



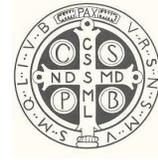
+

THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

Saint Vincent Archabbey

300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690

724-805-2291



February - April, 2017

Volume 70, Number 1

E-mail address: svaoblates@email.stvincent.edu ; web site: <http://www.svaoblates.org>

Please note forms on fliers for renewal of Oblation, for celebration on March 21, & for C.D.'s & D.V.D.'s.

CONVERSATIO MORUM: BEING TURNED AGAIN AND AGAIN IN A STABLE ENVIRONMENT

Dear Oblates, Oblate Novices, and Friends,

Our longing for change - & reluctance to change

The Advent and Christmas seasons, together lasting some six weeks, have passed by rather quickly. The once beautiful poinsettias have mostly wilted and been removed. The trees and decorations have been taken down. As we grow older, we may experience the sameness of it all: another Advent of preparation (perhaps with some genuine hopeful expectation), another Christmas of festive celebrations, another transition back to Ordinary Time, with a sense that Lent will arrive soon. In our monastic community we have had more or less the same schedule, the same arrangement of liturgies, and the same liturgical music for a number of years; so there has been a sense of strong continuity for the Advent and Christmas celebrations. To have this dependable regularity from year to year may give us a sense of comfort; as one of the organists, I appreciate not having to learn new music every year. On the other hand, the sameness can seem a bit stifling. One may wonder, "Is all this effort to celebrate the birth of Our Lord leading anywhere? Am I moving forward spiritually? Am I any closer to Christ this year than I was last year?" (This past Christmas provided me with at least one new occurrence; I ended up falling asleep soundly before monastic Vigils at 11:00 P.M. on Christmas Eve and thus missing a 10:30 music practice, which as the organist I should have attended. Thanks to a loud bell sounding at 10:45, I made it to the basilica organ before 11:00. Even though I very much appreciate the stability of our Christmas liturgies from year to year, that one embarrassing change made my Christmas rather memorable and interesting.)

God provides the needed change - real transformation

Amid possible feelings of stagnation and weariness as we grow older and experience more decline than progress, God is working in wonderful and mysterious ways to render us truly renewed in His love. The readings at every Mass and Hour of the Divine Office challenge us to welcome the often subtle but marvelous workings of God in our lives. On Epiphany we heard about the magi's long-distance travel to encounter the Messiah-King; their journey may assure us of the lights

that God gives us daily to continue confidently on our inward journeys to ever deeper encounters with Christ. The Gospel proclaimed on January 7 (Jn 2:1-11) involved the manifestation of Christ's glory at Cana as He changed water into wine - with some reluctance, it seems. That scene may give us hope that though at times God seems to be silent or even remote. He, in fact, ever awaits opportunities to effect transformations in our lives of faith. The verses in St. John's Gospel referring to the Baptism of Christ (1: 29-34) indicate that St. John the Baptist was slow to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. At the Baptism the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ helped the Baptist truly to "see" Jesus for who He was and then to proclaim, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29). In our sometimes confusing lives, there is always hope of our coming to recognize Our Lord better and better and in ever new ways if only we remain faithful to prayer and to the disciplines of the spiritual life recommended to us.

Conversatio morum - opening us to amazing graces

We monks and Oblates have an especially powerful resource to help us to keep growing in our lives of faith and to overcome temptations to stagnancy. That resource is the vow (or promise) of *conversatio morum*. Last September 25 our Fr. Nathan Munsch gave an excellent presentation on the meaning of the Latin word *conversatio*, which is based on the verbs *vertere* and *versare*. *Vertere* means to turn, and *versare* means to turn around or to turn over again and again. *Versare* also came to mean to stay in a place with a certain group of people. That might seem contradictory, but the implication is that one is to follow certain routines over and over in a certain place and with a certain community. In the New Testament *conversatio* is used to mean a way of life, in particular the Christian way of life. In the *Holy Rule*, *conversatio* is used in diverse ways, but the principal occurrences refer to a monastic way of life that includes such disciplines as obedience to the abbot and to a rule of life, prayer in common, meals in common, and the sharing of all property. All those practices are part of a monastic way of life. Furthermore, the word *morum*, coming from *mores*, meaning customs or manners, reinforces the notion of keeping to fundamental practices in a monastic lifestyle.

It is interesting to examine the historical development of *conversatio* as used in the *Rule*. Scholars of the *Rule*, probably several centuries after St. Benedict's time, reinterpreted the word to be *conversio*, which generally means a one-time conversion. Those who, perhaps with good intentions, changed the manuscripts of the *Rule* (probably because they did not understand *conversatio*) were doing a disservice to St. Benedict, the *Rule*, and monasticism. For centuries the monastic way was seen as superior to life in the world because monks had undergone a "conversion" from life in a secular environment to life in a monastery, where Christ was followed with great zeal. This notion of one-time conversion from life in the "world" to life in a monastery made matters simple but unauthentic. Those who had the fortune to be called to live in a religious community now lived a "safe" life that was an almost guaranteed way to holiness. Those in the world, being "unconverted," could achieve only a far lower degree of sanctity. With that misunderstanding, it would be tempting for monks to think that they "had it made" and, therefore, needed to do little more than follow the monastic routine to keep themselves close to Christ. According to this reasoning, lay people outside the monastery could easily settle for a lesser degree of holiness and never aspire to anything greater. Fortunately, in recent decades the original meaning of *conversatio* has come to light. It challenges all Christians, monks and non-monks, to be "turned over again and again," by God's grace, perhaps painfully at times, to become the holy persons that God wants us to become. It takes much ongoing conversion for any Christian to shed long-ingrained sinful tendencies and to develop Christian virtues. This process ends only with death; so it is urgent that we never lose vigilance or practice monastic disciplines mindlessly or carelessly.

Biblical encouragement to live in conversatio

The New Testament reminds us in many passages that Christianity is a way of life, not just a set of rules, and that it is rooted in an ongoing, growing relationship with Christ. This growth occurs as a response to His love, which begins with adherence to essential norms but which goes far beyond. Specific ways of praying, working, and dealing with other people are essential to Christian life; but such observances, when embraced in a heartfelt manner, should lead to readiness for ever new and ever surprising moments of grace. In his presentation Fr. Nathan noted that since word "conversation" (coming from *conversatio*) originally meant "way of life," some old translations of the Bible rendered the Latin word *conversatio* to be "conversation" in English. Chapter 13 of Hebrews uses the word *conversatio* to describe a lifestyle that includes obedience to leaders, good deeds, generosity, hospitality, mindfulness of prisoners, observance of the sanctity of marriage, avoidance of the love of money,

avoidance of strange teachings, and the readiness to bear insults. Through Christ, Christians are to "offer God a sacrifice of praise" continually (Heb 13:15). In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul reminds us that "we have our citizenship in heaven" (Phil 3:20). The word "citizenship" is a translation of *conversatio*. This new way of life does not mean that we are continually thinking about heaven but that we live by eternal values that will lead us to heaven, our ultimate goal. Neighboring passages in Philippians suggest that this way of life includes being on guard against mere legalistic observance, being ready to leave behind the past, not allowing our stomachs to be our gods, respecting the sanctity of our "lowly body" (Phil 3:21), seeking reconciliation with others, dismissing all anxiety (4:6), directing our thoughts to what is honest and pure (4:8), and rejoicing in the Lord always (4:4). All those behaviors present us with quite a challenge, but by God's grace we can make progress in these areas in ways that God has chosen for each of us.

Ways for Oblates and monks to practice conversatio

Because they are rooted in the *Rule* of St. Benedict, the monastic life and the Oblate life have additional guidelines for growth in a Christian way of life. The word *conversatio* in the *Rule* and in the formula for monastic vows is given various translations, and perhaps we can learn something from all of these. They include "fidelity to monastic life" (*RB* 1980, 55:17), "the reformation of life," "ongoing conversion," and "striving for perfect charity in a monastic manner." All these seem to boil down to eagerness to keep growing in one's life of faith through the relentless practice of certain disciplines. The mixture will vary from person to person, but the principle of radical openness to God's graces through a disciplined way of life is essential to every disciple. Thus Oblates and Oblate novices are urged to read portions of the *Rule* regularly, to reflect on the passages and to put them into practice. They are urged to pray at least a part of the Liturgy of the Hours, daily if possible. They are urged to practice *lectio divina* frequently, especially with the Bible. They are urged to make an annual retreat or at least a day of recollection. They are urged to attend Oblate meetings, when possible, and to use their gifts, according to each one's particular calling, to build up fellowship in Christ within their families, parishes, and local communities. This last precept accords with the traditional meaning of *conversatio* as a frequent abiding in a place in a certain manner of life, usually with someone or a group of people. Involvement in community forms an important part of *conversatio morum* as used in the *Rule* and in monastic tradition.

In a broader sense, living in *conversatio* means that growth in faith is a never-ending project. God never gives up on us; so we should never give up on Him or on ourselves. No matter how old or weary we may feel, God still has a wonderful plan for our future. In fact, He is relentless in seeking after us and summoning us to

advance in holiness; so we should relentlessly seek after Him and welcome Him to keep working on us. Very often we may feel that nothing new is happening within us or in our external environment, except possible physical that we need to trust all the more that *conversatio* is basically God's work and not ours. Our progress in holiness does not depend on how we feel about ourselves or how others evaluate us. It is a matter of our openness in faith to God's initiatives in our lives. The commitment to *conversatio* does encourage us to keep trusting, to keep praying, and to keep practicing the traditional disciplines that, through longstanding traditions in the Church, God has taught are beneficial for us.

Conversatio as connected with humility

In a society where people are sometimes urged not to do things "beneath their dignity," our perseverance in doing lowly, thankless acts of service can be important in our commitment to *conversatio*. Kitchen service is one of these forms of service. In her book *Reclaiming Humility* (Athens, OH: Cistercian Publications, 2015), Jane Foulcher, commenting on *RB* 35, writes, "All carry the burden of the work of the kitchen equally. Mutuality (*invicem*) is stressed: all serve; all are served (cf. *RB* 72:4). In the kitchen, the commitment to common service to Christ is enfleshed in a practical way in the life of the community" (p. 146). Such service causes an "increase of love" (*RB* 35:2). Foulcher comments further that "it is precisely because kitchen service is humiliating, lowly work that it becomes *par excellence* a practice of humility, that is, a practice that encourages the internalization of humility. Humility is not an attitude to be put on: it is a way of being. Indeed, humility cannot be practiced directly but is more the fruit of looking away from achievement of any kind, even the achievement of humility" (p. 147). Humility is very much part of *conversatio* because even as we must do much to "plant seeds" and do the "watering" in our spiritual journeys, only God "causes the growth" (1 Cor 3:7). Furthermore, we need humility to keep practicing disciplines that are recommended by the *Rule* and Christian tradition even when they don't make sense to "me" as an individual. Humble obedience to what God asks of us through the Church and our particular communities is a sure way to growth in holiness.

and mental decline. As long as we are being faithful to our spiritual practices, that sense of stagnation can be an opportunity for many graces. It is when we feel helpless

Conclusion: every day leading to eternity

The promise of *conversatio morum* helps us to overcome stagnation, leads us to live in hope, and keeps us on the path to eternal life. We learn to find joy in Christ's presence here and now even as we realize that this joy is provisional and is only a faint taste of the joy that God has in store for us in eternity. When we live in this joyful hope, even while we are aliens on this earth, we become manifestations of Christ to others ever more fully. This being caught up in Christ for the sake of others forms a major theme of the mystery of Christmas. The following reflections are from Thomas Merton's (Fr. Louis, O.C.S.O.) *Seasons of Celebration: Meditations on the Cycle of Liturgical Feasts* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2009). "Christ is born. He is born *to us*. And, He is *today*. For Christmas is not merely a day like every other day. It is a day made holy and special by a sacred mystery. It is not merely another day in the weary round of time. Today, eternity enters into time, and time, sanctified, is caught up into eternity" (pp. 81-82). Furthermore, "we who have seen the light of Christ are obliged, by the greatness of the grace that has been given us, to make known the presence of the Savior to the ends of the earth. This we will do ... above all by revealing Him in our lives. Christ is born to us today, in order that He may appear to the whole world through us. This one day is the day of His birth, but every day of our mortal lives must be His manifestation, His divine Epiphany, in the world which He has created and redeemed" (pp. 89-90). May our practice of *conversatio morum* help us to live every day in a spirit of Christmas as we welcome eternity into our the routines of our daily lives, as we call upon Christ to fill our emptiness, and as we thus become manifestations of His love, for the sake of His glory and for the salvation of the world.

In the peace of Christ and Saint Benedict,

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

OBLATE DAY 2017 ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24; OCTOBER DAY OF RECOLLECTION ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14

This year's Oblate Day will be Sunday, September 24; the speaker has not yet been chosen. The fall day of recollection is scheduled for Saturday, October 14. Fr. Donald is still searching for a retreat master.

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. Of course, it is also important to keep reading the *Holy Rule* on a regular basis and to keep seeking to apply it personally to one's everyday life.

THANK YOU FOR CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Fr. Donald and Br. Joachim thank all the many Oblates and Oblate novices who sent Christmas greetings. As often happens, as of the January 31, Fr. Donald was still responding to Christmas greetings and was probably only about a third of the way through. If

you have not yet received a response, you should receive one soon.

A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS

Lent, 2017

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

On March 21 we celebrate the Solemnity of the Passing of our Holy Father Saint Benedict, one of the pivotal figures in the development and expansion of Western civilization. It was the monastic movement across Europe that created a new civilization following the collapse of the Roman Empire in the early Middle Ages.

Saint Benedict dedicates an entire chapter (49) to Lent. The chapter begins: "The life of a monk ought to be a continuous Lent." The life of a monk and of every believer is meant to share in the trust of Jesus in the goodness of the Father. Sharing in that faith, we can face the trials of life with courage and pray with Jesus even as He prayed on the cross: "Father, into Your hands I entrust My spirit." The way of faith is a continuous seeking to live with Jesus in the Father's love.

In the gospel, Peter asks Jesus, "What can we expect from following you?" Jesus responds, "Everlasting life." Everlasting life means to live in God's life of love.

We live in a world that offers many attractive temptations to abandon the way of faith and love which Jesus gives to us. Saint Benedict reminds us that this way of faith and love is a lifelong search. Let us pray for the grace to search with undivided hearts, always trusting that Jesus is with us on the way that leads to everlasting life for all of us.

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, which is celebrated on 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.

Also, if you are an Oblate novice who is not involved in a deanery and have not contacted the Archabbey for several years, please use the renewal form to express your interest in the Oblate Program. In particular, if you have been an Oblate novice for over a year, please remember that you are eligible to become a full Oblate if you fulfill the requirements in II.E of the *Oblate Formation Booklet*. In any case, it would be good to know if we can help you in any way on your journey as an Oblate / Oblate novice. Also, if you are an inquirer on our temporary mailing list and are no longer interested in receiving this newsletter, please let us know.

OBLATE NOVICES: PLEASE CONSIDER READINESS FOR FINAL OBLATION

About three years ago, an estimate was made of how many Oblates and Oblate novices were on our mailing list. It was found that there were some 342 Oblate novices and some 610 Oblates. The high number of Oblate novices was surprising. Later, letters were sent to those who had been Oblate novices for three years or more to determine whether they were still interested in the Oblate Program and whether they wished to prepare for final Oblation. Only a few responded that they were ready for final Oblation, and most of the others are still Oblate novices. Please pray as to whether the Lord may be calling you to make the plunge into final Oblation; to help you to make your way to final Oblation, you may consider signing up for the new Oblate-novice formation lessons. (See below.)

THE SOLEMNITY OF ST. BENEDICT AT THE ARCHABBEY ON MARCH 21, 2017

Oblates from all locations are welcome to join Oblates of the Latrobe (St. Gregory) Deanery on **Tuesday, March 21**, to celebrate the Solemnity of the Passing of Our Holy Father Benedict with the monastic community and other guests. The schedule includes a 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), Vespers with the monastic community at 7:00 P.M., and a social at 7:35 P.M. (in the Assembly Room). Members of the Oblate community and their guests who wish to attend should fill out the form on the flier and send it to the Oblate Office by March 15. 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. (N.B.: Bishop Edward Malesic is scheduled to preside.)

PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM

Our revised Prayer-partner Program has begun to be implemented. New Oblates are automatically partnered with a monk who has agreed to participate. There is no communication between partners unless both agree to such communication. It is quite simple. Each partner prays for the other regularly, as best as he or she can. Previous partnerships will continue as they have been as long as both

parties wish to continue as partners.

RETREAT SCHEDULE FOR 2017

The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2017, have been scheduled. The 2017 retreats on Benedictine spirituality are to be held on May 19-21, 2017 and June 2-4, 2017. The silent retreat is to be offered on June 23-25, 2017. The two "Oblate retreats" will be directed, respectively, by Fr. Maurus and Fr. Boniface, and the silent retreat will also be directed by Fr. Boniface. **If you would like to be placed on the Retreat Program's mailing list, please contact Br. Hugh at the Retreat Office at 724-805-2139 or hugh.lester@stvincent.edu. You may also wish to see the retreat website at www.saintvincentretreats.org.**

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

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 mentoring booklet in the mail. If you have not received one, please inform the Oblate Office. **Mentors are very much needed especially for a number of prisoners who are Oblate novices or inquirers.**

OBLATE FORMATION LESSONS (mostly for Oblate novices)

Since last July 10, a new Oblate formation program of 12 lessons has been implemented. All those who have been invested as Oblate novices since that time have been encouraged to participate either by e-mail or by U.S. mail. A large majority of new Oblate novices have been receiving and returning the monthly lessons, which need not necessarily be completed before final Oblation. Mentors in the Oblate *Directory*, as well as lay leaders and prison chaplains, have also been invited to participate in the program in order to help those under their guidance. At a meeting of the editors of the lessons on January 10, it was decided that we are extending participation to (1) all mentors who are not in the *Directory* and (2) any Oblate novices, even if invested before last July 10, who would like to participate by e-mail. **Anyone in either of these categories who would like to receive the lessons to date may contact the Oblate Office.** Those Oblate novices who wish to use U.S. mail will need to wait until late summer, when it is anticipated that all twelve lessons will have been developed and then can be sent in a binder to all Oblate novices who request the set of lessons. Those who are already full Oblates may be allowed to participate at some later time.

DEALING WITH DAMAGED NEWSLETTERS (and other letters)

At least one copy of the November newsletter was returned in a damaged condition. (Other mail also occasionally comes in damaged.) The returned fragment was from Canada, but the address was not included in the fragment. If you (or an Oblate or Oblate novice whom you know) ever does not receive a newsletter in November, February, May, or August, please contact the Oblate Office. The person's newsletter may have been damaged by the postal system. We shall be glad to send a new copy first-class to anyone who received a damaged one or who would like another one for any good reason. In any case, if one of our Oblates in Canada did not receive the November newsletter, please let the Oblate Office know, and we shall send you a replacement.

OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS: meeting on January 13, 2017

The Oblate Board of Advisors met on Friday, January 13, with six Oblate members and one guest joining Fr. Donald and Br. Joachim. The group discussed the following issues: the Assembly of Deanery Representatives on June 10, recommendations from the survey of deaneries, the booklet about Oblate Nadeem Feroze, the formation lessons in process, the revised prayer-partner program, and possible new members for the board. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 21, at 6:30 P.M. Representatives of deaneries outside Latrobe are always welcome.

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. **Members of the Board of Advisors have put together a new brochure for first-time Oblate guests, but any Oblate is welcome to request a copy.**

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

- Peter Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989)
- Chris Padgett, *Why the Eucharist Matters for Your Life* (Frederick, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 2014)

NEW (or newly discovered) BOOK ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

- Jane Foulcher, *Reclaiming Humility: Four Studies in the Monastic Tradition* (Athens, OH: Cistercian Publications, 2015)
[Especially recommended is the second study, which is about humility in the *Holy Rule*.]

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 12, March 12, April 9, and May 7. **(Note the departure from the usual third Sundays because of St. Benedict Day, Easter, etc.)** 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. Presentations on Benedictine spirituality will continue to be offered at 3:00 P.M. on the same dates. In February, Br. Cassian will offer a presentation

on poverty and simplicity; in March, Br. Ignatius will speak on *conversatio morum*; and in April, Fr. Boniface will speak on hospitality.

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

Thanks to Fr. Andrew, Br. Pio, and Br. David Klecker, talks given at Oblate meetings in Latrobe (when the presenter is willing and when someone is able to do the recording) 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 \$6.00 or \$3.50 (plus tax & postage). **Please see the order form on the flier attached to this newsletter.** Note that if you order by mail, you need to pay a sales tax only if you are a resident of Pennsylvania.

ADORATION FOR VOCATIONS

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed every Sunday from 2:00 P.M. to 4:15 P.M. (and on Fridays from 8:30 A.M. to 3:45 P.M.) in St. Gregory Chapel. Oblates are encouraged to use these times for Eucharistic adoration, if possible, especially on the Sundays of Oblate presentations and meetings, to pray for vocations, and particularly for vocations to the Archabbey.

OBLATE GROUP IN TENNESSEE COLONY, TX (Michael Unit)

Oblate Alejandro Torres reported on December 26. At an hour-long meeting on December 13, seven men gathered to pray Vespers and to discuss Chapter 59 of the *Holy Rule*. Attending were two Oblates, two Oblate novices, and three inquirers.

OBLATE GROUP IN ROSHARON, TX (Terrell Unit)

Oblate Gilberto Gomez reported on November 7 and January 8. There were prayer meetings late in October and early in November. Six men attended each meeting, which included praying the Liturgy of the Hours and reading from the *Rule* of St. Benedict..

OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by phone on December 5. There was no meeting in November; three people showed up at the scheduled time, but the church doors were locked. There was no meeting scheduled for December.

OBLATE GROUP IN PHILADELPHIA, PA

Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported on January 2. The meeting on December 3 began with Morning Prayer according to the Roman Rite. The topic for discussion was the countercultural nature of monastic life. After some general remarks by Fr. Vincent de Paul, the group shared thoughts on how this countercultural aspect relates to the life of all baptized Christians and to Oblates. After a closing prayer, the group enjoyed a lunch provided by faithful hosts Sharon Fischer and her daughter JoAnn.

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.

NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES

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

Moderator Deacon Ralph DeCecco reported by mail on November 29. The meeting on November 28, attended by Deacon Ralph, his wife Janet, and five others, began with Vespers. Then the group viewed a D.V.D. of Fr. Wulfstan's presentation on prayer in Benedictine spirituality. There was some discussion on the presentation. The meeting ended with the praying of the "Litaney of Humility." The next meeting was scheduled for some time in January.

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

Lay leader/secretary Mary Ann Bingeman reported by e-mail on January 7 and 22. The meeting on December 4 was attended by Fr. Job Foote, O.S.B., moderator, and seven others. The meeting began with a praying of the "Oblate prayer" and continued with a social. Then the section of the *Rule* for the day was read and discussed. Fr. Job encouraged the Oblates to consider a stay at St. Vincent Archabbey for one or several days of private retreat aside from the group retreats. A collection was then taken for a child in Honduras named Francisco, whom the deanery is helping to sponsor. Fr. Job showed the group a card and a picture from Francisco, and Mary Ann was to write a letter with a Christmas card to him in behalf of the deanery. The meeting concluded with the praying of Vespers.

Six Oblates attended the meeting on January 22. The session began with the praying of the Oblate prayer and a social, during which a collection was taken up for Francisco. Mary Ann also distributed information about contacting him. Camille LaVoie suggested having after-school children at the local Catholic school prepare cards to send to Francisco, and the group agreed that such a project should be implemented if possible. The group then read Chapter 5 of the *Rule*, and Mary Ann offered a reflection by Br. Jerome Leo, O.S.B., on obedience. During the ensuing discussion the group mentioned that our obedience is a gift to God and to His people, that it makes one a better Oblate, and that it is very much connected with humility. Mary Ann then presented excerpts from Fr. Nathan Munsch's talk on *conversatio morum* at the Archabbey on September 25. The meeting ended with the praying of Vespers.

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

Secretary Jay Wells reported by e-mail on January 16, and Oblate Bonnie Bezila sent an e-mail message on December 14 concerning calendars for sale to raise funds for an August mission trip to a poverty-stricken area of West Virginia. The meeting on January 15, attended by Fr. Paschal Morlino, moderator, and thirteen others, took place in the parish house. Fr. Paschal introduced a discussion about wisdom and Epiphany. The magi were mentioned as examples of faith who allowed themselves to be stretched by God. Several attendees shared about personal experiences. Next Fr. Paschal distributed copies of an article entitled "What Kind of

Person the Abbot Should Be.” The meeting ended with the “Litany of the Infant Jesus,” and a social with food and beverages followed. As usual, the session ended with Vespers in the church at 5:00 P.M.

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

Lay leader/secretary Ronald Weleski reported by FAX on February 7. The meeting on October 27 began with Evening Prayer and continued with a study of the book *Lessons from Saint Benedict*. Considering Chapter 14 on reviving our spiritual lives, the group reflected on the priority of the love of Christ and the need to stir ourselves out of complacency by such means as praying the Divine Office, reading Scripture, studying the *Rule*, and especially attending Mass and receiving confession frequently. The session ended with a social with refreshments.

On December 6 the deanery held its annual pre-Christmas party with twelve members attending. Besides the enjoyment of food and conversation, the group watched the D.V.D. “Holy Odyssey - The Journey of a Sacred Treasure,” which chronicles the history of the icon of Our Lady of Kazan. The meeting lasted over two hours.

Despite a snow storm seven members attended the meeting on January 26. After the praying of Vespers, the group studied Chapter 15 of the same text. There was a lively discussion about impatience and its origin in selfish inner demands. The *Rule*, they concluded, directs us to put Christ at the center of our lives, to learn to be patient in suffering, and to focus on God’s gift of the moment. The meeting ended with a brief social.

Cyber Deanery (St. Isidore of Seville Deanery) [Those interested in the deanery may contact hislittleone14@gmail.com .]

Co-lay leader Theresa George reported by phone on December 21 and by e-mail on January 27. The deanery has chosen St. Isidore of Seville as its patron. Pope St. John Paul II declared St. Isidore the patron saint of the Internet.

As of January 27, there were 69 members. The group, which continues to grow, has been studying Chapters 23 and 24 of Dom Paul Delatte’s *Commentary*, with the pattern of reading and discussing one or two chapters per week. Many have been sharing insights, sometimes daily. The deanery continues to unite their prayers with all the Oblates and monks through the sharing of prayer intentions.

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

Lay leader/secretary Kathy Kristofko wrote on November 22 and December 9 and 17. The meeting on November 14 began, as usual, with the praying of Vespers. Then Oblate Carol Massingill gave the group some information about “prayer boxes” from the book *The Prayer Box* by Lisa Wingate. Oblate Rose Arcurio gave a presentation on the making of prayer boxes, with suggestions about what to place inside. The meeting ended with quiet prayer, with each attendee’s thanking God for someone or something in his or her life.

The deanery met at a local restaurant on December 14 for an annual pre-Christmas dinner. Before the dinner Deacon Michael Russo, moderator, led those present in Evening Prayer. During a brief discussion it was decided not to meet in January because of the strong possibility of inclement weather.

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

At the meeting on November 20, Bishop Edward Malesic of Greensburg addressed a gathering of some 40 people including Oblates, guests, and a few monks on the topic “The Centrality of Christ in the *Rule*.” (Bishop Malesic also presided at Solemn Vespers for Christ the King with Benediction.) He began his talk by expressing his encouragement to see so many people interested in the spiritual journey. These times, he said, have some similarity with the time of St. Benedict, when society seemed to be crumbling and decadent. St. Benedict wrote the *Rule* to help monks (and ultimately others) to bring the values of Christ into a fallen world. Likewise, many in today’s world, even nominal Christians, know little of Christ or His Resurrection; they are a “blank slate.” That is all the more reason for us to make Christ the center of our lives. Bishop Malesic then gave an overview of the *Rule*’s qualities: giving guidelines for balance in life, having a common-sense approach to human behavior, fostering awareness of temptations, helping its followers to find God through life in community, and establishing an ordered, regulated life that would help monks to overcome chaos and to seek God intentionally. Next, the bishop showed how Christ’s being at the center of the *Rule* is shown in the vows of obedience, stability, and conversion of life. In treating obedience, he asserted that it was at the heart of the *Rule*. Christ was first obedient to the Father; as the New Adam, He undid the disobedience of Adam and Eve. His obedience led Him to the Cross, through which we have our sins forgiven and are saved from death. Our obedience brings us closer to Christ. Obedience takes practice. Obedience to the abbot helps to establish healthy order in monastery; it is hard to seek God amid chaos. Our obedience is always ultimately directed to God, but He has given us human superiors whom we can see to help us to practice that obedience. We likewise need to obey Church authorities, including the Magisterium and the Bible. Without authorities there is division and discord, which the Devil loves. We are also to obey one another out of love as part of our obedience to God. After connecting obedience to stability and conversion of life, Bishop Malesic showed how we live out obedience in corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Finally, he responded to a number of questions from the audience. (Bishop Malesic’s presentation was recorded, and C.D.’s and D.V.D.’s are available.)

On December 18 Oblate William Iglesias led a group of some fifteen people in a session of group *lectio divina* on the Prologue of St. John’s Gospel. The session was somewhat shortened because of the change of monastic Vespers to 7:00 P.M. (The Oblates gathered for dinner at 5:00 and then proceeded to the meeting room shortly after 5:45.) Many fruitful insights were offered. Bill and Gisela Iglesias continue to offer a session of group *lectio* at their home in Latrobe on Thursday evenings.

On January 15 some ten people gathered to begin a series of discussions based on Fr. Demetrius Dumm’s book *Flowers in the Desert*. The Foreword and the beginning of Chapter 1 were covered. It was mentioned that the *Holy Rule*, the praying of the Divine, and the practice of *lectio divina* are very Biblical. The basic themes of bondage and liberation from the Book of Exodus were discussed. These themes are woven through the whole Old Testament and are fulfilled in the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, who came to free us from the bondage of sin and death.

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

On November 20 Fr. Anthony Grossi gave a presentation on the Liturgy of the Hours to an audience of well over 30 people. After defining the Hours as part of the official prayer of the Church, he spoke about the origins of the Hours in monasteries. He then gave reasons for praying the Hours: in response to the human need to pray often, for the sanctification of the hours of the day, to pause from the busyness of life to remind ourselves of the priority of God, and to imitate Christ, especially in His praying of the psalms. Fr. Anthony next spoke about the various kinds of psalms and their relevance to every human situation. He then described the various Hours, mentioned different breviaries, and recommended the books *The Monastic Hours* and *The Divine Office for Dodos*.

On December 18 Fr. Robert Keffer gave a presentation on simplicity in Benedictine spirituality to over 20 people despite inclement weather. First he reviewed false notions of simplicity. For example, some people can necessarily lead lives with many duties and crises and still be models of personal simplicity. Such situations as the lack of resources or the lack of busyness do not always amount to simplicity. Nor does simplicity necessarily mean easiness of life. Then Fr. Robert went on to show how simplicity must be part of our ascetical lives physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Physical simplicity leads us to examine how much we really need and the possibility of giving up some of our wealth to help the needy. Emotional simplicity leads us to look at our "emotional baggage," our lack of forgiveness from hurts of the past, and/or excessive or obsessive attachments. Spiritual simplicity leads us not so much to measure the quantity of our prayer lives but to strive for quality and regularity. We need to be disciplined to strive for spiritual simplicity. Striving for simplicity involves a "balancing act" and an ongoing recognition of our vices and working on them. Little by little, our self-examination becomes more simple and frank.

On January 15 Fr. Thomas Acklin gave a presentation on holiness and humility to a group of about 28 people. He described holiness as rooted in the seeking of God, i.e., coming to know Him and love Him more and more. Seeking is at the basis of holiness and humility. In our culture we spend much of our lives seeking things other than God, even when perhaps we think we are seeking God first. St. Benedict specifies that a man trying to enter the monastery must be truly seeking God. All of the Oblates (and monks) who come to these meetings want deeper conversion, but we may also have other motives. In the Gospel of St. John, Christ asks, "What are you seeking?" Ideally, we should be seeking Christ and growth in holiness. Such seeking means that we actually do (or begin doing) what God is asking us to do. If we truly cherish Christ above all, then the love of neighbor should flow naturally. *(continued)* In our culture such love is difficult to practice because we are generally self-absorbed; the motto for our era might be, "They couldn't love themselves." When we truly seek God, we make changes in our lives, such as embracing the elements of Benedictine spirituality, especially praying the Liturgy of the Hours and entering other types of prayer. Even if we don't feel like it, we can come before God and tell Him how much we seek Him. That kind of prayer is fine! To help us to seek God more fully, we might ask ourselves, "How am I spending my life? Am I sometimes lost in distractions or just 'marking off time'? Or am I letting my heart and mind be trained to listen and to become detached from the other loves that compete with my love of God?" Humility is very much connected with the seeking of holiness because it calls us to be in awe of God and His gifts instead of worrying about ourselves. God seeks us first, and we should wonder in amazement, "Who am I to be so remembered by God? If we cherish Christ first, humility naturally follows. When we humble ourselves and recognize the giftedness of life, God exalts us by giving us lavish gifts. When we counteract the tendency to grab and counteract it with the effort to give freely (as God does), we come to realize that "if we give all we have, we have everything!"

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

Lay leader Brian Chisholm reported by phone on November 11 and December 2. Seven people attended the meeting on October 23. Brian showed a video on *conversatio morum* to the group. He also reported that a new Oblate novice prays Morning and Evening Prayer each day with Brian and Roy McKenzie.

Five people attended the meeting on November 27. It began with the praying of Vespers, a rosary, and other prayers. The group talked about the Oblate-novice formation program. At the end of the meeting, all went together to a concert at the cathedral and then to a restaurant for dinner.

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

Lay leader/secretary Gabriele Terrill reported by U.S. mail on November 22 and by e-mail on January 24. There was no official meeting on November 13 since most potential attendees were busy or ill. However, the small group who attended prayed Vespers together, and during Vespers

Cheryl Ann (Frances Cabrini) Martin of Palmyra, PA,

made her final Oblation before Fr. James Podlesny, moderator, and the others who were present.

Fr. Jim and seven others attended the meeting on January 22, which began with the praying of Vespers. Fr. Jim then had to leave. The group enjoyed a social and then listened to a C.D. of a conference by Thomas Merton entitled "the Development of Conscience." Some of the themes from the talk were that we need to become aware of the presence of God, to let this awareness change our lives, and to learn to develop God-inspired judgment with the help of the Church. Constant awareness of the "last things," especially death, can help to form our consciences since knowing the limited nature of our time on earth helps us to live by eternal values.

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

Secretary Frederick Laux reported on December 4 & 14. The meeting on November 15 was attended by three Oblates, four Oblate novices, and three inquirers in addition to Deacon John Etter, moderator. After the praying of Evening Prayer, Oblate novice Steve Davidson gave a presentation on humility and compared Chapter 7 of the *Rule* with an outline on humility from the *NIV Study Bible*. Steve also referred to Lk 14, Ps 130, Prov 15:33, and Job 42:10. He asserted that perfect love of God is attained through humility. Then Oblate Dean Everett gave a presentation on the day's reading from the *Rule* (Chapter 37, on the elderly and children). He emphasized that we need to be patient and tolerant of the needs of the elderly and the young and to nurture a special love for them. Next Deacon John led the group through two reprints from the Archabbey, one on holiness and being an Oblate and the other on St. Benedict and his *Rule*. He stressed the following points: the "universal call to holiness," Our Lord's being our source of mercy, the Oblate commitment to live out baptismal promises seriously, and the Oblate's call to give witness to God's saving action in this world rather than to reject the world, the "world" being one's environment, even if very confining. From the second reprint Deacon John mentioned that the *Rule* is a synthesis of previous rules and traditions and that St. Benedict had a very pastoral outlook regarding differences among monks based on their human nature. The meeting ended with a "Glory Be" and a blessing from Deacon John.

The meeting on December 13 was attended by three Oblate novices, two Oblates, and five inquirers in addition to Deacon John. After the praying of Evening Prayer, Fred Laux gave a presentation on *RB 59* (on the offering of sons to the monastery). Although that practice is antiquated, we can still learn a lesson from *RB 59* about the need to appreciate children as gifts from God. Pope Francis was quoted on the gift of children and concern for their growth, their education, and their prospects for fulfillment. It was mentioned that the men of the deanery must be in solidarity with children and have some responsibility for children; they are called to pray for children and to pray for vocations as well as to suggest and promote vocations. Then Deacon John led a discussion on "conversion of heart" and "obedience" from lessons given out from the Archabbey. It was emphasized that "we are never not forgiven" and that we should ask for forgiveness. We need to be humble enough to know that we need conversion, and we need to "choose our obedience." The meeting with a brief communion service, followed by a time for socializing.

In the last newsletter the investiture of Chris Beard was erroneously reported. The correct date was September 15, 2016.

Pittsburgh, PA (St. Peter Deanery) -- *meetings on Thursdays (usually 3rd or 4th of the month), 7:00 P.M., basement of St. Peter Church.*

Oblate George Ponticello reported by e-mail on November 6 and December 23. Fr. Vincent Ziidek, moderator, and eight others attended the meeting on October 18. After the praying of Vespers, the group discussed Chapter 4 ("The Journey") of the book *Flowers in the Desert* by Fr. Demetrius Dumm, O.S.B. Before the meeting six of the Oblates had met for dinner at a local restaurant.

The December meeting consisted of a pre-Christmas party on December 19. There were twelve attendees, including some guests. The group was grateful to Sister Alice from St. Peter Church for the use of her apartment. They first prayed Evening Prayer and then enjoyed a feast with abundant food, conversation, and camaraderie.

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

Lay leader/secretary Roland Fernandez reported on December 4 and 17, and Oblate Stephen Hall reported on October 30. There was a very brief meeting on October 15 attended by two Oblates and one Oblate novice. They discussed the influence of secularism on Christianity and the Catholic Church and the Church's influence on secularism.

Attending the meeting on November 19 were three Oblates and two inquirers. It began with an opening prayer and the praying of Morning Prayer. Then there was the reading of a passage from the *Rule* followed by some discussion. For special reasons the meeting had to be brief, and it ended with a prayer.

The meeting on December 17 followed Mass celebrated by Fr. Frank Wittouck, S.C.J., who is the new moderator of the deanery. The meeting began with opening prayers from the *Oblate Formation Booklet* and with Morning Prayer. Then there was a reading from the *Holy Rule*, followed by some discussion. The meeting ended with prayers from the formation booklet. Attending were three Oblates, one Oblate novice, and two inquirers.

During Mass in the Ramsey I Chapel on January 21, Fr. Frank received the following:

Oblate: **Scott M. (Scholastica) Boyd** of Rosharon, TX

Oblate novice: **Patrick Henry Drew** of Rosharon, TX

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

There were no reports because the deanery does not meet between November and March.

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

Moderator Fr. Ronald Gatman, O.S.B., reported on January 23. On a Sunday in October, the deanery met for a discussion of the *Rule*, followed by Evening Prayer. Oblate Michael Williams, lay leader, made a presentation during Vespers, and supper followed.

On a Sunday in November, Oblate Francine Ware led a session of group *lectio divina*. It was followed by Mass in the priory chapel celebrated by Fr. Joseph Smith, the Catholic chaplain at St. Joseph/Chandler. A supper followed the Mass.

On December 16, some of the Oblates prepared food and drink for the Benedictine Priory's annual pre-Christmas party. Some 300 people had been invited, and the turnout was large.

At the meeting on January 22, Oblate Lori Williams led a discussion on Chapter 6 of the *Rule*. There were some shared thoughts about the rarity of silence in our society and the importance of making time for silence for the sake of reorientation to God. There then followed a session of group *lectio* and a presentation on the Psalms by Fr. Ronald, who gave a brief history of the origin of the psalms and added some personal insights about praying the psalms over a number of decades, especially regarding the psalms' effects on his

outlook on life. Finally, the group prayed Vespers and ate supper together.

In February there was to be a gathering for group *lectio* followed by Mass in the chapel. There were hopes to have the Vicar General of the Diocese of Savannah as the main celebrant. The sharing of supper is to follow the Mass.

In March there were plans to have a discussion of some part of the *Rule* before Evening Prayer, with the pastor of a near-by parish as a presenter.

In April there was to be a three-hour afternoon of recollection, including a Mass, presentations, time for quiet prayer, some shared *lectio*, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

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

Oblate Co-lay leader/secretary Teresa Warlow reported by e-mail on December 11 and January 13. The meeting on November 13 began with the “prayer for Oblates” and continued with a discussion on the benefits of silence as recommended by the *Holy Rule*. The meeting ended with Midday Prayer.

A few people did gather for a meeting on December 11 despite snow and very low temperatures. The group prayed Midday Prayer and then adjourned until January.

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

Co-lay leader/secretary Jeffery Hahn wrote on November 2 and 23, December 14, and January 29. The meeting on October 25 was attended by six Oblates, six Oblate novices, and two inquirers in addition to Deacon David Hornick, moderator. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Holy Rule*, Oblate Ron Bergman gave a presentation on the life of St. Benedict and on the history and meaning of the medal of St. Benedict. He distributed enlarged photocopies of both sides of the medal, and the group prayed together the prayer for the blessing of medals of St. Benedict. Next Jeff Hahn introduced the topics for presentation during 2017 and provided each attendee with a labeled folder. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline from newly received copies of *Shorter Christian Prayer*, with an insert for an examination of conscience. The group later learned that Bishop Mark Bartchak would be coming for a pastoral visit on November 20.

The meeting on November 8 was attended by Deacon David, eight Oblates, and six Oblate novices. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Holy Rule*, Jeffery Hahn gave a presentation on the *Rule*, which included the history, origins, structure, and importance of the *Rule*. He also reviewed the recommended daily schedule for reading the *Rule*, led a discussion on the application of the *Rule* to modern times and on the impact of the *Rule* on those who were attending, and distributed a packet of reflections on each of the daily readings by Br. Jerome Leo of St. Mary’s Monastery in Petersham, MA. The meeting ended with Compline.

Nearly a hundred people participated in a Mass on November 20 with Bishop Mark Bartchak, including some seventeen members of the Oblate community.

The meeting on November 22 was attended by seven Oblates, ten Oblate novices, and two inquirers in addition to Deacon David. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Holy Rule*, Jeffery gave a presentation on the Liturgy of the Hours, with reference to the most frequently asked questions. (*continued*)

Each attendee was also provided with a calendar for determining which week of the psalter to use, with instructions for using the Proper of Seasons and the Proper of Saints, a packet of step-by-step directions for praying Morning, Evening, and Night prayers, and a set of six labeled bookmarks to be placed in copies of *Shorter Christian Prayer*. Then the group went through the steps of praying three Hours properly. After some questions were answered, the meeting ended with prayer.

The meeting on December 13 was attended by seven Oblates, eight Oblate novices, and two inquirers in addition to Deacon David. First of all, Deacon David, assisted by Jeffery Hahn, invested as Oblate novices

Wendell Q. Caldwell of Somerset, PA, and

Christopher Marinaccio of Somerset, PA.

Then there was a discussion about the importance of studying Sacred Scripture. The daily reading from the *Holy Rule* was read and discussed. Next Oblate novice David Clewes gave a presentation on St. Nicholas. He referred to Thomas Nast’s illustration of 1881 and Clement Clarke Moore’s poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas.” The group then discussed the true meaning of Christmas. The meeting ended with Compline. Members of the deanery sent a Christmas card to the Oblate Office with about 20 personal greetings.

The meeting on January 10 was attended by six Oblates, nine Oblate novices, and one inquirer in addition to Deacon David. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, Jeff Hahn offered a schedule of presentations for the year 2017, with a focus on Benedictine values. He wrote the word “value” on the chalkboard and asked each attendee for a definition of “value.” He then read ten different definitions from a dictionary and led an in-depth discussion, which was a good foundation for the study of Benedictine values. Next he distributed a mini-billboard message to the participants that read, “What have you done with what I have given you?” He noted that we should often ask ourselves that question. Finally Jeff introduced the program of Oblate-novice lessons, and the group agreed to participate together in the lessons. The first lesson, on holiness, was distributed. The meeting ended with Compline.

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

Secretary Phyllis Austin reported by e-mail about November 20, December 18, and January 16. The meeting on November 14 was attended by eight Oblates and three Oblate novices as well as Fr. David Griffin, O.S.B., moderator. After the praying of Evening Prayer, the group continued to discuss the book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. They covered Chapters 19 to 26, with emphasis on consoling those who are in pain, not having deceit in the heart, not giving a false peace, and never abandoning charity. Many thoughts were exchanged. The meeting ended with intercessory prayer and the singing of the Benedictine “Ultima.”

The meeting on December 12 was attended by two Oblates, two Oblate novices, and one guest. Lay leader Ashley Leggett led the meeting in the absence of Fr. David, who was ministering at a penance service. The small group enjoyed a lively discussion on some of

the instruments of good works, such as not giving a false peace and not abandoning charity. One must be careful not to hold on to lingering resentment against others or quietly try to undermine another's success even while one seems to get along with other persons. The meeting ended with prayer and the "Ultima."

The gathering on January 9 began with Mass at 5:00 P.M. celebrated by Fr. David. During the Mass

Catherine R. "Kay" Machi of State College, PA,

made her final Oblation in the presence of Fr. David and the other attendees. Also, the eight other full Oblates who were present renewed their Oblation. In his homily for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Fr. David emphasized the appearance of the Blessed Trinity at the Baptism and the importance of our own reception of baptism, by which we are washed in Christ and claimed by Him to become righteous and ready for our missions. A pot-luck dinner followed in the parish Activity Center, and several other guests, including the pastor and the parochial vicar of the parish, participated.

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

Lay leader/secretary Peggy Gambardella reported on November 15 and January 8, and former lay leader Delina Pauls wrote on November 7. Nine people attended the meeting on November 2. After the praying of the "Oblate prayer," one Oblate recited a prayer for guidance in voting in the upcoming election. In the absence of Fr. Lee, moderator, Joanne Hansinger spoke on *lectio divina*, with reference to the book *Reading to Live* by Fr. Raymond Studzinski, O.S.B. She quoted St. Pio about the need to read good books, described the four dimensions of *lectio*, and quoted St. Jerome regarding prayer leading to reading and vice versa. Then the group shared about their own experiences with *lectio*.

At the meeting on December 7, fourteen people joined Fr. Lee for a pre-Christmas potluck dinner. The dinner ended with the praying of Compline and a prayer for deceased Oblate Dorothy Hopper.

The meeting on January 4 was attended by Fr. Lee and seventeen others, Oblates and inquirers. Fr. Lee spoke about the application of the *Holy Rule* to Oblates' everyday lives. The meeting ended with Compline and prayers for those Oblates and family members who were experiencing health problems or scheduled for surgery.

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

Lay leader/secretary Sue Wykoff reported by e-mail on February 1. On November 13 the group met at the convent of St. Anne Church since the library where they usually meet was affected by flooding in the church basement. Four people attended. They prayed the Office of Readings, did an exercise of *lectio divina*, and closed with the Angelus.

Because of inclement weather, the deanery did not meet in December. Five people gathered in the convent for the meeting on January 8 since a social was being held in the area of the library. (The parish was wishing the pastor well shortly before surgery.) The group prayed the Office of Readings, watched a D.V.D. of Fr. Philip's talk about St. Benedict and his *Rule*, and closed with the Lord's Prayer. The group also discussed the possibility of other activities at meetings, such as conversations about books being read.

Various Locations

On November 12 in the chapel in Buford, GA,

Charles E. "C-Jay" (Maximilian Thomas) Tarwater of Buford, GA,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Rev. Kevin Peek of All Saints Catholic Church in Atlanta, GA.

On November 30 Fr. Gary Rottman, chaplain, received as Oblate novices in the chapel in Tennessee Colony, TX (Coffield Unit):

Phillip Carrasco of Tennessee Colony, TX, and

John Lesley "Les" Miller of Tennessee Colony, TX.

On December 2 during Mass in the chapel in Lisbon, OH, Fr. Bernard Mlapah invested as an Oblate novice

J. Keith Hughes of Lisbon, OH.

For the homily Fr. Mlapah explained the *Rule* of St. Benedict and the meaning of Oblate commitment. Some 27 people were in attendance, including an Oblate and an Oblate novice affiliated with St. John's Abbey. After the Mass the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for adoration.

On December 3, Fr. Roderick Ermatinger, pastor of St. Matthew Church in Kalispell, MT, invested as an Oblate novice

Mary Ann Manning of Kalispell, MT,

Mary Ann is a friend of Oblate Tanishia Sperling of Rollins, MT, who moved to Montana from Lebanon, PA, several years ago.

On December 8 Oblation ceremonies were held at Infant of Prague Church in Jacksonville, NC. Fr. Jeffrey Bowker, parochial vicar, officiated and received the following:

Oblate: **John W. (Simeon) Bradley, Jr.**, of Jacksonville, NC

Oblate novices: **Donald Robert "Bob" Butler** of Jacksonville, NC

Diana L. Schmidt of Richlands, NC

Namir Perez-Gonzalez of Camp Lejeune, NC.

Diana is the mother-in-law of Oblate novice Timothy Humm.

On January 11 at the chapel at San Quentin after a monthly Mass, Fr. George Williams, S.J., assisted by a Jesuit novice, invested as Oblate novices:

Todd Garton of San Quentin, CA, and

Bob R. Williams, Jr., of San Quentin, CA.

On January 15 Fr. Michael Antonacci, O.S.B., of the Archabbey invested as an Oblate novice

David M. Farrell of Chapel Hill, NC.

Fr. Michael is a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. David was seriously ill and died one week later, but he eagerly sought to begin formation 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: Archabbot Paul Maher, Br. Leo Monahan, Br. Stephen Nazaruk, Fr. Stanley Markiewicz, Fr. Paulo Panza (serious eye surgery on Jan. 31), Br. James Cartwright, and Fr. Myron Kirsch.

SOME SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Oblates are welcome to attend concerts offered by the Saint Vincent Camerata. On Saturday, March 18, at 7:00 P.M. in the Basilica and on Sunday, March 19, at Queen of Peace Church in Patton, PA, there will be a performance of "My soul's been anchored in the Lord," a program of Renaissance and American contemporary *a cappella* choruses for Lent. On Saturday, April 22, at 7:00 P.M. in the Basilica and on Sunday, April 23, at 7:00 P.M. at St. Bernard Church in Mt. Lebanon, PA, there will be a performance of "A new song," a program of psalms, anthems, and motets for chorus and organ. For tickets and further information for all performances, phone 724-805-2579.

2. If you have moved or are away temporarily, please inform the Oblate Office about your change of address. In some cases mail sent by other departments may come back to St. Vincent, and names can be eliminated from our mailing list without our knowing about the elimination. Please keep in touch as best as you can!

3. There is still very little information about the Fourth World Congress of Oblates on November 4-10, 2017. Those who would like advice about registering and attending may contact the Oblate Office.

4. Fr. Rene Kollar, O.S.B., a Professor of History at St. Vincent College, published another book this past December. It is entitled *A Nun, a Convent, and the German Occupation of Belgium: Mother Marie Georgine's Diary of World War I*. Fr. Rene meticulously edited and annotated the diary of Mother Marie Georgine, an Ursuline nun. The book offers a valuable perspective of the harsh German rule of Belgium during World War I. The book can be purchased at the Saint Vincent College Bookstore as well as online at Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

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 Tuesday, March 21, 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 **Oblate Office, Attention: St. Benedict Day event, 300 Fraser Purchase Rd., Latrobe, PA 15650-2690.**

SCHEDULE FOR SOLEMNITY OF SAINT BENEDICT, MARCH 21, 2017

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

7:00 - Vespers in Archabbey Basilica, choir area (tentative)

7:40 P.M. – social in Assembly Room

RENEWAL OF OBLATION

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

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

Date of Renewal _____

Please detach and return to:

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

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

Fr. Boniface's talk on work in Benedictine spirituality (November 15, 2015):

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

Fr. Donald's talk on the Liturgy of the Hours (December 20, 2015):

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

Br. Rafael Dos Santos' talk on holiness and Benedictine spirituality (January 17, 2016):

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

Fr. Killian's talk on prayer in Benedictine spirituality (February 21, 2016):

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

Fr. Chad's talk on *conversatio morum* (March 20, 2016):

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

Fr. Maurus' talk on St. Benedict and his *Rule* (April 17, 2016):

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

Fr. Thomas Hart's talk on the Holy Eucharist (May 15, 2016):

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

Fr. Vincent de Paul's talk on work and the ecumenical group in Philadelphia (June 12, 2016):

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

Fr. Shawn Matthew's talk on silence in Benedictine spirituality (July 17, 2016):

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

Br. Lawrence Machia's talk on hospitality in Benedictine spirituality (August 21, 2016):

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

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

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

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

able to order copies of recent presentations at a discounted price.

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

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

Wednesday, April 12

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

Holy Thursday, April 13

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 14

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 15

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) 8:30 P.M. (tentative)

Easter Sunday, April 16

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

Easter Monday, April 17

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

The regular schedule resumes on Tuesday, April 18.

