



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

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WAITING IN JOYFUL HOPE
AND ENTRUSTING OURSELVES TO GOD'S MERCY (RB 4:74)

Dear Oblates, Oblate novices, and Friends,

Most of you who are Oblates are familiar with the oft-quoted verse from the *Rule* stating that "the life of a monk ought to be a continuous Lent" (49:1). That gem of wisdom also applies to every Christian insofar as we all need to struggle relentlessly against sinful tendencies, live in a spirit of compunction of heart and repentance, and perform those penances that will open the way to God's healing, transforming graces. It has also been said that the life of a Christian can be regarded as a continual Advent; that is, every Christian, placing his hope in God alone, trusts in His promises and waits longingly for their fulfillment. The notion of a continual Advent likewise expresses a norm for the monk, the Oblate, and every follower of the *Rule*.

Advent is a preparation for Christmas; but Christmas points to the Paschal mystery, which culminates in the Resurrection. We hope ultimately to share in Christ's Resurrection on the Last Day. For now, "encounters with the risen Christ characterize Christian hope of resurrection. We shall rise like Christ, with Him, and through Him" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #995). Although "in a certain way, we have already risen with Christ," this heavenly life "remains 'hidden with Christ in God'" (*Catechism*, #1002, #1003 [quoting Col 3:3]). Thus we are called to wait in hope for that great day of resurrection and for all the graces that lead up to it.

However, we all tend to lose hope, especially when we feel burdened by insurmountable problems and weighty responsibilities. Death, heaven, and resurrection seem so far away, and our current pressured situation seems so urgent and immediate. Some months ago I received a heavy package in the mail, which was delivered to the Oblate Office. At first I could not imagine what was inside, especially since the return address did not look familiar. Since I had so much other work that day, I decided to leave the package unopened until evening. When I finally opened the container, I recognized the two wood carvings that Archabbot Douglas had commissioned (with me as an intermediary) several months earlier. I was eager to show the carvings to him, but he had recently left on a trip; so I had to keep the carvings for a while and restrain my desire. I also

noticed that one corner of one of the carvings had been damaged, probably during shipping. That meant one more dreaded task for me: seeing our carpenter about repairing the broken edge. As it turned out, the next morning as I was walking to my office, I spotted the carpenter a short distance in front of me. When I hurried to catch up with him and told him about the problem, he took the carving then and there, carried it to his shop, and delivered a repaired carving to my office by evening. What a grace! My expected time of waiting was shortened immensely.

Far more important than the repairing of a wood carving is the repairing of human souls, badly damaged by personal sins and saddened external tragedies beyond human control. All of us, in a sense, are "damaged goods," waiting to be repaired. Sometimes it seems that God, who heals and transforms, has abandoned us, and we are not sure how to find Him. On the one hand, we have all seen evidence of the Lord's coming to our aid in marvelous ways; yet on the other hand, we grow impatient with long unresolved problems, physical ailments that only grow worse, moral flaws that keep resurfacing, and sinful tendencies that seem never to be overcome. It is then that we need to let go of our frail human hopes. It is then that we need to "place [our] hope in God alone" (RB 4:41) and to wait longingly for Him to redeem us in His way and at His time. It is then that we need to entrust our past to God's mercy and to trust that God has a far better future in store for us that is literally beyond this world. We need to hear St. Benedict's clear command, "Never lose hope in God's mercy" (4:74). Why is it that we can keep waiting in joyful hope for the arrival of His mercy and saving love? It is because, as St. Benedict says, if we have used the "tools of the spiritual craft" that God has given us, we have God's own assurance that "our wages will be the reward the Lord has promised: 'What the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, God has prepared for those who love Him' (1 Cor 2:9)" (RB 4:77). God indeed longs for us to attain to heavenly glory and then, ultimately, to the glorious resurrection of our bodies.

How does the *Rule* of St. Benedict assist us to live a life of persistent waiting in hope? The first 73 instruments of good works in Chapter 4 lead up to the

74th (never losing hope in God's mercy) because when we set out to implement any of them, we learn how miserably we fail and that the only alternative to despair is to hope in God and His mercy. Beyond Chapter 4, the rest of the *Rule* is also rich in wisdom concerning joyful hope. The abbot, for one, "is to distrust his own frailty and remember not to crush the bruised reed" (64:13) and must "strive to be loved rather than feared" (64:15). By showing his monks the compassion of the Good Shepherd and in knowing his own weaknesses, he acknowledges God's great hope for every human being; no one, including himself, is beyond repair, and God Himself has charged the abbot with the task of encouraging obedient monks to attain greater virtue and of reproofing and rebuking negligent monks in order to help them to reform (2:25). In assisting monks to live out their vow of *conversatio morum*, he may marvel more and more how God works through him to care for souls, and so he never gives up on anyone. Like all the monks, however, he must be careful not to "show too great concern for the fleeting and temporal things of this world" (2:33) lest he put his hope in human, material progress rather than in God Himself. The abbot and community are likewise to trust that God can and does often speak through young, inexperienced monks to reveal something true, wise, and beautiful; so all must be ready to hear such wisdom from the young at community meetings (3:3). In esteeming silence, all the monks learn to trust and hope that God can do greater things through their silence and humble listening than through their trying to take control of situations by "a flood of words" (6:4). The monks also hope that their practice of the steps of humility will lead them to "that perfect love of God which casts out fear" (7:67, quoting 1 Jn 4:18) and to the virtuous state which "the Lord will by the Holy Spirit graciously manifest in His workman now cleansed of vices and sins" (7:70). In faithfully praying the Divine Office, the monk should never lose hope that God assists him in this glorious but humbling service, however distracted he may feel; amid the struggle to "sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices" (19:7), the monk can be reassured that he is singing God's praises in the presence of the angels and in communion with Christ Himself. Therefore, he must never lose hope in the value of his prayer even amid tedium and distractions. Christ is present to make good our defects if we only let Him! Furthermore, the many stipulations of the "penal code" (*RB* 23-30 and 43-46) attest to the basic reformability of human nature despite all its perversions. With God's grace all good things are possible (cf. Mk 10:28, Mt 19:26, Lk 1:37, Gn 18:14, Jer 32:27), and one must never give up on even the most wayward brother. Even if "one diseased sheep" (28:8) must be expelled from the monastery, there is hope that such discipline will save the others from infection and perhaps even contribute to the spiritual growth of the one expelled. Although St.

Benedict does not explicitly call for this, the expelled brother continues to need and deserve prayers; in Mt 18:17, Jesus stipulates that a brother who refuses to listen to the Church after other efforts to correct him have failed, he is to be treated as "a Gentile or tax collector"; but we know that such outcasts were treated lovingly by Christ and remain precious in God's eyes.

The Scriptures often exhort us to put our hope in God and not in human schemes, which ultimately fail us. The epistles, in particular, encourage the early Christian communities to hold on to great hopes because of the love that Christ has shown them. It is precisely because Christ took on our poverty and weakness that our limitations do not doom us; rather our unpromising beginnings urge us on to trust in God's desire to perfect us since Christ has brought our human nature to heaven. We need to wait in joyful hope for God's own ways and times of leading us another step closer to full redemption. Our Lord longs to set us all ablaze with a desire for holiness as he cries out, "I have come to light a fire on earth. How I wish the blaze were ignited!" (Lk 12:49). St. Paul prays for his congregation in Ephesus, new in the faith through they are, that God may "bestow on you gifts in keeping with the riches of His glory" (Eph 3:16), and he promises that if they truly welcome Christ to dwell in them "you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love, which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God Himself" (Eph 3:18-19). Even to the wayward Corinthians, Paul proclaims, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, ... what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9, quoting Is 64:3). He also exhorts them to strive for true freedom in Christ as he asserts, "All of us, gazing on the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed from glory to glory into His very image by the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). Yes, since God wants us to share in His very glory, how could we not live in joyful hope?

A marvelous book that was recently recommended to me, *Fire Within*, by Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M. (Ignatius Press, 1989), speaks of the call of every Christian to attain the heights of prayer and holiness, as shown in the teachings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. According to the author, St. Teresa "forthrightly said that there is no reason why people in the world should not attain to the very highest mansions of prayer growth, to the transforming union" (p. 2). Fr. Dubay comments, "This volume deals with a 'philosophy' that produces not only contentment but also a perduring, unspeakable joy even on earth, a foretaste of eternal joy. This claim is verifiable in experience for anyone willing to pay the price of pursuing it" (p. 4); he continues, "A book on advanced prayer is a book on advanced joy. It is a love story, a book about being loved, and loving totally. It is a book on holiness, the heights of holiness to which the Gospel invites everyone. Still, we must face the fact that there are people who

think the message is too good to be true" (p. 5). Yes, alas, the idea that one is called to deep communion with God is "so attractive that many people assume that it is not something that can be realized in their own lives" (p. 2). How sad! Perhaps it is so because we tend to put our trust largely in human efforts rather than in God's grace and mercy. Let us oppose such futile and ultimately hopeless struggles with intense prayer, with nourishing reading, and with the cheerful embracing of our crosses so that we may open the way to the hope for holiness that God wishes us to possess!

How, in particular, can we learn to be more joyfully hopeful in our time of waiting on this earth? First, we must put our human hopes in proper perspective. Our thoughts and ways are not God's thoughts and ways (cf. Is 55:8). It is often a blessing to have our human hopes shattered so that we may give way to God's better plan. Secondly, we need to strive against murmuring (and certainly cursing and swearing). Murmuring and violent thoughts and words do nothing to improve a situation; in fact, they render a bad situation worse and reflect the attitude, "There is no God here, or He cannot make good of this mess!" Such a disposition needs to be healed, not fostered. Thirdly, we need to recognize in faith that Christ is in our midst to redeem whatever condition of weakness or pain afflicts us. He, the incarnate Son of God, shares our misery and gives us every reason to hope that He will lead us out of our "Egypt" -- in God's time and way. Finally, we need to content ourselves with waiting. Waiting is natural and healthful, especially in the

Christian life. We are not yet what we ought to be, and the process of transformation of our deficient condition takes much time and trust in God's grace and mercy. As long as we are ready to leave behind our past and to welcome daily manifestations of grace, God will give us much reason to hope. He will give us love, joy, peace, patience, and the other fruits of the Holy Spirit. He will give us every possible encouragement to keep waiting in joyful hope.

As this newsletter is mailed out, Advent is still a month away, but it is never too early to practice waiting in joyful hope. Christ has taken on the imperfections of our warped human nature, and with His divine power He is gently and firmly leading us to be healed of our individual and communal disorders. Let us place our confidence in Him and in His mercy and ask Him for the strength never to give up hope in Him, in our inherent value and future salvation, or in anyone else's. As we anticipate a marvelous future in communion with Christ and all the saints, let us avoid every snare that would keep us from losing hope in God's mercy. Let us keep waiting in joyful hope!

In the peace of Christ and St. Benedict,

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

P.S.: A recent experience giving me further reason to wait in joyful hope came through a literal fog. Driving through a very dense fog to a place where I had never been, I had two incompatible sets of directions (both of which turned to be wrong!) and was very much tempted to lose heart. I kept praying, however feebly, and the fog eventually lifted. Soon after, as I approached my hoped-for destination, I spotted in front of me a clear blue sign pointing the way. What a grace! That lesson in trust made the waiting in uncertainty and the driving through fog immensely worthwhile.

OBLATE DAY 2006 – SEPTEMBER 24

Some 85 people, Oblates and family members and other guests, came to the Archabbey for our fifteenth annual Oblate Day. Twelve of them were from the area of St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. In the absence of Archabbot Douglas, who was away, Fr. Prior Earl Henry celebrated Mass at 10:30 A.M. for the group. After Midday Prayer, lunch, and some free time, Oblation ceremonies were held in the basilica at 1:45, during which Fr. Donald received the following:

Oblates: **Ronald (Nicholas) Berardi** of Latrobe, PA
 Ursula Koenig of Smithville, Ont., Canada
Oblate novices: **J. Marsha Boles** of Summerville, SC
 Marcela M. Cordero-Garcia of Baltimore, MD
 James N. Hodge of Harpers Ferry, WV
 K. Wendy Hodge of Harpers Ferry, WV
 Andrea Palombo of Welland, Ont., Canada
 Patricia A. Telesz of Pittsburgh, PA .

Jim and Wendy are husband and wife.

After confessions in the basilica, there was a social in the Parish Assembly Room. Then at 3:45 Fr. Ananias Buccicone, O.S.B., pastor of Queen of Peace Church in Patton, PA, delivered a lively presentation on the spirituality of the monastic habit. While asserting the adage that "the habit does not make the monk," he emphasized that the habit is a service to the monk. As a cloth covering, it reminds him of his baptismal call to die to self, challenges him to live in separation from the secular world, and establishes him as a member of a particular group. Fr. Ananias also described the parts of the habit

along with their function, meaning, and historical origins. Throughout the talk he stressed that the habit is not about a job but about a divine vocation and that it constantly reminds the monk of his commitment to *conversatio morum*. **Anyone who would like a printed copy of Fr. Ananias' talk** (which excludes some of the details) **may contact the Oblate Office.**

Then the Oblates joined the monastic community for Vespers. Supper ended with the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima."

OBLATE DAY 2007

Next year's Oblate Day has been scheduled for September 23, 2007, since facilities will be available on that day.

SECOND FALL OBLATE DAY OF RECOLLECTION AT THE ARCHABBEY - October 14

Some 19 people, mostly Oblates, attended this event, which was held mostly in St. Gregory Chapel. Fr. Wulfstan Clough, O.S.B., delivered three conferences on forgiveness as found in the *Rule*, in the lives of saints, and in the Amish response to the recent tragedy.

During ceremonies at 3:00 P.M. in St. Gregory Chapel, Fr. Donald invested the following as Oblate novices:

Carol Ramela of Acme, PA

Debra Scott of Sebring, OH .

Debbie is the sister of Fr. Mark Floreanini, O.S.B.

RETREAT SCHEDULE FOR 2007

The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2007, have been scheduled. The retreats on Benedictine spirituality are to be held on May 18-20, 2007 and June 3-5, 2007. The first will be directed by Fr. Thomas Acklin, O.S.B., and will include a Mass for priestly ordination. The second will be a silent retreat directed by Fr. Donald.

OBLATE DAY OF RECOLLECTION AT ST. EMMA IN 2007

The annual day of recollection on Benedictine spirituality at St. Emma Retreat House in Greensburg has been scheduled for Sunday, April 22, 2007 (Third Sunday of Easter). Fr. Maurus Mount, O.S.B., will be the retreat master. Those interested may register through the sisters at St. Emma when April draws near. The April meeting of the Latrobe Deanery of Oblates will follow at 6:15 in the evening.

MEETING OF OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS, October 27, 2006

Ten members of the Board assembled for their ninth regular meeting at 6:30 on October 27 in Brownfield 203. Among the main issues discussed were the classes in Benedictine spirituality to begin in January, 2007; a booklet *Rosary for Priests* put together by Oblate Anthony Sunseri; and the call of Oblates to bring spirituality into the world (to be discussed further at future meetings). The next meeting of the Board, weather permitting, will be at 6:30 P.M. on Friday, January 19, 2007, in Brownfield 203.

The booklet *Rosary for Priests* (i.e., with meditations involving prayers for priests) is available on the Oblate website. It can also be printed from Anthony's web site: ajsunseri@verizon.net .

BASILICA GIFT SHOP OFFERS 10% DISCOUNT TO OBLATES

Oblates who purchase items in the Basilica Gift Shop may now receive a discount of 10% on all purchases, according to a new policy set by the store's manager, Br. André Melli, O.S.B.

SEE FLIER FOR MENTORING PROGRAM AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT LATROBE MEETINGS

The recently established Mentoring Program for guiding inquirers and Oblate novices in Benedictine spirituality is in need of volunteers to be mentors. Please see the flier, and fill out the form if you are able to serve as a mentor.

Also, many Oblates of the Latrobe Deanery in Latrobe, Greensburg, Jeannette, and Ligonier are unable to attend monthly meetings. If you are one of these Oblates and would like to stay in touch with the deanery regarding monthly meetings, please fill out the form on the flier regarding phone or e-mail reports.

PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM

Oblate Daniel Marston has been coordinating the Prayer-Partner Program. Any Oblates or Oblate novices who are not participating but who wish to participate may enroll in the program. If you wish to have another Oblate or Oblate novice as a prayer partner, please contact Dr. Daniel Marston at 412-380-2695 or by e-mail at kdm230@sgi.net. You can also send a letter to him at 630 6th St., Pitcairn, PA 15140. Please indicate whether you wish to communicate by letter and/or e-mail with your partner or whether you wish merely to pray for him or her. If you prefer to have a monk as a prayer partner, please contact Fr. Donald.

OBLATE LIBRARY: FEEL FREE TO USE IT WELL!

Members of the Oblate community are always welcome to borrow books from the Oblate Library, either by mail or by personal visits to the Oblate Office (or by attendance at Oblate meetings in Latrobe). Those who would like a list of books in the library are welcome to write to Fr. Donald. If you have any library books that you have had for six months or more, please return them to the Oblate Office as soon as possible.

2006 EDITION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO ME TO BE AN OBLATE

Some 54 Oblates and Oblate novices contributed entries to this recently printed booklet, which was edited by Oblates Anthony and Donna Sunseri and by Fr. Donald. If you would like to have a copy, stop to pick one up at the Oblate Office, or write to Fr. Donald to have one mailed to you.

RECOMMENDED READING (available in the Oblate Library)

- Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O., *Fully Human, Fully Divine: An Interactive Christology* (Liguori, MO: Liguori/ Triumph, 2004)
- Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M., *Fire Within: St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and the Gospel -- on Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989)

BENEDICTINE OBLATE PROGRAM ON RADIO WEDO, 810 AM: This program, hosted by Oblate John James of North Huntingdon, is broadcast from 8:45 A.M. to 9:00 A.M., Monday through Friday.

OBLATE MEETINGS IN LATROBE

Oblates from all locations and their guests are invited to monthly meetings at the Archabbey. The forthcoming meetings will be on Sundays Nov. 19, Dec. 17, Jan. 21, and Feb. 18 at 6:45 P.M. in Room Brownfield 202. Those wishing to come early for Evening Prayer (at 5:00) and supper should phone Fr. Donald (724-805-2291 or, on Sundays, 724-532-6709) in advance. Br. Shawn Matthew Anderson, O.S.B., will be the guest speaker on November 19.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS IN LATROBE AVAILABLE

A number of Oblates in the Latrobe area have found it helpful to have a printed schedule of the dates of forthcoming Oblate meetings. If you would like such a schedule for meetings of the St. Gregory the Great (Latrobe) Deanery, please contact the Oblate Office.

CLASSES IN BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY AT ST. VINCENT

On the same days as Oblate meetings, beginning in January, classes in Benedictine spirituality will be held in Brownfield 202 from 3:00 to 4:30. They will be taught by monks or Oblates. All are welcome to attend. The first class on January 21 will address the topic "Benedictine Spirituality and the Call to Holiness."

CONDOLENCES: Through the trials of sickness and death, Christ brings about the fullness of healing and new life. Let us through prayer share in the sorrows of those members of the Oblate Community who have recently lost loved ones:

- Oblate Nancy Lee Mehalko of St. Marys, PA, whose mother, Edna Brennan, died on July 31 (Edna was also the sister of Fr. Daniel Wolfel, O.S.B.)
- Oblate Nancy Plows of St. Marys, PA, whose father, Nicholas Solic, died on Aug. 18
- Oblate Charlotte Burlas of Latrobe, PA, whose aunt Rita Orlando died in mid-Sept.
- Oblate Barbara Secunda of Butler, PA, whose aunt Pauline died on Oct. 18
- Oblate novices Jack and Mary Ann Cherubini of Greensburg, whose granddaughter Jamie Lynn Greece died on Oct. 30 .

OBLATE DEATHS: With the support of our prayers, may the recently deceased members of our Oblate Community receive the fullness of life in Christ with all the choirs of angels and saints:

- 16 Sep 2006 – Deacon Raymond (Paschal) Check of Virginia Beach, VA (Oblate since Mar., 1996)
- 1 Oct 2006 – Andrej Kodjak of Chincoteague, VA (Oblate novice since Jan., 2006)

NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES

Albion, PA -- Deacon leader Ralph DeCecco wrote on August 1 and October 10. On July 29 the final Oblation of two men was celebrated during Mass at the community chapel, with Msgr. James Peterson as the celebrant. Deacon Ralph preached about the loaves and fishes and compared the men offering themselves in Oblation with the young boy with the few barley loaves and fish; these men were presenting their gifts to the community for Christ to bless and multiply. Those making final Oblation were:

David (Paul) Cornish of Albion, PA

James T. Knepp of Albion, PA .

The meeting scheduled for August had to be canceled. During Mass on September 16, Msgr. Peterson invested

Jeffrey H. McCaugherty of Albion, PA

as an Oblate novice. In his homily Msgr. Peterson mentioned the importance of prayer and work in the service of others.

At the meeting on September 18, led by Oblate novice Kevin Partello, Evening Prayer was followed by the viewing of a D.V.D. from St. Vincent Archabbey, after which there was a discussion based on the *Oblate Formation Booklet* ("Seeking God"), the *Holy Rule* (4:49 & 7:23), Scripture readings, and quotes from some great spiritual leaders. The meeting closed with Compline.

Deacon Ralph, in a recent e-mail message, also asked for prayers for the success of a Metanoia retreat for some 60 men from October 26 to 29.

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

Secretary Gabriele Terrill wrote on October 4. The meeting on September 24 began with Evening Prayer. Then during ceremonies in the church, Fr. John Peck, moderator, received:

Oblates: **Adele J. (Margaret Mary) Grimes** of Annville, PA

Jeanette (Peter) Van Skike of Middletown, PA

Oblate novice: **Michael Kinney** of Mechanicsburg, PA .

During the ceremonies Fr. John read from the Prologue of the *Rule*, and all the Oblates present renewed their promises. When the group returned to the meeting room, there was no time for the usual discussion. The three newly received were congratulated, and refreshments were served before the meeting closed with prayer.

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

Moderator Fr. Paschal Morlino, O.S.B., reported on September 29 and October 30. On April 23 the group had discussed the forthcoming regional meeting of Oblates on October 28 and also Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. On Labor Day the group gathered at the Grotto for Evening Prayer and then enjoyed a picnic. On September 24 the group continued its discussion of *Deus Caritas Est* and pondered the application of its principles to Benedictine spirituality.

The regional meeting sponsored by the St. Walburga Deanery on October 28 attracted some 60 Oblates from the area. Br. Benedict Janecko, O.S.B., gave a workshop on the psalms.

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

Moderator Fr. Vincent Zidek, O.S.B., reported briefly by phone on September 13. The Oblates had met on September 12 and had continued a discussion of the book *Cherish Christ above All*.

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

Lay leader Carl Motter wrote on August 16, September 13, and October 13. The meeting on August 14 took place after the Vigil Mass for the Assumption. The group first discussed the trip to Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, VA, on August 2. It was mentioned how differently the Trappist monks there live from religious who are more active. During their visit a Fr. Robert, O.C.S.O., had explained the Trappist way of life, and the group had joined the monks for Vespers before departing. After this report the group began to discuss the first chapter of *How to Be a Monastic and Not Leave Your Day Job*, by Br. Benet Tvedten, O.S.B.

At the meeting on September 11, the Oblates offered Evening Prayer for the deceased, and then they discussed their feelings about the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001. Then Msgr. Michael Becker, moderator, led a continuing discussion of Benedictine spirituality, with emphasis on Oblates' responsibility to pray the Divine Office and to practice *lectio divina*. Msgr. Becker spoke about his own prayer obligations as a priest and about the way in which he prefers to pray.

At the meeting on October 9, after Evening Prayer, Msgr. Becker continued to lead a study of "What Is Benedictine Spirituality?", with emphasis on the balance between prayer and work. Several people shared about their understanding of balance. Some of the new Oblate novices mentioned how much they had enjoyed attending Oblate Day at the Archabbey on September 24.

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

At the meeting on August 20, the group discussed "Pleasure" from Chapter 28 of *Benedict's Way*. Among other insights offered was the notion that God has given us pleasures in order to help us to live rightly and to be drawn to Him; and so we must avoid becoming attached to them for their own sake. In the Archabbey Basilica before Compline, Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

Kathleen J. Murphy of Coraopolis, PA.

At the meeting on September 17, guest speaker Fr. Demetrius Dumm, O.S.B., offered some insightful reflections related to his fifth and latest book, *So We Do Not Lose Heart: Biblical Wisdom for All Ages*. There was overflowing attendance. Fr. Demetrius remarked that the Bible does not talk much about old people. However, the Bible does say much about the biggest problem of growing old, which is losing control. The only genuine response to loss of control is to start trusting in God. Christ came to earth to show us that God loves us and that we have a "spiritual child" in us that keeps growing younger even as the body ages. We need to nurture that spiritual child, especially by being thankful, by not complaining, and by loving unselfishly. If we learn thus to let go and trust God every day (and thus die to self), then actual death will not be so difficult. (Tapes of Fr. Demetrius' talk may be available, depending on the quality of the taping.) After the presentation Br. André, manager of the Basilica Gift Shop, offered copies of Fr. Demetrius' books for purchase at discounted prices.

At the meeting on October 15, the group discussed "Marking Time" from Chapter 29 of *Benedict's Way*. Attendees reflected on how praying the Liturgy of the Hours can help the Christian to walk in the presence of God all day long and to keep the light of Christ alive in their hearts, as opposed to the darkness of earthly attachments.

Niagara Area, Ontario, Canada -- meetings on 4th Friday of each month, St. Patrick's Church, St. Catharines, Ont.

Lay leader Brian Chisholm phoned on August 29 and November 3. At the meeting on August 25, St. Henry and St. Gertrude were proposed as possible patrons for the deanery. At the meeting on October 27, the group of 10 or 12 who attended have an enthusiastic discussion, led by Fr. Charles Gagné, moderator, about the Prologue of the *Rule* and the first of 11 lessons for Oblate formation. An Advent day of recollection was planned for December 2.

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

Lay leader Bill O'Neil wrote on August 25. At the meeting on August 16, the group continued to discuss the book *Toward God* after the praying of Vespers. It was clarified that the patron of the deanery chosen a few months before was St. Peter, and not Our Lady, Queen of Peace, as earlier reported.

St. Marys, PA (St. Maurus Deanery) -- meetings on Thurs. before 1st Fri. of month, 7:00 P.M., St. Mary's Annex

Secretary Peggi Gabler wrote on September 18. The meeting on September 7, held at St. Mary's Parish Annex (the new location for meetings), began with the "Oblates' prayer." The group regretted no longer having a Benedictine moderator. They discussed plans for some of the deanery to attend Oblate Day at the Archabbey and talked about the Mentoring Program as described in the August newsletter. Eileen Brennen read *RB Prol:45-50*, and the group prayed Evening Prayer and Compline. The next meeting was scheduled for October 5.

Savannah, GA

Moderator Fr. Jude Brady wrote on August 4 and 14; September 16 and 25; and October 2, 11, and 16. The Oblate Advisory Council met on August 3 during supper after Vespers with the monastic community. The council made plans to have a series of monthly guest speakers spread over the 2006-07 school year. Each speaker was to present a reflection as a "second reading" during a Vespers service at 4:00 on a Sunday. Fr. Francis Ehnat, O.S.B., assisted with the meeting.

The council met again on September 15 after Vespers with Fr. Jude and Br. Francis. Final plans were made for an evening of recollection on September 24. The group decided to have a business card printed and also a holy card for Oblates to use when they visit the sick.

The first of the "Vespers/reflection prayer services" for the Oblate community took place on September 24. Sr. Pauline O'Brien, O.S.F., reflected on "The Charism of Hospitality." Then the group gathered for a covered-dish supper. The 35-or-so people who attended responded enthusiastically. Sr. Pauline is the Director of the Social Apostolate for the Diocese of Savannah.

On October 10 three members of the Advisory Council met with Fr. Jude and Br. Francis to make final plans for the event on October 15, which involved a talk entitled "The History of Monasticism," given by Rev. Douglas Clark, a diocesan priest, a theologian, and the editor of *The Southern Cross*. Some 30 people attended, and once again a covered-dish dinner in the school cafeteria followed the Vespers service.

On November 5 Abbot Placid Solari, O.S.B., of Belmont Abbey in North Carolina was to speak on "The Life and Miracles of St. Benedict."

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

Lay leader Laura Schneider wrote on September 17 and October 18. The meeting on September 11, attended by eight Oblates, five guests, and moderator Fr. Boniface, began with an opening prayer and the Divine Office. At Fr. Boniface's suggestion, those attending introduced themselves and spoke of their interest in Benedictine spirituality. Then the group began a series of discussions based on the book *Strangers to the City*, by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. The question for the day was, "Why are you here?" It was mentioned that several members of the deanery had moved out of the area or

were about to move.

The meeting on October 19, attended by eight Oblates and six guests, involved a discussion of Chapters 3 and 4 ("Leisure" and "Reading") from *Strangers to the City*. One main conclusion from the exchange was that to read well one must be at leisure.

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

Lay leader Delina Pauls wrote on September 18 and October 7. The meeting on August 2 was attended by only four Oblates. Fr. Cristiano, moderator, gave an excellent talk about Judaism, Islam, and the differences between them.

Ten Oblates and an inquirer attended the meeting on September 6. Fr. Cristiano spoke on contemplative prayer and mysticism, with emphasis on the writings of St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. John of the Cross.

At the meeting on October 4, attended by 13 Oblates and an inquirer, Fr. Cristiano continued to offer reflections on prayer. Urging Oblates to engage in *lectio divina* and to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, he stated that conversational prayer can lead to meditation, which in turn can lead to contemplation. Then inquirer Ed Gallop was invited to speak about Buddhism from his own personal experience.

Williamsport, PA -- meetings on last Sunday of each month, 1 P.M., St. Boniface Church (or rectory) meeting room

Lay leader Ted Richardson wrote in September. The first meeting of the 2006-07 season took place on September 24. The group discussed "Simple Authenticity," from Chapter 22 of *Benedict's Way*.

On October 8 Fr. Donald visited the deanery. After Evening Prayer he received the following at St. Boniface Church:

Oblate: **Michael J. (Ambrose) Sobjak** of Muncy, PA

Oblate novices: **Constance A. Muir** of Sugarloaf, PA

Frank J. Stoshack of Shamokin, PA .

After the ceremonies Fr. Donald gave a presentation about the call of Oblates to holiness, especially through *lectio divina* and the practice of obedience. The group then voted to change the time for regular meetings from 3 P.M. to 1 P.M.

On the evening of October 28 in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald invested

Sharon M. DeAngelo of Hazleton, PA,

as an Oblate. Sharon and her friend Constance Muir were on an overnight visit to the Archabbey.

Various Locations

On August 7 in St. Gregory Chapel at the Archabbey,

Barbara (Lioba) Secunda of Butler, PA,

made her final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Donald. Also present were her daughter Susan from Texas, Susan's five daughters, Oblate Barbara Kristufek, Fr. Brian Boosel, and Fr. Roland Ripoli.

On September 6 in St. Gregory Chapel at the Archabbey,

Donald G. Ballish of Round Rock, TX,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Thomas More Sikora, O.S.B.

On October 7 in the Archabbey Basilica,

Michael M. (Jerome) LoPiccolo of Cuyahoga Falls, OH,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Fr. Donald. Also present were Mike's wife Genny, his son Michael, and his daughter-in-law Cheryl.

NEW AND DEVELOPING DEANERIES

Ann Arbor, MI

Lay leader James Durka wrote on September 5 and 10 and on October 18. Jim, two people who were later invested in August, and several other interested people began to meet monthly beginning in July on Saturday mornings at Old St. Patrick Church in Ann Arbor, MI. Rev. Gerald Gawronski, pastor, has agreed to assist the group.

Six people attended the second meeting on August 19 in addition to Fr. Gerald. Before the meeting he invested as Oblate novices:

Robert Christian of Northville, MI

Frances Vitale of Pinckney, MI .

Jim suggested that the new Oblate novices become familiar with the *Rule*, especially the Prologue. Then there was a discussion about the promises made by Oblates and the importance of praying the Divine Office and doing *lectio divina*. The group also pondered the message of Christ regarding His narrow path, that of obedience and humility, versus the wide path of the world. Also, Fr. Gerald suggested that the deanery might offer the Office of Readings between Masses on Sundays; Jim suggested praying Evening Prayer in the church on at least one weekday evening.

On September 9 Fr. Gerald invested as an Oblate novice

Rose Marie Smillie of South Lyon, MI .

The deanery members have agreed to meet every Friday for Evening Prayer followed by the rosary. On first Fridays the

group is responsible for the 6:00 P.M. hour of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. During late September or early October members of the group visited St. Benedict Monastery in Oxford, MI, which belongs to the Sylvestrine Benedictine Congregation. Fr. John of that monastery is trying to start an Oblate program.

On October 7 Fr. Gerald invested as an Oblate novice

Daniel Krebs of Whitmore Lake, MI.

On October 22 at Holy Trinity Church in Bay City, MI, the pastor, Rev. Robert S. Gohm, invested

Raymond B. Rasmer of Bay City, MI,

as an Oblate novice.

Asheboro, NC

Oblate Doris Blase of Asheboro has been encouraging others in her area to consider the Oblate Program of St. Vincent Archabbey, and several people have completed applications. Rev. Francis Cancro of St. Joseph Parish in Asheboro has agreed to assist the group.

Butler, PA

A group of 17 people, including several Oblates, gathered at St. Fidelis Church on October 17. Oblate Ethel Galli has been organizing the meetings, and Fr. Brian Boosel, O.S.B., who comes from Butler, has agreed to serve as moderator of the group.

Minersville, PA (St. Malachy Deanery)

Lay leader Paul Mangiardi reported on August 3, 10, and 14; September 6, 11, 24, and 27; and October 12 and 25. The first meeting of the deanery was held on August 2, with four new Oblate novices and four guests. St. Malachy was chosen as the patron of the deanery, and the deanery motto was chosen to be "Second to none, love for Jesus." After opening prayers the group read Chapters 1 to 4 of the *Rule* and had some discussion. Each person agreed to pray for two intentions among those sent to the group. The meeting ended with a closing prayer and a Litany of St. Benedict. The deanery was hoping to meet weekly.

At the meeting on August 9, the group read and discussed "Who is called to be an Oblate?" (from the *Oblate Formation Booklet*) and then *RB* 5, 6, 7, and 8. The relevance of Chapter 7 on humility was emphasized.

In sum, the group has been meeting every Wednesday at 6 P.M. They have been reading from the formation booklet and a few chapters of the *Rule* and discussing the significance of the rosary, St. Benedict's opposition to paganism, the 15 prayers of St. Bridget, and the significance of helping fellow Christians.

On September 8 each Oblate novice and candidate offered a rosary for the sick monks of the Archabbey.

During Mass on September 11, Rev. Robert J. Potts invested the following as Oblate novices:

James Baez of Minersville

Anthony DiMeo of Minersville

Wesley M. Hiles of Minersville

Thomas Pugliese of Minersville .

The meeting on September 20, attended by seven members, discussed pages 41-51 of the formation booklet and Chapters 32 and 33 of the *Rule*. The members were encouraged to seek out others who would be ready to live out Benedictine values in their daily lives.

On September 27 the group met for prayer for fellow Oblates, a discussion about a portion of the formation booklet, and the welcoming of a new applicant. Fr. Potts also offered Mass at the local chapel.

As of October 12, the deanery began to meet biweekly for 1½ hours on Wednesdays.

At the meeting on October 25, the group read from *RB* 36-40 and from the diary of St. Faustina, on the vow and virtue of obedience. The attendees also prayed for the Oblates and monks in special need. They decided also that the deanery's Oblate novices would serve as waiters and cleaners at a special Catholic meal to be held on December 7.

The deanery is also sponsoring a sale of T-shirts and sweatshirts with the motto "Second to None, Love for Jesus." They may be purchased by phone order on weekdays at 570-322-0139. Any purchases by churches will result in 25% being returned to the churches, and any purchases by Oblates will result in 25% being returned to the "Oblate foundation.)

Scranton, PA

Moderator Fr. John Kita wrote on August 21. A group of people have been meeting monthly with Fr. Kita at Immaculate Conception Church to study the *Rule* and Benedictine values. They have been using the 10 standard lessons by Sr. Dolores Dowling, O.S.B. They also have formed a lending library and have been sharing books on spirituality with one another.

On August 20 Fr. Kita invested the following as Oblate novices in Immaculate Conception Church:

Regina Ardizoni of Dunmore, PA

Ann Marie Claus of Scranton, PA

Gretchen Meyers of Scranton, PA .

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Oblate John Kelly, who has been working to organize regular meetings, phoned on September 19 and 20. The first official meeting of the group was held on September 18, with four people attending. They prayed Evening Prayer and got to know one another. They decided to use the book *Preferring Christ* for their monthly meetings, which will be on the third Monday of each month. They also mentioned people in need of prayers.

SICK & INFIRM MONKS

The following monks of the Archabbey have been hospitalized or otherwise especially ill during the past three months and could use our prayers: Fr. Brinstan Takach, Fr. Benjamin Walker, Fr. Jerome Purta (recovering well), Br. Nicholas Nicol, Fr. Joseph Bronder.

OVERDUE OR MISSING LIBRARY BOOKS: PLEASE RESPOND!

During the past year a number of books from the Oblate Library have been found to be missing, presumably because people withdrew them without signing them out. Below is a list of such books, as well as others that have been lost by borrowers. Please check your bookshelves to see if you have any of the missing books. Also, if anyone would like to donate a copy of any of the lost books, such a donation would be welcome.

Missing books

- Roberta C. Bondi, *To Pray and to Love*
- Rev. William Burk, *Protect Us from All Anxiety: Meditations for the Depressed*
- André Gozier, O.S.B., *Fifteen Days of Prayer with Saint Benedict*
- Richard J. Hauser, S.J., *Finding God in Troubled Times*
- Guy-Marie Oury, O.S.B., *A Monastic Pilgrimage: Following the Footsteps of St. Benedict*
- Abbot David Parry, O.S.B., *Household of God*
- Basil M. Pennington, O.C.S.O., *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice ...*
- Pseudo Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*
- Marsha Sinetar, *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics*

Lost books

- Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works*
- Michael Scanlon, O.F.M., *Let the Fire Fall*

Volunteers Needed for Mentoring Program

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

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

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

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

e-mail address _____

Application for receiving information about St. Gregory the Great (Latrobe) Deanery Meetings

____ As a resident of the Latrobe/ Greensburg/ Jeannette/ Ligonier area who is not generally able to attend monthly meetings, I would like to be contacted after monthly meetings:

____ by phone

____ by e-mail

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ e-mail address _____

Application for transmitting information about St. Gregory the Great (Latrobe) Deanery Meetings

____ As a resident of the Latrobe/ Greensburg/ Jeannette/ Ligonier area who is generally able to attend monthly meetings, I would like to help to contact others after monthly meetings:

____ by phone

____ by e-mail

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ e-mail address _____