

April 2015



## Oblates of Peace

Teaching by Sister Mary Ann Verkamp  
Oblate Retreat, March 22, 2015

In our Mission Statement, we, the Sisters of St. Benedict, “commit ourselves to be a presence of peace.” As Oblates of St. Benedict, we invite you also to be a presence of peace, Oblates of Peace.

In the Prologue to the Holy Rule we read: “The Lord calls out: ‘Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days?’” If you hear this and your answer is “I do,” God then directs these words to you... “let peace be your quest.”

What first comes to your mind when you hear the word “peace?” Is it something internal or external for you? Actually it is both. John Dear, SJ, in *Living Peace* says: “A life of peace is both an inner journey toward a disarmed heart and a public journey toward a disarmed world.”

Both are important but it is crucial where we begin. If we begin with the outer journey, which is often the temptation, we are likely to end up disillusioned, frustrated, angry and burned out. Why? Because we are trying to do it on our own strength. Peace is first and above all, a journey to the heart. We must become grounded and rooted in God, who is the source of all true peace. St. Francis of Assisi said: “While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.” “We can never obtain peace in the world,” says the Dalai Lama, “if we neglect the inner world and don’t make peace with ourselves.” World peace must develop out of inner peace. In his book, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Thomas Merton states that for Gandhi, “The first thing of all and the most important of all was the inner unity, the overcoming of inner division.” Etty Hillesum, a Dutch Jewish woman who died in Auzwitz, wrote: “The more peace there is in us, the more peace there will be in our troubled world.”

“*While you are  
proclaiming peace  
with your lips, be  
careful to have it  
more fully in your  
heart*”  
—St. Francis of Assisi



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### Poem by Lao-tse, ancient Chinese Philosopher 6 C. BC

*"If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations. If there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities. If there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbors. If there is to be peace between neighbors, there must be peace in the home. If there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart."*

If our inner journey is authentic, we need not be afraid of getting stuck there. God will nudge us and challenge us to move and be an instrument of Christ's peace in the world.

This afternoon, in our time together, I would like for us to think of the monastery as a school of peace. As Oblates of St. Benedict, you are enrolled in this school. Peace for Benedict is not an ornamental, optional extra like an elective but rather peace is an indispensable element, a required course. We can say that peace is a common thread or leitmotiv in the Rule of Benedict. In this school Benedict says: "Your way of acting should be different from the world's way." And we know only too well what the world's way for achieving peace is. Jesus says: "The peace I give you is not as the world gives." We do our part but ultimately peace is a gift from God. Being an Oblate of peace is sharing God's gift of peace with the world.

Let's imagine that in this school of peace there is an orchestra. Did any of you ever play in an orchestra or perhaps a band? In this orchestra, God is the director. We are the members of the orchestra. We are required to play not just one instrument but all of them! If we truly want to become Oblates of Peace, we must be willing to practice. We will focus on learning to play a composition by Benedict called the "Symphony of Peace." I have selected eight instruments that I believe we all need to learn to play. Someone else might select other instruments. Some of you may already be quite proficient with some of these instruments. None of us is beginning from zero, but we all have room to improve.

The first instrument is truth. Truth is the foundation of peace. Benedict says: "Rid you heart of all deceit." In John's Gospel we read: "The truth will set you free."

The truth must be faced and embraced in order for it to help anyone. This is the painful part. It hurts because we don't like to see ourselves as we really are. We have spent a lifetime developing systems of escape through making excuses and blaming others for our problems = false self. The truth, if

we accept it, will move us toward our true self. Accepting the truth about ourselves implies a willingness to change. Benedict reminds us not to worry about our reputation or the impression we are trying to make on others. He says: "Do not wish to be called holy before you really are." "If you notice something good in yourself," says Benedict, "give credit to God, not to yourself, but be certain that the evil you commit is always your own and yours to acknowledge."

How do we discover the truth, personally, as a family, church or nation? Benedict says: "Listen with the ear of your heart." Listen to ourselves, to God and to others. Stop being defensive; stop blaming others; stop giving excuses.

Rosa Parks, the woman who refused to move to the back of the bus, said: "I will no longer act on the outside in a way that contradicts the truth I hold deeply within." She listened with the ear of her heart. Benedict says: "Speak the truth with heart and tongue." We are each called to live our inner truth. Discovering and owning the truth is an essential step toward achieving inner peace. Each of us is called to remember who she is and what s/he is called to be. The most important truth about ourselves is that God loves each of us unconditionally.

We must acknowledge that we don't know it all. We each have only a small portion of the truth. Am I willing to learn something from the other, even the adversary? Can I stay open to other alternatives? In chapter 3 of the Rule, Benedict speaks of the importance of summoning the brothers (sisters) for counsel. "The reason why we have said all should be called for counsel is that the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger." Am I willing to listen to others, including those younger than I am? Am I willing to let go of my need to be right?

Some countries have had the courage to form truth commissions. South Africa benefited from that experience under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He said: "If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies." Benedict encourages us to pray for our enemies — not that they will change but that my heart will soften.

Bishop Juan Gerardi chaired the truth commission in Guatemala. Just hours before he was assassinated, Bishop Gerardi said: "To open ourselves to the truth, to face our personal and collective reality are not options that can be accepted or rejected. They are the indispensable





condition for achieving peace.” Could it be that what our country most needs at this time is a truth commission? I think Pope Francis is calling us to open ourselves to the truth, to face our personal and collective reality. If we want to know the truth, we must be open to dialogue.

Forgiveness is another instrument we need to learn to play well. “Never give a hollow greeting of peace,” says Benedict. “If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with her/him before the sun goes down.” “Do not harbor hatred of anyone.” Benedict asks us to include the “Our Father” twice a day in our communal prayer “because thorns of contention are likely to spring up.” The antithesis of peace is the refusal to recognize failure and humbly begin again.

After 9/11 I remember being deeply touched when I learned of an organization called “September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.” Have you heard of this group? They have a website: [www.peacefultomorrows.org](http://www.peacefultomorrows.org). Their mission is to seek nonviolent responses to terrorism. The formation of this organization was like a breath of fresh air when so many were clamoring for war. The group chose their name based on a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. “Wars,” he said, “are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows.”

Prayer is another instrument we need to play in this school of peace. Notice, I did not say, “prayers” but prayer. In chapter 4 Benedict calls us to “devote yourself often to

prayer.” Be aware that God walks with us. Benedict also says: “pray for your enemies.” Robert Coles, a Pulitzer Prize winner for his work on the moral lives of children, tells the story about a young girl whom he calls “one of my great teachers.” It was in the ’60s shortly after the courts ruled for integration that 6-year-old Ruby Bridges, an Afro-American child, was being escorted by security guards into a formerly all-white school in New Orleans. Each day she had to walk past mobs who heckled her, screamed insults and curses. One day she stopped and looked at the crowd. Her teacher was watching all through the window. When Ruby got inside, the teacher said: “I saw you spoke to the people today.” “No, I didn’t speak to them,” said Ruby. “I saw your lips moving,” said the teacher. “Yes,” said Ruby, “I was talking to God.” “What did you say?” asked the teacher. Ruby responded: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing.” Ruby chose not to harbor hatred in her heart. How many of us pray for members of terrorist groups or for the person in our family, community, or church who rubs us the wrong way, constantly gets on our nerves or has offended us? In chapter 28 of the Rule, Benedict encourages us to pray for the one who is struggling and going through a difficult time.

For more of Sister Mary Ann’s presentation, check the Oblate web site at [www.thedome.org/oblates](http://www.thedome.org/oblates).

### From the March 2015 Oblate Retreat



1. Oblate Ellen Stanton, Candidate Don Stanton and Oblate Patti Schroeder have some thoughtful moments. 2. Oblate Joann Rubeck and Inquirer Dianne Le Duc listen to shared prayer during *Lectio* time. 3. Inquirers Marcia Stroud and Arleta Weyer pause after sharing reflections at the table. 4. Sister Mary Ann Verkamp, Oblate June Goforth, Oblate Shirley Stern, and Inquirer Melissa Barnes all contribute to a funny story. 5. Sister Mary Jane Kiesel and Oblate Mary Ann Littlefield are getting to know one another. 6. Oblates Kathy Knust and Judy Luebbhusen listen attentively to one another. 7. Oblate Mel Schroeder and Sister Brenda Engleman lead the song, “Let There Be Peace on Earth.” 8. Oblates Jackie and Dave Richard sit quietly in prayer.

## Rule of Benedict 5: Obedience

Teaching by Sister Jeana Visel  
Oblate Meeting, April 11, 2015

If I were to ask you what you love about obedience, your first response just might be to scoff. Love obedience?! It isn't always the most pleasant aspect of monastic living. However, were I to ask why we profess obedience, you might be able to cite a few more positive reasons: Obedience brings order to a community. It is something we do out of love. It helps form us into more Christ-like people. It's about listening to the needs to our community and the people around us. It may not be easy, but it is valuable.

I invite you to read and reflect on RB 5, and then to think about what the chapter has in common with the early Christological hymn from Philippians 2:5-11:

*Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

In both of these texts, we hear themes of humility, trusting in God, and not holding on to one's own status. Ultimately we aim to be obedient because Christ himself was obedient. He trusted in God the Father, and out of his obedience, redemption was made possible. In this juxtaposition, we thus can talk about obedience in terms of relationship with God, relationship with others, and relationship with oneself. Obedience is a baptismal call of all Christians, and monastic obedience finds its meaning in this larger context (Rees, et al, 189).

### Context: Major Sources

When seeking the meaning of a text, it is good to start with context, then to look to content, and then to see what meaning emerges. RB 5 has for its major source the Rule of the Master (RM), a "fourth generation rule," written about 530 CE, per Adalbert de Vogüé. The Rule of Benedict, by contrast, is a "fifth generation" rule, probably written between 530 and 560. Some scholars think the RB might possibly have been written by an older, wiser, Benedict redacting what he wrote in the RM as a younger, more idealistic man. In any case, RB 5 parallels RM 7, keeping some aspects from the RM, but omitting a lot, removing large sections that were redundant or had questionable theology. Benedict also brings in higher sense of the glory of God.



His major emphasis here is on unswerving obedience to a superior who mediates the will of God. It is important to note that RB 68 (Impossible Tasks) and 71 (Mutual Obedience) balance this chapter, and there is no RM parallel for these; thus they represent a softening influence clearly from Benedict himself.

When we look at the sources from the Rule of the Master, we find great influence from Cassian, Pachomius, Sulpicius Severus, Augustine, and Cyprian, particularly Cassian's Conferences and Institutes, to which Benedict directs the attention of the ambitious monastic toward the end of the Rule. RB 5 makes several Scripture citations, including several from St. Benedict's favorite books: Matthew, Psalms, Luke, and 2 Corinthians. These Scripture verses provide structure to the entire chapter.

What we see when we look at some of the early sources alongside what we have in RB 5, we begin to get a sense of different monastic cultures being brought together in an interesting mix (Terrence Kardong, *The Benedictines*, 73 [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988]). While Pachomius and Basil wrote for cenobites, and focus on fulfilling God's will in community, Cassian gives us the culture of the desert tradition, in which one would attach oneself in strict obedience to a chosen elder, learn virtue and the ways of God, and eventually become an independent hermit oneself, to whom others would go for direction. Recall how RB 1 tells us of the different kinds of monks, where cenobites may eventually become good enough to become hermits, and do "single-handed combat" with the devil. When this desert approach is taken from Cassian and put into a more communal context by the Rule of the Master, it creates a completely different culture: monks now are to be supervised



and strictly obedient forever, rather than with an eye toward their own eventual independence.

The RM in some ways promotes a disturbing abdication of responsibility; the monk is to obey no matter what, and the abbot is held responsible at the judgment. As Kardong notes, in RB 5, Benedict softens the doctrine but not theme: the disciple is to obey immediately as a “grateful response to God,” not to resist with murmuring (74). The abbot is the main locus of authority, and holds the place of Christ (RB 2.2); as we hear repeated more than once, “Whoever listens to you, listens to me” (Lk 10:16). Yet the RB does offer some balance to the abbot’s authority, as noted in RB 2.1, and calls for the monk to be obedient to others, too (RB 71). In the Rule of Benedict, obedience is always about discerning God’s will, which today means we also listen to the Church’s interpretation of the Bible and teaching (Kardong, 76).

### Context within the Rule

When we look at the context of RB 5 within the Rule itself, we can consider the order of chapters around this one and note the topics addressed:

- Ch. 1 Kinds of Monks
- Ch. 2 The Abbot
- Ch. 3 Calling the Brothers for Counsel
- Ch. 4 Tools for Good Works
- Ch. 5 Obedience – note v. 1: “1st step of humility = unhesitating obedience”
- Ch. 6 Restraint of Speech
- Ch. 7 Humility – note v. 10: “1st step of humility = fear of God before one’s eyes”
- Ch. 9 Liturgy...

Thus we see that RB 5 builds off of the context established about cenobites being under a superior, further developing some aspects of Tools for Good Works and helping us to understand silence and humility. Obedience is one of the tools of good works, but then it gets its own chapter, along with humility and several others. Obedience and humility are both emphasized and interrelated in RB: each has its own chapter, but each is mentioned elsewhere as well. A good structural analysis of how the verses of the chapter are arranged could also show us some important themes, but I’ll pass over that exercise today.

For more of Sister Jeana’s presentation, check the Oblate web site at [www.thedome.org/oblates](http://www.thedome.org/oblates).



Oblate Mary Eileen Fritz enjoys some refreshments during social time at the March Oblate Retreat.

## Oblate Volunteers for the Monastery

An extremely important part of being an Oblate is doing service work. Many of our Oblates already involve themselves in so many parish and church-related ministries. Yet they still find time to volunteer here at the monastery. Currently, Oblates are cleaning the gallery in church and the outside colonnade. Some are faithful workers in the bakery. Some help out at switchboard when substitutes are needed. Others help to keep our grounds beautified. During Christkindlmarkt, several help in various booths. Just recently, a generous Oblate volunteered to “minister” to the flower gardens in front of Kordes Center. If others have extra time to help out in their already busy lives, please contact Sister Brenda Engleman or Sister Mary Philip Berger. You may just find that special job you have always been looking for.

## Share the Joy of Being an Oblate of St. Benedict

All Oblates and Oblate Candidates are encouraged to share the joy of being an Oblate with others. Spread the good news among your friends, relatives, and members of your church. Talk with those you think would be fine Oblates. Invite them to read this newsletter.

We always welcome those who may want to learn more about the Oblates to contact Sister Brenda Engleman at any time. Contact information can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

## Getting To Know the Oblates

# Judy and Charlie Luebbehusen

Greetings to all our Benedictine Oblates from Charlie and Judy Luebbehusen! We live three miles north of Ferdinand, Indiana, and have lived there since 1975.

The first 13 years of our marriage we lived in the city limits of Ferdinand in the former home of Judy's parents, Mildred and Sylvester Fleig.

Charlie was born in Jasper, Indiana, to Ray and Henrietta Luebbehusen. When he was one year old, the family moved to his grandparents' farm in St. Henry, Indiana, and Charlie lived there until we got married on July 21, 1962. His father farmed with his wife until his death at the age of 90 years. Charlie attended St. Henry Elementary where he was taught by the Benedictine sisters and graduated from Holland High School. Charlie has two brothers and a sister who is deceased.

Charlie worked at Kimball International as a project and design engineer for 54 years. Forty-two of those years were full-time and 12 years as part-time. At the present,

he is a volunteer driver for veterans — taking them to their doctors' appointments in Evansville, New Albany or Louisville.

Judy was born in Ferdinand and has lived her entire life in Ferdinand. Judy attended St. Ferdinand Elementary and graduated from St. Ferdinand High School. She was very blessed to have been taught by the Benedictine Sisters all 12 years of her education. Judy has three sisters, one of which is a member of the Ferdinand Monastery (Sister Mary Judith), and two brothers.

Judy worked 28 years as a librarian assistant for the Southeast Dubois County School Corporation. Following retirement, she continued to volunteer in the school libraries.

As a couple, we have been very blessed. First of all, as life-long Catholics we are very dedicated to our faith. During the early 80's Judy was diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis. With her faith, her very supportive family and new medications, she is now able to lead a



good and active life.

We have been blessed with two sons, two daughters-in-law, and six grandchildren, of whom two are married. Also, we are looking forward to our first great-grandchild who is due in August.

We have been active Benedictine Oblates since 2010. Our mentor was Sister Karen Joseph. We always looked forward to each session with Sister Karen and try to live the Rule of St. Benedict on a daily basis.

## Monastery Event Hall

**Ferdinand, Indiana**

Host your event on the grounds of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana.



- Round table seating available for up to 400 guests at the Monastery Event Hall (former Marian Heights Gymnasium).
- Rental fee of \$395 includes full day rental and decorating time the day before your event.
- Contact Laura Reckelhoff at 812-367-1411 ext. 2635 or lreckelhoff@thedome.org to reserve, schedule a visit, or for more information.

## Visit For Heaven's Sake gift shop

Ferdinand Benedictine Oblates receive

**10% off  
your entire order!**

*Be sure to let the clerk know you are one of our Oblates!*



# Monastery Moments and Oblate Offerings

May 2, 2015

**Wise Women in the Benedictine Tradition** Presentation will be held in Kordes Center from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Presenter: Sister Mary Ann Verkamp

May 17, 2015

**Oblate Meeting** Will be held in St. Gertrude's Hall from 1 to 3 p.m. Presentation: Chapter 6 of the Holy Rule "The Restraint of Speech." Presenter: Sister Karen Joseph

June 29–July 3, 2015

**Private and Personal Retreat** Will be held in Kordes Center from Monday, June 29, at 7:30 p.m. to Friday, July 3, at 10 a.m. Those in retreat may arrange to meet with a spiritual director.

July 12–19, 2015

**Directed Retreat** Will be held in Kordes Center from Sunday, July 12, at 7:30 p.m. to Sunday, July 19, at 10 a.m. Those in retreat may arrange to meet with a spiritual director.

July 26–August 2, 2015

**Centering Prayer Retreat** Will be held in Kordes Center from July 26, at 7:30 p.m. to Sunday, August 2, at 10 a.m. A prerequisite is the Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat.

September 11–18, 2015

**Directed Retreat** Will be held from Friday, September 11, at 7 p.m. to Friday, September 18, at 10 a.m. Those in retreat may arrange to meet with a spiritual director.

## North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors Conference (NAABOD)

The NAABOD biennial conference will be held from July 10 to July 15 at Subiaco Abbey in Subiaco, Arkansas. This year's presenters are Father Jerome Kodell from Subiaco Abbey, Sister Macrina Wiederkehr from St. Scholastica Monastery in



Father Jerome



Sister Macrina



Sister Karen

Ft. Smith, Arkansas, and our very own Sister Karen Joseph, from Ferdinand. The topic is "Nurturing Benedictine Spirituality — From Theory to Practice." Oblates Kathy Knust and Theresa Bauer will be joining Sister Brenda as they attend the Conference.

## Oblate Birthdays

**May**

6—Linda Doyle, 7—Barbara Poitra, 8—Mary Eileen Fritz, 10—Phyllis Claycamp and Debbi Vickers, 20—Sharon Kilpatrick, 21—Jean Siebelts, 22—Pamela Crawford, 23—Bridget Tierney, 27—Julie Beck, 28—Linda Begle, 31—Gail Trottier

**June**

7—James Werner, 12—Karen A. Rexing, 15—Bernadette Heeke and Phyllis Jollie, 16—Rev. Earl Menchhofer, 20—Dayna Barlow, Joseph Marion, and Stephanie Smith, 21—Theresa Bauer and Anne Howerton, 24—Brenda DeMotte

**July**

4—Elaine Baumgart, 7—Mary Lou Bassler and Mary Taber, 9—Chihoko Wake, 11—Martha Schmitt, 13—Charles Luebbehusen, 17—Mary (Cheshire) Lamberg, 20—Ed Brown and Sandra Turner, 30—Judith Kissel



In memoriam

Please pray for Alvina Schnell, who recently died. She is the mother of Oblate Kathy Knust.

For the sick

In your prayers, remember Oblates Ruth Goepfrich, Judy Power, and Richard Huggins as they deal with health challenges, and Oblate Therese Walker, for continued good health.

*Oblates* is published four times a year under the leadership of the Oblate Director, Sister Brenda Engleman.

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## *Oblates*

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Ferdinand Benedictines Are Moving Up to the Eastside

Guess what? We Ferdinand Oblates will soon be live streaming our monthly meetings. This means that we will give you our Oblate camera's link (address) which you will access on our website. When you open up the link, you will find yourself right here in Ferdinand in St. Gertrude's Hall. Doesn't this sound exciting? No matter where you live — California, Texas, North Dakota, Washington, D.C., Florida, etc. — you will be close to us. And we will be close to you.

Before we go nationwide, however, we will need some time to get this endeavor fine-tuned. We had one practice session on April 11 and will have another on May 17. During the summer, we may need to do some more tweaking. I promise you that by September 19, we WILL go live all over the United States.

Stay tuned in. More information will follow.

Thank you, Mel Schroeder and Lynn Belli, for taking leadership on our technology committee. We do need other volunteers to help set up equipment at future meetings and gatherings. And, lastly, thank you to our technology director, Bob Vaal, for helping to make this project a reality.

