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THE SAINT VINCENT OBLATE NEWS

Saint Vincent Archabbey

300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650-2690



November, 2016 – January, 2017

724-805-2291

Volume 69, Number 4

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STRIVING TO LIVE IN GOD'S PRESENCE: CONSIDERING "HOW WE OUGHT TO BEHAVE" (RB 19:6)

Dear Oblates, Oblate novices, and Friends,

God's grace: always before us and after us

The collect (opening prayer) for Mass for the 28th Week of Ordinary Time reads, "May Your grace, O Lord, we pray, at all times go before us and follow after and make us always determined to carry out good works." (The words *at all times* and *always* are especially important!) It is easy to ignore such prayers at Mass; they pass by quickly and are not always pronounced distinctly by the celebrant. Furthermore, we ourselves are often not focused enough for the prayers to penetrate our minds. These prayers, however, have profound lessons for us; in fact, they are meant to teach us to live as we pray. In any case, of course, God's grace is always before us and after us, but we are not always aware of it; so the prayer can help us to welcome the grace and respond to it. What a blessing it is to know that God's grace, His very life, surrounds us always and beckons us to draw near to Him! What a blessing it is that God ever seeks to awaken us to that grace, drowsy though we often may be! Psalm 139 beautifully expounds on this pervasive presence: "O where can I go from Your spirit, or where can I flee from Your face? If I climb the heavens, You are there, If I lie in the grave, you are there" (Ps 139: 7-8). It seems almost too good to be true that God's tenderly caring presence surrounds us and that, along with His presence, He offers us a multitude of benefits. If only we would be ready for them!

God's presence sometimes manifest

Sometimes it is relatively easy to recognize God's presence and activity, at least in retrospect. Certain events would never go so well if it were not for His guidance. In September I underwent eye surgery in Mercy Hospital, about an hour away from home. I had to be at the hospital by 5:30 A.M.; so my driver and I decided to set out at 4:00 A.M. It was a true grace that I awoke particularly early that morning (I do not use an alarm) and was able to pray Vigils and Lauds before we embarked on the trip. It was a grace, too, that we found the right hospital, especially since the doctor's office had mailed me directions to a different hospital! Other genuine graces were evident in my being called in on time (7:30 A.M.) from the waiting room, in my being given warm blankets (the room for the surgery was cold!), in my receiving thoughtful explanations from the staff, in my feeling no pain, and in the surgery's being successful. On top of it all, Br. Hugh and I arrived back at the Archabbey in time for Midday Prayer at 11:30. The summation of the details of the whole process could hardly leave any doubt that the Holy Spirit was guiding

us and that God was present to help us to respond with praise and thanksgiving.

God's presence in darker times

However, there are times when God seems distant or perhaps His presence is perceived as oppressive. When I return to my office after a few hours' absence and find ten messages on my phone and see the huge pile of unopened mail on my desk, I am tempted to wonder why God does not give me some relief (or a few more hours) or heal my tendency to become anxious. When my goals for the day are shredded to pieces by unexpected interruptions, I am tempted to ask God why He leaves me in such disarray. When we have chronic health problems that show no signs of improvement, we may be tempted to worry about God's apparent indifference. When we cannot resolve financial difficulties, we may tend to doubt God's generous love. When our prayer feels dry and unfruitful for days or even for years, then we may feel, as Psalm 88 indicates, that "my one companion is darkness" (Ps 88:19). In reality, Psalm 88 provides a beautiful meditation for people who are not experiencing God's presence but who wish to hang on to Him and not let go. By the very fact that the psalmist is praying to God throughout the psalm, it is clear that he never gives up hope. He begins, "Lord my God, I call for help by day; I cry at night before You" (verse 2); he prays all day and all night despite the darkness. He continues by questioning God and reminding Him that he would like to proclaim His wonders but is hampered by the forces of death: "Will You work Your wonders for the dead? Will the shades stand and praise You? Will Your love be told in the grave or Your faithfulness among the dead?" (verses 11-12). He is frustrated that God seems to reject him and hide His face (verse 15) and that He seems even to "sweep down upon me" like an enemy (verse 17). In all this there is the hidden grace that keeps the psalmist communicating His misery to God and apparently hoping that God will ultimately intervene, rescue him, and embrace him anew in His way and His time.

Insights from the Holy Rule

One might say that it is a specialty of Benedictines to seek God's presence always and everywhere. Other spiritualities may emphasize certain ministries or devotions, but the way of St. Benedict is based on being attentive to Christ in every situation and responding to His presence ever more faithfully. The whole *Rule* challenges us to "believe that the divine presence is everywhere" (19:1), but we are to be especially attentive to His presence "when we celebrate the divine office" (19:5). Remembering that we are being watched -

lovingly - by God, we must “consider ... how we ought to behave in the presence of God and His angels” (19:6). The living, active presence of God is to affect our thoughts, our words, and our behavior. The whole monastery is established as “a school for the Lord’s service” (Prol: 45). The abbot, in particular, is to be mindful of God’s presence and of His call to serve in the name of Christ; he “must always remember what he is and remember what he is called [“abba,” father, representative of Christ], aware that more will be expected of a man to whom more has been entrusted” (RB 2:30; cf. Lk 12:48). The cellarer and the monks whom he serves are to remember that the monastery is “the house of God,” in which no one should be deliberately “disquieted or distressed” (31:19). Nurturing a peaceful atmosphere in the community contributes to each individual’s peace of mind and heart and thus also to his capacity to be aware of God’s presence. Chapter 22, on the “the sleeping arrangements of the monks,” also has some provisions regarding awareness of God’s presence. St. Benedict prescribes that “a lamp must be kept burning in the room [where the monks slept] until morning” (22:4). Although the lamp may very well have had a practical purpose, it may also symbolize the challenge to live in the light of Christ even during the night, even when we are asleep. This notion is reinforced by the provision that the monks “always be ready to arise without delay when the signal is given” (22:6) and then “hasten to arrive at the Work of God” (22:6). Since Christ is most especially present at the Divine Office (Work of God), we might see rising in the morning as a wonderful opportunity to encounter Christ anew. We, the Church, His bride, hasten to meet Christ the Bridegroom where He is most likely to be present. Surely, then, whatever our physical and emotional disposition might be, we ought to get up with much joy and good zeal. A wedding feast awaits us!

God’s presence calling us to obedience

Furthermore, living in God’s presence cannot be separated from the call to obedience. God is present to us not so that we might merely admire Him from afar in a static way, but so that He might transform us in His love and draw us into communion with Himself. Encountering God requires of us that we respond in faith and that we eagerly return His love. We are called each day to enter into “the battle of holy obedience” (Prol: 40) and to “run and do now what will profit us forever” (Prol: 44). The strictness of Christian life and of life according to the *Rule* is meant to help us “progress in this way of life and in faith” (Prol: 49). Since the abbot is to represent Christ in the monastery, he has an obligation to teach and command only in harmony with the Lord’s instructions, and the monks are obligated to receive his commands “like the leaven of divine justice” (RB 2:5) which permeates their minds. Encountering Christ always and everywhere requires that the disciple always be ready to obey and, if necessary, to change his course of action. Even when our bodies are tired and our minds feel burned-out, we must, with the help of God’s grace and of our fellow Christians, rise to the occasion of welcoming

Our Lord’s loving command. Just as the monks “quietly encourage each other” (22:8) to arrive at the Work of God on time (especially because some tend to be sleepy), so we must strive as family and community to assist one another to be where we are called to be, to be fully present to what we are doing, and to abide intentionally in the presence of God.

Peace as the disposition for living in God’s presence

The communal dimension of living in God’s presence can be summarized by the word “peace.” When we have a peaceful atmosphere in the house, the members of the household will have more time and energy to be aware of God’s graces. St. Benedict urges his monks, “Let peace be your quest and aim” (Ps 34:15; RB Prol: 17). Disputes are to be settled quickly; “if you have a dispute with someone,” St. Benedict says, “make peace with him before the sun goes down” (RB 4:73). Part of this work of establishing peace is to make sure that goods are distributed according to need. When goods are thus given out and the monks strive to avoid a sense of self-importance (because they receive more) and a sense of distress (because they need less and receive less), then it is likely that “all the members will be at peace” (RB 34:6). Having an atmosphere of peace does not, of course, mean that things never go wrong. However, if we learn to bear our crosses cheerfully, if we avoid taking out our miseries on others, and if we refrain from murmuring, then we are doing our part to establish the peace that will help others to recognize God’s presence; and we ourselves will have greater peace in our own hearts.

Practical Responses for Oblates

What are some practical measures that may help to establish the individual and communal peace that contributes to living constantly in God’s presence? For one thing, we must begin where we are; most of us, I am guessing, probably can admit that we do a rather poor job of living intentionally in God’s presence for more than a few fleeting moments each day. If we are honest, poor, and humble about the matter, God will provide us with many graces to do better. We might begin with the Divine Office (and, of course, if we are Catholic, with the Mass, especially if we attend daily Mass). In reflecting on RB 19, we might ask ourselves such questions as: “How can we be more attentive at public worship?” and “How ought [we] to behave in the presence of God and His angels” (RB 19:2)? Whatever weariness or distractions may beset us, we can strive to be as attentive as possible. We can open ourselves to God’s presence with our voices by the care and good zeal with which we recite or sing. (We should be especially conscious of others in communal worship and strive relentlessly to be with the others who are worshipping. Let us not be individualists who stick out!) We might need to keep pulling our minds away from distractions so that they might be “in harmony with our voices” (19:7). Praying the Mass and the Divine Office well is a healthy practice for living in the divine presence always and everywhere. It is a goal to be achieved not without much struggle!

One can summarize the ultimate aim of Christian life

as “[praying] always without growing weary” (Lk 18:10). Of course, we cannot say prayers always lest we never get anything else done! Still, we can aim to “pray always” by living in a Christ-centered way based on gratitude for what He has done for us in His Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Almost every preface of the Mass includes the phrase, “It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Father most holy.” This exhortation, occurring shortly before the consecration of bread and wine to become Our Lord’s Body and Blood, implies that we should relentlessly seek to live in thanks and praise and in accord with God’s plan for us and not by self-centered impulses. When we are working, we can focus wholeheartedly on what we are doing and do it for God’s glory. (cf. *RB* 57:9.) When we are speaking with others, we can be especially attentive to what they say; we encounter Christ when we listen well and seek not to dominate conversations. When we awaken in the morning, we can hasten to pray as soon as possible and resolve to keep with us throughout the day a word or phrase that will help to unite us with God. When we go to bed, we can bring with us a brief phrase from Scripture or a short prayer or the name of Jesus as we sink into our pillow; thus we can strive to live in God’s presence even during our sleep. Little by little, we should and can learn to keep ourselves alert to God’s presence and available to receive His wonderful surprises, whether pleasant or unpleasant. God very much desires our response of love to His loving initiatives so that He may more easily draw us closer to Himself.

Conclusion: life in God’s presence as the way to heaven

The responsory for the First Vespers of All Saints Day includes the phrase, “The just shall rejoice in the presence of the Lord.” It is indeed our true joy to live in

God’s presence, for that is what we shall be doing in eternity. Perhaps the word “presence” is not dynamic enough to express the wonderful and exciting nature of living in communion with God for eternity. It is the same when we pray that the souls of our departed ones “rest in peace.” The word “rest” may not seem very enticing. As I grow older, however, and feel more than ever the burdens of not being able to cope with my work and other expectations, I more and more long for “rest” from all the turmoil of this world - and of my own mind. Just as being securely and eternally in God’s presence will be far more delightful and appealing (with our purified senses) than anything we can imagine on this earth, so will the eternal “rest” involve not only freedom from earthly turmoil but also the fullness of joy that is implied by Sabbath rest. It will be our joy to worship God eternally with all the angels and saints. It will be our joy to gaze at the throne of the Lamb with shouts of thanks and praise. It will be our joy endlessly to abide in Christ’s peace and to remain ever assured of His victory as we proclaim Him worthy “to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing” (Rev 5:12). Amazingly, in His love for us He welcomes us to share in these infinite riches. Let us, then, practice now for this eternal “rest” by striving with all our might to acknowledge His grace-filled presence, going before us and following after us even amid our very ordinary - and sometimes traumatic - lives on earth.

In the peace of Christ and St. Benedict,

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

A MESSAGE FROM ARCHABBOT DOUGLAS

November, 2016

Dear Oblates and Friends of Saint Vincent,

In November of 2016, the Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis will conclude a year-long celebration of the transformative power of God’s compassion and mercy in our lives. Pope Francis has been quick to remind us on numerous occasions that God’s love is not some abstract, theological concept. The love of God has a face and is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. The Year of Mercy invites us to live with daily awareness of the presence of God’s compassion and mercy in our lives.

As we conclude this Jubilee Year of Mercy and begin to celebrate the Advent Season, let us ask the Lord to prepare our hearts to receive the grace of His ever abiding presence in the Gift of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

May God’s blessings be with you!

Sincerely in Christ,

+Archabbot Douglas R. Nowicki, O.S.B...

*P.S.: Fr. Donald and Br. Joachim join Archabbot Douglas and the monastic community in wishing all Oblates, Oblate novices, and other readers of this newsletter a joyful Advent and a grace-filled Christmas Season.

OBLATE DAY: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2016

Some 38 people, Oblates and family members and other guests, came to the Archabbey for our 29th annual Oblate Day. Fr. Prior Earl Henry celebrated Mass at 10:30 A.M. for the group in Mary, Mother of Wisdom Chapel. 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 as full Oblates:

: **Theresa K. Gerson** of Mount Pleasant, PA
Beth (Rita) Grabiak of Latrobe, PA.

After confessions in the basilica, there was a social in the Parish Assembly Room, during which Fr. Cyprian and Fr. Donald played two sonatas by Benedetto Marcello for piano and viola.

Then at 3:45 Fr. Nathan Munsch, O.S.B., instructor in theology at St. Vincent College and sacramental minister for two parishes, gave a presentation about *conversatio morum* (one of the Benedictine vows), with an analysis of how the word *conversatio* has been used in Scripture, in Christian tradition, in the *Rule*, and in the history of monasticism. The word comes from the root verb *versare*, which means turning over frequently but which historically came to mean remaining in one place with someone or some people; hence *conversatio* came to mean a frequent abiding in a place or in a manner of life. In monastic circles, *conversatio morum* came to mean commitment to a monastic lifestyle. However, in the course of history the word seemed too vague to monastic authors, and texts of the *Rule* substituted the word *conversio* for *conversatio*; the latter simply meant leaving behind an old way of the life in the world and converting to a new way of life in the monastery. Today we have recovered the true meaning of the word *conversatio*. The term, for Oblates, is descriptive rather than prescriptive; that is, each Oblate must formulate for himself or herself a "job description" based on monastic values. For monks the term is translated in many ways today: "fidelity to the monastic way of life" or "the discipline of monastic life," etc. It should include the elements obedience to the abbot, stability in community, common prayers and meals, property held in common, private prayers (especially *lectio divina*), restraint of speech, hospitality, and, most of all, the following of Christ. **(Fr. Nathan's talk was recorded, and C.D.'s and D.V.D.'s are available at the St. Vincent College Book Store and at Oblate meetings in Latrobe.)**

Then the Oblates joined the monastic community for Vespers. The day's events ended with supper and the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima." Two attendees were overnight guests.

ELEVENTH FALL OBLATE DAY OF RECOLLECTION AT THE ARCHABBEY - Saturday, October 15, 2016

Some 46 people, mostly Oblates, attended this annual event, with conferences in St. Gregory Chapel. Fr. Wulfstan Clough., the retreat master, delivered conferences about prayer, obedience, listening, surrender to God's will, and the life of St. Teresa of Avila (especially regarding her trials and her obedient submission to God's will), whose feast it was that day.

During ceremonies at 1:45 P.M. in St. Gregory Chapel, Fr. Donald received the following:

Oblate: **Joan (Scholastica) Frye** of Erie, PA
Oblate novice: **Bradley Alexander Noble** of St. Catharines, Ont., Canada.

Bradley belongs to the Niagara Area Deanery, from which there were six people attending the day of recollection. Among the other long-distance attendees were Oblates David & Patricia Hicks of Decatur, GA.

Many of the retreatants joined the monastic community for Vespers, and then some stayed for supper, which ended with the singing of the Benedictine "Ultima."

OBLATE DAY AND DAY OF RECOLLECTION FOR 2017

Oblate Day for 2017 has been scheduled for Sunday, September 24, 2017, since facilities will be available on that day. The October day of recollection for 2017 has been scheduled for Saturday, October 14, 2017.

RETREAT SCHEDULE FOR 2017

The retreats at St. Vincent for summer, 2017, have been scheduled. There will be two retreats on Benedictine spirituality; they will be held on May 19-21, 2017 and June 2-4, 2017. **All Oblates and Oblate novices are urged to consider making a summer retreat at the Archabbey.**

N.A.A.B.O.D. CONFERENCE AT ST. SCHOLASTICA MONASTERY IN DULUTH, JULY 14-19, 2017

In the last newsletter it was announced that the 2017 meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors would take place at St. Scholastica Monastery in Duluth, Minnesota; the place was correct, but the dates were not correct. The conference will be held from Friday, July 14, until Wednesday, July 19. The theme of the conference will be "Benedictine Values & Practices: Tools for Living, Tools for Life." Two Oblates affiliated with St. Vincent Archabbey are welcome to attend. Those who attend should be active in their deaneries and have the capacity to share with our Oblate community whatever they gain from the conference. Subsidies from the Oblate Office are available to help with travel expenses. We already have two tentative volunteers, but if you are interested in representing the Archabbey at the N.A.A.B.O.D. meeting, please contact the Oblate Office.

BASILICA GIFT SHOP OFFERS 10% DISCOUNT TO OBLATES

Oblates and Oblate novices who purchase items in the Basilica Gift Shop may receive a discount of 10% on all purchases.

MEETINGS OF OBLATE BOARD OF ADVISORS, August 5 and October 21, 2016

Members of the Board assembled for their 59th and 60th regular meetings at 6:30 P.M. on August 5 and October 21 in Brownfield 203. The meeting on August 5, attended by seven members, involved the scheduling of the 2017 Assembly of Deanery Representatives, the tentative new brochure for guests, the need to have a follow-up to the deanery survey, and the progress of the new Oblate-novice formation program, which so far has had very positive feedback.

The meeting on October 21 was attended by seven members. The group considered a number of issues: continuing work on the new formation program for Oblate novices, completion of work on a brochure for first-time guests, a proposed revision of the prayer-partner program, results of the survey of deaneries, and happenings in the various deaneries and other Oblate groups. The next meeting, barring inclement weather, has been scheduled for January 13, 2017, in Brownfield 202.

FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS OF OBLATES IN ROME, NOVEMBER 4-10, 2017

Another World Congress of Oblates in Rome is being planned for November 4-10, 2017. Several Oblates have expressed interest in attending. The details are still forthcoming. If you are an Oblate who has been active in the Oblate Program and/or in your local deanery and would like to consider attending, contact the Oblate Office. Subsidies will be available to help to cover expenses.

MENTORS NEEDED!

A number of people who are Oblate novices or inquirers have requested Oblate mentors. There are still a number of people, many of them prisoners, who have requested mentors but who have not been matched. If you are a full Oblate and think that you could serve as a mentor for someone new to the program, please contact the Oblate Office. There is a set of guidelines available for all mentors and a special brochure for mentors of prisoners.

BISHOP EDWARD MALESIC TO SPEAK TO OBLATES IN LATROBE ON NOVEMBER 20 - last call to register

Bishop Malesic of Greensburg has kindly agreed to address the Oblates and others who attend the evening meeting in Latrobe on Sunday, November 20. Also, on that day, which is the Solemnity of Christ the King, there will be exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the Archabbey Basilica from 12:30 until Vespers, which begins at 5:00 and which will end with Benediction. Because of the possibly larger number of attendees, supper will be in the Placid B Dining Room about 6:00, and those planning to attend should complete the enclosed registration form in advance. Bishop Malesic will join us for supper and then give his presentation at 7:00 in the Foundations Room (second floor of Placid Hall). See the attached flier for registration.

SAINT BENEDICT EDUCATION FOUNDATION: LOTTERY TICKETS AVAILABLE

Fr. Benoit Alloggia, O.S.B., president of the foundation, has mentioned that Oblates may wish to participate in the raising of money for its mission to assist Benedictine monks and nuns studying at Sant' Anselmo, the international Benedictine university in Rome. The funds raised are directed to students from Benedictine communities that are experiencing financial hardship and to the physical upkeep of Sant'Anselmo. Those who are interested may contact Fr. Benoit at 724-805-2607 or benoitalloggia@yahoo.com, or you may consult the foundation's website: www.stbenedictfoundation.org . Please make checks payable to St. Vincent Archabbey.

SOME ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM THE OBLATE OFFICE

- (1) pamphlet "God's Love for You" with message of evangelization – free
- (2) booklet *St. Benedict for Busy Parents* – for a donation
- (3) booklet of Oblates' reflections on verses of the *Rule* – free or with donation for postage
- (4) booklet of deanery histories – free or with donation for postage
- (5) book *Lessons from St. Benedict* - \$12.00 each, only by personal pick-up; also, *The Rule in Bits and Pieces* - \$16.00, only by personal pick-up (Otherwise order from Sacred Winds Press at www.sacredwindspress.com .)

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 (this often happens), please return them to the Oblate Office as soon as possible.

REVISED PRAYER-PARTNER PROGRAM

Beginning January 1, 2017, the Prayer-Partner Program will involve a revised procedure. Upon making final Oblation, each new Oblate will be assigned to pray for a monk who has agreed to participate in the program. The monk will also be encouraged to pray for the Oblate. There is no contact by mail, e-mail, or phone unless both parties request it. After the program has been in effect for a while, those who have already been full Oblates may also request a monk as a prayer-partner. **Prayer-partners matched under the previous system will continue as long as both parties agree to the continuation.**

OBLATE GROUP IN PHILADELPHIA, PA – meetings at Saint Mary's (Episcopalian) Church, Philadelphia

Fr. Vincent de Paul Crosby, O.S.B., reported on August 19 and October 20. The meeting on August 6 began with Morning Prayer according to the Roman Rite. The topic for discussion was the monastic instinct known as "fuga mundi" (flight from the world) and its relationship with the monastic virtue of hospitality. After some general remarks by Fr. Vincent de Paul, the group participated in some fruitful sharing of thoughts about relating the welcoming of visitors to the need for silence and solitude. At the close of the meeting Fr. Vincent de Paul invested as an Oblate novice

Sandra K. Davis of Philadelphia, PA.

Then the group enjoyed a lunch prepared by hosts Sharon Fischer and her daughter JoAnn.

The meeting on October 1 began with Morning Prayer according to the Roman Rite. The topic for discussion was "active listening, or listening with the ear of the heart." After Fr. Vincent de Paul made some general remarks, the group shared thoughts about the difference between hearing and listening. Listening with the ear of the heart, they concluded, is the proper disposition for embracing one's vocation. At the close of the meeting Fr. Vincent de Paul led Oblation ceremonies, during which he received:

Oblate: **Theresa M. (Anselm) George** of Philadelphia, PA

Oblate novice: **Elizabeth B. Lowther** of Philadelphia, PA.

There were also three new inquirers present. The celebration continued over the sharing of lunch.

The next meeting was scheduled for December 3, 2016, at 10:00 A.M. at Saint Mary's (Episcopalian) Church at 630 E. Cathedral Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19128.

OBLATE GROUP IN CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO, CANADA – *monthly meetings at St. Gregory the Great Church in Cambridge*

Oblate Cathy Mayled reported by e-mail on August 15 and 28 and October 2 and 28. Six people met on July 28. After an opening prayer, the group continued to discuss the book *Preferring Christ*, which is a reflective commentary on the *Rule*. This time they dealt with *RB 7: 51-54*. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline. Later Oblate Julie Sousa hosted a 70th-birthday party for all the Oblates, and the study group came to help her celebrate.

On August 25 four people met after a heavy rain storm. After an opening prayer the group studied *RB 7: 55-58*. Once again, they closed with meeting with Compline.

Five people gathered for the meeting on September 24. After an opening prayer, the group proceeded with a study of *RB 7: 59-61*, involving the 10th and 11th degrees of humility. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline.

The meeting on October 27 was attended by five people. After an opening prayer, the group studied *RB 7: 62-66*, on the 12th degree of humility. The meeting ended with Compline.

OBLATE GROUP IN TENNESSEE COLONY, TX (Michael Unit)

Oblate Alejandro Torres reported on August 28. Six members gathered briefly on August 16 to pray Morning Prayer. Special circumstances caused the meeting to end abruptly.

OBLATE GROUP IN ROSHARON, TX (Terrell Unit)

It was belatedly reported that on last March 10 Deacon Dale Hayden invested as an Oblate novice

Peter J. Ellington of Rosharon, TX.

Oblate novice Gilberto Gomez wrote on August 29, September 1, and October 17. A group of five people met on August 17 and August 24. They prayed the Liturgy of the Hours and read parts of the *Rule* of St. Benedict. On August 31 ten people attended the "Oblate prayer meeting," during which they prayed the Liturgy of the Hours, read *RB 73*, and had intercessory prayers. The group has been praying, in particular, for an education program that would be linked with a seminary or a Catholic university. There was also a brief meeting during the week of October 10, with six members of the Oblate community attending

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 November 20, December 18, January 15, and **February 12 (second Sunday)** at 6:45 P.M. in Brownfield Room 202. **(Do note that the special meeting on November 20 will involve Solemn Vespers with Benediction at 5:00, supper in Placid B, and a presentation by Bishop Edward Malesic at 7:00 in the Foundations Room.)** Those wishing to come early for Evening Prayer (at 5:00) and supper should phone Fr. Donald (724-805-2291) in advance. It is important especially for the meeting on November 20 that you sign up for the meal in advance - by U.S. mail. **(N.B.:** On January 15 we shall begin to discuss Fr. Demetrius Dumm's book *Flowers in the Desert*. The meeting on December 18 will involve a session of group *lectio divina*.)

PRESENTATIONS ON BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY AT ST. VINCENT

On the same days as Oblate meetings in Latrobe, presentations on Benedictine spirituality are being held in Brownfield 202 from 3:00 to 4:15. They are given by monks or Oblates. All are welcome to attend. The session on November 20, to be offered by Fr. Anthony Grossi, O.S.B., will address the topic "The Liturgy of the Hours," and the session on December 18, to be offered by Fr. Pio Adamonis, O.S.B., will be about "Simplicity of Life in Benedictine Spirituality."

ADORATION FOR VOCATIONS IN ST. GREGORY CHAPEL; EXPOSITION ON SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING:

The Blessed Sacrament is generally exposed on Sundays from 2:00 P.M. to 4:15 P.M. in St. Gregory Chapel. Oblates are urged to use these times for Eucharistic adoration, if possible, especially on the Sundays of Oblate meetings, to pray for vocations and especially for vocations to the Archabbey. **On the Solemnity of Christ the King, November 20, exposition will begin at 12:30 P.M. in the basilica and will conclude with Benediction at the end of Vespers, which begins, as usual, at 5:00.**

- 18 Oct 2016 - Bertha J. Wittman of St. Marys, PA (age 100; Oblate since May 1, 1978)

NEWS FROM OBLATE DEANERIES

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

Moderator Deacon Ralph DeCecco reported by mail on August 23 and September 30. Eight people met for the meeting on August 22, which began with the praying of Vespers. Then Oblate Janet DeCecco gave a presentation on the first step of humility, given in *RB 7: 10-18*. She referred to the book *The Rule in Bits and Pieces* and included the themes "clarity of focus," thoughts amidst distractions," and "temptations." The meeting ended with a praying of the Litany of Humility. There was also some discussion about inviting non-members to meetings, and the group agreed that inquirers were most welcome to attend. *(continued)*

Six men met with Deacon Ralph for the meeting on September 26. After the praying of Vespers, the group listened to a presentation on humility by Oblate novice Aaron Wygant, which focused on the first step and which drew forth much discussion. The group also reviewed the summary of the survey of Oblate deaneries. The next meeting was planned for early November. The session closed with the Litany of Humility.

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 September 5. The meeting on August 28 began with Oblates' attending the Divine Mercy Holy Hour at 2:30 P.M. Then the group celebrated their annual Oblate picnic, which this year consisted of a covered-dish dinner. Besides Fr. Job, moderator, and seven Oblates, two inquirers were present. Because of other commitments, it was decided not to meet in September but to continue the deanery's study of the *Rule* at the meeting on October 23.

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 September 19, and Fr. Paschal Morlino, moderator, reported on October 22. The meeting on September 18 was attended by eighteen people in addition to Fr. Paschal and guest speaker Br. David Klecker, O.S.B., of the Archabbey. Br. David gave a presentation discussing Chapters 31 and 34 of the *Rule* and their application to Oblates. He also linked the values in those chapters with the meaning of the readings from the Mass that Sunday. Then Fr. Paschal offered reflections on an article entitled "Who is my neighbor?", based on the parable of the Good Samaritan and offering a lesson in humility. Also, there was planning for the regional Oblate meeting scheduled for October 15. Next the group spent some time reflecting on their common text, *St. Benedict and St. Thérèse* by Fr. Dwight Longenecker; they covered material up to page 41. Then, after Fr. Paschal spoke about forthcoming events in the parish, the group adjourned to go to the church to pray Vespers at 5:00 P.M.

The regional meeting on October 15 went well. Fr. Paschal thanked all who had participated and suggested that this year again, on the Solemnity of Christ the King, the Oblates volunteer to pray the seven "Advent Stations." The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the stations, and Solemn Vespers with Benediction were to take the place of the regular Oblate meeting on November 20. The next regular meeting scheduled to be held on January 15

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

Lay leader/secretary Ethel Galli reported by mail on August 8 and October 4. The meeting on April 28 began with Evening Prayer and continued with a discussion, led by Ethel, of Chapter 11 of the book *Lessons from Saint Benedict*. The themes discussed were the need for reverence and awe, especially in churches, and the importance of providing good example. The session ended with prayer and a time of food and fellowship.

The meeting on May 26, after the praying of Evening Prayer, involved a study of St. Hildegard of Bingen led by Oblate Ron Weleski. St. Hildegard was visionary, mystic, composer of hymns, artist, and philosopher, and in recent years she was declared to be a doctor of the Church. Ron brought some of her art work and poetry to the meeting. The session ended with prayer and fellowship.

The meeting on June 23 once again began with Evening Prayer. Then Ethel led a reading and discussion of Chapter 12 of *Lessons from Saint Benedict*. The themes discussed included the task to trust in God's merciful love, readiness to let God lead us to perfection despite our weaknesses, and humble acceptance of our own poverty. The evening ended with a prayer and fellowship.

The meeting on July 28 began with Evening Prayer and continued with a discussion, led by Ethel, of a lecture on C.D. given by Fr. Dan Crosby, O.F.M.Cap., entitled "Becoming the Eucharist We Celebrate." There was emphasis on awareness of consuming the Real Presence of God Himself in the Holy Eucharist and the call to bring the presence of God to others through self-sacrificing love. Thus the Eucharist moves us to evangelize. The session ended with a prayer followed by fellowship.

The meeting on September 29, after the praying of Vespers, involved the viewing of a D.V.D. with a presentation about styles of prayer given by Fr. Jeremiah. The talk gave descriptions of vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplation. The presentation was incomplete since the second of two D.V.D.'s would not play. The session ended with a prayer and a time of food and fellowship.

Cyber Deanery

Co-lay leader Theresa George reported by e-mail on August 16 and October 19. As of August 16 there were 60 members in the yahoo group. They were reading and discussing Delatte's *Commentary* and were in the middle of Chapter 7. Also, their names have been added to the Oblate prayer chain so that they could be united to the rest of the Oblates affiliated with the Archabbey although most of those in the Cyber Deanery live at a great distance. If anyone is interested in joining, the link to the yahoo group is <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/svacyberdeanery/info>. You may also contact Theresa at hislittleone14@gmail.com.

As of October 19 there were 62 members. There has been a continuing discussion of the degrees of humility. Note that the group is open to all Oblate novices and Oblates affiliated with the Archabbey who live at a distance from the Archabbey or any of its Oblate deaneries. It is also open to those who cannot attend meetings because of poor health and to those who are inquiring about becoming Oblate novices affiliated with the Archabbey.

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 August 20 and October 21. The meeting on August 8 began with Evening Prayer in St. Benedict Church. The group then moved to the meeting room in the St. John Paul II building to engage in *lectio divina* on Psalm 62. Next there was a planning session with some refreshments. The group decided not to have a meeting in September but to invite the Oblates to attend the Forty Hours devotions in St. Benedict Church.

The meeting on October 10 began, as usual, with the praying of Vespers and then proceeded to a discussion about topics for future meetings. One Oblate suggested the making of "prayer boxes," and she was scheduled to make a special presentation on the topic at the meeting in November. The meeting ended with a period of hospitality and the singing of "Sing of Mary."

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

The meeting on August 21, attended by some 15 people, involved a continued discussion of Chapter 7 of the *Holy Rule* based on the *Commentary* by Dom Paul Delatte, O.S.B. The third and fourth degrees of humility, both involving obedience, were discussed. Love and faith must both show themselves in acts of obedience. (*continued*)

It may be not so difficult to obey God directly, but He generally asks us to obey through people in authority, who themselves are very fallible. It is a special challenge to obey without protest or reservations. Likewise, it is especially challenging to obey when we experience a difficult demand, the authority's disorders, or our own imperfections. However, all of these difficulties can help us to grow in humility. God will give us the grace to endure patiently and with a silent heart, not to grow weary, and not to murmur. In fact, we can ultimately rejoice amid such undesirable conditions because these crosses unite us with "Him who so greatly loved us" (*RB* 7:39 & *Rom* 8:37). The session ended, as usual, with the praying of Compline in the Archabbey Basilica at 8:15 P.M.

On September 18 some seven people gathered with Fr. Donald to continue the discussion of the degrees of humility. They completed the fourth through the seventh degrees. Because of the small turnout the meeting concluded somewhat early with Compline in the classroom.

On October 23 eight people met with Fr. Donald to conclude the discussion of humility based on Dom Paul Delatte's *Commentary* on

the *Rule*. They reflected on the last five degrees of humility, three of which involve speech and laughter, and on the last part of *RB 7*, which involves the goal of doing everything out of love for Christ as a preparation for eternity. It was interesting that some of the attendees had been speaking about the value of good humor at supper right before the meeting. The group, as well as those who had assembled at 3:00, also prepared for Bishop Edward Malesic's coming to address Oblates and their guests on November 20. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline in the classroom.

It is hoped that the December meeting will involve a session of group *lectio divina* and that in January the Latrobe Oblates will begin discussing the book *Flowers in the Desert* by Fr. Demetrius Dumm, O.S.B.

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

On August 21 Br. Lawrence Machia gave a presentation on hospitality, which began with his quoting of *RB 4: 20 and 26*: "Your way must be different from the world's way"; "Do not turn away someone in need of love." Hospitality, he said, is based on our need for love. We are all needy. It is good for us, therefore, to admit that we are needy; then we can receive God's gifts, and, realizing how needy others are, share His gifts with others. The essence of hospitality is to recognize other people's need for love. Food is often a part of hospitality since food and relationships often go together. Human beings cannot live without food or without love. We must make room for other people both physically and spiritually. Our actions of love speak to others of our faith. Br. Lawrence then reflected on three biblical examples of hospitality: Abraham's greeting of three visitors in Genesis, Elijah's encounter with the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings; and Christ's feeding of 5,000 people. Abraham's hospitality reminds us that we, too, encounter angels - and God Himself - when we welcome the stranger. The fact that Our Lord's heart was moved with pity for the crowd is especially relevant to us. Even in a dark moment of His life, He poured Himself out in love. We can likewise offer hospitality to others by being in the depths of suffering with them. Br. Lawrence finally responded to a number of questions from some of the 25-or-so attendees.

On September 18 Fr. Donald gave a presentation on obedience to some ten people. He began with a summary description of obedience in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and in the *Rule*. He then treated the different dimensions of obedience in the *Rule*, with emphasis that religious obedience refers to responding to God through superiors and others and on the need for prompt, cheerful obedience to make it genuine. He finally spoke about obedience in its relation to humility, especially regarding the third degree of humility in *RB 7*, which deals with overcoming self-will.

On October 23 Br. Joachim, assistant Director of Oblates, addressed some twenty people on the subject of *lectio divina*. He began with a personal story of his learning to regard the reading of Scripture as not a mere intellectual exercise but as a genuine encounter with God. Furthermore, everything in Scripture is intertwined, and everything points to Christ. Br. Joachim then reviewed the four dimensions of *lectio* and linked each dimension with one of the four senses of Scripture: historical/literal, Christological, moral, and eschatological. He emphasized that we grow gradually in our understanding of Scripture; the process is a journey. He then gave some practical suggestions, including dealing with dryness, the praying of the rosary, the choice of a Bible, the way of entering into *lectio*, the need to savor the word of God, and the possibility of writing down insights. In *lectio*, he concluded, it is most important to realize that in going to the Bible we are encountering Christ and learning to know, love, and serve God better as we wait to hear His voice and let Him draw us into deeper communion with Himself.

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 August 31 (before departure for Rome on September 1). The meeting on August 28 was attended by only three people, possibly because some thought that Brian had already left for Rome. The group prayed the Stations of the Cross, the rosary, and Evening Prayer. Oblate novice Keith Beaulieu spoke about his experiences as a monk at an abbey in northern Quebec.

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

Lay leader/secretary Gabriele Terrill reported by e-mail on September 24 and October 20. The meeting on September 18, attended by moderator Fr. James Podlesny and seven others, began with Evening Prayer in the church. Gabriele began by giving a summary of the conferences that had been given at a day of recollection for Oblates in Lancaster on September 10. (The event was held at St. Joseph Church in Lancaster, and Br. Zachary Wilberding, O.S.B., of St. Meinrad Archabbey was the speaker. The topic was "Silence Speaks." Four members of the Holy Spirit Deanery attended.) Br. Zachary had encouraged the retreatants to experience silence as an opportunity to encounter God, without expectations that anything particular would happen. Silence is the medium for the word of God to speak to us. St. Benedict says much on the importance of silence. Silence helps us to combat internal noise and to learn, through prayer, to forgive. The whole group entered into a discussion on Gabriele's report, and Fr. Jim answered some questions.

The meeting on October 16 began with Evening Prayer in the church. Then the group listened to a C.D. of a presentation by Thomas Merton on Benedictine spirituality with emphasis on humility. The speaker stated, "Place all your trust in humility," and asserted that humility was rooted in our own nothingness. Nurturing humility is especially helpful when we feel that we cannot pray and when we are unsure if God wills us to do something or not. Then there was some consideration of the "signified will of God" and "God's will of good pleasure" (which covers everything that happens in life). After some discussion Fr. Jim gave some background information about Thomas Merton. The meeting ended with the serving of refreshments.

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

Secretary Frederick Laux reported on July 31, August 29, October 3, and October 23. Eleven people, including moderator Deacon John Etter, three Oblates, and three Oblate novices, attended the meeting on July 12, which began with the praying of Evening Prayer along with some personal intercessions. Then the group discussed a possible community project, such as sending cards to residents of a nursing home or donating to a diocesan appeal for seminarians. Next Fred gave a presentation on *RB 34: 1-7*, on the distribution of goods. Quoting an essay by Fr. Andrew Campbell and a commentary by Fr. Terrence Kardong, he emphasized the need to cultivate a spirit of peace and of gratitude for what is provided. Prayer, patience, and mercy are required to nurture such a disposition. Dean Everett then gave a presentation on how he lived Benedictine spirituality in his particular circumstances. He mentioned his need to read daily from the *Rule* and the Bible and his desire for daily fellowship with "seekers of the truth" who might not be Catholic. Finally,

Deacon John led a discussion based on the essay in the May Oblate newsletter, with focus on the support that we receive from community and should offer to community; it is thus that we grow closer to one another and to God. Deacon John closed the meeting with a "Glory be," a blessing, and a dismissal.

Although Fred was unable to attend the meeting on August 9, he forwarded notes taken by Oblate Dean Everett. That meeting was attended by one Oblate, three Oblate novices, and seven inquirers. It began with Evening Prayer and the Oblate prayer, and then Oblate novice Cory Desarmo gave a 20-minute presentation on *RB 56*, which deals with "the abbot's table." Cory spoke about the need for hospitality, the Gospel demand of serving Christ in the "least ones," the call to live in service of others, and the challenge to be vigilant in staying on the path of obedience, especially in acts of mutual service. He also pointed out that the flexibility of the *Rule* makes it a valuable guide to living an authentic Gospel life. The group then reviewed a reprint from Delatte's *Commentary* from the Archabbey. It concerned the role of the abbot in his representing Christ in the monastery despite his weaknesses and imperfections. The ultimate authority is God, and earthly authorities must lead by example and show no partiality. The meeting ended with the "Glory Be" and a blessing given by Deacon John.

The meeting on September 13 began with Deacon John's leading Evening Prayer for the memorial of St. John Chrysostom. Attending in addition to Deacon John were three Oblates, two Oblate novices, and six inquirers. Oblate Curt Kennedy gave a presentation on how he lives out Benedictine spirituality in his daily life, with emphasis on prayer and humility. The presentation involved a reading of *RB 2: 23-29* and references to the commentary by Fr. Terrence Kardong, an entry from *The Rule in Bits and Pieces*, and a recent exhortation by Pope Francis. It was said that we need to be flexible in dealing with others whom we encounter: friends, loved ones, and everyone whom we meet personally. One needs to meet others "where they are," to listen well, to be empathetic, and especially to be merciful. Thus we enter into "the apostolate of the ear." Then the group discussed the essay from the August newsletter, with a special show of interest in the word "deadline" and in ways to deal with chronic faults. The meeting ended with the "Glory Be," a dismissal, and a blessing.

On September 5 Fr. Sean Pogue, after the homily during Mass in the chapel, invested as an Oblate novice

Chris Beard of Pendleton, IN.

As of September 22 Deacon John was helping inquirers to complete applications for investiture as Oblate novices.

The meeting on October 11 had smaller attendance than usual because of certain difficulties. Deacon John was joined by two Oblates, one Oblate novice, and three inquirers. After the praying of Vespers, Fred gave an impromptu presentation on Chapter 8 of the *Rule*, "On the Night Office." He mentioned the practicality exhibited by St. Benedict and the notion of not overeating. Then Oblate Curt Kennedy shared with the group about two articles that he had read having connections with St. Vincent Archabbey. Finally, there was some discussion about the news that Archbishop Tobin of Indianapolis was to become a cardinal. The next meeting was scheduled for November 15.

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 August 25 and September 23. The gathering on August 17 involved the deanery's annual summer picnic. It was held in the church basement because of threatening weather. Good camaraderie and good food prevailed among the seven Oblates and two guests who attended along with Fr. Vincent Zidek, moderator.

Six people attended the meeting on September 20, including two inquirers. After Evening Prayer in the church, the group had an interesting discussion of Chapter 3 of the book *Flowers in the Desert* by Fr. Demetrius Dumm, O.S.B.

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

Former lay leader/secretary Dale Smith reported on October 16. The meeting in July took place after a Mass celebrated by Fr. Frank Wittouck. Four Oblates and one inquirer attended. Despite time constraints the group was able to pray Morning Prayer and read the daily section of the *Rule*, namely *RB 37: 1-3*.

The meeting on August 20 likewise occurred after Mass and was attended by three Oblates and three inquirers. The group prayed Morning Prayer and viewed a D.V.D. from the Archabbey entitled "St. Benedict and the *Rule*." Applications for investiture as Oblate novices were distributed to the inquirers.

The meeting on September 17, again following Mass, was attended by three Oblates and two inquirers. Dale handed on the Oblate materials to his successor as lay leader, Roland Fernandez. After the praying of Morning Prayer, Dale shared about the future of Catholic functions on the Ramsey Unit.

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

Secretary Peggi Gabler wrote on September 15 and October 21. The meeting on August 4, attended by seven people, began, as usual, with Evening Prayer and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Then the group prayed the Benedictine prayer, and the minutes of the last meeting were read. They rejoiced that someone who had been an Oblate for 32 years attended the meeting for the first time. Prayers were offered for the repose of the souls of Fr. Kurt Belsole's father and his brother Patrick, and Mass cards were sent to the family. Next the attendees read *RB 53: 1-14* on the reception of guests and reflected on the hospitality that they had experienced at the Archabbey. The meeting ended with the Oblate prayer. (continued)

The meeting on September 1 was attended by nine people. After the usual opening prayers, an inquirer announced that she was ready to be invested as an Oblate novice. Then the group read *RB Prol: 1-7* and discussed a reflection on those verses by Fr. Michael Gabler, O.S.B. They noted that St. Benedict was building on the traditions of the past, especially the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the Church Fathers and earlier monks. He emphasized that by listening and obedience one makes one's way to everlasting life. Preferring nothing to the Work of God is a key element in this journey of faith. The meeting closed with the Benedictine prayer and a blessing from Fr. Alfred, moderator.

The meeting on October 7 began with Evening Prayer, Benediction, the Benedictine prayer, and the reading of the minutes from September. Eleven people were in attendance. Two letters from Fr. Donald were also read, with the group's promising to pray for all the intentions mentioned therein. Br. Canice McMullen, O.S.B., a deacon on a two-week practicum in St. Marys, spoke to the group. He

recited the prayers said while dressing with each piece of the habit. He also read a reflection on the verses Prol: 8-13 by Fr. Michael Gabler. Oblate Sandy Tucker read about the same passage from the book *The Rule in Bits and Pieces*. There were a number of questions and comments in dialogue with Br. Canice. The meeting closed with the Oblate prayer and lay leader Ben Hoffman's announcement that this would be the last meeting of the year until spring. Finally, some refreshments were served.

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

Moderator Fr. Killian Loch, O.S.B., reported that a few freshmen came to an introductory meeting on September 13. However, there was no follow-up, nor have any further meetings been scheduled. It seems, therefore, at least for the time being, that the deanery has been dissolved for lack of interest.

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

Moderator Fr. Ronald Gatman, O.S.B., reported on September 20 concerning Oblate activities for the coming months. The Oblate Advisory Board met on September 6 after praying Evening Prayer. A shared supper followed.

On September 18 the full Oblate community met for *lectio divina* and Mass. Fr. Ronald led the section on *lectio* with focus on the passage from St. Mark's Gospel concerning the raising of the daughter of Jairus. The need for faith and trust was emphasized.

Plans for future meetings included a discussion of a passage from the *Rule* in October, a guest speaker along with Evening Prayer in November, the Oblates' assistance with a pre-Christmas party at the Benedictine Priory in December, and a monetary donation to an organization that is helping to find a cure for Alzheimer's disease - as well as a donation to the Carmelite nuns in Savannah for their project of building a new monastery.

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

Oblate Bonnie Morgan reported by U.S. mail on August 17, and co-lay leader/secretary Teresa Warlow reported by e-mail on September 12 and October 12. Three people were present for the meeting on July 10. They entered into a discussion which summarized Chapter 2 of the *Rule* from the *Commentary* by Dom Paul Delatte, O.S.B. Then the group prayed the "Oblate prayer" and ended the meeting with Midday Prayer.

The meeting on September 11 opened with the prayer for Oblates and continued with a discussion of Chapter 4 of the *Holy Rule* with the help of the same commentary. There was focus on the spirit in which good works are done, and the attendees shared some of their personal experiences. The meeting ended with a recitation of Midafternoon Prayer and a prayer for the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The meeting on October 9 began with the prayer for Oblates and continued with a discussion of the promise of obedience as defined in the *Rule* and as explained in the commentary. The meeting ended with a recitation of Midafternoon Prayer. The next meeting was scheduled for November 13.

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 August 24, September 4, and October 12. The meeting planned for August 9 was cancelled. The meeting on August 23 was attended by six Oblates, two Oblate novices, and seven inquirers, along with moderator Deacon David Hornick. After an opening prayer and a reading for the day from the *Holy Rule*, Oblate Richard Lafayette gave a presentation on the Fourth Commandment, with mention of other references to "honor" in the Bible, with a definition of honor, and with emphasis on the role of parents (and other authorities) as substitutes for God. Richard encouraged the listeners to treat all people with the respect due to parents and gave some personal stories. Finally, he mentioned seven core values from the army based on the word "leadership." A discussion followed. Jeff then distributed copies of a handout entitled "Attitude Is Everything," and the meeting closed with the praying of Compline.

On September 4 four prospective Oblate novices received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Also, co-lay leaders Jeffery Hahn and Robert Fadden submitted to Deacon David a schedule of topics for meetings in 2017, which he approved.

The meeting on September 13 was attended by five Oblates, two Oblate novices, and eight inquirers in addition to Deacon David. After an opening prayer and a reading from the *Rule*, Oblate Michael Reichert gave a presentation on conversion, including the story of his personal conversion at Christmas Mass in 2001. Michael emphasized that we must always keep striving for a closer walk with God. Conversion, he said, is a result of turning away from sin, accepting the truth of the Gospel, and submitting in obedience to Christ. A powerful discussion followed. The meeting ended with the praying of Compline. The meeting scheduled for September 27 had to be cancelled.

The meeting on October 11 began with a ceremony for the investiture of seven Oblate novices. Deacon David, assisted by Oblate Jeffery Hahn, officiated. The new Oblate novices were:

Phillip Colton of Somerset, PA
Kevin Getchius of Somerset, PA
Jordan Leese of Somerset, PA
William Strode of Somerset, PA.

Jeremy Cool of Somerset, PA
Stephen Killian of Somerset, PA
Tyler Reed of Somerset, PA.

(continued)

Attending the meeting and the ceremonies besides Deacon David were eight Oblates, nine Oblate novices, and four inquirers. After the ceremonies a portion of the *Rule* was read, and copies of *Shorter Christian Prayer* were distributed. Then Oblate Robert Fadden gave a presentation on "Music and Spiritual Warfare." He gave some historical background and stated that music must be properly used for God's purposes, specifically with respect to obedience and humility. Not everyone is called to sing or play an instrument, but all are called to worship, praise, revere, and glorify God. Robert also mentioned how music can be used for healing and deliverance and how it can enhance sacred liturgy.

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

Lay leader Laura Lowder submitted a final report by e-mail on August 28. Only two people had been meeting in recent months, and

one of them subsequently withdrew from meetings. Therefore, the deanery has been dissolved. We are grateful to Laura and to all those who contributed to starting and maintaining the deanery for the past few years.

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 mail on September 20 and October 7. The meeting on September 12 was attended by moderator Fr. David Griffin, five Oblates, three Oblate novices, and one inquirer. The group began the discussion of the book *Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living* by Fr. Michael Casey, O.C.S.O. After Fr. David highlighted some points from the introduction of the book, the attendees engaged in some discussion about love as the key component for living the law of Christ and the call to honor all people because of the dignity and value given to each person by God. The meeting concluded with a prayer and the singing of the "Ultima."

The meeting on October 10 was attended by seven Oblates, three Oblate novices, and one inquirer in addition to Fr. David. After the praying of Vespers, the group continued its discussion of the tools of good works, including "to love fasting" and "to clothe the naked." They shared thoughts and experiences regarding the benefits of fasting and virtue of compassion. There was a lively discussion. The meeting concluded with a prayer and the singing of the "Ultima."

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 September 23 and October 14, and former lay leader Dee Pauls wrote on October 11. Fifteen people attended the meeting on July 6. Moderator Fr. Lee gave to Dee Pauls a framed Appreciation of Service Award from St. Gregory Parish, signed by the pastor and by Fr. Lee, for her 20 years of service. A pot-luck reception followed.

Fifteen people attended the meeting on August 3. Oblate Damian Finke gave a talk on the Year of Mercy in terms of the apostolic letter of Pope Francis announcing the year. He addressed the themes of receiving divine mercy, practicing humility, and knowing God's love for sinners. He also recommended the book *The Name of God Is Mercy*.

Seventeen people attended the meeting on September 7. At the beginning, Fr. Lee invested as an Oblate novice

Santiago "Jo Jo" Camano of Virginia Beach, VA.

Then Fr. Lee showed a movie on the life of St. Maximilian Kolbe. Attending the meeting was a member of the Militia Immaculata, a group founded by St. Maximilian, and she spoke further about his life and struggles. Fr. Lee distributed copies of the book *For the Life of the World* by Fr. Jerzym Domanski, O.F.M.

Fifteen attendees joined Fr. Lee for the meeting on October 5. To continue reflections on the Year of Mercy, he showed a video on the life of St. Faustina, the "apostle of divine mercy." It also happened to be her feast day. Then Fr. Lee received as an Oblate novice

Steven Tempesco of Virginia Beach, VA.

Finally, it was announced that the deanery had received a thank-you card from the family of Oblate novice Judith Lynch, who had died on August 31 and for whom the Oblates had had a Mass offered.

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 phone on September 12 and by e-mail on October 6 and 28. There was no meeting in July. Although originally no meeting was planned for August, on August 13 eight people from the deanery gathered at a restaurant for a belated celebration of the feast of Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (July 29). They prayed the prayer of St. Benedict together.

Four people attended the meeting on September 11, which was preceded by the annual ministry fair of St. Anne Church, in which the Oblates staffed a booth on September 10 and 11. The meeting opened with the praying of the Office of Readings, and the group viewed a D.V.D. of a presentation on the *Rule* by Br. Mark Liatti, O.S.B. The meeting ended with a praying of the "Unity Chaplet." At the meeting some of the attendees expressed plans to attend the Oblate day of recollection at the Archabbey, and two of them did, in fact, attend on October 15.

Nine people attended the meeting on October 9. Oblate Helen Prien brought in a table runner with the medal of St. Benedict printed at each end, and the group will be using it at meetings. The deanery had been asked to submit a mission statement to St. Anne Church, and they formulated the aim of the Oblate group as follows: "to be formed in the image and likeness of Christ through the practice of Benedictine spirituality, which includes but is not limited to praying the Liturgy of the Hours, practicing hospitality, *lectio divina*, ongoing conversion, and service in our church communities and parishes. After a discussion of the mission, the group prayed the Office of Readings for the day. Then Sue led the group in an exercise of *lectio divina* based on suggestions from Fr. Jeremiah in Selinsgrove several years ago. That led to a discussion about the Kingdom of God, its manifestation in our hearts and our lives, and the viewpoints of St. Faustina and Julian of Norwich on the Kingdom. The meeting ended with a praying of the deanery prayer to its patrons Martha, Mary, and Lazarus of Bethany.

Various Locations

On August 13 at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in San Jose, CA,

Beverly L. (Gemma) Torres of San Jose, CA,

made her final Oblation after Mass with Rev. Walter Suarez, pastor, presiding. Also present at the ceremony was Beverly's father.

On August 30 at St. Albert the Great Church in Austin, TX, Rev. Matthew Iwuji invested as an Oblate novice.

Giovanni Voltaggio of Austin, TX. (continued)

On September 3, the Feast of St. Gregory the Great, in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald invested

Paul C. Lundmark of Wilmington, DE,

as an Oblate novice. Also present were Paul's wife, Christine, and Br. Joachim.

On September 15 in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

Rev. Marc J. Solomon of Houtzdale, PA.

Father Solomon, a priest of the Diocese of Erie, is pastor of Christ the King Parish in Houtzdale. Also present for the ceremony were Fr. Ananias, Br. Joachim, seminarian Mark Groeger, and Oblate Robert Kefferstan.

On October 13 in St. Gregory Chapel at the Archabbey, Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

Mary Cathryn "Cathy" Burns of Coshocton, OH.

Also present were Cathy's friend Oblate Kathryn Stuart as well as Oblates David & Pat Hicks and Betty Wass.

On October 28 in the Archabbey Basilica, after the praying of Vespers, Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

Julie A. Monzi of Gettysburg, PA.

Also attending the ceremony were Julie's husband Christopher (an alumnus of St. Vincent College), their daughter Abby, Br. Joachim, and Br. Joachim's parents, who happened to be visiting from Michigan.

On October 30 at St. Patrick Church in Franklin, PA,

Robert T. (Pius) Hammerlee of Venus, PA,

made his final Oblation in the presence of Deacon Richard P. O'Polka.

On November 2 in the Archabbey Basilica, Fr. Donald invested as an Oblate novice

John Thacik of Canonsburg, PA.

A husband and the father of young children, John works as a state policeman.

SICK & INFIRM MONKS

The following monks of the Archabbey have been hospitalized or otherwise especially ill during the past three months and could use our prayers: Br. Stephen Nazaruk, Br. James Cartwright, Fr. Myron Kirsch (recovering from two heart surgeries).

DECEASED MONK

Fr. Jeremy Bolha, 82, died on September 1. Please pray for the repose of his soul.

SOME SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Oblates and all their guests are always welcome to pray the Liturgy of the Hours with the monastic community. If large numbers are coming, it is good to notify the Oblate Office in advance so that there will be sufficient booklets for all the guests. Please note the importance of praying with the monastic community. If you are a guest and do not know the community's pace, please do not recite or sing until you know the right pace. During one retreat this past summer, some of the retreatants sang loudly and erratically, and the result was chaotic! If you have a good voice, please be especially careful to sing at a moderate tone and in synchronization with others so that we may sing together and with reverence. Thank you!

2. Thanks to Oblate Lawrence Cuda, Oblates Bill and Gisela Iglesias, employee Kim Metzger (in Archabbey/Seminary Public Relations), and consultant Matthew Minerd, we have a bibliography of Benedictine books listed on the Oblate website (<http://www.svaoblates.org>). Please feel free to consult this very exhaustive list, which has taken several years to compile.

3. Oblates are welcome to attend concerts offered by the Saint Vincent Camerata. On Saturday, November 12, at 7:00 P.M. in the Archabbey Basilica and on Sunday, November 13, at Word of God Church in Swissvale, PA, at 7:00 P.M., there will be a performance of early baroque choruses with Chatham Baroque as special guests. On Saturday, December 10, at 7:00 P.M. in the Archabbey Basilica, there will be "Festival of Lessons and Carols." For tickets and further information for all performances, phone 724-805-2579.

4. Since Oblates of St. Benedict are a "pious association of the faithful" and not a canonical order of the Catholic Church, Oblates should not use such initials after their names as "O.S.B.Obl.," despite the fact that some Oblates have developed this custom. Using such an appendage is contrary to Catholic tradition and practice.

5. For those who would like to plan ahead for Oblate events in 2017, the Solemnity of St. Benedict (with Mass at 4:00 P.M.) will be on Tuesday, March 21, 2017. The Feast of St. Benedict (with Mass at 10:00 A.M. for the solemn profession of vows) will be on Tuesday, July 11, 2017.

6. The 2017 Assembly of Deanery Representatives has been scheduled for Saturday, June 10, 2017. Deaneries (and other groups that meet regularly) may wish to begin now to decide if they can send one or two representatives. Several guest rooms are being held from June 9 to 11 for those who may wish to stay overnight.

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.)

Oblate Nicholas Parrendo's presentation "A Spiritual Journey in Light" (September 20, 2015):

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

Fr. Boniface's talk on weakness and strength on Oblate Day (September 27, 2015):

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

Br. Mark Liatti's talk on St. Benedict and his *Rule* (October 18, 2015):

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

Fr. Robert Keffer's three conferences for the day of recollection (October 17, 2015):

Set of 2 C.D.'s _____ (number) Set of 2 D.V.D.'s _____ (number)

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)

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.

***Schedule for special Oblate meeting in Latrobe, Sunday, November 20, 2016**

3:00 P.M. Presentation by Fr. Anthony Grossi, O.S.B., on the Liturgy of the Hours, Brownfield 202

5:00 P.M. Solemn Evening Prayer with Benediction, Archabbey Basilica (nave)

6:00 P.M. Supper, Placid Dining Room B (\$8.75 per person)

7:00 P.M. Presentation by **Bishop Edward Malesic**, Foundations Room (2nd floor of Placid Hall)

Registration Form for Special Oblate meeting, Sunday, November 20, 2016

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

___ I plan to attend supper along with the Oblate meeting(s) on Sunday, November 20.

___ Enclosed is the fee of \$8.75 for supper.

___ I would like overnight accommodations for ___ Nov. 19, ___ Nov. 20. (Please contact Fr. Donald well in advance.)

Please send this form to the Oblate Office by November 15; please mark on envelope "November event."

DIRECTORY OF OBLATES: Application form

I would like to be included in the 2017 edition (whether e-mail or not) of the *Directory* of Oblates affiliated with Saint Vincent Archabbey. The information that I would like to have included is the following:

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ e-mail address _____

Please send this form to the Oblate Office by U.S. mail or by e-mail to 305makaufman@gmail.com .

Poem by Oblate Elmer R. Furman of East Pittsburgh (composed at the Archabbey on October 16)

It is good to make a visit

To my second home away from home.

So many fond memories flash through me.

So many benefits to be thankful for -

1. like precious holy Benedictine monks
2. made holy by Divine Liturgies
3. and sung Hours,
4. Scripture reading, and meditation.

The Benedictine way is so true to life, a balanced form of life:

1. foremost love of God (*ora*)
2. and service (*labora*).

I am grateful for the inspiring monks who quietly set the world on fire with the flame of the Holy Spirit!

Thank you!