



FROM THE RULE:

“Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset.”

Prologue 48

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Oblates seek stability in secular world

It can be challenging for oblates to achieve the stability they promised at oblation. Oblates are not monks living in a cloistered monastery. We are not grouped together in community for work and prayer. Oblates live in the secular world, which has a profound effect on how we view stability.

Society has changed and so has the concept of stability. It can be viewed from a geographical approach or a spiritual approach. Looking at the physical aspect of stability, our ancestors were largely an agrarian society. One could not venture too far from the home place if one had to tend to crops and animals. Frequently, travel was inaccessible and expensive.

Spiritual stability usually accompanied geographical stability. Intergenerational attendance at church was often the norm, along with intergenerational family prayer life. Stability of place often assured the stability of intergenerational families.

Rapid industrialization caused rapid urbanization, and increased mobility was closely associated with this trend. Industries and businesses began to expand to various geographical locations. The nuclear family began to change as young people moved entire families to locations where opportunities for job advancement and increased income were available.

In fact, many principal income earners change jobs at least six times during their

careers. Joan Chittister, OSB, states in her book, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*, “We change schools and jobs and homes as casually as we once changed clothes. We are born in one state, raised in another, married in a third, and retire in a fourth.”

In the fourth century, St. Benedict was aware of something called acedia or listlessness. He knew his monks would want to find a more perfect monastery than the self-conceived imperfect monastery in which they lived. The same is true in the secular world of work.

Benedict had his monks take a vow of stability. Oblates also make a promise of stability. Oblates, however, have more flexibility than monks do. Oblates may place their emphasis on spiritual stability or may pray the Liturgy of the Hours wherever they may be. Spiritual stability can be a constant in an oblate’s life. The workplace may change, the shelter location may change, but the rhythm of prayer does not.

Another aspect of oblate stability is the affiliation with a specific monastery—another constant. Oblates from California, New York, Florida and Kentucky all share a monastic home. In our case, it is Saint Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana. Oblate chapters exist in other states, and oblates may participate in chapter meetings. They all share the stability of a common monastic home.

see Stability, p. 2

Stability from p. 1

Even though a monk may be assigned to duties away from his monastic home (such as parish pastors, missionary work or teaching in schools), he maintains his geographical stability to his monastery. Oblates have the opportunity to return to their home monastery for oblate retreats, workshops and days of recollection. This also represents stability in a physical sense.

It is true that God will have an easier time finding you if you stand still. This does not have to be in the physical sense. If you stand still in your spiritual life, God can also find you. The root of stability is the Latin verb *stare*, which means to stand. The late Fr. Hilary Ottensmeyer, OSB, in his booklet *Stability of Heart*, defined the spirituality of stability as being nothing more than reaffirming the basic promises of conversion that we make at Baptism.

The promise to stand firm and persevere is also evident in Reconciliation and Confirmation. The Eucharist provides the stability of the intimate love of God shared day by day. We, as oblates, can express our stability through our adherence to the sacraments. To Fr. Hilary, stability of heart is nothing more than the outward expression of perseverance. Stability of the spirit means one who is on the way to God should persevere in this journey. The monastic or oblate wants to be bound firmly to God or, as Benedict says, wants to persevere to the end.

For oblates to profess the promise of stability does not necessarily mean lifelong stability in one place. What is important is the outward expression of stability of heart that deepens and enhances a commitment to continue to look for God and to grow closer to Him. Oblates whose stability of heart

is strong will root themselves into a community, such as the parish church, and serve in various ministries associated with it.

For the remotely situated oblate, the technological improvements in communication can be helpful. Retreats given through DVD media, computers and various technological devices make contact with the home monastery easier. Web sites and online communications enhance the oblate's stability with a monastic anchor. Perhaps modern technology can assist an oblate to transcend physical limitations and better achieve the goal of stability.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

Reflection Questions

1. What is most stable in your life? Is it faith, career or physical location?
2. Is your stability of heart more strongly fixed than your stability of place?
3. How has stability influenced you in your value decisions?
4. How has Benedictine oblation assisted you in stability in God?
5. If the spiritual value of stability lies in commitment to prayer and community, how strong is your commitment? Do you avoid escape hatches in your oblation? ♦

A POINT TO PONDER FROM THE RULE

“Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset.”

Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue 48

Stability is achieved through perseverance, through hanging tough even though the strain is great. Benedict knew that some monks would be seeking the perfect monastic community and would wish to escape from the self-conceived imperfect one. For this reason, stability becomes the first vow of the three that a monk makes when he enters the community.

The struggle for stability also affects those who live as oblates in the secular world. We change schools, jobs and homes with the frequency of changing dress. In today's world, we are inclined to be too quick to change. Sometimes we put the blame on the external situation and not upon ourselves.

We do not make progress spiritually unless we stop running away and open ourselves to God. True stability has the fire of the Spirit that enables us to accept the good or bad situation because we find God in it.

As oblates, we need to grasp the vow of stability as preparation so the Holy Spirit can confer on us the gift of inner stability, which is a quality of the heart. This quality of heart shapes our attitude.

Inner stability can be enriched through frequent engagement with the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion. By participating in the sacraments and casting our problems onto God in prayer, we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit so that we can be truly healed.

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INSTITUTES & OBLATIONS

April 18, 2007, Investitures—*Mrs. Anne Schapman* and *Mr. Thomas Schapman* of Duluth, MN.

May 4, 2007, Investitures—*Captain David Fields* of Belleville, IL; *Mr. Mike Head* of Owensboro, KY; and *Mr. Richard Johnson* of Muncie, IN.

May 9, 2007, Oblation—*Mr. Patrick Bernard Gallagher* of Germantown, TN.

May 9, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Joseph Newton* of Indianapolis, IN.

May 15, 2007, Investiture—*Miss Karen White* of Asheville, NC.

May 19, 2007, Oblation—*Mr. Pearse Jude Columb* of Cold Spring, NY.

May 24, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. John Pelletier* of Mt. Pleasant, SC.

May 26, 2007, Oblation—*Mrs. Yvette Cecile Brigid Donabue-Duffy* of Kettering, OH.

May 26, 2007, Investiture—*Ms. Wendi Mulligan* of Dayton, OH.

June 2, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Tom Rose* of Owensboro, KY.

June 7, 2007, Investiture—*Dr. Juan Jaramillo* of Cordova, TN.

June 14, 2007, Investiture—*Mrs. Carol Sniadecki* of Anderson, IN.

June 18, 2007, Oblation—*Mrs. Rae Ann Joan of Arc Reichert* of Peru, IN.

June 19, 2007, Oblation—*Mr. Michael Romuald DeCriscio* of Kernersville, NC.

June 20, 2007, Oblations—*Ms. Diane Louise Therese Fallon* of Pensacola, FL; *Mr. Robert John Bosco Frank* of Salem, OH; *Mrs. Georgianne Monica Kent* of Indianapolis, IN; *Mr. Kenneth Joseph Herman Contractus Muth* of Bluffton, IN; *Ms. Patricia Ann Magdalene Theresa Opaczewski* of South Bend, IN; and *Mr. Thomas Gregory Yost* of New Albany, IN.

June 20, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. John*

Huether of Jasper, IN, and *Mrs. Annemarie Muth* of Bluffton, IN.

July 12, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Dennis Gorcoff* of N. Lawrence, OH.

July 21, 2007, Oblation—*Mr. James Bede Anzelmo* of Gahanna, OH.

July 25, 2007, Oblation—*Fr. David Joseph Metz* of Wilson, KS.

July 27, 2007, Investiture—*Mrs. Diane Wright* of Candler, NC.

August 4, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Franklin Walsh* of Sun City, AZ.

August 11, 2007, Investiture—*Dr. Richard Duplantis* of Lafayette, LA.

August 18, 2007, Oblation—*Mrs. Margarita Teresa de Ávila Baer* of Muncie, IN.

August 21, 2007, Oblation—*Mr. Ronnie Padre Pio Bradford, Sr.* of LaPorte, IN.

August 23, 2007, Investiture—*Miss Ann Morrill* of Grove City, OH. ♦

DEATHS

Rev. Msgr. Robert W. Contant of Carthage, OH, died on April 16, 2007.

Ms. Marianne Henderson of Oak Ridge, TN, died on June 23, 2007.

Deacon Jerry Hughes of Boyertown, PA, died on July 20, 2007.

Mrs. Louise Updegraff of Fairland, IN, died on August 4, 2007.

Mrs. Rosemary Davis of Evansville, IN, died on August 23, 2007. She was the coordinator of the Evansville Chapter for 20 years, 1979-99. She gave great service to the oblates of the Evansville area. ♦

HAPPENINGS

April 29, 2007—Dr. William C. Hine, dean of the School of Continuing Education at Eastern Illinois University, was honored for his 20 years as national councilor for

Eastern Illinois University Alpha Sigma Lambda's chapter of Epsilon Xi, for outstanding leadership and meritorious service and in recognition and appreciation of his inspiration and commitment to adult learners.

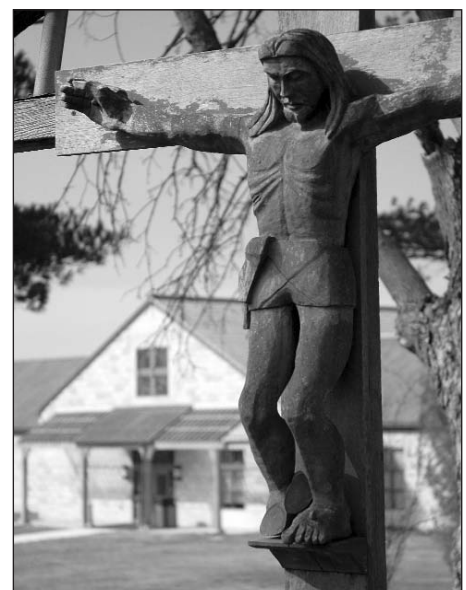
May 6, 2007—Congratulations to oblates Albert and Irene Kovacs of Indianapolis, IN, on the birth of a daughter, Madeline Elizabeth.

May 8, 2007—Ron Beathard, Cincinnati oblate, has written an article, "Ancient Monk, Modern Call." In response to a friend's seeking and finding oblation at Saint Meinrad Archabbey as an important part of his life, Ron, too, became an oblate.

May 11, 2007—Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, assistant oblate director, achieved a Doctor of Ministry in preaching from the Aquinas Institute of Theology on the campus of St. Louis University.

May 26, 2007—The Ohio Chapters of Benedictine Oblates met at Bergamo Center in Beavercreek, OH, for a day of reflection presented by Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB. The Prologue and Chapter 72 of the *Rule of Benedict* reminds us that one's interior disposi-

see *Oblate News*, p. 6



A view of the Guest House from "paradise."

Conference focuses on Benedictine leadership

The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD) held its biennial conference July 28-August 1 at St. Martin's University in Lacey, WA. Ninety-two directors and their oblate representatives from across the country met at the campus associated with St. Martin's Abbey to discuss "The Charism of Benedictine Leadership."

The main presenters for the conference were Abbot Peter Eberle, OSB, and Sr. Jacquelyn Ernster, OSB. Abbot Peter is a monk of Mount Angel Abbey in Mount Angel, OR, and Sr. Jacquelyn is a member of Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD. Both have served their communities as superiors.

Sr. Antoinette Purcell, OSB, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN, and president of NAABOD, gave the opening address. She used the Scripture story of the wedding feast at Cana as an example of how Jesus listened to the needs of the moment, having the power to transform ordinary things into something wonderful. In like manner, Sr. Antoinette said, "Leaders must call forth the gifts that they see in their followers so that something wonderful happens."

In his presentations, Abbot Peter explored different models of leadership, looked at leadership as it is prescribed in the *Rule of Benedict*, and



The officers of the NAABOD: l. to r. Sr. Bonita Gacnik, OSB, Sr. Antoinette Purcell, OSB, and Br. John Peto, OSB.

asked how both leaders and their followers need to respond to leadership if they are, in fact, living by the *Rule*. Noting that leadership is a timely topic addressed in myriad books, he cited the work of Gary Wills, *Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders*.

Speaking of the necessary interplay between leaders and followers, he said monastic leadership falls outside the model of secular leadership because the Holy Spirit is involved in the process. It is the abbot's job, as prescribed in the *Rule of Benedict*, to do everything he can to lead all of his monks, no matter their weaknesses or temperaments, to the ultimate goal of "everlasting life." He is the Abba, which literally means Father. However, Benedict uses it as a title signifying the role of Christ. The abbot is believed to hold the place of Christ as shepherd, healer, judge and teacher—all of these roles being seen as necessary aspects of being the Abba.

Such a lofty role model can be overwhelming until the abbot remembers that, in his humanity, he allows grace to transform his weaknesses into strengths. He must surrender himself in his imitation of Christ. Abbot Peter spoke of the importance of the model of rhetorical leadership for abbots, who teach through conferences and homilies.

Rhetoric can teach the truth more effectively than regular language. When an eloquent leader's rhetoric reaches the real truth of a situation, the listeners and the orator are propelled in the direction of that truth. However, such rhetoric has a sustaining force only to the extent that it effects continued conversion in the orator. His lived experience must be a product of the word preached, and eventually an abbot must integrate the entirety of the *Rule* into his life if his monks are going to willingly follow him.

And, in following the lead of the abbot, Benedict demands two important characteristics of the monastic community—obedience and support. Monks are asked to obey willingly, with a glad heart, always avoiding murmuring or grumbling against authority. At the same time, they must recognize the importance of the value of their support of the leader. In the *Rule*, Benedict uses the word "love" to refer to this kind of support.

Drawing on "The Covenant of Peace," a document written expressly for the Swiss-American Congregation, Abbot Peter noted the responsibility monks bear in carrying out the work of the Holy Spirit in the community. If the abbot is perceived to have failed in some way, the community must look at itself for the role it has played in this failure. The abbot has a right to expect the good will and trust of his monks, engaging in a collaborative approach that allows him to listen to gentle correction or complaint. The declaration speaks strongly of the abbot's need for love. Mutual love between the abbot and his monks makes the monastery a beautiful place to be.

Sr. Jacquelyn's presentations addressed three major qualities of leadership: active listening, discernment and humility. She correlated what Benedict had to say with James Autry's work, *Servant Leadership*. Autry identifies ten characteristics of the servant leader, which can all be found in Benedict's understanding of how the abbot is to guide and serve his community.

She said Benedictine life is built around a communal understanding of a hierarchical structure that takes into consideration shared consultation and where authority exists for the common good. The leader must be able to articulate clearly the vision or overarching purpose of the community's life.

see Conference, p. 7

Oblate Council hears about chapter evaluations

The Oblate Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on June 30. Present were Janis Dopp, chair; Gail Chambers, Jennie Latta, Chris Topa, Pat Phillips, Dennis Skeleton and Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB. The meeting began with a reading of the mission statement by Janis Dopp.

The council discussed the recently completed Oblate Study Week, which was facilitated by Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB. The days of study included a variety of activities on the theme of the vocation of the oblate. Three council members were able to attend and reported there were mixed reactions to the various experiences, some positive and some not so positive. The council found all of this information useful and decided to take a number of steps as a result.

First, the council was unanimous in its gratitude to Fr. Denis for the careful thought and preparation that went into the study days. Second, the council agreed that future oblate activities will include a formal evaluation process, just as other Saint Meinrad retreats do. Third, Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, felt further clarification should be provided, both for the monks and for the oblates, about the relationship between the oblates and the monastery.

He and Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, have prepared a letter to be sent to the participants in this year's study days. The council felt that a great deal had been learned, both through the study days and through the process of evaluation.

The afternoon was devoted to a number of other issues. A round of chapter evaluations is under way, with Bloomington, Merrillville, Memphis and Indianapolis being the first to be evaluated. Each member of those

chapters has been provided with a confidential Oblate Chapter Evaluation Form to complete and return to Fr. Meinrad. At the same time, the chapter coordinators have been asked to prepare a self-evaluation. Over a six-year cycle, each chapter will undergo an evaluation. The council hopes the evaluations will reveal ideas that will be helpful to other chapters and coordinators.

One such idea was that of the oblate mentor. The Bloomington Chapter had discovered that its inquirers and oblate novices were not always clear about the process of moving toward investiture and final oblation. As a result, the chapter has identified a person to serve as oblate mentor. This person focuses on providing information, hospitality and prayer support to inquirers and oblate novices.

The oblate mentor also offers information about upcoming opportunities for retreat at the Archabbey, gives instruction about prayer etiquette in the Archabbey Church, invites the oblate novices to her home for fellowship and formation, and remembers the oblate novices with cards at Christmas, birthdays and feast days. The Bloomington Chapter has found the ministry to be a real addition to their chapter.



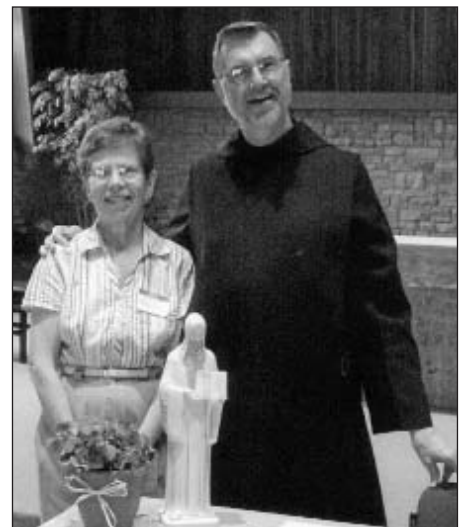
The Ohio Chapters held a day of reflection on May 26. Left photo: Yvette Donahue-Duffy makes her oblation with Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB. Right photo: Georgianna Kassman with Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB, the guest speaker.

As a result of Fr. Denis' talk during study days last year, the Bloomington Chapter has created an atmosphere of sacred space for chapter meetings. It has begun to incorporate recordings of chant, the lighting of candles, the presence of an icon of St. Benedict, the Bible and the *Rule* into its meetings, all to good effect. Gail Chambers reported that similar changes were made by the Memphis Chapter.

The council discussed various projects, including a report by Dennis Skelton on the production of the video, "What is an Oblate?" A number of oblates have been interviewed for this production, and the producer has plans for filming later in the year. There were reports about the preparation of the second edition of the *Benedictine Oblate Companion*, a Liturgy of the Hours book, a customary and ritual book, and a council handbook. Each of these is moving along toward production, with various members of the council responsible for completion.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Chris Topa.

*Jennie Latta, oblate
Memphis, TN*



Oblate News from p. 3

tion is what is important—to see Christ present in every person we meet.

Zeal is fervor, action, ardent interest and passion. While the world is full of good zeal, there is much evil zeal expressed as hatred, terrorism and war. Wicked zeal includes jealousy, selfish ambition, envy, rejection and fear. Good zeal is a choice with the knowledge that the border between light and darkness is inside, and it furthers humanity, separates one from evil and builds community, while evil zeal destroys community.

When overwhelmed by life's challenges, remember Jesus and be at the foot of His cross, and remember to call upon the Holy Spirit for grace and assistance. We were reminded to pray the powerful "Come Holy Spirit" prayer often, to use the treasures of holy reading and to persevere in *lectio divina*.

While love of Jesus alone is easy, love of Christ present in the poor and in others can be difficult. Good zeal, prayer, holy reading and tools provided in Chapter 4 of the *Rule* help monks and oblates live out monastic values and offer practical ways of living out the Gospel.

Oblates prayed evening vespers followed by Mass, celebrated by Fr. Noël and Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB. Music was provided by oblates Joan Marquis and Fr. Ed Burns from Wright State University Campus Ministry. Mrs.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Did you know that one of the activities your renewal contribution makes possible is the production and distribution of the oblate newsletters and other publications? The cost to produce and distribute the newsletter and other publications for the past year was about \$10.45 per oblate.

Yvette Donahue-Duffy made her final oblation and received a warm welcome from the Ohio oblates.

Many thanks to the Marianist Community for sharing its home for this day of reflection, and to Mrs. Jean Rohmiller, mother of oblate Fr. Chris Rohmiller, who died in February 2006 and was the Dayton Chapter coordinator for many years. He is still missed by the Dayton oblates and is always in our prayers.

*Patricia O'Malley, oblate
Beavercreek, OH*

June 18-21, 2007—Sixty-four oblates gathered at Saint Meinrad Archabbey for the Benedictine Oblate Study Week. The theme was "Work and Prayer: Integrating Benedictine Life." Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, was the presenter.

With an emphasis on giving their lives as oblates a greater sense of focus, Fr. Denis urged participants to place their identity as oblates at the center of their existence, integrating Benedictine spirituality and values into every aspect of their daily lives. He said, "Oblation is a true vocation. It has a divine character to it."

With lectures on what the home, or domestic monastery, of an oblate might look like and the centrality of the Liturgy of the Hours in the prayer life of an oblate, Fr. Denis encouraged the participants to establish an order to the way they go about being disciples.

Participants had the opportunity to give their input about an expanded four-week Liturgy of the Hours for oblates and to the development of a future customary and ritual book for oblates. As always, prayer was the hallmark of the week and good hospitality was enjoyed by all.

*Janis Dopp, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

June 26, 2007—After much prayer, discussion and consultation with Bill Dieckman, coordinator for the

Pensacola Chapter, it has been determined that the chapter will be discontinued because of small attendance at meetings, loss of some members who have moved away and not enough remaining members to support the expenses of a monk to travel to Florida twice a year. The Pensacola oblates are welcome to visit Saint Meinrad Archabbey for any programs, remaining in close contact through newsletters and other mailings. The chapter could be reinstated in the future, depending on meeting chapter guidelines.

June 28, 2007—The Lancaster County Oblates' potluck dinner was a success with delicious food and a good time for 15 people, despite a gentle rain, as reported by Oliver and Sharon Ogden.

July 11, 2007—The oblates of the New York Westchester Chapter celebrated the feast of St. Benedict with a liturgy, with Fr. Thomas D'Angelo as celebrant and homilist, followed by lunch. A contribution was made to the Corpus Christi Monastery in appreciation of the Dominican Sisters hosting the affair.

July 19, 2007—Anne Y. Koester, associate director of The Georgetown Center for Liturgy in Washington, DC, has had a book, *Sunday Mass, Our Role and Why It Matters*, published. It is a journey through the Sunday Mass, offering meaningful insights to enhance weekly gathering, helping us to understand our mission and ministry.

July 21, 2007—Rev. Christian D. Boyd has been called to the staff of the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy, St. Louis area, to work with developing congregations and as a consultant for congregational mission and leadership development. He will be trying out his doctoral thesis on developing Presbyterian congregations rooted in a Benedictine spirituality.

August 22, 2007—Oblate Rev. Michael Pahls was made the interim rector of Christ Church Anglican in St. Charles, MO. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 5-15, 2007—“The Best of Ireland” pilgrimage will feature places where St. Patrick lived, the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock, information about Celtic spirituality as well as Irish history and culture. Contact Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, (812) 357-6674 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu for information.

November 25, 2007—A day of recollection for the New York oblates will be held with Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, assistant oblate director, presenting the topic “Prayer.”

December 7-9, 2007—Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, will be retreat master for the oblate retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. The topic will be “Stability: Running in Place.”

March 3-12, 2008—Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, is conducting a tour to the Holy Land, visiting Caesarea, Haifa, Tiberias, Cana, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and other towns. Contact him at (812) 357-6674 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu.

March 31-April 2, 2008—Oblate retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, with the Feast of St. Benedict celebrated on April 1. Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB, will be the presenter. The retreat title will be announced later.

June 16-19, 2008—Oblate Study Week at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, will be the presenter with Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, assisting. The topic will be announced. ♦

Help Needed: The Oblate Office is running out of scapulars. Materials needed are the paper images (from Fr. Meinrad), firm (but soft) black cloth for backing and black woven ribbon—and, of course, a sewing machine. Would any oblates be willing to take on or share this task? Contact the Oblate Office if you're interested. ♦

Recent volunteers in the Oblate

Office: Faith Abbot, Monina Abrera, Debbie Burden, Jerry Campbell, Gail Chambers, Novice Kyle Cothorn, OSB, Ruth Engs, Ray Ensweller, Lyle Fettig, Robert Frank, Ed Huff, Chris Jones, Barb Krick, John Lehner, Teresa Lin, Mary Maillet, Br. Matthew Mattingly, OSB, Jim and Rita Merk, Patty Opaczewski, Joan and Tom Rillo, Dennis and Judy Skelton, Br. Stanislaw Sullivan, OSB, of St. Leo Abbey in FL, Chris Topa, Christina Toral, Novice Craig Wagner, OSB, and Yvonne Weaver. ♦

Conference from p. 4

To do this ably, the leader must pay attention to what is being said with an open mind, withholding judgment until time has been given over to reflection and clarification. Active listening on the part of the leader builds strength in the followers, mutual respect and positive relationships based on love and loyalty. Active listening allows the leader to articulate the vision of the community and creates a unity of purpose among all of the members.

The essence of such leadership is truthfulness and this virtue dominates in the *Rule*. Benedict is always urging us to seek our truest nature through the development of humility, which keeps us connected to our origins, teaching us to be content with who we are. Truth-filled living is the soul of humility and involves the acceptance of our limitations and our woundedness and, by extension, the limitations and woundedness of others. Going through Benedict's 12 steps of humility, Sr. Jacquelyn stressed mindfulness of God and of ourselves, which leads to the tranquility of patience, a quiet mind, moderation and inner calm, by allowing us to understand that knowing our authentic inner selves is paramount in leadership.

Sr. Jacquelyn asked, “If you wanted one sentence or phrase to sum up your

character, impact and influence when you are gone, what would that sentence be?” She said Pope Paul VI had used the phrase “elegant gravity” to express the distinctive mark of leaders who live by the *Rule of Benedict*. This phrase summed up, in Pope Paul's estimation, the qualities that mark the lives of people carving community out of the mundane things of life, creating security and stability through routine, sinking deep roots to achieve an ongoing presence, and striving to preserve and advance learning. This is a legacy for all who value perseverance in lieu of continually seeking what is new or novel.

As oblates, we have much to learn and emulate in all that was offered by these experienced leaders. We play a crucial role in the lives of our leaders and we must recognize the responsibility we have to be open to transformation and to setting aside all that is merely self-serving as we look to the common good of the groups in which we live and work, pray and play. A leader who loves his followers and is, in turn, loved by them, allows something wonderful and transformative to happen, following the lead of Jesus at the wedding at Cana who transformed ordinary water into the best of wines.

Janis Dopp, oblate

Bloomington, IN

Dennis Skelton, oblate

Louisville, KY

Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, director

Reflection Questions

1. What did you read that challenges your experience of leadership?
2. How are oblates empowered to be leaders spreading Benedictine spirituality?
3. How as an oblate do you experience Benedictine leadership—in the oblate community, the church, the parish?
4. What kinds of leadership are required for an oblate community such as Saint Meinrad Archabbey? ♦

Reading Room

In *Strangers to the City* (Paraclete Press, 2005), Michael Casey, a Cistercian monk of Tarrawarra Monastery in Australia who has written extensively on Benedictine spirituality, reminds us that Benedict advises his monks “to make themselves strangers to the actions of the age,” which, to Casey, means they become strangers to the city. They are to live apart, not only physically but with a lifestyle different from that of the world.

In the 13 chapters of *Strangers to the City*, Casey contrasts the life of a monastic to that of people of the “city.” In his chapter on leisure, he writes about the importance of using leisure time in a meaningful way. In his chapter on “Reading,” he stresses how people of this century try to alleviate their boredom by watching TV, which he calls “food for the mind which is meant to be swallowed without being chewed.”

Rather he suggests that one should carefully read a good book, as “a good book is an invitation to grow beyond what we are at present.” Casey also discusses *lectio divina* as an integral part of Benedictine spirituality.

Other topics covered by Casey, all of which focus on life in a monastery, are distinctiveness, asceticism, chastity, dispossession, antecedent willingness, mutuality, generativity, Christ, contemplation, holiness and perseverance. Although he treats all of his topics seriously, he manages to do so without being ponderous.

In his chapter on dispossession, he states, “A neatly patched habit, for example, reminds us and others that we have opted out of consumerism and are happy to make the most of what we have.” Later, he writes, “If poverty is not only practiced but also loved, then life becomes less cluttered and more of our energy can be directed to seeking that for which we came to the monastery in the first place.”

*Dorothy Soudakoff, oblate
Bloomington, IN*



Saint Meinrad
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**Benedictine
Oblate** NEWSLETTER

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