



*Steven Smith is invested as a Benedictine oblate novice of Saint Meinrad Archabbey by Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, on September 28, 2019.*

## We depend on God's promises

*Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you..."* Genesis 12:1

Thus begins the formation of the people of God. God calls Abram, promising to make him a father of many people, a holder of land, and a blessing to the families of the earth.

What God's promising ultimately means is revealed as the rest of the story unfolds. Often there is much intrigue and challenge, even some testing of worthiness, yet throughout we see that if God is promising, we can trust those promises to be true.

Life for us means depending upon God's promises. In baptism we begin to live in the promise that we are now full members of the Church and the family of God. We receive the promise that our sins are forgiven, we

receive the Holy Spirit, and we are marked with the indelible seal of Christ. Now the challenges and intrigue, and even some testing, begin to unfold as we grow into the fullness of the faithfulness of God.

As Benedictine oblates, we take promising seriously. Through our baptismal and oblation promises, we respond to God's faithfulness as we choose to daily live in the light of Christ and by the *Rule of St. Benedict*.

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate  
New Salisbury, IN*



# A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received.”

*Rule of St. Benedict, 53:15*

“Hospitality is one form of worship,” the rabbi wrote. Benedictine spirituality takes this tendency seriously. (Joan Chittister, OSB)

We are to be generous and warm-hearted to the needy – poor both in body and spirit. Be concerned with the needs of others.

Jesus offered great kindness to the poor. Our faith helps us to penetrate the mask of poverty and brokenness of another, behind which Christ hides.

To follow the Benedictine way means to receive and support the poor. In so doing, Christ Himself is received.

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## Are we faithful to our promises?



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB

*Promise?*

*Yes, I promise.*

*Really?*

*Yes, honey, really.*

*Cross your heart and hope to die?*

Well, that last question certainly raised the stakes a bit!

In that never-to-be-experienced ideal world, we wouldn't need written, multi-page contracts to back up our agreements. Our word, perhaps solemnly sealed with the gesture of a handshake, would suffice.

Our world, however, seems to thrive on “revised words” (to put it charitably).

We so often revise or refine our promises. We say, “I didn't mean *that*,” or perhaps, “You're reading too much into what I said.”

And we know that even the most solemn promises – those of husband and wife to each other, of newly ordained priests to their bishops, and religious men and women professing solemn vows to God and their communities – are far too often “taken back.” Sad, tragic, unfortunate (and certainly unforeseen on

the day when the promise is made), but such is human nature, affected with an (unhealthy) dose of original sin.

Have we been faithful to what we have promised? An even bolder question would be: do we ever thank God for the promises He has made to us? Although we forget it so many times, our relationship to God is a two-way street.

God promised Abraham he would be the father of a great nation. He kept that promise. He promised through the prophets that He would send the world a savior. He kept that promise as well. And, like Father like Son! Jesus promised his disciples that He would be with them always, and that He would send them the Holy Spirit.

We are not always faithful, and for that we repent. But God always makes good on his promises. It is no wonder that, during the ceremony of solemn vows, the newly professed monk and the community solemnly chant these most reassuring words: *Uphold me, O Lord, according to your promise, and I shall live. And do not confound me in my expectations.*

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey

## The new Quarterly: Focused on formation



Janis Dopp

I have been reading the oblate newsletter for close to 30 years, and it has been a source of continued support on my journey as a Benedictine oblate. A couple of years ago, we realized the

oblate newsletter is the best tool for ongoing formation, since it is mailed to all our oblats four times a year.

Our oblats live all over the United States and beyond. Many of them have very few opportunities in their lives to visit Saint Meinrad. Some of them feel isolated and find it difficult to cultivate their relationship with the monastery. While we have 18 chapters, hundreds of oblats are not living close to any of them or to any other oblats.

We decided to create a format for this publication that would focus on ongoing formation. Each issue has a theme that is

developed in most of the articles from a variety of perspectives – from the abbot to our novices. This change has been well received. We even heard from oblate directors in other monasteries about the exceptional content of our publication. It is, in fact, much more than a newsletter.

With this issue, we are renaming this publication *Benedictine Oblate Quarterly*. Our emphasis will continue to be on producing a valuable tool for your spiritual growth, and our goal is to enhance the quality of our articles.

The practices that we use daily as Benedictine oblates help us to keep the promises we made at our oblation. But, it's also important to put those practices

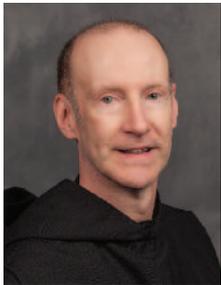
in context for a deeper understanding of what St. Benedict taught and how the practices have been lived out over the centuries.

We are the living part of an incredible heritage and tradition. We want to treasure our role in the line of holy men and women who understood the value of the way of life they had chosen.

Let's continue to study together, share our insights with one another, and contribute to the Benedictine legacy we have embraced as our own as oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

*Janis Dopp  
Oblate Director*

## Musings from the Chaplain



*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB*

The word, “promising” may be used as an adjective or a verb. An example as an adjective may be, “The sun is shining this morning and the day looks promising.” Here it refers to being encouraging, bright and hopeful. An example as a verb may be, “I am promising to be loyal to you.” Here it concerns giving assurance or giving one’s word to do something.

Scripture is filled with promises. The Lord has promised to supply every need we have, and that God’s grace is sufficient for us. God has promised that all things work together for good for those who love and serve Him faithfully. God has promised us victory over death and eternal life.

The Lord’s promises to us are many and they fill us with hope. Since God is pure truth, then what God says, goes. It doesn’t get any more promising than this.

*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB  
Oblate Chaplain*

We are all accustomed to promises. We are also accustomed to seeing them made and broken. Anyone who has lived for a number of years certainly never would claim to have kept every promise made. Hopefully over the years, we become wiser and so we think seriously about the possible consequences of keeping or breaking promises before we make them.

Through the baptismal promises that we made, or our godparents made for us, we promised to renounce sin, reject evil, and affirm our faith in the Holy Trinity and the Catholic Church.

*Saint Meinrad*  
**DAY OF SERVICE**  
*has been set for*  
**March 9, 2020.**  
*alumni.saintmeinrad.edu/DOS*

## OBLATES *In their own words*



*Oblate John Lehmer  
South Bend, IN*

“The greatest sense of blessing of the community is my relationship with other oblates and the monks. I can talk to anyone, almost anytime. Everybody has an open ear. I learn from them and hopefully others get a few insights from me.”



# Notes for Novices

## The oblation of our promises



*Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB*

Benedict is quite clear that newcomers to the monastic life are to be told about the hardships and difficulties that lead to God, so the monastic community can discern whether novices truly seek God (see RB ch. 58). Only once this initial testing and discernment are completed can novices make a

promise to remain stable to life-long conversion in obedience to God.

Monks and oblates fulfill these promises differently, though the overall essence is the same: being true to oneself in all humility to God and for others.

Stability of heart ensures that we ask for the courage to stay put when harsh difficulties arise. Fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life enables us to recommit to our promises each day, despite the ups and downs of life.

Obedience to the will of God reminds us that God will give each of us what we need to do his will by following the way that Jesus has shown us. Our promises to God comfort us when we fail and remind us to begin anew in the present moment.

This is why discernment in the novitiate is so vital to our life as Benedictines.

*Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB  
Oblate Novice Mentor*

## Cause for Canonization of Benedictine Oblate Dorothy Day continues

Benedictine Oblate Dorothy Day's cause for canonization has been under way since 2000. Cardinal John O'Connor began the process, which was continued by Cardinal Timothy Dolan in November 2012.

Laywoman Dorothy Day made her oblation at Holy Innocents Church, NY, on April 26, 1955, for St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, IL, with which she had been familiar since 1940. She co-founded the Catholic Worker movement in 1933 with French immigrant and former Christian Brother Peter Maurin, a teacher and laborer concerned with the plight of the poor.

A midlife Catholic convert, Dorothy Day was a journalist who was concerned with the poor and issues of social justice. The Catholic Worker movement included the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, houses of hospitality, and a return to the land through a "green revolution."

If you receive a favor or miracle from God through her intercession, please email Msgr. Gregory Mustaciulo at [Gregory.Mustaciulo@archny.org](mailto:Gregory.Mustaciulo@archny.org). You can learn more at [www.dorothydayguild.org](http://www.dorothydayguild.org).

Oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey have committed to praying the following prayer for the canonization of Dorothy Day on the first Thursday of every month. ♦

### Prayer for the Canonization of Servant of God Dorothy Day (1897-1980)

God our Father, Your servant Dorothy Day exemplified the Catholic faith by her life of prayer, voluntary poverty, works of mercy, and the justice and peace of the Gospel of Jesus.

May her life inspire your people to turn to Christ as their Savior, to see His face in the world's poor, and to raise their voices for the justice of God's kingdom.

I pray that her holiness may be recognized by your Church and that you grant the following favor that I humbly ask through her intercession: (mention your request)

I ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

# The Value of Vigilance in the Monastic Life

*This is the second article in a four-part series.*



*Fr. Justin DuVall, OSB*

In the monastic life, different values are held together in an interconnected web, and vigilance is one of those values. Not all the values have

equal weight, of course, but vigilance has its place within the entire network. Prayer, work, hospitality, mutual obedience – all of these are basic values that monastic life holds, and vigilance works together with them.

Any value that we personally hold does two things. First, because we believe it is important, it contributes to a sense of identity, both communal and individual, and so it helps us to know who we are and those who share our values.

Secondly, any value helps us to make sense of the world in which we live. It is a key for uncovering meaning, both for the everyday life we lead – our work, our family, our friendships – and for the larger complex society and culture in which we live it.

Both identity and meaning flow from the values that a person holds. The same is true for vigilance as a value in the monastic life. It helps monks to know who they are and how to make sense of the complex world in which they live.

Values do not arrive by email; we learn them and choose them, both consciously and subconsciously, through our interactions with others and the world. This dynamic is at work in every family household.

It is no different for the monastic household. The novitiate introduces newcomers to the values of monastic life, and profession of vows binds them to a lifelong “school of the Lord’s service,” which forms the monks in the way of the Gospel.

The value of vigilance has a basis in Jesus’ parable (Luke 12.35-38) about the servants who await the master’s return. Their mindfulness of his future return is exactly what governs their present actions.

In this parable, the servants’ intentional fulfillment of their duties, even as they await the return of the master, reinforces their identity in the household. They know who they are, as well as who they are not, and are steady in their vigilance.

The temptation to blow it all off or to assume the role of the master and treat their equals cruelly threatens the sense of self-possession they have. It would result in confusion and chaos in the household. So for these servants, the value of vigilance strengthens their identity and helps them make sense of the world in which they live.

In the monastic household, vigilance works the same way. Vigilance helps monks avoid a slothful forgetfulness – the spiritual kind spoken about in the first article on vigilance – a forgetfulness both of who they have vowed themselves to become, and of the fraternal relationships of the monastic household that support their efforts to remain faithful.

Through a constant remembrance of God’s presence, even when it seems like He is absent, monks keep their hearts alive in the present with that

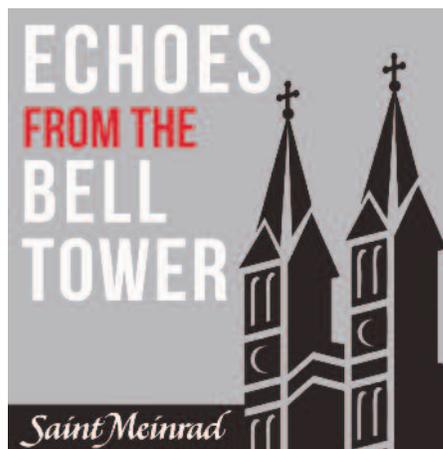
“good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life” (RB 72.2).

While the specific word *vigilance* itself never appears in the *Rule*, the value of vigilance permeates it. It is not merely an idea, nor an ideal; vigilance is a value that informs the way monks live, helping them to remain faithful to their vow of *conversatio morum* and to make sense of this beautiful, wounded world in which they live.

Vigilance is the unsleeping third eye through which a monk mindfully looks both within and without, in order to perceive the mystery of God in which the world lives and in which the monk lives in the world.

Like any value, vigilance needs concrete expression. In the next article, I will look at a few ways by which the *Rule* embeds the value of vigilance into the daily life of the monastery.

*Fr. Justin DuVall, OSB, monk  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*



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# Reflections from the Wilderness:

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## Footprints can tell our stories to others

Footprints. We all have them. They identify us like a signature. Just like fingerprints, they are unique. They are a form of information that illustrates our presence in life. On a dusty path or muddy road, they leave traces of us. They are emblems of the heaviness and weariness we may sometimes experience.

Sometimes we see them on a lonely path or road. When there are many footprints, it is often difficult to tell what is happening or who is going where. We often don't pay attention to footprints, but in truth, footprints can tell a story.

It is our story of life, of joys and sadness, of want and blessing, of future promises and lost dreams. Even when others have no idea of what we have seen or where we have been or

where we want to go, our footprints convey a message about us.

As we grow older, and hopefully wiser, our memories become footprints. As we look ahead to the future, we often need to respond to these memories and the promises they held. We know we cannot change the past, but who does not hope for a bright future?

Sometimes we cannot plan for what life may throw at us. At those times, we must walk in faith. In any time of sorrow, who has not wanted to walk with peace?

At those times, clinging to God's grace and promises can comfort us. When we are weak and weary, there is nothing like mercy to ease our burdens.

Worries and sorrows have a way of directing our paths. Walking with humbleness can clear our pathway to see what promises lie ahead, giving our steps a fresh perspective. Being mindful of what we can control and giving our life over to the Lord for guidance can direct our walk.

Respect the value of compassion, understand the power of grace, and use the blessing of mercy. Our footprints make a valuable imprint on others. Choose wisely! May your steps demonstrate who you are in ways that benefit our world. As Jeremiah 10:23 says, "Lord, I know that a person does not control their own life. They don't direct their own steps." Now that is a promise.

*Ron Lewis, oblate  
Putnamville, IN*

## Mark 12:28-34

### An invitation to love yourself

Have you ever made a mistake? Of course, we're human, and humans mess up more than we would like to admit. When we make mistakes, we must move forward through forgiveness. We know that God loves us and forgives us, no matter the circumstances.

The question here is: Do we forgive ourselves? I know I'm my own worst critic and I'm harder on myself than anyone else ever could be. This comes from not loving ourselves like we are told in this Gospel.

Elsewhere in scripture we're told that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. I'm going to take that out of context and use it here. First, we are told to love God. Then we are told to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. What if we don't really love ourselves? It is impossible to give away something you don't have.

So we must first love our self, not prideful or self-righteous love, but a joyful and caring love. This will reflect in love for our neighbor. And loving our neighbor is loving God, since Christ dwells in all of us.

If I don't have self-love, I can't love my neighbor or God. You can't have one without the other, and you can't show love if you don't know love.

*Robert Branson, oblate  
Branchville, IN*

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# Considering the Psalms:

## Psalm 12 reminds us of God's promises



*Kathleen Polansky*

I have spent the last three months preparing for and recovering from surgery. Yesterday I learned that I have at least another month of recovery ahead. In this time of weakness, it has been difficult to take on much reading material of any substance, so I focused on the news media.

Children are still being separated from their parents and placed in detention centers. The Amazon is burning, as are parts of Africa and California. Another hurricane of enormous proportion has caused devastation to the Bahamas and moved northward for more destruction of lives. There are bombings and missiles being tested.

Several more mass shootings have occurred with more deaths and hospitalizations. Young immigrants who were invited to the United States for life-saving medical treatment not available in their home countries were given 33 days to leave, constituting a death sentence for each of them.

That's when I broke. I opened to Psalm 12. (NRSV)

Help, O Lord, for there is no longer anyone who is godly; the faithful have disappeared from humankind.

They utter lies to each other; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great

boasts, those who say, "With our tongues we will prevail; our lips are our own – who is our master?"

"Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan, I will now rise up," says the Lord; "I will place them in the safety for which they long."

The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

You, O Lord, will protect us; you will guard us from this generation forever.

On every side the wicked prowls, as vileness is exalted among humankind.

While the beginning of the psalm seems only a repetition of the news media, the psalm goes on to remind us of the Lord's promises to protect us and guard us. The promises of the Lord are pure and forever, and God sees not only the behavior of the wicked, but also the harm being done to the least among us. Just as the speech of the wicked reveals their character, the Word of God reveals God's divine truth.

This psalm cries out to us as much today as it did to our ancient ancestors. Amid chaos, fear, hateful hyperbole and evil deeds, we are still encouraged by the psalmist to find hope and strength in God's promises.

The covenant God made with Abraham is still a reality for us. ("I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to

you and to your offspring after you" Genesis 17:7). God's promise remains as true to us as it did to Abraham.

We must be in solidarity with those who are being systematically victimized (Verse 5). Our place is with God and not with those who seek to do harm. Our protection is as a people of God. We profess our security to be in God and God alone. We are God's servants; our lives are not our own. As baptized Christians, we are sent into the world, but we do not belong to the world.

As a lector trainer, I tell lectors that God speaks, but we voice. We give verbalization to the Word. In contrast to the psalm's reference, our lips are not our own. Our service is to God, not to those who seek to obfuscate us in our calling. Today those who are able are reaching out to comfort, donate, aid, protest and rebuild. That is the promise of God at work in our world. It is faith engaging in these times of pain and evil deeds.

The promises of God bring forth a reminder that, as believers, we are people of blessings. We are blessed and we are to be a blessing to others. We are people of the Beatitudes. The promises of God are manifest in ways that contradict our desire for retaliation, retribution or revenge. The promises are a reality through the blessings Jesus taught in the Beatitudes.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who mourn... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... Blessed are the

*Continued on p. 11*

# The Busy Benedictine

## Recall that oblate promises are not vows-lite

*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*

When we became oblates, we made three promises: stability of heart, fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life, and obedience to the will of

God. These are promises, not vows. Vows are the professions that people make when they become monks. Monks make vows. Oblates make promises. What's the difference?

Maybe a promise is like a vow-lite. An example would be the promise I make to Nina not to let the dog sleep on her pillow. She hates that. Whenever the dog goes to sleep there – she loves that pillow – an epic struggle ensues: two mammals, one pillow. Nina always wins, but we both enjoy the dog's stubbornness and shameless favor-seeking.

Beagles are disobedient, but very cute, and often get away with things that would send other dogs to the pound. That dog is so darn cute I can't resist setting up the fight, so I invite her onto the pillow when my wife is not looking, despite my promise. The struggle ensues and we both, Nina and I, get a good laugh.

Now consider the context. This particular promise is made as part of a comic situation. What if I made a promise to God almighty that that dog was not going to sleep on my wife's pillow? That would be different. And what if the matter at hand were not canine sleeping patterns, but something as serious as life itself?

Promises rise to the level of vows as they are more solemn. What makes a promise solemn is the attitude of the person making the promise, the content of the promise, and the nature of the person receiving the promise. When I became an oblate, I took the promise as seriously as a vow. The promises themselves are weighty: They change how we live every day.

And to whom are we making our promise? Is it the abbey, or St. Benedict? Maybe it is to the oblate director: "Dear Janis, I promise to do X, Y and Z. Sincerely, Ted." Is it to the monks? Or are we not promising our Father in heaven that we will live a new life, a life of stability, fidelity and obedience?

Oblate promises are not vows-lite. The difference between oblates and

monks is that monks open themselves to many corrections on the part of their confreres. Every time the *Rule* says, "...shall be subjected to the punishment of the *Rule*," it reminds us of the depth of the monks' commitment. Monks must agree to correction, or they will be asked to leave. Monks can get fired.

Oblates don't receive correction when they fail to live up to their promises. Oblates can, if they wish, pretend the promises they made didn't really matter. However, by giving up on the promises, an oblate becomes a mere shadow of the person they said they were going to be. Monks can get fired by the other monks, but oblates can only fire themselves.

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



*David Freyer prays at the beginning of the oblation and investiture rites in September.*

# Finding Christ at the Border

## Volunteer helps deliver the promise of a better life

Recently, I met an extraordinarily determined Catholic nun named Sister Norma Pimentel in the city of McAllen, Texas. Sister Norma is the executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley Humanitarian Respite Center and one of the nation's strongest champions of immigrants. Somewhat of a celebrity within social service circles, she has been recognized by Pope Francis for her immigration work and featured on all the major news outlets.

On arrival I was greeted by hundreds of immigrants and a dozen volunteers. ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) was emptying the detention centers over the next few days, so there was a record number of asylum seekers. I and other volunteers made sandwiches, assembled hygiene kits and confirmed bus tickets to cities across the country for folks to find their families.

I was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of people, all coming here with the hope of a promising future. Most children were under the age of 7. Many pregnant women appeared to be no older than 15 or 16. Their stories were of people escaping violence. Women were being raped or killed in Honduras because crimes against women are not investigated. Gangs and drug cartels ruled.

The stories are horrific. These people walk, hitchhike, ride buses thousands of miles to reach the United States. The risks and hardship are incredible; the danger is extreme. Women and children face abduction and trafficking along the way. Tears well in the eyes of the men who tell of the difficulties they have endured.

When they reach the border, it is often the cartels that determine whether they can approach the legal ports of entry. Others risk their lives by crossing the Rio Grande. All are held in detention until it is determined if they will be allowed to remain. If eligible, they will be assigned a court date for an amnesty hearing and typically stay with families in the United States.

The level of gratitude expressed by the immigrants for the most basic things we provided was humbling. Shoelaces, soap and deodorant were met with heart-filled appreciation. The broad grins were evidence of their relief to be welcomed in such a manner. They came for the promise of a better, safer life. We were their first experience of that promise.

At one point, I felt connected to these people in a way that I still struggle to put into words. The simplest way to describe what I felt was a unity that transcends color of skin, nation of origin, ethnicity or language. I saw us as I can only imagine God sees us: as individuals joined in God. Separate, yet one – each of us loved and unified under God.

I gained a deeper knowing that, if I failed to recognize anything less than our equality, I was denying that God is ultimately and infinitely truth, and ultimately and infinitely present in



each of us. I was overwhelmed by knowing that God loves these people as much as he loves you and me. We are all made in the image of God.

We live in a country blessed with freedoms and a promising future for its citizens. Our faith calls us to listen to the people who desire those same promises, but come from places that starve them of this freedom. God calls us to hear this promise and to see it in the lives of those who struggle to live in that promise. As God's promise of unconditional love is given to us, so we are called to live that promise for each other.

*Scott McKee, oblate  
Greens Forest, IN*

# Meeting the Monks

## A visit with Fr. Pius Klein, OSB



Fr. Pius Klein, OSB

### A Single Step

For Fr. Pius Klein, the journey toward a lifelong promise of fidelity, not only to the monastic way of life but to a certain community – Saint Meinrad Archabbey – began with a single step.

“In grade school, I thought of dedicating myself to religious life,” he recalls. Finishing the eighth grade in 1953, Charles Klein wanted very much to dedicate himself to the Lord and had a Mass offered for his intention of discernment. Soon after, his parish priest, a Saint Meinrad alumnus, asked him, “Charles, what are you doing next year?”

Charles shared his desire to give his life to God in monastic life. Soon a letter was on its way to the Archabbey. Then Charles and his parents made a visit to Saint Meinrad. By the fall semester of 1953, Charles had become a full-time high school freshman in the minor seminary of Saint Meinrad.

Charles continued to seek God during his high school years. When he first

came to the Archabbey, he envisioned himself joining the community as a monk – a brother. A year after graduating in 1957, he entered the novitiate. As is the tradition, for his first vows the next April, he submitted three names to Archabbot Bonaventure Knaebel (1955-1966) – St. Pascal, St. Eugene and St. Pope Pius X.

From his first vows over 60 years ago, the name Charles was no more. Pius Klein was his new monastic name. “I remember Dad being here for my first vows,” Fr. Pius says, “on the front steps of the [Archabbey] church. He said, ‘Well, Charles, I really like your [new] name.’ Mom said, ‘I don’t care. You’ll always be Charles to me.’” Fr. Pius’ mother always called him by his given name despite his new religious identity, he says.

### Scaling the Heights

What was next for the newly minted brother? A time of service in Peru. He would have left for Peru right after his final vows, but Archabbot

Bonaventure, after consulting with the Archabbey Council, determined that young Br. Pius needed to wait at least a year.

The year passed swiftly, and in 1964, he was on his way to the Archabbey’s priory at Huaraz, 10,013 feet above sea level in north-central Peru. During his time in South America, he would serve in various ways, including school principal, English and religion teacher, and seminary disciplinarian. He also would see up close the desperate need for priestly ministry.

One day while out with the priory’s superior, Fr. Bede Jamieson, a mother cradling a deathly ill baby in her arms came running up to them, pleading with them to baptize her child. Fr. Bede looked directly at Br. Pius. “You take care of it,” he said.

The only water Br. Pius could find was in their car’s radiator. Lowering a handkerchief down into the reservoir, he brought up the wet cloth, wrung it out over the baby, and completed the baptism. The baby died soon after.

### Listening for God’s Call ... and Answering

It was the time of decision ... and wrestling. Was God calling him to the priesthood now? “It was a one-year fight within [myself],” Fr. Pius recalls.

Fr. Bede’s words of wisdom echoed in his mind. “Pius, you’ve got the last word on that,” he had said. If Br. Pius hadn’t gone to Peru, would he have heard the call?

“I was out one evening walking,” he continues. “The moon was very bright. And I decided on that walk.” The decision: OK, God.

Fr. Bede's response came swiftly. "Fine, we'll take it from there," Fr. Pius recalls him saying.

As is often the case, timing is everything.

On May 31, 1970, at 3:23 p.m. local time, a 7.9-magnitude undersea earthquake struck off the coast of Peru. The Great Peruvian Earthquake killed an estimated 74,000, injured more than 143,000, and destroyed the homes of over one million people. High up in the Andes, the quake leveled the city of Huaraz. It also took the life of Br. Pius' mentor, the beloved Fr. Bede.

Miraculously, Br. Pius escaped injury in the quake. Soon after this devastation, he returned to the Archabbey to begin his studies for the priesthood, culminating in his ordination in 1974.

### The Priest Returns

After his ordination, he returned to Peru. Now Fr. Pius Klein, he became pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish in Lima. In 1978, he was elected prior. The priory community could elect its own prior, he recalls, subject to approval by the Saint Meinrad

archabbot. Speaking by ham radio, the archabbot asked Fr. Pius, "So, do you want to accept, over?"

"Yes, over."

"Fine, over."

And so, with the confidence of his community behind him, Fr. Pius assumed the helm of leadership for the next six years. Then, in 1985, Fr. Pius closed his chapter of life in Peru and returned to the Archabbey. He then served as chaplain to the Sisters of St. Benedict at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand and as director of food service at Saint Meinrad.

Then, in 1987, he was assigned as pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Huntingburg, where I first met him. I asked Fr. Pius how he has remained faithful to the promises made so long ago. I wondered at how someone begins a journey and remains true to it for a lifetime.

"Trust in God," he says. "You have to look at the big picture.... I may not understand it, but I accept it."

*Angie McDonald, oblate  
Huntingburg, IN*

*continued from p. 7*

merciful... Blessed are the pure in heart... Blessed are the peacemakers... Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake... Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account" (Mt. 5:3-11).

The world is gasping under the weight of all that is happening. Through the promises of God, the wicked that prowl and the vileness that is being exalted cannot last. We are called to take what is wrong and make it right; to attest to the suffering of today and show mercy and compassion; to strive for what is righteous and to stand with those who mourn; to speak for those who have no voice.

We are called to be peacemaker and blessing. The promises of God lead to action. Those crying out are promised God's safety from this generation. In that promise, we find hope, healing and mission.

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate  
New Salisbury, IN*



*Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, plays the cello at the beginning of the oblation and investiture rites in September.*



*Fr. Pius Klein, OSB, gives the sign of peace to Margaret Theis after the oblation and investiture rites on September 28.*

# Advisory groups report on projects

The Saint Meinrad Archabbey Oblate Advisory Council and Oblate Finance Committee met on October 18 and 19, 2019. Following are some of the highlights:

**Saying Goodbye and Hello:** We are grateful to Al Kovacs, who has been a blessing to the work of the Oblate Council the past 12 years. Al has decided to resign from his position with the council to concentrate more intently on the formation of the Indianapolis chapter, of which he is the co-coordinator, and to spend time on the Hill with his wife and family.

We are also thankful that Rick Tomsick has agreed to serve on the council. Rick hails from the Cleveland area. We will benefit from his spirited wisdom and experience as an attorney.

**Finance Committee:** At the close of the fiscal year on June 30, 2019, oblate expenses slightly exceeded the budget. The budget for fiscal year 2019-2020 has been finalized.

Potential increases in spending could come from CD production, printing of new Liturgy of the Hours books, and the increase in the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter (now renamed Quarterly).

**Novice News:** We are blessed to have Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB, as the novice mentor. He works diligently to oversee the formation of the novices. He has endeavored to individualize the experience to meet the needs of the novices. Br. Stanley is also creating an evaluation tool so novices can share their perspectives and thoughts on the formation process. This feedback will allow the Oblate Office to better assist the novices in their journey.

**Formation and Readings for Advent and Lent:** Novice Dennis Reyes, who assists in the Oblate Office, has been hard at work on formation pieces for the oblates, including readings with audio music during Advent. All writings were done by monks of Saint Meinrad. The Lenten booklet will include writings from oblates. Be on the lookout for that soon.

**Online Chapter:** Slack is our online chapter, which affords those not tied to a local chapter a place to share and discuss their oblate journey. There are daily postings of the *Rule* as well as book discussions. Holly Vaughan is coordinator of the Slack Chapter. She presented the forum to the Council. Her enthusiasm and energy for this group of oblates are evident.

**Alcuin Library Update:** Mary and Ann continue to work on organizing and updating the resources and check-out procedures for the library in the Oblate Office. All books are now catalogued and in the database. The

new check-out system is easy and allows for better tracking of titles.

**Dorothy Day:** The Benedictine Oblates of Saint Meinrad have recommitted to praying for the canonization of Dorothy Day. We are asked to pray every first Thursday of the month. If you are not doing this, please accept this challenge. If you are already praying, thank you and please continue to do so. You can find prayers specifically for this intention online.

**Upcoming Dates in 2020:** Retreat with Fr. Patrick Caveglia, OSB, March 20-22; Investitures and Oblations – March 28, June 13, September 26, December 5; Oblate Study Days with Fr. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, June 8-11; Midwest Woodlands Regional Meeting, September 27-29.

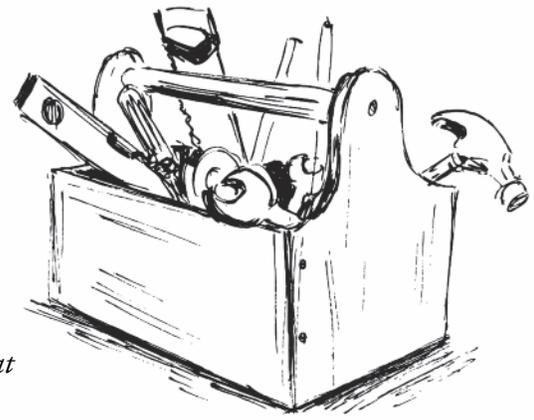
The Oblate Council will meet next on April 25, 2020. ♦



*Thirteen people become oblates during the September rites in the Archabbey Church. From left are David Freyer, Charles Thatcher, Pamela Washburn, Billy Joe Patterson, Margaret Theis, John Peter Radez, Abigail McFeely, Norbert Strobel, Rachel Bourneuf, Jim Clerc, Marilyn Clerc, Steve Anslinger and Laura Jean Flaherty.*

# The Oblate Toolbox

## Start with the tool of listening



*Editor's note: This issue marks the debut of a new column by oblate Angie McDonald of Huntingburg, IN, a member of the Jasper chapter. Inspired by Chapter 4 of the Rule of St. Benedict, her column will explore the various tools at our disposal in St. Benedict's toolbox.*

*"These, then, are the tools of the spiritual craft ... the workshop where we are to toil faithfully at all these tasks is the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the community." – Rule of St. Benedict 4:75, 78*



*Angie McDonald*

It is one thing to promise something; it is quite another to keep that promise. How are we all doing with keeping our oblate promises?

Let us review these three things: obedience, stability of heart, and fidelity to the monastic way of life.

After testing the waters for a year as an oblate novice, I took the plunge with my final oblation in the Archabbey Church. My husband and daughter attended, as did two members from the Jasper Chapter. I had undertaken a new way of spiritual growth, a way all of us have chosen as oblates.

As we run the way of God's commands, Benedict's *Rule* is like the GPS in your Garmin: Go this way. And if you get off the path, a voice speaks: "Recalculating."

The first tool in the *Rule* toolbox is listening. Many of the conferences and presentations by the monks have focused on obedience, which is joined at the hip to the skill of listening. In this day of nonstop electronic noise and stimulation, however, listening in the quiet can seem to be an impossible goal.

We squirm in the silence. Our cell phones interrupt us with incessant notifications. We find it hard to focus on what God is saying through the Scriptures. And our to-do list looms larger in our minds than the presence of God in the Eucharist.

To really listen, we must get quiet. To get quiet, we must set aside our distractions. As we cultivate quiet, we begin to pay attention to the inner voice that comes to us through the psalms and prayers of Lauds, Vespers and Compline.

The promise made at our final oblation is our pledge to allow God to enter and inhabit our busy lives. As we take the time to listen, we will live out our promise of obedience as we hear and respond to what the Holy Spirit is speaking to our hearts.

As we pick up and use the tool of listening, we will be able to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. A listening heart is an obedient heart.

*Angie McDonald, oblate  
Huntingburg, IN*



*Charles Thatcher signs his vow chart in front of Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, during the oblation rites in September.*

# OBLATE NEWS

## New Oblate Chapter Commissioned

A new oblate chapter in Columbus, IN, was commissioned on September 12, 2019, at St. Bartholomew Church by Br. Zachary Wilberding, OSB. Attending were Fr. Clem Davis, oblates and novices from Columbus, and guests from Bloomington, Greensburg and Plainfield.

The chapter has 11 oblates and three novices. Elaine Zimmer and John Brooks are the chapter coordinators; they have been oblates for six years and one year, respectively. The oblates and novices previously were associated with the Bloomington chapter.

The chapter is grateful to the parent chapter for supporting the spiritual needs of its oblates and novices until now. The Columbus oblates have been meeting for about a year for Vespers and reflections monthly under the leadership of Elaine Zimmer. Plans are to hold chapter meetings on the second Thursday of the month at St. Bartholomew Parish.



*Members of the newly commissioned oblate chapter in Columbus, IN, gather for a photo.*

## Donate to Saint Meinrad by shopping Amazon

Are you aware that Amazon will donate to Saint Meinrad for every item you purchase? It is easy and does not change the cost of your purchase. Simply go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) from your web browser.

On your first visit to “AmazonSmile,” select “Saint Meinrad Archabbey” from the list of charitable organizations to receive donations from eligible purchases before shopping. Amazon will remember your selection of Saint Meinrad, and every eligible purchase will result in a donation sent to Saint Meinrad.

From then on, every time you log into Amazon, do so from [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and you will automatically be making a donation. If you already have an account with Amazon, that will remain the same.

## OBLATIONS

September 28, 2019 – Steve Anslinger, Loveland, OH; Rachel Bourneuf, St. Louis, MO; Jim Clerc and Marilyn Clerc, Columbus, IN; Laura Flaherty, Orland Park, IL; David Freyer, Pasadena, CA; Abigail McFeely, Connersville, IN; Billy Patterson Jr., Pittsboro, IN; John Peter Radez, Evansville, IN; Norbert Strobel, Coldwater, MI; Charles Thatcher, Winter Springs, FL; Margaret Theis, Homer Glen, IL; Pamela Washburn, Mishawaka, IN. ♦

## INVESTITURES

September 28, 2019 – Amy Balcam, Bloomington, IN; Micah Beck and Sonia Keepes, Mt. Carmel, IL; Tilde Bricker, Madeline Couch, Sandra Long and Bette Niedblaski, Columbus, OH; Judy Campbell, Champaign, IL; Karen Dwyer, South Bend, IN; Jacquelyn Edwards, Versailles, KY; Craig Galbraith, Kure Beach, NC; Richard Getch, Carmel, IN; Debra Hansen, Worthington, OH; Daniel Lear, St. Charles, MO; Valerie Morgan, Charlotte, NC; Allen Raver, Anderson, IN; John Shawler, Hurricane, WV; Steven Smith, Cincinnati, OH; Beverly Weinhold, Louisville, KY. ♦

## DEATHS

Dr. Maurice Keller of Evansville, IN – August 23, 2019

Mary Frances Elbert of Boise, ID – September 30, 2018

Fr. Robert Goodrum of Monticello, IN – June 10, 2019

Cyrilla Schatz of St. Meinrad, IN – September 10, 2019

Mary Ann Fortkamp of Kettering, OH – May 28, 2019

Carolyn “Kay” Etienne of Evansville, IN – January 28, 2018

# OBLATE NEWS

William S. Fabianic of Orlando, FL –  
September 27, 2019

Mary Jo Melody of Copley, OH –  
December 9, 2019

Mary M. Northerner of Cannelton,  
IN – December 10, 2019 ♦

## ANNIVERSARIES

25th: Remedios Anne Cabanilla of  
New York, NY; Mary E. Gallagher of  
Shelbyville, IN; Helen Kite of  
Indianapolis, IN

60th: John Busam of Huron, OH;  
Joyce Greenwood of Tell City, IN;  
Angelo Musone of Lady Lake, FL

70th: Elizabeth Wollenmann of  
Ferdinand, IN ♦

## UPCOMING EVENTS

March 20-22, 2020: Oblate Retreat at  
Saint Meinrad, Presenter: Fr. Patrick  
Caveglia, OSB

March 28, 2020: Investitures and  
Oblations

June 8-11, 2020: Oblate Study Days

## VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office  
were Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB,  
Ann Smith, Mary Campanelli, Fr.  
Mateo Zamora, OSB, Novice Dennis  
Reyes, OSB, Candidate Simon Holden,  
Becky Boyle, Marie Kobos, Michelle  
Blalock, Ron DeMarco, Al Kovacs,  
Jennie Latta, Maureen and Paul  
Reichardt, George Thompson, Rick  
Tomsick, Chris Topa, Holly Vaughan  
and Bill Wilson. ♦

*Top photo - Br. Zachary Wilberding, OSB,  
installs Shirley Galey as the Co-coordinator of the  
Tell City Chapter.*

*Bottom photo - Oblate Fran Brown, a member of  
the council for St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities in  
New Albany, IN, works with two seminarians,  
left, Wojtek Sobczuk, and right, Oscar Romero,  
who do pastoral ministry at St. Elizabeth, a  
residential home for women in crisis pregnancy or  
escaping domestic violence.*

## We want you and your articles!

*The Benedictine Oblate* is looking for news and happenings about you or your oblate chapter. Whether or not you are connected to a chapter, you are connected to Saint Meinrad and we want to hear what's going on with you.

You are invited to submit news and information about your chapter, write an article about your Benedictine journey, submit a book review for the Reading Room column, or send in photos of you or your chapter engaged in oblate activities.

All submissions must include your name, city and state, and an explanation of how it connects to the theme. Submissions will be edited to fit the theme or need of the quarterly. A 500-word or less limit is suggested for all submitted articles. Please send all submissions to Kathleen Polansky at [kpolanskyoblate@yahoo.com](mailto:kpolanskyoblate@yahoo.com).

### Upcoming themes and submission dates:

Spring 2020 – Stability (February 1 deadline)

Summer 2020 – Fidelity (May 1 deadline)

Fall 2020 – Obedience (August 1 deadline)

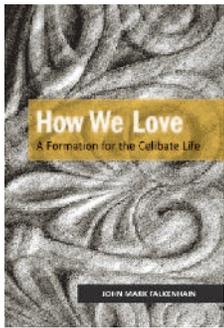




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## Reading Room

*How We Love: A Formation for the Celibate Life* by John Mark Falkenhain, OSB. The Liturgical Press, 2019.



Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, is a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and a licensed clinical psychologist. He is well qualified to write a useful and thorough program for celibacy formation for men and women. He has experience in research, writing and teaching in the area of celibacy formation for priests and religious.

The book has four major content areas: motives for chaste celibacy, theological aspects of celibacy chastity, sexual identity, and skills for celibate living. This is a timely book for the Church in troubled times. Br. John Mark has the experience and literary courage to apply his knowledge so the layperson can understand the various aspects of celibacy for those contemplating the religious life.

Adhering to celibacy can be uppermost in the minds of young adults who are discerning priesthood or the religious life. Br. John Mark presents his findings to answer this fundamental challenge.

This book represents years of Br. John Mark's work as a clinical psychologist, teacher, lecturer and monk. This book will serve as a valuable resource to formation directors and the seminarians they form. It will provide valuable insights for vocation and formation directors in the assessment of candidates to the religious life.

It will help oblates who want to understand how to live a life of celibacy with integrity. The topic of clergy sexual abuse he presents can serve to foster understanding by those living in the secular world. It can be a valuable tool in workshops, seminars and discussion groups far beyond the borders of monasteries and seminaries.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate  
Bloomington, IN*