



Saint Meinrad

NEWSLETTER FOR BENEDICTINE OBLATES OF SAINT MEINRAD

Benedictine Oblate

FALL 2009

VOLUME 15:4

New *Liturgy of the Hours* for oblates published

For more than 14 years, it has been the dream of Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, director of Benedictine Oblates, to have an easy-to-use Liturgy of the Hours book available to oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

With assistance from the Oblate Council, he decided to publish a four-week cycle of the Liturgy of the Hours, adapted for the oblates from the monastic community's own prayer. The dream became reality this June with the publication of *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates*.

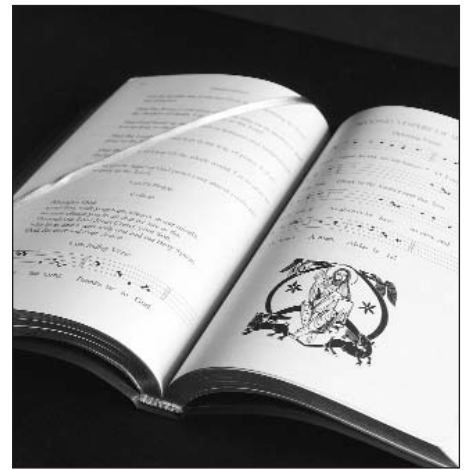
Because oblates live and work in the secular world, they cannot be present with the monks to pray on a daily basis. However, as they are encouraged to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the new book will support the oblates in their prayer life and be a resource for filling their hearts with the love of God. The volume has an easy-to-follow format, and Fr. Meinrad says he would like to see the book used in chapter meetings.

Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, supported the project and wrote the book's Foreword. He noted that the book is based on the way the monks at Saint Meinrad Archabbey pray in the Archabbey Church. The book will allow oblates who pray the Liturgy of the Hours to be "in concert" with the monks.

Oblate Reactions

An oblate from the Cincinnati, OH, Chapter purchased the book and showed it to a friend who is an oblate from Florida. Her friend was so impressed with the book that she wanted a second one to bring back to the Florida chapter.

A Louisville, KY, oblate expressed great delight in having the publication



Liturgy of the Hours book

available to the oblates in his chapter. At the oblate's request, Fr. Meinrad has included in this newsletter a schedule of what week oblates should use when praying the Liturgy of the Hours (see page 11).

Fr. Meinrad was pleased with the many individuals involved in the creation and production of *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates*. Oblate Council member Jennie Latta chaired the committee, which was comprised of monks, oblates and communications personnel. Mary Jeanne Schumacher, John Farless and Jo Rita Bishop, of Saint Meinrad's

FROM THE RULE:

"They no longer live by their own judgment, giving in to their whims and appetites; rather they walk according to another's decisions and directions, choosing to live in monasteries, and to have an abbot over them."

Chapter 5, Verse 12

see Liturgy book, p. 11

Developing leadership important for oblate program's future

In the summer of 2007, I participated in a national meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD) at St. Martin's Abbey, Lacey, WA, where the theme was "The Charism of Benedictine Leadership." It was at this meeting that I saw the need to follow up on leadership for Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

Two years later, I attended a meeting of NAABOD at St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA. This time, the theme was "The Formation of Benedictine Spirituality." During one session, the group broke into 10 small groups and each was given a set of four questions directed to improving oblate leadership in the future. One set of questions was on developing leadership among oblates and chapter representatives. The suggestions were well received by the general assembly.

Every five years, Saint Meinrad's oblate chapter coordinators meet. This summer, the meeting theme was "Developing Leadership Among Oblates and Chapter Representatives." I asked them to look to the future and the importance of leadership as part of that future. I presented them with three goals:

- to challenge oblates who are currently in oblate/leadership positions
- to challenge those who might find themselves in such positions
- to better understand and take ownership of the responsibility such leadership requires.

Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, was the principal speaker, and he presented detailed and excellent information on leadership and what is necessary for being a leader. Based on that, I proposed two questions to the group:

1. As we look to the future, what actions do you think should be undertaken to strengthen the oblate community of Saint Meinrad Archabbey?
2. As we look to the future, what actions do you think should be undertaken to strengthen the Oblate Chapter?

Each respondent was to submit up to three suggestions for each question. By July 31, the Oblate Office had received 37 responses. This is a 55% return rate, which is excellent by most research standards.

The Oblate Council will evaluate the responses and make recommendations on how to follow through with the challenge of improving oblate communities and chapters in terms of future leadership.

*Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB
Oblate Director*

A POINT TO PONDER FROM THE RULE

"They no longer live by their own judgment, giving in to their whims and appetites; rather they walk according to another's decisions and directions, choosing to live in monasteries, and to have an abbot over them."

Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 5, Verse 12

Although we do not live in monasteries, as oblates we are still lay members of that particular community. By making our oblation, we make promises of humility, stability and obedience.

Obedience to another's will and direction may be difficult for some. This condition is best alleviated when the individual oblate comes to recognize the abbot as representing Christ in the monastery. To obey Christ does not require any resistance from us. We do it without question if we are truly embracing Benedictine spirituality and if we are Christians.

In our oblation, we obey the abbot's decisions for us and his guidance for our prayer life. The concept of submitting one's entire life to the judgment of another appears foolhardy to many people in our society. To them, this runs contrary to the very concept of modern freedom. For many monks, this is not true. Under a good abbot, a monk can cast off the shackles that bind him and be truly free to seek God. This is equally true for oblates living in the secular world.

*Pray
for
Vocations*

Benedictine Oblate is published four times a year by Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

Editor: Mary Jeanne Schumacher
Designer: Jo R. Bishop
Oblate Directors: Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB
Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

Send changes of address and comments to The Editor, Development Office, Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad, IN 47577, (812) 357-6817, fax (812) 357-6325 or e-mail oblates@saintmeinrad.edu www.saintmeinrad.edu

© 2009, Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Oblate writes article on Benedict's influence during troubled times

Oblate Charles McKelvy of Harbert, MI, wrote a May 27th newspaper article about St. Benedict's influence as a salve for these troubled times. He found that Quentin R. Skrabec's book, *St. Benedict's Rule for Business Success*, presented many parallels for coping with the distress and confusion of today's world.

Ohio oblate ordained deacon

Congratulations and best wishes to James H. Hatfield III of Columbus, OH, on his ordination to transitional deacon on June 6.

Oblate begins new work

Anne Koester, oblate of Washington, DC, began a new job July 1 as director of off-campus student life at Georgetown University while continuing as an adjunct instructor with the Theology Department.

Fr. Vincent Tobin speaks on obedience and freedom

For the 50 Oblates gathered at Saint Meinrad for a day of recollection on July 10, Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, spoke on "Freedom to Obey: I Will Run the Way of Your Commands; You Give Freedom to My Heart."

Fr. Vincent noted that this is a different kind of freedom, a freedom to choose to be obedient to God's will for us. Our first call to faith is when we ask, "Will I allow God to love me completely, forever and unconditionally? Will I allow God to do good for me?"

He cautioned that we often suffer from the sin of self-sufficiency, the idea that we, rather than God, are in control of our lives. We forget that our devotedness is a gift—unearned and unearnable, freely given by God. Like Adam and Eve, we may choose to turn away from harmony and toward chaos

instead. We Americans may be even more at risk because our sense of entitlement sometimes leads to a divinization of the self, with no connectedness to the rest of creation.

Fr. Vincent described freedom as a gradual process of ridding ourselves of anything that hinders our baptismal vocation. We need to recognize that Christ has always been counter-cultural; thus, as Christians, we are called to a life that looks beyond an earth-bound framework.

The "yes" of obedience apologizes for the rebellion of paradise and nudges creation closer to the paradise created by God. This is not the "yes" of enslavement, but the "yes" of love. In our humanness, we are often detoured by our own weakness and sinfulness, but God will never let us go or take away our freedom to choose to return Him to the center of our reality.

We become centered on God by paying unremitting attention to:

1. Sacred Scripture, the teaching of the apostles;
2. The building up of relationships, because our salvation is outside ourselves;

3. The breaking of bread, the spiritual nourishment of the Eucharist;

4. Prayer, conversation with God.

Primarily, we need to listen because God lives in the heart before He lives in the mind. We must forgive and, through the hard work of obedience, we can freely choose to return to Him.

*Cathy Byers, oblate
Nineveh, IN*

New York Oblates celebrate feast day

The New York Oblates celebrated the feast of St. Benedict on July 11 with a Mass celebrated by Fr. John Monahan, followed by the hospitality of the Cloistered Dominican Sisters of Bronx, NY, who served pizza, meatballs, vegetables and ice cream. Twelve Oblates and three guests attended.

*Carmen Flores, oblate
Bronx, NY*

Oblation held at parish church

The Oblation of Dennis Perry was held August 15 at St. Paul Church in Salem, OH, at the Saturday evening Mass celebrated by his pastor. The date was chosen because it was the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin

see Oblate News, p. 4



Oblates meet in the Guest House Chapel for the opening of the General Assembly of Chapter Coordinators and Representatives, July 17-19, 2009.

Oblate News from p. 3

Mary and the anniversary of his father's death.

Evansville oblate ordained deacon

Oblate John McMullen was ordained a permanent deacon on August 15 at St. Benedict Cathedral, Evansville, IN. His wife Grace is also an oblate.

Abbey Press booklets offer Benedictine insights

Abbey Press' Publications Division has launched a new series of booklets called *Notes from a Monastery: The Sacred Way Every Day*, which explores how the ageless wisdom of the monastery applies to all walks of life. Each 12-page booklet focuses on a different aspect of the *Rule of St. Benedict* and draws on ancient and contemporary insights in providing inspirational and practical spiritual guidance for readers.

"I think there is a deep yearning in the world today for a simple, sacred and intentional way of life that connects the everyday to the eternal," says Br. Francis Wagner, OSB, associate editor at Abbey Press Publications. "And the *Rule of St. Benedict* offers precisely that."

Each booklet makes the Benedictine way of life relevant to those seeking God within the context of their family, work, social and community responsibilities. If the series proves successful, it may be developed into a book, periodical, Web site or retreat resource.

Part of the vision for the series and its anticipated development involves Benedictine oblates. It is expected that oblates associated with Saint Meinrad Archabbey and other monastic communities across the country can both contribute to and benefit from *Notes from a Monastery*. "Oblates are already doing what this series is attempting to



Cover of one of the *Notes from a Monastery*

convey to a wider audience," according to Br. Francis.

"We hope to have some authors for the series who are oblates, and we hope that oblates will help 'get the word out' about the series in their respective communities. I think there are many people today who are seeking something like what the Benedictine way of life offers, but simply don't know about it." In addition, oblates may find the booklets useful for group or personal reflection.

Authors for the series include monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Benedictine oblates, men and women from other Benedictine communities, and well-known authors in the field of Benedictine spirituality. Each booklet features original illustrations by Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, and is designed by the Press' Mary Bolin.

The first five titles in the series are: *The Wisdom of Benedict: Seeking God in the Rhythms of Life* by Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB; *Living Simply: Embracing the Gift of Peace* by Dr. Jane Tomaine; *Making Our Work Holy: Reconnecting with God the Creator* by Kathleen

Norris; *Pursuing God with Passion: Daily Desire, Drive, and Devotion* by Fr. Gueric DeBona, OSB; and *Invitation to Prayer: Time and Being with God* by Br. Francis.

Four more titles will be released in November: *Detachment: Letting Go of What Possesses Us* by Janis Dopp, oblate of Saint Meinrad; *How to Live Together in Harmony* by Br. Benet Tvedten, OSB; *Receiving God's Embrace in Lectio Divina* by Fr. Christian Raab, OSB; and *Conversion: How We're Called to Change Every Day* by Sr. Laura Swan, OSB.

The booklets are available at the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Gift Shop, Scholar Shop, and the Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center. They can also be purchased at www.abbeypress.com. The booklets sell for \$1.95 each, or can be purchased at 30 percent off for an order of 30 or more. Call (800) 325-2511 for more information. ♦

INVESTITURES & OBLATIONS

May 9, 2009, Oblation—**Mrs. Lisa Marie Frances Holt** of Greenwood, IN.

May 14, 2009, Oblation—**Mr. Remi Remy St. Onge** of Brunswick, ME.

May 21, 2009, Investiture—**Ms. Pat Reckelhoff** of Schnellville, IN.

May 22, 2009, Investitures—**Mr. Vance** and **Mrs. Debra Webb** of Clarkson, KY.

June 3, 2009, Investiture—**Ms. Mary Taylor** of Mitchell, IN.

June 8, 2009, Investiture—**Mr. Scott Kirkpatrick** of Huntington, IN.

June 17, 2009, Oblations—**Mr. Stephen Michael Bay** of Greenhills, OH; **Mrs. Nancy Corazón Loriaux** of Bedford, IN; and **Mr. James Thomas Ulm** of Spring City, TN.

see Oblate News, p. 5

Oblate News from p. 4

June 18, 2009, Investiture—**Rev. Carol Ruth Wiley** of New Castle, IN.

June 19, 2009, Oblation—**Mr. Maurice Jay Enoch John Rush** of Shelbyville, IN.

June 24, 2009, Oblation—**Mrs. Cynthia Thomas More Boener** of Argos, IN.

July 8, 2009, Oblation—**Ms. Patricia Mary Linder** of Kokomo, IN.

July 10, 2009, Oblations—**Dr. Kenneth Joseph Dilger** of Evansville, IN, and **Mrs. Marilyn Jean Jane Fuhs** of Jasper, IN.

July 10, 2009, Investiture—**Ms. Brittney Rivera** of Kalamazoo, MI.

July 11, 2009, Oblation—**Mr. John Joseph Sanders** of Campbellsville, KY.

July 11, 2009, Investiture—**Mr. Matthew Gordon** of Lincoln, NE.

July 14, 2009, Investiture—**Mr. Charles Cooper Jr.** of Louisville, KY.

July 22, 2009, Oblation—**Dr. Alexander Alexander Roman** of Toronto, Canada.

July 22, 2009, Investiture—**Mr. Bret Bailey** of Arcadia, IN.

July 26, 2009, Oblation—**Ms. Josephine Scholastica Kostka** of Evansville, IN.

July 30, 2009, Investitures—**Mr. Raymond Henderson** of Westbury, NY, and **Mr. Eugene Ritter** of Charlotte, NC.

August 11, 2009, Investiture—**Dr. Kimberly Lyle-Ippolito** of Anderson, IN.

August 12, 2009, Investiture—**Mr. Ronnie Santana** of Bowling Green, KY.

August 15, 2009, Oblations—**Ms. Catherine Kim Mary Diaz** of Decatur, IL; **Mr. Aaron Boniface Johnson** and **Mrs. Kativa Mary Leal**, both of Westfield, IN; and **Mr.**

Dennis Michael John Perry of Columbiana, OH.

August 20, 2009, Investiture—**Mrs. Michele A. Reffett** of Evansville, IN.

August 21, 2009, Investiture—**Ms. Sandra L. Tompkins** of Loudon, TN. ♦

DEATHS

Mr. Maurice Kriese of Indianapolis, IN, died on July 14, 2008.

Mr. Friedrich Bischoff of Austria died on January 14, 2009.

Mr. Norman Jeffords of Niagara Falls, NY, died on May 20, 2009.

Ms. Mary Rose Shoemaker of Owensboro, KY, died on May 30, 2009.

Dr. Allen Cooley of Saultillo, MS, died on June 2, 2009.

Dr. John Mattingly of Corydon, IN, died on June 12, 2009.

Mrs. Mary Susan Groom of Columbus, OH, died on June 19, 2009.

Ms. Mary A. Schumacher of Hanover, IN, died on July 20, 2009. ♦

How you can help:

- Pray for vocations
- Remember Saint Meinrad in your will
- Request information about life income gifts

For more information, contact
Barbara Balka
Director of Planned Giving
Saint Meinrad Archabbey &
School of Theology
St. Meinrad, IN 47577
800-682-0988
www.saintmeinrad.edu

Vision statements approved for oblate community

During the summer of 2007, Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, felt a growing need to clarify the relationship between the oblate community and the monastery and to substantiate the role of the abbot in making final decisions regarding the oblate community.

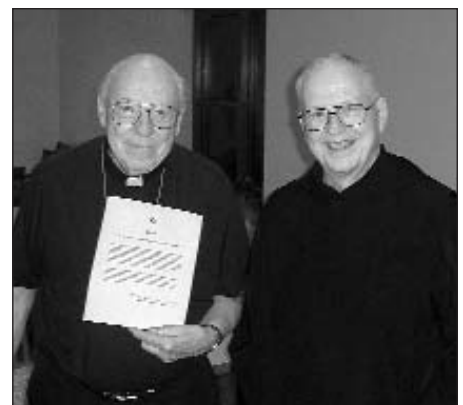
From this vantage point, the Oblate Council created three statements that look toward the future and clarify who the oblates are and what they are about.

The final drafts were accepted at the April 2009 meeting of the Oblate Council; the drafts were subsequently approved by Fr. Meinrad and Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB. The Philosophy Statement is printed on page 10.

Two other documents will be published in future issues of the newsletter:

Winter Issue 2010: Vision Statement of the Oblate Community

Spring Issue 2010: Personal Rule of Life. ♦



Msgr. Robert Noon of Columbus, OH, was made an honorary oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey on Saturday, July 18, at the General Assembly of Oblate Chapter Coordinators and Representatives. Over the past 27 years, he has participated in many oblate meetings, special celebrations and Masses. On the right is Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB.

Obedience: Just getting it done doesn't quite do it

Monks are to be obedient. It's one of the vows they profess. They promise to live under a rule and an abbot. They know well that the very first word of the *Rule of St. Benedict* is *obsculta*, listen.

Oblates try to live the Benedictine monastic ideals outside the monastery, and their efforts certainly include practicing the virtue of obedience. But most oblates probably can't afford not to be obedient! Few have climbed to such a high rung on the corporate ladder that they can order others, all the while paying little heed to the instructions others give them.

Most have to answer to a higher authority. The secretary must answer to her boss, the junior executive to the senior, the worker to his employer—and even the teacher, who expects her pupils to listen to her, is subject to the instructions of the school's principal.

A disobedient monk may be a disappointment to his abbot, a poor example to his confreres or a clogged gear in the smooth running of the monastery, but he likely will not be fired from his monastic vocation! But for the oblate living in the “real world,” a world where a worker's performance usually takes precedence over an employer's mercy, those who disobey can face a poor job review, a cut in pay or, in the worst-case scenario, termination of employment. So, when it comes to obedience, do oblates really have a choice?

As is usually the case when he talks about virtues, when St. Benedict writes about obedience, he has much more in mind than what first meets the eye. Benedict expects more than mere compliance from his monks (and oblates). Just “following orders” is not enough. Let's consider two of the standards of performance Benedict sets out concerning this virtue.

Obedience: With What Speed?

In Matthew's gospel (21:28-32), Jesus commends the young man who, at first refusing his father's command to go out and work in the fields, eventually reconsiders. Notwithstanding the young man's initial reluctance, at the end of the day he was obedient to his father's wishes.

But concerning his followers, Benedict raises the bar a notch. When receiving a command, monks (and oblates) should “carry out the superior's order as promptly as if the command came from God himself” (*Rule* 5,4). This careful listening to the superior's words, followed by the prompt acting upon it, reveals that the monk is making progress not just in obedience, but also in humility: he turns toward the words of his master and turns away from those contrary desires of his own will that try to enslave him.

While the young man in Matthew's gospel was eventually obedient, he is not a good example of the kind of obedience Benedict wishes to see in his monks. Benedictine obedience has speed, and is better illustrated by the disciples who did not first mend, then clean, then neatly hang their fishing nets when Jesus called, but simply dropped them at once and followed him.

Obedience: With What Spirit?

For Benedict, doing what one is told—even promptly—is not necessarily fulfilling that command. “If a disciple obeys grudgingly and grumbles, not only aloud but also in his heart, then, even though he carries out the order, his action will not be accepted with favor by God, who sees that he is grumbling in his heart” (*Rule* 5,17-18).

Here Benedict simply states what is known only too well by bosses, par-

ents and teachers alike: a command obeyed under protest, accompanied by grumbling and griping, may get the job done; but it will add to the disease that tears up the Body of Christ, rather than contribute to the peace that nourishes and strengthens it.

Simply put, for Benedict, obedience is more than just doing the right thing. It is doing the right thing right away (“unhesitating obedience”: *Rule* 5,1) and with the right attitude (“God loves a cheerful giver”: *Rule* 5,16; 2 Corinthians 9,7). Benedict knows that what he asks is not easy, but he insists it is important.

Above all, he realizes that progress in obedience does take time. Let us conclude with some advice and encouragement he offers us from the Prologue to his *Rule*: “What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace” (v. 41).

Questions for Reflection

With what speed do I obey? Am I prompt in tending to my routine duties, especially those duties on which others depend? When it comes to my prayers—especially in the morning and in the evening—am I prompt in turning to the Lord, or do I procrastinate to the point where, all of a sudden, “it's too late”?

How many minutes before (hopefully not after!) Mass do I arrive? Do I give myself a chance to settle down and prepare to “obey” (listen to) God's word and the prayers? On the other hand, am I overly prompt at leaving Mass, or do I take a few minutes to consider how I can be more obedient this week, given what I have heard and learned?

With what spirit do I obey? If others were to watch me at work, what

attitude would they observe? Am I a cheerful worker? And, if my job involves working directly with others—co-workers or customers—does my spirit help them be obedient to their duties?

Do I try to approach even my routine tasks as an opportunity to help someone who could benefit from my attitude as well as my assistance?

*Fr. Kurt Stasiak, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*

Oblate Council evaluates recent conference

The Oblate Council met July 19 at the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House. Council members and Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, had an extended discussion about the conferences on leadership given by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, to the chapter coordinators and representatives (see page 11).

Generally, the Council members felt the participants had a very good experience and that it would take some time for the material presented at the conference to be processed, thus providing a good foundation for enhanced leadership in the chapters, now and in the future. As follow-up, several ques-

tions will be sent to the meeting participants. In the future, the Council may form a committee to further evaluate the results of the meeting.

Fr. Meinrad reported that the 2011 meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors will be hosted by Saint Meinrad Archabbey, with the support of Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB. The Council members discussed a number of questions related to hosting this event.

Information was presented regarding Br. Martin Erspamer's work on a St. Meinrad or St. Benedict icon. He may produce the icons for each chapter, with a smaller version of the icon for individual oblates.

Oblate Jennie Latta met with Fr. Jeremy King, OSB, to gather information for a proposed CD of psalms and hymns. Fr. Jeremy will be away on sabbatical and is unable to help with this project.

Oblate Gail Chambers reported some issues remain to be resolved before the publication of the ritual and customary book for Benedictine Oblates. The meeting closed with a prayer.

*Gerald Campbell, oblate
Chillicothe, OH*

Ohio oblates hear about Benedictine wisdom in May

Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, provided an edifying and inspirational day of reflection for Ohio oblates on May 16. About 35 oblates were in attendance, including Msgr. Robert Noon from Columbus.

The conference on "Wisdom for Everyday Living" opened with the first words of the *Rule of St. Benedict*: "Incline the ear of your heart" and "Listen for the word of God."

Fr. Brendan offered oblates these reminders: when we listen to others, we rarely "get it" the first time; ponder your daily routine—it will lead you back to God, the source of everything good; recognizing the love God has for you enables you to be a way to God for others; when God is there, Satan cannot have the last word; be compassionate as your Father is compassionate; and forgive and let it go.

The conference ended with Mass and, in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the singing of "Salve Regina."

*Rita M. Merk, oblate
Lancaster, OH*

Gift certificates for retreats available

Saint Meinrad Archabbey is offering gift certificates for a retreat of two nights and three days at the Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center. To purchase a gift certificate, contact the Guest House and Retreat Center, (800) 581-6905. ♦

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were Monina Abrera, Jerry Campbell, John Cislow, Novice Gary Edwards, OSB, Ruth Engs, Trevor Fanning, Anushka Fonseca, Daniel Leal, Pat Linder, Joan and Tom Rillo, Dennis Skelton, Christine Toral, Yvonne Weaver and Tom Weber. ♦



The Bloomington oblates attend a Day of Reflection on July 10, 2009, at Saint Meinrad.

Conference focuses on lifelong Benedictine formation

For 60 years, Benedictine oblate directors in North America have been gathering to pray and exchange ideas and practices for the enrichment of Benedictine oblates. This year, 90 oblate directors and oblate representatives gathered at Saint Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, PA, from June 26 to July 1, for the biennial meeting.

Sr. Antoinette Purcell, OSB, president of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors and oblate director at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN, led the participants in listening and sharing on the theme of lifelong formation of Benedictine oblates.

The opening keynote speaker was Mother Mary Anne Noll, OSB, prioress of St. Emma's Monastery in Greensburg, PA. She spoke eloquently and humorously about the beauty and challenges of living a "daily" life, filled with a deep understanding and appreciation of the sacredness of all that we do.

She said God uses our lives to "prevent our idols from becoming our ideals," and He helps us to do that through a built-in "God Positioning System"

(GPS). For oblates, that GPS is the *Rule of Benedict*. By seeking God in our daily, present circumstances through the guidance of the *Rule*, we mature in humility, stability, hospitality, prayer and work.

We move from an "I"-centered way of life to one of service as seen through the eyes of faith. With faith, we approach the most ordinary task as sacred, recognizing our crosses as jewels in a sacred vessel. Quoting the Lenten *bona opera* of a nun in her monastery, she summed this up, "I bake my bread and I feed the cats out of love for God."

Another presenter was Fr. Brian Boosel, OSB, a monk of Saint Vincent Archabbey, who spoke on "Community with the Extended Family." Fr. Brian used the construct of the Trinity as the perfect example of community, referring to it as the "interaction of the household of heaven."

The Trinity is the source of Benedict's understanding of community, which is

not about uniformity, where individual gifts are stifled, but rather the place where the uniqueness of each person is valued. In this environment, the oblate who is hungry for real spiritual food can be taught to listen to the Word of God, to practice communal and private *lectio*, and to experience a sharing of food, which, with the proper mindset, points to the Eucharist.

With faith, we approach the most ordinary task as sacred.

Also, the community must never see itself as the "judge and jury of life in the world." Criticizing leads to chronic complain-

ing, which is destructive to being a community. Finally, the oblates should never see themselves as an elite group. All should be welcomed into the space that will encourage "the use of distinct gifts shared with one heart."

The final speaker was Sr. Cecilia Dwyer, OSB, prioress of St. Benedict's Monastery in Bristow, VA, on "The Two Pillars of Benedictine Life: Relationship and Reconciliation." For Sr. Cecilia, the essential ingredient in any relationship is presence. Monastic profession, a profound gift of self, is a decision to freely make oneself present to a community of choice, and placed under a rule with those who will be lifelong companions, helping us take the raw stuff of everyday life and turning it into a thing of beauty.

We engage in presence physically by showing up, mentally by expressing our interest and emotionally by connecting with the people who make up our community. We enter into conversation with them, attending to their words with our heart and sharing stories. Quoting from Margaret Wheatly's work, *Turning to One Another*, Sr. Cecilia explained that conversation allows us to acknowledge one another as equals, helps us to stay mutually



Janis Dopp, Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and Dennis Skelton attended the meeting of Oblate Directors and Oblate Representatives in Latrobe, PA.

curious about one another, recognizes that we need one another to become better listeners, slows us down to think and reflect, and reminds us that conversation is the natural way for people to think together.

Presence also breeds difficulties, and the *Rule* makes many provisions for reconciliation. It demands that we be in right relationship with ourselves and others. Reconciliation becomes the responsibility of everyone in the community. Each member becomes a “repairer of the breach,” offering God’s face to the others.

Sr. Cecilia noted that it is impossible to be in right relationship if we do not allow others to be present to us. Without this level of vulnerability, community will suffer. It is a decision we make each day. Community helps us to do and be what we cannot do and be on our own; it is the space where we learn to see one another through the lens of forgiveness. Importantly, oblates can be bridge-builders between the community and the world, living out and modeling these primary obligations of right-relationship and reconciliation.

In addition to the major presentations, small groups shared information about formation at all levels of oblate life: the inquirer, the candidate/novice, the oblate and in developing leadership. It was a compilation of the ways that all of the participating monasteries approach formation. This information will be invaluable as we seek to enhance our own oblate community at Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

During a business meeting, the oblate directors re-elected Sr. Antoinette as president and elected Fr. Paschal Morlino, OSB, of Saint Vincent Archabbey, as vice president.

*Janis Dopp, oblate
Dennis Skelton, oblate
Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB,
oblate director*

General Assembly meets to learn about leadership

The 2009 meeting of the General Assembly of Chapter Coordinators and Chapter Representatives was held at Saint Meinrad in July. The General Assembly was formed in 1998, and a meeting of coordinators only was held in 1999. It expanded to include chapter representatives by 2004. The Assembly meets every five years at Saint Meinrad and serves 20 chapters in the United States. The meetings are focused on management and improvement within oblate chapters.

Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, director of Benedictine Oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, opened the meeting on July 17 with a prayer. Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, welcomed everyone to Saint Meinrad for the conferences to be led by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB.

Fr. Meinrad said there are currently 1,100 members of the oblate community (about 1,000 oblates and 150 novices); 70 participants are at this meeting; 19 of the 20 chapters with participants at the meeting represent more than 700 oblates and novices; and 29 chapter coordinators and 34 chapter representatives are in attendance.

A brief report on oblate program finances was presented by Gerald Campbell, a member of the Oblate Finance Committee. He highlighted the strong support of the oblates received through *Bona Opera* and renewals, Archabbot Justin’s support of the oblate program and Fr. Meinrad, especially with designated income from the general endowment to pay for educational expenses of the oblate program, and the gratitude of the oblates for the oblate director’s outstanding stewardship of the finances.

Fr. Meinrad mentioned various pieces of information in each participant’s

packet. He gave special attention to the purchase form for the newly published *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates* book and expressed appreciation to Oblate Council member Jennie Latta for her work as chair of the committee that produced the book.

Oblate Council President Janis Dopp presented three documents for discussion: Philosophy of the Oblate Community, Vision Statement of the Oblate Community and A Personal Rule of Life. Oblates Gail Chambers, Jennie Latta, Dennis Skelton and Fr. Tom D’Angelo prepared draft versions in July 2008.

Dr. Tom Walters, academic dean of Saint Meinrad School of Theology, reviewed the drafts and presented suggestions to the Oblate Council in October 2008. The drafts were finalized at the April 2009 meeting. Fr. Meinrad reported that he and Archabbot Justin reviewed and accepted the final versions of these documents. The document, Guidelines for Chapters of Benedictine Oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, was presented and approved by the chapter coordinators.

The meeting was closed with a comment from the weekly monastic bulletin, written by Archabbot Justin: “Earlier this month Fr. Meinrad attended the meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors, hosted by Saint Vincent Archabbey at Latrobe. He offered the recently published *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates*, produced for our own oblates, and it was very well received and deservedly praised. The resources and programs that we provide have established for our oblates a solid formation in Benedictine spirituality that is unparalleled.”

*Gerald Campbell, oblate
Chillicothe, OH*

Philosophy of the Oblate Community

We are Benedictine Oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. We form a community united by adherence to the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Holy *Rule of St. Benedict*, and the values we share with the monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. We strive through prayer, liturgical celebration, instruction, and fellowship in Christ to be people who experience the richness of the Benedictine monastic tradition while living in the world.

Our lives as oblates are built on three promises and five duties. The first promise, stability of heart, expresses the commitment the oblate makes to a particular monastic community. Stability of heart is a reaffirming of the basic promise of conversion that we make at baptism. The second promise, fidelity to the spirit of monastic life, expresses our commitment to live lives of spirituality, piety, and balance. The third promise, obedience to the will of God, expresses our commitment to growth in discernment of God's will through

prayer, spiritual direction, and faithfulness to one's religious traditions. Obedience is not a series of acts grudgingly done, but the response of a willing heart in the service of God.

Oblates accept into their lives five duties. These duties have both a formative and a sustaining function in the oblate's life. During the novitiate, usually a one-year period, these duties help novices to develop habits that will sustain them in their vocation as oblates. The five duties are: praying the Liturgy of the Hours, regularly reading the *Rule of St. Benedict*, practicing *lectio divina*, being faithful to the sacraments (or other religious practices), and cultivating a sense of God's presence in daily living.

Benedictine Oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey are committed to forming a community of love and faith based on the promises and duties of oblate life. As we move forward, the words of our Holy Father St. Benedict guide and remind us to "prefer nothing to Christ." ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 2-10, 2009—The Second World Congress of Oblates, held in Rome, will emphasize the celebration of liturgy and prayer. Two prayer vigils (one ecumenical and the other an inter-religious character) are planned. The testimony of three lay oblates will be an important contribution. A panel discussion will include participants from the Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Oblates Janis Dopp and Jennie Latta will represent Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

November 29, 2009—The New York Oblates will have a day of recollection with Fr. Godfrey Mullen, OSB, on "Eucharist, the Gateway to Heaven: Keeping Death before Our Eyes."

December 11-13, 2009—The retreat will be given by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB. The topic is "Listening with the Ear of Your Heart: Obedience in the Bible and the *Rule of St. Benedict*."

February 20, 2010—Fr. Harry Hagan, OSB, will lead the Day of Reflection on the topic "Praying the Psalms" in Louisville, KY.

March 19-21, 2010—Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB, has chosen "Healing the Hurt of Humanity: The Life of Obedience" as the title for this oblate retreat.

May 15, 2010—The day of recollection in Dayton, OH, will feature Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB. His topic will be "To Pray as Jesus Prayed: The Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours."

June 14-17, 2010—Oblate study days will be conducted by Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, on the topic, "To Pray as Jesus Prayed: The Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours."

Pilgrimages—Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, is hosting two pilgrimages in 2010 that have openings: March 9-20 and May 9-19. Contact him at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 100 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad, IN 47577; (812) 357-6674; or e-mail: mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu ♦

OBLATES: IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Norine Keller, oblate, Newburgh, IN

"My life has changed by involvement in the oblate community. It has become simpler and more orderly. I seem to be working within the framework, finding the rhythm of life. I like the statement, rhythm of life, for it shapes us and forms us, and this is what it means to be within a framework."

Liturgy book from p. 1

Communications Office, handled the book's production.

Monks serving on the committee were Fr. Columba Kelly, OSB, Fr. Jeremy King, OSB, Br. Jacob Grisley, OSB, Br. Karl Cothorn, OSB, and Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB. Br. Karl spent the summer of 2008 organizing the psalms, readings and other text to create an electronic version for publication of the volume. The Development Office and Abbey Press also contributed to the final product.

The book can be purchased from the Oblate Office for \$20 per copy, plus \$5 for shipping and handling. To order, send a check for \$25 payable to: Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Oblate Office, 200 Hill Drive, Saint Meinrad, IN 47577; or call (812) 357-6817. Chapter coordinators can obtain copies to sell directly to the oblates for \$20.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

Liturgy of the Hours Schedule Begin Week I on these days:

2009

September 20
October 18
November 15
November 29 – First Sunday
of Advent
December 27

2010

January 10 – Baptism of the
Lord
January 31
February 7
February 21 – First Sunday
of Lent
March 21
April 4 – Easter
May 2
May 23 – Pentecost

Fr. Eugene explains qualities of leadership

Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, presented conferences on “Looking to the Future: Leadership” at the July 17-19 meeting of chapter coordinators and representatives. The purpose of this conference, attended by 70 representatives, was to provide information to use as a guide for leadership now and preparation for chapter leadership needs in the future.

In his presentations, Fr. Eugene used as an example a monastic community and the leadership of this type of organization. He presented four perspectives of the monastery as an organization: structural, human resources, political and symbolic. Each perspective has its own vision of reality.

People generally believe—falsely—that there should be “one true way,” he said. “The more perspectives a superior or leader can use to understand and lead a monastery, the more effective will that superior and leader be.”

Fr. Eugene compared the major features of the four perspectives, using a metaphor for each: 1. factory/machine for the structural mode; 2. family for the human resources mode; 3. jungle for the political mode; and 4. carnival/temple/theatre for the symbolic mode.

He also explained the central concepts for each mode. The structural mode includes rules, roles, goals, policies, technology and environment. Human resources includes needs, skills and relationships. For the political mode, the concepts are power, conflict and competition. And for the symbolic mode, he spoke about culture, meaning, ritual, ceremony, stories and heroes.

He explained and compared the types of leadership for each mode: social architecture for the structural mode, empowerment for human resources, advocacy

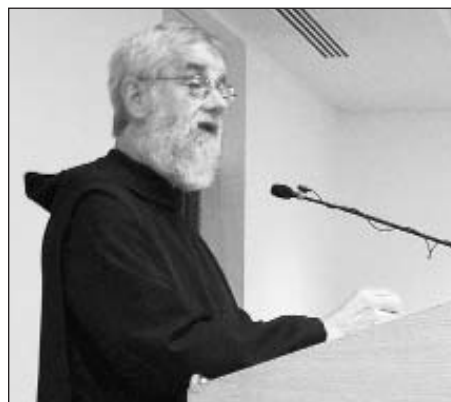
for the political mode and inspiration for the symbolic mode. All modes exist in varying degrees and relate to leadership of a monastic community.

Fr. Eugene also discussed factors to consider when speaking about leadership and leaders. Good managers are not always good leaders. Managers generally attempt to maintain the status quo and keep things running efficiently and without disruption. Leaders have vision, which may include serious changes in how things are done. They are focused on effectiveness and they can be messy. Managers operate in shorter timeframes, while leaders plan for the long term.

Fr. Eugene discussed sources of power, including position power (a person's role in the organization), power derived from control of rewards (promotions, wage increases, bonuses), and charismatic power (personal characteristics of the leader). The presence of multiple sources of power may provide persons with the adequate authority to make important decisions.

Leadership includes the establishment of a vision for the organization, and leaders are good listeners. Not only does the leader work to establish a vision for the organization, but also to communicate that vision to everyone in the organization.

*Gerald Campbell, oblate
Chillicothe, OH*



Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, presents conferences at the July 17-19 meeting of chapter coordinators and representatives.



200 Hill Drive
St. Meinrad, IN 47577

Return service requested

Reading Room

The book selection for this issue is *From Holidays to Holy Days: A Benedictine Walk Through Advent* by Fr. Albert Holtz, OSB (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2008).

Fr. Albert is a monk of Newark Abbey in Newark, NJ. His book is a literary walk through the season of Advent, strolling from his monastery through the busy and noisy streets of downtown Newark. In his daily meditations, Fr. Albert points out the often-unobserved connections between the secular celebration of the holidays and the deeper, spiritual meaning of the holy seasons of Advent and Christmas.

Each day's reflection is based on some familiar aspect of the holidays, such as Christmas shopping, welcoming guests or putting up Christmas lights. The reader is invited to walk beside him and share in his reflections as he watches the city prepare for and celebrate the holidays. The book encourages readers to walk through the streets of their towns and take a contemplative look at the familiar people and events around them.

Each chapter includes questions for reflection, a quote from Scripture, and a passage from the *Rule of St. Benedict* or another early monastic source. There is a daily meditation from the first Sunday of Advent through January 1.

Fr. Albert works in his monastery's inner-city prep school, teaching Scripture. For 25 years, he has served as master of novices and as a retreat master for Benedictine communities throughout the United States.

The format of this book is similar to his earlier book, *Pilgrim Road: A Benedictine Journey Through Lent*. Both books are a must for the oblate who wishes to pray and follow each day of Advent or Lent. They are suitable for individual reading or group reflections and would be excellent resources for a parish book club.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*