

July 2011



Sister Barbara C. Schmitz talks with Oblates Judy Luebbehusen (center) and Linda Begle. Judy and Linda were helping with the NAABOD visitors on July 3.



The Work of Seeking God

By Sister Kathryn Huber

Embracing Creation with Reverence and Hospitality:
Listening to Scripture and the Rule Speak

This is a portion of the presentation given by Sister Kathryn Huber, OSB, at the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD) meeting held at St. Meinrad, July 2, 2011

... I have grown in awareness that the same laws that govern life on this planet Earth also appear to govern life in the universe. There is no distinction. The same dust that makes up the stars of our universe constitutes the substance of our human bodies. In fact we now know that all matter within our universe, from the farthest star to the content of your body and mind, is interconnected. Scientists tell that we are literally connected to one another and to all things – part of one vast web of life in our universe. Brian Swimme says it so well: “Nothing is itself without everything else.” We are participants in one another’s lives at every level of being.

In the gospels Jesus shows a wonderful attitude toward created things by using water, bread, fish, wine, light, flowers, vines, branches, soil, spittle, mud, seed, and creatures such as birds, foxes, and hens. Jesus assumed the worth of the created universe, the dependability of nature, the reoccurrence of the season, the normal pattern of sowing and harvesting, of planting a vineyard and caring for it, of seeding the clouds and counting on the rain. The natural world

Continued on page 2.

“*The cellarer of the monastery will take care of everything according to the order of the prioress/abbot. S/he must show every care and concern for the sick, the young, guests and the poor, knowing for certain that s/he will be held accountable for all of them... S/he will regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar, aware that nothing is to be neglected. S/he should not be prone to greed, nor be wasteful and extravagant with the goods of the monastery, but should do everything with moderation. If the community is large, helpers should be given.*”

—Rule of St. Benedict Chapter 31



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is the stage where the reign of God is enacted, the place where faith in God is lived out. The reign of God is not so other-worldly that we can treat the earth badly. (Abbot John Klassen, OSB, Introduction to St. John's Conference on "Environmental Stewardship," 2004) We followers of Benedict need to pledge ourselves and our communities not to do violence against creation. In the Prologue, Benedict states that we make this journey with the gospel as our guide.

When was the last time you read one of the gospels from beginning to end?

We are deeply connected to nature and the movement of the seasons in another way, namely, the liturgical cycle. Our liturgical life is richly interwoven with the natural cycles of the year, the ebb and flow of light, the definition of color and its patterns, the plants and flowers that grace our spaces as prayer and life move on each day. The liturgy roots us, grounds us in the earth and its cycles of birth, growth, maturation, death and regeneration. Liturgy triggers our awareness of the natural cycles that operate in our search for and response to God. (Abbot John Klassen, OSB, Introduction to St. John's Conference "On Environmental Stewardship," 2004)

Benedictine spirituality is really an intense and intentional living of Christian spirituality. Benedict was simply describing the essentials for Christian living normative for all. Its central themes lead one back inevitably to the central themes of being human:

- Commitment
- Balance
- Being in the right relationship with God, others
- Respect for materials, possessions, and for the world around us.

In the *Life of St. Benedict*, St. Gregory tells us that shortly before he died Benedict saw the whole world gathered up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light. "All creation," Gregory explains, "is bound to appear small to a soul that sees the creator." The one who stands in the divine

presence is able to see the entire world as a single entity, a single responsibility. The contemplative human, inside or outside the monastery, is able to see all acts in every single act, and all life in a single light. (Sutera, p. 83) This global responsibility is reflected in the comment by astronaut Ed "Buzz" Aldren when he saw the planet Earth from space. He said, "We are not one nation under God, we are one earth under God."



Stewardship is another value which, like hospitality, captures the essence of Benedictine life. On a most basic level, Benedict prescribed care and reverence of material things ("treat all goods as if they were vessels of the altar"). For Benedictines the ideal that gardening tools were just as important as chalices has come to mean a total way of life which emphasizes wholeness and wholesomeness and connectedness. The body, the mind, the spirit, material things, the earth — all are one and all are to receive proper attention. All created things are God-given, and a common-sense approach to resources should prevail. Thus, Benedictine communities

are ready to accept the most recent technology but will use the same bucket for thirty years. "Taking care of things" has been elevated to a virtue of surpassing value in Benedictine monasteries. ("About the Rule of St. Benedict" by Sister Jane Michele McClure, OSB, brochure published by Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Indiana)

How we are in relationship determines whether entities thrive or die — physical body, family, parish, community, nation....all working together, supporting one another, contributing gives and sustains life. Hoarding, discarding, abusing, domineering, and disrespecting results in chaos, violence, and death. The ecosystem's disaster symbolizes a lack of care and reverence for all living things. We followers of Benedict need to pledge ourselves and our communities to hold creation in sacred trust.

Monastery Moments and Oblate Offerings

August 15

Dome Golf Classic — The golf event allows women and men to come and enjoy themselves while raising money for the monastery. This year's Classic will be at the beautiful Hurstbourne Country Club in Louisville.

August 21

Oblate Picnic — Oblates, candidates, and inquirers are invited to the annual gathering in St. Gertrude Hall. Picnic-style meal begins shortly after the regular monastery Sunday Mass. Meat and drinks provided by the sisters. All other participants bring a salad, vegetable, or dessert to serve 12 people. **Reservations required.**

September 18

St. Hildegard Dinner — This dinner honors members of the St. Hildegard Society who have named the sisters in their wills, life insurance policies, or other estate planning.

September 25

Oblate Meeting and Reception of Oblate Candidates — Four men and women have requested to become candidates for the year 2011-12. After the brief Rite of Reception to welcome the candidates, Sister Mary Ann Verkamp will present an Overview of the Psalms to begin this year's theme of the Psalms. Morning prayer in the Monastery Church is at 10 a.m. (EST) with Mass at 10:30 a.m. The meeting begins at 1 p.m. **(Reservations required for all or part of the activities.)**

October 1

Perpetual Monastic Profession — Sisters Jill Marie Reuber and Kathleen Marie Cash will make their perpetual monastic profession. A public reception will be held in the afternoon.

October 16

Rite of Oblation and Renewal of Oblation — Oblate Candidates will profess their Oblation during Morning Prayer in the monastery church. Prayer will be at 9:45 a.m. Mass is at 10:30 a.m. with dinner to follow. No Oblate meeting in the afternoon. **Reservations required for services and dinner.**

October 30

Diamond Jubilee — This celebration honors Sister Mary Charlotte Kavanaugh for 75 years of monastic profession; Sister Martha Marie Tempel, for 70 years; and Sisters Joanna Trainer, Lorraine DeVault, and Mary Dominic Frederick for 60 years. The celebration is for members of the religious community only.

November 18–20

Christkindlmarkt — Plan ahead to work with the sisters during this annual holiday festival. Call or email the Oblate directors to volunteer. Simply Divine Bakery would also appreciate volunteers from early November through the Christmas holidays. Contact Sister Jean Marie Ballard to help in the bakery or the bakery booth.

Oblate Birthdays

August

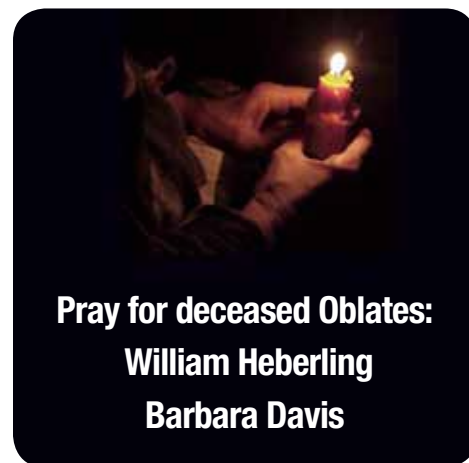
1 — Paulette Campana, 4 — Sister Kathy Bilskie, 5 — Olivia Adler, 9 — Craig Howerton; 10 — Evelyn Berube, 14 — Valerie Scott, 19 — Mary Agnes Willegal, 20 — Mary Etta Kiefer and Lucille Vinson, 21 — Judy Luebbehusen, 23 — Carolyn Kohler, 27 — Theresa Walker, 29 — Pauletta Adler Jeter

September

2 — Lee Garrity, 6 — Barbara Nonte, 8 — Christy Dumont, 9 — June Goforth and Brenda Padgett, 12 — Victor Begle, 15 — Gloria Hasler, 18 — Jane Ann Breen, 25 — Shirley Azure and Sheila Walker, 26 — Mary Metz, 30 — Gary Adler

October

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



Pray for deceased Oblates:
William Heberling
Barbara Davis

Oblates is published four times a year by the Oblate Leadership Team: Sisters Kathy Bilskie, Mary Victor Kercher, and Barbara Ann Offerman.

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Oblates in Action

Volunteers from the Oblate communities of Ferdinand, Beech Grove, St. Meinrad, and Covington, Kentucky, generously worked to make the 2011 meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD) a tremendous success. The Oblates' willingness to carry luggage, serve refreshments and meals, staff book sales, and all the other hundreds of duties promoted a relaxed atmosphere for NAABOD participants.

Members of the Ferdinand Oblate community were everywhere with their smiling faces and willing hands. Mel Schroeder worked with the representatives from other communities to coordinate the work that was done at St. Meinrad. Besides Mel, these most generous Oblate volunteers included: Mary Lou Bassler, Mary Eileen Fritz, Charlie and Judy Luebbehusen, Linda and Vic Begle, Sandy Turner, Kathy

Knust, Marsha Brown, and Jim Werner. Lynn Belli, in addition to artfully taking pictures throughout the meeting, also coordinated the volunteers who help to host the NAABOD guests for an evening at Ferdinand on July 3. The guests joined the religious community for evening prayer, supper, a tour, and a visit to the gift shop. Working along with Lynn to greet and serve the NAABOD participants were: Mary Lou Bassler, Mary Eileen Fritz, Judy Luebbehusen, Linda Begle, Sandy Turner, Kathy Knust, Marsha Brown, Marilyn Becker, Ruth Goepfrich, and Theresa Bauer. Mel Schroeder organized the transportation to and from the Ferdinand monastery — no easy task for 82 participants. At the end of the July 3 celebration at Ferdinand, Sister Betty, motherhouse coordinator, and several other sisters remarked what a splendid job the Oblates did and how smoothly all the evening's activities flowed.

Elaine Baumgart and Vic Begle

were also part of a presentation for NAABOD participants. A panel of Oblates from various communities explained how they practice the teaching of Benedict about respect for all persons, things, and nature. This presentation fit well with the NAABOD theme of Embracing Creation with Reverence and Hospitality. While all the panelists were inspiring, the Ferdinand duo was outstanding.

Thank you to all the Ferdinand Oblate volunteers!

Top: (1) Oblate Marsha Brown (side shown only), Oblate Sandy Turner, and Oblate Mel Schroeder talk with bus driver Larry Hochgesang. **(2)** Oblate Theresa Bauer speaks with Sister Antoinette Purcell, OSB. **(3)** Oblates Mary Lou Bassler and Marsha Brown prepare cake for serving.

Bottom: Oblates Mary Eileen Fritz and Lynn Belli check the list. **(2)** Oblate Kathy Knust greets NAABOD participants arriving at Ferdinand. **(3)** Oblate Thomas Rillo (St. Meinrad Oblate), Sister Mary Fisher from New Mexico, and Oblates Marilyn Becker and Eileen Fritz chatting in Cloister Hall.



Notes from the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors Conference (July 1–6, 2011)

By Oblate Marilyn Becker

Holy Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 31 “Of the Cellarer of the Monastery”

“Let him look upon all the vessels and goods of the monastery as though they were the consecrated vessels of the altar.”

As Oblates, it is our duty and our obligation to walk gently on this earth, to embrace creation with reverence

and hospitality. The earth is waiting to be saved — let us pledge ourselves to do no violence, but to shepherd, to nurture, to build and to nourish. We will then be holding creation in sacred trust; we will be acknowledging that creation is indeed sacramental, holy; that being in the garden is contemplative; that our breath is the breath of God and that the snakes

in life have a purpose.

All life is a gift — all life is interconnected — all life will grow and thrive when supported by community. We need each other. Let us be good stewards.

“O Lord, you gave us power over the works of your hand, put all things in our care.” Psalm 8

Pray and Work: Some Notes from the NAABOD Conference

A new concept of the Benedictine motto *Pray and Work* was the subtle theme of the presentations given during the July 1-6 meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors which took place at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana. Benedictine Oblate directors and Oblates attending the conference were treated to ideas and insights concerning Embracing Creation with Reverence and Hospitality: Listening to Scripture and the Rule Speak. The theme is one that certainly resonates with the challenges we face relative to life and the environment in all of creation.

A reflective reading of the creation stories in the Book of Genesis, of Psalm 8 and Psalm 104, remind us of the creative work of God in the universe, giving beauty and all life its place, and function with inter-relatedness and inter-dependency. On page one of this newsletter, Sister Kathryn Huber, OSB, shares reminders and insights about the wonder and interrelatedness of all things in the cosmos, in the universe, in all of creation.

The sustainability and spirituality of creation was the focus of Kyle Kramer, who founded and lives with his wife and three children on Genesis Organic Farm in his native southern Indiana, in a solar-and wind-powered home he designed and built himself. He also

is the director of graduate lay degree programs and spiritual formation for St. Meinrad. Sustainability of creation includes concerns about renewability, the ability to regenerate itself, that it be resilient, able to bounce back from harmful elements and community, that it be a living system which belongs to each one and all of us. Spirituality derives from creation, being God’s gift and our relationship with God and with all creation. Sustainability and spirituality are interrelated, as sustainability needs a spiritual foundation and spirituality needs to be incarnated.

The Rule makes reference to the qualities of sustainability and spirituality when St. Benedict speaks of stability as a commitment, investing in a place, a vocation to location, accepting gifts and limitations, knowing our roots; when he speaks of obedience as listening, putting community needs first, of humility and consulting with others; when he speaks of poverty as not destitution, rather as non-attachment, that ownership is an illusion, that there be joy in sacrifice; of prayer as living in the presence of God, to be balanced with work because spirit and matter belong together; of balance between contemplation and action; of hospitality as welcoming other people, welcoming the world of nature, truly belonging, making a home in the world; and conversion as an ongoing process, taking the long view with humility and hope. God is drawing all of us to depend

on the slow work of God.

Knowing and understanding the interconnectedness, interdependency and beauty of all creation brings us to the challenge of being aware of the many ways we abuse and/or misuse creation and its beauty and life-giving gifts. Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, OSB, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana, emphasized the need to care for, protect and preserve the beauty and the gifts that nature offers us. Involvement in community efforts for recycling, composting, reducing energy usage, supporting practices for safe disposal of harmful waste, challenging practices which harm the environment, pollute the air, the water, or show disrespect for human life at any level are just a few of the ways to be active in saving the planet and life. Such activity may be done on a small scale, or with limited cooperation. Limited or slow progress done with positive action can and often does produce significant results. A small start has potential for significant progress.

The prayer and work which direct our lives are significant and important tools helping each of us to embrace with reverence and hospitality the wholeness and holiness of God’s gifts of creation. Fidelity to prayer and work supports our accountability for their use, development and preservation so that in all things God may be glorified.

SISTERS
OF ST. BENEDICT
FERDINAND, INDIANA

Seek. Pray. Share.

Oblates

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Calling All Cooks

The sisters at Ferdinand will be publishing a new recipe book to sell in the gift shop. You, as a member of the Oblate community, are invited to be a part of this project by sharing one of your delicious recipes.

Please submit your recipe on the newsletter insert to Sister Rosa Lee Koch at the monastery or email her at rlkosb@thedome.org or email Sister Mary Francis Williams at mfwilliams@thedome.org.

Recipes are due August 30.

