

Greetings to all oblates of the monastic community of Saint Leo.

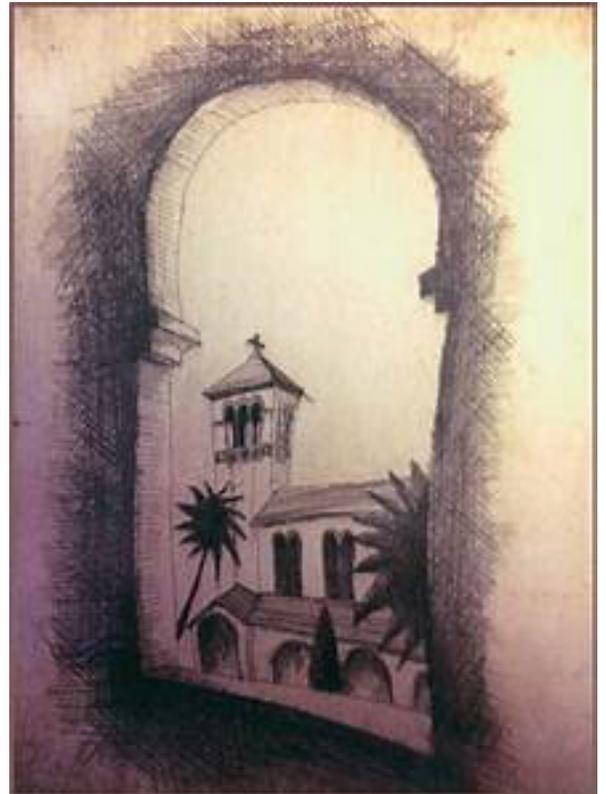
Today I sit in peace, and wonder as I reflect on the kindness of our God as I remember you. May the Lord bless you all!

Recently, we celebrated the Fourth of July. A great celebration for the country. At the same time my thoughts went to those who died for the freedom that we all enjoy!

It also has brought me to think of those who have gone before us and the ones that are here today in a society that enjoys peace, according to the world, meaning a time without war. But I wonder how much peace we have in our minds and what kind of spiritual peace we have?

I obviously will not talk about politics, that is not my place. The only thing I can say about our war on politics that the country lives under is what saint Paul says: "The man in authority has to responde to God."

It is our duty to pray for those who lead the country. If you want to say a prayer that brings justice to all, use this: Father in heaven, we ask for your blessing upon \_\_\_\_\_ who has been entrusted to lead us. Give him wisdom to make the decisions that will please you. Help him not to be selfish, but that every decision he makes will be for the good of all. Bless him with peace of mind to serve you. We ask you this through Christ our Lord.



My dear Brothers and Sisters, the war that we endure in our personal lives is a worst war. The devil himself has conquered our minds and we believe that he does not exist. People laugh at us when we mention the devil.

Please read the following quotes and reflect on them. Do you embrace their message? Do you agree with them or do they not make any sense?

- "If God is not of great importance He is not important at all."

- “The sin of men is his failure to live what he is. Being the master of the earth, man forgets that he is the servant of God.”
- “Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy. And yet being is no answer to the problem of living. To be or not to be is not the question. The vital question is: how to be and how not to be?”
- “It seems as though we have arrived at a point in history, closest to the instincts and remotest from ideals, where the self stands like a wall between God and man.”
- “Racism is mans gravest threat to man - the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason.”
- “In a free society when things go wrong few are guilty, but all are responsible.”
- “It is gratefulness which makes the soul great.”
- “Indifference to evil is more insidious that evil itself. It is a silent justification affording evil acceptability in society.”
- “A religious man is a person whose greatest passion is compassion.”

All the quotes above are from Abraham Joshua Heschel.

It has been an anchor in my search for God to hear the words of him who lived his life in wonder of life itself. I wonder myself how Heschel saw life, and what he have said if he were a Christian. How would my friend Abraham express heaven as we Christians see it? How would he relate if he were to know Mary the mother of Jesus?

Wow where is this war taking me? Well, we who claim to be followers of Christ have fallen into the devils game. The devil tells us that nothing is more important than ourselves. Nothing is more important than to be the center of the world.

How empty we are if we think that way. The spiritual war in which we live is that blinding idea that no one can judge us, that we are ok and have rights, that we have the freedom to say whatever we want. That we are the best in the world.

To follow Christ is to have him as the head and leader of our lives. To follow Christ is to embrace his teachings and to see his life as a pattern that we can learn from and to live by.

Joseph and Mary ran away to Egypt because they wanted to save the life of their only son, Jesus. They did not want their son to be killed by the government.

According to the tradition, Joseph died some time during the early years of Jesus' life. Jesus is left alone with his mother. What happened during Jesus' lifetime? How did Jesus and His mother relate to each other? Did He perform miracles that only they both knew about? Was Jesus such a good boy that He never disappointed Mary? Or was Jesus tired of being home and just ran away?

How did Jesus relate to others in the little town where He lived? Did He look suspicious to others? Was He just a normal guy? Was He pious?

When we read about Jesus' life, as it is narrated by the Gospel writers, we do not see much, but for His behavior the way He spoke to others and how He related to men and women we can conclude much. We can learn so much from Jesus' life.

As I mentioned above, when Jesus was a kid and the King wanted to kill Him, His parents ran away to another land, to another country and found refuge there. He grew up in a different land until age five or older, we just don't know. But Mary and Joseph, together with the younger Jesus, had to experience life as refugees.

That is the life experienced of Jesus and his family. To run away in order to save His life. So I wonder: "Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy. And yet being is no answer to the problem of living. To be or not to be is not the question. The vital question is: how to be and how not to be?"

How to live the life of this child, who the angel told Mary was the Son of God. How did Jesus' parents act? How can they live a life worthy of being the parents of the Son of God?

I cannot help but imagine the suffering and worries of the parents, and later on of Mary as she brings her Son to a mature age. Because I understand now: "The sin of men is his failure to live what he is. Being the master of the earth, man forgets that he is the servant of God". For what we see in the Scriptures is that the Scribes and the Pharisees are masters of the



Law and the temple, and interpreters of the will of God. But they got it all wrong. We know that because later on Jesus will tell them what God wants from us, and it is not a strict life or a life regulated by the law. The law was a guide in case they needed to be sure of how to be Holy.

We, as in the times of Jesus have forgotten that we are servants of God and not equals to the Law Giver. We are not protectors of the law, but protectors of our brothers and sisters. Oops! I never saw it in this way before; however, how true it is? Before the law was given to Moses God asked Cain, “where is your brother?” “Am I my brothers keeper?” was the answer. But to that the condemnation comes a great assurance of my thinking. The law is not a human being, my brother is, my sister is and to them the law should serve them.

How have I forgotten that God is God and I am at his service?

Jesus in His life as we see it is trying to restore creation as God intended it to be. We are supposed to be happy at his service. We are supposed to be a people with joy as we are the creatures of God. God tried to make the blind man see, and He does it. The man can see and can be one among many. He will not suffer much now, because he has been restored as God intended him to be.

How many times I see myself like the man, blind, with no one to help me on my way, on the path where I find so many obstacles. God never intended this, that silly idea that we should offer up our pains and sorrows, makes no sense. God never intended for us to suffer. It is sad that the blinding ego of others is the origin of the suffering of others. There is so much to do in order to bring life to others, life in abundance.

“It seems as though we have arrived at a point in history, closest to the instincts and remotest from ideals, where the self stands like a wall between God and man.”

We need to bring the ideals that we live by, yes those ideas and ideals that come from the teachings of Jesus.

The reason why I stated right at the beginning the fourth of July is because for us Christians there is no separation of Religion and State. We are a people who



follow Christ. We have to live up to the teachings of Jesus. It is not easy, it is hard to embrace them all. But we cannot choose one and ignore the other. We will not be true followers of Christ. The fourth of July makes me think of all those who chose Christ and did not know Him, or did not know what they were embracing.

Who am I?  
Where do I go?  
Am I a Christian?

“Blessed are the poor.”  
“Blessed are the ones who mourn.”  
“Blessed are the meek.”  
“Blessed are the ones that hunger and thirst for righteousness.”  
“Blessed are the merciful.”  
“Blessed are the pure of heart.”  
“Blessed are the peace makers.”  
“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness.”

It is only in Christ that the human being will find fulfillment. We are the only religion in the world that has a God who is in the middle of His people. Asking or demanding love from us and to love each other. I believe that this is a challenge to our way of living. A challenge not only for those who see us as pious, but for anyone who does not agree with the teachings of the Church and those of Christ. Where do we stand? What are my fears? Why do I refuse to follow Christ as He says?

This is my meditation and I want you to talk to me about your fears and challenges as Oblates.

Abbot Isaac