



Saint Meinrad

NEWSLETTER FOR BENEDICTINE OBLATES OF SAINT MEINRAD

Benedictine Oblate

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Exploring the origins of the Liturgy of the Hours

As Benedictine oblates, we are encouraged to say fixed-hour prayers such as the Liturgy of the Hours. This prayer has a long, rich history. From the beginning, two strands have made up the basic form and mystery of Christian spirituality. The Gospel Scriptures and the Eucharist comprise one of these strands. The second strand has been the fixed-hour prayer.

Both strands make up the rope that ties Christian to Christ and Christian to Christian across history, geography and differences in faith. The first strand is the nourishment and sustenance of the Church, and the second strand represents its work. The focus of this article will be on the second strand—the Divine Hours or

Liturgy of the Hours that represents the work of the Church.

The various names associated with this fixed-hour format are *Liturgy of the Hours*, *Divine Office* or *Hours* and the *Breviary*. All the names refer to the official prayer of the Church offered at various times of the day in order to sanctify it.

The Liturgy of the Hours has its origins in the three-part daily prayer of classical Judaism. From the time of the Exodus, faithful Jews offered morning and evening prayers and sacrifice. According to tradition, each of the three prayer sessions can be traced back to a founding patriarch.

For example, Abraham got up early in the morning and went to a place where he stood before the Lord. This was called *Shaharit* (morning prayer). Isaac, a second founding patriarch, went to meditate in the field at eventide, and this was called *Minhab* (afternoon prayer). Jacob, a third founding patriarch, would pray the *Ma'Ariv* (evening prayer). All together, this triad fulfills the promise of Psalm 55:17: "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice." This fixed-prayer ritual also paralleled that of the one prayed morning, evening and at night in the Temple of Jerusalem until it was destroyed in 70 A.D.



Fixed-hour prayer, along with the Eucharist, is the oldest form of Christian spirituality. Centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, a Hebrew psalmist wrote: "Seven times a day do I praise you" (Ps. 119:164). By the first century, the ritual of daily prayer had been set or fixed into something very close to the present-day format.

Moving to a more recent era, Judaism was disseminated throughout the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire depended upon successful commerce and the efficient organization and conduct of the business day. In the cities of the Empire, a bell called the forum bell would ring out the beginning of the business day at six o'clock each morning. This was called *prime*, or the first hour.

The day's progress was noted when the forum bell rang at nine o'clock (*terce* or third hour). The forum bell would ring again at noon signaling the lunch

FROM THE RULE:

"So too, those who have been sent on a journey are not to omit the prescribed hours but to observe them as best they can, not neglecting their measure of service."

Chapter 50, Verse 4

see History, p. 10

Speakers chosen for national oblate directors meeting

The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors will hold its 2011 biennial meeting at Saint Meinrad Archabbey July 1-6, 2011. The theme will be “Embracing Creation with Reverence and Hospitality: Listening to Scripture and Rule Speak.”

The selected speakers are: Sr. Kathryn Huber, OSB, a member of Monastery

Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN; Kyle T. Kramer, director of Lay Degree Programs at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology; and Sr. Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, OSB, of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN.

Both Sr. Sheila Marie and Mr. Kramer have been involved in environment and ecology issues as they correlate to

Catholic spirituality and will direct their talks to those concerns and practices.

Saint Meinrad oblate Michael Reffett will oversee the volunteer force of oblates from Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Monastery Immaculate Conception and St. Walburg Monastery in Villa Hills, KY. Oblate representatives from Saint Meinrad are Gail Chambers from Memphis, TN, and Rev. Bill Wilson from Huntington, WV. About 90 oblate directors and oblate representatives are expected to attend the meeting.

The meeting planning team includes Sr. Antoinette Purcell of Beech Grove, president; Fr. Paschal Morlino of Latrobe, PA, vice president; Fr. Meinrad Brune and oblate Janis Dopp of Saint Meinrad; Sr. Mary Victor Kercher, Sr. Barbara Ann Offerman and oblates Lynn Belli and Mel Schroeder of Ferdinand; Sr. Mary Tewes of Villa Hills; and oblate Larry Fourman of Beech Grove. ♦



Two members of the New York Oblate Chapter made oblation on September 5 during the Labor Day gathering. From left are Paul Muhs, Irene Muhs, Fr. Timothy Sweeney, OSB, new oblates Ray Henderson and Paul Zalonski, Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, Carmen Flores and Elisa Testa.

A POINT TO PONDER FROM THE RULE

“So too, those who have been sent on a journey are not to omit the prescribed hours but to observe them as best they can, not neglecting their measure of service.”

Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 50, Verse 4

In this chapter, St. Benedict points out that monks who are on a journey and cannot return to the oratory on time should pray the Divine Office where they are working. When they are sent on a journey, they should not omit praying the fixed-hour prayers at their appropriate times.

So, too, should oblates include the Liturgy of the Hours while away from home. The *Liturgy of Hours for Benedictine Oblates* of Saint Meinrad Archabbey can make fixed-hour prayer time very feasible. In travel on public conveyances, oblates should not negate the obligation to pray the Hours, just as St. Benedict’s monks were required to do when on a long journey.

Pray for Vocations

Benedictine Oblate is published four times a year by Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

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OBLATE NEWS

New deacon ordained

On August 21, 2010, Richard Zoldak of Crestwood, KY, was ordained a permanent deacon. He is wished many blessings and much joy in this special way of serving God.

Br. Zachary leads day of recollection

The fourth annual Day of Recollection was held September 11 by the Lancaster Chapter at St. Joseph's Parish in Lancaster, PA. Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and Br. Zachary Wilberding, OSB, traveled from Saint Meinrad Archabbey to provide spiritual guidance.

Br. Zachary conducted the conferences on the Liturgy of the Hours. He reminded us that when we pray the psalms, we are praying the prayers of Christ with the mind of Christ. As oblates, our ministry is to pray.

He noted, "While praying the psalms, we become the heart and voice before God for more than ourselves, but also for someone somewhere in the world who needs that psalm. We unite ourselves to them to pray to God in their stead. This is our quiet ministry for those who perhaps don't pray, or may not know how to pray, or that they should pray. We pray for those who may not know the Lord and, in apostolic prayer, we pray the psalms loving them before God, in the love of God."

This thought was particularly insightful on the anniversary of Sept. 11. Pondering the importance of prayer in our lives and reflecting on how much each oblate's daily prayers contribute provided cause for deep reflection. Br. Zachary's message left us with a renewed sense of our mission. At the end of the day, Fr. Meinrad invested Cheryl Tacosky, Mary Ellen O'Donnell and Mary Lou Dorffner as oblate novices.

*Joseph and Trish Lamont, oblates
Gretna, PA*

Finance Committee reports on fiscal year

The Oblate Finance Committee met October 15 to review financial results for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2010. In summary, revenue exceeded operating expenses while net operating income was slightly improved from the prior year.

Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, expressed gratitude that the oblate community's contributions have not decreased in spite of the current economy. Renewal, *Bona Opera* and miscellaneous gifts, together with retreat revenue, are vital for funding oblate activities and expenses. Expenses for the year included office staff, travel, and printing and postage for mailings.

It was noted that two-thirds of the *Liturgy of the Hours* books have been sold and that book sales revenue now exceeds the printing costs. Future *Liturgy of the Hours* book sales will assist with funding other upcoming book costs, including a new *Oblate Companion* book.

The oblate endowment funds benefited from two gifts during the past year. These endowment amounts will not be spent, but will generate earnings to assist the oblate community in the future. Endowments are vital to the present and future strength of the oblate community.

*Mike Reffett, oblate
Evansville, IN*

Oblate Council hears of upcoming projects

The Oblate Council met with Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, on October 16, 2010. Present were Janis Dopp, Dennis Skelton, Jennie Latta, Mike Reffett and Al Kovacs.

For 2010-11, assisting Fr. Meinrad from the monastic community in the work of the oblate community will be Fr. Joseph Cox, Fr. Brendan Moss, and Brothers Adam Edwards, Luke Waugh and Francis Wagner.

Fr. Meinrad unveiled the newly published *Prayers and Rituals for Benedictine Oblates*, which was featured in a previous edition of this newsletter.



Benedictine monks serving the oblate community are, from left, seated: Br. Francis Wagner and Fr. Meinrad Brune; standing: Br. Adam Edwards, Fr. Joseph Cox and Br. Luke Waugh. Fr. Brendan Moss was not available for the photo.

Oblate News from p. 3

It joins the *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates*, published in 2009, and, ultimately, will become part of a three-part set when *Spirituality for Benedictine Oblates* is published in 2011.

In addition to these publications, which will have wider appeal, two other publications are in preparation: the *Oblate Novice Companion* and the second edition of the *Benedictine Oblate Companion*, which are aimed specifically at the novices and oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and will be published in loose-leaf format so additional materials may be added as needed.

Following reports of the ongoing work of the various committees and an excellent financial report, the bulk of the Council's time was spent discussing preparations for the upcoming meeting of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors, scheduled for July 2011.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey is the host of this gathering of oblate directors and delegates from monasteries across North America. Mike Reffett presented a schedule of events and volunteer opportunities for consideration by the Council. Interested oblates will be encouraged to volunteer as the event draws closer.

*Jennie Latta, oblate
Memphis, TN*

Oblates enjoy potluck

The Lancaster, PA, Chapter hosted an evening of fellowship on September 7. The mild weather allowed the 15 oblates and guests, including Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, to enjoy an outdoor dinner on the Lamonts' porch in Mount Gretna, PA. Everyone enjoyed sharing stories of the past summer. It was special to have Jessie and Rene McCurdy visit, as recently they have been unable to attend the meetings. ♦

INVESTITURES & OBLATIONS

May 8, 2010, Oblation—**Mr. Kenneth Joseph Taylor** of Indianapolis, IN.

August 5, 2010, Investiture—**Mrs. Dawn Neymeyer** of Grove City, OH.

August 21, 2010, Investitures—**Mr. Robert Bindley** and **Mrs. Lisa Bindley** of Newburgh, IN.

September 2, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. Darryl Hurst** of Bloomington, IN.

September 3, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. Alan Hughes** of Gaston, IN.

September 5, 2010, Oblations—**Mr. Raymond Alberic Henderson** of Westbury, NY, and **Mr. Paul Meinrad-Joseph Zalonski** of East Haven, CT.

September 6, 2010, Investiture—**Ms. Therese Hollwitz** of Larchmont, NY.

September 10, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. Frank Palmer** of San Antonio, TX.

September 11, 2010, Investitures—**Ms. Mary Lou Dorffner** of Hanover, PA; **Ms. Mary Ellen O'Donnell** of Myerstown, PA; and **Mrs. Cheryl Tacelosky** of Marietta, PA.

September 16, 2010, Investiture—**Ms. Shirley Casebolt** of Tell City, IN.

September 18, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. Stephen Joseph Mattern** of Brimfield, IL.

September 20, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. John H. Murphy** of Worden, IL.

September 23, 2010, Investitures—**Mr. David Jenkins** and **Mrs. Karen Jenkins**, both of Boonville, IN; and **Ms. Lois Palau** of Westerville, OH.

September 24, 2010, Oblation—**Mrs. Barbara Anna Winifred James Leclair** of Fairfield Glade, TN.

September 26, 2010, Investiture—**Mrs. JoAnn Rawert Dugan** of Louisville, KY.

September 26, 2010, Oblations—**Deacon Jerry Francis Etienne** and **Ms. Deborah Patricia Storer** of Hammersville, OH.

October 1, 2010, Oblation—**Mrs. Patricia Rose O'Hagan** of Knoxville, TN.

October 3, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. Tony Reindel** of Delphos, OH.

October 4, 2010, Investitures—**Mr. David Maloney** and **Mrs. Phyllis Maloney** of Port Charlotte, FL.

October 5, 2010, Oblation—**Ms. Sandra St. John of the Cross Tompkins** of Loudon, TN.

October 8, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. Michael Tant** of Franklin, TN.

October 16, 2010, Oblation—**Mr. Morris Francis Brown** of Dawson Springs, KY.

October 17, 2010, Oblation—**Mrs. Carolyn Elizabeth Linton** of Louisville, KY.

October 17, 2010, Transfer of Oblation from Conception Abbey to Saint Meinrad Archabbey—**Mr. Ted St. Thomas Becket McGill** of Louisville, KY.

October 20, 2010, Oblation—**Mr. John Gregory Convery** of Cincinnati, OH.

October 22, 2010, Oblation—**Mrs. Mary Frances Dufour** of Rogers, AR.

October 23, 2010, Oblation—**Mr. Larry Anthony Stout** of Austin, IN.

October 23, 2010, Oblations—**Mr. Michael Giles Rippy** and **Mrs. Margaret Ann Elizabeth Rose Rippy** of Louisville, KY.

October 31, 2010, Investiture—**Rev. Brian Burns** of Lancashire County, England.

November 4, 2010, Oblation—**Mrs. Lynn Catherine Hansen** of Bloomington, IN.

see Oblate News, p. 5

Oblate Life—Personal Evaluation

Each year, oblates are encouraged to carefully examine and evaluate the living of their oblations and seek thoughtful, honest answers to areas that need improvement and poor habits that need elimination.

In a world full of distractions, it is easy to struggle through life, with all of its interruptions and demands, without realizing the neglect of some of the spiritual and joyful aspects of oblation.

A prayerful and honest look at one's oblate life may stimulate more attention to spiritual obligations and pursuits.

Oblate News from p. 4

November 6, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. Erik Hanson** of Evansville, IN.

November 7, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. James Geiss** of Evansville, IN.

November 8, 2010, Investiture—**Mr. Tim Mattingly** of Henderson, KY.

November 13, 2010, Investitures—**Mr. Ronald Felder** and **Mr. Theophan Keith Yox**, both of Indianapolis, IN. ♦

Oblate life—personal evaluation

To see how well you are fulfilling your vocation as an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, reflect on and ask yourself the following questions. These questions are for your personal consideration and evaluation, so that you may see how you are growing as an oblate. The oblate directors are convinced that if you sincerely reflect on these questions, you can only deepen your relationship with God. And in doing so, you are truly growing in Benedictine spirituality as an oblate.

1. What have I done during the past year to continue ongoing formation as an oblate?

2. What do I plan to do during the coming year?

3. How well do I see myself living the oblate promises:
Rate yourself on a scale of 1–5, with 1 as “needing improvement” and 5 as “doing well.”

- Stability of heart? 1 2 3 4 5
- Fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life? 1 2 3 4 5
- Obedience to the will of God? 1 2 3 4 5

4. How well do I see myself fulfilling the oblate duties:

- Praying the Liturgy of the Hours? 1 2 3 4 5
- Reading from the *Rule of St. Benedict*? 1 2 3 4 5
- Daily practice of *lectio divina*? 1 2 3 4 5
- Participating in the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation or in my own faith tradition of church and prayer? 1 2 3 4 5
- Attentiveness to God's presence in my ordinary, daily life? 1 2 3 4 5

5. In what ways can I offer my time, talent and treasure to the services of the Oblate Community of Saint Meinrad Archabbey?

6. If I need to improve in any of these areas, what do I plan to do?

DEATHS

Ms. Dorothy Dunnigan of Columbus, OH, died August 3, 2010.

Mr. Dennis Drake of Cincinnati, OH, died August 14, 2010.

Ms. Adella Meyer of Dale, IN, died August 20, 2010.

Ms. Mary Magdalen Meny of Haubstadt, IN, died August 27, 2010. Mary was invested as an oblate novice in 1979. That same year, she was asked by the oblate director to become the coordinator of the Haubstadt Oblate Chapter. She held this office for 20 years, when she asked to be relieved of the position due to her health. For a while, Mary continued to attend some of the chapter meetings. We are grateful for her work on behalf of the oblates of the Haubstadt Chapter.

Mrs. Catherine Tittmann of Farmingdale, NY, died September 14, 2010.

Ms. Mary Izzo of Greenwich, CT, died October 11, 2010.

Mrs. Adelfa B. Cabanilla of Australia died October 23, 2010.

Ms. Viola Weaver of Jasper, IN, died November 26, 2010.

Mrs. Eleanore Malayter of Crown Point, IN, died December 7, 2010. ♦

Inside the monastery: Monastic meals characterized by rituals

Whenever I give talks or tours to visitors of the monastery, I find that people are most interested in hearing about how the monks go about their daily lives. Many of the co-workers whom I have met are curious as well about what goes on inside the monastery cloister. In light of this, I thought it might be helpful to write a series of articles about monastic life as it is lived here at Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

The traditional and well-known motto of Benedictine monasticism is “*Ora et Labora*” (Prayer and Work). Perhaps it would be more accurate (though certainly less edifying) if we were to change this to “*Ora et Cibus*” (Prayer and Food)—for these are the two poles around which life in a monastery really tends to revolve.

It is not by chance that our monastery’s meal times happen to coincide with our times for liturgical prayer. Nor is it an accident that the

slype—the long hallway connecting the Archabbey Church to the monastery—leads directly into the refectory where we take our meals. The implication is that there is a real connection between the altar from which we receive our spiritual sustenance, the Eucharist, and the common table that provides for our bodily nourishment.

If monastic life, in general, is characterized by its structure and its regimented ritual and routine, this is especially true for monastic meals, particularly (in our case) for dinner, which is the main and most formal meal of the day. Following Vespers each evening, there is a short period of silence in the monastery for the monks to do spiritual reading or personal reflection; it also gives the assigned table waiters an opportunity to prepare for the meal.

Shortly before six o’clock, the monks begin to line up outside the refectory

and, then, following the bell, we make our way to our assigned places. The community sits in order of seniority. The large circular room is ringed by rectangular tables that seat six; each monk has his own napkin ring indicating where his place is. The superiors—the abbot, the prior and the subprior—sit at the “head table” in the rear center of the room from which all the other tables radiate out.

When everyone has reached his place, the meal begins with a prayer led by Father Abbot. The food is served buffet style. The head table goes through the line first, followed by the most senior table, all the way down to the junior monks and novices. If it happens to be the patronal feast day of an individual monk, his table gets to go first that night.

According to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, which governs our monastic life, “The brothers should serve one another...for such service increases reward and fosters love.” Consequently, we all take turns serving as weekly table waiters. Three servers are assigned to each meal. The two most senior are responsible for keeping the food line stocked and clean, while the junior pushes a small service cart around the refectory throughout the meal, offering milk, tea or coffee to those who desire it.

There is no talking during the meal, but there is table reading, again following the *Rule*, which prescribes that, “Reading will always accompany the meals of the brothers,” and “let there be complete silence.” Like waiting tables, we each take turns serving as the weekly table reader, although the *Rule* does qualify that, “The readers will read and sing, not according to rank, but according to their ability to benefit their hearers.”



Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, met with oblates from the Merrillville, IN, Oblate Chapter for their chapter meeting on October 10. From left are Charles McKelvey, Fr. Meinrad, Deacon Steven Zubel, Yvonne Weaver, Jim Spicer, Lani Peterson and Donald Starkey.

The reading includes a short section from the *Rule of St. Benedict*, the daily martyrology (a brief description of the saints whose feasts are honored the following day), the daily necrology (a remembrance of the monks who have gone before us on the anniversary of their death) and, finally, the continuous reading from a book or article of interest.

The topics of these will vary widely. We recently finished a book, appropriately enough, about how the experience of food and shared meals helped one couple to overcome a devastating tragedy in their lives and, before that, we had listened to a biography of Benjamin Franklin.

The meal ends when everybody is finished; it is the junior waiter's responsibility to signal the abbot that this is so. He then rings a small bell, we all stand and, following the closing prayer, we are now free to talk. Common recreation then follows immediately in the calefactory (the monastic living room), although the table waiters remain to clean up, and two other monks will take their turn as dishwashers.

There are exceptions to these customs, of course. Every Wednesday, we take our dessert during recreation. For certain feast days, we have what is called *colloquium*—literally, “conversation”—and we may talk during the meal. For really big feast days, Christmas, Easter and a few others, in addition to *colloquium*, we also have open seating and the tables are dressed with tablecloths and candles. And for special occasions, such as ordinations, vows, jubilees and so forth, we will eat with guests in the Newman Dining Room.

It seems fitting to me that the two most ritualized aspects of our monastic life are our liturgical prayer in the church and our common meals

in the refectory. Ritual is about doing something intentionally (as opposed to leaving it to chance or spontaneity), and so we tend to ritualize or solemnize those things in our lives that are most important to us.

Common meals, like liturgical prayer, are important to us, as monks, because they remind us of our dependence on God and afford us the opportunity to give Him thanks for the gifts that sustain our life. Sharing a meal with others is also a bonding experience, and so our common table is an important part of forming us into a healthy monastic community. All these rituals and customs, small and unimportant as they may seem, help to make meal times one of my favorite parts of being a monk.

*Br. Matthew Mattingly, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were Ruth Engs, Steven Hulst, Jim Hulst, Susan Kalmar, Novice Michael Luckett, OSB, Michael Reffett, Tom and Joan Rillo, Francis Shivone, Dennis Skelton, Dorothy Soudakoff, George Thompson and Novice Timothy Wymore, OSB. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 20-22, 2011—For the oblate retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB, will be presenting, “Encountering God through the Liturgy of the Hours.”

April 16, 2011—A day of recollection in Louisville, KY, will feature Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB, presenting on the topic of St. Benedict and the dynamics of his life and prayer on our life.

May 21, 2011—For the Ohio day of recollection in Cincinnati, Br. Zachary Wilberding, OSB, will present the conferences on the theme of “The Liturgy of the Hours.”

June 13-16, 2011—For the Oblate Study Days at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, the theme will be “A Closer Look at the Holy *Rule*” with Fr. Harry Hagan, OSB, presenting.

July 1-6, 2011—The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors will hold its biennial meeting at Saint Meinrad Archabbey with about 90 oblate directors attending. The theme will be “Embracing Creation with Reverence and Hospitality: Listening to Scripture and *Rule* Speak.” More details can be found elsewhere in the newsletter.

July 11, 2011—A day of recollection for oblates at Saint Meinrad will feature Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB, as the presenter of “Serving under an Abbot and a *Rule*,” a servant-leadership reading of the *Rule of St. Benedict*.

September 2-5, 2011—The New York oblates will celebrate their annual Labor Day weekend retreat with Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, speaking on the *Rule of St. Benedict*.

September 10, 2011—The Lancaster, PA, day of recollection in the Amish country will have Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, presenting conferences on the *Rule of St. Benedict*.

September 14-24, 2011—Br. Maurus Zoeller, OSB, is hosting a “Benedictine Pilgrimage to Athens and the Greek Isles,” which includes a seven-day cruise to the Greek Isles and Turkey. The total cost, including round-trip air from New York, is \$2,449 per person. Contact him at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 100 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577, phone (812) 357-6674, or e-mail mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu for information. ♦

CHECK THE WEBSITE

Past issues of the Benedictine Oblate newsletter are available at www.saintmeinrad.edu. ♦

Sharing the wealth— About our chapters

Dayton, OH, Chapter

Fr. Chris Rohmiller (+2006), the founder of the Dayton, OH, Chapter, had been an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey since 1983. While assigned to Ascension Parish in Kettering, OH, he often took parishioners on retreats to the monastery. There he introduced them to Fr. Gerard Ellspermann, OSB, (+2000) who was the oblate director at the time.

Ten parishioners from his parish made the initial decision to become oblates. Eleven more joined this group after Fr. Chris put an announcement in local newspapers and parish bulletins. At the first meeting on April 23, 1987, Fr. Gerard invested the new oblate novices during Mass. Unfortunately, this was the only meeting of that original group.

In August 1996, Fr. Chris reorganized the chapter, inviting anyone who had an affiliation with Saint Meinrad to attend a meeting and learn more about the oblate program. The format, which is still followed today, included a conference on the *Rule of St. Benedict*, group *lectio divina* (using a format he developed), sung Vespers (with accompaniment) and light refreshments.

What began as a chapter of just the original members quickly grew as others from surrounding parishes became interested in learning about the oblate movement. The chapter leaders were Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, who is now the oblate director, Fr. Chris and Jerry Kassman, a member of the 1987 group.

Meetings are held on the fourth Saturday of February, April, September and November. In 1999, the chapter added a January meeting to discuss

favorite spiritual books and create a book list that currently includes more than 150 titles. In May 2002, an all-Ohio Day of Recollection was added to the yearly schedule. The day provides opportunities for listening to presentations on the *Rule* by one of the monks, praying and socializing with the other chapters. The day closes with Mass and Vespers.

The tradition of celebrating the feast of St. Benedict with the Ohio chapters was introduced in 1998. The day included Mass and a picnic. The event was very successful, but was discontinued after a few years when the original site was no longer available. In 1999, Bill Duffy was chosen coordinator. He resigned in 2000 for health reasons and Pat O'Malley became, and still is, the chapter coordinator. The next unexpected change occurred in 2005 when Fr. Chris resigned his coordinator position due to an increase in his commitments at the university. Sadly, he passed away the following year. His enthusiasm and love of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and the oblates have been greatly missed. He was a special person and for this reason the chapter dedicated a brick in the monastery's Holly Tree Courtyard in his memory.

Since our beginnings, 60 oblates have been added to our roster, though not all are currently active. In 2006, the history of our chapter was written to help us all better understand and appreciate our roots and how we are living out our Benedictine vocation.

Our chapter is unique in that we generally meet at a local restaurant for lunch and conversation with the visiting monk who will be speaking at the afternoon meeting. Those attending these luncheons appreciate the opportunity to visit informally with him and discuss numerous topics. Since the summer of 2008, we have been meeting for Mass and breakfast on the fourth Saturday of

months that do not have a regularly scheduled chapter meeting.

This past May at the Ohio Day of Recollection (which rotates among the chapters each year), we started having a book exchange. Oblates placed books that they wanted to share on a table and exchanged them for ones they were interested in reading. Books not taken by the end of the day were donated to Saint Meinrad Archabbey's Oblate Library.

In the near future, we plan to have a chapter website that will include our chapter events, history, mission statement, minutes, and links to important sites related to the monastery and the life of a Benedictine Oblate of Saint Meinrad.

As oblates, we work to make a difference in how we live and respond to the needs of our family, our parish, our community and our world. The support and guidance that we receive both from St. Benedict and the monks at Saint Meinrad Archabbey give us courage and strength in our struggle to "prefer nothing to Christ."

*Marianne Neal, oblate
Fairborn, OH*



Kimberly Lyle-Ippolito of Anderson, IN, left, made her oblation at Saint Meinrad Archabbey on November 20. Oblate Linda Swindell of Indianapolis, IN, attended the ceremony. Both are professors at Anderson University.

The paradox of time: Ordered yet intangible, predictable yet elusive

Time can be viewed as somewhat of a paradox. It has been referred to as the “fourth dimension.” There is a dimensional nature about it, yet there is an elusiveness in its character as well. Even though we have boundaries, such as minutes, hours, days, etc., to mark the passage of time, we cannot grasp or touch it.

We use time to order our days and activities, yet we can't mold it to fit the tasks, events or activities that we have planned. We can estimate the amount of time we need for certain occurrences, yet we are unable to “catch” the moments and set the pace of them to coordinate with our actions.

We can remember what has been past, but we cannot revisit it; we can live what is now occurring, but we can't hang on to it; we can dream or think about what will come, but we can't guarantee or shape it. We experience time in our temporal bodies in a limited manner. It occurred before our presence in the world, and it will continue to occur when we depart this world. We are finite entities tied to an infinite dimension.

Time has its own form and movement, and nothing we do can alter that. Time passes, whether we are fully immersed in the now or whether we are counting the moments waiting for a certain occurrence. Time can lessen or blunt pains or heartaches by giving space between the occurrence and the present, but it can also speed toward an event relentlessly and arrive at the moment much too quickly.

Time is a continuum that needs no input from anyone—it simply occurs. Yet this “simple occurrence” can be vital and critical in certain events, such as “If I had left home 3 minutes later, I would not have run into an old friend” or “If I had left home earlier, I

would not have been caught up in that terrible traffic jam.”

Time affects everything, and yet it is beyond our grasp and incapable of being shaped by us. It is a fascinating, incomprehensible and utterly independent event.

And yet, that makes it comforting, too, as something put in place that is so consistent with what it is. There is an orderliness and steadiness to it. The orderliness and structures make sense, even as I wish I had more of it, or that it would move more quickly, or more slowly, or that I could have a moment back so that I could act differently.

The presence of time, its consistent passage and the way it moves beyond our realm of control are indications and signs of a higher reality and power. There is some One, some Presence, who puts things into place and orders them as they should be. As I trust the movement, dependability and inexorability of time, so, too, can I trust the One who put it into place. The One who ordered time to be and made it so, also holds me in His care.

Questions for Reflection

Does the presence of time-keeping devices help or hinder our daily activities? Do we become too caught up in “clock-watching” so that we are less able to appreciate and fully experience the “now-ness” of where we are?

Have the precision and accuracy of our time-keeping devices placed an artificial burden of awareness of time on us? Do we try to micromanage our lives down to the last seconds?

Is it possible to be aware of time without being concerned with its passage? Could time be thought of as a “companion” rather than something of which we have too little or too much?

Do we trust that the time we are given on earth is sufficient? Are we able to give ourselves over to God and rest in the assurance that our days are numbered rightly?

*Cynthia A. Boener, oblate
Argos, IN*



Members of the Bloomington, IN, Oblate Chapter were among those who attended the December Oblate Retreat at Saint Meinrad. From left are Greg Kuzmits, Candi Bailey, Jean Lindsey, Casey Winningham, Anne Wagner, Joan Rillo, Steve Bailey, Marge Brumleve, Diane Rivera and Tom Rillo.

History from p. 1

break (*sext* or the sixth hour). The Roman citizens were called back to work at three o'clock (*none* or ninth hour).

The businesses, including the market, closed for the day when the forum bell rang at six o'clock in the afternoon (*vespers* or evening hours). Every part of the Roman citizen's life was governed by the ringing of the forum bells, including Jewish and Christian prayer.

From its earliest days, the Christian community incorporated the psalms in their prayers (Acts 2:23-30). The Psalter has remained unchanged as the living core of the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours ever since. As Christianity grew and spread, so did the practice of fixed prayers as formalized daily prayer.

By about 60 A.D., the writer of the first recognized manual of Christian prayer practice, the *Didache*, was

advocating the inclusion of the Lord's Prayer at least three times a day. This quickly spread to all recognized fixed prayers, such as the Liturgy of the Hours.

We know from the writings of the fathers of the Church, such as Clement (c. 150-215 A.D.), Tertullian (c. 160-225 A.D.) and Origen (c. 185-254 A.D.), that the observance of prayer in the morning and at night, as well as the "little hours" of terce, sext and none (or in modern definition, 9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m.), were the standard times of prayer for the Christian of that period.

These prayers were often recited or observed alone, or they could be said by family units or small groups. These prayers never stood alone as individual ones, but included the time-honored and time-polished prayers and recitations of the faithful. At that time, every Christian was expected to say the prayers as they were and not attempt any creative departure.



By the third century, the Desert Fathers, the earliest monastics of the Church, began to pursue the desire of living as hermit monks or in small monastic communities and to honor St. Paul's admonition to "pray without ceasing" (1 Th. 5:17). To implement this, the monks developed a system of passing an Office without a break to another group of monks waiting to pray the next Office. It was like passing the baton during a relay race.

The purpose of this system was to implement a continuous chain of prayer to grow closer to God. This concept has survived into our own time and is used by monastics and laity alike. Many oblates have expressed that when they pray the Liturgy of the Hours, they are connecting with others who also are saying the same prayer. Somewhere others are praying the Liturgy of the Hours, just as they have previously done. Some oblates feel a kinship with the Desert Fathers who prayed a similar way centuries ago.

Once the idea of unbroken and uninterrupted prayer was adopted by the monastic world, the prayers became longer. Despite its lengthiness and complexity, the fixed-prayer concept of the monks became the norm for the religious in both the Eastern and Western branches of the Church. By the fourth century, the characteristics of the Liturgy of the Hours, as we pray them today, were firmly entrenched.

OBLATES: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

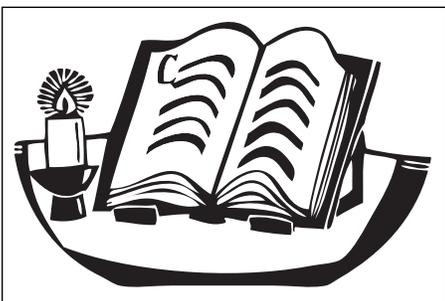


Oblate Dr. James A. Merk
Lancaster, OH

"The greatest blessing of the oblate program is having more time with the Lord. Praying the morning and evening Liturgy of the Hours with my wife, Rita, brings us closer together in the Lord. Oblation is a great way to bring Christ into the world through the oblate message."

We would be able to recognize the Liturgy of the Hours as it was prayed during the Middle Ages. For non-monastic clergy and the laity, the prayers were shortened and confined to something not unlike what we use today. In some churches, the pastor was a monk priest and, consequently, there was a blend of the longer prayers with the shorter, economical practice of the laity.

St. Benedict put into order the fixed prayers of the Divine Office, and it became the model for all other ordering of the divine hours. St. Benedict modeled his version after the Offices as they were observed in the basilicas of Rome. It was St. Benedict who first stated, “*Orare est laborare, laborare est orare,*” meaning “To pray is to work, to work is to pray.”



“Office” comes from the Latin word *opus*, or work. For St. Benedict, the fixed-hour prayer was called *Opus Dei*, or “the Work of God.” The Liturgy of the Hours is the only fixed-prayer format that is consistently referred to as “the work of God.”

Other prayer forms have changed during the passing centuries. The words and order of the Liturgy of the Hours have changed, but its purpose and characterization have remained constant. To this day, the format remains an act of offering prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God.

By the 11th century, praying the Liturgy of the Hours required a number of books. What was needed was a Psalter from which to sing the

psalms appointed for that day and hour, a Lectionary from which to ascertain the appointed Scripture reading, a sacred text from which to read the Scripture, a hymnal for singing, etc.

As the growth of small communities took the laity away from the great cathedral centers, where such books were available, it also created a need for unifying the pieces into a more manageable and portable form. The result was the creation of a master list in Latin, *breviarium*, showing how the fixed-prayers were to be observed and what texts were to be used.

From this listing of the *breviarium*, it was a short jump into incorporating it into a book. Papal officials in the 12th century did this, and the modern breviary was born. Breviaries, or manuals of prayer for keeping the daily Offices, have varied over the centuries from order to order, from church to church, from monastery to monastery, all within the realm of Christianity.

In 1971, Pope Paul VI modified the Offices to an ordering very similar to the one used by the Episcopal Church in the United States. Four hundred years ago, the Episcopal Church had restored the Noon Office to its rightful place in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Even though the “little hours” of terce, sext and none were collapsed into one noontime observance, it became the core of the Offices and of daily Christian practice.

Four Offices were now suggested to the laity and required of monastics, clergy and those under orders. These Offices were a Morning Office still called by its Latin name of *Lauds*; a Noon Office that allows the individual Christian to choose the hour of his or her workday (terce, sext or none) in which to pray the Office; the Evening Office of Vespers; and

before retiring, the simple office of Compline. Under Paul VI’s ruling, there was also an obligatory Office of Readings that could be observed at any time that was most convenient during the day.

The Benedictine Oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey now have a Liturgy of the Hours volume that is smaller and easier to use. However, the new *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates* is reduced in potency.

Using the fixed-prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours puts the individual praying in concert with all of those who are also praying the Divine Office, in other places and time zones. The most significant contribution of praying the Liturgy of the Hours is that it provides oblates with a rhythmic cadence to prayer life. However busy and chaotic an oblate’s secular life may be, the Liturgy of the Hours can provide time for quiet and contemplation.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate
Bloomington, IN*



Monastery Sacristan Br. Kim Malloy, OSB, displays a recent gift to Saint Meinrad in honor of deceased oblate Gerald T. Campbell, including four gold patens engraved in his memory and a gold thurible and incense holder. The donated items, purchased by Gerald’s daughters, Christin Gaston and Kimberly Plessinger, and other family members, were valued at more than \$5,000.



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Reading Room

In a challenging, but eminently readable book, Norvene Vest looks at Benedictine spirituality through the lens of relationships. Using the *Rule of St. Benedict* and Scripture, along with a realistic look at today's world and the difficulties of acting within a framework of faith in contemporary culture, Vest "explores the meaning and fullness of human life, as understood in the gospel and lived in ongoing relationship to the God of Christ."

Her book, *Desiring Life: Benedict on Wisdom and the Good Life* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), is divided into three sections: wisdom, virtue and ethics. Wisdom, she says, comes through experience, through a concrete understanding of the world around us and our relationship to it.

We must learn to "think big," to overcome the smallness of the human condition. It can happen if we do as Benedict instructs and listen with the ear of the heart, learning to be obedient and "listening" for the life that is truly ours.

As we listen to God's call, we also begin to look closely at our interpretation of the "good life" or "abundant

life." It may be difficult in today's results-oriented culture to cooperate with God and train our thoughts to achieve wholeness through a deep and fulfilling intimacy with God. Yet, Vest argues, if we face the reality of who we are, we can overcome our human instincts of lust, anger, and intellect and, through virtue, gain freedom for ongoing praise and adoration of God.

Finally, Vest argues that, through wisdom and virtue, we can live an ethical life, a life based upon moral values, acting in accordance with what we believe. We are also called to act justly to others, turning away from self-reliance and the sin of self-sufficiency to an understanding that everything belongs to God. Thus, our ethical standards must be based in sharing, listening, blessing and honoring all.

The choices are difficult and challenging. They are counter-cultural. They can result in despair if we bow to cultural norms and try to "go it alone." And yet, if we truly "desire life," as Vest describes it, we will not be alone. We will have each other and we will have God, and it will be, as she says, enough.

*Catherine Byers, oblate
Nineveh, IN*