



## FROM THE RULE:

“The third step of humility is that a man submits to his superior in all obedience for the love of God, imitating the Lord of whom the Apostle says: He became obedient even to death (Phil 2:8).”

Chapter 7, Verse 34

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## ‘Groundhog Day’ movie offers lessons of stability for monks and oblates

The 1993 Harold Ramis film, “Groundhog Day,” is the story of a television weatherman named Phil Connors, played by Bill Murray, who finds himself stuck in a kind of time warp in which he is forced to relive the same day over and over again.

As the film begins, Phil is portrayed as a cocky, sarcastic, self-important prima donna who resents being sent to the small town of Punxsutawney, PA, to cover the Groundhog Day festival. He spends his day in Punxsutawney ridiculing the provincialisms of the people, bragging about his chances of becoming an anchorman and trying, rather rudely, to charm his attractive producer, Rita, played by Andie MacDowell.

At day’s end, Phil’s TV crew gets snowed in at Punxsutawney. Phil awakens the next day to discover that, once again, it is February 2nd, though he is the only one who seems to notice. He relives the whole day, encounter by encounter, no more gracefully and with even more frustration than he had the day before. He finally goes to bed, hoping that he has just suffered the world’s worst case of *déjà vu*. However, when he awakens, he finds that once again it is February 2nd. This pattern repeats itself for the rest of the movie. Phil, quite clearly, has become stuck in Groundhog Day.

As we watch this film, we get to see Phil relive his day and re-encounter the people in it countless times. As he does this, Phil’s

reactions to his experience change. At first, Phil meets his fate with utter frustration and angrily lashes out at those he encounters. Then, Phil decides that a life without consequences beyond one day might be used for hedonistic pleasure-seeking.

When he ultimately tires of this, he turns his attention to trying to win the heart of Rita, but he goes about this artificially. He spends a number of days figuring out who the perfect man is in Rita’s eyes, and then he pretends to be this person. Needless to say, it doesn’t work.

Phil responds with despair and, believing it is the only way out of his private hell, tries, in numerous ways, to end his life. However, after each ill-fated attempt, he awakens again to the same song on the radio and sees that it is still February 2nd.

Finally, Phil recognizes that his selfishness is getting him nowhere. Having reached rock bottom, he changes direction and begins to live for others. He gets to know people and responds to their needs. He feeds a homeless man. He is kind to an annoying character. He helps counsel a young couple. He knows what time every day a group of old ladies get a flat tire and so he hurries there to fix it for them.

Likewise, he knows what time each day a young boy falls from a tree and he rushes there to catch him. He discovers that he has

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## Groundhog from p. 1

a gift for music, which he develops and shares. He becomes part of the community he once ridiculed and, finally, in forgetting himself, he escapes his fate and reaches February 3rd.

There is something about Phil's Groundhog Day that resonates strongly with the experience of living as a novice in a Benedictine monastery. Benedictine life, especially life in the novitiate, is very structured and, like Groundhog Day, repetitive.

For example, every day begins the same. At 5:15 a.m., the bells start ringing to announce that Morning Prayer will commence at 5:30. After Morning Prayer is breakfast, then private spiritual reading. At 7:30 a.m., we return to church for Mass. When this is over, we may grab a quick cup of coffee before the workday begins at 8:30 a.m.

Coffee break is at 10 a.m. At noon comes Midday Prayer and then lunch, followed by work or class again at 1 p.m. At 4:30 p.m., the workday ends. The monks go back to church at 5 p.m. for Vespers. After this, we have another period of private spiritual reading, and then at 6 p.m. we meet for the evening meal, which is usually eaten in silence while one of the monks reads aloud from a selected text.

After dinner, monks are usually free to recreate, study or go to bed. Occasionally, we have a religious service or a conference with the abbot in the evening. The monk ends his day, goes to sleep, awakens again the next day to the ringing of the bells, and the cycle begins again. It is a structured, repetitive and somewhat predictable life. In some ways, every day feels the same.

Of course, this structured life is not just a repetition of practices but, more importantly, it is a repetition of encounters with people. It is easy to know that a particular brother can be expected to sit at a particular place in the refectory during breakfast. A certain father will be arriving at the coffee-maker at 7 a.m.

Some monks will sit on this side of the calefactory during coffee break, and others will probably sit on the other side. We expect to see certain monks in the computer lab before we open the door. We know who will almost surely be playing cards after supper.

We become familiar with the sounds of monks' breathing and walking. We begin to know who will like a book and who will hate it, who will take a joke and who won't, who likes hugs and who doesn't, who prefers the mornings and who prefers the evenings. In the way that monastic life provides a series of repeat encounters and practices, it isn't far different from Groundhog Day.

The monk, unlike Phil, voluntarily chooses this life of repetitive practices and encounters in connection to the vow of stability. The vow of stability is a monk's promise to stay in the same

*see Groundhog, p. 5*

### A POINT TO PONDER FROM THE RULE

**“The third step of humility is that a man submits to his superior in all obedience for the love of God, imitating the Lord of whom the Apostle says: He became obedient even to death (Phil 2:8).”**

*Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 7, Verse 34*

The monk's vow of stability is fulfilled in his lifetime commitment to his community. He does not run away to another community because life is better there or there is less pressure.

St. Benedict has made stability a constant throughout the *Rule*. As oblates, we should be continually searching for God, but we need the discipline of stability to ensure that we are on the right path to finding God.

We should not become modern-day gyrovagues, who wander about looking for the best monastic handout. Nor should we wander about looking for the best church or the best pastor who suits our perceived spiritual needs.

For a healthy family life, stability is vital in maintaining security for children. If a child is not perfect, a parent does not run away from the responsibility of love, shelter, food and health care. As parents, we have taken a vow of stability. Spiritual stability will enrich the much-needed physical stability.

The vow of stability means that we must come face to face with reality. It means that we face up to a specific place, a specific time and the specific group of people with whom we live. Stability will help us to become more obedient to God.

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INSTITUTES & OBLATIONS

September 3, 2007, Oblation—*Mr. Joseph Elijah Allain* of Brooklyn, NY.

September 3, 2007, Investitures—*Mr. Alan Creus* and *Miss Carrie Matillano*, both of New York, NY; *Mr. Steve Joseph* of Staten Island, NY; and *Ms. Ninieva Magbilang* of Farmingdale, NY.

September 6, 2007, Oblations—*Mr. Stephen Augustine Kiernicki* and *Mrs. Anne Bernard of Clairvaux Wagner*, both of Bloomington, IN.

September 7, 2007, Investiture—*Ms. Beth Hirtzel* of Tipton, IN.

September 8, 2007, Oblation—*Ms. Anne Catherine Kendig* of Lancaster, PA.

September 8, 2007, Investiture—*Rev. Lisa Marchal* of Greenfield, IN.

September 13, 2007, Investitures—*Mrs. Linda Gatwood* and *Mr. Noah Gatwood*, both of Birdseye, IN; and *Mr. Robert Thompson* of Bucyrus, OH.

September 15, 2007, Oblation—*Mr. Daniel Stephen Leal* of Westfield, IN.

September 23, 2007, Investitures—*Ms. Nancy Barnes* of Cold Spring, KY, and *Mr. Tim Grant* of Batavia, OH.

October 2, 2007, Investiture—*Dr. Linda Swindell* of Indianapolis, IN.

October 4, 2007, Investiture—*Ms. Jean Lindsay* of Bloomington, IN.

October 5, 2007, Investiture—*Miss Eydie Hill* of Cordova, TN.

October 6, 2007, Oblation—*Rev. J. Robert John of the Cross Kirkham* of Rushville, IL.

October 13, 2007, Oblations—*Mr. John Joseph Francis Burke* of Indianapolis, IN, and *Mr. Stephan Joseph Gray* and *Mr. Eddie Michael Sexton*, both of Louisville, KY.

October 13, 2007, Investitures—*Mr. Edward Andercheck* of Franklin, TN, *Mr. Anthony Lewis* of Fortville, IN, and *Mr. James Pfaff* of Indianapolis, IN.

October 25, 2007, Oblation—*Ms. Rosemary Benedicta Trelease* of Worthington, OH.

October 25, 2007, Investitures—*Dr. James Albright* of Westerville, OH, and *Mrs. Loretta Shalosky* of Pataskala, OH.

October 29, 2007, Investitures—*Ms. Janie Tormohlen* and *Mr. Derick Tormohlen*, both of Stendal, IN.

October 30, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Eric Hunter* of New Albany, IN.

October 31, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Jason Barr* of Evansville, IN.

November 2, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Jerry Sparks* of Muncie, IN.

November 5, 2007, Oblation—*Ms. Rita Marie Elizabeth Fortuna* of Indianapolis, IN.

November 9, 2007, Investitures—*Mrs. Marilyn Fuhs* and *Mrs. Cindi Jones* of Jasper, IN.

November 17, 2007, Investiture—*Ms. Peggy Mayles* of Vincennes, IN.

November 18, 2007, Transfer of Stability—*Miss Marilyn Nesselbuf* of Cincinnati, OH, transferred her stability from St. Walburg Monastery, Covington, KY, to Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

November 21, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Jeffrey D. Emmitt* of Rockford, TN.

November 25, 2007, Investiture—*Mr. Thomas J. Streppone* of Bronx, NY. ♦

DEATHS

*Mrs. Clarissa Fischer* of St. Meinrad, IN, died on October 2, 2007. ♦

HAPPENINGS

**August 31-September 3, 2007—**The New York Oblate Retreat at Mariandale Retreat Center in Ossining, NY, brought together 36 East Coast oblates and included four investitures and one oblation—all of whom have chosen to share in the spiritual life of Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, with the oblates, looked at the peculiarly monastic vow of stability to see how it affects the oblate's daily life at home, school, work or wherever. There is a stability of place tied to a plot of land and a community, and a stability of heart that goes wherever we go. Without the latter, the former is cold legalism.

Fr. Vincent maintains that a vow is a promise made to God in an institute approved by the Church as a way of living an intense Christian life. The three traditional vows for religious (those vowed to God in a religious institute) are poverty, chastity and obedience. Monks such as Benedictines add another vow—stability.

In the contemporary ritual of making vows, the monk promises before God and His saints, whose relics are in the monastery, stability, total conversion of life and obedience. The emphasis is on ongoing conversion, the lifelong will to respond to God's call, to persevere until death on the way of His commandments, to keep on changing by a ceaseless effort to make His will our will, following the Gospel as guide.

see *Oblate News*, p. 6



*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, associate oblate director, invests Thomas Streppone of Bronx, NY, during the New York Day of Recollection on November 25, 2007.*

## Spiritual companionship can assist in oblate's formation

*This, then, is the good zeal which monks must foster with fervent love: They should each try to be the first to show respect to one another (Rom 12:10), supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behavior, and earnestly competing in obedience to one another.*

Rule of Benedict, 72:3-6

Spiritual direction has become quite a popular phenomenon. Even those who are not Catholic, or even very religious, are taken with the idea of having a spiritual director. Some persons move restlessly from one director to another, searching for the perfect fit.

The need for spiritual direction features prominently in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, which are built upon daily meetings with a carefully prepared director, who is to listen for the movements of the Spirit in the directee and assign meditations for further discernment. The spiritual director is intended to be removed from the experience of the directee—a caring guide, to be sure, but not an active participant.

The *Rule of Benedict* proposes an alternate model. Rather than the model of spiritual direction, the *Rule of Benedict* is built upon relationships of spiritual companionship. While the relationship between the abbot and individual monks is intended to be that between a father and his sons, the relationship between monks is to be one of mutual love and obedience as between brothers.

The monks are to be the first to show respect to the other, to bear with each other's weaknesses patiently, to pursue what is better for the other, and to love each other with a pure (i.e., chaste) love. Together, they are to prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and indeed, this preference for Christ is the bond that unites them.

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter;  
he who finds one finds a treasure.  
A faithful friend is beyond price,  
no sum can balance his worth.  
A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy,  
such as he who fears God finds;  
For he who fears God behaves accordingly,  
and his friend will be like himself.  
*Sirach 6:14-17 (NAB)*

Those oblates who have completed their novitiate year often ask about the process of ongoing formation. The novitiate year is one of intense formation, with monthly lessons supplied by the oblate director and a process of discernment undertaken with his direction. The completion of the novitiate year and the making of the final promises of oblation mark a transition in the life of the oblate.

No longer under direction, the oblate must form a community of friends to be companions in his ongoing formation. These may be fellow oblates, perhaps, but certainly need be persons who fear God. The oblate's friends will not form a monastic community; but will nevertheless serve as the community within which the oblate practices common respect, patient endurance, mutual obedience and fraternal charity.

The choice of persons for this community should be deliberate. As the writer of the Book of Sirach suggests, one who finds a faithful friend finds a treasure. She is a lifesaving remedy:

a consolation in times of sorrow and a ready companion in times of joy.

For the oblate, as for anyone who seriously undertakes the spiritual life, friends are those who share their loving fear of God and preference of nothing whatever to Christ. Without this foundation, friendship quickly fades.

Toward the end of the Gospel of John, the Lord says, "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything that I have heard from my Father." (John 15:15)

Spiritual companions are those who tell their friends everything they have heard from the Father. Like the writer of the Second Letter of John, they have much to say to each other, but do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, they long to see each other and speak face to face, so that their joy may be complete. (2 John 12)

Choose carefully, then, the companions of your heart. Invite them to share in your intimate communion with the Lord. Bear with each other patiently. Encourage each other in prayer. Mourn each other's sorrows. Rejoice in each other's joys. In this way, your joy in this life will be complete and, in the love of Christ, may you be brought together into everlasting life.

*Jennie D. Latta  
Oblate, Memphis, TN*

*Pray  
for  
Vocations*

## Groundhog from p. 2

place with the same people and engage in the same monastic practices for the rest of one's earthly life.

Like all the vows, stability is a means toward the end of conversion. Our Br. John Mark explains that stability aids conversion by providing the sure and solid context in which the human will may conform to the will of the loving God. Br. John Mark compares the human will to a steel rod which, in conversion, is bent into conformity with the divine will.

One cannot bend a rod without having something strong and solid to hold it in place while the bending is being done. This is what stability does. It provides the necessary strong and solid foundation that makes conversion, the bending of the rod, possible.

Stability means the monk stays put. He commits to repeat his day over and over again, in the same place with the same people doing the same things. And so the monk, in a very real way, is choosing voluntarily to do what Phil Connors did involuntarily, to stay in one place, to relive and re-encounter while being transformed.

Repetition can help us with this transformation, not merely by keeping us surefooted, but by supplying and re-supplying opportunities to us for loving choices. For example, because I am in this repetitive life, each day I have the opportunity to be more attentive in liturgy and to be more open in prayer than I was earlier.

As each day I live and work alongside some characters who annoy me, I have the opportunity to "love my enemies," to set aside grievances, to practice patience, to exercise charity. Each day I have the opportunity to anticipate needs in the elderly monks, to clean things with more care than I did the

day before, to listen with more receptivity to the lonely and the needy.

Because so many of our experiences and encounters repeat themselves, I am, each day and always, being given the opportunity to be humble where I was proud, to be chaste where I was lustful, to be calm where I was angry, to be forgiving where I was unforgiving, to be assertive where I was a pushover. In this way, stability, by its repetition, can be accepted as a great gift that can be a tremendous help in the path to holiness.

The monk who perseveres can, like Phil Connors, be transformed. Like Phil, we may come to this life with problems of self-centeredness, sarcasm, conceit, anger, despair or lust. But if

we are open to the grace that comes with living out stability in a monastic community, we, like Phil, may be transformed into persons of charity.

In the last scene of "Groundhog Day," Phil has finally "gotten it right" and the morrow has finally come. On the morning of February 3rd, the now-transformed Phil says to Rita with joyful single-mindedness, "Is there anything I can do for you today?" It is this novice monk's hope that he may be able to start his own day, each day, with the same happy singularity of purpose, saying to my brothers and to God, "Is there anything I can do for you today?"

*Br. Christian Raab, OSB  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*



*Making final oblation during the December retreat (l. to r.): Cynthia Butler, Dallas, TX; Linda Faulhaber, Bethel, OH; Joe Teague, Danville, KY.*



*Making investiture during the December retreat (l. to r.): Alan Carter, St. Meinrad, IN; Thomas Lehr, Richland, IN; Chris Mileski, St. Meinrad, IN.*



*Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, with the oblates who attended the Days of Recollection in Lancaster, PA, September 7-8, 2007.*

### Oblate News from p. 3

Fr. Vincent led the group in looking at pertinent details in the *Rule of St. Benedict* as it spells out how this ideal of stability becomes the object of our striving and the *terra firma* of our spiritual lives.

**August 31, 2007**—Oblate Jamie Thompson, Bloomington, IN, is preparing to accept the call to be a chaplain. The first unit has been completed and work on the next unit has begun.

**September 2, 2007**— After much prayer and discussion by the oblate directors, the deactivation of the Manhattan Oblate Chapter and the uniting of it with the Bronx Oblate Chapter were announced at the New York Oblate Retreat. This decision was due to low attendance, security issues and loss of some members to the Bronx and Farmingdale chapters.

Ken Kirwin, as coordinator of the Manhattan Oblate Chapter from November 6, 2002, until September 2, 2007, did a marvelous job as coordinator. From September 30, 2000, to September 2, 2007, George and Virginia McLaughlin's wonderful leadership and hard work as coordinators of the Elmsford Chapter at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and then the Bronx Chapter, will be well remembered as they retire as coordinators for the Bronx Chapter. Carmen Flores and Remie Cabanilla are now co-coordinators for the combined chapter, which will now meet in the Bronx and be named the Bronx Oblate Chapter.

**September 7-8, 2007**—Twenty-five people attended the first Time of Reflection hosted by the Lancaster, PA, Oblates of St. Benedict at St. Joseph's Church in Lancaster. Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, was the presenter and enthralled us with his talks on "Stability in Benedictine Spirituality." There was time for private prayer, reconciliation and adoration in St. Joseph's Adoration Chapel. During Mass on

Saturday morning, Anne Kendig made her final oblation. The retreat-goers also enjoyed some wonderful fellowship and good food at the Friday night social and the Saturday morning break and lunch. The Lancaster, PA, Chapter is coordinated by Sharon and Oliver Ogden.

**September 9, 2007**—Oblate Charles McKelvy, Merrillville, IN, has created "Making the Most of a Mexican Fiesta in Merrillville with a Mindful Monk," weaving together the first oblate meeting of the season and the annual parish picnic at St. Joan of Arc Church in Merrillville. Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, gave a presentation on "Judging Others" with a focus on the gentle art of not judging others by jumping to conclusions. Fr. Andrew Corona, having made tortillas and tamales for the parish picnic, demonstrated the proper way to eat a tamale by first peeling back the cornstalks and then devouring the tasty contents of cornmeal and beans.

**September 13, 2007**—A DVD titled "The Promise of Stability—Sticking with It, Not Walking Away" by Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, is available for \$5, which includes a summary and question pages, postage and handling.

**September 14, 2007**—The Oblate Finance Committee reviewed the financial statement for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2007. It was found to be in

the "black," but efforts to reduce costs in the Oblate Office will continue. The retreats and Study Week were well attended and helped to cover all expenses. A gift was made to cover the cost of the production of the DVD, "What Is an Oblate?"

The oblate director and two oblate representatives attended the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors meeting at St. Martin Abbey, Lacey, WA, in the summer of 2007. All expenses were covered by a gift.

The office will need to cover the cost of three major projects that are coming up: a new Liturgy of the Hours, a new *Benedictine Oblate Companion*, and a Customary and Ritual Prayer Book. The oblate program had a good year in that its expenses were covered by gifts of the oblates.

**September 15, 2007**—The Oblate Council met and discussed the need to develop a communications policy. Mary Jeanne Schumacher, director of communications for Saint Meinrad Archabbey, explained the publicity that we already do, the promotional efforts of the Oblate Office, the oblate DVD on recruitment being completed the first part of January 2008, and the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Web site.

A report was given on the oblate library and how it is being updated and put on



*The Merrillville, IN, Chapter met on September 9, 2007. Front row (l. to r.): Lane Peterson, Yvonne Weaver and Charles McKelvy. Back row (l. to r.): Deacon Steven Zubel, Joe Little, Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, and Earl Walton.*

the Dewey Decimal system. Information about each book is being entered into a database. Also, policies are being written for adding new books and weeding out books. This report was given by oblate Monina Abrera from Bloomington, IN, who is doing all of this work.

There was discussion on the Liturgy of the Hours volume for the oblates. Fr. Subprior Denis Robinson, OSB, presented two models. Oblate Jennie Latta from Memphis, TN, is the chairperson of this project.

Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, talked about past study weeks. In the future, they will be called Oblate Study Days, and they are not retreats. There was much discussion on the retreats and the blessing of having large numbers of oblates who want to attend.

Reports were given by these committees: Customary and Ritual, Liturgy of the Hours, Chapter Evaluations, Video Committee and Finance Committee. Fr. Meinrad asked council members if they think they are meeting the purpose of the council. They were assured by Fr. Meinrad that they are a great help to him and the work of the oblate community.

**October 31, 2007**—Oblate Catherine Tittmann of Farmingdale, NY, has compiled a book of her poems, *The God of the Universe Dances in Trees*, published by iUniverse, Inc., New York, 2007. Written over 30 years, the poems reflect her devotion to God and His son Jesus. The author has referred to her works as prayer-poems, and they are easy to understand. It is an excellent little volume that can be used with *lectio divina*.

**November 5, 2007**—Oblate Marc Kellams, Bloomington, IN, has received the “Man for All Seasons” award from the Indianapolis chapter of the St. Thomas More Society. This award is given each year to a judge or lawyer who epitomizes the qualities of St. Thomas More by his or her commitment to ethical standards; commitment

to legal and social issues affecting morality, justice and faith; and service to the community and legal profession.

**November 23, 2007**—Oblate Dr. Alexander Roman of Toronto, Canada, created an Easter liturgical service in honor of St. Benedict, with both the canon for matins and the devotional Akathist service—a beautiful job on ritual and ceremony.

**November 25, 2007**—The New York Day of Recollection was held at St. Ignatius Retreat Center at Manhasset, NY, with 50 in attendance. Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, associate oblate director, gave the conferences on “What is Prayer?” and “The Battle of Prayer.” Oblate Fr. Thomas D’Angelo assisted Fr. Joseph. One man was invested as an oblate novice during the Mass. Three outgoing chapter coordinators were presented with certificates of appreciation for their service and a small gift by Fr. Joseph. The coordinators were Virginia and George McLaughlin from Larchmont, NY, and Ken Kirwin from Glendale, NY. Anthony Muhs and Stephanie Kerchinski played their musical instruments, sang and led the oblates in singing during the Mass. Oblates Paul and Irene Muhs from Farmingdale, NY, planned the Day of Recollection.

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

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 1, 2008**—The Bronx Oblate Chapter will have its first oblate meeting since the Manhattan Chapter united with it.

**March 31-April 2, 2008**—The oblate retreat will be “Stability: The Beginning or the End,” presented by Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB. The feast of St. Benedict will be celebrated on April 1.

**June 16-19, 2008**—Oblate Study Days at Saint Meinrad Archabbey will be on “Art, Craft and *Conversatio*” and be presented by Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, with Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, assisting. They will explore the Benedictine approach to *conversatio* through art, craft and work. Sessions will include discussion, prayer and time in the studios or workshops.

**October 31-November 10, 2008**—A pilgrimage to Lisbon, Fatima, Santiago de Compostela, Salamanca, Madrid and Lourdes is being hosted by Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB. This pilgrimage will include round-trip airfare from New York, accommodations at first class/select hotels, most meals, services of a professional tour director, comprehensive sightseeing throughout, automatic \$100,000 flight insurance policy, all hotel service charges and local taxes. For a brochure or further information, call (812) 357-6325 or e-mail [mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu](mailto:mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu).

### Recent volunteers in the Oblate

**Office:** Monina Abrera, Julie Benton, Jerry Campbell, Novice Kyle Cothorn, OSB, Ruth Engs, Jerry and Mary Maillet, Marianna Neal, Tom and Joan Rillo, Dennis Skelton, Dorothy Soudakoff and Christina Toral.◆

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## Reading Room

In *Music of Silence: A Sacred Journey Through the Hours of the Day*, David Steindl-Rast, OSB, and Sharon Lebell have written a book that will assist oblates in entering the sacred space of monastic experience. The authors are enchanted with the monastic life, and the book is an open invitation to enter this quiet world of ecstasy. Oblate readers will rediscover the sacred rhythms that enable the inner ear of the heart to discern the music of silence.

The book is a perfect companion to *Chant*, the best-selling recording by the Benedictine monks of Santo Domingo de Silos. The authors demonstrate with fresh insight how we can incorporate the sacred meaning of chant and the other gifts of the monastic life into our secular lives.

The monastic day is structured according to the eight canonical hours, and the authors lead us through each hour and tell us of the special quality of the chant at that time. The hours are the inner structure for living consciously and responsively through the stages of the day. Chant primes us to respond to the call of each hour.

The message to oblates is that we live in the now by attuning ourselves to the call of each moment and responding to what each hour or each situation brings.

The table of contents reflects how the canonical hours are the seasons of the monastic day: Vigils: The Night Watch; Lauds: The Coming of Light; Prime: Deliberate Beginning; Terce: Blessing; Sext: Fervor and Commitment; None: The Shadows Grow Longer; Vespers: The Lighting of the Lamps; Compline: Completing the Circle; and The Great Silence: The Matrix of Time.

This book is all about rhythm and how we can achieve it by traveling across the full circle of the seasons of the day. We arrive at the time of Great Silence, which is the bridge between Compline and Vigils that will usher once again the cycle anew. We can learn to live responsively, consciously and intentionally, directing our lives from within and not being swept away by the external demands of the secular life.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate  
Bloomington, IN*



*Saint Meinrad*  
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