

Benedictine Oblate



Saint Meinrad



Oblate Cathy Funkhouser attends Mass in the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House Chapel, during the Midwest Regional Oblate Conference.

Embracing the will of God

As the New Year begins, it is a tradition for many of us to make New Year's resolutions. We promise that we will live better lives, repair broken relationships, and grow in our understanding of not only ourselves, but also those around us.

In searching for a way to accomplish this, we oblates can look to Scripture, which encourages us to "choose life ... by loving the Lord, [our] God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him" (Deut. 30:19). We have only to follow the example of Christ, who came down from heaven not to do his own will, but rather "to do the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38).

For Benedict, "the first step of humility is unhesitating obedience, which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above

all" (RB 5). In being obedient to the witness of those who model Christ for us, we "empty ourselves out so that the presence of God can come in, tangible and present and divinely human" (Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century*, Chapter 5).

As we examine where we are in our lives and where we want to go, we oblates are blessed to have a multitude of people who have gone before us and who walk beside us, continually offering us wisdom – and love – and hope.

In this issue of the newsletter, we offer stories of oblates – and others – who have chosen to embrace the will of God. They are a witness to all of us who journey together in love and obedience.

A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“The first step
of humility is
unhesitating obedience,
which comes to those
who cherish Christ
above all.”

Rule of St. Benedict, 5:1

It’s an unsettling thought for many of us, as we pride ourselves on our “rugged individualism” and strive for perfection in our chosen lifestyle.

And yet, it’s comforting to recognize that our goal is obedience, rather than a particular lifestyle – or perfection.

It seems that if we recognize the presence of God in our lives and embrace what we perceive to be his will, then no matter our trials and tribulations, we will be assured that we are not alone. And, as Julian of Norwich wrote, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

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Insights from the Abbot

Obedience: Just getting it done doesn’t quite do it



Archabbot Kurt
Stasiak, OSB

Monks are to be obedient. It’s one of the vows they profess. They promise to live under a Rule and an abbot. They know well that the first word of the Rule is *obsculta*, or listen.

Oblates try to live the Benedictine monastic ideals, including obedience, outside the monastery. But most oblates probably can’t afford not to be obedient!

Monks can’t be fired from the monastery! But for those who live in a world where performance is usually not an option (poor job review, a pay cut or even termination of employment?), when it comes to obedience, do oblates really have a choice?

When St. Benedict writes about obedience, he has much more in mind than mere compliance.

Obedience: With what speed?

According to Benedict, when monks (and oblates) receive a command, they should obey “as promptly as if the command came from God himself” (RB 5:4). This prompt response shows that the monk (oblate) is making progress not just in obedience, but also in humility: he turns toward the words of his master and turns away from those contrary desires of his own will that try to enslave him.

Benedictine obedience has speed to it, as illustrated so well by the disciples who, when Jesus calls them, do not first mend, then clean, then neatly hang their nets – but simply drop them at once and follow Him.

Obedience: With what spirit?

For Benedict, doing what one is told – even promptly – is not necessarily fulfilling that command. “If a disciple obeys grudgingly ... his action will not be accepted with favor by God, who sees that he is grumbling in his heart” (RB 5:17-18).

Here Benedict simply states what any boss, parent or teacher knows: a command obeyed, but accompanied by grumbling and griping, may get the job done; but it will add to the dis-ease that tears up the Body of Christ rather than contribute to the peace that nourishes and strengthens it.

Simply put, for Benedict, obedience is more than just doing the right thing. It is doing the right thing right away (“unhesitating obedience” RB 5:1) and with the right attitude (“God loves a cheerful giver” RB 5:16; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

It’s difficult, to be sure. So let us follow the advice we find in the Prologue to Benedict’s *Rule*: “What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace” (v. 41).

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Saint Meinrad
**DAY OF
SERVICE**
has been set for
March 10, 2018.
alumni.saintmeinrad.edu/DOS

From the Desk of the Director

Obedience: Saying what we will do



Janis Dopp

At our oblation we make three promises: stability of heart, fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life, and obedience to the will of God. Each of these promises is rich with meaning.

It takes a lifetime to understand what they mean for us.

As Fr. Guy Mansini, OSB, writes in his book *Promising and the Good*, promising “is not saying what will happen, but saying what I will do.” In the promises we make at our oblation, we are saying what we will do – what we will become as time goes on. It is a lifelong endeavor.

The word “obedience” comes from the Latin *obedire*, which means to listen, to harken, to hear. We are promising to listen to what God is saying to us, to try to make sense of the world we inhabit,

and to respond appropriately and responsibly through our lives and the choices we make.

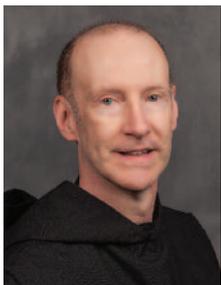
The daily prayer and reflection that we bind ourselves to is designed to help us listen to the voice of God. We practice listening with each psalm we pray. But, harkening to God’s voice also is an invitation to respond. God wants to be in conversation with us.

Obedience never should be merely a passive acceptance, but an active encounter that changes our hearts and minds and helps us understand who we say we will become. We are keeping our promise of obedience as we recognize who God is calling us to be.

Obedience is not merely subservience. It is a powerful enactment of doing what we believe will result in our becoming all that God dreams that we can be.

Janis Dopp
Oblate Director

Musings from the Chaplain



Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln met with a group of ministers for a prayer breakfast. Lincoln was not a church-goer, but was a man of deep faith.

At one point, one of those present said, “Mr. President, let us pray that God is on our side.” Lincoln’s response showed far greater insight: “No, gentlemen, let us pray that we are on God’s side.”

Lincoln reminded them that religion is not a tool to get God to do what we

want, but an invitation to open ourselves to be and do what God wants. Something similar can be said for obedience. We obey God because we love God, and God loves us, and we want to do what God desires of us.

We can know God’s will by listening to how God speaks to us through the sacred Scriptures, through the Church and through those around us. Only by listening and knowing what God asks of us can we open ourselves so that we can comply with God’s desires.

Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB
Oblate Chaplain

OBLATES

In their own words



Oblate Debra Burden
Martinsville, IN

“To me, an oblate is a person who feels the call of God to a particular kind of discipleship, and it turns out that it’s a very ancient form of discipleship, which means it’s tried and true.

The greatest blessing to me has been a deepening of my spiritual life and feeling closer to Christ. The benefit I did not anticipate is the community of fellow oblates and the support we give each other. You feel like an ambassador for the monastery and the monastic way of life.”



60 years of marriage: 'With God all things are possible'



Jerry Altstadt



Lora Altstadt

We have been married for over 60 years! Can you imagine living with the same person for that length of time? When we married and said our vows, “for better or worse, in sickness or in health, until death do us part,” little did we realize the implications of this vow.

Over this extended period of time, we:

- had six children
- went through six job changes
- had 19 grandchildren
- underwent 10 surgeries.

Not a single use of the “D” word! Are we any different from other couples who fell in love and decided to spend their lives together? We can only speak from our point of view, which was to take our vows seriously and live according to God’s will for us. And that was to try, among all the distractions of life, to keep Jesus and his teachings at the top of our “to do” list.

Problems in marriage are often caused by a difference of religion, money or lack thereof, unfaithfulness, poor communication or the lack of a predetermined role that each partner is to fill. For us, raising our children in faith was very important. Lora was Protestant and Jerry was Catholic.

Our parents, all very good people, were also strong in their faiths, which

created an early crisis for us. What must we do to make this relationship successful? We were deeply in love, and each of us was strong in his/her faith. Lora decided that she would talk to a priest. And God love him, he was absolutely great!

After her initial discussion, she decided to go back for more instruction. Upon conclusion, she said there was nothing that created a stumbling block for her. As a result, she joined the Catholic Church. Since that time, we have always practiced our faith together.

For us, the money problem was a “lack of.” Upon graduation from college, Jerry accepted a job in a small rural school, which was a great experience. The money was sufficient for us to survive, but savings was not a word in our vocabulary. The next nine years were spent in a Catholic high school, where the word “sacrifice” had a special meaning.

During this time, we had many of our children and trusted in God that He would be our supplier, and He was. Since we had little, money was not a problem. We always kept what we had together. There was never “my account” or “your account.” It was always “our account.” Money spent is a mutual act.

Another potential problem in marriage is the inability of the partners to identify their roles. In Ephesians 5, we are told to be “subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ ... wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church ... in

any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.”

Obedience, as applied by the above quote, is the apex of a good marriage. Both partners must be obedient to the word of God. We like to compare obedience in marriage to a form of servant-leadership. It is easy to understand how a servant can be humble, but a leader must have a prayerful attitude and a genuine concern for his/her spouse.

St. Benedict (RB 5) states that the first degree of humility is obedience. To attain this obedience, a prayer life constantly calling on God for wisdom and discernment is an absolute necessity. Both husband and wife must, at different times, demonstrate qualities of the servant and the leader.

We believe that God is the giver of all authority. If there is no prayer life, leadership will be reduced to a worldly task with the goal of manipulating the marriage partner. For a marriage to be truly successful, we must understand that God is love and “with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27).

*Jerry Altstadt, PhD, and
Lora Altstadt, oblates,
Huntingburg, IN*

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Priestly, oblate vocations rely on obedience

“Do you promise respect and obedience to me and my successors?”

This question was asked of me and my classmates when we were ordained to the priesthood on May 1, 1966, in the Archabbey Church at Saint Meinrad. When I was asked to write an article for this newsletter on the theme of obedience and the oblate, I immediately recalled this question, which is still posed to every newly ordained priest.

I compare it with the renewal of oblation:

Peace! In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. I (Name) renew before God and all the saints, as my state in life permits, my promise of stability of heart, fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life and obedience to the will of God as an oblate of the venerable monastery of St. Meinrad Archabbey.

Diocesan priests do not make public vows like the monks at Saint Meinrad do. What is a vow? “A vow, that is, a deliberate and free promise made to God about a possible and better good, must be fulfilled by reason of the virtue of religion.”¹ It is a public vow if a legitimate superior accepts it in the name of the Church; otherwise, it is private.²

The promise of obedience made by diocesan priests is similar to that made by oblates. It represents a personal commitment to doing the will of God.

By our baptism, we Christians are committed to a life of obedience to the will of God. I have found that the practices of the oblates are supportive of my life of obedience as a diocesan priest.

Let’s take apart that word “obedience.” The word is derived from the Latin, *obaudire*. Often when the Scripture text says in the original language, “hear my voice,” the translation is given as “obey me.” Therefore, obedience is respectful and thoughtful listening.

I would say those who have become oblates heard the call deep within themselves over a significant period of time before they came forward to inquire further about becoming an oblate. The structure of becoming an oblate requires a period of novitiate – a period of conscious and intentional discernment about whether they want to make oblation.

All of this reminds me of my personal journey to the diocesan priesthood. People ask me: “When did you first think of becoming a priest?” I remember first having the sense that I might be interested in becoming a priest when I was in fifth grade.

From that point in my life, I was listening to what I now know was God’s call. But being a priest means

daily listening to God’s call to live out priestly ministry. Being an oblate helps me to continue to say “yes” to God’s call in a different way as a senior priest.

*Msgr. Fred Easton, OSB, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

¹ Canon 1191

² Canon 1192



Ordination of Fr. Fred Easton, OSB, in 1966.



50th jubilee of Msgr. Fred Easton at St. Charles Borromeo Church, Bloomington, IN, in 2016.

God's Call: A confrontation of contradiction



Kathleen Polansky

Recently, I was reading an article that spoke of God's promise to Abram. God was promising numerous descendants.

The article specified that it was "nighttime" when God told Abram to look up at the sky and count the stars if he could, and so shall his descendants be (Genesis 15).

Seven verses later the text stated, "As the sun was going down ..." (Genesis 15:12). It got me thinking that Abram's real challenge of counting the stars was to look up (while it was still daylight) and believe what seems to be absent. It appears to be a contradiction of what Abram knows.

To see the challenge God placed before him demanded faith, not facts. It asked Abram to place complete trust in God. I wish to look at the consistency of seeing this confrontation God uses to challenge Abram's faith as a reflection of the challenge posed throughout the Bible and into our lives today.

God challenges conventional wisdom

God does not call us to find comfort in conventional wisdom, but confronts us with contradiction. Later in Genesis, Abram, now known as Abraham, is confronted by God with the contradiction of taking his son Isaac, the promise of descendants for Abraham and Sarah, and offering him in sacrifice to God.

How devastating a demand to Abraham to destroy the heir of God's promise in order to be obedient to God's will. God confronts Abraham

with this contradiction so Abraham might see a new way of being.

Jesus doesn't make it any easier. His Sermon on the Mount presents us with a set of Beatitudes that rattle the foundation of our stability and comfort. How can one be blessed and be in mourning? Or find solace and joy in meekness when a country's leader is forcing its people into becoming refugees?

How does mercy bring happiness when personal attack has become as easy as a "send" button? Jesus' teachings demand a confrontation of the norms of society. They demand a follower to stand up, and speak up, when conventional wisdom would say run, hide and keep quiet.

The parables of Jesus are not meant to be just stories that end in a moral. Their intent is to grab hold of what is, shake it up, rattle its foundation, and then turn it upside down. It takes great faith to see a parable through to its completion. So often we grab hold of the way it has always been and hold on.

Jesus' cross is ultimate contradiction

On the cross, Jesus became the ultimate confrontation of contradiction. How can God, who became incarnate, allow this brutal humiliation and degradation? Yet today we look upon the cross as our way to salvation, as our redemption. Conventional wisdom would laugh at such nonsense.

As St. Paul says, "For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ Crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. ... For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is

stronger than human strength" (1 Cor. 1:22f).

This past Good Friday, my mother-in-law, who was brought up Baptist, accompanied my husband and me to our church service. I sat with her beforehand and talked about what the cross means to us and why we will venerate it in this service. I knew her background and upbringing would not allow her to understand what we were about to do.

At the service, I watched in tears as Mom walked up and kissed the cross. Later she told me, "I had to do that. I could not sit back. I had to go up." "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

God confronts us in the Eucharist

Every time we come together as a community and celebrate the Eucharist, we are confronting a contradiction. How is it that this wafer becomes the body of Christ and this wine becomes the blood of Christ? By all accounts, this seems to be preposterous.

Yet that is precisely what we are confronted with by the words given to us by Jesus at the Last Supper. "Take and eat, this is my body. Take and drink, this is my blood." We believe what seems to be unbelievable. We are confronted once again with a contradiction of expectation over what is real. Our faith is challenged to believe when everything seems to say otherwise.

Just as Abram, who stared into the sky and trusted his descendants would be more numerous than the stars, we have throughout the Bible been confronted by God who calls us to

trust, to live our faith, especially when it seems to be ridiculous.

As oblates, we strive to live contrary to much of the prevailing wisdom. Our days are centered around prayer and a *Rule* that sets societal norms on edge. Benedict says to receive all visitors as Christ. How contrary is that to our perceiving all strangers as threats?

How demanding Benedict is regarding correction of one another in a dignified manner, rather than choosing Facebook and bearing false witness. We too, just as Abram, when called by God and confronted by contradiction, say, amen, I believe.

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate
New Salisbury, IN*



Nine oblate novices were invested at Saint Meinrad on December 9, 2017. From left are: Jeff K. Frazee, Martha Gilliom, Matthew Graf, Dr. Kimberly Weber, Bryan Todd Walck, Jodi L. Knapp, Vincent J. Geremia, Juliet Lonth and Jerry Hopf.



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, (standing at the altar) speaks to the oblate novices before they make their promises of oblation, on December 9, 2017.

Online Store

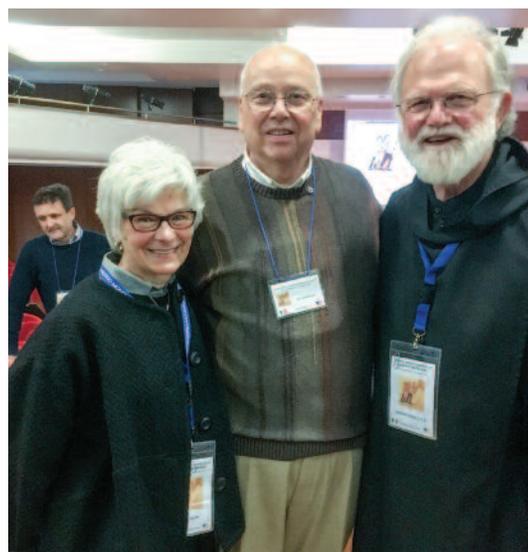
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Shop our new website for the latest books from Saint Meinrad authors, clothing and other items.



Marcia Werne, right, retired from her work in the Oblate Office at the end of December. The new administrative assistant for the Oblate Office is Brenda Black, left. She previously worked for Guest Services at Saint Meinrad.



From left, Oblate Director Janis Dopp, Rev. Dr. Bill Wilson and Fr. Jeremy King, OSB, represented Saint Meinrad Archabbey at the World Congress of Benedictine Oblates in Rome November 4-10.

The Busy Benedictine: Command Central

The Busy Benedictine is an occasional column about trying to be like a monk when you're working and taking care of kids.



Edward Castronova

Every time we go on a trip, there are lots of commands. I'm telling everyone to get in the car. Nina is telling the kids to brush their teeth and go to the

bathroom. The kids are telling me we should go to Moe's for lunch. Everybody is telling everybody else what to do. I don't know how we ever get anywhere.

Sometimes a family is like the bridge of a starship where everybody is a captain. It's not very effective, is it? If a group is going to work together in peace, somebody has to stop giving orders and start taking them.

With a few exceptions (like the military and sports teams), obedience has fallen on hard times of late. The modern world was kicked off 500 years ago by men who no longer wanted to obey the Pope. Our country was kicked off 250 years ago by men who no longer wanted to obey the King. The '60s generation no longer wanted to obey their parents. Millennials don't want to obey anybody.

It is strictly out of fashion to admit that you are willing to do something just out of obedience. Not because you agree with it, not because it feels good, not as a favor to someone, not because you are getting paid. You do it simply because it is a command and

you have chosen to be obedient. It is a different path than the world recommends.

Oblates choose this path because we have encountered the wisdom of St. Benedict, who teaches that obedience is an important virtue. As oblates, we are specifically called to obey the will of God. "Don't grumble," our teacher says. "Just do your work and say your prayers."

So the next time you are about to command the whole starship to turn around, stop and ask somebody else what to do.

*Edward (Ted) Castronova, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

Voices from the Past

January 1, 1918 (Vol. 1, No. 1)
Fr. Henry Brenner, OSB

To all our readers a bright and happy New Year! Though wars may rage about us, still let us, as the Following of Christ advises, while we keep one eye on earth not take the other from heaven!

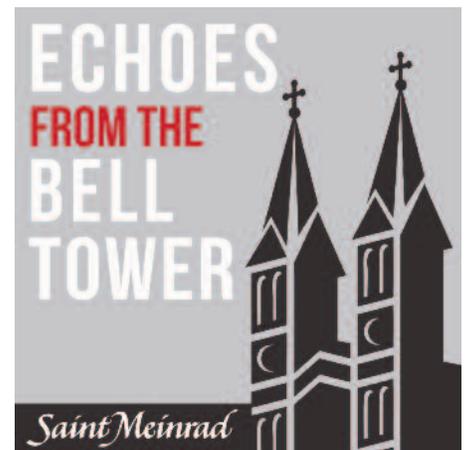
Whatever may happen in the world, we may with profit and joy still call to mind the thought which St. Paul placed before the first Christians, saying: "And we know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8).

As long as we are bright, we are happy, no matter what storms break around us; and our brightness is this,

the confidence we feel in Him who promises us His protection.

Such then is the first greeting of *The Oblate* – the greeting of good cheer and trust in God. We have our apportioned work, each in his way; let us attend to that and not worry inordinately about the rest but leave all to God. This, in our opinion, is the best way at the present time to wish a happy New Year.

PRAY FOR
VOCATIONS



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OBLATE HAPPENINGS



Photos, clockwise, from top left photo: Christopher Williams of Hobart, IN, was invested with the oblate scapular on September 9, 2017, by Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB.

Oblate librarian Ann Smith of Gahanna, OH, gives a reading during the blessing of the Alcuin Oblate Library at Saint Meinrad on December 8, 2017.

Jeff Frazee of St. Ann, MO, right, receives the blessed scapular from Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, at the investiture ceremony on December 9, 2017.

Thirteen oblates made their final oblations on December 9, 2017, in the Archabbey Church. From left are Mary Campanelli, Sandra Maschino, Jennifer Ertel, Jane McLeod, Kristin Campbell, Amanda Vogel, Rebecca Brune, Karen Adams, Jason Moore, Sunita Nunes, Frances Walker, Clayton Nunes and Scott McKee.

Oblate Chaplain Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, blesses the Alcuin Oblate Library on December 8, 2017.

OBLATE NEWS

Oblate Council learns of new projects

The Oblate Council gathered at Saint Meinrad for its 39th meeting on October 28, 2017. Bill Wilson chaired the meeting. Also present were Oblate Director, Janis Dopp, Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, Michelle Blalock, Becky Boyle, Al Kovacs, Mike Reffett, and Chris Topa. Jennie Latta attended part of the meeting by teleconference.

It was announced that oblates Dennis Skelton, Mike Reffett, and Pat Phillips have elected to retire from their roles on the advisory council. Each has contributed countless hours of dedicated service to the Oblate Community. They will be missed. The council welcomes new member Candee Mackell of Dayton, OH, who was unable to attend the meeting.

The council received updates about several new initiatives:

- Archabbot Kurt's appointment of several monks as deans to the oblate chapters has been well received by the chapters and by the deans themselves.
- The Archabbot's presiding at investitures and oblations will be expanded to include a special blessing of new oblates before the monastic community at Vespers.
- Br. Kolbe gave a presentation on establishing an online chapter for members of our oblate community who participated in Saint Meinrad's "One Bread, One Cup" youth conferences. The chapter is intended to be a pilot project. Additional online chapters are envisioned for oblates who do not live close enough to one another to form a traditional chapter.
- Novice Noel has been reorganizing our community's membership files. He visited the meeting to suggest that we might learn from

our data to attract, retain and better serve new and existing members.

- Br. Zachary is working with several Branchville Correctional Facility inmates who have expressed interest in becoming oblates. The council discussed ways that our community might welcome them.
- A new edition of the *Oblate Novice Companion* is nearing completion.
- Chris Topa offered a glimpse of the new Saint Meinrad Oblate Facebook page, which was recently made accessible to the general public. Visit www.facebook.com/SaintMeinradOblates.
- Mary Campanelli and Ann Smith continue to make improvements to our library. Their efforts include culling books to make room for volumes that better fit the collection and needs of our community. Look for news of a future book sale.
- Jennie Latta is exploring ways by which sung chant of psalter week I from the *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates* might be recorded and distributed.

- The possibility of publishing a supplement to our *Liturgy of the Hours* for liturgical seasons and feast days was also mentioned.
- The common format for oblate retreats is being adjusted. More time for personal prayer will be provided by reducing the number of sessions and socials. Selected retreat sessions may involve interactive participation.
- Adding another day of recollection to our annual calendar is being considered.

The council discussed a revision of our community's Angel Fund Guidelines. The Angel Fund assists Oblates for whom it would be financially difficult to visit and enjoy Saint Meinrad. Eligibility has been extended to those traveling to the Hill to make their investiture or Oblation.

After the meeting adjourned, participants Janis Dopp and Bill Wilson, along with Fr. Jeremy, OSB, set their sights toward Rome. They would be traveling there shortly to represent Saint Meinrad Archabbey and help facilitate the fourth World Congress of Benedictine Oblates.



Fr. Henry Byekwaso receives the final oblation of Dan Sheets of Mishawaka, IN, on October 8, 2017.

Council members look forward to hearing their report at our next meeting scheduled for April 28, 2018.

*Al Kovacs, oblate
Indianapolis, IN*

Louisville Oblate Chapter

The chapter held a potluck dinner on Sunday, November 19, at the home of chapter coordinators Deacon Rich and Cheri Zoldak in Louisville, KY. Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, led the evening prayer for the members in attendance.

INVESTITURES

October 8, 2017 – **Edward J. Vanek Jr.** and **Vicki L. Vanek**, both of Michigan City, IN

December 9, 2017 – **Jeff K. Frazee** of St. Ann, MO; **Vincent J. Geremia** of Ashland, KY; **Martha Gilliom** of West Lafayette, IN; **Matthew Graf** of Bloomington, IN; **Jerry Hopf** of Birdseye, IN; **Jodi L. Knapp** of Washington, IL; **Juliet Lonth** of Louisville, KY; **Bryan Todd Walck** of Lafayette, IN; **Dr. Kimberly Weber** of Heyworth, IL. ♦

OBLATIONS

September 28, 2017 – **Mary Teresa Nancy Maria Goretti Palau** of Delaware, OH

October 8, 2017 – **Daniel St. John Paul II Sheets** of Mishawaka, IN

November 11, 2017 – **Anne Hildegard Peacock** of St. Louis, MO

December 9, 2017 – **Karen Mary Magdalen Adams** of Haubstadt, IN; **Rebecca Patricia Brune** of Evansville, IN; **Mary Martha Campanelli** of Gahanna, OH; **Kristin Bernadette Campbell**, **Jennifer Scholastica Ertel**, **Jane Frances of Rome McLeod**, **Amanda Maximilian Kolbe Vogel** and **Frances Alice of Schaerbeek Walker**, all of North Vernon, IN; **Sandra**

Monica Maschino of Butlerville, IN; **Scott Francis of Assisi McKee** of Greens Fork, IN; **Jason Simeon Moore** of Dale, IN; **Clayton Joseph Nunes** and **Sunita Theodore Guerin Nunes**, both of Bloomington, IN. ♦

TRANSFER OF OBLATION

December 3, 2017 – **John Wallace** of Branchville, IN, transferred his oblation from the Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand to Saint Meinrad Archabbey. ♦

DEATHS

September 23, 2017 – **Reuben Tupas** of New York City, NY

October 21, 2017 – **Richard L. Johnson** of Muncie, IN

October 23, 2017 – **Christian McNamara** of Tampa, FL

December 17, 2017 – **James Riedford** of Evansville, IN ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 21, 2018: Oblate Day of Recollection for the Feast of St. Meinrad

March 20-22, 2018: Saint Meinrad Oblate Retreat with Fr. Denis Quinkert, OSB

March 24, 2018: Investitures and oblations at Saint Meinrad Archabbey

April 14, 2018: Louisville Day of Recollection with Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB ♦

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were Sandra Duffee, Ann Smith, Mary Campanelli, Novice Joseph Wagner, OSB, Novice Noel Zamora, OSB, Ruth Engs, Catherine Russell, Mike Edwards, Becky Boyle, Ted Castronova and Sarah Kraner. ♦

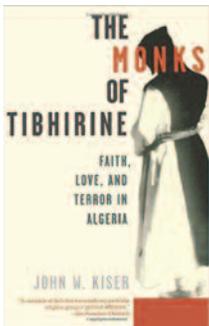


Martha Gilliom of West Lafayette, IN, receives a copy of the Rule of St. Benedict from Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, during her investiture as an oblate novice on December 9, 2017.



Reading Room

The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith, Love, and Terror in Algeria.
John W. Kiser, St. Martin's Press, 2002.



On March 27, 1996, seven monks in a monastery at Tibhirine, Algeria, were kidnapped by Algerian terrorists and eventually beheaded. Their heads were discovered in trees, but their bodies were never found. Two of the monks happened to be in a different area of the monastery and escaped.

This book is their story. John Kiser spent two years doing research for this book. He talked to families and friends of the monks, the two surviving monks, Algerian and French political and military leaders, the Trappist abbot general and other Trappist monks, Muslim leaders, and the villagers of Tibhirine.

It is also the story of the Algerian political, religious and terrorist upheavals and the relationship between the monks of Tibhirine and the local villagers, who were Muslim.

How did the monks and the Muslim villagers come to love, respect and depend on each other? Why did the monks decide to stay at their monastery despite warnings from terrorists, the Algerian and French governments, the bishop of Algiers and the Trappist abbot general?

This is a story of Christianity and Islam, love and respect, the Bible, the Koran, and St. Benedict's *Rule*. It may give some readers pause to think about the relationship of Christianity and Islam and perhaps one's religious practices.

*John Pitts
Louisville, OH*