

July 2014



Sister Rose Wildeman (above) and Sister Donna Marie Herr shared in the presentation for Oblates on April 26..

RB 1: Different Kinds of Monks

By Sisters Rose Wildeman and Donna Marie Herr

On April 26, 2014, Sister Rose Wildeman and Sister Donna Marie Herr shared insights about Chapter One of the Rule of Benedict: the Different Kinds of Monks. Sister Rose began the presentation with the following introduction: “Chapter 1 of the Rule is an interesting description of four different kinds of monks that had evolved by the time Benedict in the 6th Century. The word “monk” comes from the term “monachos,” which originally meant ‘hermit’ or ‘solitary.’ Even though there is a long interesting history of monks, I will give you a shorter version that will, hopefully, help you understand the development of these different kinds of monks.” The four primary sources for the kinds of monks are Jerome, Cassian, Master, and Benedict.

Historical Development of Monks

Jerome: Jerome, who lived from 331–420, described three kinds of monks in Egypt. First, were the “cenobites” who lived together with order, virtue and obedience. The second kind of monks were the “anchorites” who live alone in the desert. The third group Jerome called “remouth.” They lived in groups of twos or threes and lived independently, according to their own will.

Cassian: John Cassian lived around the same time as Jerome--from 360-435. In his Conference 18 he describes four kinds of monks in Egypt. The first type was the cenobites. They lived together in one community under the authority of an elder. The second type was the anchorites who were first trained in monasteries, achieved perfection in their way of life and who then chose the hidden life of solitude. The third type, however, was to be deplored — the sarabaites. They cut themselves off from the monastic communities and took care of their own needs, living in groups of twos or threes. The fourth kind of monks Cassian calls “False Hermits.” In their own eyes they seemed to look like anchorites. They lived alone in remote cells so that no one would bother them. Their faults grew worse and there was no one to challenge them to improve.

“To be worthy of the task of governing a monastery, the prioress/abbot must always remember what the title signifies and act accordingly.”

—Rule of St. Benedict
Chapter 2,
Qualities of the Prioress/Abbot



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Master: The Rule of the Master is an anonymous 6th Century collection of monastic precepts. At any rate, the Master, like Cassian, describes four kinds of monks. The first group was again called “cenobites.” They lived in monasteries and served under a Rule and an abbot. The second was the “anchorites.” Like the descriptions of Jerome and Cassian, this type, after being trained in the monastery and becoming perfect, went away to live alone. The third type of monks the Master also called “sarabaites.” However, the Master also gave them the descriptive title of “lay” which meant “of the world.” The fourth type of monk he called “gyrovagues.” They had no stability. They were known for wandering from monastery to monastery expecting to be fed and cared for. They were lazy and moved on as soon as they sensed they had worn out their welcome.

Benedict: Benedict lived in the 5th-6th centuries from 480-547. In Chapter 1 of his Rule, he also has four types of monks — cenobites, anchorites, sarabaites and gyrovagues. His descriptions of them are very much the same as Jerome, Cassian and the Master so I’m not going to give a repetitious description here. In describing the cenobites, Benedict gives four elements that are essential. They are 1) living in a monastery (stability), 2) giving service/fighting, 3) living under a Rule and 4) living under an abbot or prioress.

Monks Today

Sister Donna Marie shared about monks today and how we may have some of these characteristics both positive and negative in our own lives. I used to think of sarabaites and gyrovagues as monk-types of long-ago history! These were the inauthentic “monks” — the monks in name only! The good monks were the cenobites (those who lived in community) and the anchorites (those who lived in reflective solitude in order to deepen their relationship with God.) Some time ago I read an article in American Benedictine Review on the Four Kinds of Monks — written by one of St. Meinrad’s monks, Kurt Stasiak, (Sept 1994) in which he says we can’t just categorize two kinds of monks as “bad” and the other two as “good.” Instead we can find obstacles to our “seeking God” today in each of the four kinds of monks. There might well be “sarabaites” and “gyrovague” qualities in our own monastic life — or your lives as Benedictine Oblates. Likewise there could be stumbling blocks for us even in the cenobitic and anchoritic aspects of our lives.

By way of summarizing Fr. Kurt Stasiak’s article, let us then look at possible “stumbling blocks”:

Sarabaites: “where there’s a will...it’s theirs!” Certainly there is a healthy independence, but sometimes we want to stand by ourselves and only for ourselves in opposition to any kind of authority. Benedict points out the danger of living

with “no experience to guide us, no rule to try us as gold is tried in a furnace.” Yet sometimes we prefer having no rule to live by and think we are perfectly capable of living our own lives without a teacher. For example, “I don’t have any need for a spiritual director!” “I know how to run my own life!” or “I won’t learn anything I don’t already know!” Why do I need to read, or pray, or go to those Oblate sessions? An important part of seeking God is “surrendering” our certainty that we are our “own best teachers. The “sarabaitic” tendency in us resists doing this.

Gyrovagues: “Let nothing be preferred to doing nothing — or going on a trip!” The “gyrovague” tendency shows itself in one who is always “on the go” — either outside their monastery or within themselves. A characteristic of the gyrovague as regards the spiritual life is procrastination. Do we sometimes postpone nurturing our spiritual lives until this or that is finished? You have your own busy schedule. Many activities can be signs of procrastination with regard to the spiritual life! “Putting things off” is a gyrovague tendency! Sometimes we forget that our basic monastic vow and your promise as Oblates is to seek God. This requires contemplation and action rather than contemplation after action is finished! But we find stability ultimately within ourselves — in God’s presence — in the NOW!

Cenobites: A caution: May you remember to seek God in community. In community there can develop enduring and intimate friendships. After all, monastics share lots in common: a common identity and mission, shared work, praying together through the years, experiencing fun times together, enduring hardships and sorrows together, receiving and giving mutual support and compassion, having similar values. If deep friendships do develop these can be a treasure which helps us on our monastic life’s journey. But such a friendship is an unexpected treasure; it is not the automatic consequence of living in common. The purpose of the monastic life is to seek God. God is found in community. It is the “workshop” in which we labor. Being alone with God is essential to the life of a cenobite and to your lives as Oblates.

Anchorites: A challenge: “Hermit, come out of yourself.” Solitude is the distinctive feature of the hermit life and something that must also be part of the cenobitic life — and of your life as Oblates. But it is possible to seek solitude for the wrong reason. Living in community has its challenges, its trials, and its frustrations — as does married and family life! We are called to “bear with one another’s weaknesses of body or behavior.” Sometimes in community we might be asked to do something we don’t like. In some cases we disconnect ourselves from the gifts that others have to share. Our “protective isolation” might seem like a “solution” for a while but in the long term it is not “the answer” and it

doesn't help my community members either. Our relationship with our community members and our relationship with God are not two separate things but are two aspects of our life. Respect and fraternal charity, on the other hand, are expected gifts to be experienced in community. They are legitimate expectations each monastic may make upon the other. We are called to be "sisters" to all!

Let us then — as monastics or as Oblates — strive to keep the good features of both the cenobitic and the anchoritic life in balance so that we may be attentive to those around us and yet seek the solitude we must have to deepen our relationship with God. Both community and solitude are "right deeds" of monastic life — and they certainly can be done for the "right reasons."

Sister Rose and Donne Marie ended their presentation by stating that the two most important values in monastic life are solitude and community. They defined these concept with examples and asked several questions for reflection:

- How do you use the quiet moments in your daily life?
- Does your day have a balance of life together with others and life alone?
- What can I do to improve family relationships or

community relationships?

- What part do I play if there is lack of harmony?

This presentation has been shortened because of space. For the full presentation check the website for the Oblates (www.thedome.org/Oblates/presentations).

Scenes from the April 26 meeting



RB 2 and 64: The Abbot or Prioress

By Sister Jeana Visel



On May 18, 2014, Sister Jeana introduced her presentation on the Rule of Benedict Chapter 2 and 64: "The Abbot or Prioress" with the following: "Without a doubt, the abbot is one of the major themes and characters of the Rule. The abbot

gets two chapters dedicated to the topic, and the title occurs 126 times throughout the Rule; almost every other topic relates back to the abbot, and this superior often is posed as a model for other officials of the monastery. From the very first chapter proper, we hear that the definition of a cenobite itself involves belonging to a monastery in obedience to a rule and an abbot (RB 1:2). While many earlier cenobitic rules don't give the superior a very prominent role, in the Rule of Benedict, the abbot plays a key position. The abbot, in short, is "meant to be the very heart of the Benedictine

community." Esther de Waal writes, "St. Benedict finds Christ in people... above all in the abbot who in himself reflects Christ, whose place he takes as the father of his monks." In other words, to be a community, we need a center to hold things together, and while the true center is Christ, as sacramental people, we need someone to represent Christ on earth. Within our communities, the abbot or abbess/prioress is that person. Given the delicacy of our weak and yet beautifully graced human nature, fulfilling such a special function requires a special person indeed. Identifying the skills and characteristics needed for the position is important, as is ensuring that the process by which this person is chosen is fair and holy. Such is the work of RB 2 and 64."

She continues her expansion of these concepts with such topics as:

- Pre-Benedictine Traditions of Community Leadership
- Organization and Placement of Chapters 2 and 64 in RB
- Inner Structure of RB 2
- RB 64 on the Election Process
- A Few Other Historical Developments
- What's it Mean for Us?

In this newsletter we are quoting Sister Jeana's exact text of "What Does It Mean for Us?" and her questions for your personal reflection.

“So what does all of this mean for us today? Whether we are professed sisters or Oblates, the reality is that all of us function under some sort of authority. Whether we explicitly vow our obedience or not, we all are obedient to someone (probably many someones!), and we all serve. Benedict’s chapters on the abbot remind us that Christ is the true source of authority, and that ultimately he is the one we serve. It’s not about us, but it’s about being part of his life, his mission, his love. While we sometimes chafe at the idea of allowing another person to take the place of Christ in our lives, the reality is that we all are part of the Body of Christ, and here on earth, at the universal and most local levels, we need someone to represent Christ as the head of the Body. We need someone to represent the unity we are called to live. We need someone to dictate the common direction and say, “This is the way we’re going to go.” (If you’ve ever seen a chicken run around with its head cut off, it’s not pretty.) It’s hard being the Body of Christ! We are so many members, each with our own talents and gifts and vision of the world, and yet each of us is not the center of the world. We are called to work together, to be at peace with each other, to love each other and to show care for each other, especially for the weakest among us. Who can bring order to this process? Ultimately this is the work of the Holy Spirit, and we believe that the Holy Spirit gives us a leader as our Christ figure, to remind us of who we are, who we are not, and who we are called to be.

The chapters on the abbot also are a reminder that God does not abandon us. As a loving abba, God gives us guides and mentors, people who can shepherd us in the right path. God provides us healers for our spiritual wounds, as well as teachers to give us depth and a broader view. We need these people in our lives, and God gives us leaders to be these ministers of love.

So who are the people in your life who guide your path? Who are the healers? Who are your teachers? Can you see them as God’s gift of love to you? One of Benedict’s main themes is that God works through the people in our lives. Early on he gives us this chapter on the abbot as an initial image of how we can see God in a Christ-like leader. Eventually he broadens that view to show us how to see God in other people of service, in pilgrims and guests, in the sick, and in those who annoy us and try our patience. God is present in all of these people, our brothers and sisters, but if we can’t see Christ in a holy designated leader, we’re going to have a hard time seeing him anywhere else.

As we see in later chapters of the Rule (and as we know from life), we may not always like our leader. We may be asked to do things we don’t want to do. We may think the direction we’re headed is completely wrong. In his wisdom dear Benedict allows for us to voice our concerns. But: at

the end of the day, we are asked to trust that God is working through this person, through these circumstances, and even if it all looks like a grand mess, to trust that God is present and Christ will triumph. Good Friday looked like an utter failure of leadership to most people, and yet it was through that very mess that Jesus came to triumph over evil with the resurrection. We have to trust that God is here.

While Benedict does not urge his monks to compete with each other in good works to gain the office of abbot, as the Master does, Benedict does tell us to compete with each other in good works and obedience (RB 72.6). The point is to cultivate the “good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life” (RB 72.2). Inasmuch as Benedict presents the ideal superior as a model for imitation, he seems to suggest that if we become like this, we also will become living representatives of Christ. Truly, no matter who holds the place of superior, at the end of the day, we are to “prefer nothing whatever to Christ.” He is the one with the power to bind us together in one Body. He is the one with the grace to forgive us. He is the one who ultimately will lead us home, bringing us “all together to everlasting life” (RB 72.11).

Questions for Reflection:

- As you consider Benedict’s teaching on the abbot, what characteristics seem most important?
- Who are the authority figures in your life? How are they Christ figures?
- What does obedience to Christ’s representative mean in your everyday life?
- How is this difficult? How is this life-giving?

If you are interested in reading the full documentation of her presentation, please contact the Oblate Office. You may also check the website for the Oblates (www.thedome.org/Oblates/presentations).

Scenes from the May 18 meeting



Change in Oblate Leadership



Sister Betty (left) poses with Sister Brenda on the colonnade outside of the monastery church.

Recently, Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, prioress, appointed Sister Betty Drewes to be director of Oblates. Sister Betty will join Sister Brenda Engleman who will continue to serve as associate director. Sister Betty definitely

brings with her a multitude of gifts and vast experiences. Throughout her years in this monastery, she has been in a variety of leadership roles. Among her gifts are her

compassion, her upbeat personality and her ability to empower others. Welcome, Sister Betty. We look forward to your leadership. (See the article on page six that Sister Betty has written to tell you a bit about herself.)

We also wish to thank Sister Barbara Ann Offerman, who has generously served ten years on the Oblate Leadership Team. Sister Barbara Ann encouraged Oblates to become more involved in service ministry and in advisory capacities. She strove to develop further spiritual formation opportunities for the Oblates. We will indeed miss her pleasant demeanor, generous ways and funny little stories. At this time, Sister Barbara Ann will be able to give her full attention to being director of community health services. Thanks again, Sister Barbara Ann, for inspiring us to be faith-filled people.



Rite of Election of Oblate Candidates

On September 20, 2014, at 1 p.m., the Rite of Reception of Oblate candidates will be held in St. Gertrude Hall during Midday Prayer. The upcoming candidates will be Carole Dunn from Scottsburg, Indiana, Shirley France from Plain City, Ohio, and Jim Goepfrich from Ferdinand.

As new candidates, Carole, Shirley and Jim will receive The Holy Rule of St. Benedict, St. Benedict's medal, Sister Joan Chittister's book, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*, and a study guide. As candidates they will discover ways to apply St. Benedict's values in daily living. The preparation also includes a personal study with a sister companion and regular attendance at Oblate meetings. At the end of the candidacy, both candidate and companion each will complete an evaluation. Then the candidates will receive "Guidelines for Oblation" and prepare to make an Act of Oblation in October 2015.



You are invited to be in touch with the Sisters of St. Benedict in prayer. Use the following link:

<mms://web-srv.thedome.org/churchcam>

You can also download a liturgy schedule from the Oblate page: thedome.org/oblates

Oblate Birthdays

August

1—Paulette Campana, 5—Olivia Adler, 9—Craig Howerton, 14—Valerie Scott, 18—Dolores Webber, 19—Mary Agnes Willegal, 20—Mary Etta Kiefer, 21—Judy Luebbehusent, 23—Carolyn Kohler, 27—Therese Walker, 29—Paulette Adler Jeter



September

3—Lee Garrity, 6—Barbara Nonte, 8—Christy Dumont, 9—June Goforth and Brenda Padgett, 12—Victor Begle, 15—Gloria Hasler, 17—Ruth Goepfrich, 18—Jane Ann Breen, 25—Shirley Azure, 26—Mary Metz, 30—Gary Adler

October

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

Sisters Scrip Program

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Interested? Contact Sister Rosa Lee Koch!
rlkosb@thedome.org or 812367-1411, ext. 2658

Sister Betty's Life

By Sister Betty Drewes

Peace and joy to all of you! I feel so blessed to have this opportunity through this newsletter to share with you a part of my life experiences. As some of you know, I am the Oblate director for the second time. My first time was from 1991 to 2000. When Marian Heights Academy was closed, I moved to Beech Grove, Indiana, as director of spirituality program and therefore, had to discontinue being director of Oblates because of the distance.

In 2003 Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau, the newly elected prioress, appointed me to be a member of the leadership team as monastery coordinator and director of ongoing formation — positions I held for ten years. After my sabbatical time (July 2013 until Jan. 2014), I became a team member of the Ferdinand Benedictine's Spirituality Ministry and serve as director of hospitality at Kordes Center. I also do spiritual direction, programs, and retreats at the monastery and in outreach locations.

I have professional degrees in education, counseling and spirituality. In light of these degrees, I have taught in several parochial elementary schools in Evansville and also at Marian Heights Academy in Ferdinand. In the Academy I was also director of recruitment/admissions, school counselor and dean of students for over 15 years.

My biological home is Brookville, Indiana. However the closest hospital when I was born was Saint Margaret Mary's Hospital in Batesville, Indiana. My parents were Richard Arnold (dec. 1976) and Helen Mary (Schuck) (dec. 1992) Drewes. I am the youngest of five with three brothers and one sister. My oldest brother (Robert) was a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. This is significant because it is through him I became acquainted with the Ferdinand Benedictines. He was ordained from Saint Meinrad in 1958 and unfortunately died of cancer in 1996. My other siblings are married and have families. I have lots of nieces and nephews, and I love to be with them.

My education includes Saint Michael's elementary school in Brookville, Indiana, secondary school at Academy of Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, Indiana (I had Franciscan Education for 12 years), and college at Saint Benedict's College in Ferdinand. In 1965, after two years at Saint Benedict's I entered the Benedictine community as a postulant. I was a novice in 1966 and was given the name of Sister Mary Arnold but since then I made first profession in 1967, and on August 8, 1971, Perpetual Monastic Profession. After Vatican Council II, I returned to my baptismal name, Sister Betty.

Others have described me as friendly, joyful, fun-loving, hospitable, sensitive, and organized. I love visiting family and friends, being and walking in nature, reading, planning and doing creative prayer and projects, playing cards (poker

and pinochle), movie going, traveling, and listening to music, especially religious, classical, and country. My favorite scripture quote is: "Love others as I love you." (John 15:12) My favorite word from the Holy Rule is "LISTEN" from the Prologue and the best chapter is number 72 on good zeal. The two best places I have traveled are to the Holy Land (my Christian roots) and Italy (my Benedictine roots). One of my dreams is to travel to Germany (my biological roots)! My motto is "Living Each Day Fully With Joy!" For by doing just that "Everyday is a Holy-Day – Holi-day"! "Rejoice...this is the day the Lord has made." (Psalm 118:24)

So it is with much delight I look forward to working closely with Sister Brenda on this second journey with the Oblates. May each of us listen to how God is calling us to be a vibrant community praying together and serving others willingly and selflessly as we live the Rule of Benedict. So my prayer for you is "may God who began this good work in you bring it to completion in Christ Jesus as you grow in the depth, length, height, and width of God's love." (Phil. 1:6 and Eph 3:18) Be assured of my prayers for you and your loved ones.



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. Share the good news with your friends, relatives and members of your church. Talk with those you think would be fine Oblates. Share this Oblate newsletter with them.

By the way, we do not have a formal meeting during July. However, we welcome those who may want to learn more about the Oblates to contact Sister Betty Drewes or Sister Brenda Engleman at any time. Contact information can be found below.

Oblates is published four times a year by the Oblate Leadership Team: Sisters Betty Drewes and Brenda Engleman.

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 Sister Betty: 812-367-1411, ext. 2902
 Sister Brenda: 812-367-1411, ext. 2827 or ext. 2647

Monastery Moments and Oblate Offerings

July 11

The Solemnity of St. Benedict

Feastday services include Morning Prayer at 7 a.m., followed by Mass at 7:30 a.m. Evening Prayer is at 5 p.m. All services are in the monastery church.

July 12–19

Directed Retreat will be held in Kordes Center. Begins on July 12 at 7 p.m. and ends on July 19 at 1 p.m.

August 2

Sacraments: Christ's Sign of Legacy and Love workshop will be held in Kordes Center. Begins at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 11:30 a.m. *Presenter: Sister Jolinda Naas*

August 9

Introduction to Centering Prayer workshop will be held in Kordes Center. Begins at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. *Presenter: TBA*

August 17

Oblate Picnic will be held in St. Gertrude Hall. Begins at noon and ends at 3 p.m.

August 23

Golden Jubilee Sisters Karlene Sensmeier, Jeannine Kavanaugh, Ida Otto and Rebecca Abel will celebrate their 50th Jubilee at 1 p.m. in the monastery church.



Sister Karlene



Sister Jeannine



Sister Ida



Sister Rebecca

August 30

Eucharist: Called, Nourished, and Sent workshop at Kordes Center. Begins at 9:30 a.m. and closes with Mass at 4 p.m. *Presenter: Sister Anita Louise Lowe*

September 5–12

Directed Retreat will be held in Kordes Center. Begins on September 5 at 7 p.m. and ends at 10 a.m. on September 12.

September 12–13

Contemplative Retreat for Young Adults will be held in Kordes Center. Begins on September 12 at 7:30 p.m. and ends with Evening Prayer at 5 p.m. in the monastery church. *Presenters: Sister Rachel Geracitano and Shayne Duvall*

September 20

Introduction to Lectio Divina will be held in Kordes Center from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. *Presenter's training will be from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Presenter: TBA*

Rite of Reception of Oblate candidates in St. Gertrude Hall. Presentation of Chapter 3 of the Holy Rule, "Summoning of the Brothers/Sisters for Counsel." Begins at 1 and ends at 3 p.m. *Presenter: Sister Kathryn Huber*

September 25

Annulment in the Catholic Church: Dispel the Myths, Journey toward Healing workshop at Kordes Center. Begins at 7 p.m. and ends at 9 p.m. *Presenter: Sister Celeste Boda*

October 4

Reflections on the Mysteries of the Rosary will be held in Kordes Center. Begins at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 11:30 a.m. *Presenter: Sister Madonna Helmer*

October 18

Rite of Oblation at Morning Prayer, followed by Mass in the monastery church. Begins at 9:45 a.m.

October 26

Diamond Jubilee Sisters Marge Sasse and Brenda Englert will celebrate their 60th Jubilee. Sisters Helen Maurer, Benita Biever, and Dolorita Libs will celebrate their 75th Jubilee. Mass is at 10:30 a.m. in the monastery church.



Sister Marge



Sister Brenda



Sister Helen



Sister Benita



Sister Dolorita

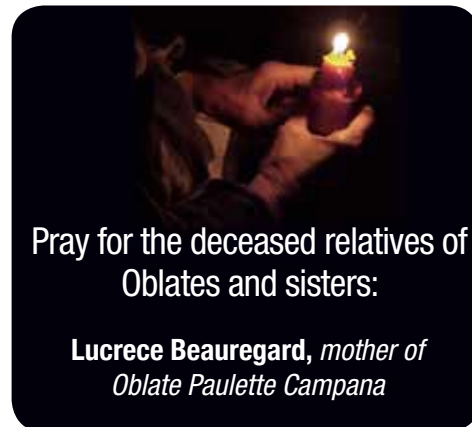
November 1-2

Praying with Icons retreat will be held in Kordes Center. Begins November 1 at 9:30 a.m. and ends November 2 at 4 p.m. *Presenter: Sister Jeana Visel*

November 8

Forgiving What We Cannot Forget workshop will be held in Kordes Center. Begins at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 11:30 a.m. *Presenter: Sister Jane Becker*

NOTE: For all Spirituality Ministry offerings held at Kordes Center, call 812-367-1411, ext. 2915, for more information. See also: thedome.org/programs



Pray for the deceased relatives of
Oblates and sisters:

**Lucrece Beauregard, mother of
Oblate Paulette Campana**

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT FERDINAND, INDIANA

Seek. Pray. Share.

Oblates

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May the Lord Bless Them

On May 18, after Sister Jeana's presentation, Sister Brenda announced that Sister Barbara Ann was resigning as Oblate director and that Sister Betty would become the new Oblate director. Sister Brenda invited those present to join in giving each sister a special blessing. The pictures here reveal the feelings of this touching ceremony.

