



# OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT

Saint Vincent Archabbey

300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690

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Please note registration form for July 11 and the form for "What It Means to Me to Be an Oblate" on the insert.

## QUIETLY ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER: NURTURING FAITH AMID TRIALS

Dear Oblates, Oblate novices, and Friends,

How much time and energy we spend trying to overcome suffering! Human remedies sometimes do bring us significant relief, and these can indeed be mediated gifts from God. In most cases, however, there is no lasting remedy despite all the powers of science and technology. In our pilgrimage of faith we know that the only ultimate consolation for our suffering comes from the Cross, whereby Christ compassionately unites us with Himself and shares our every suffering, and the Resurrection, whereby Christ gives us victory over sin, death, and discouragement and gives us new life in communion with Him. One of the means for our participation in this victory is mutual encouragement in the love of Christ.

The word "encourage" is a powerful one. Since it comes from the Latin word for heart, "cor," one could say that encourage means "strengthen the heart." In fact, we have the roughly equivalent word "hearten." We also sometimes say, "Do not lose heart." Since in spirituality the heart is a person's core or deepest center, where he or she encounters God, encouragement in the Christian sense serves to strengthen faith and to nurture relationships with God, especially amid feelings of doubt and fear. Many psalms abound in words that encourage us to hope in God, who is all-reliable. Psalm 27 ends with the exhortation, "Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord" (v. 14). Psalm 31 ends in much the same way. Psalm 59 includes the refrain, "O my strength! your praise will I sing; for You, O God, are my stronghold, my gracious God!" (v. 18; cf. v. 10). The Lord orders Moses to "encourage and strengthen" his successor Joshua to carry out his mission to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (Deut 3:28). The Lord is always encouraging people to have faith and to fulfill their vocation in life despite oppressive burdens and severe trials. At the same time, God often works through human instruments to convey His encouragement. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. ... If we are afflicted, it is for your encouragement and salvation; if we are encouraged it is for your encouragement, which enables you to endure the same sufferings that we suffer" (2 Cor 1:4,6). At the end of the letter the Apostle likewise heartens his people, "Mend your ways. Encourage one another" (2 Cor 13:11). When the

Council of Jerusalem decided in favor of welcoming Gentiles into the Church and sent representatives to Antioch to announce the decision, the Bible records that "there was great delight at the encouragement it gave" (Acts 15:31).

Encouragement can come in unexpected ways. About once every two months I am assigned to celebrate Mass at Torrance State Hospital, a mental institution. There one readily witnesses profound sufferings stemming from the patients' physical, emotional, and relational disorders. To most of us these afflictions would seem unimaginably oppressive. During the prayers of the faithful the residents often add their own intercessions, and it is then that some of their heartfelt concerns are revealed. Also, some of the congregation have questions and comments during the time of the homily. On one Sunday last November the chapel was almost unbearably hot, and there was no way of lowering the heat. I myself was sorely tempted to murmur about the situation under the thickness of my priestly vestments. However, the congregation, some of whom were also heavily dressed, seemed to bear the heat with remarkable patience. In fact, during my homily they made more comments than usual, and these dealt largely with heaven, hell, purgatory, and eternal life. After the struggle to preach in that overheated environment with all the interruptions, I realized what encouragement the Lord was giving me through the precious people in front of me. If they could focus their attention on spiritual matters amid such discomfort and all their other problems, could I not do likewise? Similarly, at the sign of peace and during the time of departure, I often see evidence of the patients' tender compassion for one another and their promises of prayers for one another; and then I must ask myself whether I cannot nurture the same Christ-centered disposition in myself even when I am enduring some far less severe trial.

Mutual encouragement in the name of Christ is an essential element of Christian community. It is not just a way to make people feel happy but a God-given means of hastening disciples on their heavenward pilgrimage amid the discouragement that suffering can engender. Although the *Rule* of St. Benedict uses the word "encourage" ("cohortari" in Latin) only twice, the spirit of mutual encouragement pervades the *Rule*. In the chapter on the monks' sleeping arrangements, the concluding verse states, "On arising for the Work of God, they [the monks] will quietly encourage each other, for the sleepy like to make excuses" (*RB* 22:8). This almost

hidden sentence encapsulates much of the essence of cenobitic monastic life and Christian family life. We all grow “sleepy” and spiritually weary at times. We are all tempted to be lax in our prayer now and then. We all benefit from others’ encouragement to overcome our spiritual tepidity and to recommit ourselves to be zealously faithful to prayer and works of sacrificial love. We regain spiritual courage from such gentle but firm reminders from others in family and community. Amid temptations to make excuses for not praying as well or as much as we should, we can benefit from quiet but persistent words of encouragement from spiritual directors, family members, and other fellow Christians to return to the narrow path of disciplined prayer. The *Rule* itself and the abbot as well need to “prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to safeguard love” (Prol:47). In particular, all superiors are to give encouragement by their good example since, as stated in the eighth step of humility, every monk is to look to “the example set by his superiors” (7:55) as a standard for his own behavior. Without some degree of rigorous discipline, we shall never make progress in overcoming sinful tendencies and welcoming God to expand our narrow hearts into the realm of generous, selfless love. At the same time, the establishment of norms must always be made out of love, genuine concern for people’s spiritual growth, and particular compassion for people in their weaknesses, which must always be taken into account.

Mutual encouragement is opposed to nagging and angry criticism. Those who try to change others out a sense of frustration are likely to make matters worse because of their lack of compassion. Encouragement ultimately comes from God, and God never violates our freedom or dignity. Thus the abbot is to lead and teach most especially by the way he lives; “he must point out to them [his monks] all that is good and holy more by example than by words” (2:12). In correcting and punishing, the abbot must “avoid extremes; otherwise, by rubbing too hard to remove the rust, he may break the vessel”; he is to prune away faults “with prudence and love as he sees best for each individual” and is to “strive to be loved rather than feared” (64:12,14,15). Also, the abbot must not be “excitable, anxious, extreme, obstinate, jealous or oversuspicious” (64:16); such traits would tend to cause reactions of fear, mistrust, or disdain in others and thus hamper spiritual growth. The cautions that St. Benedict voices regarding the abbot’s call to be an instrument of encouragement apply readily to other authorities, such as parents, teachers, pastors, and spiritual directors.

Our need for mutual encouragement and mutual obedience is addressed by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O., in the chapter entitled “Mutuality” in his book *Strangers to the City* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2005). He states, “A monk committed to the practice of mutual obedience is one who has come to the realization that he could be instructed and formed by many members of the community whose monastic experience was broader

and deeper than his own. If he remains alert, each day will bring hundreds of opportunities in which he can say ‘yes’ to God and ‘no’ to self-will” (p. 106). The self-denial that we exercise in family and community not only nurtures Christ’s love among us, but it also provides edification and encouragement to others who are eager to be formed in Christ. Fr. Michael further comments, “True community is built on self-denial .... If I think of others only when I feel like it, then my service is no more than an arcane form of self-pleasuring. If my concern is limited to a select few, then it is beginning to look like a form of patronage, and we know how strongly Benedict rejected that (*RB*] 69:1-4). My part in creating a climate of mutuality is to hold back on self-assertion so as to leave room for others. I must be constantly inviting others to flow into the common space, welcoming them, affirming them, even though this has to be done at the price of not asserting my own rights” (pp. 110-111). The author later continues, “Everyone is defective in something. As a result we need one another, and we need to recognize, appreciate, and encourage the different giftedness of others as a means of ensuring the common progress that provides a matrix for my own growth” (p. 112).

During this Easter Season the words of Scripture offer us special encouragement in the exhortations of the risen Lord and of the apostles, once they have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately after the Resurrection, when the disciples are weak in faith and fearful, the risen Christ again and again wishes them peace (Mt 28:9; Jn 20:19, 20, 26) and tells them, “Do not be afraid” (Mt 28:10). He chides them for their disbelief and urges them to believe: “It is really I” (Lk 24:39) and, to Thomas, “Do not persist in your unbelief, but believe!” (Jn 20:27). Strengthened by the grace of the risen Lord, St. Peter can encourage his people during a time of persecution, “Cast all your worries on Him because He cares for you. ... Resist [the Devil], steadfast in your faith, knowing that your brothers and sisters throughout the world undergo the same sufferings. The God of all grace ... will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish those who have suffered a little” (1 Pt 5:7-10, used on the feast of St. Mark).

How, then, can we better practice mutual encouragement in Christ amid our various doubts, fears, and discouraging trials? First, we need to acknowledge that God is the source of all encouragement; without His grace we can neither receive nor extend encouragement. By and large, we are not called to solve others’ problems; much of the time we cannot even solve our own! However, we can, like St. Paul (2 Cor 1:4), pass on to others the encouragement that we have received from God. We can make time and space for others, listen to others’ groanings, and take them to heart. We can refrain from whining about our own trials or the crosses that others seem to lay upon us. It may be appropriate, however, to share how wondrously God has led us through our afflictions. If we have the authority and the opportunity, we might be able to invite people

who feel left out to certain community gatherings. We might be able to point out faults gently and prudently, or discerningly to ask others to correct and encourage. We might be able to solicit the opinions of those who feel powerless. Perhaps most of all, we can strive to pursue zealous prayer lives, both in private and in public, so that we set a good example that may help to enkindle renewed enthusiasm in others for living in radiant faith. Christian encouragement is not a matter of making people feel good, patching over problems, or eliminating difficulties, but of leading people humbly and gracefully to the God who deeply shares our every concern. At the same time we as Oblates and monks need to remember that our Oblation or monastic profession, far from being a "feather in our caps," is a grace-filled commitment to welcome Christ to stretch us and encourage us in every way He chooses to become the living sacrifices of praise

that He wants us to become. In the process of encouraging others according to the plan of God, we ourselves receive encouragement and strength to resist complacency. As we put aside the impatience and anger that tend to discourage others, we can strengthen our mutual desire to know Jesus Christ and His immense love for us all. As St. John did in his Gospel, our words and example can move others to "believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith [they] may have life in His name" (Jn 20:31).

Your brother in Christ and Saint Benedict,

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

P.S.: Even as I was writing this essay, I received a phone call from a distressed single mother who lives far away. She shared with me her immeasurably heavy burdens and the several very difficult decisions that she faces. From my perspective as a monk who has almost no experience in such matters, I could offer her no practical answers; but I hope and pray that my listening and our praying together over the phone may have given this good Christian woman some encouragement to keep trusting the God who sustains her and her beloved son. Please keep them in your prayers!

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## **A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS**

Easter 2006

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

Greetings and warmest wishes for a blessed and joyous Easter from the Benedictine Community of Saint Vincent Archabbey! In the Easter Season, we celebrate the "Good News" that God's love triumphs over the power of darkness in whatever form it may come to us in our lives. As we look at the world around us, we see the darkness of terrorism, war, alcohol and drug abuse, and physical and verbal violence, as well as sickness, death, and broken relationships. Whatever darkness we confront in this life, Easter reaffirms our faith that God's light overcomes all darkness.

Each of us bears some of the darkness of human suffering. Our Lord teaches us that by embracing the cross of Good Friday we will come to share in the glory of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Be assured of the continued prayers of the Benedictine Community of Saint Vincent Archabbey for you and your family throughout this Easter Season.

Faithfully in Christ,

+Douglas R. Nowicki, O.S.B.  
Archabbot of Saint Vincent

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

A number of Oblates and their guests, some 47 in all, joined the extended Benedictine community for the annual celebration of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict, Abbot. At the Mass at 4:00 P.M., Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta, the principal celebrant and homilist, preached about the need to be converted from the attitude of asking, "What's in it for me?", to a total self-offering to the Lord. Such self-offering can be learned from St. Benedict and his ideals and from the example of his self-surrender at death. After a festive meal, Oblation ceremonies were held in the Archabbey Basilica, where Fr. Donald invested the following:

Oblate novices: **Edward A. Conroy** of Ligonier, PA  
**Monica L. Goddard** of Wheeling, WV  
**Christine R. Karem** of Greensburg, PA .

Also, Christine's daughter **Samantha Karem** was invested as a junior Oblate novice.

After dinner the group prayed Vespers with the monastic community at 7:30. A social in the Parish Assembly Room followed.

### **DAY OF RECOLLECTION AT ST. EMMA, APRIL 23**

A turn-out of some 25 Oblates and others came to the annual day of recollection at St. Emma Retreat House. Next year's day of recollection is likely to be scheduled for Sunday, April 15, which is once again the Second Sunday of Easter, or "Divine Mercy Sunday."

### **OBLATE RETREAT, MAY 19-21**

It is still not too late to register for this year's retreat. Use the retreat brochure that you received in the mail, and register directly with the St. Vincent Retreat Program. Br. Benedict Janecko, O.S.B., will be the retreat master. Included in the retreat will be the Mass for the ordination to the priesthood of Br. Maurus Mount, O.S.B., at 10:00 A.M. on Saturday, May 20. On the afternoon of May 20, there will be a meeting of representatives of Oblate deaneries, and Oblation ceremonies will also be held later in the afternoon.

### **FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT, JULY 11**

All Oblates, Oblate novices, and their guests are welcome to attend the festive Mass for the Feast of St. Benedict, including ceremonies for the profession of solemn vows, at the Archabbey Basilica at 10:00 A.M. on Tuesday, July 11. Oblates are invited to stay for lunch and for a 2:30 meeting, Evening Prayer at 5:00, and supper. If you are coming for Mass, lunch, or supper, please fill out the form on the insert and send it to Jackie Milko by July 4. (Even if you are coming only for Mass, it is good for the sacristans to know how many pews to reserve for the Oblates.) This year for the first time the meeting at 2:30 will include a ceremony to honor Oblates who this year celebrate 5, 15, 20, 25, 30, 40, or 50 years of Oblation.

Also, this year for the first time overnight accommodations will be available for Oblates coming for the festivities on July 11. Ten double (air-conditioned) rooms in Aurelius Hall have been reserved for Oblates from July 9 to July 13 at a cost of \$17.00 per person per night. Those needing room reservations should call Fr. Donald at the Oblate Office (724-805-2291) and send (or give) the money to him.

### **OBLATE DAY 2006 - September 24**

Fr. Ananias Buccicone, O.S.B., pastor of Queen of Peace Church in Patton, PA, and former moderator of the St. Maurus Deanery of Oblates in St. Marys, PA, has agreed to serve as the guest speaker on Oblate Day, Sunday, September 24, 2006. A schedule and a registration form for the event will appear in the August newsletter.

### **OBLATE DAY OF RECOLLECTION - October 14**

Last year's fall day of recollection at the Archabbey was quite successful, and so another similar day of recollection will be offered this fall on Saturday, October 14. Fr. Wulfstan Clough, O.S.B., Chairman of the Department of English at St. Vincent College, will serve as the retreat master.

### **EXTENSION OF DEADLINE FOR *WHAT IT MEANS TO ME TO BE AN OBLATE***

We are grateful to the dozens of Oblates who have submitted entries for the forthcoming new edition of the booklet "What It Means to Me to Be an Oblate." Based on past experience of some people's needing more time to ponder the matter, the invitation to submit an entry is offered once again in this newsletter; see the colored insert. The extended deadline is July 13, the feast of St. Henry, patron of Oblates.

### **RENEWALS OF OBLATION**

I am grateful for the many Oblates who, as of the end of April, had renewed their Oblation by using the form in the last newsletter. If you have not recently been in contact with the Oblate Office or your local deanery and have not renewed your Oblation at St. Vincent during the past year, please renew your Oblation privately and send in the renewal form.

### **OBLATE RADIO PROGRAM**

Radio station WEDO, 810 AM, offers an almost daily program of reflections especially geared for Oblates. Oblate John James manages the station and arranges for this program. The program is scheduled at 8:45 A.M., Monday through Friday.

### **BOOKS FROM PARACLETE PRESS AVAILABLE AT 50% DISCOUNT**

In the last newsletter three new books from Paraclete Press were mentioned, but I neglected to mention the discounted prices. They are as follows: *How to Be a Monastic and Not Leave Your Day Job*, by Br. Benet Tvedten, O.S.B. (\$7.50);

*Oblation: Meditations of St. Benedict's Rule*, by Oblate Rachel M. Srubas (\$6.50); *Man of Blessing: A Life of St. Benedict*, by Carmen Acevedo Butcher (\$11.00). We shall have the 50% discount if we order 50 or more copies of any combination of the three books. I am confident at this point that we shall have over 50 books ordered. Please use the form on the colored insert to order any of these.

Also, the highly recommended book *Strangers to the City*, by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O., is being offered at a 50% discount for every order of 30-40 books. This book will be used for discussions at monthly meetings of the Latrobe (St. Gregory) Deanery and of the State College (St. Joseph) Deanery, and it has been used for discussions at community meetings of the monks of the Archabbey. Furthermore, Fr. Michael Casey will be the retreat master for the monks at St. Vincent on June 5-9. Once again, to order this book at \$8.00 a copy, please use the form on the colored insert.

### **OBLATE BUSINESS CARDS AVAILABLE**

At the suggestion of the Oblate Board of Advisors, business cards have been printed up for Oblates affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey. Although they refer specifically to the Latrobe Deanery, one can put one's own personal information on the back and thus use the card to give to those who might be interested in our Oblate Program. Also, if any other deaneries want to print up their own cards, we may be able to do the job at the college's Mailing & Duplicating Office. In either case, contact Fr. Donald if you would like some business cards or would like to print up different cards for your deanery.

### **RECOMMENDED READING** (volumes available in the Oblate Library and the Basilica Gift Shop)

(1) Fr. Thomas Acklin, O.S.B., *The Passion of the Lamb: God's Love Poured Out in Jesus* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 2006)

(2) Fr. Thomas Acklin, O.S.B., *The Unchanging Heart of the Priesthood* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2005) - mostly for priests and seminarians

(3) Archabbot Lambert Reilly, O.S.B., *Because There Is Jesus: A Call to Be New-Made in Christ* (St. Meinrad, IN: The Abbey Press, 1997)

(4) Archabbot Lambert Reilly, O.S.B., *Latin Sayings for Spiritual Growth* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2001)

(5) Dom Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B., *Holiness: A Guide for Beginners* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1997 [first published in U.S. in 1963])

(6) Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord* (N.Y.: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996) – somewhat heavily theological but with authoritative reflections on good Christian liturgy and good liturgical music

### **NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE IN BASILICA GIFT SHOP**

If you are at the Archabbey as a guest or retreatant, you might check the Basilica Gift Shop for the above books or some of the following new books suggested by Br. Maurus, who is in charge of recommending books for the gift shop:

(1) new reprints of books by Blessed Dom Columba Marmion, O.S.B.:

*Christ, the Ideal of the Monk*, \$31.95

*Christ, the Life of the Soul* (temporarily out of stock as of May 1)

*Christ, the Ideal of the Priest*, \$18.95

(2) two editions of the *Holy Rule*:

- *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. by Leonard Doyle, Oblate of St. John's Abbey, hard cover, large print, \$24.95

- *The Rule of St. Benedict: In English and Latin*, trans. by Abbot Justin McCann, O.S.B, hard cover, with dates for sections of *Rule* to be read (1951), \$16.95

(3) reprint of *The Medal or Cross of St. Benedict: Its Origin, Meaning, and Privileges*, by Dom Prosper Guéranger, O.S.B., \$11.95

### **VISIT TO OBLATES IN LANCASTER**

On April 20 Fr. Donald, accompanied by Oblate George Bordell of Murrysville, visited the Oblate group in Lancaster, PA. At the monthly meeting at St. Joseph Church, Fr. Donald delivered a talk on "Poverty and Chastity in the *Rule*." Most of the Oblates in Lancaster are affiliated with St. Meinrad Archabbey, but a few are affiliated with St. Vincent.

### **OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS**

The Oblate Board of Advisors met at the Archabbey on April 7. They came close to completing a guide for mentors for a soon-to-be-implemented Mentoring Program for inquirers, aspirants, and Oblate novices. **It will be good to have mentors in every Oblate deanery. Those full Oblates who are interested in possibly serving as mentors should contact the Oblate Office to receive a packet of information.** The board also made tentative plans to begin extra formation sessions at the Archabbey at 3:00 P.M. on Sundays before the regular meetings of Oblates. **Seven more volunteer teachers for these sessions are still needed. If you are interested, please contact Fr. Donald (724-805-2291).** The board also discussed a change of schedule for Oblate Day, responses to the flyer for the booklet *What It*

*Means to Me to Be an Oblate*, the anniversary celebrations on July 11, and the business cards for Oblates.

**OBLATE MEETINGS IN LATROBE:** All Oblates and their guests are welcome to monthly meetings of the Latrobe Deanery, held at 6:45 P.M. on Sundays in Brownfield 202 at St. Vincent. (This year we shall remain in Brownfield through the summer because it is now air-conditioned.) The next four meetings will be on May 21, June 25, July 16, and August 20. (Note the change to the fourth Sunday in June.) Those wishing to come early for Vespers and supper should phone Fr. Donald (724-805-2291) in advance.

### **CONDOLENCES**

Let us together offer prayers for those of our Oblate Community who have lost loved ones, that they may receive consolation and new strength from our risen Lord:

- Oblate Gloria Harvey of St. Marys, whose brother Robert died on June 4, 2005 (Please also pray for the consolation of his widow)
- Oblate Mary Ann Facetti, whose uncle Edward Schutz died on Jan. 30
- Oblate Philomena Rich of Greensburg, whose brother Joseph Rich died on Feb. 4 (in San Diego, CA) at the age of 99 (Joe was the oldest living alumnus of St. Vincent College)
- Oblate Mary Forbes of Savannah, whose mother died in February
- Oblate Barbara Blystone of Latrobe, whose sister Eileen Porter died in February
- Oblate novice Jerome Fatora of Cincinnati, OH, whose brother Fr. Joachim, O.S.B., died on Feb. 17 [see below]
- Oblate Eugene P. Battistone of Monessen, PA (affiliated with Conception Abbey), whose aunt Clarina Cerolini died in Feb. and whose great-nephew Jeremiah Battistone died in Feb. (at the age of 18 from an auto accident)
- Oblate Stephen P. Roskoš of Conshohocken, PA, whose father, Stephen A. Roskoš, died on Feb. 21
- Oblate Patricia Pappas of St. Marys, whose husband, John, died on Feb. 27
- Oblate Lisa Kayser of Hershey, whose father died on Apr. 14
- Oblate Pamela Johnson of Greensburg, whose grandmother Edith Johnson died on Apr. 14
- Oblate Mary Virginia Himes of St. Marys, whose father, Frank Beimel, died on Apr. 19
- Oblate Paul Lieb of Carrolltown, whose sister Blanche Hipps died on Apr. 24 at the age of 101 (She was also the mother of Br. Norman Hipps, O.S.B.) and whose brother Fr. Germain, O.S.B., died on Apr. 30 [see below]
- Oblates Vincent Drnevich of W. Lafayette, IN, and Ronald Drnevich of Harrisburg, PA, whose uncle Frank Drnevich died on Apr. 27 [see below]
- Oblates Jacqueline Milko and Dorothy Valore of Latrobe, whose aunt Elizabeth Skolode died on Apr. 30
- Oblate Dorothy Valore of Latrobe, whose brother-in-law Charles Valore died on Apr. 29 .

### **OBLATE DEATHS**

Let us be united in prayer for recently deceased members of our Oblate Community, that they may enjoy the fullness of life with the risen Christ and all the saints:

- 18 Dec 2005 - John A. Fisher of Greensboro, PA (Oblate since Aug., 1953)
- 13 Feb 2006 - Ida M.M. (Gertrude) Brungard of Avis, PA (Oblate since May, 1967)
- 14 Feb 2006 - Alphonse A. (Peter) Eckert of St. Marys, PA (Oblate since Apr., 1990)
- 1 Mar 2006 - Virginia "Ginny" A. Harper of St. Marys, PA (Oblate since Apr., 1985)
- 27 Apr 2006 – Frank Drnevich, Sr., of N. Versailles, PA (Oblate since Mar., 1996; novice Oblation in Aug., 1938).

### **NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES**

Albion, PA (St. Paul Deanery) – Deacon leader Ralph DeCecco wrote on February 13, March 14, and April 18. At the meeting on February 13, after the praying of Vespers, Oblate novice Michael Bolos led a long discussion on *RB* 11, "On the Celebration of Vigils on Sunday." The ten people present shared about the various ways in which they respected the dignity of Sunday. One spoke of using quiet time to pray and to re-read prayer cards and letters; another spoke of adding a daytime prayer to his praying of the Divine Office; another spoke of using *Magnificat* magazine to delve more deeply into Scripture readings and the lives of the saints. Some of the Oblate novices expressed eagerness to prepare for final Oblation. The meeting ended with Compline.

On March Oblate novice James Knepp led a discussion on *RB* 29, "On the Readmission of Brothers Who Leave the Monastery." James distributed copies of his own commentary on the chapter, which reflected on its meaning in terms of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. There was a lengthy discussion with much sharing, which was followed by Compline.

On Saturday, April 1, during the Vigil Mass for Sunday, the following made their final Oblation in the presence of Msgr. James Peterson and Deacon Ralph in the St. Paul's Community Chapel in Albion:

- Craig (John) Knepper** of Albion, PA
- Carmen (Michael) Musolino** of Albion, PA
- William (Joseph) Simms** of Albion, PA

**John (Alban) Simpson** of Albion, PA .

Also, Deacon Ralph and his wife, Janet, both Oblate novices, have been working to prepare a Metanoia retreat for the 62 men who signed up for it.

Annville/Harrisburg Area, PA (St. Placid Deanery) -- meetings at 3 P.M. on 4th Sunday of each month, St. Paul the Apostle Church, Annville, or Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church, Harrisburg

Secretary Gabriele Terrill wrote on February 3, March 10, March 31, and April 24. At the meeting on January 22, After Evening Prayer, prayer intentions were mentioned. For the main lesson Fr. John Peck, moderator, led a discussion about *RB 5* on obedience. Various questions were raised about “unhesitating obedience” and how a person knows what really comes from God. The group decided to continue with the same topic in February.

At the meeting on February 26, after Evening Prayer there were light refreshments and inquiries about those who were ill. Fr. John led another discussion about Benedictine obedience. Gabriele distributed a copy of her own reflections on obedience, which resulted from her pondering of the psalms and other spiritual writings. During the exchange obedience was linked with humility and the love of Christ. Fr. John observed that we cannot be truly obedient unless we are people of prayer and belong to a community that prays.

On March 26, after Evening Prayer all the Oblates renewed their Oblation together. Then refreshments were served, and two inquirers were welcomed. Finally, since the Solemnity of St. Benedict had occurred only a few days earlier, Fr. John read passages from Pope St. Gregory’s *Life and Miracles of St. Benedict*.

At the meeting on April 23, after Evening refreshments were served, and a newcomer was welcomed. Condolences were expressed to Oblate Lisa Kayser on the death of her father, and other prayer requests were mentioned. Fr. John then began a discussion of the “ancient archetypes,” which led to a reading of *RB 2* on the qualities of an abbot and a discussion of their application to any authority. The group then turned to *RB 27* and reflected together on the example of the Good Shepherd in loving correction and gentle care of the “wayward brothers.”

Baltimore, MD (St. Walburga Deanery) -- meetings at 3:30 on third Sunday of each month, parish house, St. Benedict Church

Oblate Dale Dombrosky wrote on March 23 and April 12. At the meeting on March 19, the group read and discussed three Lenten letters written for Oblates of other monasteries. They made plans to meet on the Solemnity of St. Benedict, March 21, with Solemn Vespers and a supper of soup, sandwiches, and ice cream. Also, after Vespers several Oblates renewed their Oblation.

Fr. Paschal Morlino, moderator, announced that the deanery would host a day of prayer on Saturday, October 28, and that Oblates affiliated with St. Anselm’s Abbey, Emmanuel Monastery, the Benedictine sisters in Ridgely, and the Benedictine sisters in Bristow had been invited. The speaker for the day would be Br. Benedict Janecko, O.S.B., who was to speak about the psalms.

On Easter Sunday some Oblates gathered for a festive Vespers service with the blessing of water.

Carrolltown, PA (Sacred Heart Deanery) -- monthly meetings at St. Benedict Church, in the church and/or a meeting room

Secretary Mary Catherine Hoover phoned on February 16 and wrote on April 8. At the meeting on February 14, after Evening Prayer in the church, the group moved to the Boniface Wimmer Room, where Fr. Vincent Zidek, moderator, spoke about the blessing of the Sacred Heart Annex on February 12, at which Bishop Adamec and Archabbot Douglas had been present. The group then entered into an interesting discussion of Chapter 2 of *Cherish Christ above All*.

At the meeting on March 14, Evening Prayer in the church was followed by a discussion in the Sacred Heart Annex. The group reflected on Chapter 3, “A Journey of Faith,” from *Cherish Christ above All*. Fr. Vincent reminded the group of the Oblate events on March 21, April 23, and May 19-21, including the priestly ordination of Deacon Maurus, who was serving on weekends in Carrolltown. He also announced that he would go to Rome for the Benedictine “recyclage” program from shortly after Easter Sunday until late in June.

Johnstown, PA (St. John Gualbert Deanery) -- meetings on 2nd Monday of each month, St. Joseph Chapel

Lay leader Carl Motter wrote on February 14 and March 19. The meeting on February 13 was held at St. Benedict Church in Geistown and led by Msgr. Michael Becker in the absence of Fr. Benjamin, moderator. Since the weather was inclement, only a few Oblates attended; however, twelve parishioners of St. Benedict

Church who were interested in the Oblate Program were present. After leading Evening Prayer, Msgr. Becker explained how to pray using *Shorter Christian Prayer*. Carl and the other Oblates described the Oblate Program and explained the medal of St. Benedict, and each attendee was given a medal.

On Sunday, February 19, Msgr. Becker, several Oblates, and a busload of parishioners visited the Archabbey for a tour and a sharing in monastic Vespers.

The meeting on March 18 was combined with Msgr. Becker's Saturday-morning Lenten discussion. After Morning Prayer the group continued a discussion of the Seven Last Words of Christ. Then Carl talked about the Oblate Program and distributed application forms to those who were interested. Finally, there was a ceremony for the renewal of Oblation, in which 16 Oblates participated.

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

Despite a snow fall earlier in the day, some 15 people gathered for the monthly meeting on February 12 to discuss *lectio divina* from Chapter 23 of *Benedict's Way*. There was emphasis on the power of God's word to transform us gradually when we are faithful to the practice of *lectio*.

On March 12 the Oblates were privileged to welcome retired Archabbot Lambert Reilly, O.S.B., as their guest speaker. Archabbot Douglas introduced him, before his presentation entitled, "Oblates, Like Monks, Must Become Better." Telling some humorous stories, Archabbot Lambert pointed out how "good people" often become stuck in judging others instead of using their time and energy to change themselves. If we are truly to become like Christ, he said, we must change often, change all life long, and even welcome the painful truth about our own sinfulness and narrow opinions. Responding to a question, Archabbot Lambert also reflected on his giving of retreats to Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, both in India and in the U.S., and on his encounters with Blessed Teresa.

In light of the great enthusiasm for Archabbot Lambert's talk, the Basilica Gift Shop has stocked up on the two books that he has written: *Because There Is Jesus* and *Latin Sayings for Spiritual Growth*.

On April 23 the Oblates met at 6:15 P.M. at St. Emma Retreat House following the annual day of recollection there. The group pondered the meaning of Christian wisdom with reference to Chapter 24 of *Benedict's Way*. It was decided to use Fr. Michael Casey's *Strangers to the City* as the text for discussion after the group finishes going through *Benedict's Way*. Many joined the Benedictine sisters for Compline to close the day.

Niagara Area, Ontario, Canada -- meetings on 4th Friday of each month, St. Patrick's Church

Lay leader Brian Chisholm phoned on February 23, and secretary Suzanne Keays wrote on March 9. At the meeting on February 24, plans for a Lenten day of recollection were reviewed. Then Msgr. Charles Gagné, moderator, led a discussion on "Spiritual Discipline," the topic of Chapter 25 of *Benedict's Way*. Spiritual disciplines were seen as tools by which we cooperate with God in becoming the persons He means us to be. The disciplines were categorized as inward, outward, and corporate, and Fr. Gagné urged each person to choose one from each category to assist his or her spiritual growth.

On February 25 the deanery sponsored a pre-Lenten day of recollection from 10:00 to 3:00. Morning activities included Morning Prayer, Mass, the Way of the Cross, and Angelus. After lunch the group viewed a video, "How Jesus Died: The Final 18 Hours," and then there was time for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and confessions, followed by the praying of a rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet.

Pittsburgh, PA -- meetings on 2nd or 3rd Wednesday of each month, Our Lady Queen of Peace Worship Site

Lay leader Bill O'Neil wrote on February 21 and March 19. At the meeting on February 15, after Evening Prayer led by Fr. Ralph, moderator, the group began a series of discussions on the book *Toward God*, by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. Two inquirers were among the 10-or-so attendees. The issue of choosing a deanery patron was also brought up.

At the meeting on March 15, attended by 13 people, after Evening Prayer Fr. Ralph spoke about what it means to be an Oblate and how that relates to monastic profession. The group continued to discuss a possible patron saint for the deanery.

At the meeting on April 19, in the presence of Fr. Ralph and those gathered for the meeting,

**Jonathan (Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother) Claire** of Pittsburgh made his final Oblation.

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

Lay leader Bernard "Ben" Hoffman wrote in March. At the meeting on February 2, which occurred after Compline, Benediction, and the blessing of throats, a summary of the previous month's meeting was read, and



Fr. John-Mary, moderator, read a letter from AIM-USA concerning charitable Lenten projects. Then the group discussed steps 8, 9, and 10 of humility from *RB* 7. The next two scheduled meetings, on March 2 and April 6, were to be combined with a large group of parishioners discussing "Why Catholic?" on those evenings.

On March 21 a special Mass with the imparting of the St. Maurus blessing was celebrated.

At the meeting on April 26, during an evening Mass at St. Mary's Church,

**Margaret (Aurea) Gabler** of St. Marys, PA, and

**Mary Lynn (Walburga) Nicklas** of St. Marys, PA,

made their final Oblation in the presence of Fr. John-Mary and the others attending.

### Savannah, GA

Moderator Fr. Jude Brady wrote on March 2 and March 20. On February 26 Fr. Ronald Gatman, O.S.B., celebrated a Mass at Benedictine Priory for about 30 members of the Oblate community.

On March 10 the Oblates anticipated the Solemnity of St. Benedict with a Mass and a covered-dish supper. About 50 people attended. The homily emphasized Lenten and Benedictine themes. During the Mass Fr. Jude invested as an Oblate novice

**James N. Letendre** of Charleston, SC.

Also, it was reported that on March 6, 2005, Fr. Jude had invested as an Oblate novice

**Bobbie J. Bridgers** of Savannah, GA.

### State College, PA (St. Joseph Deanery) -- meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month, Benedictine residence

Secretary Ashley Leggett wrote on February 15 and April 20, and Oblate Rosemary Dombroski wrote on March 17. At the meeting on February 14, after Evening Prayer, various members mentioned the A.I.M. magazine with its Lenten collection, the celebration at the Archabbey on March 21, the day of recollection at St. Emma, the opportunity to order Benedictine books, and the option of contributing to *What It Means to Me to Be an Oblate*. Then there followed a lively discussion on Chapter 3 of *The Way of the Lamb*. The topics introduced included the value of curiosity, the possibility of becoming a child in the pattern of the Lamb of God, and the statement that "in all that really matters ... the child is the teacher of the adult." The meeting ended, as usual, with prayers and a blessing.

The meeting on March 14 was attended by 10 Oblates and one visitor along with Fr. Boniface, moderator. After Evening Prayer the group was reminded about praying the novena to St. Benedict from March 13 to 21. (Groups were praying it at Our Lady of Victory Church and on the Penn State campus.) The group then discussed the remaining pages of *The Way of the Lamb*. After some consideration of various options, those present decided to use the book *Strangers to the City* for future discussions.

At the meeting on April 18, three guests were present along with Fr. Boniface and six Oblates. There was some talk about who might go to the Oblate retreat at St. Vincent in May and how they might travel together. Ellen Mazzara distributed copies of *Strangers to the City*, which she had ordered. Then the group discussed Lenten and Easter practices that they had experienced in the past. They mentioned various ethnic and family customs, especially for Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

### Virginia Beach, VA (St. Scholastica Deanery) -- meetings on 1<sup>st</sup> Wed. of month, 7 P.M., Computer Library, St. Gregory the Great School

Lay leader Delina Pauls wrote on March 19 and April 17. The meeting on March 15 had to be shifted to the "work room" of the church office because of so many other meetings. Fr. Cristiano, moderator, spoke of the meaning of Lent and emphasized the sufferings of the Blessed Mother during the Passion. He used the hymn "Stabat Mater" as the basis for his talk. Dee suggested that more Oblates come to adore the exposed Blessed Sacrament on Fridays. Also, some of the Oblates expressed hopes of attending the retreat at St. Vincent in May.

At the meeting on April 5, Fr. Cristiano spoke about Holy Week, with focus on how the Church reproduces the last week in the life of Our Lord. The life of a monk, he reminded the group, should be a continuous Lent. He also reflected on the meaning of the days of the Sacred Triduum, the colors of the vestments used, and the history of the observance of Lent.

### Williamsport, PA -- meetings on last Sunday of each month, 3 P.M., St. Boniface Church (or rectory) meeting room

Lay leader Ted Richardson wrote on March 16. In Ted's absence Oblates Alfred and Lynn Stola led the meeting on March 26. The topic of discussion was Chapter 20 of *Benedict's Way*, "Balance and Celebration." The group also discussed the need for more assistance in the functioning of the deanery.

The meeting scheduled for April 30, along with Fr. Donald's annual visit, had to be canceled because of other

events occurring at St. Boniface Church on that date.

#### Various Locations

On February 1 at St. Mark Church in Pittsfield, MA,  
**Claude J. (Sergius) Couture** of Pittsfield, MA,  
made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. John C. Salatino.

On February 2  
**Carol (Scholastica) Leland** of Salem, WV,  
transferred her Oblation to St. Vincent from Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, CA, with which she made her Oblation on May 25, 1980.

On February 6  
**Matthew B. (Athanasius) Callihan** of Butler, PA,  
transferred his Oblation to St. Vincent from Holy Trinity Monastery in Butler, PA, with which he made his Oblation on October 21, 1995.

On February 18 at St. Faustina Chapel in Waymart, PA  
**Domenic M. (Roman) Ricciuti** of Waymart, PA,  
made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Joseph P. Kutch.

On February 26 at St. Peter's Chapel in Somerset, PA,  
**Radames G. (Ambrose) Sipe** of Somerset, PA,  
made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Albert J. Anselmi. The ceremony took place during a Sunday Mass, during which Radames also assisted as an altar server.

On March 12 at St. Clare Church in Toronto, Ontario,  
**John H. (Bernard) Kelly** of Toronto  
made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Ernesto DeCiccio, the pastor. The ceremony was performed during the noon Mass; so many of the faithful were present. Among those attending was Oblate novice Toomas Karmo of Toronto.

On March 23 at St. John the Evangelist Chapel in Valdosta, GA, Rev. John O'Brien, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church in Valdosta, received the following:

Oblate: **David M. (Aquinas) DeCoteau** of Valdosta, GA  
Oblate novices: **John Hursey** of Jacksonville, GA  
**Wayne D. Luberda** of Valdosta, GA

#### SICK & INFIRM MONKS

The following monks of the Archabbey have been hospitalized or otherwise seriously ill or infirm over the past three months and could use the Oblates' prayers: Fr. Damian Abbaticcio (lung cancer), Fr. Brinstan Takach (heart surgery on March 30), Fr. Roland Ripoli (stroke and blindness), Fr. Benjamin Walker (leukemia), Fr. Jerome Purta (heart surgery on April 18).

#### DECEASED MONKS

Please pray for the repose of the souls of the recently deceased monks of the Archabbey: Fr. Joachim Fatora, 77, who died on February 17; Fr. Germain Lieb, 86, who died on April 30.

#### OVERDUE OR MISSING LIBRARY BOOKS: PLEASE RESPOND!

During the past year a number of books from the Oblate Library have been found to be missing, presumably because people withdrew them without signing them out. Below is a list of such books, as well as others that have been lost by borrowers. Please check your bookshelves to see if you have any of the missing books. Also, if anyone would like to donate a copy of any of the lost books, such a donation would be welcome.

##### Missing books

- Roberta C. Bondi, *To Pray and to Love*
- Rev. William Burk, *Protect Us from All Anxiety: Meditations for the Depressed*
- André Gozier, O.S.B., *Fifteen Days of Prayer with Saint Benedict*
- Richard J. Hauser, S.J., *Finding God in Troubled Times*
- Guy-Marie Oury, O.S.B., *A Monastic Pilgrimage: Following the Footsteps of St. Benedict*
- Abbot David Parry, O.S.B., *Household of God*
- Basil M. Pennington, O.C.S.O., *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice ...*
- Pseudo Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*

- Marsha Sinetar, *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics*

Lost books

- Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*
- Michael Casey, O.C.S.O., *Toward God*
- Anselm Grün, O.S.B., *The Challenge of Silence*
- Basil M. Pennington, O.C.S.O., *Call to the Center*
- Michael Scanlon, O.F.M., *Let the Fire Fall*

**ORDER FORM FOR BOOKS FROM PARACLETE PRESS**

I wish to order the following books in conjunction with other Oblates of St. Vincent Archabbey in order to get a 50% discount (the prices below are the discounted prices):

Number

\_\_\_ *Strangers to the City*, by Fr. Michael Casey, O.S.C.O., \$8.00 each

\_\_\_ *How to Be a Monastic and Not Leave Your Day Job*, by Br. Benet Tvedten, O.S.B., \$7.50 each

\_\_\_ *Oblation: Meditations on St. Benedict's Rule*, by Oblate Rachel M. Srubas, \$6.50 each

\_\_\_ *Man of Blessing: A Life of St. Benedict*, by Carmen Acevedo Butcher, \$11.00 each

\_\_\_ I plan to pick up my books at St. Vincent.

\_\_\_ Please mail the books to me; I enclose extra money for postage.

Enclose is a check for \_\_\_\_\_. (Please make out to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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**Reservation for Feast of St. Benedict on July 11, 2006**

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

\_\_\_ I plan to come to St. Vincent for \_\_\_ lunch, \_\_\_ supper along with \_\_\_ guests;

I enclose \_\_\_\_\_ (\$5.00 for lunch, \$6.00 for supper, per person).

\_\_\_ I plan to come only for 10:00 A.M. Mass on July 11.

\_\_\_ I hope to be invested as an \_\_\_ Oblate, \_\_\_ Oblate novice on July 11. (If becoming an Oblate, I choose \_\_\_\_\_ as an Oblate name. ***An application form is required.***)

Please send this form and a check made out to **ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY** for meals before July 4 to:  
**Miss Jacqueline Milko, 820 Beatty Village Rd., Latrobe PA 15650.**

If you would like overnight accommodations, please phone Fr. Donald at 742-805-2291.

## OBLATE PROJECT FOR 2006

As an extension to the project recommended for Lent, 2006, Oblates affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey are welcome to make a written contribution to a new edition of the booklet *What It Means to Me to Be an Oblate*. If you are a full Oblate (or hope soon to make final Oblation), please use this form to submit a reflection on “what it means to me to be an Oblate.” The length of the reflection is to be ½-page typed or one page written. An alternate option is to give permission to use reflections which you already submitted on your application for final Oblation or investiture.

If you are making a new written contribution, you are welcome to use the back of this form. The deadline for submissions is July 13, 2006. Please make a copy of your submission since the original cannot be returned. You may remain anonymous if you do not wish your name to be included with your entry. (Please check one of the boxes below under “Anonymity.”)

### RELEASE:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Option 1: (Please sign.)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my permission to the Oblate Office to publish my reflection (enclosed) in the forthcoming booklet *What It Means to Me to Be an Oblate*. I understand that my reflection may be edited for grammar or length.

#### Option 2: (Please sign.)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my permission to the Oblate Office to publish my statement from my application for Oblation (or novice Oblation) in the forthcoming booklet *What It Means to Me to Be an Oblate*. I understand that my reflection may be edited for grammar or length.

#### Anonymity (Please indicate one or the other.):

I would be glad to have my name included with my reflection.

I prefer not to have my name printed with my reflection.

