



FROM THE RULE:

“If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts.”

Prologue, Verse 10

INSIDE

- ◆ Investitures & Oblations
- ◆ Happenings
- ◆ Deaths
- ◆ Reading Room
- ◆ Upcoming Events
- ◆ Duties Guide an Oblate's Life
- ◆ Oblate Life—Personal Evaluation

A parabolic reading of the *Rule of St. Benedict* provides insights

There are many ways to read the *Rule of St. Benedict*. One can read it from a historical perspective, attempting to reconstruct its original social setting, author and audience. One can read the *Rule* from a literal perspective, understanding it as a clear and authentic guide that sets down the rules and observances necessary for living a cenobitic way of monastic life.

One can also read this “rule for beginners” from a literary-symbolic perspective, which attempts to get below the surface of the text and capture the deeper possibilities for meaning that lie enmeshed in the structure, phrases, images and symbols contained in its 73 chapters.

This approach is not interested in the many historical questions the *Rule* raises. Instead, it is interested in questions of meaning and spirituality. All of these ways, and even more, can be beneficial. It all depends on what one is seeking.

I would like to offer a few observations on reading the *Rule of St. Benedict* from a literary-symbolic perspective. I want to limit my focus to viewing the *Rule* from the point of view of a parable. I do not claim that this is what the author was thinking when the *Rule* was originally composed. Nevertheless, the parabolic dynamic does indeed show through these chapters and

reveals a depth of meaning not available in a literal or historical reading.

As the author is bringing the *Rule* to a close, he includes a chapter titled, “The Good Zeal that Monks Ought to Have” (RB 72). Toward the end of that chapter, he makes the following statement: “Let them prefer absolutely nothing to Christ...” (RB 72:11).

This, of course, has been the subject matter of the entire *Rule*: how to search for God by living a life totally centered on Christ. The brilliance, as well as the success, of this *Rule* is in its moderation and practicality. Nevertheless, it never loses its focus. The question for us, however, is: what does it mean to prefer absolutely nothing to Christ?

The *Rule of St. Benedict* presupposes a familiarity with the Scriptures, especially the gospels. If we examine the gospels carefully, especially Matthew, Mark and Luke, we notice that the preferred method Jesus uses for teaching is the parable. Not only that, but a good case can be made that, in those gospels, the life and ministry of Jesus Himself takes on the characteristics of a parable.

Let me explain. One way to understand a parable is to watch carefully how it works. It starts out by making us think we know what it is about, how it will unfold and

see [A parabolic reading, p. 4](#)

Duties guide an oblate's life as husband, father, lawyer

"Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart." This introduction to the *Rule of St. Benedict* provides an invitation to honor the oblation promises of stability of heart, obedience to God's will and fidelity to the monastic way of life.

This calls me to practice my oblate duties of morning and evening prayer, of reading from the *Rule*, of practicing *lectio divina*, of frequently receiving the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and of being attentive to God's presence in my daily life in order to grow in my faith. In turn, I know that I have God's love and support to guide me in my life as husband, father and lawyer.

I have been married to my wife Kelly for six years. As newlyweds, we

enjoyed the excitement of building our new lives together. Now, the exciting moments are mixed with the ordinary and the usual chores. To see God's presence in daily life, I realize the blessings of my marriage in the routine, but necessary, parts of life and experience God's presence as I live the sacrament of marriage with my wife. God is present as I pray with my wife or sacrifice my wants, such as taking a walk or reading a good book, for her needs, such as helping her when she is sick or tired.

Additionally, living the routine in married life requires stability. In fulfilling the oblate promise of stability of heart, I gain the courage and strength to be devoted in my marriage. As a result, I grow in the sacramental love with my

wife, deepen my relationship with God and foster the "good zeal" that "leads to God and everlasting life" (Chapter 72, *Rule of St. Benedict*).

My wife and I have a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Gabriella. Being a father brings the joys of sharing laughter with her and watching her personality emerge, but also brings the duty of instilling values and guiding her through disappointments in life. Daily prayer, an oblate duty, encourages me to talk to God and ask for help and guidance in my efforts to be a strong, caring and responsible father.

Lectio divina, the oblate duty of meditative reading, gives me the opportunity to reflect on God's Word and act on that Word, especially in my role as a father. In addition, as a Catholic, I am responsible for teaching my daughter the faith.

By receiving the sacraments frequently, another oblate duty, I gain a deeper knowledge of the faith that I must pass on to my daughter. Likewise, as my daughter watches me receive the Eucharist and go to Reconciliation, I teach by example and put concrete meaning into my teaching.

see Duties, p. 5

A POINT TO PONDER FROM THE RULE

"If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts."

Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue, Verse 10

Whenever Psalm 94 (95) is used during Mass, the responsorial psalm will be, "If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts." It is an astounding thing to be addressed by God! His voice comes to us in myriad situations and places and when we least expect it. To harden one's heart means a lack of attentiveness and openness to God's voice. His voice does not always come with the sound of thunder or cymbals or harps, but in an inaudible way to our minds, in our hearts and through our actions.

It could be said that the Lord's transfiguration provides the backdrop for this verse. Peter wanted to set up three tents at the transfiguration, and he was silenced. He was attentive to hearing, and his heart was open. Even though there was no thunder, Peter was thunderstruck. Like Peter, oblates must be open to hearing God's voice and not permit other concerns to deaden our ears.

Monks hear this verse during every vigil service, which begins with Psalm 94(95):8: "If you hear his voice today." Because it is so repetitive, it lends familiarity. Since it is heard every morning, a degree of immunity can be equated to a hardening of the heart.

For oblates, one of the hardest challenges of the spiritual life is to remain attentive to God's voice whenever and wherever He speaks to us. St. Benedict admonishes us to listen with attentive ears to the warning of the divine voice. If, indeed, we listen with the ear of our heart, we will hear God's voice.

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INVESTITURES & OBLATIONS

November 13, 2008, Oblations—**Mr. Eric Bernard Hunter** of New Albany, IN; **Mr. Derick John Chrysostom Tormohlen** and **Ms. Janie Maximilian Kolbe Tormohlen**, both of Stendal, IN.

November 14, 2008, Transferred—**Ms. Laura Roberts** of Louisville, KY, transferred her oblation from Dwelling Place Monastery to Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

November 15, 2008, Investiture—**Mr. J. Kevin McCombs** of Terre Haute, IN.

November 21, 2008, Investiture—**Rev. Larry Minter** of Louisville, KY.

November 29, 2008, Oblation—**Ms. Jean Hildegard Lindsay** of Bloomington, IN.

November 30, 2008, Oblation—**Ms. Jane Peter Massimino** of Farmingdale, NY.

November 30, 2008, Investitures—**Ms. Tracy Andrés** of Bronx, NY, and **Mr. Effendi Torres** of Jackson Heights, NY.

December 6, 2008, Investiture—**Mr. John Pairitz** of South Bend, IN.

December 8, 2008, Oblation—**Mrs. Diane Mary of Magdala Wright** of Candler, NC.

December 8, 2008, Investitures—**Paul** and **Shirley Paradzinski** of Catawba, VA.

December 13, 2008, Oblations—**Mr. Jeff Philip Neri Emitt** of Powell, TN; **Mr. Thomas Joseph Lehr** of Richland, IN; and **Mr. Wayne Robert Bellarmine Moore** of Lexington, KY.

December 13, 2008, Investitures—**Mrs. Laura Brzegowy** of Bloomington, IN; **Ms. Julie Keneipp** of Newburgh, IN; and **Dr. Walter Linz** of Temple, TX.

December 20, 2008, Investitures—**Mrs. Sandra Cunning** of St. Louis, MO; **Mr. Todd Harman** of White House, TN; and **Dr. David Miller** of Mt. Carmel, IL.

December 21, 2008, Investiture—**Mrs. Virginia Olson** of Tucson, AZ.

December 23, 2008, Investiture—**Ms. Monica Clements** of Annapolis, MD.

December 31, 2008, Investiture—**Mr. Steve Wilson** of Grand Rapids, MI.

January 8, 2009, Oblation—**Mrs. Loretta Elizabeth Shalosky** of Pataskala, OH.

January 8, 2009, Investiture—**Miss Pamela Gilliatt** of Bloomington, IN.

January 10, 2009, Oblations—**Mr. Anthony Bede Lewis** of Fortville, IN, and **Mr. Robert Ignatius Miskell** of Fishers, IN.

January 10, 2009, Investitures—**Mr. Rex Craig** of Tipton, IN and **Ms. Terri Simms** of Greenwood, IN.

January 21, 2009, Investitures—**Dr. James** and **Mrs. Karen Miller** of Ada, MI.

An apology is offered to Mr. Dennis John of the Cross Gorcoff of Massillon, OH, for misspelling his last name under the picture on page 5 of the newsletter's Winter 2009 issue. ♦

DEATHS

Ms. Eileen C. Reilly of Bronx, NY, died on May 22, 2007.

Ms. Mary McLoughlin of Farmingdale, NY, died on November 10, 2008.

Rev. Thomas Kubn of Tiffin, OH, died on December 4, 2008.

Mr. Robert Marx of Louisville, KY, died on December 22, 2008.

Mrs. Frances Borbo of St. Meinrad, IN, died on January 11, 2009.

Mrs. Madge Bunker of Evansville, IN, died on January 30, 2009. ♦

HAPPENINGS

December 2008—William Hamrick, an oblate in St. Louis, completed a doctorate at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium. This is his second PhD in philosophy, and one that he was to begin in 1968. At that time, language disputes between the French and Flemish led to riots and the fall of the government. Against that background, he decided to remain in this country to complete a PhD in 1971 at Vanderbilt University. Taking advantage of his retirement, he re-entered the

see Oblate News, p. 7



Oblates gather for lunch during the Day of Recollection for the New York oblates on November 30, 2008, at Manhasset, NY.

A parabolic reading from p. 1

how it will end. It is a simple little story. In other words, we have a built-in set of presuppositions. We can call those our basic orientation to the story.

As we get into the story, however, things do not unfold as we thought they would. The good people lose and the bad people win. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The tyrants are victorious and the humble are beaten down. The wrong people show up at the right time and the right people do not show up at all.

All of this forces the story into a certain reversal, which we were not expecting. This puts us in a certain state of disorientation. The story does not make sense. Because of this, we tend to turn the parables into example stories so that we can make our own sense out of them, but not necessarily what Jesus Himself was teaching.

Jesus emphasizes and supports these reversals found in so many of the parables He taught. For Him, the meaning is in the reversal. These reversals are geared to expand both our minds and hearts regarding who God is, who Jesus is and who we might become. This expansion of the mind and heart can be referred to as new orientation. It is indeed something new and not merely a return to the old (orientation). It is gospel: good news.

Jesus Himself can be understood parabolically. He was the Messiah and the Son of God. Yet He came among us as a full human person. The Messiah was expected to be a victorious warrior who would enter and leave the world totally unharmed and usher in a new age where we would finally be in charge and our enemies defeated.

Jesus was not a warrior. Not only was He harmed, He was killed. On the surface, not much changed after His death. Of course, it takes the eyes of

faith to see who Jesus really was and what He really did. He taught by His words and by His life that real life comes through death. If you want to be first, you must be last. If you want to lead, you must serve. These are all parabolic reversals.

The way of life outlined in the *Rule of St. Benedict* is all about reversal. We find ourselves by losing ourselves. What we must lose, of course, is our false self, which the *Rule* refers to as “self-will.” When we get rid of all the phoniness and excess personal, psychological and spiritual baggage we carry around with us, we can finally get a glimpse of the real self.

It is that real self that is a reflection of the image of God. And, of course, it is God whom we are seeking. The real reversal is that what we have been seeking all along, we already had, but we could never find it underneath all that stuff. The *Rule* counters our current culture’s quest for power, fame, money and unlimited goods. They promise us everything, but they deliver only disillusionment.

The *Rule of St. Benedict* does not proclaim a false asceticism that claims that if it hurts, it’s good. The *Rule* is clear and concrete. We need to listen intently to one another and to God (obedience, RB 5). We have to have the courage to be real with ourselves, with others and with God (humility, RB 7).

We have to learn to serve God in praise and serve one another in acts of kindness and caring. We do not judge others; instead, we accept everyone as Christ (the reception of guests, RB 53). These things are almost the total reversal of how our culture lives and how we are encouraged to live in it.

Faithful Christians, and especially those who want to follow the way of life outlined by St. Benedict, are called to a life that, by nature, must be para-

bolic. We must appear to be contradictions to our culture’s status quo. To the status quo, it will appear that our lives are a waste of time and energy. To those willing to embrace this parabolic way of life, however, it is the pearl of great price.

Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB
Monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to you: “Let them prefer absolutely nothing to Christ”? How would your lifestyle change if you adapted this basic tenet from the *Rule of St. Benedict*? Are there things you would exclude from your present lifestyle? Would you establish your priorities differently when you accept as your major priority preferring nothing to Christ?

2. Can you fully read the *Rule of St. Benedict* from a literary-symbolic perspective? This would imply reading the *Rule* with the point of view of a parabolic dynamic. What would it take for you to approach the reading of the *Rule* using the parabolic dynamic?

3. What approach would you feel most comfortable with when reading the *Rule*? One is the historical perspective, where the reconstruction of the original social setting, the author and the audience are of primary concern. The second approach deals with reading the *Rule* from a literal perspective with the understanding that it is a clear and authentic guide. A third approach would be to read the *Rule* while raising the question of spirituality and meaning and not from the historical questions that the *Rule* raises. The fourth involves reading the *Rule* from a strictly parabolic dynamic that reveals a depth of meaning that the literal or historical approaches do not. Take some time to reflect on which approach you feel will teach you more about the *Rule*. The parable approach (what the parabolic dynamic is about) is the approach used by Jesus. ♦

Duties from p. 2

The oblate duty of daily reading from the *Rule of St. Benedict* also helps me in my role as a father. For example, Chapter 53 instructs the abbot to hear the advice of the monks before undertaking important tasks. This chapter explains, "...the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger."

This passage implies that I include my daughter in discussions about family matters. This may seem silly now that my daughter is barely 3 years old, but she is smart enough to voice her opinion on what she wants to eat for dinner and what music she wants to hear in the car. I want her always to feel comfortable talking with me about her problems and concerns, and I am laying the foundation for that now through the wisdom of St. Benedict.

Being a Benedictine Oblate also helps me in my career as a lawyer. In particular, the oblate promise of being obedient to God's will reminds me that I have ethical obligations and that I must practice my trade with care and diligence. Currently, I am a staff attorney for a judge. Being obedient to God's will means that I need to be fair

and impartial in my research projects. It is my hope that fulfilling my legal duties in obedience to God's will provides encouragement and examples for my colleagues and younger lawyers.

The oblate promise of fidelity to the monastic way of life calls me to constant conversion and perseverance to renew myself to the Christian life. For no matter what role I am undertaking in life, I live, as stated in Chapter 57 of the *Rule*, "so that in all things God may be glorified."

*James A. Anzelmo, oblate
Gahanna, OH*

VOLUNTEERS

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office include Jerry Campbell, John Cislo, Br. Karl Cothorn, OSB, Vinny Cothorn, Ruth Engs, Br. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, James Hubbman, Brad Jensen, John Lehner, Michael Luckett, David Marcotte, Charles McKelvy, John Pelletier, Joan and Tom Rillo, Dennis Skelton, Dorothy Soudakoff and Jacob Vervynckt. ♦

Seeking e-mail addresses

The Oblate Office would like to include your e-mail address in its database of information. If you have an e-mail address, please send an e-mail to the Oblate Office with the following message:

Your Name:
Here's my e-mail address:

Send to: oblates@saintmeinrad.edu ♦

How you can help:

- Pray for vocations
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For more information, contact Barbara Balka
Director of Planned Giving
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Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, with oblate novice John Pairity (center) and John Lehner, both from South Bend, IN.



Oblate Patricia Ryan (right) and friend Mary Thomas at the St. Ignatius Retreat Center on Long Island.

Oblate life—personal evaluation

To see how well you are fulfilling your vocation as an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, reflect on and ask yourself the following questions. These questions are for your personal consideration and evaluation, so that you may see how you are growing as an oblate. We, the Oblate Directors, are convinced that if you sincerely reflect on these questions, you can only deepen your relationship with God. In doing so, you are truly growing in Benedictine spirituality.

1. What have I done during the past year to continue ongoing formation as an oblate?

2. What do I plan to do during the coming year?

3. How well do I see myself living the oblate promises:
(Please rate yourself on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1 as “needing improvement” and 5 as “doing well”)

- Stability of Heart? 1 2 3 4 5
- Fidelity to the Spirit of the Monastic Life? 1 2 3 4 5
- Obedience to the Will of God? 1 2 3 4 5

4. How well do I see myself fulfilling the oblate duties:

- Praying the Liturgy of the Hours? 1 2 3 4 5
- Reading from the *Rule of St. Benedict*? 1 2 3 4 5
- Daily practice of *lectio divina*? 1 2 3 4 5
- Participating in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation or in my own faith tradition of church and prayer? 1 2 3 4 5
- Attentiveness to God’s presence in my ordinary, daily life? 1 2 3 4 5

5. In what ways can I offer my time, talent and treasure to the services of the Oblate Community of Saint Meinrad Archabbey?

6. If I need to improve in any of these areas, what do I plan to do?



Winter at Saint Meinrad.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 15-18, 2009—Oblate Study Days at Saint Meinrad Archabbey will have as a theme “Obedience: A Monastic Way of Living,” presented by Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB. Participants will examine obedience as an act of the intellect, a response of the heart and a passion of the soul. We will explore how obedience forms within the Benedictine a monastic way of living. Sessions include discussion, prayer and time for interaction among the oblates.

July 10, 2009—A day of recollection for oblates will be held at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. Fr. Vincent Tobin, OSB, is the presenter on “Freedom to Obey.” Included will be Mass, three conferences, quiet time for prayer, lunch and the sacrament of Reconciliation.

July 17-19, 2009—The meeting of chapter coordinators and representatives, held every five years, will be at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, will be the presenter and facilitator. The topic will be “Looking to the Future: Leadership.”

September 4-7, 2009—The New York Labor Day weekend retreat will be held for oblates of New York, New Jersey and the Connecticut area. Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, will be the presenter of “Obedience: A Monastic Way of Living.”

September 12, 2009—The Lancaster, PA, day of recollection will be held at St. Joseph Parish, Lancaster. Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, will present “Obedience: A Monastic Way of Living.”

November 29, 2009—The New York oblates will have a day of recollection with Fr. Godfrey Mullen, OSB. The topic will be “Freedom in Obedience.”

December 11-13, 2009—The oblate retreat will be given by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB. The topic will be announced later. ♦

Oblate News from p. 3

doctoral program at Leuven in 1998, and the degree was conferred in December 2008.

December 6, 2008—A beautiful, but cold, Feast of St. Nicholas proved to be one of the most delightful Christmas potlucks yet for the Lancaster, PA, oblates. The hosts were Tom and Louise Souders. We had 14 in attendance and had fun telling Christmas memories. The highlight of the afternoon was when Trish LaMont started singing Christmas carols, and we all joined her.

*Sharon Ogden, oblate
Lancaster, PA*

December 12-14, 2008—The Benedictine Oblate Advent Retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey on “Conversion: With Instruments of Good Works” was conducted by the oblate directors, with each presenting a conference. There were 68 oblates in residence and 13 who commuted for a total of 81 oblates on the Hill. On Friday evening, Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, gave the conference on “*Conversatio*—Turning to the Lord Again and Again and Again.” The oblates then participated in Compline followed by a social.

Saturday morning Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, presented the second conference, “Our Life of Conversion.” The sacrament of Reconciliation was available in the Guest House chapel immediately after the conference. After noon prayer in the Archabbey Church, Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, invested three persons as oblate novices and received the oblation of three oblate novices.

The third conference, “Tools for Prayer,” was presented on Saturday afternoon by Br. Thomas Gricoski, OSB. Vespers with the monks was available before dinner. Following Compline, a concert titled “Sing A New Song” was presented by oblate Thomas G. Yost, a pastoral associate at

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany, IN.

He played the guitar and sang contemporary Catholic music that emerged after Vatican II, selecting songs from the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s and beyond. The concert was about remembering, celebrating and thanksgiving. The oblates enjoyed the concert, and many of the songs were familiar to oblates of varying ages.

The closing conference was presented by Fr. Meinrad on “Tools in the *Rule* that Lead to Joy.” Fr. Meinrad opened his conference with a recording of “Joy to the World” and closed his conference with the oblate retreatants singing the song. In the words of Fr. Meinrad, “It was a wonderful Advent retreat.”

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

December 15, 2008—A U.S. bankruptcy judge in the Western District of Tennessee, oblate Jennie D. Latta wrote an article, “Forgive Us Our Debts,” for the December 15, 2008, issue of *America*. The article talks about the current volume of bankruptcy petitions including repeat and multiple filings, reforms with codes and provisions, as well as the breadth of feelings and attitudes held by those in desperate straits and those who are in better financial shape.

Dynamics of family size and single parenting influence the number of filings for bankruptcy. Sadly, there are deep feelings of embarrassment for parents and children in these families. For most Americans, filing for bankruptcy is still a sign of inadequacy and a cause for shame.

How should we think about bankruptcy? What are the reactions, thoughts and feelings regarding today's bankruptcy problems by those who are and aren't suffering from them? Biblical references to “those who will not work should not eat” and “the resentment of those who worked all day and received the same pay as those who worked

only the last hour of the day,” along with the sturdy work ethic instilled in many people and a hint of pride from those who are “better off” all make for mixed feelings and attitudes toward those in bankruptcy.

She closes with a conscience nudge by asking if we have forgotten the Lord's parable about workers in a vineyard. Have we convinced ourselves that we somehow deserve all that we have been given?

*Joan C. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

December 23, 2008—Oblate Pat Astemborski from Muncie, IN, lost her house and all her possessions to fire. She is living with her daughter and her husband in Muncie.

January 2009—Oblate James Hubbman of St. Peters, MO, created a Vespers service for his parish for Advent, Lent and Palm Sunday. Parishioners pray Vespers in church at 6 p.m. on Sundays, with an average of 50 people per evening. Jim started this project as a *Bona Opera* work.

January 8, 2009—An Epiphany celebration was held at the home of Dr. Jim and Rita Merk with 35 oblates attending. Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and Msgr. Robert L. Noon concelebrated Mass together. Music was provided by Tom Flood at the piano. All joined in with joyful hymns.

During the Mass, Loretta Shalosky made her final oblation. Fr. Meinrad led us in the blessing of homes by distributing blessed chalk for all to take home. We then continued to the River Jordan, where married couples renewed their marriage vows and singles prayed for holiness in their state of life.

The cake adorned with the Three Kings was cut and distributed. It contained three beans, which designated the kings for distribution of prayer partner gifts. All those present received gifts. A large buffet of varied and delicious foods topped off the evening. ♦



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Reading Room

Invitation to Oblate Life (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2006) is clearly a book written for oblates. The author has been director of oblates for Blue Cloud Abbey in South Dakota for more than 30 years.

Besides being a Benedictine monk, Br. Benet Tvedten, OSB, has been a skilled and wise spiritual director for oblates through retreats, for conferences and in spiritual direction. He describes oblates as everyday people with jobs, families and other responsibilities. Some are Catholic and others are not.

Oblates offer the monastery a rich spiritual connection from the chaotic, hectic, and ever-changing world to the stability and wisdom of an established monastery. Br. Benet is an accomplished writer and storyteller whose earlier book, *The View from a Monastery*, is familiar to many oblates.

This book could be considered, in a Benedictine sense, as a tool for good works. It belongs on the oblate's reading table or bookshelf beside the *Rule of St. Benedict* and the *Liturgy of the Hours*. Br. Benet illustrates specific points in the *Rule*, such as the story of the 90-year-old

priest who was going for a Sunday walk when he noticed a young man and his mother standing in the vestibule. He said to himself, "I must be hospitable," so he took them inside and gave them hot coffee and cookies.

Throughout the book, Br. Benet uses stories to illustrate such Benedictine values as peace and justice, conversion, hospitality and stability. The calling to oblation and running to the *Rule* will be of particular value to the oblate reader's knowledge of oblation. Also of interest will be the five simple guidelines for oblates regarding affiliation to a monastic community.

The book includes a recommended reading list of valuable resources. This book is the second of a series called "Voice from the Monastery" by Br. Benet.

The book is written as an invitation to the oblate life and it is centered on Benedictine spirituality, which does not negate its applicability to non-Catholics who are contemplating the oblate life. This very readable resource is highly recommended.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*