



THE BENEDICTINE OBLATE NEWSLETTER

Westminster Abbey

P.O. Box 3310, Mission, B. C., Canada V2V 4J5

October 2020

Dear Oblates and Friends of the Abbey,

It has been a year since we last communicated with you! Too long for this age of rapid communication. So much has transpired since then that this will serve to be somewhat of a catch-up letter.

Our last letter was filled with news of the younger monks, postulants, novices, and the professed making commitments and promises. The past year shifted our attention to the glory of the Christ Jesus as he called three of our confreres to himself. Fr Basil Foote passed to the Lord November 11, 2019, Br David Whelan, on December 14, 2019, and then Br Maurus De Klerk on May 26, 2020.

The memory of a confrere is a precious legacy in a community as it wends its way to the shores of eternity. The gift of monastic life lived out in the humanity of each brother is a testimony to the grace of God which is always stronger than our worst fears, richer than our deepest failures, and heartier than our most strenuous sufferings. The death of a monk is the work of the fidelity of Christ to whom we pledged our "I do" of our monastic "suscipe". The sickness of each confrere also brings out in us that patience and long suffering which shapes our own longing for heaven and sharpens our realism in the expectation of our own death.

In the last three months the community has been accompanying Br Gregory, our Claustal Oblate, in a unique phase of his life. After his operation for two brain tumors in June 2020, he did not recover his mobility. He presently has a tracheostomy and a PEG (percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy!), that is to say, a feeding tube that connects directly to his stomach. In spite of all the dire predictions of the doctors and nurses, and their readiness to give up on our 59-year-old Brother, his is very much alive and slowly rediscovering his movements of body and soul. Our infirmarian has aptly called it "slow medicine." It's a phrase we learned from a book called *God's Hotel* by Victoria Sweet. God uses slow medicine on all of us. Please keep Brother Gregory and our deceased confreres in your prayer.

Our Guesthouse still remains closed as long as it serves as an emergency quarantine for sick monks or seminarians. Five high school seminarians completed a fairly strict isolation for two weeks last week. Our grounds remain open but with shorter visiting hours. This year the Seminary year began with the necessary quarantine period for the students which is now complete. It's one big bubble for four communities on the Abbey hill. Our preparation for this complicated process was made possible by many, many meetings. We are keeping our eyes on the joy of having them back rather than on the layers of sanitizations!

The Abbey Church is open for Mass and Midday Prayer but one needs to register for Mass attendance. With the return of the students there will be further changes.

Our Brothers Paschasius Roca and Joshua Rosario were able to complete their cooking course, finishing the last two months online and with some on-campus classes. They have been testing out their recipes on the community to the satisfaction of all!

With much gratitude we rejoiced at our successful attempt at bringing our second postulant Isaac Mack across the US border. The other postulant is Agostino Pizzolato, from Burnaby, B.C. Our two postulants from last year, David Park and Isaac Bruneau are now almost a month into their canonical novitiate.

Our new sacristy was completed in May of this year but is yet to be blessed. It is a beautiful addition to our Church and a worthy place for all our sacred vessels and vestments. We hope to bless the building and space soon after we emerge out of the quarantine period so that the seminarians may participate in our joy. Hopefully, when the virus is finally defeated, you will have the chance of viewing this exquisite space.

More recently Fr Joseph has made an important contribution to the sound system in the Abbey church. Much research and labour has accompanied the project. While he is still tweaking the system we are enjoying the higher clarity in the Abbey Church.

Our monthly Oblate Meetings are now online as many of you know. It does afford the possibility for others to join who live too far away. If you register your email with us (oblates@westminsterabbey.ca) you will be sent the link each month.

Two supplements accompany this Newsletter. One is a view from the Church's "field hospital" in northern India. The second is a spiritual reflection on the COVID-19 virus by Fr Abbot.

Keeping close to you through our prayers and labours,

Yours in Christ,

The Oblate Directors