

Oblate Benedictine

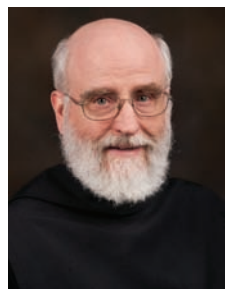


Saint Meinrad



Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, invests novice Peyton Reed with the scapular of St. Benedict. His wife, Mary Louise, waits for her turn to receive the scapular. The ceremony was performed during the Cincinnati Oblate Chapter meeting on November 24, 2013.

Become more aware of God's presence



Fr. Bede Cisco, OSB

During the Advent and Christmas seasons, we hear much of Emmanuel, "God with us." The one we await during Advent as the triumphant risen Lord comes at Christmas as a helpless infant. Our experience is filled with many other ways in which

God is present to us.

The presence of God in our lives can be taken for granted, and is often overlooked. Some will say when they begin to pray in a small group, "Let us place ourselves in God's presence." But really, we don't have to do anything to be in the presence of God. It's almost pretentious to think that *we* can place ourselves in God's presence! God always takes the initiative. God made us and we continue to exist because of divine gratuitousness.

So we can ask, is God's presence in our lives a matter of awareness or revelation? Since God is always with us (RB 7:23; 19:1) and we are often scattered or inattentive, recognizing God's presence is frequently a matter of focusing our awareness.

Some of us are able to cultivate our awareness of God's steady presence with us and bring it to a higher or more continuous level of awareness. We develop our awareness and, as we do, we realize that God is providing the grace that makes our effort possible.

God can also take the initiative more directly to prompt our awareness of the divine presence. When we are out walking in God's creation, seeing a spectacular flower or a bird's sudden flight out of a bush can flood us with the majesty of God.

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A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“When the cause of sin lies hidden in his conscience, he is to reveal it only to the abbot or to one of the spiritual elders, who know how to heal their own wounds as well as those of others, without exposing them and making them public.”

Rule of St. Benedict 46:5-6

While St. Benedict does not mention the sacraments per se, they are inherent in various places throughout the *Rule*.

All monks in the monastery have access to the gifts of the sacraments, because ordained priests are members of the monastic community. Penance or Reconciliation is the first healing sacrament. St. Benedict agreed with the Desert Fathers and their emphasis on the deepening healing of the penitent.

The penitent with radical honesty makes a complete revelation to the confessor of the symptoms of his faults or sins. St. Benedict proposes that the abbot or other spiritual directors exercise complete discretion as demanded by canon law.

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God can use our interactions with others to provide glimpses of the divine presence in the other, in the love and care expressed, and in ourselves. A child's awe and delight leads parents to encounter God in and with their children. The divine presence is disclosed when husbands and wives recognize God weaving them together in their ups and downs.

The *Rule* directs our attention to interactions with three kinds of persons as revelatory of God's presence: the abbot, the guest and the sick. In each case, it is particularly Christ's presence that is revealed to the monk.

The abbot “is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery, since he is addressed by a title of Christ . . .” (2:2). Benedict goes on to describe how the abbot ought to act, but the reader is invited to consider how interacting with the abbot is an encounter with Christ.

With guests, the *Rule* is more direct: “By a bow of the head or by a complete prostration of the body, Christ is to be adored because he is indeed welcomed in them” (53:7). The perceptive reader recalls the admonition in the Letter to the Hebrews: “Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels” (13:2, alluding to Abraham's visitors in Genesis 18).

“Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ . . .” (36:1). Benedict is not naïve—“sick brothers must be patiently borne with” (v. 5), and caring for the sick becomes carrying Christ's cross with them.

God can also reveal the divine presence to us in deeply personal ways. Chapter 20 of the *Rule* teaches us “to lay our petitions before the Lord . . . with the utmost humility and sincere devotion” (v. 2). We can dare to ask to be in God's presence in a special way, as Moses did—“Please let me see your glory” (Ex 33:18).

Covered by God's hand, Moses experienced God's glory and saw God's back. Chapter 20 alludes to such intense personal experiences of God's presence: “Prayer should therefore be short and pure, unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace” (v. 4).

In contrast, many speak of God's absence or non-responsiveness. Such experiences need to be carefully considered. While never minimizing such experiences of another, they must be placed in dialog with our conviction that God is always present. God's apparent absence or non-responsiveness can be an invitation to let go of an inadequate view of who God is or an invitation to greater intimacy with God.

There are also special settings, events and places in which we experience the presence of God. Silence and solitude are among such privileged settings. They are ancient and basic components of monastic spirituality with profound relevance for every Christian. British Catholic author Sara Maitland published *A Book of Silence* about her explorations. She writes:

When . . . I started not just to be more silent, but also to love silence and want to understand it and hunt it down, both in practice and in theory, I did not feel I was running away from anything. On the contrary, I wanted *more*. I had it all and it was not enough. Silence is additional to, not a rejection of sociability and friends and periods of deep emotional and professional satisfaction. I have been lucky, or graced; in a deep sense, as I shall describe, I feel that silence sought me out rather than the other way round.” (p. 13)

The *Rule* describes the rite in which a novice makes promises as taking place “in the presence of God and his saints” (58:18). All of the sacraments and liturgical celebrations of our lives are similarly situated. Jacob's dream about a stairway led him to realize, “the Lord is in this spot, although I did not know it!” (Gen 28:16).

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Abbey Caskets celebrates 15 years

Abbey Caskets, a work of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, celebrates 15 years of business in 2014. In the past 15 years, the enterprise has seen much growth and many changes. Here are five changes you may not be aware of:

New showroom location—Abbey Caskets' showroom is located in the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Gift Shop. You are welcome to visit the showroom to view the products and speak to a representative about any of your questions.

Prepay Option—Abbey Caskets offers the option to prepay for a casket. If you purchase a casket in advance, it locks in the price of the casket, avoiding future price increases.

Updated Website—The Abbey Caskets website, www.abbeycaskets.com, is easy to navigate and gives you all the information you need about caskets,

cremation urns and pricing. You also have access to our blog with information regarding end-of-life planning and grief support.

E-Newsletter—You can sign up for Abbey Caskets' quarterly newsletter that keeps you informed on important end-of-life information, like funeral planning, grieving advice and estate planning resources.

Facebook—The Abbey Caskets Facebook page provides a way for you to connect with others who are grieving, organize end-of-life planning and get updates about Abbey Caskets.

In celebration of Abbey Caskets' 15-year anniversary, a 15% discount is offered to any Saint Meinrad oblate who chooses to prepay for an Abbey Casket by June 30, 2014. For more information, contact Abbey Caskets at (800) 987-7380 or by email at info@abbeycaskets.com. ♦

End Matters for Benedictine Oblates

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

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

During your will/estate planning, clearly state that, upon your death, your survivors should return your Certificate of Oblation, with the date of your death, to: Director of Benedictine Oblates, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577, and

your certificate will be filed in the Office of Benedictine Oblates.

It can be a source of comfort to know that, upon an oblate's death, he or she is remembered in several rituals and prayers and a Mass is offered for the repose of the deceased oblate's soul by one of the monks.

*Charles McKelvy, oblate
Harbert, MI*

PRAY FOR
VOCATIONS

OBLATES *In their own words*



*Oblate Celestine Quiban
Farmingdale, NY*

“I am part of the oblate community and I am enjoying it so much. It is good to belong to the oblate community, wherein I can project God's love to the oblates. They can see God in me through the kindness I offer them.”



Sacraments: Opportunities to meet God



Jane Massimino

In September 2013, Fr. Raymond Studzinski, OSB, gave talks on “The Role of Sacraments and Sacramental Living in

Benedictine Spirituality” at the oblate retreat in Ossining, NY. Here is an overview of some of his talks.

Through the sacraments, we are caught up in the very life of God. Baptism signifies newness or freshness; it is a great act of hope, anticipating that the baptized will have this oasis called “church”—a community where love and forgiveness are found—to turn to. A distinguishing mark of baptized Christians is that they are people of hope; they know they have a future.

Exorcism is part of the baptismal ceremony; it pulls the baptized person out of the sphere of evil—when you are baptized, you “spit in the eye of the devil.” Baptism places us in the Body of Christ.

Through the ceremony of Baptism, our imagination is touched by the ritual actions and the readings we hear, as we look ahead to what this individual may become. The Church prays for the newly baptized as priest, prophet and king.

The sacrament asks that we live as Jesus did, that we reach out to the poor and marginalized. The challenge we face is that we are all one family, yet we want to fragment this unit into different classes. Too often, we see ourselves as better than others rather than as servants. It is important to recapture that fundamental oneness we can have with each other.

In *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Thomas Merton shares his own epiphany:

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts . . . the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God’s eyes.

At Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, he becomes aware that He is the beloved of God. We, too, are God’s beloved.

Sacramental Living and *Lectio*

Our opportunity for meeting and touching God is everywhere, including sacred reading. *Lectio* can be thought of as “sacrament” with a small “s,” a real communion with the Divine. In his book, *Real Presences*, George Steiner describes making contact with something that is really there. In *lectio*, the Divine is there.

Lectio keeps in the forefront who we are and reminds us of our real destiny. *The Hymn of the Pearl* (from the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*) tells the story of a boy, “the son of the king of kings,” who is sent to Egypt to retrieve a pearl from a serpent. During the quest, he becomes distracted by the life he finds there, and forgets his origins and his royal dignity.

Concerned for their son, his parents send him a letter in which they remind him of who he is and what he should be about. As he reads the letter, “. . . what was written concerned that which was engraved on my heart. And I

immediately remembered that I was a son of kings. . . . I remembered the pearl for which I had been sent to Egypt.”

Lectio is reading for formation, not for information. In Rembrandt’s painting *Philosopher Reading*, the light comes not only from behind, but emanates from the page onto the face of the reader. The illumination of *lectio* allows us to see ourselves fully, not only our flaws, but as a child of God.

Too often when we read, we read like a “commuter”—we want to get to the end. George Steiner recommends reading as if on a pilgrimage—stopping here and there. When practicing *lectio*, we invite a word *in* and carry on a conversation with it. First, we hear, then “chew over” the word, pray with what comes to mind and, finally, contemplate—resting in the Divine.

Penance/Reconciliation

There is no explicit reference to Reconciliation in the *Rule of St. Benedict*, but it is implied by the emphasis on forgiveness. Penance is a sacramental encounter with God’s forgiveness.

Sin has implications; there is a social dimension to it—it affects the community. In the early monastic communities, there was a tradition of confession, of sharing one’s thoughts that are at the root or beginnings of sin.

In confession, we face the truth of who we are, both positive and negative. Conceit and false security are the price of not embracing the sacrament; overcoming weaknesses and limitations is its gain. The practice of confession is about the process of shaping and forming us. Forgiveness impels us to be forgiving in our own life, and brings a sense of peace.

Anointing of the Sick

Benedict's *Rule* contains a chapter on the care of the sick, as illness, dying and death were a community event during the medieval era. Monasteries conducted a ceremony of admission as a patient was brought to the infirmary. As the end of life neared, there was community prayer and the singing of the psalms.

The Anointing of the Sick takes the ill to the emerging of a new possibility. Illness and aging rob us and leave us bereft. We experience "dis-ease" of body, with God and others. We feel abandoned. The Anointing of the Sick helps us to know that God is with us. Illness triggers shame; communications are cut and we perceive ourselves as no longer worthy to enter into human relationships. (See *The Stone Angel* by Margaret Laurence.)

In a communal celebration of the Anointing, we realize that we are not alone. The sacrament gives us a new sense of being God's beloved children. Touch, the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, reconnects us to other memories of touch in our lives, such as that of a loving mother. Jesus would touch even those who were considered untouchable. In the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the sacred gesture of blessing is present.

*Jane Massimino, oblate
Farmingdale, NY*



Paula Theresa Benedicta of the Cross Yerke made her oblation before Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and the oblates at the Cincinnati Oblate Chapter meeting on November 24, 2013.

Policy: The use of OSB by oblates

Just like individual people and families, monastic orders differ from each other in many ways, such as primary focus or emphasis or method of conducting business. Each monastery has nuances and preferences that characterize it and make it a bit different from other monasteries within the same order.

These differences lend a "flavor" of their own, perhaps because of the consensus of the monks or the decisions of the abbot. Following the *Rule of St. Benedict* leaves room for differences, and the abbot has the task of governing his monastery. His personality traits, preferences and demeanor play a role in this task, as do the individual monastery traditions.

Saint Meinrad traditionally reserves the use of OSB after one's name for the monks of the Archabbey as an earned privilege and the choice of the archabbot in respect for that long tradition. In obedience to the archabbot, oblates are to refrain from using OSB or OSB,Obl or any similar combination of letters after their names in correspondence or written contributions of any kind.

When oblates write for the newsletter, we add Oblate or Oblate Novice after their name, followed by where they are from. The *Rule of St. Benedict* says, "The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience, which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above all," and the abbot "is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery." ♦



An oblate reads the Rule of St. Benedict during the investiture of oblate novices, from left, Jonathan Weyer, Judith Robbins and Curtis Robbins in the Archabbey Church.

The Spirituality of a Chapter



Janis Dopp

In the summer of 2013, one of the faithful oblates of our Bloomington Chapter passed away. Marge Brumleve never missed a meeting if it was in her power to get there, and she regularly attended the retreats and days of recollection that were offered at Saint Meinrad.

Marge had taught us a lot about perseverance in prayer and the value of a gentle, caring heart. She listened more than she spoke, and when she did, what she said was worth listening to. We loved Marge, and she loved us. Her death came quietly in the midst of a busy summer, and some of our chapter members were taken by surprise when we announced it at our August gathering.

As we spoke of her life, we realized that it would be important to mark her death. So, at our next chapter meeting, we prayed the Office of the Dead for her. It was a Benedictine way to ritualize her life and her death.

I say all of this as a way of explaining that what goes on in an oblate chapter has many layers of meaning for those who are part of that chapter. It is not simply a venue where we gather to pray Vespers and hear a conference talk, even though those aspects of our meetings are essential.

There is a depth to our commitment to one another that allows us to value each person for the unique contribution that they bring to share with all of us. When somebody is missing from a meeting, we feel their absence. We look with fondness at our

book of photos that have been accumulated over the years, because they are a reminder of how much ground we have covered together.

And, we rely on the fact that we care about and for one another. We have all made the same promises that we sometimes struggle to keep, but somebody is there to remind us that we can pick ourselves up and start again.

Embedded deep within the mechanism that helps us to manage meetings, communications and finances is a spirituality that is the backbone of our chapter. It is the source of our strength, our growth and our continuity. It is based in Christ, the *Rule of St. Benedict* and Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

And we are reminded of it at each gathering when we read our mission statement. Together we recall that we are there “to support one another and strengthen our spiritual life through prayer, liturgical celebration, instruction, and fellowship in Christ so ‘that in all things God may be glorified.’”

Our spirituality as Benedictine Oblates is the graced nuance that enriches our desire to greet everyone as though they were Christ Himself, to listen attentively with the ear of our heart, to be obedient to one another, “since we know that it is by this way of obedience that we go to God” (RB 71:2).

When we scratch away the veneer of the Gregorian chant, the lighted candles on the tables, the food that has been brought to share, what we find is the connective tissue that makes us care for one another and our desire to be the people that God has created us to be. The chapter becomes one of the classrooms in St. Benedict’s

“school for the Lord’s service” (Prologue 45).

We leave our chapter meetings a little richer because we have been reminded that the praying of the Psalms and the *Rule of St. Benedict* really belongs to us and that we are called to be the prayerful presence that can change the world around us because we are focused on something beyond ourselves and our own needs.

In a world where we are always encouraged to put our own desires at the forefront of our life, the *Rule of St. Benedict* teaches us that we “should each try to be the first to show respect to the other ... supporting with the greatest patience one another’s weaknesses of body or behavior, and earnestly competing in obedience to one another. No one is to pursue what he judges better for himself, but instead what he judges better for someone else” (RB 72:4-7).

When you read these words, the importance of being able to share this journey with other like-minded people becomes clearer. Other people become the sandpaper that God uses to smooth out our rough edges. They are the constant reminder of what we have promised to be. They keep us humble. They give us opportunities for cultivating a quality of heart that is a response to the Holy Spirit calling us to our heavenly home.

Marge has gone before us, but we know she was one of our shining examples of Benedictine holiness of heart. Each year we will remember her in prayer and know that she remains an integral part of our Benedictine family.

Janis Dopp, oblate
Bloomington, IN

Is it OK to be angry with God?



Kathleen Polansky

“Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Often as children we chanted that little verse. We also discovered how erroneous

this fallacy was. Words have tremendous power. They have the power to heal or the power to hurt.

As I listen to the news, read the paper, check my Facebook, I am overwhelmed at the amount of angry words in our modern world. The level of anger and violence we experience in a day is shocking. The daily news is replete with stories of wars, fighting, shootings and hate crimes. A lengthy campaign season leaves me numb over the use of words that bear false witness and escalate the level of anger and divisiveness we live in.

Angry words surround us. Anger engulfs us. Anger consumes us. I read the Psalms and see that we have not created anything new. Anger has been with humanity for as long as our history.

In Genesis, we see that one of the first evils to be addressed is Cain's anger toward Abel's more acceptable sacrifice to God. Cain is given a warning, “The Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it’” (Gen. 4:6f).

We are living with the evils of anger knocking at our door. Genesis tells us we must master it. But how are we to do that? Is anger to be avoided? There

are numerous examples in the Old Testament that speak of God's anger toward Israel, toward Israel's enemies, toward Israel's leaders, toward the people of Israel. The Psalms are replete with anger references, often referring to God's anger. Moses, Job, Esau and Saul also show us the reality of anger.

Anger is a very real emotion. It, in itself, is neither good nor bad. Anger has often motivated people for good. It has been the stimulus to change injustice. How else could Moses continue to return to Pharaoh time after time demanding his peoples' freedom? It is how we choose and act upon our anger that can place the judgment of condemnation upon us.

We are created in the image of God. Just as God shows anger, so we also inherit this emotion. Our response to anger demands our attention. God mirrored for us an example of how to address our anger and violent words. God sent Jesus, His Son. Jesus preached, taught and confronted our anger, our hateful words and our violent choices.

In doing so, Jesus taught us to turn the other cheek, to give our shirt also if one demands our coat. These teachings are not given as pious platitudes to train us to back away from evil. They are true challenges to confront our anger.

To turn the other cheek is to refuse to lower ourselves to the level of injustice and violence being brought upon us. It is a choice to raise up our persecutor to our level and handle our differences with dignity, humanity and, yes, even love. It is a choice to do what is necessary to bring well-being, not violence, to another.

When faced with imminent arrest, Jesus took His emotions to God in

prayer. How could He want to face the trial that awaited Him? It was in and through prayer that Jesus could transform the violence that lay before Him. We, too, can bring our anger, our violence, to God in prayer. God can take it! God can transform it. God has the love needed to heal the wounds of our anger.

I believe our prayer must be bold and honest. If anger is where we are, then we must admit to being angry, even if that includes being angry with God. To me, the sin is to pretend with God. Being angry with God does not remove our love of God. In fact, it may show us how real that love is.

I have never been angry with something or someone I care nothing about. Anger has a direct correlation to personal investment. In working with others, there have been times when misplaced anger has been lobbed in my face.

In grace-filled moments, I have found myself responding to the person's pain and not the anger masking it. I'd like to think it is God's example I have followed. I'd like to believe that God responds to me that way and can see through to the pain underlying the anger.

Luke's Gospel account surrounds us with the choices Jesus made when faced with the angry words of the crowd, the hostility of the guards, the divisive plotting of the powerful. It is accented with the story of Peter cutting off the ear of a guard in response to the arrest of Jesus.

Once again, the healing of the guard reminds us that, as followers of Christ, as people of God, we have a need to

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Oblate begins work with youth program



Tammy Becht

Oblate Tammy Becht from Floyds Knobs, IN, was selected for the full-time position of director of the “One Bread, One Cup” youth liturgical

leadership program at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology on December 2, 2013. Best wishes on her new position.

Fr. Eugene gives retreat on ‘The Infancy Narratives’

The annual Advent Oblate Retreat drew 72 oblates to the Hill in December. Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, was the retreat leader.

Archabbot Justin DuVall, OSB, warmly welcomed the group and turned the floor over to Fr. Eugene, who began his presentation of “The Infancy Narratives.” As Fr. Eugene said, almost everyone is familiar with the Christmas story. We have heard it over and over again through pious legends and pageants. But perhaps we have not listened to the stories in the way the first people who heard them did, and he urged us to try to do so.

Most of what we “know” is not accurate, according to Fr. Eugene. Rather, there is a different story from the one that is so familiar to us. The first Christians were interested in the passion narrative, but not so interested in the infancy narratives. There are no infancy narratives in the Gospel of Mark, probably because he had never heard one, nor in John. So why, asked Fr. Eugene, were they written by Matthew and Luke?

He explained that they were not intended to be a factual, biographical history of Jesus, but rather were composed as stories of faith intended to describe what certain people at a certain time believed. They were derived from real material, borrowed material and theological reflection, but at the core they were intended to answer the question, “Who is Jesus?”

The Gospel of Matthew was the favorite for a long time. It was written for a small group of mainly Jewish communities in Antioch (Syria). Matthew presupposes that his community will understand his references to Judaism, which was not the case with Luke. Matthew’s audience was solidly middle class, while Luke’s was much poorer.

Matthew started with Jesus’ pedigree by composing a genealogy. It was not necessarily factual, but rather set the tone for the argument that Jesus was the Messiah, and was descended from Abraham and David. According to Fr. Eugene, the shocking part of the genealogy was that four women of questionable character were included: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba), in addition to Mary, a virgin. So Matthew made the point that the Messiah came from a tainted background.

Moreover, the Jews of the time were expecting the Messiah to be a warrior against the Romans and then return to wherever he came from. Jesus, however, was an itinerant preacher, a colossal failure, an insurrectionist and known by everyone, so at the time it was impossible to link Jesus with the Messiah.

Jesus’ birth was equally strange. In Matthew, Joseph is the lead character: righteous, strong, a person who knows about dreams. Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the time of King Herod,

a Jew, who knew nothing about the birth of Jesus. The Wise Men from the East were astrologers and gentiles, following a star that Matthew made up as a symbol of divine guidance.

Essentially, the people who “should” have known about the birth of the Messiah—the Jews—did not know, and those who had no reason to know did know, bringing frankincense and myrrh, items used in burial rites, foreseeing Jesus’ death. And so, the familiar story of the Wise Men is one of the many indications in Matthew that Jesus is anything but a traditional Messiah.

As for Luke: Luke was, according to Fr. Eugene, an accomplished author. In writing his Gospel, he makes his point by comparing one person or event with another. Luke begins his infancy narrative with the Annunciation, the birth of John the Baptist, to Elizabeth, who was barren, and he continues with the birth of Jesus, to Mary, who was a virgin.

The underlying theme is how God’s grace works: Nothing will be impossible with God. For Luke, religion and the real world were intertwined. The relationship between John and Jesus began even before they were born, as Mary and Elizabeth met and demonstrated their faithfulness and joy.

The strange thing about this narrative, Fr. Eugene explained, is that the shepherds find out about Jesus: the lowlifes in the ancient world who were around carcasses all the time and were in a perpetual state of being marginalized. They knew it even before the parents recognize the significance of it. It is the ultimate reversal.

Ultimately, Fr. Eugene asked, why do we spend time considering the infancy

narratives? Jesus was born, but so what? As westerners, we want everything to work along linear time, but the ancients believed time is cyclical, and the Church tells time cyclically, not linearly. So every year we start over and enter into everything again.

It is not history and fact, but rather symbol and story. The more clearly we hear the stories through the writings of the ancients, the closer we can come to being one with those who came before us and shared their faith for all to see—and believe.

*Catherine Byers, oblate
Nineveh, IN*

Seminarian directs Advent presentation

Oblate Deacon Brian Wideman from Neenah, WI, directed a choir of seminarians and played the organ during the “Advent Lessons and Carols” held in the Archabbey Church on December 9, 2013.

Ohio oblate graduates in December

Oblate Kelly Sollinger of Columbus, OH, graduated on December 14, 2013, from Ohio Dominican University with a Master of Arts in theology. The title of her presentation to faculty and students of her department was: “Oblate Hospitality: An Answer to the Call of Baptismal Mission.”

Monk professes solemn vows

Br. Luke Waugh, OSB, made his solemn monastic profession on January 25 in the Archabbey Church. Br. Luke helps with the work of the oblate chapters. ♦

OBLATIONS

December 14, 2013—*Mr. Thomas Joseph Causey* and *Ms. Kathleen Marie Magdaline Catherine Polansky*, both of New Salisbury, IN



Br. Luke Waugh, OSB, made his solemn monastic profession on January 25, in the Archabbey Church.

December 20, 2013—*Mr. David Gregory of Nazianzen Butzu* of Milligan College, TN

January 9, 2014—*Mrs. Brenda Monica Winkler* of Santa Claus, IN

January 10, 2014—*Mrs. Linda Mary Kleeman Bieker* of Jasper, IN

January 24, 2014—*Mrs. Julie Lucy Watts-Stothfang* of Pahoa, HI

February 7, 2014—*Mrs. Corazon Teresa of Avila Veza* of Elizabethtown, KY

February 8, 2014—*Mr. Thomas Antony (the Desert) Alvarez* of Greenwood, IN ♦

INSTITUTES

December 1, 2013—*Mrs. Jane Moyer* of Fremont, OH

December 13, 2013—*Rev. Karen Blank Ewell* of Kansas, IL, *Mr. Tim Elder* of Corydon, IN, and *Mr. Michael Laflin* of Oblong, IL

December 14, 2013—*Mrs. Ann Geraty* of St. Louis, MO, and *Ms. Pam Mathias* of Jasper, IN

December 23, 2013—*Mr. Deepak Frank* of Columbus, IN

December 28, 2013—*Mr. Curtis Robbins* and *Mrs. Judith Robbins*, both of Seminole, FL, and *Mr. Jonathan Weyer* of Columbus, IN

December 29, 2013—*Mr. Donald Schmitt* of Columbia, CT

January 11, 2014—*Ms. Dawn Condra* and *Mr. Robert Gillmore*, both of Indianapolis, IN ♦

DEATHS

November 7, 2013—*Ms. Jo Ann Joshu* of Rantoul, IL

November 28, 2013—*Mr. Conrad Brown* of Muncie, IN

December 19, 2013—*Mrs. Anna Jo Kirchgassner* of Guilford, IN

December 26, 2013—*Mrs. Dorothy Cochran* of Rineyville, KY

January 14, 2014—*Mr. Donald Ryan* of Indianapolis, IN

February 1, 2014—*Mr. James O’Connell* of Jasper, IN

As of November 2, 2013, when an oblate dies, the monastery will offer a Mass for that oblate. ♦

PILGRIMAGES

November 3-14, 2014: Pilgrimage to Poland and Eastern Europe will include visits to Warsaw, Poland's capital; Krakow, site of the Divine Mercy Shrine; Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa, home of the Black Madonna; Wadowice, birthplace of Pope John Paul II; as well as Budapest, Vienna and Prague. Contact Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, at (812) 357-6674 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu.

October 28-November 7, 2014: Fr. John Martin Shimkus, OSB, of St. Benedict Monastery in Oxford, MI, (an Olivetan Benedictine monastery that is part of the regional area of oblate directors and oblates) and his oblates are sponsoring a pilgrimage to Italy. Participants will visit Florence, Orvieto, Spoleto, Assisi, Cascia, Norcia, Fabriano, Osimo, Rome, Monte Cassino and Subiaco. Contact Robert Holihan at robertholihan@hotmail.com or (810) 728-3040 or Lucille Ferrara of Regina Tours at (800) 228-4654 ext. 208 or lucille@groupist.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 19, 2014: The day of recollection for the Louisville, KY, area oblates will be held. Br. Zachary Wilberding, OSB, will be the presenter on "From Our Hands to Our Hearts: Praying the Rosary."

May 17, 2014: The day of recollection for the Ohio Oblates will be held in the Cincinnati area. Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB, will be the presenter on "Our Commitment to Christ: Living the Sacraments and the Rule."

June 9-12, 2014: The Saint Meinrad Study Days will take place at the Archabbey. Fr. Brendan Moss, OSB, will speak on "The Presence of God in the Life of the Oblate."

June 13-15, 2014: The chapter coordinators and two oblate representatives of each chapter will hold a general assembly at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. About 80 oblates are expected to attend. Conferences on "Praying and Singing the Psalms" will be led by Fr. Harry Hagan, OSB, and Fr. Jeremy King, OSB. Also, discussion groups will look at various sections of the second edition of the *Handbook for Chapter Coordinators* in preparation for a new edition.

July 11, 2014: Fr. Julian Peters, OSB, will be the presenter for a day of recollection at Saint Meinrad. His title

is: "The Art of Living in the Presence of God." The day will be held at the Guest House and Retreat Center.

August 30-September 2, 2013: The New York oblates will celebrate their annual Labor Day weekend retreat with Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB, speaking on "Clothed in the New Self: 'Christ is All and in All.'" The title is based on Colossians 3:10-11.

September 7, 2013: The Lancaster, PA, day of recollection will feature Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB, speaking on "Clothed in the New Self: 'Christ is All and in All.'" The title is based on Colossians 3:10-11. ♦

Oblate life: Annual personal evaluation

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

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: (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?

Glorious Mysteries

Some reflections about the rosary



William Hamrick

Editor's note: In this final article in a series, oblate William Hamrick offers some reflections on the Glorious Mysteries of the rosary.

The Resurrection: This is surely the ultimate victory of hope over despair, of light over darkness, of goodness over evil, of life over death. In thinking about this mystery, I wonder why Jesus told Mary Magdalene not to touch Him. I also wonder if He appeared to His Mother of Sorrows in order to withdraw the sword and heal the wound.

The Ascension: Here we have the end of Jesus' earthly existence, but what then? He was taken up in the skies, but how and to what destination? The Nicene Creed describes Jesus as "born of the Father before all ages, God from God, light from light, true God from true God." The Ascension, then, is the event of the reunification of the Trinity, light to light, truth joined seamlessly to truth.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit: We speak of inspiration, and it is literally true. It is a "breathing-in" (*in-spirere*), as when the Apostles were overcome by tongues of flame and inspired to preach the Gospel in newly acquired linguistic tongues. They were carried

out of and beyond themselves to do what they had never considered possible. I think about how this can sometimes happen to us in the context of religion, as when a liturgy that sometimes had been experienced as dull and uninteresting (uninspiring), suddenly "speaks to us," lifts us up and makes us feel much closer to God.

The Assumption of Mary into Heaven: However it occurred after her death, surely no one could say that she didn't deserve it. It's highly regrettable that we know nothing of her life after the Crucifixion, or of her death. We have traditions, but no direct evidence. All we do know is that Jesus on the Cross charged St. John with her care.

The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven: "Coronation" is too anthropomorphic unless there really are gold crowns in heaven. But it is a question of her glorification—the recognition of her immaculate heart, and the celebration of her courageous, loving role in the history of our salvation.

William Hamrick, oblate
St. Louis, MO

Continued from p. 2

Questions for Reflection

Do you experience God's presence as a routine awareness or a revelation?

How do you experience Christ in persons like the abbot, the guest and the sick in your life?

Have you dared to ask to be in God's presence in a special way?

How have you understood your experiences of God's absence or non-responsiveness?

What are the special settings, events and places in your life where you have found God present?

Fr. Bede Cisco, OSB, monk
Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Continued from p. 7

"do well, . . . or sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you. You must master it." Jesus raised up His persecutors. He was resurrected to bring life and wholeness and a way out of our evil. He is known as the Word of God made flesh. Words do have power. God's Word does bring life.

Kathleen Polansky, oblate
New Salisbury, IN

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were John Avery, Mike Edwards, Mike Reffett, Pat Reckelhoff, Dennis Shelton, George and Connie Thompson. ♦



During the Epiphany Celebration at the St. Meinrad Oblate Chapter meeting on January 9, 2014, Br. William Sprauer, OSB, Courtney Blalock, daughter of oblate Michelle Blalock, and Tim Elder were chosen as the three kings.

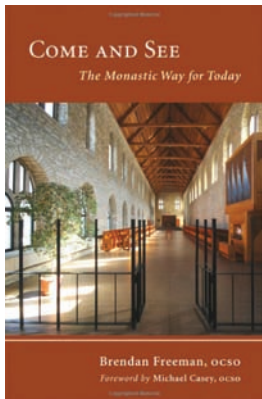


200 Hill Drive
St. Meinrad, IN 47577

Return service requested

Reading Room

Freeman, Brendan, OCSO. *Come and See: The Monastic Way for Today*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010.



Saint Meinrad Archabbey has a “come and see” program where young men discerning the monastic way of life can visit. This book titled *Come and See* depicts a perspective inside the mind of a monk.

The author is Abbot Brendan Freeman, OCSO, the abbot of New Melleray Abbey in Peosta, Iowa, since 1984. At the outset of the book, Abbot Brendan

states that the current vision of monastic life is not something new, but goes back to the Desert Fathers of the fourth century. However, it is also new because it is rooted in the soul that never grows old.

The abbot is to create a climate of meaning in the monastic life that makes sense. Abbot Brendan says that Jesus told His disciples to “come and see” where I live. He

could have said to come and see where you live, where your real life is being lived.

Monastic life is not some esoteric or Gnostic way of viewing the reality of life, according to the author. It is a treasure that lies deep within the heart, a universal spirituality that is a common inheritance of all who seek God. Because there is a desire in our hearts to seek God and a desire for ultimate meaning, each of us has the heart of a monk. This statement alone should speak powerfully to oblates.

Among the great themes of monastic life found in the *Rule of St. Benedict* that Abbot Brendan focuses on are silence, solitude, community life and prayer. An interesting point he makes is that an ancient notion of the monastery is that it is much like a hospital. It is a place of healing the soul, the spirit and the heart.

Abbot Brendan’s insights will enable the reader to better understand what keeps a monk going, why he lives the way he does and what he is seeking.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*