

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT FERDINAND, INDIANA

Seek. Pray. Share.

To Oblates, Oblate Candidates,
Inquirers, and Friends,

There can be no doubt that the news — whether in daily papers, announcements on the radio, or TV pictures — has carried messages of heavy rains, strong wind, storms, flooding, and loss of property and equipment. Those events in nature, plus the reports of violence, wars, untold loss of life, and disruption of family life, can make a person question, “Where is God in all of these things?”

Each of us has trouble spots in life. We question ourselves and look for ways to get help. The Scripture passages from the past few Sundays gave examples of such events and provided some insights on where to go and with whom to consult. These happenings seem to be ordinary, regular events in life. Scripture stories offer rather ordinary advice to accept or work through ordinary events in our ordinary lives.

Sister Mary Ann Verkamp shared realistic thoughts on the readings from St. Mark’s Gospel for the third Sunday in June. Her reflection is on page 5 in this newsletter.

Are you a summer time reader? You can find two book reviews by Sister Carlita Koch on page 4. You may want to check them out. Both are available in For Heaven’s Sake, the monastery gift shop, and in the monastery library. Both speak to topics on our Oblate meeting schedule for 2009-2010.

Thanks to those who returned the survey forms from the spring newsletter. A mail-in or a phone call is still welcome. Your comments and commitment to the Oblate way tell us of your desire to seek God and live according to the Benedictine way as your present life situation permits. We look ahead and move forward in our belief that God, St. Benedict, and St. Scholastica will continue to guide us and teach us in this school of the Lord’s service.

The six-day meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors was held at St. Vincent College, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, from June 26 to July 1, 2009. Sister Barbara Ann Offerman and Sister Mary Victor Kercher participated as members of the Oblate Leadership Team, and Oblates David and Jackie Richards participated as representatives of our Oblate community. (St. Vincent Archabbey is the first Benedictine foundation in the United States (1846). This year we celebrate 60 years as an

(Continued on page 2.)

August 2009

“We intend
to establish
a school for
the Lord’s
service.
In drawing
up its
regulations,
we hope
to set down
nothing
harsh,
nothing
burdensome.”

—Rule of Benedict,
Prologue, 45,46



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

Association for Benedictine Oblate Directors, persons who are responsible for the formation of women and men who desire to deepen their relationship with God according to the traditions of St. Benedict.

The topics presented included "Tools of Our Daily Lives as Sacred Vessels of the Altar" by Mother Mary Anne Noll, OSB, prioress of St. Emma's Monastery, Emmitsburg, Pennsylvania; "The Trinitarian Basis of Benedictine Family Life" by Father Justin Matro, OSB, Rector of St. Vincent Seminary; "Two Pillars That Form Us in Benedictine Life: Relationships and Reconciliation" by Sister Cecilia Dwyer, OSB, prioress of St. Benedict Monastery, Bristow, Virginia. Panel discussions helped to deepen our understanding of each topic. More on this in the fall newsletter.

The 2009-2010 Oblate meeting schedule is posted on page 3. Take a minute, cut it out, and post it in a place where it will always remind you of special Oblate Sunday gatherings in the coming months.

On our way to the monastery church, a special bulletin board draws our attention to the many requests for prayers — requests received via Internet, phone calls, or written messages. When we gather for community prayer and personal prayer, these requests are right there with us.

PRAYER... being present to God in praise, in giving thanks, in sorrow, in needs small and great. In my home we were often reminded that more things are done by prayer than this world dreams of. Have you heard it said, "Pray as if everything depends on God; work as if everything depends on you. The two of us together can do wonderful things."

St. Benedict reminds us to pray before we begin any good work, asking God to bring that good work to perfection, to a good end. St. Benedict would have us pray before any event or situation so that grace and strength, which comes from God, may accompany us and bring the event, the situation to the end which is according to His will for us.

Be generous in giving your prayerful support to others in need. In these difficult times, include the other who may be in need of shelter, food, a safe place to live and work, and pray especially for an end to violence and persecution. St. Benedict reminds us to do all things so that God may be glorified.

—Sister Mary Victor Kercher, OSB

Getting To Know the Oblates

Mary Margaret Salas



Being an Oblate continues to give me spiritual help and inspiration in my daily life. Distance from the monastery hinders my participation in Oblate events.

However, receiving

the Oblate newsletter is definitely a highlight in my commitment. (Sister Joella's reflection on the Gospel of St. Mark ignited a spirit of forgiveness and healing in me that I truly need at this time in my spiritual life. Now my body is cured and my soul is healed.)

My husband, Cruz, is also influenced by me being an Oblate. He has set aside the first hour of his day to prayer and meditation. He has his own little prayer corner in his garage and treasures the time he spends there.

Both of us are involved in our parish activities. He is on the Finance Board governing our parish and is a parish usher. I belong to the Ladies Sodality (serving all luncheons for our funerals) and to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. I am a Eucharistic minister and co-director for our parish Religious Education program.

Cruz and I volunteer for our community's Meals-on-Wheels program each Monday. Each Tuesday I visit at our local nursing home, Heritage Health Care.

So you see, we do "pray and work" with the Benedictine spirit in our minds and hearts. Thank you so much for allowing me to continue as a Benedictine Oblate.

It is a wholesome thought to pray for the dead.

Recently deceased:

Brothers of Oblate Jerry Schmit, Urban and Albinus Schmitt. Brother of Oblate Madeline Keplin, James Davis. Brother of Oblate Barbara Nonte, Patrick Nonte.

Life is changed not taken away. May they Rest in Peace

The new season of Oblate happenings begins with a picnic/social event scheduled for **August 30, 2009**. A special announcement of the event and a request for reservations are included with this newsletter. Help us plan well for everyone who wants to participate. Please give the information by mail, by a phone call to the office, or by online registration.

Thank you!

Monastery Moments and Oblate Offerings

July 4

Golden Jubilee Celebration

Sister Mary Austin Blank, Sister Mary Emma Jochum, Sister Mary Cheryl Uebelhor, Sister Rosa Lee Koch, and Sister Mary Oliver Reising were honored by community, their families, and friends in recognition of 50 years of monastic life, fidelity to life in community, and service to the Church. A special liturgy, a banquet, and reception made the day a special event.



From left, Sisters Rosa Lee, Mary Emma, Mary Cheryl, Mary Austin, and Mary Oliver.

July 18

Silver Jubilee

Sister Susan Ann Necas celebrated 25 years of monastic profession. The sisters in community, family members who arrived from Arizona, a festive liturgy, a feast for all, and a special reception made the day one to remember.



July 21-24

Summer community/meeting days for the sisters

July 25

Missioning Day

August 3

Reception of Postulant

Alex Larsen comes from Chapel Hill, South Carolina.

August 6

Feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus and Feast of Our Lady of the Snows

August 10

Feast of St. Lawrence, martyr

August 15

Feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven

August 22

Oblate Picnic reservations due today!

August 30

Oblate Picnic! Food and fun for

Oblates and guests. See you in St. Gertrude Hall.

September 7

Labor Day — God bless workers everywhere and the work of their hands, hearts, and minds.

September 8

The Birthday of Mary, Mother of God.

Oblate Meeting Schedule

August 2009 – May 2010

St. Benedict established “a school of the Lord’s service.” This year the Oblate meetings will focus on some of the subjects that can help us make progress on this way of life. May we, then, not easily swerve from his instructions, but rather run on the path to life. We begin as friends with an event for fun and food. Note the dates, the time, and the topics below.

August 30, 2009

Picnic — St. Gertrude Hall

Lunch 11:45 a.m.
Reservations due August 22.

September 27, 2009

Silence

1 p.m. St. Gertrude Hall; Presenter: Sister Carlita Koch, OSB

October 18, 2009

Oblate Celebration

Sister Kristine Ann Harpenau, prioress
Oblation/Reception of Candidates/
Oblate Renewal

1 p.m. monastery church, reception
following in St. Gertrude Hall

December 6, 2009

Work

1 p.m. St. Gertrude Hall; Presenter: Sister Joella Kidwell, OSB

January 17, 2010

Obedience

1 p.m. St. Gertrude Hall; Presenter: Sister Kathryn Huber, OSB

February 21, 2010

Conversion

1 p.m. St. Gertrude Hall; Presenter: Sister Eileen Reckelhoff, OSB

March 21, 2010

Tools To Cultivate Virtue

1-4 p.m. St. Gertrude Hall; Presenter: Reverend Brendan Moss, OSB

April 18, 2010

Stability

1 p.m. St. Gertrude Hall; Presenter: Sister Vivian Ramos, OSB

May 16, 2010

Stewardship

1 p.m. St. Gertrude Hall; Presenter: Sister Dolores Folz, OSB

Oblate meetings are held on Sundays. You are invited to participate in Morning Prayer, Sunday Mass, and dinner with the sisters. Prayer begins at 10 a.m. followed by Mass and dinner.

Nurturing Silence in a Noisy Heart: How to Find Inner Peace

by Wayne E. Oates

Wayne Oates is professor emeritus of ethics at the University of Louisville School of Medicine. The author of numerous books and articles, he offers in this book practical and spiritual ways to maintain peace and centeredness in our work, our relationships, and our daily routine, through silence.

In her book *Psalms for Praying* Nan C. Merrill praises the beauty of silence in Psalm 132:

“Enter the Silence, into the Heart of Truth; for herein lies the Great Mystery where life is ever unfolding... Listen for the music of the Holy Word in the resounding Silence of the universe... Be not afraid of the Silence, for Wisdom’s Voice is heard there!... Wise are those who learn through silence and stillness within; you will come to know a profound and dazzling Silence... Blessings of the Great Silence be with you.”

The first chapters of Oates’s book elaborate on the search for silence in a noisy world and a noisy heart. The noisy heart has three meanings: “(1) Noise is the load of sound — chosen or unchosen — on your eardrums; (2) Noise ‘in the heart’ is the annoyance level of given noises; and (3) Noise ‘in the heart’ ... means friction that other people cause in your daily life.”

The later chapters continue the theme of silence in a noisy heart but center on more psychological examinations of one’s life patterns.

At the end of the book, there are questions for reflection and discussion, making this book usable for group study. There are five pages of annotated bibliography for further reading.

I found the book practical and an interesting read. The value of silence in a noisy world seems to be a value needed and pursued by those seeking a simpler and more contemplative lifestyle.

Nurturing Silence in a Noisy Heart is available to Oblates in both the Oblate Library and St. Benedict Library.

Review by Sister Carlita Koch, OSB



Minneapolis: Augsburg,
1979, 1996

Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting

by Holly W. Whitcomb

In a culture of fast foods, microwaves, and instant “almost everything,” the idea of waiting might be repugnant. Yet, Holly Whitcomb’s book — *Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting* — explores the hidden treasures of waiting that are integral to the spiritual life. The seven gifts of waiting are patience, loss of control, living in the present, compassion, gratitude, humility, and trust in God.

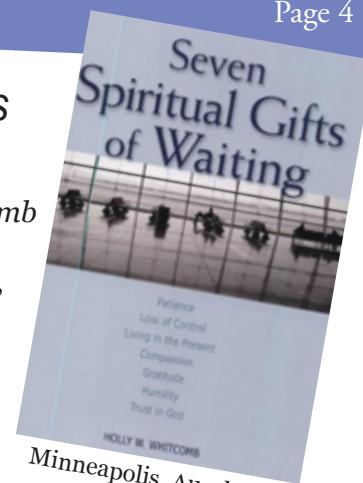
Loss of control might seem to be undesirable. But in this chapter, Whitcomb explains how the release of control can be an empowering spiritual step. Loss of control teaches us to depend on one another, allows us to surrender to grief, and teaches us resilience.

At the end of each chapter, there are questions to ponder. The book has a section on how to use this book with a group. There is a helpful bibliography and a program for a one-day retreat on spiritual waiting.

The author is “a wise and seasoned spiritual guide.” She is a United Church of Christ minister and director of Kettlewood Retreats. She is frequently invited to speak at churches, retreat houses, and conference centers around the country.

Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting is one of my favorite books. I highly recommend it. This book is available to Oblates both in the Oblate library and in St. Benedict Library.

Review by Sister Carlita Koch, OSB



Minneapolis, Augsburg
Books, 2005

Notes about the Oblate Leadership Team

On July 6, Sister Barbara Ann Offerman moved from her ministry in the monastery gift shop to her appointment as director of Community Health Services. She will continue to serve on the Oblate Leadership Team.

Sister Kathy Bilske has been named as the fourth member of the Oblate Leadership Team. On August 17, Sister Kathy will begin her ministry as director of Hildegard Health Center in the monastery.



Sister Barbara
Ann



Sister Kathy

Getting Through a Storm

by Sister Mary Ann Verkamp

Mark 4:35-41; reflection given on June 20, 2009

At the beginning of this Gospel passage, Jesus suggests that they should cross the lake to the “other side.” To the “other side” where people are different in beliefs, customs, race, and speech. Who, what, or where falls into the category of the “other side” in my life? Jesus always encourages us to reach out and break through barriers of race, class, nationality, beliefs, and customs. For some of us, the “other side” may be no farther than the other side of the dinner table.

Many of us have had the experience of either driving or being a passenger in a car when there was a severe storm raging. It can be very frightening, not unlike what the disciples experienced in the boat with Jesus.

Besides natural storms, however, we also experience inner storms. Storms within ourselves, in the community, in the Church, or in the world. It doesn't require much thought to make a list of the multiple storms raging today. Sometimes we speak of storms as “sudden.” Of course, that is not the case. If you watch the weather reports, the meteorologists will trace their cause to high-pressure patterns which can usually be spotted a few days in advance. In other words, storms don't suddenly happen. They are the final result of pressures that have been building up for some time.

Am I aware of patterns in my own life, in the community, in the Church, in our country that could develop into a full-blown storm? What do I do? Take cover and wait for the storm to blow over?

Often times the storms do NOT go around us. They confront us, challenge us. When a storm is whirling about us, it's easy to lose our sense of direction or to panic. What is important for us to remember at this point is that Jesus is WITH US in the storm. This Gospel passage is not only about Jesus' power over the wind and sea, but it is about Jesus' presence DURING the storm. The disciples seemed to equate his sleeping with absence. They still had a long way to go to really believe that this man Jesus in the boat with them is truly the Son of God, all-powerful and all caring. Do I truly believe that the One who knows all hearts is with me?

In the celebration of the Jewish Passover meal, it is not a minor detail that the story of God's deliverance of the Hebrew people is told and retold year after year. And why do they continue this custom? So that they will not forget how God heard their cry, set them free, and WALKED WITH THEM.

For us, journaling might be one way to keep us from forgetting what God has done for us. Months or years later when we reread our journal, we realize that even during the worst storms, we were not alone. God was right there in the midst of it with us. Didn't the prophet tell us “His name is Emmanuel!” (Is. 7:14)

Did you notice in the reading that Jesus ignored the disciples' question: “Teacher, don't you care that we are

perishing?” If we feed the thought that God doesn't really care, we are headed down a dead-end street. How painful it is to wonder if anyone really cares. A relationship slowly dies when we feel that the other doesn't really care what happens to us. When we no longer care about others, our hearts are becoming hardened.

Do you think the disciples expected Jesus to perform a miracle or did they simply want him to pitch in and help dip water out of the boat? Who knows, but what we are told is that they were awe-struck by what actually happened.

Isn't it true, God ALWAYS does more than we expect. When the storm ceases, the disciples articulate one of the central questions of our faith: “Who is this?” Later Jesus would ask the disciples: “Who do you say that I am?”

In the midst of the storm, Jesus said: “Quiet! Be still.” The words in Psalm 46 come to mind: “Be still and know that I am God” — the God who stays with us through every storm — the God who says I will stay with you as you cross to the other side.

In her book, *On Your Mark*, Megan McKenna includes a way of praying this verse of psalm 46 as it was taught to children. I think it is apt for us as well.

I invite you to read reflectively this concluding prayer.

Quiet! Be still and know that I am God.

Quiet! Be still and know that I am.

Quiet! Be still and know.

Quiet! Be still.

Quiet! Be.

Quiet!



June

Oblate Birthdays

6 — Sister Michelle Willett, 7 — Jim Werner, 8 — Frances Berberich, Marlis Mahrer, 12 — Karen Rexing, 15 — Bernadette Heeke, Phyllis Jollie, 20 — Dayna Barlow, Joseph Marion, 21 — Theresa Bauer, 24 — Brenda DeMotte, 30 — Marilyn Becker

July

4 — Elaine Baumgart, 7 — Mary Lou Bassler, Mary Taber, 9 — Wally Vega, Chihoko Wake, 11 — Martha Schmitt, 12 — Zella Kueneman, 20 — Sandy Turner, Ed Brown, 30 — Judith Kissel, Carolyn Werner

August

1 — Paulette Campana, 5 — Olivia Adler, 10 — Evelyn Berube, 14 — Valerie Scott, 19 — Mardee Edelstein, Mary Agnes Willegal, 20 — Mary Etta Kiefer, Lucille Vinson, 23 — Carolyn Kohler, 27 — Theresa Walker

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Oblates

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Monastery Volunteers

Many Oblates were present for the volunteer recognition event held at the monastery in June. On a regular basis you will see an Oblate or two helping out in the monastery gift shop, helping with mailing needs and clerical work in the Mission Advancement and Communications departments, assisting the senior sisters in the Hildegard Health Center, taking a turn for night duty in Community Health Services, giving time to help in the task of cookie making in the monastery bakery, and working on the monastery grounds and at switchboard. At times we have seen them helping to park cars and doing special jobs at various monastery events. Sisters and Oblates working together demonstrate the truth of the adage, “Many hands make the work light,” and “In unity there is strength.”



Above: Oblate Julie Beck is one of the Oblates who serve as receptionist and switchboard operator when the sisters are in community meetings.



Left: Oblate Phyllis Claycamp, Sister Shirley Ann Schulthies, Oblate Barbara Gordon, and Oblate Patti Schroeder visit during the volunteer recognition event in June.