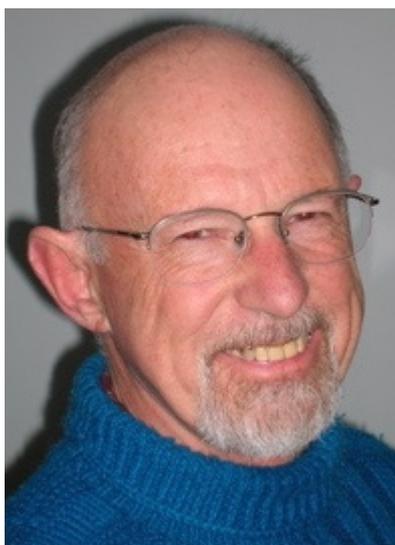


OBLATE REFLECTION: FEBRUARY 2007



Dear Friends,

As we know there are some aspects of the Rule that seem particularly applicable to oblates. One that would seem to have particular resonance for us is stability. This was the theme at a recent meeting of the Ottawa community as we wrapped up our series of reflections on the monastic vows.

Of the three vows stability is probably the most straightforward and easiest to understand. In fact Benedict himself gives very little by way of explanation as to his own understanding of it. Because of this there could be the temptation to dismiss it as unimportant, however as our little discussion highlighted, in the case of stability this would be a mistake. In fact I think we all agreed that stability is one of the pillars of both an individual life and a society that is fully functional.

For Benedict the concept was simple. He saw stability as commitment to the community - once you took your vows you stuck it out. Case closed. And implicit in this was not only a commitment to the community but to the geographical space that was the monastic enclosure.

This becomes very clear in chapter one of the Rule when he talks about the gyrovagues. They were the itinerant monks of his era and in Benedict's view they were little more than freeloaders in habits. There is little doubt that for Benedict stability was a communal concept. However the Rule makes clear that Benedict also had utmost concern the monks as individuals as well. It is probably safe to say that he believed that what was good for the community was good for the individual and vice versa.

The rise of individualism over the past couple of centuries has made all of this a little more complicated for us than it was for those of Benedict's time. Today we tend to balance commitment and communal good against our own need for fulfillment and personal actualization. This may seem a bit self-serving but there can be no denying that under the old way of looking at things many people became marginalized or even broken. Communal stability carries with it a certain need for conformity which in turn carries with it the danger of marginalizing those who quite don't measure up. We've probably all seen examples of this - an outsider in a small town, an abused spouse, or even a member of a religious community who has become the victim of in-house politics or institutional bureaucracy and heaviness.

This being said there is no doubt that society today is experiencing a bit of an individualism-gone-wild syndrome which in turn has contributed to the birth of the "me generation" with its accompanying restlessness, alienation and compulsion for escapism.

Although the applying the principals of the Rule will make for a more stable life-style, stability is ultimately an interior thing and for us meditators it is a bit of a chicken-and-egg thing as well. On the one hand a serious commitment to our daily meditation helps bring about this inner stability, and this stability in turn enables us to persevere on the journey as well as help develop within us a peaceful spirit. Not that it is a cure-all.

Sometimes we are broadsided by external unforeseen events and sometimes storms of one kind or another erupt within our own psyches and throw us off our game. What our commitment to daily meditation does do is gives us the resilience to bounce back quickly and get back on the journey.

Nor is it all about ourselves. Stability can be one of our gifts to the larger community in which we live. Few would argue it is a major need of society and the young especially are the real victims of this lack of rootedness. Just as most of us have been touched by people who may never realize they have touched us so we too never know when and how we will affect the lives of others. One thing for certain is that our commitment to, and participation in a weekly meditation group will help ensure such groups are there for those of our society who, while living in the fast lane, wake up to their own need for balance and centredness in God.

A hearty thanks to all of those who sent a donation to our Via Vita fundraiser. The results so far are encouraging and we have received a number of generous donations, so if things continue we should end up in fairly good financial shape at least for next few of issues.

Also a reminder that we do have oblate crosses for sale. We still have a few 1 1/2" X 1 1/2" maple crosses (light color) left for \$4.00 including shipping and the newer 1 1/4" X 1 1/4" black walnut crosses are \$8.00. If you would like a cross just mail me a cheque or cash to the following address:

Don Myrick
27 Costello Ave.
Nepean, ON, K2H 7C3

May God continue to bless us all as we journey together.

Peace,
Don

Oblates

Source URL: <http://www.wccm.org/content/oblate-reflection-february-2007>