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OBLATE REFLECTION: June 2007 - Don Myrick

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Dear Friends,

Once again we are into the season of summer with its long warm days. And again we are brought to the realization that we really are part of the natural world - even for those of us who are urban types! Summer brings with it a certain lightness of spirit that flows into most aspects of life and draws us like some magnetic force to spend time in the great outdoors. Summer affects our attitudes, it affects our lifestyle. There are weekends at the cottage, summer vacations, visits to out-of-town family and the receiving of guests. We dress lighter, go for walks in the park after supper, perhaps even bicycle to work.

It is easy during times like this to get side tracked from spiritual practice, and if we are particularly busy we may even rationalize that after all, we can always take up where we left off in the fall. During times like this it is perhaps a good idea to remind ourselves why we are on the journey in the first place.

In Chapter 50 of the Rule, Benedict deals with all of this in one seemingly unremarkable sentence. Verse 4 reads as follows: "Those who have been sent on a journey are not to omit the prescribed hours but to observe them as best they can, not neglecting their measure of service." In this one verse Benedict reminds us that our call to service remains constant despite the flux and rhythms of our lives.

For we oblates of the WCCM that means of course a commitment our core practice of daily meditation. And yet it also calls on us to foster within ourselves a healthy measure of self-forgiveness. We are being called to do our best, and if circumstances are such that we are not able to meditate then there is no need to look back - we just begin again where we left off be it an evening, a day or a month. No guilt; no self recrimination - just start again. What this verse is not, however is a license to slack it. In the end, our spiritual practice should not be at odds with the other aspects of our lives but over time should become totally integrated with our overall lifestyle.

Nor is all of this really just a summer thing - the seasons are, in a certain sense a metaphor for the seasons of our own psyches. If we have a healthy a awareness and acceptance of where we are in the psychological department at any given time, while at he same time not getting into navel gazing and self analysis, our actual practice can help build within us a resilience and an ability to bounce back after a difficult period.

The "monastery" too - particularly for us extra-mural Benedictines - is, in a certain sense a state of mind, or perhaps more accurately a mind set, and again we can easily leave it for a bit of a break. I was reminded of this recently here in Ottawa when the whole city was in a state of near frenzy over the hockey play-offs with our long-suffering local team demonstrating some long awaited success. It was pretty easy to caught up in the whole despite the fact that a band wagon mentality may not be a very healthy trait. On the other hand assuming an attitude of aloofness or self-righteous detachment may be even worse as it smacks of Pharisaism (and we all know what the good Lord thought of these guys).

The world we live in may well have its faults however it is still our home and at the end of the day we are all part of the same family despite our different belief systems and journeys. To participate and celebrate with our fellow citizens is surely not a bad thing. In the end it probably all comes down to balance, perspective, and commitment. Our daily meditation is what enables us to build into our lives the silence necessary to be centered in the mystery of God while at he same time participating in the world around us with good-naturedness and compassion.

Hope you all have a great summer!

Peace to all,

Don

Oblates

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