



**THE NEXT MONTHLY RETREAT IS AUGUST 10, 2013
BEGINNING 10:00AM**

**OFFICIANT
CANTOR
READER
MEDITATION**

**DEACON STEPHEN
SUBDEACON TOMÁS
SUBDEACON MICHAEL
SUBDEACON LAZARUS**

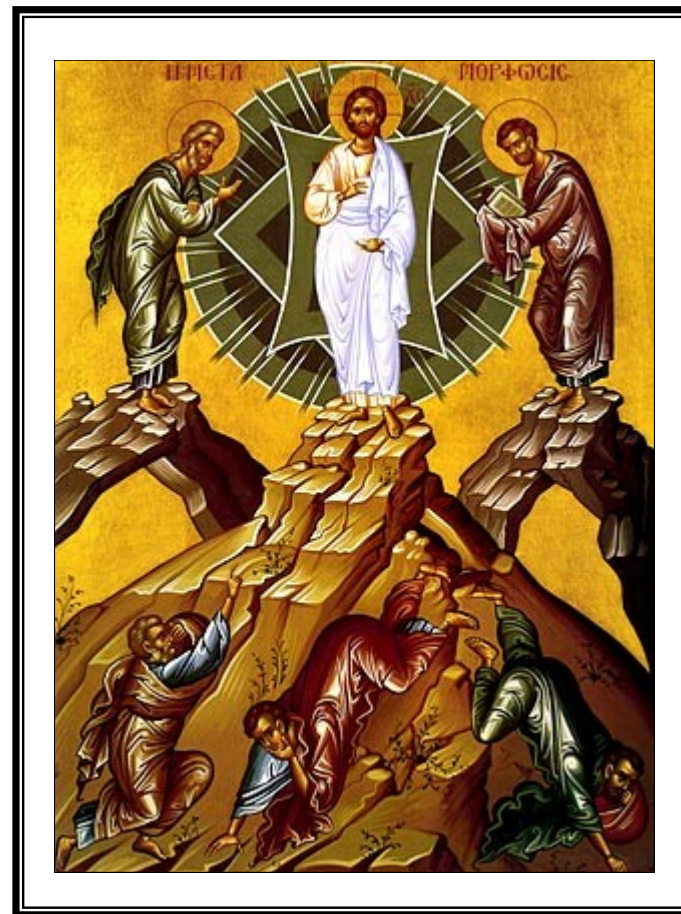
**MAIN COURSE
DRINK
FRUIT
SNACKS
BREAD
SALAD**

**THE HOLLEYS
SUBDEACON LAZARUS
BENEDICT GIRARD
BISHOP ANTHONY
BEN SANDOVAL
LINDA FLEXSER**

The ORTHODOX OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT NEWSLETTER is published by the Orthodox Oblates of Saint Benedict of Saint Michael Orthodox Christian Church, Whittier, CA. Our Spiritual Director is Archpriest Father Stephen Herney; the Secretary is Subdeacon Michael Perkins; the Publisher is Joseph Brown

ORTHODOX OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT
SAINT MICHAEL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH
3333 WORKMAN MILL ROAD
WHITTIER, CA 90601
Stmichaelwhittier.org

ON THE COVER: THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST



ORTHODOX OBLATES
OF
SAINT BENEDICT
NEWSLETTER
JULY 2013

THE RULE OF OUR HOLY FATHER BENEDICT

**Commentary by Philip Lawrence, OSB
Abbot of Christ in the Desert**

Are you ready to give up your own will? That is the question of formation for each of us, including the superior. We give up our will when we acknowledge that there is a wisdom much greater than our knowledge. As Benedictines, we must recognize that our Rule presupposes that we are willing to give up a great deal of personal freedom in order to grow in deep, inner spiritual freedom.

In modern culture, there is a strong emphasis on MY deciding, MY choices, MY way of thinking, etc. In the Rule, the emphasis is on accepting a way of wisdom that comes to us from others. The emphasis is on allowing ourselves to be formed by the wisdom of scripture, of tradition, of the desert monastic ancestors, etc. We must try to live the way they lived in order to understand their wisdom. That means giving up our own will.

There is a dynamic way of relating to one another that is described in the Holy Rule. To give up my own will implies that I know my own will and that I can express my own will. In the Holy Rule it is presumed that we speak with our superior and our superior with us. Look for a moment at Chapter 2, verse 11 and following. The Abbot is to teach by example and by words. This presumes a communication from the superior of the house. It implies that we are grown men and women who know our own thoughts and feelings, can express them and can also live beyond them. This is the challenge of our monastic life.

In Chapter 3 of the Rule we find the presumption that all the brothers are called to council and that all are able to speak. This chapter actually presumes that every member of the community is both able to speak and able to listen. It is a most important chapter in the Rule.

Chapter 5 tells us that obedience must be free from any grumbling and any reaction of unwillingness; it should not be cringing, sluggish or half-hearted. Saint Benedict wants each of us to give himself or herself totally to the monastic way of life, with all our heart and with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

We can go through all the Holy Rule and point out this dynamic over and over. Each of us should be reading the Holy Rule and finding this for yourself. Saint Benedict presumes a community in which there is communication. He does not expect a community of saints, nor a community of experts, nor a community that is perfect. He expects a human community that makes mistakes, that has sinfulness and that is always learning. Saint Benedict presumes that we will give our whole energy over to becoming a saint through following the monastic way of life.

Each of us, if we follow the Rule, must become responsible for his own actions. We will not always take such responsibility even when the Rule invites us to do so. We cannot say, for instance, "I am unhappy and it is the community's fault." Nor can we say, "I am unhappy and it is this or that brother's or sister's fault."

We will only be able to take such personal responsibility if we have a life of prayer. That is why the life of prayer receives such emphasis in the Holy Rule. The emphasis is not on how to do a life of prayer, but throughout the Rule every action that is mentioned presumes that we are praying and that our actions are based on prayer. Whatever we do, we must do it with prayer. No matter what decisions we take in our lives, we are invited to pray about them first and to try to take such decisions from our prayer.

Obedience and prayer. These are the cornerstones of our monastic life and we seek to love God and our brothers and sisters more faithfully. May the Lord lead us all to everlasting life. May God give us deeper faith, strong obedience and a lively life of prayer.

