



nothing Dearer than Christ

Oblate letter of the Pluscarden Benedictines, Elgin, Moray, Scotland. IV30 8UA.

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The Davidic Monastic Voice

Devotional Poetry

George Herbert (adoptive Godchild of John Donne) 1593-1633

Poem CXL VII. THE ODOUR.

Biblical quotation 2 COR. II.14-17 heading the poem.

"14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the **aroma** of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are to God the pleasing **aroma** of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are an **aroma** that brings death; to the other, an **aroma** that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? 17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God. NIV

THE ODOUR

How sweetly doth My Master sound! My Master !

As ambergris leaves a rich scent

Unto the taster:

So do these words a sweet content,
An oriental fragrancy, My Master.

With these all day I do perfume my mind,
My mind e'en thrust into them both-;
That I might find
What cordials make this curious broth,
This broth of smells, that feeds and fats my mind.

My Master, shall I speak ? O that to thee
My Servant were a little so,
As flesh may be ;
That these two words might creep and grow
To some degree of spiciness to thee !

Then should the Pomander, which was before
A speaking sweet, mend by reflection,
And tell me more :
For pardon of my imperfection
Would warm and work it sweeter than before.

For when My Master, which alone is sweet,
And e'en in my unworthiness pleasing,
Shall call and meet,
My servant, as thee not displeasing,
That call is but the breathing of the sweet.

This breathing would with gains by sweetening me
(As sweet things traffic when they meet)
Return to thee.
And so this new commerce and sweet
Should all my life employ, and busy me.

FROM THE OBLATEMASTER'S DESK

It is notable that Christian prayer and praise-- especially for Benedictines-- is 90% poetic-- seven times a day and once at night of course in the 150 psalms and some hymns also. Prose is a small portion of all of this. Prose, be it theology or Scripture commentary, spiritual reading, sacred history or other disciplines useful for lectio--these do not always and at all times speak to our often urgent need to fully engage with the mystery and plumb its depths in as far as the Lord permits.

It is the Davidic charism of the religious, Christian poet to engage us in the direct but enigmatic mystery. It engages without attempting to explain. It intuits and grasps the whole, person to person, heart to heart, interior to interior.

So it is with “The Odour” which bypasses all our analyses (as does St Paul in his scriptural prototype “aroma”). Odour, aroma, immediately engages our person and in this context is interpersonal and puts before us associations of –odour of sanctity, bad odour, smell of death, enticing fragrance (such that a St Augustine pants after), perfume of good deeds, pleasing aroma, fragrant offering, the myrrh, the incense of suffering, the fragrant sacrifice.

“My Master”, Jesus, is to be the sweet fragrance emanating from “My Servant” drawing others to The Source.

It is well that the psalms, too, help to make this odour, this fragrance permeate and transform “My Servant’s” life.

BOOKS AND MEDIA:

“George Herbert (3 April 1593 – 1 March 1633) was an English poet, orator, and priest of the Church of England. His poetry is associated with the writings of the metaphysical poets, and he is recognised as "one of the foremost British devotional lyricists." He was born in Wales into an artistic and wealthy family and largely raised in England. He received a good education that led to his admission to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1609. He went there with the intention of becoming a priest, but he became the University's Public Orator and attracted the attention of King James I. He sat in the Parliament of England in 1624 and briefly in 1625.[3]

After the death of King James, Herbert renewed his interest in ordination. He gave up his secular ambitions in his mid-thirties and took holy orders in the Church of England, spending the rest of his life as the rector of the rural parish of Fugglestone St Peter, just outside Salisbury. He was noted for unfailing care for his parishioners, bringing the sacraments to them when they were ill and providing food and clothing for those in need. Henry Vaughan called him "a most glorious saint and seer". He was never a healthy man and died of consumption at age 39.”(Public forum)

Pluscarden Benedictines For inclusion on the mailing list write Br. Cyprian Bampton

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 items or click on this link :-

<http://pluscardenabbey.org/live> Br. Michael is in charge of the live streaming—All thanks & queries to him, please.

RESIDENTIAL BOOKINGS:- Fr. Giles by letter (suggest SAE) or email guestmaster.pluscarden@gmail.com for bookings or officially guestmaster@pluscardenabbey.org or a form through the website www.pluscardenabbey.org

Oblate Congress-- Full report by Bryan Miller our delegate in the Christmas Oblate Letter!

Next Year 2024 there will be one Grand Retreat(as of yore) next Summer 2024 for the Golden Jubilee of Pluscarden becoming an ABBEY--dates probably the four days following the Pilgrimage 2024--30th June: namely **1st-4th July 2024--multiple speakers and meals provided in common in marquee(as of yore)**

PRAYER INTENTIONS For Father Joseph Carron and for his mother Jacqueline and family. RIP Rev. Angus Macleod, Oblate and Fr. Martin's sister Annie. Rev. Aldo Canon Angelosanto, Oblate, golden Jubilee of Ordination. Jane Coll, Oblate- Golden wedding annivaerary

Health of Oblates: Mrs Sarah Drever op. for cancer of eyelid 26th September 2023,*Peter Aitken*, George Brand's wife Yvonne, Justyna Tymecka, Joe Bagley, Mrs Sheila Barr, Robert Cantafio and his mother Margharita, Ursula Humphrey, Jane Coll's granddaughter Natasha Gunn. Fr. Francis Wilson, Connie Reid, Mary Frances McGregor. Please pray for the health of, Rev. Christopher Mayo. For Siobhan Gilmour's husband, Margaret Johnston's mother, for Gitte Mackay, Leonora Duson, Robert Johnstone & his father, for Joe Barrett senior, Maureen Woodhead & her Sister Doreen, Bob Barr, Brian Milne, Fiona Sellar, Nick MaCrae, Martin MaCrae, Jacqui Heath-Anderson and daughter Sally, Poppy Sinclair, Ian, Fred's Twin, Pamela Nelson Shaw's brother, Pam Woodhead(nursing home),Alison Donald(nursing home), Patricia Robertson, Carolyn Campbell, Carolyn, Marshall & Malcolm Boardman,

and also for Eileen Kerr, Elizabeth MacKay, Alistair Macdonald, **and for ALL the housebound and the sick.**

Our three sponsored seminarians are all doing well. Josaphat was ordained Deacon 8th July thanks be to God. They are all extremely grateful for the financial support we give them and pray for us. Please pray for them and for Sr Catherine OSB, who does so much to keep everything running smoothly & our coordinator of the seminarian programme-- Penelope Coate--- contact details: penelopecoate@yahoo.com 0794 9399592.

OBLATE CHAPTERS

PLEASE MAKE USE OF THE CONTACT DETAILS BELOW or contact me--details at the head of every letter.

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

St. Peter's Chapter, Aberdeen: 7.00-8.00 pm Mondays as below, Cathedral Presbytery, Huntly Street, Aberdeen contact Chairman Mr. Robert Ian Johnston, 31, Tay Road, Mastrick, ABERDEEN AB16 5LA or secretary Mr. George Brand geobra@msn.com:- prayer & discussion & centred around Compline from the Abbey---contact chairman & secretary. See Addenda to Lenten letter for programme.

St Andrew's Chapter. Moray. Live-streamed Oblates at None followed by tea in the Visitor Centre. Past Oblate None at <http://pluscardenabbey.org/live> Warm regards and prayers Eileen Fitzpatrick Oblate OSB Co-ordinator St Andrew's Chapter

Benedictine Prayer Circle- Oblates may like to join John McKinlay's Benedictine Prayer Circle, see Links on the UKOT website— John McKinlay jgim07@yahoo.co.uk

Our Holy Father St Benedict Pray for us, Sts Michael, Gabriel & Raphael pray for us!

Prayers for Peace and Blessings

Fr. Martin PAX