenever, however, wherever. Wisdom is the knowledge of how to live a holy life, connected with God, aware of God's presence and grace.

Luke's gospel for this feast, the story of Martha and Mary, is an interesting parallel to Gregory's story of Benedict and Scholastica. Mary, the image of the Christian disciple, is sitting at Jesus' feet listening to him, with the "ear of her heart" [Rule of Benedict, Pro. 1 "Listen carefully...to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart"]. Meanwhile, Martha is fussing, and like Benedict complains that the holy talk needs to stop. Jesus' reply to Martha is "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her." Mary, like Scholastica, is one of the wise women of Matthew's gospel. Both Mary and Scholastic know what is essential, know how to be single hearted, are aware of the person to whom they should listen and to whom to commit their lives. Jesus alone is worthwhile. They combine the virtues of wisdom, prayer, and love.

As Gregory the Great recounts in his *Dialogues* Scholastica was a woman "dedicated to God," one who "praised God," and had a great "strength of love." The story of the violent rainstorm tells us something very significant about what it means to be wise, and what it means to "choose the better part." It also challenges us to that wisdom and single-heartedness. Benedict, in Gregory's story, is concerned about the rules. "I certainly cannot stay outside my monastery for any reason." Additionally, though Benedict's Rule begins with the word "Listen" and admonishes his followers to "Listen with the ear of your heart," Benedict seems not to be doing so in this situation. He symbolizes, in this story, the person who is more concerned with the laws than with listening to the Spirit. He also is similar to Martha, fussing at the late hour and then at the storm. Scholastica, on the other hand, having an inner wisdom and desire for the holy, appeals to God and she is the one God listens to that night.

This story of Benedict and Scholastica, and Matthew's and Luke's Gospel passages, ask us to reflect on our decisions and motives. Do we decide how we should act based on "What are the rules? What will people think? What will keep me out of trouble? What would the 'good person' do?" Or do we, in prayer, respond because we have listened to God, have known God's love and therefore can love one another and act with that love? Do we respond because Jesus is so essential to our lives that we can

hardly do anything else? Sometimes a loving, holy response means that, like Scholastica, we risk the displeasure or judgment of those whom we love most. But wisdom calls us in love to follow Jesus, to sit at his feet as Mary did, to be ready for this presence like the five wise women, and to be women of prayer, wisdom, courage, and love like Scholastica was.

Sr. Jeanette is a member of Queen of Angels Monastery in Mt. Angel, Oregon. She teaches biblical spirituality in parishes and retreat settings.

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BOOK NOOK



Books at Shalom Gift Shop Queen of Angels Monastery

[Books for Lenten and Easter Season](#)

"Lent and Holy Week: Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton," edited by Jonathan Montaldo and Robert G. Toth.

This small book opens the writings of Thomas Merton and pairs them with the words of other great spiritual thinkers. The book has 8 powerful Lenten themes and can be used for small group discussions or your own reflection and prayer. The cost: \$5.95.

"The Spirituality of Fasting: Rediscovering a Christian Practice," by Charles M. Murphy.

The practice of fasting needs to be rediscovered in our day! This book draws from sources ancient and current. The cost: \$12.95.

["Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide,"](#) by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn.

A must for every world citizen. The cost: \$27.95.

Shalom Gift Shop also has a variety of reflection books for Lent and Easter, books on the Stations of the Cross, Lent and Easter books featuring the wisdom of Thomas Merton, St. Francis and St. Clare, Fulton J. Sheen, and others.

The staff of Shalom Prayer Center wishes you a very blessed Lent and Easter.

Sister Dorothy Jean Beyer, OSB
Shalom Prayer Center
840 S. Main St., Mt. Angel, OR 97362
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News Notes



MARJORIE SUE ABRAMOVITZ MEMORIAL FUND ESTABLISHED

A memorial fund for Marjorie Sue Abramovitz has been established by her husband, Marshal Goldberg at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Donations to the Marjorie Sue Abramovitz Memorial Fund will be acknowledged to the family and will support EMO activities where the need is greatest.

Marjorie was born and raised in Baltimore, MD, in a secular Jewish family. She moved to Portland with her husband and two children in 1973, after sojourns in Boston, Atlanta, the San Francisco Bay Area, Vancouver, B. C. and Madison, Wisconsin.

Marjorie's involvement with peace and justice work began in the early 1960s with the Congress on Racial Equality and the Baltimore Committee to End the War in Vietnam. She continued this work in Portland on the social action committee of her congregation and with a Jewish anti-nuclear weapons group.

Marjorie's spiritual journey led her to St. Clare Catholic Church and the Queen of Angels Monastery (the Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel) as an Oblate. Marjorie's humanist, feminist and progressive commitments carried through her life. She was a much-beloved wife, devoted mother and grandmother, and steadfast friend. Marjorie's intention as an Oblate in the last year of her life was: "To be mindful of God's presence in all things."

To donate to the Marjorie Sue Abramovitz Memorial Fund, simply write the fund's name on your check or mark "in memory of MSA" on your donation envelope or online donation.

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"Musings"

Prayerful Thoughts

Submitted by

Oblate Annelizabeth Pullman

"These are some prayerful thoughts I wrote since beginning formation to become an Oblate at Queen of Angels. I am so blessed to be a part of this community...any attempt to put the experience into words is pretty much futile, but these did seem to capture my feelings at the time.

"They were written during Lent in 2008 when I became an Inquirer."

Brother Jesus +,

Wrap your arms around my heart and soul + Immerse me in your love and grace + Share with me your

wounds then grace me with your strength + Lift the veil between us and encompass my being + Stroke my hair and let me wash your feet + Wipe away my tears and make me grateful and humble for each moment with you + Reinforce the beauty of your mystery and satisfy my questions not with words for my ears but by your presence in my heart + I place my hand in your hand and my head on your breast and we are one +



An Opening Heart

Submitted by
Mari Miller, Oblate Candidate

If I cannot fathom you in Vigils' risen stars,
I will never pierce you in the dawn of Matins
or recognize your hand in my breakfast of blueberries,
for your invitation to mystery is ever present,
always watching and waiting for my acceptance.

I pray my prayers will be liberated,
untied from personal needs
unless it is the passion to see you
to finally return your gift of freedom.

I confess my gravest sin.
I harbor the fear that I am *Love*
and what that means for my very next breath
and the one after.

It is not a question of holiness, rather
am I open or is my gate still too narrow
for the grace and gifts to return
to the *Source*?

Love only flourishes in a heart without fear
and only perfect love can cast out all anxiety.
In my mystic heart I dream I am falling
into your arms and when I land all fear is gone.

If you love me
who am I not to claim myself for you
alone.



Obedience in the Oblate Life:

Fear or Freedom?¹

Thomas J. Rillo, Oblate
Bloomington, Indiana

Obedience is not a popular word today. It strikes fear in our hearts and reminds us of harsh, authoritative tyranny. We are reminded of people who are servile, with groveling submission to the point of being considered weak and without self-respect.

The word "obedience" conjures up a certain meaning to those of us who were born and reared in a democratic society based on individualism and independence. It means subjection to someone or something with authoritative power.

As cynical adults, not only do we find it difficult to obey, but we find it impossible to conceive of obedience as a virtue. To obey, we need to have someone to obey; and yet we have been taught to distrust all authority, to search for the facts and to make up our own minds.

Freedom of choice is a core value of modern life. An oblate candidate once expressed it this way: "I don't want to be told what to do. I want to be free to be me. I express my freedom by exercising my right to choose and I don't want to adhere to the dictates of an abbot."

What this individual did not realize was that the greatest freedom concerning obedience is that one *chooses* to obey. Obeying without knowing why is not free choice. Oblates must choose those things that open up future possibilities and not those things that would enslave them.

The word "obedience" derives from the Latin word *oboedire*, which means not only to obey, but also to listen. The prefix *ob* means "in the direction of," and *audire* means "to hear"; together they become

¹ This article is printed with permission from St. Meinrad Archabbey, Indiana, a Benedictine men's community. Please note that the content is applicable to a women's community as well.

oboedire. The monastic way invites oblates to listen and select what voices they are to follow.

Obedience should not be blind obedience and should instead exercise discernment. Discerning obedience is really obedient freedom. It is what the monastic oblate way invites one to experience. To St. Benedict, obedience was not just doing what the most assertive voice tells us to do; it is about mutual love.

Obedience is a blessing to be shown by all, not only to the abbot, but also to one another as brothers, since we know that is by this obedience that we go to God. To Benedict, this meant you have to listen to other people and not just to yourself.

In Benedict's chapter describing the good zeal that monks should have for one another, he states: "No one is to pursue what he judges better for himself but instead what he judges better for someone else. To their fellow monks they show the pure love of brothers to God, loving fear." (RB 72.7, 8)

Thus the monastic way urges free and conscientious obedience. Oblates are confronted by the widespread belief that you are free and in control if you follow your feelings. The monastic way challenges that belief.

Alan Watts, an existentialist writer of the 1960s, once wrote a treatise titled *Masks of Identity*. In it, he wrote that we all wear masks of identity for specific situations. Because in our overpopulated, urban society we are constantly bumping into one another, we counteract this inevitable enforced contact by putting on masks. We have one for the subway, elevator, shopping mall, supermarket, athletic events, concerts and theatre.

This wearing of multiple masks is a way that people maintain their privacy and stay in control. What freedom of choice are they obeying? Putting on and taking

off masks does not speak of obedience based on innocence and mutual love for our brothers and sisters. It would be a sacrilege if an oblate put on a mask just for church, another for retreats and one just for the kids' soccer matches.

For oblates, the best demonstration of obedience is to exercise great inner freedom: the ability to judge what you desire and what the other desires, and to choose freely to set aside your desires for the desires of another. In essence, that is the description of the exercise of conscience. Conscience is not the same as feeling. Conscience is the inner process that enables one to listen to voices that are beyond one's own feelings and desires.

This inner process of judgment guided by the power of conscience is at the heart of true obedience. You decide not to have that extra drink because an inner process of conscience enables you to discern the law against drunk driving. This is a freely chosen obedience, a conscientious choice.

At the beginning of Lent, the abbot sends out a form for an oblate to list *bona opera*, good works, to be performed for the Lenten season. The completed form is then reviewed by the abbot and consequently approved. The oblate is then obligated by the nature of oblation and obedience to the monastic way to fulfill what he or she freely chose to do as *bona opera*.

The obedience that Benedict calls for is an active obedience, an obedience that struggles to obey because it is constantly struggling to conquer self-will. Benedict expects instant obedience from his monks, but does not expect them to be mindless robots.

The monks are to struggle with obedience. They are to be soldiers of Christ; as warriors, they are to do battle with the devil and with themselves. It is so with oblates. The struggle to obey is the

struggle of the spirit, and it is within that struggle that grace abounds. It is also from this struggle that spiritual power flows.

It is said that those who have not yet begun to struggle with obedience have not yet begun to obey. The story of obedience is one of rebellion, then of repentance, and then to return. This is vital for the path to salvation.

The parable of the Prodigal Son is an excellent example of two sons and their obedience. One son struggles with obedience and the other son rebels. The son who rebelled repents and returns, while the other son still struggles with obedience. The question is: which son becomes stronger because of the struggle?

Jesus tells another story of two sons. The father tells one son to go out to the fields and work. He tells the other to do the same. The first son does not go and procrastinates. The second son did not want to go at first, but eventually overcomes his struggle and goes to the fields. Which son was the strongest in his obedience?

The monks freely chose the monastic way of life and pledged their allegiance to the abbot. In a similar way, the oblates pledge their allegiance to the monastery and the abbot. Monastic obedience can be a simple road to religious freedom and thus it is full of pitfalls.

Some individuals embrace religious obedience as an escape from the realities of life. The monastic way is not for those who seek its obedience out of a desire to opt out of the demands of life. Some leave the monastic way when obedience becomes difficult.

St. Therese puts a lid on this notion by saying there was freedom in obeying even when the superior seemed wrong. No one ever said obedience would be easy. The

degrees of difficulty in obedience vary by individuals.

But the struggle within is on-going and perhaps never-ending. If it is born out of mutual love for one another, then it will flourish and endure. It is in this struggle that monks (and sisters) and oblates have a common ground.

Questions for Reflection

What is your initial reaction to the word "obedience?" How does the monastic vow of obedience apply to you?

Do I obey everyone or just those who are placed in authority over me? Can obedience help me with my relationship with others?

Obedience is defined as an attitude and humility as an action. Have I focused on humility as a positive attitude? Have I meditated on the vow of obedience to the point where it is an integral part of my monastic oblation?

Do I see the relationship between obedience and the other monastic vows of stability, hospitality, silence and conversion of life?

Can obedience help me internally with meditation, prayer, fasting and study? Can obedience assist me externally with simplicity, solitude, submission and service?

POETRY CORNER



Poems "**At the Feet of Teachers**" and "**Ready Me to Respond**" by Rachel Srubas are from the book, *Oblation: Meditations on St. Benedict's Rule*, ©2006 Rachel M. Srubas, used by permission of Paraclete Press, available at www.paracletepress.com.

At the Feet of Teachers

The third step of humility is to submit oneself out of love of God to whatever obedience under a superior may require of us.

(Chapter 7, St. Benedict's Rule)

Thank you for the ones who nurtured me
when I could only crawl,
who fell to their knees to see from my
small perspective,
and upheld me when I took my first,
faltering steps.
They helped me walk, however unsteadily,
in the way you had laid out for me.
When I veered toward danger, they
forbade me to go any further.
For my good, early guardians and
trustworthy teachers,
who insisted I obey them when my
preference for transgression
would have put me at risk, I thank you,
at last.
It took me decades to appreciate the limits
they set, to understand
I'd been hemmed in, behind and before,
not by arbitrary prohibitions, but by your
love.

The first preachers do little more than
remind us:
the teachings of Moses and Jesus
mandate reverence, self-control, and
kindness.
For exacting instructors who embody
compassion
without condescension, confidence
without arrogance,
who teach me my neighbors are everyone
without exception
and expect me to serve them
not as whimsical option
but as sacred obligation, I thank you.

Help me, O God, to outgrow
any remnant of defiant adolescence within
me.
Show me the difference between sullen
docility
and discerning obedience. Open my
conscience

to prophets who speak on behalf of the
silenced
and issue ultimatums grounded in your
covenants.

Sit me down at the feet of teachers
who will school me in humility.

Ready Me to Respond

*With a ready step inspired by obedience
they respond by their action to the voice that
summons them.*

(Chapter 5, St. Benedict's Rule)

In the beginning, you sighed.
You spoke over chaos and made the
original day.
This day shines as that one must have
done,
the sky a bright arc,
the earth a dark dynamic,
everywhere, beings you articulate in love.
When you speak, life pulses in my limbs.
I run with wild energy you breathe into
me.

Your second word comes: a summons,
Curbing the frenzy, guiding my feet.
Open the ear of my heart today.
Encourage me to do a harder thing
than mere hearing;
ready me to respond.

I'm fond of my internal monologue,
the sound of my mental soliloquy,
relevant to no one but me.

Obedience. The very word fences me in.
I chafe at the thought, and then—
find myself shaken awake
by some act of uncommon decency
or outrageous violation
that shouts me out of my self-
preoccupation and back
to the land of the living:

here, where you breathe
and name everything,
where my heart's ear bends
and my life depends
first on obedient listening.

The Battle of Holy Obedience Joseph C.²

The last nineteen years of my life I've spent in prison. This is nearly twice the number of years I gave to my small town family medical practice, which led me here. However, these last ten years I've been fortunate enough to serve under the guidance of *The Rule of St. Benedict*, which Fr. James Murray so graciously sent me when I needed it most.

In his Preface to *RB 1980*, Fr. Timothy Fry talks about the alternative that *The Rule* provided to the debauchery and paganism of the falling Roman Empire:

“In the unsettled strife-torn Italy of the sixth century, Benedict's *Rule* offered definitive direction and established an ordered way of life that gave security and stability.”

I have found that it does so here as well, in the chaos, torment, and sometimes uncontrollable violence of a maximum security penitentiary.

To be sure, there are indeed admonishments that don't fit in a modern day prison, such as the sufficiency of a half bottle of wine a day (RB 40.3) and removing your knife before you lay down to sleep (RB 22.5). Nonetheless, I've found that *The Rule* contains many exhortations from the great saint that are not only applicable in the twenty-first century, but extremely useful—especially in a penitentiary environment.

The Rule's emphasis on obedience is certainly not the least of these extremely valuable instructions.

² Joseph is a prisoner at a penitentiary in Illinois and became invested as an Oblate candidate on December 7, 2008. The article is printed with permission from his Oblate Director, Fr. James Murray, St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Illinois. Fr. James is editor of “Our Family News,” the Monastery's Oblate Newsletter, in which Joseph's article first appeared.

In fact, for me, St. Benedict's perspective on “holy obedience” actuated more changes in my approach to God than anything I've ever read before, or since, except for the Bible itself. Even though only chapters 5 and 71 have the word “obedience” in their titles, I've gradually come to appreciate how St. Benedict's particular perspective on obedience underscores and permeates practically everything he brings to us in *The Rule of St. Benedict*.

From the start, he dares us to be “armed with the strong and noble weapons of obedience to do battle for the true King, Christ the Lord,” (Prologue 3). And at the end, he proclaims boldly that “it is by this way of obedience that we go to God.” (RB 71.2) Everywhere in-between, “this way of obedience” is subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, in the background of his holy instructions.

It took me a while, however, to comprehend the scope, the breadth, and the sheer magnitude of “this way of obedience” that St. Benedict was propounding to his prospective monks. Prison is all about obedience. The obedience of the inmate toward the prison staff and the rule the enforce is prerequisite to sustaining the modicum of privileges allotted to a maximum security prisoner: the twice-weekly shower and recreational period, the occasional access to a phone, the library and the barber shop, and the opportunity to shop at the prison's commissary for a limited number of items that are not provided by the institution: deodorant, shampoo, gloves, coffee, and treats of various sorts.

The “obedience” of a gang member towards his “chief” and the rules that he enforces is perhaps a bit more personal. “Good standing” in his “prison family” is not only essential for his self-esteem, but also his basic identity in this world enclosed by cement and iron, and is well worth the extra narrow path that his gang requires him to follow.

Then, of course, there is a prison version of the “mutual obedience” that St. Benedict talks about in chapter 71. In prison, however, a person’s age and time-served usually count for naught in determining “seniority,” thereby leaving the question of “rank” wide open. Nevertheless, two individuals who each consider themselves an “alpha male” often must face each other alone in a locked cell, far away from the ears of anyone with a key and a can of pepper spray who could possibly thwart a bloody, perhaps even deadly, encounter. Here, a prison-styled “mutual obedience” toward each other’s privacy and property rights, as well as expectations of a cell that is relatively free of stench and squalor is paramount to both prisoners’ well-being, and maybe even life itself.

All of these forms of prison obedience offer an “ordered way of life” as well as “security and stability” for those who obey. But how close are they otherwise to St. Benedict’s “way of obedience that we go to God?”

The worldly results are identical; a life that is more stable and secure than it would be otherwise, and usually more pleasant as well. But the ultimate goal of prison obedience rarely goes beyond personal safety and pleasure, while the ultimate goal of St. Benedict’s obedience is far more eternal.

Even so, does this make a difference in the QUALITY of the obedience itself?

For the last nineteen ears I’ve had the golden opportunity to closely observe both kinds of obedience in a sharp contrast to one another that is rarely seen outside of prison walls. Contrary to public perception, there are individuals in prison who sincerely and wholeheartedly seek God.

I’m not talking about the religious fervor of the newcomer who is scared for his very life and needs some “divine protection,” or is still bargaining with God for some unexpected leniency in the appellate court. The seeker I’m

talking about usually has no “out-date” marked on his calendar, or any options left in the court system. His worldly hopes and dreams have all been stripped away by years of sorrow and despair behind bars. All he now has left is what God put there in the first place—the Call of Heaven.

I’ve never seen anyone truly seek God who has not somehow got a glimpse or a taste of God Himself. And this usually doesn’t come easy. But from that moment on, his “prison obedience” takes on an entirely different quality. The guards become his abbot, and as such, “hold the place of Christ: for him (RB 2.2). He has given up his own will (Prologue 3) and his compliance becomes “free from any grumbling or any reaction of unwillingness.” (RB 5.14).

Even when his obedience looks just like ordinary “prison obedience,” it surely feels different from where I’m standing. It has now become holy.

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BLESSINGS ON YOUR LENTEN JOURNEY!

PLEASE REMEMBER: To contribute material for the Advent 2010 Newsletter, contact newsletter editor, Dorothy Frances: by phone (509-548-5697), by e-mail (dhbwrites@charter.net), or by U. S. mail (P. O. Box 2218, Leavenworth, WA 98826.)