



FROM THE RULE:

“The workshop where we should accomplish this work is the monastic enclosure and stability in the community.”

Chapter 4, Verse 78

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Stability: Destroying some myths

Stability is one of the three vows a Benedictine monk professes. Many people understand, in a general way, what this vow means, but there are misunderstandings as well. Sometimes these misunderstandings lead to myths: impressions taken as facts, but which are really far from the truth. Here I hope to debunk three common myths about the Benedictine vow of stability.

The first myth: Stability means that the monk spends his entire life at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. Many of our monks, often those having specialized skills necessary for the monastery’s daily operations, do spend most or all of their lives here. For example, except for several years away training to become a registered nurse and, later, a physician’s assistant, our Brother Daniel Linskens (†2001) spent his monastic years tending to the health needs of those on the Hill and in the surrounding community.

This “geographical stability” may be the case for many monks, but for others their stability is expressed in their commitment to the monastery’s works. Some monks spend years away from the Hill, but they do so tending faithfully to a particular work Saint Meinrad Archabbey contributes to the Church. Some are parish pastors, for example, while others teach at schools in this country or in Europe.

In fact, six times in our history monks have left the Hill to establish monastic

foundations elsewhere. On five of these occasions, these foundations eventually became monasteries in their own right (our “daughter houses”). These founding monks may transfer their stability to the new monastery, but they will always claim Saint Meinrad Archabbey as their monastic home, their monastic “place of birth.”

The second myth: Stability is boring. How could living in the same place with the same people not be boring? Familiarity may sometimes breed contempt, but living in the same place with the same people offers its own treasures. Older monks find it fascinating to walk down a particular corridor now filled with the video equipment seminarians use to practice their homilies, for “right here” is where their bed was when they first came to Saint Meinrad Archabbey!

Younger monks delight in finding out that “this room” used to be the theology chapel before it became the monastery’s refectory before it became the theology chapel (again!) and is now the Alumni Commons. The place changes, and the changes are fascinating. They reflect how we shape our space to better serve the many people who journey to the Hill for so many different reasons.

If the changes in one’s place are fascinating, the changes in one’s confreres can be

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inspiring. A monk learns valuable lessons thanks to that vow of stability. First, it is truly a privilege to share life with so many fine men for so many years. But there is more. As he buries former friends, mentors and community leaders, the monk is reminded of his mortality. He learns about humility as he witnesses once-strong men who laid sandstone or administered the community now graciously accepting the help of others for their basic needs.

And the monk is inspired—and challenged—when, thinking about a particular confrere, he realizes just how much better a preacher, a reader, a worker, a person—a monk—his confrere has become over the years.

The third myth: Stability stifles a monk's creativity. I look back upon what I

have been asked to do these past 31 years, and one thing is clear: most of those things I wouldn't have chosen to do! But I say that, not with anger or regret, but with awe and thanksgiving. My attempts to commit myself to the people, the place and the works of Saint Meinrad Archabbey have constantly pulled me out of myself to tend to those people, this place and those works.

I have discovered skills and resources within myself that forever would have remained untapped had I simply been left to "my desires." Would I have been happy if I had been able to chart my own course? I think so. But as I look back upon what has actually happened, I know that I am.

I close, not by debunking a myth, but by stating a fact. Stability is related closely to thanksgiving and to confi-

dence. The stability of those who have gone before us encourages us to be thankful for the monastic heritage we now enjoy. And it is our stability that will allow us to continue to build upon what they have begun so that, as the blue banners throughout the Archabbey grounds confidently proclaim, "We're beginning our next 150 years!"

*Fr. Kurt Stasiak, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*

Reflection Questions

1. What is a myth? How does it affect how we think about something? How might we "defuse" it?
2. Why do Benedictine monks take a vow of stability?
3. What does "stability" mean to me? Why should it be a part of monastic life? Oblate life?
4. How do monks justify their stability when they live and work away from the monastery?
5. Why do many monks live most of their lives at the monastery?
6. Is stability boring? How might it not be boring? What kind of thinking might be needed to avoid feelings of boredom?
7. What might monks treasure about daily sameness?
8. What are some strong values of stability aside from holding a community together?
9. How do I value (or not value) stability in my faith and family life?

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

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A POINT TO PONDER FROM THE RULE

"The workshop where we should accomplish this work is the monastic enclosure and stability in the community."

Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 4, Verse 78

This is the last verse of the chapter on "The Tools of Good Works." It is interesting that the word "tools" matches up with the word "workshop," for it is in the workshop that tools are most apt to be used. The word "stability," as used by St. Benedict, means stability in the monastery and not necessarily in the monastic enclosure.

For good works to manifest themselves in the monastic community, there must be both stability of the spirit and stability of the heart on the part of the monks. The root of the word "stability" is the Latin verb *stare*, to stand. At the time of the martyrs, it was used for those who remained firm in faith and persevered to the end.

Stability also includes "stability of feet," inasmuch as it means stability of the spirit. Benedict was aware of the danger of *acedia*, listlessness, where a monk may want to roam about looking for diversion. To Benedict, stability was connected to all four aspects of being a monk, namely that of monastery, community, rule and abbot.

He had no tolerance for those wandering monks who went from monastery to monastery, exploiting their hospitality. To Benedict, stability of heart meant to persevere and bind oneself firmly to God. In short, he wants us to persevere to the end and not leave the way once it has been chosen.

INSTITUTES & OBLATIONS

January 31, 2007, Oblation—**Mrs. Linda Anne Larson** of Ashland, WI.

February 8, 2007, Investiture—**Mr. Earl Walton** of DeMotte, IN.

February 10, 2007, Oblations—**Mr. Mark Philip Neri Fetter** of Bedford, IN, and **Mr. Jeffrey Paul Trammell** of Whiteland, IN.

February 10, 2007, Investitures—**Mr. Steven Seitz** of Fishers, IN, and **Dr. Brooke Whitten** of Noblesville, IN.

February 17, 2007, Investiture—**Mr. Steven Frueh** of Lexington, KY.

February 19, 2007, Oblation—**Mr. Jerid Romanos Miller** of Huntington, IN.

February 19, 2007, Investiture—**Mr. John Schaffner** of Indianapolis, IN.

February 22, 2007, Investiture—**Miss Silverhorse** of Worthington, OH.

February 24, 2007, Oblations—**Mr. Jerome Louis Jerome Bessler** of Avon, IN, and **Mr. Michael Gabriel McVey** of Pittsboro, IN.

February 27, 2007, Investiture—**Mr. James Hubbman** of St. Peters, MO.

March 1, 2007, Investiture—**Mrs. Mary Kathryn Dorsey** of West Chester, PA.

March 3, 2007, Investitures—**Ms. Lorraine Kraft** of Copiague, NY, **Mrs. Patricia Nicholes** and **Ms. Edith Pellicano**, both of Farmingdale, NY.

March 9, 2007, Oblation—**Ms. Mary Francesca Caperton** of Louisville, KY.

March 10, 2007, Oblations—**Mrs. Cynthia Catherine Neuhaus** of Harrison, OH, and **Mrs. Jean Scholastica Ness** of Marion, IL.

March 14, 2007, Investiture—**Mr. Remi St. Onge** of Brunswick, ME.

March 16, 2007, Oblation—**Mrs. Janet Monica Wilhelm** of Rudolph, OH.

March 20, 2007, Investiture—**Ms. Adrienne Strickland** of Asheville, NC.

March 21, 2007, Oblations—**Mrs. Barbara St. Francis of Assisi Habig** of Jasper, IN, and **Mr. Jens Meinrad Thomsen** of Columbus, IN.

March 24, 2007, Oblation—**Mr. James Henry Spicer** of Lowell, IN.

March 24, 2007, Investitures—**Mrs. Kathleen Kauffman** and **Dr. James Kauffman** of Louisville, KY, and **Mr. Richard Peters** of Lowell, IN.

April 4, 2007, Oblation—**Mr. John (Spike) Meinrad Qualls** of Clarkton, MO.

April 8, 2007, Oblations—**Mr. Richard Austin Paul Martin** and **Mrs. Ruth Ellen Mary Magdalene Martin** of Oak Ridge, TN.

April 14, 2007, Investitures—**Mr. Thomas McKiernan** of Indianapolis, IN, and **Mr. Danny Wright** of Carmel, IN.

April 22, 2007, Investiture—**Mr. Fred Otto III** of Fort Thomas, KY.

April 24, 2007, Oblation—**Mr. Terence Cosmas Collins** of Fernandina Beach, FL.

April 28, 2007, Oblation—**Mrs. Gail Jane Frances Chantal Lyman** of Dayton, OH.

April 28, 2007, Investiture—**Mr. David Absbear** of South Vienna, OH.

April 30, 2007, Oblation—**Rev. Christopher Gregory Millay** of Brookville, IN. ♦

DEATHS

Mrs. Shirley Rogier of Tell City, IN, died on February 14, 2007.

Mrs. Greta Silich of Staten Island, NY, died on February 18, 2007.

Mrs. Mary Devillez of Evansville, IN, died on February 28, 2007.

Mr. Donald Waters of Washington, DC, died on March 7, 2007.

Rev. Donald Hardebeck of West Lafayette, IN, died on March 11, 2007.

Mrs. Mary Zarrella of Tell City, IN, died on March 21, 2007. She was an oblate for 65 years. She and her husband Joe (†2006) made their oblations the day before their wedding in 1942.

Mr. Joseph Mayer of Sawyer, MI, died on March 29, 2007.

Mrs. Pauline Woehler of Haubstadt, IN, died on April 1, 2007.

Mrs. Sheila Olohan of Morgantown, IN, died on April 7, 2007. ♦

HAPPENINGS

February 2007—Oblate Scott Knitter of Chicago taught a Lenten Adult Class Series at the Church of the Ascension in Chicago. The title was: “Benedictine Tools for Lent and Beyond.” He used Jane Tomaine’s book, *St. Benedict’s Toolbox: The Nuts and Bolts of Everyday Benedictine Living*.

March 2007—Oblate John McMullen from Evansville, IN, has written a book, *The Last Blackrobe of Indiana and the Potawatomi Trail of Death*. It is the true story of a French attorney-turned-missionary-priest, Benjamin Petit, and his mission to the Diocese of Vincennes, IN. Fr. Petit worked with

see Oblate News, p. 6



Oblate staff gathers for a photo: Sitting are Brenda Uebelhor, secretary, and Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, director. Standing l. to r. are: Br. Thomas Gricoski, OSB; Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB; Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB; and Br. Christian Raab, OSB.

Oblates: A program or a community?

Where and how does oblation fit into the secular life? What might oblates do to help it fit? The “oblation as a vocation” theme, with its ongoing formation and dedication to stability, may stagger the good intentions of many prospective novices and oblates. However, each oblate grows into the vocation as an individual with his/her own timetable, coping with individual secular life demands.

A previous newsletter gave an excellent blueprint of the ongoing formation process—the resources available, a list of ten steps to a stronger vocation, monastery expectations of oblates, oblates’ promises and duties, and so on. Oblation’s stability and unity of purpose raises the question: is oblation a program or a community?

At one time or another, all of us have participated in “programs.” In fact, we participate in numerous programs in the course of our lives. These can be brief experiences of information or entertainment, or they can be extended courses of study. Programs expand our understanding of a certain subject or allow us an opportunity to participate in a pleasurable public performance. In all situations, however, programs have a marked beginning and an expected end, and they do not perpetuate the necessity of stability.

On the other hand, a “community” is where something more meaningful is taking place, for it provides us with the context for a “way of life” and the needed support to make that way of life possible. We are part of our family, which is a community of related people. We enter into a “parish community,” where we live out our chosen religious commitment in union with others who share our faith.

Society at large is also considered a community of persons linked together by a common set of governmental

policies. Many times, we seek out other forms of community, but all are intended to give shape and meaning to the common interests of the people who make them up. Unlike participation in programs, being part of a community is generally ongoing. We do not anticipate an end date when the community will be completed—thus the stability factor can be supported and sustained.

As oblates, we form a community of individuals who share an appreciation of the *Rule of St. Benedict*, prayer and a spiritual home at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. We ask for admittance into this sacred community as oblates who will seek the will of God in all we do and promise stability of heart to this monastery and all the other oblates who journey with us. Our promises bind us together in a relationship that sets us on a common course that is ongoing and lifelong, if we choose.

Because of this, we live as participants in the oblate community of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. Our common formation does not come to an end at the close of a semester of study. We are in for the long haul—an indication of stability—choosing to be here because our

hearts long for the same homeland where the community of God’s chosen people will live together eternally.

*Janis Dopp, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

Reflection Questions

1. How would I identify or describe a program? A community?
2. What unites a group of people in a program? In a community?
3. What does unity in a community provide for the individual oblates?
4. Am I willing to try, however slowly, to add additional enrichment to my oblation?
5. Am I willing to regularly examine my spiritual growth and seek to improve it?
6. Am I able to identify strengths and growth as well as weaknesses in my oblation formation? How may I improve further? Am I looking at oblation as a way of life? ♦

Volunteers appreciated

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office have been Jerry Campbell, Novice Kyle Cothorn, OSB, Ruth Engs-Franz, Barbara Krick, Dennis Skelton, Dorothy Soudakoff, Novice Craig Wagner, OSB, Tom and Joan Rillo. ♦



Oblates get ready for the next conference by Br. Fidelis Mary von Hazmburg, OSB, during the March retreat at Saint Meinrad.

Oblate Council looks at financial picture

The Oblate Council met with Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, in the Oblate Office on April 21. The meeting was opened by Chairwoman Janis Dopp with a reading from Fr. Gueric DeBona's new book, *Praying with the Benedictines*.

The meeting was preceded the night before by a meeting of the Finance Council, which provided a report for the full Council the following day. In essence, the Finance Council report was very positive. Concerns about a budget shortfall from two years ago have been allayed through the generous giving of our oblates and careful attention to spending.

Attendance at oblate retreats has been very strong. The Oblate Council recommended that pertinent financial information be included in each newsletter, so that all oblates can better understand the costs and benefits of belonging to the oblate community. Be sure to look for this information in upcoming editions of the *Benedictine Oblate*.

At the request of the Oblate Council and at the direction of Fr. Meinrad, Br. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, examined the database to determine how many of the oblates are age 45 and under. He reported 110 oblates in this category, with about 900 over the age of 45. The Council felt that this showed the strength of the community and its broad appeal.

This information was heard in connection with an article distributed by Fr. Meinrad from the *National Catholic Reporter* showing the projected growth in the population of Catholics age 65 and older in the next 25 years, and the tendency of these persons to become increasingly committed to religious faith and institutions. Br. Thomas was also able to identify those oblates who have not been active in the oblate community

in recent years. A special effort is planned to reach out to these persons to encourage them to recommit to the oblate community.

There was an extended discussion about the July 11 dinner for the Feast of St. Benedict. This event began as a fairly simple social event many years ago, but has grown to be more and more elaborate, requiring the coordination of a number of volunteers and a great deal of expense. After consulting the Council, Fr. Meinrad decided not to hold the dinner this year, but to plan for a day of recollection in following years.

The Council felt that a day of recollection, without a formal dinner afterward, would provide a more affordable and focused option for oblates who have not attended an oblate retreat in the recent past. The day of recollection will also reposition the annual event as one of the elements in the program of ongoing formation for the oblates of Saint Meinrad.

Ongoing formation was a theme discussed in a number of ways throughout the day. Fr. Meinrad reported overwhelmingly positive responses to the special edition of the *Benedictine Oblate* dedicated to opportunities for ongoing formation. Extra copies of this edition were printed so they can be provided to each new oblate following final oblation.

Fr. Meinrad reported that the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors requested permission to reprint substantial portions of Archabbot Justin's article from that newsletter. You may view the *NAABOD Newsletter* at www.naabod.org/naabod-news.html. The Council was pleased that the oblate community at Saint Meinrad is held in high esteem by directors of other oblate communities.

Many plans are under way to increase the outreach and strengthen the ties of the oblate community. A new DVD, "What is an Oblate?" is in production, through some generous gifts of time and funds. In addition, plans continue for the production of a second edition of the *Benedictine Oblate Companion*, a new four-week cycle of the Liturgy of the Hours, and a customary and ritual manual. Any oblate who can help with the funding of one or more of these projects is asked to contact Fr. Meinrad.

The community will send representatives to the NAABOD biennial meeting, hosted by St. Martin's Abbey and St. Placid's Priory, July 28-August 2, 2007, again made possible by a generous gift to the community. Plans are under way for ongoing evaluations of the chapters and chapter coordinators on a six-year cycle, and for a time, talent and treasure survey of all oblates to help the Oblate Director better identify and coordinate oblate volunteers.

Fr. Meinrad distributed a schedule of oblate retreats and days of recollection for the next three years, which was quite impressive. Fr. Brendan Moss and Br. Christian Raab have joined Fr. Joseph Cox and Br. Thomas Gricoski as assistants to the oblate director. They provide help as they are able, especially by attending chapter meetings in the local area.

Registrations for the Oblate Study Week this summer have exceeded 70 persons. The study week will be led by Fr. Denis Robinson on the theme, "Work and Prayer: Integrating Benedictine Life." Those who are still planning to attend, but have not made reservations, need to make their intentions known as soon as possible.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 3:45 p.m.

Jennie Latta, oblate
Memphis, TN

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the Potawatomi tribes and traveled with them in their forced march to the West from northern Indiana.

March 20-22, 2007—An oblate retreat was held at Saint Meinrad, with 70 oblates in attendance and two oblate novices who made their final oblation.

Br. Fidelis von Hazmburg, OSB, presented the retreat, inviting us to fall in love with the Mary of Scripture. He told us of his youthful misunderstanding of the Catholic devotion to Mary that was corrected by an unquenchable desire to read Scripture and regularly pray the rosary with his sister. Duly inspired, he was led to request the name Fidelis Mary when he became a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

Reading Scripture led him to examine Mary in the Gospel of John. John took her into his house to live after the crucifixion, just as we take Mary as our own mother into the center of our lives. He drew parallels between the Old and New testaments, especially between Eve and Mary.

Moving into Luke's Gospel, he explained the meanings of ancient Greek words and Jewish customs and crafted a solid foundation to show Mary as the Ark of the Covenant. The all-powerful God actually stopped time and laid it at the feet of a teen-aged Jewish girl from a nowhere village to await her "yes."

Mary is honored as the Queen Mother in Jesus' kingdom. God began preparing us for Mary right after the great fall in Genesis when He cursed the serpent, but not Adam and Eve. The final victory of Christ through Mary was prophesied from the very beginning.

It was suggested that we meditate on Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24, as the Church refers to these as Mary, meditate on Psalm 45 as the procession of the Queen, and find and study Mary throughout all of Scripture.

*Barbara Krick, oblate
Worthington, OH*

March 25, 2007—Oblates of the Memphis chapter sponsored a Lenten day of recollection. Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, presided at 8 a.m. Mass in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Sixty-five people then gathered for the day of recollection. The group had breakfast and lunch and prayed noon prayer together.

Fr. Denis pointed out that, for many people, Lent is a waste of time, as they are the same people after Lent as they were before. Lent should be a season of transformation, an opportunity to change and never go back, a transformation for life and not just for Lent.

Luke's Gospel was used as a catechism of discipleship to help explain how disciples can change. He presented Jesus as a teacher, and he illustrated how decisions can change directions and how we must be willing and open to change. To be a disciple of Jesus, you have to move; you have to change.

Several of Luke's stories were used to relate actions of Gospel characters to our actions. In the Good Samaritan story, we are the person in the ditch and it is Jesus who reaches into the ditch to help us only because He loves us. The story of Martha and Mary represents risk—single women who risked their reputations to welcome Jesus, a single man, into their home.

In the Prodigal Son story, the older brother's refusal to be a part of his brother's celebration reveals behavior ruled by disappointments and hurts. The two broken-hearted people are fleeing Jerusalem and the Crucifixion, but on later recognition of Jesus, they turn back to evangelize others. This is our Eucharistic story!

In these stories, we see evidence of gathering with others, taking risks and changing directions that should give us thoughts about examining our own discipleship. We cannot be a Christian and have church or faith on our own. At Eucharist, we gather (and Jesus is there), we read Scripture, we recognize

Jesus in the breaking of the bread and we leave to evangelize others. This was a Lenten experience that allowed us to journey together for a few hours as we examined our own discipleship.

*Gail Chambers, oblate
Memphis, TN*

March 24, 2007—Oblate Michele Martinez renewed her vows of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus during Mass at Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish in Cicero, IL, with Fr. Esequiel Sanchez presiding. Her family was in attendance for the sacrament of Reconciliation, followed by Eucharistic Adoration. On Sunday, March 25, the rosary was prayed at 3 p.m., followed by Mass. After a reception with the parish, Michele, her family, Fr. Esequiel and Associate Pastor Fr. Morales enjoyed a private dinner. During Mass, Michele also renewed her oblation to Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

April 11, 2007—Oblate John J. Bower of Santa Cruz, CA, celebrated his 70th anniversary as an oblate, becoming an oblate in 1937. Congratulations and blessings to him on this occasion.

April 13, 2007—Fr. Fintan Cummings, OSB, left Saint Meinrad Archabbey and returned to the Lafayette diocese to be pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Reynolds, IN. His work with the oblates was very much appreciated, and he will be missed.

April 14, 2007—Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, celebrated his 73rd birthday.

April 16, 2007—Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, approved Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, and Br. Christian Raab, OSB, to assist with chapter meetings of the oblates.

April 17, 2007—Rose Ranno celebrated her 90th birthday. For 27 years, she was coordinator of the New York oblates, "retiring" from that job at the age of 83. Congratulations, Rose!

April 20, 2007—Oblate Janis Dopp from Bloomington, IN, was the presen-

ter at “Living a Balanced Life” for Theology in the Round at Saint Meinrad. Students, staff, faculty, monks and visitors were invited to attend.

April 20, 2007—The Finance Committee met and discussed the current financial report for the period ending March 31, 2007. The budget for the year ending June 30, 2008, was presented and discussed. The March financial report and the budget for the fiscal year 2008 were accepted by the Finance Committee.

May 17, 2007—At a prayer service at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on May 17, Archbishop Daniel Buechlein, OSB, presented the first Ecclesial Lay Ministry certificates to those who have completed the archdiocesan program offered through Saint Meinrad School of Theology. Margaret Nelson, an oblate of the Indianapolis chapter, was one of the three receiving certificates.

May 31, 2007—Br. Paul Nord, OSB, was released from his oblate duties to work fulltime in the School of Theology. We offer thanks to Br. Paul for his service to the Oblate Office.

June 3, 2007—Br. Paul Nord, OSB, was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Daniel Buechlein, OSB, of Indianapolis. God’s blessings upon him.

June 23, 2007—Oblate Rosemary and husband Jim Geiss celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

July 6, 2007—Oblates Thomas and Joan Rillo celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

July 11, 2007—We will not have the customary dinner we have had in the past for the Feast of All Benedictine Saints. For 2008 and 2009, we are seeking a new spiritual activity for that date. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 27-Aug. 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.

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

September 8, 2007—A day of recollection will be held in Lancaster, PA, with Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, retreat master, presenting “Stability: Running in Place.”

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, enjoyment of the natural beauty and antiquity of the Emerald Isle. Contact Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, (812) 357-6674 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu for additional 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 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 on the topic of stability. The retreat title will be announced later.

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

Your will and your certificate of final oblation

If you have framed your Certificate of Final Oblation, you might not be aware that there are instructions on the back about what to do with the document after your death.

“Upon the death of an Oblate, this Certificate of Final Oblation is to be returned to the Director of Benedictine Oblates” is an important message. Benedictine Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, said this action will enable your death to be reported in the oblate newsletter, so that all oblates and the Saint Meinrad monastic community can pray for you.

During will preparation or estate planning, clearly state that it is your will that, upon your death, your survivors return your Certificate of Final Oblation, with the date of your death, to: Office of Benedictine Oblates, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577. In this way, your certificate will be filed in the Office of Benedictine Oblates.

In addition, the *Chapter Coordinator’s Handbook* contains a service called “Office of the Dead for a Deceased Oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey” that may be prayed at the funeral home after the death of an oblate.

The service is contained on pages 31-33 and includes an opening hymn, Psalms 23 and 15, a reading from Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:51-57), a Responsory, the Lord’s Prayer, a Collect and Concluding Verse.

The service is followed by a “Prayer for All the Deceased Oblates of the Chapter.” If your chapter does not already do so, you might want to include this in one of your meetings on an annual or quarterly basis.

*Charles McKelvy, oblate
Harbert, MI*

Reading Room

Fr. Gueric DeBona, OSB, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, has written a delightful little book, *Praying with the Benedictines* (Paulist Press, 2007). In this book, Fr. Gueric has compiled texts on prayer and meditation written by Benedictines throughout the world. Beginning with St. Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine order, it includes contemporary prose, poetry and song texts.

In Fr. Gueric's words, "*Praying with the Benedictines* is like carrying a 1,500-year-old history of prayer in a briefcase or handbag." This book is the pilot book in the publisher's "Praying with" series.

In the introduction, he suggests that monastic prayer has been a river to God's people, and the collection included in the book is like a quiet, meandering stream. The book naturally formed a pattern. He used excerpts from the *Rule*, such as humility, stability, conversion, obedience, manual labor, tools of good works, silence, care of the sick and good zeal, and established them as a basic framework.

The collections were chosen because of their ability to crystallize basic spiritual ideas or concepts. Fr. Gueric included material and quotes from his fellow monks at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, as well as religious sisters, his abbot and noted spiritual writers.

An important consideration of the book was to relate spiritual voices from the past to those of today. For example, he included the spiritual voice of Hildegard of Bingen as well as that of Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, a noted contemporary spiritual writer.

Fr. Gueric envisions the book as a source for *lectio divina*, not only for the monks, but oblates and Christians in general. Its portability is an asset, allowing it to be used conveniently for prayerful moments of reflection. For oblates, this book can be placed on their bookshelves alongside the *Christian Prayer Book, Rule of St. Benedict* and other daily devotionals. The book can also be used during oblate chapter meetings where short reflective prayers may be appropriate.

Of special note is the cover of the book and the subtitle, "A Window on the Cloister." The cover photo is of a window looking out of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, just behind the organ pipes of the monastery church. The book, too, is a window into spiritual perceptions gained through Benedictine prayer. Fr. Gueric calls the book "a spur to prayer." It is a "must read" for all Christians and especially oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
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Saint Meinrad
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