



*Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, reads and signs the oblates' Bona Opera cards at the start of Lent.*

## Fidelity: The challenge to remain faithful

“Christmas in July” is abhorrent to me. Taking a holy feast that celebrates the fidelity of God choosing to become one with humanity and turning it into not just one occasion for rapacious consumerism, but a second event in the middle of the year, leaves me exasperated.

Remaining faithful to the intention of our holy days and not the hype with which our culture surrounds them is one focus for fidelity. Lent was about to begin as I first wrote this. The chocolate bunnies were already in all the stores.

Walter Brueggemann states, “As Paul spoke . . . , he knew about a world of fickle deception and betrayal, as do we. The world of advertising, of ideology, of euphemism offers us endless phoniness that coerces and manipulates and invites into a virtual world that has no staying power.”

And then we faced a fidelity challenge beyond our imagining. Our lived faith got upended in a way not experienced in our lifetimes. Being faithful demanded new forms and inventive intention. Fidelity forced us to dig deeper than following our

usual celebrating routine. We strained to find faithfulness in prayer by coming together in new ways.

I thought of the first Passover. God told the Jews to stay home! They were to mark their homes and eat their meal in a way not done before. We had to do that. We found communion in distance and desire in separation, and we felt a loss over not being able to receive the sacraments.

Examining what is truly important in our celebrations became a discussion. St. Paul puts it, “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Romans 15:5f*).

Beyond society’s ephemerality is our God of fidelity, who makes and keeps promises. This issue of the *Benedictine Oblate Quarterly* will examine fidelity and its grace in which we are all called to dwell.

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate  
New Salisbury, IN*



# A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

When they are to be received, they come before the whole community in the oratory and promise stability, fidelity to the monastic life, and obedience. This is done in the presence of God and the saints to impress on the novices that if they ever act otherwise, they will surely be condemned by the one they mock.

*Rule of St. Benedict, 58:17*

Our hearts are laid open to be reformed in the tradition of monasticism. Fidelity allows our failures to become steps of growth toward holiness.

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## Fidelity: I know it when I see it



*Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB*

Asked to define fidelity, I wouldn't first turn to the dictionary. I'd turn to my memories. I'd turn to some of the memorable people I have known.

Asked to define fidelity, I'd think first of my Dad. He and Mom were married for 43 years. Other couples have been married longer, of course. But my Mom and Dad were married as long as possible – right up to my Mom's stroke and her death in intensive care some six weeks later.

My Dad visited her in the hospital every day. He would read her the paper. He would say the Liturgy of the Hours with her. He would go through the mail. Was she aware of what he was doing? We don't know. But it was something he wanted to do. Something he had to do. He knew what he was doing.

Asked to define fidelity, I'd think also of Fr. Theodore Heck, OSB. A monk of

Saint Meinrad, Fr. Theodore died in 2009 at the age of 108. He "retired" at the age of 70, but then spent the next 19 years as pastor of one of our small country parishes. Then he kept on learning. And reading. And praying. Things he felt he had to do. He knew what he was doing.

Asked to define fidelity, I'd think especially of so many of our medical professionals during this pandemic. How many stories have we come across where, asked by others what keeps them going into the hospital "battle zone" day after day, at ever-increasing risk to themselves, they answer, "I'm a doctor; I made a promise to do my best to heal." "I'm a nurse; it's what I do." These people know what they are doing.

I'm still not sure how I would define fidelity. But I know there are certain virtues I'll always associate with it. Duty. Selflessness. Sacrifice. Love. Sanctity.

Define fidelity? I know it when I see it.

*Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*

## Fidelity: How we are faithful to our promises



*Janis Dopp*

As oblates, our promise of "fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life" can be perplexing to some because it isn't black and white. There isn't one right way of doing it. For each

oblate, the demands will be different, because for each of us, our lives have demands that are specific.

A woman with small children will have to view the requisite daily prayer with a more flexible eye than the one who is living a more relaxed life of retirement.

The oblate who needs to be at the office by 8 a.m. may need to have an abbreviated morning prayer.

We are not promising fidelity to the monastic life, but to the spirit of the monastic life. And what is that "spirit"? It isn't about fleeing to the monastery and hanging out there. It is about looking at the place we call home and realizing that is our monastery.

It is the sacred space God has provided us and where the community of family and friends keeps us honest and committed to a life of holiness. It is where our time is not our own, but rather belongs to God.

So many times, we think of fidelity as what we have, rather than what we do. Fidelity is defined as how we are faithful to our promises and duties. My husband, Jack, and I recently celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. It is no mere hope that is realized in that celebration.

The “how” of those 50 years is as crucial as the initial promise of faithfulness itself. Have I been open to a life of changing possibilities and realities? Have I been steadfast in my loving? Have I been forgiving?

We make a promise to stay true to our commitments as our state in life

permits. While it will look a bit different for each of us, the promise is the same, made within the real hope that, as one year melts into the next, we will become the promise that we have made.

*Janis Dopp  
Oblate Director*

## Musings from the Chaplain: *A life of fidelity*



*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB*

undertakings such as vows, promises and other commitments we have made. To be faithful is to invest our hearts, our souls and our lives in a supremely important quest or journey through life.

If we are living a life of fidelity, then we are faithful people. It means that we are “doing what we are supposed to be doing.” This concerns important

This faithful undertaking is good and is blessed by God. If we make mistakes and do not live up to what the quest requires of us, then we ask for forgiveness and apply ourselves again. If we learn something from our mistakes and become more faithful people, then we are better able to help others to be faithful.

Whether married or single, monk or oblate, we are all called to be faithful. I am called to be faithful to my vows of obedience, stability and conversion of life. I am also called to be faithful to my brother monks and to the

oblates. As oblates, you are called to be faithful to your promises and duties and other responsibilities.

Fidelity has to do with perseverance, because sometimes it is difficult to be faithful. Doing the same things day after day, we confront challenges and setbacks. When we persevere and continue being faithful, we affirm that ultimately our lives have meaning; that what we do or don’t do matters; that we are virtuous people.

*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB  
Oblate Chaplain*

## Notes for Novices: *Finding fidelity in uncertain times*



*Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB*

The COVID-19 pandemic has showed all of us how fidelity can be lived even in the most mundane and quotidian circumstances.

A constant theme from your oblate novice lesson responses has been how obedience to your prayer has helped to stabilize your life amid

Fidelity binds us to God in good and uncertain times alike, but it also binds us to each other so we can be Christ to one another in those same good and uncertain times.

quarantining. Recall how Benedict insists that members of a monastic community should be mutually obedient to each other (*RB 71*).

Just as we are mutually obedient to each other so that we can lead each other to God, so should our vows and promises be mutually obedient to each other. Being faithful to prayer enables us to be aware of God throughout each moment of the day, thus allowing us to be obedient to all, which gives us stability, even in the most uncertain of times.

As Benedictine oblate novices of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, you have had the distinct opportunity to experience God’s grace during a unique moment

in world history. Whether you are praying Lauds or Vespers in private, watching Saint Meinrad’s Mass over the internet, or encountering the divine presence when washing dishes, God’s grace has been abounding all the more (*Romans 5:20*) during our less-than-willing quarantine.

The fidelity that we are learning and practicing each day is guiding us on the Way that leads to eternal life. May God continue to give us the grace to remain faithful to the good news of the Kingdom, so others may see the joy of the gospel in our obedience, stability and fidelity.

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

# Notes from Novices:

## First step to fidelity is remembering



*Karen Dwyer*

As an oblate novice, I wondered how I could make a commitment to a monastery so far from where I live. How could I be faithful to a monastic way of life living in the world, so far away from my confreres who were living the life? I found an answer while mourning the death of my friend, Celeste, who died at the end of February. The first step to fidelity is in remembering.

In Deuteronomy 4:9, when God proclaimed his covenant, He added a caveat: “However, take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget ....”

And in verse 12: “... take care not to forget the Lord.” Throughout the passages of the giving of the covenant, we hear God pleading, “Remember, remember, remember, and if you forget, remember again.”

I met Celeste in 1978 when we were in our 20s, she a recent convert and me a cradle Catholic. Two years later, I moved to the Midwest; 40 years later, the friendship endured. Through good times and sad, hard, difficult years.

We remembered. She helped me buy my house when I was going through my divorce and annulment. I repaid her during a time she was unemployed and struggling. There were many years we barely spoke, maybe sending belated greetings on birthdays or on

holidays. But we remembered even as we lived our separate lives.

It was in her death that I realized how our fidelity to one another endured the time and space that had separated us. We remembered what God had done for us; we remembered our love for one another; we remembered not to forget the goodness of the Lord. Our shared love of the Lord, of one another, the small acts of friendship, the remembering was what fidelity is all about; it is how fidelity is lived.

Friendship with Celeste over a 40-year period from California to Indiana is a faithfulness that overcomes time and space. Yes, it can happen.

*Karen Dwyer, oblate novice  
South Bend, IN*

## Be gentle in inviting others to join the journey



*Debra Hansen*

“Did you make this up?” my 13-year-old daughter asked as she rolled her eyes, and probably thought to herself, “My mother is so strange.” It was just Week One of our shuttering in time in March and already my mind was on fast forward, looking to the weeks, possibly months, of our family being together 24/7. Our middle son had just returned from college in Iowa to finish up the semester at home and online.

Knowing it was important for us to establish some new routines while adjusting to our new reality, I made a

list of jobs for each of us, assigned each Sunday and lasting for the coming week. I also decided that our family would have a reader to read for us at mealtimes. Thank you, St. Benedict.

As I continue to step forward faithfully and with trust on this path we walk with Jesus, my heart also longs to bring my whole family along with me! Sometimes my encouragement to pray together and to bring Jesus into our home and each of our lives is probably perceived as control (they are probably right).

So I ask God to give me the grace to let go, to trust Him and to keep me faithful to my commitment to my husband, my children and to Saint Meinrad as an oblate novice. A fellow

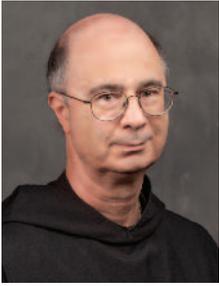
oblate, whom I met just once, shared with me a beautiful piece of advice. While recognizing and accepting that I cannot control my family, I can – gently, lovingly – invite them to join me on this journey.

While I long, at times, to live the prayerful, structured and balanced life within a monastery, I remember that I am called to fidelity, not only to my promises made at my novice investiture, but also to the promises I made to my husband and my children. I try to be patient and gentle with myself, as God always is.

*R. Debra Hansen, oblate novice  
Worthington, OH*

# Ways to be vigilant in the oblate life

*This is the last of a four-part series on vigilance.*



*Fr. Justin DuVall, OSB*

On a Holy Saturday night in fifth-century Hippo, St. Augustine told his people, who had come together for the Great Vigil of Easter, that on

this night they kept watch because it is “the Mother of all vigils.” That was then. Now, the Easter Vigil is more like the widow of all vigils.

Soon enough in the Church’s history, the practice of liturgical vigils other than the Easter Vigil started to fade from common observance. Remnants remained in monastic houses with the Office of Vigils, and individual Christians kept various vigils as a private practice of piety, but it is hardly a common experience today.

At the end of the previous article, I wrote that, while oblates are not expected to duplicate the structures of monastic life, they promise to share in the values and the practices of it. In this final piece, I want to suggest a few possibilities for practicing vigilance that would fit in with the oblate promises.

To do so, I will look at a few things that might be communal practices for a chapter, and then at a few things that would be personal practices for individuals. The present circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic have all but eliminated group gatherings, but, God willing, at some point we can return to collective activities, even if limited.

We might begin by taking a lesson from our own times, though it is a harsh one. In current American

society, the unfortunate recurrence of mass shootings has given expression to spontaneous vigils of shocked, angry, concerned and determined citizens. Images of crowds gathered at the sites of shootings – sometimes in silence, almost always with candles – flood the internet and the news reports.

They value life and they mourn its loss and they hope for a better society. Vigilance brings together strangers, telling them who they are as human beings and helping them uncover meaning in the face of senseless acts in the world.

Certain civic occasions might provide an opportunity for members of a chapter to assemble in solidarity with others in sorrow or in concern. Should any civic tragedy – not necessarily a mass shooting – happen in a place where an active chapter is located, and a vigil of solidarity happens in response, the silent presence of an oblate chapter can be a witness to hope as well as a show of solidarity with those affected.

Here I am not talking about political marches or any specific cause; but God stands with all who lose loved ones in a tragedy, and a vigil goes beyond differences to embrace our common humanity. It can help tell that chapter’s members who they are, and how they can show compassion at human loss. Vigilance is more than a personal act of piety.

Tragedy need not be the sole driver. Some parishes have an Arimathean Society, named after Joseph of Arimathea, who arranged for Jesus’ burial. It is a group of men who attend funerals of parishioners, especially those who might be without many relatives or friends to mourn

them. Could a chapter do the same, especially for parishioners of the oblates?

Then there is the possibility for a chapter to gather in a church the evening before a great feast, such as that of St. Benedict, or even before an important event for one of the chapter members, such as a surgery or a wedding anniversary, and pray the Office of Vigils together. It can demonstrate a solidarity in love and support that is more than just a thoughtful card or phone call from an individual.

When it comes to personal practices, the options are much more fluid.

If there is an illness in a family, or even a neighborhood, “keeping vigil” with someone at the hospital or in hospice can become the occasion for prayers for healing or for strength, or when appropriate, for a peaceful death. Our culture fears illness and wants either to hide it or to conquer it. Vigilance is instead a way of transforming it and allowing God’s presence to pulse through a silent accompaniment from one who keeps watch.

Certainly, any oblate can pray the Office of Vigils, or in the Roman Liturgy of the Hours, the Office of Readings, as a regular practice. If it proves difficult, then perhaps it can be done as a weekly spiritual exercise on Saturday evening, in anticipation of the Sunday remembrance of the Lord’s Resurrection. A seasonal opportunity would be on a weekly basis during Advent, the liturgical time of expectation.

*Continued on Page 18*

# Workers in the Vineyard

## Fidelity means staying true to more than ourselves



John Brooks

It implies the unfailing fulfillment of one's obligations and strict adherence to vows and promises. It defines a quality or state of being faithful. It

implies a steadfast and devoted attachment that is not easily turned aside. It was once applied to the obligation of a vassal to a feudal lord. It is the degree to which the wave output of a system, such as an amplifier or radio, accurately reproduces the characteristics of the input wave.

All these definitions can be used to describe fidelity. Fidelity is often replaced with words such as loyalty, faithfulness, reliability, trustworthiness, dependability, devotion, commitment and conformity. It is used when defining and describing relationships, oaths, vows, promises and the commitments we make.

As oblates, when we made our final oblation, we promised stability of heart, fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life, and obedience to the will of God. We defined our commitment to the Benedictine community by reminding ourselves that we are not a world unto ourselves. As oblates, we are members of a community devoted to prayer, study and living a life that mirrors the true heart of God. It is a life with a heart for prayer, study, sacrifice, service and dedication. We are to plant the seeds of love in a world often blinded by our own self-importance.

The rocks of self-importance, greed, pride and jealousy cause resistance to the waves of our expression of love. A love that is the umbra of our heart and soul radiating true waves of compassion, joy, kindness, caring and forgiveness. The waves crashing on the beaches of life can wash away the sadness of loneliness and the loneliness of grief and comfort those suffering and in pain.

It is a love that "has the hands to help others. The feet to hasten to the poor and needy. The eyes to see misery and

want. The ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of our brothers and sisters" (Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB). A love that is true and faithful to the will and heart of God. A heart full of love that, once lit by God, continues to burn brightly, powering the promises we made at our oblation.

True to our promises and the heart of God, "We must learn to complete in faith what we began in enthusiasm; we must learn to be true to ourselves; we must continue to become what we said we would be, even when accommodation to the immediate seems to be so much more sensible, so much more reasonable, so much easier" (Joan Chittister, *Spirituality for the 21st Century*).

So that every day, we live a life centered in prayer and a desire to see Christ everywhere and in everyone we meet. It is only then that we are true to the promise we made at our oblation – "fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life." For if we are only living for ourselves, we are not living the monastic life St. Benedict envisioned.

*John Brooks, oblate  
Columbus, IN*

## Reflections from the Wilderness

To every mother around the world,  
I wrote this poem for you.  
You are always doing those extra  
things you don't really have to do.  
Giving birth to a son or daughter is a  
gift from above,  
And no matter what road your child  
may choose, they will always need  
your love.

They will need it their first day of  
school, to help them concentrate.  
They will need it their senior year,  
when it's time to graduate.  
They will need it when they find a  
job and move out on their own.  
They need to know that you love  
them when they feel all alone.

They will need your love if they are in  
trouble to help them overcome.  
They need your love and support no  
matter what they have done.  
To all the mothers around the world,  
I write this poem for you.  
We want you to know that all the  
children love their mothers too!

*Ron Lewis, oblate  
Greencastle, IN*

# Considering the Psalms:

## Psalm 15(14): Prepare to enter sacred space

- 1 LORD, who may abide in your tent, who may dwell on your holy hill?
- 2 Those who walk blamelessly and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart;
- 3 Who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;
- 4 in whose eyes the wicked are despised, but who honor those who fear the LORD;  
Who stand by their oath, even to their hurt;
- 5 who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent.  
Those who do these things shall never be moved.

—Psalm 15(14)



Kathleen Polansky

I wonder what it was like for the Israelites experiencing exile. I wonder what it was like for them to see the temple, their place to meet God on earth, destroyed. I wonder how they felt being separated from God's promises of land and presence.

This past spring has called us to a fidelity we have seldom known. Facing a deadly virus has required being faithful to one another. We were asked to practice "social distancing." It was distressing to be set apart from celebrating Mass as a community and to be cut off from receiving the sacraments.

Knowing the importance of our liturgical prayer, we found ways to include each other in prayer. It was a blessing and a means of remaining faithful during a time of great anxiety. Churches came online. At home, we joined in prayer with the monks each day. That connection made the distance and isolation seem less lonely.

Our exile and our separation from the sacraments gave an opportunity to reflect upon what it means to "abide in God's tent." In the midst of

quarantine, God increases a desire for faithfulness to the gift of the sacraments and to become what it means to be a sacramental people of God in our relationship to God and each other.

Approaching Psalm 15/14 in this time of isolation and separation took on greater urgency. This psalm was probably used as an entrance into a holy place. One asks, "Who may enter for worship?" Preparation to encounter the holy presence is important. This psalm warns the community to take care when approaching sacred space because God is accessible but also holy. There are 10 entrance requirements in the psalm. The concerns are about how we are in relationship. It is about how we are faithful to God, to our neighbor and to ourselves.

The psalmist is aware that there is evil in the world. As believers, we are to reflect the holiness of the God we worship. Our actions, words and thoughts must not separate us from the community of worship or from being worthy to enter this holy place. Our deeds must always be in relationship with one another so as to care for one another and never do anything that harms another.

Our isolation, our separation, is an opportunity to re-evaluate how we live

and remain accountable to one another. Hearing of so many who are hungry and unemployed, of an economy that leaves the most vulnerable among us in great need – and realizing that those hurt the most are most needed to keep our society running – should give us pause to reflect on our relationship to one another and the importance we place on the work of people in our society.

"Food insecurity" became a catchword that underlines the day-to-day struggle to eke out a living that so many experience. Our lowest paid professionals became the first to step up and care for the health of people and provide and make available food. "The last shall be first ...."

Our exile and our separation were not from the God in the sacraments as much as they were from our blindness to the ways in which we live in God's domain and take for granted those with whom we share this planet. "Lord, who may abide in your tent?" We have just discovered what happens when we continue to live as people who care nothing for our neighbors, for truth, for doing what is right.

Kathleen Polansky, oblate  
New Salisbury, IN

# Our vows challenge us to constant spiritual growth



David W. Miller

The *Rule of St. Benedict* prescribes at oblation the triple promises of stability, fidelity and obedience (*RB 58.17*). A close look at

Benedict's term translated as "fidelity" reveals a deep teaching.

In the original *Rule*, St. Benedict wrote the vows as "...*stabilitate sua et conversatio morum suorum et obedientia...*" The terms "stability" and "obedience" are visible. But what is to be made of "*conversatio morum*"? Is it easily translated into "fidelity"? This is complicated by the fact that, for 1,000 years, Benedict's word "*conversatio*" was written as "*conversion*." The former means "a way of life" and the latter "a constant turning or change."

It was not until the 1920s that scholarly work revealed the copying error from the 8th century. The error was corrected, but interpretation has been difficult. Some scholars suggest the phrase does not translate into English and is better left in the Latin. But what does the lack of clarity mean for us? Perhaps the controversy itself is a gift of growth.

The promises at oblation are not frozen in time. As we age, mature in life's wisdom and grow in faith, we change. Our time commitments to family and job evolve. The oblate at 40, with a spouse, children and an expanding career, looks very different from the 60-year-old widow, retired and with an "empty nest." In the intervening years, the oblate has certainly "turned" in relationship with God. Hopefully grown, but the relationship has changed.

As we mature, we embrace that fidelity requires spiritual growth. We fall down and get up; it is a dynamic process. Growth is confusing, painful and comes with a high price. St. Benedict warned the road "would be narrow at the outset ... (but then turn) to everlasting joy" (*RB Prol. 48-49*).

Thomas Merton wrote on his 25th anniversary: "I find that I certainly do not believe in the monastic life as I did when I entered here – and when I was more sure I knew what it was. Yet I am much more convinced I am doing more or less what I ought to do, though I don't know why and cannot fully justify it."

Most of us are not at the same place on our spiritual journey we were 20 years ago, nor as we will be in 10 years. Many of us question what God wants us to do and where we are going. These questions are wonderful because they tell us God is at work in us. As creatures of habit, we prefer predictability and comfort. God confronts us with new challenges. That to which we cling is taken away and we must learn to let go.

We are turning and changing. Thanks be to God! Our promise of "*conversatio*" is to accept and embrace that slow growth, that gradual conversion. As St. Paul said, "We must forget what is behind and look forward to what is ahead" (*Phil 3:13*). Always be open to surprises and know that God is leading us where we need to go.

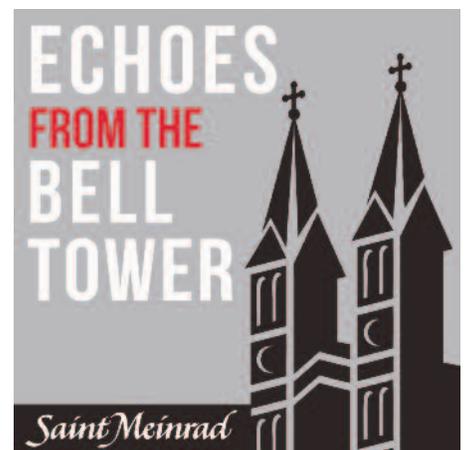
Sources of growth are all around us. A monk grows, changes and learns from the community. Sr. Joan Chittister wrote about how "in community we get our edges rubbed off." So, our Saint Meinrad oblate community, and its chapters, are a force in our turning and growth.

Attending retreats and workshops at Saint Meinrad allows us time to listen to the wisdom of the monks and of our brother and sister oblates. The Seminary and School of Theology offers classes on theology and philosophy to feed our minds and souls. Inspired writings by scholars such as Merton, Kardong, Chittister and de Waal fill us with answers to questions we never knew existed.

The sacraments, the Divine Office, *lectio* and Mass attendance are indispensable. We are moving in faith, toward Christ or away from Him, but we are rarely static, and the right growth requires teaching. We do not get there on our own.

We reconcile the apparently conflicting promises of stability and constant conversion, or fidelity to the monastic way of life, by realizing that commitment to our community is a lifetime embrace and a spiritual progress of growing toward God. The monastic life, as we live it in our ordinary lives, is one of constant transformation, over and over again returning to Christ.

David W. Miller, oblate  
South Milford, IN, and Venice, FL



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# Meeting the Monks: Br. Kim Malloy, OSB



Br. Kim Malloy, OSB

While all the priests of Saint Meinrad Archabbey are monks, not all monks are priests. Br. Kim Malloy, OSB, celebrated 62 years of monastic profession on April 16, 2020. At the age of 82, he is still going strong as one of the community's senior brothers.

After his first profession in 1958, he began work in the Archabbey bakery. The wine cellar soon followed. Over the years, he also has put his shoulder to the harness in the motor pool, at the guest house, and in numerous roles as refectorian, house prefect and Archabbey Council member.

Woven throughout this multifaceted monastic career has been a literal common thread. Early in his monastic life, Br. Kim attended art school and developed a love for the craft of weaving. That creativity soon blossomed into making such practical items as rugs and placemats.

It was only a matter of time before Br. Kim began to design and craft handwoven vestments for liturgical use, beginning in the 1970s. The Archabbey soon began using these

pieces in its liturgies and has done so to this day. A 2018 exhibit at the Archabbey Library showcased many pieces used by bishops and abbots for pontifical Masses, including a special miter designed by Br. Kim.

An artist and a natural teacher, Br. Kim has shared his love of the craft with others over the years. In the fall of 2009, he hosted a weaver's colloquy from Mineral Point, Wisconsin. For a week, these artists saw firsthand how this craft has enriched the daily liturgical and prayer life of the Archabbey. Still the enthusiastic teacher, Br. Kim currently has four students learning the ins and outs of the loom.

Since becoming *custos* of the Archabbey Church in 1986, Br. Kim has overseen its maintenance, repairs and budget. That task expanded in the 1990s to include the role of sacristan, an assignment he had already shared off and on with other monks before going solo.

"I don't have a vocation to the priesthood," Br. Kim says. "I assist the monastic community in our common

worship and life." This broader context of what it means to be a member of the Archabbey shows clearly in the enthusiasm and energy Br. Kim brings to whatever task he is given – including his art.

And what of his approach to sticking with his profession for 62 years?

"It's a day-to-day challenge, as it always has been," he reflects. "Living in community, you rub shoulders and share meals and prayers with the same people, people of all ages." The monk's vows of stability, obedience, and pursuit of monastic perfection – fidelity to the monastic way of life – must be pursued and renewed daily, he says.

This daily routine of morning and evening prayer, holy reading, and ongoing study and application of the *Rule of St. Benedict* gives monks – and oblates – a structure that not only directs, but encourages, their conversion of heart.

Br. Kim, the weaver, reflected on what it all means. The tapestry, including all those loose ends, clashing colors, and varied weights and textures, is a work in progress – until it is cut from the loom.

"Only then is the tapestry finished."

*Angie McDonald, oblate  
Huntingburg, IN*

## Smugmug

*For more photos of  
Saint Meinrad events, visit:*

<http://saint-meinrad.smugmug.com>

# The Busy Benedictine: On fidelity

*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*

Children eventually see the parent's hypocrisy. While young, they are told again and again to wash their hands, keep their mouth closed when

chewing, and not interrupt. My kids got that last reminder many times because Daddy, you see, is a Big Important Person and his feathers get ruffled when his audience does not sit rapt, hands folded, hanging on every word.

And so, it came to pass that the children aged and eventually noticed Daddy interrupting others, talking with his mouth full, and failing to wash hands before dinner. Small things.

We're also hypocrites in big things. We don't stay true to our commitments. As oblates, we commit to honoring God above all else, to loving our neighbors as ourselves, and

to attending the Feast of the Assumption of Mary on August 15 at 7:30 a.m. We do not live up to these fully. Mary often gets herself Assumed with very little audience.

This is partly a fault in ourselves, but mostly a fault in our promises and vows. The fault is not that these oaths are bad. On the contrary, making tough oaths is the sign of a person with a hunger for righteousness and justice. Tough oaths are good. But they are also hard. Good oaths, those worth making, are hard to follow perfectly.

Everyone with a moral code worth the name will fall short of living up to it. That I interrupt people, and that it is so very annoying to others, only confirms the importance of promising not to do it. Only by making promises to behaviors we haven't mastered can we grow in the spiritual life.

We grow by trying and falling. Through it all, we have to maintain fidelity to the institutions that receive our promises and hold us accountable

for them. I must remain true to the Catholic Church because my Holy Mother holds me accountable when I hurt her feelings. She offers free and perfect reconciliation through the rituals of confession.

The Church serves us a complex meal: Encouragement to strive for behaviors we do not yet master, accountability for failings along the way, reconciliation to give us hope for doing better. These flavors blend well and give us the food we need to live a good life.

My kids will be better people – better than me – if they wash their darn hands before meals. It was good that I passed along that rule, even if I can't seem to follow it myself. Because I'm not a hypocrite. I'm a Christian, trying to stay loyal to my promises.

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

## Your Oblate Council Connection

### Memphis Oblate Chapter relies on technology during COVID-19



*Jennie D. Latta*

The Memphis Oblate Chapter has expanded its time together through the wonders of technology.

We met together by Zoom for

Morning and Evening Prayer since the churches were closed in Memphis

on March 16. We have used the *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates* supplemented by appropriate Lenten and Easter hymns.

And we have enjoyed the broadcast liturgies from the monastery, especially during the Triduum.

Our one sadness has been that two of our number who planned to be invested as oblate novices in March

had to postpone their investitures. There is no doubt that we will look back on this time of quarantine as one of deepening the bonds of our chapter.

*Jennie D. Latta, chapter coordinator  
Memphis, TN*

# Opening doors to deeper faith: Silence

*Editor's note: This is the first part of a three-part series on spiritual direction.*



*Beverly Weinhold*

When I attended our novice retreat, Oblate Director Janis Dopp mentioned to me that some oblates seek spiritual guidance, but don't have access to spiritual direction. While this ancient charism is classically a one-on-one relationship with a seasoned guide, it's also an art defined as "help given by one believer to another that enables the latter to pay attention to God's personal communication, [and] to grow in intimacy with God."<sup>1</sup>

In this wider sense, I was asked to write small articles drawing from spiritual direction practices that open doors to deeper faith. Not easy, but well worth the try.

Seeing a spiritual director for 12 years and then becoming one myself, I see sitting in silence as a doorway to deepen faith. Fr. Henri Nouwen, my patron saint, was a priest, psychologist and spiritual director. His life and legacy profoundly formed my faith.

In his book, *The Way of the Heart*, Henri names silence as a primary practice for growth in intimacy with God: "Silence makes us pilgrims. Silence guards the fire within. Silence teaches us to speak."<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on these movements, I offer the following.

First, "silence makes us pilgrims." St. Benedict puts great emphasis on silence in his *Rule*. He quotes the

Psalmist, "I will put a guard on my mouth. I was silent and was humbled, and I refrained even from good words" (*RB 6.1*). St. Benedict's "esteem for silence" (*RB 2*) was influenced by some of the earliest spiritual directors, starting in the third century. They were the Desert Fathers and Mothers who fled the clamor of Rome for the quiet of the Egyptian desert.

When Desert Father Arsenius prayed, "Lord, lead me into the way of salvation," he heard a voice saying, "Be silent."<sup>3</sup> But these early pilgrims didn't think of solitude as an escape from noise, but rather being present to God. They didn't define silence as not speaking, but as listening to God. Like our forebears, the Holy Spirit beckons us all to be pilgrims by turning off technology, dialing down devices and opening space to divine silence.

Second, "silence guards the fire within." The inner fire refers to both the heat of the Holy Spirit and the passions of human personality that need to be tended. The first, to provide warmth to weary travelers, and the second, to protect emotions that harm others.

Living in a wordy world, sparks fly when feelings define our identity and mar the true self, created in God's image. Our words are weighted with history and can trigger core wounds. It's healing to step back, gain perspective and ask the Holy Spirit to shift our emotions. Simply said, silent space invites us to be more reflective than reactive.

Third, "silence teaches us to speak." It's a paradox to say silence makes speech powerful, but God spoke a word from silence that created the world. Jesus withered a fig tree with a word. Paul told a crippled man to walk in a word. This power emerged from the ebb and flow of work and prayer.

None of our words are as powerful as God's or a saint's. But we have stories about the still-speaking God who spoke to our souls, giving us words when we knew not what to say. These words were steeped in power. Like a word spoken in season that gave grace to the hearer (*Proverbs 15:23*).

Elijah didn't hear God speak in the earthquake or the fire, but in "sheer silence" (*1Kings 19:12*). We don't have to go to Mt. Horeb to hear God. We can intentionally carve out 10 minutes a day of quiet, uninterrupted silence. We can light a candle, letting the light draw us to the Divine Director.

We can unburden our hearts and give our gathered fragments to God. We can open our hands in a gesture of thanks. Rhythmically returning to this spiritual discipline opens space, creating a portable cell where we can pause and pray throughout our day. Pope Francis sums it up: "Only in the silence of prayer can you learn to listen to the voice of God."

*Beverly Weinhold, oblate novice  
Louisville, KY*

<sup>1</sup> Wm. Barry & Wm. Connolly, (1982). *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 8. HarperCollins: NY.

<sup>2</sup> H.J.M. Nouwen, (1981). *The Way of the Heart*, 49. HarperCollins: San Francisco.

<sup>3</sup> *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, The Alphabetical Collection* (1984). Trans. B. Ward, SLG. Cistercian: Kalamazoo.

# Liturgical Chant: A Benedictine legacy



Charles Thatcher

One of the first things that comes to mind when thinking about Saint Meinrad is the liturgical chant heard in the Archabbey

Church. Chant

is one of the hallmarks of the cycle of prayer at the heart of monastic life. Visitors find the chant beautiful, but it also can seem foreign. This article, the first of a series about chant at Saint Meinrad, is intended to lay the groundwork for a greater understanding.

Singing is an integral part of liturgical worship, powerfully expressing sacred texts and aligning the body, mind and spirit. Song is really the beginning of all music. The U.S. bishops have stated that, “of all the sounds of which human beings ... are capable, voice is the most privileged and fundamental.”<sup>1</sup>

Singing was part of Christian worship from the beginning. Some of the texts of the Eucharist were chanted in an elevated tone, as was the case in Jewish worship. Over time, the humble chants of the early Church changed and developed, coming into full flower in Benedictine monasteries of the Middle Ages. These chants, composed during the latter centuries of the first millennium and almost exclusively in Latin, constitute what is called Gregorian chant.<sup>2</sup>

Comprised of thousands of works of exquisite beauty, expressiveness and genius, Gregorian chant is a unique

musical genre. This Benedictine legacy is an essential part of the Church’s treasury of sacred music. The Second Vatican Council decreed, “The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore ... it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.”<sup>3</sup>

St. Pope John Paul II called it “a unique and universal spiritual heritage which has been handed down to us as the clearest musical expression of sacred music at the service of God’s word.”<sup>4</sup>

At Saint Meinrad prior to Vatican II, the music sung at Mass and the Divine Office was almost exclusively Gregorian chant. When the Council permitted vernacular languages in the liturgy, the monks chose to switch to English – a bold decision, since there was virtually no English chant repertoire to draw on.

Fortunately, at that time, Fr. Columba Kelly, OSB, had returned from studies in Rome, where he earned the doctorate in sacred music under the direction of the eminent chant scholar, Dom Eugène Cardine, OSB, of the Abbey of Solesmes.

Fr. Columba had learned of the intimate connections of text, melody, mode and rhythm that exist in the Gregorian masterpieces. Using this knowledge, as well as his skill as a composer, Fr. Columba began his lifelong work of creating English plainsong for the community’s worship.<sup>5</sup> Other monks have also contributed to this monumental task.

Many of the chants composed by Fr. Columba were entirely new melodies,

which retained the character of the ancient chants. In other cases, he modeled his melodies closely on Gregorian originals, skillfully adapting them to English texts. An antiphon for Vespers of January 1, *O Wonderful Exchange*, is of the latter type. The scores below illustrate how the contour of the English melody closely follows that of its Latin counterpart.



The first word, “O,” an expression of wonder, is rendered musically by an extended 5-note neume (a neume is a note or group of notes over a single syllable). With the Latin word “*admirábile*,” a 2-note neume is placed over the accented third syllable. This neume, read from bottom to top, indicates a delicate rise in pitch on the gentle Latin accent.

Since the accent of the corresponding English word, “wonderful,” is on the first syllable, Fr. Columba placed the melodic accent at the beginning of the word, using a 3-note neume that reproduces the heavier accentuation of English.

The QR code on pg. 13 accesses a recording of *O Wonderful Exchange*. One can hear how deftly the antiphon melody expresses the text: “O wonderful exchange! The Creator of the human race assumes our human nature, choosing to be born of a

*Continued on Page 13*

<sup>1</sup> *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (USCCB, 2007) 86.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see [www.saintmeinrad.org/the-monastery/liturgical-music/history-of-chant/](http://www.saintmeinrad.org/the-monastery/liturgical-music/history-of-chant/)

<sup>3</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) 116.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Address to the International Congress of Sacred Music (2001) 3.

<sup>5</sup> Plainsong is the proper term for these chants. Gregorian chant refers to the chant corpus from the Middle Ages.

# Beautiful example of fidelity: 76+ years as an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey



Ronald DeMarco

I recently visited my friend and fellow oblate, John Campbell, in his apartment in Cincinnati. His first words to me as I sat down were, “I’ve been an oblate since 1944!” Wow. It’s hard for me to imagine that even before I was born, before so many of us were born, John pledged the promises of an oblate and has prayed as one for 76 years now.

Through all the changes in the monastery and in his world, he has lived his life faithfully as an oblate. His hearing and eyesight are not what they used to be, and he can no longer remember so many things, yet he proudly remembers he is an oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. In fact, his oblate name is Patrick!

Recently John celebrated his 95th birthday. He was born on February 18, 1925, in Pony Township, Switzerland County, Indiana. After studying Scripture at a young age, John became interested in becoming Catholic after he realized that our Lord founded the Church on St. Peter the Rock.

With encouragement from his Presbyterian mother, he spoke to his family doctor and a local priest and went to live at the Saint Meinrad monastery to learn more about being Catholic. He can’t recall how many years he lived at Saint Meinrad, but says he probably has outlived everyone else who lived there with him. “I stay in touch with Fr. Joseph Cox at the monastery as much as I can.”

He grabs the Ordo next to him that he receives from Saint Meinrad every year and reads out loud some names of the monks there. He said to me, “I was there sometime when Fr. Ignatius Esser was the abbot (1930-1955). A very holy man!”

John has a scrapbook of old picture postcards of Saint Meinrad. He pointed to one in the scrapbook inside the church showing the chair where Fr. Abbot Ignatius would sit. “I remember him sitting there. And back then the Mass was all in Latin. I miss the Latin,” he said. He also had a postcard with a photo of young people in a rowboat on the lake at Saint Meinrad dated 1907.

John is a member of the Cincinnati Oblate Chapter and until age 92 he was still driving himself to the meetings! He didn’t want to miss any. I asked John how being a faithful oblate has affected his long life. He said being an oblate “brings us closer to God.” He offers this wisdom, “I don’t worry about what other people do. I just pray to God for them.”

He picks up his *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates* book to show me. At night, he prays Compline knowing that, even though he can’t leave his apartment too much, he is still a part of the Benedictine oblate/monk community. “When I pray, I pray for all those at the monastery, our oblates, and for all those who have passed away.”

I asked if there was anything special he would request from all the oblates and monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. He just said, “Pray for me.” As I walked to the door to leave,

John yelled out with a big wave, “*Vaya con Dios*” (Go thou with God). I will, John.

Congratulations on being an oblate for 76 amazing years and, yes, we all will pray for you.

Ronald DeMarco, oblate  
Cincinnati, OH



John Campbell

Continued from Page 12

virgin, and by becoming flesh bestows divinity on us. Alleluia!”



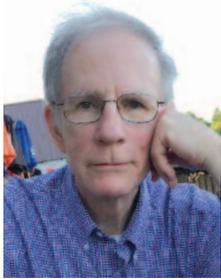
To listen, hover your smartphone camera over this code.

St. Benedict’s *Rule* clearly states that nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God (*RB 43:3*). Benedictines of all ages have used artistry to enhance this work, offering their best to the Creator of all beauty. Saint Meinrad Archabbey is a shining example of this venerable tradition.

Charles Thatcher, oblate  
Winter Springs, FL

# What does St. Benedict mean by good zeal?

The penultimate chapter of St. Benedict's *Rule* is titled, "Of the good zeal which monks ought to have." He writes: As there is an evil zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal which separates from vices and leads to God and life everlasting. Let monks, therefore, practice this latter zeal with most fervent love: that is, let them in honor anticipate one another; let them bear most patiently one another's infirmities, whether of body or of character; let them endeavor to surpass one another in the practice of mutual obedience; let no one seek that which he accounts useful for himself, but rather what is profitable to another...<sup>1</sup>



Bill Hamrick

Most of us tend to distrust others who are filled with great zeal. We see zealots as rigid, uncompromising and fanatical in their views – people untempered by rationality, unable to admit the legitimacy of other people's opinions, and incapable of criticizing their own from third-person perspectives. So, what is *good* zeal?

The key word in St. Benedict's text is "anticipation." I do not have the original Latin text at hand, but the word in that language for "anticipation" is *expectatio*, literally a "looking out," and St. Benedict's sense of the word is to look out for others to help.

What anticipation solicits and nourishes is two senses of responsibility. The first and most basic sense is response-ability, the capacity to respond to the needs of others. In turn, that sense underlies our moral responsibilities not only *to* others, but also *for* others (being one's brother's keeper, etc.). This is one of the basic ways in which Judeo-Christian ethics differs from those of Western philosophy, from the ancient Greeks to our own times.

How can we best understand St. Benedict's sense of anticipation? The 20th-century philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1888-1973) made significant progress in that direction in his many

books and other scholarly writings. An excellent summary essay is his "On the Ontological Mystery,"<sup>2</sup> which originally appeared in 1933.

Marcel begins with the key concept of "presence" and distinguishes real presence from mere physical presence. Physical presence is neither necessary nor sufficient for real presence. It is not necessary because, for example, a loved one far away can be more present to me than the strangers who surround me in, say, a crowded subway car.

It is not sufficient because those physically present can fail to be "with me," as Marcel puts it. They have no meaningful connection with me, as exemplified by the edgy tolerance I feel in other passengers at a congested airport gate.

Real presence, on the contrary, implies "permeability" (*OM 38*), which signifies openness and the ability to establish true relationships with the Other. It is the opposite of building walls and barricades, whether physical, emotional or symbolic. In any relationship, be it between monks in a monastery, teachers and students, family members, workers in an office or other workplace, there can be perceptible differences between mere physical presence and real presence.

Thus, Marcel points out correctly, "The most attentive and the most conscientious listener may give me the impression of not being present; he gives me nothing, he cannot make room for me in himself .... The truth

is that there is a way of listening which is a way of giving, and another way of listening which is a way of refusing, of refusing oneself" (*OM 40*).

Over and over again throughout my university teaching career, that very description lay at the heart of many students' complaints about instructors whom they disliked. Yet it is also true that that same scenario gets instantiated in many types of relationships devoid of life and hope. Think of unfeeling bureaucrats whose jobs have been reduced to enforcing rules with no concern for the welfare of their clients.

Think of long-married couples who "listen" to each other without giving themselves in the experience, as in this first verse of Simon & Garfunkel's "The Dangling Conversation":

It's a still life water color,  
Of a now late afternoon,  
As the sun shines through the  
curtain lace  
And shadows wash the room.  
And we sit and drink our coffee  
Couched in our indifference,  
Like shells upon the shore  
You can hear the ocean roar  
In the dangling conversation  
And the superficial sighs,  
The borders of our lives.

Marcel articulates the notion of real presence using the concept of "*disponibilit *" (*OM 39*) – "disposability." This does not mean to be disposable in the sense of putting something in the trash. Rather, it signifies being at someone's disposal.

Thus, “the person who is at my disposal is the one who is capable of being with me with the whole of himself when I am in need; while the one who is not at my disposal seems merely to offer me a temporary loan raised on his resources. For the one I am a presence; for the other I am an object” (*Ibid.*, 40).

*Disponibilité* means “total spiritual availability” and “pure charity” (*Ibid.*, 39). Contrariwise, “To be incapable of presence is to be in some manner not only occupied but encumbered with one’s own self” (*Ibid.*, 42).

*Disponibilité* is, I submit, what St. Benedict had in mind by anticipation. *Disponibilité* means to be available to, and actively await the needs of, the

Other. It is a question of an active receptivity animated by hope, which is “not a kind of listless waiting; it underpins action or runs before it, but it becomes degraded and lost once the action is spent” (*Ibid.*, 33).

What “runs before” the action, the disposition, can be better understood by taking apart the word. To be in a position is to be set, to be established. It is no accident that we speak of being in a “fixed position.” However, to be dis-posed is to be knocked off-center, to lose that fixedness, so to speak, to be dis-posable. In that way, we are not closed in on ourselves, but actively attuned to others who need us.

St. Benedict’s notion of anticipation is therefore the very opposite of rote,

conformist actions. It implies faithfulness, but that faithfulness is also creative. “Creative fidelity” is one of Marcel’s most important concepts. Within a monastery, a home or workplace, “So little is fidelity akin to the inertia of conformism that it implies an active and continuous struggle against the forces of interior dissipation, as also against the sclerosis of habit” (*Ibid.*, 35-36) – as pictured in “The Dangling Conversation.”

Because it requires effort, it consists of an achievement, and is therefore also necessary for anticipating the needs of others “in honor,” as St. Benedict advised.

*Bill Hamrick, oblate  
St. Louis, MO*

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Rule of Our Most Holy Father Saint Benedict*, eds. The Monks of St. Meinrad Archabbey (St. Meinrad, IN: Grail Publications, 1956), pp. 89-90.

<sup>2</sup> *In The Philosophy of Existentialism*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: The Citadel Press, 1956), pp. 5-46 (hereafter: OM). The original French title is *Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique*.

## Home Bound

Just when you think your world is in balance and everything is placid and unruffled  
Along comes something that is pandemic and shakes you from your roost  
Because we live so close to others and that of the world and have freedom to travel  
The larger and more confining is the living habitat, the greater the dissemination of disease.  
Home Bound

The more humans race ahead of their moral obligation and social responsibilities  
The greater will be the physical disaster that will result from these negative behaviors  
The possibility of pandemic disaster will cause fear and hoarding of essential household items  
The super structures of communities, states and nation will be forced to unprecedented action.  
Home Bound

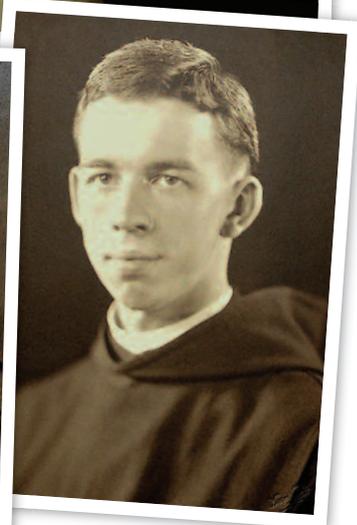
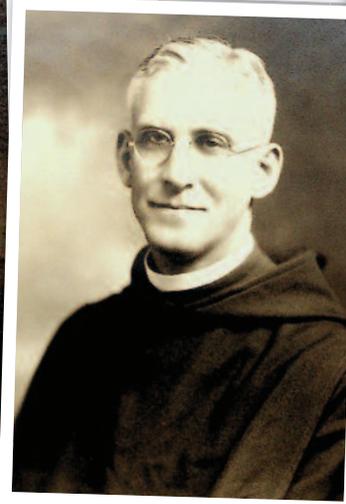
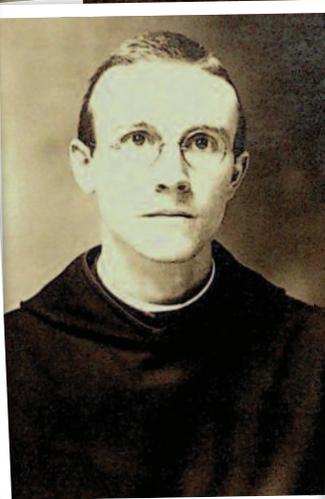
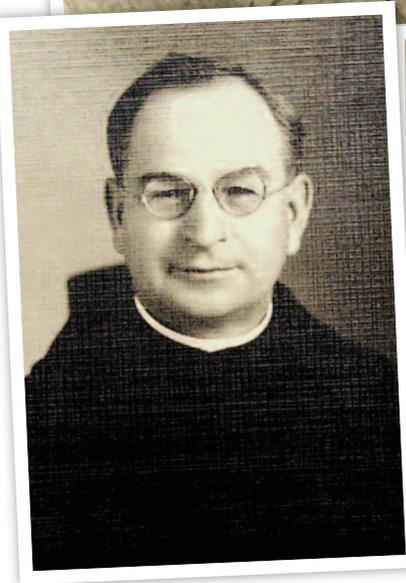
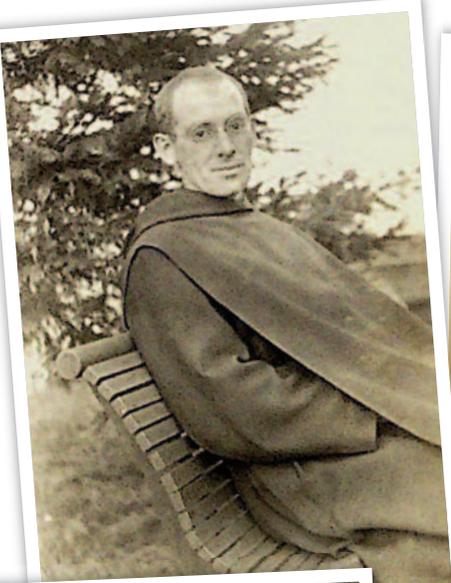
Unprecedented actions will include a lock-in of many places where people closely interact  
To stop a pandemic virus is to stop all work, places of entertainment, even to be home bound  
The threat of possible death is a greater motivator and promotes acceptance of self-isolation  
All nonessential workers are urged to stay at home,  
in an effort, to contain the virus.  
Home Bound

To stop all activities both at the local and national levels is not always a bad thing  
It brings families together and family activities become more interactive  
Being home bound forces family members to take time to pray and play with each other  
With praying and with the Lord’s omnipotent love survival in a tough time is possible.  
Home Bound

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate  
Bloomington, IN*

# How Saint Meinrad battled the 1918-19 Spanish flu epidemic

*Note: These excerpts from the Chronicles of Saint Meinrad tell of the 1918 flu epidemic and its effects on the monastery and schools. Edited for length, these journal entries give us a peek into the past at how a similar situation to our modern COVID-19 was experienced. Reading over these four months of 1918-19, it seems that many of the decisions made today were requested and effective in the past.*



October 8, 1918: This morning Dr. Loumax receives official orders to close all churches, schools, theatres, and picture shows in the town as a caution to ward off the "Spanish Influenza (Flu)." After Vespers Father Instructor informs the fraters of the nature of this disease and suggests some preventive cautions.

October 13: The Abbey Church is closed to the parish owing to the "Flu."

October 15: First case of the Spanish Flu is reported today in the town of St. Meinrad.

October 20: At the request of Bishop Chartrand, we had Exposition from

Lauds till after Vespers in order to expel the epidemic of flu from the diocese and that priests may remain immune in the future, since three priests of the diocese already became victims thereof. Also to preserve the monastery and seminary from its ravages.

November 2: All Souls Day. The Indianapolis Board of Health removed the ban on the closing of the churches. The monastery, major and minor seminaries remained closed.

December 4: The flu claims her 1st victim. A 12-year-old girl died.

December 5: All the students of both departments make a pilgrimage to Monte Cassino to implore the Blessed Virgin to avert the plague.

December 6: Rev. E. Hoelger of Wichita, Kansas, ordained here last spring, breathed forth his soul ... R.I.P. In town 2 more victims and cases of the flu.

December 11: The influenza certainly demands her victims. Our bulletin board testifies to this. 10 to 15 death notices.

December 19: Great excitement in the Seminary. Everybody wishes to wear masks. Windows and doors are open in the classrooms. Some leave during the lectures to obtain overcoats.

December 28: The flu dares to enter the very precincts of the monastery. Many seminarians, now at home, are reported to have the flu.

December 30: Fraters make a pilgrimage to Monte Cassino.

January 1, 1919: The duty devolves upon me to record the death of our beloved classmate and confrere in major orders, Rev. Vincent Ciaccio, Deacon, who entered upon his reward today (Jan. 1) at St Anthony's Hospital, Terre Haute, Indiana. He died of the flu. The deceased was of a very conscientious and dutiful character.



*Clockwise from the top, Br. Stanley Wagner, OSB, Janis Dopp, Br. Michael Reyes, OSB, and Brenda Black prepare the Season of Hope mailing in the Oblate Office on April 23.*

January 4: The shocking news arrives that another of our classmates and confreres, Rev. Edward Dean, Deacon, died today of the flu at Indianapolis.

January 13: Pilgrimage to Monte Cassino.

January 18: All our organists are in bed.

January 19: After dinner two trained nurses arrive from Evansville to take care of the students, of whom about twenty are reported sick.

January 20: Between 30 and 40 are reported sick in the Minor Seminary.

January 23: *Religio depopulata* in choir. One frater on each side of choir.

January 25: Do not envy the sick who got chicken broth and ice cream. This was prescribed by the trained nurses for the students. The untrained nurses in the monastery prescribed a warmer and bitter dose.

January 28: Another attack or relapse of the flu. This seems to be the third dose. The Doctor (Loumax?) says he has patients with periodic cases or spells of the flu. Fr. Stephen has the "walking flu." He is not in continual association with his bed.

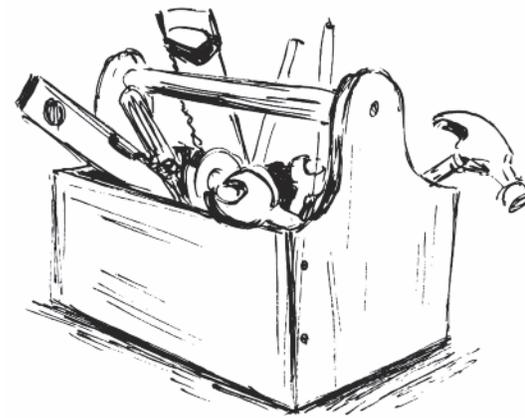
January 29: Though the conventual two are at matins, at Mass the choir swells with more Fathers and three Fraters. At 11 am and 5 pm the weak and convalescing Fraters line up for their tonic with its iron strength and quinine aftertaste ... all out of one bottle. Surely family style!

The approximate total of flu victims may be given as: 30 in the monastery; 25 in the major seminary; 65 in the minor seminary.

*Photos, opposite page, starting at top, left to right, Archival photos circa 1918 - Novice Br. Joseph (Alexius) Margolis, Br. Meinrad Hoffman, monk in Music Library, Fr. Cyril Gaul, Fr. Maurus Ohligslager, Fr. Anselm Schaaf and Fr. Placidius Kempf.*

# The Oblate Toolbox

## Set your roots deeply in God's word



*“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

Consider the acorn. For such a small nut, it packs a big wallop. If the blue jays, squirrels or chipmunks don't eat it, it may have a chance to

sprout. If the other plants around it don't crowd it too much, it may have a fighting chance to make it to the sapling stage.

From there, the young tree will continue to add rings of growth through the years. In time, it will reach its mature height and take its place among the dominant members of the forest canopy.

From the beginning, the oak tree sets its roots down deep to draw up moisture and nutrients in the soil. It lifts its foliage toward the sun to receive life-giving energy. It produces thousands of acorns every year that

feed the woodland wildlife and replenish the grove. An oak tree is the very picture of fidelity.

Like this tree, we oblates set our roots down deep into the soil of God's word through the Liturgy of the Hours and *lectio divina*. This source of mercy and hope is always available to us.

We lift our lives toward Christ, taking his light into every cell of our being. He permeates us with his Presence, generating new energy for vigorous growth and prosperity in our souls.

As we meditate on his mighty works and tender care, Christ's life within us produces the acorn that will grow into abundance, ripen and fall to the ground, feeding others and producing new vocations to the oblate life.

Our regular encounters with God sustain us through our lives, through times of joy and sorrow, plenty and scarcity, togetherness and solitude.

The current pandemic has made temporary monastics of all believers. The Lord has invited us to intensify our prayer while waiting to return to corporate worship.

Our faithfulness to our oblate disciplines keeps us going – continuing to convert our hearts, buffer our extremes and solidify our faith.

Angie McDonald, oblate  
Huntingburg, IN

## Online Store

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Lastly, if an early hour is impossible, there is always the late hour. Compline can be an expression of vigilance. The regular practice of the daily examen of conscience helps an oblate “keep a careful watch over all you do” (*RB 4.48*), not out of fear, but out of love of God and desire for heaven.

And the *Nunc Dimittis*, the Song of Simeon that closes compline, offers a

beautiful meditation on vigilance. An old man at the end of his days – holding in his arms the Child who is the Ancient of Days – Simeon is an emblem of vigilance rewarded. To make Simeon's vigilance one's own is an act of the truest piety.

So now this year-long journey through the land of vigilance draws to a close. The coming year will have a different

theme, but vigilance ought not fade away. I hope that along the journey you will have found ways to welcome it into the familiar patterns of your life, and it will be your companion as you “hasten towards your heavenly home” (*RB 73.8*). May Christ bring us all alike to everlasting life. Amen.

Fr. Justin DuVall, OSB, monk  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey

# OBLATE NEWS

## OBLATIONS & INVESTITURES

The ceremonies scheduled at Saint Meinrad Archabbey for March 28 and June 13, 2020, were canceled. ♦

## DEATHS

**Elisa M. Testa** of Landing, NJ, July 30, 2019

**Margaret Schroder** of Bronx, NY, December 17, 2019

**Carlos Gallegos** of Farmingdale, NY, April 9, 2020

**Charles Wilson** of Columbus, IN, April 18, 2020. His oblation was received on March 28, 2020, in Columbus, IN.

**Norman Burkett** of Fort Wayne, IN, April 23, 2020

**Mary Ann McMullen** of Dayton, OH, May 2, 2020

**Abigail McFeely** of Connersville, IN, May 27, 2020 ♦

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Canceled due to the COVID-19:

**Oblate Council and Finance Committee meetings**, July 17-19, 2020

## ANNIVERSARIES

**50th:** Oblates Paul and Margaret Cash celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this spring. They were married March 29, 1970, in Baltimore, MD. ♦

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fr. Gueric DeBona, OSB, began a sabbatical on June 1 that will continue through mid-January 2021. While he is gone, Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, will serve as the acting novice-junior master.

Br. Joel Blaize, OSB will begin a one-year master's program in ritual chant and song, focusing on Gregorian chant, at the University of Limerick, Ireland. ♦

## Chapter Meeting Information

Chapter meeting dates will be set and sent to Chapter Coordinators as we determine the viability of regular chapter meetings during the pandemic. While we assume that we will be able to resume chapter meetings in September, we must wait for confirmation from Abbot Kurt regarding the travel of monks to those meetings and the feasibility of groups of oblates to congregate.

## Prayer for the Canonization of Servant of God Dorothy Day

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.

## We want you and your articles!

*The Benedictine Oblate* invites you 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 and published as they fit the theme or need of the newsletter. Articles of 500 words or less are suggested.

Please send all submissions to Kathleen Polansky at [kpolanskyoblate@yahoo.com](mailto:kpolanskyoblate@yahoo.com).

### Upcoming themes and submission dates:

Fall 2020 – Obedience (Final date of submission Aug. 1)  
Winter 2021 – Humility (Final date of submission Nov. 1)



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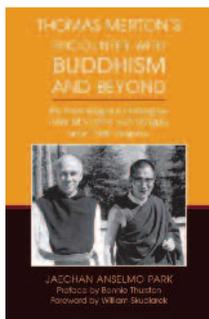
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## Reading Room

*Thomas Merton's Encounter with Buddhism and Beyond: His Interreligious Dialogue, Inter-Monastic Exchanges and Their Legacy*, by Jaechan Anselmo Park, OSB.  
Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2019.



As oblates, it is easy to focus only on immersion into Benedictine spirituality and fail to view the commonalities between other religions and our own.

Thomas Merton recognized the value and possibility of contemplative dialogue between monastics and contemplatives of other traditions,

and he hoped that, through such dialogue, monastics would strive for inter-monastic communion and a bonding of the larger spiritual family.

Merton strongly believed that this bonding would serve to demonstrate the basic unity of humanity to a world that was becoming more and more materialistic and significantly divided.

The author of this book is a member of St. Benedict Waegwan Abbey in South Korea. Fr. Jaechan Anselmo Park, OSB, presents and analyzes the influences of Buddhist theory and practice on Thomas Merton's contemplative spirituality.

We profit from learning about Merton's transformation through his contemplative experiences. With this book, we can journey with Merton as he explores Zen and Tibetan Buddhism and Christianity. The book delves into the process of Merton's spiritual transformation through these encounters.

Oblates find in Merton's legacy true depth in different religions coming together to dialogue. This book would be an excellent reference should oblate chapters move to inter-religious dialogue with other denominations or traditions.

*Thomas J. Rillo, oblate  
Bloomington, IN*