



THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

Saint Vincent Archabbey

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*Please note flier with form for registration for event on July 11

LEARNING TO LOVE IN THE WAY OF ST. BENEDICT: WHAT TO LOVE AND WHAT NOT TO LOVE

Dear Oblates, Oblate novices, and Friends,

Basic role of love in all Christian life

We as the Church recently celebrated the foundation of our Christian faith in the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. It was out of love that Christ suffered and died for us, even “while we were still sinners” (Rom 5:8). It was out of love that Christ rose from the dead to open the way to eternal life for those who believe. The Christian life is rooted in love. Therefore, of course, monastic life and Oblate life are also rooted in love. The basic command from Our Lord to love God and our neighbor (Mt 22:40 and Gal 5:14) appear as the first two of St. Benedict’s tools of good works (*RB* 4: 1-2). In his book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* (Liturgical Press, 2014), Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O., comments that “monastic spirituality grounds itself on this most fundamental and universal of all precepts: the indivisible love we must have for God and neighbor” (p. 1). He also asserts that “for Saint Benedict, living by this double love, in all its various expressions, is a sign that a monk is really giving himself to the life to which he has been called” (p. 9). The same could be said for Oblates.

Love in the Rule of Saint Benedict

It is a common error that some people think of the *Rule* primarily as a document of rules and regulations. Yes, there are plenty of regulations (many of which no longer apply literally today), but they do not constitute the essence of the *Rule*. It is basically a book of wisdom for Christian living, and such life in community or family is always a matter of love - the self-emptying love of Christ. According to the thematic index of the expanded version of *RB 1980*, the word “love” in the form of a verb or a noun, occurs about 36 times in the *Rule*. (The Latin terms used by St. Benedict are *amare*, *amor*, *caritate*, *caritas*, *praeponere*, and *diligere*). These various references to “love” can help us to practice the love of God and neighbor in daily life. In some instances we are admonished not to “love” certain behaviors and attitudes. In Chapter 4 itself, aside from the first two basic tools, St. Benedict instructs us about love five times. The key to the other passages is found in 4:21: “The love of Christ must come before all else.” If the love of Christ comes first in our lives, then we shall “never turn away when someone needs your love” (4:28). Perhaps the most countercultural instructions on love occur in the exhortations to “love fasting” (4:13), to “love your enemies” (4:31), and to “love chastity” (4:64). [*RB 1980* uses the phrase “treasure chastity.”] The love of

Christ also leads us to accept the following admonitions: “do not love immoderate or boisterous laughter” (4:54) and “do not love quarreling” (4:68). We could add, “hate the urgings of self-will” (4:60).

Comments from Sister Aquinata Böckmann

In her commentary *From the Tools of Good Works to the Heart of Humility* (Liturgical Press, 2017), Sr. Aquinata Böckmann, O.S.B., reflects on the meaning of the challenging precepts in *RB* 4. Regarding fasting and chastity, she says that St. Benedict uses the word “love” to emphasize, as he often does, that we are to practice Christian disciplines not just exteriorly as cold duties but with deep, interior consent that contributes to the expansion of our hearts in the love of Christ. She states, “The fulfilling of law in the Christian-monastic life is not the focal point but an interior stance and engagement” (p. 18). Furthermore, “correctly used, [fasting] is a good medicine; the passions diminish, prayer more easily reaches heaven, the gift of contrition is given, and the human being will become more spiritual” (p. 18). Sr. Aquinata also asserts that “to love chastity” is very much connected with the other references to love in *RB* 4. She says, “Chastity refers not only to the body but also to the person’s entire way of thinking” (p. 64). In other words, if we ardently seek to nurture a pure heart, then we shall love other people for Christ’s sake and for their benefit rather than for self-gratification, which is really not love at all. The discipline of chastity assists us to love in a truly Christian way and brings us the joy of self-emptying in communion with Christ. In contrast, quarreling and boisterous talk are expressions of self-centeredness, which leads to isolation and misery.

More about love for fasting

In his book *To Love Fasting* (St. Bede’s Publications, 1989), Fr. Adalbert de Vogüé, O.S.B., shows how the dietary regulations of the *Rule* have been a source of spiritual joy for him. (I would not personally recommend that extreme regimen to people in general or to myself! However, the principle holds that moderate fasting from food opens us to appreciate joys on a higher level than bodily satisfaction.) Spiritual authors of the early centuries of the Church often cited the observed fact that healthy control over the appetite for food and drink normally helps a person to control the other passions, such as lust, greed, anger, envy, and pride. In sum, the love of fasting is a part of our love for Christ since appropriate fasting puts good order into our disordered passions so that we become freer to “do [everything] in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17) and to “do all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).

Love of enemies

The precepts to “love your enemies” (4:31) and to “pray for your enemies out of love for Christ” (4:72) are key tests of our Christian faith. Both come from the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord says that there is nothing special about loving those who love us in return. Loving our enemies and praying for them, in contrast, show that we are true children of the Father and genuine disciples of Christ, who died for His enemies and for all of us sinners. It has been written that our “enemies” are, at least temporarily, those with whom we are at odds in our families, communities, and work places. As Christians, we are called to transcend feelings of hostility. As Christians, we are given grace not to act on our disordered emotions. As Christians, we should turn to Christ quickly to subdue such uncontrolled passions as anger. We are to seek to reconcile differences quickly. There may be people, perhaps even in our families, with whom we disagree strongly over some important issues, but we need to do all that we can not to allow these divisive issues to damage the bonds with others to which the love of Christ commits us.

Love and joy in key chapters of the Rule

In his book *Joy in Lent* (St. Vincent Archabbey, 1995), Fr. Kurt Belsole, O.S.B., at one point proceeds “to study the various elements of *RB* 49 as they emerge in a comparison of the vocabulary and structure of the Prologue and chapters four, five, seven, and seventy-two” (p. 14). It is interesting to note that these key doctrinal chapters of the *Rule* contain elements of joy, delight, and love, especially at the end of the chapters. The Prologue speaks of the awakening call of God, the necessity of putting His word into practice, and the “battle of holy obedience” (Prol: 10). At the end, however, St. Benedict observes that “as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God’s commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love” (Prol: 49). How encouraging it is to hear that the strictness of monastic or Oblate life, implemented “in order to amend faults and to safeguard love” (Prol: 47), results in our deserving to share in Christ’s kingdom (cf. Prol: 50) with great delight and love!

Chapter 4 also ends on a glorious note. The instruments may be difficult to put into practice; it may not be natural for us to love fasting, to love chastity, or to love our enemies. However, we are assured of God’s merciful love, catching us when we fall and setting us back on the arduous path to life. If we apply all these “tools of the spiritual craft” (4:75) well and “without ceasing” (4:76), we can be assured that we shall enjoy “what the eye has not seen nor the ear heard,” that is, what “God has prepared for those who love him” (4:77, 1 Cor 2:9). Once again, the struggle to love God and neighbor “day and night” (4:76) amid assorted trials will bring us to the ultimate joy of life in God’s love for all eternity.

Chapter 5 does not have such a glorious ending, but it begins with words of encouragement to practice “unhesitating obedience” (5:1), “which comes naturally to

those who cherish Christ above all” (5:2). Most of us are probably sluggish in obedience much of the time; but we have the great hope that as we grow closer to a total, loving surrender to Christ, we shall also begin to delight in cheerful, unhesitating obedience. Near the end of Chapter 4, St. Benedict reminds us that “obedience must be given gladly; for ‘God loves a cheerful giver’ (2 Cor 9:7).” Obedience becomes less of a burden and more of a blessing. With the help of grace, we can learn to obey in the love of Christ and out of love for Christ. Indeed Christian obedience is not so much about the disciplined heeding of commands as the faithful, loving response to the One who has first loved us. When Our Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd, one who lays down His life for His sheep, we are the sheep who “hear My voice” (Jn 10: 16, 27) and benefit immensely from His love..

Chapter 7 ends with an enticing goal for the monk or Oblate who practices the steps of humility, all of which are challenging but life-giving. St. Benedict assures us that after “ascending” the steps, “the monk will quickly arrive at that ‘perfect love’ of God which ‘casts out fear’ (1 Jn 4:18)” (7:67). (In practice, the progress is usually not so quick, but when one arrives near the height, perhaps the long period of hardships will seem like just “one night in a bad inn,” as St. Teresa of Avila put it.) In any case, humility leads to genuine love and also flows from love. The one who arrives at this “perfect love” begins to fulfill the observances connected with his vocation “out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue” (7:69). Although it may take us decades to reach this stage, it is very encouraging to hear that someday we shall possess such good habits that we shall regularly delight in virtue and do everything out of love for Christ!

Surely growth in the capacity to love is a substantial part of the “good zeal” described by St. Benedict in *RB* 72. Good zeal, he says, involves efforts at mutual respect, patient bearing with weaknesses, a healthy “competition” in obedience, the pursuit of whatever benefits the other, “the pure love of brothers” among the monks, loving fear for God, and “unfeigned and humble love” for the abbot (72: 4-10). We might also say that all these practices and attitudes are expressions of “[preferring] nothing whatever to Christ” (72:11), which sums up all Christian virtues. A growing love for Christ and the persevering struggle to practice this love in every situation will open us to share in Christ’s desire to “bring us all together to everlasting life” (72:12).

Practical ways to abide in Christ’s love

Thus the *Rule* of St. Benedict outlines a spiritual path of love, a way rooted in God’s love for us, in our increasing capacity to return that love, and in our zealous efforts to love others in good times and in bad times. How can we nurture growth in this love? First of all, we need often to remember God’s loving presence at every moment. It is only God who initiates and promotes this growth; without Him we can do nothing! However, our efforts are important. We can be vigilant to His presence, or we can be lazy about seeking Him. It is a key element of monastic spirituality to remember God’s presence as often as possible and to know that His

presence is always a loving outreach to us. In the first step of humility, St. Benedict summons the monk to “recall that he is always seen by God in heaven” (7:13), to know “that our thoughts are always present to God” (7:14), and to “believe that God is always with us” (7:23). On some occasions that presence may seem like a threat since, having our ultimate salvation in mind, God ever opposes our self-willed endeavors. (We may have plenty of them every day!) However, He does everything out of love for us, even when He is weaning us away from harmful, self-centered ways. Our attention to God in *lectio divina* and in our praying of the Divine Office should help us to be aware of God’s loving gaze at more and more times and thus also to respond in love, no matter what sacrifice it may require.

Secondly, to know God’s love for us now, it may be helpful to recall often how God has loved us in the past in obvious ways and in specific instances. I hope never to forget the time when He rescued me from being stuck in a snow storm through the kind efforts of a young man who was passing by and pulled my car out of a pile of snow at the side of the road. I hope never to forget a rarely felt, delightful experience of the Holy Eucharist at the papal Mass in Washington in 2008. (Of course, the Holy Eucharist is always our greatest blessing on this earth, but you and I do not always experience the superabundant graces available to us.) I hope never to forget the loving attention I received when, ill with pneumonia, I was confined to a hospital for seven days. We need to trust that the instances of deeply experienced love point to the truth that the same love is with us always. The apparent problem of our not being aware of that love is not God’s fault. It may be our fault if we have been neglectful of the practices that help us to live mindfully. However, it may be no one’s fault but only a result of our chronic weakness and of God’s allowing us temporarily to groan in longing so that we may savor His love all the more in the glorious future He has prepared for us.

Thirdly, we need to avoid, as much as possible, those activities and circumstances that take us away from genuine

love. Some of the things that we “love” to do may not be very loving in the Christian sense. As St. Benedict reminds us twice, we must dash all temptations and all wrongful thoughts (or unhealthy thoughts) against Christ (Prol: 28 and 7:50) and thus welcome Him to heal us of these inclinations. Mindfulness of God’s loving presence also necessitates the elimination of “harmful or deceptive speech” (7:51) and “foolish chatter” (7:53), strong efforts to overcome impulses of hatred, envy, and jealousy in our relationships (7: 65-67), and determination to make peace quickly with those with whom we have had disputes (7:73). Learning not to love these disordered behaviors might form a large part of our battle to live in the self-emptying, compassionate love of Christ.

Conclusion: seeing dimly now and brightly later

The readings for the Fourth Sunday of Easter include the beautiful passage, “See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are” (1 Jn 3:1). Even though all our struggles with weakness on this earth may make it difficult to see this love clearly, we have the assurance that what is still hidden, for God’s good reasons, will someday be revealed. When this hidden truth is revealed, “we shall be like him [God], for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2). With this great hope, let us never give in to weariness or discouragement on the spiritual journey. Because He loves us as His children, God is continually prodding us, beckoning us, inviting us to enter more deeply into a communion of love with Him so that one day “we may deserve ... to share in his kingdom” (RB Prol: 50) - a Kingdom where everyone together abides in the sacrificial love of Christ.

Your brother in Christ and Saint Benedict,

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

A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS

May, 2018

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

Our Holy Father Pope Francis reminds us that the Resurrection of Jesus is not an event that belongs to the past. The Resurrection is lived by us in the present and projects us toward the future. Jesus is God’s everlasting presence - yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Our daily problems and dark moments can sometimes overwhelm us with sadness. The Good News for each of us, however, is that the Risen Lord is always there with us - and ready to surprise us! The disciples went to the tomb. Something new happened - a life-changing event. Always keep an open heart to those life-changing events of the Risen Lord in your life.

Faithfully in the Risen Lord,

+ Archabbot Douglas, O.S.B.

RETREATS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST, May 18-20, June 8-10, June 15-17, July 20-22, July 27-29

It may not be too late to register for this year's retreats. The retreats on Benedictine spirituality are to be held on May 18-20, 2018 and June 15-17, 2018; Fr. Canice and Fr. Brian, respectively, will be the retreat masters. The silent retreat, directed by Fr. Killian, will take place on July 20-22. Also of interest may be the charismatic-prayer retreat, directed by Fr. Shawn Matthew, from June 8 to 10 and the men’s retreat, directed by Fr. Isaac, from July 27 to 29. 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, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2018

A number of Oblates and their guests, some 30 people, joined the extended Benedictine community for the annual celebration of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict, Abbot. (Well over 40 people had planned to come, but the worst snow storm of the season prevented many from attending.) At the concelebrated Mass at 4:00 P.M., Bishop Edward Malesic of Greensburg presided, and Fr. John Moineau, a Third-Order Carmelite, preached about the way of St. Benedict as being opposed to the way of the "world."

After dinner, Oblation ceremonies were held at 6:30 P.M. in the choir area of the basilica, during which Fr. Donald received the following:

Oblate: **Rev. Marc J. (Macarius) Solomon** of Houtzdale, PA
Oblate novices: **Christopher S. Connor** of Hastings, PA
Sharon Kimes of Bethel Park, PA
Cecilia "Celine" Mitchell of Butler, PA
Christine Raizin of Bridgeville, PA.

Father Marc, pastor of Christ the King Church in Houtzdale, is a priest of the Diocese of Erie. Christopher is a candidate for the permanent diaconate for the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. Sharon and Christine belong to the Bl. Columba Marmion Deanery in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, and Celine belongs to the St. Hildegard Deanery in Butler. Also, the Oblates who were present renewed their Oblation. After the ceremonies the attendees joined the monks for a festive Evening Prayer at 7:15.

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 Wednesday, 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. Ignatius Camello on monastic vows and then the eleventh 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. If no rooms are available at the Archabbey, you may contact the Oblate Office about two near-by motels.

ORDINATIONS ON SATURDAY, MAY 19, 2018

Oblates are welcome to attend the Mass in the Archabbey Basilica for the ordination of two monks to the priesthood, Br. Joachim Morgan and Br. Lawrence Machia, on May 19. The ordination is 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 ordination.

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

Oblates are welcome to attend the ceremony for the profession of first vows at Evening Prayer in the Archabbey Basilica at 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, 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. Placid, 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 Bill and Gisela Iglesias 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* – \$1.00 each
- (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) prayer card with picture of Oblate Nadeem Feroze - free

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.

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.

CONTACTING PEOPLE IN LATROBE/GREENSBURG/JEANNETTE/LIGONIER 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. Contact is also made about other events of significance involving the Archabbey and local Oblates (e.g., changes in the monastic schedule for monks' wakes and funerals or for other reasons).

RECOMMENDED READING (items available in the Oblate Library)

- Peggy Wilkinson, O.C.D.S., *Finding the Mystic Within You* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1999)

NEW (OR NEWLY DISCOVERED) BOOKS ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

- Judith Valente (Oblate), *How to Live: What the Rule of St. Benedict Teaches Us about Happiness, Meaning, and Community* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc., 2018)

OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS: The Oblate Board of Advisors met at the Archabbey on Friday, April 13. Only three Oblate members were able to be present. Still, they discussed with Fr. Donald matters regarding the "Vision Statement Worksheet" from the International Oblate Congress, the bibliography of Benedictine books, the Dorothy Day Canonization Support Network, the Ohio Pennsylvania Associate Leadership organization, and the forthcoming changes in the Pittsburgh Diocese and how they might affect the St. Peter Deanery. The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Friday, June 1, 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 the Oblate Office. Those who offer to be mentors receive a booklet of guidelines.

THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATES SCHOLARSHIP - UPDATE FROM BR. NORMAN

Br. Norman Hipps, O.S.B., President of St. Vincent College, wrote to Fr. Donald in February with an update on the endowed fund of the Oblates Scholarship. For the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2017, the scholarship had a book value of \$10,695 and a market value of \$13,499. During the fiscal year ending in 2017, \$597.00 was awarded to students from the fund. Oblates are always welcome to donate to the scholarship. If you have any questions or would like additional information, you may contact Joan Aungier Davis, Director of Stewardship and Communications, at 724-805-2215 or joan.davis@stvincent.edu .

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 May 20, June 10, July 15, August 19, and September 16. (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 23. The speaker has not yet been chosen. The annual Oblate day of recollection will be directed by Fr. Shawn Matthew Anderson, O.S.B., on Saturday, October 13. 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 contact the Oblate Office and to mention their specific needs. (Having an entry in the Oblate *Directory* might also help.) 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.

OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by phone on March 19 and by e-mail on April 6. Five people gathered on March 19 for the renewal of their Oblation during a Mass at St. Gregory Church.

Regarding the meetings in March and April, five people attended each meeting. After an opening prayer, there were discussions on Chapters 45 and 46 of the *Holy Rule*. The meetings ended with the praying of Midday Prayer.

OBLATE GROUP IN MORGANTOWN, WV

Lay leader/secretary Pauline Lanciotti reported on February 19, late in March, and on April 24. Thirteen people gathered for the meeting on February 19, including moderator Fr. Justin Blanc, two Oblates, three Oblate novices, and seven guests. After the praying of Evening Prayer, Fr. Justin provided a brief catechesis on the Liturgy of the Hours and reviewed the meaning of "oblation" for both Oblates and all Christians by virtue of baptism. Since Lent had begun, the group read Chapter 49 of the *Rule* and offered insights.

Regarding St. Benedict's words about having the abbot's approval for Lenten penances, Fr. Justin suggested a broadened application to include a trusted friend or family member if one does not have a spiritual director. The remaining discussion was centered on the book *Introduction to Christianity* by Joseph Ratzinger (the future Pope Benedict XVI). Fr. Justin guided the discussion with such lead questions as "Why did the author write the book? Why should we read it? What do we mean by 'belief' and 'faith'?" What prevalent ideologies challenge us in matters of faith and evangelization? How do we understand the presence of doubt in both

the believer and unbeliever?" The group offered many thoughtful insights in response to the questions. At the close of the discussion, Pauline suggested that the reading assignment laid a foundation for understanding the Benedictine value of "holy leisure" and suggested further exploration of this value in Chapter 3 of the book *Strangers to the City*. Fr. Justin closed with a prayer, which was supplemented by specific prayer intentions from the attendees. (continued)

The meeting on March 26 was attended by four Oblates or novices, three inquirers, and Fr. Justin. After the praying of Vespers, Fr. Justin led the discussion on pages 83-115 of *Introduction to Christianity*. The points of the discussion involved the Creed as the Church's expression of our faith, its origins in early baptismal ceremonies, and the three-fold assent and renunciation. It was noted that faith is essentially an act of conversion: turning one's being toward trust in the invisible. The group also strove to clarify the author's points about the "I" type of creed versus the "we" type; it was concluded that the individual aspect of faith can attain unity and completeness only when it is considered together with others, i.e., the Church. There were also references to the promise of *conversatio morum* in the *Rule* and in Chapter 10 of *Strangers to the City*.

Nine people, including Fr. Justin and three inquirers, met at a local restaurant on April 23 to celebrate Fr. Justin's birthday. The group temporarily set aside their discussion of *Introduction to Christianity* to focus on the topic of Christian hospitality. Fr. Justin had had the group read passages on hospitality from Scripture (on creation, on Abraham's visitors, on the anointing of Christ, on His consolation among friends, on the Last Supper, and on His "new commandment") and from the *Rule*, especially Chapter 53. The group explored several facets of hospitality: the Christocentric nature of authentic hospitality, the dimensions of both giving and receiving, and examples of practical and human limitations. It was agreed that hospitality is an act of faith which impels us to see Christ in all whom we meet. The next meeting was scheduled for May 14.

OBLATE GROUP IN TENNESSEE COLONY, TX (Michael Unit)

Oblate Alejandro "Alex" Torres reported on February 27, March 14, and April 1 & 10. Although there were no regular meetings in January and early February, the Oblate community met regularly to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Oblate community gathered for a monthly meeting on February 27, which began with the Liturgy of the Hours. Attending were three Oblates, seven Oblate novices, and three inquirers. They discussed the 12-lesson program, Chapter 22 of the *Rule*, and the outline of a plan for continuing formation for the group.

The meeting on March 27 was attended by two Oblates, five Oblate novices, and three inquirers. After a recitation of the "Prayer for Oblates," Alex announced that in June meetings were likely to be moved to Thursdays.

It was belated reported that **Gerald (Vincent de Paul) Campbell** of Tennessee Colony, TX, made his final Oblation on January 24, 2017, in the presence of Rev. Gary Rottman.

On April 10, **Robert G. (Walter) Bernhardt** of Tennessee Colony, TX, made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Gary Rottman.

OBLATE GROUP IN ROSHARON, TX (Terrell Unit)

Secretary Gilberto Gomez wrote on March 26 and April 5 with ideas for the Oblate community, but there was no report of meetings.

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 e-mail in March. The meeting on February 25 was attended by Fr. Job Foote, O.S.B., moderator; nine Oblates; and three inquirers. After the praying of Vespers in the sanctuary of the church, the group enjoyed a simple social with pretzels and popcorn, and collections were taken for Francisco, the child in Honduras that the deanery had agreed to sponsor. They also donated for the cost of the book *Formation Lessons for Oblate Novices and Oblates*, which they are beginning to study as a group. In discussing Lesson 1, the Oblates recalled their time of formation as Oblate novices and the importance of their ties to the Archabbey. In response to a question, Fr. Job encouraged the Oblates to spend at least three times a day in prayer, including the Liturgy of the Hours and some *lectio divina*, as well as some reading of the *Rule*. Also discussed were the meaning of "Oblate," the importance of patience with self and others, and the need to keep praying when one finds oneself becoming impatient. In preparing for surgery on March 1, Mary Ann requested the Anointing of the Sick; so Fr. Job administered the sacrament to her and two other Oblates who were present. The next meeting was scheduled for April 22.

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

Lay leader/secretary Jay Wells reported by e-mail on February 21 and late in March, and Fr. Paschal reported on April 22. The meeting on February 18 was attended by Fr. Paschal Morlino, moderator, and ten others. The meeting began with a discussion of some administrative matters and the introduction of a new inquirer. Fr. Paschal then presented the draft of a booklet of the stations of the cross from St. Benedict Church that he is putting together. It was to be made available for purchase by the end of February. Also discussed were a Lenten meditation from *Magnificat* magazine, an article on the prodigal son from *Spirit and Life*, daily reflections on the *Rule* by Br. Jerome Leo, O.S.B., of Petersham, MA, a poem entitled "Angles" by Mary Tarone, and an article entitled "Things I Want to Do before I Die," which was a commentary on Chapter 4 of the *Rule*. Attendees were urged to submit a list of Lenten good works to be placed on the altar if they had not already done so. After the meeting ended, the attendees went to the church, as usual, to pray Vespers at 5:00 P.M.

Nine people joined Fr. Paschal for the meeting on March 18; among them was one new inquirer. Fr. Paschal distributed a pamphlet entitled "Hope in the Cross: A Lenten Experience" and reviewed an article "Rewards of Listening." There followed a discussion about listening. Fr. Paschal then summarized an article on forgiveness, and there was a discussion on the difficulty of forgiveness, the damage done to oneself by anger, and the destructiveness to one's inner life caused by lack of forgiveness. Several attendees shared from their personal experiences. As usual, Vespers were prayed in the church after the meeting.

On April 15, Paschal gathered in the parish house with four Oblates and two inquirers. First the group discussed an article "Don't

Quit Your Day Job” by Carol Bonomo, with reference to living by the *Rule* for an Oblate who has a career. Next they prayed a prayer entitled “In the Resurrection Garden” by Sr. Beda Brooks, O.S.B., with subsequent reflections. Fr. Paschal then gave a brief synopsis of *On the Death of St. Bede* by St. Cuthbert and *A Visit to the Garden of the Resurrection* by St. Ephraim. Fr. Paschal also instructed the group about sanctifying all the hours of each day and reminded them that the bells of St. Benedict Church ring every 15 minutes to help people to do that. Additionally, he spoke about meditating on Scripture by putting oneself into the scenes described. A brief social was held, and it was followed by Vespers in the church. The next meeting was scheduled for May 20.

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

Lay leader/secretary Ronald Weleski reported by FAX on April 27. Seven members attended the meeting on February 28, which was preceded by Mass at St. Fidelis Church. After the praying of Vespers the group continued a discussion of *Lessons from Saint Benedict* with a consideration of Chapter 23, which concerns *conversatio morum*. The attendees concluded that the promise of *conversatio* helps to keep us growing as we apply the Gospel and the *Rule* to daily life; usually changes occur in small, quiet ways and in ordinary decisions. The meeting ended with “A Prayer for Oblates” and a brief social.

There was no meeting in March because the usual meeting date fell during Holy Week. Three deanery members attended the celebration on March 21 at the Archabbey, and one of them was invested as an Oblate novice. (See above.)

The meeting on April 25 again followed Mass and began with Evening Prayer. The group reviewed the 2018 retreat schedule and other items in the deanery newsletter. Oblate novice Edythe Schirra then led a lively discussion on obedience based on Chapter 24 of *Lessons from Saint Benedict*. The attendees spoke about the anxiety and fear that characterize our culture and about the ways that Scripture and the *Rule* help us to turn away from self-will, to bring our concerns before the Lord, and thus to enter into the peace of Christ. The meeting ended with a prayer and a brief social.

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 April 27. As of that date, there were 79 members, and they were discussing Chapter 66 of the *Rule* with the help of Delatte’s *Commentary*. Some members of the deanery were planning to get together at the Archabbey from June 29 to July 1.

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 17, March 19, and April 13. The meeting on February 12 began with Evening Prayer in the church, during which Deacon Michael Russo, moderator, assisted by Fr. Peter Crowe, parochial vicar, invested as Oblate novices:

Jon C. Hordubay of Johnstown, PA
Lori Little of Munson, PA
Jerome M. Nevling of Winburne, PA
Lori L. Nevling of Winburne, PA
Jill A. Van Scoyoc of Johnstown, PA.

Jerome and Lori Nevling are husband and wife. Then the meeting proceeded to a continuing discussion of the book *Everyone Needs to Forgive Somebody* by Allen R. Hunt.

The meeting on March 5 began with Evening Prayer in the St. John Paul II chapel. Then the group continued a lively discussion on the same text. The attendees also discussed the possibility of attending the event at the Archabbey on March 21; however, work schedules prevented anyone from going. The meeting ended with the sharing of snacks.

The meeting on April 2 began with Evening Prayer in the church. The session in the St. John Paul II Center began with a questions and answers about aspects of the Catholic faith and the challenges that the Church faces in today’s world. With reference to the *Holy Rule*, the importance of prayer, the Psalms, and the reading of Sacred Scripture was emphasized in the practice of the Catholic faith. The Oblate novices shared their progress in deepening their spirituality, and the full Oblates spoke about their embracing of Benedictine spirituality. It was decided that *lectio divina* would be the topic for the meeting in May.

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

Lay leader/secretary Tanishia Sperling reported on March 3. The meeting on February 13 was led by Oblate Mary Ann Manning and attended by her and two Oblate novices. The group continued to read, study, and discuss the *Rule* of St. Benedict.

During ceremonies on February 24 at St. Matthew Church,

Eveline (Jane Marie) Dupré of Kalispell, MT and
Katie Jackson of Kalispell, MT,

made their final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Roderick Ermatinger, pastor. Also present were family, friends, and other Oblates.

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 18, some eighteen people gathered for a discussion of the book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. They completed reflections on the introduction, which spoke about monks as doing many different works but working together as a community in unity and harmony with one another. The 74 tools in *RB 4* are a cause for an examination of conscience and for being faithful in small things. Then the discussion proceeded to a consideration of the first two tools, namely love of God and love of neighbor. Practicing such love challenges us to live in faith and to trust that God will provide beyond our meager resources. Wholehearted love cannot be achieved by human efforts but only by God’s grace. In Christian communities we are to help one another to become perfect in this love. We are to seek the purity of heart that reflects the total lack of inner divisions. As usual, the meeting ended with the praying of Compline in the Archabbey Basilica.

Some eleven people attended the session on March 18, which included a study of tools 3-6. It was emphasized that one should not underestimate the importance of “ordinary virtues” or the need to follow the basic laws of God, including the Ten Commandments. Our hearts are not yet fully purified. Also, there is a need for persistent prayer in order to avoid vices. Also discussed were the call to engage in spiritual warfare, the need to find healthy ways to satisfy physical and emotional needs, and the importance of resisting unhealthy desires. The meeting ended with Compline.

Some thirteen people attended the meeting on April 15, which consisted of a study of tools 7-10. Some themes discussed were the danger of gossip and negative speech, the meaning of honoring people, the practice of charity toward people who are different from us, and the necessity of Christian renunciation and of “denying oneself to oneself.” The praying of Compline ended the meeting.

Also, on April 15, at 4:15, after the presentation at 3:00, Fr. Donald received the following in the Archabbey Basilica:

Oblate: **Paul C. (Gregory) Lundmark** of Wilmington, DE

Oblate novices: **Deborah Boone** of Greensburg, PA

Mary Anne Samuels of Aliquippa, PA.

Both new Oblate novices had been scheduled to be invested on March 21, but the snow storm had prevented them from coming. Mary Anne is the wife of Oblate novice James Samuels.

Presentations in Latrobe at 3:00 P.M.

On February 18, Fr. Justin Nolan, O.S.B., gave a presentation on “Everyday Spirituality” to an audience of over 30 people. After a brief description of his background, he spoke on the essential role of love in any Christian spirituality and recommended the book *Primacy of Love*. He referred to Aristotle’s definition of love as “wishing the other well,” and Christians could add doing something to make the other well. Loving is thus a matter of willing, not feeling. For us to practice love and its associated virtues (such as joy, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and longsuffering) is a lifelong project. Fr. Justin then spoke of God as all-loving and existing everywhere and noted that everything in the world reflects God’s love and beauty. Next he spoke of human beings as being made in the image of God. Each person has inalienable rights given by God. Christians have the added dignity of being “people of God” and of having God’s life in us by baptism. We also have an obligation and an opportunity to love everyone as God loves everyone. We are made for God, and by contemplation and action we come to establish Christ’s Kingdom even on this earth. Finally, Fr. Justin responded to several questions.

On March 18, Br. Hugh Lester, O.S.B., spoke to about 15 people about “Stability in Benedictine Spirituality.” He mentioned that a close synonym to stability was perseverance, according to several authors, and that the word occurred five times in the *Rule*. Then he summarized comments on stability by Fr. Charles Cummings, O.C.S.O., in his book *Monastic Practices*. Stability implies a steadfast, permanent abiding in monastic values. Two forms of stability are bodily stability, which is not always possible, and interior stability, or “stability of heart,” which is more important. Br. Hugh then commented on an article “The Value of Stability” by Fr. Michael Casey. In that article elements of stability are given as aggregation to a local community, love for the community, a limiting of outside interests, formation in local standards, perseverance in and commitment to spiritual practices, and trust in Providence. In sum, stability is an expression of evangelical faith. Finally, Br. Hugh responded to several questions.

On April 15, Br. Albert Gahr, addressed the topic of “Sustainability in Benedictine Spirituality.” Br. Albert began by reviewing two Biblical stories to illustrate sustainability, namely the healing of Naaman in 2 Kings and the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18. The idea of sustainability is fairly recent, he noted; only in 1972 was there a document on environmental sustainability, which was considered a “blueprint of survival.” Among the various areas of sustainability, Fr. Albert sought to focus on sociological and spiritual sustainability, especially regarding the monastic community for which St. Benedict wrote his *Rule*. Christians regard sociological sustainability differently from the secular world because for us it is based on prayer and the dignity of every person. St. Benedict provides for sustainability by ranking the monks only by the dates of their entry; the categories of the world do not apply. For St. Benedict the monastery had to be able to provide for the basic needs of the monks, especially regarding times for prayer and for work. There was no regard for the monks’ previous wealth or status, and there was no special reward for those who were most naturally gifted. St. Benedict’s monastery was very sustainable; one might say that it operated on the principle of “good works.” Some important features of a sustainable monastic community (or Christian family) are consultation of all members in making decisions, the provision for everyone’s real needs, the practice of humility, common ownership of possessions, and charity for those outside the community. Br. Albert also distributed an architectural plan for the monastery of St. Gaul (which was never built) about 820 A.D. because the plan demonstrated the various elements of a monastic complex that would render it sustainable. He also spoke about Abbot Boniface Wimmer in his planning of a sustainable monastic community at St. Vincent Archabbey. Finally, Br. Albert responded to a number of questions.

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

Lay leader Brian Chisholm reported by phone on February 20, March 16, and April 20. The meeting on February 15 was attended by seven people, and Fr. Benjamin Weber, moderator, led the meeting. The meeting followed a holy hour with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and with Fr. Ben’s hearing confessions. The topic of discussion was obedience, with reference to the writings of John Cassian. The deanery was awaiting books ordered from the Archabbey.

Five people attended the meeting on March 15, which followed a holy hour attended by fourteen people. The group along with Fr. Ben discussed materials for publicity, decided to order copies of *The Rule in Bits and Pieces* from the Archabbey, and discussed an article on distractions in prayer, which replaced the original plan to consider “listening.” (*continued*)

The meeting on April 19 followed a holy hour attended by eleven people. Five people attended the meeting along with Fr. Ben. There was a lively discussion based on the Prologue of the *Rule*, verses 8-13 and the reflection on those verses in the book *The Rule in Bits and Pieces*. The attendees offered personal examples of their struggles in giving themselves totally to God. The group expressed the hope to begin to discuss the formation lessons from the Archabbey in September.

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

Lay leader/secretary Gabriele Terrill reported by U.S. mail on March 21 and by e-mail on March 24. On March 18 six people gathered for a meeting, which began with Evening Prayer in the church. Then they used a D.V.D. from the Archabbey with a presentation on “Work” by Fr. Thomas Hart to guide a discussion. It was mentioned that work gives us self-worth and dignity. Three types of “work” were considered: the Work of God (Opus Dei), work in terms of labor, and good works that stem from faith; together the three types form us as instruments of healing. Also, during the meeting three Oblates recited their renewal of Oblation together.

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

Secretary Frederick Laux reported on January 22, March 4, and April 15. Attending the meeting on January 9 were two Oblates, three Oblate novices, and four inquirers. Moderator Deacon John Etter was unable to attend. After the praying of Vespers, the group entered into a discussion of the topic from the last Oblate newsletter, namely "Yearning for Ideals from the Past." The discussion was lively. There was also some exchange about the translation of the words in the canticle Ephesians 1: 3-10. The meeting ended with the "Oblate Prayer."

The meeting on February 13 was attended by two Oblates, two Oblate novices, and two inquirers. After the praying of Vespers, one of the inquirers requested that Fred create a guide for praying *Shorter Christian Prayer* during Lent. (He had written up guides for Advent and Christmas.) Then the group viewed a D.V.D. from the Archabbey, "Holiness and Humility," with the presentation given by Fr. Thomas Acklin, and there were many positive comments. Then Oblate novice Steve Davisson gave a presentation based on a hand-out entitled, "For Me to Be More Godly." It included 17 Bible verses with blanks meant to be filled in. The meeting ended with the "Oblate Prayer."

Attending the meeting on March 13 were three Oblates, four Oblate novices, and four inquirers. One inquirer asked Fred if he would make a guide for using *Shorter Christian Prayer* during the Easter Season, and he later did so. Then Fred gave a presentation on the "Kitchen Servers for the Week," RB 35. He noted the frequent use of the words "serve" and "service" and the call of Christians to serve not for reward but out of love for others. Next Deacon John made some relevant comments from the day's Office of Readings passage from St. Leo and from an intercession from Evening Prayer. The group also discussed the essay on deeper conversion from a recent Oblate newsletter.

The meeting on April 10 drew three Oblates, five Oblate novices, and five inquirers. After the praying of Evening Prayer, Oblate Dean Everett gave a presentation entitled "Not All Mercy Is Good Mercy," based on RB 57 on the artisans of the monastery. His talk included a warning against seeking material gain. Then the group watched a D.V.D. of a presentation on St. Benedict and the *Rule* by Fr. Maurus, O.S.B., at the Archabbey. Two inquirers expressed interest in becoming Oblate novices. Deacon John closed the meeting with a Glory Be, a dismissal, and a blessing.

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

Moderator Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported by e-mail about February 5. The meeting on February 3 began with Morning Prayer according to the Roman Rite. The group continued to read and discuss the book *Monastery of the Heart*, with a focus on Chapter 3, entitled "Silence." The group talked about practical ways in which they could practice silence in the course of lives that were mostly very busy and noisy. The formal meeting ended with a period of silent reflection. Then the group proceeded to enjoy a lunch prepared by generous hosts from the parish, Sharon Fischer and her daughter Joann.

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

Oblate George Ponticello reported by phone on April 12. The meeting on April 9 was attended by eight people. Moderator Fr. Vincent Zidek, O.S.B., could not be present. The group departed from the agenda and instead discussed the future of the deanery in light of the reorganization of the parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh during the coming months. They hope to continue to meet under whatever new arrangements are made by the diocese.

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

Lay leader Mary Ann Kaufman reported by e-mail on February 5, March 7, and April 21. Attending the meeting on February 4 were five Oblates, two Oblate novices, and two inquirers. The meeting opened, as usual, with Daytime Prayer, "A Prayer for Oblates," and "Consecration to the Blessed Trinity" (a prayer by Blessed Columba Marmion). After some sharing about forthcoming retreats and other relevant news, there was a discussion about "Holiness and Pursuing Benedictine Spirituality," which had been the theme of Fr. Paul Taylor's presentation last September. Mary Ann introduced the discussion with references to holiness in the *Oblate Formation Booklet*, in Lesson One of *Formation Lessons for Oblate Novices and Oblates*, and in RB 4:62. The fruitful discussion ended at 3:00 P.M. with personal prayer intentions and a prayer from a holy card of St. Benedict. Some of the group remained for conversation and for looking at various Oblate books and materials that were made available.

The meeting on March 4 was attended by six Oblates, two Oblate novices, two people planning to be invested soon, and four inquirers, along with Fr. Isaac Haywiser, O.S.B., who has been assigned as temporary parochial vicar of St. Louise Church. The meeting opened with Daytime Prayer and the two other usual prayers. Mary Ann shared news from the Archabbey and mentioned the availability of Benedictine books and of free copies of the D.V.D. "St. Vincent: A Benedictine Place." The possibility of a poster to publicize the Oblate Program was considered, and a bag for free-will offerings was passed around. Then Mary Ann reviewed Fr. Donald Breier's presentation last November and his emphasis on the primacy of prayer and hospitality. She also mentioned that recent publications explain the relevance of the *Rule* in today's world. Then there followed a discussion on the value of rules (with the analogy of a train's need for a railroad track) and today's society's inclination to reject rules. It was suggested that the group use Lesson 2 of the formation lessons for reflection over the next month. The meeting ended with prayer intentions, the prayer from the St. Benedict holy card, and a blessing from Fr. Isaac. Some attendees remained for fellowship. (continued)

The meeting on April 8 was attended by eleven Oblates, five Oblate novices, sixteen inquirers, and Fr. Isaac, the presenter for the day. After the usual prayers, Fr. Isaac spoke about *conversatio morum*. He emphasized that the intense focus on conversion which is made during Lent should continue throughout the Easter Season and for the rest of one's life. In the *Rule* the monk's ongoing conversion involves a commitment to poverty (communal ownership) and celibate chastity. *Conversatio morum* is related to the universal call to holiness emphasized by the document *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican Council II. Oblates respond best to this call by trying to place God first in everything and thus seeking to do His will at every moment. This effort includes, for Catholics, regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church, faithful obedience to the teachings of the Church in all matters of faith and morals, a prayerful study of the Scriptures and the *Catechism*, and respectful, filial submission to the Pope, bishops, and pastors. The promise of *conversatio morum* is very much connected with the other two promises of stability and obedience. At the end of the meeting Fr. Isaac invited all the attendees to the Divine Mercy devotions that followed in the church. The next meeting was scheduled for May 6.

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

Lay leader/secretary Roland Fernandez reported on January 4 & 21, March 14, and April 10. The first meeting of 2018 was held early in January. It began with a prayer from the *Oblate Formation Booklet* and the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours. Seventeen people attended, including an Oblate, an Oblate novice, and three candidates ready for investiture. Roland read the Prologue, verses 21-32, of the *Rule*, and a discussion followed. The group also viewed a video entitled "The Life of Jesus" from the Keys to Witness series. The meeting ended with the closing prayers from the formation booklet.

On January 20, Fr. Frank Wittouck, S.C.J., celebrated Mass for the group and led Oblation ceremonies, during which the following made commitments:

Oblate: **Patrick H. (Jude Therese of the Cross) Drews** of Rosharon, TX
Oblate novices: **Emilio Banda** of Rosharon, TX
Cameron L. Sharon of Rosharon, TX
Eric Williams of Rosharon TX.

The second meeting of the year, occurring on March 1, began with opening prayers and Evening Prayer. Then a reading from the *Rule* and from the Gospel of St. Luke (16: 19-31) led to a brief discussion. Next the group viewed a video entitled "Paul, Contending for the Faith." The meeting concluded with closing prayers. In attendance were three Oblates, three Oblate novices, and two inquirers.

The meeting on April 5 was led by sponsor David Littlefield, who led an opening prayer and then announced that he would soon be moving away. Roland then led a praying of the Liturgy of the Hours and read the reading from the *Rule* for the day, from Chapter 53. The discussion involved comments that the group should warmly welcome new people into the community and thus should strive for a growing, vibrant Catholic community. God should be at the center of our individual lives and of the community. After the discussion the group watched a video entitled "Apostolic Fathers: Handing on the Faith." The meeting ended with closing prayers.

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

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

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

There was no report.

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 14, March 22, and April 8. The meeting on February 11 began with the "Prayer for Oblates" and continued with a playing of a C.D. with a presentation on the Divine Office by Fr. John-Mary at the Archabbey. A discussion followed. The meeting ended with the praying of Mid-afternoon Prayer.

The meeting on March 11 began with the "Prayer for Oblates" and continued with a discussion of an article on conversion by Fr. Donald. Mentioned in the exchange were the difficulties posed by our current popular culture. The meeting ended with Mid-afternoon Prayer.

The meeting on April 8 began with the "Prayer for Oblates" and continued with the playing of a C.D. of a conference on hospitality by Fr. Boniface at the Archabbey. Instead of praying Mid-afternoon Prayer, the group proceeded to join the parish's devotions for Divine Mercy Sunday, including exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the Divine Mercy chaplet, and Benediction.

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

Co-lay leader/secretary Michael Reichert wrote on February 4, March 7, and April 3. The meeting on January 9, led by Deacon David Hornick, moderator, was attended by seven Oblates, six Oblate novices, and four inquirers. After an opening prayer and the reading from the *Rule* for the day, some housekeeping issues were addressed, including the scheduling of presentations for 2018. Then Deacon David received the final Oblation of

Jordan (Paul) Leese of Somerset, PA.

Next Michael opened a discussion on the topic of Oblation. Various aspects were discussed, including the primary, spiritual meaning of Oblation and the affiliation with the Archabbey. All attendees participated.

The meeting on February 13 was attended Deacon David, seven other Oblates, five Oblate novices, and three inquirers. After an opening prayer and the reading of a passage of the *Rule*, Oblate novice Stephen Killian gave a presentation on Lent, which included the history of Lent; the practices of fasting and abstinence, prayer, and charity; and the penances of "giving up" things that might interfere with our relationship with God. Stephen also spoke about the aim to prepare for Holy Week and Easter. There followed a discussion about Lent, with emphasis on giving up something not grudgingly but willingly.

The meeting on March 13 was attended by five Oblates, five Oblate novices, and two inquirers. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, Deacon David received the final Oblation of Tom Wojnarowski, who is affiliated with St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, Kansas. (Tom has been attending deanery meetings regularly and has been very active in the parish.) Then Oblate Robert "Bo" Fadden gave a third of a series of presentations on music and spiritual warfare. The talk referred to David and Absalom in the Old Testament and applied the story to members of the choir and parish in Somerset, with emphasis on the need for obedience. A discussion followed. 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 on February 18, March 16, and April 11. The meeting planned for January, with a Mass and dinner and the renewal of Oblations, was canceled because of inclement weather. The meeting on February 12 was led by Fr. David Griffin, O.S.B., moderator, and was attended by seven Oblates, two Oblate novices, and two inquirers. After the praying of Evening Prayer, the group entered into a discussion of Chapter 5 of the book *Living in the Truth* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. The chapter deals with seriousness and the commitment to ongoing conversion. It was mentioned that the chapter provided much food for thought that would be especially appropriate for Lent. The meeting ended with the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima." Then some business was discussed, especially regarding the scheduling of a session for Mass, dinner, and the renewal of Oblations.

The meeting on March 12 was attended by seven Oblates, two Oblate novices, and two inquirers. Fr. David was unable to be present; so lay leader David Nice led Evening Prayer and the continuing discussion of *Living in the Truth*. It was mentioned that listening for God's "still, small voice" is essential to the discernment of His will and that we also need to slow down and forego some of our "autonomy" to obey Him. A good first step to obeying God's will is to maintain a stable, consistent commitment to prayer each day. The meeting ended with the singing of the "Ultima" and the discussion of some business, including the scheduling of renewals of Oblation at a meeting in the near future.

The meeting on April 9 began with Vespers for the Solemnity of the Annunciation. Attending were Fr. David, three Oblates, two Oblate novices, and two inquirers. Oblate Maria DiCola took minutes in the absence of Phyllis. The group discussed "Patience" from Chapter 7 of the same text. Fr. David noted that by "patience" Fr. Michael was referring to a lifestyle of acceptance in union with Christ and not just a lull in the experience of frustration. The attendees shared thoughts about the goal of patience and noted the struggles involved. Fr. David recounted relevant monastic stories, and the married Oblates made helpful comments about learning patience from living together. Aged monks and married couples who persevere, Fr. David commented, often display the virtues of trust, patience, and hope. The meeting ended with announcements, prayers of intercession, and the singing of the "Ultima." The next meeting was scheduled for May 14.

Tennessee Colony, TX [Coffield Unit] (St. Boniface Deanery)

Lay leader/secretary John Lesley "Les" Miller reported on March 9 and March 31. The deanery met weekly from late January through early March. The usual attendance consisted of four Oblates, five Oblate novices, and four inquirers. The attendees finished studying Lesson 3 from the formation lessons, with an honest and heartfelt discussion of the question, "Where do you find it easy/difficult to trust in God's abiding love and mercy?" The group also began Lesson 4, with emphasis on the dangers of murmuring. They also prayed for their new deanery and decided to open and close each meeting with the invocation "St. Boniface, pray for us."

On February 21 in the chapel in Tennessee Colony,

Anthony J. (Joseph) Carufel of Tennessee Colony, TX,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Jonathan Frels and the others present.

On March 21 in the chapel in Tennessee Colony, Rev. Timothy Kelly invested the following as Oblate novices:

Troy Griffin of Tennessee Colony, TX

Jose Luis Perez of Tennessee Colony, TX

Jose I.A. Santos of Tennessee Colony, TX.

The meeting in March was attended by four Oblates, seven Oblate novices, and three inquirers.

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

Lay leader/secretary Nancy Chrabot reported on February 11 and March 15. Meetings scheduled for November, December, and January had to be cancelled because of conflicting activities in the parish or because of inclement weather. Some 24 people, including some inquirers, attended the meeting on February 7. Fr. Lee Yoakam, moderator, gave a presentation on the book *The Benedict Option* by Rod Dreher. The book speaks of the challenges of Christian faith in today's world characterized by immoral lifestyles and the domination of technology. The *Rule* of St. Benedict was also written in a time of social disorder, and today's Christians can learn to become communities of intensive faith through the values of the *Rule*. Oblate Bernie Hamilton brought a number of copies of the book from the parish's bookstore, and most were sold.

Sixteen people attended the meeting on March 7. Fr. Lee gave a presentation on *conversatio morum*, or "conversion of heart," with reference to the virtues of obedience, stability, and humility. In the discussion that followed, there was emphasis on the importance of prayer and the practice of turning to God often during the day as a key part of Benedictine spirituality. The meeting ended with Evening Prayer. Since the normal date for the next meeting would be April 4 and since the school would be closed, Fr. Lee suggested that instead of a meeting, the Oblates each visit the Blessed Sacrament for an hour. Also, there were plans for a number of the Oblates to travel to the Archabbey from May 17 to 21 in order to attend the first retreat on Benedictine spirituality.

Waynesburg, PA (St. Dismas Deanery) -- meetings on 1st Wed. of each month

Lay leader/secretary Jacob Maldonado reported on February 9 and April 5. At the meeting on February 7, after an opening prayer, the attendees talked about a change of the day of meetings, discussed the day's reading from the *Rule*, and explained the Oblate Program to the inquirers who attended. The meeting ended with the praying of Night Prayer.

The meeting on April 4 was attended by four Oblates and seven inquirers. After an opening prayer, Oblate Ron Bergman gave a presentation about the vocation to be an Oblate of St. Benedict and about St. Benedict himself. Then copies of Lesson 1 from the formation lessons from the Archabbey were distributed. Jacob spoke about St. Dismas, the repentant thief. The meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer.

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

On April 17, 2018, at St. Joseph the Worker Church in Williamsport, PA, Rev. Brian F. Van Fossen, pastor, received

Luke A. Caputo of Montoursville, PA,

as an Oblate novice. Luke also had a special opportunity to visit the Archabbey on April 22 and 23.

Various Locations

On January 23 at the chapel in Grovetown, GA, Fr. Walter Y. "Mike" Ingram invested as an Oblate novice

Paul L. Thennes of Grovetown, GA.

On April 21, Oblate **Ronald L. Coleman** of Bloomington, IL, officially transferred his Oblation from St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, IL, to St. Vincent Archabbey.

On April 26 in the Archabbey Basilica, after the praying of Midday Prayer in St. Gregory Chapel, Fr. Donald invested **Benjamin French** of Parkersburg, WV, as an Oblate novice. Also present was Oblate Paul Fling, who was also making a private retreat at the Archabbey.

SICK & INFIRM MONKS & other prayer intentions

According to reports, there have been no monks who have been seriously ill during March or April. Please pray for all of our monks who are ill or infirm and for Br. Bruno's mother, Ina Heisey, who underwent heart surgery on April 27. Also, please pray for the repose of the soul of Catherine Lieb of Carrolltown, who died late in April. She was the widow of deceased Oblate Paul Lieb, the sister of Fr. Champion Gavalier, O.S.B., and the aunt of Br. Norman Hipps, O.S.B. Thank you.

SOME SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The monks of the Archabbey will be on retreat from June 4 to 8. Please pray for the fruitfulness of this retreat. On Thursday, June 7, 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 probably May 13 until late in August. 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.

5. Volunteers are needed to fill slots at the Basilica Gift Shop and the Gristmill Store. A shift is generally one morning or one afternoon per week. If you think that you can provide this service, please contact the manager, Br. André Melli, at 724-532-6736.

6. Oblates and Oblate directors are invited to attend a symposium to explore the role of Oblates of St. Benedict as monastic communities face the future. The event, entitled "Oblates for the Future - Symposium 2018," will take place on October 8-12, 2018, at the Spirit Center of the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, Idaho. Those interested may contact Oblate Nikki Nordstrom by e-mail at nikki@stgertrudes.org or by phone at 425-949-9744.

Excerpts from a treatise on John by St. Augustine (from the Office of Readings for Thursday of the 4th Week of Easter)

A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. This commandment that he is giving them is a new one, the Lord Jesus tells his disciples. Yet was it not contained in the Old Law, where it is written: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself?* Why does the Lord call it new when it is clearly so old? Or is the commandment new because it divests us of our former selves and clothes us with the new man? Love does indeed renew the man who hears, or rather obeys its command; but only that love which Jesus distinguished from a natural love by the qualification: *As I have loved you.*

This is the kind of love that renews us. When we love as he loved us, we become new men, heirs of the new covenant and singers of the new song. My brothers, this was the love that even in bygone days renewed the holy men, the patriarchs and prophets of old. In later times it renewed the blessed apostles, and now it is the turn of the Gentiles. From the entire human race throughout the world this love gathers together into one body a new people, to be the bride of God's only Son. ...

And so all her members make each other's welfare their common care. When one member suffers, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is glorified all the rest rejoice. They hear and obey the Lord's words: *A new commandment I give you, that you love one another*, not as men love one another for their own selfish ends, nor merely on account of their common humanity, but because they are all ... sons of the Most High. They love one another as God loves them so that they may be brothers of his only Son. He will lead them to the goal that alone will satisfy them, where all their desires will be fulfilled.

(The English translation of the non-biblical readings from *The Liturgy of the Hours* © 1974, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.)

Reservation for Feast of St. Benedict on Wednesday, July 11, 2018

Name & Phone _____

___ I plan to come to St. Vincent for ___ lunch, ___ supper along with ___ guests;
I enclose _____ (\$8.50 for lunch, \$9.25 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 a full Oblate, I choose _____ as an Oblate name. **An application form is required.**)

___ I am a jubilarian Oblate and hope to be present to receive a certificate. (Please contact Fr. Donald.)

Please send this form and a check made out to **ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY** for meals before July 4 to:

Oblate Office, c/o July 11 event, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650-2690.

If you would like overnight accommodations, please phone Fr. Donald at 742-805-2291. Please also contact Fr. Donald if you plan to be invested as an Oblate novice or to make your final Oblation on July 11.

Schedule for Oblates, Feast of St. Benedict, July 11, 2018

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. Ignatius Camello & 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, 2019, edition of the *Directory* of Oblates affiliated with Saint Vincent Archabbey. (Entries in the 2017 *Directory* will automatically be carried over. The e-mail version will be updated as soon as new entries or changes are reported.) 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**.

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.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fr. Justin Nolan's talk on Everyday Spirituality (February 18, 2018):

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

Br. Hugh Lester's talk on stability in Benedictine spirituality (March 18, 2018):

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

Fr. Isaac Haywiser's talk on *conversatio morum* at St. Louise de Marillac Church (April 8, 2018):

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

Br. Albert Gahr's talk on sustainability in Benedictine spirituality (April 15, 2018):

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

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

Enclosed is _____ for my order of _____ C.D.'s and _____ D.V.D.'s.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ I will pick up my order. _____ Please mail my order to me.

(*Remember to include \$4.95 for postage per order plus tax [if PA resident].)

Please order from Saint Vincent Book Center over the phone at 724-805-2557 or online at www.bookstore.stvincent.edu , 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.