

Honoring Janis Dopp



Janis Dopp gives the sign of peace during Mass for the Midwest Regional Oblate Conference in the Guest House Chapel on October 4, 2016.

During the last two World Congresses of Benedictine Oblates in Rome, there is one very special person who stood out among many—Janis Dopp. Her commitment to being an oblate was something deep and profound within her. You would only have to speak with her once, and her dedication shone like a bright and splendid star. May she rest in God’s loving embrace.

Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, OSB

To share a dream is to share love, hope, and a vision for the future. Janis was a woman of vision. Her dream of a new set of materials for oblate formation caught fire around the world. During the 2017 World Congress, Janis stood out for her advocacy of social justice, her sense of fairness, and her initiative and determination. Her knowledge and experience are irreplaceable and shaped the last two Congresses. Our friendship was sparked by shared work, planning, and girl talk by email and in person. She was a valiant and vibrant woman. I will do my best to carry on her dream.

*Jean Ritzke Rutherford
Regensburg, Germany*

When 77% of responding participants rate the International Benedictine Oblate Congress as at least an 8 (out of 10), you know Janis Dopp was a major player. Her vibrancy and passion for our charism brought life to the oblate formation workshops. She pointed out the way.

*Shirley France and Stephanie Smith,
Oblates of Monastery Immaculate Conception
Ferdinand, IN*



A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

Listen carefully, my child, to the instructions of your master, and incline the ear of your heart. ... “Today, if you hear God’s voice, harden not your hearts” (Ps 94[95]:8). And again: “Those who have ears to hear, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7). And what does God say? “Come, children, listen to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord” (Ps 33[34]:12).

(Prologue 1, 10-12)

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Silence Can Be Very Sound



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB

Obsculta. Listen. This is how Benedict famously begins his *Rule* for monks. “Listen, carefully, my sons and daughters, to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.”

We come across the value of listening—and of its attendant companion *silence*—throughout the *Rule*. In his sixth chapter, *Restraint of Speech*, Benedict refers to Psalm 39 to remind his monks that “there are **times when good works are to be left unsaid**, out of esteem for silence” (v. 2; emphasis mine). In a subsequent verse, Benedict clarifies why this is so, as he sets down an important principle: “Speaking and teaching are the master’s task; the disciple is to be silent and listen” (v. 6).

Another way to consider this is to realize that when we are talking, we are paying attention primarily to ourselves. When we are listening, however, our focus is—or should be—on someone or something else. This is why the importance of *listening*—of being attentive to another—is found often in the *Rule*.

Monks are to “listen readily to holy reading” (4:55). They are to “prefer moderation in speech” (4:52). “Monks should diligently cultivate

silence at all times, but especially at night” (42:1). Benedict allows the night silence to be broken only when hospitality to guests requires it or the abbot must issue an order, but he notes, “even this is to be done with the utmost seriousness and proper restraint” (42:11).

Monks are to listen to the abbot. Abbots are to listen to his deans and to his confreres when he calls them for counsel. And as noted above, all are to listen to holy reading (4:55) and the divine voice. Benedict quotes from Psalm 95: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Prologue: 10).

The power of speech and the power of silence. It’s often a struggle to achieve the proper balance. Benedict never refers to this verse from Sirach, but he would certainly applaud the wisdom it offers: “If you blow on a spark, it will glow; if you spit on it, it will be put out; yet both come out of your mouth” (28:12).

Blowing or spitting? It’s always our choice.

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey



Janis Dopp reads during the blessing of the renovated monastery infirmary on February 2, 2017.



Janis' Journey: From the Desk of the Director's Husband

On July 2, 2021, after ten days of tests and blood samples at Cleveland Clinic, Janis, my dear wife of 53 years, was told that not only did she have cancer, multiple myeloma, but also had heart failure. On top of that, Jan had amyloidosis of the heart. The doctors told her she was a unicorn. They had never seen a case like hers.

Facing an uncertain future, the doctors asked Jan what her goals were. Her number one goal was to see her only grandchild come into the world. Next on her list was to get back to Saint Meinrad and fulfill her duties as the oblate director. And number three was to go to Rome and participate in the World Congress of Benedictine Oblates, which at that point was two years away.

If nothing else, Jan was a fighter. Not only did she see her beloved granddaughter, Mona Faye, born, but she experienced the first two years of her life. Janis came back to the Oblate Office on the Hill in the spring of 2022. Helping to put together a book, "Laudato Si' Reflections," on the repair of the Earth. She had it distributed to all the oblates of Saint Meinrad and gave out copies at the World Congress in Rome.

Janis initiated two Oblate Study Days, one on our climate, and one on our divided Church and country. Along with the international team including Shirley France, Stephanie Smith, and Fr. Jeremy King, OSB, Janis worked tirelessly to organize the best-ever World Congress of Benedictine Oblates.

The Congress concluded with an audience with Pope Francis. As we approached the Vatican for the audience with Pope Francis, I rolled Janis in her wheelchair across the cobblestone walkways. I asked if she

was uncomfortable. She replied, "I'd crawl across these stones if I had to." After our audience with the Pope, we had a moment alone. I asked her if as a little girl in Catholic school in Gary, IN, would she have ever dreamed that one day she would have an audience with the Pope. She looked up at me and cried.

Janis loved food, especially Greek food (she was 50% Greek). On the afternoon of her passing, we were in Indianapolis for her chemo treatment. On our way home after the treatment, Jan asked if we could stop at her favorite Greek restaurant. When we arrived, we were the only customers. Jan ordered avgolemono (lemon soup), she devoured every drop. When the server came by, she pointed to the empty bowl. The server said, "Boy, you did a number on that soup." "Oh yes," Jan replied. "This soup transports me back to my childhood." That bowl of avgolemono was her last meal.

*Jack Dopp
Bloomington, IN*

Listen with Love



Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

Almost every day, we engage in conversations with others. It isn't easy to carry on a balanced conversation when just one person does all the talking. If

that were the case, then the conversation would be one-sided. We have all experienced this, either as the

one who has dominated a conversation, or as one who has been dominated. Many times we talk about what we want to talk about, and we are not so willing to listen to people. Actually, listening can be even more important than speaking.

The prologue of the *Rule of Saint Benedict* begins with, "Listen carefully to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart." The ear of your heart. What

an intriguing image—that our hearts are to listen! We are not just to listen, but are to listen with love.

It takes our time to listen to others and we are not always willing to take the time to listen. If we love others, then we are more willing to listen to them, and carefully consider their words and ideas. It is not easy to be aware of people's concerns or needs unless we are good listeners.

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The true seat of listening is the heart. Saint Augustine encouraged listening with the heart (*corde audire*), to receive words not outwardly through the ears, but spiritually in our hearts. He said, “Do not have your heart in your ears, but your ears in your heart.” Saint Francis of Assisi encouraged his brothers to “incline the ear of the heart.”

Pope Francis has emphasized encounter, dialog, and listening. We are to be working toward a culture of

encounter with everyone, especially with people on the edges of society, because each of us can learn something from others. He said that we should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, and building bridges.

The Holy Father wrote an Encyclical Letter titled, “*Fratelli Tutti*,” meaning, “Brothers and Sisters All.” These are the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, and Pope Francis has proposed this as a program for renewal. He wants to

challenge the way we view the world and invite all people to a conversion of attitudes and actions. Pope Francis said, “Listening is the first indispensable ingredient of dialogue and good communication.” Today there is plenty of talk but not a lot of listening. Let us pray we may attempt to reverse this tendency and try to use our ears/hearts more than our tongues.

*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB
Oblate Chaplain*

“First LISTEN, then remain SILENT before you ENLIST”

*Ron Hooker, oblate
Columbus OH*

Notes for Novices: Awareness



*Br. Gregory Morris,
OSB*

“As soon as anyone knocks or a poor person calls out, the porter answers, ‘Thanks be to God’ or ‘Your blessing, please’ and, with all the gentleness of the fear of God,

promptly answers with the warmth of love. Let a younger member be provided if the porter needs help” (RB 66:3-4).

For many, the winter season is a time of glad tidings, fellowship, and comfort. Moments of celebration and family gathering punctured by the hustle and bustle of online shopping, impatiently awaiting the Amazon delivery before the holiday rush (Yes,

even monks get anxious and excited about receiving gifts, care packages, and boxes of sweets for Christmas and New Year’s).

Still, the holidays are often a time of anguish and sorrow for many, especially those without shelter, family, or a place of peace and joy that welcomes them as beloved children of God. Sometimes, those spaces of joy are places of grief, anxiety, hardship, and depression. In short, what is usually a time of peace and celebration is a struggle against intense moments of isolation and loneliness.

As a junior monk, I have grown to see the monastic community as a field hospital for those wounded through the various vastitudes of life. Whether as a monk, oblate, or guest, this way

of life beckons many to seek these places of peace, hospitality, and fellowship. For many, it has become a place where our despair has turned to joy, our sorrows into moments of happiness, and our tears into moments of laughter. It is a place of peace where we seek God, who, through Christ, has given our world of endless violence and strife a peace and joy that surpasses all understanding.

With awareness, patience, and grace from the Holy Spirit, let us arise and quickly respond to those who happen upon our doorstep this winter season. To welcome a guest is to receive Christ, the true Prince of Peace. Come, let us be attentive!

*Br. Gregory Morris, OSB
Oblate Novice Mentor*

Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord

Listening and Awareness



John Brooks

A few years ago, I took on a new role while volunteering at our local hospital. I became a volunteer hospital chaplain.

Patients request a chaplain to visit and pray with them. You listen to the patient and gain an awareness of their needs. Do they need an understanding listener, a logical listener, a hand to hold, a light in the darkness, or a beacon of hope in a time of despair?

About a month ago, I was volunteering in the hospital, and I received a call that a family in the ER had requested a chaplain for a dying family member. It was a first for me. Walking into the room, I found several family members huddled together beside the bed of their loved one. The staff had told me before I went in that death was imminent.

Overwhelmed by the situation unfolding before me, I introduced myself and became a member of the group surrounding the bed. All I knew was the patient's name and that he was dying. The family introduced themselves. I turned to a daughter standing beside me and asked her to tell me a funny memory of her dad. She did. I asked if she had another. She did. Someone else spoke up with another memory, then another.

There were some laughs, some giggles, and lots of smiles. Then I asked, tell me what kind of father he was. She did. Some others followed with comments. I asked about his hobbies and where he worked. As we were talking, the staff came in to check on him. They said it was time to say goodbye. During our visiting, he had quietly passed away. Family who loved him surrounded him, remembering the wonderful man he was. We prayed together. They thanked me for all I had done. Hugs all around.

A short time later, I saw the obituary in the local paper, then I received a call from the volunteer office with a message from the daughter of the ER patient. When I called, she said the family wanted me to come to the showing at the funeral home and to the funeral. At the showing, they introduced me to family and friends as the chaplain at the hospital that helped them through some very tough times.

I sat with family members at the funeral dinner, hearing many of the stories I had heard in the ER. Every story began with "I remember when..." It made us realize that as long as we hold their memories, the deceased will always be with us.

I often reflect on what I could do better and what I had done. I decided I had done well helping a family in need. The answer to the second reflection was easy. I listened.

*John Brooks, oblate
Columbus, IN*

Listening and Attentiveness in Every Moment



Ellen Godbey

Pondering the Gospel story of Mary and Martha brought to focus the value and need for attentive listening. Reacting to Jesus' seemingly problematic

response about choosing the "better part," I think that if we all just sat at Jesus' feet listening to him, how would all the work get done? I often look enviously at Mary, thinking about how I would like to escape some drudgery and just relax with Jesus. But then, listening would be an escape, not an attentive choice. Not a good motive for listening!

But maybe Martha is doing the escaping by avoiding contact with Jesus. Is she hiding in her work and self-absorption, so she won't have to face listening to what Jesus is asking of her? Can she be serving and listening at the same time? Could she be attentive to her work, which serves God? Which side to choose? Can she and I be engaged in attentive listening no matter what situation in which we

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find ourselves? The answer to this question may avoid it being such a dilemma.

What if it isn't a matter of choosing which side to champion? Listening and attentiveness should permeate every moment, thought, or activity. Encompassing all of life as in our ordinary and often seemingly mundane ways, we work to further the Kingdom. It's not either/or

action/contemplation, work/listening, but both/and.

As I reflected on this passage, I was struck by Jesus calling out Martha as being worried and distracted and anxious (Luke 10:41), certainly not qualities conducive to attentiveness or active listening. Quite a message for those of us who find ourselves worried and anxious about so many things. Through the grace of God, may we

gain peaceful focus to listen with the ears of our hearts.

And thank you, Janis, for giving us the example of a beautiful and focused fusion of Martha and Mary.

Ellen Godbey, oblate
Yosemite, KY

Just Listen

I have always loved the Letter of James in the New Testament, largely because of its very practical and forthright tone. James isn't content with abstractions. No, he tells it like it is: don't just talk about your faith—do something about it!

One verse from James especially stands out for me: "You must understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger" (1:19).

Why? James continues: "Human anger does not produce God's righteousness" (1:20).

In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson beautifully paraphrases James' words: "Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear." This echoes the modern adage that we are given two ears and one mouth, and we should use them proportionately!

In our noisy, noisy world, filled with cellphones and computer screens and television and talk, talk, talk from every direction, it is so hard to listen to anyone or anything, let alone to God.

My introduction into Benedictine spirituality occurred at a clergy

workshop I attended many years ago. Perhaps providentially, other breakout options that interested me were filled. Without knowing the topic, I signed up for a session on *lectio divina*, led by a Benedictine sister from St. Mary Monastery in Nauvoo, IL.

I was profoundly affected by that initial experience of *lectio*, and I was captivated by Sr. Helen's succinct but compelling description of the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. Through *lectio*, I could listen to the divine voice in a new fashion. In "real time," *lectio* enabled me to hear God actively speaking to me through the words of scripture, and the experience invited me not only to respond to God's voice but also to rest in God's presence.

As I further encountered the *Rule*, Benedict's opening instruction to listen again struck me. "Listen...listen carefully, my child, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart."

I must confess that, as a well-trained, very left-brained, seminary-educated Protestant clergy person, the spirituality of St. Benedict has filled a void within my soul and helped me listen to God in new, vibrant, and life-giving ways. Scripture has become a

"living" word rather than a dry and ancient text for study. To listen with "the ear of the heart," as Christopher Morris notes in a recent article, "is to engage with the whole of oneself and be transformed by the process."¹ The Benedictine charism of hospitality, the rhythm of prayer and work, and the daily practice of "sacred reading," continue to transform me as I grow in God's grace and wisdom.

Joan Chittister says it well: "Benedictine spirituality is about listening to four realities: the Gospels, the *Rule*, one another, and the world around us."²

Wouldn't we all be better—wouldn't the world be better—if we would just listen more and talk less?

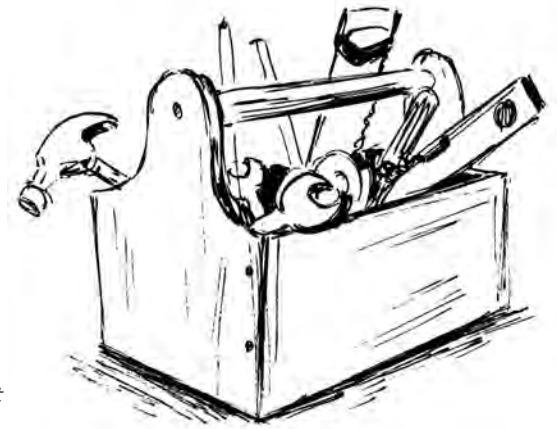
1. Christopher Morris, "Benedictine Wisdom and Method in Spirituality: Applying Bruno Barnhart's Sapiential Knowing," *The American Benedictine Review*, 74:2 (June 2023): 125.

2. Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 15.

Rev. Victor Long, oblate
Mount Vernon, Illinois

The Oblate Toolbox

Listening and Awareness in Moments of Stress and Uncertainty



“Let us listen for the voice of the Lord; let us enter into His rest...O that today you would listen to His voice! Harden not your hearts...” —Psalm 94



Angie McDonald

As I am writing this column, our oblate community has just received word that our oblate director, Janis Dopp, has passed away after a long hard battle against not

one but two very rare, very terminal illnesses. Janis always had a good word to share with all of us in this publication, always seeking to draw the deeper meaning out of anything and everything. I believe she modeled the epitome of the listener who seeks and is sought by God.

Today I am so grateful for this oblate vocation. Through all seasons and times, ups and downs, and disasters and deliverances, the constant north star of the Benedictine attitude of “listening with the ear of the heart” provides the ballast in the ship’s hold as it crosses stormy or placid seas.

As I once more pray this week’s Liturgy of the Hours, the verses have become so very familiar...and comforting. I have prayed them so many times now that they have literally become part of my inner thought life. I draw on them in moments of stress and uncertainty, replacing my fear with faith and my trepidation with peace.

I can’t live without this...I can’t live without turning to God again for help.

I can’t live without really listening hard for that word which will deliver me. And as I listen, I must also commit to responding readily to what I hear. This response Benedict calls “obedience.” Jesus also reminds us in his parable of the man who built his house on rock that it’s the follow-through and not just the hearing that makes for victory when the storms of life beat on the house of our lives. That is the time to cling even more tightly to this blessing of prayer to steady us in those times.

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

*Angie McDonald, oblate
Huntingburg, IN*

Still Small Voice

“Listen carefully, my child, to the instructions of your master, and incline the ear of your heart.” (Rule of Saint Benedict: An Inclusive Translation and Daily Commentary, Judith Suter, OSB)



Dale Edwyna Smith

How often have I been reminded that the very first word of our common rule is “Listen!” In prayer, listening is as essential as petition and thanksgiving, especially

listening “with the ear of the heart.” Perhaps, especially in these war wild current days, when many harden their hearts and stop their ears because as they sit in the ruins, they find it hard to believe that God listens, that God is attentive.

The Gospels and Scripture repeatedly remind those who have ears, let them hear. And yet Jesus often taught in

parables, riddles described in symbolic language, as well as in clear, bright invitations or warnings. This is one reason why *lectio divina* is so important. God is listening, and God speaks, but attentiveness is needed to hear.

This is also true in human conversation. In one-on-one interaction, I must take care to listen

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to the words of others rather than to my own expectations or assumptions or prejudices. Interpretation may not help to listen. Pay attention to the words themselves. Even love may befuddle or twist a quite simple and straightforward declaration.

Social media, email, and texting by phone have made it possible for people isolated by circumstance or by their own fears to “connect.” The pitfall in words proffered without the context of facial expression, voice volume or tone, body language or gesture may result in misinterpretation, hurt feelings, anger, disappointment, or ruptured relationships.

I still occasionally write letters on paper with pen and ink! With friends of my generation, this is a treasured mode of communicating using carefully chosen words intended for

the “ear of the heart.” We might select special stationary or ink colors to illuminate heart-felt sentiment, thought, feeling, or ideas. I have a box of cards, letters, and notes written to me over many years by family and friends, some of whom have passed from this earth. In moments of confusion, doubt, or need, I sometimes return to them, selecting one “at random” and meditating on the long-ago confession or gift of words. I listen intently, attentively with the ear of my heart to how these words might inform my present circumstances.

Attention to the word, whether whispered or shouted, requires my utmost attentiveness in the clamor of daily life. Often, I repeat the words given to open each hour of our office, “O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me.” Do I hear you, Lord? Do I hear you, friend?

Do I hear you, my own heart? Or do I “help” you by filling in a word I believe you perhaps forgot or omitted? Does my own fear or insecurity or pride fill in a word?

At news of the passing of our beloved oblate director, Janis Dopp, I at once felt like a sheep without a shepherd. The emails Janis sometimes sent me are a grace and a particular blessing. They remind me of many things, of attentiveness to the *Rule*, of using the *Rule* as a compass or guide to steer by in the tumult of contemporary, secular life, of my promises as an oblate, and of the preciousness and brief moment we are here. It reminds me again to pay attention, give attention or be attentive, to listen with the ear of my heart.

*Dale Edwyna Smith, oblate
Brighton, MA*

Putting the Ear to Paper



Diane Walter

In 1816, a French physician desperate to help a patient took 24 thick pieces of paper into his hands. His name was René Théophile-Hyacinthe

Laennec, and he

was inspired to solve a problem. In the past, doctors had to listen to the human heart by placing an ear on someone’s chest, but it wasn’t very effective.

Doctor Laennec remembered learning as a child that sounds travel better through solids, so he took those pieces of paper and fashioned them into a tight cone. He tried his invention, one end to his ear and the other to his

patient’s chest, and was overjoyed to find he could hear with astonishing clarity. He had invented the first stethoscope.

It is a beautiful story to highlight something oblates may miss about St. Benedict’s call to listen and “bring near to the ear of the heart.” When we think of listening, we think of people talking to us, but when it comes to the heart, we may want to think of paper as well.

The Prologue’s call to listen is not the only time St. Benedict pointed his readers to a deeper attentiveness in his Holy *Rule*. The act of listening is thematic throughout. Listening reappears in the fourth chapter and seems to be the impetus for the sixth chapter, which is devoted to silence. Those are specific mentions, but some

form of attentiveness undergirds the entire *Rule*.

The fourth chapter’s mention of listening is worth noting, however, as it is so brief it can be missed. In the chapter titled, *The Tools of Good Works*, St. Benedict presents his readers with 78 ways to be a better monastic. In the middle of the substantial list, he offers another reminder to listen, but this time fronted with four instructions that help make room for silence before paying better attention. From Saint Meinrad’s recently released translation of the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, the verses read:

- 51 To guard your mouth against evil and devious speech.
- 52 Not to love much talking.
- 53 Not to speak words that are vain or

that give rise to laughter.
54 Not to love much or explosive
laughter.
55 To listen willingly to holy reading.

The first time seeing this, I had to stop and read verse 55 again. To listen to reading is a common way of perceiving being read to, but it is not a common way of perceiving the act of personal reading. In this verse, St. Benedict is referencing both the act of listening to what is read to us such as during Mass, (or for monks in the cloister during readings at mealtime), and is also referencing the daily expectation of personal reading as outlined in Chapter 48.

Reading is a form of connecting with community. We are not just gathering information when we read. Instead, we are hearing what someone else has

to say through writing. The author may not know their reader, but they were inspired in hope to write. In reading what the author has written, we are answering to what they have shared. It is a unique and often silent conversation.

The story about Doctor Laennec and his invention can be an excellent anecdote reminding us how paper can amplify. But from St. Benedict's standpoint, we are not trying to diagnose anyone else's heart, rather we use our hearts to listen more acutely. Our spiritual readings and studies can amplify the message that God wants us to hear.

Of course, a lot of us read with computers and tablets in these times, and we are not necessarily clutching books or scrolls. Many authors rely on

new technology to share their inspired insights. Stethoscopes have advanced in two centuries and look much different today than the first one made of a thick stack of paper. Our hearts have stayed the same however, desperately in need of inspired thoughts and insights, sacred poetry and prose.

The next time we hope to hear with better clarity, we may recall the origins of the stethoscope, and seek out a stack of papers to hear better. However we engage in holy reading with paper books, tablets, computers, or even audio books, may we bring near to the ear of the heart, and discover astonishing clarity.

*Diane Walter, oblate
Georgetown, KY*

New Books at the Alcuin Oblate Library



Ann Smith

In September 2023, we added 47 books to the Alcuin Oblate Library.

Let me share four of them.

1. *The Hunger Inside* by Brad

Roth, who is pastor at the West Zion Mennonite Church in Kansas. From the back cover, "All Christians know that Holy Communion does something, but it's what and how the Eucharist does what it does that divides us. Drawing on various theological traditions, Brad Roth explores the myriad ways the Lord's Supper transforms the life of every follower of Jesus..." The call number is 264.02 R845.

2. *Stability* by Nathan Oates, who is lead pastor of Emmaus Church Community in California. Oates

learned the importance of stability from visiting Benedictine monasteries and reading their authors. The call number is 255.093 OA11.

3. *Walking the Way of the Cross for Caregivers* by Michelle Laque

Johnson. Using the Stations of the Cross as scaffolding, Johnson's book is full of inspiration, as well as practicalities for caregivers. The call number is 248.86 J66.

4. *The Convent Cook* by Maria Tisdall. In the 90s, Maria Tisdall, a trained chef living in New Jersey, was looking for a non-restaurant chef job. The Benedictine Sisters at Saint Walburga Monastery were looking for a chef. It was a perfect fit. Now, Tisdall shares favorite recipes and bits about the sisters and Benedictine life. The call number is 641 T613.

The next time you're at Saint Meinrad, come check out the Alcuin Oblate Library in the Oblate Office,

and check out a book or two. And if you checked a book out and forgot to return it, please do so.

Suggestions for 2024 Lenten reading

Jesus a Pilgrimage by James Martino

"Getting to know Jesus, like getting to know anyone, has been a pilgrimage."

Jesus: the Way, the Truth, and the Life by Marcellino D'Ambrosio

"This encounter with Christ will inspire and empower you to center your entire life around him..."

The Case for Christ: a Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus by Lee Strobel

"...a riveting quest for the truth."

A Little Daily Wisdom: Christian Women Mystics by Carmen Acevedo Butcher

"...seventeen famous and not-so-

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famous medieval women invite you to create an intimate friendship with God.”

Band of Angels: the Forgotten World of Early Christian Women by Kate Cooper

“The extraordinary women who helped lay the foundations of the early Christian Church.”

Practice of the Presence: a Revolutionary Translation by Carmen Acevedo Butcher

“...a practice of the Presence that is both accessible and deeply personal.”

Border Lands by David Adam

A deep dive into Celtic spirituality.

The Saint Makers: Inside the Catholic Church and How a War Hero Inspired a Journey of Faith by Joe Drape

From Kansas to the Vatican to a brutal Korean prisoner of war camp, a story of Servant of God by Emil J. Kapaun.

A Book of Silence by Sara Maitland

Not a void to be filled, but a healing energy to be cultivated.

In This House of Brede by Rumer Godden

Steeped in the *Rule*, this novel of Benedictine nuns was written by an oblate at Stanbrook.

Remember Your Death: Memento Mori a Lenten Devotional by Theresa Altheia Noble, FSP

“...an absolutely essential aspect of the Christian life not only because it helps us to live well but also because it helps us to remember what Christ has done for us.”

Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy by Donald B. Kraybill

“...an Amish community’s extraordinary response to a horrifying act of violence.”

How to Keep a Spiritual Journal: a Guide to Journal Keeping for Inner Growth & Personal Discovery by Ronald Klug

Journal keeping as sabbath time.

Ann Smith, Oblate Librarian
Gahanna, OH

Funeral Mass for Janis Dopp

October 19, 2023



Fr. Meinrad Brune,
OSB

We need to make our memories of Janis Dopp real, to keep the memories of her alive. They are part of who we are, part of where we have been, and in forgetting we would be

diminished. I hope my faith and my love and concern for her will shine through. This morning we come to this Mass of Resurrection to do three things:

- 1) We remember.
- 2) We regret.
- 3) We rejoice.

We remember: When I first got to know Janis, she told me about her first experience with the monks. How

she came to Saint Meinrad for a meeting and went to the early morning prayer. The bells were ringing as she was running in the dark to the north door of the church. Before she got there, the bells stopped, but when she opened the door, she heard the monks chanting, and she knew she had to be part of this prayer.

Fr. Gerald Ellspermann, OSB, invested her as an oblate novice in 1991. The next year, he received her oblation. She took as her oblate name, Sophia. I got to know Janis well in 1995 when I became the oblate director. The first chapter meeting at Bloomington was in the fall of 1995. There I met Janis and the others who were the founders of this chapter. I went to many fine meetings with prayer, conference, and good conversations on Benedictine Spirituality. Of course, I enjoyed the

tasty food and having the experience of tasting her delicious desserts, especially her apricot scones.

Janis and other oblates found that being a Benedictine Oblate helped them grow spiritually by living their daily life in God’s presence. She lived her oblate life with pointed honesty and more than a little humor. Because of her oblate life, she reached out and touched many people. Fr. Justin DuVall, OSB, was a recipient of the joy of knowing Janis and her family.

In 2016, it was announced that I would step down as the oblate director. Fr. Abbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, said we would choose an oblate to become the new director. Janis applied for the office. After consultation with his Council, Fr. Abbot chose her to be the first oblate to be the director. She took over the office in June 2017.



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, incenses the casket during the funeral Mass for Janis Dopp in the Archabbey Church on October 19, 2023.

As the president of the Oblate Council, Janis accepted the office and work of being the director of oblates. She drove with me to all the oblate chapters so that she could meet with the chapter coordinators and the oblates.

She coordinated the organization of the oblate files, worked with the oblates in creating an inspiring *Benedictine Oblate Quarterly* (no longer would she allow us to call it a newsletter) and developed new rituals for investitures and oblations with Fr. Abbot Kurt investing the new novices and receiving the oblations. The number of oblates increased. And lest I forget her kindness in bringing delicious scones for the old oblate director.

She took on work that expanded her faith and increased her heart. She met many dedicated oblates who were journeying with her. In various conversations, Janis praised the secretaries and young monks for the helpful work in the Oblate Office. These relationships enhanced her life beyond imagination. Her energy and faithful approach to life served us well.

The last memory I will cherish took place this past August. She had a

“retirement from the archive’s party” for me. The monks and the Guest Services co-workers were invited. It was delightful. As always, the party was grand with good things to eat. She wrote a beautiful card and note that she closed with, “You will always be in my heart and prayers.”

In St. Paul’s second letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul offers consolation in a time of trial. It is a strong declaration of faith, declaring that our trials are light compared to the glory to come. We have a loving Father whose love does not stop with our death. It continues for those who die into eternity. God’s love is strong that not even death can diminish or stop it. For us who remain, for us who grieve over the loss of Janis, God’s love continues to reach out and touches us. God sends loving relatives and friends who bring words of consolation and hope. We believe in the power of God’s love. What a memory this is!

We regret: We regret the three years when Janis suffered with health problems. During this time she had many sufferings to go through, but she had the support of Jack, a loving husband who was so good and helpful in the care of his wife. Janis had good things to say about Michele and

Blaise, Michael, Nancy, and her brother, Nicholas, who in your own ways were most caring for Janis. We heard from the Book of Wisdom that the souls of the just are in the hands of God. God’s loving care will be with those who trust in God. We can look to triumph after death. The purified people, like gold in the furnace, shall shine victorious on the day of visitation, just as Janis came into the presence of her loving God.

Also, the author of Wisdom finds value in suffering. For Janis, as a believer in God, the sufferings she endured throughout her life was redemptive. Suffering, though evil, can deepen a person and cause inspiration and life in others. God took the Great Pain of his own Son’s death and used it to blot up into himself all the pain that Janis suffered.

I regret over the times I saw Janis get frailer and weaker. Janis said to me, “Father, I am not in a very good mood today.” But the smile still came.

It hurts when people lose a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, sister, friend, and oblate. It hurts when the final cross comes. Her death diminishes us all. All of us are the poorer for her passing. Grace and love have been taken from our midst. *Not sinless, surely not flawless, of course.* Just a woman who inspired us to be better than we are, and often showed us how without a word or maybe with a few words.

We rejoice: I am grateful that Janis was able, with the help of Jack, to fly to Rome and attend the World Congress of Benedictine Oblates. She was on the committee that planned the program. She had much to say, and Fr. Jeremy King, OSB, said she was alert and able to conduct well-planned and organized discussions in different language groups. She worked

Continued on page 12

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hard on this gathering of oblates from around the world.

I enjoyed her friendship for many years. Her family enjoyed Janis as wife and mother and the good family times they had together. We share fond and joyful memories of Janis as we met her in her many duties, work, and activities. She furnished light to so many over the years. She will always be a star to us as she continues to illuminate our thoughts and actions.

As we celebrate this Eucharist this morning, we tell the stories of hope

and promise from the Scripture readings. The story of Jesus is the story of a love that overcomes death itself and we wait for this hope to be fulfilled in our own lives.

Jesus tells his disciples that if they are ready when the master comes, he will seat them at the table and proceed to wait on them. Nothing eases life's vigilant times like caring friends who keep watch for us, so we rest free from anxiety. Jesus did this for his friends when he called them to the table of the Eucharist. Sharing in the Lord's Supper reminds us of the eternal love

of Jesus for Janis and for us. Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ at this table gives us the strength to keep vigil till Jesus comes again in glory. In the meantime, Janis will be in our hearts and prayers.

“Good friends are like stars. You don't always see them, but you know they're always there.” AMEN!

*Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*

Address of Pope Francis to the World Congress of Benedictine Oblates on September 15, 2023



Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I extend to you a warm welcome and I am pleased to meet with you on the occasion of your World Congress.

The Benedictine Oblate, “in his or her own family and social environment, recognizes and accepts the gift of God...inspiring his or her own journey of faith with the values of the Holy *Rule* and of the monastic

spiritual tradition.” This is from article 2 of the *Statutes of the Italian Benedictine Oblates*. Here, I am thinking of your charism which, I believe, can be summarized in a certain way by the very beautiful expression of Saint Benedict, who invited his followers to have a “heart expanded by the unspeakable sweetness of love” (*Rule of Saint Benedict*, Prologue, n. 49).

How beautiful is that phrase: a heart expanded by the unspeakable

sweetness of love! This expanded heart characterizes the Benedictine spirit, which invigorated the spirituality of the Western world and subsequently spread to all continents. This expression, “an expanded heart,” is very important. Throughout the centuries, the Benedictine charism has been a charismatic herald of grace, for its roots are so firm that the tree grows well, weathering the ravages of time and bearing the savoury fruits of the Gospel. I believe that this expanded heart is the secret of the great work of evangelization that Benedictine monasticism carries out, and to which you promise yourselves as oblates, “offered up” in the footsteps of the great Holy Abbot. So I want to reflect briefly with you on three aspects of this “expansion of the heart”: the search for God, enthusiasm for the Gospel, and hospitality.

The Benedictine life is marked first of all by a continual search for God, for his will and for the wonders he works. This search takes place principally

through his word, with which you are nourished each day by *lectio divina*. Yet you also do this by contemplating creation, by letting yourselves be challenged by daily events, by experiencing work as prayer, to the point of transforming the very means of your work into instruments of blessing, and finally through people, in those brothers and sisters whom divine Providence leads you to encounter. In all this, you are called to be seekers of God.

A second important characteristic is that of enthusiasm for the Gospel. Following the example of the monks, the lives of those who take their inspiration from Saint Benedict are given as a gift, whole and rich. Like the monks, who make the places where they live fruitful and mark their days with industriousness, you also are called in this way to transform your everyday settings, wherever you live, by acting as a leaven in the dough, with skill and responsibility, and at the same time with gentleness and compassion. The Second Vatican Council outlines this missionary enthusiasm in an eloquent way when, speaking of the role of the laity in the Church, it says that they are called “to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will...from within, like leaven” (Lumen Gentium, 31). In this sense, we should be mindful of what the presence of monasticism, with its model of evangelical life marked by the motto *ora et labora* and the peaceful conversion and integration of numerous peoples, was able to build during the transition period from the fall of the Roman Empire to the birth of medieval society! All this zeal was born out of enthusiasm for the Gospel, and this, too, is a very timely matter for you. Indeed, nowadays, in a globalized but fragmented and fast-paced world devoted to consumerism, in settings where family and social roots

sometimes almost seem to disappear, there is no need for Christians who point fingers, but for enthusiastic witnesses who radiate the Gospel “in life through life.” This is always a temptation: go from being “Christian witnesses” to “Christian accusers.” There is only one accuser, the devil. We should not assume the role of the devil, but of Jesus. We are students of the school of Jesus, of the Beatitudes.

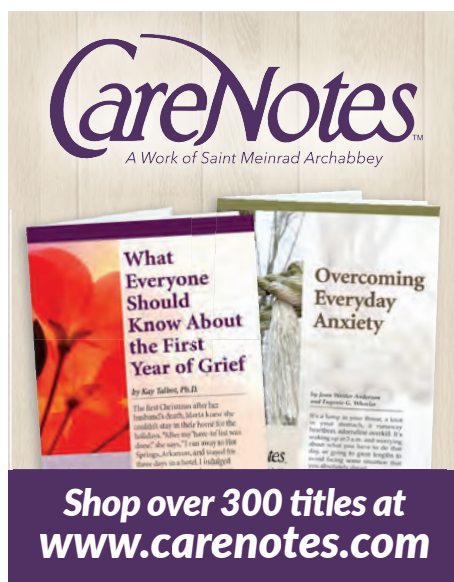
The third characteristic of the Benedictine tradition that I want to reflect on is that of hospitality. In his *Rule*, Saint Benedict devoted an entire chapter to this (Ch. 53, On the Reception of Guests). The chapter begins with these words: “Let all guests who arrive at the monastery be received as Christ, for he will one day say: ‘I was a stranger and you took me in’ (Mt 25:35)” (n. 1). *Venit hospes, venit Christus*. And he continued by indicating some concrete attitudes to be taken by the whole community with regard to guests: “let them go forth to meet him, showing him their love in every way...let them pray together and then let them associate with one another and exchange the kiss of peace” (n. 3), that is, they should share with the guest what they hold most dear. Benedict then spoke of those who are “special” guests, saying: “Let the greatest care be taken, especially in the reception of the poor and pilgrims, because Christ is received more specially in them” (n. 15). As oblates, your wider monastery is the world, the city and the workplace, for it is there that you are called to be models of welcome with regard to whoever knocks at your door, and models in preferential love for the poor. This is what it means to welcome, yet we are confronted with the temptation to close ourselves off. Today, in our society, our culture, even a Christian culture, one of the ways of closing ourselves off from others is through gossip. Gossip “dirties” other people. “I close myself

off from another person because he or she is a wretch.” Please, as Benedictines, let your tongue be reserved for praising God, and not for gossiping about others. If you are able to change your lives in such a way that you do not speak ill of others, you will have opened the door for your causes of canonization! Move forward in this way. Sometimes it seems that our society is slowly suffocating in the locked vaults of selfishness, individualism, and indifference. Gossip locks us into this reality.

Dear brothers and sisters, I want to bless the Lord with you for the great patrimony of holiness and wisdom of which you are custodians, and I invite you to continue to expand your heart and entrust it every day to God’s love, never ceasing to seek it, to bear witness to it with enthusiasm and to welcome it in the poorest whom life leads you to encounter. I offer my heartfelt thanks for your oblation, and ask you, please, to remember to pray for me. Thank you!

[01382-EN.02] [Original text: Italian]

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Top left, Janis Dopp meets Pope Francis during the Fifth World Congress of Benedictine Oblates on September 15, 2023. Photo licensed and used with permission, credit: © Vatican Media.

Bottom left, Janis is blessed as the new oblate director during the chapter coordinator's meeting in the Guest House Chapel on June 23, 2017.

Bottom right, Fr. Lorenzo Penalosa, OSB, blesses Janis after his priesthood ordination in the Archabbey Church on August 30, 2020.



Top, Janis Dopp prepares appetizers and snacks in the St. John Vianney Center for participants attending the Conference on Human Formation on April 17, 2018.

Bottom, Janis gives the sign of peace to newly invested oblate novice, Shawn Way, after the Oblate Rites in the Archabbey Church on March 24, 2023.

Fifth World Congress of Benedictine Oblates



Charles Thatcher

This past September, I had the extraordinary privilege of attending the Fifth World Congress of Benedictine Oblates in Rome as a delegate

from Saint Meinrad (Sept. 9-16, 2023). Held at the Abbey of Sant’Anselmo which sits atop the Aventine Hill, one of the seven hills of Rome, the Congress was a series of mountaintop experiences, literally and figuratively.

While prior Congresses have taken place in Rome, this was the first one to be held at Sant’ Anselmo, the seat of the Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order. The current primate, Abbot Gregory Polan, OSB, is a strong supporter of oblates throughout the world. His invitation to hold the Congress at the primatial abbey is a sign of the high regard he has for the oblate charism.

The international team which planned and facilitated the Congress comprised of 28 oblates and monks from 14 countries, including Saint Meinrad’s own Janis Dopp and Fr. Jeremy King, OSB.

Janis and her husband Jack, Fr. Jeremy, and I arrived three days before the opening of the Congress. Despite a tremendous amount of preparation prior to departure for Rome, members of the core team had much to do on site to get things up and running. Janis displayed her usual energy and positivity—awe-inspiring given her health challenges.

Since I was slated to be organist for daily Masses and the Divine Office, I used those days for organ practice in the Abbey Church.

Benedictine Hospitality

Benedictine hospitality was on full display throughout the week. On Saturday, September 9, 150 oblates, monks, and nuns, from 25 countries on six continents, arrived at the abbey in a steady stream. The new arrivals were registered and shown to their rooms, cells within the cloister normally occupied by international student monks who had not yet returned for the fall semester. The Congress officially began that evening with Vespers.

Since general conferences would be conducted from the rear of the Abbey Church, the pews had been removed and replaced with movable seating. Five booths were erected for interpreters, who would translate the talks into various languages. Individual listening devices were available to access those translations.

During the liturgies, the resident monks sat in chairs close to the nave to support the singing of the oblates. While the chants of the Mass and Divine Office were in Latin, the dialogues, prayers, readings, and homilies were in different languages each day.

Meals were held in the large refectory. The food was fresh, delicious, and plentiful, in true Italian fashion. Except for breakfast, the discipline of silence during meals was lifted, making meals a prime time for interacting with both oblates and monks.

Throughout the week, the ever-cheerful Fr. Benoit Alloggia, OSB,

guest master and Congress organizer, seemed to be everywhere at once. Abbot Gregory, approachable and unassuming, was visibly present.

The Congress Schedule

The daily schedule was full but varied. The Congress theme of “Moving Forward: Living the Wisdom of the *Rule*,” provided the focus for the conferences. Small-group workshops followed each conference, allowing for interaction and sharing of ideas. Presentations exploring ways of creating “Islands of Silence” included time for meditation and reflection.

Bus trips up steep mountain roads brought us to the “Holy Cave” of Subiaco, where Benedict began his monastic life, and to the Monte Cassino Abbey, where he wrote his *Rule*.

The first conference, given in French by Sr. Marie Madeleine Caseau, OSB, addressed the topic “Exploring Formation Needs for the Future.” Her scholarly presentation was daunting for both translators and listeners. However, it is worthwhile to read her talk in English translation.

[Sr. Marie Madeleine Caseau]



“Living Out Our Oblate Calling in the 21st Century,” was the title of the second conference presented by Abbot Donato Ogliari, OSB, from the Roman Abbey of St. Paul Outside the Walls. Abbot Donato explored ways in which the wisdom of St. Benedict’s *Rule* and life might be a roadmap for oblates as we evangelize and live our stewardship in the world.

[Abbot Donato Ogliari]



Abbot Gregory presented the third conference, “Expanding the Mission of the Monasteries We Serve.” The abbot expressed his fervent hope that Benedictine monasteries be havens of reconciliation and forgiveness, both for monks and for guests who arrive with the experience of brokenness in their lives. He suggested oblates stay close to their monasteries. “Be known as someone to whom the monks or sisters can turn as true helpers...be people whose life resonates with reconciliation.”

[Abbot Gregory Polan]



Private Audience with Pope Francis
Seeing “Audience with

the Pope” on Friday’s schedule, I assumed it would be a general audience with many thousands in attendance. What an unexpected blessing it was to be led into the Clementine Hall, where Pope Francis addressed us in private, summarizing our oblate charism as having “a heart expanded by the unspeakable sweetness of love” (RB, Prologue:49). None of us was left unmoved by the experience of personally greeting the pope, taking his hand, and briefly looking into his eyes. It took many days to descend from that mountaintop!

Commission

The Congress ended Saturday morning with Lauds and Mass. Abbot Gregory sent us forth, commissioning us to carry the fruits of the Congress to the world, as we live out our oblate calling. As a parting gift, he presented

each of us with a small, handmade polymer clay bowl, imprinted with an image of the Jubilee Medal of St. Benedict.

These beautiful bowls were handcrafted especially for us over the course of a year by a group of incarcerated women at an Ohio reformatory, led by a Benedictine oblate named Alice, who is serving a life sentence. I see in this gift a symbol of the Benedictine family of men and women of all ages, races, backgrounds, and living conditions, who, with expanded hearts, bear witness to Christ’s love in every corner of the world.

*Charles Thatcher, oblate
Winter Springs, FL*

Benedictine Oblate Congress in Rome



*Fr. Jeremy King,
OSB*

I write these reflections with very mixed emotions.

In spring 2016, Janis Dopp told me that Abbot Justin DuVall, OSB, allowed her to ask for my help in planning

World Congress IV of Benedictine Oblates in Rome in November 2017. That was the beginning of a truly wonderful opportunity to get to know Janis better and to learn so much from her and others about the vocation of our oblates.

Fr. Edward Linton, OSB, stationed at Sant’ Anselmo in Rome, was the leader of a very talented international team that had already spent a good deal of

time planning for the Congress. It privileged me to join them in the final stages of preparation. Congress IV was a great success. I was asked to work on the next Congress scheduled for 2021. That plan met many challenges from the COVID-19 Pandemic and was delayed until September of 2023.

I was concerned about the terrible situation of Janis’ health and the prospect that she might not live to see her hard work on Congress V come to fruition. My fears did not come true. If it had not been for Janis and her co-workers, Shirley France and Stephanie Smith (oblates of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN), the event would have never been so successful.

Janis and her husband Jack, along with Charles Thatcher and I, arrived in Rome on September 6. Janis, Shirley,

and Stephanie quickly put us and other oblates to work preparing for the formation workshops at the Congress. The process of forming oblates was the meat and potatoes of this Congress and it flowed directly from the work of Congress IV. This was Janis’ passion and I believe one of the major incentives for her to get as healthy as she could, in order to present the extensive work she had done with Shirley and Stephanie.

Developing the “Four Pillars of Formation: Human, Spiritual, Intellectual, Communal”; the “Seven Formation Models: Catechetical, Contemplative, Extended Novitiate, Houses in Process of Completion, Interactive, the Rehabilitative Model for the Incarcerated, or the Virtual,” these three formation task force leaders, along with oblates from all around the world put tons of time and talent into

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presenting a fantastic experience for over 150 oblates gathered at Sant' Anselmo September 9-16, 2023. I partnered with Janis for six of the workshops. These were presented in five languages.

Sr. Marie Madeleine Caseau, OSB, from Saint Bathilde Priory, Vanves, France: Her address focused on images and references from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*.

"Every bee that passes from one flower to another carries something of itself with it. When it lands, it leaves something of itself behind, transforming the world micro-cosmically through the phenomenon of pollination. Wouldn't we be called to invent this new art of evangelizing, by pollination, integrating the support of our oblation, of our links with our oblate monasteries, still depositing this taste for formation as incorporation into the totality of Christ? Wouldn't the oblate thus be a messenger of peace and freedom through praise and fraternal life in relation to his or her oblate monastery? If we are truly bearers of the living Christ, then with his Spirit, we will know how, as the Hands of the Father, to encourage new paths of formation for a happy humanization, divinization and thus communion in the image of the Trinitarian life from which we come and to which we are going."

Living Out the Oblate Calling in the 21st Century, presented by

Abbot Donato Ogliari, OSB, Abbot of the Abbey of Saint Paul, Outside the Walls, Rome.

He ended his presentation by referencing Alasdair MacIntyre's study of Moral Theory and comparing our current state to the fall of the Roman Empire. As then, the barbarians are not waiting at our borders; they have already been governing us for quite some time. We are waiting not for a "Godot" (ala Samuel Beckett), who never comes, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict. Perhaps each of us is the St. Benedict, for which this time is waiting. It is up to us to take up the challenge and be true witnesses of Jesus!

Expanding the Mission of the Monasteries We Serve, presented by Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, OSB.

At the conclusion of his address, Abbot Gregory said, "I would suggest that you stay close to the monasteries of which you are oblates. Be known as someone to whom the monks or sisters can turn as true helpers, as people who stand with them as people of prayer and faith, as ambassadors of reconciliation. Inspire one another with the various involvements you may have in your monastery, parish, and among yourselves...make a difference where you are.

"I think it is important to distinguish between 'doing' and 'being' in the life

of an oblate. And what is more important? 'Being' is most important because it involves your personal growth as one who is an extension of a monastic community—that means people see you as a person of faith dedicated to service for this monastic community. Your service flows out of your faith and love of the community. As oblates of communities, be people whose life resonates with reconciliation—wherever you are or whatever you are doing.

"So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:20).

The Congress closed with one of the most memorable events of our lives: an audience with Pope Francis. We each had a moment with him. To see Jack wheel Janis up in front of the Vicar of Christ on Earth was worth all the hard work that went into the Congress. Some of you know Janis was one day older than I. We both celebrated just days before heading to Rome and agreed that if we had to wait 76 years to meet a pope that we were blessed that it was Francis. Janis doesn't need Christ's vicar anymore. She is face to face with her Lord Jesus.

*Fr. Jeremy King, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*

Janis was a precious member of the organizing group for the last two World Congresses of Benedictine Oblates. Her deep faith, her experience as an oblate director, her good humor, and her attentive availability to others made her an invaluable asset and an example to all of us who had the privilege of working with her. May the light of the Lord shine perpetually upon her soul.

*Sergio Portelli
Representing Oblates from Italy and Malta*

A former Abbot of my monastery, Santa Maria de Montserrat, wrote that the *Rule of Saint Benedict* allowed humble people to live a very exciting, fascinating, and deep life. It is in this context that I remember Janis Dopp. Her enthusiasm and ideas about oblate formation were essential for now and the future and were the essences of the last two World Congresses. We were shocked two years ago by the news of her serious illness but were so impressed by the way she carried on her work with great dignity and strong Christian hope. We were over-joyed to be reunited again in Rome, but only a short time after did that joy turn to almost equal sadness with news of her death. I'm sure Janis is sitting close to our God, taking care of her family, as well as the oblates of Saint Meinrad, and indeed those all over the world. I am honored to have met Janis and I will never forget her.

Jordi Gubern-Prat

Oblate of Santa Maria de Montserrat, Barcelona, Spain

OBLATE NEWS

DEATHS

William “Bill” Cox, of Louisville, KY, died on March 11, 2023.

Michel Frappier, of Carolina, RI, died on June 19, 2023.

James “Jim” Schmitt, of Fort Wayne, IN, died on September 25, 2023.

Janis Dopp, of Bloomington, IN, died on October 12, 2023. ♦

INVESTITURES

The following were invested as oblate novices on September 23, 2023: Fr. Brandon Bigam, Prestonburg, KY; Joyce D. Fazio, Franklin, TN; Joy Ann Fish, St. Meinrad, IN; Kelly Gallagher, Huron, OH; Rex Gehlbach, Troy, IL; Susan Isaacs, Lanesville, IN; Yolonda Lysle, Louisville, KY; Christopher McClure, Lancaster, PA; Dominic Salomone, Henderson, NV; Sally Shawler, Hurricane, WV; Kathleen Shriner, Delphi, IN; Anthony Tepe, Lizton, IN; Terrence Toon, Plainfield, IN; and Ernesto Yanes Santos, Louisville, KY. ♦

OBLATIONS

The following made their final oblation on September 23, 2023:

Mary Anne Anselmino, Joseph, MI; Michael Brandt, Cincinnati, OH; John O’Keefe, Columbus, OH; Fr. Steven Walter, Loveland, OH; Beverly Weinhold, Groton, MA; Claire Wilson, Stow, OH. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

Investiture and Oblation Rites: March 2, 2024

Oblate Retreats: March 19-21, 2024

Oblate Chapter Coordinator Meeting: January 11-15, 2024 ♦

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were Benedictine monks Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, Br. Gregory Morris, Fr. Eugene Hensell, Fr. Joseph Cox, Fr.

Mateo Zamora, Fr. Meinrad Brune, Fr. Lorenzo Penalosa, Fr. Colman Grabert, Fr. Jeremy King, Br. John Mark Falkenhain, Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, Fr. Thomas Gricoski, Br. Joel Blaize, Br. Francis de Sales Wagner, and Br. James Jensen, seminarians, Br. Agustin Lopez and Br. Stephen Johnson, oblates Joanna Harris, Michelle Blalock, Teresa Lynn, Andy, Bridget Kosegi, Marie Kobos, Rick Tomsick, and Bill Wilson, Quarterly editor Kathleen Polansky, and assistant editor Angie McDonald. ♦

We REALLY want you and your articles!

The *Benedictine Oblate Quarterly* invites oblates and oblate novices to submit news and information about your chapter or write an article about your Benedictine journey.

We also have a theme for each upcoming issue that we welcome you to reflect on and submit an article. Finally, please submit a book review for the Reading Room column.

All submissions must include your name, city and state. A maximum 700-word limit is suggested. If choosing to add sources, please use endnotes and not footnotes. Send all submissions to Kathleen Polansky at kpolanskyoblate@yahoo.com.

Upcoming themes and submission dates:

Spring – Final due date: Feb. 1, 2024 (Benedictine Spirituality Dismantling Polarization)

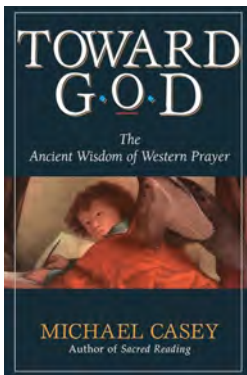
Summer – Final due date: May 1, 2024 (Self-esteem vs. Ego)

Fall – Final due date: Aug. 1, 2024 (Women of Faith in the Life of the Church)



200 Hill Drive
St. Meinrad, IN 47577

Reading Room



*Toward God: The Ancient Wisdom
of Western Prayer*

By Michael Casey, OCSO
Liguori/Triumph, 1996

171 pages

Suggestion: read anything by the
Australian Cistercian Michael
Casey and begin by reading this
book.

Toward God is packed with practical information, piercing insight and counter-intuitive thought, like this: “Prayer is not controlled. We are the ones controlled, called upon to submit to a mysterious inward process, to be carried beyond ourselves without ever knowing clearly what carries us or where we are going” (p. 34).

Like Merton and Lewis, Casey writes in a style that smacks of being directly talked to; you sense you are in a conversation with Casey, as opposed to drowning in some magnum opus.

The book is laid out in fourteen chapters with titles like “Given, Not Achieved,” “Creating Space for Meditation,” and “Pondering the Word.” The only criticism I have of the book is that it utilizes endnotes instead of footnotes; I hate fumbling to the back of the book to catch the citation! But that is a stylistic method at the behest of the publisher, not with Casey.

If you find this book pleasing, and I think you will, follow it up with his slimmer volume, *Sacred Reading: The Ancient of Lectio Divina*. Good stuff, both.

*Mark Plaiss, oblate
Mundelein, IL*