

Douai Oblate

October 2006 No 27

One Year On ...

In September 2006 the UK Benedictine Oblates were invited to a meeting hosted at Ealing Abbey to discuss a way forward, following the First World Oblate Congress in Rome in September 2005.

Nine monasteries were represented by thirty-two oblates from Alton, Belmont, Douai, Ealing, Elmore, Malling, Pluscarden, Ramsgate and Stanbrook.

The meeting was led by Marcus Wakely, the Acting UK National Co-ordinator, who is an oblate from Ealing Abbey.

In true Benedictine style, his Oblate Director, Dom Timothy Gorham, kindly arranged for us to have a delicious hot meal, which was cooked by another Ealing Oblate, a lady called Concetta.

It was a great start to our gathering, with oblates from different monasteries mixing together – not unlike what we did in Rome, with the added advantage that we could all speak the same language!

Lunch was followed by a meeting, held in a conference room nearby. The meeting started with a prayer, and then the delegates who went to Rome were asked to comment and share their recollections from the Congress.

In some ways, it was difficult to suddenly think back over one year and to summarise, in a few minutes, the spirit, style, warmth and depth that we all experienced and embraced in Rome. However, once we got going, the memories came flooding back.

The meeting then moved on to deciding the next steps for the future. Marcus announced his intention to step down from the Acting UK Co-ordinator's role and gave a general outline of some of the skills he thought were required.

This initiated an interesting and useful discussion, with the sharing of people's views. As a result of this, a small team of people was brought together to further the work from the World Oblate Congress.

The new UK National Oblate Co-ordination team are:

Reverend Alan Hodgetts, Oblate from Alton. Alan had registered a website on his return from Rome, www.benedictineoblates.org.uk, and has offered to develop the site further.

Ali Wrigley, oblate from Douai, volunteered to compile a non-public voluntary National Oblate Directory. The purpose of this is mainly to help new oblates meet other oblates living in

their area.

Monsignor Richard Moth, Oblate from Pluscarden, will be assisting Alan in an editing role for the website and will help with general correspondence.

As for myself, I am an oblate also from Douai, and will be acting as the international contact with the Congress Office in Rome and will disseminate information to the Oblate Directors in the UK.

And so, coincidentally we have a small balanced team of two males/ two females, two Anglican/two Catholic oblates working together, and all four of us, again coincidentally, were delegates at the Congress in Rome last year.

Website

The web site will only post information sent via the editor from monasteries or from oblates.

If anyone has any articles, or other items that would be of interest to oblates in the United Kingdom, please forward them to alanhodgetts@f2s.com. Alan will be delighted to hear from you or your Oblate Director.

General Contact

Also, for general enquiries an email address has been set up for people to make contact with the team:

ukoblateteam@hotmail.co.uk.

The Way Forward

At the present time, we are busy setting ourselves up with putting plans into place, in order to create small steps from which to form a proper foundation.

As well the tasks mentioned above, we will also be working on organising an annual national oblate conference, a meeting with the UK Oblate Masters and arranging a communication and administrative process for the next World Oblate Congress in 2009.

We will keep you posted on progress and all further developments.

Meanwhile, please feel free to come forward with any ideas or suggestions that you may have. We will be happy to hear from you, and please keep us in your prayers as we begin this work. Thank you.

Pax

Zina Neagle

UK National Oblate Co-ordinator ◇

From the Oblate Director

It is encouraging to be able to print Zina's report from the National Oblates Meeting at Ealing.

The Oblate Forum held last year in Rome has created enormous enthusiasm. Every monastic newsletter seems to be reporting the effects. It has given great support to Oblates worldwide.

The Abbot Primate has been speaking about it wherever he goes and it has featured again in his latest letter to monasteries. It was his idea and

nothing but good is coming from it.

There were those who had negative feelings, who feared that the autonomy of monasteries and their oblates would be threatened by any move for oblates of one community to associate with those of another. These fears have been ill founded. Meetings of oblates from different monastic families, like meetings of monastics themselves only strengthens the family feeling of the oblates, who wish to share their experiences with

their fellow oblates back home, as well as share the riches of their own families with the wider oblate community. We can all grow from greater contact and learn from each other.

At Douai, we have all gained from hearing the reports from Rome, and are proud that three of our oblates were able to be at Rome last year. We wish the national team every success and promise them our full support. ◇

St Bede 673 - 735 *Monastic saint*

‘I Bede, servant of Christ and priest of the monastery of St Peter and St Paul which is at Wearmouth and Jarrow... was born in the territory of this monastery. When I was seven years of age I was, by the care of my kinsmen, put into the charge of the reverend Abbot Benedict and then of Ceolfrith to be educated. From then on I have spent all my life in this monastery, applying myself entirely to the study of the Scriptures and amid the observance of the discipline of the Rule and the daily task of singing in the church, it has always been my delight to learn or to teach or to write. At the age of nineteen I was ordained deacon and at the age of thirty, priest, both times through the ministrations of the reverend Bishop John on the direction of Abbot Ceolfrith.’

So wrote St Bede of himself. He rarely went outside the monastery and probably never travelled beyond Northumbria. He spent his whole life studying and writing. The monastery had a large and significant library, its founder, St Benet Biscop, had brought many books, including classical authors, as well as works of art, from Gaul and Italy.

Bede’s most famous work is the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, which he completed in 731. It was the first English systematic history written. It is still regarded as an important work. Bede was a careful, disinterested scholar sifting evidence, synthesising materials from disparate sources, listing authorities in a way that is surprisingly modern. He, himself, however, considered his twenty-five books of commentaries on Scripture as being more important. These were much used during his lifetime, not least by the English missionaries on the continent of Europe, through whose efforts Bede’s works spread widely. St Boniface asked for copies to be sent to him in Germany. His works have always been included among the fathers who are read at Matins or the Office of Readings. In addition he wrote on many diverse secular subjects including a work on chronology which remained the classic authority until the sixteenth century. He is responsible for dating years from the birth of Christ, introducing the form ‘AD’.

An account of his death was written by St

Cuthbert. “... when day broke which was the Wednesday (before Ascension Day), he gave instructions for the writing, (an English translation of St John’s Gospel) which he had begun, to be finished without delay... At three o’clock he said to me: ‘I have a few treasures in my box, some pepper, and napkins, and some incense. Run quickly and fetch the priests of our monastery and I will share among them such little presents as God has given me.’ I did so, in great agitation; and when they came he spoke to them and to each one singly, urging and begging them to offer masses and prayers regularly on his behalf, and they promised with a will... ‘It is time, if it should so please my Maker, that I should be released from the body, and return to him who formed me out of nothing, when as yet I was not. I have lived along time and the righteous judge has well provided for me all my life long. The time for my departure is at hand, for I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ in all his beauty.’ This he said, and other things, to our great profit, and so spent his last day in gladness until the evening. Then the boy (who was his scribe) whose name was Wilberht said: ‘There is still one sentence, dear master, that we have not written down.’ And he said ‘Write it.’ After a little the boy said: ‘There! Now it is written.’ And he replied ‘Good, it is finished.’

And so upon the floor of his cell, singing ‘Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit’ he breathed his last.”

Bede died on May 26, 735. Within fifty years he was celebrated as a saint. Relics were found in Fulda, York and Glastonbury. His bones were moved from Jarrow to Durham in the 11th century, where they are still buried in the Galilee Chapel at the west end of the cathedral.

St Bede is the model monk, never travelling far from his monastery, but spending his whole life there in prayer and scholarship, and clearly very much a community man.

Without leaving his monastery St Bede was also a missionary monk. It is a paradox that ‘monasticism flourishes and spreads the faith in the measure in which it lives its own life most fervently in contemplation and removal from the world ... whenever they introduced the monastic life anywhere the monks became preachers and witnesses of the faith. They did not pretend to fulfil entirely the demands of the aposto-

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Cake recipes by Oblate Joy Nye

Whenever Joy Nye comes on retreat she always brings one or two or her delicious homemade cakes, which have proved exceedingly popular with oblates. We have asked her to provide the recipes of those she brought recently so that you can all try them. Ed.

LUCIOUS LEMON CAKE

6 oz S.R. Flour 4 oz Margarine - soft
6 oz Castor Sugar 2 large Eggs
4 - 6 Tablespoons Milk Grated rind of 1
Lemon
1 teaspoon Baking Powder

For Topping:

Juice of 1 Lemon 3 Tablespoons Icing
Sugar

Method:

Grease and line a 2lb loaf tin or, for two smaller cakes, use 2 x 1 lb loaf tins lined. Place flour, baking powder, margarine, sugar, eggs, milk & lemon rind into a mixing bowl and beat for 2 minutes until mixture is smooth and creamy. Place mixture into prepared tin, level off and bake for 40-45 mins 180°C until golden brown and springy. Stand cake tin (with cake still in) on cooling rack for 10 mins. Prick well with skewer or knitting needle. Mix icing sugar & lemon juice together & spoon over warm cake. Allow cake to go quite cold before removing from tin. (Don't remove greaseproof paper until ready to serve - this keeps cake moist)

Serve in thin slices.

DARK COFFEE AND SULTANA TEA-BREAD

12 oz (350g) Sultanas
1 Level tablespoon instant coffee
½ pint (300ml) warm water
8oz (250g) self-raising flour
4oz (125g) Demerara sugar plus extra
1 level teaspoon mixed spice
3oz (90g) pecan nuts: 2oz (60g) chopped, 1 oz (30g) sliced, to decorate the top
2 eggs, size 3
Two 1 lb (500g) loaf tins, base lined.

Method:

Put the sultanas in a basin. Dissolve the instant coffee in the water, then pour over the sultanas. Leave to soak in the basin overnight.

The next day, set the oven to moderate, Gas Mk 4 or 350°C. Mix together the flour, sugar and spice and the chopped pecan nuts. Beat the eggs into the sultanas, then add to the dry ingredients and stir thoroughly until well mixed.

Turn the mixture into the lined tins and level with the back of a spoon. Sprinkle over a little extra Demerara sugar (about 1-2 tablespoons). Press the sliced pecan nuts into the top. Bake in the top half of the oven for 50 - 60 minutes or until cooked.

Scrumptious served on its own as a cake, or sliced and spread with butter.◊

St Bede continued from previous page

late .. they were the necessary catalysts. Their role consisted less in action than in mere presence...their work was not so much in preaching the word of God in distant lands as in attracting the natives to the liturgy, to culture and to learning, in short, to Christianity as portrayed in a monastic milieu.'

Jean Leclercq OSB *Saint Bede and the Christian Expansion* in St Bede, a Tribute St Bede's Publications, Petersham Massachusetts.

St Bede is the ideal model for monks today whose mission is to spread gospel values from

the monastery itself, by living the Christian life, sharing this life with those who come to the monastery as guests, teaching and leading them. He is the model for oblates too, whose lives and homes are to be Christian centres where the values of the Kingdom of God are to be found, oases of spirituality in a materialist world. ◊

Douai Oblate is the Newsletter for the Oblates of Douai Abbey. It is published at Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton, Reading, Berks, RG7 5TQ. phone 0118 971 5338 fax 0118 971 5303 e-mail oblate@douaiabbey.org.uk web site http://www.douaiabbey.org October 23, 2006