A new book, *Benedictine Spirituality for Oblates*, has been published under the guidance and direction of Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and with assistance from the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Communications Office and Abbey Press.

This book has been a long time in the making. Many monks and oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey contributed time and creative writing skills to the production of the book.

The book serves as a guide for oblates seeking to understand what Benedictine spirituality is and how to make it an integral part of their spiritual and secular lives.

The book starts at the beginning of the Benedictine oblation process and the affiliate monastery. The first section includes the life and death of St. Meinrad and the roots of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. The next section deals with St. Benedict and his holy *Rule*. Overviews of the basic themes inherent in the *Rule* are presented as well as information about St. Benedict and his twin, St. Scholastica.

The section on what it means to be an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey spells out, step by step, what is involved in oblation and the process of becoming an oblate. Each step in the process is clearly presented in a definitive manner.

The section on Benedictine spirituality is, understandably, the longest one. The articles were written by monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and a few oblates. It is a broad cross section of the *Rule of St. Benedict* and the ensuing spirituality it conveys. The subjects are diverse, such as “’Tis a Gift to Be Simple” and “Watch Out: God’s Gifts Come with Strings Attached.”

The final section is titled “The Oblate Community.” It is an important section for oblates to read because subjects like “The Monastery’s Expectations of Its Oblates,” “The Value of Oblates to a Monastic Community” and “Responsibilities of the Monastery to Its Oblates” are of paramount importance to the success of any oblate program. The glossary gives oblates knowledge of some of the more common terms used with reference to Benedictine spirituality.

The book’s artwork was done by Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, a well-known liturgical artist and a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. His creative artwork lends beauty to the book. *Benedictine Spirituality for Oblates* is highly recommended, and it may be purchased for $20, plus $5 for shipping and handling.

**Thomas J. Rillo, oblate**

**Bloomington, IN**
Oblate panel discusses spiritual activities

Sr. Antoinette Purcell, OSB, president of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors, introduced a panel discussion as part of the organization's conference, held at Saint Meinrad during July.

The panel members were: from Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Maureen Grant and Albert Kovacs; from Monastery Immaculate Conception, Elaine Baumgart and Victor Begle; from Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Frank and Margie Pile.

Each panel member explained the reason for becoming an oblate and how the formation program of oblation helps them to practice the teaching of St. Benedict and to have respect for all persons, living things and the natural world. The oblate panel members also specified what they do for their church and in what capacity they serve, such as soup kitchens, visiting the sick and making mission trips to other countries.

Each also explained how being an oblate has helped in achieving a more balanced spiritual life amid a chaotic secular world and what helps to remain faithful to vows of oblation. One departure from the normal activities involved with oblation was mentioned by Maureen Grant. She is a student in the master's degree program at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. As an assignment for a class taught by Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, she chose to do an artistic reflection on the theological symbolism of the floor of the Archabbey Church.

A hand-painted rendition of the floor and its symbolism was displayed and explained. Being a math teacher, she immediately recognized the so-called Sierpinski triangle-within-triangle design in the beautiful marble floor. She stated that the project was an opportunity to make connections between the nature of the five geometric elements of the pavement and the nature of God.

Feedback from the conference participants indicated the panel was one of the best compared to previous NAABOD conferences and that the theme for the panel was well selected.

How you can help:

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• Request information about life income gifts

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and Seminary and School of Theology
development@saintmeinrad.edu
(800) 682-0988
www.saintmeinrad.edu

Pray for Vocations

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

Editor: Mary Jeanne Schumacher
Designer: Tammy Schuetter
Oblate Directors: Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB
Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

Send changes of address and comments to The Editor, Development Office, Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad, IN 47577, (812) 357-6817, fax (812) 357-6325 or email oblates@saintmeinrad.edu
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Oblate surprised with parish award

Oblate Oliver Ogden received the Spirituality Development Award from the Good Shepherd Men’s Association on April 30. He received an ovation when he went up to receive it from Msgr. Thomas Smith, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Lancaster, PA. The award is a glass outline of a flame, about eight inches high. He was thanked for his unceasing commitment to the spiritual development of his parishioners, his tireless efforts to maintain perpetual adoration, and for everything else that he does. It was a total surprise!

Sharon Ogden, oblate Silver Springs, PA

Ministry work rewarded

Mary Kathryn (Kitty) Gilles, an oblate from Evansville, IN, received the Mother Teresa Service Award on May 19 from Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Evansville. Her parish, St. Anthony Church in Evansville, highly praised her for this prestigious award. She served on the Catholic Charities board for 10 years, worked with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and began the SPRED program for special needs children and is still its director today. She was a leader in her parish soup kitchen and served in a total of 30 ministries in her parish since 1951.

Ohio oblates hold day of recollection

The Cincinnati Chapter hosted the Ohio oblates for a day of recollection at the Milford Spiritual Center on May 21. Br. Zachary Wilberding, OSB, gave two conferences on the Liturgy of the Hours. Also, the group enjoyed a meal together; prayed Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer and Vespers; and finished by attending Mass together.

The spring day reflected the rejuvenation provided by Br. Zachary to root the Liturgy of the Hours more deeply in our lives. Personal examples and sharing aided the participants in considering the beauty of the Psalms and the need to remain faithful to incorporating prayer in our daily personal lives.

As St. Athanasius writes in his interpretation of the Psalms, “In the Psalms, just as in a mirror, the movements of our own souls are reflected. The words are our very own, given us to serve both as a reminder of our changes of condition and as a pattern and model for the amendment of our lives.”

Susan Anderson, oblate Cincinnati, OH

Study Days offer closer look at Rule

The Oblate Study Days were held June 13-16, with 43 oblates participating. The topic of “A Closer Look at the Holy Rule” was led by Fr. Harry Hagan, OSB.

Fr. Harry explained that the Rule came together in a complex way over a long time. Essentially, there were two big rivers of monasticism: 1) the way of Anthony the Great, a hermit who lived in the desert and confronted the devil there, and 2) the way of Pachomius, an atheist who became a Christian and went to the desert, but was then called to a place where the people came to him. He became a cenobite, one who lives a common life.

Obviously, living with people demands a common understanding of how to live and, because of this, different rules began to be written, including the Rule of the Master and the Rule of St. Benedict. According to Fr. Harry, Benedict may have been familiar with the Rule of the Master and may have used it as the basis for his own rule.

As Fr. Harry explained, the Rule of St. Benedict is not the answer. Rather, it is a number of things held in tension, and those who follow the Rule are called to see that tension.

In studying the Rule, one of the main questions throughout the centuries has been “what is the mother of virtue?” In other words, what virtue is, or should be, the most prominent in one’s life? Fr. Harry took a closer look at the virtues named by Thomas Aquinas: temperance, prudence (discretion), love and humility.

In the quest to put nothing before Christ, a life balancing all of these virtues brings one closer to God; and the Rule of St. Benedict is a guide for those who choose to follow its instruction. It is essential, explained Fr. Harry, that one embrace the reality of the Cross, basing one’s life in Christ’s love, being obedient to the best part of oneself and then focusing outward to God’s creation.

Fr. Harry also referred to the Latin version of the Rule, explaining that the translation to the vernacular often dilutes Benedict’s intended meaning. The original text allows a much broader understanding of what Benedict calls each to do. This broader understanding makes the Rule more exciting and meaningful.

For those interested in further reading, Fr. Harry recommended several books: Reading Saint Benedict: Reflections on the Rule by Adalbert de Vogue; The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century by Joan Chittister; Reading to Live: Evolving Practice of Lectio Divina by Raymond Studzinski; and Tradition of Catholic Prayer by Saint Meinrad Monks.

Catherine Byers, oblate Nineveh, IN

A faith-filled day of recollection

On the day of recollection for oblates, held at Saint Meinrad on July 11,

see Oblate News, p. 4

The reasons for choosing the retreat were based on the reputation of the presenter, the topic and the time of year. The participants liked the retreat format, including time for the sacraments of the anointing of the sick and reconciliation. The focus on the abbot and understanding his relationship to the monastic community was especially appreciated.

The servant leadership quality of the Rule and the history of the Rule and monasticism were very informative. Another highlight was the opportunity to pray with the monks at noon prayer and Vespers. The participants enjoyed the hospitality extended to them, as well as the opportunity to share experiences during informal gatherings such as meals and free time. The retreat received high evaluations and was considered a success.

Fr. Meinrad celebrates golden jubilee
On July 17, Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, celebrated a jubilee Mass at Good Shepherd Church in Indianapolis commemorating 50 years as a priest.

Originally, Good Shepherd Church was two churches: St. Catherine of Siena Church (Fr. Meinrad’s home parish) and St. James the Great Church. Concelebrating the Mass were seven Benedictine priests and nine diocesan priests. Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, and former Archabbot Bonaventure Knaebel, OSB, were among the concelebrants.

About 240 relatives, friends and oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey attended the celebration. After Mass, a buffet luncheon was held in the parish gymnasium.

Fr. Meinrad, in looking back over 50 years as a priest and a monk, assessed that he had a calling to be both a monk and a priest. Abbot Ignatius Esser suggested that Fr. Meinrad, while he was in the seminary, consider both vocations. It was a single, viable vocation for Fr. Meinrad that had its inherent tensions.

He spent 25 years within the monastic community in various teaching assignments and then, in 1997, he began a pastoral ministry. He said he gained a deeper appreciation of being a monk as he interacted with the laity, who had more complex problems than those of a monk living in a monastic community. Father stated that we are all called to the priesthood of Christ by virtue of baptism.

From the day of his ordination to the jubilee celebration, Fr. Meinrad has celebrated 20,395 Masses at 909 different places throughout the United States and the world. He concluded the celebration with these words: “I thank God but words of gratitude to other people cannot be separated. It is not enough to say thank you to God, unless we live lives of thank you to others.”

Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN

Organ recital in Archabbey Church
In conjunction with Fr. Columba Kelly’s retreat, “Bringing to Life the Word of God in Song,” held August 1-12 at Saint Meinrad, an organ recital was presented in the Archabbey Church on Sunday, August 7.

The organists were retreat participants George Hubbard of Charleston, Michael David of Chicago and New York Chapter oblate Raymond Henderson. The music represented works of 20th-century composers whose music was based on or inspired by Gregorian chant.

INVESTITURES & OBLATIONS

April 25, 2011, Investiture—Mrs. Katherine Guthrie and Mr. Ross Guthrie of Jackson, TN.

May 14, 2011, Investiture—Mr. Peter Manninen of Brownsburg, IN.
May 14, 2011, Oblation—Ms. Gerardine Helena Waggle of Indianapolis, IN.

May 16, 2011, Oblation—Mr. Steven Benedict Theodore Perez of West Palm Beach, FL, and Ms. Judith Ann Gertrude Umlauf of Hot Springs, NC.

May 18, 2011, Oblation—Mrs. Elizabeth Maurus Jones and Deacon Walton Solanus Jones of Louisville, KY, and Mr. Edward Thomas Peter Penton of Ottawa, Canada.

May 20, 2011, Investiture—Mrs. Donna Hardy and Mr. P. Curtis Hardy of Pittsboro, NC.

May 21, 2011, Investiture—Mr. Nick DelleCave of Cincinnati, OH; Mr. Bernard Kenney of Georgetown, OH; and Mr. Charles Roth of Port Washington, NY.

May 22, 2011, Investiture—Mr. Robert Hartenstein of Fort Wayne, IN.

June 2, 2011, Investiture—Mrs. Debra Ordner of Newburgh, IN.

June 8, 2011, Investiture—Colonel Stephen Russell of Colbert, WA.

June 14, 2011, Investiture—Ms. Christine Vincent of North Vernon, IN.

June 15, 2011, Oblation—Dr. Gerald James Altstadt and Mrs. Lora Anne Altstadt of Huntington, IN; Mr. Stephen Thomas More Drees of Mason, OH; Mrs. Margaret Julianna Sherlock of West Chester, OH; and Robert Anthony Placidus Siebenaller of Toledo, OH.

June 24, 2011, Oblation—Mr. James Lee John of the Cross Essner and Mrs. Sharon Marie Scholastica Essner of Cape Girardeau, MO; and Mr. James John Schmitt of Albion, IN.

June 29, 2011, Oblation—Rev. Bruce Becket Jacobson of Groveland, MA.

July 1, 2011, Investiture—Mr. David Bohnenstiehl of Collinsville, IL.

July 11, 2011, Investiture—Miss Sarah Longoria of Bartlett, TN.

July 11, 2011, Oblation—Mr. David Anselm Bartolowits of Indianapolis, IN.

July 24, 2011, Oblation—Mr. Samuel Joseph Eversman of St. Louis, MO.

July 25, 2011, Investiture—Rev. Deborah Apoldo of Harrods Creek, KY.

July 26, 2011, Oblation—Mr. David Gregory Annable of Monroe, OH.

July 30, 2011, Investiture—Miss Kaitie Castagna and Miss Amanda Olnsted, both of Newport News, VA.

August 6, 2011, Investiture—Ms. Carol Hugenberg of Florence, OR.

August 9, 2011, Investiture—Mr. Duane Carver of New Castle, IN.


August 3, 2011, Transfer of Oblation—from Conception Abbey in Conception, MO, to Saint Meinrad Archabbey—Ms. Vicki Burns, Miss Shannon Burns and Mr. Dakotah Burns, all of Louisville, KY.

DEATHS

Mr. Charles Riebe of Dublin, OH, died May 8, 2011.

Mr. Bernard Seger of Indianapolis, IN, died May 11, 2011.

Dr. Ronald Anjard of San Diego, CA, died May 11, 2011.

Mrs. Lucille Baurley of North Vernon, IN, died July 31, 2007. We recently received notice of her death.

Mrs. Elsa Parker of Cincinnati, OH, died May 21, 2011.

Ms. Mona Rinear of Martinsville, IN, died July 5, 2011.

Ms. Mary Jo Jarboe of Tell City, IN, died August 23, 2011.

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 27, 2011—The day of recollection for New York oblates will feature Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, as the presenter of “Following the Path that Leads to Life!”

December 9-11, 2011—The Oblate Retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey is expected to have Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, as the presenter of “Under a Rule and an Abbot: The Human Face of Monastic Life.”

March 20-22, 2012—The March retreat for oblates will be presented by Fr. Timothy Sweeney, OSB. The title is: “Come Away by Yourselves to a Deserted Place and Rest Awhile,” based on Mark 6:31.

April 21, 2012—The Louisville, KY, oblates will welcome Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, presenting three conferences centered on the Rule of St. Benedict.

April 29-May 8, 2012—A 10-day Benedictine pilgrimage to the Canadian Rockies by train will include British Columbia, Westminster Abbey Tour, Columbia Icefields, Lake Louise, Banff, Calgary and Vancouver. Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, is hosting this trip, and Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, oblate director, will be the chaplain. The cost is $2,844 plus airfare. Contact Br. Maurus at 100 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577; (812) 357-6674 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu for a brochure.

May 19, 2012—The Ohio (Columbus) Day of Recollection will be held at the Shrine of the Little Flower in Columbus with Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, presenting “Rule of Benedict Offers Peace in the Midst of Suffering.”

June 11-14, 2012—Oblate Study Days will have the theme of sacraments (church). One of the duties of an oblate is to stay close to the sacraments. (Protestant oblates should remain close to their faith tradition.) Fr. Prior Kurt Stasiak, OSB, will present “The Sacraments: Means of Grace, Ways of Life.”

◆ ◆ ◆
Three lectures about land stewardship and sustainability and how they relate to Benedictine spirituality were presented during the conference of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors, held at Saint Meinrad Archabbey July 1-6. The conference theme was “Embracing Creation with Reverence and Hospitality: Listening to the Scripture and the Rule Speak.”

Sr. Kathryn Huber, OSB, a member of the spiritual ministry team at Monastery Immaculate Conception, Ferdinand, IN, pointed out that, using adult education learning theory, “each of us knows about the topic from our experiences,” and that personal experiences have shaped our understanding of the issue.

She related her childhood experiences and her understanding of the interrelationship of nature and God. Sr. Kathryn was brought up on a fruit and vegetable truck farm. The whole family contributed to, and received, from this farm. Nature was sacred, because the family lived close to it.

The laws that govern life on earth are the basis of the whole universe, she said. “All matter in the universe is interconnected, and we are all part of a vast web. God is present in the universe and in energy, and the two most important forms of energy are light and thought.”

Christian and Benedictine tradition, as well as Scripture, mystics and the Rule of St. Benedict, abound with references to nature. Scripture suggests that all created life is a gift. This is found in Genesis and in Psalm 104, in particular. References to the seasons, sowing and harvesting can be found in these and many other biblical readings.

Benedictine spirituality is the intense and intentional living of Christian spirituality. The Rule is the basis of this spirituality. Sr. Kathryn noted, “A casual read of the Rule does not discuss stewardship of nature or the environment.” However, stewardship is woven throughout the Rule.

Reverence for creation and the cycle of seasons permeates the work. The Rule suggests that all resources, such as garden tools, must be wisely used in monastic work. A good cellarer, as discussed in the Rule, is an example of stewardship of resources. Since all life is interconnected, we must become stewards of the land and our resources.

Kyle Kramer also spoke during the conference. He is the director of the Lay Degree Program at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. He also lives on and maintains a small organic or “green farm” and has a foot in both the world of Benedictine spirituality and farming. He is the author of A Time to Plant: Lessons of Work, Prayer and Dirt.

Kramer pointed out that sustainability and spirituality are interrelated. They comprise “a way of living that enables life for all creatures now and in the future.” Four aspects of sustainability are:

Renewable – materials can be renewed and recycled.

Regenerativity – the earth changes, improves and repairs itself.

Resilience – when disasters happen, a sustainable ecosystem will bounce back.

Community – an ecosystem that is sustainable is a living system of many parts, each affecting the others.

Also, six key themes from Benedictine spirituality show the interrelationship of sustainability and spirituality. Benedictines make a vow of stability to stay in one monastic community for a lifetime. We can make a commitment to stay in one place and to improve our land.

The vow of obedience is putting a community’s needs first and then making responsible lifestyle choices. The vow of poverty does not mean not owning anything, “Our land is really not our land; it is on loan to us... we must deliver it in better condition to the next generation.”

We need to have a balance between contemplation and action. Hospitality is welcoming nature and people into our homes. Conversion takes the long view. It takes a long time to change things, both in society and on the earth.

Benedictine communities can become an “ark,” which can preserve what we are forgetting as a society. Benedictine communities did this after the fall of the Roman Empire. However, “the doors would be open, not closed, and inviting, and the ideas would be shared to include the interrelationship of sustainability, spirituality and hospitality.”
Contemplative Heart.

We can begin our action for creation with a Benedictine "We need to begin with our Benedictine values. It is what we are called to as Christians and as creation." We must use the senses God has given us to co-create with the world. In this way, "humankind comes to know God, for God is the author of all creation." We need to begin with our relationship with God and live out of our Benedictine values. It is what we are called to as Christians and as Benedictines. "We can begin our action for creation with a contemplative heart.”

Each speaker offered concrete actions we could undertake for sustainability and stewardship of nature and their interrelationship with spirituality based upon the Rule – in other words, becoming good cellars of the world. These actions included recycling waste, turning lights off when a room is not in use, opening windows for ventilation and to let nature in, rain gardens, permeable pavement, refraining from using disposable and plastic items, if physically able using the stairs rather than taking the elevator, planting trees and crops that fit the local environment, planting a backyard/urban garden and other initiatives.

Ruth Clifford Engs, oblate
Bloomington, IN

Creation and nature themes are found from antiquity. The ancient Hebrews lived close to the earth. They respected the power of creation and the power of God's work in creation. This is found in Psalms 38, 104, Book of Job, the story of Noah, the Canticle of Daniel and other writings. Jesus also used parables with nature themes.

Environmentalist Rene Dubos noted that St. Benedict “managed the land in a way to sustain their livelihood, yet had an ethical approach to creation.” Hildegard of Bingen said, “We are dressed in the scaffold of creation, in seeing to recognize the world; in hearing to understand; in smelling to discern; in tasting to nurture; in touching to govern.”

We must use the senses God has given us to co-create with the world. In this way, “humankind comes to know God, for God is the author of all creation.” We need to begin with our relationship with God and live out of our Benedictine values. It is what we are called to as Christians and as Benedictines. “We can begin our action for creation with a contemplative heart.”

One of the most difficult tasks of the week was the Sunday afternoon exchange of the NAABOD participants with the priores and delegates to the meeting of the Federation of St. Gertrude at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand. Council member Mike Reffett, the volunteer coordinator for the NAABOD conference, worked with his counterpart at Ferdinand, and the exchange went off with hardly a hitch (except for an unexpected rain shower).

Saint Meinrad hosted a banquet for the priores in the Anselm Dining Room, while the NAABOD delegates were provided a tour and dinner by the Ferdinand community.

A highlight of the week was the opening of the workshops of Brothers Martin, John Mark, Kim and Flavian to the directors and delegates. This, too, required fine coordination of transportation, but allowed a number of volunteers their first peeks inside the various shops. Another highlight for some was the opportunity to join the conference delegates in worship, topped with an outdoor experience of liturgical reading and movement led by Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB.

Jennie D. Latta, oblate
Memphis, TN

Oblate Council reviews conference

The Oblate Council met at Saint Meinrad on July 6, following the close of the biennial meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors to reflect on their experiences over the past week. Council members were joined by members of the Finance Committee and other volunteers who had played an important part in the success of the NAABOD meeting.

After congratulating the volunteers on the outstanding level of hospitality shown to the directors and delegates, Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, led the discussion about the conference. The responses of the volunteers were overwhelmingly positive. The conference provided a unique opportunity for the members of the Oblate Council and Finance Committee to live and work together for an extended period. Many commented on the sense of community that quickly developed and the joy that came from working toward a common purpose.

New card features lectio divina

If you'd like a card that describes a method of lectio divina, it is available from the Oblate Office. It features a color photo of the “Christ in Glory” painting from the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church. On the opposite side is a brief “Way of Doing Lectio Divina.”

If you would like a lectio divina card, write Office of Benedictine Oblates, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577. Or, call (812) 357-6817 or email oblates@saintmeinrad.edu
Sharing the wealth—About our chapters

Evansville Chapter

Note: Dr. Ruth Clifford Engs, an oblate from Bloomington, IN, searched the oblate archives for materials concerning the Evansville Chapter. They are composed of bits and pieces of meeting minutes, news clippings, correspondence, and lists of oblates paying dues or attending a variety of meetings and retreats. Most of this material is from the 1940s and 1950s. Later material was gathered from the newsletter and the oral history of some of the Evansville members. Because the records were not always kept at the Oblate Office or by the chapter, the history of the Evansville Chapter is sparse.

Saint Meinrad Abbot Ignatius Esser, OSB, founded the Evansville Chapter in 1936. The chapter was the first one to serve laity who wished to be a part of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. An earlier oblate chapter at the abbey was for seminarians only.

1940s-1950s: Abbot Ignatius may have established a group for married couples to attract more men to the oblate program. A list of members shows that most of the oblates were women, and men may have felt uncomfortable attending these meetings. Alternatively, perhaps younger individuals felt a need for a separate group that would more reflect their interests.

As membership grew, Abbot Ignatius established a separate group for married couples only in 1941. This group was a subgroup of the Evansville Chapter. The records show that there was a married and single group and also a “young” and “mature” group. The records of that period often list the same member in both groups. Small group meetings for just married couples were still ongoing in the early 1960s. During the early years, primarily the World War II years, chapter meetings were held all year with the exception of months with days of recollection and retreats. During the WWII years, no mention of the war or even prayers for the fighting troops was made in the chapter meeting minutes. After the war ended, Fr. Alfred Baltz, OSB, in 1946, related his experience at Monte Cassino during the Allied destruction of that monastery.

The earliest Oblate Newsletter began in June 1942, and from these newsletters, some information about the Evansville Chapter is found.

In 1943, Fr. Walter Sullivan, OSB, the new oblate director, reorganized the Evansville Chapter. Meetings became more formalized and structured. Fr. Walter appointed officers to serve one year; some served for many. The officers were as follows:

- Spiritual Director, Fr. Walter – moderator of parish group
- President, Mrs. Cecilia Ruder – presides at meetings not held in church
- Vice-President, Mrs. Emma Schoenbechler – keeps the registers of oblates and dates of investiture and oblation
- Secretary, Miss Genevieve Closter – keeps minutes of each meeting and addresses up to date; she kept detailed minutes through February 1946.
- Treasurer, Miss M. Ubelhor – in charge of oblate funds; makes sure that at each meeting the “secret bag” is passed to each one for donation toward the Mass fund for deceased members.

The meeting minutes of January 26, 1944, show that the meeting was held at the rectory. Fr. Walter and 19 members were present. The office of Compline was recited. One woman was invested by Fr. Walter. The total amount in the treasury was $8.99. By December 1949, the Evansville oblates were meeting at St. Benedict’s Church, the last Tuesday of the month, except June, July and August.

In 1945, 26 active oblates were on the roll. However, only one man was listed as a member. In February 1959, 42 people attended the chapter meeting and still only three were men.

On December 4, 1947, Fr. Walter conducted the first oblate meeting for young married couples, with seven couples attending, for a discussion of oblate principles in family life. It was held at the home of Ray Wargel.

On June 2, 1950, young married couples who had formed a new Cana chapter in Evansville came to Saint Meinrad for the day. Under Fr. Walter’s leadership, the number of oblates increased. During December 1957, 57 oblates from the Evansville area held a day of recollection at St. Mary’s Hospital.

1960s-1970s: In April 1964, 228 oblates were listed for the Evansville Chapter; most were women. This list included 23 couples or 46 individuals who also belonged to the couples small group meeting. However, it was likely most of the 228 people on the list were not active, and minutes appear to indicate that few attended chapter meetings. The roll call on Nov. 7, 1976, reported that 14 attended.

In 1979, Rosemary Davis became coordinator of the chapter. Keada Grisham was in correspondence with the oblate directors for a number of years up to the time Davis became coordinator. The newsletter often announced the Requiem Masses said for oblates. One example was for Beulah O. Edwards, on October 24, 1979. This oblate died at age 87 and bore 20 children!
Faithful Witnesses

Note: This new series will focus on the lives and virtues of saints and blessed from our Benedictine tradition. May these reflections on these “good and faithful servants” who have lived under the wisdom of St. Benedict’s “little rule for beginners” inspire you in your own search for God and service to the Church.

Br. Silas Henderson, OSB

St. Hildegarde of Bingen
Feast: September 17

By the standards of any age, Hildegarde of Bingen was a remarkable person. Her accomplishments and influence, particularly as a medieval woman, were extraordinary. And yet, with all her giftedness, Hildegarde simply described herself as being “a feather on the breath of God.”

Born to a noble family in 1098 at Bermersheim, Germany, she was only a child when her parents entrusted her to Blessed Jutta, a recluse who lived in a small cottage attached to the church of the Abbey of Disibodenberg. In time, Jutta formed a new community, adopting the Rule of St. Benedict. Following Jutta’s death in 1136, Hildegarde was elected to succeed her teacher as abbess.

As a young woman, Hildegarde had begun to receive private revelations in the form of visions and she kept a record of her mystical experiences. Her theological writings, especially the Scivias, included original insights into the love of Christ, the Kingdom of God, and heaven and hell. Hildegarde also wrote on themes as varied as medicine, astronomy, geology and music.

In addition to her many letters, she is especially celebrated for her original musical compositions and her unique poetry, much of which were used in her monastery’s liturgies.

Around 1150, Hildegarde and her nuns established a new monastery at Bingen. She continued to share her mystical experiences and she counseled and challenged the rich and powerful of her day. Honored by kings, popes and paupers, Hildegarde died in her monastery in 1179.

True to her Benedictine vocation, this woman who has been called the “Sibyll of the Rhine” understood that the obedience she offered to God, the source of her wisdom and faith, was the most perfect sign of her love for God.

As St. Benedict says, “such people as these immediately put aside their own concerns, abandon their own will… it is love that impels them to pursue everlasting life” (RB 5:7, 10). She recognized that whatever good she was able to do was only the result of a cultivated, dynamic relationship with the “Living Light,” her name for God.

May the obedience of St. Hildegarde, rooted in obedience, continue to inspire us to seek those things that are most pleasing to God and of greatest service to our families and our church.

Reflection Questions

How do you show gratitude for the many gifts and talents God has given to you?

How could you better listen for the voice of the Lord calling to you in your day-to-day life?

CHECK THE WEBSITE
Past issues of the Benedictine Oblate newsletter are available at www.saintmeinrad.edu/benedictineoblate
OBLATES: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“An oblate is a Christian man or woman who is interested in growing in their spiritual life and willing to commit to a way of life according to the Rule of St. Benedict. Following the Rule has increased my organization of my prayer life. I have become more aware of opportunities to participate as a member of community. If someone is interested in growing spiritually and is willing to commit to the Rule of St. Benedict, they will find encouragement and food for the journey.”

Oblate Jessi McCurdy
Mt. Gretna, PA

Conference participants tour Ferdinand monastery

The 82 participants in the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors conference boarded two school buses for a five-mile trip to Ferdinand, IN. The purpose was to tour the Benedictine women’s monastery, Monastery Immaculate Conception.

Upon arrival, the group entered the beautifully renovated monastery church, where they prayed the Liturgy of the Hours with the sisters. After prayer, the group moved to the monastery dining hall for a wonderful chicken dinner served country-style. A sister from the monastery was assigned to each table.

After dinner, the group was divided into smaller groups and a sister was assigned to lead each group on a tour. The tour included a history of the community and of the founding sisters who dedicated their lives to the building of the monastery.

The visit ended with a trip to the monastery gift shop. The group returned to Saint Meinrad Archabbey appreciative of the generous hospitality that the Sisters of St. Benedict extended to them.

Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Volunteers from Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN, Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN, and St. Walburg Monastery in Covington, KY, worked together to make the meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors a great example of Benedictine hospitality. The volunteers carried luggage, showed participants to their rooms, served refreshments and meals, handled book sales and performed hundreds of other duties for the guests who came for the meeting. Oblate Mike Reflett from Saint Meinrad organized the volunteers. Much gratitude is extended to all the volunteers who made the conference run smoothly.
Saint Meinrad hosts oblate directors conference

Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and Sr. Kathryn Huber, OSB, of Ferdinand, IN, (right) participate in a discussion with one of the oblates who attended the conference.

Oblate directors from 31 Benedictine monasteries from throughout the United States and Canada pose for a conference photo on the Archabbey Church steps.

Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, welcomes the oblate directors and oblates at the opening session in the Guest House Chapel.

The oblate directors and oblate representatives who attended the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors meeting from July 1-6 gather for a group photo. There were 82 who participated in the meeting.

Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, gives a tour of the Chapter Room to the meeting participants.

Various discussion groups of directors and oblates conversed in the Guest House Dining Room.
Kathleen Norris’ best-sellers, like *Cloister Walk*, have introduced millions to monastic spirituality and oblate life by demonstrating their relevance to our times. Her latest book, *Acedia and Me*, continues that tradition in a confessional style that reads like St. Augustine or Thomas Merton.

*Acedia and Me* recounts with touching openness Norris’ life as poet, oblate and wife to fellow poet David Dwyer and tells of her struggles with acedia, a condition described in detail by the fathers of the desert. St. Benedict knew acedia well and warned of its dangers.

What is acedia? Dictionary definitions—”restlessness and inability to work or to pray” or “idleness”—don’t begin to exhaust its meaning. The desert fathers called it “the noonday demon” and feared it as the most harmful of “eight bad thoughts.” Over time, acedia was combined with sloth as one of the seven deadly sins and almost forgotten.

Norris even sees acedia at work in the boredom, ennui and despair that have “inspired” artists and intellectuals from the romantic era to the present. But acedia is neither muse nor mere sloth; Thomas Aquinas defines it as “the wanton, willful self-distressing that numbs all love” and that makes it impossible “to rest in God.”

It’s also described as “a voice claiming God has no mercy and no love for (us).” In surrendering to acedia, we become detached spectators of life and wallow in listlessness or frantic activity to avoid the demands of love.

Fortunately, Norris throws us a lifeline. She, like the desert fathers and the holy *Rule*, asserts that the antidote to acedia is stability and obedience. St. Benedict warns that “idleness is the enemy of the soul” and calls for obedience to “bring you back to Him from whom you had drifted through the sloth (read, acedia) of disobedience.” For oblates, this means continuous response to God’s call in the routines of life and the daily round of prayer and work that characterize Benedictine spirituality.

John Swales III, oblate
Parkersburg, WV