



FROM THE RULE:

“The fourth step of humility is that in this obedience under difficult, unfavorable, or even unjust conditions, his heart quietly embraces suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape.”

Chapter 7: 35-36

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Achieving balance is challenging for oblates in the secular world

When turning to the dictionary to find the meaning of balance, one finds many definitions can be cast aside for they do not relate to human existence in a social order. One definition implies judging and deciding. This is applicable to oblates striving to achieve balance between lay monasticism and the demands of the secular world, in particular, family life.

Another dictionary interpretation involves a counterbalancing weight, force or influence. Life is just like that! We have to manage our obligations and responsibilities and prioritize them to achieve some type of forward momentum. We counterbalance to achieve balance.

The dictionary says that to balance means to achieve equipoise between contrasting, opposing or interacting elements. Sounds familiar, does it not? In any type of community, be it monastic, family or institutional, balance is necessary for healthy, joyful and spiritual living.

How can one achieve the balance of prayer and work? I am not a monastic. I do not live in a community where responsibilities and duties are commonly shared and where the maxim, “Prefer nothing to the love of Christ,” is predominant and all else falls into place.

The rhythm of work and prayer is not always achievable where household duties, child-rearing responsibilities and work

need to be balanced and shared and do not wait. It is much easier for older adults who have reared their children and have, in many cases, retired from secular work. This may be the reason that a greater number of oblates tend to be older and free of child-raising duties.

So how does one achieve balance and still be an oblate? First, let us recognize that there is diversity with every situation. Married couples may not be able to pray the Liturgy of the Hours together and still monitor their young children. However, one partner might watch the children and attend to their needs while the other partner prays.

Oblates can commit to memory a variety of prayers that can be prayed during the course of a day. The Jesus Prayer is one of many prayers that might be utilized during periods of activity or inactivity in the workplace or even when changing a baby’s diaper. The rosary has been a prayer that families have historically prayed as a unit. If after the dinner is over, the dishes are addressed, the homework is done and time is available, that is the time to pray the rosary together.

A young couple can read something from the *Rule of St. Benedict* and discuss it together after the children have gone to bed. It takes coordinated teamwork for couples

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with young children to reach a level of rhythm of work and prayer, but the time will come when it will be possible to pray together.

Remember that one definition of balance involves a counterbalancing weight, force or influence. St. Augustine's axiom, "You do what you can do and you pray for what you cannot do," is one that younger oblates who are still involved in the workplace can apply to their chaotic, hectic, busy lives. Do not set high, unrealistic goals that cannot be reached in your prayer life.

One still has to fill out income tax forms, balance checkbooks, pay the bills, arrange for doctors' appointments, cook meals, mow the lawn, paint the

house and myriad activities that fill a life with materialistic obligations. If you think of spirituality as being on a scale, then one can begin to understand Benedictine oblation more clearly.

Young parents are on a spiritual scale that is not in balance. As they grow older and the children become more independent, the scale begins to balance. Spirituality can become the counterweight that brings the secular world into balance with it.

Remember, oblates are not monks; we are lay monastics living in the secular world. God wants us to be family-oriented. Children are a part of God's plan. This is not to minimize those oblates who may not have children or are not married. There are still pressures exerted upon them by secular variables. However, if you have never changed a

diaper or soothed a crying child during the night, you may not know intimately how difficult it can be on one's physical and emotional balance.

There are always moments for prayer, no matter how brief the time or how hectic life can be. The question many busy oblates ask is, "Am I doing enough spiritually?" Oblation is not a competitive commitment to knowing and serving God. The Benedictine's job is to praise God. God can be praised anywhere and at any time. God can be praised during the simple routines of ordinary life.

The frequency and intensity of prayer can be modified to fit within the time constraints imposed by a busy and structured life. This modification is not set in concrete. It can change as conditions change. The worst thing that can happen to an oblate is to let frustration affect the quality of prayer life. Let us remember that the balance scale is not inflexible. Prioritizing means counterbalancing as we continue in growth and progress, and the scales will shift.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

see Achieving, p. 4

A POINT TO PONDER FROM THE RULE

"The fourth step of humility is that in this obedience under difficult, unfavorable, or even unjust conditions, his heart quietly embraces suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape."

Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 7: 35-36

Chapter 7 of the *Rule of St. Benedict* best illustrates the quest for balance. The fourth step of humility, in particular, gives a good example of how to achieve balance for the oblate living a secular life outside of the monastery. Verses 35 and 36 imply that when obedience involves hard work and unpleasant things, or even unjust injuries of some sort, one embraces them patiently and with no outcry.

This is one of the hardest verses of St. Benedict's *Rule* for an oblate to assimilate. It is difficult to achieve a rhythm of work and prayer without feeling the pressure of everyday responsibilities or obligations. As oblates, we need to have courage. In a monastery setting, Benedict urges the monk to persevere and not give up the struggle. This is also true for the oblate, knowing that in the struggle will be the acceptance of a quiet form of humility.

We are not meant to be martyrs, but rather to seek God and to see His Son in all persons through a balance of work and prayer. The New Testament calls for perseverance in the face of bloody persecution. For the oblate, the persecution lies in secular hurdles and obstacles presented by living outside monastery walls.

St. Benedict knew that obedience would be a difficult task for young monks entering the monastic community as novices. It is no different today for oblates. Persevere, for the reward of salvation is too great.

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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

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INSTITUTES & OBLATIONS

August 23, 2006, Investiture—*Dr. Alexander Roman* of Toronto, Canada.

August 31, 2006, Oblation—*Ms. Angelina Mary Cipriani Guarini* of Farmingdale, NY.

September 1, 2006, Investiture—*Mrs. Margarita Baer* of Muncie, IN.

September 2, 2006, Investiture—*Mrs. Becky Savage* of Lexington, KY.

September 4, 2006, Oblations—*Ms. Florence Mary Caruso* of New Rochelle, NY; *Miss Celestine Maria Celestia Quiban* and *Mrs. Catherine Gabrielle Tittmann* of Farmingdale, NY; *Mrs. Catherine Philip Testa* of Massapequa, NY.

September 4, 2006, Investitures—*Mr. Joseph Allain* of Brooklyn, NY, and *Ms. Jane Massimino* of Farmingdale, NY.

September 5, 2006, Oblation—*Ms. Patricia Martha Marie Sullivan* of West Chester, PA.

September 5, 2006, Investitures—*Mrs. Nancy Lips*, *Mr. George Lips* and *Ms. Anne Kendig*, all of Lancaster, PA.

September 9, 2006, Investiture—*Mr. John (Jack) Burke* of Indianapolis, IN.

September 17, 2006, Investiture—*Mr. Samuel Eversman* of St. Louis, MO.

September 23, 2006, Investiture—*Mrs. Donna Zvonar* of Huber Heights, OH.

September 27, 2006, Oblation—*Mr. Harold Stewart John Lenfesty* of Oakville, Ontario, Canada.

September 28, 2006, Oblation—*Mrs. Kimberly Hildegard Converse* of Columbus, OH.

September 28, 2006, Investiture—*Ms. Rosemary Trelease* of Worthington, OH.

October 6, 2006, Investiture—*Mr. Joe Teague* of Danville, KY.

October 7, 2006, Investitures—*Mr. Manuel J. Grimaldi* of Louisville, KY;

Mr. Frederick Rickert and *Mrs. Kathleen Rickert* of Amory, MS.

October 8, 2006, Oblation—*Mr. Bobby Mathew Easley* of Indianapolis, IN.

October 18, 2006, Oblation—*Dr. Ronald Paul Ignatius Anjard* of San Diego, CA.

October 19, 2006, Oblation—*Rev. Timothy Benedict Fleace* of Sullivan, IN.

October 28, 2006, Oblations—*Mr. Lancelot Gabriel Dufour* of Irving, TX, and *Mrs. Angela Kay Scholastica McDonald* of Huntingburg, IN.

November 2, 2006, Oblation—*Mrs. Mary Carol Francis Work* of Bloomington, IN.

November 3, 2006, Investiture—*Rev. J. Robert Kirkham* of Rushville, IL.

November 5, 2006, Investitures—*Mr. John Beadles* of Yokohama, Japan; *Mrs. Judy Longoria* and *Mr. Raul Noe Longoria* of Bartlett, TN.

November 9, 2006, Investiture—*Dr. Cynthia Kinney* of Santa Claus, IN.

November 18, 2006, Investiture—*Rev. Mr. George Zvonar* of Huber Heights, OH.

December 2, 2006, Oblation—*Ms. Mary Catherine Faustina Hutchins* of Pinellas Park, FL.

December 9, 2006, Oblations—*Mr. Conrad Francis Brown*, *Mrs. JoAnn Therèse Brown*, *Mrs. Elizabeth Monica Puhl* and *Mrs. Theresia Monica Riddle*, all of Muncie, IN; *Mr. William Andrew Fabianic* of Fishers, IN; *Mrs. Mary Faustina Maillet* of Indianapolis, IN; and *Mr. Donald Daniel Shannonhouse* of Sewanee, TN.

December 9, 2006, Investiture—*Ms. Cynthia Butler* of Dallas, TX.

December 16, 2006, Oblation—*Mrs. Joy Clare Harbert* of Cincinnati, OH.

December 19, 2006, Oblation—*Rev. Greg Francis Alexander* of Lexington, KY.

January 6, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Joseph Mayer* of Sawyer, MI. This is a special event because Mr. Mayer is homebound, having suffered from polio since 1941, and is unlikely to ever visit Saint Meinrad Archabbey except in prayer. He became attracted to Benedictine spirituality through oblate Charles McKelvy, who began bringing Communion to him and his wife, Lavern, a few years ago. Now, as a novice, he has begun to be an oblate recruiter in his parish.

January 11, 2007, Investitures—*Mrs. Mary Rahman* of Santa Claus, IN, and *Mr. Stephen Wollenmann* of Ferdinand, IN.

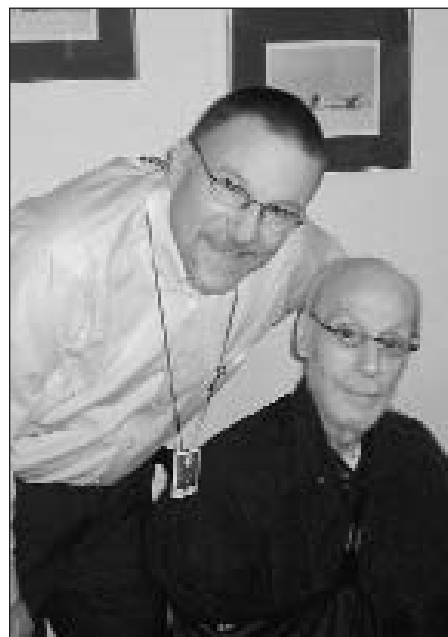
January 13, 2007, Investiture—*Mrs. Josephine Stickford* of Indianapolis, IN.

January 20, 2007, Investitures—*Mr. John Lehner* of South Bend, IN, and *Mr. Wayne Reed* of St. Charles, MO.

January 22, 2007, Investiture—*Dr. Donna Harper* of Antioch, TN.

February 1, 2007, Oblation—*Ms. Joanne Bernadette Beriswill* of Bloomington, IN. ♦

see *Oblate News*, p. 6



Oblate Charles McKelvy (left) greets Joseph Mayer following his investiture as an oblate novice in Sawyer, MI.

Fr. Ralph Lynch, former assistant oblate director, dies in monastery infirmary



Fr. Ralph Lynch, OSB, monk and priest of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, died at the monastery on Thursday, October 19, 2006, after a

period of declining health. He was a jubilant of profession and priesthood.

Fr. Ralph was born in Cleveland, OH, on May 20, 1920, receiving the name John Anthony at baptism. Fr. Ralph attended Catholic schools in Cleveland and Akron before beginning his seminary studies at Saint Meinrad in 1939. He was invested as a novice in August of 1941, professed his simple vows on August 6, 1942, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 11, 1946.

In 1947, Abbot Ignatius appointed Fr. Ralph as secretary to the abbot, a position he held for eight years. From 1947 to 1952, he studied at Notre Dame University during the summers and earned a master's degree in economics in 1954. While working on his graduate degree, he taught history, religion, economics and political science in Saint Meinrad's minor and major seminaries.

In 1968, Fr. Ralph spent some time at the former St. Charles Priory, now known as Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, CA. He returned to Saint Meinrad to teach in the Seminary College, holding the position of confessor for the minor and major seminaries, serving as registrar and assistant spiritual director in the Major Seminary, and directing parochial assistance, where he received and provided for the requests from parishes for weekend and longer term help.

In 1982, Fr. Ralph began a ministry of service as chaplain to the Benedictine

sisters at Holy Angels Convent in Jonesboro, AR. He returned to Saint Meinrad Archabbey in 1984, assuming the position of assistant oblate director under both Fr. Gerard Ellspermann and Fr. Michael Keene. Fr. Ralph served for nine years in the Oblate Office, often remarking how impressed he was with the oblates' spirituality.

During this time, he was also a commuting chaplain for the Benedictine sisters at Ferdinand, IN. From 1997 until 2001, Fr. Ralph ministered to the residents of St. Paul Hermitage, the retirement community run by the Benedictine sisters of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN. His final assignment was as chaplain to the St. Martin de Porres Lay Dominican Community in New Hope, KY, from 2002-2006.

Toward the end of his life, Fr. Ralph spent most of his time in the monastery infirmary with serious health problems, but he accepted his suffering with a strong will that was an asset in all of his struggles. He was always willing to be of assistance when needed. He was very pleased to be able to celebrate his 60th anniversary of priesthood in May 2006. His loyalty and service to the oblate program of Saint Meinrad Archabbey will not be forgotten. ♦

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Reflection Questions

1. What changes can I make in my daily life that will afford more time for praying and growing closer to God?
2. Have I prioritized my commitments and responsibilities to family and to God and integrated them wherever and whenever possible?
3. Do I take advantage of brief moments during the course of the day to do short prayers that are repetitive in format?
4. Have I provided for "a place apart," both in the spiritual and physical sense, for prayer?
5. Do I include others, such as family members, in praying the rosary or the Divine Office, etc.? Do I render grace at all meals, even outside my home?
6. As my family responsibilities decreased, have I increased my spirituality and grown closer to God through an established pattern of work and prayer? ♦

Volunteers appreciated

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office have been Julie Benton, Jerry Campbell, Novice Kyle Cothorn, OSB, Ray Emsweller, Ruth Engs-Franz, Br. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, Novice Todd Mattingly, OSB, Linda Peeno, Joan and Tom Rillo, Dennis Skelton, Dorothy Soudakoff, Christina Toral and Novice Craig Wagner, OSB. ♦



Photo taken after the closing Mass of the New York Oblates Retreat on September 4, 2006. Front row l. to r.: Paul Muhs, Catherine Testa, Catherine Tittmann, Celestine Quiban, Florence Caruso, Irene Muhs. Back row l. to r.: Fr. Edward Linton, OSB, Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, Fr. Thomas D'Angelo.

Oblate Director speaks on living the oblate vocation

Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, oblate director, gave a presentation on “The Vocation of Being an Oblate and How to Live It” to the St. Meinrad Oblate Chapter at its September 14 meeting and it was recorded in a DVD format. Fr. Meinrad noted that every Christian has a call to a vocation. Saint Meinrad Archabbey has 101 monks and 1,110 oblates—a ratio of 11 oblates to every monk.

The monks are following a calling from God. If a vocation is a calling, are the Benedictine oblates also following a vocation in the traditional meaning of living the monastic life? There are three distinct steps to a personal call to vocation: the call, the discovery of the call and the response to the call.

Oblates should reflect on this pattern of steps in light of their vocation as an oblate. Fr. Meinrad further stipulated that oblates are travelers on the way to everlasting life. Making final oblation is only the beginning of the process, and it is an adventure that involves being on the move spiritually.

He also suggested that there are five markers that indicate an oblate is following in the footsteps of St. Benedict: stability, simplicity, humility, obedience and prayer. The common threads that oblates share with the monks are: truly seeking God, following St. Benedict’s mottos of *ora et labora* (prayer and work) and *pax* (peace), and committing to the Benedictine way.

A DVD of the presentation is available for oblates to view, and perhaps local chapters can make copies available to chapter members. It answers the questions oblation raises for every individual contemplating or practicing

oblation. Fr. Meinrad defines what an oblate is, how to live as an oblate in the world and how to utilize the monastic values in everyday living.

To obtain a copy of the DVD, contact the Oblate Office at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. A \$3 donation to cover the cost of the DVD, shipping and handling would be appreciated.

Reflection Questions

1. Before we begin this year’s focus on oblation as vocation, do you think of your life as an oblate as a vocation?
2. How would you answer the question proposed by someone living in New York when she asked, “Why do I want to belong to a monastery located so far away?”
3. As an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, do you feel that you are a Benedictine presence in the world?
4. You made three promises at final oblation: stability of heart, obedience to the will of God, and fidelity to the monastic way of life. Which of these promises has made the biggest impact on your life?
5. Fr. Meinrad stipulated five markers of stability, simplicity, humility, obedience and prayer that we can use to evaluate how well we are following in the footsteps of St. Benedict. In what way do our oblate duties help us to work toward these markers?◆

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 20, 2007—Oblate Finance Committee meeting in the Oblate Office at Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

April 21, 2007—Oblate Council meeting in the Oblate Office at Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

May 26, 2007—The Ohio Day of Recollection will be held in Dayton. The presenter will be Fr. Fintan Cummings, OSB, junior monk assistant oblate director. His topic will be “Chapter 72: On the Good Zeal of the Monk - On the Good Zeal of Oblates.”

June 18-21, 2007—The Oblate Study Week topic is “Work and Prayer-Integrating Benedictine Life.” The week will focus on the practical side of being an oblate; how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours in oblate meetings, in family or community gatherings, or alone; how to focus the life of home and family along Benedictine lines; and what constitutes Benedictine family life and the Benedictine workplace. These topics will be considered in presentations by Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, and in workshops that will experiment with various types of prayer and Benedictine living skills.

July 27-August 2, 2007—The biennial meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors will be hosted by St. Martin’s Abbey and St. Placid’s Monastery in Lacey, WA. The theme, “Leadership in the *Rule of Benedict*,” will provide a forum for reflection on leadership from Benedict’s perspective, how we apply that to our roles in working with oblates and how we help to develop leadership among our oblates.

August 31-Sept. 3, 2007—For the New York Oblate Retreat, Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, will be the retreat master, presenting the topic, “Stability: Running in Place.”

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.”◆

**Pray
for
Vocations**

DEATHS

Mrs. Louise Gutsell of Jasper, IN, died on July 5, 2006.

Mrs. Leona Block of Jasper, IN, died on August 30, 2006.

Mr. Chris Wolfe of Muncie, IN, died on September 11, 2006. He organized the Muncie Chapter and was coordinator from September 23, 1999, until November 9, 2001. We are grateful for his hard work and dedication.

Mr. Charles Budke of Hays, KS, died on September 14, 2006. He became an oblate on March 12, 1945.

Mrs. Mary Louise Uebelhor of Huntingburg, IN, died on September 18, 2006.

Miss Mary Emily Hicinbothem of Pelham, NY, died on September 19, 2006.

Dr. William Smith of Fallbrook, CA, died on September 30, 2006.

Mr. Charles Young of Jasper, IN, died on October 9, 2006.

Mrs. Patricia Funk of Vincennes, IN, died on November 25, 2006.

Mrs. Suzanne Lythgoe of Jasper, IN, died on November 26, 2006.

Mr. Joseph Filcer of Indianapolis, IN, died on December 3, 2006.

Miss Ellen Twibell of St. Meinrad, IN, died on December 7, 2006. She was the coordinator of the St. Meinrad Oblate Chapter, and we appreciate all she did for that chapter.

Rev. Bruce Farmer of Toledo, OH, died on January 2, 2007.

Mr. James J. Graves of Indianapolis, IN, died on January 10, 2007. ♦

HAPPENINGS

August 2006—Oblate Jennifer Basham of Indianapolis, IN, joined the Catholic Church this past Easter. In discerning God's will for her life, she began to inquire about religious life. A

response from Mount Saint Benedict in Crookston, MN, offered a live-in volunteer program to get the feel of 21st-century monastic life. She participated in the program from August 4 to October 9.

August 26, 2006—Oblates Louis B. Dugan, Gregory L. Klinglesmith and Gerald J. Mattingly were ordained as permanent deacons for the Archdiocese of Louisville, KY. May God's blessings be upon them in their pastoral ministries.

September 2006—Dr. Edgar Howell, Middletown, MD, an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, donated a copy of his book, *The Words and Works of the Holy Spirit*, with a publication date of December 2005, to the Oblate Library. The book explores biblical passages to promote a better understanding of the Holy Spirit. The guide presents 126 Scripture passages that refer to the Holy Spirit, explains their message, and reflects on how they can be understood and appreciated. Each short lesson presents the biblical reference, the agents or people involved and the major action. The author presents his reflection on the passage, followed by a short spiritual prayer.

September 2006—Nancy Lux of Bloomington, IN, has been developing a Novice Mentor Program using the guidebook, *Mentoring Program for Oblate Novices*. In the process, she created a Novice Prayer for chapter members to pray in support of the novices.

Novice Prayer

Holy Father Benedict, protect and guide your Novices.

May God grant them wisdom, discernment and help in meeting their challenges.

Let us pray to God that the teaching of St. Benedict will strengthen their faith.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

September 1-4, 2006—The New York Oblate Retreat at Mariandale used the theme, "Hospitality—The Way that Benedict Encourages Us to Meet Others as Christ." Fr. Edward Linton, OSB, was the retreat director and was assisted by Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB. There were two investitures and five oblations. A sizable crowd enjoyed the conferences, the meals and the lovely cake presented to honor the 50th jubilee of Fr. Meinrad.

September 5, 2006—The Lancaster, PA, Oblate Chapter met at St. Joseph's Church, Lancaster. Three novices were invested (Nancy and George Lips and Anne Kendig) and one novice made her final oblation (Pat Sullivan). The highlight of the meeting was the surprise celebration of Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune's 50th anniversary of profession. The oblates had a special cake during the social after their meeting.

September 24, 2006—Cincinnati oblates gathered at the home of Clyde and Pat Dorn to initiate the 2006-07 year and enjoy a potluck dinner. This meeting marked a special milestone for the oblates, as it was the 10th anniversary of the re-formation of the Cincinnati Chapter. Its first meeting was held September 1995 at Raymond Walters College in Blue Ash, OH (a Cincinnati suburb). Laurie Wallhauser brought a beautifully decorated cake to celebrate the occasion. Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, was the guest speaker, and he provided some interesting insights on "The Vocation of an Oblate and How to Live It."

September 25, 2006—Oblate Chris Jones completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree in science and nursing. She received her BSN pin. We congratulate her on her achievement.

October 16-26, 2006—The Benedictine pilgrimage to Austria, under the leadership of Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB, and Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, was an awesome trip that offered the gift of daily Mass in a variety of lovely churches; several visits to monas-

teries that displayed diversity in art, architecture and size; varying historical perspectives and influences culturally affecting the lives of peoples and places; gorgeous scenery with comfortable and peaceful travel; a flavor of foods, customs and ways of life in each area; an exposure to the Alps scenery and other “The Sound of Music” sites, Mozart’s birthplace and the opulence of royal palaces; and some interaction with other languages, currency and styles of dress. The group of 32 travelers, including some oblates, enjoyed shopping, sightseeing and relaxing. It was truly a faith-inspiring trip.

October 20, 2006—The Oblate Finance Committee met with Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB. The meeting began with an end-of-the-year financial report (July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006) and an explanation of the financial statement. The report showed a small surplus with all expenses covered. Also discussed were the new capital expenditures that were made for improvements in the Oblate Office. The committee talked about holding expenses down and ways to do this while being accountable for the income and expenses of the oblate program. They looked at upcoming expenses and how they will be funded.

October 21, 2006—The Oblate Council met with Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, to discuss some of the current and future activities and projects of the oblate community. Two of the council members participated by teleconference. The items on the agenda related to the oblate community, the Oblate Office staff and volunteers, formation, publications, activities, chapters, resources and finances.

Topics of discussion in the morning session included letters to non-participating oblates; the development of a time, talent and treasure survey; recruiting new oblates in general; younger oblates and increasing the number of oblates participating in the chapters; staffing the Oblate Office

and how to make it more efficient; volunteer workers in the Oblate Office; and how the Oblate Council and various committees are functioning.

The afternoon session began with Fr. Meinrad commenting on various resources of the oblate library and future activities that will involve oblates: retreats, the oblate study week, the meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors, and the World Congress of Oblates in 2009. There was much discussion on the chapters: how things are going with the chapters, chapter coordinator self-evaluations, chapter evaluations and monks’ visits to chapters.

Of note was that a St. Benedict icon is being created by Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, and that Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, will present a copy to each chapter. Also discussed was the final draft of the “Ongoing Formation Special Edition” newsletter and other future publications such as the second edition of the *Benedictine Oblate Companion*, a Liturgy of the Hours book, and a customary and ritual book. Two video projects are in production, “The Vocation of An Oblate,” a conference given by Fr. Meinrad, and “What’s An Oblate?,” which is moving ahead with the first interviews to be done during the December retreat. The council meeting ended with a report on the finances and the work of the finance committee.

October 28, 2006—Br. Paul Nord, OSB, who is an assistant oblate director, was ordained to the diaconate.

November 2, 2006—Ray and Lois Emsweller, oblates of Dublin, OH, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

November 26, 2006—Fifty-one oblates attended the New York Oblates’ Day of Recollection at St. Ignatius Retreat Center in Manhasset, NY. Fr. Anthony Vinson, OSB, presented “Cherishing Christ Above All.” Oblates Paul and Irene Muhs made the arrangements.

December 8-10, 2006—The Oblate Retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey featured Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, presenting “Sharing the Mind of St. Benedict: The Monastery, the Oblate and the World.” The first conference was introductory in scope and depicted the oblate as a bridge between the monastery and the secular world.

From there, he addressed how we know the mind of St. Benedict to shape our own lives and how to live in witness to others who share the same commitment. Archabbot Justin emphasized that the mind of St. Benedict lives on in the monastery and that the monks share it with the oblates, who then share it with the world. The oblate is subsequently the bridge to the world, reaching areas inaccessible to monks.

He concluded with the mind of St. Benedict and the spirit of Advent, emphasizing the themes of worship, suffering and everyday choices that shape the season of Advent and that are found within the *Rule*. There were 93 oblates present for the retreat. Seven novices made their oblation and one person was invested as an oblate novice after the Mass on Saturday, December 9.

January 27, 2007—The following is a testimony of the value of Benedictine oblation submitted to Fr. Jonathan Fassero, OSB, by Scott Read. Fr. Jonathan met Scott in the Tampa, FL, airport a number of years ago. Scott writes, “Every time I pick up my oblate companion book, I can’t believe how much it, God and Saint Meinrad Archabbey has helped me to bring sanity back to my life. I look forward to reading it when I get back home, before going to bed and when I awake. I am at the point where I can recite many parts of it by heart so when I can’t get to my book, I simply say part of it in the car or wherever I am. The *Rule* gives me little things to practice throughout the day as it relates to interacting with people and conducting my day-to-day experiences.”◆

Reading Room

Corinne Ware's book, *Saint Benedict on the Freeway: A Rule of Life for the 21st Century* (Abingdon Press, 2001), reflects on several questions: How can we heal the rift between our daily lives and the sacred? How can we live a life capable of hearing "the still small voice of God" while experiencing the speed and sensory overload of modern life?

Do these questions sound familiar? Of course they do, for as oblates we have reiterated them many times. The author attempts to translate into today's world several spiritual formative practices that have worked in the past. The heart of the book is the creative adaptation of those practices to contemporary secular life.

The author also identifies the barriers that keep one from achieving a desired relationship with God. She identifies significant practices and insights that have been of great assistance to pilgrims throughout the centuries. In particular, she presents the learned capacity for detachment through prayer.

She offers new and innovative ways to pray, including realistic approaches to praying the Divine Office, which should be of specific interest to oblates. Ms. Ware also shares a creative approach to creating a contemporary

"rule of life" that is individualistic or personalized. This should be of great interest to oblates seeking balance in their oblation requirements. The author considers the question of how to be present to God through all hours of the day and not just at specified times.

This book is a practical guide to recognizing the cultural situation of the people for whom she writes, especially oblates. Recognition is made of the pragmatic influence of St. Benedict's *Rule* in our modern spiritual awareness. She sees the Benedictine *Rule* as presenting solid ways to remember God throughout the myriad thoughts and activities of daily life.

A significant dimension of the book is the study guide for each chapter. It makes the book an excellent tool for small group study. Oblate chapters might use the book to augment their study of the *Rule* and its importance in living in a tumultuous, pluralistic culture.

This is a particularly applicable book for oblates, as we all live busy lives on the "freeway." St. Benedict and his *Rule* are the brakes that slow us down. It is only in the slowing down that we have time to grow closer to God.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*



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