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THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

Saint Vincent Archabbey

300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690

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Please note forms on flier for renewal of Oblation and for celebration on March 21.

WHAT SHOULD NEVER HAPPEN “HAPPENS ALL TOO OFTEN” (RB 65:1); YET HERE IS AN OCCASION OF DEEPER CONVERSION AND TRUST IN GOD’S MERCY

Dear Oblates, Oblate Novices, and Friends,

We live in a non-ideal world, in a non-ideal Church, and in non-ideal families and communities. Some of the flaws are unavoidable while others, alas, stem from evil choices. We Christians live by high ideals, but we almost always fall short. We monks and Oblates know that we should not murmur (RB 34:6-7), and yet sometimes we grumble about our problems to get a bit of fleeting relief. We know that we ought always to be moderate in our consumption of food and drink (RB 39 & 40), and yet some of us chronically overindulge or think immoderately about the next meal. We know that “nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God” (RB 43:3), and yet we may often fail to find enough time to pray the portion of the Divine Office to which we are committed. We know that we should “bear injuries patiently” (4:30) and “love [our] enemies” (4:31), all in the love of Christ, and yet we readily complain about people who hurt us and may secretly delight in the failures of those whom we dislike. We know that we should catch hold of evil thoughts quickly and “[dash] them against Christ” (Prol: 28), and yet we find gratification in lingering in such destructive plottings. If we pause to examine our lives and reflect on such inconsistencies, we may be tempted to despair over the glaring hypocrisies in our spiritual lives. With so many serious defects, how are we to begin to overcome our lamentable lack of patience, perseverance, stability, humility, prompt obedience, inner recollection, horror for sin, and charity?

Wisdom from the Rule and the Bible

The Scriptures and the *Holy Rule* remind us in many ways that it is our very weaknesses, including hypocritical behaviors, that can serve as the seedbed for spiritual growth. King David’s outrageous sins of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11 & 12) led the prophet Nathan to stir him to awareness of his guilt and thus to prayerful repentance, growth in humility, and grace-filled acceptance of the death of his child. Our Lord’s disciples’ fearful encounter with the storm on the sea led Him to chide them for their lack of faith (Mark 4:35-41), but all this helped them to be in awe of Christ as Lord and to welcome Him to strengthen their faith. St. Paul’s recognition of his not doing what he “really” wanted to do

(with his innermost self) led him to put the whole messy situation in God’s hands and to exclaim, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 7:25). Indeed only Christ could deliver him “from this mortal body” (7:24), and St. Paul learned that Christ was very eager to bestow on him lavish graces to effect such a deliverance.

Every monastery and, indeed, every Christian home should be a place where, despite all sorts of human weakness, spiritual growth is valued and nurtured as a top priority. The *Rule* certainly underscores this necessity. The monastery should be “a school for the Lord’s service” (Prol: 45), where we “prepare our hearts and bodies for the battle of holy obedience to [the Lord’s] instructions” (Prol: 40) and where we learn to “run on the path of God’s commandments” (Prol: 49). It should also be a school of charity. At community meetings “the brothers ... are to express their opinions with all humility, and not presume to defend their own views obstinately” (3:4). “In the monastery no one is to follow his own heart’s desire” (3:8), but rather each one is to obey the abbot first and then also his fellow monks in the love of Christ. The abbot himself should guide the monks in such a way that everything he teaches and commands “should, like the leaven of divine justice, permeate the minds of the disciples” (2:5). In the monastic community all the monks are to “cherish Christ above all” (5:2), and no one is to be deliberately “disquieted or distressed” since the monastery is “the house of God” (31:19). Furthermore, all are to “serve one another in love” (35:6); all the members are to “be at peace” (34:5); all are to support one another “with the greatest patience” in their “weaknesses of body or behavior” (72:5).

Those weaknesses of body and behavior can be very great indeed, as we see dramatically in St. Benedict’s chapter on the prior (RB 65), and yet despite the failure of lofty ideals to materialize in such situations, there is a pressing need to live in hope and, with the help of God’s grace, to work to overcome defects. The prior of the monastery, who is second in charge after the abbot, is to be a model monk who “is to carry out respectfully what his abbot assigns to him” (65:16) and “should be

concerned to keep what the rule commands" (65:17). (Much the same can be said about the deans, the cellarer, the infirmarian, and the porter.) However, we hear from the outset of the chapter that having a prior "has been the source of serious contention in monasteries" (65:1). Apparently from St. Benedict's experience, a prior could be "puffed up by the evil spirit of pride" (65:2); he might think himself to be "exempt from his abbot's authority" (65:6); the existence of a prideful prior could lead to the development of "envy, quarrels, slander, rivalry, factions and disorders of every kind" (65:7); and monks involved in the controversies "go to their ruin" (65:9). If an abbot should find it necessary to depose or even expel a prior, he must remember that he is responsible to God for his judgments and careful, on his part, not to let "flames of jealousy or rivalry sear his soul" (65:22). That sort of language may be difficult to hear, and yet it shows that even the most gross of imperfections and scandalous situations should not be allowed to hinder the growth of a Christian community, or of its individuals, on the path of salvation. The very strict measures used to counteract the evils that can erupt are meant to ensure that the way of Christ's love might prevail over the community's disorders, however grave.

Example of a lamentable situation

When we encounter lamentable or even scandalous situations in our daily lives, we may feel like crying out, "This should never happen!" Despite our feelings we can realize in faith that, whether we can change something for the better or not, there are graces hidden in the situation for our salvation and growth in faith. Some weeks ago, when I was driving early on a Sunday morning on my way to a Mass at 8:00, about a mile from the church I found that the road I needed to take was blocked because of construction. There were no detour signs but only a turn-off to an expressway that I definitely did not want to take. Caught in a bind and not familiar with the roads in the area, I certainly thought that such a thing should never happen. Didn't "they" consider that some people don't know their way or that a priest might be traveling along that road to celebrate Mass? Fortunately, almost without thinking I was able to make a U-turn and then found another road, a few miles back from the road-block, that led to the church. (When I shared my frustration with the ushers at the church, they indicated that the construction had been announced on the radio; but, I thought, what about travelers who don't listen to the radio?) In any case, there was surely a blessing in disguise. The incident taught me that every journey, like the journey of life, has its uncertainties; it reminded me of the necessity of faith and trust especially when I have little or no control; it reinforced in me the importance of growing in humility and of not complaining or blaming when I don't get my way. Yes, in every occurrence that "should never happen," there are hidden graces that help us sometimes to make a regrettable

situation better and always to grow into a deeper communion with Christ, our only Redeemer.

Ways of dealing with defective situations

How, then, can we deal with such incidences in a more faith-filled way? First, there are many events over which we have no control. On a scale of world, national, and local events, we hear about senseless killings, disastrous medical procedures, youths who commit suicide, companies that cheat consumers and employees, and governments that rig elections to maintain authoritarian rule. In such instances we can pray for the people involved and especially for the conversion of those who contribute to such evils. We can also look to our own lives and perhaps recognize some of the greed, selfishness, indifference, and hopelessness that lie behind notorious tragedies. Also, there are the faults of other people, whom we may judge as needing swift and firm correction. Most of the time we can do little to change others, who may very well be struggling to overcome their faults in ways we cannot perceive. Our main task is to learn to love others as they are, to forgive them if we have been hurt, and to do small things in our own lives that minimize the bad effects of others' disordered ways.

Above all, we need to acknowledge our own personal flaws that lead us to do what we should not do (and what our better self does not want to do). Like St. Paul, we can say, "I cannot even understand my own actions. I do not do what I want to do but what I hate I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend" (Rom 7:15, 16). Recognizing the great inconsistency of our lives, we may be tempted to despair or simply to ignore the defects. The Christian, Benedictine approach to our moral weaknesses is to be both firm and compassionate with ourselves. We need to take resolute measures to guard our hearts to avoid near occasions of sin; we need to confess our sins and to change our bad habits. We need to focus on the defects that are most serious and to work on them persistently. We need to ask the Lord to give us renewed courage to face our sinfulness and not to give in to indifference or despair. We need to embrace the call to ongoing conversion and to remember not to make excuses that would exempt us from further transformation and sanctification.

Remedies in liturgy & sacraments

Those of us who are Catholics have some wonderful remedies to deal with our moral weaknesses. During the Penitential Act at the beginning of Mass, we have an opportunity to examine our consciences and to own up to our responsibility for some recent sins. (Those of us who are priests can be careful to pause long enough to allow for a remembrance of one or two sins!) If the Confiteor is used, we have an occasion to acknowledge that we have "sinned greatly" and to strike our breasts three times in honest admission of guilt even as we ask the angels and saints to "pray for me to the Lord our

God.” We then hear that when we repent, God does “have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.” We Catholics also have the Sacrament of Penance, too often neglected or underused in recent decades. It is an honor and a privilege to receive the sacrament often, even once a month (as the sisters who taught me grade-school catechism suggested). It is a blessing to know that God takes us back again and again, that He gives us unique and powerful graces in the sacrament, and that He strengthens us for future avoidance of sin and near occasions of sin.

Example of doing something constructive

Amid my writing of this essay, I was blessed to be able to participate in the March for Life in Washington, DC, on January 23. It was edifying and energizing to see tens of thousands of people doing something positive and hope-filled about the abominable situation of legalized abortion and euthanasia in our country. It was encouraging to view multitudes of young people so zealous for the cause of life. It was gratifying, too, to witness older people and people in wheelchairs struggling along the path to say “Yes” to God’s plan for the sacredness of life and “No” to the poisonous disregard for life in our world. The minor inconveniences of travel, poor sleep, and irregular schedule seem insignificant beside these gross evils being opposed. Although abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, infanticide, and contraception should never happen and we can grow discouraged over the world’s promotion of such evils as if they were good, God always offers us a ray of hope. The March for Life showed that large numbers of faith-filled people do find the grace cheerfully to oppose these atrocities, to unite with others in the cause of reverence for life, and little by little to overcome the seemingly invincible forces that deny human beings the dignity that God gave them.

Application for Lent

As Lent approaches, we might ask ourselves how we are dealing with sin in our lives. Do we own up quickly to our part in what “happens too often” but never should? Do we guard ourselves “at every moment from sins and

vices” and “recall that [we are] always seen by God in heaven” (*RB* 7: 11, 13)? Do we often recall that “we are rightly taught not to do our own will” (7:20)? Do we assign ourselves salutary penances (see *RB* 23-29) that will help us to overcome our flaws even while we “exercise the utmost care and concern for wayward brothers” (27:1), including ourselves, and remember that God is all-patient, all-merciful, and all-loving? Are we striving to be faithful to our commitment to pray the Divine Office and to practice *lectio divina* regularly whether we feel like it or not? When we look at the lives of the saints (at least after their conversion experiences), do we “blush for shame at being so slothful, so unobservant, [and] so negligent” (73:7) and yet still persist in” hastening toward [our] heavenly homeland (73:8)? And if we are Catholic, we might consider going to confession more than just once or twice a year.

Value of stability & conversatio morum

Yes, many things that should never happen do, in fact, happen, sometimes through our own fault. Our promise of stability urges us to keep struggling to overcome our sinful ways. Our promise of ongoing conversion reminds us not become apathetic about the urgency of further spiritual growth, often through suffering. We need daily to welcome the grace to begin again to “run on the path of God’s commandments” (Prol: 49). God loves us so much as to accept us amid all our flaws, but He also loves us too much to let us stay where we are. May we rejoice in His every effort to purify us of sinful tendencies and to help us “set out for the loftier summits of ... teaching and virtues” (73:9), which God meant for us to attain from the moment He created us.

In the peace of Christ and Saint Benedict,

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

RENEWAL OF OBLATION AND KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE ARCHABBEY

All Oblates who do not have the occasion to renew their Oblation at St. Vincent or with local deaneries are encouraged to make their renewals privately on or about the Solemnity of Saint Benedict, March 21, and to send a completed renewal form (see the flier) to the Oblate Office. It is helpful to know of your ongoing, active interest in the Oblate Program and your personal growth in Benedictine spirituality. Those wishing to make donations may write out checks to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY. (Now that the Oblate Office is dependent on donations for its operation [except for photocopies], donations are especially helpful.)

Also, if you are an Oblate novice who is not involved in a deanery and have not contacted the Archabbey for several years, please use the renewal form to express your interest in the Oblate Program. In particular, if you have been an Oblate novice for over a year, please remember that you are eligible to become a full Oblate if you fulfill the requirements in II.E of the *Oblate Formation Booklet*. In any case, it would be good to know if we can help you in any way on your journey as an Oblate / Oblate novice. Also, if you are no longer interested in the Oblate Program and do not wish to receive the newsletter, this might be a good opportunity to let us know your intention. If you are genuinely interested in continuing your pursuit of an Oblate vocation, please do renew your Oblation in a living, faith-enhancing way.

Also, if you are an inquirer on our temporary mailing list and if you are still interested in receiving this newsletter, please let us know. Those inquirers who have not been in touch with the Oblate Office for over a year will be removed from

the mailing list as of the next newsletter unless they let Br. Jeremiah or Fr. Donald that they would like to remain on the list.

A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS

January, 2012

Dear Oblates and Friends,

Saint Benedict, whose feast day we celebrate during the season of Lent on March 21, tells us in his *Rule* that Lent is a time to “look forward to Holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing.” Lest we imagine that these are simply the wishes of a utopian dreamer, we should recall that Saint Benedict’s sixth-century world was quite similar to our twenty-first century world. It was a world where everything seemed to be falling apart, with the disintegration of the once-powerful Roman Empire. It was a world where hope in peace and prosperity was giving way to despair in the face of violence and the loss of prosperous well-being. Yet Saint Benedict’s way prevailed in the birth of a new world, so that today Saint Benedict is honored as the Patron of Western Civilization.

We, like the communities Saint Benedict founded, will be able to live in joy and spiritual longing, regardless of the circumstances of our lives, if we believe the Good News which Jesus proclaims in the Gospel. At the Last Supper, Jesus tells His disciples (and tells us) that we can receive the gift of living in Him just as He lives in God the Father. He says, “I have told you this so that My joy might be in you and your joy might be complete” (John 15:11). Lent is a time of spiritual longing for the gift of a deeper trust in the words that Jesus speaks to each of us. In this faith in the Risen Lord and in life in Him, we will experience the gift of unconquerable joy and peace which surpasses understanding.

May the coming days of Lent truly be a privileged time of interior pilgrimage as we follow the way Christ has shown us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Archabbot Douglas

THE SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT AT THE ARCHABBEY ON MARCH 21, 2012

Oblates from all locations are welcome to join Oblates of the Latrobe (St. Gregory) Deanery on **Wednesday, March 21**, to celebrate the Solemnity of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict with the monastic community and other guests. The schedule includes concelebrated Mass at 4:00 P.M., supper at 5:30 P.M. (in Placid B), Oblation ceremonies at 6:30 P.M. (in the basilica), Evening Prayer with the monastic community at 7:30 P.M., and a social at 8:05 P.M. (in the parish Assembly Room). Members of the Oblate community and their guests who wish to attend should fill out the form on the flier and send it to Chris Karem by March 14. The cost of the supper is \$6.50. Checks should be made out to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY, and reservations should be made in advance so that we can plan for the right number of people. Those needing overnight rooms should contact Fr. Donald very soon since the number of rooms is very limited.

OBLATE DAY 2012 ON SEPTEMBER 23; DAY OF RECOLLECTION ON OCTOBER 13

This year's Oblate Day will be Sunday, September 23, and Fr. Andrew is scheduled to be the speaker. The fall day of recollection is scheduled for Saturday, October 13, and Fr. Thomas Acklin is scheduled to be the retreat master.

“OBLATE RETREATS,” MAY 18-20 and JUNE 8-10, 2012

Oblates and others interested in Benedictine spirituality are invited to participate in either (or both) of this year's two “Benedictine” retreats. The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2012, have been scheduled. The retreats on Benedictine spirituality are to be held on May 18-20, 2012, and June 8-10, 2012. The first, to be directed by Fr. Jeffrey Nyardy, will include a Mass for the priestly ordination of Br. Francis and Br. Nathanael. The second, to be directed by Fr. Edward Mazich, will be a silent retreat. **Note that both of these retreats will be based on Benedictine spirituality** although retreatants are not limited to Oblates. All those on the Oblate mailing list should have received a listing of retreats, but if you need a brochure, contact the Oblate Office. Registration (and all other special arrangements) should be done through

the St. Vincent Retreat Program, and not through the Oblate Office.

BROTHER JEREMIAH TO BE ORDAINED A DEACON; OBLATES ARE WELCOME

Br. Jeremiah Lange, Assistant Director of Oblates, and Br. Maximilian Maxwell are scheduled to be ordained to the diaconate on Saturday, April 14, at 10:00 A.M. at the Archabbey Basilica. Any Oblates who wish to attend are welcome. If you wish to stay for lunch, please notify Fr. Donald at 724-805-2291 by April 10.

PLEASE CHECK BOOKSHELVES FOR BOOKS MISSING FROM OBLATE LIBRARY

Despite efforts to check books out only through a librarian at Oblate meetings in Latrobe, some books continue to “walk away.” Please review the list of lost and missing books at the end of this newsletter, and see if you might have any of them on your bookshelves. Thank you! Also, some people have had books out for unreasonably long periods of time – up to seven years. If you are one of these people, please return borrowed books promptly! It is uncharitable to prevent other people from using these books.

OBLATES RECEIVE 10% DISCOUNT AT BASILICA GIFT SHOP

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

MENTORING PROGRAM: THOSE WHO DESIRE MENTORS OR WHO WISH TO MENTOR

Please contact the Oblate Office if you are an inquirer or an Oblate novice (or even an Oblate) who would like to have an Oblate to help you on your journey in Benedictine spirituality. Likewise let us know if you are willing to volunteer to serve as a mentor; if you do volunteer, you will receive a packet of information to assist you in your ministry. **Right now we are in special need of mentors; several people have requested mentors, and we do not have any more volunteers to serve in this way.**

OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS: Meeting on January 15

The Oblate Board of Advisors met on Friday, January 15, with five Oblate members and Marcela Cordero-Garcia of the Baltimore Deanery joining Fr. Donald. The group discussed resignations and possible new membership, the replacement of long-overdue books in the Oblate Library, the possibility of a “cyber-deanery,” possible ecumenical initiatives, and the possibility of finding someone to put the Oblate files on computer. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 20, at 6:30 P.M. Representatives of deaneries outside Latrobe are always welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF OBLATE EVENTS DESIRED

Oblate Joyce Collins of West Newton, a member of the Board of Advisors, has been assembling a photograph album of pictures of Oblate events that the Oblate Office has accumulated over the years. For some reason no photographs previous to 2002 have been found. If any Oblates have photographs of past Oblate events, especially before 2002, and are willing to donate them to the Oblate Office, please send them to us, preferably with dates and names of the people in the photographs.

DIRECTORY OF OBLATES: LATE BUT FINALLY READY

Since most entries involve e-mail addresses, the 2011-12 *Directory of Oblates* will be distributed by e-mail to everyone listing an e-mail address unless a hard copy is requested. (Those who did not list an e-mail address will receive a hard copy.) The *Directory* is revised about every two years, and copies are sent only to those who wish to participate. For security reasons copies are not sent to prisons. Chris Karem is the compiler; so if anyone has any comments or corrections, please contact Chris. Her e-mail address is: ckarem@comcast.net, or she can be contacted by mail at Mrs. Christine Karem, 2012 Souli St., Greensburg, PA 15601.

RECOMMENDED READING (*The books listed are available in the Oblate Library.*)

- Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M.Cap., *Sober Intoxication of the Spirit: Filled with the Fullness of God* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 2005)

NEW BOOKS ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

- Thomas Merton (Fr. Louis, O.C.S.O.), *An Introduction to Christian Mysticism: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 3* (ed. by Patrick F. O’Connell) (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2008)
- Sister Judith Sutera, O.S.B., *Advent and Christmas Wisdom from St. Benedict* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2010)

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 are welcome to the monthly meetings of the Latrobe Deanery of Oblates, mostly at 6:45 P.M. in seminary classroom Brownfield 202 on Sundays. The next four meetings will be on February 19, March 18, April 15, and May 20. Those wishing to come early for Evening Prayer (at 5:00) and supper before the meetings at St. Vincent should phone Fr. Donald in advance at (724) 805-2291. Classes on Benedictine spirituality will continue to be offered at 3:00 P.M. on the same dates. On February 19, Fr. Robert Roche will offer a teaching on "*Lectio Divina*"; on March 18, Fr. Justin Matro a teaching on "*Conversatio morum*"; and on April 15, Fr. Bonaventure Curtis a presentation on "Obedience in Benedictine Spirituality."

ADORATION FOR VOCATIONS

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed every Sunday from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. in St. Gregory Chapel. Oblates are urged to use these times for Eucharistic adoration, if possible, especially on the Sundays of Oblate classes and meetings, to pray for vocations, and especially for vocations to the Archabbey.

SUGGESTED LENTEN PROJECTS FOR 2012

It is suggested that the Oblates and Oblate novices affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey rededicate themselves to the regular praying of the Liturgy of the Hours (as much as their schedules allow) and the regular practice (ideally daily) of *lectio divina*. The undertaking of good spiritual reading in the place of less beneficial activities is also recommended.

OBLATE WEBSITE AND E-MAIL ADDRESS

Saint Vincent's Oblate Program now has its own web site. The address is: <http://www.svaoblates.org>. Br. Jeremiah is trying to keep the web site updated weekly with relevant information. For those of you who prefer to use e-mail to contact the Oblate Office, Br. Jeremiah may be contacted at the address: svaoblates@email.stvincent.edu. He will try to respond as best he can or give the messages to Fr. Donald. Both of us have much other work to do; so we cannot guarantee a quick response. Please be patient with us.

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

Thanks to Fr. Andrew, talks given at Oblate meetings in Latrobe (when the presenter is willing and when someone is able to videotape) will be made available to those who desire to have copies for a small cost. So far, Br. Albert's presentation on the Liturgy of the Hours, Fr. Cyprian's presentation on the revised English translation of the *Roman Missal* (both on November 20), Fr. Boniface's presentation on poverty and simplicity, and Fr. Killian's presentation on holiness and Benedictine spirituality are available for purchase, the D.V.D.'s costing \$5.00 each and the C.D.'s costing \$2.60 each. **Please see the order form on the flier attached to this newsletter.**

STATUS OF THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATES SCHOLARSHIP

Br. Norman Hipps, O.S.B., President of St. Vincent College, wrote to Fr. Donald on December 29 with current information on the scholarship set up by Oblates several years ago. During 2010-2011 two awards of \$500.00 were granted to juniors Austen Fradeneck of Hollidaysburg, PA, and Anne Roslonski of Pittsburgh, PA. As of June 30, 2011, the book value of the fund was \$10,395.00, and the market value was \$12,435.76. Anyone wishing to donate to the Oblate Scholarship may contact Beth A. Conway, Director of Stewardship and Donor Relations, by phone at (724) 805-2275 or by e-mail at beth.conway@stvincent.edu.

OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by e-mail on November 6 and December 21. The meeting on October 27, attended by eight people, involved reading the section of the *Rule* on "reverence in prayer" (*RB 20*); there was a good discussion. The group was awaiting the arrival of books for monthly study. The meeting ended with Compline.

Five people attended the meeting on November 24, during which the group began to discuss the book *Songs of the Heart*, with a look at Chapter 1, "Path of Life." The meeting on December 20, attended by four people, began with Mass and then continued with a discussion of Chapter 2, "Leadership." As usual, the meeting closed with Compline.

OBLATE GROUP IN PHILADELPHIA, PA

Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported on February 2 that the meeting on January 7 took place at 10:00 A.M. at St. Mary's parish hall. After the praying of Morning Prayer and a brief coffee break, the group gathered for a presentation on the Prologue of the *Rule* followed by some faith-sharing. Then they prayed Midday Prayer and enjoyed lunch together.

Fifteen people were in attendance besides Fr. Vincent de Paul. The next meeting took place on February 4.

NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES

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

Moderator Deacon Ralph DeCecco reported on January 16 and 25. On November 26 seven people joined Deacon Ralph and his wife, Janet, who gave a lesson on "Obedience, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the *Rule* of St. Benedict."

At the meeting on January 14, ten people came together to hear a lesson given by Oblate John Simpson on "The Trials and Blessings of Oblate Life." The group also prayed the Liturgy of the Hours.

Deacon Ralph also works with Oblates in Mercer, PA, and there is some thought of starting a deanery there.

Annvile, PA (St. Placid Deanery) -- *meetings at 3 P.M. on 4th Sunday of each month, St. Paul the Apostle Church, Annville, or St. Joseph Church in Mechanicsburg or St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Mechanicsburg.*

Lay leader Gabriele Terrill wrote on October 30 and December 7. Fifteen people attended the meeting on October 23, which took place at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. After the praying of Evening Prayer, an inquirer was welcomed, and then Fr. John Peck, moderator, spoke about his recent pilgrimage to Italy, including his visit to St. Francis' hermitage, an opportunity to see the Holy Father close-up, and his viewing of relics. Three of the group spoke about their attendance at the day of recollection at the Archabbey on October 15. Fr. John recommended reading the chapter "Dryness in Prayer" from *Lessons from St. Benedict*.

The meeting on November 20 in Annville, attended by fifteen people, began with Evening Prayer. Then there was some talk about the changes in the translation of the Roman Catholic Mass. Next the group read *RB* Prologue: 45-50, and Fr. John read from the book *The Oblate Life*, Chapter 17 on "Stability." There was some discussion about the volatile world of St. Benedict's time, our own fragmented world, St. Benedict's warning that we not be too ready to give up the journey of faith, and the truth that stability prevents us from running away from necessary development. To be silent is to let go of all the needless preoccupation with the past and the future so that we may become aware of the still center where we can meet God, in the silence of the human heart.

Asheboro, NC (St. Joseph / St. Gabriel Deanery) -- *meetings at Lillian Hazelwood's home, 4th Sat. of month*

Lay leader Doris Blase reported on November 8. Four Oblates, including Laura Lowder, visiting from the Southern Pines Deanery, met on October 29. They opened and closed with the Liturgy of the Hours and spent some time discussing the reading from the *Rule* for the day. The group rejoiced in Doris' miraculous recovery from gall-bladder surgery on September 23; she had been very close to death.

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

There was no report.

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

Lay leader Ethel Galli wrote on November 5 and December 10. At the meeting on October 27, after the praying of Vespers, Oblate Ronald Weleski gave a summary of Fr. Killian's three presentations at the day of recollection at the Archabbey on October 15. The theme of the talks was "A Call to Holiness and Mission." In sum, the call to holiness is initiated by God's love for us, and we are given a free will in order to receive God's love, to let God draw us out of ourselves, and to extend that love others to enhance their God-given dignity. Our mission is to manifest God's love to those whose lives we touch. We are to seek a growing relationship with God in the little things of life, such as a sick call to the hospital.

A meeting on December 1 took the place of meetings in November and December because of conflicts involving Thanksgiving and Christmas. After the praying of Vespers, there was a reading of *RB* 7:49-50 and from a commentary by Esther deWaal. The group then heard a presentation by Edyie Schirra, a former DRE of St. Fidelis Church. She summarized a book on spirituality, *Christian Life in the World Today* by Fr. Eugene Walsh. In sum, he asserts that prayer and spiritual exercises are necessary for a fruitful life of faith. On the other hand, God is also very present in our work and "is in some way at the tip of my pen, my spade, my brush, my needle" We are most completely absorbed in God when we are most completely absorbed in the job we are doing at any moment, and by working with full attention we struggle to bring the universe closer to perfection even while we become more beautifully human. After the presentation the group enjoyed a pre-Christmas celebration.

Carrolltown, PA (Sacred Heart Deanery) -- *monthly meetings at St. Benedict Church, in the church and/or a meeting room, on Sunday evenings at 6:00.*

Lay leader Mary Catherine Hoover reported by letter on December 9. There was no meeting in November, and none was scheduled for December. Mary Catherine and her husband, Bob, visited the Benedictine Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Rio Grande, Texas, and were very impressed with what the three sisters had done.

Charleston, SC – *monthly meetings at Cathedral of St. John the Baptist: Vespers in upper church, 6:30, meeting in cathedral hall at 7:00.*
There was no report.

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

Lay leader Mary Hoffken reported on November 26 and January 23. Some seven people, along with Fr. Richard Chirichiello, pastor, met on September 15 and continued to discuss humility from the *Rule*. Five people attended the meeting on October 11 and discussed Chapter 36 of the *Rule* (on the sick brothers). Only three people came for the meeting on November 10; since the meeting room was locked, they met briefly in the parking lot and expressed their desire for more “meat” in the Oblate program.

Eight people gathered for the meeting on January 10. After opening with the Invocation to Our Lady of Guadalupe, the group discussed correspondence from Fr. Donald about the future of the group. They agreed that they wanted a priest or deacon to direct them and that it would be good to discuss a Benedictine book at each meeting. Suggestions were made. Then the group discussed Chapter 4 of the *Rule*, “The Tools for Good Works,” before they closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

Frackville, PA (St. Dismas Deanery) – *monthly meetings at chapel in Frackville*

Oblate Jeffery McCaughtry, secretary, reported by letter on November 21, December 30, January 1 and January 12 and by phone on December 1. The monthly meeting on November 16 attracted 19 inquirers. Inquirer Rich Walter concluded a presentation on “Obedience in Humility,” and Jeff quoted passages from *RB* 7. Then Jeff offered the question, “What can we learn from silence?” After reflection in silence, there was time for comments, and one inquirer stated, “When we focus in our solitude, it’s clearer to discern the truth that’s right in front of us.” The meeting closed with intercessory prayers, an invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord’s Prayer. Some 15 people attended the meeting on November 30, along with Rev. William Seifert, pastor of St. Stephen of Hungary Church in Allentown, who has agreed to serve as moderator of the group.

On December 7 an Oblate social was held. Led by Deacon Mercado of St. Paul Church in Allentown, it attracted seventeen inquirers in addition to Jeff. A D.V.D. about St. Francis was shown, and a lengthy discussion followed.

Oblation ceremonies were held on December 28. Fr. Seifert received the following:

Oblate: **Jeffery (Dismas) McCaughtry** of Frackville, PA

Oblate novices: **Michael R. Breidenstein** of Frackville, PA.

Jeffrey Lorenz of Frackville, PA

Daniel B. Malloy of Frackville, PA

John M. Quier of Frackville, PA

Louis Silcott of Frackville, PA

Richard M. Walter of Frackville, PA.

Thus the group in Frackville officially became a deanery.

On January 1, following the homily at the Mass for the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, Fr. Seifert invested

Sean McCaffrey of Frackville, PA, as an Oblate novice.

In January Jeffery McCaughtry began a monthly newsletter for the deanery. On January 11 twenty-seven men attended an Oblate-sponsored “DVD/VHS movie night,” during which the Christian film *Fireproof* was shown.

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

Lay leader Carl Motter wrote on November 16, December 8, and January 13. At the meeting on November 14, after Evening Prayer, moderator Deacon Michael Russo showed and reviewed a second video about the Mass, which explained the liturgy from the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist to the conclusion. In explaining each part in historical detail, the video helped the group to realize what great reverence should be shown at every Mass.

At the meeting on December 5, which began with Evening Prayer, Deacon Michael led a discussion on plans for future meetings. The group decided to use the book *Preferring Christ* by Norvene Vest, an Oblate in California. The attendance at that meeting was low because of conflict with other commitments. The meeting on January 9 consisted of a delayed Christmas party at a restaurant. The dinner took place after the praying of Evening Prayer.

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

On November 20, the Solemnity of Christ the King, Fr. Cyprian Constantine, O.S.B., serving as the guest speaker, gave an oral/power-point presentation on the new English translation of the third edition of the *Roman Missal*, which was to take effect the following Sunday. Referring to the new translation as “a momentous change for all English-speaking countries,” he described some background, beginning with the hastily done first translation in 1970, which was meant to be tentative. A document from Rome issued in 2001, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, approved by Blessed Pope John Paul II,

changed the rules for translation from “dynamic equivalence” to “formal equivalence.” The result was a translation that is more accurate in terms of the original Latin, more poetic, more elegant, and more doctrinally precise. According to the traditional precept *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the new translation should help us to pray better and to understand the liturgy better. Fr. Cyprian then went through some of the specific changes and showed how they were a definite improvement. After his talk, loaves of pumpkin bread baked by Mary Ann Kaufman were sold; the desire was expressed to have cranberry bread, likewise to be purchased as a donation to charity, on December 18. (See the notes below on the 3:00 class.)

At the meeting on December 18, Mary Ann Kaufman and her husband, Gilbert, brought cranberry bread for those who had ordered it, and more; in sum, over \$1,000 was raised for poor Christian children in the Holy Land. The group of some 15 people discussed the remainder of Chapter 5, “Childhood and Obedience,” of the book *St. Benedict and St. Thérèse*. The topics treated included the importance of the spiritual battle, the true freedom that comes through obedience, and the call to obey Christ through other people, especially those who are difficult to love.

On January 6, some ten members of the Oblate community joined members of the family of deceased Oblate Anthony Campolongo for a wake service at 2:45 P.M. It was held at Bacha Funeral Home in Greensburg.

At the meeting on January 15, some 18 people came together to reflect on “Childhood and Stability,” Chapter 5 of the text. Stability as a Benedictine vow or promise and a basic Christian virtue means that “God is not elsewhere.” Stability challenges us not to run away from the present place and circumstances but to listen to God’s call right where we are. If we never stay put, then we do not give God a chance to transform us. Some elements of stability are detachment from things and from our false selves, being rooted in a particular place and a particular community, and finding God in the present moment. After the discussion the attendees, as usual, went to the basilica to pray Compline. Before Compline Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

Craig Gilbert of Delmont, PA.

Lessons in Latrobe at 3:00 P.M. before Oblate Meetings

On November 20, Br. Albert Gahr, O.S.B., gave a dynamic presentation on the Liturgy of the Hours, “the prayer of the Church,” to nearly 24 people. Giving a historical background to the Divine Office, he showed how it originated from the prayer of the apostles described in the Acts of the Apostles and, even further back, from the daily morning and evening prayer of pious Jews in the temple for centuries before Christ. Br. Albert also described the meanings given to the eight Hours, the origins of the “cathedral Office” and the “monastic Office,” and the distribution of psalms in the *Rule* of St. Benedict. He showed how the psalms chosen for Lauds on various days help to reflect traditional themes attributed to each day of the week. He concluded that St. Benedict’s saying that we “prefer nothing to the Work of God” (*RB* 43:3) indicates that we encounter Christ in a special way in the Divine Office and that praying the Hours brings the life of Christ to us in an especially effective way.

Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman, having baked and brought in loaves of pumpkin bread to be sold as a fund-raiser for a charitable cause, described the origin of her pumpkins-bread project and the two possible charities that could benefit from the Oblates’ donations for the bread. By vote the Oblates chose to help poor Christians in the Holy Land.

On December 18, Fr. Boniface Hicks, O.S.B., gave a presentation on “Poverty and Simplicity in Benedictine Life.” He commented that this was an especially appropriate time to speak about poverty since on the first Christmas Our Lord was born poor and humble. To be spiritually poor is to acknowledge our total dependence on God. We humans too often try to avoid being “human” by seeking never to lack anything. In contrast, Our Lord was fully human and resisted the temptations by Satan to deny His humanity. Fr. Boniface also spoke of dimensions of poverty from the Vatican document *Gaudium et Spes*, from Blessed Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, from Fr. John-Baptiste Metz’ book *Poverty of Spirit*, and from the *Holy Rule*, which calls for great personal responsibility along with radically communal ownership of property. True poverty overflows into generous self-giving, as we see in Our Lord’s gift of Himself in the Eucharist and in His words of praise for the poor widow who gave from her want.

On January 15, to a large audience of over 24 people, Fr. Killian Loch, O.S.B., gave a presentation on holiness and Benedictine spirituality. After offering a “podcast” for the Gospel of that Sunday (the call of the first four apostles in the Gospel of St. John), Fr. Killian asked the group what they were seeking in Benedictine spirituality. Although the call to holiness in response to God’s call may be very subjective, it is universal, as stated by *Lumen Gentium* from Vatican Council II, by Pope John Paul II, and by Pope Benedict. The *Rule* of St. Benedict is one time-tested path to holiness. After his formal presentation, Fr. Killian had everyone respond to quotes on holiness in small groups, which then reported to the whole group.

Minersville, PA (St. Malachy Deanery) – monthly meetings at the chapel in Minersville

There was no report.

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

Secretary Kathy Golchuk sent e-mail messages in November and December, and lay leader Brian Chisholm reported by phone on January 26. The meeting on October 28 was essentially an "information night" since most members were absent because of conflicting activities. Lay leader Brian Chisholm welcomed Kathy as the new secretary and announced that he was making his collection of books available to the deanery as a lending library. The group agreed to schedule future meetings on the last Monday of each month to avoid conflicts with other commitments. They also discussed seeking a priest to serve as moderator, writing to the bishop for that purpose, praying a novena to St. Benedict for that intention, and preparing for the Advent day of recollection on November 26.

The meeting on November 28 began with a discussion about the attempt by the "Occupy Vancouver Movement" to occupy Holy Rosary Cathedral during the morning Mass as a way to launch attacks on Christianity and, in particular, on the Catholic Church. There was also mention about plans to construct a recycling plant next to the Martyrs Shrine in Midland, Ontario; Brian planned to organize people to protest this construction because of the threat of environmental pollution. Brian also brought up a request from the Archabbey to review the *Oblate Formation Booklet* and said that he was working on finding a priest-moderator for the deanery. He then read from page 29 of the formation booklet and suggested that the members reflect on the Beatitudes and report on one of them in relation to the *Rule* and its application in daily life. It was hoped that these presentations would be made during the January meeting.

The meeting on December 5, held early in the month because of Oblates' commitments for Christmas, consisted of a potluck supper held at the home of Oblate Roy McKenzie.

The meeting on January 23 included a lively discussion on the Beatitudes. Some plans were made for the celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday in April.

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

Lay leader James Perini reported by e-mail on November 7 and January 13. After some delay because of a new pastor at St. Peter Parish and because of his illness, the Oblates planned their first meeting for 2011-12 for December 14. They celebrated a pre-Christmas party, with each attendee bring different food items. The group also decided what book to begin discussing in January.

On January 11 the group had its first meeting with Fr. Vincent Zidek, pastor, and discussed its path for the future. He suggested that the group visit Benedictine monastic communities other than the Archabbey, and so they planned to visit the Benedictine sisters in Perrysville (Pittsburgh) on February 15. The group also agreed to meet on March 21 at Our Lady Queen of Peace to reflect on their experience with the sisters.

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

Secretary Peggi Gabler wrote on November 12. The meeting on November 3 began with Evening Prayer in the church and the final Oblation of

Mary Lee (Barbara) Gabor of St. Marys, PA,

in the presence of Fr. Michael Ferrick, moderator, and the other seven-or-so Oblates present. Then the group moved downstairs for the Oblate prayer, a Benedictine prayer, and a reading from the *Rule*. The meeting ended with the serving of refreshments. It was decided to hold the next meeting in February, 2012.

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

Fr. Ronald Gatman, moderator, reported by e-mail on December 13. At the meeting in October, Fr. Patrick Van Durme gave a talk to the Oblates during Evening Prayer about how he was called to the priesthood and then to the vocation of an army chaplain. Fr. Van Durme is stationed at Hunter AAF in Savannah.

The meeting on November 20 brought together the Oblates for Mass in the priory chapel, with Fr. Chris Ortega as the main celebrant. Fr. Chris is a newly ordained diocesan priest. After the Mass all gathered for supper in the priory refectory, with over 20 people in attendance. It was also reported that for their project for the year the Oblates were donating money to help the priory to repair the chapel.

All the Oblates were invited to the priory's pre-Christmas party on December 16. The new bishop of Savannah, Bishop Hartmayer, was expected to attend as well as retired Bishop Boland.

In January Fr. Frank was to celebrate Mass for the Oblates, and in February it was expected that Sr. Mary Elizabeth, the prioress of the Carmelite monastery in Savannah, would give a talk during Evening Prayer.

Scranton, PA (St. Boniface/St. Lioba Deanery) -- monthly meetings on 3rd Fri. at Immaculate Conception Church

Lay leader Gretchen Meyers wrote on December 1, December 18, and January 16. The new moderator, Msgr. Vincent Grimalia, participated in the meeting on November 18 along with three others. Msgr. Grimalia introduced himself and mentioned that he was also involved with the Carmelite community in Sugar Loaf and that he was very interested in the field of continuing formation. He suggested that the group change their monthly meeting to Sunday afternoons, and the

group agreed to begin a new schedule in January.

Four people met on December 16 and continued a reading and discussion of the book *Engaging Benedict*. The discussion involved the chapter on humility and was rather long but fruitful.

On January 8 Msgr. Grimalia joined three others for a continued discussion on humility. He suggested that the group begin to engage in some group *lectio divina* at some meetings. Prayers were requested for two sick members.

Selingsgrove, PA (St. Anselm Deanery) – *monthly meetings at 2 P.M. on 2nd Sundays at St. Pius X Church in Selinsgrove*

Secretary Marcia La Bant reported by e-mail on November 14. Eleven people gathered for the meeting on November 13, for which Br. Jeremiah traveled from the Archabbey to serve as the guest speaker. Giving a presentation on *lectio divina*, he emphasized that *lectio* is a spiritual discipline and that we should make time for it every day in order to grow in the capacity to hear God's word. The meeting ended with Evening Prayer.

Southern Pines, NC (St. Ephrem the Syrian Deanery) – *monthly meetings on 2nd Thurs. of month*

Secretary Laura Lowder sent reports by e-mail on January 2 and January 14. Five people gathered for a meeting on December 1, and as usual the group began with the praying of Vespers and continued with a discussion of the *Rule* of St. Benedict.

At the meeting on January 12, the group welcomed a newcomer, an Oblate affiliated with the Camaldolese Benedictine monastery at Big Sur, California. The five people present began with Evening Prayer and then discussed Chapters 54 and 55 of the *Rule*. There was an animated exchange about possessions and how we deal with the worldly tendency to be acquisitive.

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

Secretary Kay Tittmann wrote or sent e-mails on November 16, December 12, and January 10. Lay leader Ashley Leggett, in the absence of Fr. David, led the meeting on November 14. The twelve people present prayed Evening Prayer and then entered into a discussion of Chapters 5 to 9 of the book *Benedict's Way*. The topics covered were chastity, hospitality, humility, service, and learning. The meeting closed with prayer, the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima," and prayer for various voiced intentions.

The meeting on December 12 began with some refreshments to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe along with several anniversaries of final Oblation. Lay leader Ashley Leggett led the meeting, attended by thirteen people, including two inquirers. After Evening Prayer the group began a discussion of Chapters 10-14 of the book *Benedict's Way*. Before the discussion of each chapter Ashley read a relevant section of the *Rule*. The topics treated were reverence, possessions, responsibility, reasonable balance, and conversion of life. The session closed with a prayer, the singing of the "Ultima," and the offering of several prayer intentions.

The meeting on January 9 consisted of an annual Mass followed by a potluck supper. The Mass for the Baptism of Our Lord was celebrated by Fr. David, moderator, in Our Lady of Victory Church. Twenty-two people were in attendance, and Oblates served in the various ministries. During the Mass the full Oblates renewed their Oblations. In his homily Fr. David connected the beginning of Jesus' public ministry with the beginning of new life for us in the new year and the mission given to us at baptism to usher in the Kingdom of God. Then there was a potluck supper in the church's social hall, which concluded with the Oblates' presenting to Fr. David a Christmas gift of \$200.00 for "Mission Mexico." He then reflected briefly about his work with the mission in Mexico with Penn State students, who have accompanied him to minister to the very poor in Mexico and have learned to adapt to primitive conditions.

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

Lay leader Dee Pauls wrote on November 4, and Oblate Anna Patti wrote on December 12. At the meeting on October 5, Fr. Michael Gabler, moderator, led a reading and discussion of verses 8-13 of the Prologue of the *Rule*. He emphasized the verse, "If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Today" always exists as an opportunity to respond to God's word, with no time to waste. Religious life and Oblate life are callings, not careers. Also, at that meeting Fr. Michael received the final Oblation of

John P. (James) Dooley of Virginia Beach, VA. (continued)

Seven people joined Fr. Michael for the meeting on November 2, which followed Mass for All Souls Day. Fr. Michael gave a brief talk on verses 14-20 of the Prologue, dealing with hearing the word of God and humbly obeying it. St. Benedict's appeal is addressed to the individual soul and all Christians; God Himself in His loving kindness calls us to true life and shows us the way.

At the meeting on December 7, Fr. Michael continued to offer reflections on the Prologue of the *Rule*, this time on verses 20-31. There was a good discussion on the performance of good works, on faith, and on our dependence on

grace. The evening closed with Night Prayer. The next meeting was to be held in February.

Williamsport, PA (Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus Deanery) -- meetings on last Sunday of each month, 1 P.M., St. Boniface Church or Mater Dolorosa Church

Oblate Sue Wykoff reported by e-mail on November 9 and November 14 and by letter on December 14. Three Oblates came together on October 30 and agreed to continue to meet at St. Boniface Church (although the former location of meetings, Mater Dolorosa, was to remain open after news about its possible closing). The group prayed Vespers and then listened to the first half of a radio program, "The Inner Life," aired by Relevant Radio and narrated by Fr. Boniface Hicks of the Archabbey, who is a regular guest on the program. Fr. Boniface spoke about monasticism. The program sparked discussion and memories of visits to St. Vincent. The group talked about ways in which people seek God through the *Rule* and in parishes. They planned to listen to the second half in November and concluded the meeting by sharing prayer requests and praying the "Angelus."

Because of complications the deanery subsequently decided that meetings would be held at Mater Dolorosa instead of St. Boniface Church.

Four people attended the meeting on November 27, which opened with Mid-Afternoon Prayer and continued with a listening to the rest of the Relevant Radio podcast on monasticism. Sue reported on her visit to a meeting of the Selinsgrove Deanery, at which Br. Jeremiah had given a presentation on *lectio divina*. There was an updated report on the future of Mater Dolorosa Church, and there was a discussion about the practice of making a prayer of thanksgiving after Holy Communion. There was some sharing of insights over a hand-out brought by Sue concerning a "Method of Thanksgiving after Communion." Then the group shared prayer requests and closed with a praying of the "Angelus." It was decided not to have a meeting in December.

Various Locations

On November 15 at Espiritu Santo Catholic Church in Safety Harbor, FL, Rev. Joseph A. Musco invested
Caroline Van Pelt of Clearwater, FL,
as an Oblate novice.

On December 28 in the Archabbey Basilica,
Mark (Michael) Medvitz of Downingtown, PA,
made his final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Donald along with Br. Jeremiah, Oblate Susan Wykoff of Lock Haven, and Oblates Sheila Flynn and James Bockhoff of Cleveland, Ohio, who happened to be making a retreat at the Archabbey at the time. (The latter are affiliated with St. Andrew Abbey.)

On January 3 at the chapel in Pendleton, IN, Deacon James MacDougall of St. Lawrence Church in Muncie, IN, invested
Daniel S. Flammer of Pendleton, IN,
as an Oblate novice. The ceremony took place during a communion service, and afterward Dan explained to the other attendees his vocation to become an Oblate of St. Benedict.

On January 15 in the chapel at Mercer, PA,
Claud Ellis of Mercer, PA,
made his final Oblation before Deacon Ralph DeCecco and the others who had gathered for a communion service.

On February 3 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Ogdensburg, NY, Rev. Joseph A. Morgan invested
John W. Power of Ogdensburg, NY,
as an Oblate novice.

On February 4 in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald invested
Michael McKay of Pittsburgh, PA,
as an Oblate novice. Michael had been a postulant at the monastery for over five months.

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. Gilbert Burke, Fr. Jacques Daley, Fr. Stephen Honeygosky, Fr. Paul Rubadue, Fr. Lee Yoakam, and Fr. Bonaventure (who underwent open-heart surgery on February 6).

DECEASED SISTER OF ST. EMMA MONASTERY

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Sr. Gaudentia Kaemmerle, O.S.B., who died on January 28 at the age of 97. Sr. Gaudentia was the last surviving founder among the Benedictine sisters in Latrobe/Greensburg, and she worked with the monks of the Archabbey in the monastery dining room during most of her time at St. Vincent (1934-1987).

OVERDUE OR MISSING LIBRARY BOOKS AND TAPES: PLEASE RESPOND!

During the past several 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. Thank you!**

- Fr. George A. Maloney, S.J., *The Jesus Prayer* (pamphlet)
- Susan Annette Muto, *Meditation in Motion*
- Fr. Guy-Marie Oury, O.S.B., *A Monastic Pilgrimage: Following the Footsteps of St. Benedict*
- Abbot David Parry, O.S.B., *Household of God*

RESERVATION FORM FOR CELEBRATION OF ST. BENEDICT DAY ON MARCH 21

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

___ I plan to attend the dinner for Oblates at St. Vincent on Wednesday March 21, 2012, along with ___ guests; I enclose _____ (\$6.50 per person; make out checks to **ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY**. An additional donation for the social would be welcome).

___ I plan to be invested as an ___ Oblate, ___ Oblate novice on March 21. On becoming a full Oblate, I plan to take the Oblate name _____. (*application form required*)

___ I would like overnight accommodations. (Please contact Fr. Donald well in advance.)

Please send this form to: **Mrs. Christine Karem, 2012 Souli St., Greensburg, PA 15601 (phone: 724-875-0285).**

SCHEDULE FOR SOLEMNITY OF SAINT BENEDICT, MARCH 21, 2012

4:00 P.M. – Concelebrated Mass in Archabbey Basilica

5:30 P.M. – dinner in Placid Hall Dining Room B

6:30 P.M. – Oblation ceremonies, Archabbey Basilica, choir area

7:30 P.M. – Vespers with monastic community, Archabbey Basilica, choir area

8:05 P.M. – social in Parish Assembly Room

RENEWAL OF OBLATION

Peace! In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I, (name), renew my Oblation and offer myself to Almighty God, through the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy Father Benedict, as an Oblate of Saint Vincent Archabbey, and I promise again, before God and all the saints, to dedicate my life to the service of God and neighbor according to the *Rule* of St. Benedict, insofar as my state in life permits.

“Sustain me, O Lord, as You have promised, that I may live, and disappoint me not in my hope” (Ps 119:116 & *RB* 58:21).

Name _____

Address _____

Date of Renewal _____

Please detach and return to:
Director of Oblates
St. Vincent Archabbey
300 Fraser Purchase Rd.
Latrobe, PA 15650-2690 .

Order Form for C.D.'s & D.V.D.'s of Presentations in Latrobe

Br. Albert's talk on Liturgy of the Hours (November 20, 2011):

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

Fr. Cyprian's talk on the revised translation of the Mass (November 20, 2011):

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

Fr. Boniface's talk on poverty & simplicity (December 18, 2011):

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

Fr. Killian's talk on holiness & Benedictine spirituality (January 15, 2012):

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

Fr. Robert's talk on *lectio divina* (February 19, 2012):

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

Please enclose \$5.00 per D.V.D. and \$2.60 per C.D. If you wish to have your order mailed to you, please add money for postage.

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

Name _____

Address _____

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

A NOTE ON POSSIBLE ERRORS IN THE MAILING OF THE FEBRUARY, 2012, NEWSLETTER

The computer system of St. Vincent College, which is used for Oblates' addresses and other groups' addresses for mailings, has been in a process of merging two previous systems into one new one named "Datatel." It seems that many errors have crept into the system in the process, and volunteers have been working with Fr. Donald for many hours to correct the many errors on a preliminary mailing list. If you know of people who should have received this newsletter but who did not or if your own address was not quite right, please contact the Oblate Office. We apologize for the errors stemming from this massive endeavor.

We are grateful to the following volunteers for spending many hours of work to remove as many errors as possible: Oblates Thomas Angelo, Deborah Johnston, Peg Palfy, and Linda Rockey; also, novice Br. Basil Alexander.

PLEASE PRAY FOR REVERSAL OF THE HHS REGULATION REGARDING HEALTH INSURANCE

Last August the federal government issued a mandate that, by summer 2012, all health insurance plans cover all FDA-approved contraception and sterilization procedures and pharmaceuticals, some of which even result in abortion. This unjust and immoral mandate was reinforced on January 20. Catholic bishops, including Bishop Lawrence Brandt of Greensburg and Bishop David Zubik of Pittsburgh, have voiced strong opposition to this mandate, which could result in the closing down of virtually all Catholic institutions. The mandate violates not only traditional Judaeo-Christian morality but also the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees religious freedom. Do pray for the reversal of this reprehensible mandate, and consider writing to government officials to work to reverse it. (See Bishop Zubik's statement in the January 27 *Pittsburgh Catholic* and Bishop Brandt's statement read at all Masses in the diocese on February 4-5 and inserted in all bulletins on February 11-12.)

SAINT VINCENT BASILICA ORGAN PROJECT

It is hard to believe that the pipe organ installed in the basilica in 1956 and now no longer functioning cost \$40,000. Now the replacement of this organ is one of the last projects remaining as part of the total renovation project of the basilica begun in 1996. Over the course of the last 10 years, our beautiful church, which can be seen from miles around, has undergone significant changes, including a new roof and interior renovations such as artwork and window restoration, painting, plastering, and lighting.

An organ fund was begun several years ago. However, the cost of a custom-made pipe organ today is extremely expensive compared to that of 1956. The project is now estimated to be well over a million dollars; however, the beauty and the sound will be well worth the cost. It will be built by hand and will take several years of labor and skilled craftsmanship. The result should be outstanding. Music is very critical to any liturgical celebration, and it is hoped that a new pipe organ will do much to enhance liturgies in the basilica.

Please consider a donation to the Organ Fund. To discuss this project further, please contact the Director of Development, Paul Whiteside, at 724-532-6740, or e-mail Paul at paul.whiteside@email.stvincent.edu.