

October 2009



In the prologue to his Rule, St. Benedict invites and challenges us to set out on the way to God. The energy to bring that effort to a successful end comes from a deep awareness that what we lack by nature can be provided by the grace of God — help that is ours when we humbly call, “O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me.”

*Let us never swerve from the instructions,
observe the teachings faithfully,
patiently share in the sufferings of Christ,
so to deserve to share in his kingdom. (Prologue)*

To Oblates, Oblate Candidates, and Friends,

Some of the warmth and beauty and activity of summer has given way to fall. The accent on harvest, school (and all that entails), starting a new job, or beginning retirement, gives a different flavor to life.

We cannot forget the concerns about safety, leadership, citizenship, life, death, health, sickness, peace, war, justice, warmth, cold, too much or too little rain, successes and attempts that did not turn out for our benefit. We wonder what we can make out of all this mixture. Through it all, we are called to celebrate life, enjoy the gifts that come our way, live with a heart full of gratitude for blessings, and accept the setbacks with courage. Recalling and celebrating the cross of Christ and the sorrows of Mary are occasions that make us mindful of the tension we often experience between life experiences that are painful and the rewards that come from pain borne with faith, hope, and love.

To speak of the cross in life is not a favorite subject for most of us. To celebrate the cross seems like a mistaken idea. Yet, Christ warned the apostles that he would

(Continued on page 2.)

“
*Listen with the
ear of your
heart,
attend to the
father’s
instructions,
and faithfully
put them into
practice... .
Handle
all things as
sacred vessels... .
Live so that
in all things
God may be
glorified.*
”



Monastery Immaculate Conception
802 E. 10th Street
Ferdinand, Indiana 47532-9239
812-367-1411, ext. 2827
www.thedome.org/oblates
oblates@thedome.org

Message to Oblates, Oblate Candidates, and Friends
(Continued from page 1.)

suffer, die, and rise, and that to be his disciple, one would have to lose life in order to have it. To celebrate the Exaltation of the Cross is to recall and give thanks for the wonder of God's love. Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, lived, emptied himself, gave his life, and rose to new life to show us that it is possible to let go of life and gain new life.

Lest we forget, the Church wants us to know that Mary, the most faithful follower of Jesus, shared in a special way in his life and death and received the special graces that come from generosity and fidelity. Celebrating the Mother of Sorrows calls us to contemplate Mary, who held in her heart the words of Simeon, "This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many...a sign that will be opposed; you yourself shall be pierced with a sword, and the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35) That certainly was not the best news for a new mother as she presented her infant in the temple! Take a few minutes to bring to mind other painful moments for Mary and Joseph as the child grew, became a public preacher, teacher, miracle worker, healer, and was brought to death as a criminal.

What purpose is served by going over such events in the life of Christ and Mary and, for that matter, the life of any one we know who has suffered in any way? In the prologue to his Rule, St. Benedict questions the reader, "What could be sweeter than the voice of the Lord inviting us...?" Hearing the word of God, reading the story, entering into the event, putting oneself into the picture and acting on its meaning for our lives can bring us to a moment of understanding and prayer.

Pray as if everything depended on God; work as if everything depended on you! Have you noticed that happy experiences often include a tinge of painfulness? Have we not known joyful moments amid the pain we experience? We do live with contradictions. Our lives are often a mixture of experiences that challenge the body, the spirit, and the heart.

Benedict advises that with the Gospel as our guide, clothed with faith and good works, not boastful of our successes nor daunted by the sufferings and setbacks of life, but with patience and perseverance, we participate in the sufferings of Christ and will share in his Resurrection — life in the Kingdom of God. What is not possible for us by nature, let us ask God to supply by the help of his grace.

—Sister Mary Victor Kercher, OSB

Getting To Know the Oblates

Dayna Barlow



I live in Wichita, Kansas. I have been an Oblate with the Benedictine sisters in Ferdinand since spring of 2004 and enjoy the times I am able to attend meetings and pray with the sisters. I have gotten to know Sister Mary Victor and other Oblates through the years and keep in touch and share spiritual reflections

with them via email and instant messaging. Though I'm less able to attend meetings now than when I lived closer, I find consolation and mooring in my tie to the monastery and a continual call back to live my Baptismal commitment.

My spiritual director has helped me see my purpose in my secular vocation as a way to minister and do God's will rather than a paycheck. This has also helped me in my spiritual progress and in balancing my time and priorities better in order to spend more time in relationship with God. This spring I found a podcast of Lauds and Vespers from the Benedictine monastery at Clyde, Missouri, that I have really enjoyed and that has made me feel like I'm praying in community, even when not at the monastery.

I'm fortunate to be able to attend daily Mass before work.

My hobbies include gardening (including extensive weeding and pruning at my parish), do-it-yourselfing on the fixer-upper I live in, hiking, and kayaking. I'm involved in Eucharistic ministry at a local hospital, food prep at a soup kitchen, and an adoration hour. Through time, I've grown from doing these as something I felt I ought to do, to appreciating them as things I want to do.

I look forward to continuing to grow spiritually and in sharing with the sisters and Oblate community.

Monastery Moments and Oblate Offerings

October 16-18

Come & See Weekend

Young women discerning a vocation to religious life spend time at the monastery, living the schedule of prayer, work, and leisure.

October 18

Oblation Day

The ceremony for Oblation and the reception of Oblate Candidates began at 1 p.m. with Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau presiding.

October 25

Jubilee Celebration

Congratulations to Sisters Helen Maurer, Benita Biever, and Dolorita Libs for 70 years of monastic profession and to Sisters Victoria Pohl and Benedicta Clauss for 60 years of monastic profession.

November 2

All Souls Day

At the end of Evening Prayer, the sisters process to the monastery cemetery for a ritual of prayer and remembrance of all the faithful departed.

November 26

Thanksgiving Day

The sisters remember with appreciation all family members, Oblates, members of the Spiritual Association, co-workers, and other friends.

November 29

First Sunday of Advent

Prepare the Way of the Lord! Regular Sunday schedule with Morning Prayer at 10 a.m. and Mass at 10:30.

December 6

Oblate meeting at 1 p.m. in St. Gertrude Hall

Sister Kathy Huber will give a presentation on the topic of work.

December 8

Feast Day of Monastery Immaculate Conception

Most Rev. Gerald A. Gettelfinger, bishop of the Diocese of Evansville, will preside at an afternoon Mass at the monastery.

December 24

Christmas Eve Services

Oblates are invited to the monastery for Christmas Eve Services beginning with prelude music at 9:30 p.m. and Mass at 10, followed by refreshments in the dining room.

December 25

Christmas Day

Oblates are invited to join the sisters for Morning Prayer at 10 a.m. and Christmas Day Mass at 10:30.

New Oblates and candidates join Oblate community

Carolyn and Gary Adler from Evansville made their Oblation, becoming professed Oblates of St. Benedict, during a ceremony at the monastery on October 18. Victor and Linda Begle and Charles and Judy Luebbehusen, all from Ferdinand, became Oblate candidates during the ceremony. Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau, prioress, officiated and gave a reflection.

Pauletta (Adler) Jeter from Friendswood, Texas, was enrolled as a candidate in a private ceremony at the monastery on October 12 because she was unable to attend the October 18 ceremony.

These candidates, supported by their sister companions, will study Scripture, the Rule of St. Benedict, and Benedictine spirituality during their year of preparation for Oblation.



Front row, Carolyn and Gary Adler
Back row, Linda and Victor Begle and Charles and Judy Luebbehusen



Oblate Olivia Adler, Pauletta (Adler) Jeter, Sister Mary Victor Kercher, and Sister Mary Beth Maier, sister companion to Pauletta.

Oblate Birthdays

September

2 — Lee Garrity, 6 — Barbara Nonte, 8 — Christy Dumont, 9 — June Goforth, Brenda Padgett, 12 — Victor Begle, 15 — Gloria Hasler, 25 — Shirley Azure, Sheila Walker, 26 — Mary Metz, 30 — Gary Adler

October

1 — Mary Thale, 5 — Martha Hester, Rose Wilkie, 7 — Jerome Schmitt, 9 — Lauretta Verkamp, 11 — Derrick Dixon, Clarice Kroll, Katherine Tennis, Donella Vondrak, 19 — Rev. Gerald McCarthy, 22 — Madeline Keplin, 23 — Frank Keller, 31 — Adelaide Trapp

November

3 — Peg Albertson, 4 — Gloria Patnaude, Ellen Stanton, 8 — Marie Roberge, 10 — Bob Cadwallader, 18 — Denise Marcellais, Mel Schroeder, 22 — Lawrie Hamilton, 23 — Norma Lennartz, Janet Ziliak, 29 — Patricia Hopf

December

4 — Shirley L'Esperance, 14 — Dolores Gourneau, 27 — Sharon Champagne, 28 — Jeanie Jollie, Elaine Rodland



NAABOD 2009 in Latrobe, Pennsylvania

Oblates David and Jackie Richards and Sisters Mary Victor Kercher and Barbara Ann Offerman represented the Ferdinand Oblate community at the 2009 North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors meeting in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, from June 26-July 1. Other Indiana representatives were from Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove, and Saint Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad. Over 80 participants from North America attended.

The general theme of the 2009 meeting was a celebration of NAABOD and its “60 years & Growing: Formation for a Benedictine Way of Life.” Various presentations with discussions were offered during the meeting.

Mother Mary Anne Noll, prioress of St. Emma’s Monastery in Pennsylvania, presented “Tools of our Daily Lives as Sacred Vessels of the Altar,” using chapter 31 of the Rule, which states that “all utensils and goods of the monastery will be regarded as sacred

vessels of the altar.” The presentation noted that our attitude and actions should reflect reverence and respect for all people and things.

Sister Virginia Dwyer from Bristow, Virginia, presented “Relationships and Reconciliation: Two Pillars that Form Us in Benedictine Life,” reminding the audience of the opportunities for relationships with family, co-workers, visitors, and all who touch their lives. And relationships offer the occasions for reconciliation that may arise from normal tensions.

Another presentation, entitled “The Trinitarian Basis of Benedictine Family Life,” was a reminder that Benedict wrote his Rule for those who live in community, those who live in relationship. God, too, is community — three-in-one, trinity, and unity.

NAABOD was held on the campus of St. Vincent College at St. Vincent Archabbey in Labrobe. Participants were housed in Rooney Hall, home for the Pittsburgh Steelers during their summer training.

Belcourt Chapter News

Sister Wilma Davis, member of the Oblate Leadership Team, prepared a retreat for the Belcourt Queen of Peace Chapter for their August meeting. The theme was “Thirsting for the Living God, According to the Way of St. Benedict.” St. Benedict’s desire for God was the primary motivation of his life. This desire is the echo of God’s longing for us. Retreatants reflected on the prologue of the Rule, especially verses 14-20.

To deepen their desire for God, they spent time alone meditating on Psalm 63:1-3. The gathering ended with a sharing of their thoughts and a potluck meal.

An Oblate for more than 20 years, Mary Ellen



Mary Ellen Renault

Renault, 98, who had been honored

as the oldest living “Metis” (French-Indian) on Turtle Mountain Reservation, died September 18, 2009. She had eight children, 32 grandchildren, 51 great-grandchildren, and 24 great-great-grandchildren. She retired after many years of employment, especially at the William Langer Jewel Plant (Bulova watches). She was an active parishioner of St. Anthony Church and served on the parish council for many years. She enjoyed cooking, being with family, social gatherings, playing cards, and dancing.



These Oblates participated in the August retreat at Queen of Peace Center in Belcourt, North Dakota. Two retreatants are not in the photo.

August Show and Tell

The sights and sounds during the August indoor picnic event told a story of Oblates who enjoy picnic fare, can laugh together, and enjoy the creative talent of Oblate members.

Having been spirit-fed during the celebration of prayer and Sunday Eucharist, we gathered in St. Gertrude Hall for feeding the body and enjoying the company of Oblates and friends. Tables displaying a variety of potluck contributions and food for the hungry were a welcome sight. While final touch was being made, most were occupied with finding words on large word game charts prepared by Oblate Patti Schroeder. Special tallies were handed out for use later in the afternoon. After giving thanks and asking for a blessing, the food lines formed. The dessert section seemed to draw particular attention. Everyone took the opportunity to take care of that proverbial "sweet-tooth." Oblate Mel Schroeder used the tallies we received earlier to involve everyone in a question session, in which the answers gave bits of information about the person. A lot of good humor and laughter filled the space.

The special treat of the afternoon was the presentation of a puppet show. The script, the set, the costumed puppets, and the props were the creation of Oblate Ellen Stanton, with the assistance of her husband, Don. Oblates Dayna Barlow and Carolyn Kohler assisted in setting up, and played important rolls during the presentation. Before a captive audience, Ellen and her stage crew performed "The Image of the King." The show tells about a knight who wanted to be like the king, who was very good and helped all in need. Rather than assist a poor man, the knight went on his way, but in the end found that, to be like the king, it is necessary to be generous and help those in need. Having learned that lesson, the knight did take on the image of the king. Our Oblates do have talent.

Held each year on the last Sunday in August, this informal social event is a way to extend a special welcome of hospitality to the members of the Oblate community. Join us in our seeking and praying and serving so that God may be glorified in all things.



Oblates

Monastery Immaculate Conception
802 E. 10th Street • Ferdinand, Indiana 47532-9239

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

A Delegate to Rome

Oblate Paulette Campana represented the Ferdinand Benedictine Oblates at the meeting of the Oblates' World Congress in Rome on October 2–10. The Congress brought together some 250 Oblate delegates from all parts of the world. The total number of Oblates, according to information received from Rome, is 25,481.

The Religious Challenges of Today – The Benedictine Answer was the focus of the Congress presentations. The three “moments” of the nine-day conference included observation, evaluation, and action.

Observation: The Prayer of the Oblate in a Pluralist World. As a result of extra-ordinary technical and scientific development, and media and communication, world-wide injustice, violence, human migration, search for escape from hunger, poverty, human dignity, mosques rising up beside churches, Buddhist and Hindu temples, synagogues, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious are widely known. Christianity is challenged to be open to these realities. Jesus taught us to say “Our Father.” Whom do we include in this “our”? Who is our neighbor, or, is the question, whose neighbor am I?

Evaluation: To Evaluate in the Light of the Gospel, the Rule of Benedict, and the Second Vatican Council. We are challenged to see if our attitudes are consonant with the

Gospel precept of universal brotherhood, including all of humanity and all creatures. How are we influenced by the clash of civilizations, by a spirit which sets different cultures, civilizations, and religions against each other? That implies a choice. In many monasteries that choice has already been made by way of reconciliation and multiculturalism.

Action: To Act in Order to be Faithful to Jesus Christ, to Saint Benedict, and to the Signs of the Times. How do we build bridges and break down walls? It will not be enough to have a Christian vision of the “other.” Continuing formation with strong determination to think as a disciple of Jesus and as a member of the Benedictine family will be necessary.

Such is the dream, the goal that the second World Congress of Benedictine Oblates set for itself as members came together in Rome. (More on the Congress of Oblates in the next newsletter.)

