



THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

Saint Vincent Archabbey

300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690

May - July, 2017

724-805-2291

Volume 70, Number 2

e-mail address: svaoblates@email.stvincent.edu ; web site: <http://www.svaoblates.org>

Please note flier with form for registration for July 11 & application for 2017 Oblate Directory.

DO WE TRULY SEEK GOD?

OVERCOMING SELF-SEEKING AND LEARNING TO "PREFER NOTHING WHATEVER TO CHRIST" (RB 72:11)

Dear Oblates, Oblate novices, and Friends,

Easter & seeking what is "above"

Saint Paul urges us boldly, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:1-3). Yes, in baptism (and every time we receive the Holy Eucharist) we have died to sin and to self-seeking, and we have risen to new life in Christ and with Christ. Of course, we are still dragged down by desires that come from our "old selves," but we must persistently "die" to those parts of us so that our whole being may more and more become a yearning for God and our will a joyful surrender to His will. As Saint Paul again exhorts us, "Put to death ... the parts of you that are earthly [that is, whatever is focused on self instead of God]" (Col 3:5).

Saint Benedict and the Seeking of God

St. Benedict prescribes that in evaluating a novice monk's vocation, the novice master must have "concern ... whether the novice truly seeks God" (RB 58:7). It should be obvious that anyone hoping to enter monastic life would have to be seeking God. It should also be a foregone conclusion that anyone considering the Oblate Program would, as a baptized Christian hoping to grow closer to Christ and the Church, would surely be seeking God. However, if we examine our consciences, we probably will realize that we seek many things along with God and perhaps some things in place of God: pleasure, power, possessions, success, fulfillment of personal goals, completion of our work, and convenience and comfort. We may indeed, on the whole, be seeking God, but a part of us still yearns for things that cripple our single-hearted devotion to God. Part of our motivation for becoming Oblates or monks is that we recognize our spiritual sickness and need a time-tested resource to enhance our spiritual health. The Gospel and the *Rule* challenge us to put to death our unredeemed urgings and to welcome God, in His time and His way, to purify us of these impediments.

Our disordered seeking: the prodigal son

This past Lent, when the Gospel of the prodigal son (Lk 10:11-32) was read (on the Saturday of the second week), I was particularly attentive to the younger son's rebellious inclinations. The father gave him every possible good thing, and yet he sought to be on his own. He crudely demanded his share of his inheritance while the father was still alive and then ran off to a faraway land to indulge in earthly pleasures. Well, thanks be to God, this seeking of a substitute for a blessed life at

home did not work. (It will not work for us, either!)

Through his frustration and near-starvation, the son came to a renewed appreciation of the goodness he had experienced in his father's house. Therefore, he broke away from his degrading lifestyle and "set off for his father's house" (Lk 10:20). In a wonderful way, he found his father running out to meet him even before he could reach home. The lavish celebration initiated by the father expressed overwhelming joy at the son's return and the father's desire that the son would be deeply impressed by his love. When we then look at the older son's refusal to join in the celebration, we see that his motives were not very pure either. Although he had "slaved" for the father for years and "never disobeyed one of [his] orders" (Lk 10:29), his heart was dominated by self-righteousness and the gratification that he gained from being a seemingly good, obedient son.

We, too, in our seeking of God can easily wander off course. The exclusive seeking of God above all else (which must be our goal) can be very painful because He often denies us the satisfaction that we crave since, knowingly or unknowingly, our hearts are set on lesser things. Therefore, God denies us what we crave since He wants us to seek beyond our narrow human desires. Whenever we think we have found Him, He needs to let us know that we are still very, very far from the holiness and the full communion with Himself that He wants for us. Our desire for "holy things" can be good but not the best possible disposition at any particular stage of our spiritual journey. In His great love for us, God continually draws us away from lesser things so that we shall learn to desire greater things - ultimately God Himself - that will lead us to our true home in heaven.

Sometimes we can see the imperfection of other people's desires better than the limitations of our own desires. Some Catholics, probably well-intentioned, regularly leave in churches slips of paper promising that a certain "never-fail novena" will give guaranteed results to petitionary prayers. We may easily see that in these devotions with attached guarantees God is being caricatured as someone who demands the "right" formula of prayer in order to give what is desired. How sad a narrowness of vision! However, we monks and Oblates can also fall into the same trap by making absolute some of the intermediate goals that are meant to lead us to God. Every year as Easter approaches, I harbor vague hopes that I may have a genuine "spiritual experience" at one or more of the big liturgies. Usually, just the opposite occurs. At the Chrism Mass I tend to feel weary and scattered, and I am not much more

engaged mentally or emotionally at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. At the Commemoration service on Good Friday, my attention is generally gone after the first few sentences of the homily. During the Easter Vigil, I inevitably find myself falling asleep during the long readings. By Easter Sunday evening, I often feel ready to collapse and hope that the long, festive dinner will end as quickly as possible. At the same time, I am learning, I hope, that I need to emerge from being stuck in seeking less-than-ideal goals that can blind me to the ways that the Risen Lord is coming to me in circumstances beyond my control. Thus I must be grateful for the gift of being able to lead the Good-Friday service this year and for the opportunity to behold devout expressions on people's face as they venerated the cross. I must be grateful for the manifest joy in the small congregation of mental patients whom I served at Mass on Easter Sunday. Also, I must be grateful even for God's depriving me of any great "spiritual gratification" that I tend to seek. He is much more than my paltry desires, and perhaps I am haltingly learning that relevant message from Him!

Warnings in the Holy Rule about seeking lesser things

The *Holy Rule* often warns against seeking things as substitutes for seeking God Himself. In Chapter 58 St. Benedict prescribes that "the beds are to be inspected frequently by the abbot, lest private possession be found there" (58:14). Warnings against private possessions are not just a matter of preserving good order or maintaining obedience to rules; especially in religious life such admonitions remind the vowed person that he or she has promised to keep Christ as one's greatest treasure and to share all material things in common. To hoard possessions also indicates a lack of trust in God's provision. More often than not, attraction to religious life or Oblate life includes a mixture of motives; one may nurture a real desire to respond to God wholeheartedly and yet also have an eye for the human advantages that can accompany such vocations. The storing of possessions under beds symbolizes the seeking of one's own will in all sorts of ways. St. Benedict insists that, for example, true obedience that is acceptable to God must "free from any grumbling or any reaction of unwillingness" (5:14). When "a disciple obeys grudgingly and grumbles, not only aloud but also in his heart" (5:17), his attitude signifies that his heart is clinging to self-will. If a monk seeks God and His will at all times, he will "love not his own will nor take pleasure in the satisfactions of his desires" (7:31), but rather will strive to imitate the Lord Jesus, who came to earth "not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (Jn 6:38; *RB* 7:32).

What we seek and what we desire are key issues in the faithful living of monastic life. The devoted Oblate or monk is one who "yearns for life and desires to see good days" (Ps 34:13; *RB* Prol: 15). Such a person must then avoid deceitful talk, turn away quickly from evil, and aim to abide in peace (cf. Prol: 17). Like all his monks, the abbot must, in particular, "seek first the kingdom of God and His justice" (*RB* 2:35, Mt 6:33). As part of his quest for God, the abbot must also "imitate the loving

example of the Good Shepherd" (*RB* 27:8) when a monk goes astray and strive to bring back the wavering brother, perhaps with the help of *senpectae* (cf. 27:2). Lent is a time for concentrated effort for training our often fluctuating desires. It is with the joy of the Holy Spirit that the monk is to offer something extra to God "of his own will" (*RB* 49:6), and he is to "look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing" (49:7). This joy is surely not just a matter of welcoming the end of fasting and other penances; it is associated with gratitude that God has worked to purify one's heart of some clingings that were interfering with the seeking of God. Therefore, if certain Lenten practices truly helped us to "prefer nothing whatever to Christ" (72:11), then let these disciplines continue into the Easter Season and beyond! It is a great consolation that when we "train ourselves" (only with grace!) to seek God first, then He will indeed transform our desires to be directed to what He wants for us - ultimately anything that will lead us to eternal life in heaven.

Ways to welcome God to transform our desires

How can we more wholeheartedly seek God and what He desires for us? It might be helpful to note that He is first seeking us before we begin to seek Him. St. Benedict asserts that the Lord is "seeking His workman in a multitude of people" (Prol: 14) and has created man with the tendency to "yearn for life" and "desire true and eternal life" (Prol: 15,16). No matter how far we have advanced, however, we must realize that we are still often caught up in lesser desires, sometimes even sinful ones. The offertory prayer at Mass for the Friday of the Easter Octave reads, "Perfect within us, O Lord, we pray, the solemn exchange brought about by these paschal offerings, that we may be drawn from earthly desires to a longing for the things of heaven." Only God can transform our imperfect and disordered longings into an unselfish yearning for Him and for His will for us. On the other hand, we can do much to dispose ourselves to receive the graces that He wishes to give us. The word of God and the Holy Eucharist surely help us enormously to be detached from "perishable food." Our Lord admonishes the crowds who went after Him and admonishes us: "You should not be working for perishable food but for food that remains unto life eternal, food which the Son of Man will give you" (Jn 6:27). How God longs to give us this food, His very life, lavished on us must fully on earth in Holy Communion!

Nipping disordered longings in the bud

Certainly one key way to begin to overcome disordered seeking is to catch unhealthy thoughts and desires quickly and, with the grace of Christ, not to hold on to them. The more often and the more quickly we throw them into the "trash heap," the more we establish the habit of not wanting them. St. Benedict firmly recommends that we should catch temptations while they are "still young" and dash them "against Christ" (*Prol*: 28). St. Benedict repeats the same advice in 4:50: "As soon as wrongful thoughts come into your heart, dash them against Christ and disclose them to your spiritual father." These days many of our perverted desires stem from exposure to the media; so we need to

be especially prudent in guarding ourselves against the onslaught of immoral enticements coming from the Internet, television, and other media. Before we turn on the computer, the television, or other electronic gadget, we might pray that we use the device only for God's glory and for our genuine spiritual or intellectual edification. We might resolve ahead of time not to watch any television program unless we have assurance that it is decent and that the viewing will be for our spiritual or intellectual benefit. To look at the Internet at random can be disastrous! To watch T.V. for recreation or to flip from channel to channel for something interesting can be disastrous! For those who can do so, it might be beneficial to avoid television altogether, and it certainly is advisable to use the computer only when it is strictly necessary.

The simple act of mindfully making a sign of the cross can also help us to put "the love of Christ before all else" (RB 4:21). The blessing of oneself slowly and thoughtfully can amount to saying "Lord, I put You before all else. I long for communion with the Blessed Trinity. I love You, Lord Jesus, who died on the Cross for me, and I am willing to bear my crosses cheerfully out of love of You. Help me not to waste the graces that You are now giving me!"

Conclusion: the joy of seeking our heavenly home

On the positive side, God will surely give us every possible grace to train ourselves to "yearn for everlasting life with holy desire" (RB 4:46). Benedictine spirituality is rich in practices that can help us to "[hasten] toward [our]

heavenly home" (RB 73:8). The seeking of God above all else is not an option or a luxury; it is a necessary dimension of God's plan for all of us to live in eternal communion with Him and with all the saints and angels. Christ suffered and died for us to save us from the folly of sinful desires that lead to sin. Christ rose from the dead to open for us the way to heaven. Christ ascended bodily to heaven so that even now our bodies and minds might direct all our efforts to showing our love for Him and doing His work on this earth. Christ poured out the Holy Spirit upon us so that we might ever turn to our Advocate who inspires us to know the right thing to do and to do it with joy and holy desire. Since God, out of love for us, personally took on every phase of the Paschal Mystery for our eternal salvation, how could we not desire with all our beings to return that love? And how could we not fail to rejoice even in the sufferings that open us more fully to receive that love and respond to it? If we here and now learn to "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col 3:17), then we can be sure that we shall one day "appear with Him in glory" (Col 3:4). Therefore, may this true glory, that of self-emptying love, and the peace that comes with it "be [our] quest and aim" (RB Prol: 17)!

Your brother in Christ and Saint Benedict,

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

A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS

May, 2017

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

The Season of Easter/Pentecost reminds us that the events of the encounter with the Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit continue to unfold in the life of the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read about how the appearances of the Risen Lord and the descent of the Holy Spirit radically transformed the lives of the first disciples.

The disillusionment and fears of the disciples were transformed into hope and joy that engendered a boldness in them to go forth from the Upper Room and to give witness to the power of God's love over the power of Satan's darkness and fear. It is that same boldness that energizes us in life to witness to God's love.

Through our baptism, we became sons and daughters of God in order to live in His love. We are charged to go forth to give witness to that love that comes from Christ's light in our lives. As Saint Paul reminds us, "We walk by faith and not by sight."

May this grace-filled Easter/Pentecost Season renew your hearts through the intercession of the Holy Spirit.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Archabbot Douglas, O.S.B.

RETREATS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST, May 19-21, June 2-4, June 16-18, June 23-25, July 21-23, July 28-30

It may not be too late to register for this year's retreats. The retreats on Benedictine spirituality are to be held on May 19-21, 2017 and June 2-4, 2017; Fr. Boniface and Fr. Maurus, respectively, will be the retreat masters. The silent retreat will take place on June 23-25, 2017, and it will also be directed by Fr. Boniface. Also of interest may be the charismatic-prayer retreat, directed by Fr. Boniface, from June 16 to 18; the men's retreat, directed by Fr. Edward, from July 21 to 23; and the father-and-son retreat, directed by Fr. Shawn Matthew, from July 28 to 30. Registration (and all other special arrangements) should be done through the St. Vincent Retreat Program, and not through the Oblate Office. **Oblates are no longer automatically placed on the Retreat Program's mailing list; so if you**

would like to receive the annual retreat brochure, please contact Br. Hugh at the Retreat Office at 724-805-2139 or hugh.lester@email.stvincent.edu. You may also wish to see the retreat website at www.saintvincentretreats.org.

SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT AT THE ARCHABBEY, TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2017

A number of Oblates and their guests, some 37 people, joined the extended Benedictine community for the annual celebration of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict, Abbot. At the concelebrated Mass at 4:00 P.M., Bishop Edward Malesic of Greensburg presided, and Fr. Jonathan Wisneski, newly appointed diocesan vicar for religious, preached about the death and glorification of St. Benedict and these events' implications for us.

After dinner, Oblation ceremonies were held at 6:30 P.M. in the choir area of the basilica, during which the Oblates who were present renewed their Oblation. After the ceremonies the attendees joined the monks for a festive Evening Prayer at 7:00, which included a ceremony for the temporary vows of Br. Dominic Leo; then some of the group enjoyed a social in the Parish Assembly Room.

FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT AND CELEBRATION OF JUBILEES OF OBLATION, JULY 11

All Oblates, Oblate novices, and their guests are welcome to attend the festive Mass for the Feast of St. Benedict at the Archabbey Basilica at 10:00 A.M. on Tuesday, July 11. The Mass will include the profession of solemn vows. Oblates are invited to stay for lunch and for a meeting at 2:00, for Evening Prayer at 5:00, and for supper. If you are coming for Mass, lunch, or supper, please fill out the form on the insert and send it to the **Oblate Office (c/o July 11 event) by July 4**. Even if you are coming only for Mass, please let us know since it is good for the sacristans to know how many pews to reserve for the Oblates. The meeting at 2:00 will include a reflection by Br. Lawrence Machia on monastic vows and then the tenth annual ceremony to honor Oblates who this year celebrate 5, 15, 20, 25, 30, 40, 50, 55, or 60 or more years of Oblation. After the ceremonies there may be an opportunity for the taking of photographs.

Those needing overnight room reservations should call Fr. Donald at the Oblate Office (724-805-2291) as soon as possible.

ORDINATIONS ON SATURDAY, MAY 20, AND SATURDAY, MAY 27

Oblates are welcome to attend the Masses in the Archabbey Basilica for the ordination of a priest, namely Br. Canice McMullen, on May 20 and for the ordination of deacons, namely Br. Joachim Morgan and Br. Lawrence Machia, on May 27. Both ordinations are scheduled for 10:00 A.M. Any Oblates who wish to stay for lunch in the guest dining room should contact the Oblate Office at least a few days in advance of the ordinations.

NOVICES TO PROFESS FIRST VOWS ON MONDAY, JULY 10, 5:00 P.M.

Oblates are welcome to attend the ceremony for the profession of first vows at Evening Prayer at 5:00 P.M. in the Archabbey Basilica on Monday, July 10. Those wishing to stay for supper should contact Fr. Donald.

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

Thanks to Fr. Andrew, Fr. Pio, and Br. David Klecker, presentations given at Oblate meetings in Latrobe are, for the most part, available to those who desire to have C.D.'s or D.V.D.'s. Orders will be taken only by the St. Vincent College Book Center unless one attends monthly meetings in Latrobe, where orders will still be taken for recent presentations at a discounted price. Please see the order form on the flier attached to this newsletter.

PHONE PRAYER CHAIN AND E-MAIL PRAYER CHAIN:

Oblates in the Latrobe/Greensburg/Jeanette/Ligonier area have had a prayer chain by telephone since 2009, and later we began a prayer chain that transmits intentions by e-mail. If any Oblate or Oblate novice would like to join the weekly prayer chain by phone, please contact the Oblate Office. If you wish to be a part of the weekly e-mail prayer chain, please send an e-mail message to tkgeron@gmail.com, or contact the Oblate Office.

ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM THE OBLATE OFFICE

- (1) pamphlet "God's Love for You" with message of evangelization – free
- (2) booklet *St. Benedict for Busy Parents* – free or with small donation
- (3) booklet of Oblates' reflections on verses of the *Rule* – free or with donation for postage
- (4) booklet of the histories of Oblate deaneries – free or with donation for postage
- (5) copies of the booklet *You Are Loved* (a guide from Catholic Answers on addiction to pornography) - free or with small donation

OBLATES RECEIVE 10% DISCOUNT AT BASILICA GIFT SHOP

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

CONTACTING PEOPLE IN LATROBE/GREENSBURG/JEANNETTE AREAS FOR FUNERALS & OTHER EVENTS

Whenever an Oblate or spouse dies in the Latrobe area, local Oblates gather for a wake service whenever possible. Oblates and Oblate novices who have requested to be notified by e-mail or by phone will be notified by Fr. Donald via volunteers. If you are not on these lists and would like to be, please contact the Oblate Office. These people are also contacted about other events of significance regarding the Archabbey and local Oblates (e.g., changes in the monastic schedule for monks' wakes and funerals or for other reasons).

RENEWALS OF OBLATION

Fr. Donald and Br. Joachim are grateful for the many Oblates (over 100) who have 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.

ADORATION FOR VOCATIONS

Oblates are welcome to participate in Eucharistic adoration in St. Gregory Chapel at the Archabbey every Sunday from 2:00 to 4:15 P.M. to pray for vocations to the religious life and the priesthood, especially for vocations to St. Vincent Archabbey. Oblates are

encouraged to participate especially on those Sundays of Oblate meetings.

RECOMMENDED READING (items available in the Oblate Library)

- Fr. Jacques Philippe, Community of the Beatitudes, *In the School of the Holy Spirit* (tr. By Helena Scott; N.Y.: Scepter Publishers, Inc., 2007)

- Peter Kreeft, *How to Be Holy: First Steps in Becoming a Saint: A Festooning of Abandonment to Divine Providence* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2016):

NEW (OR NEWLY DISCOVERED) BOOKS ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

- Fr. Terrence G. Kardong, O.S.B., *Benedict Backwards: Reading the Rule in the 21st Century* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017)

OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS: The Oblate Board of Advisors met at the Archabbey on Friday, April 21. They welcomed new members Bill and Gisela Iglesias and Cindi Ruff and discussed various issues, including the online bibliography, the forthcoming Assembly of Deanery Representatives, the progress of the formation lessons, and the status of various deaneries and the need to support deaneries in their particular needs. The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Friday, June 16, at 6:30 P.M. in Brownfield 203. Note that input from all the deaneries is always welcome.

MENTORING PROGRAM

The Mentoring Program for guiding inquirers and Oblate novices in Benedictine spirituality is in need of volunteers to serve as mentors. If you would like to mentor in this way or if you are an inquirer or an Oblate novice who would like to have an Oblate mentor, please contact the Oblate Office by mail, or send an e-mail message to 305makaufman@gmail.com. Those who offer to be mentors receive a booklet of guidelines.

OPPORTUNITY FOR RETREAT WITH FR. MICHAEL CASEY IN BEECH GROVE, INDIANA

From Friday, June 30, through Saturday, July 1, Fr. Michael Casey, O.S.C.O., will offer presentations entitled "Monasticism in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Trenches." The talks will be offered at Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center at 1402 Southern Ave. Beech Grove, IN 46107, phone: 317-788-7581, e-mail: benedictinn@benedictinn.org. You may register online at www.benedictinn.org. The cost (before May 15) is \$185 for those staying overnight and \$135 for commuters; after May 15 it is \$10 more. If you want a registration form, contact our Oblate Office.

OBLATE MEETINGS AND CLASSES IN LATROBE

All Oblates and their guests are welcome to attend monthly meetings of the Latrobe (St. Gregory the Great) Deanery, held at 6:45 P.M. on Sundays in Brownfield 202 at St. Vincent. All are also invited to the presentations on Benedictine spirituality that begin in the same place at 3:00 P.M. The next four sessions will be held on June 11, July 16, August 20, and September 17. (Note the change to the second Sunday in June to avoid meeting on Father's Day.) Those wishing to be present for Vespers and supper should phone Fr. Donald (724-805-2291) in advance.

MARK CALENDARS FOR OBLATE DAY IN SEPTEMBER AND FOR DAY OF RECOLLECTION IN OCTOBER

Our annual "Oblate Day" will be held on Sunday, September 24, and Fr. Brian Boosel, O.S.B., will serve as the main speaker at 3:45 P.M. The annual day of recollection will be directed by Fr. Fred Byrne, O.S.B., on Saturday, October 14. Reservation forms for these events will appear in the August newsletter.

THOSE WHO CANNOT DRIVE TO MEETINGS IN LATROBE

Those who would like to have a ride to monthly meetings in Latrobe (and those who are willing to drive others) are urged to sign up for the Oblate *Directory* and to mention their specific needs. If you contact the Oblate Office, the Oblate who coordinates this driving ministry will try to match each one who needs a ride with a volunteer driver.

VISIT WITH OBLATES IN LANCASTER, PA

On May 18 Fr. Thomas Hart, O.S.B., traveled to Lancaster to attend the monthly Oblate meeting at St. Joseph Church and to give a presentation on the topic "to love fasting." Most of the Oblates in the group are affiliated with St. Meinrad Archabbey, but several are affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey.

OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by e-mail on February 3. Five people attended the meeting on January 26. After an opening prayer the group proceeded to study Chapter 31 (on the cellarer) of the *Rule*. They also considered changing the time of meetings from the evening to daytime and gathered a number of prayer intentions from the attendees. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline.

OBLATE GROUP IN TENNESSEE COLONY, TX (Michael Unit)

Oblate Alejandro Torres reported on February 10 and April 24. On January 31 some Oblates and Oblate novices gathered to pray Evening Prayer and to read the daily passage of the *Rule*. They also considered possible saints to be their patron for the time when the group becomes a deanery.

OBLATE GROUP IN ROSHARON, TX (Terrell Unit)

Oblate novice Gilberto Gomez wrote on April 3. Toward the end of March three members of the "Oblate Prayer Group" gathered for a meeting, and the following week two people came together. One new person expressed interest and submitted an application.

The Oblate group met again on April 18, with ten people present. They prayed Vespers, discussed *RB* 63 on community rank, and had some exchange about whether the group should be called a "gathering" or a "community." Many of the group have been coming together to pray Evening Prayer every Tuesday after Mass. On April 25 five of the members met with moderator Fr. Gary Rottman before Mass.

ECUMENICAL OBLATE GROUP IN PHILADELPHIA, PA - semi-monthly meetings on Saturdays at 10:00 A.M.

Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported on March 10 and April 10. The meeting on February 11 began with Morning Prayer according to the Roman Rite. Then the group listened to a guest speaker, Liane Hansen of Bethany Beach, DE, who had been a host of "Weekend Edition, Sunday Morning on NPR." Liane described how she had been called to Oblate life and how her Oblate commitment had an impact on her professional and personal life. Her story resonated well with the attendees and led to a fruitful discussion. At the end of the meeting, Fr. Vincent de Paul received the following:

Oblate: **Valerie J. (Frances) James** of Philadelphia, PA

Oblate novice: **Deacon Gary Schmitt** of Beverly, NJ.

The celebration continued over a lunch prepared by devoted hosts Sharon Fischer and her daughter Joann.

The next meeting took place on April 1, at 10:00 A.M. at Saint Mary's Church, 630 E. Cathedral Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19128 (the location of all the meetings). The meeting began with the praying of Morning Prayer according to the Roman Rite, which ended with a praying of the "Subvenite" (prayer for the dead) for recently deceased Oblate novice Mary Biddle. Fr. Vincent then presented some thoughts on the subject "ora et labora," that is, prayer and work. The group spent an hour sharing thoughts about their attitudes about work and prayer in daily life. At the end of the meeting, Fr. Vincent de Paul received as an Oblate novice:

Robert M. Quinn of Bensalem, PA.

The group then proceeded to eat lunch, as usual. The next meeting was scheduled for Saturday, June 3.

POTENTIAL OBLATE DEANERY IN SOUTH HILLS OF PITTSBURGH, PA

On the morning of Saturday, April 22, thirteen Oblates and Oblate novices gathered at the home of Gilbert and Mary Ann Kaufman to talk about Benedictine spirituality and Oblate commitment. Almost all were Oblates. Four others expressed interest but could not attend. After gathering together, the group prayed Morning Prayer at 10:00 A.M. Then they shared information about books on Benedictine spirituality, some of which Mary Ann had made available. Next, after a break for coffee and snacks, the attendees shared about how they had become involved in the Oblate Program. On the whole, the group expressed great interest in forming a deanery with regular meetings. The session ended about 12:30 P.M. Mary Ann subsequently spoke with the pastor of St. Louise de Marillac Church about the possibility of having monthly Oblate meetings at some location on the parish grounds.

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:

- 17 Feb 2017 – Mary Antoinette (Benedicta) Spenger of Johnstown, PA (Oblate since March 21, 1987)

- 05 Mar 2017 – Rosemary M. (John) Dombroski of Florence, AZ (originally State College, PA; Oblate since December 12, 1995)

- 06 Mar 2017 – Mary R. Biddle of Philadelphia, PA (Oblate novice since May 14, 2016)

- 15 Mar 2017 – Carol Meridionale of Annville, PA (Oblate since August 23, 2009)

- 05 Apr 2017 – John T. (Raymond-Bernard) Hall of Altoona, PA (Oblate since June 23, 2014)

N.B.: Oblates and Oblate novices, please ask family members to notify the Oblate Office on the occasion of your death. Sometimes we learn about someone's death only years later. A Mass is offered as soon as possible after the notification of death for every deceased Oblate or Oblate novice.

NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES

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

There was no report.

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

Lay leader/secretary Mary Ann Bingeman reported by phone on May 8. At the meeting on April 23, moderator Fr. Job Foote, O.S.B., shared some information from the boy in Honduras whom the deanery is assisting financially. An additional collection was taken up for the boy. A passage from the *Rule* was read. Attendance was exceptionally large.

A fuller report for meetings in February, March, and April will appear in the next newsletter.

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

Secretary Jay Wells reported by e-mail on February 21 and March 21. The meeting on February 19 was attended by Fr. Paschal Morlino, O.S.B., moderator, and eleven others. First, Fr. Paschal presented a summary of an article entitled "Living from the Spiritual Heart," which drew from the Prologue of the *Rule* and mentioned practices that might help to "prefer nothing whatever to Christ." Then the group began a study based on the formation lessons from the Archabbey; they were to read Lesson 1 for the next meeting. Fr. Paschal then spoke about the sequence from the Mass for St. Scholastica, along with references from the Song of Songs. Next the group discussed *RB* 49 on Lent, with encouragement for each individual to hand in to Fr. Paschal a slip of paper with his or her Lenten sacrifices; he was to place these papers on the altar of the choir chapel as an object of prayer each day during Lent. At 4:50 the group departed for the church to pray Vespers at 5:00 P.M.

Eight people attended the meeting on March 19. Fr. Paschal, assisted by Deacon Paul, presided. The two of them began with a presentation on Lent, and Fr. Paschal spoke about "the most touching moments of my life." Then the group reviewed and discussed Lesson 1, "On Holiness and Pursuing Benedictine Spirituality," and copies of Lesson 2 were distributed. Announcements were made about the Fatima Pilgrimage Statue at St. Benedict Church, about the new Catholic radio station broadcasting from the church (WVTO 92.7 FM), about the Fourth Assembly of Deanery Representatives at the Archabbey, and about a protest letter concerning the International Oblate Congress. As usual, the session ended with Vespers in the church at 5:00.

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

Lay leader/secretary Ronald Weleski reported by FAX on May 5. The meeting on February 23 began with Evening Prayer, and then, in preparation for Lent, the group discussed Chapter 49 of the *Rule*. They then continued a study of *Lessons from Saint Benedict* with a

discussion of Chapter 16. The attendees noted that St. Benedict tells us humbly to accept our human inadequacies and to place our hope in God alone. God voices His encouragement in such words as: "My grace is enough for you."

The meeting on March 23, attended by eight members, again began with Evening Prayer. Then the group reviewed Chapter 17 of the text. The discussion included such themes as loss and gain, choices to give up personal comfort for the sake of others, patient endurance of sufferings, willingness to turn to Christ to overcome worries and fears, and the Oblate commitment to *conversatio morum*, which enables us to find Christ and His graces for our sanctification amid our losses.

The meeting on April 27, after Evening Prayer, involved a discussion of Chapter 18 of the text. The theme of God's glory shining through human weakness was appropriate for the Easter Season. The attendees noted how the liturgies and Scripture readings for the season call us to be especially aware of the glory of our risen Lord, and they shared about ways God's glory can emerge amid our daily frustrations and disappointment. Ron led a closing prayer service with the theme of Pentecost and the gifts of the Holy Spirit based on a presentation from his parish's Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

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

Co-lay leader Theresa George reported by phone on May 9. During Lent the group took a break from their online discussions. After Easter Sunday they resumed their study of Delatte's *Commentary* on the *Rule* by reflecting on Chapters 36 and 37. As of early May there were 69 participants.

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 February 11, March 11, and April 3 & 24. The meeting on February 6 began, as usual, with the praying of Evening Prayer. Then Deacon Michael Russo, moderator, explained in detail the structure of praying the Liturgy of the Hours in the monastic tradition and compared that with other traditions of the Hours in dioceses and other communities. There was also some consideration of how the Hours are prayed by the monastic community at St. Vincent, with focus on reverence, pace, and the tone of voices with which the psalms are recited. The group also discussed supporting the annual rosary rally that is held at St. Benedict Church each October and getting the word out to more churches about the rally. The attendees also were offered the possibility of attending a retreat on May 19-21 by Deacon Michael for the Adult Enrichment and Lay Ecclesial Ministry Office of the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese. The retreat is entitled "Discovering God's Vision for Your Life: You and Your Spiritual Gifts" and will be held at the Antiochian Village north of Ligonier.

The meeting on March 6 began with Evening Prayer in the church and continued with a discussion in the St. John Paul II Center. Deacon Michael led the group in a discussion on Psalm 22, which Our Lord prayed from the Cross. Deacon Michael emphasized that it is not just a cry of lament but also a psalm of hope, victory, thanksgiving, and praise. We can all relate to the mixture of feelings as we face the everyday challenges and joys of life. After the discussion the group considered possible topics for future meetings.

The meeting on April 3 began with Evening Prayer in the St. John Paul II Center. Then the group had a lively discussion on a presentation given the previous week by an expert on the Shroud of Turin. The discussion then focused on the Passion and Death of Our Lord, and Deacon Michael responded to questions. The topic of the New Evangelization was also brought up, and the Oblates agreed on their need to grow in the knowledge of their faith. The diocese, it was said, offers many programs, including classes, Bible studies, and special events to help the faithful to grow in their understanding of the Catholic faith. Deacon Michael recommended that the Oblates meditate on the Passion of Christ during the last two weeks of Lent.

It was decided not to meet during May since Deacon Michael and some of the Oblates were going on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

NEW OBLATE DEANERY IN KALISPELL, Montana (Holy Trinity Deanery) (monthly meetings at St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church in Kalispell)

The meeting held on February 21 was attended by lay leader/secretary Tanishia Sperling, an Oblate novice, and two future Oblate novices. After an opening prayer the group spoke about the forthcoming investiture ceremony on February 25. At a previous meeting the members had been asked to reflect on three questions and to write down responses. The questions were: (1) Do you desire holiness? Where can you find strength and support to allow for this growth? (2) In what areas of your life do you seek for growth in personal holiness? (3) In what practical ways do you plan to seek this growth? The attendees shared their insights about the presence of God in their lives and the ways in which He has led them through His love.

On February 25 Fr. Roderick Ermatinger, pastor of St. Matthew Church in Kalispell, invested as Oblate novices

Eveline Dupré of Kalispell, MT, and

Katie Jackson of Rollins, MT. (continued)

Four people attended the meeting on March 20. After the praying of Daytime Prayer, the group decided to meet on the second Monday of each month. Then the attendees discussed the Prologue of the *Rule*. In the sharing of their individual insights, they agreed that there was much spiritual wealth in the Prologue. The practice of *lectio divina* was then described, and the members were asked to apply *lectio divina* to the reading of the Prologue before the next meeting. The attendees also shared their insights about the meaning of the word "oblate" and the meaning of being an Oblate of St. Benedict.

About April 13 Tanishia reported that the meeting on April 10 was attended by the usual four Oblate/Oblate novices and one inquirer. The meeting began with a prayer and the daily reading from the breviary. The attendees shared the fruits of their use of *lectio divina* to read the Prologue of the *Rule*. The group was urged to continue to reflect on the *Rule* during the summer break from meetings. As "homework" before the meeting, the group had been asked to ponder the following questions: "What does conversion of heart mean? How does a genuine conversion of heart affect a person and others with whom he or she deals?" Each attendee shared responses to those questions. "Homework questions" were given for the next meeting, which was scheduled for May 8. The meeting ended with a prayer.

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

At the meeting on February 12, some twelve people gathered to continue a discussion of Fr. Demetrius Dumm's book *Flowers in the Desert*. They addressed the topics of covenant and "covenant responsibility," with reflections on the Ten Commandments. Biblical spirituality is based on appreciating God's freeing us from slavery and on using our freedom to show His love to others and thus to help them to experience the same freedom. The session ended, as usual, with the singing of Compline.

At the meeting on March 12, some sixteen people discussed Chapter 2 of Fr. Demetrius' book. The topics addressed included the actions of God in salvation history, the ongoing life of Biblical events, the meaning of Our Lord's baptism, the Word (Christ) as a vehicle of the Father's Self-revelation, and the giftedness of faith and life, especially as an antidote to murmuring or grumbling. The session ended with the praying of Compline in the Archabbey Basilica.

Some twelve people attended the meeting on April 9, which involved a continuation of the discussion of Fr. Demetrius' book. The topics covered, all from Chapter 3, included faith as our human response to God's saving events, faith as grounded in the truth and in daily obedience to Christ, faith as trusting in the gift of life, the good qualities (related to faith) that an abbot (or any authority) should have and those qualities that he should *not* have, and the example of King David as a man of faith, as opposed to King Saul. The meeting ended, as usual, with the praying of Compline in the basilica.

At 4:10 in the Archabbey Basilica, after the 3:00 presentation, the attendees gathered for the investiture of two Oblate novices by Fr. Donald:

Cecelia Oshnock of Latrobe, PA

David L. Robinson of Latrobe, PA.

"Ceil" is the wife of Oblate Robert Oshnock. (See the next newsletter for a report on the meeting on May 7.)

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

On February 12 Br. Cassian Edwards gave a presentation to some 25 people on poverty and simplicity. He quoted from passages in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for each topic and reflected on them with references. Regarding poverty, Br. Cassian addressed the themes of renunciation, poverty of heart, common ownership in monastic life, the yearning for something beautiful, the poverty necessary for contemplative prayer, and Our Lord's life of poverty from His birth to His death on a cross. Regarding simplicity, Br. Cassian spoke about the praying of the psalms (and their simple expressions), the need to know that before everything else we are God's beloved sons and daughters, the call to imitate Christ in His simplicity, and the battle for keeping a pure and simple vision of other people and life (just as Mary of Bethany simply sat at Our Lord's feet). He noted that if we find our true identity as children of God, then we learn to be detached even from spiritual goods so that we can seek the "one thing necessary": encountering God as He truly is and letting Him speak to us. Finally, Br. Cassian responded to a number of questions.

On March 12, despite very cold weather and an insufficiently heated meeting room, some 35 people gathered to hear Br. Ignatius Camello give a presentation on *conversatio morum*. Using a power-point outline, Br. Ignatius spoke of Christian life as an ongoing journey from sin to holiness, with the ultimate goal of sharing in the glory of the Blessed Trinity. He spoke about all humanity's need for conversion, with reference to St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching about humans' three-fold dignity: being made in God's image, the grace of having consciences by which to make free choices, and the transcendent quality of being children of God by baptism. Br. Ignatius also described the unique activity of humans that leads us to holiness as worship and liturgy. In liturgy the militant, suffering, and triumphant Church worship together with Christ, the Main Presider. In sum, the desire to grow beyond ourselves, which is inherent to every human being, is helped by the truths taught by the Church. Our dignity as human beings underlies the process of conversion.

On April 9 some 30 people gathered to hear Fr. Boniface Hicks give a presentation on "Hospitality in Benedictine Spirituality." He began by describing hospitality as nurturing others by the gift of oneself for the betterment of the others. In a broad sense, hospitality involves the message of the whole Gospel, and most especially the scene from the Last Judgment in which Our Lord proclaims, "Whatever you did for the least of My brothers, you did for Me" (Mt 25:40). Hospitality means making room for other people, not just in terms of physical space but in our very hearts; it requires an attitude of self-emptying in genuine love. Chapter 53 of the *Rule* tells us that "all guests shall be welcomed as Christ" (53:1). The guest is welcomed with a "kiss of peace" and prayer; that is, he is invited to enter into the Christian culture of the monastery. In *RB* 61 visiting monks who cannot respect the culture of the receiving monastery are asked to leave. The reception of the guest begins with prayer; monks thus show who they are as Christians. The monastic guest house is different from a hotel! Hospitality is connected with stability. Guests are not to intrude on the daily routines of the monastery; only certain monks are to tend to their needs. Families are likewise to hold on to their Catholic culture and to share it with their guests. Also, the monks are to be especially attentive to the poor and pilgrims; we are not to prefer some people because of their wealth or position. Many guests are "poor" in various ways. We are to welcome them anyway! When we welcome guests with humility and "wash their feet," they come to realize their dignity and their status as gift to their hosts. Also, hosts can learn much by listening to their guests. Visiting monks, says *RB* 61, may have valid criticisms that the hosting monastery should take to heart. Hosts make room in their hearts for their guests by receiving them as they are and listening to them; we Christians can learn to admire the mystery of Christ in the other person.

See the next newsletter for a report on the presentation on May 7.

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

Lay leader Brian Chisholm reported by phone on February 27, March 14 and 18, and April 6. The meeting on January 29 was attended by eight people. After the praying of Evening Prayer, a rosary, and a litany, the group proceeded to Brian's house because of some difficulty with the physical space in the church. The group viewed a D.V.D. about Montecassino, and some stayed for supper.

Six people attended the meeting on February 26. After the opening prayers the group entered a study of Lesson 2 from the Archabbey's Oblate formation program. They also chose subjects for the coming months, with the expressed hope to find a priest to speak to the deanery each month.

In March the weekly holy hours sponsored by the Oblates were reported to be well attended. The Oblates were scheduled to sponsor an information session on Divine Mercy devotions on Sunday, April 2, with a local priest, Fr. Paul MacDonald, giving a presentation. The session, which included one hour of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, went very well.

Six people attended the meeting on March 26. They began a study of the book *The Rule of Benedict for Beginners* by Wil Derkse. There was a good discussion on the introduction to the book, and the attendees were to read the next twelve pages for the subsequent meeting in April.

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

Lay leader/secretary Gabriele Terrill reported by U.S. mail on February 22 and by e-mail on March 30. On February 19 Fr. James Podlesny, moderator, received as an Oblate novice

Andrea Jablonski of Middletown, PA.

Fr. James and five others attended the meeting on March 26. After Evening Prayer in the church, Fr. James reflected on the Gospel of that Sunday, which was the story of Our Lord's encounter with the Samaritan woman. Then some news from the Vatican was discussed. Fr. James also explained about the Solemnity of St. Benedict on March 21 and spoke about monasteries in Europe in past centuries when each community sought to be self-sufficient.

Five people attended the meeting on April 23. A number could not attend because they were at Divine Mercy devotions. After Evening Prayer in the church and the sharing of some snacks and coffee, the group viewed a D.V.D. from the Archabbey with Fr. Boniface's presentation on hospitality earlier in April. It was noted that Oblates can help to form a Christian way of life at home, in the Church, and at work. They can evangelize by the way they live their everyday lives. When Oblates invite guests, they can invite the guests to pray with them, to share a meal, and to socialize. Being a humble host can bring the Gospel message to guests. The next meeting was scheduled for May 21.

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

Secretary Frederick Laux reported on February 15, March 16, and April 23. The meeting on January 10 was attended by Deacon John Etter, moderator, and three Oblates, three other Oblate novices, and five inquirers. After the praying of Vespers, Oblate Dean Everett gave a presentation on *RB 2: 6-10*, regarding the abbot of a monastery. He asserted that the abbot was called to deal with the monks as individuals according to their needs. In the sense that all of us Christians are our brothers' keepers, we are all called to be like the abbot in this respect. Oblates make promises to live by a higher standard, especially in terms of charity and respect, first of all, to God. A long discussion followed the presentation. Then Deacon John led a discussion on obedience based on a lesson from the Archabbey. There was some discussion about obedience to what God has permitted in life. Deacon John closed the meeting with benediction.

The meeting on February 14 was attended by two Oblates, four Oblate novices, and five inquirers. After Deacon John led the group in Vespers, Oblate Curtis Kennedy gave a presentation based on *RB 12: 1-4*, which deals with the praying of Lauds. The talk included a definition of Lauds, and a review of Scriptural citations from the passage of the *Rule*. Curt also read a reflection on the passage from the book *The Rule in Bits and Pieces*, referred to Sunday Lauds as "the kick start of the week," and said that there is never a time or place in which we can't praise God. Next Deacon John reviewed the lesson on prayer from the Archabbey, with emphasis on a quote from St. Augustine about the restless heart's seeking of God. God lives within us, and prayer often comes from our brokenness. The meeting ended with a praying of the "Glory Be."

The meeting scheduled for March was cancelled because of power outages.

The meeting on April 19 was attended by two Oblates, three Oblate novices, and three inquirers. Since Deacon John was unable to attend, Fred led the meeting. After the praying of Vespers, Oblate novice Cory DesArmo gave a presentation on "community rank" from *RB 63:10-19*. In sum, he said that we Christians can either grow or become stagnant. Whether we are new or old in our present situation, we should always love and respect others, whether or not they are in our category, not because doing so brings us gain but because it is right before God. There are already too many "walls" between people, and we should not add to them. The meeting had to be shortened because of a long delay in a event that preceded. The next meeting was scheduled for May 9.

Pittsburgh, PA (St. Peter Deanery) -- *meetings on Thursdays (usually 3rd or 4th of the month), 7:00 P.M., basement of St. Peter Church.*

Oblate George Ponticello reported by e-mail on January 27 and early in April. Nine people attended the meeting on January 17, including guests and Fr. Vincent Zidek, O.S.B., moderator. After the praying of Vespers in the church, the group discussed Chapter 6 of *Flowers in the Desert* by Fr. Demetrius Dumm, O.S.B.

The meeting on February 20 was attended by nine people. After Evening Prayer in the church, Fr. Vincent led a discussion on Chapter 7, entitled "Traveling Together." The discussion was quite lively, and group agreed to continue its consideration of Chapter 7 at the next meeting.

The meeting on March 21 began with the praying of Vespers and continued the exchange begun in February. The group decided not to meet in April because of busy schedules for Holy Week and Easter. The next meeting was planned for May 2. Some expressed interest in meeting in April for a light dinner and conversation at a local restaurant.

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

Lay leader/secretary Roland Fernandez reported on January 27, February 19, and March 19. At ceremonies during Mass, reported in the last newsletter, two Oblates renewed their Oblation in addition to the ones invested or making final Oblation. [I apologize for misspelling the name of the man invested as an Oblate novice. The correct name is Patrick Henry Drews.] (*continued*)

The meeting on February 18 began after the celebration of Mass by Fr. Frank Wittouck, S.C.J., moderator. Five people attended. After an opening prayer and a praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, the group read Chapter 15 of the *Rule* and engaged in some discussion, which led to some questions about the whole section of Chapters 11-17. A lively conversation continued about the number of psalms prayed and the way of praying the Opus Dei at the Archabbey. Roland also reported some requests for Oblate literature and breviaries in Spanish.

Three inquirers gathered with one Oblate on March 19. After an opening prayer, the group prayed the Liturgy of the Hours and read a passage from the *Holy Rule*. There was some lively discussion, and the explanation of the meaning of the medal St. Benedict was read. Also, the group discussed topics from the latest Oblate newsletter, and Roland explained what drew him to become an Oblate. The meeting ended with prayer.

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

Lay leader Peggi Gabler wrote on April 20. The meeting on April 6, attended five Oblates, followed Evening Prayer and benediction. The meeting began with the Oblate prayer, a reading of the minutes from the last meeting in October, and the reading of a letter from Fr. Donald. The group decided to read and study the *Rule* methodically at meetings and to use written explanations provided by Fr. Michael Gabler, O.S.B. The group expressed desire for the ideal of having a priest or deacon present at all meetings, but it was realized that one might not always be available. The meeting closed with the "Benedictine prayer," and the next meeting was scheduled for May 4.

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

Moderator Fr. Ronald Gatman, O.S.B., reported on March 21. At the meeting on March 19, the attendees discussed Chapter 41 of the *Rule*, which involves times of meals. Fr. Ronald emphasized that St. Benedict sought to establish good order in his monasteries in order to provide stability in the monastic community. Fr. Ronald also quoted from Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel about the need to gain self-discipline and control over one's whole being in order to be in good relationship with God.

The annual day of recollection was planned for April, with Fr. Paul Cabrita, S.M., celebrating Mass on that day.

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 February 17, March 13, and April 17. The meeting on February 12 began with the prayer for Oblates and continued with a recorded presentation by Fr. Bonaventure, O.S.B., on obedience. A discussion followed. The session ended with the recitation of Mid-afternoon Prayer.

The meeting on March 12 began with the prayer for Oblates. Then the attendees discussed the value of the promise of stability, especially as it applies to the Lenten Season. After a lengthy discussion the meeting ended with a prayer.

The meeting on April 9 began with the prayer for Oblates and continued with a recorded presentation of Fr. Boniface's talk at the Archabbey on Oblate Day in 2015. A discussion followed. The meeting ended with the recitation of Mid-afternoon Prayer.

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

Co-lay leader/secretary Jeffery Hahn wrote on March 6. The meeting on February 4 was attended by moderator Deacon David Hornick and by seven other Oblates, none Oblate novices, and one inquirer. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Holy Rule*, Oblate Brandon Cavanaugh gave a presentation on the topic "Seeking God." He referred to seeking as the root of all the other values in the *Rule* and referenced the formation booklet, the *Rule*, and Scripture. He also shared about his own journey of seeking God, with special references to *RB* 7:23 and 4:48-49. Then Oblate Robert Fadden gave a presentation on "Prayer and Work: A Balanced Life." He spoke about the experience of children's asking parents for things, the motto "prayer and work," the vital nature of prayer in our lives, and the call to do everything for the love of Christ. He concluded by mentioning the need for balance among prayer, work, and leisure in Benedictine life. Finally, after the presentations, there was a brief discussion on Lesson One of the Oblate novice lessons. The answers for Lesson One were collected, and Lesson Two was distributed. The meeting closed with a prayer.

Eight Oblates, seven Oblate novices, and three inquirers joined Deacon David for the meeting on February 28. After the opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, Oblate novice Gabriel Leshko gave a presentation on "Ash Wednesday and the Season of Lent." He spoke about various styles of fasting, read several Scripture passages, and stressed that Lent was a time to look deeply into oneself and to grow in humility. He challenged all to turn to God to help in the evaluation of our lives so that we might repent, let go of the past, trust, and walk with Christ. A powerful discussion followed, which included a review of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The group was reminded of a connection between the Father's words "Listen to Him [Jesus]" at the Transfiguration and St. Benedict's appeal to "listen" at the beginning of the *Rule*. Then Lesson Two from the formation program was reviewed, and the answers were collected; Lesson Three was distributed. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline.

The meetings scheduled for March had to be cancelled because of circumstances beyond the community's control. Because Jeffery Hahn moved away on April 17, Oblate Michael Reichert was chosen as the new co-lay leader and secretary of the deanery.

On April 26 Michael reported on the meetings on April 11 and 25. The former was attended by six Oblates, six Oblate novices, and two inquirers and led by Deacon David. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, Oblate Richard Lafayette gave a presentation on silence and humility. It began with an exercise that effectively helped the participants to learn the importance of listening in silence and humility as opposed to mere hearing. Then outgoing co-lay leader Jeff Hahn spoke about Holy Week and Easter, with an overview of each day of Holy Week and a detailed explanation of the liturgies of the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday. Michael also shared the significance of the Easter Vigil for him since he was confirmed in the Catholic Church at the Vigil in 2002. Jeff then introduced Michael as his replacement as secretary/co-lay leader, and Michael thanked Jeff for his years of commitment to the deanery. (We are all grateful for his faithful service to the deanery.) Michael then distributed Lesson 4 from the formation lessons, and the meeting ended with a closing prayer and intercessory prayers for Jeff Hahn and Ron Bergman.

The meeting on April 25 was moderated by Deacon David and attended by five Oblates, five Oblate novices, and two inquirers. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, Ron Bergman gave a presentation on the Oblate promises of obedience, stability, and ongoing conversion, with an explanation of each in great detail. He then handed out forms for renewal of final Oblation to all the Oblates present, and they subsequently renewed their Oblation together. There followed a discussion about the three Benedictine vows, and answer sheets to Lesson 4 were handed in. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline.

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

Secretary Phyllis Austin reported by e-mail about February 20, March 5 and 15, and April 13. The meeting on February 13 was attended by four Oblates, three Oblate novices, and three guests in addition to Fr. David Griffin, O.S.B., moderator. After the praying of Vespers, Fr. David opened a discussion on Chapters 40-49 of the book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. This section focuses on detraction, hope, the consequences of sin, and the Last Judgment. The book states that resistance to God's constant mercy brings us to an unhappy state and that Hell is primarily being deprived of God through a person's unwillingness to be touched by Him. There was much exchange about the "crooked-line" aspect of the spiritual life, the need to let go of self-will, and the call to let Christ change us for the better. Oblate Ashley Leggett shared some insights from the inmate with whom he corresponds. The meeting ended with a prayer and the singing of the "Ultima."

Phyllis informed the Oblates about the death of Oblate Rosemary Dombroski, who had been a member of the deanery until, in her old age, she moved to Arizona to be with her daughter.

The meeting on March 13 was attended by six Oblates and two Oblate novices. After the praying of Vespers, the group continued to discuss Fr. Michael Casey's book on the tools of good works. The exchange involved the section about the control of inappropriate laughter, the importance of mindful speech, the need to develop good listening skill, and the importance of reflecting daily on evil actions. The meeting ended with a closing prayer and the "Ultima." Then there were some announcements, including an appeal for representatives to attend the Assembly of Deanery Representatives on June 10. Also, Phyllis shared a thank-you note from the Mission Mexico class for the Oblates' Christmas donation, and Fr. David talked about experiences and showed photographs from the recent

mission trip to Mexico.

The meeting on April 10, attended by six Oblates, one Oblate novice, and one inquirer, began with Evening Prayer. The group then continued its discussion of *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* with the guidance of Fr. David. The topics discussed included “hating self-will” and “the false self,” with comments about applications to spiritual leaders, all of whom have human limitations like everyone else and are sometimes stretched beyond their limits. The meeting ended with a closing prayer and the “Ultima.” Oblate Kay Tittmann shared a letter and pictures from the recent “Mission Mexico” trip by Penn State students. The group planned to complete discussion of the current text at the meeting on May 8 and to have a final meeting for 2016-2017 on June 10, with Mass and a light brunch.

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

Lay leader/secretary Peggy Gambardella reported on February 12 and April 16. Seventeen people attended the meeting on February 1, along with Fr. Lee Yoakam, O.S.B., moderator. The group celebrated former lay leader Delina Pauls’ 92nd birthday. Then Fr. Lee spoke about the consecrated life, and the group discussed this spring’s “Oblate retreats” at the Archabbey. Also, during the meeting Fr. Lee invested as an Oblate novice:

Jaime R. Sugden of Chesapeake, VA.

On March 4 in the Archabbey Basilica, after the praying of Midday Prayer in St. Gregory Chapel, Fr. Donald invested

Cynthia “Cindy” Gorman of Virginia Beach, VA, and

Michelle Mocco of Virginia Beach, VA,

as Oblate novices. Cindy and Michelle were at the Archabbey for a private retreat.

Ten people attended the meeting on March 1. The group viewed the D.V.D. of Fr. Nathan’s presentation on *conversatio morum* from last September. After a discussion of the presentation, the meeting ended with the praying of Compline.

Fifteen people attended the meeting on April 5. Oblate novice Damian Finke spoke about authentic devotion of the Blessed Mother, and some discussion followed. The group decided to sponsor a student in Haiti for a year. Also, there were plans for some fourteen people to go to the Archabbey for the retreat on May 19-21, and two vans were being rented to transport the retreatants. The meeting ended with Compline.

Williamsport, PA (Saints Martha, Mary, & Lazarus Deanery) -- meetings on 2nd Sunday of each month, 2 P.M., St. Anne Church

Lay leader/secretary Sue Wykoff reported by e-mail on March 13 and in person on May 6. The meeting on February 12, attended by six people, began with the praying of Daytime Prayer and the discussion of deanery business, including the desire of one Oblate novice to make her final Oblation. They also considered the value of the new formation program for Oblate novices. Next the group used study questions from the guide to *Lessons from Saint Benedict* as the topic for the main discussion, which was based on the chapter “The Slow, Ongoing Death to Self.” They also had some conversation about books on Christian topics that they were reading. The meeting ended with the praying of the Lord’s Prayer.

The meeting on March 12 also began with Daytime Prayer. The group first discussed a possible trip to the Archabbey. Agendas for future meetings were also considered, with the possibility of having additional meetings on Saturdays that would be less formal. The main topic of discussion was “holiness” and the relationship of pursuing holiness to baptismal promises. There was some exchange about the meaning of the phrase “reject Satan and all of his works.” The attendees agreed that the promise of ongoing conversion was a great help to growth in holiness; the fact that God knows our weaknesses encourages us to move forward in the spiritual life.

The meeting on April 9, attended by six people, began with a praying of the Office of Readings from “E-Breviary” copies. Then they discussed a possible trip to St. Vincent for one member’s final Oblation. Next Sue led a discussion based on a chapter of a book by Richard Foster entitled “The Spiritual Disciplines: Door to Liberation.” The group used the article to consider what Oblates’ focus should be as they study the *Rule* and practice Benedictine disciplines. Seven pitfalls to be avoided in the spiritual life were reviewed, and there was some good discussion, with both agreement and disagreement with the author’s points. The discussion ended with a “call to action,” with questions including: “What is the purpose of the Benedictine *Rule* in life? What is the primary requirement for embarking on this journey? What keeps us from living out the *Rule*? What helps do we have in living the Benedictine life, and what benefits do we find in living this way?” The meeting closed with a praying of the Our Father.

Various Locations

During February Oblates **Paul C. Kurisko** and **Janet Kurisko** of Signal Mountain, TN, transferred their Oblation from St. Leo Abbey in Florida to St. Vincent. Originally from Johnstown, Paul and Janet were invested as Oblate novices affiliated with St. Vincent in 2006; then, moving to Florida, they transferred to St. Leo and made final Oblation there in February, 2008. We welcome back Paul and Janet to our Oblate community.

On February 8, in the chapel in Tennessee Colony, TX, Fr. Gary Rottman invested as an Oblate novice

James Fowler of Tennessee Colony, TX.

On February 18 in the chapel at Bellefonte, PA, at a communion service, Deacon Jack Orlandi invested as Oblate novices:

Alexander “Alex” Frye of Bellefonte, PA, and

Jason Robinson of Bellefonte, PA.

On February 28 in the chapel at Westville, IN, Rev. David Link invested as an Oblate novice

Eric V. Graves of Westville, IN.

On March 3 at St. Agnes Church in Charleston, WV, Fr. Joseph M. Augustine invested as an Oblate novice

Andrew Breckenridge of Charleston, WV.

On April 2 at Sacred Heart Church in Coshocton, OH, Deacon Douglas Mould received as an Oblate novice his wife:

Susan M. Mould of Coshocton, OH.

SICK & INFIRM MONKS

The following monks of the Archabbey have been hospitalized or otherwise especially ill during the past three months and could use our prayers: Archabbot Paul Maher, Fr. Bede Hasso, Fr. Jerome Purta, Fr. Augustine Flood, Fr. Thaddeus Rettger, Br. Hilary Hanrahan, Fr. Andrew Campbell.

SOME SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The monks of the Archabbey will be on retreat from June 5 to 9. Please pray for the fruitfulness of this retreat. On Thursday, June 8, at 4:00, the annual Jubilarian Mass will be celebrated in the Archabbey Basilica. Those wishing to attend the Mass and stay for supper should contact the Oblate Office.

2. a note to mentors and mentees: It is gratifying that many Oblates have volunteered to serve as mentors for the many inquirers and Oblate novices who have requested mentors. It often happens that a mentor writes to a mentee and then receives no response, or perhaps receives one only after a long time. We urge mentors to be patient; perhaps a given mentee has many other issues to deal with, or perhaps he or she was not genuinely interested in being mentored. Please do not contact the Oblate Office unless there is a real need. We urge mentees gratefully to receive the offers of help from mentors. If you really do not want a mentor, then please let the Oblate Office or the mentor know. Thank you!

3. Evening Prayer at the Archabbey generally is moved to St. Gregory Chapel during the "summer" months because the chapel is air-conditioned. This year the dates for praying Vespers in the chapel are Monday, May 15 through Sunday, August 20. On some occasions, such as July 10 and 11, Vespers is moved back to the Archabbey Basilica. Feel free to contact the Oblate Office if you are uncertain where (or when) Vespers might be on any given date. Oblates are always more than welcome to pray with the monks in choir.

Schedule for Oblates, Feast of St. Benedict, July 11, 2017

- 10:00 A.M. Mass, Basilica
- 12:00 P.M. Dinner, Placid B (1st floor, Placid Hall)
(approximate)
- 2:00 P.M. Conference by Br. Lawrence Machia & Oblation ceremonies (investitures, Oblations, honoring of jubilarians), St. Gregory Chapel
- 5:00 P.M. Evening Prayer, St. Gregory Chapel (or possibly Basilica if there is a large turnout)
- 5:40 P.M. Supper, Placid B (1st floor, Placid Hall)

DIRECTORY OF OBLATES: Application form

I would like to be included in the summer, 2017, edition of the *Directory* of Oblates affiliated with Saint Vincent Archabbey. **(Entries in the 2015 *Directory* will automatically be carried over.)** The information that I would like to have included is given as follows:

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ e-mail address _____

Please mail this form to the Oblate Office, **c/o Directory**, or send the information by e-mail to 305makaufman@gmail.com .

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

Fr. Chad Ficorilli's talk on *conversatio morum* (March 20, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Fr. Maurus Mount's talk on St. Benedict and his *Rule* (April 17, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Fr. Thomas Hart's talk on the Holy Eucharist (May 15, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby's talk on work and the ecumenical group in Philadelphia (June 12, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Fr. Shawn Matthew Anderson's talk on silence in Benedictine spirituality (July 17, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Br. Lawrence Machia's talk on hospitality in Benedictine spirituality (August 21, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Fr. Donald Raila's talk on obedience in Benedictine spirituality (September 18, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Fr. Nathan Munsch's talk on *conversatio morum* on Oblate Day (September 25, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Br. Joachim Morgan's talk on *lectio divina* (October 23, 2016):

C.D. _____ (number) D.V.D. _____ (number)

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)

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 , 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.