



*Nothing Dearer than Christ*

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Oblate Letter Autumn Archangels 2021

## Monastic Voices: St AUGUSTINE of Hippo and Flavius Magnus Aurelius CASSIODORUS

### *ST AUGUSTINE(354–430) on Psalm 118*

*Verses 116-117. The hope of being led to true life -----*

4. He has swatted these flies away from the eyes of his heart, and now he turns' to the Lord. He said a moment ago, "You are my helper and supporter; I have hoped in your word, and now he extends his prayer: Support me according to your word, and I shall live; and do not disappoint me of my hope." He has already addressed the Lord as his supporter, and now he begs to be supported more and more efficaciously, and to be brought safely to that blessedness for the sake of which he endures so many hardships; for he is confident that there he will be more truly alive than he can be in this dream-like human existence. His words look to the future: I shall live, he says, implying that there is no real life in this death-ridden body; for the body is dead because of sin. As we await the redemption of our bodies we are saved in hope, and as we hope for what we do not yet see, we wait for it in patience.<sup>6</sup> And our hope is not disappointed if God's charity is poured abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us! Begging for a yet more generous outpouring of the Spirit the psalmist cries out to the Father, Do not disappoint me of my hope. And now he seems to hear the Lord silently answering him: "You do not wish to be disappointed of your hope? Then never give up pondering on my ways of justice." The psalmist knows how often such meditation is hindered by weariness or sickness in the soul, so he prays in reply, "Help me, and I shall be saved, and I will meditate unceasingly on your ways of justice."

CASSIODORUS (485–585) on Psalm 118-----

**Verse.116.** "Uphold me according to thy word, and I shall live: and do not confound me in my expectation." Now that they have routed the faithless and are cleansed of intimacy with wicked men, they ask to be supported by the Lord so that they can be saved by the promise of His word. It would perhaps be presumptuous to say to the Lord: "Uphold me", without adding the promise which can never mislead. But when they say: "I shall live", they speak of the time to come, for we do not truly live in this world where we sin in the frailty of the flesh. Their expectation was that in their great devotion they would encounter Christ's mercy. They ask that they realise this hope at the Judgment to come, so that they cannot be robbed of their expectation through misleading themselves and being confounded. This doubt is always present in holy hearts until the heavenly promise is realised. There is a similar expression elsewhere: "With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and he was attentive to me." So the expectation is blessed when the promise is certain; for why should faithful hope meet disappointment when He who gives the promise cannot experience change? So the expectation of the saints is to deserve the kingdom of heaven and companionship with the angels, and above all the continual vision of Him who ever grows sweet in the hearts of the blessed. "Help me, and I shall be saved. and I will meditate on Thy justifications always." Though these words are found often repeated, there are great mysteries being announced to us in such frequent occurrence. We must apply them to our minds' longing, and they cannot be divorced from them for any period, for though we receive blessings from the Lord, we must always beg Him to impart them constantly, so that the kindnesses bestowed may not forsake us through a crisis of faith. We should not regard the repetition as without point, so that we may not appear to have negligently disregarded what it is

important for us to know. They added: "And I wilt meditate on Thy justifications." always. They give the reason for their obeisance, so that after receiving salvation they may not appear ungrateful for the gift which has been bestowed. But when they promise to meditate always on His justifications, they are continually longing for their salvation to be maintained, for by such a course the devil wholly loses his opportunity. We can interpret justifications in two ways, either as those which we perform here and now in confessing our sins, like the gospel-example when the tax-collector confessed his sins and emerged justified from the temple; it is appropriate, as long as we are in this world and cannot be free of sins, always to prostrate ourselves in this justification. But because always follows, a word which we know transcends all time, the passage may not seem to you to befit this world, but may encourage you to give some thought to the eternity to come. The saints meditate on the Lord's justifications always when they shall combine their longings with those of the bands of angels, when they shall sing the Lord's praises with lasting exultation, when in Paul's words: "This corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality."

### FROM THE OBLATEMASTER'S DESK:-

Today, dear sisters and brothers, you have an opportunity to renew your Oblation, as a devotional act using the renewal slip enclosed which I usually send out at this time-- except when I forget and it comes out with the Christmas oblate letter to the consternation of some!

Now St Benedict has a special choice of psalms or rather one psalm for the whole of the little hours of Sunday and Monday psalm 118 in Roman numbering-- A psalm -- the longest psalm, and alphabetical psalm where each stanza of eight lines--twenty-two of them--each stanza celebrates the law of God under a different Hebrew letter in turn. It is a poetic and literary masterpiece. It celebrates the Torah-- the Law, the utterances, the Words (dhabar), precepts, testimonies, behests and so many other designations. --It includes the words of our Oblation " Suscipe me secundum eloquium tuum et vivam: et non confundas me ab expectatione mea"--Protect me according to Thy WORD, that I may live; And let me not be confounded in my hope."

Why does St Benedict give this psalm the prime time( starting with Prime1) on Sunday and Monday? Why is St Benedict making the psalm the keystone of the week's liturgy for his monks and nuns-- this is the key question I ask you today--Why is None on Sunday and Monday as well all from psalm 118 about God's law?-- every stanza of about six pages worth is about God's law in 175 different ways of its 175 verses?

The answer is very easy and very enlightening. St Benedict gives the psalm its key position in our worship and prayer because for him, and for us, it is a providential commentary on his Rule-- the Law under which all his monks fight with the same banner and under obedience to its yolk we all serve.

As we renew our Oblation we say " "Standing before God and His Saints, and in union with the monks and oblates of the monastery of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist & St. Andrew at Pluscarden, I offer myself to Almighty God. I renew my oblation, and I promise again the conversion of my life, according to the Rule of our holy Father St. Benedict, in so far as my state in life permits."-- And then we say :- "Receive me, Lord, as you have promised, and I shall live: do not disappoint me in my hope."--Yes this is *the verse from Ps 118:116* -- yes our famous, longest psalm about God's Law and we can safely say I would submit that in the mind of St Benedict, our founder, every verse of it is about his Rule, the Law, the Commandments, the Precepts of our Lord, the Teaching, the Statutes, the Instructions. Therefore I have included in this quarter's Oblate letter two commentaries on this verse from our Renewal and psalm 118 from two Fathers of the Church, St Augustine of Hippo and (the at least Venerable?) Cassiodorus.

Take any verse of the psalm and substitute "Rule" for "Statutes" or its many other designations and you instantly get a new Meditation on the Rule of St Benedict- take for instance Verse 83-- I take it at random!--

Vs. 83 "Though parched and exhausted with waiting  
I remember your statutes"

= for our meditation

"Though parched and exhausted with waiting

I remember your **RULE**".

--A new meditation on the Rule!--The end of the prologue sounds almost like verses from psalm 118-- " But as we progress on the path of God's **commandments**, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love. Never swerving from his **instructions**, but faithfully observing his **teaching** in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom" **Commandments, instructions, teachings**-- the same joy in the Law of God inspires psalm 118, the showpiece of Sunday and Monday of St Benedict's Divine Office, as inspires the Prologue of our Holy Father's Rule!

Going back to verse 83 chosen at random we see that the the sharing through patience in the sufferings of Christ can sometimes be the undramatic " Though parched and exhausted with waiting I remember your Rule".( St Benedict's Rule)--"YOUR Rule"( God's Rule) Nevertheless in embracing whichever of the 175 forms of keeping God's Law ( St Benedict's Rule) suggested by St Benedict's showcasing of psalm 118( Vulgate)---by carrying the Cross of faithful obedience to the Law of Christ, the New Covenant in His Blood, by patient humility, the monk, the Oblate, the Christian is exalted with Christ by sharing in His sufferings.

Serving faithfully under the banner of Christ's law, victory is assured.

We can therefore see that psalm 118 is meant by St Benedict by its prize position on Sundays and Mondays throughout the days, throughout the year, it is meant to be 175( or 176!) different lectio texts on God's Law , on St Benedict's Rule, 175 meditations--two day meditations for the whole year.

Psalm 118 is therefore a rich Thesaurus, treasure-trove of commentary and reflection on our Holy Rule which could almost be used like our yearly reading of the Rule itself!

## **Books & Media**

All of St Augustine's voluminous commentaries on all the psalms (and all the rest of Scripture) are available for free download as also Cassiodorus's writings. (There are good modern translations of each in print)

**PLUSCARDEN BENEDICTINES** Br. Cyprian Bampton is the new editor. All enquiries about the magazine that so many of you enjoy to him, please. £10 is a suggested subscription donation. For inclusion on the mailing list write Br. Cyprian Bampton OSB at the Abbey address -- similarly subscriptions and changes of address to him, Br. Cyprian. The Magazine and the Oblate Letter( just that, brief letter) are both quarterly, usually the third month of each quarter.

**PLUSCARDEN LIVE STREAMING--go to our website and you will find a drop-down list leading you to livestreaming-- click onto that and choose past or present item.**

**or click on this link**

<http://pluscardenabbey.org/live>

**Br. Michael is in charge of the live streaming. All queries to him.**

**RESIDENTIAL BOOKINGS:- FR. GILES BY LETTER**(S.A.E. ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA!)-----OR EMAIL--or form through the website

**guestmaster.pluscarden@gmail.com for bookings for this summer or officially guestmaster@pluscardenabby.org**

***The Pluscarden website is the primary source for day to day information: Please keep an eye on it--especially if you have a "booking"- and for livestreaming.***

**[www.pluscardenabbey.org](http://www.pluscardenabbey.org)**

## **NEXT YEAR 2022**

- **LENTEN RETREAT NEXT YEAR 2022--2nd Weekend of Lent Fr. Abbot Friday 11th March to Monday 14th March**
- **SUMMER OBLATE RETREAT NEXT YEAR 2022- Friday 29th July to Monday 1st August Fr. Stuart Chalmers, Oblate, Spiritual director of the Scots College in Spain.**

## **TWO YEARS HENCE 2023**

- **2023 Lent Friday 24th February to Monday 27th February Fr. Abbot.**
- **2023 moved back!! N.B. to Summer 18th to 21st AUGUST Bishop Richard Moth, Oblate**

- **Inter Oblate zoom event: 2021--This Year ADVENT:UK Oblate Team'MUTUAL LONGING:**

GOD AND HIS CREATION'

An Online National Benedictine Oblate Retreat for Advent  
SATURDAY 4 DECEMBER 2021 (11.00 – 17.00 GMT) via Zoom

Organised by the UK Oblate Team

GUEST SPEAKER:

REV. FATHER STUART CHALMERS

Spiritual Director, Royal Scots College, Salamanca

SUGGESTED DONATION: £15

For further details and registration please contact:

Neil Zoladkiewicz (Treasurer, UK Oblate Team) at [nzolad53@gmail.com](mailto:nzolad53@gmail.com)

FINAL DATE FOR REGISTRATION: SATURDAY NOVEMBER 27 2021

**PRAYER INTENTIONS** Abbot Anselm's intentions. Bishop Hugh's & Bishop Richard Moth's(Oblate) intentions. For Deacon Joseph Carron, newly Ordained by Bishop Hugh here on the 30th September 2021. For the repose of the soul of Postulant Oblate Marek Zielinski who died aged 38 of covid last month and for his widow and three young children, and for the repose of the soul of for Gillian Cockwill's mother Mrs Helen Wilcox died this month. Professor Dalway Swaine and his wife Winifred Swaine both Oblates, been informed died Australia some time ago. R.I.P. Deacon Pat Carrigan's brother Alex Carrigan. For Canon Luke Smith( Oblate) Spiritual director Wonnesh & for Fr. Stuart Chalmers (Oblate) spiritual director of the Scots College in Spain &. For Prior Bede & For Fr. Ambrose Flavell in charge of the Shetlands. Vocations to St Mary's and St. Scholastica's, Petersham, U.S.A and Kristo Buase Priory. Justyna Tymecka and Marvia McCulloch, Joe Bagley, Robert Cantafio and his mother Margharita , Jane Coll's granddaughter Natasha Gunn. Fr. Francis Wilson(any news **still** welcomed by Oblatemaster), Janet Boyd Moss, Connie Reid, Mary Frances McGregor and her daughter Ruth. Please pray for the health of Fr. Matthew, Br. Cyprian, Br Finbar, Br. Gabriel, Rev. Christopher Mayo, Rev. Angus Macleod(news and address again welcome), for Netta Ewing , for Gail( very poorly) & Deacon Tony Schmitz. For Siobhan Gilmour's husband, for Mrs. Allie Brien, Margaret Johnston's mother, for Gitte Mackay, , Leonora Duson, and her daughter, Joe Barrett, Maureen Woodhead & her Sister Doreen, Bob Barr, Brian Milne, Fiona Sellar, Johan(Joy) Baillie, Nick MacCrae. Martin MacCrae, Dr. David Paterson and his wife Angela, Jacqui Heath-Anderson and daughter Sally, Dr. Hester du Plessis, Poppy Sinclair, Ian & Frederick Brodie, for Pat Foster, Pam Woodhead, Carolyn, Marshall & Malcolm Boardman, and also for Eileen Kerr, Elizabeth MacKay, Peter and Brian Wynne, Susan Stephen serious illness, Cindy's husband, Danielle & her son Osyp, Evelyn, and Sheila, Martin Drinkwater, Alistair Macdonald and all the

friends of the Abbey and for all Oblates, and for ALL the sick and those who care for them--and for our 3 sponsored seminarians. For vocations and all our novices Brothers Patrick, Edmund and Andrew, monks and Oblates, and all our Oblates living and dead.Br. Jerome Leo Oblatemaster of St Mary's Petersham. All we have omitted or forgotten, living and dead.

***Our three sponsored seminarians are all doing well. Their education has been disrupted with the global lockdowns that have been imposed. Uganda is now returning to normal and the seminarians have all returned to their formal studies. Please pray for them and for Sr Catherine OSB, who does so much to keep everything running smoothly and our outgoing coordinator & our new coordinator:***

***Oblate Penelope Coate has taken over as the co-ordinator of the seminarian programme. Penelope Coate's contact details: [penelopecoate@yahoo.com](mailto:penelopecoate@yahoo.com). 0794 9399592.***

#### **OBLATE CHAPTERS**

**PLEASE MAKE USE OF THE CONTACT DETAILS BELOW TO FIND OUT HOW THINGS ARE PROGRESSING.>>>>▼▼▼▼OR--Contact me( details at the head of every letter!) I can forward or:-**

**St Mungo's Chapter**, Glasgow:-We meet on the second Saturday of each month at 2 p.m. Contact can be made via Peter Aitken. Tel. 0141 427 2084.

**St Margaret's Chapter**, Dunfermline meetings as announced. All details contact Deacon Pat Carrigan [smcb\\_oblates@live.co.uk](mailto:smcb_oblates@live.co.uk)

**St. Monica's Chapter for far North** -- Thurso. Contact Jane Coll. "Scaraben", Westside, Dunnet, Thurso, Caithness, KY14 8YD. Phone 01847 851467( informal)--and Orkney and Shetland by zoom I understand!

**St. Peter's Chapter**, Aberdeen --When resuming 7.00-8.00 pm Mondays as below, Church Hall, St Joseph's, 2 Tanfield Walk, Aberdeen contact Chairman Mr. Robert Ian Johnston, 31, Tay Road, Mastrick, ABERDEEN AB16 5LA or secretary Mr. George Brand [geobra@msn.com](mailto:geobra@msn.com):-Schedule:

- Monday 18th October 2021 7.00-8.00 pm
- Monday 15th November 2021 7.00-8.00 pm
- Monday 17th January 2022 7.00-8.00 pm
- Monday 21st February 2022 7.00-8.00 pm

**"St Andrew's Chapter"** AT PRESENT ONCE A MONTH ON A TUESDAY AS ANNOUNCED IN CHURCH NONE AND FOR HALF AN HOUR AFTER--**LIVESTREAMED** FOR THOSE NOT PRESENT --FROM WEBSITE. You are warmly invited to the 6th of these sessions at 2.30pm Tuesday 12th October, to (silently) pray the Divine Office of None at Pluscarden Abbey.

After None, Oblatemaster Fr Martin will kindly give a short talk, to be followed by time (15 minutes) for private prayer before the Tabernacle. He will close with a blessing at 3.15pm.

Hand sanitizer and masks are still required please.

As before, the Brethren, Fr Martin's talk and blessing will be live-streamed so Oblates unable to attend can participate online via [pluscardenabbey.org/live](http://pluscardenabbey.org/live) on the Abbey website.

We very much appreciate the generosity and kindness of Fr Abbot and the Brethren, especially Fr Martin and Br Michael.

Warm regards and prayers  
Eileen Fitzpatrick Oblate OSB  
Co-ordinator St Andrew's Chapter (local to Moray)

**St Columba's Chapter** in Dundee -- if interested please contact Mrs. Georgina Quinn 2D, Church Street, Broughty Ferry DUNDEE Fife DD5 1EZ“

**Benedictine Prayer Circle**-If interested some oblates may like to know of John McKinlay's Benedictine Prayer Circle, see Links on the UKOT website—John McKinlay jgjm07@yahoo.co.uk

JOHN 1.51&52

50 Jesus said to him, “Do you believe just because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” 51 Then He declared, “Truly, truly, I tell you, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”



*Love and Blessings in S.P.N.B & Our Lord Jesus Christ*

*Fr. Martin*

*Pax*