



PORTSMOUTH ABBEY

May 2016

Vol. XXXVIII No. 5

Dear Oblates and Friends of Portsmouth,

In the **Paschal Season** some of the Scriptural readings in the Office and Liturgy are taken from the **Book of the Acts of the Apostles**. In the opening chapters an ideal concept of the Christian community life is portrayed during the first age of the Church in Jerusalem, with a small group of followers of the Way of Jesus, attempting to apply the teaching of Jesus to their daily lives. *They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. ...Every day they met together in the Temple and to breaking bread in their homes, eating their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people.* As the Church expanded and grew in numbers, *such* a life could not continue, with the ideal giving place to the realities of human nature and a more structured organization formed based on authority, discipline and the need for close supervision.

In the ancient world **Plato's Republic** set the standard for the creation of a utopian society, eliminating the ills which seemed the inevitable lot of humanity. Classical antiquity looked to the past for *a golden age when* everyone was happy, living in permanent state of plenty and peace. Later, **Thomas More's Utopia** gave us the word to describe such an ideal world, and other writers were inspired by the discovery of the New World and the opportunities it offered for a fresh start that suddenly seemed possible for the human race. In modern times the quest for the ideal has turned sour, with writers depicting *dystopias* instead as social systems to be avoided as illustrated in the still relevant **Brave New World** of **Aldous Huxley** and in **George Orwell's 1984**, Unless we are wary, we are liable to be seduced into accepting such versions of social organization as valid expressions of the ideal existence we wrongfully prefer.

No such dangers exist for **St. John** in his **Apocalypse**, the other book of Scripture read during **Paschaltide**. After the admonitions given to the congregations of the early Church, the evangelist describes the world that will come about after the present age ceases, when, following the opening of the Seventh Seal, the new perfect world of an everlasting existence in which those who are saved enjoy the glory of the Beatific **Vision** An idyllic picture of the **Lamb of God** being adored by countless throngs of the saints in a city illumined by the **Lux Mundi**, the Light of the World which is Jesus.

The Jews had their own idea of what the messianic age would bring, and they felt it was almost within their grasp as they envisioned a charismatic messiah who would replace the supremacy of Rome with that of Jerusalem, bringing peace to all nations and recognition of the one true God through worship in his holy Temple: a laudable concept but still a material one and hence capable of misguiding the people through substituting Jews for Romans. The first Christians were likewise mistaken in their belief that the Second Coming was near at hand when Jesus as Christ would return in glory to claim His Kingdom. The Apostles themselves at Jesus' Ascension were eager to know *when the Kingdom would be restored to Israel*. This was not theirs to know, but *'they would have a vital role to play in establishing the Kingdom through proclaiming the Gospel to the ends of the world through the power vested in them by the Holy Spirit.'*

But the ideal community life of the first Christians described by Luke continues to be a model worthy of pursuit. And we can find it in the growth of the *monastic movement*, which grew up first in **Egypt** and then gradually spread throughout the **Roman Empire** and throughout the world. The ideal of groups of people living together in community, holding all things in common, devoting themselves to prayer and the practice of charity to those in need: these were the essentials of their life based on what Jesus had taught; the impossible ideal was to become a practical reality.

Before ending his earthly ministry, at the Last Supper, Jesus left a final word in the form of a command, a **mandate** that we must love and serve one another if we would be his disciples. It is through the practice of this love, symbolically illustrated in the lesson given in the liturgical act of the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday, that we can be truly identified as his disciples. It is this ideal that becomes a reality, enabling us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and truly become his disciples. "Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est."

“All of us are naturally frightened of dying and the dissolution of our bodies, but remember this most startling fact: that those who accept the faith of the cross despise even what is normally terrifying, and for the sake of Christ cease to fear even death. When he became man, the Saviour’s love put away death from us and renewed us again; for Christ became man that we might become God.”

Saint Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria

MONASTERY NOTES

Dom Paschal Scotti has completed his book, **GALILEO REVEALED**; it will be published in several weeks by Ignatius Books.

Christopher Buckley’s most recent novel, **THE RELIC MASTER**, has been selected by the Catholic Book Club for January. It is a satirical work, but unlike most of Buckley’s books, it is based on an historical issue, the abuse of relics as a contributing cause of the Protestant Reformation. Liberties are taken with history, especially with a leading character, Albrecht Durer, whose self-portrait appears with obvious approval on the cover of a new book on the theology of Romano Guardini, leading German theologian of the 20th century.

The Development Office located on Cory’s Lane has been completed and moved from its temporary quarters near the Manor House. Its renovation has been carefully designed to harmonize with the surrounding residential houses and its location is nearer to the main axis of the school, the Cortazzo Administration Building.

The school and monastery mourn the loss of **Mrs. Eileen McGuire**, who served the school as Executive Secretary for six headmasters over a period of thirty-five years. At her funeral the church was filled to capacity with friends far and near, following which a reception was held in the Winter Garden. She was buried next to her husband, **Donald**, in the monastery cemetery.

After their two month stay at the school, the seven members of the **Manquehue Movement** returned to **Chile** to resume their University studies in Santiago. On their return journey they stopped several days at **Saint Louis Abbey**, our sister monastery in the English Congregation.

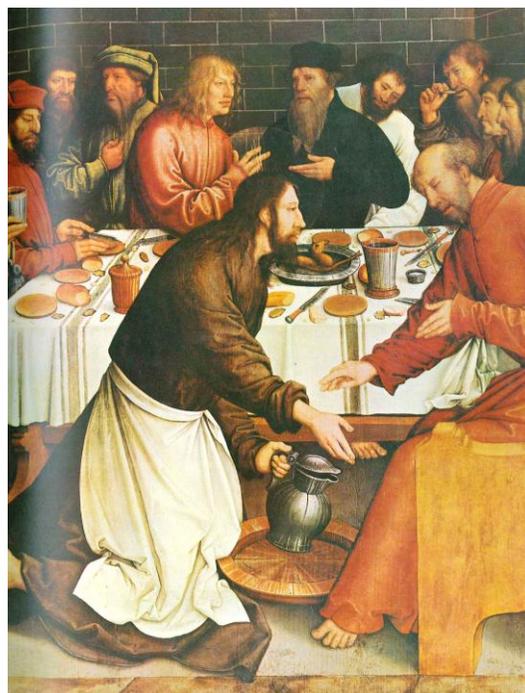
A number of laymen, chiefly from New England, have been enrolled as Oblates over the past several months. **Ms. Cynthia Nebergall** made her final Oblation at the March meeting. **David and Beth Paget** were enrolled as novices. In February, Richard **Rivard** transferred his stability as an oblate to Portsmouth from Glastonbury Abbey.

Easter Night

Alice Meynell (1847-1922)

*All night had shout of men and cry
Of woeful women filled his way:
Until the noon of somber sky
On Friday, clamour and display
Smote him, no solitude had he,
No silence, since Gethsemane.*

*Public was Death; but Power, but Might,
But Life again, but Victory,
Were hushed within the dead of night,
The shuttered dark, the secrecy.
And all alone, alone, alone,
He rose again behind the stone*



In washing His disciples' feet, Christ was performing the most menial of tasks which was usually assigned to the humblest servant. That is why they are protesting as He teaches them the lesson of humility.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR FOR MAY

- 1 Sunday VI of Easter**
(*St. Joseph the Worker, omitted*)
- 2 St. Athanasius, Bishop & Doctor of the Church
- 3 SS. Philip and James, Apostles
- 4 All Martyrs of England and Wales, inc. Ann Clitherow
- 5 ASCENSION THURSDAY OF THE LORD**
(**Holy Day: Masses 7:20 and 8:15 (Conventual)**)
- 8 SUNDAY VII OF EASTER**
- 11 SS Odo, Maieul, Odilo, Hugh & Peter the Venerable**
(**Abbots of Cluny**)
- 14 St. Matthias, Apostle
- 15 PENTECOST SUNDAY**
- 22 FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY**
- 25 St. Bede the Venerable; Priest & Doctor of the Church
- 27 St. Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop**
Chief Patron of English Congregation
- 29 CORPUS CHRISTI: Graduation Mass**
- 30 St. Joan of Arc, Maid of Orleans (1412 - 1431)**
- 31 Visitation of Our Lady



Joan of Arc