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# THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

## Saint Vincent Archabbey

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Please note forms on flier for renewal of Oblation, for celebration on March 20, and for 2015 Directory.

### KEEP WATCH! BE VIGILANT! LET US FOIL THE EVIL ONE AT EVERY TURN (cf. Prol: 28)

Dear Oblates, Oblate Novices, and Friends,

#### **The importance of vigilance & quick response**

Vigilance and a quick response to threats are valuable practices on various levels. Anyone who has had eczema knows how vigilance can prevent a worsening of this skin condition. Eczema can be dormant for months or even years, but it can reappear subtly in a patch of skin that has become dry and cracked. If one does not apply the proper ointment quickly, the affliction will spread, cause pain and possible bleeding, and thus become harder to counteract. How much more is it important to be vigilant against cancer and other serious diseases! Keeping watch for the first indication of a malady and applying a remedy as soon as possible may spare an individual much trouble and even save his life. If this vigilance is crucial for physical ailments, it is all the more crucial for moral evils.

#### **Parts of the Rule showing awareness of evil**

St. Benedict was quite astute about the insidiousness of evil in his monks' lives. In the *Rule* he often prescribes swift responses to subdue the initial appearance of some evil tendency. As early as verse 2 of the Prologue, we hear that we have all "drifted [from God] through the sloth of disobedience" (Prol: 2), and then a few verses later we are warned "never [to] grieve [God] by our evil actions" (Prol: 5). In verses 17 and 26-27, St. Benedict exhorts the monks to avoid sins of the tongue and any kind of offense against one's neighbor. As a practical approach to all temptations, he describes the faithful disciple as one who "has foiled the evil one, the devil, at every turn, flinging both him and his promptings far from the sight of his heart" (Prol: 28). Yes, the devil is real and attacks often. The devil works hard to capture our hearts. However, the power of God is always greater if we avail ourselves of it. The sooner one turns to Christ in this combat, the better. Quoting the end of Psalm 137, (which literally refers to the killing of Babylonian children), St. Benedict commands the disciple to be prompt to strike against evil: "While these temptations were still young, he caught hold of them and dashed them against Christ" (Prol: 28). Our monastic founder further reminds us that God gives us time on earth to "amend our misdeeds" (Prol: 36) and that we need a certain measure of strictness "in order to amend faults" (Prol: 47).

If we think that advancement in the spiritual life lessens our vulnerability to the devil's attacks, St. Benedict dispels this illusion. Hermit monks, for example, are those "who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life" (*RB* 1:3).

Are they now free from battles with evil? Much to the contrary! In community they grew in strength through participation in "the battle line in the ranks of their brothers"; now they engage in "the single combat of the desert"; "with God's help" they now "grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind" (1:5). Thus the battle continues, in varying degrees of intensity, until the time of death.

Ignorance of evil forces and of one's own evil tendencies is a great danger in the spiritual life. The two types of inauthentic monks, the sarabaites and gyrovagues, exemplify this danger. The sarabaites, in lacking obedience to a rule or an abbot, "lie to God by their tonsure" (1:7) and do "whatever strikes their fancy" (1:8); thus they give in to the evil of submission to self-will. Similarly, the gyrovagues, lacking stability in a monastery, are "always on the move," "... never settle down, and are slaves to their own wills and gross appetites" (1:11). Such chronic instability is a genuine evil since it separates these would-be monks from God.

The abbot, the prior, and other superiors in the monastery must be especially aware of the temptations that they face because of their positions of authority as well as the evils that confront those who are in their charge. St. Benedict warns the abbot "not [to] show too great concern for the fleeting and temporal things of this world" (2:33) and "always [be] fearful of the future examination of the shepherd about the sheep entrusted to him" (2:39). In *RB* 65 St. Benedict cautions against the "evil and dangerous situation" (65:10) of the abbot's and the prior's both being appointed by the same authority; because of his high position, the prior needs to be careful not to be "led astray by conceit" (65:18) or "show open contempt for the holy rule" (65:18). The cellarer is similarly cautioned "not [to] be prone to greed, nor be wasteful and extravagant with the goods of the monastery" (31:12); he is likewise "not to presume to do what the abbot has forbidden" nor manifest any "pride or delay" in providing the monks with "their allotted amount of food" (31:15-16).

#### **Two great monastic evils: murmuring & private possessions**

One great evil, in the opinion of St. Benedict, is that of murmuring, or grumbling. In Chapter 34, which addresses the distribution of goods, he strongly insists, "First and foremost, there must be no word or sign of the evil of grumbling, no manifestation of it for any reason at all" (34:6). Why is murmuring considered such a great evil? It causes one to be blind to God's gracious gifts; it can lead a person to have a hardened and bitter disposition; it can spread like an infection in a family or community. When one person begins to complain, it is unfortunately natural for others to chime in about their seemingly greater afflictions. This focus on the faults of

people or institutions deepens attachment to one's own preferences, wants, and opinions. Furthermore, who would want to join and community where a significant number of the members are chronically grumbling? We all know people who are "chronic complainers," and we probably would like to shake them out of their self-imposed misery. However, if we look into ourselves, we may find that we, too, sometimes murmur about not getting our way, about not having enough of something, or about having to deal with other people who do not treat us as we would like. We need, then, with God's grace, to dash these negative impulses against Christ (cf. Prol: 28 and 4:50) before they take deeper root in us; we need to seek healing from this tendency. Indeed, we should not only seek to avoid murmuring, but we should also strive actively to live in continual praise and thanksgiving, as God asks of us, because it is such a joyful attitude that will lead us to eternal communion with Him.

Another "evil practice" in St. Benedict's mind is the vice of private ownership. Chapter 33 of the *Rule* begins starkly with the statement, "Above all, this evil practice must be uprooted and removed from the monastery" (33:1); and then verse 7 prescribes, "But if anyone is caught indulging in this evil practice, he should be warned a first and a second time." Why is private ownership, at least for monks, considered such a great evil? In our society we cherish the right to private property, and it is a good thing that we citizens of a relatively free society have this right. However, to *cling* to this right as an ultimate criterion for the quality of life can be dangerous. Nurturing attachment to possessions can lead one to become grasping, selfish, and envious. It is fine that we own things for our peace of mind, for relative physical comfort, and for the accomplishment of necessary tasks. Excessive focus on possessions, however, can cause us to become unmindful of God, oblivious of His generosity in giving everything good to us, and blind to our responsibility to use possessions to reflect God's generous love to others. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us, "This precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven" (#2544). Furthermore, in the section of the *Catechism* entitled "Love for the Poor" (#2443-249), we read, "Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use" (#2445). Also, the *Catechism* quotes St. John Chrysostom as saying, "'Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs'" (#2446). These teachings about possessions apply to all Christians. How much more, then, do they apply to monks, who are committed by vow to consider all things to be owned in common and to be revered "as sacred vessels of the altar" (31:10)! When monks consider themselves as entitled to goods as their own rather than seeing them as the community's, they fall into the realm of individualism, which tends to tear apart the bonds of mutual love in community.

#### **How to respond to evils, whether big or small**

Those of us who watch or read the news even minimally know that there is evil in the world. We see, almost daily, massive evidence of war, terrorism, religious persecution, human trafficking, corruption in organizations, exploitation of the poor, and abuse of power on every level of business and government - and even in the Church. We Christians also sadly witness what we recognize as grave moral evils in our communities, in our work places, and in our families. Abortion, euthanasia, adultery, fornication, pornography, drug addiction,

and legal approval of same-sex unions have become rampant in our society. We may be tempted to throw up our arms in despair since we recognize that, except for the few people who have special authority, we can do very little to counteract these massive evil forces.

However, to focus excessively on the evils of society can keep us from acknowledging the evil tendencies in our own hearts. Do not the great evils of our day emerge from individual human beings who have given in to sin? The evil of murmuring can give rise to far greater evils; so we need to nip it in the bud as soon as we find ourselves beginning to grumble, even in our thoughts. It is no excuse that "everyone else seems to be complaining." In his reflection on *RB* 4:30, Fr. Michael Casey comments (in his book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* (Liturgical Press, 2014)) that we live in a "culture of complaint" and that we think that "other people have a duty to make my life as smooth and happy as possible" (p. 13). Fr. Michael goes on to reflect that people who chronically murmur fail to recognize that "we live in a valley of tears" (p. 132) and that "those who murmur have lost sight of the goal of their monastic journey" (p. 132). To live in a mode of murmuring, he says, has the effect of generating "more pain, and not only for ourselves, but also for those around us who are foolish enough to take our complaints seriously" (p. 132). Therefore, aside from occasional constructive criticisms, let us examine our hearts for the tendency to murmur, and let us struggle against this evil valiantly lest it poison our whole attitude toward life (and perhaps even toward God) and spread like a contagious infection.

As for the evil of clinging to possessions, Fr. Michael provides with useful insights in his comments on *RB* 4:6, which he translates as "not to lust" (whereas *RB 1980* translates the phrase as "not to covet"). He mentions that in our culture of consumerism "it may well be that we feel good about ourselves and our situation in life only to the extent that our craving for consumer goods is satisfied" (p. 21). Fr. Michael advises that we "should not consent to unwholesome desires or act them out" (p. 22). Such evil desires may be so ingrained in our consciousness that we may never completely root them out. However, we can "wait patiently until inappropriate thoughts wear themselves out by crashing against the rock of stability" (p. 22). In sum, although the evil of clinging to material things (as well as to selfish hopes and dreams) may not easily be banished from our hearts, we can at least struggle daily not to consent to these desires and thus learn humbly to seek God's lavish graces whenever our cravings tend to overwhelm us. He will indeed help us and transform our desires gradually to be directed to Him and Him alone!

#### **Summary: Lent as an opportunity to engage intentionally in the battle against evil**

As we approach the Season of Lent, we might do well to consider how valiantly we are struggling against evil in our daily lives. Do we often worry about our lack of material resources or lack of time? Do we often begin to murmur about non-ideal situations? If so, we need to heed St. Benedict's advice and recognize these tendencies as being disordered. In recent weeks, as I was proceeding through the Gospel of St. Luke for my *lectio divina*, one brief phrase from Our Lord especially caught my attention: "Stop worrying" (Lk 12:29). It occurs in the context of Christ's discourse about trusting in God

and depending on His providence (Lk 12: 13-34). Why do we worry? Aside from legitimate concern for genuine deprivation and plans to overcome it, we worry because we do not trust that God will give us the grace to deal well with an undesirable circumstance. Not having confidence that God will come through, we think that we have to exert complete control over a situation, whether it involves material things or some trial, in order to avoid disaster. We falsely guess, at least indirectly, that fear and worry will lead us to victory. Of course, they won't! Only a strong, radiant trust in God and a genuine willingness to embrace the Cross will enable us to emerge from trials in a way that will enhance our status as children of God. Therefore, in our struggle against evils, let us strive to nip worry in the bud!

In opposition to worry, an authentic antidote to the evils that threaten to overwhelm us is a disposition of thanks and praise. If such a disposition dominates our hearts and minds, then there is no room for grumbling, attachment to riches, or unnecessary worry. St. Paul commands us, "Give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thes 5:18), and he reinforces this exhortation by adding, "This is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" (5:18). These profound words are part of a series of closing admonitions, including the exhortation, "Test everything; retain what is good. Avoid any semblance of evil" (1 Thes 5: 20-21).

Ironically, as I write this essay, some eczema has

appeared on one of my fingers after many months of dormancy. Probably I have not been vigilant to dry my hands well. Now, however, I know that I must be attentive to combat this slight affliction with the tools that I have at hand. Likewise we must all often unite ourselves with Our Lord and use the tools He has given us in the struggle against evil. Let us be watchful against the devil's seductive appeals and be prompt to reject them. With God's grace we can be ready to engage in this spiritual battle at all times; we can subdue quickly the evil of murmuring; we can abide in the self-emptying love that will keep us from clinging to time or possessions. When we use such "tools" as keeping careful watch over all that we do (*RB* 4:48), being aware of God's compassionate gaze (4:49), and being quick to dash wrongful thoughts against Christ (4:50), we, in the grander scheme of things, are also preparing ourselves to receive the "wages" that are the most fulfilling and lasting: "the reward the Lord has promised" (4:76) in eternity, the reward of unquenchable joy in the presence of the Blessed Trinity and all the saints.

In the peace of Christ and Saint Benedict,

Fr. Donald S. Raila, O.S.B.,  
Director of Oblates

## **A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS**

February, 2015

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

Pope Francis calls upon all of us to remember that "by nature of [our] baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples" (*Joy of the Gospel*, n. 120).

The coming Lenten Season provides us with a much-needed time for self-examination regarding our baptismal call to be missionary disciples. Do we give witness to the Resurrected Lord by our outreach to those who live on the periphery of society - the poor, the lonely, the elderly, the outcasts, the marginalized? The world is beset by ethnic and religious conflict. Our nation is struggling with racial prejudices and stereotypes. Are we actively involved in promoting the entire pro-life teachings of Christ and the Church?

Pope Francis notes that "at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others. Proclaiming the kingdom of God has an immediate moral implication centered on charity" (n. 177).

Pope Francis has inspired many to re-engage in the faith by "embodying the loving mercy of God." As we prepare for the coming Lenten Season, let us pray for the grace to proclaim the Resurrected Lord by embodying the loving mercy of God at every moment and with every person. Be the "missionary disciple" you were called by baptism to be!

Sincerely in Christ,

+Archabbot Douglas

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**OBLATE DAY 2015 ON SEPTEMBER 27; DAY OF RECOLLECTION ON OCTOBER 17**

This year's Oblate Day will be Sunday, September 27; the speaker has not yet been chosen. The fall day of recollection is scheduled for Saturday, October 17, and Fr. Robert Keffer is to be the retreat master.

### **SUGGESTED LENTEN PROJECTS**

It is suggested that the Oblates and Oblate novices affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey rededicate themselves to the regular praying of the Liturgy of the Hours (as much as their schedules allow) and the regular practice (ideally daily) of *lectio divina*. The undertaking of good spiritual reading in the place of less beneficial activities is also recommended. If you haven't already read it, you might peruse Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*.

### **RENEWAL OF OBLATION AND KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE ARCHABBEY**

All Oblates who do not have the occasion to renew their Oblation at St. Vincent or with local deaneries are encouraged to make their renewals privately on or about the Solemnity of Saint Benedict, March 21, and to send a completed renewal form (see the flier) to the Oblate Office. It is helpful to know of your ongoing, active interest in the Oblate Program and your personal growth in Benedictine spirituality. Those wishing to make donations may write out checks to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY.

Also, if you are an Oblate novice who is not involved in a deanery and have not contacted the Archabbey for several years, please use the renewal form to express your interest in the Oblate Program. In particular, if you have been an Oblate novice for over a year, please remember that you are eligible to become a full Oblate if you fulfill the requirements in II.E of the *Oblate Formation Booklet*. In any case, it would be good to know if we can help you in any way on your journey as an Oblate / Oblate novice. Also, if you are an inquirer on our temporary mailing list and are no longer interested in receiving this newsletter, please let us know.

### **OBLATE NOVICES: PLEASE CONSIDER READINESS FOR FINAL OBLATION**

Last year in January Fr. Donald decided to obtain an estimate of how many Oblates and Oblate novices were on the Oblate mailing list. The result was that there were some 342 Oblate novices and some 610 Oblates. The high number of Oblate novices was somewhat amazing. In October or November letters were sent to those who had been Oblate novices for three years or more to determine whether they were still interested in the Oblate Program and whether they wished to prepare for final Oblation. Almost 200 letters were sent out, and some 50-55 people have responded. If you are among those who received a letter, please respond so that the Oblate Office can meet your needs appropriately. Thank you!

### **THE SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT AT THE ARCHABBEY ON MARCH 20, 2015**

Oblates from all locations are welcome to join Oblates of the Latrobe (St. Gregory) Deanery on **Friday, March 20**, to celebrate the Solemn First Vespers of the Solemnity of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict with the monastic community and other guests. The schedule includes Evening Prayer at 5:00 P.M., supper at 5:45 P.M. (in Placid B), Oblation ceremonies at 6:45 P.M. (in the basilica), and a social at 7:30 P.M. (in Placid B). Members of the Oblate community and their guests who wish to attend should fill out the form on the flier and send it to Nancy Premoshis by March 13. The cost of the supper is \$6.50. Checks should be made out to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY, and reservations should be made in advance so that we can plan for the right number of people. Those needing overnight rooms should contact Fr. Donald very soon since the number of rooms is very limited.

### **RETREAT SCHEDULE FOR 2015:**

The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2015, have been scheduled. **I apologize for giving the wrong information in the November newsletter; it was for the retreats in 2014.** The 2015 retreat on Benedictine spirituality is to be held on May 29-31, 2015, and silent retreats are to be offered on June 12-14, 2015 and June 19-21, 2015. The first retreat will be directed by Fr. Jeffrey. The silent retreats will be directed, respectively, by Fr. Edward and Fr. Shawn Matthew. **If you would like to be placed on the Retreat Program's mailing list, please contact Br. Hugh at the Retreat Office at 724-805-2139 or [hugh.lester@email.stvincent.edu](mailto:hugh.lester@email.stvincent.edu). You may also wish to see the retreat website at [www.saintvincentretreats.org](http://www.saintvincentretreats.org).**

### **THANK YOU FOR CHRISTMAS GREETINGS**

Fr. Donald and Br. Joachim thank all the many Oblates and Oblate novices who sent Christmas greetings. Fr. Donald has been working on replying to them, mostly in alphabetical order. As of January 27, he was working on names beginning with L; so if your greeting has not yet been acknowledged, please be patient.

### **THIRD ASSEMBLY OF DEANERY REPRESENTATIVES TO BE HELD AT ARCHABBEY, JUNE 5-7**

Each deanery affiliated with the St. Vincent Oblate Program is invited to send two delegates to the Archabbey from Friday, June 5, to Sunday, June 7, for the third weekend meeting of deanery representatives. (Oblates from near-by deaneries who do not wish to stay overnight may choose to come on Saturday only.) Events on Saturday will include Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours with the monastic community, two presentations by monks, and the opportunity to discuss issues of interest to the deaneries. Each deanery should decide which two Oblates will be attending. (Of course, in some cases, only one may be available; in cases involving married couples, three representatives will be allowed.) **To register, contact the Oblate Office; however, the Events and Conference Services Office at St. Vincent will take care of housing in Aurelius Hall (if needed) and transportation to and from airports.** (Phone 724-532-5030.)

### **PLEASE CHECK BOOKSHELVES FOR BOOKS MISSING FROM OBLATE LIBRARY**

Despite efforts to check books out only through a librarian at Oblate meetings in Latrobe, some books continue to "walk away." Please check to see if you might have any "overdue" (i.e., out for more than six months) Oblate-Library books on your bookshelves. Thank you! Some people have had books out for unreasonably long periods of time. If you are one of these people, please return

borrowed books promptly! Prolonged borrowing can prevent other people from using these books.

### **MENTORING PROGRAM: THOSE WHO DESIRE MENTORS OR WHO WISH TO MENTOR**

Please contact the Oblate Office if you are an inquirer or an Oblate novice who would like to have an Oblate to help you on your journey in Benedictine spirituality. Likewise let us know if you are willing to volunteer to serve as a mentor. If you do volunteer, you will receive a packet of information to assist you in your ministry. If you already are a mentor, you should have received a copy of the revised mentoring booklet in the mail. If you have not received one, please inform the Oblate Office. **Mentors are needed especially for a number of prisoners who are inquirers or Oblate novices.**

### **SEASONED MENTORS: YOUR ADVICE WOULD BE WELCOMED**

Some new mentors have mentioned that advice from mentors who are experienced would be helpful. If you have been (or were) a mentor to Oblate novices or inquirers and are willing to share your experience with others, please contact the Oblate Office or Mary Ann Kaufman (see her e-mail address below). Also, if you are a mentor who would like to obtain assistance by sharing with other mentors, please, again, contact Mary Ann Kaufman. She is planning to send out regularly by e-mail excerpts from a book on mentoring for the benefit of all mentors.

### **AN ANONYMOUS REFLECTION ON BENEFITING FROM THE MENTORING PROGRAM**

"... I want to say a few words about mentors. I saw in the newsletter that mentors were needed for prisoners. I just wish I could tell my fellow Oblates this: we prisoners live in places that are not exactly conducive to trusting relationships with those around us. We also understand the way that most of the 'Free World' may view us. After my ceremony to become an Oblate novice, I was fairly lost. I read the Rule straight through, understood I should be praying the Liturgy [of the Hours], [practicing] Lectio Divina, and trying to practice some silence. But it wasn't until I got a letter from a complete stranger that I understood that Benedictine life was about community. I was floored by the trust shown me, a monster by society's standards. My mentor helped me understand the Rule, and as a consequence I have done a lot of changing. And maybe some people are a little nervous about giving a prisoner their address; if so, maybe ask your local parish if you can use that address. I just wanted to let them know how easy it is to impact someone's life and answer Jesus' call to 'visit those in prison' by taking a few moments to write a letter and help them along the Benedictine way. If you ever use any of this, please allow me to remain anonymous." -by an Oblate novice who is in prison

### **PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM**

If you are an Oblate or an Oblate novice and would like to have another Oblate or Oblate novice as a prayer-partner, please contact Oblate John Hudock, who is now in charge of the Prayer-Partner Program, at 724-834-1718 or [jshudock@verizon.net](mailto:jshudock@verizon.net). If you would like to have a monk as a prayer-partner, please contact Fr. Donald or Br. Joachim at the Oblate Office.

### **LATROBE AREA E-MAIL LIST FOR LOCAL OBLATE NEWS**

Mary Ann Kaufman is in charge of an e-mail list of people in the Latrobe/Greensburg/Jeanette/Pittsburgh area who wish to be informed of events at the Archabbey or news concerning Oblates in the area. If you are an Oblate or Oblate novice in this geographical area and would like to be added to this list, please contact Mary Ann at [305makaufman@gmail.com](mailto:305makaufman@gmail.com).

### **OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS: Meeting on January 9, 2015**

The Oblate Board of Advisors met on Friday, January 9, with seven Oblate members joining Fr. Donald. The group discussed the forthcoming third Assembly of Deanery Representatives; the possibility of helping struggling deaneries; the bibliography of Benedictine books for the Oblate website; the possibility of having a group of mentors who benefit from one another by e-mail communication; the need for more St. Benedict/St. Scholastica scapulars; and the need for new members on the Board. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 17, at 6:30 P.M. Representatives of deaneries outside Latrobe are always welcome.

### **OBLATES AS GUESTS AT THE ARCHABBEY**

As always, Oblates are especially welcome to come to the Archabbey as overnight guests. The number of rooms in Leander Hall is very limited; so reservations should be made as far in advance as possible. No fee is required or specified, but donations are welcome. The current break-even cost for one guest staying one overnight and taking three meals is \$55.00.

### **RECOMMENDED READING** (*The books listed are available in the Oblate Library.*)

- Rev. Robert E. Barron, *The Strangest Way: Walking the Christian Path* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002)
- Pope Benedict XVI, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004) - very deep and perhaps difficult but extremely insightful
- Scott W. Hahn, *Joy to the World: How Christ's Coming Changed Everything (and Still Does)* (New York: Image, 2014)

### **NEW (or newly discovered) BOOK ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY**

- Abbess Emerita Maria-Thomas Beil, O.S.B., *Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict with Reflections for Those Who Seek God* (Virginia Dale, CO: Abbey of St. Walburga, 2014) - available for \$25.00 from the St. Walburga Gift Shop (Call 970-472-0612, or write to Abbey of St. Walburga, 1029 Benedictine Way, Virginia Dale, CO 80536.)

### **ADORATION FOR VOCATIONS**

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed every Sunday from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. in St. Gregory Chapel. Oblates are urged to use these times for Eucharistic adoration, if possible, especially on the Sundays of Oblate classes and meetings, to pray for vocations, and

especially for vocations to the Archabbey.

### **OBLATE MEETINGS IN LATROBE**

Oblates from all locations are welcome to the monthly meetings of the Latrobe Deanery of Oblates, mostly at 6:45 P.M. in seminary classroom Brownfield 202 on Sundays. The next four meetings will be on February 15, March 15, April 19, and May 17. Those wishing to come early for Evening Prayer (at 5:00) and supper before the meetings at St. Vincent should phone Fr. Donald in advance at (724) 805-2291. Classes on Benedictine spirituality will continue to be offered at 3:00 P.M. on the same dates. In February, Fr. Jean-Luc will offer a teaching on obedience; in March, Fr. Justin Matro will offer a teaching on hospitality; and in April, Br. Ignatius will offer a presentation on *lectio divina*; **the presentation on April 19 will be at 2:00 P.M. so that attendees will be able to attend the concert on the new pipe organ offered by Fr. Cyprian at 3:00. Also, the talk in April will be in Brownfield 301.** At the regular meeting on March 15, Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman will give a presentation on a talk from the 2013 NAABOD conference, and she and her husband, Gilbert, will give a presentation on Benedictine sites in Europe that they visited in the summer of 2014.

### **TALKS PRESENTED TO LATROBE DEANERY AVAILABLE ON C.D.'s AND D.V.D.'s**

Thanks to Fr. Andrew, talks given at Oblate meetings in Latrobe (when the presenter is willing and when someone is able to videotape) are being made available to those who desire to have copies for a small cost. Those who attend meetings in Latrobe may purchase the D.V.D.'s at \$3.50 each and the C.D.'s at \$2.50 each. Others may purchase the presentations from the College Book Store at \$6.00 and \$3.50 (plus tax & postage). **Please see the order form on the flier attached to this newsletter.**

### **OBLATE GROUP IN ROSHARON, TX**

Oblate William Tkacik reported on November 15, December 23, and January 22. The meeting on November 15 began with an opening prayer and the recitation of Morning Prayer. The group discussed a planned ceremony for final Oblations and investitures, which had been rescheduled for December 20. The group also pondered the possible names for a deanery since it would have the required numbers after some of the members would become full Oblates.

On December 20, during a Mass offered by Fr. Frank Wittouck, C.S.J., of Houston, Deacon Ed Stoessel received the following:

Oblates: **Gilford (Michael Roman) Abshire** of Rosharon, TX  
**Jules F. (Frederic) Clark** of Rosharon, TX  
**Roland R. (Bartholomew) Fernandez, Sr.**, of Rosharon, TX  
**Stephen A. Hall** of Rosharon, TX  
**Pete (Malchus) Salas** of Rosharon, TX  
**Dale E. (John Henry) Smith** of Rosharon, TX  
**William J. (Rudolph) Tkacik** of Rosharon, TX

Oblate novices: **Larry Haragan** of Rosharon, TX  
**Sanford L. Russell, Jr.**, of Rosharon, TX.

All are members of Holy Trinity Parish in Angleton, TX. Two others were ready to be invested as Oblate novices but were unable to be present.

The meeting on January 17 was attended by all seven Oblates and the two Oblate novices. After an opening prayer from the *Oblate Formation Booklet*, the group prayed the Liturgy of the Hours and then the special prayer for Oblates. They then discussed a possible patron saint for the deanery. The Oblate novices were informed about the format of the meeting, and there was a discussion about humility from Chapter 7 of the *Rule*. The meeting closed with a prayer from the formation booklet.

### **OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA**

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by e-mail on December 7. Five of the group met on November 27 on a very snowy, stormy evening. After an opening prayer, the attendees read and discussed Chapter 4, verses 1-9, of the *Rule*. They ended the meeting with the praying of Compline.

### **OBLATE GROUP IN PHILADELPHIA, PA**

Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported on January 28. The meeting on December 6 began with Morning Prayer according the Roman Rite. In the spirit of the Advent Season, when we are asked to slow down and be content to wait for the Lord, it seemed appropriate to reflect on prayer: what prayer is and how one prays. However, only the question of how one prays was addressed since the notion of prayer is a "mystery to be lived" beyond analysis. Fr. Vincent made a brief presentation, and the group read from the *Holy Rule* and from a contemporary rule called *A Rule for a New Brother*. Then there was a discussion with the members sharing their thoughts and experiences about prayer. The meeting ended with prayer and a hymn, followed by gathering for lunch. The next meeting was scheduled for February 7 at 10:00 A.M. at Saint Mary's Church, 630 E. Cathedral Rd. Philadelphia, PA 19128.

### **OBLATE GROUP IN MORGANTOWN, WV**

Secretary Pauline Lanciotti reported by e-mail on November 20 and January 28. In attendance at the meeting on November 19 were one Oblate, three Oblate novices, and two inquirers in addition to Fr. John Paul, moderator. After an opening prayer there was a group discussion about possible topics for future meetings. It was decided that future meetings would include teachings by Fr. John Paul on various periods of Benedictine/monastic history supplemented by information about some of the Benedictine saints of each period. Oblates may be asked to prepare and present information about particular saints. Also, Fr. John Paul said that he was looking for a volunteer (or volunteers) to create and maintain an Oblate page on the St. John University Parish website. Also considered were the dedication of the new pipe organ at the Archabbey Basilica, the Oblate presentations at the Archabbey on the third Sunday of each

month, and some books on the *Rule* and Benedictine spirituality recommended by Fr. John Paul. The meeting was concluded with a prayer and a blessing by Fr. John Paul. (continued)

The meeting on January 28, rescheduled from January 21, was attended by two Oblates, who viewed and discussed Fr. Thomas Acklin's recorded talk on *lectio divina*. Before they viewed the talk, Pauline reviewed the key concepts of *lectio* that helped to put it in the context of Benedictine spirituality. It was agreed that the viewing and a group discussion should be repeated at a future meeting with more people present.

#### **POTENTIAL OBLATE GROUP IN TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA**

Oblate Kenneth Lavin reported by e-mail on November 14. Ken and Fr. Anselmo Park, O.S.B., were hoping to publicize the Oblate Program in the Toronto area and possibly start a deanery in the city.

#### **OBLATES RECEIVE 10% DISCOUNT AT BASILICA GIFT SHOP**

If you are shopping at the Basilica Gift Shop and are an Oblate or an Oblate novice, mention your affiliation with the Oblate community to the volunteers at the shop, and you will receive a 10% discount on your purchases.

#### **NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES**

##### **Albion, PA (St. Paul Deanery)** -- *monthly meetings at chapel in Albion*

Deacon Ralph DeCecco, moderator, reported on October 15. Problems with health and a multiplicity of duties have prevented the deanery from having meetings since July 19. During a communion service on October 11,

**Jamie (Paul) Rowles** of Albion, PA, made his final Oblation in the presence of Deacon Ralph and all those present.

##### **Annville, PA (St. Placid Deanery)** -- *meetings at 3 P.M. on 4th Sunday of each month, St. Paul the Apostle Church, Annville*

Lay leader/secretary Mary Ann Bingeman reported by e-mail on November 9, November 22, and January 28. At the meetings on September 28 and October 26, the group continued to read and discuss Pope Francis' *Joy of the Gospel*, with emphasis on how Oblates can evangelize in their parishes and communities. Both meetings, as usual, began with Evening Prayer.

Because of illnesses and previous commitments, the Oblate meeting scheduled for November was cancelled. Likewise there was no meeting scheduled for December. The next meeting was to be held on January 25, 2015.

##### **Baltimore, MD (St. Walburga Deanery)** -- *meetings at 3:00-4:30 on 3rd Sun. of month, parish house, St. Benedict Church*

Secretary Jay Wells sent reports by e-mail on November 17 and November 24, and Oblate Ann Porter reported on January 27. The meeting on November 16 was attended by Fr. Paschal, moderator, and nine others. (continued)

Fr. Paschal began by distributing a brochure about Christ as King and commented about the article and about devotions to the saints. He also gave all the attendees copies of the *Magnificat Advent Companion* and a book of daily reflections for Advent and Christmas by Bishop Robert Morneau for personal reading and reflection during Advent and Christmas. Next Fr. Paschal gave a short reflection on Advent. The group then turned to their monthly discussion of the book *Sacred Reading* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.S.C.O., this time covering pages 41 to 45. There were also plans for Oblates to be assisting with reading the "Advent stations" in St. Benedict Church on November 23. The next meeting was planned for January 18, 2015

On November 23 there was Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Benedict Church after the last Mass. The Oblates shared in the reading of the seven "Advent stations." Then at 5:00 Vespers were sung with the help of choir members, and the prayer was concluded with Benediction. Oblates, parishioners, and friends were in attendance.

Ten Oblates and Fr. Paschal attended the meeting on January 18. Attendance was lower than usual because of inclement weather. Fr. Paschal suggested that the group read the book *The Little Rule and the Little Way* by Dwight Longenecker and then later return to discussions of *Sacred Reading*. Fr. Paschal distributed articles for discussion: "Seeking the Presence of God Each Day" by Oblate Thomas J. Rillo (of St. Meinrad Archabbey) and "Women of the Word: the Grandmothers of Jesus" by Br. Zachary Wilberding, O.S.B. (also of St. Meinrad). Finally, the group discussed the forthcoming Season of Lent and the distribution of Lenten reading materials at the next meeting on February 15. It was also suggested that the members put together a Lenten list of good works (*bona opera*) to be handed in for placing on the altar in the choir chapel. Finally, the group proceeded to pray Vespers in the church at 5:00.

##### **Butler, PA (St. Hildegard Deanery)** -- *monthly meetings at St. Fidelis Parish Hall, generally the 3rd Thurs. of month*

Lay leader Ethel Galli wrote on December 10. The deanery held a November/December meeting along with a pre-Christmas party on December 9. The meeting began with a prayer service called "Living Light" and led by Sister Evelyn Dettling, O.S.B. Sister Evelyn spoke about her 60 years as a Benedictine sister and reflected on the season of Advent. She remarked that although God is with us at all times, in His gentleness He waits for us to invite Him to be part of our daily lives; only then shall we experience the fullness of His presence. As trees extend their branches to the sky as they wait for the light, so we wait for the Lord to nurture us. The meeting ended with a prayer and a social for Christmas.

##### **Carrolltown, PA (Sacred Heart Deanery)** -- *monthly meetings in St. Benedict Church or meeting room,*

There was no report.

##### **Cyber Deanery**

Lay leader David Hicks reported by phone on February 2. After a time of departing from the common text, namely *Lessons from Saint Benedict*, the deanery recently resumed their reading of the book and are now discussing Chapter 21. They congratulate member

Scott Cundiff on his final Oblation at the Archabbey. As of the beginning of February, there were 34 members on Yahoo and 10 on Face book.

**Johnstown, PA (St. John Gualbert Deanery)** -- meetings on 2nd Monday of each month, 6:30 P.M., St. Benedict Church

Lay leader Carl Motter wrote on November 13, December 18, and January 15. The meeting on November 10 began with Evening Prayer. Then Deacon Michael Russo, moderator, showed a 38-minute video on the life of St. Benedict. The video reviewed his entire life and captured his character and his insights as well as the setting of sixth-century Italy. After the viewing the group discussed their impressions of the story of St. Benedict's life.

At the meeting on December 15, which began with Evening Prayer, Deacon Michael led a discussion on *lectio divina*. Then the small group actually practiced some "group *lectio*" under the guidance of Deacon Michael, with a given text of Scripture being read several times.

The monthly meeting on January 12 consisted of the praying of Evening Prayer and a gathering for a Christmas party at a local restaurant. Since the weather was cold and snowy, only a small group attended.

**Latrobe, PA (St. Gregory the Great Deanery)** -- meetings usually on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of month, 6:45 P.M., Brownfield 202

Some twenty people attended the meeting on November 16. Beforehand, about 4:15 in St. Gregory Chapel,

**Cynthia J. (Eusebia) Ruff** of Toledo, OH,

made her final Oblation before Fr. Donald, Br. Joachim, Cindi's mother, and some 25 Oblates who came over after the 3:00 session. At 6:45 Cynthia gave a presentation to some 20 people based on a talk given by Sister Colleen Maura McGrane, O.S.B., at the NAABOD meeting in July, 2013, entitled "Communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." The original presentation was about the effect that technology, especially the electronic media, can have on our lives and how values from the *Rule* of St. Benedict can help to overcome the negative influences. There were ultimately three recommendations about how people can reshape and reuse technology to their advantage and for the greater good of society. The three categories which can be threatened by modern technology are (1) mindfulness of the presence of God, (2) encountering and reverencing Christ in others, and (3) defining community. There was much lively discussion. In conclusion, it was stated that there are ways to exert healthy control over technological devices and to avoid letting them rule our lives.

It might be of interest to note that the planned use of the computer had to be revised. First, Fr. Donald had not brought the D.V.D. that Cindi needed. Then no one knew a password that would allow Cindi to get into the computer in the classroom. Then Cindi went to fetch her lap-top computer, but because of the smallness of the picture and the low volume of the sound, the group expressed preference for Cindi simply to give her presentation directly. It worked out very well in the end!

Some twelve people gathered on December 21 for a continued discussion of the Prologue of the *Rule* based on the *Commentary* by Dom Paul Delatte, O.S.B. (*continued*)

The topics covered included the unique call to each individual, the joy of sharing in God's work, the great desirability of hearing Christ's voice, the need for hard work and "running" to obtain salvation, the challenge of dealing with temptations, and the danger of complacency over spiritual achievement.

On January 18, after the 3:00 presentation, some 25 people gathered in St. Gregory Chapel for a ceremony for the final Oblation of

**Scott Cundiff** of Roanoke, VA,

in the presence of Fr. Donald, Br. Joachim, and the others who were assembled in the chapel. Scott was making a weekend retreat at the Archabbey, and it was his first time at St. Vincent.

At the meeting at 6:45 P.M., the group continued and almost completed a discussion of the Prologue. The topics discussed included faithfulness in responding to God's word, the notion of God's waiting for us, the need to repent today and to engage in spiritual battle, moderation in the *Rule*, and the call to bear patiently with the daily sufferings of Christian, Benedictine life. Other issues that were brought up were the availability of free copies of *The Joy of the Gospel* (by Pope Francis) and programs that were scheduled on the media to mark the Right-to-Life novena. Prayers were also offered for those participating in the March for Life on January 22.

**Lessons in Latrobe at 3:00 P.M. before regular Oblate meetings at 6:45 P.M.**

On November 16 Fr. Fred gave a presentation on obedience to a large audience of some 35 people. He first spoke about an elderly monk, now deceased, who grew in his monastic vocation by always accepting whatever assignment the abbot asked of him. The monastery, said Fr. Fred, is a school of the Lord's service and a "preparation for finals," where each member needs to be attentive in order to be ready for the "final exam" of death and judgment. It is listening to the voice of the Master, which is often expressed in the requests of other human beings, that helps one to gain the gift of eternal life. The journey of faith is made through self-surrender and self-emptying. We learn from Christ, who was obedient to His Father (and to legitimate human authorities) throughout His life on earth. Obedience is not just to keep order in the monastery but to nurture each individual's spiritual growth. For Christ, death meant "going to the Father," and so it is for us. The Christian who follows Christ through the *Rule* of St. Benedict should be eager to let go of control through use of the "bright, noble weapons of obedience." Blessed Columba Marmion said that he "became a monk because God had revealed to him the beauty and greatness of obedience." St. Benedict is concerned not just with external obedience but principally with the disposition of the heart. Obedience must be given gladly. We can gradually overcome our inner murmuring. Oblates should realize that they are engaged in a life-long battle against self-will and for obedience to Christ the King. They are to establish God's reign over the territory of their hearts. The main purpose of monastic obedience is liberation from self-will and the ultimate ability to live in a continual "listening mode." We come to see how every person in our lives, both the youngest and the oldest, can be an instrument of God's will and a messenger from Him.

On December 21 Br. Lawrence gave a presentation on poverty and simplicity of life to another large audience of at least 35 people, with a power-point showing of relevant Scripture quotes. He began with a description of different kinds of poverty and concluded that



just by being human we all experience poverty in terms of weaknesses and limitations; we are not sufficient unto ourselves. The kind of poverty addressed in the talk, however, was evangelical poverty, that is poverty chosen for the sake of following Christ more perfectly and sharing in His poverty. We are to examine what we value in life and then realize the danger of clinging to these things. Our baptism and Oblation commit us to conforming our lives to Christ's life and thus to "get out of ourselves." Br. Lawrence then described three ways in which we receive heavenly riches: through detachment, contentment, and generosity. In others words, we must give up those things on which we depend for our value; we must learn to be happy with what we have and what we don't have; and whatever we have is meant to be given away to others. At the same time, we need to realize that whatever we do in life will always be imperfect. God cares mainly about the love that we put into anything. One lesson to be derived from the celebration of Christmas is that we should be content with God and His plan and to be poor and helpless like the Christ-child.

On January 18 Br. Hugh gave a presentation on holiness and Benedictine spirituality to about 25 people. He began with the reminder from the *Catechism* and the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* that all Christians are called to holiness, that is, the fullness of Christian life, which is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and evidenced by the fruits of the Holy Spirit. However, since we often show forth the vices corresponding to the fruits rather than the fruits themselves, we need much practice and preparatory work to grow toward holiness. The *Holy Rule* challenges to grow in holiness, especially in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 and in the Prologue. Various verses of the Prologue speak of the necessity of obedience, silence, humility, and good deeds in the pursuit of holiness. Br. Hugh then cited the book *Seventy-four Tools for Good Living* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O., to show how the tools of good works (Chapter 4 of the *Rule*) contribute to growth in holiness. The monastery is compared with a workshop for growing in holiness, and we require knowledge and skills to use rightly the tools that are provided. This process involves work and struggle; in fact, it is a matter of spiritual combat. Some of the tools involve avoidance of sinful behavior; others involve positive virtues or good works. All reflect Gospel values. Of course, we weak people cannot succeed in mastering all the tools at once; some, in fact, may be very hard for us. The key to growth in holiness, however, is fidelity to little things and progress in small steps. Conversion is an ongoing, life-long process.

**Niagara Area, Ontario, Canada (St. Henry/St. Gertrude Deanery)** -- meetings on last Monday of each month, meeting room of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, St. Catharines, Ont.

Lay leader Brian Chisholm reported by phone on November 24 and January 29. Eight people attended the meeting on November 23, which was led by Fr. John Vickers, moderator. Since the group had not met for several months, Fr. Vickers gave a review of the lessons that he had prepared. He spoke about the works of various monasteries, the need for balance between work and prayer and for a healthy rhythm in life, the importance of the abbot's summoning the brothers for counsel (*RB* 3), and the instruments of good works (*RB* 4). He emphasized that the precepts of the *Holy Rule* help the monastery to function well and that they should help our lives to function well, too. The group also made plans for an "after-Christmas meal" in January.

Five people besides Fr. John attended the meeting on January 25. At 2:00, before the 3:00 meeting, the Oblates prayer Evening Prayer, a rosary, and the Litany of St. Benedict. Then Fr. John distributed copies of an article on Benedictine spirituality from the Catholic newspaper *Prairie Messenger*, which led to some good discussion. The group then discussed *RB* 5 on obedience.

**Palmyra, PA (Holy Spirit Deanery)** – monthly meetings on Sundays at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Palmyra

Secretary Gabriele Terrill reported on November 16 and January 22. Fr. James Podlesny, moderator, and eleven others attended the meeting on November 16. It began with Evening Prayer in the church and continued with a discussion on the theme "How do I pray?" Fr. Jim stated that "Scripture gives us everything" and that St. Benedict wanted to make the Bible a part of everyone's life. Reading the *Rule* reveals that it is filled with quotes from Scripture. When monks of others pray the Divine Office, they are immersing themselves in Scripture. Also, short prayers or songs uttered throughout the day can keep one connected with God as reminders that He is always with us. Aiming for continual awareness of God is a large part of monastic spirituality. Fr. Jim then spoke about the new Archabbey Basilica Organ and about the dedication ceremony and concert on November 23. The group then concluded its meeting with some refreshments.

The meeting on January 18 was attended by Fr. James and seven others. Fr. Jim began by speaking to the group about the meaning of postures and gestures used during Mass. Then the group prayed Evening Prayer in the church and proceeded to the meeting room for light refreshments. The discussion began with the question "What is *conversatio morum*?" Fr. Jim explained the monk's vow as committing himself to "grow in perfect charity through a monastic manner of life" whereas the Oblate promises to keep seeking Christ amid the ordinary events of daily life. For the Oblate every moment becomes an opportunity for deeper trust in God. Next, after Fr. Jim left, the group read a few pages from the book *Seeking God* by Esther DeWaal, specifically about the three monastic vows. Her explanation of *conversatio* involved the notion of ongoing conversion, that is, letting God's grace transform a person more and more. There then ensued an interesting discussion about the differences between monastic vows and the promises that Oblates make. Gabriele also handed out applications to the inquirers who were present.

**Pendleton, IN (St. Celestine Deanery)** – monthly meetings in the chapel in Pendleton

Secretary/lay leader Frederick Laux reported on November 23 and December 21. The meeting on October 30 was attended by three Oblates, one Oblate novice, and seven inquirers. Deacon John Etter, moderator, opened with a praying of the Angelus, and the group then started a Bible study on 1 Corinthians by Scott Hahn. Fred gave a presentation on the goal of heaven and the need to make efforts to avoid sluggishness in pursuit of heaven. He referred to *RB* 4:77, which quotes 1 Cor 2:9; noted that one can easily become complacent regarding the process of ongoing conversion; and tied this idea with a chapter from *Lessons from Saint Benedict*. In sum, one needs to keep taking little steps in order to reach the summit of eternal life.

There was no meeting in November because Deacon John was recovering from surgery.

The meeting on December 18 was attended by ten people in addition to Deacon John and a special visitor. After beginning with the Angelus, the group continued a study of 1 Corinthians. Oblate Curtis Kennedy gave a presentation, beginning with the "Prayer in Honor of St. Benedict," on parallels between *RB* 63 (on community rank) and the end of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of 1 Corinthians. As the

abbot of a monastery chooses the ranking of his monks (determined also by the date of entry and virtue of life according to RB 63), so St. Paul appointed St. Timothy as bishop and encouraged to be bold in his task of leadership despite his youth.

**Pittsburgh, PA (St. Peter Deanery)** -- meetings on 2nd or 3rd Wed., St. Peter Church.

Oblate George Ponticello reported by e-mail on November 10, December 26, and January 25. During October the group went on a field trip to visit the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh at their new monastery in Bakerstown. Eleven people participated in the trip, which included a tour, Evening Prayer, dinner, conversation with the sisters, and a farewell prayer from them. The group felt that they had had a good experience of Benedictine hospitality, and the sisters welcomed them to visit again at any time.

George noted that there was a story about the vocation of Fr. Ralph Tajak, O.S.B., former moderator, in the "Vocations Supplement" of the November 7 issue of the *Pittsburgh Catholic*.

The deanery held a pre-Christmas party on December 18 after Evening Prayer. Nine Oblates and one guest attended, and there was plenty of food and drink. The Oblates were grateful to Sister Alice for her hospitality since she welcomed the group to use her apartment for the party.

Eleven people, including Fr. Vincent, moderator, attended the meeting on January 22. The group discussed Chapter 18 from *Lessons from St. Benedict*. The next meeting was scheduled for February 26.

**St. Marys, PA (St. Maurus Deanery)** -- meetings on Thurs. before 1<sup>st</sup> Fri. of month, 7:00 P.M. at Queen of the World Church

Secretary Peggi Gabler wrote on November 11. The last meeting before spring was held in the Queen of the World teachers' lounge on November 6 after Benediction and Evening Prayer. Eight people attended. After the Oblate prayer, a reading of the minutes from October, and a reading of a letter from Fr. Donald, the group discussed RB 30: 1-3 on reproving boys. There was some consideration of the harsh treatments used in St. Benedict's day. Then Oblate Lorraine Gerber spoke about her recent trip to Guadalupe, Mexico, and some of the hardships that she experienced. The meeting ended with the "Benedictine prayer" and the intention to meet in the spring.

**Saint Vincent College** – monthly meetings to begin in September, in Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel

Fr. Killian Loch, O.S.B., moderator, reported on February 3 on the monthly meetings on November 10, in December, and in January. Most of the attendees have been new; so the meetings have begun with a general overview to acquaint them with the Oblate Program. The lessons have included instruction from the *Oblate Formation Booklet* and sharing by some students who are already Oblates or Oblate novices. The meetings conclude with group *lectio*. The new attendees are then invited to come to future meetings. The retention rate has been low since students have so many other commitments. A special event was planned for February 10, the Feast of St. Scholastica, which is to include a presentation on St. Scholastica, some *lectio divina*, and refreshments.

**Savannah, GA (St. Katherine Drexel Deanery)** -- special monthly events at Sunday Vespers at Benedictine Priory

There was no report. (The report in the last newsletter gave a summary of events for the year 2014-2015.)

**Selingsgrove, PA (St. Anselm Deanery)** – monthly meetings at 2 P.M. on 2nd Sundays at St. Pius X Church in Selingsgrove

Secretary Marcia LaBant reported by e-mail on December 2. There were plans for a meeting on January 11, with a presentation on the twelve steps of humility by Oblate Teresa Warlow. Maria also sent out a list of members of the deanery with contact information.

**Somerset, PA (St. John Paul II Deanery)** – meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays, 6:30 -8:15, chapel annex

Co-lay leader Steward Steckley reported on January 28. The first meeting of the year was held on January 13; in attendance were five Oblates, two Oblate novices, four inquirers, and the moderator, Fr. James Dugan. The meeting began with an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*. Then Oblate Robert Fadden gave a talk on stewardship and conformity. A group discussion followed. The meeting closed with the praying of Compline and a special prayer for Oblate novice Ron Bergman. The next meeting was scheduled for February 9.

**Southern Pines, NC (St. Ephrem the Syrian Deanery)** – monthly meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs. of month

There was no report.

**State College, PA (St. Joseph Deanery)** -- meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month, Our Lady of Victory Church, Activity Center.

Secretary Kay Tittmann reported by e-mail on November 11, December 9, and January 20. The meeting on November 10 was attended by eight Oblates, two novices, and four inquirers in addition to Fr. David, moderator. The session began with Evening Prayer, followed by a continuing discussion of the book *The Road to Eternal Life* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. The group reflected on sections 12 through 16 of the Prologue, with emphasis on the themes of "fear of the Lord," the virtue of choosing God amid many attractive alternatives, "running" with childlike simplicity, and St. Benedict's admonition that living the spiritual life takes a lot of effort and is a struggle; it is spiritual warfare. The meeting closed with a prayer, the singing of the "Ultima," and the voicing of several prayer intentions.

The meeting on December 8 began with Evening Prayer for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. In attendance were eight Oblates, one Oblate novice, and one inquirer in addition to Fr. David. The group discussed verses 17 through 21 of the Prologue with the guidance of the book *The Road to Eternal Life*. The section was about our use of speech, which can be a cause of our downfall; unholy speech can lead to unholy attitudes, which will be expressed in unholy behavior. Sometimes we must keep our mouths closed and remember that God is ready and eager to answer us even before we begin to call out. God's voice is one of love and acceptance, and we need to remain attuned to it despite the tumult of our lives. The meeting ended with a prayer, the singing of the "Ultima," and the voicing of several prayer intentions. The group also had had a Mass offered for deceased Oblate Fred Letzeisen.

The meeting on January 12 began with Mass at 5:00 P.M. celebrated by Fr. David, whose homily focused on Christ's identity and ours and Christ's question, "Who do you say that I am?" He reflected that we are required to make a definitive about Who Jesus is; either He is the Son of God and the center of our lives, or He is not. There is no middle ground. Oblates have chosen to live lives open to God's grace and mercy not just when things are going well but especially when times are difficult. The full Oblates present at Mass renewed their Oblation. (Ten Oblates, two Oblate novices, four inquirers, and six guests were in attendance.) After the Mass the group enjoyed a potluck supper in the church social hall. The evening concluded with a presentation to Fr. David of a Christmas gift of \$570 for "Mission Mexico." Fr. David then spoke for a while about the enthusiasm displayed by Penn State students for the annual trip to Mexico to help the very poor among the people.

**Virginia Beach, VA (St. Scholastica Deanery)** -- meetings on 1<sup>st</sup> Wed., 7 P.M., Assembly Room, St. Gregory the Great School

Lay leader/secretary Delina Pauls wrote on November 11 and January 18. A mini-retreat was sponsored by the deanery on October 18. It began with Mass at 8:00 A.M. Some 25 people attended, and several expressed interesting becoming Oblates. It was thought that there might be a similar retreat in January.

The meeting on November 5, led by moderator Fr. Lee Yoakam, was fairly well-attended despite problems with notifying people by e-mail. The group began with praying Evening Prayer along with prayers for all the deceased Oblates and moderators of the deanery. Then Fr. Lee led Oblation ceremonies, during which he received the following:

Oblate novice: **Joseph M. Rae** of Chesapeake, VA

Oblate: **Janet V. (Cecilia) Maratea** of Virginia Beach, VA.

Fr. Lee also spoke briefly about the importance of prayer in the life of an Oblate. To enhance the meeting Joseph brought a pumpkin that he had carved out in the form of the cross of St. Benedict.

On Friday, December 12, after a 6:30 Mass at St. Gregory the Great Church,

**Damian (Maurus) Finke** of Virginia Beach, VA,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Lee. Damian had asked to make his Oblation at that time since he was about to be deployed with the military. Also present were Damian's wife Liza Marie and several other Oblates.

Br. Canice of the Archabbey gave the Oblates a well-attended day of recollection on Saturday, January 3. The day began with Mass at 8:30 A.M., followed by Morning Prayer and some refreshments. Br. Canice spoke about the Magi, the meaning of their bringing of gifts, and a connection with the Blessed Virgin Mary. (The next day was the Solemnity of the Epiphany.) Also, Fr. Lee spoke about the forthcoming Oblate retreat at the Archabbey and encouraged the attendees to consider making the retreat.

**Williamsport, PA (Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus Deanery)** -- meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month, 2 P.M., St. Anne Church

Lay leader/secretary Sue Wykoff reported by e-mail on December 4 and January 12. Three people attended the meeting on November 9, which opened with a praying of the Litany of St. Benedict. To prepare for the Advent Season, the attendees read from the section "Benedictine Values for Oblates" from the *Oblate Formation Booklet*. (continued)

The group ended up having a very good discussion, with emphasis on the need for silence and humility. There was no time to view a D.V.D. that had been prepared. The meeting closed with a praying of the Angelus.

Five people met on December 14. After an opening prayer the group prayed the Office of Readings for the Third Sunday of Advent. Then they listened to a C.D. entitled "The Fourth Cup and the New Passover" by Dr. Brant Pitre, a professor of Sacred Scripture. The attendees participated in some discussion about the C.D. and then closed with the Angelus. Two of the attendees brought cookies and cupcakes for a pre-Christmas celebration.

The meeting on January 11 was attended by four people. Sue brought a pile of books for the others to look at so that the group could choose a book for common study during the year. Sue also distributed some blessed medals of St. Benedict along with the corresponding pamphlets. The group prayed the "prayer to St. Benedict" together and then read the Prologue of the *Rule*. There was a lively discussion with various insights offered. Some of the aspects of the Prologue that stood out for some of the attendees were the importance of managing speech for the sake of spiritual growth and God's tendency to interrupt our plans so that we might direct our wills to conform with His will. The group then reviewed the questions and suggested activities in the *Study Guide to Lessons from St. Benedict*. As usual, the meeting closed with a praying of the Angelus.

**Various Locations**

On November 22 in the Archabbey Basilica, after the praying of Midday Prayer in St. Gregory Chapel,

**John-Paul Buzard** of Urbana, IL, and

**Janice (Michael) Heagy** of Pittsburgh, PA,

made their final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Donald. John-Paul is the owner of Buzard Pipe Organ Builders, which installed the new pipe organ in the Basilica. Janice attends meetings in both Pittsburgh and Latrobe. Also present for the ceremony were Br. Joachim, Fr. Cyprian and three cousins who were visiting, several of John-Paul's co-workers, Oblate Fr. Bernard Costello, Oblate Nicholas Parrendo, and another friend of Janice.

On December 6 in the chapel in Buford, GA,

**Kane Miller** of Buford, GA,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. John C. Fallon, pastor of Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Atlanta, GA.

On January 4 in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald received the following:

Oblate: **Very Rev. Luis R. (Gaudentius) Rodriguez** of Chambersburg, PA

Oblate novice: **Ronald D. Fasano** of Boardman, OH.

Fr. Luis is a priest of the Harrisburg Diocese and serves as pastor of Corpus Christi Catholic Church in Chambersburg. Ron is a 1970

alumnus of St. Vincent College. His daughter and one of his two sons were present for the ceremony.

**DECEASED MONKS:** Please pray for the repose of the soul of retired Abbot Joaquim de Arruda Zamith, O.S.B., who died on November 10 at the age of 90. He had been the Abbot of São Bento Abbey in São Paulo, Brazil, from 1974 to 1989, and then he came to live at São Bento Priory in Vinhedo, Brazil (the mission of St. Vincent), in 2002. He transferred his stability to the American-Cassinense Congregation and to St. Vincent Archabbey in 2005.

Please also pray for the repose of the soul of Fr. William Beaver, O.S.B., who died on January 15. He would have turned 86 on January 28. Only last October Fr. Bill gave a presentation to the Oblates in Latrobe on hospitality.

**SICK & INFIRM MONKS:** The following monks of the Archabbey have been hospitalized or otherwise especially ill during the past three months and could use our prayers: Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, retired Archabbot Paul Maher, Br. Anthony Kirsch, Br. Stephen Nazaruk, Br. Timothy Waid, Fr. Damian Warnock, Br. Nicholas Koss. (A number of monks came down with a serious strain of the flu in January.)

**Oblates are welcome to attend Camerata concerts.**

The following concerts will be given by The Saint Vincent Camerata in April and May:

1. Early Baroque works by Monteverdi, Buxtehude, and Schütz, The Camerata Scholars;  
7:30 P.M., Saturday, April 11, 2015, Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica  
4:00 P.M., Sunday, April 12, 2015, Synod Hall, St. Paul Cathedral, Oakland (Pittsburgh)
2. *Requiem, Opus 9* by Maurice Durufle (1902-1986), The Saint Vincent Camerata with The Academy Chamber Orchestra  
7:30 P.M., Saturday, May 2, 2015, St. Bernard Parish, Mt. Lebanon (Pittsburgh)  
2:30 P.M., Sunday, May 3, 2015, Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica

**Supply of Catholic Worker newspapers and Columbia magazines available**

Over the years Fr. Donald has accumulated a large pile of issues *Columbia* magazine (issued by the Knights of Columbus) and of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper. If anyone is interested in having these, please contact the Oblate Office.

**New Directory of Oblates to Be Printed This Year**

In accordance with our semi-annual custom, a new *Directory* of those Oblates and Oblate novices who wish to be listed is being put together with the hope of having printed copies available before July 11, 2015. If you are not in the *Directory* and would like to be listed, please see the form on the flier below. Since most people in the *Directory* have e-mail, Mary Ann Kaufman, who is in charge of the *Directory*, has been updating it every few months and sending out updated electronic versions to those having e-mail.

**RESERVATION FORM FOR CELEBRATION OF ST. BENEDICT DAY (VIGIL) ON MARCH 20**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I plan to attend the dinner for Oblates at St. Vincent on Friday March 20, 2015, along with \_\_\_ guests; I enclose \_\_\_\_\_ (\$6.50 per person; make out checks to **ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY**. An additional donation for the social would be welcome).

\_\_\_ I plan to be invested as an \_\_\_ Oblate, \_\_\_ Oblate novice on March 20. On becoming a full Oblate, I plan to take the Oblate name \_\_\_\_\_. (*application form required*)

\_\_\_ I would like overnight accommodations. (Please contact Fr. Donald well in advance.)

Please send this form to **Ms. Nancy Premoshis, 3021-2 Williamsburg Lane, Latrobe, PA 15650 (phone: 724-837-6647) by March 13.**

**SCHEDULE FOR SOLEMNITY OF SAINT BENEDICT, MARCH 20, 2015**

5:00 P.M. – Solemn First Vespers in Archabbey Basilica

5:45 P.M. – dinner in Placid Hall Dining Room B

6:45 P.M. – Oblation ceremonies, St. Gregory Chapel

7:30 P.M. – social in Placid B

**RENEWAL OF OBLATION**

Peace! In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I, (name), renew my Oblation and offer myself to Almighty God, through the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy Father Benedict, as an Oblate of Saint Vincent Archabbey, and I promise again, before God and all the saints, to dedicate my life to the service of God and neighbor according to the *Rule* of St. Benedict, insofar as my state in life permits.

“Sustain me, O Lord, as You have promised, that I may live, and disappoint me not in my hope” (Ps 119:116 & *RB* 58:21).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach and return to:  
Director of Oblates  
St. Vincent Archabbey  
300 Fraser Purchase Rd.  
Latrobe, PA 15650-2690 .

**DIRECTORY OF OBLATES: Application form**

I would like to be included in the summer, 2015, edition of the *Directory* of Oblates affiliated with Saint Vincent Archabbey. (**Entries in the 2013 *Directory* will automatically be carried over.**)The information that I would like to have included in given as follows:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form to Mrs. Mary Ann Kaufman, 305 Harvester Circle, Pittsburgh, PA 15241 (412-302-8501); or send the information by e-mail to 305makaufman@gmail.com .

**Order Form for C.D.'s & D.V.D.'s of Presentations in Latrobe**  
**(See *past newsletters or phone Book Center for previous presentations.*)**

Sandra Monier's talk on the Eucharist in Benedictine spirituality (July 21, 2013):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Liz Hart's talk work in Benedictine spirituality (August 18, 2013):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Fr. John Peck's talk on hospitality in Benedictine spirituality (September 15, 2013):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Fr. Wulfstan's talk on obedience in Benedictine spirituality (October 20, 2013):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Fr. Thomas Acklin's talk on *lectio divina* (November 17, 2013):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Fr. Jean-Luc's talk on the Liturgy of the Hours (December 15, 2013):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Br. Étienne's talk on *lectio divina* (February 16, 2014):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Fr. Killian's talk on *conversatio morum* (March 16, 2014):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Br. Canice's talk on the Holy Eucharist (June 22, 2014):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Fr. Thomas Hart's talk on work (July 20, 2014):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Fr. Robert Keffer's talk on silence (August 17, 2014):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Br. Thomas Sanders' talk on the Liturgy of the Hours (September 21, 2014):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Fr. William Beaver's talk on hospitality (October 19, 2014):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Br. Lawrence's talk on poverty and simplicity in Benedictine spirituality (December 21, 2014):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

Br. Hugh's talk on holiness and Benedictine spirituality (January 18, 2015):

C.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)      D.V.D. \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

**Please enclose \$6.00 per D.V.D. and \$3.50 per C.D. (Add 6% Pa. sales tax before shipping cost; then add \$4.95 for postage & handling per order.)**

**Enclosed is \_\_\_\_\_ for my order of \_\_\_\_\_ C.D.'s and \_\_\_\_\_ D.V.D.'s.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

I will pick up my order \_\_\_\_\_ Please mail my order to me \_\_\_\_\_ (Remember to include 6% tax & \$4.95 for postage per order.)

**Please order from Saint Vincent Book Center over the phone at 724-805-2557 or online at [www.stvincent.bkstr.com](http://www.stvincent.bkstr.com) , or by mail (St. Vincent Book Center, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650-2690); or come in person to the Book Center. Please make out checks to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY. N.B.: Those who attend monthly meetings in Latrobe will still be able to order copies of recent presentations at a discounted price.**

**SPECIAL SCHEDULE FOR MONASTIC PRAYER AT THE ARCHABBEY DURING HOLY WEEK AND THE OCTAVE OF EASTER**

The following times or liturgical services will be different than the normal ones:

Wednesday, April 1

Evening Prayer as penitential prayer service (basilica) 5:00 P.M.  
Compline (basilica) 7:30 P.M.

Holy Thursday, April 2

Morning Prayer (basilica choir) 6:45 A.M.  
(no Evening Prayer)  
Mass of the Lord's Supper (basilica) 7:30 P.M.

Good Friday, April 3

Morning Prayer (basilica choir) 6:45 A.M.  
Midday Prayer (basilica choir) 11:30 A.M.  
Commemoration of the Passion and Death of Our Lord 1:30 P.M.  
(basilica; no Evening Prayer)  
Tenebrae Service (basilica) 8:00 P.M.

Holy Saturday, April 4

Morning Prayer (basilica choir) 6:45 A.M.  
Midday Prayer (basilica choir) 11:30 A.M.  
Evening Prayer (basilica choir) 5:00 P.M.  
Easter Vigil Mass (basilica) 8:30 P.M.

Easter Sunday, April 5

Morning Prayer (with procession from Assembly Room) 7:00 A.M.  
Evening Prayer (solemn, in basilica choir) 4:15 P.M.

Easter Monday, April 6

Morning Prayer followed by Mass (basilica choir) 6:45 A.M.

**The regular schedule resumes on Tuesday, April 7.**

