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# THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

## Saint Vincent Archabbey

300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690



February - April, 2018

724-805-2291

Volume 71, Number 1

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Please note forms on fliers for renewal of Oblation, for celebration on March 21, & for C.D.'s & D.V.D.'s.

### TO BE CONVERTED MORE DEEPLY AND NEVER TO "GRIEVE [GOD] BY OUR EVIL ACTIONS" (Prol: 5)

Dear Oblates, Oblate Novices, and Friends,

#### ***Longing to overcome evil***

In the recesses of our hearts we all long for deeper conversion and freedom from slavery to sin, which hinders us from fulfilling the purpose for which we were created: to receive God's infinite love and to show forth His love to others. On the morning of this past Christmas Eve, which fell on a Sunday, I celebrated two Masses at the parish assigned to me. Although I had heard confessions the previous afternoon at the scheduled time, one parishioner asked before the second Mass if I were going to hear confessions that day. I responded that I would gladly hear his confession after the Mass. During the Mass the thought occurred to me that other people might also want the Sacrament of Reconciliation before the Christmas liturgies; so, near the end of Mass, I made an announcement about my availability right after Mass. To my surprise, I was kept busy with a steady stream of penitents for some forty minutes. It might have been the case that the people were accustomed to going to confession shortly before Christmas and had not yet had the opportunity. However, the demand for the sacrament may also have indicated a heartfelt response to the incarnate love of Christ that we celebrate at Christmas and to an eagerness not to grieve such a loving, merciful God through unforgiven sin.

#### ***The stark reality of evil in the Rule of St. Benedict***

In many passages, the *Rule* of St. Benedict speaks of the ever-lurking possibility of evil thoughts, words, and actions, not just in the world outside the monastery but in the monastic community itself. Right at the outset St. Benedict urges monks to turn back to God after having drifted into "the sloth of disobedience" (Prol: 2) and warns that they "should never grieve [God] by our evil actions" (Prol: 5). Near the end of the Prologue we are reminded of the need for some strictness "in order to amend faults and to safeguard love" (Prol: 47). At the end of the *Rule*, St. Benedict, recommending good reading for his monks, comments that such literature can "make us blush for shame at being so slothful, so unobservant, so negligent" (73:7). Throughout the *Rule* St. Benedict refers to various ways in which monks fail to observe community norms. The abbot, while himself a

sinner, has to deal with monks who are weak and sinful; he is warned that "he should not gloss over the sins of those who err, but cut them out while he can, as soon as they begin to sprout. ..." (2:26). At community meetings monks may be tempted to "presume to defend their own views obstinately" (3:6), or a monk may wish to "follow his heart's desire" (3:8) or to "presume to contend with his abbot defiantly, or outside the monastery" (3:9). Again and again St. Benedict warns against grumbling, whether interior or spoken, and against types of talk that can be sinful. In the chapter on silence, he firmly states, "We absolutely condemn in all places any vulgarity and gossip and talk leading to laughter, and we do not permit a disciple to engage in words of that kind" (6:8). Since St. Benedict gives such a stern warning, we can be sure that such disordered speech occurred in some of his monasteries, or at least that monks were tempted to indulge in such verbal sins. Even as all Christians are called to be vigilant against temptations, monks have an explicit vocation to practice such vigilance. In the chapter on humility St. Benedict cautions his monks, "We must then be on guard against any base desire, because death is stationed near the gateway of pleasure" (7:24). That is, we are to live with an increasing desire to know God's will and do God's will rather than to yield to self-gratifying pleasures.

#### ***Struggle against ways of our culture***

Perhaps even more than in St. Benedict's day, we live in a culture that too easily dismisses the potential evil in all of us and downplays personal sin, at least until it grows all out of proportion, as in mass murders and human trafficking. Our society seems to promote an atmosphere of making people feel good about themselves and of not challenging anyone to turn away from sin. Perhaps it is this excessively permissive and individualistic environment that has led to the prevalence of such evils as abortion, euthanasia, legalized same-sex unions, and the alarming diminishment of stable family life. One could also add such evils as addiction to drugs, deaths from overdoses, suicides, and domestic violence. Given all these massive disorders in individuals, in families, and in society as a whole, one might be tempted to withdraw into despair and cynicism. However, the Scriptures and the *Rule* urge us to be

brave and steadfast in confronting such evils. With God's grace, we need not be overwhelmed by them, and as individuals we can surely work on a small scale to try to combat such evils when they first spring up in our hearts, in our families, and in our communities.

### ***Fighting evil with the tools of good works***

A number of the "tools for good works" (*RB* 4) provide hope-filled ways of dealing with evil, especially in our personal struggles. As Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O., notes in his book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* (Liturgical Press, 2015), thirty-eight of these tools, or over half, "detail courses of action to be avoided" (p. xix). As the Church has ever asserted, Christians always have, with God's grace, the power of will to say no to sinful ways, however difficult a struggle this repudiation of evil may involve. Our wills might be greatly weakened by past sins, by bad habits, or by various physiological conditions, but God always provides sufficient strength to resist temptations. Our task is to practice using these tools for combating evil so that we develop the virtues that help us more readily to counteract sinful tendencies. We can learn to exert ourselves to welcome the graces needed to overcome dysfunctional ways. Without God's grace, of course, we are hopeless, but with His grace we have the strength to practice the self-denial required to resist evil. Hence St. Benedict gives us such admonitions as "Do not pamper yourself" (4:12); "You are not to act in anger" (4:22); "Do not repay one bad turn with another" (4:29); "You must not be proud" (4:34); and "Do not grumble" (4:39). The list of negatives could go on and on, but it is urgent to realize that despite our multiple sinful tendencies, we can, with grace, do those little things each day that counteract the poison of sin. By striving relentlessly to resist evil as it emerges in our daily lives, we are also helping to overcome the massive evils of the world.

### ***Practicing virtue to overcome vice***

It is often said by spiritual authors that the best way to combat vice is to nurture the opposite virtue. When one realizes that it is ultimately far more appealing to practice the virtue, the desire to do evil gradually withers away. In the Prologue of the *Rule*, St. Benedict, quoting Ps 34:15, exhorts us, "Turn away from evil and do good" (Prol: 17). If we have a habit of anger, we can nurture a disposition of joy and thanksgiving. If we tend to be gluttonous, we can learn to enjoy eating small, nourishing portions and to give genuine thanks for those morsels. If we tend to be envious or greedy, we can pause frequently to be grateful to God for what we already have (which for most of us is probably more than enough). If we are frequently tempted to gossip or to speak deceitfully, we can strive to treasure silence in our lives and to pray for people who are likely to be harmed by detraction or calumny. We can learn also to walk away gently from groups of people indulging in gossip. If we tend to be lazy or late

for appointments, we can, with God's grace, discover satisfaction in getting up early and making extra effort to be punctual. If we are tempted to lust, we can welcome the genuine joy that comes from chaste relationships of self-giving as opposed to self-gratification. If we are chronically selfish with our time and energy, we can practice saying, "Thank You, Lord," when we encounter someone in need of our help, especially when he or she comes at an inconvenient time, interrupts us, or stirs up feelings of annoyance.

Vices that are especially highlighted in the *Rule* are sins of speech. In Chapter 6 on "restraint of speech," St. Benedict states emphatically, "We absolutely condemn in all places any vulgarity and gossip and talk leading to laughter ..." (6:8). In the Bible, sins of the tongue, especially deceitful talk, are seen as typical of all sins. There is some truth to the belief that if one can control the tongue well (and the thoughts and desires that lie behind sinful speech), then other sinful impulses can also be more readily controlled. All of us probably know some people who, in a circle of people, tend to dominate conversations. Such people may take up a word or phrase that someone else mentions and then turn the conversation in a completely different direction that seems to be self-gratifying. At that point the original thread of conversation is lost, and the avid talker seems to be lost in a world of his or her own. Of course, such a way of self-centered speech goes very much against charity. If only the person could see himself or herself through the eyes of others! Perhaps, however, there is an element of this vice in many of us. Most of us could benefit from St. Benedict's advice that we be disciples who strive "to be silent and listen" (6:6).

### ***Example of overcoming evil with good***

This past January 18-19, I was blessed once again to attend the March for Life in Washington, DC. The whole event was a powerful example of counteracting evil with good. The Vigil Mass, with the crowded basilica and the solemn liturgy, helped the participants to place the issue of abortion and other anti-life crimes into God's hands even while it offered graces to continue the struggle in peaceful, life-giving ways. Before the morning Mass in the Capitol One Arena, hundred of penitents, mostly young people, flocked to confession offered by dozens of priests in the outer circle of the arena. Those of us who rally against crimes against life must admit that we ourselves have sinned and have also abused God's gift of life; we, too, need the redeeming power of Christ to forgive us. During the subsequent Mass tens of thousands of participants enthusiastically proclaimed their love for Christ and the Church, and the priest homilist expressed his joyful gratitude that his mother refused to consent when a doctor recommended abortion as a remedy to supposedly life-threatening defects. On the march itself, which, I hear, is hardly ever mentioned in our country's biased secular media,

hundreds of thousands of marchers proclaimed the precious value of human life by holding banners, by chanting pro-life slogans, or simply by walking in solidarity with everyone else. The sacrifices made by so many people to oppose evil and to promote good showed how spiritual weapons can counteract the forces of our "culture of death."

### **God's role in destroying evil**

There is a negative dimension of opposing evil, which is God's therapeutically destructive power. The Book of Psalms mentions many times that God seeks to destroy evil forces. The New Testament, too, attests to the destructive power of God when it comes to evil. In Mark 1:24, an unclean spirit cries out to Our Lord, "Have you come to destroy us?" (Of course, Christ did come to destroy such evil spirits!) The Second Letter of St. Peter speaks of the Day of the Lord as a time when "the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and all its deeds will be made manifest" (2 Pt 3:10). Furthermore, St. Peter refers to the day of judgment as "the day when godless men will be destroyed" (2 Pt 3:7). However, we know that God does not positively will that people be destroyed. In the same passage we hear that God "shows you generous patience, since He wants none to perish but all to come to repentance" (2 Pt 3:9). St. Benedict may be referring to this passage as well as to Romans 2:4 when he asserts, "Do you not know that the patience of God is leading you to repent?" (RB Prol: 37). In the monastery the abbot is to administer this merciful yet sometimes "destructive" power of God as "a wise physician" (28:2) would. In dealing with a stubbornly unrepentant monk, the abbot is to apply "compresses, the ointment of encouragement, the medicine of divine Scripture, and finally the cauterizing iron of excommunication and strokes of the rod" (38:3) - and then, if none of these methods works, a special kind of communal prayer to restore the monk to spiritual health. Only if the monk still refuses to accept spiritual healing, "the abbot must use the knife and amputate" (38:6) by expelling the man. Like God's own power to destroy evil, the authoritative measures taken by the abbot are meant to "bring about the health of the sick brother" (28:5).

### **Reminder of God's providence from the Catechism**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches about divine providence amid physical and moral evils (#309-314). The text powerfully asserts "*There is not a single*

*aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil*" (#309). Furthermore, "God in his almighty providence can bring good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures. ..." (#312), just as "the glorification of Christ and our redemption" came about from "the rejection and murder of God's only Son" (#312). Quoting St. Thomas Aquinas, the *Catechism* also states, "God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good" (#412). It seems that through our faith-filled, free-will decisions, we human beings are often part of His plan to overcome various evils, sometimes very gradually.

### **Conclusion: ultimate victory over evil**

No matter what evils beset us as individuals or as a society, we can rejoice that "the victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us" (CCC #420). The fact that "as a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers ... and inclined to sin" (#418) is not the end of the story. The *Holy Rule* guides us to practice the "good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life" (RB 72:2). With God's grace we can avoid the "wicked zeal of bitterness" (72:4) by acknowledging the evil we commit (4:43), by reminding ourselves daily of death and yearning for a holy death (cf. 4:47), by striving to live constantly under God's gaze (cf. 4:49), by dashing wrongful thoughts quickly against Christ (cf. 4:50), by opposing the promptings of the flesh and the urgings of self-will (cf. 4:59-60), by learning to love chastely (cf. 4:64), and by loving our enemies and praying for them out of love for Christ (cf. 4:30, 72). Those tools of good works, mentioned again in many other sections of the *Rule*, assist us in the daily battle against sin, energize us never to lose hope in God's mercy, and encourage us to be among those "hastening on to the perfection of monastic [and Oblate] life" (73:2). As Lent approaches, let us rejoice in the graces that God gives us daily not to grieve Him but rather to cause Him joy through repentance from sin and ever renewed conversion to a life of deeper and more persevering love.

In the peace of Christ and Saint Benedict,

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

### **OBLATE DAY 2018 ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23; OCTOBER DAY OF RECOLLECTION ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13**

This year's Oblate Day will be Sunday, September 23; the speaker has not yet been chosen. The fall day of recollection is scheduled for Saturday, October 13, and Fr. Shawn Matthew Anderson has agreed to serve as 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 one's schedule allows) and the regular practice of *lectio divina* on the Bible (daily, if possible). The undertaking of good spiritual reading in the place of less beneficial activities is also recommended. Of course, it is also important to

keep reading the *Holy Rule* on a regular basis and to apply it personally to one's everyday life.

## **A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS**

Lent, 2018

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

As a consequence of our being born again of water and Spirit (Jn 3:5), each of us can be confident that the words spoken by the Father to Jesus at His baptism in the Jordan are also spoken to us: "You are my beloved [son/daughter]" (Lk 3:22). Saint Paul assures us of the reality of this mystery of love and faith: "As proof that you are children, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father'" (Gal 4:6). We are able to pray with confidence to God our Father, who loves us.

In the Eucharistic Prayer, we ask God our Father to make the gifts we bring to the altar holy by sending down His Holy Spirit so that the bread and wine may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of our prayer: that by eating and drinking, we may become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Church expresses the awesome reality of the mystery of our transformation in the Post-Communion Prayer for the Mass of the 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time: "Grant, Almighty God, that we may be refreshed and nourished by the Sacrament we have received, so as to be transformed into what we consume." We have received the gift of becoming the life-giving gift of bread and wine so as to be consumed by others.

What is the meaning for our lives of sharing in the life of Christ through the gift of the Eucharist? The deepest reality that comes to mind is that we, through the Holy Spirit, become one with Christ in His relation to the Father. May I suggest that each day during Lent we remember to pray that we will live more deeply and practically in the mystery of the divine and human love which we celebrate each day in the Eucharist.

Faithfully in Christ,

+Archabbot Douglas

## **THANK YOU FOR CHRISTMAS GREETINGS**

Fr. Donald and Br. Joachim thank all the many Oblates and Oblate novices who sent Christmas greetings. As often happens, as of the early February, Fr. Donald was still responding to some. If you have not yet received a response, you should receive one soon.

## **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, which is celebrated on 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 not involved in a deanery who has not contacted the Archabbey for several years, please use the renewal form to express your ongoing 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*.

All Oblates and Oblate novices are welcome to write to the Oblate Office to let us know if we can help you on your journey as an Oblate or 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, or inform us if you feel ready for investiture as an Oblate novice.

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

About four years ago, an estimate was made of how many Oblates and Oblate novices were on our mailing list. It was found that there were some 342 Oblate novices and some 610 Oblates. The high number of Oblate novices was surprising. Later, 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. Only a few responded that they were ready for final Oblation, and most of the others are still Oblate novices. Please pray as to whether the Lord may be calling you to make the plunge into final Oblation; as an aid to help you to make your way to final Oblation, you may consider signing up for the Oblate-novice formation lessons.

## **THE SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT AT THE ARCHABBEY ON MARCH 21, 2018**

Oblates from all locations are welcome to join Oblates of the Latrobe (St. Gregory) Deanery on **Wednesday, March 21**, to celebrate the Solemnity of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict with the monastic community and other guests. The schedule includes a concelebrated Mass at 4:00 P.M., supper at 5:15 P.M. (in Placid B), Oblation ceremonies at 6:15 P.M. (in the basilica), and Vespers with the monastic community at 7:15 P.M. Members of the Oblate community and their guests who wish to attend should complete the

form on the flier and send it to the Oblate Office by March 15. The cost of the supper is \$9.25. 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.

#### **PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM**

Our revised Prayer-partner Program has begun to be implemented. New Oblates are automatically partnered with a monk who has agreed to participate. There is no communication between partners unless both agree to such communication. It is quite simple. Each partner prays for the other regularly, as best as he or she can. (If you have not yet been assigned, you should receive a prayer partner soon.) Previous partnerships will continue as they have been as long as both parties wish to continue as partners.

#### **RETREAT SCHEDULE FOR 2018**

The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2018, have been scheduled. The 2018 retreats on Benedictine spirituality are to be held on May 18-20, 2018 and June 8-10, 2018. The silent retreat is to be offered on July 20-22, 2018. The two "Oblate retreats" will be directed, respectively, by Fr. Canice and Fr. Brian, and the silent retreat will be directed by Fr. Killian. **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@stvincent.edu](mailto:hugh.lester@stvincent.edu). You may also wish to see the retreat website at [www.saintvincentretreats.org](http://www.saintvincentretreats.org).**

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

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 mentoring booklet in the mail. If you have not received one, please inform the Oblate Office.

#### **OBLATE FORMATION LESSONS (mostly for Oblate novices)**

Since July of 2016, a new Oblate formation program of 12 lessons has been implemented. All those who have been invested as Oblate novices since that time have been encouraged to participate either by e-mail or by U.S. mail. A large majority of new Oblate novices have been receiving and returning the monthly lessons, which need not necessarily be completed before final Oblation. Last fall the lessons were printed and bound together in spiral-bound booklets, which are available for pick-up at the Oblate Office for any Oblate novice or Oblate. The cost of printing each one is \$11.50, and those who receive a copy are welcome to make a donation.

#### **OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS: meeting on January 26, 2018**

The Oblate Board of Advisors met on Friday, January 26, with six Oblate members joining Fr. Donald. The group discussed the following issues: the new book of formation lessons, the need for mentors, publicity devised by the Johnstown Deanery, and the need for volunteers at the Basilica Gift Shop and the Gristmill Store. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 13, 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. Members of the Board of Advisors have put together a new brochure for first-time Oblate guests, but any Oblate is welcome to request a copy.

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

- Fr. Thomas Acklin, O.S.B., & Fr. Boniface Hicks, O.S.B., *Spiritual Direction: A Guide for Sharing the Father's Love* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2017)

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

- Sr. Aquinata Böckmann, O.S.B., *From the Tools of Good Works to the Heart of Humility: A Commentary on Chapters 4-7 of Benedict's Rule* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017)

#### **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 18, March 18, April 15, and May 20. 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. Informative presentations on Benedictine spirituality will continue to be offered at 3:00 P.M. on the same dates.

#### **ADORATION FOR VOCATIONS**

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed every Sunday from 2:00 P.M. to 4:15 P.M. (and on Fridays from 8:30 A.M. to 3:45 P.M.) in St. Gregory Chapel. Oblates are encouraged to use these times for Eucharistic adoration, if possible, especially on the Sundays of Oblate presentations and meetings, to pray for vocations, and particularly for vocations to the Archabbey.

#### **OBLATE GROUP IN TENNESSEE COLONY, TX (Michael Unit)**

Oblate Alejandro Torres reported on December 26. The monthly meeting on December 19 was attended by three Oblates, five Oblate novices, and three inquirers. The group prayed Evening Prayer. The hope of the possibility of having a two-hour time slot was

mentioned.

#### **OBLATE GROUP IN TENNESSEE COLONY, TX (Coffield Unit)**

It was belatedly reported that on March 29, 2017, at the chapel in the Coffield Unit, Rev. Gary Rottman invested as an Oblate novice **Macario Carvajal, Jr.**, of Tennessee Colony, TX.

Oblate John Lesley "Les" Miller reported on November 5 and January 11. At the meeting on October 18, Les spoke about the new book of formation lessons, and the group decided to study one lesson a month as a group. Attending that meeting were two Oblates, six Oblate novices, and three inquirers. The attendees discussed the possibility of becoming a deanery, read from the *Rule*, prayed in intercession for the group's intentions and those requested from the Archabbey, and discussed the formation lessons. On October 11 four members had met for prayer and the distribution of copies of *Shorter Christian Prayer*.

The meeting on October 25 was attended by two Oblates, six Oblate novices, and three inquirers. After an opening prayer and a reading of the passage from the *Rule* for the day, the group spent 20 minutes reading the first lesson and discussing the topic of holiness. Each attendee shared about his view of holiness and how he was striving for holiness. There was much fruitful interaction among the attendees. There was hope to have some investitures and Oblations during December.

On January 10, during Mass celebrated by Rev. Jonathan Frels, the following were received by Fr. Frels:

Oblate: **John Lesley "Les" (Jerome) Miller** of Tennessee Colony, TX

Oblate novice: **Rogelio Ramirez, Jr.**, of Tennessee Colony, TX.

Les reports that the group meets almost every week, with an average attendance of two Oblates, four Oblate novices, and about four inquirers. They open with a prayer and a reading from the *Rule* and then proceed to a study of the formation lessons. The lesson ends with a short prayer, followed by a closing prayer. Because of the regular meetings and the presence of full Oblates, the group will officially become a deanery under the patronage of St. Boniface on March 1.

#### **OBLATE GROUP IN ROSHARON, TX (Terrell Unit)**

Oblate Gilberto Gomez reported on November 7 and December 13. There were prayer meetings late in October and early in November. Six men attended each meeting, which included praying the Liturgy of the Hours and reading from the *Rule* of St. Benedict.

During late November and early December the "Oblate prayer-meeting community" met weekly, with thirteen, fifteen, and eight members attending. Activities at meetings include praying the Liturgy of the Hours, reading and sharing from the *Rule*, studying Church history, studying from the *Catechism*, learning about leadership development, and watching D.V.D.'s from the Archabbey.

#### **OBLATE GROUP IN BEAUMONT, TX (Stiles Unit)**

Oblate novice John Francis Harrup reported on December 23. At the meeting on November 10, attended by eight Oblate novices and three inquirers, the group prayed Morning Prayer, read from the *Rule* in *lectio* style, and discussed the passage from the *Rule*. They also watched and discussed a video from the Archabbey and discussed the theme "prayer and work." Many members expressed disappointment about the Archabbey's policy on the mentoring of inmates and the restrictions on former inmates' attendance at Oblate events.

The meeting on November 29 was attended ten Oblate novices, three inquirers, and visitors from the Brothers of St. Dismas. For the sake of the visitors, the Oblate Program was explained by Oblate novices Stephen Stoeltje and Anthony Vidal. Extra copies of *Shorter Christian Prayer* were distributed, and the group prayed Morning Prayer. Then a passage from the *Rule* was read and discussed. Next Stephen led a discussion about Lesson 2 of the formation lessons and explained the medal of St. Benedict. The meeting ended with a praying of the "Oblate prayer" and an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

At a gathering on December 2, the following were invested as Oblate novices by Rev. Stephen L. Leger:

**Curless "Abbey" Abshire** of Port Neches, TX

**Thomas Broussard** of Beaumont, TX

**Austin Crawford** of Beaumont, TX

**Abbott Uranga** of Beaumont, TX.

Attending the meeting on December 6 were eight Oblate novices. The description of the medal of St. Benedict was repeated for those who had been absent previously, and Stephen talked about the categories of solemnities, feasts, memorials, and optional memorials. He also gave some instructions on using the "Commons" from the Divine Office. The group then prayed Morning Prayer and read a biography of St. Nicholas and discussed his life. A passage from the *Rule* was read and discussed, and videos on St. Vincent Archabbey and *lectio divina* were viewed.

Nine Oblate novices were present at the meeting on December 20. Stephen spoke about Advent, and then the group prayed Morning Prayer. Curless Abshire spoke some words of encouragement and asked for some intercessory prayers. A passage from the *Rule* was read and discussed. A schedule of lesson leaders and prayer leaders for future meetings was developed, and the issue of new inquirers was considered. Then John Harrup led a discussion on the lesson on conversion. Next Stephen led a discussion on the topic of antiphons. The meeting ended with the usual prayers.

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

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by e-mail on February 6. There were meetings on January 4 and February 1, attended respectively by four Oblates and five Oblates. Each meeting opened with a prayer, and the discussions involved Chapters 44 and 45 of the *Rule*. The meetings ended with the recitation of Midday Prayer.

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

Oblates in Morgantown, where Benedictine monks of the Archabbey had served for several years, have decided to start meeting again under a moderator, Fr. Justin Blanc, parochial vicar of St. John University Parish, and Oblate Pauline Lanciotti is serving as lay leader and secretary. On February 2, Pauline reported by e-mail about the meeting on January 29 at the parish. (*continued*) Attending were Fr. Justin, two Oblates, four Oblate novices, and two inquirers. After the praying of Evening Prayer, Fr. Justin led the group in a discussion on poverty spirit. He used the book *Poverty of Spirit* by Johann Baptist Metz as a guide. In the discussion the attendees reflected on the various shapes of poverty mentioned by Metz and reflected on other experiences that invite us to confront and embrace our poverty as an opportunity for spiritual growth. The next meeting was scheduled for February 19, and the topic was to be the beginning of a study of the book *Introduction to Christianity* by Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger when he wrote the book).

On February 3 at the Archabbey, Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

**Alexander "Alex" Phelps** of Morgantown, WV.

Accompanying him were Oblate novice James Kirby and three young men from West Virginia University. Also present for the ceremony were Oblates Gilbert & Mary Ann Kaufman. Alex is a student at W.V.U.

## **NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES**

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

There was no report.

**Annvile, 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 17, but the message was not received until January. The meeting on October 22, attended by moderator Fr. Job Foote, O.S.B., and seven others, began, as usual, with Vespers in the sanctuary of the church. A brief social followed. Then a guest speaker spoke about contemplative prayer. In a secular context, "contemplation" means the giving of attention to something or someone deeply and fully. Contemplative prayer means giving that attention to God Himself. Contemplation is a wordless prayer that is a gift from God; we cannot make it happen, but we can prepare ourselves for it. Other spiritual practices, such as fasting, vigils, silence, solitude, simplicity of life, chanting, praying the rosary, prayer over icons, meditation, and "affective prayer," can prepare the way to contemplation. This resting in God is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. After the presentation the attendees suggested various books for discussions at future meetings. The group agreed that in January they would begin discussing *Formation Lessons for Oblate Novices and Oblates*, which was recently issued by the Archabbey. The meeting ended with the praying of the "Oblate prayer."

Mary Ann also reported early in February about the meeting on January 28, which was attended by Fr. Job and ten others. After the praying of Vespers, the group enjoyed a covered-dish dinner since the deanery had not met in December. At that time a collection was taken for a boy from Honduras, Francisco, whom they have been sponsoring. A Christmas card from him was read. (*continued*) Then Mary Ann gave a brief overview of the new Oblate formation lessons, and everyone who needed a copy was given the *Oblate Formation Booklet* and *Formation Lessons for Oblate Novices and Oblates*. The group planned to discuss Lesson 1 at the meeting on February 25. Finally, it was announced that a new directory of deanery members had been created.

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

Moderator Fr. Paschal Morlino, O.S.B., reported by e-mail on November 19 and personally on December 7. Because of illnesses, only a few people attended the meeting on November 19. Fr. Paschal gave out materials about Advent, and the group had a discussion on the will of God based on an article by a Benedictine sister in *Spirit & Life*. The next meeting was scheduled for January 21; it was to be held in the rectory with a Christmas social following.

On the Solemnity of Christ the King, November 26, a number of Oblates participated in the "Advent Stations," and the event went quite well.

**Butler, PA (St. Hildegard Deanery)** -- *monthly meetings at St. Fidelis Parish Hall, 4th Wed. of each month*

Lay leader/secretary Ronald Weleski reported by e-mail on February 5. In what has become an annual tradition for the deanery, the meetings for November and December were combined into a single gathering in December to celebrate Christmas. Fifteen people, Oblates and family members, attended the party held at Ron's home. Each one brought favorite snacks.

The meeting on January 31 began with Mass at St. Fidelis Church, which was followed by the praying of Vespers. The group then reviewed the calendar of forthcoming events and retreats at the Archabbey as well as events at St. Fidelis Church during Lent. They also discussed the possible impact of the Pittsburgh Diocese's "On Mission for the Church Alive" on the local parishes and on the deanery. In light of the new groupings of parishes, the attendees considered how the deanery might welcome parishioners of these groupings into the Oblate community. It was noted that the next few years will be a time of great challenge and opportunity for the whole diocese. The meeting ended with "A Prayer for Oblates" and a brief social. Also, a deanery newsletter has been issued.

**Cyber Deanery (St. Isidore of Seville Deanery)** [Those interested in the deanery may contact hislittleone14@gmail.com.]

Co-lay leader Theresa George reported by e-mail on February 5. As of that date the deanery had 77 members, and they were discussing Chapter 62 of Delatte's commentary. Oblate Brenda Conyers was leading the discussions. The group was also considering a possible gathering at the Archabbey for a weekend in 2018. (Those unable to travel to the Archabbey express gratitude for the deanery's existence.)

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

Lay leader/secretary Kathy Kristofko wrote on November 15 and December 5. The meeting on November 13 began with the recitation of Evening Prayer in the church. The group then moved to the meeting room to discuss the first two chapters of the book *Everybody Needs to Forgive Somebody* by Allen Hunt. The group enjoyed hospitality during the discussion. Three new persons in attendance expressed interested in being invested as Oblate novices.

The meeting on December 4 opened, as usual, with the praying of Vespers. The meeting was held at a local restaurant, with a meal following the prayer. The group planned not to meet in January because of likely inclement weather.

**Kalispell, MT (Holy Trinity Deanery)** - meetings at St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church in Kalispell on 2<sup>nd</sup> Tues, 9:00 A.M.

Lay leader/secretary Tanishia Sperling reported on December 3 and 21. The meeting on November 14 was attended by one Oblate, two Oblate novices, and one inquirer. After the praying of Morning Prayer, the group then continued an in-depth study of the *Rule*, with sharing that helped the attendees to see how the wisdom of the *Rule* was applicable to daily life.

The meeting on December 12 involved the reading and discussion of *RB 7* on humility, with much sharing of thoughts and experiences. Three Oblate novices attended.

On December 16 after a 5:00 P.M. Mass at St. Matthew's Catholic Parish in Kalispell,

**Mary Ann (Benedict) Manning** of Kalispell, MT,

made her final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Roderick Ermatinger as well as Oblates, Oblate novices, and some of Mary Ann's family and friends.

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

At the meeting on November 19, the fifteen-or-so attendees discussed the final chapter of Fr. Demetrius' book *Flowers in the Desert*, entitled "The Resurrection as Homecoming." Before the discussion, Oblate Beth Grabiak gave an oral report of her experiences at the International Oblate Congress in Rome on November 4-10. It was hoped that she would give a power-point presentation during the meeting in January. Regarding the chapter of the book, Fr. Donald commented that November and Advent were appropriate times to consider resurrection since the themes of our liturgies involve death, eternal life, the Second Coming of Christ, and the Last Judgment. The Resurrection is at the core of our faith. On this earth we are always aliens or pilgrims; it is meant to be that way since our true home is in heaven. Although St. Benedict does not explicitly mention the Resurrection of Christ, he often mentions our eternal destiny and speaks of Christ as Lord and King, that is, the risen and ascended Christ in heaven. Just as the risen Christ surprised His disciples during His 40 days of bodily existence on earth, so should we be ready for the surprising comings of Christ into our lives. Being prepared for these surprises keeps us ready for the special comings of Christ at the time of our death and on the Last Day. The session ended, as usual, with the praying of Compline in the basilica.

The meeting on December 17 was rescheduled to 5:45 (after supper) since the monastic Vespers began at 7:00 P.M. instead of 5:00 P.M. Eleven people gathered for a session of group *lectio divina* led by Oblate Bill Iglesias. The Scripture passage used was 1 Thes 5:16-24, which was the second reading for the Mass that Sunday. Many helpful insights were shared. The group adjourned at 6:50 to join the monks at Vespers.

After the 3:00 presentation on January 21, the Oblates proceeded to the Archabbey Basilica, where Fr. Donald invested

**Aaron N. Talbott** of Elkins, WV,

as an Oblate novice. Aaron is a 2004 alumnus of St. Vincent College.

The 6:45 meeting on January 21 was attended by about sixteen people. The session began with a power-point presentation on the Fourth International Oblate Congress by Oblate Beth Grabiak. She expressed great enthusiasm for the event, which brought together well over one hundred Oblates from all over the world. Then the group began its study of the book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. Fr. Donald and the attendees addressed the issues of reading the *Rule* slowly and meditatively, the necessity of good works as a demonstration of faith, the need for exertion for spiritual growth, and the need to struggle against wrongful courses of action. As usual, the session ended with the praying of Compline in the basilica at 8:15 P.M.

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

On November 19 Fr. Cyprian Constantine gave a presentation on "Obedience in Benedictine Spirituality" to some 24 people. He opened by mentioning that the Latin word for obedience is related to "listening" and that the whole *Rule* of St. Benedict is permeated with the theme of obedience. He also noted that these days the idea of obedience is a "hard sell" since we live in a culture that values self-will and doing whatever one feels like doing. Also, in the past unreasonable obedience was sometimes demanded by religious superiors; that unhealthy extreme sometimes gives obedience a bad reputation today. However, true obedience is a great blessing since it calls us out the deception of self-will and leads us to freedom in Christ as a necessary element of following Him. It is the way that we "put on the mind of Christ." Monastic obedience is, first of all, Christian obedience as articulated in a monastic community. Then Fr. Cyprian spoke about obedience and authority, particularly the authority of the abbot, who represents Christ in the community. The monastic leader, he said, is to be a director of souls, not an executive manager. The superior's commands are to help the individual monk to seek God. This true obedience involves personal relationships between the abbot and his monks and among the monks themselves. There are times, as *RB 68* states, when a monk can approach the superior humbly and state why a command seems impossible. However, one must be careful not to be motivated by self-will. Obedience in difficult situations can help one to grow in faith. On a practical level, most obedience probably involves responses to people other than superiors. This mutual obedience, St. Benedict says, is the way to God. Obedience shows how well we love and serve one another. When we obey cheerfully and deny ourselves indulgence in self-will, we are providing a divine counterweight to the individualism of our society. Each day we are provided with the challenge and opportunity to obey in various ways; such situations help us to express our love for Christ.

On December 17 Fr. John Paul Heiser gave a presentation on "Work in Benedictine Spirituality" to some 20 people. Beginning with a brief analysis of the word "work" in Latin (*opus*), Fr. John Paul mentioned that there are over 32 uses of *opus* in the *Rule* of St.



Benedict. Most of them refer to the Liturgy of the Hours (*Opus Dei*). After mentioning many of these references, Fr. John Paul summarized St. Benedict's view of work as anything performed by human will, including prayer and liturgy. (He commented that a priest celebrating three Masses on a Sunday knows that such ministry is real work!) In St. Benedict's view, both prayer and manual work are to be consecrated to God and to be done for His glory; both can help the monk to grow into communion with God. Fr. John Paul then spoke about the priority of the Divine Office in the life of the monk. Next, in referring to passages about manual work, he mentioned St. Benedict's stern warning against idleness, the need for all monks to do something, and the need for obedience and humility in one's work so as to overcome pride. (The monk who becomes prideful over his work is to be removed from it.) Fr. John Paul then gave a brief reflection on the theology of work beginning with God's giving work to Adam in the garden of Eden, provided a summary of Catholic social teaching involving work (from documents by Pope Leo XIII and Pope St. John Paul II), and answered several questions, one of which led to a teaching about avoiding the extremes of activism and quietism.

On January 21 Fr. Robert Keffer spoke to some 25 people on the unique topic "Beauty in Benedictine Spirituality." He began by saying that beauty in Benedictine life, particularly in art and as expressed in the *Rule*, is a subset of beauty in the Catholic Church. Throughout history, he stated, there has been a tension between poles; the pole of exuberance or opulence might be said to have the motto, "Nothing is too good for the glory of God," and the pole of austerity or noble simplicity might be said to have the motto, "We need to strip ourselves of everything material in order to reach God since He is beyond material creation." St. Bernard of Clairvaux espoused the second view for his monks. Fr. Robert then showed a series of slides showing monastic churches through history, from the Romanesque style to the Gothic, baroque, rococo, neo-Romanesque, and various modern styles, some of which have stressed ultra-simplicity in architecture. Fr. Robert then presented ten Benedictine hallmarks of beauty, including permanence and progressive use of technology, and nine principles of aesthetic appreciation for Oblates, including good manners and acceptance of one's station in life. The presentation closed with Fr. Robert's recommendation of websites and books that were pertinent to his topic.

**Niagara Area, Ontario, Canada (St. Henry/St. Gertrude Deanery)** -- meetings on 3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs. of each month, meeting room of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, St. Catharines, Ont.

Lay leader Brian Chisholm reported by phone on November 15 and January 22. In November Rev. Benjamin Weber of St. Denis Church agreed to serve as moderator of the group. The dates of the meetings have been changed to the third Thursdays of each month, and the meetings will follow the already-scheduled exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

The first meeting with Fr. Ben took place on January 18, with five people joining him. They discussed possible agendas for future meetings, and the Oblates mentioned to Fr. Ben the books used in the past. They expressed the desire to study the *Holy Rule* from the beginning, possibly from the commentary by Dom Paul Delatte, O.S.B.

**Palmyra, PA (Holy Spirit Deanery)** – monthly meetings on Sundays at 2:00 P.M. at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Palmyra

Lay leader/secretary Gabriele Terrill reported by e-mail on November 14 and January 27. The meeting on November 12, attended by six people, began with Evening Prayer in the church. After that the group enjoyed some snacks. The Gabriele presented a D.V.D. of a talk on "Holiness and Humility" by Fr. Thomas Acklin, O.S.B., at the Archabbey. Some insights derived from the presentation were that people generally spend too much energy seeking earthly happiness and forgetting about God, that to seek God and holiness one should pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily, and that one must grow in humility and regard every day as a precious gift from God. The next meeting was scheduled for January 21.

The meeting on January 21 began with Evening Prayer in the church followed by a social with snacks. Then the passage of the *Rule* for the day, *RB* 4:62-78, was read, and the subsequent discussion focused on how to use these "tools of the spiritual craft." It was mentioned that it is difficult not to stumble while trying to practice virtue and that Christ must be at the center of our lives and of our families. In times of turmoil it is important to distance oneself from a situation and to pray. We can learn to be grateful even during difficult times. Following the precepts of the *Rule* can give one a sense of peace and of encouragement. What God wants from us is that we give ourselves to Him, to let go of our egos, and to strive to do His will. He will take care of the rest. The next meeting was scheduled for February 18.

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

Secretary Frederick Laux reported on December 3 and 20.

Also, it was belatedly reported that on Feb. 23, 2017, Fr. Sean Pogue invested as an Oblate novice

**Theodore A. Davis II** of Pendleton, IN.

Fred led the meeting on November 14, which was attended by two Oblates, four Oblate novices, and two inquirers. After the praying of Evening Prayer and the "Oblate prayer," Oblate novice Chris Beard gave a presentation based on a book of daily devotions for the Year of Mercy by Pope Francis. The reflection included the three questions: "Where is my heart anchored? Is it anchored in mercy? Does our life reflect that the Resurrection is true?" Chris directed the group to Heb 6:18-19, with the comments that God is totally reliable and that our hope is an anchor for life. Then the group discussed Lesson 9, on work, from the Archabbey. Included in the exchange were the importance of balance and references to four social papal encyclicals.

Notes from the meeting on December 12 came with Christmas greetings from Fred. Attending that meeting were two Oblates, five Oblate novices, and four inquirers. Oblate novice Ted Davis gave a presentation from *RB* 58: 17-28 on the welcoming of new monks and spoke about the making of promises, pledges, and vows; the three Benedictine vows; and the reference to vows and promises in the *Catechism* (#2101-2102). Promises should be kept freely out of love and respect for God and neighbor.

**Philadelphia, PA (St. Augustine of Canterbury Deanery)** – meetings at Saint Mary's (Episcopalian) Church, Philadelphia, every two months

Moderator Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported about January 10. The meeting on December 2 began with Morning Prayer

according to the Roman Rite. Then the group continued its discussion of the book *Monastery of the Heart*, the topic this time being "prayer" from Chapter 3. The attendees reflected on the special quality of Benedictine prayer and compared the Benedictine approach with approaches in other spiritualities. Several of the group shared how they personally understood prayer and practiced it. As usual, the meeting ended with a lunch prepared by devoted hosts Sharon Fischer and her daughter Joann.

**Pittsburgh, PA (North Side - St. Peter Deanery)** -- meetings on 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4th Mondays, 7:00 P.M., basement of St. Peter Church.

Oblate George Ponticello reported by e-mail on December 15. Nine Oblates joined Sister Alice for the annual pre-Christmas party on December 11. The evening began with Vespers and continued with a meal, warm fellowship, and stimulating conversation.

**Pittsburgh, PA (South Hills - Blessed Columba Marmion Deanery)** -- meetings on 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of month at St. Louise de Marillac Church in the Bishop Leonard Room, 1:45 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

In correction to the last report, at the meeting on November 5, Fr. Donald Breier spoke about the topic St. Benedict and the *Rule*.

Lay leader Mary Ann Kaufman reported on January 3 and 9 and on February 5 by e-mail. Attending the meeting on December 3 were seven Oblates, one Oblate novice, and eleven inquirers. After a welcome by Mary Ann, the group prayed Daytime Prayer, "A Prayer for Oblates," and a "Consecration to the Blessed Trinity." The inquirers spoke about what they were seeking, and the others explained how their joining St. Vincent's Oblate Program had affected their lives. There was emphasis on "listening" and the need to remember being part of a larger Benedictine family, the seeking of God in prayer and work, and the pursuit of a balance that brings one closer to Christ. Then Mary Ann related the Mass readings from the first Sunday of Advent to the *Rule's* command to "listen" and to advance on the "path of the Lord's commandments." Also, referring to the *Oblate Formation Booklet*, Mary Ann talked about Oblates' need to strive to grow in holiness and about the period of formation for Oblate novices. She also referred to the new series of twelve formation lessons and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Then a bag for free-will offerings was passed around to collect money to give to speakers and to offset general costs. Forthcoming meetings and speakers were announced, and the meeting closed with the offering of personal intentions and the prayer to St. Benedict. Some of the attendees stayed for coffee and conversation.

The meeting on January 7 was attended by seven Oblates, two Oblate novices, and ten inquirers. After a welcome and the usual opening prayers, guest speaker Fr. Philip Kanfush, O.S.B., gave a power-point presentation on stability in Benedictine spirituality. He mentioned that stability was connected closely with the other two Benedictine vows and that there were three forms of stability: of place, of awareness, and of the entire person. Stating the St. Benedict emphasizes stability of place, he compared our times with those of St. Benedict, when many people were moving from place to place because of invasions by barbarians. The Benedictine way seeks not to succumb to our disposable culture but to stay in one place if at all possible; thus we can improve the situation in our place through our contribution to it. Fr. Philip stressed the importance of the deanery, in which the Oblates gather each month to pray, to learn, and to support one another. He also said that stability needs to be flexible; one needs to work through issues with family, friends, and co-workers and thus to grow by putting down roots and learning to be happy in any circumstance. Fr. Philip then addressed spiritual stability, which is related to a continual awareness of God's presence. To nurture this interior stability, it is helpful to disconnect from the media, to keep a mindful focus on one activity, and to foster silence. After the presentation the group moved upstairs to the church, where Fr. Philip invested the following as Oblate novices:

**Vincenzo "Vince" Croce II** of Monaca, PA, and **Elizabeth Kusen** of Pittsburgh, PA.

The next meeting was held on February 5, and a fuller report will appear in the May newsletter. The meeting included Daytime Prayer, other opening prayers, the sharing of relevant news, especially about forthcoming retreats, and a discussion on Fr. Paul Taylor's presentation last September on "Holiness and Pursuing Benedictine Spirituality."

**Rosharon, TX [Ramsey Unit] (St. Bede Deanery)** -- monthly meetings

Lay leader/secretary Roland Fernandez reported on December 16 along with Christmas greetings. On December 11 Sister San Juanita of the Sisters of the Eleventh Hour prayed with the Oblates and invited them to join in the Monday-evening rosary prayers. Readings from Scripture were done in English and Spanish. After a discussion Sister San Juanita led the group in praying Vespers, in doing an Advent Scripture reading, and in singing a hymn. The session ended with closing prayers.

On December 16, during a Mass celebrated by him, Fr. Frank Wittouck, S.C.J., invested as an Oblate novice

**Michael Keel** of Rosharon, TX.

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

As usual, there were no meetings during the winter months.

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

Moderator Fr. Ronald Gatman, O.S.B. wrote on December 1. The session scheduled for September along with a meeting of the Oblate Council had to be canceled because of Hurricane Irma and the resulting evacuation. On November 19 the new prior of Benedictine Priory, Fr. Jean-Luc Zadroga, celebrated Mass for the Oblates, and a supper followed. The Oblates decided to collect money (as has been the annual custom) this year to help to build a church in Pooler, GA, near Savannah.

The annual priory pre-Christmas party was scheduled for December 15, and the Oblates normally play a big role in preparing for it. A meeting of the Oblate Council was scheduled for early January, with the hope of setting a calendar of events for 2018.

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

Oblate Co-lay leader/secretary Teresa Warlow reported by e-mail on November 17, December 10, and January 21. At the meeting on November 12, after opening with the "Prayer for Oblates," the group listened to a C.D. on *lectio divina* by Fr. Canice. A discussion

followed. The meeting ended with the recitation of Mid-afternoon Prayer.

The meeting on December 10 again began with the "Prayer for Oblates." Then the group discussed the article from the November newsletter, "Yearning for Ideals from the Past." The meeting was closed with Mid-afternoon Prayer.

The meeting on January 14 began with the "Prayer for Oblates" and continued with a recorded talk by Fr. Thomas Acklin on holiness and humility. A discussion followed. The meeting closed with Mid-afternoon Prayer.

**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/secretary Michael Reichert wrote on November 29, and the whole deanery sent Christmas greetings to the Oblate Office during December. The meeting on November 14 was attended by nine Oblates, five Oblate novices, and four inquirers and was led by Deacon David Hornick, moderator. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule* for the day, Oblate William Strode, Jr., gave a presentation on prophetic witness. He emphasized that all Christians have a duty to witness to those whom we encounter both with our words and with our conduct. A short discussion followed. Then Oblate Jimmy Polites gave a presentation on stewardship for God's creation and on abortion. Christians have a responsibility to be stewards of the gifts given to us by God and to uphold the sanctity of life. A brief discussion followed, and the meeting ended with the praying of Compline.

The meeting on November 28 was attended by ten Oblates, four Oblate novices, and two inquirers. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, Oblate Brandon Cavanaugh spoke about forgiveness and urged the listeners to practice this virtue in all situations. There were many comments after the presentation, including remarks about the difficulty of forgiving oneself, the words in the Lord's Prayer about forgiving, and Jesus' command to love others as He has loved us. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline. It was announced that there would be no meetings in December.

**State College, PA (St. Joseph Deanery)** -- meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month, 6:30 P.M., Our Lady of Victory Church, Activity Center.

Secretary Phyllis Austin reported by e-mail on November 21 and December 16. The meeting on November 13, which began with the praying of Vespers, was attended by six Oblates and two Oblate novices and led by Fr. David Griffin, moderator. The group continued to discuss Fr. Michael Casey's book *Living in the Truth*. The focus was on Chapter 3, which seemed complicated but which offered a wealth of spiritual advice and practical applications. The members shared many personal reflections. The meeting ended with prayers of intercession and the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima."

The meeting on December 11, led by lay leader David Nice, began with Evening Prayer. In attendance were six Oblates. There was a lively discussion on Chapter 4 of the text. The group concluded that they had found that understanding the true meaning of humility was humbling in itself. Humility helps us to accept the reality of ourselves and of life as it evolves. The meeting ended with the "Ultima" and the discussion of some business. The meeting scheduled for January 8 was to include a Mass, Oblation ceremonies, and a potluck dinner.

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

There was no report about monthly meetings.

It was reported early in December that during Oblation ceremonies on October 14, at which Fr. Lee Yoakam, moderator, and Fr. Chad Ficorilli of the Archabbey presided, the following were invested as Oblate novices:

**Norma P. Barbosa** of Virginia Beach, VA  
**Barbara Ann Jenkins** of Virginia Beach, VA  
**Barbara Murphy** of Virginia Beach, VA.

**Waynesburg, PA (St. Dismas Deanery)** -- meetings on 4<sup>th</sup> Wed. of each month

There was no report.

The last newsletter failed to report that on August 20 at the chapel in Waynesburg, Fr. G. Malcolm McDonald, chaplain, invested **Wayne Summers** of Waynesburg, PA, as an Oblate novice.

**Williamsport, PA (Saints Martha, Mary, & Lazarus Deanery)** -- meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sun. of some months, 2 P.M., former convent at St. Anne Catholic Church

Lay leader/secretary Sue Wykoff reported by phone on November 14 and by e-mail on December 11. Four Oblates attended the meeting on November 12, which began with Daytime Prayer. The group expressed the desire to continue to meet each month even though Sue, having moved farther away, could attend only quarterly. The plan for future meetings was to have quarterly viewing of D.V.D.'s from the Archabbey with discussion. At other meetings the group would begin with adoration in the Eucharistic chapel in the convent and then move to the "family room" for Daytime Prayer. After that they would discuss a book on Benedictine spirituality. Also, various responsibilities were assigned regarding communications about meetings, facilitation of discussions, secretarial duties, the treasury, and hospitality. The meeting ended with a prayer.

Six Oblates attended the meeting on December 10, which opened with Daytime Prayer. Sue distributed a schedule of meetings for the coming year and reviewed the decisions about future meetings. The group decided to use *Lessons from the Rule of Saint Benedict* as the text for discussion. Larry Hamm was to arrange for the purchase of books and for the obtaining of copies of the new *Formation Lessons for Oblate Novices and Oblates*. Then the attendees viewed a D.V.D. on vocations from the Archabbey, and they discussed ways to incorporate the Liturgy of the Hours in their schedules. The meeting ended with prayer.

**Various Locations**

On June 14, 2015, **Timothy C. Lenhart**, now of Mt. Pleasant, PA, made his final Oblation in the chapel at Waynesburg, PA, in the presence of Rev. J. Francis Frazer, chaplain. (The ceremony was

reported only recently.)

On November 13 at the chapel in Palestine, TX, Rev. Gary Rottman invested as an Oblate novice  
**Carl Mason** of Palestine, TX.

On November 20 at the same location, Fr. Rottman invested as an Oblate novice  
**Michael J. Rosenberg** of Palestine, TX.

On December 8 at the F.C.I.- Elkton Chapel of St. George's Catholic Church,  
**J. Keith (Pio) Hughes** of Lisbon, OH,  
made his final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Bernard Mlapah, chaplain, along with some 29 others, including four other Oblates.

On December 25, during a Christmas Mass celebrated in the chapel at Richmond, TX, by Fr. Michael Carmody of the Houston-Galveston Diocese,  
**Anthony (Joseph-Nicholas) Chiofalo** of Richmond, TX,  
made his final Oblation in the presence of Deacon Patrick Cheung and the others attending the Mass.

On January 6  
**Michael J. Canovali** of Lisbon, OH,  
formerly an Oblate affiliated with St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, KS, officially transferred his Oblation to St. Vincent Archabbey. Michael is originally from Pittsburgh.

**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: Fr. Bede Hasso, Fr. Augustine Flood, Fr. Aaron Buzzelli, Fr. Thomas Acklin (recovering well from a kidney transplant), Fr. Nathan Munsch (recovering well from the insertion of four stents), Br. James Cartwright, and Fr. Bonaventure Curtis (recovering well from a serious fall).

### **SOME SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Oblates are welcome to attend concerts offered by the Saint Vincent Camerata. On Saturday, April 21, at 7:00 P.M. in the Basilica and on Sunday, April 22, at St. Paul Church in Butler, PA, there will be a performance of "A capella": Choral Works of Palestrina and Arvo Pärt." For tickets and further information for all performances, phone 724-805-2579.
2. If you have moved or are away temporarily, please inform the Oblate Office about your change of address. In some cases mail sent by other departments may come back to St. Vincent, and names can be eliminated from our mailing list without our knowing about the elimination. Please keep in touch as best as you can!
3. Many members of our Oblate community pray regularly with the monks in our choir area. If you notice other guests who may not know where to sit or how to find their place in our liturgical books, please make an effort to assist them.
4. Volunteers are needed to fill slots at the Basilica Gift Shop and the Gristmill Store. A shift is generally one morning or one afternoon per week. If you think that you can provide this service, please contact the manager, Br. André Melli, at 724-532-6736
5. Remember that, thanks to Fr. Andrew, Br. Pio, and Br. Placid, presentations given at monthly at Oblate meetings at the Archabbey are generally recorded (when the presenter is willing). The resulting C.D.'s and D.V.D.'s are available for purchase to those who desire copies. 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 or \$3.50 (plus tax & postage). **Please see the order form on the flier.** Note that if you order by mail, you need to pay a sales tax only if you are a resident of Pennsylvania.

**RESERVATION FORM FOR CELEBRATION OF ST. BENEDICT DAY ON MARCH 21**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I plan to attend the dinner for Oblates at St. Vincent on Wednesday, March 21, along with \_\_\_ guests; I enclose \_\_\_\_\_ (\$9.25 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 21. 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 **Oblate Office, Attention: St. Benedict Day event, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650-2690.**

**SCHEDULE FOR SOLEMNITY OF SAINT BENEDICT, MARCH 21, 2018**

4:00 P.M. – Concelebrated Mass in Archabbey Basilica

5:15 P.M. – dinner in Placid Hall Dining Room B

6:15 P.M. – Oblation ceremonies, Archabbey Basilica, choir area

7:15 - Vespers in Archabbey Basilica, choir area (tentative)

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**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

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

Fr. Anthony Grossi's talk on the Liturgy of the Hours (November 20, 2016):

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

Bishop Edward Malesic's talk on the centrality of Christ in the *Rule* (November 20, 2016):

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

Fr. Robert Keffer's talk on simplicity (December 18, 2016):

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

Fr. Thomas Acklin's talk on holiness and humility (January 15, 2017):

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

Br. Cassian Edwards' talk on poverty & simplicity (February 12, 2017):

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

Br. Ignatius Camello's talk *Conversatio morum* (March 12, 2017):

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

Fr. Boniface Hicks' talk on hospitality in Benedictine spirituality (April 9, 2017):

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

Fr. John-Mary's talk on the Liturgy of the Hours (May 7, 2017):

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

Dr. Matthew Fisher's talk on Camaldolese Benedictine spirituality (June 11, 2017):

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

Fr. Canice McMullen's talk on *lectio divina* (July 16, 2017):

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

Br. Lawrence Machia's talk on the vows (July 11, 2017):

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

Fr. Wulfstan Clough's talk on the Holy Eucharist (August 20, 2017):

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

Fr. Donald Raila's talk on stability in Benedictine spirituality (September 17, 2017):

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

Fr. Edward Mazich's talk on silence in Benedictine spirituality (October 22, 2017):

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

Fr. Cyprian Constantine's talk on obedience in Benedictine spirituality (November 19, 2017):

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

Fr. John Paul Heiser's talk on work in Benedictine spirituality (December 17, 2017):

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

Fr. Robert Keffer's talk on beauty in Benedictine spirituality (January 21, 2018):

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

**Please enclose \$6.00 per D.V.D. and \$3.50 per C.D. (Pennsylvania residents only: 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 \$4.95 for postage per order plus tax [if PA resident].)

Please order from Saint Vincent Book Center over the phone at 724-805-2557 or online at [www.bookstore.stvincent.edu](http://www.bookstore.stvincent.edu) , 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 for liturgical services will be different than the normal ones:

#### Wednesday, March 28

Evening Prayer as penitential prayer service (basilica) 5:00 P.M.  
Compline (basilica) 9:00 P.M.

#### Holy Thursday, March 29

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

#### Good Friday, March 30

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, March 31

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. (tentative)

#### Easter Sunday, April 1

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

#### Easter Monday, April 2

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

**The regular schedule resumes on Tuesday, April 3.**

