



Janis Dopp will become the new director of Benedictine Oblates when Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, steps down on June 24.

Passing the baton of leadership



Janis Dopp

Meinrad Archabbey.

However, I am very aware and firmly convinced that Fr. Meinrad has spent much of his 22 years as our oblate director not only forming us to be steeped in the spirituality of St. Benedict, but also preparing us to accept deeper and deeper levels of responsibility for our oblate community.

He has allowed us to grow and prosper and to walk with him as participants in the movement, the challenges and the measurable innovation that mark the oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

It is humbling to follow in the footsteps of an iconic figure like Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB. So, I do not take this new challenge lightly as I embark on this journey of leadership for the Benedictine Oblates of Saint

This lay movement, of which we are all participants, is a thriving, worldwide movement that speaks to the growing need for sound spiritual development for men and women everywhere. It also is a nascent recognition that the need for true community is pervasive in our culture and in our world.

Human beings are hungry for something that will fill the void of cultural isolation. We have a deep-seated need to share our lives with others and to allow the needs of others to affect and change us. We need to have a place that we call home and meaningful values that we can share with other human beings. It is something that is sorely missing in our world.

And then, we happen upon the *Rule of St. Benedict* and Saint Meinrad Archabbey and we are flooded with a fullness that seems to speak to us on so many different levels. It is a way back to the connectedness that is missing in our lives.

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A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“...he (the abbot) will not only keep the flock entrusted to his care from dwindling, but will rejoice in the increase of a good flock.”

*Rule of St. Benedict,
Chapter 2, Verse 32*

A good abbot is concerned not only with the number of monks in his community, but also with their spiritual and physical welfare. He encourages growth in the love of Christ and growth in the community.

The oblates share in this directive from the *Rule of St. Benedict*. Currently, we have 204 oblate novices and 1,161 oblates for a total of 1,365 in the oblate community. Compare today's number with the total of 300 novices and oblates we had in June 1995.

We rejoice in the increase of Benedictine Oblates of Saint Meinrad, due primarily to the oblates who themselves have done so much recruiting. Their good example, zeal and love of Christ have promoted growth!

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As Fr. Meinrad passes on the baton of leadership, he leaves us with the gift of a well-developed community spirit that will serve us well as we look into the future. Under his direction, our community has grown from 300 to more than 1,300 oblates.

He has allowed himself to be guided by an Advisory Council and a Finance Committee made up of oblates with far-reaching life experience. He has listened carefully and lovingly to all of the suggestions that have been made along the way, often allowing his decisions to be influenced by what was contributed by others.

He has supported mentoring endeavors and made possible the publication of handbooks for novices and chapter coordinators that have become models of formation for many other monasteries. He has created caring relationships with all of the oblates, who feel valued and

loved because of him. And he has recognized the growing need to attentively cultivate leaders for the future.

This is not about change. This is about a natural and progressive movement of growth that we have been participating in for the past 22 years.

It is also about becoming more consciously responsible for our oblate community as lay people who have been formed by one of the most remarkable spiritual documents of the past 1,500 years. It is also a document that was written with one express purpose, to one day “dwell in the tent of (God’s) kingdom.” (Prologue)

St. Benedict says that we must begin every good work with prayer, so let us join our hearts together in prayer as we look to this next phase of our journey. Fr. Meinrad has prepared us for this. It is his legacy.

*Janis Dopp, oblate director
Bloomington, IN*



A beautiful photo of the Archabbey Church at sunset with the inside lights of the Archabbey Church shining through the windows.

'There's a mighty judgment coming'

34th Week of Ordinary Time, November 22, 2016

Luke 21:5-11; homily given in the Archabbey Church during the Community Mass



Fr. Christian Raab, OSB

As I have often noted, when we finish proclaiming the Gospel, we always say: "The Gospel of the Lord." Gospel means "good news." We are saying the good news of the Lord. That can feel awkward when the news doesn't sound too good, like in today's Gospel.

The end is coming. Calamities are coming. "There's a mighty judgment coming."¹ But it is actually good news. God's judgment is good news. It belongs definitively to the content of our eschatological hope and longing.

Judgment is good because, not only will the just be rewarded, but "evil will be judged, revealed for what it is and brought to nothing."² It is self-evident that "enormous evils have left their mark on history." I will spare you the litany of specifics. Generally speaking, these evils have exploited people, cruelly damaged them, discarded them, treated them like waste.

Judgment means God does not simply excuse all of this. According to Australian Redemptorist theologian Anthony Kelly, judgment "marks the limit of divine patience" with what most contradicts the divine will. The mighty judgment is occasion for celebration because in it "the Antichrist is vanquished and evil is revealed for what it was all along, a parasite living on the original good of creation."

At the judgment, "the light of God will be the radiance in which no pretense, no evasion, no further subversion of the good will be tolerated. The mighty will

be toppled from their thrones. The mass murderer will no longer triumph over innocent victims. Pride and violence will be brought to nothing, and Satan will be humbled."

Indeed, there is no question "of positively hoping that individual evildoers will be condemned to hell." On the micro level, we are obliged to pray for the conversion of each soul and the arrival of each at a heavenly peace. This is what it means to love our neighbor and our enemy.

But on the macro level, we are right to look forward to that day when the limits of divine patience with those forces which contradict the divine will will be revealed.

We are right to want to see evil get its comeuppance. We are right to want to see the innocent vindicated. We are right to hope alongside Mary our Mother that the poor will be filled and the lowly raised while the mighty who have manipulated, and used them to their advantage, are finally toppled.

Let us pray now for the coming of the lion of Judah, the king and judge of the universe.

Fr. Christian Raab, OSB, monk
Saint Meinrad Archabbey

¹ Leonard Cohen, "Tower of Song."

² This and all subsequent quotes are from Anthony Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope* (Maryknoll, NY: 2006), 145-6.

PRAY FOR
VOCATIONS

OBLATES In their own words



Oblate Chris Topa
Howell, MI

"Oblation changed my life, primarily in that I learned that life is not a checklist of accomplishments to be completed. Life must be lived, and the *Rule* is a very practical guide on basic everyday living and prioritizing what is truly important in life."



What is an oblate? Let me explain



Ron DeMarco

Have you ever tried to explain what a Benedictine oblate is?

Recently, Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and I took a trip down to

Memphis to visit the oblate chapter there. I was invited to the chapter meeting to speak on why I became an oblate.

As I thought about how to best give testimony, I recalled an experience I had in church where one of my friends noticed my oblate button on my jacket. Her puzzled look was my cue to tell her that I am a Benedictine oblate. Her reply was, “You’re a what? What did you say?”

Now, at this time I was a new oblate, and it made me realize explaining what an oblate is would not be done in three words or less.

I began, “The word ‘oblate’ comes from the word ‘oblation,’ an offering of self to God. As oblates, we follow the way of St. Benedict to pray and praise God as individuals, and in community with the monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and other Benedictine oblates all over the world. Each day by example, we practice Christian life and live by our monastic values in our home, at work and in our local community.”

I explained to the Memphis chapter members that since that experience in church, many friends have asked the same question and now recognize my oblate button and what it means to me to be an oblate.

Jennie Latta, the chapter coordinator, suggested I explain in the meeting

what my typical day as an oblate is like. Of course, as we all do, I pray the Liturgy of the Hours, especially loving the highs and lows of emotions in the psalms.

But the morning is a special time for me. I get up before the rest of my family and immediately go to the breakfast room window, open the shutters, look up at the sky, and give praise and thanksgiving to the Father for his unconditional love and the sure hope of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

And then I make it a point to look out at the beauty of the birds, trees, blue sky and sunshine. In a colorful *lectio divina* of nature, I am reminded of God’s presence all around us, and within us, and am thankful for a new day, new chances!

Many reminders of his presence come back to me during the day, again in nature, in others at work and also in me, and I try to put into action being Christ to others as St. Benedict exhorts us to do. By now the day is closing and at home family time is a priority. So is *lectio divina*, spiritually inspirational reading (love books by Frs. Ronald Rolheiser and Richard Rohr) and Compline.

Some days I fall short of all this, but I strive to keep a steady routine. And here I mention to the Memphis oblates that I’m sure my day is similar to that of most other oblates.

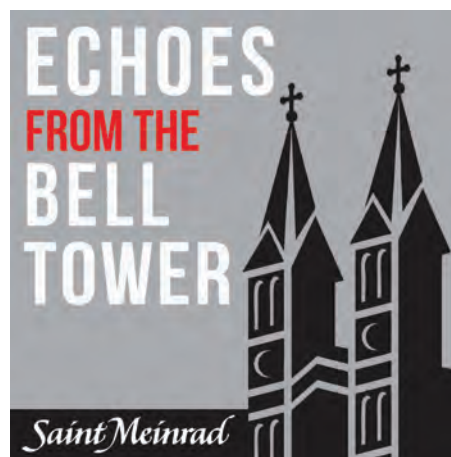
To close my talk, I thought it important to reflect on what our oblate chapter meetings bring to each of us. Ironically, I read something on the feast day of All Saints by Fr. Ed Foley that made me think of our chapter. Fr. Foley wrote about how Jesus chose the twelve apostles and

purposely did not weed out the saints from the sinners. They were a gaggle of the gifted and the not-so-gifted who chose to practice holiness together.

That’s us! And like the apostles, our chapters, too, are moved from our individuality into a holy collective through the Holy Spirit. We are community, a family that meets in prayer and gratitude. And our chapter meetings are a chance to reconnect, to recharge each other’s spiritual batteries and, in community with the monks, to be connected with Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

I wish to thank the members and friends of the Memphis chapter for their warm hospitality and for the opportunity to reflect deeply on being a Benedictine oblate. Being one has become an integral part of my life.

Ron DeMarco, oblate
Cincinnati, OH



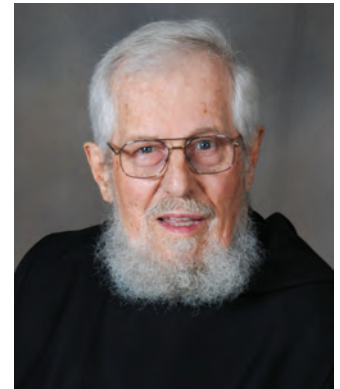
Be dressed for action:

Homily for the funeral of Fr. Rupert Ostdick

January 17, 2017, Luke 12:35-40

“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

“But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”



Stories about watchfulness and being prepared for the coming of the Son of Man originated at a time in the early Christian Church when expectations were very high that the second coming of Jesus would happen very soon.

It did not. Gradually, these stories began to be applied to the need of every believer to be prepared for the moment of death: a time when one would meet the Lord face to face. We are admonished, “Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit.”

Those who are prepared for the Master when He comes will be treated to a remarkable experience of reversal. The Master will invite the servants to sit at table and He will serve them. Still, the overall emphasis on being prepared for the unexpected remains the same. “But know this, the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.” Even for that servant who is faithful, there is still very much about the hour of death that is unknown and beyond anyone’s control.

In spite of all this, I would like to suggest that no one tried harder to keep all the unexpected and unknown aspects of both life and death under control than did Fr. Rupert. Obviously, he could not control the actual moment of his death. But that

did not deter him in his efforts. He simply opted for second best – to control every aspect of life.

Fr. Rupert was a monk and a priest of deep faith and strong convictions. Almost every day of his very long monastic life, he was dressed for action and had his lamps lit. He left nothing to chance. He allowed for no randomness.

His entire approach to life might best be described by a phrase taken from a poem by Wallace Stevens. Fr. Rupert

had what Stevens refers to as a “Blessed Rage for Order” (Wallace Stevens, *The Idea of Order at Key West*).

Here we must not misunderstand the poet. The word “rage” does not refer to intense anger. That certainly would not fit Fr. Rupert. Rage, in his context, describes a profound sense of enthusiasm, the virtue and daily dynamic that allowed Fr. Rupert to engage life fully right up to the last second of his 95 years.

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Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, tosses the first shovelful of dirt in the grave of Fr. Rupert Ostdick, OSB, on January 17.

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For all we know, Fr. Rupert is this very moment sitting at the Master's table and the Master is serving him. He always seemed to enjoy on occasion sitting at the monastic head table, so no doubt he would enjoy the step up. The somber truth is, however, we do not know factually what happens after death. We hope and we pray, but, in fact, what happens after death is shrouded in mystery.

In his Rule for Monks Chapter 4, which deals with "the tools for good works," St. Benedict says, "Day by day remind yourself that you are going to die. Hour by hour keep careful watch over all you do, aware that God's gaze is upon you wherever you may be" (RB 4:47-49).

Since factually we begin dying the very day we are born, I like to think that St. Benedict is really attempting to focus our attention on the fullness of life, which reaches its crescendo at the moment of death. He is not referring simply to the final act of death itself.

St. Benedict is admonishing us to pay careful attention to how we live. Life is a glorious gift from God. Do not



Monks carry the casket in procession to the cemetery following the funeral Mass for Fr. Rupert Ostidick, OSB.

squander even one moment of it. We do not know when the Son of Man will come and our life will be completed through death. Fr. Rupert took this teaching of St. Benedict very seriously because he was a faithful and obedient monk.

Prepare as he might, Fr. Rupert did not know that his moment of death would be on Saturday, January 14, 2017, around 5:00 a.m., as he was getting dressed for action with his lamps lit. If he had known, no doubt his "Blessed Rage for Order" would have included

detailed instructions setting forth how everything was to be done.

Throughout his long 95 years, Fr. Rupert focused his energies far more on life than on death. It was precisely by focusing on life that, in fact, he prepared for death. In that long preparation, Fr. Rupert taught us some very important lessons. Sometimes he used words, but most of the time he taught by example.

Lesson one: Live life to the fullest. It is an amazing gift from God.

Lesson two: Do not be overwhelmed by the many hardships you may encounter along life's journey, but trust in the healing processes of life, which constantly manifest the grace of a loving God.

Lesson three: Do not be afraid to try new things at any age. When you can no longer ride your bicycle, get a tricycle and keep on peddling.

Lesson four: Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit.

*Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, monk
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*



A schola led by Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, sings at the funeral Mass for Fr. Rupert Ostidick, OSB.



Photos, beginning at top left: John Kuhn proclaims his promises as an oblate during the oblate meeting in Lancaster, OH. Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, oblate director, looks on.

Oblates Lora and Jerry Alstadt hosted the social and brought the beautiful crib set for the Epiphany Celebration during the January 2017 chapter meeting St. Meinrad, IN.

Oblates of the Farmingdale Oblate Chapter met at Paul and Irene Muls' home for the March 2017 meeting.

Br. Simon Herrmann, OSB, gave the conference during the Bloomington, IN, oblate chapter meeting on February 2, 2017.

Future Investitures and Oblations

Beginning this summer, investitures and oblations will be scheduled a bit differently than they have been in the past. Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, has offered to preside at investitures and oblations in the Archabbey Church as we begin our new model of governance in the oblate community.

These investitures and oblations will take place four times a year: during the March Oblate Retreat, the June Study Days, in early September and during the December Oblate Retreat.

The dates that are designated for this year are September 9 and December 9.

Please call or email the Oblate Office at least two weeks prior to the rite if you plan on being invested or making your oblation.

December retreat focuses on incarnation



Dr. Julie Wilberding

A group of Saint Meinrad oblates gathered for the annual oblate retreat entitled, “Descending God, Rising Lord, Ascending Christ –

Incarnation and

the New Creation” on December 9-11. The retreat, presented by Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB, focused on the mystery of the incarnation, its purpose within the divine flow and its implications for our life.

After some introductory remarks about the humanity of Jesus, Fr. Adrian presented a framework called “the divine flow,” a diagram that illustrates the dynamic nature of God, for the retreatants to understand the context of the incarnation.

This flow starts with the Godhead, proceeds to the Trinity, then to creation, then to return (through the incarnation, where Christ assures our return to the Godhead), and finally, the ascension (where Christ returns humanity and creation to the Godhead).

This divine flow illustrates that the incarnation did not happen because of our sinfulness; rather, God always intended to come to ensure our return back to Him. Our return to God is also intentional; *we* desire to be with God and to be Christ-like.

Fr. Adrian discussed what a fully human Christ looks like and the effect of Christ’s humanity on us. He reiterated that Christ is both fully human and fully divine. In his humanity, Christ was not a superhero who could read minds and control his surroundings. Rather, He existed as a fully vulnerable human being.

Fr. Adrian turned to the Philippians Canticle to emphasize the meaning and importance of the humanity of

Christ, highlighting some key phrases. “He did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.” This does not mean miracles did not happen; it means Christ relied on the same working of God through his humanity, like we must do.

Indeed, when tempted in the desert to “pick up his divinity,” Christ refused. “He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave.” Yes, slave. Christ demonstrated a radical servanthood. “...being found in human form, obedient to the point of death.” Christ fully engaged in and experienced the mundane and ordinariness of human life, as well as its challenges, and He did this so we could participate in the fullness of Him – a sort of divine exchange.

Christ descends so that we may ascend; he positions us for our return to God. We are made new by the grace of the incarnation, a newness that carries with it responsibilities.

As a consequence of the incarnation, we have an essential vocation to be



Jonathon Bradford from Elizabethtown, KY, is pictured in the center with his family following his oblation on December 21, 2016.

true to ourselves, which is the image and likeness of God. We become more Christ-like by transcending ourselves to surrender to the demands of charity and respond to the need of another, often at a cost to ourselves.

We transcend ourselves through creativity as well, as God was creative, by giving life to others and building them up. We also transcend ourselves, not by being perfect, but by loving generously, letting go of the need to be in control and allowing others to be who they are.

In all of these actions, we live with our eyes gazing outward, to our neighbor. When we do this, we embody, as St. Teresa of Avila stated, holiness. Holiness, Fr. Adrian added, is not about religion; it is about loving generously even though it may be flawed. The essence of God is love and we are the image of God; therefore, love must be the center of all that we do. When love is central to our lives, the incarnation continues through us.

On a deeper level, the incarnation has an interior effect in a place called “the ground,” where our innermost self as the image of God resides; indeed, it is God within us. As we gazed outward to our neighbor above, we now gaze inward to know our true selves in God.

Our existence is God’s existence in the world. Our suffering is his suffering, our joys are his joys. This self-awareness allows us to be more attuned to our false ego and the attachments that govern our lives and keep us from what is truly important, which is full union with God.

How do we tap into these deep truths in the busyness and chaos of our everyday, ordinary lives? We do this by finding moments of solitude in our



Oblate Susan Lang of Biggleswade, United Kingdom, center, is pictured with her family following her oblation on November 16, 2016. They include her husband Deacon John, son David, father-in-law Joseph and mother-in-law Jackie.

day and by developing a regular, habitual prayer life. Growing in prayer is the path to living an authentic life in God.

Fr. Adrian reminded the group that prayer is sitting at the feet of Christ, listening; we are with Him in silence and stillness. We should not get hung up on waiting for answers, which signifies our desire for God to bend his will to ours. Rather, we should pray out of love and then let it go.

A deep prayer life cultivates the life of God within and keeps our eyes looking both outward and inward and, in so doing, continues the work of the incarnation and further prepares us for our return to God.

*Dr. Julie Wilberding, oblate
Greencastle, PA*

Degrees Conferred

Oblates Deacon Richard Paul Zoldak and Mrs. Cheryl Zoldak earned master’s degrees in pastoral theology from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. Deacon Richard’s research paper is titled “The Rite of Marriage as Related to Benedictine Spirituality and Community.” Cheryl’s concluding exercise and project is titled “Benedictine

Spirituality as Lived in Marriage.” Congratulations to them for their fine work in this important area of lived spirituality.

Books Written by Oblates

Edward Andercheck’s book, *The Roman Catholic Deacon*, has been released. More information can be found at his website, <http://deacon.tateauthor.com>.

Michael Edwards’ newly released book, *Vigilance*, has been published by Christian Faith.

Oblates in Service

Oblates Dorothy and Carney Strange served as volunteers for the Mercy Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, for two months. They worked in the Klong Toey slums. The Mercy Centre was founded by Fr. Joe Maier, a Redemptorist priest and friend of Cardinal Joseph Tobin.

Smugmug

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

<http://saintmeinrad.smugmug.com>

INVESTITURES

December 8, 2016 – **Sandra Maschino** of Butlerville, IN; and **Kristin Campbell, Jennifer Ertel, Jane McLeod, Amanda Vogel** and **Frances Walker**, all of North Vernon, IN

December 10, 2016 – **Mary Campanelli** of Gahanna, OH; **Katherine Wynn** of Evansville, IN

February 5, 2017 – **George S. Collins Jr.** of Crestview, FL

February 11, 2017 – **Dr. Sean Alexander** of Pompano Beach, FL ♦

DEATHS

September 13, 2016 – **Raymond William Garland** of Centerville, OH

November 27, 2016 – **Linn Robinson** of Louisville, KY

December 3, 2016 – **Edward M. Saraniero** of Columbus, OH

December 4, 2016 – **Gerald W. Sohn** of Sinton, TX

December 23, 2016 – **Hamako Ringle** of Sellersburg, IN

January 1, 2017 – **Rene McCurdy** of Middletown, PA

February 6, 2017 – **Florence Hagedorn** of Ferdinand, IN

February 7, 2017 – **Rosemary LaFollette** of Louisville, KY ♦

OBLATIONS

December 10, 2016 – **Marjorie Alfons Maria Mazurek Mechtilde** of **Hackeborn Busch** and **William Richard of Lucca Busch**, both of Bardstown, KY; **Robert Charles de Foucauld Colquett** of Louisville, KY; **Dorothyann Julian** of Norwich **Strange** of Bloomington, IN

December 21, 2016 – **Jonathon Joseph Michael Wolfgang Stanislaus Bradford** of Elizabethtown, KY

January 11, 2017 – **Kent Isidore Druyvesteyn** of Fort Worth, TX

Oblate life: Annual personal evaluation

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

1. What have I done during the past year to continue ongoing formation as an oblate?
2. What do I plan to do during the coming year?
3. How well do I see myself living the oblate promises: (Rate yourself on a scale of 1–5, with 1 as “needing improvement” and 5 as “doing well.”)
 - Stability of heart? 1 2 3 4 5
 - Fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life? 1 2 3 4 5
 - Obedience to the will of God? 1 2 3 4 5
4. How well do I see myself fulfilling the oblate duties:
 - Praying the Liturgy of the Hours? 1 2 3 4 5
 - Reading from the *Rule of St. Benedict*? 1 2 3 4 5
 - Daily practice of *lectio divina*? 1 2 3 4 5
 - Participating in the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation or in my own faith tradition of church and prayer? 1 2 3 4 5
 - Attentiveness to God’s presence in my ordinary, daily life? 1 2 3 4 5
5. In what ways can I offer my time, talent and treasure to the services of the Oblate Community of Saint Meinrad Archabbey?
6. If I need to improve in any of these areas, what do I plan to do?

A look back: 65 years ago

In May of 1955, Saint Meinrad Archabbey sponsored an oblate pilgrimage to Europe. The tour took 41 days: 10 days at sea aboard two famous English ocean liners, the Queen Elizabeth and the Britannic; and 31 days in Europe visiting the great Benedictine abbeys in Ireland, England, Switzerland, France, Germany and Italy.

The cost for the entire trip, which included all transportation, all meals and all overnight accommodations, was \$985. But remember, the average yearly salary for a schoolteacher was between \$3,500 and \$4,000. How time changes our perspective. What a marvelous trip that must have been. ♦

January 24, 2017 – Deacon Michael Ephrem Catalano of Nashville, TN; Michael Godfrey of Amiens Johnson of Edgewood, KY ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 12-15, 2017: Saint Meinrad Study Days will take place with Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, as the presenter. The title is: “The Challenges of Community Life According to the Thought of St. Paul.”

July 11, 2017: The Saint Meinrad Day of Reflection will have Fr. Denis Quinkert, OSB, as the presenter on “Daily Living of the Benedictine Stability of Heart.” ♦

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office have included George Thompson, Dennis Skelton, Mary Maillet, Jerry Maillet, Saundra Duffey, Novice Joseph Wagner, Christian Lumsden, Mike Edwards, Barbara Kammerlohr, Janis Dopp, Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, Sandy Wilson, Harriett Akins-Banman, Ed Lukes and Melanie Isaacson. ♦

Sign up for the e-newsletter

If you’d like to receive brief updates on what’s happening at Saint Meinrad, you can sign up for a free e-newsletter. Every few weeks, you will receive a newsletter in your email’s inbox.

To sign up, go to the “Newsletters” link on the front page of the website: www.saintmeinrad.edu. Or, send an email to news@saintmeinrad.edu



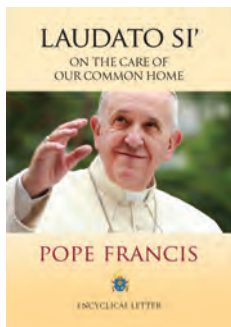
Photos, beginning at top: Oblate Msgr. Robert Noon and Oblate Director Janis Dopp took time for a photo during the January 2017 Oblate Chapter Meeting in Columbus, OH.

During the Muncie, IN, oblate chapter meeting on January 6, 2017, oblate novice Scott McKee, Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, and Fr. Dennis Goth gather for a picture.

During the Epiphany celebration at the Tell City, IN, oblate chapter meeting, the following posed for a photo: oblates Sandra Borbo and Shirley Gale, Very Rev. Dennis Duvelius, pastor of St. Paul Church, and oblate Janis Dopp.

Reading Room

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*. Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father: On the Care of Our Common Home. Rome, Italy: The Vatican, May 24, 2015.



In 2015, Pope Francis issued an encyclical titled *Laudato Si'*. An encyclical is an authentic and authoritative letter written for the clergy and laity by the current Holy Father. It is usually directed to a world problem that has implications for humanity in the areas of morality and spirituality.

The words *Laudato Si'*, or Praise Be, are the opening words to St. Francis' epic Canticle of the Sun. This was St. Francis' song of praise for all of God's creation. The Pope titled the encyclical *Laudato Si'* because he felt that St. Francis was the best role model for care of our environment.

In the encyclical, Pope Francis calls for swift action to combat the relentless exploitation and destruction of the environment. Using blunt language, he states that apathy, irresponsible pursuit of profits, excessive faith in technology and political blindness are the culprits. He calls climate change the most critical environmental issue confronting humankind today.

The Pope blames fossil fuels and human activity in the unprecedented destruction of vulnerable ecosystems. The

destruction of ecosystems will have serious consequences for all humans if corrective action is not taken now.

He is quick to point out the most vulnerable victims are the poor of the world, and he stresses the importance of correcting the inequality in the distribution of goods.

Pope Francis has had his share of critics with regard to the encyclical. They say the Church does not have the qualifications to criticize environmental degradation and climate change. It is a scientific issue and the Church should stick to theological and spiritual concerns.

The Pope says the encyclical is not a scientific treatise, but rather a plea for action with human beings at the core of remedial action. The encyclical is a call for global action and a plea for deep inner conversion of all humans.

This is imperative reading for all who, in order to love God, must love their fellow human beings and care for all of God's creation. Pope Francis states that all people of good will should have an obligation to take steps in rectifying climate change, clean up the pollution of the land and the sea and promote equal distribution of goods.

Oblates are certainly people of good will and they should be willing to join the pope's crusade to make this common home we call earth a clean and healthy place to live.

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