

5-17-2017

Welcome by Way of a Proem

Obsculta Editors

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, obsculta@csbsju.edu

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ISSN: 2472-2596 (print)

ISSN: 2472-260X (online)

Recommended Citation

Editors, Obsculta. 2017. Welcome by Way of a Proem. *Obsculta* 10, (1) : 7-9. <http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/obsculta/vol10/iss1/2>.

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WELCOME BY WAY OF A PROEM

What *is* in a name? Often, in telling others about Saint John's student journal of theology, we are asked, "What does *obscura* mean?" or "Where did you come up with that name?" On one hand, the answers are simple and straightforward: *Obscura* is the Latin imperative "listen" and is the first word of the Rule of Benedict. But on the other hand, there is significance of this name that those short answers fail to relate.

"*Obscura*," Benedict instructs each of us: "Listen." To listen, especially to listen with the ear of the heart, requires more of a person than keeping one's mouth shut, though that certainly is a profitable starting point.

In the Latin the Rule is written in, this word translated as listen also has connotations of "obey" and "understand" - the idea being that if you were truly listening, you would come to understanding and quite naturally then, obey. Listening is foundational. Without it, learning would be incredibly inefficient if it were even possible at all. Listening opens us to hear truth and understand, and then to be willing to try to apply it in our lives.

Our journal bears the name *Obscura* in homage to our Benedictine values and tradition, and the Rule is certainly ever present lending its wisdom to our daily experiences. And it is also the aim of this journal to fulfill Benedict's request "*obscura*."

This volume is the 2017 edition of *Obsculta*, and we are aware of the significance and import of listening as we acknowledge the 500th year since the Protestant Reformation. In recognition of our continuing efforts to understand and listen even non-Catholic Christians, this volume includes a piece from our archives, from the year 1971, which attempts, however imperfectly, to listen with an ear attentive to truth, wherever it might be. After all, Truth has God as its ultimate source.

As the rest of the contributions to this year's *Obsculta* attest to, the aim for understanding, is very much present still. This year we have attempts to listen across various boundaries, not only with Protestants, but with Hindus, and with Catholics who we may be tempted to discount without further question, whether because their challenges are too unsettling, or because we forget they exist. And yet we listen, we hope with the love and patience intended. We try to understand. We see that the views of others matter, and that we can listen without abandoning our own identity.

Here in these pages is a space in which we strive to listen honestly to one another, to scripture, to God, and yes, even to "the other." We hope you enjoy our explorations as you enter these pages and join in the advise of Benedict, "*obscura*."

Much *shalom*,

The Obsculta Editorial Team

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