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THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

Saint Vincent Archabbey

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WATCHING FOR THINGS “HIDDEN UNDER OUR BEDS”: WELCOMING GOD TO CLEANSE US OF THE DARKNESS WITHIN

Dear Oblates, Oblate novices, and Friends,
Darkness and weakness in monastic life

What impression do people generally have of monks - or other vowed religious? At least for Catholic Christians it is probably that those who profess religious vows are spiritually strong, and there may be some truth to that. In order to profess vows of obedience, stability, and *conversatio morum* (or the better known vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience), a person must have achieved a certain degree of spiritual maturity and the ability to make sacrifices of lesser things for a higher good - ultimately for God Himself. St. Benedict says in his final chapter of the *Rule* that those who observe the *Rule* “can show that we have some degree of virtue and the beginnings of monastic life” (73:1). However, then he goes on to say that such observance is only a beginning and that those who are “hastening toward [our] heavenly home” (73:8) have much further to go.

At the end of Chapter 1, St. Benedict calls cenobites the “strong kind” of monks, presumably because they have an abbot, a rule of life (the *Holy Rule*), and an intentional Christian community to support them on the journey to holiness. That statement in itself contains a hint that the “strength” of cenobites is not self-generated. When earlier in *RB* 1 St. Benedict deals with the rare vocation of the hermit monk, he states, “Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they [the hermits] are now trained to fight against the devil” (1:5). He then explains that “they have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert” (1:5). In other words, members of monastic communities are to assist one another to fight against evil, and the few who have a vocation to become hermits continue the battle without that fraternal support.

The above passages also imply that the monk becomes strong in his commitment because he is thoroughly tested in battle. In fact, the monk is tested for his suitability even before he enters the monastery. A candidate in St. Benedict’s day, both literally and figuratively, had to “[keep] knocking at the door” (*RB* 58:3) and even bear with “harsh treatment” (58:3). Then, if he persevered, it must be determined whether the new novice “truly seeks God and whether he shows eagerness for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials” (58:7); he must be ready for all sorts of “hardships and difficulties that will lead him to God” (58:8).

The necessity of darkness for continued growth

After all these trials and further testing during the novitiate (58: 9-16), one might think that a monk would be very strong in his vocation, and yet in the *Rule* we see professed monks indulging in all sorts of objectionable behaviors. In *RB* 55:16, St. Benedict

stipulates, “The [monks] beds are to be inspected frequently by the abbot, lest private possessions be found there.” In 33:1 and 33:7, the keeping of private possessions without the abbot’s permission is considered “this evil practice” and “this most evil practice.” How could monks who are so thoroughly tested and trained in virtue become so vulnerable to the vice of greed - coupled with disobedience and lack of trust? Furthermore, we also find references in the *Rule* to monks’ giving in to “the evil of grumbling” (34:6, among other occurrences), sick monks’ making “excessive demands” (36:4), a possible “spirit of vanity” (38:2) in monks who are gifted to read well, the breaking of rules of silence (42:9 and other passages), and tardiness at the Divine Office or at meals (all of *RB* 43). The very fact that St. Benedict mentions such failings indicates that they must have occurred with some frequency in monasteries of his day. Beyond this sampling of infractions, there are references to mores serious disorders. St. Benedict mentions that abbots may have to deal with monks who are “evil or stubborn, arrogant or disobedient” (2:28) and who, therefore, need physical punishment. (Of course, this is not an option today!) Also, some community members may have “[presumed] to defend their views obstinately” (3:3) at community meetings or may have been so self-willed as to “presume to contend with [their] abbot defiantly, or [even] outside the monastery” (3:9). There are monks who must be warned not to engage in “evil speech” (6:2) or “vulgarity and gossip” (6:8). A monk may be “reproved frequently for [a] fault” and yet “not amend” (28:1); after further efforts to “bring about [his] health” (28:5), he may be considered as a “diseased sheep” who must be thrown out (28: 7-8). Yes, even monks who have been long tested in their vocations seem to have fallen into grievously reprehensible behaviors! How could this be?”

One answer might be that the disorderly monks failed to persevere in prayer and other monastic disciplines and so became spiritually weak and vulnerable to temptation. Another possibility, however, is that a monk may have had hidden evil tendencies all along, but these were not recognized until years after he entered the monastery. Under the pressures of community life this “inner darkness” became visible and confronted the monk with a critical choice. Seeing his tendency to sinful ways, he may, with God’s grace, seek to overcome the disorder, or he may ignore God’s warnings and avoid the hard work and humility of overcoming the weakness. This “dark night” of facing one’s utter emptiness, especially in prayer, can become a welcome, if painful, opportunity to be purified more and more from disordered ways. Confronting one’s darkness can be an

occasion of welcoming graces to advance more freely toward full communion with God and a more authentic life in the light of Christ and His truth.

Wisdom on the dark night from Fr. Dominic Hoffman

The book *The Life Within: The Prayer of Union* by Fr. Dominic Hoffman, O.P. (N.Y.: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1966) contains much wisdom about facing one's inner darkness and growing into deeper, more contemplative prayer. In his first chapter, the author comments that people of deep faith and a strong prayer life nevertheless still have a "final gap" between God and them. Fr. Dominic teaches, "The bridging of the last gap is the gift of God, and the work of God alone. But what puts it somehow within our grasp, the weak grasp of men who must accuse themselves as sinners, is that God has no counselor. No one tells Him what He *must* do or whom He must choose. And so this gift of knowing God is ordinarily offered to all, at least at some time in a lifetime, if they seek Him in true love and perseverance and want Him as He must be wanted. God is such a kind of Father" (p. 5). This purification of one's being, which is completed in Purgatory, is necessary if we are to experience the fullness of life in heaven, but it cannot be achieved by human effort. Therefore, God must allow for some "darkness" to descend upon us and especially on our prayer life so that we might recognize our helplessness and insufficiency. The challenge is to learn humbly to trust and to let go of control over our prayer (and our whole lives) so that God may genuinely take over and do His purifying work. Preliminarily to this purification, the soul "sees more clearly into itself, [and] sees the imperfection it is still carrying and which must be rooted out" (p. 5). At the same time, the process of purification is frustrating because "prayer on the levels where it found Him [God] formerly, such as in the affections or reasons, does not produce the hold on God that it once had" (p. 7). This entry into "dark contemplation" can also be accompanied by much sadness since everything that we do seems to fall apart. However, there is also joy in such purification, the joy of finding new "freedom of spirit" (p. 9). God seeks our "total detachment" from all things, even "spiritual" things, so that He may become our all. That is our ultimate joy, and it is attained only after much stripping away of other sources of happiness in which we have become entangled over the years.

It might be noted here that this concept of "dark night" does not apply to *any* sort of suffering. Sometimes people will say, "I'm going through a dark night," whereas they are only having a bad day or some annoying physical problems; or perhaps they are causing their own suffering through sin or negligence of ordinary disciplines. The minor emotional or physical suffering that comes our way must be dealt with appropriately, as by taking medication, seeking reconciliation with other people, or repenting of some sin and going to confession. The suffering of the genuine dark night is fundamentally caused by God (though He can use various physical or emotional deprivations as part if it) specifically to root out lingering, hard-to-remove attachments that constrict our capacity to make our life a total offering to Him.

Learning from darkness in our lives

On the other hand, whether or not we have actually experienced what is formally a "dark night" that opens us to "dark contemplation," we can all learn various lessons from the phenomenon of darkness in prayer and in our

spiritual struggles. One lesson concerns growth in humility, which overcomes pride. At certain stages of the spiritual life, we may think that we are doing well and that we do not need to improve very much. Experiencing darkness through desolation in prayer can remind us that, rather than glorying in past achievements, we have much further to go and must "[hasten] on to the perfection of [Christian] life" (*RB* 73:2). Sometimes we may become discouraged that all our efforts to grow spiritually seem not to be producing the results that we desire. Dealing with this sort of darkness can help us to let go of *our* expectations and *our* methods of reaching holiness and instead to welcome God to take over the process and to set the standards of spiritual growth. Too often, though we may be well-intentioned, the focus in our prayer life can be on "me." Also, some people who are very disciplined have a tendency to interpret the need for "total detachment" as the elimination of all pleasures or anything that leads to pleasure. However, such efforts may be prideful and backfire! God may not be asking for that kind of discipline, which can lead to self-righteousness and burnout. Instead He may be asking a soul to thank Him for the pleasures that come his way without clinging to them. That may be harder than the total refusal of pleasures. Thus we can learn to accept graciously and humbly what God gives and yet not lust for those things that He does not provide. We might note the example at the end of *RB* 43. After St. Benedict specifies that "no one is to presume to eat or drink before or after the time appointed" (43:18), he goes on to say, "If anyone is offered something by a superior and refuses it, then, if later he wants what he refused or anything else, he should receive nothing at all until has made appropriate amends" (43:19). Perhaps what the superior offers is a freely given snack outside the usual restrictions of monastic observance, and perhaps it is thus also a gift from God. Who are we to reject what God graciously chooses to give us? We must learn to receive graciously what God offers, when He gives it and because He gives it! (Of course, we must avoid all pleasures attached to sinful behavior, which can never be from God.)

The ongoing project of dealing with hidden faults

In considering darkness and weaknesses in our lives, it is likely that all of us sinners have some things "hidden under our beds," perhaps without even realizing it. God, in His generous love for us, knows that keeping all that "stuff" enslaves us in the sense that we have less room for Him in our clinging to some earthly reality. On the other hand, God does not wish to smother us with full knowledge of our regrettable disorders all at once, and we must be patient with ourselves, too. Our task, especially during Lent, is to discern what God is asking us to turn over to Him for healing and conversion. Even while hiding some of our faults from us until we are ready to deal with them, He is surely revealing to us those areas which, with His grace, He wants us to work on now. Thus, little by little, God relentlessly pursues us in His desire to make us ultimately free of sinful tendencies so that we may be totally pure in heart and

prepared to be with Him forever in heaven.

God certainly wants us to keep growing in our life of prayer. Although we cannot be changing the way we pray every day, there are certain times when God may allow us to experience some darkness to help us to advance to a higher level. Yes, we may have a well-developed prayer life with which God may be very pleased; yet like every good thing it may need to be replaced now and then by something better. Perhaps we have become so attached to our routine of prayer that we love the routine more than we love God. He may, therefore, send us darkness to render our prayer less and less satisfying. Although He may be asking us to persevere in the same type of prayer but without feelings of satisfaction and thus to pray merely out of love for Him, He may instead be asking us to develop a *new* type of prayer, with fewer words and images and more wordless, imageless attention to Him. Our task is to embrace the night in trust and to accept God's forward-looking plan for us. Rather than clinging to what is familiar and comfortable, we are sometimes asked to trust God to lead us through the darkness to a new unknown "land" in the realm of prayer.

In an extended sense of the dark night, the same kind of phenomenon can occur in the realm of work. At certain stages of our work lives, we may be clinging to our routine because it gives us emotional gratification or wins the praise of others or brings in a large income. We may realize that the love of Christ is not very much part of our work. In that case, God must let some darkness descend upon our work to make it clear that we must let go of self-centered motives. When we feel frustration or anxiety over our work, we need to pause and examine what God might be telling us. He may be urging us to glorify Him instead of ourselves; He may be teaching us to rely on Him, and not on our own illusory strength, to render our work fruitful. God may even be nudging us to go on to some other kind of work that He has prepared for us.

In all cases, the experience of various forms of the "dark night" can be a gift from God to help us to overcome pride and to grow in humility. Especially in reference to a person with perfectionistic tendencies, Fr. Dominic Hoffman says, "This freedom from the tyranny imposed by the pride image can be a repeated exhilarating experience of the purification process. The now wiser man sees that he no longer has to be perfect with the absolute perfection imposed upon himself by inner compulsion. For instance, he no longer *must* be without even involuntary faults. And when faults are partly voluntary, his world no longer comes to an end. He no longer has to be infallible. He no longer has the compulsion that he *must* be perfect in every detail, that he must be supremely adequate or victorious in all situations. He no longer feels the need to stand like a giant, but can now become little before God like a child" (*The Life Within*, p. 156). This year, with the continuing scourge of the coronavirus upon us, we have ongoing opportunities to become small, humble, and trusting as individuals, as communities, and even as a world. May

we be attentive to God's benevolent plan for us hidden beneath the dark effects of the pandemic!

Opportunity for a joyful Lent

As Lent approaches, let us then choose our sacrifices wisely, ideally with the help of a spiritual director or a trusted Christian friend, lest spiritual pride (or debilitating discouragement) set in. As St. Benedict warns, "Whatever is undertaken without the permission of the spiritual father will be reckoned as presumption and vainglory, not deserving a reward" (*RB* 49:9). Our Lenten penances may or may not visibly bear the fruit that we desire; but if we focus genuinely on Christ and His will for us, then our efforts should lead to growth in virtue, especially humility, which may involve acceptance of some darkness and weakness in our lives. We may learn how terribly hard it is to root out a persistent sinful habit, and that itself, though not very gratifying, can be a very good thing. Furthermore, our penances should help us to embrace the penances of daily life that God allows or sends our way - the interruptions, the annoying people, reminders of our forgetfulness and negligences, and the reality of the frailties of old age that often cannot be remedied, not to mention the limitations stemming from the pandemic and its regrettable consequences. All these miseries, these forms of "darkness," can move us to trust in God and not in ourselves. They can help us to realize that "the evil [we] commit is always [our] own and [ours] to acknowledge" (*RB* 4:43) and that God, in His great mercy, is telling us, "I do not wish the death of the sinner but that he turn back to me and live" (*RB* Prol: 38; *Ezek* 33:11). Let us all, then, look forward to a fruitful and even joyful Lent, even if it bring us God's gifts that flow from experiences of darkness.

In the peace of Christ and St. Benedict,

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

P.S.: Psalm 139 shows us how what we see as darkness is actually God's gift of light and truth for us:

"If I say: 'Let the darkness hide me
and the light around me be night,'
even darkness is not dark for you
and the night is as clear as the day"

(Ps 139: 11-12; 1963 Grail).

RETREATS FOR 2021

Because of the pandemic, no in-person retreats have been scheduled. Br. Hugh Lester, Director of the Summer Retreat Program, reports that two pre-recorded sets of retreat conferences will be made available, and they should be posted on St. Vincent's website sometime this spring. These will be offered free of charge.

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

These days before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday (February 17 this year) are marked by food antics. I thought I had heard of most of them. Even if your French is not too good, everybody knows that Mardi Gras is "Fat Tuesday." And "shrove" in Shrove Tuesday is derived from "shrift," another word for confession. But regardless of its religious origins, the day is mostly known for gluttony! Mardi Gras is equated with gorging ourselves on one final deluxe bacon-cheeseburger or colossal banana split or giant chocolate bar before the duration of the penitential season of Lent. In former days, eggs, butter, fat, milk, and cheese were also forbidden during Lent; so Shrove Tuesday was devoted to emptying the pantry. For old times' sake, some have recommended again following this tradition, which also happens to be a healthier way of eating!

One name I had never heard before is "Pancake Tuesday." One blogger wrote that flipping out over pancakes is so universal on Shrove Tuesday that the holiday is sometimes called "Pancake Tuesday." In England, Pancake Day is celebrated with races at which women, frying pans in hand, trot over a course while tossing pancakes over at least three times. Pancakes are a worthy recipe for consuming some of the forbidden food before Lent begins.

Maybe "emptying the larder" is a good way to consider these pre-Lenten days. As we consider how we want to observe this impending grace-filled season, some prayerful time could be spent on what we want to eliminate: judgment, darkness, discontent, anger, pessimism, worry, negativity, procrastination, complaints, anxiety, hostility, bitterness, self-centeredness, lethargy, and suspicion, for example. Lenten disciplines and activities that foster the elimination of these vices that hamper our faith journey towards Christ would be worthwhile for the great 40 days and beyond.

Best wishes and prayers for a blessed Lent.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Martin R. Bartel, O.S.B.
Archabbot of Saint Vincent

OBLATE DAY AND DAY OF RECOLLECTION FOR 2021

Oblate Day for 2021 has been scheduled for Sunday, September 26, 2021, and the fall day of recollection has been scheduled for Saturday, October 30, 2021. The form of these events will depend much on the status of the pandemic. It would be prudent at this point not to plan for any overnight guest rooms. As of now, the guest house is closed for the foreseeable future.

SUGGESTED LENTEN PROJECTS

It is suggested that the Oblates and Oblate novices affiliated with us rededicate themselves to the regular praying of the Liturgy of the Hours (as much as one's schedule allows) and the regular practice of *lectio divina* on the Bible (daily, if possible). The undertaking of good spiritual reading replacing less beneficial activities is also recommended. It is also important to keep reading the *Holy Rule*, ideally a bit each day, and to apply it personally to one's everyday life, as in performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

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. Just let the volunteer at the cash register know. Since the gift shop re-opened after the worst of the pandemic, the hours have been reduced to 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M., Monday through Saturday.

MEETING OF OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS, Jan. 29, 2021: Members of the Board assembled for their 78th regular meeting at 6:30 P.M. on January 29 in the Fred Rogers Center. Eight members, including Fr. Donald and Timothy Sheridan (assistant Director of Oblates), were able to attend. The topics discussed included the welcoming of three new members, the 2022 International Congress of Oblates, the translation of some Oblate documents into Spanish, the postponement of a deanery representatives' meeting until at least 2022, options for the dinner on March 22, and the possible NAABOD meeting tentatively scheduled for August 5-10, 2021 at St. Meinrad Archabbey. The Board agreed to schedule its next meeting for April 23.

PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM

Our revised Prayer-partner Program has been implemented now for several years. Each new Oblate (soon after final Oblation) is partnered with a monk who has agreed to participate. There is no communication between partners unless both agree to such communication. Each partner prays for the other regularly, ideally daily, as best as he or she can. If you are a full Oblate who wishes to have a monk prayer-partner, please phone the Oblate Office.

OBLATES AS GUESTS AT THE ARCHABBAY - NONE UNTIL THE CORONAVIRUS SUBSIDES

After the pandemic ends, it is hoped that Oblates will again be very welcome to come to the Archabbey as overnight guests. The number of rooms in Leander Hall is very limited; so reservations should be made as far in advance as possible. No fee is required or specified, but donations are welcome. The current break-even cost for one guest staying one overnight and taking three meals is \$55.00. Also, some Oblates and Fr. Donald have put together a brochure for first-time Oblate guests, but any Oblate is welcome to request a copy.

THE SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT AT THE ARCHABBEY ON MARCH 22, 2021

Oblates are welcome to attend events at the Archabbey on **Monday, March 22**, to celebrate the Solemnity of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict with the monastic community and other guests. The schedule includes Mass at 4:00 P.M., supper at 5:15, Oblate ceremonies at 6:15, and Vespers at 7:00. (See the schedule and reservation form below.) The registration form should be sent to the Oblate Office by March 12. The cost of the dinner, depending on the menu chosen, will range from \$16.29 to \$19.50. At the suggestion of the Board of Advisors, no one will be obliged to pay, but free-will donations will be accepted at the time of the dinner. Checks should be made out to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY. Oblates with e-mail addresses in the *Directory* are being polled regarding the choice of menu, the main dish being meat or fish or a vegetarian option for those who prefer it.

PLANS FOR 2022 INTERNATIONAL OBLATE CONGRESS

The International Oblate Congress originally scheduled for November of 2021 has been rescheduled (if all goes well) for November of 2022, because of the pandemic. Presumably, as previously planned, it is to be held at the Fraterna Domus convention center outside of Rome. The planning committee has chosen keynote speakers as well as the theme, namely "Moving Forward: Living the Wisdom of the Rule." Four Oblates affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey have already expressed interest. For more information you may contact Fr. Benoît Allogia, O.S.B., who is coordinating plans for the congress.

SOME 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 deanery histories – free or with donation for postage
- (4) book *Nadeem Feroze: Oblate of Saint Benedict, Pakistani, Defender of the Faith* - \$8.00 each
- (5) blessed St. Benedict/St. Scholastica scapulars (usually given at final Oblation; sometimes the supply is limited)

OBLATE LOGO CLOTHING & APPAREL ITEMS FOR PURCHASE

Oblate Mary Ann Cleaveland is serving as the administrator of this project. To order Oblate-log clothing or apparel, you may contact <https://stbenedict.qbstores.com>. If you have any problems, you may contact Mary Ann at maryannnowakowski@gmail.com with subject line "SVA Oblate Store," or contact the Oblate Office for a flier regarding the present arrangement.

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

- Fr. Dominic Hoffman, O.P., *The Life Within: The Prayer of Union* (N.Y.: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1966)
- Rev. Jacques Philippe, *Called to Life* (trans. by Neal Carter; N.Y.: Scepter Publishers, Inc., 2008)
- Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ* (N.Y.: Image Books, 2016)

NEW (or newly discovered) BOOKS ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

- Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *The Wisdom of Stability: Rooting Faith in a Mobile Culture* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010)

OBLATE MEETINGS IN LATROBE AND PRESENTATIONS ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

Oblates from all locations are welcome to the monthly meetings of the Latrobe Deanery of Oblates, mostly at 6:45 P.M. and usually in the Fred Rogers Center during the pandemic. The next four meetings will be on February 21, March 14, April 18, and May 16. Those wishing to come for Evening Prayer (usually at 5:00) and supper before the meetings should phone Fr. Donald at least nine days in advance at (724) 805-2291. The book *A Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict* is currently being discussed. Also, informative presentations on Benedictine spirituality continue to be offered at 3:00 P.M. on the same dates, usually in the Basilica Crypt. All are welcome, but pre-registrations are necessary because of the pandemic and the need for social distancing. The session on February 21 is to be offered by Fr. Killian Loch ("Stability"), on March 14 by Fr. Edward Mazich (*lectio divina*), on April 18 by Dr. Catherine Petranj, a teacher of theology at St. Vincent College ("Prayer: the Psalms"), and on May 16 by Fr. Justin Matro ("Purity of Heart").

OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA –meetings on 1st Thurs. mornings at St. Gregory the Great Church in Cambridge

Oblate Cathy Mayled has e-mail messages with prayers requests and about members and their families, but because of the epidemic there have been no meetings.

OBLATE GROUP IN TENNESSEE COLONY, TX (Michael Unit)

There was no report.

OBLATE GROUP IN ROSHARON, TX (Terrell Unit)

Secretary Gilberto Gomez wrote on October 6 and January 19 and sent Christmas greetings about December 17. Although, because of the pandemic, the deanery has not been able to hold regular meetings, two of the group's members have been praying the Liturgy of the Hours together, and as of December 12 a "prayer circle" has been established, which has been offering a Liturgy of the Word service each week. In his letter of January 19, Gilberto reported that small communities were continuing to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, to have a Catholic Bible study using the *Catechism*, to engage in a prayer circle, and to have Liturgy of the Word services.

NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES

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

There was no report.

Baltimore, MD (St. Walburga Deanery) -- meetings at 3:00-4:45 on 3rd Sun. of month, parish house, St. Benedict Church

Moderator Fr. Paschal Morlino sent an e-mail message on November 14. Because of the pandemic, the deanery has still been unable to meet, but Fr. Paschal has been sending relevant readings by e-mail. One of the Oblates suggested using the presentations at the Archabbey in their online version as spiritual nourishment for the Baltimore Oblates.

Beaumont, TX [Stiles Unit] (St. Stephen Deanery)

Acting secretary Kenneth Kerr has written several times, but because of the pandemic there have been no meetings.

Butler, PA (St. Hildegard Deanery) -- *monthly meetings at St. Fidelis Parish Hall, 6:30 P.M., 4th Thurs. of each month*

Lay leader/secretary Ronald Weleski reported via a deanery newsletter dated December 15, whose theme was "peace." Ron mentioned that although there had not been an in-person deanery meeting for some months, the group might consider using social media to respond to the need for social interaction, and he appealed for suggestions. He recommended the continuation of individual practices of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, doing *lectio divina*, studying and reflecting on the *Holy Rule* and applying it, and praying for the Benedictine community and for peace and healing in the world.

Cyber Deanery (St. Isidore of Seville Deanery) [Those interested in the deanery may contact patrickkenny@bellsouth.net.]

Lay leader Patrick Kenny reported by e-mail on October 31, and Oblate Aaron Talbot phoned on December 9. A Zoom session was held on December 4 with the praying of Vespers; five members participated. Another similar session was planned for December 11.

Jacksonville, NC (St. Michael the Archangel Deanery) - *meetings at Infant of Prague Church, 7:00 P.M., 3rd Tues. of month*

Oblate Robert Hilton phoned on February 3 and reported that there had been deanery meetings on October 20 and January 19. On the other months since March, 2020, there were no meetings because of the pandemic. A report will appear in the next newsletter.

Johnstown, PA (St. John Gualbert Deanery) -- *meetings on 1st Monday of each month, 6:30 P.M., St. Benedict Church*

Lay leader/secretary Kathy Kristofko wrote on November 12, December 15, and January 12. The meeting scheduled for November was canceled. Because of the large increase in cases of Covid-19 in the Cambria County area, the group decided to have future meetings only online through the use of Zoom until further notice, and Kathy suggested that those who wished to attend were to contact Deacon Michael Russo, moderator.

A meeting by Zoom was, in fact, held on December 14. The attendees started to discuss the book *Mary for Today* by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Because of some technical problems, the group was able to discuss only the first twelve pages of the book. The Oblates who attended commented that they were glad that the book had been chosen, and they discussed how in iconography Mary is always pointing to her Son; this position is a sign to us that it is through Christ that we go to the Father. Mary, in her holiness, represents the whole Church in its ideal. Because Christ promised that the gates of hell (the devil) would never prevail against the Church.

During the meeting on January 11, the group continued a discussion based on the book *Mary for Today*. The attendees considered the responses to the angel by Mary and Zechariah, the process of Jesus' growing up with Mary and Joseph, and Mary's pondering of events in her life. The group planned to continue the discussion in February.

Kalispell, MT (Holy Trinity Deanery) - *meetings at St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church in Kalispell on 2nd Wed., 10:00 A.M.*

Lay leader/secretary Tanishia Sperling reported by e-mail on November 11, December 11, and January 14 and 18. The meeting on November 11 was attended by three Oblates and one Oblate novice, while three "long-distance Oblates" were kept informed. After the praying of Daytime Prayer from the breviary, the group continued a study of the book *A Guide to Living in the Truth* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. They discussed the statement "Humility is truth" and reflected on the bullet points given in Chapter 2 of the book, with emphasis on the fact that we are not divine beings but creatures who are sinners and stunted human beings. The attendees shared some personal stories that were relevant to the theme of humility.

The meeting scheduled for December 9 was canceled because of the increase of Covid-19 in the area. The same was true for the meeting planned for January. One candidate was ready for investiture, but the ceremony had to be delayed until it could be held safely.

Latrobe, PA (St. Gregory the Great Deanery) -- *meetings usually on 3rd Sunday, 3:00 in Basilica Crypt; 6:45 P.M., in Fred Rogers Center*

At the meeting on November 15 at 3:00 in the basilica crypt, Fr. John-Mary Tompkins gave a presentation to some fifteen attendees on "Humility in Benedictine Spirituality." He began with a description of humility in the saying "God is God, and I am not." The chapter on humility in the *Rule* (RB 7) is the longest, and it challenges us to live in a supernatural mode, contrary to our fallen human nature, with the underlying question, "Is God in charge of my life?" Fr. John-Mary then proceeded to read through the whole chapter, with his own comments based on a commentary by Fr. Adalbert de Vogüé, O.S.B. He noted at the outset that the twelve "steps" were not really a temporal succession of steps; rather they point to various virtues connected with humility. Regarding the first step, on having the fear of God before one's eyes always, he suggested keeping a word from Scripture in one's mind all day long. The first step also emphasizes one's inner disposition in turning away from self-will, "praying always," and glorifying God in all things. The fourth step focuses on patience and seeing trials and humiliations as opportunities. The fifth, sixth, and seventh steps deal with "self-abasement" for the sake of purifying one's mind, and the ninth, tenth, and eleventh steps deal with speech and laughter. The final step urges the monk to do everything for love of God and to depend totally on grace. Fr. John-Mary then made some comments on the strong connections between humility and obedience and silence, and he responded to several questions.

Some of the attendees then stayed for the monastic community's Vespers, and six went to the Rogers Center for supper at 5:45 and a discussion based on the book *A Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict* at 6:30. The topics discussed included the eight capital vices, spiritual combat, spiritual progress ("walking humbly"), and the meaning of "monk," "monastery," and other monastic terms. The session ended with the praying of Compline at 7:45.

Because of the spread of the coronavirus, the in-person meeting scheduled for December 20 was not permitted by campus authorities. However, the scheduled speaker, Fr. Shawn Matthew Anderson, had Zoom capabilities in his biology office in the science center; so a Zoom presentation was offered, with Oblates on the e-mail list notified only about a day in advance. Some 22 people participated from locations ranging from St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, to Daphne, Alabama. Fr. Shawn began by defining the word "hospitality," which is generally associated with welcoming visitors and entertaining them. In its origins it is related to the words "hospital" and "hospice"; in fact hospices were originally places run by the Order of Hospitallers for pilgrims in the Holy Land. For Christians hospitality is a way to practice our faith by welcoming others as Christ did; note His words, "Come to Me ..." (Mt 11: 28-30). Fr. Shawn then reflected on RB 53:1-2. In prescribing that all guests were to be welcomed as Christ, St. Benedict radically departed from previous monastic rules, which were more restrictive regarding visitors. St. Benedict says that all (in Latin *omnes*) are to be

welcomed, at least into our hearts. He later specifies that there some restrictions on how guests are welcomed and who is welcomed physically. Still it is important to receive people with generous love, just as we have been received by God and just as Christ died for us ungodly people (cf. Rom). We might also consider the Blessed Mother's hospitality to God, whom she welcomed as a child in her womb, and her hospitality to her cousin Elizabeth, whom she hastened to help in her pregnancy. Fr. Shawn then cited several other Biblical examples of hospitality and ended by challenging all hearers to make more room for all in their hearts - and to pray for greater openness. He and Fr. Donald then responded to various questions and requests.

The in-person meeting scheduled for January 17 was permitted, and a group of some fifteen people, including an inquirer and one candidate for investiture, attended the meeting at 3:00 in the Archabbey Basilica Crypt. Fr. Isaac Haywiser, the presenter, spoke about "Silence in Benedictine Spirituality." He began by describing his experience of returning from graduate school last March, just after the campus at St. Vincent had shut down because of the coronavirus. He thought that the silence was beautiful. Then he invited the attendees to share their experiences about the restrictions from the pandemic and silence, both positive and negative. Fr. Isaac next went on to describe the prescribed times and places for silence in the *Rule*, including times during meads (especially during readings), during the night, during siesta time, with guests (generally), and after a monk had returned from a journey, as well as in the oratory. (St. Vincent, he noted, for good reasons, does not observe many of these prescriptions.) The rationale for this silence includes the need for discipline in speech, the avoidance of evil talk, and respect for others' need for quiet. A more basic reason for silence in itself is that in silence we can face the reality of who we are before God, with our weaknesses and faults. (Periods of silence, he remarked, by the way, should be observed during the Catholic Mass.) Next Fr. Isaac referred to St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother as models of silence in Scripture. Quoting a number of monastic authors, he then showed that silence is a fundamental monastic disposition, that it has a genuine ascetical dimension, that it opens us up to listening to God, that it can often be uncomfortable, that it helps us to see "who sits on the throne of my life," that it has a negative dimension of lack of charity (when we should communicate), that we need to practice it even when we feel hurry and turmoil in life, and that it can help us to combat vices. Silence can also aid us in interpreting difficult parts of Scripture, such as 1 Tim 2: 11-15. Our mission and our work should be the fruit of silence that gives us direction in life and that keeps us close to Christ.

After Fr. Isaac's presentation Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

Stephen Gross of Turtle Creek, PA.

Some six Oblates joined Fr. Donald and Timothy Sheridan for supper and the discussion based on the study guide for the *Rule* from St. Walburga Abbey, both in the Fred Rogers Conference Center. The topics, coming from Chapter 1 of the *Rule*, included the kinds of monks in St. Benedict's time, Biblical models of monasticism, hermit experiences, and the value of solitude and "desert experiences." The session ended with Compline at 7:45.

Niagara Area, Ontario, Canada (St. Henry/St. Gertrude Deanery) -- meetings on 3rd or 4th Thurs. of each month, meeting room of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, St. Catharines, Ont. (after a holy hour with benediction)

Lay leader Brian Chisholm and Oblate Roy McKenzie reported by phone on December 9 and 30 and then early in January. As usual, the meeting on November 26 followed a holy hour with exposition and benediction. Many people stayed for the meeting, during which Fr. Benjamin Weber, moderator, spoke about constant prayer and set times of prayer. Brian noted that Fr. Ben had received a new assignment as rector of the cathedral in St. Catharines.

The meeting on December 17 again followed a holy hour. After Fr. Ben reposed the Blessed Sacrament, he invested

Robert James of Hamilton, Ontario,

as an Oblate novice in the church. Brian noted that there could be no more than ten people in the church because of a regulation by the Canadian government. After the ceremony Fr. Ben offered a talk on the genealogy of Christ, with reference to the inclusion of disreputable people, in St. Matthew's Gospel. He reflected that the way to holiness was to do simple, ordinary tasks with love and to the best of one's ability. Thus we do our part to contribute to the progress of salvation history.

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

Secretary Frederick Laux reported on November 22 about meetings in October and November and on January 10 about a meeting on January 10. A meeting on the local housing unit on October 24 was attended by three Oblates and one inquirer. After the praying of Midday Prayer, Oblate Cory DesArmo gave a presentation on *RB* 19, "The Discipline of Psalmody." He drew attention to the verses that suggested that in all prayer we should be aware of God's presence, that we should always try to behave with the thought of being "in the presence of God and his angels," and that our minds can easily stray from where our voices are when we are praying in community. Cory concluded that we should strive to bring our whole selves into alignment with God and His will. The session ended with the "Prayer for Oblates."

The meeting on November 21 began with Midday Prayer and was attended by three Oblates and one guest. Fred gave a presentation on *RB* 43: 1-12, the chapter about being tardy at the Divine Office or meals. Fred mentioned that St. Benedict uses the phrase "the Work of God" at least 14 times in the *Rule*. He probably refers to the Liturgy of the Hours, but some authors say that the phrase refers to a broader set of activities in monastic life. The meeting again ended with the "Prayer for Oblates." Fred requested prayers for the deanery, the members of which have been deprived of the sacraments for nearly a year because of the pandemic.

The meeting on January 10, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, involved three Oblates and one guest and began with Midmorning Prayer. Oblate Curt Kennedy then gave a presentation on *RB* 2:610, which concerns the qualities of an abbot. He also utilized the book *Seeking God* by Esther DeWaal, especially the chapter "Authority." Our responsibility, he said, is to "walk and talk like Jesus" so as to help one another to go to heaven. Our real purpose must be seeking God and helping one other to do so.

On January 10 on another unit, two Oblates and a guest met for Evening Prayer and a discussion of the passage from the *Rule* for the day. Their exchange focused on being obedient and teaching obedience, with reference to Luke 1:17.

Philadelphia, PA (St. Augustine of Canterbury Deanery) – meetings at Cathedral Village, 700 E. Cathedral Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19128, in Classroom 2, on first Saturdays every two months (before the pandemic)

Moderator Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported on January 29. The deanery has not been able to meet in person since the meeting in February of 2020. In lieu of face-to-face meetings, Fr. Vincent de Paul has reached out to the Oblates each month by email

to inform them of activities at the monastery and to pass along articles on monastic spirituality as well as to recommend excellent videos of talks on the *Holy Rule*. All of the Oblates have expressed disappointment at not being able to meet semi-monthly in person to pray, reflect, and break bread together. God willing, the deanery will be able to meet again some time in 2021.

Pittsburgh, PA (North Side - St. Peter Deanery) -- meetings on 4th Monday, 7:00 P.M., St. Anthony Chapel in Troy Hill

Oblate George Ponticello reported by e-mail on November 12; December 5, 17, and 27; and January 26. The meeting on October 26, held at St. Anthony Chapel, was attended by six Oblates and Fr. James Orr, moderator. After the praying of Vespers, the group reviewed and discussed the first seven chapters of *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis.

The meeting on November 23, held at St. Peter Church, was attended by eight Oblates. After Evening Prayer, the attendees discussed the second half of *The Great Divorce*. They also discussed some ideas for “moving forward” with the deanery. After consultation with Fr. Jim, the group decided to postpone the usual December pre-Christmas party and to plan the next meeting for January 25.

Later George and the other Oblates decided to have a “first-ever Spontaneous Zoom December Christmas Gathering.” Ten people, Oblates and some guests, prayed Evening Prayer together over Zoom and then shared “some nice holiday conversation” along with some beverages. An Oblate who had moved out the area and his wife gave the others a virtual tour of their beautiful nativity scene. George concluded that the attendees found the experience enjoyable and that they now knew that Zoom meetings were a possible option for the future.

The meeting on January 25, which was held in St. Anthony Chapel, drew together six Oblates, one guest, and Fr. Jim Orr. After the praying of Vespers, Fr. Jim provided some final commentary on the book *The Great Divorce* and responded to questions and comments. The attendees also discussed options for the next book to be read and chose St. Thérèse’s *The Story of a Soul*. The group planned to discuss the first three chapters at the next meeting, planned for February 22. Those attending expressed preference to having an in-person meeting as opposed to one by Zoom. All wear masks, and the chapel is amply large for social distancing.

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

Lay leader Mary Ann Kaufman reported by e-mail on November 8 and 9, December 5, and January 18. The Zoom meeting planned for November was cancelled, and a printed version of the presentation by Gilbert Kaufman that was to be given was forwarded to deanery members. A meeting by Zoom was held on December 13 between 1:00 P.M. and 3:00 P.M. and involved a discussion on *conversatio morum* based on Lesson 3 of the *Formation Lessons*. The presentation emphasized the need for ongoing conversion in Christ at all times.

There was no meeting in January, but seven members of the deanery participated in the Zoom meeting in Latrobe on January 17 (see above). Mary Ann suggested that the members might wish to organize another Zoom meeting among themselves in February.

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

Lay leader/secretary Roland Fernandez sent Christmas greetings about December 15 and reported that there were still no meetings. He said that he trusted that the members were praying the Liturgy of the Hours on their own and that there was hope that matters would return to normal by July.

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

Moderator Fr. Ronald Gatman, O.S.B., reported by e-mail on January 7. Although meetings had not been held for some months, a meeting was planned for January 24, beginning with a Mass at 3:00 P.M., with the intention of investing two Oblate novices after the homily. Also, the other Oblates who would be present were to renew their vows. The event was to end with supper. The next gathering was planned for February 21, with the possibility that the new bishop of the diocese would come to speak.

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

Lay leader/secretary Teresa Warlow reported by e-mail on November 8. It was not possible to hold meetings, because of the pandemic, from March through November, but Teresa contacted the deanery members in November.

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

Lay leader/secretary Robert “Bo” Fadden wrote on December 10. Because of the pandemic, no meetings have been held, and no Oblation ceremonies have taken place although there are some members ready to make their Oblation. The group was glad that a new priest-chaplain had been appointed.

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

Secretary Phyllis Austin reported by e-mail on November 12, December 16, and January 13. Attending the meeting on November 9 were five Oblates, one Oblate novice, and one inquirer in addition to the moderator, Fr. David Griffin. After the praying of Vespers, the group continued a discussion based on the book *Toward God* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. Considering Chapter 5 of the book, “The Gift of Time,” the attendees found the opportunity to express their personal styles of prayer and to discuss similarities and differences. The group found that their intentions and struggles were much the same. The meeting ended with prayers of intercession and the singing of the Benedictine “Ultima.”

Attending the meeting on December 14 were four Oblates and Fr. David. They began with Evening Prayer and then covered Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of the given text. The topics considered were various models of prayer and ways to ponder the Scriptures via *lectio divina*. Once again, the meeting ended with intercessions and the “Ultima.”

The meeting on January 11 was attended by four Oblates, three Oblate novices, and Fr. David and began with Evening Prayer. The discussion focused on Chapters 9 and 10 of *Toward God*. It was noted, as the author asserted, that the use of words in prayer relates to the “wordless prayer” in people’s hearts and should lead to transparency of life. Short prayers were recommended as a way of living in mindfulness of God’s presence. Still, it is important to reserve set times for prayer if one is to have a good prayer life. Although it is helpful to ponder Fr. Michael Casey’s list of eight factors involved in personal prayer, it was commented that rarely are any two periods of prayer alike. As usual, the meeting ended with intercessions and the “Ultima.”

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

Acting lay leader/secretary Oblate Kenneth Kerr wrote on November 15 and January 11. He reported that, although face-to-face meetings are not possible, the deanery has been active in the sense that Oblate Leo Little has been going from one Oblate to another individually. All have been praying the Divine Office individually. The report on January 11, said that the deanery was "functional" but that a new wave of infections in the area had caused a unit-wide lockdown so that even Leo Little was not able to visit the other members of the Oblate community.

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

Lay leader/secretary Nancy Chrabot reported on January 18. The deanery held its first meeting since March of 2020 on October 15. Attending were five Oblates and one new inquirer. The attendees rejoiced to be seeing one another again. The passage of the *Holy Rule* for the day was read. Then Deacon Kevin Gorman led a discussion about the need for people to incorporate the realm of God and the will of God into their lives. God's word in the Bible remains constant while the "world" has changed many of its moral standards in a way that opposes God's law. (Therefore, Oblates, in particular, need to be countercultural.) The meeting ended with Evening Prayer.

The meeting scheduled for November 12 was canceled because of inclement weather. The meeting on December 14 was attended by Fr. Dominic Leo, moderator, and four Oblates. Fr. Dominic and Deacon Kevin led a discussion about "keeping Christ on our radar at all times," especially during the Advent Season. Practicing Christians can be seen as a faithful remnant in a world that is falling away from God. We need to appreciate the great treasures of the Church and not lose hope. Steadfast prayer, especially the daily praying of the Divine Office, protects us from the evils of the world. Fr. Dominic suggested seeing "The Unstoppable Waterfall" on You-Tube. The meeting ended with Evening Prayer.

Seven Oblates attended the meeting on January 14, and an inquirer was given information about the Oblate Program. Deacon Kevin, leading the meeting, referred to St. John Henry Newman's work "Meditations on Christian Doctrine." The attendees talked about praying for our country and the new President. The session closed with Evening Prayer.

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

There was no report. Apparently, there have been no meetings because of the pandemic.

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

As reported previously by lay leader Sue Wykoff, the deanery is not scheduling any meetings during the pandemic.

Various Locations

On October 20 Rev. Daniel E. Kirk invested as an Oblate novice

Thomas L. McDonald of Medford, NJ.

Thomas has been in touch with the Cyber Deanery for formation in Benedictine spirituality.

On November 21 at St. Juan del Rio Church in Switzerland, FL, Fr. Dilip Pally invested as an Oblate novice

Robert E. Gearing II of St. Augustine, FL.

Bob has a history of closeness to the Archabbey. His family originally came from Latrobe; his paternal grandfather was an Oblate; and his father was a graduate of St. Vincent College.

On December 12 at Corpus Christi Church in Waterville, ME,

Jay Violette of Waterville, ME,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. André-Joseph LaCasse, O.P.

On January 9 **Lindy (Maria Bridget) Redmond** of Williamsville, NY,

officially transferred her Oblation to St. Vincent Archabbey from Mount Saviour Monastery, where she had been an Oblate since 1998.

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. Chrysostom Schlimm, Fr. Andrew Campbell, Fr. Patrick Cronauer, Fr. Lee Yoakam, and Fr. Nathan Munsch.

DECEASED MONK

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Fr. Noel Rothrauff, age 94, who died on December 15. He had been the oldest monk of our community.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Oblates who wish to attend services during the Paschal Triduum may phone the Oblate Office a few days in advance. Because of the pandemic the schedule may not be the same as in previous years. The times for Morning Prayer and Mass may also be different during Holy Week and the Triduum.

2. Oblates are welcome to donate to the fund for the "Oblate Scholarship" given to qualified students at St. Vincent College. Funds available from the scholarship to be awarded are the result of the spending policy adopted by the Saint Vincent College Board of Directors. If anyone has questions or would like additional information, he or she may contact Joan Aungier Davis, Director of Stewardship and Communications, at 724-805-2215 or at joan.davis@stvincent.edu. This scholarship may benefit your children or grandchildren if they attend St. Vincent College.

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. Hard copies will be issued in July of 2021. The information that I would like to have included is the following:

Name _____ Phone (home and/or cell and/or work _____
(Please specify)
Address _____ e-mail address _____

Please send this form to the Oblate Office by U.S. mail or by e-mail to svaoblates@stvincent.edu . Thank you.

RESERVATION FORM FOR CELEBRATION OF ST. BENEDICT DAY ON MARCH 22

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____

_____ I plan to attend the dinner for Oblates at St. Vincent on Monday, March 22, 2022, along with _____ guests; I would like the main menu _____ or vegetarian dish _____.
(Donations will be accepted at the time of the dinner; checks may be made out to St. Vincent Archabbey.)
_____ I plan to be invested as an _____ Oblate, _____ Oblate novice on March 22. On becoming a full Oblate, I plan to take the Oblate name _____. (*application form required*)

SCHEDULE FOR SOLEMNITY OF SAINT BENEDICT, MONDAY, MARCH 22

- 4:00 P.M. - Concelebrated Mass in Archabbey Basilica, probably with the bishop
- 5:15 P.M. - dinner in the Fred Rogers Center
- 6:15 P.M. - Oblation ceremonies, Fred Rogers Center
- 7:00 P.M. - Vespers in the nave of the Archabbey Basilica (with the monastic community)

Reflections on detachment, suffering, and darkness by Blessed Abbot Columba Marmion, O.S.B., from his book *Union with God: According to the Letters of Direction of Dom Marmion* (collected by Dom Raymond Thibaut, translated by Mother Mary St. Thomas) (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1949), pages 81-82:

“For what regards your weaknesses, your failings, the Good God permits them in order to keep you in humility and in the sense of your nothingness. God can always draw good from our miseries, and when you have been unfaithful and have failed in confidence and abandon to His holy will, if you humble yourself deeply, you will lose nothing but, on the contrary, you will advance in virtue and in the love of God. If everything happened to you just as you could wish, if you were always in robust health, if all your exercises of devotion were performed to your satisfaction, if you had no doubts or uncertainties for the future, etc., with your character you would quickly become full of self-sufficiency and secret pride; and instead of exciting the bounty of the Father of Mercies and of drawing down His compassion on His poor weak creature, you would be an abomination in God’s eyes. ... ‘Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord’ [from Prov 16:5]. You must therefore set to work. Our Lord loves you, He sees into the depths of your soul, even into recesses hidden from yourself, and He knows what you need; leave Him to act, and don’t try to make Our Lord follow your way of seeing things, but follow Him in all simplicity.

Uncertainty, anguish, disgust are very bitter remedies necessary to the health of your soul. There is only one road that leads to Jesus, namely that of Calvary; and whosoever will not follow Jesus upon this road must give up the thought of divine union. ‘If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’

Take courage! I have as much need myself of these considerations as you have, for nature does not like sacrifice, but the reward of sacrifice, namely the love of God, is so great, that we ought to be ready to bear yet more in order to attain to it.”

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 _____

Please detach and return to:

Address _____

Director of Oblates, St. Vincent Archabbey, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd.
Latrobe, PA 15650-2690

Date of Renewal _____

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

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

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

Fr. Dominic Leo's talk on the monastic vows (July 11, 2019) - C.D.'s only

C.D. _____ (number)

Fr. Kurt Belsole's talk on "The Real St. Benedict" (July 21, 2019):

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

Fr. Brian Boesel's talk on Christian joy (August 18, 2019):

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

Fr. Edward Mazich's talk on *conversatio morum* (September 15, 2019)

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

Fr. Maurus Mount's talk on work in Benedictine spirituality (October 20, 2019):

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

Fr. Canice McMullen's three retreat conferences on stages of prayer & angels (October 12, 2019):

Set of 3 C.D.'s _____ (number of sets of 3)

Fr. Thomas Acklin's talk on silence in Benedictine spirituality (November 17, 2019):

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

Fr. Basil Burns's talk on the true meaning of stability (December 15, 2019):

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

Br. Hugh Lester's talk on *conversatio morum* (January 19, 2020):

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

Br. Angelo Lichtenstein's talk on poverty & simplicity (February 16, 2020):

(no C.D.'s) D.V.D. _____ (number)

Fr. Donald Raila's talk on the abbot according to the *Rule* (April 17, 2020):

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

Fr. Nathanael Polinski's talk on *lectio divina* (April 17, 2020):

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

Br. Albert Gahr's talk on silence in Benedictine spirituality (May 17, 2020):

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

Fr. Michael Antonacci's talk on stability in Benedictine spirituality (June 14, 2020):

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

Fr. Cyprian Constantine's talk on the Liturgy of the Hours (July 19, 2020):

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

Fr. Ignatius Camello's talk on prayer (August 16, 2020):

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

Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby's talk on work in Benedictine spirituality (September 20, 2020):

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

Fr. Donald Raila's 3 talks on the Beatitudes (October 17, 2020):

Set of 3 C.D.'s _____ (number) set of 3 D.V.D.'s _____ (number)

Fr. Anthony Grossi's talk on obedience in Benedictine spirituality (October 18, 2020):

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

Fr. John-Mary Tompkins' talk on humility in Benedictine spirituality (November 15, 2020):

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

Fr. Shawn-Matthew Anderson's talk on hospitality in Benedictine spirituality (December 20, 2020):

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

Fr. Isaac Haywiser's talk on silence in Benedictine spirituality (January 17, 2021):

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

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

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

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

Please order from Saint Vincent Book Center over the phone at 724-805-2557 or online at www.bookstore.stvincent.edu, or by mail (St. Vincent Book Center, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650-2690); or come in person to the Book Center. Please make out checks to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY. N.B.: Those who attend monthly meetings in Latrobe will still be able to order copies of C.D.'s and D.V.D.'s at a discounted price.

