

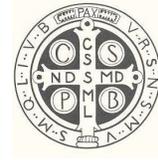


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THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

Saint Vincent Archabbey

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

GRATITUDE FOR LITTLE THINGS AND GENEROSITY IN LITTLE WAYS

Dear Oblates, Oblate Novices, and Friends,

The importance of little things

Most of life consists of little things. Each day we receive an abundance of little things from God (which are really great things since they come from His heart of infinite love), and we are called to give generously to others in little ways. One might even summarize a Christian's life of faith as an ongoing reception of graces from God, a growing capacity to receive these with a response of thanksgiving, and a readiness to share with others the generous bounty bestowed on us by God.

This past January 21-22, I once again attended the March for Life in Washington, DC. At least in retrospect, I recognized many reasons for gratitude, great and small: the bus driver's cheerfulness and skill in driving on snowy roads, the gentle leadership of the seminarian who kept us all together and on schedule, the beauty of two special Masses at the National Shrine, the grace barely to escape being late for the second Mass, the joyful enthusiasm of hundreds of thousands of marchers (mostly young people), and the gratifyingly earlier-than-usual arrival home. One of the graces I received during last year's march was the realization that I could use a new winter coat. The sentimentally valuable old coat had sustained a broken zipper that could not be replaced, snaps that were coming loose, velcro that no longer stuck together, and a belt that kept becoming unfastened. True to His providential care for small things, God moved someone to deposit on our monastery "beggars' bench," within a few weeks, another wonderfully warm winter coat. It kept me adequately warm this year, and for that I can give much thanks!

Obedience in small things

Of course, God will not let us merely gloat in gratitude without doing anything with the lavish graces that He grants to us. We are called to obey Him in loving response to His love and thus become even more fully immersed in a wonderful exchange of gifts.

In Chapter 67 of the *Holy Rule*, St. Benedict prescribes guidelines for monks sent on a journey. After legislating for the at-home monks' need to pray for the travelers, for detachment from evil things that they may have seen or

heard, and for restraint from about these evil things, St. Benedict specifies that no one should "leave the enclosure of the monastery, or go anywhere, or do anything at all, *however small* [italics mine], without the abbot's order." This somewhat abrupt statement may lead us to think that St. Benedict is being excessive in trying to control every detail of the monk's life. How is it that everything a monk does must be submitted to the abbot's scrutiny? Does not such a precept violate the monk's personal freedom and make him a slave?

The issue here is not so much the regulation of minute details in a monk's life but rather growth in his capacity to become Christ-like in obedience to God the Father's loving will. The abbot represents Christ. Obedience to the abbot in small things gives evidence of submission to Christ in the details of daily life. If we begin to go places or do things that are not in accord with our Christian vocations, then we have begun to go astray from Christ and the Church. If we begin to stray in small matters, we are likely to stray in large matters. On the other hand, if we strive to please God in little opportunities that are given, then we are laying the ground work for cooperating with God's plan in great matters as well, even when much sacrifice may be required. As Our Lord asserts, "The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones" (Lk 16: 10).

Other passages in the New Testament also refer to small matters, regarding both God's care for little things and our call to respond faithfully and gratefully in all circumstances, whether major or minor. Our Lord reminds us that even the minor details of the Old Testament are significant insofar as they are fulfilled in Him and in the New Covenant. He proclaims, "Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law [of the Old Covenant], until all things have taken place" (Mt 5:18). Also, Jesus commends the one who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple; "he will surely not lose his reward" (Mt 10:10). In the parable of the talents, the master says to two reliable servants, "Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you greater responsibilities" (Mt 25:21). Serving our "least

brother” is important, too; in the scene of the Last Judgment, Our Lord declares, “I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me” (Mt 25:40). Christ also speaks about the great impact of salt (Mt 5:13), mustard seeds (Mt 13:31), and yeast (Mt 13:33) as symbols of the Kingdom’s growth.

Attention to small things in the Rule

Throughout the practical sections of the *Rule*, St. Benedict calls for attention to small things as part of our Christian responsibility. He urges the abbot to consult others in all matters of business, the whole community for greater matters and the “seniors only” for less important business (3: 12-13). The monk himself needs to know that, although in one sense he is insignificant, he is still much beloved by God. The seventh step of humility asserts that a monk should be “convinced in his heart that he is inferior to all and of less value” (7:51) so that he might better become one with Christ in His humility and learn God’s commandments (7:54) more profoundly. The monk thus grows in the truth that his value comes not from doing great things but from the infinite love of God, proven to us by Christ’s suffering and death. St. Benedict shows concern that his monks “receive bedding as provided by the abbot, suitable to monastic life” (22:2). Thus, even in the matter of bedding, there is an opportunity for the abbot to show appropriate kindness and for the monk to be grateful. In the matter of possessions, the monk should not give or receive or retain even small things without an order from the abbot, as St. Benedict says, “not [even] a book, writing tablets or stylus” (33: 2-3). Although as in the realm of bedding, such regulations are not followed literally today, they remind us not to hoard even little things, not to manhandle them, and to treat them as gifts from God to be shared with others. St. Benedict also legislates for “the utensils required for the kitchen service” (35:10). Furthermore, he specifies that kitchen workers “receive a drink and some bread over and above the regular portion” (35:12) before mealtime so that they may serve “without grumbling or hardship” (35:13). Thus the possibly hard and heavy work of serving at meals needs to be acknowledged by a small but significant practical gesture.

Lessons for us regarding the small things of life

What can we Oblates and monks learn from this wisdom about small things? First, God is attentive to all creation, things big and small and especially human beings, whether esteemed or not in people’s eyes. Psalm 104 speaks of “beasts of the field,” wild-asses, storks, goats, rabbits, “beasts of the forest,” lions, and even sea-monsters (104:26). Most of all, of course, He is concerned about man and his needs, and He renews the earth by sending forth His spirit. For all this generosity, each of us humans can cry out, “I will sing to the Lord all my life, make music to my God while I live” (104:33) and “I find my joy in the Lord” (104:34) in and through the things He gives us. In gratitude we are also, in obedience to Him, to guard our thoughts so that they may be “pleasing to him” (104:34).

Secondly, when there are more important things to be done, the lesser things are to be left behind. If I am called to the hospital to anoint a critically ill person, I am to stop washing out recyclable containers! However, I must still pay attention to small matters. I must be calm enough to pick up the right car keys; I must drive carefully and be mindful of the dignity of

fellow drivers on the road; I must show kindness to the receptionist at the hospital. Doing the “great things” of administering a sacrament and tending to a dying person does not excuse me from being a sacrament of Christ’s love in other, smaller matters. The prioritizing of business is meant to help the individual not to be overburdened, as officials in a monastery or any company or school tend to be. Thus St. Benedict prescribes in the chapter on kitchen servers, “No one will be excused from kitchen service unless he is sick or engaged in some important business of the monastery” (35:1); and he then reiterates, “If the community is rather large, the cellarer should be excused from kitchen service ...” (35:5). Still, the cellarer and other officials are responsible for doing their small things well and for the glory of God (cf. 57:9).

Finally, we are to give back to God and show charity to others in the small ways offered to us by God. Praying a little phrase while I am on an errand to keep myself recollected can be very pleasing to God. So can brief visits to the Blessed Sacrament and gestures of reverence during communal prayer when these are done from the heart. (Therefore, let us do them well and reverently!) Holding a door open for someone, refraining from a critical word, expelling a judgmental thought in its infancy, or offering to do a small menial task to help someone who seems overburdened can be significant ways of drawing closer to God and helping others on their journeys of faith as well. It is especially important that we be vigilant for such opportunities so that we become more and more proficient in returning God’s love in small but precious ways. The more we do this, the more we realize how much God loves us in granting us so many opportunities to grow in His grace and to be conformed to Christ!

Summary: reaching eternal salvation through little things

As I compose this essay, I realize that I am tempted to lose sight of the significance of little things. Several “big projects” weigh heavily on my mind. First, there is this newsletter itself, which I want to be mailed out soon; then I need to edit the forthcoming book of reflections on the *Rule*, which is taking far longer than I had thought; also, I am still answering Christmas mail (on an A-to-Z basis, I am only on K at the end of January!). It is discouraging to think about the vast amount of work that I may or may not be able to complete. Part of me would prefer to have everything done without the slow, plodding process of working on the projects step-by-step. My faith tells me, however, that God wishes to pull me out of this discouragement and motivates me to plunge in to do the little things that I can do at this moment and not to worry so much about the end result or my self-imposed deadlines. If I cooperate with God’s grace in taking little steps each day (except, of course, for Sundays), then the projects will be completed in God’s time and not my time. Even if we are undertaking truly great projects, all we can do is to make progress in small steps. I can write an essay only by typing one word at a time, and it makes no sense to hurry so much that I am continually misspelling words. In editing a book, I can review only one paragraph at a time, and I should do so thoroughly and patiently (and, therefore, probably slowly) in order to produce a work of good quality. In responding

to Christmas greetings, I can write only one letter at a time, and if I aim to communicate with people in a caring, Christian way, I must write prayerfully and thoughtfully, whether my words be few or many.

In a world where many people are hastening to achieve great things in record time with the help of electronic devices, St. Benedict urges us to hasten to our heavenly homeland by keeping “this little rule that we have written for beginners” (73:8). Yes, our real goal is reach our true home with Christ and all the saints. To hasten toward it, we must take small, humble steps and proceed at a moderate pace – God’s unique pace for each of us. This progress in small steps and the constant battle against temptations (especially to pride) pertain to all of us, whether lowly or great. We must savor the graces that come our way, whether through encounters with other people or through reading the Bible and books “of the holy Catholic fathers” (73:4). We must ponder slowly what God is saying to us, especially in *lectio divina*, which involves chewing over small phrases. We must give thanks for these graces and thus acknowledge that God Himself has given us all these means to draw us closer to Him. Whenever we do good

deeds in response to His love, we must “judge it is the Lord’s power, not [our] own, that brings about the good in [us]” (Prol: 29). Then we must “run” to do further good (we are never done on this earth!) because this good is what God has granted us to lead us to “dwell in the tent of the kingdom” (Prol: 22). Using the little *Rule* and practicing the pithy but powerful seventy-three instruments of good works in *RB* 4, we shall ultimately arrive in the place “God has prepared for those who love Him” which is beyond what eye has seen and beyond what ear has heard (cf. Prol: 77) and beyond what our feeble human efforts can achieve. Let us rejoice that God is leading us in such a little but magnificent way, a way that helps us to “arrive at that perfect love of God which casts our fear” (7:67).

In the peace of Christ and Saint Benedict,

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

A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS

February, 2014

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

In his first Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*, Pope Francis invites all Christians to a renewed encounter with Jesus Christ: “The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step toward Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms” (n. 3).

The Joy of the Gospel provides a wonderful source for spiritual reflection as we prepare to begin our Lenten season. Written in a clear and easily understandable manner, the Pope’s letter covers a wide range of issues which offer real guidance for a journey of faith, beginning with the need for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Without this personal encounter, our religious experience has the danger of being no more than an external show, lacking spiritual depth and meaning.

Pope Francis encourages us to be bold in our efforts to respond to some of the more daunting issues facing our society and world today. He challenges us not to be indifferent or to give up as we confront these issues. He notes, “One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, ‘sourpusses’” (n. 85).

The Holy Father notes that some of the daunting issues we confront touch upon the need for us to be concerned about “the vulnerable of the earth” – the poor, the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly, migrants, and most especially “unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us. He reminds us that “the defense of unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right” (n. 213).

May the forthcoming Lenten season be a time of grace – a season of a renewed encounter with Jesus Christ.

Sincerely in Christ,

Archabbot Douglas

RENEWAL OF OBLATION AND KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE ARCHABBEY

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

Also, if you are an Oblate novice who is not involved in a deanery and have not contacted the Archabbey for several years, please use the renewal form to express your interest in the Oblate Program. In particular, if you have been an Oblate novice for over a year, please remember that you are eligible to become a full Oblate if you fulfill the requirements in II.E of the *Oblate Formation Booklet*. In any case, it would be good to know if we can help you in any way on your journey as an Oblate / Oblate novice. **Those who have been Oblate novices for over three years will soon be receiving a letter from the Oblate Office to see if they are interested in pursuing final Oblation and/or in becoming part of the mentoring program or prayer-partner program.**

Also, if you are an inquirer on our temporary mailing list and if you are still interested in receiving this newsletter, please let us know.

THE SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT AT THE ARCHABBEY ON MARCH 21, 2014

Oblates from all locations are welcome to join Oblates of the Latrobe (St. Gregory) Deanery on **Friday, March 21**, to celebrate the Solemnity of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict with the monastic community and other guests. The schedule includes concelebrated Mass at 4:00 P.M., supper at 5:15 P.M. (in Placid B), Oblation ceremonies at 6:15 P.M. (in the basilica), Evening Prayer with the monastic community at 7:15 P.M., and a social at 7:50 P.M. (in Placid B). Members of the Oblate community and their guests who wish to attend should fill out the form on the flier and send it to Nancy Premoshis by March 14. The cost of the supper is \$6.50. Checks should be made out to ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY, and reservations should be made in advance so that we can plan for the right number of people. Those needing overnight rooms should contact Fr. Donald very soon since the number of rooms is very limited.

OBLATE DAY 2014 ON SEPTEMBER 28; DAY OF RECOLLECTION ON OCTOBER 11

This year's Oblate Day will be Sunday, September 28; the speaker has not yet been chosen. The fall day of recollection is scheduled for Saturday, October 11, and Fr. Jeremiah is to be the retreat master.

RETREAT SCHEDULE FOR 2014:

The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2014, have been scheduled. The retreat on Benedictine spirituality is to be held on May 16-18, 2014, and the silent retreat is to be offered on May 23-25, 2014. The first retreat will be directed by Fr. Warren. The silent retreat will be directed by Fr. Wulfstan. (The last newsletter was erroneous in reporting the retreat master of the silent retreat.) **Oblates are no longer automatically placed on the Retreat Program's mailing list; so if you would like to receive retreat brochures, please contact Br. Hugh at the Retreat Office at 724-805-2139 or hugh.lester@email.stvincent.edu. You may also wish to see the retreat website at www.saintvincentretreats.org.**

SECOND ASSEMBLY OF DEANERY REPRESENTATIVES TO BE HELD AT ARCHABBEY, JULY 11-13

Each deanery affiliated with the St. Vincent Oblate Program is invited to send two delegates to the Archabbey from Friday, July 11, to Sunday, July 13, for the second weekend meeting of deanery representatives. (Oblates from near-by deaneries who do not wish to stay overnight may choose to come on Saturday only.) Events on Saturday will include Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours with the monastic community, two presentations by monks, and the opportunity to discuss issues of interest to the deaneries. Each deanery should decide which two Oblates will be attending. (Of course, in some cases, only one may be available; in cases involving married couples, three representatives will be allowed.) **To register, contact the Oblate Office; however, the Events and Conference Services Office at St. Vincent will take care of housing in Aurelius Hall (if needed) and transportation to and from airports.** (Phone 724-532-5030.)

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 check to see if you might have any "overdue" (i.e., out for more than six months) Oblate-Library books on your bookshelves. Thank you! Some people have had books out for unreasonably long periods of time. If you are one of these people, please return borrowed books promptly! Prolonged borrowing can prevent other people from using these books.

OBLATES RECEIVE 10% DISCOUNT AT BASILICA GIFT SHOP

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

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

Please contact the Oblate Office if you are an inquirer or an Oblate novice 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. If you already are a mentor, you should have received a copy of the revised mentoring booklet in the mail. If you have not received one, please inform the Oblate Office.

SEASONED MENTORS: YOUR ADVICE WOULD BE WELCOMED

Some new mentors have mentioned that advice from mentors who are experienced would be helpful. If you have been (or were) a mentor to Oblate novices or inquirers and are willing to share your experience with others, please contact the Oblate Office or Mary Ann Kaufman (see her e-mail address below).

LATROBE AREA E-MAIL LIST FOR LOCAL OBLATE NEWS

For several years Chris Kareem has been in charge of an e-mail list of people in the Latrobe/Greensburg/Jeanette/Pittsburgh area who wanted to be informed of events at the Archabbey or news concerning Oblates in the area. Mary Ann Kaufman is now in charge of that e-mail list while Chris is recovering from surgeries. If any Oblate in this geographical area is not on this list and would like to be on it, please contact Mary Ann at 305makaufman@gmail.com.

OBLATES AS GUESTS AT THE ARCHABBEY

As always, Oblates are especially 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.

OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS: Meeting on January 10, 2014

The Oblate Board of Advisors met on Friday, January 10, with seven Oblate members joining Fr. Donald. The group discussed the forthcoming second Assembly of Deanery Representatives; the NAABOD meeting in July, 2013, for which D.V.D.'s and C.D.'s are available; the collection in memory of Oblate Nadeem Feroze; and the offer of Oblate novice Cynthia Ruff to take care of the Oblate collection of photographs. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 11, at 6:30 P.M. Representatives of deaneries outside Latrobe are always welcome.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO SPIRIT & LIFE MAY BE PURCHASED

The bimonthly magazine *Spirit & Life*, published by the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, MO, has many excellent articles on spirituality. Subscriptions may be entered through the sisters' website, namely <http://www.benedictinesisters.org/spirit-and-life-magazine--home.php>.

RECOMMENDED READING (& Listening) *(The books and C.D.'s listed are available in the Oblate Library.)*

- Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M.Cap, *Living the Catholic Faith: Rediscovering the Basics* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 2001)
- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel* (London, England: The Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, 2013)
- Fr. Boniface Hicks, set of 3 C.D.'s, "Better Living through Liturgy" (conferences from October, 2013)

NEW (or newly discovered) BOOK ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

- Enzo Bianchi, *Echoes of the Word: A New Kind of Monk on the Meaning of Human Life* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2013)
- Sister Roberta Werner, O.S.B., *Reaching for God: The Benedictine Oblate Way of Life* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013)

NEW WEBSITE OF POSSIBLE INTEREST BY FR. PHILIP KANFUSH, O.S.B.

On January 1 Fr. Philip launched a new website which provides daily reflections on the readings of the day (called "Minute Musings") as well as longer reflections on a topic of Christian spirituality on Sundays (called "Reflections from the Rocking Chair"). The address is www.renewedeachmorning.com. These reflections might be a support to *lectio divina*. Those interested may (1) visit the website as just given, (2) follow it on Facebook ("like" the Renewed Each Morning Facebook page), (3) follow it on Twitter @RenewedEachMorn, or (4) visit the website separately on the Musings and Rocker reflection pages (therefore, this has to be done for both kinds of reflections separately) by clicking "subscribe" and entering your email address (in which case the reflection would be emailed to you each day automatically). If you have trouble accessing this website, you may wish to contact Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman.

OBLATE NOVICES: PLEASE CONSIDER READINESS FOR FINAL OBLATION

In the course of revising the *Oblate Formation Booklet*, Fr. Donald decided to obtain an estimate of how many Oblates and Oblate novices are on our current mailing list. The result was that there are some 342 Oblate novices and some 610 Oblates. The high number of Oblate novices was somewhat amazing. Some, of course, were invested only in the last year; and others who were invested only a year or two ago may very well be preparing for final Oblation. Others, however, have been Oblate novices for 10, 15, or 20 years or more. If you are in this category, please remember that novice Oblation is meant to lead to final Oblation, a lifetime commitment. If you are considering final Oblation and need some assistance, please contact the Oblate Office. **Also, as mentioned above, you will be receiving a letter soon if you have been an Oblate novice for three years or more.**

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

PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM

Although monk prayer-partners are in short supply and are still being sought for those Oblates who desire a monk partner, any Oblates or Oblate novices may request an Oblate/Oblate novice prayer partner. Please contact Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman or the Oblate Office, and specify whether you prefer contact by letter, phone, or e-mail, or just daily prayers.

OBLATE MEETINGS IN LATROBE

Oblates from all locations are welcome to the monthly meetings of the Latrobe Deanery of Oblates, mostly at 6:45 P.M. in seminary classroom Brownfield 202 on Sundays. The next four meetings will be on February 16, March 16, April 13, 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 at (724) 805-2291. Classes on Benedictine spirituality will continue to be offered at 3:00 P.M. on the same dates. In February, Br. Étienne Huard will offer a teaching on *lectio divina*; in March, Fr. Killian will offer a teaching on *conversatio morum*; and in April, Fr. Andrew will offer a presentation on "Holiness in Benedictine Spirituality."

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

Thanks to Fr. Andrew, talks given at Oblate meetings in Latrobe (when the presenter is willing and when someone is able to videotape) are being made available to those who desire to have copies for a small cost. Those who attend meetings in Latrobe may purchase the D.V.D.'s at \$3.50 each and the C.D.'s at \$2.50 each. Others may purchase the presentations from the College Book Store at a somewhat higher price. **Please see the order form on the flier attached to this newsletter.**

PROGRESS OF THE NEW BOOK OF REFLECTIONS ON THE RULE

As of the end of January, all Oblates and almost all monks who had promised to submit reflections had indeed submitted them. Fr. Donald is still editing them. Oblate contributors need to sign a statement agreeing to their reflections' being edited and published. Each contributor should have received a slip of paper in the mail recently.

BREAD SALES TO ASSIST NEEDY CHRISTIAN CHILDREN IN THE HOLY LAND

From September to December, 2013, Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman baked and sold some 661 loaves of pumpkin and cranberry bread to raise money for poor Christian children in the Holy Land. From sales to Oblates who came to monthly meetings in Latrobe and to others, \$1807.00 was raised and sent to Father Jamal Khader at Our Lady of Peace Center in Israel. Mary Ann thanks all the Oblates who helped to contribute to this cause.

OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by e-mail on December 2. Seven people attended the meeting on November 28. After an opening prayer the group entered into a discussion on humility. They decided not to meet in December. The meeting ended with Compline.

OBLATE GROUP IN PHILADELPHIA, PA

Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported on December 16 about the meeting at Saint Mary's Episcopal Church on December 7. Fifteen people attended. After Morning Prayer, Fr. Vincent gave a report on his recent trip to North Wales and England, where he visited several cathedrals that had been Benedictine monasteries. He shared some thoughts on how the Benedictine spirit has influenced the life and liturgy of the churches of England and Wales. The report was accompanied by a number of photographs that he had taken during his time in Great Britain. The group ate lunch together before departing.

OBLATE GROUP IN MORGANTOWN, WV

Secretary Pauline Lanciotti reported by e-mail on November 20 and January 15. The meeting on November 20, attended by Fr. John Peck, moderator, along with five Oblates and two inquirers, began with Evening Prayer. Then the group engaged in a discussion of *RB* 33, on "Monks and Private Ownership." Fr. John supplemented the exchange with material from Chapter 9 of *Lessons from St. Benedict*. In sum, the participants concluded that possessions have the potential to harm one's spiritual life; they can "possess us" if we allow it. Therefore, we are called to a "holy detachment" from anything that hinders our relationships with God and neighbor. The root of attachment is usually fear, which in turn is caused by lack of trust in God's providential care. Essential to rooting out inordinate attachments are prayer and self-awareness of one's personal "triggers." Ultimately all is gift, and the only thing we own is our will to say "yes" or "no" to God. Holy detachment is a "yes" that allows God to do His work in us.

The meeting on January 15 drew nine people, including two inquirers, besides Fr. John. After the praying of Evening Prayer, Fr. John gave a talk about the awareness of the sacredness of ordinary events, routines, and the practicalities of each day. Parts of the *Rule* that address practical matters, namely *RB* 22, 32, 35, and 55, were read. The discussion could be summed up as follows. "Living in community ... is the means by which we attain holiness. By fulfilling our daily tasks and interacting with others in obedience and humility (and without complaining), we serve God and others with a love that, in turn, fosters love. ... Chapter 55 ... reminds us to keep our lives simple, so that we free ourselves of the superfluities that distract us unnecessarily and so prevent us from loving others more fully. Trust in God's providence and care for us is crucial, especially when our daily tasks and circumstances are difficult or mundane or when they cause us suffering."

SPECIAL PRESENTATION ON THE NEW EVANGELIZATION, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, who heads the Holy Father's commission on the New Evangelization, will deliver a talk at the Fred Rogers Center at St. Vincent at 3:00 P.M. on Tuesday, February 18. Admission is free but reservations are required. Please call 724-805-2177 to make a reservation. Archbishop will also celebrate Mass for the St. Vincent Community at 5:00 P.M.

SUGGESTED LENTEN PROJECTS: It is suggested that the Oblates and Oblate novices affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey rededicate themselves to the regular praying of the Liturgy of the Hours (as much as their schedules allow) and the regular practice (ideally daily) of *lectio divina*. The undertaking of good spiritual reading in the place of less beneficial activities is also recommended. Catholics might especially focus on reading Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*.

BENEDICTINE OBLATE PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY

St. Benedict Monastery in Oxford, Michigan, is sponsoring a Benedictine pilgrimage to Italy organized by its Oblates from October 28 through November 7, 2014. The tour will include Florence, Assisi (on All Saints Day), Fabriano, Norcia, Montecassino, Subiaco, and many other sites. Mass will be offered every day, and there will be a papal audience. For more information you may phone Fr. John Martin, O.S.B., at 248-628-2249 or e-mail him at oblates@benedictinemonks.com.

CONTINUED EFFORTS TO GET EWTN INTO HOSPITALS

As mentioned in the last newsletter, some Oblates have been concerned that various hospitals in the Pittsburgh and Latrobe/Greensburg areas do not carry E.W.T.N. on their televisions. Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman continues to work on this project, with hopes of obtaining help to persuade the hospitals to carry E.W.T.N. Please keep this project in prayer.

NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES

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

Deacon Ralph DeCecco, moderator, reported on November 30. On the morning of November 30, Deacon Ralph, his wife Janet, and eight others gathered for a meeting, which began with Midmorning Prayer. Then Janet gave a reflection on holiness, which was followed by some discussion. There was also a reading of *RB 49* (prescribed for the day) and a discussion about living every day as if it were Lent and about the similarities of Advent and Lent and the differences. The meeting closed with the "Prayer of Humility."

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

Secretary Mary Ann Bingeman reported by e-mail on February 6. There were no meetings in November or December. The meeting on January 26, attended by Fr. Job, moderator, and nine others, began with Vespers in the church followed by a brief social. Fr. Job introduced a discussion about the Liturgy of the Hours and urged the Oblates to pray at least Morning and Evening Prayer daily. He spoke about the various breviaries, the correct way to respond to Responsories, the parts of the Office, special ways to pray for feast days, and the various guide books that are available. The group decided to return to discussing the *Rule* at the next meeting, which is scheduled for February 26.

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

Secretary Jay Wells sent reports by e-mail on November 26 and December 17. Fr. Paschal, moderator, and thirteen others gathered for the meeting on November 24. The group continued a study and discussion of the book *Sacred Reading*. An article on the O-antiphons was given out. It was announced that there would be a day of recollection at St. Benedict Church on December 7 and that it would close the parish's celebration of its 120th anniversary. Finally, Oblate Craig Callan gave a presentation on the pilgrimage to Italy, "In the Footsteps of St. Benedict," which he attended with others under the guidance of Fr. Paschal.

Fr. Paschal and nine others met on December 15 to continue a reading and discussion of *Sacred Reading*. They covered the text only up to page 19, and the attendees were asked to read ahead for the next meeting in order to facilitate discussion. As usual, the group went to the church for Vespers at 5:00.

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

Lay leader Ethel Galli wrote on February 4. The meeting on December 5 began with the praying of Vespers in the church. Then Deacon Toby Gaines led a session of Eucharistic adoration and gave a talk on the Holy Eucharist. There then followed a catered pre-Christmas dinner in the church hall, which included a humorous presentation on life given by Sister Marian Sennish.

At the meeting on January 30, after the praying of Vespers, Ethel led a lesson from Chapter 7: 1-8 of the *Rule*. It was mentioned that humility is essential to the spiritual life as the believer ascends the "ladder" to heaven. Next, an invited guest, pilgrim George Walker, gave a presentation about his travels throughout the world. He noted that God gave him a vocation to travel as a pilgrim, to depend on God for his every need, to be a witness to God's love, and to strive to pray constantly during his journeys.

Carrolltown, PA (Sacred Heart Deanery) -- *monthly meetings in St. Benedict Church or meeting room,*

Lay leader/secretary Mary Catherine Hoover reported by phone on February 6. There were no meetings in December or January because of bad weather. Oblates were encouraged to attend the parish's series on Catholicism based on videos by Fr. Robert Barron. Several of the Oblates came to the Archabbey for the funeral of Fr. Francis in January.

Charleston, SC -- *monthly meetings at Pauline Books and Media on King St., second Saturday of each month*

There was no report. Lay leader Marsha Boles came to the Archabbey in November and reported that the group has not yet found a moderator and that it is not possible to resume meetings at this time.

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

Lay leader / secretary Mary Hoffken reported by e-mail on January 1. Four people attended the meeting on October 10. The group began to view and discuss a D.V.D. on "St. Benedict and His *Rule*" by Fr. Philip. Three people attended the meeting on November 18, during which the group completed the lesson from Fr. Philip's presentation and began to view and discuss a presentation by Fr. Killian on "Holiness and Benedictine Spirituality." At the meeting on December 12, the four people who attended completed that lesson. An inquirer is interested in joining the Oblate Program.

Cyber Deanery

Lay leader David Hicks reported by phone on February 5. The group now has a total of 23 members, with two new ones joining since November. They continue to read *Lessons from St. Benedict* and just finished Chapter 12 on "Casting Out Fears." They were able to exchange some useful practical insights about facing their own fears. The group took a break over the time of Christmas and New Year's Day.

Frackville, PA (St. Dismas Deanery) – monthly meetings at chapel in Frackville, every Wed., 6:30-8:00

There was no report. Apparently, lay leader Richard Walter has been temporarily away.

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 19 and January 21. The meeting on November 18 began with Evening Prayer and continued with a discussion on Chapter 72 of the *Rule* led by Deacon Michael Russo, moderator. The discussion involved how Christians can live together in harmony, peace, and mutual understanding. Such living requires the ability to forgive and to desire perfection and strive for it without demanding it for ourselves or others. We need, the group reflected, to understand our limitations and to forgive others without grumbling. Also, for St. Benedict, peace depends on the practice of justice.

The meeting scheduled for December was cancelled because of bad weather. The meeting on January 20 consisted of Evening Prayer followed by an annual Christmas party at a local restaurant.

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

The group of some 18 people who met on November 17 discussed most of Chapter 5 of Fr. Demetrius' book *Cherish Christ above All*; Fr. Demetrius had died that very morning. The topics covered included good zeal, love versus power, loving with Christ's love, love as liberating and creating community, and the cenobitic ideal. Then the attendees proceeded to the basilica at 8:10, where Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

J. Christopher Pardini of Greensburg, PA.

As usual, the meeting ended with sung Compline. Also, loaves of pumpkin and cranberry bread were available from Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman, with the funds being used to assist poor Christian children in the Holy Land. (continued)

On December 15, despite less-than-ideal weather, some twelve people stayed for a discussion of Chapter 5 and the beginning of Chapter 6 of *Cherish Christ*. The topics covered included the call of the celibate to radical loving, the connection of love and hope to trust, and the ability to turn threat into promise through the virtue of trust. Because of the change of monastic Evening Prayer to 7:00, the meeting began at 5:45 (after supper) and resumed at 7:40 (after Vespers). As usual, the meeting ended with sung Compline.

On December 28, the Kaufman family gathered at the Archabbey for Midday Prayer, a ceremony of investiture, and lunch. At the ceremony Fr. Donald invested

J. Gilbert Kaufman of Pittsburgh, PA,

as an Oblate novice. Gil is the husband of Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman. Also present for the ceremony were Gil and Mary Ann's three sons, their daughter-in-law, their two small grandsons, and three local Oblates.

On January 19 some fifteen people gathered to continue a discussion based on Chapter 6 of *Cherish Christ*. The topics covered included monastic profession as an act of faith, freedom from the need to control, the role of humility in helping us to trust, trust and the mystery of suffering, and the relationship of poverty to trust. In the Archabbey Basilica before the praying of Compline, Fr. Donald invested

Stephen R. Studnicki of Latrobe, PA,

as an Oblate novice. Steve is an alumnus of St. Vincent College.

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

Fr. Thomas Acklin gave a presentation on *lectio divina* to a group of some 30 people on November 17. He began by reviewing the five elements of *lectio* (*lectio, studio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio*) in terms of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Noting that *lectio* was a particularly monastic practice, he recommended that we not be concerned about finishing a particular book or passage; especially with the Scriptures, we are never done praying over them. Sometimes only a brief phrase will give rise to a long period of "chewing over." Fr. Tom also addressed the issues of persevering amid distractions and sluggishness, seeking to apply the graces gained in *lectio*, and finding a good environment for *lectio*, with the need to recognize that God's word is holy. Finally, Fr. Tom addressed a series of questions about which Bibles to use, about the dimension of *actio* (acting on God's word), about marveling at providential connections, and about "getting moving" with courage and encouragement.

Fr. Jean-Luc gave a presentation on the Liturgy of the Hours to some 24 attendees on December 15. He emphasized that liturgy is something received from the Church and that we are catechized by liturgy. Summarizing the chapters of the *Rule* that speak of the Liturgy of the Hours (or "Divine Office"), Fr. Jean-Luc called it the "backbone of the day," by which the whole day is sanctified. In Chapter 19 St. Benedict stresses the need for a proper interior disposition. God is doing something wonderful in us when we pray the Hours, and it is important that the monk leave his other work behind to hasten to the "Work of God." Recent Church documents have reminded us that all Christians are urged to pray the Hours. The Divine Office helps us to "pray always" and gives us words to pray in a freeing way. Finally, the Liturgy of the Hours is a participation in the eternal worship of God in heaven by angels and saints. At the end of the talk Fr. Jean-Luc responded to a number of animated questions.

On January 19 Mr. L. Christian DeDiana of Greensburg gave a presentation about the making of wills. Some 35 people attended. Part of the presentation included a section "Elder Law Mistakes and Myths," for which a printed handout is available. Also, there are C.D.'s and D.V.D.'s available of the presentation.

Right after Mr. DeDiana's talk, Br. Bruno gave a presentation on "St. Benedict and His *Rule*," with emphasis on the influence of the *Long Rules of St. Basil*. Br. Bruno noted that, especially in *RB 73*, the *Holy Rule* points beyond itself and, in particular, recommends

“the rule of our holy father Basil,” who lived from 330 to 379. The *Long Rules* were written in question-and-answer format and includes passages on the advantages of life in community, the need for balance between liturgy and work, humility, the duty of the superior to reflect Christ, silence, the avoidance of self-indulgence, and frugality in all things. Br. Bruno’s reflections on these passages from St. Basil showed how they were related to similar concepts in the *Holy Rule*. St. Basil also wrote about the importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary in helping Christians to understand the true teachings about Christ, and he recommended meditation on the few passages of Scripture referring to Mary. Although there was no taping of Br. Bruno’s talk, **a printed transcript is available**.

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

Lay leader Brian Chisholm reported by phone on December 26. The Oblates met for the first time with their new moderator, Fr. John Vickers, C.S.C., on November 22. About fourteen people attended. They engaged in a study of the Prologue of the *Rule*, and then Fr. Vickers spoke about the rule of the Holy Cross Fathers, his order. The group decided not to meet in December.

Pittsburgh, PA (St. Peter Deanery) -- meetings on 3rd Mon., St. Peter Church, North Side.

Oblate George Ponticello reported by phone on January 13 and 27. The meeting on December 9 consisted of Evening Prayer followed by an annual pre-Christmas social at Sr. Alice’s apartment at Our Lady, Queen of Peace Worship Site. Ten people attended. The meeting on Monday, January 20, consisted of Evening Prayer followed by a discussion of Chapter 10 of *Lessons from Saint Benedict*. Fr. Vincent Zidek, moderator, led the meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for February 17.

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

Secretary Peggi Gabler wrote on December 9. The final meeting for 2013 was held on November 14, with Fr. Thomas More, moderator, officiating at exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the praying of a rosary, benediction, and a homily focused on humility, obedience, and silence. There were also a period of silent meditation and several litanies. Sixteen people attended. The next meeting was scheduled for March, 2014.

Saint Vincent College – monthly meetings to begin in September, in Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel

On November 14 at Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel,

Sean P. (Anselm) Crockette of Tucson, AZ,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Donald, Fr. Killian (moderator), and two other students. Sean is a senior at St. Vincent College.

A meeting for those interested in the Oblate Program was held on January 27 at 9:00 P.M. It was publicized as “Living Benedictine Values: Meeting and Information Night.” At that meeting four inquirers heard Sean speak about the value of Oblation in his life, and they had the opportunity to ask questions of Sean and Fr. Killian.

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

There was no report.

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

Secretary/co-lay leader Pastor Doug Schader reported on November 11 and January 22. The gathering in November consisted of a joint retreat with the Oblates from Williamsport on November 2 at a private retreat center in Richfield, PA. Eleven people attended. The group spent the day praying the Liturgy of the Hours, having quiet individual time, and enjoying fellowship. A collection was taken up for Holy Rosary Parish in Gujrat, Pakistan, in memory of Oblate Nadeem Feroze. Those attending decided that it would be good for the two deaneries to meet together twice a year.

Six people attended the meeting on January 12. They listened to a C.D. on *lectio divina* by Fr. Robert Roche, and then all shared some thoughts about *lectio*. The meeting ended with the praying of Vespers.

Somerset, PA (Blessed John Paul II Deanery) – meetings on 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 6:30 -8:15, chapel annex

Lay leader/secretary Jeffery McCaughtry wrote on December 11 and January 26, and the new lay leader/secretary Steward Steckley reported on January 31. The meeting on November 12 was attended by two full Oblates, eight Oblate novices, and six inquirers in addition to Fr. James Dugan, moderator. After opening prayers, Jeff gave a detailed lesson on the practice of humility in everyday life. It was emphasized that obedience is a key factor in nurturing humility. The session closed with Compline at 8:15.

There were no meetings scheduled for December because of the Catholic choir’s need for practice time. However, on December 10 Fr. Dugan invested in his office

Jeffery Houghton of Somerset, PA,

as an Oblate novice. Oblates Lora Jacob and Jeff McCaughtry were also present. Beginning in January, Oblate novice Steward Steckley was to assume the positions of lay leader/secretary since Jeff will be leaving the area.

The meeting on January 14 began with the “Te Deum.” Then Steward gave a presentation on “Truth in Words,” with use of the Ten Commandments and the *Rule*. He began with the second great commandment (“You shall love you neighbor as yourself”) and reviewed the 4th, 5th, 7th, and 8th commandments in terms of love of neighbor. There was no meeting on January 28 because of bad weather. The meeting on February 11 should involve consideration of the 10th, 6th, and 9th commandments.

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

Lay leader Laura Lowder reported by e-mail on November 12. At the meeting on November 7, attended by three Oblates, the group prayed Vespers together and discussed the situation concerning those who were no longer attending meetings. They agreed that they greatly valued their Oblation and their fellowship with one another and that they want the meetings to continue.

On December 12 three Oblates met to pray the Office, to discuss study goals, to discuss group hopes for the coming year, and to socialize. The enjoyable session ended up lasting two hours. Future meetings may be scheduled for mornings to accommodate a member who has been ill and who finds evenings difficult.

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

Secretary Kay Tittmann wrote on November 13, December 7, and January 15. The meeting on November 11, attended by 13 people in addition to Fr. David, moderator, began with Evening Prayer. Then the group continued a discussion of the book *Lessons from Saint Benedict*. They discussed Chapters 8 (about bringing joy to others, especially those in pain), 9 (about how to become more detached), 10 (about mutual encouragement, especially in light of our various defects), and 11 (on being more reverent toward God and in churches as a matter of love). The meeting closed with prayer, the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima," and the voicing of several prayer intentions.

The meeting on December 7, led by lay leader Ashley Leggett in the absence of Fr. David, was attended by six Oblates, one Oblate novice, and three inquirers. After Evening the group discussed Chapters 12, 13, and 14 from the text, with lessons about fear, trust, the Cross, and the taking of small steps each day to aspire to "loftier summits." The meeting closed, as usual, with prayer, the "Ultima," and some prayer intentions. An annual Christmas celebration was planned for January 13, and various attendees volunteered to take charge of the preparations.

The meeting on January 13 began with Mass at 5:00 P.M. at Our Lady of Victory Church. Fr. David, celebrant and homilist, preached on the theme "Who do you say that I am?" and emphasized that all of us are challenged to answer that question from our hearts. Oblates do so through prayer, spiritual reading, and adherence to the *Rule*. (continued)

During the Mass Fr. David invested

Catherine "Kay" Machi of State College, PA,

as an Oblate novice. The Oblates present renewed their Oblation. After the Mass the group of 24 people, including two inquirers and ten guests, gathered for a pot-luck supper in the church's social hall. They concluded by presenting Fr. David with a Christmas gift of \$565 for "Mission Mexico." Fr. David then spoke a while about his mission work with Penn State students, who go with him to help the very poor in Mexico. With the donation, six bicycles, socks, and underwear can be purchased for impoverished children.

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

Lay leader Delina Pauls wrote on October 3, November 11, December 11, and January 20. (The letter of October 3 was lost and subsequently found.) In the last newsletter it was reported that five people were invested on October 2. At that meeting Fr. Lee, moderator, gave a power-point presentation on obedience from *RB* 5. The meeting ended with a prayer, and then there was a reception, at which the Oblates who were present were able to meet the new Oblate novices.

The meeting on November 6 was well-attended; four of the five new Oblate novices were present. Fr. Lee led a continued discussion on obedience, with the assertion that a large part of obedience is the love of God and the love of neighbor in the various ways God calls us to love. Fr. Lee invited those present to share about the occasions when God asked them to obey Him when it was difficult to understand what He really wanted.

A meeting was held on December 4 despite many absences because of travel, illness, family members' illnesses, or funerals. Fr. Lee spoke once again on obedience, especially in the context of love of neighbor. The meeting was brief so that the group could enjoy a social hour. Two attendees expressed interest in applying to the Oblate Program.

The meeting on January 8, which had very good attendance, was moderated by Fr. Lee, who spoke about Epiphany and read an article about the term "Emmanuel." The latter generated a discussion about Our Lord's birth and about the beliefs of other major religious traditions. After the talk Fr. Lee invested as Oblate novices

Thomas Hannon of Virginia Beach, VA, and

Thomas M. Suvada of Virginia Beach VA.

After the ceremony there was a social, at which fudge made by one of the members was served.

Williamsport, PA (Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus Deanery) -- *meetings on 2nd Sunday of each month, 2 P.M., St. Anne Church*

Lay leader/secretary Sue Wykoff reported on November 12, January 7, and January 14. The meeting on November 10, attended by five people, opened with a review of the retreat on November 2 with the Selinsgrove Deanery. Those who had made the retreat expressed gratitude for the hospitality of the couple who hosted the retreat and for the refreshment that they had felt after the retreat. Then the group viewed a D.V.D. of Fr. Sebastian's presentation on silence, and they discussed ways to incorporate the discipline of silence into daily life. An inquirer asked some questions about characteristics about Benedictine spirituality, and so there was some discussion about major Benedictine values. The meeting ended with a praying of "Hail, Holy Queen."

At the meeting on December 9, the group viewed a D.V.D. of Br. Hugh's presentation on conversion of life. They also talked about the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and prayed the Office of Readings. In following a German custom, they made a "Mary candle,"

and each attendee took materials home to make such a candle if he or she wished.

Seven people attended the meeting on January 12. After a praying of the Office of Readings for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Sue gave a short presentation about the holiness and meaningfulness of work given to God; she used the introduction to the book *Friend of the Soul*, by Norvene Vest, as a basis for her talk and the subsequent discussion. The group also planned a joint trip to the Archabbey on Saturday, April 5. The meeting closed with a praying of the Angelus. Also, there was news about the reassignment of the deanery's moderator, Fr. Paul Fontanella of St. Ann's Church. There was still no word about the new pastor.

Various Locations

On November 3 in the chapel in Waynesburg, PA, Rev. J. Francis Frazer, pastor of St. Thomas Church in Clarksville, invested as Oblate novices:

Matthew J.C. Hunter of Waynesburg, PA
Adetokunbo Oluwafemi Ige of Waynesburg, PA.

On November 9 in the chapel in Rosharon, TX, Deacon Edward T. Stoessel invested as Oblate novices:

Gilford Abshire of Rosharon, TX
William Barbe Bishop of Rosharon, TX
Jules F. Clark of Rosharon, TX
Roland R. Fernandez, Sr., of Rosharon, TX
Stephen A. Hall of Rosharon, TX
David V. Medrano of Rosharon, TX
Robert Perry of Rosharon, TX
Pete Salas of Rosharon, TX
Dale E. Smith of Rosharon, TX
Troy L. Sullivan, Sr., of Rosharon, TX
William J. Tkacik of Rosharon, TX. (continued)

The ceremony was held during a Mass celebrated by Fr. Stephen Paine of the Galveston-Houston Diocese. There were many guests present, including Oblate Lora Jacob of the Latrobe Deanery. Each new Oblate novice received a copy of *Shorter Christian Prayer*. They plan to meet weekly to pray Morning or Evening Prayer together and to gather as an Oblate community on the fourth Saturday of each month following a communion service.

On December 11 at St. Gregory Chapel at the Archabbey, Fr. Donald invested

Fr. Luis R. Rodriguez of Mount Joy, PA,

as an Oblate novice. Br. Joachim and Br. Lawrence were also present for the ceremony. Fr. Rodriguez is a priest of the Harrisburg Diocese and serves as the pastor of Mary Mother of the Church Parish in Mount Joy.

On February 1 in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald received the final Oblation of

Sean (Paschal) McCaffrey of Clifton Heights, PA.

Also present for the ceremony were Fr. Stanley, Deacon Sean English of the Philadelphia Archdiocese (a friend of Sean McCaffrey), Oblate Mary Ann Kaufman, and Oblate Paul Fling, who has been Sean's mentor.

OBLATE GROUP IN ROSHARON

Oblate novice William Tkacik reported on January 31. The meeting on January 25 was attended by 10 of the 11 new Oblate novices. After the praying of Morning Prayer, the group entered into a discussion of Chapter 1 of the *Rule*. William tried to explain that not all the precepts apply literally to the present day or to lay people, and he read from a relevant chapter of *Lessons from St. Benedict*. Then the group read and discussed *RB 7: 1-9*. The meeting was closed with the "Oblate prayer" and with intercessions for all the monks at St. Vincent and brother and sister Oblates.

DECEASED MONK

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Fr. Francis Ehnat, O.S.B., who died on January 8 at the age of 65 after several years of struggle with cancer. During his deacon year, 2011-12, Fr. Francis served at St. Benedict Parish in Carrolltown, and some of the Carrolltown Oblates came to his funeral on January 13.

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: Archabbot Paul Maher (who fell and broke his hip on February 8), Fr. Bede Hasso, Fr. Jacques Daley, Fr. Lee Yoakam, Fr. Cuthbert Jack, Fr. Bonaventure Curtis.

SUPPLY OF *Catholic Worker* AND *Columbia* magazine available

Over the years Fr. Donald has accumulated a large pile of issues *Columbia* magazine (of the Knights of Columbus) and of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper. If anyone is interested in having these, please contact the Oblate Office.

ROSARIES AVAILABLE

Oblate Ken Craven of Sparta, Tennessee, is in contact with many prisoners through "Desert Prison Ministry." He reports that some rosaries are being made on death row at a prison in Nashville, TN. If you are interested in acquiring any of these beautiful rosaries or providing for their sale, please contact Ken Craven at 661 S. Edgewood Drive, Sparta, TN 38683-1105 or the inmate himself, William Stevens, #818668, R.M.S.I., Unit 2, C-204, 7475 Cockrill Bend Blvd. Nashville, TN 37209-1048.

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

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____

___ I plan to attend the dinner for Oblates at St. Vincent on Friday March 21, 2014, along with ___ guests; I enclose _____ (\$6.50 per person; make out checks to **ST. VINCENT ARCHABBEY**. An additional donation for the social would be welcome).

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

___ I would like overnight accommodations. (Please contact Fr. Donald well in advance.)
Please send this form to **Ms. Nancy Premoshis, 3021-2 Williamsburg Lane, Latrobe, PA 15650 (phone: 724-837-6647) by March 14.**

SCHEDULE FOR SOLEMNITY OF SAINT BENEDICT, MARCH 21, 2014

- 4:00 P.M. – Concelebrated Mass in Archabbey Basilica
- 5:15 P.M. – dinner in Placid Hall Dining Room B
- 6:15 P.M. – Oblation ceremonies, Archabbey Basilica, choir area
- 7:15 P.M. – Vespers with monastic community, Archabbey Basilica, choir area
- 7:50 P.M. – social in Placid B

RENEWAL OF OBLATION

Peace! In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
 I, (name), renew my Oblation and offer myself to Almighty God, through the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy Father Benedict, as an Oblate of Saint Vincent Archabbey, and I promise again, before God and all the saints, to dedicate my life to the service of God and neighbor according to the *Rule* of St. Benedict, insofar as my state in life permits.
 "Sustain me, O Lord, as You have promised, that I may live, and disappoint me not in my hope" (Ps 119:116 & *RB* 58:21).

Name _____
 Address _____

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

Order Form for C.D.'s & D.V.D.'s of Presentations in Latrobe
(See past newsletters or phone Book Center for previous presentations.)

Br. Joachim's talk on work in Benedictine spirituality (December 16, 2012):

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

Fr. Robert Keffer's talk on holiness and Benedictine spirituality (January 20, 2013):

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

Fr. Alfred's talk on poverty & simplicity in Benedictine spirituality (February 17, 2013):

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

Br. Hugh's talk on *conversatio morum* (March 17, 2013):

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

Br. John Paul's talk on *lectio divina* in Benedictine spirituality (April 21, 2013):

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

Fr. Sebastian's talk on silence in Benedictine spirituality (May 19, 2013):

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

Fr. Chad's talk on St. Benedict & his *Rule* (June 23, 2013):

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

Sandra Monier's talk on the Eucharist in Benedictine spirituality (July 21, 2013):

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

Liz Hart's talk work in Benedictine spirituality (August 18, 2013):

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

Fr. John Peck's talk on hospitality in Benedictine spirituality (September 15, 2013):

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

Fr. Wulfstan's talk on obedience in Benedictine spirituality (October 20, 2013):

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

Fr. Thomas Acklin's talk on *lectio divina* (November 17, 2013):

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

Fr. Jean-Luc's talk on the Liturgy of the Hours (December 15, 2013):

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

Br. Etienne's talk on *lectio divina* (February 16, 2014):

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

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Christian DeDiana from January 19, 2014, that is not available from the Book Center, but it can be ordered from the Oblate Office by those planning to pick up their orders at the Oblate Office - at \$2.50 per C.D. and \$3.50 per D.V.D..)

SPECIAL SCHEDULE FOR MONASTIC PRAYER AT THE ARCHABBEY DURING HOLY WEEK AND THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

The following times or liturgical services will be different than the normal ones:

Wednesday, April 16

Evening Prayer as penitential prayer service (basilica) 5:00 P.M.
Compline (basilica) 7:30 P.M.

Holy Thursday, April 17

Morning Prayer (basilica choir) 6:45 A.M.
(no Evening Prayer)
Mass of the Lord's Supper (basilica) 7:30 P.M.

Good Friday, April 18

Morning Prayer (basilica choir) 6:45 A.M.
Midday Prayer (basilica choir) 11:30 A.M.
Commemoration of the Passion and Death of Our Lord 1:30 P.M.
(basilica; no Evening Prayer)
Tenebrae Service (basilica) 8:00 P.M.

Holy Saturday, April 19

Morning Prayer (basilica choir) 6:45 A.M.
Midday Prayer (basilica choir) 11:30 A.M.
Evening Prayer (basilica choir) 5:00 P.M.
Easter Vigil Mass (basilica) 8:45 P.M.

Easter Sunday, April 20

Morning Prayer (with procession from Assembly Room) 7:00 A.M.
Evening Prayer (solemn, in basilica choir) 4:15 P.M.

Easter Monday, April 21

Morning Prayer followed by Mass (basilica choir) 6:45 A.M.

The regular schedule resumes on Tuesday, April 22.

PROMOTION OF GIVE US THIS DAY FOR OBLATES

You may be aware of the magazine *Give Us This Day*, a monthly publication from Liturgical Press of Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, MN, designed to encourage daily prayer among Catholics of all ages. *Give Us This Day* is about praying daily, praying well, and praying with confidence. The monks of the Archabbey now receive copies of this magazine for homily preparation since it has the readings for Mass for all Sundays and weekdays of the month.

Liturgical Press is offering a special promotion for Oblates: **12 issues for \$34.95**. This is a 51% savings off the cover price! *Give Us This Day* provides a good opportunity for Oblates to strengthen their prayer during the year and to do it together with others. To receive this offer, use the promotion code **TDLA109** when you subscribe by visiting www.GiveUsThisDay.org or by calling 1-888-259-8470. There is no expiration for this offer. (N.B.: *Give Us This Day* is similar to the *Magnificat* magazine, which is also recommended for those who find it helpful for daily readings and a shortened form of the Divine Office.)

Also, *Give Us This Day* can enhance Oblates' existing prayer practices and deepen their encounter with God by providing a fresh approach to daily prayer, new perspectives on traditional prayers, and insightful reflections on the Scriptures for Mass each day. Each monthly issue includes: (1) a feature essay by a trusted spiritual writer, (2) "Teach Us to Pray," a column by Fr. James Martin, S.J., (3) "Within the Word," which highlights a person, place, or theme in the week's readings, (4) a short form of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer for each day, (5) prayers and readings for daily Mass, (6) a reflection on the Scriptures for each day, (7) "Blessed among Us," a daily inspiration from the lives of saintly

witnesses by Robert Ellsberg, and (8) The Order of the Mass.