



## OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT

Saint Vincent Archabbey

300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690

November 2007 - January 2008

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Please see the fliers for Eucharistic adoration and for ordering clothing with an Oblate logo.

### ACCEPTING LOSS OF CONTROL WITH HUMILITY AND LEARNING TO PLACE OUR HOPE IN GOD ALONE

Dear Oblates, Oblate novices, and Friends,

Pondering the ultimate realities of death and eternal life may come naturally with the approach of mid-autumn and All Saints Day and All Souls Day. The fragility and imperfections of life on this earth are realities that may impinge upon our consciousness in a particular way at this time. All of us are vulnerable; all of us are broken in body, mind, and soul; all of us are moving toward death in a manner that is largely out of our control.

Putting together an Oblate newsletter is, for me, an example of the uncontrollability of events that prevent us from succeeding in our way and in our time. Almost every time I begin to write, I fear having too few ideas; but by the time I finish I generally have far too much to say for the newsletter's limited space. When I was composing the August issue, the computer in my office began to make strange errors (a newer computer is on the way!); some expected help did not come through; and (as usual) I did not meet my self-imposed deadline. Furthermore, every proofreading exposed more errors. All these chronic problems left me feeling downcast over the seemingly endless flaws of the project. With the help of God's grace, I realized once again that I had a choice: to throw up my hands in near-despair and lament that things never seem to go my way, or to embrace the option of faith and humility that leaves control in God's hands, with a deeper trust that He does marvels through our limitations if only we are honest about accepting them and offering them to Him. Christ teaches us the way of childlike humility that leads to peace amid human flaws, to an openness to the grace that can put together the scrambled pieces of our human endeavors, and to a growing capacity to let go of our prideful, frenzied efforts to make everything perfect by our myopic human standards. Indeed, is it not our task and our vocation to glorify God in all things rather to seek human glory through impressive achievements? (Of course, this does not mean that we should be lazy or lax in our use of God's gifts; but it does mean that even when we do our best, our results are still poor and flawed.)

In reflecting how few things we can really control in our personal lives, we are likely to develop more

compassion for others whose lives are in disorder. When compiling the last newsletter, I decided that everything had to be done by August 3, since I would be away giving a retreat from August 6 to 10. With that goal in mind, I felt frustrated when I received four pieces of information for the newsletter on the day of my self-imposed deadline. (Normally, I would welcome such information; but because I had my deadline, the additional material was less than welcome!) Needing to keep everything "under control," I frantically inserted the new material and asked another monk to take the master copy to the Mailing and Duplicating Office on August 6 since I had to depart early on that day. (Alas, I could not deliver the master personally in my customary way!) During the retreat I had enough free time to write some 40 letters and hoped that life would be easier for me once I returned to St. Vincent. Well, on returning to my office, I found matters very much "out of control" again: there were many phone messages; there was a large pile of unopened mail; and there had been two real tragedies in the Oblate community. Because of other immediate demands, a week later most of the mail (and, of course, then the pile was even larger) still remained unopened! Once more I faced the critical choice: to rant and rave about having so little control over my work and my schedule, or, with God's grace, to learn yet again to accept things as they were as part of God's good plan for me with the wisdom of the *Holy Rule*: "Place your hope in God alone" (4:41). Such an attitude not only tends to bring us peace but opens us to feel greater compassion for others. I realized that those suffering from the tragedies carried far heavier burdens than I, with my worries about the newsletter and piles of work, relatively petty things.

Anyone who has read through the *Rule* will surely notice that many circumstances in St. Benedict's monastery are less than ideal. An abbot must sometimes deal with "a restive and disobedient flock" (2:8), some of whom may be "negligent and disdainful" (2:25). Having undertaken "a difficult and demanding burden" (2:31), the abbot may be tempted to "show too great concern for the fleeting and temporal things of this world" (2:33) and to worry about the "lack of [spiritual] resources" (2:35). A monk may be inclined to "follow his own heart's desire"

(3:8) or to “contend with his abbot defiantly” (3:9). In their practice of obedience monks may at times be “cringing or sluggish or half-hearted” (5:14) and respond to commands by grumbling or other signs of unwillingness. Some monks may tend to violate rules of silence (42:9), and some may even indulge in “vulgarity and gossip and talk leading to laughter” (6:8). Officials such as deans (21:5), cellarers (31:2), infirmarians (36:10), and priors (65:2) may become proud, greedy, wasteful, or negligent of their duties. All of these situations are mentioned in the *Rule* undoubtedly because St. Benedict experienced them in his communities or heard of them in other monastic communities. Each disordered situation calls for some sort of corrective measure according to the God-given responsibilities of authorities and individuals; but the non-ideal conditions also summon the abbot and community to a deep humility to acknowledge that no matter how many human remedies are applied, the monastery will still remain a refuge for weak, incomplete, sinful human beings who likewise come from a world that is badly out of control. Accepting such chronically ingrained imperfection requires a good dose of humility, which demands a frequent surrender of these problems to God in the words of the tax collector, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Lk 18:13).

In his book *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on Eucharistic Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), Fr. Henry J.M. Nouwen, S.J., speaks of the many losses we experience in life as we grow older. He suggests that the greatest losses involve our faith: “As we grow older we discover that what supported us for so many years -- prayer, worship, sacraments, community life, and a clear knowledge of God’s guiding love -- has lost its grip on us” (p. 26). Nouwen recommends that we should not ignore our losses or become resentful over them but rather mourn them. Remembering the Beatitude “Blessed are those who mourn,” we can begin to receive comfort from God even while pain from the loss remains. Knowing that we may be responsible for some of our losses, we need to cry out for mercy rather than to complain or blame; our brokenness is part of the brokenness of the world. Finally, coming to the Eucharist with a humble, contrite heart, we allow our hearts to be “broken open, to receive the water of God’s grace” (p. 33). Nouwen concludes his chapter “Mourning Our Losses” by reflecting, “Yes, we are sinners, hopeless sinners; everything is lost and nothing is left of our hopes and dreams. Still, there is a voice: ‘My grace is enough for you’...” (p. 35).

How, then, can we broken, imperfect people living in broken, imperfect families and communities, with situations often falling out of control, better welcome the graces that give us not only comfort but also new hope and meaning amid the messy and even tragic circumstances of life? Humility, persistent prayer, and

placing our hope in God alone can help us to advance to the heights of holiness that God desires for us.

Practicing humility does not mean that I know myself to be hopeless and worthless. It means that while I acknowledge that I am broken and sinful, God’s lavish graces are constantly summoning me out of my self-absorption. Whenever I come before Christ in humble acceptance of my misery, which is caused in part by my self-centeredness, He draws me out of myself and leads me to rejoice in His compassionate care for me. (True joy always leads us out of ourselves!) He teaches me that there are reasons for thanksgiving, praise, and joy even amid the worst of afflictions and injustices (cf. *RB* 7:35-39) because our losses and miseries can (and should) motivate us to place all control into the hands of “Him who so greatly loved us” (Rom 8:37; *RB* 7:38). Thus the practice of humility stirs our hearts to make Christ the true Lord of our lives.

Humility, however, will not help us to advance very far unless we persist in being humble and persist in prayer no matter how dry or empty it may feel. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta endured some 50 years of inner darkness and yet persisted in faith, persisted in prayer, and persisted in a radiant charity that was surely driven by God and that moved the hearts of millions of people. Most of us will never experience such prolonged darkness; yet Blessed Teresa’s life gives us all encouragement to persevere in prayer amid the unanticipated adversities of life. Rather than proudly trying to repair everything instantly, we need to welcome the grace to accept imperfections day after day, with trust that God works wonder through our inadequacies. Our Lord told us a parable about the need to “pray always without becoming weary” (Lk 18:1). That powerful word of God assures us that He will always enable us to remain prayerfully united to Him. On our own we could never “pray always”; but with grace and our humble admission that we can’t pray for even one second on our own, the Holy Spirit will groan in us and pray in us and work marvels of conversion in our hearts. (And is that not what prayer is really all about: not good feelings but deeper trust and greater openness to ongoing conversion in the love of Christ?)

Finally, along with the persistent practice of humility, we need to stop placing our hopes in things other than God. Perhaps this “task” is a most difficult one since even with good motives we can easily set our mind and heart on finishing this project, on succeeding in remembering something, on gaining someone’s favor, on enjoying some possession or event or food, or even on advancing in some virtue. In some instances we may not recognize pride for what it is because we are setting our hopes on something that is good or even necessary.

In my case, I often resolve to respond to some letters promptly, to go to the Midday Prayer 20 minutes early, to finish a certain essay today, to complete a certain book by next week, or to match everyone who wants a prayer partner within a month. However, these resolutions may not be God's will for me. Unforeseen special assignments, mail that needs immediate attention, unexpected guests, someone's death, or my own physical or mental limitations can readily set my plans awry. Then I must acknowledge how much hope I have placed in fulfilling my goals and how foolishly I told myself, "I shall not be happy unless I satisfy this self-imposed expectation." Then I must once again let go and pray that I may learn better to place my hope in God alone and not in human achievements, no matter how well-intentioned.

Of course, I should mention that there is a certain good and healthful control over our sinful impulses. Placing our hope in God does not mean that we exert no human effort, especially in matters of sin and virtue. Certainly we must often say "No" to sinful impulses and take very firm measures to nurture growth in virtues. Such needed controls, however, are done in cooperation with grace and are not guaranteed means to overcome a fault or develop a virtue. The result must always be in

God's hands lest we be caught up in a vicious cycle of self-fulfillment, even in spiritual matters, which ultimately leads to nowhere instead of to a deepening relationship with God.

Some day we are going to die, and what will be the benefit of our accomplishments if we have not trusted in God and done our tasks with love, the love that springs from the life of Christ within us? That love flows best when we humbly accept our human inadequacy and place our hope in God alone. Let us daily learn to let go of our prideful ambitions, to admit that some of our hopes may not be inspired by God, and to welcome the lavish graces that make our lives far more glorious than merely human strivings. Then, eager each day for the conversions that are incited by grace, we shall be prepared for the great conversion that God has in store when He leads us from death to eternal life.

In the peace of Christ and St. Benedict,

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

P.S.: I am writing this newsletter amid the uncertainty about how and when a new computer will arrive. In the meantime the old one has been behaving fairly well, and I am blessed with the generous help of a volunteer, who is typing some of the most tedious parts of this newsletter. May God be praised!

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**A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS**

November, 2007

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

Each year during the month of November, the Church sets aside time to pray for the faithful departed. Please know that the Benedictine community of Saint Vincent Archabbey remembers all of your departed family members and loved ones in its daily conventual Mass throughout this month.

As we prepare to celebrate this Thanksgiving and the Advent and Christmas seasons, may your hearts be filled with gratitude for the great gift of God's love made visible in the birth of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let our hearts be filled with gratitude for this Great Gift and for all of the gifts which God gives us each day.

Faithfully in Christ,

Archabbot Douglas

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P.S.: Fr. Donald joins Archabbot Douglas and the monastic community in wishing all Oblates, Oblate novices, and other readers of this newsletter a joyful Advent and a grace-filled Christmas Season.

## **OBLATE DAY 2007 – SEPTEMBER 23**

Some 68 people, Oblates and family members and other guests, came to the Archabbey for our 19th annual Oblate Day. Archabbot Douglas celebrated Mass at 10:30 A.M. for the group and preached about the dangers of attachment to material things and the call to be good stewards of God's gifts. After Midday Prayer, lunch, and some free time, Oblation ceremonies were held in the basilica at 1:45, during which Fr. Donald received the following:

Oblates:                   **Andrea (Aurea Pio) Palombo** of Welland, Ont., Canada  
                                  **Patricia (Michael) Telesz** of Pittsburgh, PA

Oblate novices:   **David Andrew "Drew" Bell, Jr.**, of Scottdale, PA  
                          **Dianne R. Meltzer** of DeWitt, NY .

Drew teaches biology at St. Vincent College.

After confessions in the basilica, there was a social in the Parish Assembly Room, during which the Archabbey Baroque Ensemble (a string quartet) performed music from Antonio Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. Then at 3:45 Fr. Cyprian Constantine, O.S.B., principal organist of the Archabbey and Director of Liturgy of the seminary, delivered an enlightening presentation entitled "Beauty, Gregorian Chant, and Benedictine Spirituality." He emphasized that good liturgical music should be truly beautiful, that is, it should have the qualities of integrity, consonance, and clarity. Beauty, in having the power to re-order us to God, has a genuine objective quality. Gregorian chant satisfies the criteria of beautiful liturgical music in an especially powerful way. The *Rule* of St. Benedict calls for great care in conducting liturgy, and over the centuries Benedictines have traditionally been preservers of plainchant as an important part of Benedictine spirituality and as a witness to the rest of the Church. **Anyone who would like a printed copy of Fr. Cyprian's talk may contact the Oblate Office.**

Then the Oblates joined the monastic community for Vespers. At supper Oblate John Yuknalis entertained the group with several pieces of guitar music, with the last of which all were invited to sing. John also narrated a history of the guitar. The evening ended with the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima."

## **BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY FR. CYPRIAN IN HIS PRESENTATION**

- *Reflections on the Spirituality of Gregorian Chant*, by Dom Jacques Hourlier, O.S.B. (Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 1995); ISBN 1-55725-096-0.

- *The Benedictine Gift to Music*, by Katharine LeMée (N.Y.: Paulist Press, 2003); ISBN 0-8091-4178-7.

## **OBLATE DAY 2008**

Next year's Oblate Day has been scheduled for September 28, 2008, since facilities will be available on that day. It was suggested by some Oblates that those attending be careful to wear modest dress that is appropriate for liturgical worship. It was also suggested that there be hand-outs relevant to the presentation given out in advance so that those attending can discuss the theme(s) during free times. Both suggestions seem to be well taken, and hopefully they will be implemented in 2008.

## **THIRD FALL OBLATE DAY OF RECOLLECTION AT THE ARCHABBEY - October 20**

Some 27 people, mostly Oblates, attended this event, with conferences in Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel and St. Gregory Chapel. Fr. Thomas More Sikora, O.S.B., delivered three conferences on several essential components of Benedictine life: prayer, silence (especially as related to obedience and listening), and work (including the Work of God).

During ceremonies at 1:30 P.M. in Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel, Fr. Donald received the following:

Oblates:                   **Charlotte M. Kuehn** of Marietta, OH  
                                  **Barbara (Sophia/Malachi) Nenadovich** of Welland, Ont., Canada  
                                  **Carol (of the Immaculate Heart) Ramela** of Acme, PA  
                                  **Dorothy (Georgeann/Digna) Spudic** of Verona, PA

Oblate novices:   **Richard Hanula** of Brownsville, PA  
                          **Michael Hoffman** of Sarver, PA  
                          **Nancy Premoshis** of Latrobe, PA .

Fr. Donald apologizes for not putting the schedule in the August newsletter. This lack caused some attendees not to know where to go for registration or conferences. The August, 2008, newsletter should address this problem.

## **DAY OF RECOLLECTION IN 2008**

The October day of recollection for next year has been scheduled for October 11, 2008, and Fr. Edward Mazich, O.S.B., has agreed to be the retreat master.

### **RETREAT SCHEDULE FOR 2008**

The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2008, are being scheduled. The retreats on Benedictine spirituality are to be held on May 16-18, 2008 and (tentatively) sometime in June. The first will be likely to include a Mass for priestly ordination. The second will be a silent retreat.

### **OBLATE DAY OF RECOLLECTION AT ST. EMMA IN 2008**

The annual day of recollection on Benedictine spirituality at St. Emma Retreat House in Greensburg has been scheduled for Sunday, March 9 (Fifth Sunday of Lent). Fr. Donald will be the retreat master. Those interested may register through the sisters at St. Emma when March draws near.

### **REPORTS AND COMPACT DISKS AVAILABLE FROM 2007 NAABOD MEETING**

Having attended the biennial meeting of the North American Association of Oblate Directors from July 28 to August 2, Oblates Joyce Collins and Bill Gibson have each compiled a written report, and copies of these are available from the Oblate Office to anyone requesting them. Also, Joyce graciously donated to the Oblate Library six compact disks which include all the presentations from the meeting in Lacey, WA, and these are available for borrowing.

### **ORDERS FOR *THE PATH OF LIFE* SHOULD BE COMING SOON!**

Fr. Donald apologizes for the long delay in the arrival of the 80-or-so copies of *The Path of Life* that were ordered according to the notice in the last newsletter. In mid-October he was assured by Morehouse Publishing that the books would be coming within a few weeks. The delay was caused by reorganization of the distributing company.

### **NAMES REMOVED FROM THE MAILING LIST IN OCTOBER**

The names of some 60 Oblates and Oblate novices were recently removed from the mailing list and from active participation in the Oblate Program since these people had not been in touch with the Oblate Office (as best we could discern) for over three years and then did not respond to a written appeal in July or to a notice in the last newsletter. If you know any of these people and if they still do wish to remain in the Oblate Program, please tell them that they need merely contact the Oblate Office and let us know that they really are interested in remaining Oblates or Oblate novices.

### **MEETING OF OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS, October 12, 2007**

Members of the Board assembled for their 14th regular meeting at 6:30 on October 12 in Brownfield 203. Among the main issues discussed were comments from Oblate Day, the continuation of the classes on Benedictine spirituality through 2008, and the continuation of Eucharistic adoration before Oblate meetings in Latrobe. The next scheduled meeting, barring inclement weather, has been set for January 18, 2008.

### **THANK YOU FOR GENEROUS DONATIONS FOR BREVIARIES**

In response to the appeal in the last newsletter, ten members of the Oblate community donated a total of \$525.00 to purchase breviaries for inmates. The copies of *Shorter Christian Prayer* have been purchased and mailed, and there is money left for future requests. Thank you for your generosity!

### **BASILICA GIFT SHOP OFFERS 10% DISCOUNT TO OBLATES**

Oblates who purchase items in the Basilica Gift Shop may receive a discount of 10% on all purchases, according to a policy set by the store's manager, Br. André Melli, O.S.B.

### **OBLATE DIRECTORIES AVAILABLE FOR PICK-UP OR MAILING**

Some 200 copies of the 2007 *Directory* of Oblates affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey have been printed, but barely a fourth of these have been picked up or mailed. When you are at the Archabbey, please pick up your copy, or if you do not plan to go to Latrobe in the near future, contact Fr. Donald and ask him to mail your copy to you. There is also an edition with zip-code order of addresses. Only those whose names are in the *Directory* are entitled to a copy.

### **A REMINDER: OBLATES SHOULD NOT USE INITIALS**

Since Oblates of St. Benedict are a "pious association of the faithful" and not a canonical order of the Catholic Church, Oblates should not use such initials after their names as "O.S.B.Obl.," despite the fact that many Oblates of other monasteries and even some authors of books do so. Using such an appendage is contrary to Catholic tradition and practice.

## **PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM**

Oblate Daniel Marston has been coordinating the Prayer-Partner Program. Any Oblates or Oblate novices who are not participating but who wish to participate may enroll in the program. If you wish to have another Oblate or Oblate novice as a prayer partner, please contact Dr. Daniel Marston at 412-380-2695 or by e-mail at [kdm230@sgi.net](mailto:kdm230@sgi.net). You can also send a letter to him at 630 6th St., Pitcairn, PA 15140. Please indicate whether you wish to communicate by letter and/or e-mail with your partner or whether you wish merely to pray for him or her. If you prefer to have a monk as a prayer partner, please contact Fr. Donald.

## **OBLATE LIBRARY: FEEL FREE TO USE IT WELL!**

Members of the Oblate community are always welcome to borrow books from the Oblate Library, either by mail or by personal visits to the Oblate Office (or by attendance at Oblate meetings in Latrobe). Those who would like a list of books in the library are welcome to write to Fr. Donald. If you have any library books that you have had for six months or more, please return them to the Oblate Office as soon as possible.

**RECOMMENDED READING** (available for borrowing from the Oblate Library and (all but the first) for purchase from the Basilica Gift Shop)

- Dom Benedict Baur, O.S.B., *Frequent Confession: Its Place in the Spiritual Life*, tr. by Fr. Patrick C. Barry, S.J. (N.Y.: Scepter Publishers, 1999)
- Pope Benedict XVI, *Day by Day with Pope Benedict XVI*, ed. by Rev. Peter John Cameron, O.P. (Yonkers, NY: Ignatius Press/Magnificat SAS, 2006)
- Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* (N.Y.: Doubleday, 2007)
- Fr. Anselm Grün, O.S.B., *Benedict of Nursia: His Message for Today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006)
- Mother Teresa, *Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the "Saint of Calcutta,"* ed. by Fr. Brian Kolodiejchuk, M.C. (N.Y.: Doubleday, 2007)

## **CLOTHING WITH OBLATE LOGO AVAILABLE AT DISCOUNTS**

Please see the flier for ordering various items with an Oblate logo. Oblate Michael Russo of Johnstown has made this arrangement for us. If you have any questions or problems, you may contact Mike at 814-288-3893 or [info@industryadvisors.com](mailto:info@industryadvisors.com).

## **BENEDICTINE OBLATE PROGRAM ON RADIO WEDO, 810 AM:**

This program, hosted by Oblate John James of North Huntingdon, is broadcast from 8:45 A.M. to 9:00 A.M., Monday through Friday.

## **OBLATE MEETINGS IN LATROBE**

Oblates from all locations and their guests are invited to monthly meetings at the Archabbey. The forthcoming meetings will be on Sundays Nov. 18, Dec. 16, Jan. 20, and Feb. 17 at 6:45 P.M. in Room Brownfield 202. Those wishing to come early for Evening Prayer (at 5:00) and supper should phone Fr. Donald (724-805-2291 or, on Sundays, 724-532-6709) in advance. We are likely to have a guest speaker in January.

## **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS IN LATROBE AVAILABLE**

A number of Oblates in the Latrobe area have found it helpful to have a printed schedule of the dates of forthcoming Oblate meetings. If you would like such a schedule for meetings of the St. Gregory the Great (Latrobe) Deanery, please contact the Oblate Office.

## **CLASSES IN BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY AT ST. VINCENT**

On the same days as Oblate meetings in Latrobe, classes in Benedictine spirituality are being held in Brownfield 202 from 3:00 to 4:25. They are taught by monks or Oblates. All are welcome to attend. The class in November, taught by Oblate Joyce Collins, will address the topic "Silence," and the class in December, taught by Fr. Sebastian, O.S.B., will be a summary of the previous 11 lessons.

## **NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES**

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

Deacon leader Ralph DeCecco wrote on August 9, September 11, and October 2. The deanery has been meeting monthly except this past July. At the meeting on September 10, after Vespers Oblate John Simpson shared some insights on the Lord's Prayer with the help of *Praying the Scriptures* by Fr. Demetrius Dumm, O.S.B., and *We Pray* by Fr. Oscar Lukefahr, C.M. Then the group shared some reflections on *RB 2:6-10*, concerning the faithful abbot, and the meeting ended with Night Prayer.

At a vigil Mass celebrated on September 22 at the chapel in Albion, Msgr. Peterson, celebrant, received the final Oblation of **Deacon Ralph DeCecco** of Erie, PA, and **Janet (Faustina) DeCecco** of Erie, PA, who are husband and wife. Msgr. Peterson preached about the need for Christians, and especially Oblates, to be eager to serve one Master and to be good stewards.

**Ann Arbor, MI** -- *monthly meetings at Old St. Patrick's Church*  
There was no report.

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

**Mary Ann (Monica) Bingeman** of Mechanicsburg, PA, transferred her Oblate affiliation from Prince of Peace Abbey, Oceanside, CA, to St. Vincent Archabbey.

Secretary Gabriele Terrill wrote on September 4 and 30. At the meeting on August 26, after Evening Prayer and then refreshments, Fr. John Peck, moderator, asked an inquirer about what drew him to the Benedictine way of life. There followed a discussion about the world's disarray and lack of time to search for God, about the structure given by the *Rule* to help people to seek God, about cenobites and anchorites, and about the use of the *Rule* in various kinds of communities.

On September 23, during ceremonies in the church along with Evening Prayer, **Michael (Simon of Cyrene) Kinney** of Mechanicsburg, PA, made his final Oblation in the presence of Fr. John and nine others who were gathered for the occasion. Then, after refreshments, Fr. John led a discussion of *RB* 72 and 73 to help remind the Oblates of their vocation. Oblate Mary Lou Bongiovi spoke about a Jesuit retreat that she had attended in Wernersville.

**Asheboro, NC (Guardian Angels/St. Joseph Deanery)** -- *monthly meetings at Lillian Hazlewood's home, last Sun. of each month, 4:00 P.M.*

Secretary Robert O'Brien wrote on August 1, September 11, and October 23. Five people attended the meeting on May 19. After Morning Prayer there was a general discussion about the *Rule* and how it could be applied in daily life.

The meeting planned for June 23 was canceled since most of the members would be away.

The meeting on July 28, attended by four people, began with the praying of Psalm 111. There was then a discussion about changing the time of meetings, and it was agreed to meet henceforth at 4 P.M. at Lillian Hazelwood's home on the last Sunday of each month, after the meeting of a group that prays the Divine Mercy chaplet. Then there was a continuing discussion about the *Rule* and its applications. Lay leader Doris Blase urged the group to read the *Rule* as *lectio divina*. The meeting closed with Mid-Morning Prayer and the Litany of St. Benedict.

The meeting on September 23, attended by four members and one guest, involved a discussion of the theme of the August Oblate newsletter concerning "loftier summits." The group pondered the *Rule's* capacity to stir us out of complacency and reflected on dryness in prayer.

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

Oblate Dale Dombrosky wrote on August 19, and Fr. Paschal Morlino, moderator, sent an e-mail on September 11. At the meeting on August 19, attended by 11 people, including two guests, Fr. Paschal gave a talk on Pope Benedict's encyclical on love, *Deus Caritas Est*. He also led a discussion on the first part of the essay on "truth" from an Oblate newsletter and about news items concerning the environment.

On September 3, Labor Day, there was a gathering for a cookout, followed by Vespers sung at the Grotto in honor of the anniversary of its dedication. Some 20 people came for the cookout, and more came for Vespers.

**Butler, PA (St. Hildegard Deanery)** -- *monthly meetings at St. Fidelis Church, generally the 3rd Tues. of month*

Lay leader Ethel Galli wrote on August 24 and October 22. At the meeting on August 21, attended by 22 people including four guests, Fr. Brian, moderator, gave a reflection on *RB* 36, on "The Care of the Sick." He noted that the "sick" include angry people, the tired, the spiritually ill, and the depressed. It is important to be present to the sick with love, care, and patience and to help them know that they share in the sufferings of Christ and of the Church.

On October 16, a group of 24 people gathered for a deanery first-anniversary Mass with Fr. Brian as celebrant. In his homily he expressed thanks to God for the growth of the deanery, the need to persist in praying and in hearing God's word, and the call to bring Christ's message of life and hope to the world. After the Mass the group enjoyed refreshments and talked about their forthcoming visit to a Byzantine monastery.

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

Secretary Mary Catherine Hoover reported by phone on October 18. The Oblates met on September 11 with Fr. Jude

Brady, O.S.B., the new pastor of St. Benedict Church and the new Oblate moderator. He had been moderator of the Oblate deanery in Savannah. Fr. Jude outlined his vision for the Oblates in Carrolltown.

The meeting planned for October had to be canceled.

### **Chincoteague Island, VA (Our Lady of Guadalupe Deanery)** -- *monthly meetings at St. Andrew Church*

Secretary Mary Hoffken wrote on October 1. The meeting on July 12, attended by eight people in addition to Fr. Paschal Kneip, moderator, began with the praying of the Angelus and continued with a teaching on *lectio divina* led by Mary Hoffken. After an explanation of the four phases of *lectio*, there were many questions, and then the discussion turned to the Divine Office and its capacity to make time holy. The group decided that more time was needed to treat *lectio*, and so it would be the topic of the next meeting. The session ended with Vespers.

The meeting on August 9, attended by five besides Fr. Paschal, continued the treatment of *lectio* based on Lesson 6 by Sr. Dolores Dowling. Along with many questions, the group discussed material from the previous two meetings and how it could be applied by Oblates. After Vespers the group sang the "Alma Redemptoris" in Latin.

The meeting planned for September had to be canceled.

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

Lay leader Carl Motter wrote on August 15 and October 8. At the meeting on August 14, which followed a vigil Mass for the Assumption, the group discussed the experience of St. Benedict Day (July 11) at the Archabbey and congratulated Msgr. Becker, moderator, on his investiture and Dick and Vera Trabold on their final Oblation. Then they continued a discussion of the book *How to Be a Monastic and Not Leave Your Day Job*. Beginning Part Two of the book, the group reflected on the fear of God, on seeking to please God in all things, and on persevering in obedience even in difficult situations.

Many deanery members attended Oblate Day at the Archabbey on September 23.

At the meeting on October 8, the group continued a discussion of the text, with insights on the 12 degrees of humility and on the goal of attaining perfect love of God without fear.

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

At the meeting on August 19, the group discussed the value of serious reading from the first part of Chapter 4 of *Strangers to the City*. Volunteers were sought to help with Oblate Day on September 23. As usual, most of the attendees had come also for Evening Prayer at 5:00 and for supper.

At the meeting on September 16, Oblates Joyce Collins and Bill Gibson gave a joint presentation concerning their participation in the biennial meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors in Lacey, WA, from July 28 to August 2. Joyce had a display of photographs and a written report as well as verbal comments. Bill gave a power-point presentation with many vivid scenes from the conference and from the natural beauty of the area, including Mt. Rainier.

The meeting on October 21 took place at the Sacred Heart School cafeteria in Jeannette as an experiment to accommodate Oblates in Jeannette and to offer the Oblate Program to the parish. Some 16 people attended. The group discussed the second half of Chapter 4 of *Strangers to the City*, which concerns the urgency of serious reading and the importance of *lectio divina*. The group was blessed to have input from Oblates from Baltimore, MD, and Staten Island, NY, who had come to the Archabbey for the October 20 day of recollection.

Good numbers of Oblates and others attended the classes at 3:00 P.M. before each meeting. On August 19 Fr. Thomas Acklin present "The Eucharist in Benedictine Life"; on September 16 Oblate Joe Cirelli presented "Work in Benedictine Life"; and on October 21 Mother Mary Anne Noll, Prioress of St. Emma Monastery, presented "Benedictine Hospitality." In her talk Mother Mary Anne emphasized hospitality as "making room for someone [or something]"; it is the opposite of shutting out people or shutting out God. God is first of all our supreme Host; He invites us to share His life in the sacraments. We need to examine how well we receive others in family and community, including those who annoy us and those who have gone astray.

### **Minersville, PA (St. Malachy Deanery)**

Lay leader Paul Mangiardi reported on August 19, August 29, and October 2, 23, and 31. At the meeting on August 28, the group prayed for all those listed in prayer requests and reflected on *RB* 28, 50, 58, and 68.

Eight members attended the meeting on October 2. Paul gave instructions to the others about praying the breviary and told them about an invitation to the bishop to visit the deanery. Letters from Fr. Donald were read, and the group prayed for the intentions passed on by the Oblate Office.

At the meeting on October 16, attended by eight out of ten members, the group prayed for all intentions given and then



discussed the importance of “fine-tuning” their Catholic faith and trying to do more to bring people into the faith. The meeting concluded with the praying of Compline from breviaries.

Before the vigil Mass for All Saints Day at the chapel in Minersville,  
**Anthony DiMeo** of Minersville, PA,  
made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Robert Potts, celebrant, and others gathered for the Mass.

**Niagara Area, Ontario, Canada (St. Henry/St. Gertrude Deanery)** -- meetings on 4th Friday of each month, St. Patrick's Church, St. Catharines, Ont.

Secretary Trudy Bretzler wrote on August 19 and September 28. The meeting on July 27 began, as usual, with the Liturgy of the Hours, the praying of a rosary, and the recitation of the Litany of St. Benedict. Brian Chisholm, lay leader, mentioned the events at the Archabbey in September and October, and a prayer list was given out. Msgr. Charles Gagné, moderator, then led a discussion from *The Rule of Benedict for Beginners*. Among the topics discussed were silence, attentive listening, teaching by example, and nurturing spiritually healthy values. The meeting ended with a closing prayer, the singing of “Salve Regina,” and Fr. Gagné’s blessing.

The meeting on August 24 continued, after devotions, with a reminder of events at the Archabbey, the distribution of a prayer list, and Brian’s talking about the mentoring program. The group agreed to donate \$50 to St. Patrick’s Church in light of a recent instance of vandalism. A few pages from the text on the Benedictine vows were read, but the meeting ended early since Msgr. Gagné was not well.

The meeting on September 28 was attended by Msgr. Gagné and seven others. After devotions Brian mentioned the resumption of Oblate-formation sessions in October, which were to take place after the regular study and a coffee break. An Advent day of recollection was planned for December 1. Then Msgr. Gagné led a discussion of the three Benedictine vows based on Wil Derkse’s book.

**Pittsburgh, PA (St. Peter Deanery)** -- meetings on 2nd or 3rd Wed. of each month, Our Lady Queen of Peace Worship Site

Lay leader Bill O’Neil wrote on August 26 and October 7. At the meeting on August 22, Fr. Ralph, moderator, invested as Oblate novices:

**Dorothy Degonish** of Pittsburgh, PA, and  
**Patricia Kammersell** of Pittsburgh, PA.

Following the investiture, there were refreshments and a general discussion. Fr. William Beaver, the new senior priest at the parish, spoke about his days as a novice years ago at Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky.

At the meeting on September 26, Fr. Ralph led Evening Prayer and a discussion of *RB* 20-27. Fr. Bill was present again, in addition to Fr. Ralph and eight others.

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

Secretary Peggi Gabler wrote on August 9, September 14, and October 23. At the meeting on July 12, held at Queen of the World cafeteria, seven Oblates attended, and Rev. Michael Ferrick, pastor of the parish, served as moderator. Fr. Michael reflected on the phrase “Prefer nothing to Christ.” He noted that if we put God first and others’ needs ahead of our own, all things will fall into place. He also spoke about *lectio divina*, read from *RB* 33, and explained the monks’ practice of having few possessions. He also commented on the difference between religious priests and secular priests.

At the meeting on August 2, Peggi showed the group photographs from the ordinations at the Archabbey on July 14. Then Fr. Michael read an excerpt from the book *Benedictus*, by Pope Benedict XVI, and spoke about the need to lose oneself in order to find oneself. Then there was a discussion about “giving” in marriage. Fr. Michael then read *RB* 51 about brothers going on a short journey and explained the passage.

The meeting on September 6, attended by eight people, was led by lay leader Ben Hoffman. After Peggi read the minutes from the August meeting, Ben informed the group of Oblate Nancy Mehalko’s death and read from *RB* Prol:39-44. Oblate Eileen Brennen read an excerpt from *Benedictus* on saying “No” to self-sufficiency.

**Savannah, GA** -- special monthly events at Sunday Vespers at Benedictine Priory

There was no report.

**St. Vincent College**

On September 10 the college’s Campus Ministry, led by Fr. Vincent Zidek and Katie Wojtunik, held an informational meeting about beginning an Oblate group among collegians. On October 29 Fr. Donald explained the Oblate Program to four or five students, who had gathered at the Campus Ministry Center along with Fr. Vincent and Katie. The next meeting was planned for November 19 at Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel.

**Scranton, PA (St. Boniface/St. Lioba Deanery)** -- monthly meetings on 3<sup>rd</sup> Fri. of month at Immaculate Conception Church, Scranton, or in Dunmore

Lay leader Gretchen Meyers wrote on August 8, 12, and 19; September 25; and October 24. During the summer monthly meetings continued, with readings from the *Rule* and the *Oblate Formation Booklet*. Each section of the formation booklet was discussed regarding its place in individuals' lives and was fleshed out with other relevant material. Each meeting is begun with a prayer to the Holy Spirit and ended with Evening Prayer or Night Prayer.

At the meeting on August 17 at Immaculate Conception Church, almost all the usual members were present. The group discussed humility in the *Rule*, especially in contrast with selfish ambition. There some words of encouragement to take advantage of adult-education programs and Bible-study groups that would begin in the fall.

On September 14, during Mass at noon at Immaculate Conception Church, Rev. Navy Thomas, parochial vicar, received the following:

Oblates: **Regina Ardizoni** of Dunmore, PA  
**Ann Marie (Theresa) Claus** of Scranton, PA  
**William (Thomas) Flynn** of Scranton, PA  
**Gretchen Meyers** of Scranton, PA

Oblate novice: **Mary L. Mushenski** of Scranton, PA .

After the Mass Regina and her sister Betty took the whole group out to lunch.

At the regular monthly meeting on September 21, attended by all members but one, along with one guest and Fr. Navy, the group discussed some characteristics of Benedictine prayer in terms of its being regular, universal, reflective, converting, and communal. Members also contributed some practical suggestions on living prayerful lives.

The meeting on October 19 was attended by almost all members plus one inquirer. Oblate Connie Muir brought photographs from her Oblation ceremony in Williamsport on October 7. The group considered inviting Fr. Donald to come to lead a meeting in the future. Gretchen had put together a history of the deanery, and the group approved it. Then there was a lively discussion about "mutuality" in community from *RB* 35:1-2, 9.

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

Oblate Joel Moore wrote on September 26 and October 29. The meeting on September 10, attended by 13 people in addition to Fr. Boniface, moderator, began with Vespers and a prayer for Oblate Alice Fenlon, who was to depart for Ireland. Fr. Boniface supported the group's idea to read through the *Rule* during the meetings for 2007-08. The sessions will involve both teachings by Fr. Boniface and reports by individual Oblates on various chapters. Then the Prologue was read aloud, and Fr. Boniface gave some instruction about the writing of the *Rule*. The meeting closed with a prayer, the "Ultima," and a blessing from Fr. Boniface.

Attending the October 8 meeting were 13 people, including three guests who are Penn State graduate students. After Vespers the group discussed *RB* 1-4. It was considered advantageous to have a figure like an abbot who cares for his monks in some ways as a parent cares for children. The lack of such a figure in life outside monasteries can hold people back in their journeys of faith. It was agreed to discuss *RB* 4-7 at the November meeting.

### **Toronto, Ontario, Canada** -- monthly meetings at St. Clare Church, Toronto

There was no report. Lay leader John Kelly has been very ill.

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

Lay leader Delina Pauls wrote on July 24, August 4, and October 25. At the meeting on July 11, Fr. Moss, a navy chaplain, spoke to the group of 10 about Archabbot Boniface Wimmer regarding his life in Bavaria and his founding of St. Vincent Archabbey and other monasteries. The meeting closed with Night Prayer and special readings for the Feast of St. Benedict.

At the meeting on August 1, Fr. Cristiano, moderator, spoke about St. Ignatius of Loyola. Some eight Oblates attended. Oblate Tom Power had some interesting comments since he had been educated by Jesuits.

At the meeting on September 5, Fr. Cristiano spoke about St. Gregory the Great as prefect of Rome, monk, and reforming Pope.

At the meeting on October 3, Fr. Cristiano spoke about *lectio divina* as a dialogue of love with God and as an extension of our hearing the Word of God at the liturgy. The group decided to order copies of *Cherish Christ above All*, by Fr. Demetrius Dumm, O.S.B., for future discussions.

### **Williamsport, PA** -- meetings on last Sunday of each month, 1 P.M., St. Boniface Church (or rectory) meeting room

Lay leader Ted Richardson wrote on October 30. After the usual summer break monthly meetings resumed on September 23. After an opening prayer, a brief business meeting, and the offering of prayer requests, the group of six discussed Chapter 7 of *The Path of Life*. They found the chapter rather long and the material difficult to understand.

On October 7 Fr. Donald visited the deanery, and after Evening Prayer he gave a presentation on Christian obedience as a joyful offering of self to God, no matter what sacrifices might be involved. Then the group moved to the church itself, where Fr. Donald received the final Oblations of

**Constance A. (Helen/Frances) Muir** of Sugarloaf, PA, and  
**Frank J. (Cuthbert) Stoshack** of Shamokin, PA.

Connie's daughter, son-in-law, and three granddaughters were present for the occasion. The other five Oblates present renewed their Oblation.

### Various Locations

On August 15 in St. Gregory Chapel, Fr. Donald invested

**Bruce Burk** of Barnet, VT, and

**Eileen J. Burk** of Barnet, VT,

as Oblate novices. The Burks are husband and wife. Also attending the ceremony were Tom Angelo, Chris Karem, Cathy Miller, the Sunseri family, and the Paharik family.

On August 18 at Nativity/St. Mary's Church in Stuyvesant, NY

**Peter P. (Simeon) Greene** of Chatham, NY,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Francis A. O'Connor, pastor of the church.

On August 19 at St. Mary of the Mount Church in Pittsburgh, PA,

**Thomas J. (Ezekiel) Forbidussi** of Pittsburgh, PA,

made his final Oblation before Rev. Michael J. Stumpf during the 11:30 Mass at the Church. Oblate Jim Patrick was also present.

On September 14 at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Hayden, AZ, Rev. Dale Branson invested

**Sylvia A. Kuras** of Globe, AZ,

as an Oblate novice. Originally from the Johnstown area, Sylvia was associated with Oblates in Johnston during the 1980's.

On September 16, at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Gujrat, Pakistan, Rev. Tariq Bhatti, pastor, invested

**Nadeem Feroze** of Gujrat, Pakistan,

as an Oblate novice during a Sunday Mass with some 400 people in attendance. Nadeem became acquainted with our Oblate Program through the web site offered by Oblate Michael LoPiccolo.

On October 5 at St. Luke Roman Catholic Church in Toms River, NJ, Rev. Timothy Horgan invested

**Laura Manning** of Howell, NJ,

as an Oblate novice.

On October 26 in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald invested

**Carolyn M. Smith** of Centreville, VA,

as an Oblate novice. Carolyn is the mother of three daughters, one of whom, Allison, is a freshman at St. Vincent College. Allison and Oblate Carl Burlas and Oblate novice Peg Palfy were present for the ceremony.

On October 26 at the chapel in Folkston, GA, Rev. Gabriel Cummings, pastor of Our Lady Star of the Sea Church in St. Marys, GA, and St. Francis of Assisi Church in Folkston, GA, invested as Oblate novices

**Tommy R. Bailey** of Folkston, GA, and

**Johnny Kitchens** of Folkston, GA.

### SICK & INFIRM MONKS

The following monks of the Archabbey have been hospitalized or otherwise especially ill during the past three months and could use our prayers: Fr. Wilfred Dumm, Fr. Omer Kline, Fr. Simon Toth, Fr. Joseph Bronder.

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

During the past few years a number of books from the Oblate Library have been found to be missing, presumably because people withdrew them without signing them out. Others were admittedly lost by their borrowers. **Please check your bookshelves to see if you have any of the missing books.** Also, if anyone would like to donate a copy of any of the lost books, such a donation would be welcome. (We are grateful for several recent donations.)

- St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*

- Roberta C. Bondi, *To Pray and to Love*

- Rev. William Burk, *Protect Us from All Anxiety: Meditations for the Depressed*

- Sr. Rachel Callahan, C.S.C., & ..., *Harvest Us Home: Good News As We Age*

- Christopher Derrick, *The Rule of Peace: St. Benedict & the European Future*

- André Gozier, O.S.B., *Fifteen Days of Prayer with Saint Benedict*

- Richard J. Hauser, S.J., *Finding God in Troubled Times*

- Rev. Bernard Head, *Blessed Marmion: A 21st-Century Appreciation* (pamphlet)

- Guy-Marie Oury, O.S.B., *A Monastic Pilgrimage: Following the Footsteps of St. Benedict*

- Abbot David Parry, O.S.B., *Household of God*
- Basil M. Pennington, O.C.S.O., *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice*
- Mark Plaiss, *The Inner Room*
- Pseudo Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*
- Fr. Joel Ripinger, O.S.B., *The Benedictine Order in the United States*
- Fr. Michael Scanlon, O.F.M., *Let the Fire Fall*