



*Nothing Dearer than Christ*

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Website [www.pluscardenabbey.org](http://www.pluscardenabbey.org) DMB series No 45

Oblate Letter 46 Easter Pentecost Summer 2020

## Monastic Voice

*Fr. Martin sermon 10.00 AM Mass 6th Sunday of Easter 17th May  
2020*

*Year A. Readings : Acts 8:5-8,14-17, 1 Peter 3.15-18,*

*John 14.15-21*

We live in strange and confusing times. We are locked down like the first Christians; behind closed doors but in our case for fear of the pandemic. Today's gospel is a wonderful reminder that for the Apostles and disciples and first Christians our Lord's presence threw up a host of questions; they were frequently in a state of bewilderment. We can see and understand that our Lord was speaking and acting clearly in all this. We are bewildered at this time but nevertheless it is clear that the Lord is saying something to the whole world in these strange times. *Withdrawing from the world* springs to mind in our present state and this seems to chime in very well with today's gospel. We're all Carthusians now! Three years ago we were re-awakening and re-walking the connection with our Valliscaullian roots, our quasi-Carthusian roots and who is to say that it was not our Lord's preparation of us at Pluscarden for this present time in rediscovering

our enclosed, contemplative life in cloistered stability. We are called to be what we are-- monks-- and in doing so we have a valuable witness for a world that is locked down – We're all Carthusians now; we're all Valliscaullians now and perhaps the world needs some who can confidently say “That is Okay-- that is good – thanks be to God!” The world is freed from lots of useless and destructive activity-- what a joy to open the door and only hear the whispering of the wind and the singing of the birds. It's uncanny – it immediately makes you think on God!

In today's gospel or just before it at the end of our Lord's answer to Peter's question “Lord where are you going?” Jesus moved the conversation back to the general theme of preparation for His departure. He did the same thing after answering Philip's “Lord let us see the Father..!” Obedience to the will of God is not only a condition for getting answers to prayer. It is also an evidence of love for God. Love for God is the controlling idea in today's gospel. This is Jesus' first direct reference in this Gospel of St John to the believer's love for Himself. Typically Jesus first reaches out in love to others and then expects love as an enabled response “If you love me..” The conditional sentence in the Greek text is termed "third class,"(as the grammarians tell us) which assumes neither a positive nor a negative response. Love for Jesus will motivate the believer to obey Him. In the context Jesus' commands are His total revelation viewed as components, not just His ethical injunctions. The greatness of our love for God is easy to test. It corresponds exactly to our conformity to all that He has revealed. Love for Jesus would result in the disciples' obedience to His commands. It also results in Jesus' requesting another (Gr. allon, another of the same kind) Helper to take His place in His absence from them. The Greek word translated "Helper" or "Counsellor" is parakletos. In secular

contexts it often referred to a legal assistant, an advocate, or simply a helper (e.g. a witness or a representative in court). The verbal form of this word, *parakaleo*, literally means to “call alongside” and, therefore, to encourage or to strengthen. What Jesus speaks of here is an abiding relationship in which the Spirit remains with believers throughout their lives. This new relationship to the Holy Spirit is one of the distinctive differences between the age of the Church and former dispensations. It is a blessing few of us Christians appreciate as we should. However in the future, after Jesus returned to the Father, the Spirit would not just be with them but in them. This is another distinctive ministry of the Spirit in the present age. He indwells believers. That ministry began on Pentecost when the church began.

We are called to be rather than merely say.

St John Chrysostom speaking of today's gospel:-

“We need everywhere works and actions, not a mere show of words. For to say and to promise is easy for any one, but to act is not equally easy. (He says) Why have I made these remarks? Because there are many at this time who say that they fear and love God, but in their works show the contrary; but God requires that love which is shown by works. Wherefore He said to the disciples, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” For after He had told them, “Whatever you ask, I will do it,” and that they might not deem the mere “asking” to be sufficient, He added, “If you love Me,” “then,” He says, “I will do it.” And since it was likely that they would be troubled when they heard that, “I go to the Father,” He tells them “to be troubled now is not to love, to love is to obey My words. I have given you a commandment that you love one another, that you do so to each other as I have done to you;

this is love, to obey these My words, and to yield to Him who is the object of your love.”

So St John Chrysostom makes clear that today we hear a Gospel <sup>4</sup> of concreteness, one that reminds us that love “lives” in our actions, in our concrete behaviour and, above all, that the commandments are not only bonds or burdens to carry but signs and instruments of this love.

The Lord says to us: “Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me”,--as he says later to Peter “..if you love me –Feed my sheep” in this way showing the how both faith and love enter into our life through action. To begin with, there is an experience of knowing, when someone, either by word or example, announces the Kingdom of God and a manner of life or way of being in the world that reflects this mystery. The commandments are the way in which we give concrete form to the great love that God gives to us, in the small and tangible events of life. The commandments communicate with us not in the manner of imposing a rule but to set before us a way of life to be freely accepted; this is the greatness of a God who does not want slaves about Himself but sons and daughters, those who love freely.

Acceptance of the Gospel can confine itself to enthusiasm or to the praise of some edifying example, with the serious risk of making ineffective the gift that God gives us. The observance of the commandments, before it is ever an act of obedience to a law, is a way of Christian living that gives concrete expression to the Gospel in our lives. The Christian life, in fact, is not an abstract and intangible

thing, it is not a misty ideal or something that can properly be relegated to the abstract. It is instead a thing to be loved, something to be tried out and put into practice. It is the way in which each person (as Pope Francis repeatedly invites us) participates, in virtue of their baptism, in the evangelising mission entrusted by Christ to his disciples. Long speeches and particular talents are not necessary so as to proclaim the Gospel: it is enough to live as a Christian, to show that Christian life according to the commandments is not only feasible but is the happiest and most deeply human life that we can live.

The Catechism summarises: “243 Before his Passover, Jesus announced the sending of "another Paraclete" (Advocate), the Holy Spirit. At work since creation, having previously "spoken through the prophets," the Spirit will now be with and in the disciples, to teach them and guide them "into all the truth." The Holy Spirit is thus revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father.” And looking ahead beyond the Ascension, the apparent withdrawal of Jesus:-

“244 The eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is revealed in his mission in time. The Spirit is sent to the apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Son in person, once he had returned to the Father. The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus' glorification reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.”

So----oo!-----oo!-----!this prolonged Carthusian, Valliscaullian retreat that we are living-- along with the rest of the world **is an invitation to a contemplative “at home” to the Holy Trinity.** An anonymous Carthusian poet \*expresses it:

“Our secret

“Through silent cloisters I walk and sense You near.

The world grows paltry and dull, its anxious care.

This our honey dripping upon the hills

Our wine unstinting poured, our manna strong;

Your love our secret; our wealth this wilderness.

No purpose beyond these walls, my heart's for this;

To enter this love of God exceeding great,

To know it and thirst for more; to seek it and grow

In depths of longing”

\* see Books and Media below

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

As you know we Pluscarden Oblates do not take a specific promise of stability. Nevertheless it is fairly obvious that Providence has put stability our way with present conditions putting a searchlight upon it and highlighting and underlining it. So it is not a wasted effort if we go through the Rule of St Benedict and look at all the parts about stability-- staying put firstly in the most literal sense--- before going on to spiritualised senses. We remember our Lord's words to us all as his missionaries in the world "Whatever village you go into stay in the same house and eat what is set before you-- do not go from house to house." Is this not the menu that St Benedict is presenting us with at

this time? Obedience too has not been far behind in the rays of the searchlight.

In all this we begin to discern the essentials and indeed the one thing necessary.

## Books and Media

- \* **"O Bonitas!"**This is a book of poems written by a Carthusian. compiled by Lockhart. Review:"The eighty poems that fill this wonderful little volume were chosen by Robin Bruce Lockhart out of nearly one thousand that had been written by this Carthusian monk. We are very blessed to be able to read these inspired poems. I have found them to be creative and diverse. This is worth reading multiple times. We are lucky that these were published and shared with the world. It will be a permanent addition to my library!"-- ***I can second this! A memento of these strange, Carthusian times. Inspiring. Reassuring. --See extract above.***  
**ISBN 9780852445501 prices available £3-£7**

## ❖ Oblate Events

PLEASE CONSULT THE WEBSITE OF PLUSCARDEN ABBEY FOR DAY TO DAY INFORMATION ABOUT THE GUESTHOUSE AND EVENTS THAT ARE COMING OFF. PRESENT CONDITIONS

VARY DAY TO DAY AS YOU KNOW--  
AFFECTING EVERYTHING ESPECIALLY  
TRAVEL, LITURGY, MEETINGS,  
RETREATS, THE GUEST-HOUSE ETC --  
YOU MUST WATCH THIS SPACE  
PLEASE--NAMELY-- THE PLUSCARDEN  
WEBSITE-PRIMARY SOURCE OF  
INFORMATION

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

PLEASE INFORM OBLATES WITH NO  
SMART PHONES AND NO ACCESS!  
PLEASE PHONE THEM ON THEIR  
STEAM PHONE AND PASS ON!

SUMMER OBLATE RETREAT THIS YEAR

2020

CANON LUKE SMITH (O.S.B. OBLATE)  
SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR OF ST JOHN'S  
SEMINARY WONERSH



[guestmaster.pluscarden@gmail.com](mailto:guestmaster.pluscarden@gmail.com)  
for bookings

**FRIDAY 31ST JULY TO MONDAY 3RD**  
**AUGUST 2020**

If possible please arrive before the evening to receive any special handout/instructions on arrangements  
Book Now-- both guesthouses reserved for you-- the Oblates--reserve a place early.  
[guestmaster.pluscarden@gmail.com](mailto:guestmaster.pluscarden@gmail.com)

***Arrivals Friday 28th--Please Note:-***  
***Residents' meal arrangements***  
**AS ANNOUNCED ON ARRIVAL THIS YEAR**  
**WITH THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.**  
***Ladies please bring your own food as if***  
***for all meals just in case.***

***Liturgy-- standard times as notice boards and website or as specially announced; arrangements even on arrival. Special items only as follows:-***

- Saturday August 1st 10.30 am first conference Canon Luke Smith***
- Saturday August 1st 3.00 pm second conference Canon Luke Smith***
- Sunday August 2nd 10.00 am Mass sermon Canon Luke Smith***
- Sunday August 2nd Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament Lady Chapel***

- *2.00-4.00 pm--opportunity for confession during.(Fr. Martin--- Baxter's former parlour!)*

- *Renewal of Oblation during 9.00 am Mass Monday 19th.*

**St Scholastica's and St Benedict's are reserved for YOU so please book in good time especially because of the post-lockdown conditions and special arrangements**

Other monastic Events scheduled:

**Pluscarden Monastic Experience Weekend 2020** The Pluscarden community plans to host another Monastic Experience Weekend in 2020. The weekend will start at tea time on Friday 7 August, and end with the 0900 Conventual Mass on Monday 10 August. Once again, the invitation is extended to single men, Catholics who practise their faith, under the age of 35. Participants will join the monks in their daily prayer and work, and will be offered a close-up insight into some of the treasures of the monastic tradition. The weekend should be interesting, enjoyable, and grace-filled. It may also be of assistance in the process of discerning one's vocation in life. There will be no charge for the weekend. **Please share this with those who may be**

**interested. Thank you! Book with  
guestmaster.plucarden@gmail.com**

## **PRAYER INTENTIONS**

**Abbot Anselm's intentions.** Canon Luke Smith intentions (OUR RETREAT-GIVER, Oblate, & spiritual director of Womersley Seminary England) Bishop Hugh's & Bishop Richard Moth's intentions.

Sarah **Francis de Sales** Akehurst (apologies for postal version error!) just made her oblation during the Lenten retreat and for the repose of the soul of her son Jonny.

Judith Murdoch wife of Campbell Murdoch received into the Church just before Easter!

Those awaiting the end of the lockdown to begin their Oblate noviciate!

Those awaiting the end of the lockdown to try their vocation at the Abbey.

Repose of the souls Canon Luke Smith's mother Margaret who has just died, and of Oblates Mary Bradley and Janet Fraile. Murray Cole, Br. Thomas's father, just died and the mother of Fr. Gregory (superior of St Mary's Petersham).

All those hit by the virus living and dead-- not excluding Fleury and Vivoldone Abbeys, both badly hit-- and all sufferers throughout the world-- suffering in mind or body and those tending them.

Sr. Maria Isabel's of --St Scholastica's Petersham U.S.A.-- Solemn Profession.

For Brs. Innocent & Benjamin who have now begun their noviciate as Brothers Patrick and Edmund respectively!

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, Ghana.

For health for Oblatemaster Brother Jerome Leo of St Mary's Petersham, Jane Coll's granddaughter Natasha Gunn through the intercession of Margaret Sinclair. Fr. Francis Wilson (any news welcome), Connie Reid, Mary Frances McGregor and her daughter Ruth. Please pray for the health of Fr. Matthew, Br. Cyprian, Br. Finbar, Rev. Christopher Mayo, Rev. Angus Macleod, for Gillian Cockwill's Mother, for Gail & Tony Schmitz. For Siobhan Gilmour's husband, for Mrs. Allie Brien, Margaret Johnston's mother, Gitte Mackay, Martin Farrelly, Leonora Duson, and her daughter, and Margaret Rawcliffe, Robert Cantafio's mother Margharita, 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 (great improvement!), and also for Eileen Kerr, Elizabeth MacKay, Peter and Brian Wynne, Susan Stephen, Cindy's husband, Danielle & her son Osyp, Evelyn, Violet and Sheila, Bernadette Harris, 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 novice and postulant Oblates and all our Oblates living and dead. All we have omitted or forgotten, living and dead.

**Our Sponsored Seminarians:- *Appeal: some sponsors have dropped out there is a danger of a future shortfall in their essential fees*** If you would like to make a financial contribution (usual amount is £10/£20 standing order per month) please contact: Campbell Murdoch, email: jcmurdoch@yahoo.co.uk or mobile: 07810 350006 (Address: Fircroft, Knockbuckle Road, Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire, PA13 4JT).

**ALL THE CHAPTER'S ARE ON HOLD OBVIOUSLY DURING THE LOCKDOWN SO PLEASE MAKE USE OF THE CONTACT DETAILS BELOW TO FIND OUT HOW THINGS ARE PROGRESSING.>>>>▼▼▼▼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

St. Monica's Chapter for far North -- Thurso. Contact Jane Coll. "Scaraben", Westside, Dunnet, Thurso, Caithness, KY14 8YD. Phone 01847 851467( informal)

**St. Peter's Chapter**, Aberdeen –next 11th December. 7.00-8.00 pm each second Tuesday of each month, Church Hall, St Joseph's, 2 Tanfield Walk, Aberdeen &/or contact Mr Robert Ian Johnston, 31, Tay Road, Mastrick, ABERDEEN AB16 5LA

**St Mirin's Chapter** Paisley meets at 2pm on the 1st Saturday of each month at: Cathedral House, St Mirin's Cathedral, Cathedral Precincts, Inle Street, Paisley, PA1 1HR. Campbell Murdoch, mobile 07810 350006 or email jcmurdoch@yahoo.co.uk (address: Fircroft, Knockbuckle Road, Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire, PA13 4JT).

"**St Andrew's Chapter**" Pluscarden Abbey St Andrew's Chapter on a Saturday! Saturday 2.00pm - 3.30pm St Benedict's Guest House Men's Breakfast Room (next door on left from Abbey Shop)-Contact Eileen Fitzpatrick.

"**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—John MacKinlay jgjm07@yahoo.co.uk

## ***Romans 8.18-39***

<sup>18</sup>In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us, <sup>19</sup>for the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the

children of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup>It was not for its own purposes that creation had frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it- <sup>21</sup>with the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains. <sup>23</sup>And not only that: we too, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free. <sup>24</sup>In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping-nobody goes on hoping for something which is already visible. <sup>25</sup>But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence. <sup>26</sup>And as well as this, the Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words; <sup>27</sup>and he who can see into all hearts knows what the Spirit means because the prayers that the Spirit makes for God's holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God.

<sup>28</sup>We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in

accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good. <sup>29</sup>He decided beforehand who were the ones destined to be moulded to the pattern of his Son, so that he should be the eldest of many brothers; <sup>30</sup>it was those so destined that he called; those that he called, he justified, and those that he has justified he has brought into glory. Page |  
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<sup>31</sup>After saying this, what can we add? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>Since he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for the sake of all of us, then can we not expect that with him he will freely give us all his gifts? <sup>33</sup>Who can bring any accusation against those that God has chosen? When God grants saving justice <sup>34</sup>who can condemn? <sup>\*[Is 50:8]</sup> Are we not sure that it is Christ Jesus, who died-yes and more, who was raised from the dead and is at God's right hand-and who is adding his plea for us? <sup>35</sup>Can anything cut us off from the love of Christ-can hardships or distress, or persecution, or lack of food and clothing, or threats or violence; <sup>36</sup>as scripture says: For your sake we are being massacred all day long, treated as sheep to be slaughtered?

<sup>\*[Ps 44:22]</sup><sup>37</sup>No; we come through all these things triumphantly victorious, by the power of him who loved us.



<sup>38</sup>For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any power, <sup>39</sup>nor the heights nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Our Lady of Pluscarden, Saint John the Baptist and Saint Andrew pray for us!**

**---Saints Peter and Paul pray for us!**

**In the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord,**  
Fr. Martin

*PAX*