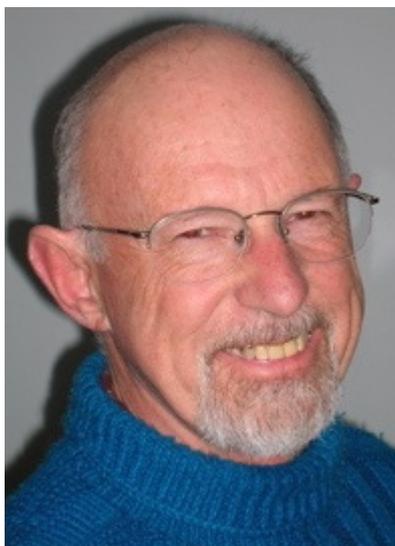


## OBLATE REFLECTION: March 2007 - Carolyn Kennedy / Don Myrick



Dear Friends,

This month's reflection comes to us compliments of Carolyn Kennedy. Carolyn is a practising psychotherapist and full time mom. She lives in Whitby, Ontario with her husband Stephen, 3 young sons, and an assortment of animals.

It's been close to three years since I stood in front of Father Laurence and took my novitiate vows at St. Basils in Toronto. Four years since I first laid my tired eyes upon this beautiful Rule and began my daily reflections on its ageless wisdom. Little did I know at the time what this would bring into my life, nor imagine what it would mean to the evolution of my soul.

The first, opening word of the Rule is "Listen" - a simple verb that has caused this oblate an undesirable amount of suffering to be sure!! Not that I suffer from deafness nor from an inability to focus, but more precisely because many of the authority figures I have had in my life could not be trusted to have my best interests at heart.

As a result, much of my teenage and young adult years were spent in a very slow and painfully lonely downward spiral, fuelled largely by feelings of self loathing, worthlessness, and an existential feeling of "not belonging". Add to this recipe a strong will to survive mixed with a dash of stubbornness and a whack of grief, and voila! a tasty melange fit for consumption only by the most manipulative and predatory among us. That being said, it is interesting that I was drawn to a sixth century monastic text, which 1500 years after it was first written could continue to speak to the hearts and minds of people who, if you're anything like

me, are terribly sophisticated and savvy (ha).

But those words, oh those first words, "Listen carefully, my son (daughter), to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart". These words jumped off the page at me. I knew intuitively what "the ear of the heart" was. Although I had trouble trusting for good reason, I had tried to turn that around in my own healing by giving to others what was never given to me: to listen to others with a compassionate, attentive and loving heart that could hear their pain and struggles with the WHOLE of their being, not just with their intellect.

Ironically, I have been led in intriguing ways to make a vocation of this "listening". In fact, as I finish my internship as a psychotherapist, you might call me a professional listener. I spend much of my time listening to the dilemmas of everyday people, some traumatic in nature, some sorrowful, some confused, some angry, and some just plain afraid. But whatever the trouble, there is a mystical, magical thing that happens when one human being can open their heart with great love and compassion and hold a silent, safe space for another human being to share their suffering. It is a deeply moving experience - humbling, sacred, profound.

It is through this act of bearing witness to another, without judgement, that the miracle of healing can occur. No amount of book study nor schooling can create it - it is only in the presence of the Love of God through another human being that this depth of healing can occur. Without it, there is little or no transformation. The most delicious paradox of it all, is that as I open myself to be a channel of God's love with my clients, I am healed myself. I can't imagine a more wonderful job to have!

As I continue to study the Rule, and incorporate it more and more into all aspects of my life, I am healing in my ability to trust authority. Benedict's advice is at once practical and creative, gentle and firm, nurturing and strict. Benedict treats each member of his community sensitively as the uniquely individual person that they are. He listens with "the ear of his heart" to these unique needs attentively and thoughtfully, and does his best to serve them with the greater good always in mind. He is a man who has become my spiritual mentor, and someone I would like to emulate in both my professional and private life.

Now if I could just listen with love to the sound of my three boys fighting over the TV channel while the dogs bark at the neighbour's cat and my husband knocks over the flower vase holding my one and only Easter lily.

Congratulations to Bill Tomka and Darrell Tessier who both began their postulancy at our bi-monthly meeting on March 24th here in Ottawa, and also a BIG thanks to Carolyn for her wonderful reflection.

May the spirit of the reality of the Easter mysteries fill us all with joy and hope during this most holy season.

Peace to All,

Don

Oblates

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