

**OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT****Saint Vincent Archabbey****300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690**

February - April, 2008

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 Please note forms on fliers for renewal of Oblation, celebration on April 1, Lenten project, and Eucharistic adoration.
 

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**SEEKING THE TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE  
IN PRISONS AND MONASTERIES AND WHEREVER OBLATES LIVE**

Dear Oblates, Oblate Novices, and Friends,

All of us long for freedom. We long to be free from the constraints that keep us from becoming the people we are meant to be. We long for the freedom to lead joyful, fulfilling, purpose-filled lives. However, sometimes we seek an illusory freedom that is more akin to destructive self-indulgence or judgmental self-justification. What, then, is true freedom from a Christian perspective?

For one who lives in Christ, there is no freedom that focuses merely on oneself and one's desires; there is no freedom without a reaching out to God and a reaching out to others in love. During the Christmas Season we celebrated the coming of God as man to set us free from sin and death and to render us free to share in His divine life of love. Thus it is God who defines what human freedom is since it is He who created us, redeemed us, and sanctifies us. Looking at the earthly life of our incarnate Lord, we can see that He continually responded to the Father's love with a succession of acts of self-emptying love that were intended to free us to know that love and to believe in that love. In the Office of Readings for the Tuesday after Epiphany, we hear in a sermon on the Epiphany, "By his passion [inflicted on him by others], he frees us from the passions [unleashed by our disobedience]; by receiving a blow on the cheek he gives the world its liberty; by being pierced in the side he heals the wound of Adam. ... To give us a new birth that would make our bodies and souls immortal, he breathed into us the spirit of life and armed us with incorruptibility." What a grace! What a blessing! Indeed we have a longing for freedom; but as we see in the life of Our Lord, the price of obtaining freedom is great. Are we willing to enter into the baptismal waters again and again to be cleansed of sin, to surrender our lives to Christ, and to live in unrelenting sacrificial love? That is true freedom: to live in persistent communion with Christ, who is the One who sets us free.

Perhaps it is people who are incarcerated in prisons who long for freedom more than anyone

else. In recent years more and more prisoners have turned to the Oblate Program to seek greater depths in their Christian lives and to be freed from some of the disorders that may have led to their incarceration. Almost all of these men, as described in their applications or in letters to me, have undergone profound experiences of conversion. Some admit that they have committed crimes and have, usually in prison, discovered Christ in a real way and turned their lives around to a great extent. Others assert that they were imprisoned unjustly, but these, too, have come to know Christ in a deeper way through the humbling experience of living in prison; and they wish further to intensify their relationship with Christ and the Church through the practice of Benedictine spirituality. It is quite natural for inmates to yearn to be free from prison and from the multiple hardships that go along with a prison environment. Those who have turned to the Oblate Program, however, have recognized their need for a freedom that goes beyond removal of external constraints; they seek to grow in the freedom that comes from knowing Christ intimately, from hearing the truth of His teaching, and from living in His truth through humble, self-sacrificing love. This kind of freedom can be found even in the most detestable of environments. This kind of freedom can make a prisoner's life fruitful and even joyful, not because of external conditions but because of the graces that flow from living a profoundly Christ-centered life.

Several months ago one of our Oblate novices in prison, who has come to know the Lord in a profound way, challenged me to write something about prisoners in this Oblate newsletter. Knowing this man to be a very discerning, prayerful Christian, I decided to take his suggestion to heart. In fact, I realized that I become truly free when I listen for the voice of the Lord from every possible source and seek to respond to His living word in the most appropriate way; hence this essay on imprisonment, freedom and Benedictine life, both for those of us incarcerated in physical prisons and for those of us imprisoned by fears, anxieties,

doubts, and all sorts of self-centered tendencies. (Such slavery is just as real as physical incarceration!)

What, then, is the Christian freedom that all of us disciples of Christ seek? The Scriptures speak about freedom both from passions and attachments and from human-imposed restrictions that can interfere with our openness to God. St. Paul, in particular, addresses the issue of freedom in Christ and refers to it as “life in the Spirit.” He tells the Galatians, “It was for liberty that Christ freed us. So stand firm and do not take on yourselves the yoke of slavery for a second time!” (Gal 5:1). Later he continues, “My brothers, remember that you have been called to live in freedom – but not a freedom that gives free rein to the flesh. Out of love, place yourselves at one another’s service” (5: 13). In other words, Christian freedom involves the capacity to be who God meant us to be: children of a loving Father who delight in His love, who follow the law of the Spirit rather than the “law of the flesh,” and who generously and cheerfully serve others in love, the same self-emptying love that Christ offered to the world in His ministry, Passion, and death. It is freedom to know Christ’s love, to remain in a communion of love with Him, and to manifest that love. As the Christmas hymn “God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen” states in verse 3, “Fear not, then,’ said the angel, ‘Let nothing you affright; This day is born a Savior of a pure virgin bright, To free all those who trust in Him from Satan’s pow’r and might.” Satan’s power shows itself both in slavery to passions and in rigid adherence to self-chosen regulations. Both types of behavior close us off from the graces of God and thus enslave us to living on a sensual or self-justifying level.

In Book Three of Pope St. Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues*, there appears a hermit Martin, who had chained himself to a rock inside his narrow cave. Apparently, Martin thought he was performing a good and holy act of asceticism. When Abbot Benedict heard about Martin, he “sent word to him that the love of Christ should keep him chained there instead of the iron chain he was using” (*Life and Miracles of St. Benedict*, tr. By Odo J. Zimmermann, O.S.B., and Benedict R. Avery, O.S.B. [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press], p. xi). The hermit heeded the abbot’s advice. This incident shows that acts of self-denial are not always freeing. They can be the result of pride, and they can bind us in slavery to self-will rather than in the servanthood of Christ’s love, which is true freedom. The life of a Christian indeed requires that he “deny

his very self, take up his cross, and follow in My [Christ’s] steps” (Mk 8:34); but the self-denial must be one given by God and performed out of love for Christ and others.

It is this kind of self-denial and genuine freedom that people seek, I think, when they apply to our Oblate Program. They want to become freer persons. Many, both prisoners and non-prisoners, state that they hope that the *Rule* will give them the healthful structure and discipline they need to pursue a more committed Christian life. Yes, it is paradoxically true that self-discipline and self-denial, when chosen in response to God’s word, become means to freedom! Also, many applicants assert that they seek the support of a living community of faith that can lead them to a fuller life of prayer and loving service, and they hope that the Oblate community will fulfill this role.

The *Rule* of St. Benedict does assist its followers to walk in the freedom of God’s children and, therefore, to strive for a holiness that is characterized by a constant abiding in Christ’s love. Although the word “free” (*liber* in Latin) does not appear frequently in the *Rule*, the whole tenor of the document is that of binding oneself to a way of life that frees one to follow Christ and His Gospel. Right at the outset, the Prologue summons the monk to accept the advice of a loving father “willingly” [*libenter* in Latin], according to the translation by Abbot Parry, O.S.B.; such free, willing obedience helps the monk to return to the Father from whom he has so often drifted. One of the instruments of good works is to “listen willingly [again *libenter*] to holy reading” (4:55, from *RB 1980*); such reading, *lectio divina*, frees one to know Christ and live in Him. When St. Benedict speaks of *lectio*, he sometimes uses the term *lectioni vacant* (48:10) or *vacant lectionibus* (48:13, 14). The Latin *vacant* comes from the verb *vacare*, which means to become empty or free. The monastic life frees up time to enable the Word of God to permeate one’s life. It is interesting that our word *vacation* comes from the same root word; the Latin *vacatio* means “freedom” or “exemption.” Our true “vacation” is not a license to whatever we please but rather the freedom to use all our time and energy to become better disciples, to “run and do now what will profit us forever” (Prol: 44). In Prol: 43 St. Benedict uses the word *vacat* in the phrases “there is still time” and “have time”; that is, all of us who follow the *Rule* need to strive constantly to be emptied of selfish concerns so that we might in all things hasten more quickly to Christ and to our heavenly home.

Our participation in the Divine Office also serves to free us for formation by God's Word, which "washes over us" every time we pray the psalms and the accompanying readings, even if we do not grasp every word intellectually. Furthermore, there is the discipline of dropping everything else and going to pray when the literal or figurative bell rings to summon the monk or Oblate to pray the Office. Such a routine frees us from being consumed by our work and other concerns in order to put God first in our lives. The Divine Office is meant to do just that as it assists us to consecrate to God this hour of the day and ultimately all moments of the day.

How, then, can we followers of St. Benedict become truly free? Christ and the Church call to be "free from" and "free for." First, we are to be more and more liberated from disordered impulses. St. Benedict recommends, "He [the faithful monk] has foiled the evil one, the devil, at every turn, flinging both him and his promptings far from the sight of his heart. While these temptations were young, he caught hold of them and dashed them against Christ" (*RB* Prol: 28). Again he urges us, "As soon as wrongful thoughts come into your heart, dash them against Christ and disclose them to your spiritual father" (*RB* 4:50). "Temptations," the devil's promptings, and "wrongful thoughts" can include self-indulgent thoughts, judgmental thoughts, prideful thoughts, despairing thoughts, envious or jealous thoughts, uncaring thoughts, spiteful thoughts, or vengeful thoughts. All of these, if we indulge in them, enslave us by cutting us off from the grace of God, who is pure love. Insofar as we at any time are surprised by such thoughts (or even find ourselves generating them deliberately), we need to catch ourselves as soon as possible and to welcome Christ to set us free from such threats. This freedom is generally gained only over a long period of time and only after a virtually lifelong struggle.

Secondly, having a structured day that includes time for the Liturgy of the Hours and *lectio divina* is another safeguard against the tendency to drift away from God's will and into whatever strikes our fancy. "Freeing up" time for these practices exposes us to the Word of God, which judges us, comforts us, and transforms us into the children of God that we are meant to be. Obedience to the Word frees us from the tyranny of self-will. Although

we may know God's will in a general way from the teachings of the Church and the Scriptures, discovering His specific will for ourselves in a particular circumstance requires extra effort. It is *lectio divina* that is specifically geared to expose us to God's very personal word for us as we listen intently in silence to the Word in Scripture. Practicing *lectio* and praying the Divine Office can form us in a habit of listening for God's Word in every circumstance. Such frequent immersion in the Word disposes us to abide in the truth that comes from God and that sets us free (cf. Jn 8:32). In fact, Christ is the Truth who sets us free; as He says, "If the Son frees you, you will really be free" (Jn 8:36).

Finally, becoming truly free necessarily involves other people, especially members of Christ's Body. Several months ago I had a splinter in a knuckle on my right hand. It was something small but potentially dangerous. At first I did not recognize the dark spot as a splinter of wood. Once I did, however, I saw that I could not remove it myself, especially since I am right-handed. I then went to ask the nurse on duty in our infirmary to remove the splinter and thus to free me from the danger of infection. When afterwards I went to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, I felt moved by the thought that it is much harder to remove the splinters (or planks!) of sins and bad habits from my heart. To eradicate these, I need not only *lectio*, the Office, the monastic routine, and the guidance of the *Rule*, but also, and very essentially, the loving, corrective support of a spiritual director and a whole faith-community to keep me struggling against slavery to sin and other obstacles to a fuller life in Christ.

As Lent, 2008, approaches, let us acknowledge that, in many ways, we are still unfree. Let us yearn more and more for the freedom which Our Lord wishes to bestow on us. Let us use the prayerful means He has given us to overcome the slavery of living in the flesh, and let us welcome His grace to be free to live in the Spirit. Let us also support one another in communities of faith that are radically evangelized and evangelizing so that we together may more and more fully come to know the "truth that sets us free" (Jn 8:32)!

In the peace of Christ and St. Benedict,

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

## **A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS**

Lent, 2008

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

The Lenten Season provides an opportunity to deepen our spiritual life by strengthening our personal relationship to Jesus. At Christmas we see God's love made visible in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ – Emmanuel – God with us – the Word made flesh. As the liturgical year now turns its focus to Lent and Easter, we see the unfolding of the mystery of God's love in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The meaning of the mystery of God's love for Jesus ultimately led to Calvary and to the cross. As St. Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Philippians, "Jesus became obedient even to death on the cross." As we read the various gospel accounts of the passion of Jesus Christ, we see the ever deepening trust of Jesus in the goodness of His heavenly Father. Despite the pain and agony, He entrusts Himself totally to the Father's will: "Into Your hands I commend My spirit."

As disciples of Jesus, let us pray for the grace to take up our crosses, whatever they may be, and to follow the way He has shown us – a way that involves embracing the cross and looking forward in hope to a share in His resurrection.

Sincerely in Christ,

Archabbot Douglas

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### **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 the renewal privately on or about the Solemnity of Saint Benedict (April 1 this year) 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.

**Also, if you are an Oblate novice or an Oblate who is not involved in a deanery and if you 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 at the Archabbey can help you in any way on your journey as an Oblate or as an Oblate novice. Also, if you are no longer interested in the Oblate Program and no longer 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 make it a point to renew your Oblation in a living, faith-enhancing way!**

Last fall some 60 names were removed from our mailing list because these Oblates and Oblate novices had apparently not contacted the Oblate Office for over three years and then did not respond to a letter asking them about their continued interest in the Oblate Program.

### **CHANGES OF ADDRESS AND LOSS OF CONTACT**

If you receive this newsletter in the mail and if you change your address at any time, please notify the Oblate Office as soon as possible. Just because another department at St. Vincent is notified, the Oblate Office does not necessarily receive notification of the change.

Also, between July and November at least six names were removed from the mailing list without the Oblate Office's knowledge. These names have been restored. As you may realize, computers are not always predictable! In any case, if ever you do not receive a newsletter in February, May, August, or November, please notify the Oblate Office in case your name was accidentally removed from St. Vincent's centralized computer data bank. Thank you!

### **VOLUNTEERS FOR PRISON MINISTRY?**

Any Oblates living in the area of Mercer, PA, who are interested in volunteering at SCRF-Mercer are welcome to contact Mr. Joseph Ranelli, 2325 Highland Rd., Hermitage, PA 16148.

### **SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT AT THE ARCHABBEY ON APRIL 1**

Oblates from all areas are welcome to join Oblates of the Latrobe (St. Gregory) Deanery on Tuesday, April 1, to celebrate the Solemnity of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict with the monastic community and other guests. The schedule includes a festive Mass at 4:00 P.M., supper at 5:15 P.M. (in the Westmoreland Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Placid Hall), Oblation ceremonies at 6:30 P.M. (in the basilica choir), Evening Prayer with the monks at 7:30 P.M., and a social at 8:00 P.M. 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 20. The cost of the supper is \$6.75. Checks should be made out to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY, and reservations should be made in advance in order to plan for the right number of people.

### **DAY OF RECOLLECTION AT ST. EMMA, MARCH 9**

A day of recollection especially for Oblates is scheduled at St. Emma Retreat House in Greensburg for Sunday, March 9, the Fifth Sunday of Lent. The schedule begins with arrival and confessions at 9:00 A.M. and continues until 4:30 P.M. (after Vespers at 4:00) or until 6:00 P.M. (after supper). The retreat master will be Fr. Donald. The cost is \$25.00, including one meal, or \$35.00, including the second meal at 5:00. For registration or further information, write to St. Emma Monastery, 1001 Harvey Rd., Greensburg, PA 15601, or phone 724-834-3060, or e-mail [benedictinenuns@stemma.org](mailto:benedictinenuns@stemma.org).

### **“OBLATE RETREATS,” MAY 16-18 and JUNE 6-8**

Oblates and others interested in Benedictine spirituality are invited to participate in either (or both) of this year's two retreats on Benedictine spirituality. Fr. Maurus Mount, parochial vicar at St. Vincent Basilica, will direct the retreat from Friday, May 16, to Sunday, May 18, and Fr. Vincent Zidek, Director of Campus Ministry at St. Vincent College, will direct the retreat from Friday, June 6, to Sunday, June 8. The latter will be a silent retreat. **Note that both of these retreats will be based on Benedictine spirituality even though the retreat brochure does not list them explicitly as retreats on Benedictine spirituality.** 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.

### **OBLATE DAY 2008, SEPTEMBER 28, & DAY OF RECOLLECTION, OCTOBER 11**

This year's Oblate Day will be Sunday, September 28. Fr. Boniface Hicks, O.S.B., is scheduled to be the guest speaker. The fall day of recollection is scheduled for Saturday, October 11, and Fr. Edward Mazich, O.S.B., is to be the retreat master.

### **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!

### **OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS: Meeting on January 18**

The Oblate Board of Advisors met on Friday, January 18. Among the items discussed were the hope to establish an Oblate prayer chain in the Latrobe/Greensburg/Jeannette/ Ligonier/ Wheeling area, Eucharistic adoration for vocations, and the writing of deanery histories. If you would like a copy of the minutes, contact the Oblate Office. The next meeting will be on Friday, April 18, at 6:30 P.M. in Brownfield 203.

### **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.

### **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.

### **PREPARATION OF DEANERY HISTORIES**

As of January 23, six out of twenty deaneries have submitted histories to the Oblate Office. If you are a lay

leader or moderator of a deanery that has not yet submitted its history, please ask someone in your deanery to compile a history. It would be best if the histories are as detailed as possible. The Oblate Office can supply files with past reports if such information would be helpful. For those deaneries that have been in existence for many years, older members might be interviewed or reached by letter for their historical input. **It is hoped that a booklet of deanery histories can be printed sometime in April; so please submit the histories before Easter if at all possible.**

#### **COPIES OF OBLATE DIRECTORY 2007 WERE MAILED OUT**

Many Oblates and Oblate novices had not picked up copies of the 2007 *Directory* as of mid-January; so Fr. Donald decided to mail them out despite an earlier decision not to do so. They were causing too much clutter in the Oblate Office, and he did not want to throw them out. However, the lack of requests for the *Directory* might lead one to ask if we should really be printing a biennial *Directory*. If you have an opinion about this matter, please let Fr. Donald know. There is no use having a *Directory* if only a handful of people ever make use of it.

#### **LENTEN PROJECT FOR 2008: SELF-EVALUATION OF MY LIFE AS AN OBLATE (NOVICE)**

As a possible project or penance for Lent, you may wish to evaluate your life as an Oblate or Oblate novice. One of the enclosed fliers has a suggested list of questions for you to ask yourself during the Season of Lent. The questions were adapted from those found in the Winter 2007 (Volume 13:1) issue of the *Benedictine Oblate* published by St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana, and we received the kind permission of Fr. Meinrad Brune, O.S.B., Director of Oblates at St. Meinrad, to use such an adaptation.

#### **ONGOING FORMATION FOR OBLATES: ISSUE OF NEWSLETTER FROM ST. MEINRAD ARCHABBEY**

The whole issue of the *Benedictine Oblate* mentioned above was dedicated to the ongoing formation of Oblates of St. Benedict. Although some of the details apply only to Oblates affiliated with St. Meinrad Archabbey, most of the items in the newsletter are relevant to all Oblates, and Fr. Meinrad of St. Meinrad kindly granted us permission to reprint the whole issue. Those Oblates who would like a copy of this 8-page issue may write to the Oblate Office here at St. Vincent. A copy will be sent to each Oblate who renews his or her Oblation via the form included on a flier sent with this newsletter.

#### **APOLOGIES REGARDING THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER**

Fr. Donald failed to mention in the August newsletter that among those invested in St. Gregory Chapel on July 11, 2007, was **Rev. Richard P. Karenbauer**, pastor of Our Lady of Chestochowa Parish in New Kensington, PA. Fr. Karenbauer is a priest of the Diocese of Greensburg.

#### **COPIES OF THE PATH OF LIFE HAVE FINALLY ARRIVED!**

The 80 copies of this book that had been ordered in mid-September finally arrived at the Archabbey on December 28 and January after having been shipped from England. Copies have been mailed to those who requested that their copies be delivered by mail. Other copies are waiting to be picked up. Morehouse Publishing kindly charged only \$12.95 per book instead of \$20.00 and then granted an additional 20% discount, so that the final price per book was only \$10.36. Therefore, those who paid \$16.00 per book are receiving a refund check for \$5.64. (Fr. Donald forgot to allow for the shipping cost of some \$80.00!)

#### **OPEN LETTER TO OBLATES REGARDING CATHOLIC PRISON MINISTRY: AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**

Oblate Miguel Such of Mercer, PA, has composed a plea for more involvement of Catholics in ministry in prisons as a work of mercy. Those who would like a copy of this letter are welcome to contact the Oblate Office.

#### **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.

#### **PRAYERS REQUESTED FOR ALL OBLATES AND OBLATE NOVICES IN PRISON**

At the Oblate Board of Advisors meeting on January 18, it was suggested that all who receive this newsletter be urged to pray regularly for Oblates and Oblate novices who are incarcerated in prisons. At present there are

members of our Oblate community in prisons in Pennsylvania (perhaps 25), Georgia (about six), Florida, and Texas, and there is a potential Oblate novice in West Virginia. Thank you for your prayers for these men, many of whom suffer unreasonable hardships in very harsh environments.

### **OBLATES IN LATROBE / GREENSBURG / JEANNETTE / LIGONIER AREA TO RECEIVE PHONE SURVEY**

In order better to assess the needs of Oblates in these areas, Oblates Chris Karem and Mary Ann Cherubini are planning to phone Oblates and Oblate novices who live near Latrobe in behalf of Fr. Donald with a series of questions regarding their needs and desires as members of the Oblate community. We hope that this project will be helpful in reminding the individuals of their importance as members of the Oblate community.

### **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 Feb. 17, Mar. 16, Apr. 20 and May 18. 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. The direct lines for reaching Fr. Donald are (724) 805-2291 (Mon.-Sat.) and (724) 532-6709 (Sundays only). Classes on Benedictine spirituality will continue to be offered at 3:00 P.M. on the same dates. On February 17, Br. Bruno will offer a teaching on silence; on March 16, Fr. Shawn Matthew a teaching on St. Benedict and the *Rule*; and on April 20, Fr. Maurus a teaching on *conversatio morum*.

### **CLASSES ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY IN LATROBE**

On November 18 Oblate Joyce Collins made a presentation on "Silence" based largely on the book *The Challenge of Silence* by Fr. Anselm Grün, O.S.B., and enhanced her talk by references to her personal experiences.

On December 16 Fr. Sebastian, O.S.B., gave a thorough summary of the previous eleven lessons. He emphasized that the foundations of a life of seeking holiness lie in baptism, in which we are given participation in God's own life, and in the Eucharist, in which we are renewed in that life. "Spirituality," he remarked, "is essentially life in the Holy Spirit." Our role is essentially not to interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus our principal means to holiness is prayer, with an emphasis on silence and listening. We hear what God has to say to us largely through the practice of *lectio divina*.

### **PRAYER INTENTIONS AND PERSONAL NOTES**

(omitted from Internet version)

### **OBLATE CONDOLENCES**

Let us together offer prayers for those of our Oblate community who mourn the loss of loved ones:

- Oblate Dale Dombrosky of Baltimore, MD, and her husband, Tom, whose mother, Margaret Dombrosky, died on November 3
- Oblate Mary Lynn Nicklas of St. Marys, PA, whose mother, Almeda Ruth Scull, died on November 18.
- Oblate Bernard "Ben" Hoffman of St. Marys, PA, whose father, Jerome A. Hoffman, died on November 24 and whose brother-in-law Michael J. Eberl died on November 12
- Oblate Donna Sunseri of Greensburg, PA, whose grandmother Phyllis Willochell died on December 9
- Oblate William Giebfried of Johnstown, PA, whose wife, Anna Mae, died on December 14 [see below]
- Oblate Christopher Bingham of Newark, OH, and his wife, Colette, whose mother, Helen Chuff, died on January 1
- Oblate George Ponticello of Pittsburgh, PA, whose brother Gerald V. "Gerry" Ponticello died on January 4
- Oblate Joseph Cirelli of Coraopolis, PA, whose uncle Pete Pollice died on January 23
- Oblate Dale Yeckley of Latrobe, PA, whose uncle Leonard Yeckley died on January 28 .

### **OBLATE DEATHS**

Let us be united in prayer for the recently deceased members of our Oblate community, that having died with Christ, they might experience the fullness of life in Him:

- 11 Dec 2006 – James R. (Ansgar) Monroe of McKeesport, PA (Oblate since May, 1950)
- 19 Nov 2007 – Stephen Ferko of Erie, PA (Oblate since June, 1960)
- 27 Nov 2007 – John H. (Bernard) Kelly of Toronto, Ont., Canada (Oblate since March, 2006)
- 10 Dec 2007 – Joseph (Michael) Roberts of St. Catharines, Ont., Canada (Oblate since June, 1996)

- 11 Dec 2007 – Elizabeth T. “Betty” Cotter of St. Marys, PA (Oblate since July, 1961)
- 12 Dec 2007 – Ronald E. (Majolus) Malkin of Newark, DE (formerly Windber, PA; Oblate since April, 1989)
- 14 Dec 2007 – Anna Mae (Catherine) Giebfried of Johnstown, PA (Oblate since March, 1987)
- 18 Dec 2007 – Elizabeth “Betty” (Emma) Cheeks of Baltimore, MD (Oblate since August, 2003)
- 28 Dec 2007 – Bertha B. (Benedicta Julian) Ballentine of Temple, TX (formerly Aberdeen, MD; Oblate since July, 2000)

## **NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES**

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

Deacon leader Ralph DeCecco wrote on November 8 and December 18. There was no meeting in October because of Deacon Ralph’s involvement in a Metanoia Retreat, a week-long mission, and a personal retreat. Also, the meeting scheduled for November had to be canceled. The meeting on December 17 began with Vespers and then proceeded to a discussion about a report from an international workshop on Oblate life. The group also studied *RB 62* (on “Priests of the Monastery”) and meditated on a reflection on the O-Antiphons submitted by Oblate John Simpson. The meeting closed with Night Prayer.

### **Ann Arbor, MI** -- *monthly meetings at Old St. Patrick’s Church*

Lay leader James Durka wrote on December 12, but there was no report.

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

Secretary Gabriele Terrill wrote on November 7 and November 18. Fourteen people joined Fr. John Peck, moderator, for the meeting on October 28. After Vespers in the church, a new guest was welcomed. Then Oblate Mary Ann Bingeman displayed some materials that she had brought from the Archabbey. The group read *RB 1* and watched a DVD about Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, CA, that Mary Ann had brought with her (she had been affiliated with this abbey until recently). The video emphasized the actual life of the monks, obedience to God, love for Christ and the people whom the monks serve, and the primacy of prayer.

At the meeting on November 18, after Vespers in the church, Fr. John spoke about the history of monasteries in Ireland, prompted by a recent pilgrimage to Ireland by a group from St. Paul Parish. One inquirer asked about living by the *Rule* with a family. Then the group read *RB 35*, with emphasis on serving one another in love as an overflow of prayer, silence, and a yearning for God’s all-consuming love. Finally, the group talked about ordering clothing with an Oblate logo. The meeting concluded with some refreshments and a closing prayer.

### **Asheboro, NC (Guardian Angels/St. Joseph Deanery)** -- *monthly meetings at Lillian Hazelwood’s home, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat. of each month, 10:30 A.M.*

Secretary Robert O’Brien wrote on November 23 and January 14. There was no meeting in November, and in December the meeting was adjoined to a meeting of the parish’s Divine Mercy prayer group. A regular meeting was held on January 6 at Lillian Hazelwood’s home, and it was decided to reschedule meetings to second Saturdays from 10:30 to 11:30.

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

Oblate Dale Dombrosky wrote on December 20. There was no meeting in October since Fr. Paschal Morlino, moderator, was away. In November the Oblates met to discuss pages from the book *Preferring Christ*. Because of pre-Christmas activities there was no meeting in December. A meeting with a Christmas party took place in January.

Fr. Paschal reported in person on February 2 that the group has been reflecting on Pope Benedict’s encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. There has been a half-hour session for Oblate novices and inquirers before the main meeting.

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

Lay leader Ethel Gallii wrote on December 29 and January 16. The meeting on November 20 took place at Holy Trinity (Byzantine) Monastery in Butler, the only men’s Byzantine Monastery in the U.S. The 24 Oblates who came joined the monks for the Divine Office and then were served supper. The group visited the book store and was delighted with the icons and crosses. Hegumen Leo Schlosser, O.S.B., gave a teaching on being Benedictine in the modern world and on the call to stand out like light in the darkness.

Despite snowy weather and icy roads, 15 people attended the meeting on January 15. After Evening Prayer the group heard a reading of the history of the deanery, which had been written by Oblate Joan Miller. Then the group did a study of humility from *RB 7:1-22*. St. Benedict’s precepts of fearing God and doing His will, they reflected, are very much at odds with the message of our culture.

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

Secretary Mary Catherine Hoover wrote on December 9. At the meeting on November 5, Fr. Jude, moderator, began a series of talks on the "10 hallmarks of the Benedictine tradition." The first discussion on that date centered on "community" and "prayer." At the meeting on December 4, Fr. Jude led a discussion on "hospitality" and "stability." The group had hoped to have discussions on the book *The Path of Life*, but since the books had not yet arrived, they decided to use another book on Benedictine spirituality.

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

Lay leader Mary Hoffken wrote on December 9 and January 14. At the meeting on October 9, attended by seven people besides Fr. Paschal Kneip, moderator, the group read Lesson 7, "The Liturgy of the Hours," and discussed it as well as the lesson "Prayer." Various attendees shared about books on the *Rule*, different versions of the Liturgy of the Hours (*Shorter Christian Prayer* was recommended as best for beginners), and on-line resources for the Hours and the *Rule*. Fr. Paschal emphasized that praying the Hours enables one to join the whole Church in sanctifying time and daily life and thus making it all an offering to God. The meeting closed with Evening Prayer.

On November 8 the eight people present discussed the chapter "Prayer" from the book *The Path of Life*. The chapter helped to answer some questions that the members had about prayer. Fr. Paschal emphasized the importance of prayers of praise and adoration, shared about praying Night Prayer from memory as a young monk, and stressed that the Hours were not simply to be read but served as an avenue to encounter God. The meeting closed with the Office for the Dead.

The meeting on December 8, led by Oblate novice Don Barkman, included readings from Lesson 8, "The Eucharist," and from the *Catechism*, #1322-1419. The group discussed Catholics' belief in the Real Presence. Fr. Paschal suggested that all read Jesus' teaching about the Eucharist in John 6.

The meeting on January 3, attended by seven people and Fr. Paschal, opened with an invocation to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Oblate Lorraine Kodjak led the main discussion, which involved the relationship between the *Rule* of St. Benedict and the Eucharist. Although the *Rule* mentions the Eucharist very little, it speaks much about the graces that flow from the Eucharist, such as love of humility, forgiveness, and a sharing in the sufferings of Christ. Fr. Paschal urged the Oblates to meditate on John 6 for a deeper understanding of the Eucharist. The meeting closed with Evening Prayer.

**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 15 and December 11. At the meeting on November 13, the group prayed Evening Prayer and then discussed the chapter "Benedictine Ways of Behaving" from the book *How to Be a Monastic and Not Leave Your Day Job*. The exchange focused upon reasons for anger and loss of patience over ordinary things. During the meeting Msgr. Michael Becker invested

**Diane P. Crownover** of Johnstown, PA,

as an Oblate novice. Also, it was made known that Msgr. Becker had been transferred to St. Michael Church in St. Michael, PA; but he assured the group that he would continue to serve as moderator of the St. John Gualbert Deanery.

The meeting on December 10 included a Mass and a pre-Christmas celebration. Oblate Mike Russo spoke about clothing with the Oblate logo and explained how to order items.

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

The meeting on November 18 attracted a large group of well over 30 people. The topic for discussion was "Chastity" as a countercultural virtue and as a gift from God as treated in Chapter 5 of *Strangers to the City*. Before the praying of Compline in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald invested

**William J. Uncapher** of Derry, PA,

as an Oblate novice.

The meeting on December 16 was hindered by stormy weather. Only six people attended Fr. Sebastian's presentation at 3:00, and some 10 people attended the regular meeting at 6:45. There was a lively discussion on "Dispossession" (Chapter 6 of the text), with an emphasis on Christians' call to work against our culture's obsession with material goods. Living more simply can help to make more room for Christ to rule our lives.

The meeting on January 20 drew a large turnout, perhaps because of the clear skies despite extremely low temperatures. The discussion was again based on "Dispossession," with various reflections on stewardship of things that really belong to God, on assisting the poor with our excess, and on pondering the reality of death to give us a better non-possessive attitude. At ceremonies in the Archabbey Basilica before Compline, Fr. Donald invested

**Kevin D. Brown** of Pittsburgh, PA,

as an Oblate novice.

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

Lay leader Paul Mangiardi wrote on November 13, November 29, December 7, December 17, and January 11. At the meeting on November 13, the group prayed for all the Oblates' special intentions and reflected on RB 8 and 9. Oblate Ken Samuelson agreed to write a history of the deanery for the booklet of histories which the Oblate Office hopes to issue in 2008.

At the meeting on November 27, the attendees read RB 10-20 to understand better the praying of the breviary and its importance. The group also reviewed the Catholic Church's teaching on indulgences and its meaning for individual

Catholics. Then they prayed for their families, for the intentions sent from St. Vincent, and for the poor souls; they also prayed the Litany of St. Benedict. Finally, a communion service was held.

The meeting on December 11, attended by 14 people, involved a review of *RB 13-20* as a foundation to understand the praying of the breviary. Special prayers were offered for Oblates suffering from cancer and for their families. On December 14 the group gathered for a communion service and then celebrated the departure of Oblate novice Brian Pham with refreshments.

On January 8 ten members gathered to discuss pages 15-27 of the *Oblate Formation Booklet*. Then the group prayed for all the intentions sent by Fr. Donald and concluded with the Litany of St. Benedict.

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

Secretary Trudy Bretzler wrote on December 9. The meeting on October 26, attended by 13 people, began as usual with devotions in the church. Then the group discussed the forthcoming Oblate day of recollection on December 1, the day of recollection at the Archabbey on October 20, and the monthly prayer list. Msgr. Charles Gagné, moderator, then led a discussion about hospitality from *The Rule of Benedict for Beginners*. The group spoke about little opportunities for acts of hospitality each day. Then, after a time of coffee and fellowship, Msgr. Gagné led an instruction "On Holiness and Being an Oblate of St. Benedict."

At the meeting on November 30, after devotions, an inquirer was welcomed; a video of a retreat talk at the Archabbey was viewed; and final preparations were made for the day of recollection. After the time of fellowship, a prayer list was distributed; the "Salve Regina" was sung; and Fr. José, a priest of the parish, gave a blessing.

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

Lay leader Bill O'Neil wrote on November 19 and January 26. At the monthly meeting on November 14, the group continued a study of the *Rule*, Chapters 42-48, under Fr. Ralph, moderator. Seven people attended besides Fr. Ralph. At the meeting on December 12 there was a pre-Christmas celebration.

At the meeting on January 23, nine people joined Fr. Ralph for Evening Prayer and a discussion of the *Rule*, ending with Chapter 59. There were some plans to put together a history of the deanery. The next meeting, on February 20, is to be preceded by the Stations of the Cross and a holy hour.

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

Secretary Peggi Gabler wrote on December 24. The meeting on December 6, attended by seven people along with Rev. Michael Ferrick, began with Vespers and Benediction and then continued in the Queen of the World cafeteria. The group first discussed gathering materials for a deanery history. Oblate Eileen Brennen read a meditation from *Benedictus* on original sin. Then Fr. Michael read *RB 54* about material possessions, and the group discussed the importance of avoiding materialistic distractions in order to focus on the spiritual life. The next meeting was scheduled for March 6. A social with refreshments concluded the session.

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

Ben Perez, Chairman of the Savannah Oblate Advisory Council, reported on November 1. The Council met with Fr. Prior Frank Ziemkiewicz, O.S.B., on September 11, and with Fr. Ron Gatman, O.S.B., and Fr. Frank on October 9. In planning the year's events, the council decided to alternate two events from month to month: (1) Mass followed by a pot-luck dinner and (2) Vespers with a guest speaker. The Council also discussed the "Oblate fund" established last year to make the Savannah Oblate program self-sustaining. There are also efforts to promote the Oblate program throughout the diocese, to develop a web page tied into the prep school's web page, and to attract the younger generation from Benedictine Military School.

The event in September involved a Mass celebrated by Fr. Ron at 4:30. Over 30 Oblates attended. On October 28, Fr. Michael Kavanaugh spoke on "evangelization" after the praying of Vespers. He also talked about his Benedictine upbringing and how it influenced his faith-journey.

**St. Vincent College**

On November 19 in Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel, Fr. Donald invested

**Lindsey Schechter** of Columbus, OH, and

**Katrina "Katie" Wojtunik** of Latrobe, PA,

as Oblate novices. Lindsey is a freshman at St. Vincent College, and Katie is a campus minister. Also present were three other students and Fr. Vincent Zidek, O.S.B., Director of Campus Ministry. A group of interested students has been meeting monthly with Fr. Vincent.

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

Lay leader Gretchen Meyers wrote on November 19, December 23, and January 25. All but one member attended the meeting on November 16. The group decided to make a deanery contribution to Sant' Anselmo in Rome. They also

discussed how God reveals Himself in stories.

Six people gathered for a meeting at Gretchen's house on December 21 and discussed the connection between Advent and hospitality.

At the meeting on January 18, Gretchen distributed copies of *The Path of Life* that the group had ordered. They then talked about possible Lenten practices and about the meaning of the Baptism of the Lord and its connection with Advent, Christmas, conversion, and hospitality.

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

Secretary Ashley Leggett wrote on November 15, December 18, and January 17. The meeting on November 12 was attended by eight Oblates, one Oblate novice, two visitors, and Fr. Boniface, moderator. The group decided to have Oblation ceremonies on December 17. Then there was an extensive and enlightening discussion about RB 4, 5, and 6, with a focus on St. Benedict's condemnation of negative humor, the precept of "burying the dead," the connection between obedience and humility, the avoidance of grumbling, and the importance of cherishing silence beyond simple restraint of speech. The meeting closed with the "Ultima," prayers for special needs, and a blessing.

On December 17 the Oblates gathered at Our Lady of Victory Church for a Mass celebrated by Fr. Boniface and for annual Oblation ceremonies. During the Mass Fr. Boniface invested

**Peter J. Hammond** of State College, PA (with home in Pittsburgh), and

**Howard W. Pickering** of State College, PA,

as Oblate novices. After the Mass the group went to the Benedictine house for a pot-luck dinner.

The meeting on January 14 was attended by 16 people, including three visitors. After opening prayers, Evening Prayer, and the reading of some letters, the group discussed RB 7 on humility. Regarding the "steps of the ladder," most felt that we move up and fall back regularly but hope that progress exceeds the slide backward. A story was told about the value of listening, especially when people have problems to share. Humility helps us to treat everyone with the same respect because of Christ present within them. The next meeting will involve a discussion on RB 8-20. Oblate Maria DiCola agreed to be in charge of writing a deanery history.

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

Oblate Anna Patti wrote on December 7. The meeting on December 5 was well-attended and involved a first discussion based on the book *Cherish Christ above All*. Fr. Cristiano, moderator, also made some comments about interpreting the Bible as the Word of God.

**Williamsport, PA (Ss. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus Deanery)** -- meetings on last Sunday of each month, 1 P.M., St. Boniface Church (or rectory) meeting room

Lay leader Ted Richardson wrote on November 25 and January 7. Only four Oblates attended the meeting on November 25. After some silent prayer in the church, the group discussed possible deanery patrons, and Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus, Hosts of the Lord (feast day on June 29), were chosen. Then possible books for study of the *Rule* were suggested. Because of the small number of attendees, no decision was made. The meeting scheduled for December 16 was cancelled because of inclement weather.

**Various Locations**

On November 4 in the chapel in Mercer, PA, Rev. Daniel Prez invested

**Louis G. Jacobs** of Mercer, PA,

as an Oblate novice during Mass.

On November 17 in the Archabbey Basilica,

**Debra "Debbie" (Jutta) Scott** of Sebring, OH,

made her final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Donald, her brother Br. Mark Floreanini, and her sister-in-law Lori.

On November 18, during Mass at the chapel in Somerset, PA, Rev. Albert Anselmo invested

**Barry L. Boyer** of Somerset, PA,

as an Oblate novice.

On December 20, before Mass in the chapel in Century, FL, Rev. Eugene Casserly invested

**John Anderson** of Century, FL,

as an Oblate novice.

**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: Br. Gerard Klaric, Br. Patrick Lacey, Fr. Simon Toth, Fr. Thomas Devereux, Fr. Paul Rubadue.

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

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

- St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*
- Roberta C. Bondi, *To Pray and to Love*
- Rev. William Burk, *Protect Us from All Anxiety: Meditations for the Depressed*
- Sr. Rachel Callahan, C.S.C., & ..., *Harvest Us Home: Good News As We Age*
- Christopher Derrick, *The Rule of Peace: St. Benedict & the European Future*
- André Gozier, O.S.B., *Fifteen Days of Prayer with Saint Benedict*
- Richard J. Hauser, S.J., *Finding God in Troubled Times*
- Rev. Bernard Head, *Blessed Marmion: A 21st-Century Appreciation* (pamphlet)
- Guy-Marie Oury, O.S.B., *A Monastic Pilgrimage: Following the Footsteps of St. Benedict*
- Abbot David Parry, O.S.B., *Household of God*
- Basil M. Pennington, O.C.S.O., *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice*
- Mark Plaiss, *The Inner Room*
- Pseudo Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*
- Fr. Joel Rippling, O.S.B., *The Benedictine Order in the United States*
- David Robinson, *The Christian Family Toolbox*
- Fr. Michael Scanlon, O.F.M., *Let the Fire Fall*

**Quote on Order and Freedom from Anselm Grün, O.S.B., *Benedict of Nursia: His Message for Today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), pages 51-53:**

A further element of Benedictine life is order, the order of the days, which brings a clear structure into the course of daily life, which divides the passing hours between prayer and work, silence and speech, commonality and solitude. .... Those who subject themselves to external order learn that thereby they bring order into their own moods and feelings as well, that they put up a barrier to the fickleness of their own hearts that does not simply push something down, but opens up a space in which the heart can become whole. .... Those who have to find a new system or schedule for living day after day, over and over again, spend their strength unnecessarily. A sensible ordering given once and for all makes us free for the essentials, and it gives us the necessary security to feel at home, not to furnish one's life comfortably, but in order to be able to pursue, with steadiness, the inner process of maturing.

## OBLATE PROJECT FOR LENT, 2008:

### A personal evaluation of my life as an Oblate or Oblate novice

(adapted with permission from a similar set of questions in the *Benedictine Oblate*, Winter 2007, Volume 13:1, published by Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, Indiana)

The following questions may be of help to you to evaluate how well you are fulfilling your vocation to be an Oblate (or Oblate novice) of St. Vincent Archabbey. It is hoped that your prayerful reflection on these questions will deepen your commitment to Christ, to the Church, and to the Oblate and monastic communities of St. Vincent Archabbey in terms of your vocation to follow Benedictine spirituality. This evaluation is intended only for your personal use, and there is no need for you to send your response to the Oblate Office.

**1. What have I done during the past year to continue my ongoing formation as an Oblate?**

**2. What do I plan to do during the coming year to continue my ongoing formation?**

**3. How well have I been living the three Oblate promises:**

Stability (patience in suffering; perseverance in my commitments)?

*Conversatio morum* (eagerness for ongoing conversion within fidelity to Oblate/monastic values)?

Obedience (seeking to know and do God's will in the context of my daily life)?

**4. How well have I been fulfilling the practices recommended to Oblates:**

Reading a portion the *Rule* of St. Benedict regularly (daily, if possible), reflecting on it, and trying to apply it to my daily life?

Meditating frequently (daily, if possible) on a portion of the Bible as *lectio divina*?

Praying a part of the Liturgy of the Hours on a regular basis (daily, if possible)?

Making an annual retreat or day(s) of recollection if at all possible?

Nurturing the values of humility, silence, hospitality, peace, and reverence for all people and all creation?

Attending monthly Oblate meetings, whenever possible (if I live in an area where there are deanery meetings nearby)? Contacting my deanery or the Archabbey (Director of Oblates) regularly?

Renewing my Oblation at least annually (privately or in a group)?

Praying regularly for the monks of St. Archabbey and for the Oblate community?

Regularly attending Mass (if I am a Catholic) or other recommended worship services (if I am a non-Catholic)?

Being attentive to the presence of God in my ordinary, daily life?

**5. In what ways have I reinforced my spiritual affiliation with St. Vincent Archabbey and the Oblate community? Are there ways in which I can better offer my time, talent, or treasure to the monks of St. Vincent Archabbey, the nuns of St. Emma Monastery, or other members of the Oblate community affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey?**

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## RESERVATION FORM FOR CELEBRATION OF ST. BENEDICT DAY ON APRIL 1

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I plan to attend the dinner for Oblates at St. Vincent on Tuesday, April 1, 2008, along with \_\_\_ guests; I enclose \_\_\_\_\_ (\$6.75 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 April 1. On becoming a full Oblate, I plan to take the Oblate name \_\_\_\_\_. (*application form required*)

Please send this form to: **Mrs. Christine Karem, 2012 Souli St., Greensburg, PA 15601 (phone: 724-216-5830).**

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### 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

**Quote from Pope Benedict XVI on Freedom** (from a homily on Dec. 8, 2005, as found in *Benedictus* (Yonkers, NY: Ignatius Press/Magnificat SAS, 2006), pp. 286-288)

“...The human being [Adam] does not trust God. Tempted by the serpent, he harbors the suspicion that, in the end, God takes something away from his life, that God is a rival who curtails our freedom and that we will be fully human only when we have cast him aside; in brief, that only in this way can we fully achieve our freedom. The human being lives in the suspicion that God’s love creates a dependence and that he must rid himself of this dependency if he is to be fully himself. ...

“Love is not dependence but a gift that makes us live. The freedom of a human being is the freedom of a limited being, and therefore is itself limited. We can possess it only as a shared freedom, in the communion of freedom: only if we live in the right way, with one another and for one another, can freedom develop. We live in the right way if we live in accordance with the truth of our being, and that is, in accordance with God’s will. For God’s will is not a law for the human being imposed from the outside and that constrains him, but the intrinsic measure of his nature, a measure that is engraved within him and makes him the image of God, hence, a free creature. ...

“...We think that a little bargaining with evil, keeping for oneself a little freedom against God, is basically a good thing, perhaps even necessary. The person who abandons himself totally in God’s hands does not become God’s puppet, a boring ‘yes man.’ Only the person who entrusts himself totally to God finds true freedom, the great, creative immensity of the freedom of good. The person who turns to God does not become smaller but greater, for through God and with God he becomes great, he becomes divine, he becomes truly himself. ...”  
(Reprinted with permission of Ignatius Press, Feb., 2008)

**Volunteers for Mentoring Program**

If you are willing to be a mentor to assist inquirers or Oblate novices in their exploration of Benedictine spirituality (or would like to think about the possibility), please complete the form below and send it to the Oblate Office. You will then be sent a packet of information about serving as mentor, and if you are willing, you will be put in touch with people who request mentoring. Please send this form to: Oblate Office, St. Vincent Archabbey, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650-2690. Thank you.

\_\_\_\_ I would like to serve as a mentor for people in my deanery.

\_\_\_\_ I would like to serve as a mentor for people in remote locations.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTORY OF OBLATES: PREPARING FOR THIS SUMMER'S REVISION**

If any Oblate or Oblate novice who is currently listed in the *Directory* wishes to report a change of address, phone number, or e-mail address, please contact Bill O'Neil, who keeps a current listing of the *Directory* on computer. Likewise, if you are not included in the *Directory* but wish to be included in the next revision, please send the information that you wish to be printed to Bill. The *Directory* is revised about every two years, and copies are sent only to those who wish to participate. The next revision is to be issued this summer. Bill's e-mail address is:

**boneil2@peoplepc.com** .

One can also write to Bill at William O'Neil, 4122 Beehner Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15217-2811, or phone him at 412-422-1313.

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**Oblate novices or inquirers who would like to have a mentor**

If you are an Oblate novice or inquirer (or even a full Oblate) who would like to have a mentor in your exploration of Benedictine spirituality, please complete the form below and send it to the Oblate Office. You will then be put in touch with someone who has volunteered to serve as a mentor. Please send this form to: Oblate Office, St. Vincent Archabbey, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650-2690. Thank you.

\_\_\_\_ I would like to be guided by a mentor in my exploration of the Oblate Program and Benedictine life.

\_\_\_\_ I would prefer my mentor to be in a certain location or to communicate with me in a certain way. *(Please specify preferred conditions on the back of this sheet.)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Application for joining the proposed prayer chain for Oblates and Oblate novices in the Latrobe area**

\_\_\_\_ As an Oblate novice or Oblate of the Latrobe/ Greensburg/ Jeannette/ Ligonier /Wheeling areas, I am willing to contact one other person once a week to pass on prayer requests.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_