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Chronicle



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Dear Friends,

It is appropriate at this season to exchange gifts. We are grateful to be able to give you two gifts presented at the Benedictine Federation meeting in Rome this past September. One is an expression of appreciation and encouragement to Benedictine Oblates. The other is the same heart-felt appreciation and encouragement directed specifically to the monastics who remained at home. We will add a third gift: a prayerful reflection by Br. Pierre on the epistle of his namesake and patron, the first bishop of Rome.

A Benedictine community is not adequately defined by its professed members and its property lines. These specifics do represent a certain core reality but they

themselves are representative of The Reality -the fellowship of Father-Son-Holy Spirit. Since the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery, the Communion which is God has taken on a new and "wider" dimension in the human community without, however, any change in Itself. We believe these words directed by the Abbots and Priors to their Oblates and Communities can also be given unchanged to our wider community of friends.

May this appreciation and encouragement we give you serve to make you aware of the largess and liberality of God whose priceless Word we have all received and in whose name we greet you.

In Christ,

J. Martin

MESSAGE OF THE CONGRESS OF ABBOTS
TO THE BENEDICTINE COMMUNITIES

We have been meeting together over the last two weeks for the Congress of Abbots, and we have been reflecting on the Lord's question: "But you, who do you say that I am?" (Mk.8,29) It was our replies to this question that prompted us to address a special message to all our Benedictine communities. The problems which we have been examining constitute a call for us to a serious self-examination; and they can be summed up in the following questions:

- what is Christ saying to us Benedictines today?
- what does Saint Benedict demand of us today?
- what do other people, both in and out of the Church, expect of us today?

We are living in a world which is full of conflict: there is tension in society and in the world of politics, and violence is rife in all its forms. We Benedictines living in our monasteries hear the echo of all this conflict, and we cannot pass over it in silence; rather, we must work for peace. We do this on several different levels: through our prayer, and through becoming more conscious of human needs, as well as through concrete action, in the measure called for by the specific vocation of each individual monastery and the means available to the individual monk or nun. We are all the more under an obligation to strive for peace because the word "Peace" --"PAX"-- has over the course of the centuries become the motto of our Order. In our search for peace, we are going back to the last legacy which Jesus gave to his disciples, and to that peace which has been promised to us as a gift of his Spirit.

1. Peace in ourselves: to persevere in patience, to make progress towards reconciling the conflicts within our bodies, our hearts, our souls and our minds: this should be our program, and it demands that we engage in a genuine asceticism day by day. As a result, our way of life can become in itself a form of service which we offer to our fellow men and women, and we shall find our own inner fulfilment in the joy of the Spirit.

2. Peace in our communities: by fostering mutual respect, goodwill and readiness to forgive. We must struggle against all hidden forms of violence, injustice and jealousy. The proven way to achieve this goal is a genuine community life, as provided for in our Rule and traditions.

3- Peace among our fellow men and women: in the first place, by enabling those who come to our monasteries to experience peace. We welcome them without respect of persons, but we practise, nevertheless, a special preference for the poor, for the

old and for the young (RB 53,15; 4,71; 37,1). We wish to respect the specific mission of each individual monastery, and we wish to practise the virtue of discretion; but we also wish to affirm our support:

- for the elimination of all forms of poverty, whether overt or hidden;
- for the integration into society of those who are pushed out on its margins;
- for better relations among all groups in society;
- for recognition of the cultural rights of all races and peoples;
- for non-violent resistance towards blatant injustice, all forms of extremism, and the crime of war;
- for all efforts to foster disarmament and peace.

4- Peace with material creation. In the past Benedictines were often successful in developing a balanced attitude towards nature, and a sound appreciation of the value of material things. In the present age too, our work has to be carried out, as far as possible, in a way that both respects the value of creation and also furthers the development of the human race. Unbridled consumption, wastage of raw materials and the destruction of the ecological balance: these are evils that need to be countered by a attitude towards material well as by a new importance and contribution made by material possessions to our cultural quite clearly at humanity.

5- Peace with God. Peace in all the areas we have mentioned will only become possible if we are prepared to make our peace with God, ready to let ourselves be redeemed by him, ready to allow him to make use of us. This applies to all men and women, and it applies to us Benedictines too. It is God who offers us the gift of reconciliation with himself, and it is his Spirit which operates to create unity within the monastic community; it is he who opens our hearts to the problems of our contemporaries, and it is he who is the one Lord and the true goal of creation. In our "Opus Dei" we have a special symbol of our communion with the oppressed: in the psalms, the voice of the poor and oppressed is raised in protest; and this voice of protest, in spite of its powerlessness and its lack of success, will never cease to call on God, the guardian of righteousness and the defender of the helpless.

May Jesus Christ our Lord, the "Father of the age to come, and the prince of peace" (Is. 9,6) renew in us the gift of the Spirit and lead us into the way of peace. May he find us on the side of those who have served him in the despised, the suffering and the persecuted (cf. Mt. 25,31-45). This is how we seek to answer his question: "But you, who do you say that I am?" (Mk. 8,29)

MESSAGE OF THE CONGRESS OF ABBOTS
BENEDICTINE OBLATES

The participants in the Congress of Abbots held in Rome in 1984 directed their attention to the groups of oblates associated with Benedictine communities throughout the world. The Congress wishes to express its deep appreciation to the role of oblates, and indeed the role of all those Christians who are united with us in prayer and aspire to a form of life inspired by the Rule of St. Benedict. We thank them for their loyal association with us, an association which in some cases stretches back over many years; we thank them, because it is not only they who receive blessings from the monastery, but they are also a source of blessings and help for the monastery. We ask them all to continue steadfast in the way they have chosen, placing their trust in their Benedictine vocation. We also express our thanks to those members of our monastic communities who have been given the task of working with oblates, and we ask them to devote great attention to this duty, and especially to open up to young people the riches of the Benedictine spirituality. We are happy to see how the oblate-directors, in collaboration with oblates, are striving to meet the aspirations of the oblates within their countries and language-areas.

May the efforts which all are making assist both oblates and their monastic communities "to set out on the way of the Lord, with the Gospel for our guide" (Prol. 21), so that all may contribute towards the attainment of peace, unity, and the coming of the kingdom of God.

LETTER OF PETER

Note: The following text was presented by Br. Pierre on his feastday, June 29th, 1984. In the introduction, he mentioned that, in our search for God, we try to find out what is beyond this life, what is behind the words of Scripture or how Christ or the apostles would address themselves today. Here is what may come out on the "screen" of our imagination or inspiration.

From Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ to God's chosen people who live as pilgrims scattered throughout the United States. May grace and peace be yours in full measure.

In my previous letters, I tried to encourage Christians to grow in faith, hope, and charity and patience. Here I try to do the same for your well-being.

Your buildings and paper money

indicate that you are a religious nation. We read: "In God, we trust!" At the same time you seem to follow the pagan motto: "Si vis pacem, para bellum!" (If you want peace, prepare for war!)

Do not use mortal means to protect your vital interests. Make sure that your efforts towards national security do not produce international insecurity.

Your technical achievements are well known all over. People can move faster and better. They sit in their car, stand in elevators and to compensate for their health, they jog and sweat after work. Live in harmony of spirit, soul and body for the glory of God.

You are concerned for the environment and legislate to alleviate all forms of pollution. Little is done to foster purity of heart. "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." We hear of some incidents of cover-ups. Should we blame the cosmetic industries for the sale of make-ups or the dissatisfaction of the people for the work of God. Will you make stories to distort the truth?

You can unite by the thousands to oppose or impose your rights. Will you share your spiritual energies to uplift the needy? Some of you are sensitive to cruelty to animals while others are indifferent to the mutilation and destruction of the unborn. Your silos used to be full of grain for poor and rich nations. Now silos are readied with missiles to destroy the same nations.

For so long, you have been told that "bigger is better". Can you correct the problems of large cities? Can you explain why 80% of the population live on 20% of the land? You have discovered the invisible phenomenon of airwaves to communicate and the power of electricity. Unfortunately, too many refuse to believe in the power of prayer and grace.

We see a lot of courage among those who are training for competitions. Similar efforts are required for the soul to be fit in your daily life. Some people receive large sums of money to run after a ball while others may not be rewarded for sitting to comfort a wounded soul; they shall receive mercy.

In spite of all the criticism that politicians receive, we rejoice that the Department of War became the Department of Defence. We look for the day when you gain enough confidence and inspire enough trust to make it the Department of Peace.

Continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour who is our Peace. Amen.

SHEEP NEWS

We have added two new shades to our yarn: a heather sand (grey) and heather beige. Our supply of meat and sheepskins was sold out during November. We keep about 400 sheep for the winter.



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