



FROM THE OPENING SPEECH AT THE WORLD CONGRESS  
OF THE BENEDICTINE OBLATES

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*Good evening, my dear brothers and sisters,*

*I am very happy to be here in Rome, for the first time at the World Congress of the Benedictine Oblates and I thank you for coming here from all over the world and accepting our invitation for us all to meet together. I travel all over the world and am privileged to encounter many cultures and monastic communities. So I have seen that the Benedictine way of life can have huge influence in the mission of a monastery, when the journey of the Oblates accompanies that of the monks.*

*I see here for example, the leader of the kings of the "Iniuguru", who is also an Oblate and am very happy to greet him. This king is working extensively to oppose corruption in his country, in his role as a lawyer. You can imagine the importance of being in contact with the monastery which prays for him and supports him.*

*The Holy Father, Benedict XVI, has affirmed that Saint Benedict laid the foundations of our Western civilisation and culture in Europe. Saint Benedict did not aspire to being a great man, but he became one through his Rule, his way of living and his monasteries. This is the origin of our Western spirituality. We have much spirituality today and Western spirituality is based on the Liturgy and the Holy Scriptures, an enormous wealth which we must not keep hidden in our monasteries.*

*If we have been called to evangelisation throughout the centuries, we must now enrich our culture with this spirituality, and it is our responsibility to be united with God and become blessed. I am a little hesitant to call somebody a saint because saints sometimes seem strange people – the true saint is the man or woman who is full of life, just like Jesus who is our living example. He called us to belong to the community of the Church and communion is the first gift of the Holy Spirit.*

*As much as it is important to preach the Gospel, it is equally important to live the Gospel, and we live this together, in communion, just as it was lived by the early Ecclesia (Church) in Jerusalem.*

*My dear brothers and sisters, these are only a few thoughts but ones I feel are significant. We have a great responsibility. Prayer and living according to the Gospel are important but not only this. Saint Benedict, in his Rule, places great importance on the study of the Holy Scriptures, but not however intending them to be followed to the letter. He chewed and digested*



*the Holy Scriptures and was transformed by them, just as we also should be transformed.*

*People often ask me what is the way of life developed by Saint Benedict – it is nothing special. I have been a Benedictine for 44 years and I continually feel myself transformed by the Word of God and the Holy Scriptures. Daily liturgy has become part of my life. The church is my house, it is part of me, part of my daily life and part of my being. Unfortunately however people often isolate their spiritual life from their daily life.*

*It would be wonderful if we could transmit all this also to those people living close to our monasteries, the latter/former would become like the sun which shines and brings light to the whole world, a light which is not artificial, like that of the “white night” in Rome, but a true light, a light of life which is able to transform us, and through us, the world as well.*

*In this regard I would like to say that our monasteries, which are very important today, are increasingly visited by lay people and I see many with numerous Oblates. In South Korea, the Waegwan Abbey has begun forming Oblates and today there are around 400 and numbers continue to increase.*

*This is the second phase of evangelisation. I think that we cannot speak only of faith, it is also important to share faith and celebrate faith with other people. We need to find a meaning in our lives, starting first of all with ourselves. I think and hope that we will leave this meeting enriched by our experiences over these few days. It is an excellent opportunity and possibility for encounter, prayer, meditation and listening. I hope you will receive great stimulus for your personal life shared with God, your monasteries, your families and the people living in your own countries.*

*May God bless us all.*