

Benedictine Oblate



Saint Meinrad



Fr. Colman Grabert, OSB, tends to the monastery's garden.

Bloom where you are planted: Stability of heart

In today's world of chaos and confusion, we are all searching for a place of peace and contentment, a place to quietly lay our heads and be grateful for God's creation. As oblates, we promise stability of heart, and yet we often find ourselves searching for more – and more – and more, not recognizing that all we need to do is listen.

As Benedict reminds us, we must not be “daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation,” for it is “bound to be narrow at the outset.” But, “as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love” (RB, Prologue).

The Psalmist says, “Happy they who dwell in your house! Continually they praise you. Happy the men whose strength you are! Their hearts are set upon the pilgrimage: When they pass through the valley of the mastic trees, they make a spring of it” (Psalm 84:5-7).

Those words are encouraging. They help us to understand and accept that God surrounds us in his love and guides us on our journey, no matter where we live and what struggles we have to overcome.

In this issue, we read the stories of oblates who live in a variety of geographical places, but whose hearts are clearly settled in God's country and whose lives are grounded in the *Rule*.

A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“It is love that impels them to pursue everlasting life; therefore, they are eager to take the narrow road”

Rule of St. Benedict, 5:10-11

For many of us, the grass is often greener on the other side, and yet Benedict reminds us to be eager to take the narrow road.

It is so tempting for us to spread ourselves thin, but if we allow love to be the compelling force underpinning our lives, then we will be well on our way to the everlasting life that God offers us.

As Scripture tells us, “Whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God” (John 3:21).

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‘Bloom where you are planted.’ Now. Here.



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB

“Bloom where you are planted.” Some might see this as a well-intentioned, borderline-cute piece of advice, but I believe the wisdom it offers is as valuable as it is simple. “Bloom where you are

planted.” In other words, *now*. In other words, *here*. In other words, with the people you are with *now*, with the resources you have *now*.

In Chapter 1 in his *Rule*, Benedict talks about two kinds of bad monks. The first kind are the sarabaites, those monks who follow their own rule, not Benedict’s. But the second kind of bad monk is even worse. These are the gyrovagues.

Gyrovagues never really get around to being monks. They wander around, always in search of the perfect monastery. They are convinced that only when they find the perfect monastery, the perfect abbot, the perfect confreres –

then and only then – will they be able to be monks.

There’s likely a little bit of the gyrovague in us. We don’t make more progress in our spiritual life because We don’t have as good a prayer life as we think we should because We’re not as charitable as we’d like to be because Why? Because we’re waiting. We’re waiting too long.

We’re waiting for the perfect book and then we’ll do spiritual reading. We’re waiting for the perfect retreat and then we’ll develop our prayer life. We’re waiting for the perfect (fill in the blank: place, time, person, spouse, friend ...) and then we’ll get around to doing what we know we should be doing, what in fact we want to do.

What would St. Benedict say? Start. Begin. *Now. Here.* Grow holy as you can now, not when you find the perfect time for it. Bloom where (and when) you are planted!

*Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*

From the Desk of the Director

There is strength in putting down roots, in staying put



Janis Dopp

My spring clean-up in the garden brought pleasure. The perennials, proudly sporting new growth, looked fresh and strong and ready to take on another summer. The snow

and freezing temperatures that came unexpectedly as winter waned and gave way to spring hadn’t deterred them a bit. Their roots went deep and they were

able to withstand the wildly fluctuating temperatures of the previous weeks.

Then I remembered the advice of a neighbor when my family had first moved into the house that we still call home after 40 years. She said, “Plant perennials. They are so much more satisfying than annuals, even if it takes a while for them to become established.”

In my inexperience, I wanted the splash of color that the impatiens and pansies immediately brought to the flower boxes.

But as the years went by, I came to look for the first appearance of the crocuses and daffodils, the hyacinths and tulips.

The flowers that had been planted when I first started working on the yard never fail to return. Marion's words keep coming back to me and I realize how much wisdom they hold. It isn't just about the flowers. It's about the power of place. It is about putting down deep roots and knowing there is strength in staying put.

Psalm 16 says, "The lot marked out for me is my delight." This is a reminder to

treasure the life that I have been given – no matter what it holds at the time. As oblates, we promise "stability of heart."

We say that we will treasure the life and vocation that we have, that we will tend the garden of our life and have faith in the growth that flows from it, becoming all that we can be through prayer and work in the very garden that God has seen fit to plant us.

*Janis Dopp
Oblate Director*

OBLATES

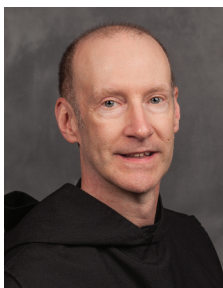
In their own words



*Oblate Clayton Cook
Columbus, OH*

"The depth of the Spirit opens you up and quiets you down so that you can become aware of the ongoing unfolding of God's love. And that's very deep and very powerful, and it's an ongoing process that, of course, takes a lifetime for most of us. And so that makes it very rich and very bountiful."

Musings from the Chaplain



Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

Much of the world today is a restless world of constant movement, where individualism is worshipped. Benedictines are different. We live in community and promise stability.

These are radical activities in an alienated society. It is a prophetic statement to our dominant culture of isolation and individualism.

We affirm by our lifestyle that God is the God of the gathering. The model of the monastery family declares that interdependence is what we seek, rather than being alone. For St. Benedict, "stability" is how a monk or nun stands firm in willingness to seek God in his/her respective monastic community until God calls him or her home.

It definitely means to be physically present to one's community. Yet, it means more. It is a commitment to establish bonds of love and service to those in one's community for life. If that sounds somewhat like a family, you're right. And we do it through love, prayer and faith, and through everyday ups and downs.

Stability is not only for those who live in monasteries, but also for oblates. Oblates have a commitment to the monastery to which they are affiliated. It is their monastic home and so, in a sense, the monks and oblates are family. Oblates pray for the monks, and the monks pray for their oblates.

The oblates' stability is also seen in their commitment to fellow oblates and to all those in need through prayer, service and support for each other. To be stable in relation to a community is to take a risk. It is to say, "We are all different from each other, but our diversity is our strength, and with God's help, we are going to stay together."

*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB
Oblate Chaplain*

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Journey leads to discovery of true self



Why was I, a lifelong Presbyterian, led to become a Benedictine oblate? As a musician, I was first drawn to the Saint Meinrad community by the beautiful chanting of the monks. The Liturgy of the Hours and regularly practicing *lectio divina* introduced me to a rhythm of prayer that spoke deeply to me.

I decided to make the commitment to become an oblate, becoming a partner in prayer with this monastery and deepening my relationship with Christ. I am now being nourished through two faith communities. What I learn about the Benedictine way of life empowers me as I lead contemplative prayer groups in my Presbyterian faith community.

My journey has been long and not always easy, but by learning to “listen carefully with the ear of your heart” (*Rule*, Prologue), God called me to a place where I would begin to discover my true self. Hearts do not lie and my heart was restless; I was in a dark place.

God’s voice spoke to me repeatedly, though patiently, until I awoke enough to realize I had to change and

save my crumbling soul. To live, I first had to rediscover gifts – musical gifts – that had remained hidden for 15 years. At the same time, I learned how to listen to God.

I first felt a strong yearning. I cannot explain any of this in words, but it is something I needed to follow. I believe there are mysteries so deep that we cannot understand, and that’s okay. The hard part is letting go of our habits and desires to find the answers we are searching for. And that’s where the Holy Spirit comes in!

Last summer, the Spirit breathed new life into me as I trekked on a pilgrimage across the country to people and places I did not know. I planned this journey thinking I would be listening to other people’s stories of faith. When they, in turn, asked me to share my story, doing so was personally transformational. I returned home with new discoveries about my pursuit in faith and a deeper conviction about allowing opportunities for us to share our stories.

The more I draw closer to God, seek God in all, and strive to live my life as a prayer, the more I realize I cannot

do it alone. This is hard work; I need help! When I struggle with faith, God answers with strength and endurance to persevere.

I have learned to be grateful for all I have experienced – consolation as well as desolation. It is through perseverance and commitment that I am growing to discover more about who I am and who God created me to be.

Allowing myself to be at peace with my true self offers glimpses of heaven on earth. God abides in our hearts, and we are nourished by what we are rooted in: God’s love. If we listen and follow our hearts to where God leads us, we calm our restless hearts and allow God’s glory to shine to the world.

One way I have responded in faith is by sharing the story of how God is working in my life. This is a daily discipline I did not choose; God led me to this place:
www.breadforthejourney.blog.

*Anne Peacock, oblate
St. Louis, MO*

Sign up for the e-newsletter

If you’d like to receive brief updates on what’s happening at Saint Meinrad, you can sign up for a free e-newsletter. Every few weeks, you will receive a newsletter in your email’s inbox.

To sign up, go to the “Newsletters” link on the front page of the website: www.saintmeinrad.edu. Or, send an email to news@saintmeinrad.edu.

Helping other women teaches lessons about judging others



Fran Brown

In 2009 I was invited to serve on the Advisory Council of St. Elizabeth's Catholic Charities (stehcharities.org) in New Albany, Indiana. My

first response to this invitation was negative, but after more prayer, discernment and study, I realized this outreach was a perfect fit for me.

Part of my passion in ministry includes advocating for pro-life issues, serving persons with disabilities and offering assistance to those with basic material needs. I hear God speaking to me as I respond with joy and enthusiasm to answer the call to be part of the great work at hand. The staff, Advisory Council, many volunteers, donors and persons who are behind the scenes praying are all part of our St. Elizabeth story. It is truly a God story!

A special draw for me was that St. Elizabeth's mission is to support and empower people. St. Elizabeth's offers housing, professional counseling and a loving environment. Some years ago, I brought my sewing machine to St. Elizabeth's, as I was visiting with a resident to see if she had any interest in sewing.

Never did I dream that an interest in sewing would evolve into biweekly sessions with women in our residences, most of whom had never sewn before. The women experience needed positive reinforcement, and they complete their chosen project in two hours or less. Miracles can happen!

A cooking program evolved similarly. When I hosted a party with food and games, I found that some residents were eating mostly fast food and frozen meals. We recognized a need, and an opportunity arose for residents to gather for some cooking fun that builds practical skills. I nicknamed the sessions "Cook, Chat and Chow." Good things happen during the preparation of food and around the meal we share. Listening, encouraging and supporting one another is part of the life lesson that occurs.

Both cooking and sewing are great skills to learn, but central to it all is the human interaction and opportunity for mutual growth. It is really about the relationships and presence of God in our lives. Every time I am with the women at St. Elizabeth's, I believe that part of my judgmental baggage dies. In a culture of drugs and abuse, I am learning not to be so fast at putting people in a box.

God is present in these women as they struggle to overcome addiction and to move away from unhealthy relationships with men. I see their efforts in trying to be good mothers, to hold a job and to be self-sufficient.

As a senior citizen and a person of God, I and the residents both have something valuable to offer each other in the time we have together. The discipline of prayer and my desire to stand firm as an oblate have been anchors for me and others.

*Fran Brown, oblate
Louisville, KY*



Fran Brown, left, volunteers to help women and children served by St. Elizabeth's Catholic Charities.

Boredom:

Good things may not be all that much fun



Edward Castronova

I was on a long flight and two young women in the seat behind me were discussing the boyfriend of a third lady.

Apparently, things had

gotten serious and, according to these two, it was a bad thing.

“He’s just, I don’t know. He goes to a party and just stands there and ... blah.”

“I know. Just same old, same old. I mean he’s good looking ...”

“Yes. Totally. It’s not that.”

“He’s totally a good guy.”

“Yeah.”

“But, like, where’s the personality, you know?”

“Yeah. I’m like, ‘Hellooo ... anybody in there? Say something funny, OK?’”

“Yeah. Boring.”

“But he’s totally a good guy. Like, I’m happy for her. He’s got a good career and everything. It’s just ...”

“Yeah. Boring.”

At this point, I put in my earplugs, thanking the Lord for not sending me any daughters. (I am not worried about my sons. Nina assures me they will live safely with their mother until a ripe old age.)

Those of us who have had an up-close view of family disruption, unemployment, addiction and worse

may not sympathize with these young ladies’ standards of eligibility. What’s a fun trait at age 27 often becomes not so fun by age 45. And anyway, the point of marriage is not to have funny, interesting conversations every day. It is to be together, forever. Marriage is supposed to be a stable union.

Stability and boredom: Do they go together? We read the same Psalms, don’t we, week by week, year by year. The Angelus is the same prayer it was a thousand years ago. At some point, it stops being interesting in the usual sense of the word. By now, we know how the Gospel of John ends. The towers of Saint Meinrad that took our breath away the first moment we saw them are now familiar to us. Saint Meinrad Archabbey is not very entertaining, is it?

Being bored – is it a problem of the outside world or a problem of our inner world? If we have an inner world that is constantly desperate for novelty, can we ever be satisfied? No. To constantly seek stimulus is to be restless forever.

This is why St. Benedict counsels stability. Oblates promise to seek stability of heart, but that is an awfully vague goal. Thankfully, the good Saint gives us practical tips. Pray the same prayers. Affiliate with one monastery. Content yourself with simple things.

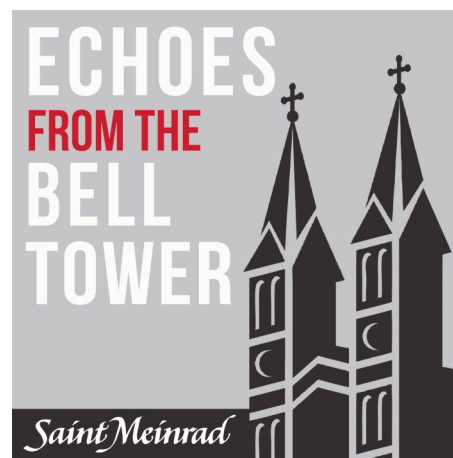
How can this work, the novice rightly asks. How can this be entertaining at all? Well, it isn’t entertaining, and that’s the point. Repetition is a feature, not a bug. The Magnificat is a good thing to pray at 6 p.m. today, and it will be a good thing to pray at

6 p.m. tomorrow, and the day after that, and so on, until the end of time.

It is a good thing to do, whether it is stimulating, refreshing, thrilling, consoling or any other immediate emotional feeling. We do it because it is a good thing to do. Many good things are not particularly thrilling. But they are good, and St. Benedict promises us doing the good things, even repetitively, brings great joy. Don’t believe it? Look at the faces of the monks.

The friend of the young ladies on my flight may not be entertained by her husband every day. But she will experience the joy of seeing his face, the same face, every morning, on and on, until death do them part. Such stability leads to joy: “Our hearts are restless, until they rest in you.”

*Edward (Ted) Castronova, oblate
Bloomington, IN*



**LISTEN TO YOUR
FAVORITE
EPISODES AT**

www.saintmeinrad.edu/echoes

Belief in prayer can lead to healing

“Lord, hear our prayer.”



Kathleen Polansky

Facebook is filled with prayer requests. Many are from people we know, but just as many are pleas being reposted for strangers with whom we have

no real connection or personal knowledge.

Our news contains tragic reports of fires, mudslides, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, tornados and floods, reminding us of people in desperate need. We also hear of places that have become so dangerous that despairing families are fleeing to foreign countries. Within every Mass, we petition our Lord to “hear our prayer” for those who are in need. It is easy to feel helpless in these situations.

How does my prayer of petition mean anything to someone so far away?

I think about the Gospel story of the centurion who, because of his concern for his servant, approached Jesus on the road to ask healing for the servant. The centurion was a Roman, yet he put his trust in Jesus to receive his request and provide the healing needed.

His respect for Jesus and the traditions of the Jews was so sincere that, when Jesus offered to come to his home, he recognized the impropriety of asking a Jewish man to enter the home of a Gentile. He announced his unworthiness to have Jesus, the rabbi and healer, come under his roof. He proclaimed his complete belief that Jesus had the authority to heal the servant even from a distance.

It is through this Gospel passage that we humbly admit our unworthiness and announce our belief in the presence of Christ, whom we are about to receive in the Eucharist. It is with the words of this Gospel passage that we prepare ourselves to accept the authority of Christ to bring healing. It is with this Gospel passage that we proclaim our faith that, in and through the authority of Jesus, all things are possible.

So that takes me back to my beginning. It is by the faith and action of the centurion that we are given an example of how to follow the commandment and love our neighbor. In asking Christ for help, we recognize our unworthiness and proclaim our belief in the authority of Christ.

We bring those who need or seek our assistance to Him in faith. We petition Christ to heal and comfort the tragedies, sufferings and desires of those in need. We not only bring to

Christ these people through prayer, but as believers and people of faith it is imperative that we do as the centurion did. We come to Jesus, wherever it may be that we find ourselves, and pray for all in need.

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate
New Salisbury, IN*



Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, plays the cello for the Rites of Investiture and Oblation on March 24, 2018.



The new novices and oblates pose for a photo after the Rites of Investiture and Oblation on March 24, 2018. From left, Shawn Way, Charles Thatcher, Mark Milliron, Amanda Milliron, Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, Virginia White, Craig Medlyn, Nora Negron, David Freyer, Keith Turner, Richard Rader and Tom Davis.

How one oblate lives

Benedictine spirituality without a chapter

We read in the *Rule of St. Benedict* the three promises of an oblate: stability of heart, fidelity to the spirit of monastic life, and obedience to the will of God. We further read about the five duties of an oblate. I won't rewrite them here. All Benedictine Oblates are aware.

As far as I know, I am the only oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in my locale. In my youth (high school), I was educated and boarded at a Benedictine monastery in the South. My first encounter with the *Rule* was there. Impressed with the goals of "pray and work," I carried that spirit with me in later life. Faith, hope and love were and are the underlying principles of a Christ-centered life.

Today, while not having the support of a local chapter, I welcome my "quiet time" in the morning to read a portion of the *Rule*, supported by commentary written by Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, in *A Spirituality for the 21st Century*. One of the three promises we make follows. Then, I pray morning Lauds. At that point, I am armed and ready for the day's issues and responsibilities.

Sometimes Vespers is overlooked with the centered activities of the day, often with family. Throughout the day, I take time to look at the wonder of the sky, the universe we inhabit and the many forms of life: humanity, fish, animals, plant life and trees. I ponder briefly the world God made for us. We are here for a short time.

Compline is always a necessity. A time to reflect on the day – the issues addressed, the encounters, again recognizing we are all God's creatures. Another time to pray and reflect.

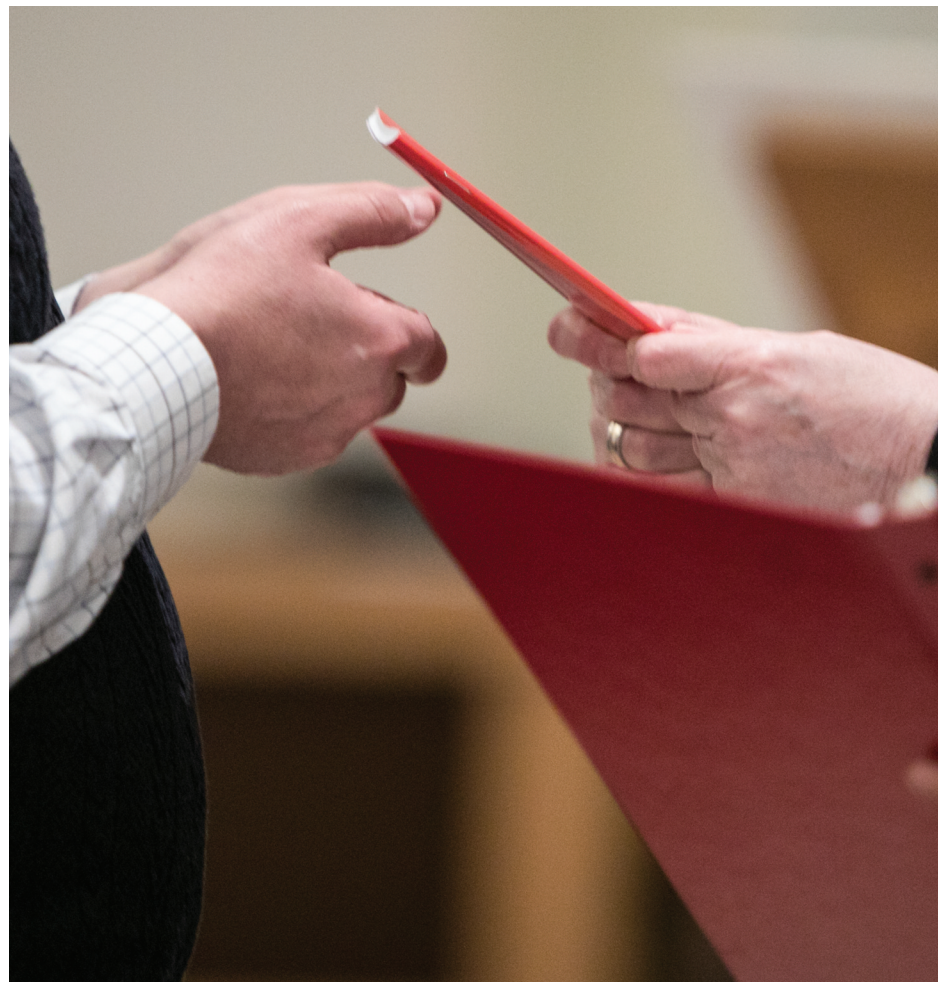
Lectio divina is another important part of the day. Simply reading a monk's reflection in our *Benedictine Spirituality for Oblates* book always reminds me of current situations I may be involved with. The support of the *Rule* and reflections makes addressing issues easy. It is inherent in the choices we make. The impact on my life is profound for family, church, leisure time and other activities. Choices of speech and presentation are dictated by the *Rule*.

One final thought regarding the daily readings as they apply to the psalms: Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, has a three-

part commentary in *Benedictine Spirituality for Oblates* that includes an introduction, praying the psalms and theological observations of the Book of Psalms. I have read other works, but none hits the points as well in understanding, praying and reflecting with the psalms.

My experience as a Benedictine Oblate, supported beautifully by Saint Meinrad Archabbey, keeps me focused: focused on our Lord, family, humanity and everlasting life.

*Bob Killelea, oblate
Canton, MO*



A novice receiving the Rule of Saint Benedict from Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB.

OBLATE MARCH RETREAT



Oblates participating in the March Retreat, led by Fr. Denis Quinkert, OSB.

For more photos of Saint Meinrad events, visit <http://saintmeinrad.smugmug.com>.

Lenten retreat looks at waiting in the garden



Michelle Blalock

“Waiting in the Garden with Jesus” was the title for the Lenten Oblate Retreat, which was held on March 20-22 at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. The

title alone and the images it brought to mind made me want to attend immediately. I am so thankful I did. Our retreat master was Fr. Denis Quinkert, OSB. It was a joy to hear Fr. Denis share stories of his experiences of “waiting in the garden.”

We gathered in the Subiaco Room, where there were wonderful discussions between the participants and Fr. Denis. There was a nice balance between conferences, small group discussion, availability of sacraments, and the celebration of Mass and prayer in the Archabbey Church, which is always a gift.

The small groups provided an opportunity to see God bring people together who may not have connected before. As our group gathered for the first time, it was inspiring to see how conversations shared with one another revealed the presence of God, and how He brings people within our paths. It is truly a blessing when we pause and ponder to receive all that God gives each of us.

I appreciated the questions that were presented to us on the registration form prior to attending the retreat:

1. When have I been asleep when someone needed me?
2. When have I fallen asleep when someone was counting on my staying awake?

3. When has my comfort been more important than what someone else needed?
4. When was my own time in the garden?

These made for heartfelt and contemplative discussions. I have pondered these questions often since the close of the retreat. They have challenged me to explore where I am in my life and if I am following Christ as He is calling me to.

*Michelle Blalock, oblate
St. Meinrad, IN*

Oblate Council reviews recent changes

The Oblate Advisory Council held its meeting on April 28, 2018. The meeting format was adjusted to allow the council members and director to participate in the liturgy and celebration for the 25th priesthood jubilee celebration for Fr. Denis Robinson, president-rector of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

The council meeting began with prayer and the reading of the Saint Meinrad Oblate Vision Statement and the Oblate Council Statement of Purpose.

Marie Kobos of the Oblate Finance Council presented the financial reports as of December 31, 2017, and the preliminary budget that has been submitted. The budget process will be completed in May.

Michelle Blalock provided a recap of the Day of Recollection attended by 70 oblates on January 21, the feast day of St. Meinrad.

Fr. Jeremy King, OSB, updated the council on the prison ministry.

Oblate Director Janis Dopp reported that there has been positive feedback

on the blessing of the new oblates and novices at Vespers by the archabbot, which is now part of investitures and oblations.

The second edition of the *Oblate Novice Companion* should be available this summer. There will be an emphasis on the need for intentional movement toward oblation during the novitiate period. On a related note, the Oblate Office is updating files of applicants and contacting those whose files are incomplete to determine if they are interested in becoming oblates and what the process will be.

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, has authorized the minimum age for becoming an oblate of Saint Meinrad is now 21. The website and related publications are being updated.

A discussion of “Service in the Life of an Oblate of Saint Meinrad” was initiated. Oblate Director Janis Dopp opened the conversation and council member Candee Mackell shared ideas on service opportunities. She will assist with service initiatives. Council members shared several thoughts on the topic and it was agreed that the discussion will continue at upcoming meetings.

The majority of the council meeting centered on a discussion of the draft vision statements from the Fourth World Congress of Benedictine Oblates, entitled “A Way Forward – The Benedictine Community in Movement,” held in Rome in November 2017. Oblate Director Janis Dopp, Oblate Council Chairperson Bill Wilson and Fr. Jeremy attended the weeklong Congress and shared information and insights with the council.

The importance of vowed Benedictines and oblates looking toward the future together was stressed at the Congress.

The council was joined by several members of the monastic community who frequently interact with oblates: Fr. Jeremy, Fr. Gueric DeBona, Fr. Joseph Cox, Novice Noel Zamora and Br. Joel Blaize.

After thoughtful reflection and discussion of the draft statements, the council members provided feedback to the oblate director. She is on the team that will be compiling feedback from oblates worldwide to be presented at the 2021 World Congress.

Future Oblate Advisory Council meetings will be July 7 and October 20, 2018.

Oblate Novice Mentor appointed

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, has appointed Br. Stanley Wagner, OSB, to be the oblate community novice mentor, effective immediately.

INVESTITURES

The next date for the investitures and oblations ceremony will be Saturday, September 22, 2018. ♦

DEATHS

Ronald Clark, of Georgetown, OH, February 6, 2018

Joan C. Rillo, of Bloomington, IN, February 15, 2018

Marche Peter Zimicki III, of Longview, TX, February 15, 2018

Dr. Louis Abbott, of Monticello, IN, March 17, 2018

Dolores M. Eckerle, of Jasper, IN, March 22, 2018

Virginia McLaughlin, of Bronx, NY, April 10, 2018

Joseph T. Funk, of Vincennes, IN, April 25, 2018

Ken Kirwin, of Brooklyn, NY, May 6, 2018 ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 6-8, 2018 - Advisory Council meetings

July 8, 2018 – Portage, MI, Chapter meeting

July 11, 2018 – Benedictine Oblate Day of Recollection with Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB.

August 12, 2018 – Portage, MI, Chapter meeting

August 30-Sept. 2, 2018 – Bronx and Farmingdale, NY, Labor Day Weekend Retreat ♦

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were Sandra Duffee, Br. Stanley Wagner, OSB, Ann Smith, Mary Campanelli, Novice Noel Zamora, OSB, and Catherine Russell. ♦



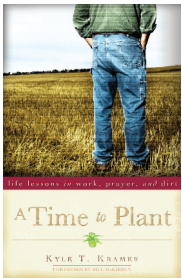
Completed in 1907, the Archabbey Church is the site of daily Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. Visitors are always welcome.



Nora Negron of Dayton, OH, and Richard Rader of Plainfield, IN, at the special Vespers blessing on the day of their oblation.

Reading Room

A Time to Plant: Life lessons in the work, prayer, and dirt,
Kyle T. Kramer, Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2010



In his debut book, *A Time to Plant*, Kyle T. Kramer describes his life journey from motorhead and lover of classical music to farmer and family man; from being a “cafeteria Christian” to entering the “large, fascinating and strange world of Roman Catholicism” (67).

Kramer is the former director of lay degree programs at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. In this book, he tells of his passage from a childhood where he had few religious feelings to an adult understanding that, “in a material world as tempestuous and transient as ours, we are all pilgrims whose final home both includes and lies somewhere beyond the world of our five senses.”

And, moreover, “whatever redeemed world is to come, the only bridge to it is from *this* world: this blessed, broken, beautiful world, which is so worthy of love and care” (168-169).

Kramer beautifully describes his journey back to Indiana, at the age of 26. Having bought a barren piece of land, he

faced all the trials and tribulations of buying farm equipment, building a shelter and then a barn and then a house, cleaning up the fields and raising a small garden, getting to know his neighbors and maintaining older friendships.

At the same time, however, he describes a keen sense of loneliness. However, the seeds that had been planted by a college friend and mentor germinated when he returned to Indiana. He recognized that although he did “convert” to Catholicism, he also converted to Catholics themselves. That conversion sustained him as he struggled to truly understand his and his family’s place in the world, and as he questioned where they truly belonged.

A Time to Plant is rooted in the Benedictine traditions of physical labor, prayer and hospitality. It is a story based in love, and it is truly challenging as Kramer implores all of us to hope and to recognize that all roads lead to Calvary.

The question is not, he says, “whether we can defeat or even simply avoid suffering, because we cannot, but whether we can face suffering with a faithful hope” (167).

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