



*Nothing Dearer than Christ*

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a very little Oblate Letter for Christmas 2021--*Red Letter for Christmas Joy*

**Monastic Voices: Fr Louis--Thomas Merton and Blessed Gueric of Igny**

**Fr Louis-- from the Introduction to the Christmas Sermons of Blessed Gueric:-**

"These words sum up the spirit of Bl. Gueric's Christmas sermons. We are to be happy, not with a mediocre happiness but with a superabundant supernatural joy in God. Happy not only at considering this mystery, or imitating the virtues of the infant Christ from afar, but in a new life which we receive as a grace of the feast, by the hidden spiritual power of the Mystery of Christ's birth into the world and time. The whole purpose of the celebration of Christmas is not the commemoration of Christ's birth but the renewal of this grace of rebirth and spiritual infancy in the hearts of the faithful. This consists first of all in a new realization that our Christ-life is a gift of the infinite mercy of God. It means also a renewal of gratitude for His generosity. It means new joy in His love. These are the particular means by which the grace of Christmas energizes our spirit and enables us to receive a fresh increase of charity and supernatural life."

**Bl Gueric of Igny. The Christmas Sermons:**

"To the splendour of His glory and the form of His Father's substance He preferred the form of a slave without beauty or comeliness. And as though He had not emptied Himself enough when He became man, He even annihilated the glory of human flesh. He made foolish the wisdom of God, weakened His power, and lessened His greatness so as to become the least of all in His nativity and the last of all in His passion. Therefore they took no account of Him. Do you wish to see God emptied of Himself? Look at Him lying in the manger. Behold our God, says Isaiah who saw Him from afar and recognized the manger of His Lord or rather His Lord in the manger. Behold our God, he says. Where? I ask. In a manger, he replies. And there I find an Infant. Is this He who fills the heavens and the earth? Nay, are the very heavens wide enough to contain His majesty? I see Him wrapped in swaddling bands. Is this He Who put on glory and beauty of light inaccessible, who is clothed in radiance as with a garment? I hear Him crying. Is this He Who thunders in the heavens and at the sound of Whose voice the angelic powers lower their wings? Yes, says another prophet taking Isaiah's place, such a God is ours, but He has emptied Himself to fill you. He has willed to unmake Himself that you may be remade. All the prophets cry out with one voice: Such a God is ours; what rival will be compared to Him?(Bar. 3:36)?"

**FROM THE OBLATEMASTER'S DESK:-**

Blessed Gueric of the Abbey of Igny is one of the four great spiritual writers of the school of St. Bernard which have have been called the "four Cistercian evangelists." Of these the greatest was Bernard himself, Abbot of Clairvaux and Doctor of the Church. The other three were his friends and disciples, William of St. Thierry, St. Aelred, abbot of Rievaulx in Yorkhire, and Bl. Gueric of Igny. Of these four, only Bernard was really well known until recently Ailred and William are beginning to be read nowadays in English translations.

Fr. Louis ( Thomas Merton!) summarises well our much needed spiritual involvement in Christmas in these strange times in which we live.

***"The whole purpose of the celebration of Christmas is not the commemoration of Christ's birth(only!!-Fr Martin) but the renewal of this grace of rebirth and spiritual infancy in the hearts of the faithful. This consists first of all in a new realization that our Christ-life is a gift of the infinite mercy of God. It means also a renewal of gratitude for His generosity. It means new joy in His love. These are the particular means by which the grace of Christmas energizes our spirit and enables us to receive a fresh increase of charity and supernatural life."***

**BOOKS & MEDIA**

**The Christmas Sermons Of Blessed Gueric Of Igny** Publisher : Literary Licensing, LLC (18 Jun. 2011) 66 pages  
ISBN-10 : 1258044692 & ISBN-13 : 978-1258044695-- Bit of a presentation booklet -- maybe someone would give it you as a gift!! (Over thirty pounds for the little book.)

**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**

### **Now For NEXT YEAR 2022**

- **LENTEN RETREAT NEXT YEAR 2022**--moved back!--to the 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-----You can check everything on the website

**WORLD CONGRESS** It has been decided that the "5<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Benedictine Oblates" will be held at the *Badia Primaziale Sant'Anselmo*, in Rome, from 9 to 16 September 2023. Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B

**PRAYER INTENTIONS** Abbot Anselm's intentions. Bishop Hugh's & Bishop Richard Moth's(Oblate) intentions. Vocations to St Mary's and St. Scholastica's, Petersham, U.S.A and Kristo Buase Priory. Repose of the souls of Martin De Klerk, Br. Michael's eldest brother., Alexander Maclean, Oblate, Gail Schmitz, Oblate, Frederick Brodie Oblate (covid). Oblation, Michael JOSEPH Brady, novice Oblates, Jamie McGowan, Michael Stertch Reverend Robert Birnie and Isobel Demoulin. Health of Oblates: Justyna Tymecka and Marvia McCulloch, Joe Bagley, Robert Cantafio and his mother Margharita, Ursulla Humphrey,,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(Lost & found!), for Netta Ewing. 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, , Poppy Sinclair, Ian Fred's Twin, 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, Elizabeth Mackay, 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--- also not least all those traumatised by the covid years.

**Our three sponsored seminarians are all doing well. 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:**

*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:**Contact can be made via Peter Aitken. Tel. 0141 427 2084.

**St Margaret's Chapter:** 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 & Orkney and Shetland by zoom I understand!

**St. Peter's Chapter**, Aberdeen: 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 17th January 2022 7.00-8.00 pm, Monday 21st February 2022 7.00-8.00 pm

**"St Andrew's Chapter"** Just to let you know that we will be taking a break for the winter, returning dv in the spring; date to be advised nearer the time. I will send out an invitation email to you in good time. Past live-streamed Oblates at None are available on:

<http://pluscardenabbey.org/live> Warm regards and prayers

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

**St Columba's Chapter** in Dundee -- 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](mailto:jgjm07@yahoo.co.uk)

Once again--"The Burning Babe."

As I in hoary winter's night  
Stood shivering in the snow,  
Surprised I was with sudden heat  
Which made my heart to glow;  
And lifting up a fearful eye  
To view what fire was near,  
A pretty babe all burning bright  
Did in the air appear;  
Who, scorched with excessive heat,  
Such floods of tears did shed,  
As though His floods should quench His flames,  
Which with His tears were bred:  
'Alas!' quoth He, 'but newly born  
In fiery heats I fry,  
Yet none approach to warm their hearts  
Or feel my fire but I!

'My faultless breast the furnace is;  
The fuel, wounding thorns;  
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke;  
The ashes, shames and scorns;

The fuel Justice layeth on,  
And Mercy blows the coals,  
The metal in this furnace wrought  
Are men's defiled souls:  
For which, as now on fire I am  
To work them to their good,  
So will I melt into a bath,  
To wash them in my blood.'  
With this He vanish'd out of sight  
And swiftly shrunk away,  
And straight I callèd unto mind That it was  
Christmas Day

St Robert Southwell,  
martyr

Blessings, love and  
prayers at Christmas, and  
always, Fr. Martin PAX

