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# THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

## Saint Vincent Archabbey

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### YEARNING FOR IDEALS FROM THE PAST: ONLY SO THAT WE MAY “PROGRESS IN THIS WAY OF LIFE AND IN FAITH” (Prol: 49)

Dear Oblates, Oblate novices, and Friends,

#### **St. Benedict's looking back at a better past**

In several passages of the *Holy Rule*, St. Benedict expresses a longing for ideals in the past which were not fulfilled in his day. Regarding the Divine Office, he states, “We read, after all, that our holy Fathers, energetic as they were, did all this [praying the full psalter] in a single day. Let us hope that we, lukewarm as we are, can achieve it in a whole week” (*RB* 18:25). In regulating the drinking of wine, St. Benedict asserts, “We read that monks should not drink wine at all, but since the monks of our day cannot be convinced of this, let us at least agree to drink moderately, and not to the point of excess” (40:6). Writing about manual labor, St. Benedict insists that his monks “must not become distressed if local conditions or their poverty should force them to do the harvesting themselves. When they live by the labor of their hands, as our fathers and the apostles did, then they are really monks” (48:8). Apparently, then, in St. Benedict’s mind monks of past ages were more diligent in community prayer, were more disciplined in their abstinence from wine, and were less faint-hearted and more cheerful in accepting heavy manual labor. In contrast, the monks of his day seemed more lukewarm in prayer, more attached to such pleasures as wine-drinking, and more particular about the kind of work that they were asked to do. Is St. Benedict, therefore, in some ways, “stuck in the past” by looking back to past standards that can no longer be matched?

#### **Benefits for God's people of looking back**

It seems to be a natural, and often healthy, tendency for people to look to the past for ideals. The Jewish people were often challenged to imitate the dispositions of Abraham, their father in faith, and of King David, who is depicted in Scripture as the ideal faith-filled king of an undivided kingdom. Unfortunately, the Israelites tended to be spiritually forgetful; so God summoned them again and again, through Moses and the prophets, to remember how God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, had led them through the Red Sea, had given them manna and quail in the desert, and had brought them safely into the Holy Land. Most significantly, the Lord exhorted them never to forget the covenant and commandments that He had given them so that they might remain His people and enjoy “a long life ... to live on the land which the Lord swore He would give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (*Deut* 30:20). Furthermore, the religious tradition of the Israelites challenged them continually to recall the example and teaching of the judges, prophets, and good kings. The

Old Testament also taught them to remember the evils caused by wicked rulers, false prophets, and the people as a whole insofar as they had strayed from the covenant, perhaps more often than they were faithful. Remembrance could help them to avoid the mistakes and tragedies of the past.

#### **Dangers of looking back nostalgically**

On the other hand, there is also a dysfunctional way of looking to the past. This might be summarized as a mournful longing for things as they used to be coupled with a chronic complaint about the way things are now. As we age, it may be natural to yearn for the joys of our youthful past when we were healthier and when our now-deceased loved ones were alive. I find myself sometimes slipping into such nostalgia. Times were so wonderful, it seems, when my parents and grandparents were alive. Back in the 1950’s the Church seemed to be more vibrant in terms of vocations, church attendance, and moral life. Men and women dressed up to attend Sunday Mass. Just about every Catholic parish had its own school, usually staffed by religious sisters. In society television shows were overwhelmingly decent. Marriages and family life, with few exceptions, were stable. The current crises involving drug abuse, pornography, and sweeping moral decay seemed to be virtually non-existent. Those of us who are old enough to remember might be tempted to think, “Oh, that we could live in the 1950’s again!”

#### **Insights from the Holy Rule**

However, this kind of thinking works against our Christian commitment and the virtue of hope. It wastes time and energy and keeps us from responding to the Lord in the present moment, however painful the circumstance may be. St. Benedict, despite his occasional tendency to lament current laxity in contrast with better observance in the past, is forward-looking. He challenges his monks to strive to do better. In the time the Lord has allotted us, we are to “amend our misdeeds” (*Prol*: 36). We are to “wish to reach eternal life” (*Prol*: 42) through cheerful obedience to the Lord’s commands. When we feel ourselves reluctant to aspire to high ideals, we must “ask the Lord to supply by the help of His grace” the strength to attain “what is not possible to us by nature” (*Prol*: 41). We are to bear patiently with the hardships of the monastic journey so that we might stay on “the road that leads to salvation” (*Prol*: 48) and ultimately “deserve ... to share in [Christ’s] kingdom” (*Prol*: 50). Even on this earth we can learn to love God’s word and to “run on the path of God’s commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love” (*Prol*: 49). The abbot

himself, as an example for others, is to “[achieve] the amendment of his own faults” (2:40) and to “keep the flock entrusted with his care from dwindling” (2:32). Monks are to be corrected after wrongful behavior so that they might improve. All the penalties in *RB* 23-30 and 43-46, harsh though they sound to our modern ears, were intended to help individual monks to “make satisfaction” and then get on with their monastic journeys with lessened tendencies to give in to disordered behavior. St. Benedict mentions that hidden sins are to be revealed only “to the abbot or to one of the spiritual elders, who know how to heal their own wounds as well as those of others” (46:5-6). The last chapter of the *Rule* reminds us that all the monks are to “[hasten] on to the perfection of monastic life” and to seek “the very heights of perfection,” to hasten “toward [their] heavenly home,” and to “set out for the loftier summits” (73:2,8,9). Thus monks and Oblates can and should look forward to a future that fulfills their deepest desires, which entail a longing for an eternal, incomparably joy-filled communion with God.

***Lent (like Advent) as a hope-filled, forward-looking time***

In his book *Joy in Lent* (based on his doctoral dissertation), Fr. Kurt Belsole, O.S.B., includes a section “The Future Is Seen as Desirable.” Fr. Kurt writes, “Benedict, in *RB* 49, 7, encourages his monks to await Holy Easter with the joy of spiritual desire. The monk who is coming face to face with the challenges of Lent is told to set his sights on what lies ahead, the celebration of the Lord’s resurrection. This theme of the future as desirable is one of the elements which *RB* 40 has most in common with the other sections of the *Rule* under consideration [i.e., the Prologue and Chapters 4, 7, and 72]. In these chapters, Benedict emerges as the consummate optimist who sees the future not only as good but as very good. It has an attractiveness not only in the next life, but even in this world as one advances in the monastic life” (p. 26). Fr. Kurt concludes this section by asserting, “The desire for the future, therefore, which Benedict relates in *RB* 49, 7 to Easter, is paralleled in [other passages] by a desire for eternal life, for *what eye has not seen and ear not heard* (1 *Cor.* 2, 9), for heavenly exaltation, for that perfect love of God which casts out fear (1 *Jn.* 4, 18), and for God himself” (p. 29).

***Passages in Scripture: both discouraging & hope-filled***

During October, I was using 1 and 2 Kings for my *lectio divina*. The message voiced in some passages can seem discouraging. Of the various kings of Judah and Israel, the large majority were portrayed as wicked. They ignored the covenant, worshiped foreign gods, and led the people to idol-worship. God shows Himself to be very upset with such rulers. In 2 Kings 17: 20, referring to the end of the kingdom of Israel and its conquest by Assyria, the word of God states, “So the Lord rejected the whole race of Israel. He afflicted them and delivered them over to plunderers, finally casting them out from before Him.” On the other hand, we know that God took His people back again and again; He looked for every opportunity to show them mercy; He brought back the Israelites exiled in Babylon back to the Holy Land; and,

most significantly, He sent humanity a true and eternal King in Jesus Christ. Christ came to bring all people back from the exile of sin and into the Kingdom that is fulfilled in eternal communion with God. St. Paul refers to this hope-filled view of the future in Romans when he states: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. ... For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance” (Rom 8: 18, 24-25). Yes, as our bodies and minds groan from physical and mental decline and our souls lament our falling into sinful patterns over and over again, we nonetheless live in great hope because of Christ’s love for us and His desire to share His glory with us. Our Lord prayed at the Last Supper: “I have given them the glory You gave Me. ... Father, they are Your gift to Me. I wish that where I am they also may be with Me, that they may see My glory that You gave Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (Jn 17:22,24). Thus, despite all our frailties, Christ considers us, His disciples, a gift from the Father and ultimate sharers in His glory, if only we remain faithful to Him until death.

***November, Advent, & Christmas: opportunities for hope***

As we approach the end of the Church year and reflect on the celebrations of All Saints Day and All Souls Day, the Church gives us themes and readings that look to the past, but only so that we might grow in Christian hope for a grace-filled future. On All Saints Day we rejoice in the examples and prayers of the many saints who are not officially canonized but who now share in heavenly glory. It is fitting to reflect on their lives not just to remember how holy they were but to be spurred on by their example, their prayers, and in some cases by their writings and preaching. On All Souls Day we pray specifically for our departed loved ones who are still being purified in Purgatory. (It is such a blessing that imperfect humans have such an opportunity after death to be purged of remaining attachments to sin!) Our prayers assist in the purification of the poor souls, even while they pray that we use our time on earth for a healthy purging of our own sinful inclinations. The “end-of-time” readings before Advent and at the beginning of Advent, whose stark imagery may seem threatening and frightening, help us to cooperate with God’s plan to defeat all evil and to encourage all Christ’s disciples to persevere in the battle against evil in our earthly lives. We also prepare for the Second Coming of Christ. During Advent we also look back to the characters of St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, and especially the Blessed Mother in their very active roles in preparing for the Savior to be born and to embark on His mission. Our meditation on their “Yes” to God’s call assists us in our efforts to welcome Christ as He bursts into our lives each day and seeks to dwell more deeply in our hearts. During the Christmas Season we remember with peace and joy the marvel of God’s love in His becoming incarnate. We remember those who welcomed Him, such as the shepherds, the Magi, and the saints who suffered for their association with Christ, such as St. Stephen and the Holy Innocents. Our celebrations of Advent and Christmas can thus lead us to prepare well for our encounter with Christ at death and at His Second Coming

and the Last Judgment. Thus opportunities for a lively hope abound!

**Conclusion: respecting the past in a forward-looking way**

How, then, can we benefit from our past without being immersed in melancholic nostalgia? How can we be forward-looking without leaving behind eternal truths and personal lessons from the past? One reason for which faithful Christians long for an idealized past is the experience of dryness and emptiness in prayer. When we experience such dryness, it is tempting to murmur about present circumstances and to yearn for a time when prayer felt more stimulating. We may even tend to blame the situation in the world or our physical decline for the dissatisfying nature of our prayer. In his book *Guided by the Spirit* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1996), Fr. Frank J. Houdek, S.J., writes, “The alleged remoteness of God is actually a sign of a deepening relationship, an invitation to take the attention off oneself. It is also another example of the perennial invitation from God to self-surrender in trust. The person is being asked simply to surrender his or her control over prayer and the development of the relationship to the mysterious God of prayer” (p. 90). In the darkness of life or of prayer, it is not helpful to look back to the “better days” except possibly for some encouragement. If we have not been negligent in prayer and if we have been leading a good moral life, the distressful situation is surely an opportunity to welcome God to lead us to a higher state of prayer. We must trust whether we perceive the progress or not. The impulse to murmur should be “dashed against Christ” (*RB* Prol: 28, 4:50) firmly, and we need to strive to live in joyful hope that God is doing something wonderful through our time of dryness. When we feel empty and dry, God can do His “surgery” to remove whatever is harmful in our hearts and make more room for His delightful gifts. As Psalm 127 assures us, “He pours gifts on His beloved while they slumber” (verse 2).

On the other hand, daydreaming about an ideal future is not helpful either. Focusing on future plans can be an escape from the hardships (and graces) of the present moment. Prudent planning for the future is necessary, but excessive focus on the future that we desire can prevent us from being mindful of God’s graces in this moment and from entrusting the future to Him.

St. Benedict’s admonition in *RB* 72 to avoid bad zeal and to nurture good zeal can keep us working toward an improved future in a constructive way. Living in the “wicked zeal of bitterness ... separates from God and

leads to hell” (72:1). In contrast, the “good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life” (72:2) involves embracing the duty of the moment with gratitude and full attention. In the Prologue, St. Benedict stated that if we “desire true and eternal life” (v. 17) [And how could we not?], then we must daily listen to the voice of God (v. 10), not harden our hearts to His voice (v. 10), keep our tongues from evil talk (including murmuring and gossip) (v. 17), and seek to live in constant peace (v. 17). Chapter 72 calls us to bear with one another’s weaknesses with the utmost patience (v. 5) and not demand instant improvement, to pursue what is better for others rather than what feeds our selfish desires (v. 7), and, most of all, to “prefer nothing whatever to Christ” (v. 11). Living deeply in Christ in the present moment is the best way to make use of what He has given us in the past and to entrust the future to God, who has a plan for us far better than we can imagine (cf. *RB* 4:77).

As all Catholics know, the Communion Rite of Mass ends with a Prayer after Communion, which leads to the brief Concluding Rite. Perhaps by that time in the Mass we are so eager for the end that we pay little attention to the prayer. Like all the prayers of the Mass, however, it is very significant. The Prayer after Communion fittingly reflects on the marvelous gift of Holy Communion but then in many cases speaks of a future in which we shall have even greater gifts. The prayer for the 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, for example, reads: “May your Sacraments, O Lord, we pray, perfect in us what lies within them, that what we now celebrate in signs we may *one day possess in truth*” (italics mine). The Prayer after Communion for the 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday mentions that we are “benefiting from participation in heavenly things” and asks that these present gifts make us “prepared for the gifts that are eternal.” Let us, then, become more aware of the marvelous “heavenly things” that the Lord grants us even now and nurture the good zeal that will keep us using those gifts well. Let us accept the crosses involved with such Christ-centered living and look forward to possessing in reality the eternal communion with God of which we now have only glimmering hints.

In the peace of Christ and St. Benedict,

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

**\*P.S.:** Fr. Donald and Br. Joachim join 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.

**RETREAT SCHEDULE FOR 2018**

The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2018, have been scheduled. There will be two retreats on Benedictine spirituality; they will be held on May 18-20, 2018 and June 15-17, 2018. **All Oblates and Oblate novices are urged to consider making a summer retreat at the Archabbey.**

## **OBLATE DAY AND DAY OF RECOLLECTION FOR 2018**

Oblate Day for 2018 has been scheduled for Sunday, September 23, 2018, since facilities will be available on that day. The October day of recollection for 2018 has been scheduled for Saturday, October 13, 2018.

## **A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS**

November, 2017

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

The month of November is dedicated to the remembrance of all of our departed family members and loved ones. On All Souls Day, November 2, and throughout the month of November, the names of all those for whom prayers have been requested are placed on the altar of the Archabbey Basilica for special prayers of remembrance during the Masses and the Divine Office of the Benedictine community.

On All Souls Day, we bring to the Lord in our prayers all of our family members and loved ones who have died. Pope Saint John XXIII once said that "the devotion to the memory of the dead is one of the beautiful expressions of the Catholic spirit." We pray in the Preface at Masses of Christian Burial: "Lord, for your people, life is changed not ended." We find great comfort in keeping alive that communion with those who have gone before us. It is our faith and hope that one day we will be reunited with them in Jesus Christ.

Be assured of the continued prayers of the Benedictine community for you and for all of your family members and loved ones.

Faithfully in Christ,

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

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## **OBLATE DAY: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2017**

Some 30 people, Oblates and family members and other guests, came to the Archabbey for our 30th annual Oblate Day. Archabbot Douglas celebrated Mass at 10:30 A.M. for the group in Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel. The congregation also included family and friends of deceased golfer Arnold Palmer in remembrance of the first anniversary of his death. 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 as Oblate novices:

**William Matthews** of Greensburg, PA

**James C. Samuels, Jr.**, of Aliquippa, PA.

After time for confessions in the basilica, there was a social in the Parish Assembly Room.

Then at 3:45 Fr. Brian Boosel, O.S.B., assistant professor of history at St. Vincent College and a graduate student at Catholic University of America completing his dissertation, gave a presentation about humility, Jansenism, and elitism. Humility, he said, reminds us that we are tied to creation and have a relationship with the earth. Elitism denotes an attitude that is the opposite of humility; elitism proclaims, "I am better than other people." It is a vice, often connected with legalism. Our Lord encountered elitism in the scribes and Pharisees. For St. Benedict humility was a key virtue. In Chapter 7 of the *Rule*, St. Benedict encourages the monk to make progress in humility, a humility that is based on listening to other people and on recognizing the dignity of all people. Sometimes, Fr. Brian asserted, elitism can creep into Christian faith, as it did in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries with the Jansenist movement. Fr. Brian described its origins, its spreading, and its ongoing danger. Opposing Jansenism, St. Vincent de Paul emphasized treating every person, especially the poor, as Christ. The "medicine" for spiritual elitism today might be described as praying regularly, welcoming people as Christ, and looking to the example of saints, such as St. Teresa of Calcutta.

After the praying of Vespers with the monks, the day's events ended with supper and the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima."

## **TWELFTH FALL OBLATE DAY OF RECOLLECTION AT THE ARCHABBEY - Saturday, October 14, 2017**

Some 29 people, mostly Oblates and Oblate novices, attended this annual event, with conferences in St. Gregory Chapel. Fr. Isaac Haywiser, the retreat master, delivered conferences about a novice's commitment truly to seek God from Chapter 58 of the *Rule*. An outline of Fr. Isaac's conferences is available from the Oblate Office.

During ceremonies at 1:30 P.M. in St. Gregory Chapel, Fr. Donald received the following:

Oblate novice: **Edythe Schirra** of Butler, PA.

Edythe has been attending meetings of the Butler Deanery.

Many of the retreatants joined the monastic community for Vespers, and then some stayed for supper, which ended with the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima."

## **PHOTOGRAPHS FROM EVENT ON JULY 11 AVAILABLE; CALL FOR PHOTOGRAPHS FROM VARIOUS LOCATIONS**

If anyone would like a copy of a photo from the Oblation ceremonies on July 11, please contact [cjlruff@att.net](mailto:cjlruff@att.net) (or phone the Oblate Office), and you will be sent a copy of the photo by e-mail. Also, if you have any photographs from Oblate events from your deaneries or elsewhere, please send them to the same e-mail address for inclusion in a historical collection of Oblate photographs. Thank you.

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

The following books are in the Oblate Library:

- Christine M. Fletcher (Oblate), *Saint Benedict for Boomers: Wisdom for the Next Stage of Life* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017)
- Richard Newman, *Saint Benedict in His Time* (Abergavenny, Wales: Three Peaks Press, 2013)
- Sister Irene Nowell, O.S.B., *Wisdom: The Good Life: Wisdom Literature and the Rule of Benedict* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017)

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

The following books are in the Oblate Library:

- Fr. Thomas Acklin, O.S.B., and Fr. Boniface Hicks, O.S.B., *Spiritual Direction: A Guide for Sharing the Father's Love* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2017)
- Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (N.Y.: Penguin Random House LLC, 2017)
- Fr. Jacques Philippe, *Interior Freedom*, trans. by Helena Scott (New York: Scepter Publishers, Inc., 2007)

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

Oblates and Oblate novices who purchase items in the Basilica Gift Shop may receive a discount of 10% on all purchases.

## **MEETINGS OF OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS, August 25 and October 27, 2017**

Members of the Board assembled for their 64th and 65th regular meetings at 6:30 P.M. on August 25 and October 27 in Brownfield 203. The meeting on August 25, attended by twelve members, involved a review of the Assembly of Deanery Representatives on June 10, hopes to have the formation lessons printed soon, news from deaneries, the issue of the mentoring of inmates, NAABOD 2017 in July, and a suggestion regarding the procedure of paying for meals for those attending Oblate meetings in Latrobe.

The meeting on October 27 was attended by ten members and involved discussions about the completion of the formation lessons, ways of witnessing to potential Oblates, the Archabbey's new policy for the mentoring of inmates and former inmates' attendance at meetings, the status of the bibliography of Benedictine books and the need to update it, and the situations of some of the deaneries and potential deaneries.

## **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF OBLATES IN ROME, NOVEMBER 4-10, 2017**

Our two Oblate representatives for this congress are Sandra Tucker of St. Marys, PA, and Beth Grabiak of Latrobe, PA. Please pray for safe travels and for the fruitfulness of the congress for all the participants, who come from many different parts of the world. Reports should be available soon.

## **MENTORS NEEDED**

A number of people who are Oblate novices or inquirers have requested Oblate mentors. There are still a few people who have requested mentors but who have not been matched. If you are a full Oblate and think that you could serve as a mentor for someone new to the program, please contact the Oblate Office. There is a set of guidelines available for mentors.

## **NEW BOOK OF FORMATION LESSONS AVAILABLE**

In July of 2016 our Oblate Program began to offer a series of twelve formation lessons to new Oblate novices. The lessons could be received by e-mail or U.S. mail, and each Oblate novice could respond in the same way. The book of lessons, titled *Formation Lessons for Oblate Novices and Oblates: A Supplement to the Oblate Formation Booklet*, is now available in a spiral-bound form for those Oblates or Oblate novices able to pick up the book at the Archabbey. The books are being offered for free, but the cost of printing was \$11.50 each; so donations will be welcome. One book is being sent to each deanery. (In some exceptional cases the booklet will be mailed to individuals.) **Oblate novices who have not been doing these formation lessons may begin at any time by e-mail or postal mail. Contact the Oblate Office if you are interested.**

## **BOOK SEVENTY-FOUR TOOLS FOR GOOD LIVING AVAILABLE AT OBLATE OFFICE**

This book by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O., will be used, beginning in December or January, for discussions by the Latrobe Deanery at the monthly meetings at 6:45 P.M.. The discounted price is \$15.96. Members of the Latrobe Deanery are welcome to pick up books at the Oblate Office if they do not already have one. Copies of the book will be mailed to others only by exception.

## **SOME OTHER 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* – for \$1.00 each
- (3) booklet of Oblates' reflections on verses of the *Rule* – free or with donation for postage
- (4) booklet of deanery histories – free or with donation for postage
- (5) book *Nadeem Feroze: Oblate of Saint Benedict, Pakistani, Defender of the Faith* - \$8.00 each
- (6) booklet *You Are Loved* (Catholic Answers Press) for those needing help with pornography addiction - for a donation

## **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 (this often happens), please return them to the Oblate Office as soon as possible.

## **ERROR FROM LAST NEWSLETTER**

In the report on the Oblate retreat on June 2-4, the names of those who became an Oblate and an Oblate novice were interchanged. Mitchell Megliola of Duryea, PA, made his final Oblation whereas Rachel Ruffing of Latrobe, PA, was invested as an Oblate novice.

## **REVISED PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM**

Since January 1, 2017, the Prayer-Partner Program has involved a revised procedure. Upon making final Oblation, each new Oblate is assigned to pray for a monk who has agreed to participate in the program. The monk is also encouraged to pray for the Oblate. There is no contact by mail, e-mail, or phone unless both parties request it. After the program has been in effect for a while, those who have already been full Oblates may also request a monk as a prayer-partner. **Prayer-partners matched under the previous system will continue as long as both parties agree to the continuation.**

**OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA**—meetings on 1<sup>st</sup> Thurs. mornings at St. Gregory the Great Church in Cambridge

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by e-mail on September 10 and November 3. The meetings in July, August, and September were attended, respectively, by six, five, and four people. The group continued its study of the *Rule* by reflecting on Chapters 38, 39, and 40. Each meeting ended with the praying of Midday Prayer.

Four people attended the meeting on October 5, and six people attended the meeting on November 2. The group continued its study of the *Rule* with Chapters 42 and 43, the latter being about silence after Compline and generating a very interesting discussion. The meetings ended with Midday Prayer. Cathy expressed gratitude for prayers and for improvement in the health of three people for whom prayers have been requested. The next meeting was scheduled for January; there will be no meeting in December.

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

It was reported about August 22 that Oblate ceremonies had been conducted in the chapel on various dates by Fr. Gary Rottman, during which the following were invested as Oblate novices:

**Robert G. Bernhardt** of Tennessee Colony, TX (January 3, 2017)

**Jesus F. Villalobos** of Tennessee Colony, TX (January 3, 2017)

**Manuel L. Rios** of Tennessee Colony, TX (March 28, 2017)

**Christopher Martinez** of Tennessee Colony, TX (July 25, 2017)

**Joe Montelongo** of Tennessee Colony, TX (July 25, 2017).

Secretary Alex Torres reported on September 3. The group met on June 27, July 25, and August 29. At each meeting the group prayed Evening Prayer and discussed the passage of the *Rule* prescribed for the day.

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

It was reported about August 22 that Oblate ceremonies had been conducted in the chapel on various dates by Fr. Gary Rottman, during which the following were invested as Oblate novices:

**Phillip D. Carrasco** of Tennessee Colony, TX (November 30, 2016)

**John Lesley “Les” Miller** of Tennessee Colony, TX (November 30, 2016)

**James Fowler** of Tennessee Colony, TX (February 8, 2017).

Also, on July 19, 2017,

**Robert R. (Germanus) Reeves** of Tennessee Colony, TX,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Gary Rottman.

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

Deacon Alvin Lovelady wrote on July 21 and August 9. On August 7 Oblation ceremonies were held at the chapel in Rosharon, during which Deacon Alvin received the following:

Oblates: **Peter John Ellington** of Rosharon, TX

**Gilberto (Augustine) Gomez** of Rosharon, TX

**Donald (Raymond) Schnidt III** of Rosharon, TX.

Oblate novices: **Tommy Garrett** of Rosharon, TX

**Darrell Hinds** of Rosharon, TX.

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

Oblate novice John Harrup, serving as secretary, wrote on September 20. At the first meeting eight Oblate novices and an inquirer met with sponsor Steve Doucet. After an opening prayer, the group decided on biweekly meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 7:30 A.M. The structure of each meeting was determined to consist of an opening prayer, the praying of Lauds from a breviary, a reading from the *Rule* and a discussion on it, a presentation and discussion of a lesson on Benedictine spirituality, questions and answers concerning Benedictine books (etc.), and a closing prayer. Lessons were assigned to Oblate novices to present at future meetings, and leaders for the Liturgy of the Hours were also assigned.

**OBLATE MEETINGS IN LATROBE AND PRESENTATIONS ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY**

Oblates from all locations and guests are invited to monthly meetings at the Archabbey. The forthcoming meetings will be on Sundays November 19, December 17, January 21, and February 18 at 6:45 P.M. in Brownfield Room 202. As stated above, the book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* will be discussed. On the same days as meetings in Latrobe, presentations on Benedictine spirituality are being held in Brownfield 202 from 3:00 to 4:15. They are given by monks or Oblates. All are welcome. The session on November 19, to be offered by Fr. Cyprian Constantine, O.S.B., will address the topic “Obedience in Benedictine Spirituality,” and the session on December 17, to be offered by Br. Barnabas O’Reilly, O.S.B., will be about “Work in Benedictine Spirituality.” Those wishing to come early for Evening Prayer (at 5:00) and supper should phone Fr. Donald (724-805-2291) in advance.

**ADORATION FOR VOCATIONS IN ST. GREGORY CHAPEL; EXPOSITION ON SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING:**

The Blessed Sacrament is generally exposed on Sundays from 2:00 P.M. to 4:15 P.M. in St. Gregory Chapel. Oblates are urged to use these times for Eucharistic adoration, if possible, especially on the Sundays of Oblate meetings, to pray for vocations and especially for vocations to the Archabbey. **On the Solemnity of Christ the King, November 26, exposition will begin at 12:30 P.M. in the basilica and will conclude with Benediction at the end of Vespers in the nave, which begins, as usual, at 5:00.**

## **NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES**

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

Moderator Deacon Ralph DeCecco reported on August 24. Extra duties taken on by Deacon Ralph prevented some monthly meetings from being held. He, his wife Janet, and four others met on August 14. They began with the praying of Vespers. Then Oblate William Beam gave a presentation on "good zeal." They also discussed RB 60 on the admission of priests, and four of the attendees renewed their Oblation. The meeting ended early when Janet fell ill. (She subsequently recovered quickly.)

### **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 late in September. The meeting on September 24 was attended by six people. After the praying of Vespers, the group spent a few minutes discussing a PBS program on St. Benedict Prep School in Newark. It was interesting that the program's focus was not only on education in general but also on the inculcation of Benedictine values. Then the group briefly discussed the book about the apparitions at Fatima that they had been reading. The desire was expressed for topics that would deepen the attendees' understanding and practice of Benedictine spirituality. It was agreed that each person would, at the next meeting, bring at least one book that is focused on St. Benedict, the *Rule*, or Benedictine spirituality, and there was a consensus that such literature should be the material for future meetings.

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

Moderator Fr. Paschal Morlino, O.S.B., reported in early October. The meeting on September 17 was attended by Fr. Paschal and seven others. He began with a reflection on recently deceased Oblate Anne Porter, who had been very active for years both in the Oblate Program and in St. Benedict Parish. He then began a teaching on hospitality with reference to an article by Sr. Jeanette von Herman, O.S.B., and there was some discussion. He also distributed an article entitled "Compliments" by Sr. Mary Jane Romero, O.S.B. Next Marie Callan, who had attended the NAABOD meeting in Minnesota in July, gave a report to the group. The next meeting was scheduled for November 19, with the aim of discussing Lesson 2 from the formation lessons. Also, all Oblates were invited to participate in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on the Solemnity of Christ the King on Sunday, November 26, from noon to 5:00 P.M., with the praying of Vespers at the end. Oblates were specifically asked to help with the praying of the "Seven Stations of Advent" during the service.

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

Lay leader/secretary Ronald Weleski reported by U.S. mail on November 1. The date of meetings has been changed to the fourth Wednesday of each month so that participants can attend the Wednesday Mass at St. Fidelis Church before the meetings. Also, Ron has begun to send a newsletter to all of the 20 members on the mailing list. The deanery has also started a book exchange at meetings, whereby each attendee can bring his or her favorite book and share about it. Oblate Grace Kolander-Shaw is now phoning all members before each monthly meeting. Furthermore, the deanery has developed a mission statement to help the group to focus efforts on areas that they consider important.

Six members attended the meeting on August 31, which began, as usual, with Evening Prayer. The attendees finalized a "Deanery Mission Statement," with three points regarding study of the *Rule* for a closer relationship with God, efforts to make the deanery a Benedictine community which is welcoming to all, and the aim of extending the joy of Benedictine spirituality with the greater Butler community. The meeting concluded with a discussion of Chapter 20 of *Lessons from Saint Benedict*.

At the meeting on September 27, after Evening Prayer, it was mentioned that a copy of the new deanery newsletter and a letter outlining the deanery's activities had been mailed to all members. The group then reviewed an article on the medal of St. Benedict. Next they continued the study of *Lessons from Saint Benedict* with reflections on Chapter 21, "The Call to Hospitality." The participants had a lively discussion on ways in which the routine of daily life can be transformed into an opportunity to welcome God's grace to renew people in their commitment to serve God and others.

The meeting on October 25, attended by eleven people, began with Evening Prayer. It was mentioned that the deanery is emphasizing evangelization and that several inquirers had come to recent meetings. One of them, Edythe Schirra, had become an Oblate novice during the day of recollection at the Archabbey. The group then discussed Chapter 22 of *Lessons from Saint Benedict*, with themes of understanding our weaknesses and cultivating silence as ways to open ourselves to God. As is the case with all meetings, the meeting ended with "A Prayer for Oblates" 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 November 7, at which time there were 78 members. Oblate Brenda Conyers has been leading a reflective discussion on Delatte's *Commentary*. The group is currently working on RB 58, with much fruitful discussion and reminders of what the Oblate life entails. There was a recent reminder that, with many of the members' living a long distance from the Archabbey, the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours keeps them all connected with Saint Vincent.

### **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 August 11 and October 10. The meeting on August 7 began with the praying of Vespers. Then the Oblates present talked about their reasons for deciding to follow Benedictine spirituality and how they were striving for holiness through the way of life that God had chosen for them. It was recommended that during September the Oblates attend the Forty Hours devotions at St. Benedict Church, and it was decided that those devotions would replace the normal September meeting. The meeting ended with a prayer to St. Benedict.

The meeting on October 3 began with Evening Prayer in the church. Then the group gathered in the John Paul II meeting room to select a book to study at future meetings. The attendees ultimately selected *Everybody Needs to Forgive Somebody* by Allen R. Hunt. Then there was a lengthy discussion about fostering increased awareness of Benedictine spirituality and the Oblate Program in the Johnstown area. They also talked about involvement in parish ministries and making other parishes in the area aware of the Oblates in the Johnstown Deanery. The attendees also considered the possibility of one-day bus trips to visit various shrines and holy places.

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

Lay leader/secretary Tanishia Sperling reported on September 12 and October 10. The meeting on September 11 was attended by one Oblate, two Oblate novices, and an inquirer. The meeting began with prayer and the offering of intentions. Each person shared about experiences during the summer in which God touched his or her life. Then the group continued a full study of the *Rule*. Since the Prologue had been discussed in the spring, the attendees read and discussed *RB 1* and talked about its relevance to today's world.

**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 20, a group of some fourteen people continued a discussion based on Fr. Demetrius' book *Flowers in the Desert*. Chapter 6, entitled "Living in Hope," was treated, with references to the theme of hope in the *Rule*. The topics considered were the goal of heaven, "manna in the wilderness" as food for the journey of faith, the Holy Eucharist as fulfilling the gift of manna, confidence in our loving Father ("Abba"), and praying in the Holy Spirit, who is the "first installment" of our future life in heaven. A number of attendees commented on the need to overcome the dark, hopeless messages of our culture and the media with the positive, hope-filled message of the Gospel.

At ceremonies about 4:25 P.M. in St. Gregory Chapel on August 20, Fr. Donald invested the following as Oblate novices:

**Thomas J. Caldwell** of Clairton, PA

**Doris Ann Clinton** of Greensburg, PA

**Eric A. Failing** of Wellsville, PA

**JoAnn Oshnock** of Greensburg, PA.

Doris is the mother of Oblate Cynthia Ruff, and JoAnn is a cousin of Oblate Robert Oshnock.

On August 29 a number of Oblates and Fr. Donald came together for a wake service in Greensburg for deceased Oblate Maryann Cherubini; many members of her family were also present. Several Oblates attended her funeral at St. Bruno Church the next day.

At the meeting on September 17, eight people joined Fr. Donald for a discussion of the chapter "Traveling Together" from the book *Flowers in the Desert*. They reflected on references in the *Rule* to mutual love in community, the challenge of appreciating one another's gifts, the characteristics of love as given in 1 Cor 13, the relevance of the Lord's Prayer to family and community, and the need for balance between rigid authority and structure and the lack of authority and structure.

At the meeting on October 22, about thirteen people gathered to discuss the Chapter "Letting Go" from the same text. The subjects discussed were Our Lord's facing of death at Gethsemane, the aloneness of death, and our need to prepare well for death without hastening it. Since it was planned to complete the book *Flowers in the Desert* in November, it was considered whether in December to begin the new book (*Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living*) or to have a special agenda for the meeting.

Also on October 22, about 4:20 P.M. in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald received the following:

Oblate: **Margaret "Maggie" (Mathildis) Shaffer** of Latrobe, PA

Oblate novices: **William D. "Bill" Lambert, Jr.**, of Diamond, OH

**Bonita Mae "Bonnie" Lee** of Austintown, OH.

Maggie is the daughter of Oblate John Hudock of Greensburg. Present for the ceremony were Bill's wife, Heather, and the 30-or-so Oblates and guests who had come for the presentation by Fr. Ed Mazich at 3:00.

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

On August 20 Fr. Wulfstan Clough, O.S.B., gave a presentation on the Holy Eucharist in Benedictine spirituality to a large group of some 35 people. Since August 20 is the feast of St. Bernard, Fr. Wulfstan began with a reading about love from St. Bernard. Then he commented that there very few references to the Eucharist in the *Rule* of St. Benedict; so we do not have St. Benedict's theology of the Eucharist. Most likely, he took for granted the fact that the Eucharist is at the center of all Catholic spirituality. For the monks at St. Vincent the Holy Eucharist is very important; except for a few special occasions when Mass is celebrated later in the day, we have daily Mass right after Morning Prayer. We should be amazed at the overwhelming truth that at the consecration the bread and wine become, through the power given to the priest, the Body and Blood of Christ. This is not just a symbol. Christ is really present, and we really receive divine life in every host. In the Eucharist we enter the "world of the spirit," which we cannot see, but we are assured in faith that the sacrament is a wonderful expression of Christ's love. The Eucharist is spiritual food which gives us strength for our daily responsibilities. It is vital to keeping our faith alive. Those who can attend daily Mass should make every effort to do so. Then Fr. Wulfstan referred to the book *Consider Your Call* to express some of the themes of the Eucharist that are especially important in monastic life. The Eucharist is a sign of unity in faith; the Eucharist gives us strength from Christ to live well as individuals and as a community; our celebration of the Mass as a community gives witness to God's grace actively working in Christian community. In contrast, the lack of regular reception of the Eucharist can leave us feeling empty and lonely. Just as we need to celebrate the Eucharist together as a public expression of our unity in Christ, so we Catholics also need frequent celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a public expression of our contrition for sins. We very much need the sacraments, which are inherently communal, in our very individualistic age! Finally, Fr. Wulfstan responded to a number of questions from the attendees. (continued)

On September 17 Fr. Donald spoke about the vow and value of stability to some 20 people. Quoting Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments, he stated that the journey to holiness requires that one be bound to the word of God and learn to be faithful as God is faithful. Stability can be considered in terms of place, of communal relationships, or of the heart (interior). The monks profess vows that bind them to one place and to one community; stability of the heart applies to all Christians and calls us to persevere in our faith through difficulties. St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter all write that disciples must be faithful, and even joyful, amid trials. We realize our lack of stability when we become impatient under various circumstances. Again and again we must acknowledge our frailty and turn to Christ, remember His covenant of love, recall His own perseverance and patience in suffering, and, with His grace, strive to overcome our impulsiveness. The *Rule* speaks explicitly of "stability" in five places, but the theme of stability also occurs in the consideration of being on guard, being mindful of God's presence, standing firm, and being content with one's circumstances. The faithful monk and

Oblate persist in a given assignment or task (unless it is clear that it is not God's will) and strive to avoid the wandering of heart and mind. Stability of the heart is at the core of Christian life. (continued)

On October 22 Fr. Edward Mazich, O.S.B., spoke about silence to nearly 40 people. After commending the Oblates for their witness to the Benedictine way and mentioning our common need for ongoing formation, he outlined the four steps of his talk: speech and silence in contemporary society, St. Benedict's use of the Bible in his spirituality of silence, the motive of avoiding sin to keep from unworthy speech, and the motive of growth in sanctification. Fr. Ed stated that there is little respect for silence in our society today. Aside from the many distracting gadgets, we ourselves need to realize how much we talk. Much of our talk is pointless and banal. The words in newspapers and the Internet are largely pitiable. St. Benedict uses Scripture in *RB* 6 to bolster his teaching on silence. Fr. Ed also read from Sirach 28, which gives some hard advice about the control of the tongue. (The passage does not occur in our liturgy.) Then Fr. Ed referred to the motive of sin. Certain kinds of talk are always sinful; yet people indulge in this sort of talk frequently today. Some gossip is simply silly, but other gossip contributes to ruining another person's reputation. St. Benedict "absolutely condemns" such evil speech. Furthermore, in order to cultivate virtue, we need to refrain even from even good or neutral words, since they do not compare even remotely with God's word and with the very Word made flesh. The practice of silence, e.g., the refraining from telling a good story, can enable us to be better channels for God's word. At moments chosen by God, we must back off from our speech. After the presentation Fr. Ed fielded a number of thought-provoking questions.

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

Lay leader Brian Chisholm reported by phone on November 2 and 9. The meeting on October 29 involved an hour and a half of Eucharistic exposition with readings on prayer, silence, and the death of St. Joseph by Maria de Agreda. Some comparisons were made with the *Rule* of St. Benedict. Also, there are hopes to have a local priest to serve as the deanery's moderator..

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

Lay leader/secretary Gabriele Terrill reported by e-mail on October 29. The meeting in October began with Evening Prayer in the church. Five people were in attendance. First, the group spoke about the "open house" at Holy Spirit Church on September 30-October 1, at which the Oblates had a table set up, with opportunities to speak with parishioners about the Oblate Program and to give out information. One attendee brought a D.V.D. from the Archabbey, and it was viewed. It was a talk on "Conversion of Life" by Fr. Justin Matro, O.S.B., who contrasted stability with stagnation and emphasized the virtue of staying put in peace and obedience as a way to grow in Christ. Humility, it was remarked, and the call to seek Christ above all are crucial for spiritual growth. Knowing our weaknesses, praying to overcome them with God's grace, and keeping death before our eyes daily are also essential to growth. Fr. Justin also spoke about the life of St. Catherine of Genoa and her conversion. After the presentation there was some discussion, and the group enjoyed some refreshments. The meeting ended with a prayer. The next meeting was scheduled for November 12.

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

Secretary Frederick Laux reported on August 27, October 1, and October 26. The meeting on August 8 was attended by two Oblates, four Oblate novices, and three inquirers. Deacon John Etter, moderator, led the meeting, which began with Evening Prayer. Oblate Curtis Kennedy gave a report about a possible order of C.D.'s or D.V.D.'s from the Archabbey. Then Fred led a praying of the "Oblate prayer" and gave a presentation on *RB* 55: 15-22. He referred to the book *The Rule in Bits and Pieces* and the commentary by Fr. Terrence Kardong, O.S.B., and contrasted real needs with imagined needs. He said that we help to build a community of peace when we resist inordinate desires and extend genuine generosity to others. Then Deacon John invited the inquirers to consider becoming Oblate novices. Oblate Cory DesArmo brought out pizza and other snacks for a social, and Deacon John closed the meeting with a dismissal and blessing.

The meeting on September 12 was attended by two Oblates, five Oblate novices, and four inquirers. The group was informed that D.V.D.'s and C.D.'s of presentations from the Archabbey had been ordered for the deanery. Curtis Kennedy gave a presentation on *RB* 2:16-22. He mentioned the dangers of favoritism, and there was some discussion on the healthy impact of impartiality. The Oblate novices, who had been invested about a year before, were urged to apply for final Oblation if they were ready.

The meeting on October 10 was attended by two Oblates, five Oblate novices, and three inquirers. After Deacon John led the group in Evening Prayer, the group reviewed Lesson 8 from the formation lessons - on the Holy Eucharist, the "source and summit" of Christian life and of who we are. There was some mention of the importance of Viaticum for those at the end of their earthly journeys. Next Cory DesArmo gave a presentation on humility in reference to *RB* 7:62-70. He addressed themes of truthfulness, mindfulness, humble bearing (walking as Jesus walked and being spiritually approachable), and remaining in God's presence as a good preparation for the Last Judgment. The *Rule's* chapter on humility reinforces the truth that love helps us to act for the right reason. It was then mentioned that a representative from *Our Sunday Visitor* would be coming on Fridays to make presentations and that about 150 books had been donated from *Our Sunday Visitor* for the Catholic portion of the chapel library.

**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 on August 25 and November 7. The meeting on August 5 began with Morning Prayer according to the Roman Rite. The group continued to conduct its discussion under a new format, with reflections on the book *Monastery of the Heart* as a study guide. This time Chapter 2, "Seekers," was read, and there was some meaningful sharing. Two new members were present. After the "shared *lectio*" Fr. Vincent suggested that in becoming a deanery the group might adopt a patron saint. After some initial discussion it was decided to give the matter more thought so that a decision could be made at the next meeting. The meeting ended with the praying of Noon Prayer from the *Book of Common Prayer*. The group then enjoyed a lunch prepared by their devoted hosts, Sharon Fischer and her daughter Joann.

The meeting on October 7 began with Morning Prayer according to the Roman Rite and continued with a focus on Chapter 3 of *Monastery of the Heart*. The topic was community life. Then the group expressed unanimous agreement to become a deanery and

chose the patron St. Augustine of Canterbury. At the close of the meeting, Fr. Vincent de Paul received the following:

Oblate novice: **David Tysen "Ty" Nutt, Jr.**, of Belle Mead, NJ  
Oblates: **Mary L. (Katharine Drexel) Coté** of Philadelphia, PA  
**Sandra K. (Scholastica) Davis** of Philadelphia, PA.

The session ended, as usual, with a lunch prepared by the gracious hosts. The next meeting was scheduled for December 2.

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

Oblate George Ponticello reported by e-mail on October 1 and 29. Nine Oblates joined Fr. Vincent Zidek, moderator, for the meeting on September 25. Prior to the meeting, several of the members had gathered for dinner and conversation at a local restaurant. At the meeting the group read and discussed Lesson Two, on holiness, from the new formation lessons.

Despite rainy, dreary weather, five Oblates joined Fr. Vincent for the meeting on October 23. After Evening Prayer in the church, the group discussed Chapter 3, "Conversion of Heart," from *Formation Lessons for Oblate Novices and Oblates*. The next meeting was scheduled for November 14. Also, some tentative dates for the December pre-Christmas party were considered.

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

Lay leader Mary Ann Kaufman reported by e-mail about August 10 and on October 31, and secretary Jana Gruber reported by phone on November 10. Two planning meetings were attended by ten Oblates on July 2 and August 6. After some voting and consultation with Fr. Donald, Blessed Columba Marmion was chosen as the patron for the new deanery. Mary Ann Kaufman is the lay leader, and Jana Gruber is the secretary. Both sessions began with Daytime Prayer followed by "A Prayer for Oblates," a reading of *RB Prol: 1,4*, and the prayer of St. Benedict from a holy card. Lessons from the *Formation Lessons for Oblate Novices and Oblates* will be used for general meetings.

About eighteen people attended the first official meeting on September 3. Mary Ann introduced the guest speaker, Fr. Paul Taylor, O.S.B., who led Daytime Prayer and then gave a presentation entitled "On Holiness and Pursuing Benedictine Spirituality." He divided his talk into three parts: holiness in light of the day's readings at Mass, holiness as understood in the *Rule*, and holiness as lived by the monks of the Archabbey. Fr. Paul said that all are called to holiness but by different paths for each person, and he described holiness as who we are rather than what we do. It is a gift from God and is characterized by the union of our will with God's will. After his talk Fr. Paul answered some questions and closed the meeting with a prayer. Finally, a "goodwill bag" was passed around to collect money that should offset deanery expenses; holy cards for Blessed Columba were distributed; and forthcoming events at the Archabbey were announced. The praying of "Glory Be" ended the session.

Attending the meeting on October 1 were ten Oblates, one Oblate novice, and four inquirers. The meeting began with Daytime Prayer, the prayer for Oblates, and the "Consecration to the Blessed Trinity." Then the attendees introduced themselves, and Mary Ann described the discernment of the call to become an Oblate novice as a gradual process, with consideration of the aim to grow in holiness amid the busyness of life in the world. All were invited to attend monthly meetings at the Archabbey. Also discussed were the gathering of donations and the plan to alternate monthly meetings between presentations by guest speakers and discussions based on formation lessons. The meeting closed with prayers to St. Benedict and Blessed Columba Marmion and the offering of personal intentions. Some attendees stayed for coffee and fellowship.

The meeting on November 5 was attended by twelve Oblates, two Oblate novices, and nine inquirers. Guest speaker Fr. Donald Breier, a priest of the Pittsburgh Diocese and a long-time Oblate, gave a presentation on St. Benedict and the *Rule*. He made references to the *Rule* and St. Gregory the Great's *Life and Miracles of St. Benedict*. He also spoke about Abbot Boniface Wimmer, St. Vincent Archabbey, and its foundations and noted that hospitality has been a key factor in his attraction to St. Vincent and the thriving of the Archabbey. The meeting ended with Midday Prayer, the prayer for Oblates, and Bl. Columba's prayer of consecration. The next meeting was scheduled for December 3.

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

Lay leader/secretary Roland Fernandez reported on August 20 and October 8. Eighteen men attended the meeting in July. After an opening prayer the group discussed topics from the *Catholic Answers Bible*. The second half of the meeting was devoted to the Liturgy of the Hours and the *Rule* of St. Benedict. The meeting ended with closing prayers.

The meeting in August began with opening prayers, a praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, and a reading from the *Rule*. Then there was some discussion about applying the *Rule* to daily life. It was mentioned that not all parts of the *Rule* are directly applicable to us today. Next the group entered into a discussion of the topics considered in July. The meeting ended with closing prayers.

Roland reported that the buildings in Rosharon had been evacuated for 22 days because of flooding in the Houston area. As of October 8 the community was just getting back to normal. On Monday evenings members of the Oblate community have an opportunity to pray a rosary led by Sister San Juanita Mendoza; recently the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours has been included in the weekly session.

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

Lay leader/secretary Peggi Gabler wrote on August 21 and October 10. The meeting on July 6, as usual, followed Evening Prayer and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Six people attended. The meeting began with a praying of the "Oblate prayer" and a reading of the minutes from June. Sheets of paper with questions to be discussed at the Fourth International Congress of Oblates were distributed. It was suggested that the attendees answer the questions individually in preparation for discussion at monthly meetings. Oblate Sandy Tucker, who is registered to attend the congress in November, was to take the responses with her to Rome. Then the group read *RB Prol: 14-20* along with Fr. Michael Gabler's explanations. Oblate Ben Hoffman resigned as lay leader after a number of years of service and suggested that Peggi Gabler replace him. The meeting ended with the "Benedictine prayer."

The meeting on August 3, attended by eight people, began with a prayer to St. Benedict. Questions 1 and 2 from the sheets for the International Congress were discussed. The group was happy to welcome a long-time Oblate who had not been to meetings in recent years. Then the attendees read from the Prologue, verses 21-27, along with explanations from Fr. Michael. The deanery chose Peggi Gabler as the new lay leader, and she agreed to continue as secretary. We are grateful to Ben Hoffman for his years of service as lay

leader. He will continue to assist Peggi in her duties. The meeting ended with the "Oblate prayer."

Eight members joined Fr. Michael for the meeting on September 7. After the praying of the "Benedictine prayer" and a reading of minutes, the group discussed questions 3, 4, and 5 from the questionnaire for the Fourth International Oblate Congress. Fr. Michael expanded upon the points that were made. Then *RB Prol: 28-32* was read along with Fr. Michael's reflections. The meeting ended with the "Oblate prayer" and Fr. Michael's blessing. (continued)

The meeting on October 5, attended by seven people, followed Evening Prayer and Benediction. Minutes of the last meeting and a letter from Fr. Donald were read. The problem of locked doors at Queen of the World Church was brought up, and the group decided to hold future meetings at Sacred Heart Church. Then *RB Prol: 33-38* was read along with Fr. Michael's reflections. Next questions 6 and 7 from the questionnaire were answered and discussed. Oblate Sandra Tucker was to travel to the International Congress with the deanery's answers to the questions.

**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 August 13, September 17, and October 22. At the meeting on August 13, after the recitation of "A Prayer for Oblates," the group read and discussed the essay from a newsletter, "Do We Really Seek God?" The meeting ended with the praying of Mid-afternoon Prayer.

The meeting on September 10 opened with the prayer for Oblates. Then the attendees reviewed and discussed the essay on finding peace from a recent Oblate newsletter. The meeting closed with Mid-afternoon Prayer.

The meeting on October 8 began with the prayer for Oblates and continued with a C.D. of a talk at the Archabbey by Fr. Killian on "Holiness and Benedictine Spirituality." A discussion followed. The praying of Mid-afternoon Prayer ended the meeting.

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

Co-lay leader/secretary Michael Reichert wrote on September 4 and 28 and October 26. The meeting on August 8 was attended by four Oblates, six Oblate novices, and five inquirers. Deacon David Hornick, moderator, led the meeting. After an opening prayer,

**Jimmy (Giacomo) Polites** of Somerset, PA,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Deacon David and the others present. Then the group read the passage of the *Rule* for the day, and Oblate novice Kevin Getchius gave a presentation on St. Dominic and the Holy Rosary, with a detailed description of St. Dominic's life and a history of the rosary. A question-and-answer period followed. The meeting ended with Compline.

The meeting on August 22, also led by Deacon David, was attended by five Oblates, seven Oblate novices, and four inquirers. After an opening prayer and a reading of the passage of the *Rule* for the day, Michael Reichert gave a presentation on "*Lectio Divina* and Reverence for Scripture." He offered a detailed history of *lectio divina* and described the four movements. The attendees were given handouts, and they practiced group *lectio* to pray Psalm 100. Everyone attending participated in the process.

Both meetings in September were unusual insofar as each person scheduled to give a presentation could not be present, but in both cases the lack resulted in unexpected blessings. The meeting on September 12 was attended by six Oblates, five Oblate novices, and one inquirer and led by Deacon David. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, the group discussed the topic of saints, with reference to the attendees' choices of Oblate names and confirmation names and other saints to whom they had special devotion. Everyone participated. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline.

The meeting on September 26, also moderated by Deacon David, was attended by five Oblates, six Oblate novices, and four inquirers. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, the group discussed the topic of choices (the scheduled topic). During the lively exchange some of the attendees shared about some very personal issues residing in their hearts. The meeting ended with a joint prayer for those in special need.

The meeting planned for October 10 had to be cancelled. At least twelve deanery members attended a Catholic retreat on October 20-22, which was focused on the Ten Commandments and Our Lord's great commandment.

The meeting on October 24 was moderated by Deacon David and attended by eight Oblates, seven Oblate novices, and five inquirers. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, Deacon David led ceremonies to receive the following:

Oblates: **Tyler S. (Conrad) Reed** of Somerset, PA  
**William H. (Alexander) Strode, Jr.**, of Somerset, PA  
Oblate novice: **Charles J. Coy** of Somerset, PA.

Then Oblate John Lohr gave a presentation on "Care for the Poor and Social Concern." John stated that although the *Holy Rule* says little about care for the poor, Christians have a duty, from the great commandment, to love the materially as well as the spiritually poor and to care for their needs. The meeting ended with a closing prayer.

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

Secretary Phyllis Austin reported by e-mail on August 21, September 16, and October 10 and 12. During the summer it was reported that Oblate David Nice had been chosen to be the new lay leader. He replaces Ashley Leggett, whom we thank for his years of dedicated service.

Present at the meeting on September 11 were ten Oblates, two Oblate novices, and moderator Fr. David Griffin, O.S.B. After the praying of Vespers, Fr. David led the group in a first discussion of the book *Living in the Truth: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. They began with a review of Chapter 7 of the *Rule*. Some attendees remarked, concerning the first two chapters of *Living in the Truth*, that the text relates to ordinary people's circumstances and that Fr. Michael's analysis of humility seeks to overcome misconceptions of what humility really means. The discussion did not go beyond the first chapter. The meeting ended with prayers of intercession and the singing of the "Ultima."

Eight Oblates joined Fr. David for the meeting on October 9. After the praying of Vespers, the group continued to discuss *Living in the Truth*. It was emphasized that Fr. Michael Casey recommends that readers first understand ancient texts before trying to apply them. The group also considered the author's reflections on humility and the importance of commentaries that help readers to avoid

misinterpretation of the texts. The meeting ended with prayers of petition and the singing of the "Ultima."

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

Lay leader/secretary Nancy Chrabot reported by letter on August 17 and September 12. Thirteen people attended the meeting on August 3. Since Fr. Lee, moderator, was away, Oblate novice Kevin Gorman, who was preparing for ordination as a deacon, gave a "practice homily" on the Solemnity of the Assumption (August 15). Kevin spoke of some ways in which the Blessed Mother had come into his life and then spoke about Mary's gifts and about her being different from us and yet very much like us. She let God's power work in her and gives us an example of humility and obedience, by which she always submitted to the will of God. Kevin also encouraged the Oblates to pray Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer daily and to read from the *Rule* of St. Benedict daily. Then there was some discussion, and the meeting ended with the praying of Vespers.

Thirteen people attended the meeting on September 7 despite a thunderstorm that kept some people from coming. Fr. Lee gave a presentation on the importance of faith and prayer. He spoke about vocal and mental prayer, the importance of praying the Divine Office (daily if possible), three dimensions of faith (knowledge, assent, and trust), the call to have courage and be good examples of faith in today's decadent society, and the need for frequent confession and Mass (daily if possible). Devotion to our Blessed Mother is also a great help. Fr. Lee also encouraged the group to pray for people suffering hardships and touched on the topic of fasting. The meeting ended with the praying of Vespers. Some of the attendees were inquirers, and they were given reading material on the *Rule* and the Oblate Program.

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

Lay leader Timothy Lenhart reported on August 24 and September 28, and secretary Jacob Maldonado reported on October 25. The meeting on August 23, attended by five men, began with an opening prayer. Then the group reviewed the questions from Lesson 1 from the formation lessons. They also discussed the consecration at Mass, the article on peace in the Oblate newsletter, a statement on holiness from *Lumen Gentium*, and the examen of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Next they read *RB* 65: 11-22 and reflected on the changes in society since St. Benedict's day. The meeting ended with the closing prayer at the end of Lesson 1.

The meeting scheduled for September 27 had to be cancelled because of the lack of staff. At the meeting on October 25, Tim Lenhart stepped down as lay leader since he was soon to move from the area. Oblate Kenneth Miller was chosen as the new lay leader, and Jacob Maldonado was to assist him in addition to serving as secretary. The group reviewed Lesson Two from the formation lessons and discussed the status of Oblate novices. They also considered changing the night of Oblate meetings. The meeting ended with a prayer.

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

Lay leader/secretary Sue Wykoff reported by phone on November 6. Only two people attended the meeting on September 24. They prayed the Liturgy of the Hours and talked about forthcoming changes in the schedule of meetings because of Sue's moving to a location farther from Williamsport. The meeting in November was to address this issue further.

On September 30 at St. Joseph the Worker Parish,  
**Bernice (Scholastica) Kibbe** of South Williamsport, PA,  
made her final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Brian F. Van Fossen, pastor. Also present were two other Oblates and some of Bernice's family.

**Various Locations**

On July 8 in the chapel at the Stiles Unit of Beaumont, TX, Rev. Steven L. Leger received as Oblate novices:

**John S. Auer** of Beaumont, TX  
**Jose Alvarado** of Beaumont, TX  
**Tommy Lee Dean** of Beaumont, TX  
**John Francis Harrup** of Beaumont, TX  
**Kenneth D. Martin, Sr.**, of Beaumont, TX  
**Chuck Purdy** of Beaumont, TX  
**Stephen L. Stoeltje** of Beaumont, TX  
**Leslie W. Todd** of Beaumont, TX  
**Joseph A. Vidal** of Beaumont, TX.

On August 8 in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice  
**James Kirby** of Morgantown, WV.  
Also present at the ceremony were Fr. Isaac, O.S.B. (who had ministered in Morgantown), and Oblate Pauline Lanciotti.

On August 18 at his home, **Anthony J. "Dutch" Surman** of Pittsburgh, PA,  
was invested as an Oblate novice by Fr. Thomas Acklin, O.S.B.

On September 11, at St. Alphonsus Church in Tupper Lake, NY,  
**Raymond M. (Germanus) Bigrow** of Tupper Lake, NY,  
made his final Oblation before Deacon James T. Ellis.

On October 22 at Infant of Prague Church in Jacksonville, NC, Rev. Gregory Spence, pastor, invested as an Oblate novice  
**Sheila M. Irizarry** of Jacksonville, NC.

The ceremony took place after a Sunday Mass, and Sheila's family was present. She is the wife of Oblate novice José Irizarry.

On October 28 at Holy Trinity Church in Harvard, MA, Rev. Terence Kilcoyne invested as an Oblate novice

William A. "Bill" Scanlon of Worcester, MA.

**SICK & INFIRM MONKS**

The following monks of the Archabbey have been hospitalized or otherwise especially ill during the past three months and could use our prayers: Fr. Bede Hasso, Br. Benedict Janecko (recovering from surgery), Fr. Augustine Flood, Fr. Stephen Honeygosky (recovering from injuries from bicycle accident), Fr. Thomas Acklin (forthcoming surgery), and Br. James Cartwright.

**SOME SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Oblates and all their guests are always welcome to pray the Liturgy of the Hours with the monastic community. If large numbers are coming, it is good to notify the Oblate Office in advance so that there will be sufficient booklets for all the guests. Please note the importance of praying with the monastic community. If you are a guest and do not know the community's pace, please do not recite or sing until you know the right pace. Sometimes guests sing loudly and erratically, and the result is chaotic for everyone! If you have a good voice, please be especially careful to sing at a moderate tone and in synchronization with others so that we may sing together and with reverence. Thank you!
2. Oblates are welcome to attend concerts offered by the Saint Vincent Camerata. On Saturday, November 18, at 7:30 P.M. St. Bernard Church in Mt. Lebanon and on Sunday, November 19, at 3:00 in the Archabbey Basilica (alas, this concert conflicts with the Oblate meeting), there will be a performance of "J.S. Bach and Buxtehude: Cantatas and Arias" with Chatham Baroque as special guests. On Saturday, December 9, at 7:30 P.M. in the Archabbey Basilica, there will be "4<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival of Lessons and Carols." On Tuesday, January 23, 2018, at 7:30 P.M. in the Archabbey Basilica, there will be a concert in honor of Dr. Martina Luther King, Jr., in a combined choir with the Penn State Choir. For tickets and further information for all performances, phone 724-805-2579.
3. 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 initials after their names such as "O.S.B.Obl." (This provision is in the *Oblate Formation Booklet*.) Using such an appendage is contrary to Catholic tradition and practice.
4. For those who would like to plan ahead for Oblate events in 2018, the Solemnity of St. Benedict (with Mass at 4:00 P.M.) will be on Wednesday, March 21, 2018. The Feast of St. Benedict (with Mass at 10:00 A.M. for the solemn profession of vows) will be on Wednesday, July 11, 2018.

**DIRECTORY OF OBLATES: Application form**

I would like to be included in the next edition (whether e-mail or not) of the *Directory* of Oblates affiliated with Saint Vincent Archabbey. (The next hard copies will not be issued until 2019.) The information that I would like to have included is the following:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
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Please send this form to the Oblate Office by U.S. mail or by e-mail to [svaoblates.stvincent.edu](mailto:svaoblates.stvincent.edu) .

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**(See past newsletters or phone Saint Vincent College Book Center for previous presentations.)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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)

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