



Exploring the issue of private ownership

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

—Genesis 1:26

Words have power. Dominion, according to dictionaries, means dominance or power through authority. So, what does "dominion" really mean? Traditionally, it is interpreted as "to subdue" or "to rule over." When taken to an extreme, it can include oppression and exploitation. However, an exploited planet Earth does not leave humanity richer.

In Scripture, God is consistently viewed as the owner of all the earth and everything in it. Theological justification for this point of view is given in Leviticus: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (Leviticus 25:23). The Torah regards God as owner of all property and the Israelites as only temporary tenants who may not buy or sell land.

The Old Testament laws regarding property ownership recognize the concept of individual ownership by prohibiting all forms of theft (Commandment 7). So what does private ownership really mean?

Michael Keaton, the actor, recently bought 1,000 acres of trout streams and mountains in Montana. His attitude since childhood has been that we don't really own anything. We are renters and caretakers. He bought the land to protect it from development and to preserve its natural beauty.

This issue of *BOQ* will explore private ownership and its connections to our Benedictine oblation.

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate
New Salisbury, IN*



Artwork by Br. Martin Espamer, OSB

A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“(T)he vice of personal ownership in the monastery must be cut out by the very root. Without the superior’s permission, no one may presume to give, receive, or keep anything as one’s own... Rather, they must look to their spiritual parent in the monastery for everything they need and are not allowed to have anything which the superior did not give or permit them to have. ‘All things are to be the common possession of all,’ as it is written, ‘so that no one presumes to call anything their own’ (cf. Acts 4:32).”

Rule of St. Benedict
Chapter 33:1-6

Benedictine Oblate Quarterly is published four times a year by Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

Editor: Mary Jeanne Schumacher

Designer: Tammy Schuetter

Oblate Director: Janis Dopp

Oblate Chaplain: Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

Editorial Staff: Kathleen Polansky, Brenda Black, Angie McDonald and Eunice Taylor

Send changes of address and comments to
The Editor, Development Office,
Saint Meinrad Archabbey,

200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad, IN 47577,
(812) 357-6817, fax (812) 357-6325

or email oblates@saintmeinrad.org
www.saintmeinrad.org

©2022, Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Rule offers unique take on private ownership



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB

Don’t believe everything you read! Wise advice, given how much information – or disinformation – bombards us every minute of every day.

But sometimes I don’t believe everything I read even when it’s in the Scriptures! When Jesus tells us to pluck our eye out if it causes us to sin ... well, if he really meant *that*, we’d all have to learn Braille to read anything.

You can’t believe everything you read. I thought that when, early in my novitiate, I read St. Benedict’s teaching that “without an order from the abbot, no one may presume to give, receive, or retain anything as his own, ... especially since monks may not have the free disposal even of their own bodies and wills” (RB 33, 2-4).

A clever literary technique, right? Overstate to get our attention, then peel away the excess to get to the real meaning.

But sometimes seeing is believing, and about 14 years later I *saw* this verse put into practice. The brother of Father

Abbot Timothy, our seventh abbot, needed a kidney transplant, and tests revealed that the abbot’s kidney would be a perfect match. So, a green light to proceed?

Well, not exactly, and not quite so fast.

Following the *Rule*, Abbot Timothy did not *presume* to undergo the operation, even for his blood brother. As abbot, he belonged to the community – he was the community’s possession in a special way – and so, not presuming, he instead *requested* permission from his Council to make this life-saving gift. In considering his relationship to his monastery and his confreres, he didn’t believe that even as abbot he could act entirely as a “free agent.”

In asking the community for permission to give a kidney to his brother, Abbot Timothy gave us a stunning example of St. Benedict’s unique take on private ownership. As St. Paul wrote in Romans, “For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another” (8:4-5).

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey



Consider developing a ‘museum mentality’



Janis Dopp

Many years ago, I was on a shopping expedition with our Fr. Noël Mueller, OSB. I found myself looking longingly at an item that I didn't

really need and couldn't really afford. With great wisdom, Fr. Noël said to me, "Janis, you need to develop a Museum Mentality."

What did that have to do with this wonderful item? He explained, "Look at it. Appreciate it for its beauty. You do not have to own it." That is a lesson that I have remembered countless times over the years. Sometimes I have heeded it and sometimes not. But it was purely Benedictine.

In Chapter 33 of the *Rule*, St. Benedict tells his monks, "(W)ithout

an order from the abbot, no one may presume to give, receive, or retain anything as his own, nothing at all ... All things should be the common possession of all, as it is written, so that no one presumes to call anything his own."

As oblates, we do not live in the same kind of community that the monks inhabit, but we can still take St. Benedict's teaching to heart when it comes to private ownership. What we own shouldn't own us. We cannot let ourselves become so enamored of our possessions that they determine the course of our lives.

Standing on a hilltop at the monastery of Maria Einsiedeln, I began talking to a man from Switzerland who was at the monastery for a retreat. He asked me how long I would be staying, and I said that I had to return to the United States in a couple of days because my vacation time was just

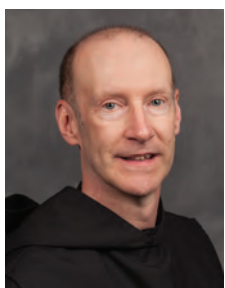
about up. He responded, "Americans live to work. We work to live."

While we all do not have the luxury of long vacations, developing a communal mentality can help to free us from the need to have everything we want, to share what we have with an open heart, and to cultivate that Museum Mentality that allows us to appreciate what is desirable without having to make it our own.

Private ownership is one of the gifts of our capitalist society. It should never be taken lightly. But we must always remember that everything we call our own actually belongs to our Creator. We are custodians of all the beauty that we hold on to, caring for it lovingly as we prepare to hand it on to the next generation.

Janis Dopp
Oblate Director

Musings from the Chaplain



Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

Chapter 33 of the *Rule* of our Holy Father St. Benedict concerns monks and private ownership. Twice in this chapter, he refers to the practice of

private ownership as "evil." Why is St. Benedict so concerned about this?

The Hasidim tell the story of the visitor who went to see a very famous rabbi and was shocked at the sparsity and the emptiness of his little one-room house. The visitor asked, "Why don't you have any furniture?" The rabbi said, "Why don't you?" The visitor said, "Well, I'm only passing

through." The rabbi answered, "Well, so am I."

Possessions in themselves are not bad. They are neutral. What we need to examine is our attitude toward possessions. If they distract us from serving God, or from helping those in need, or from prayer, they can be evil.

For Christians, it is acceptable to own things, just as long as things do not own us. We are not to accumulate much, because it is true that we are only passing through this life.

Monks can have things for their use but not own them. Items belong to everyone in the community. In a true community, the members depend on each other. A monastery is not just a

collection of isolated, independent individuals. When we acquire things without first asking a superior, then we are trying to be independent from the community.

"For their needs, they are to look to the father of the monastery, and are not allowed anything which the abbot has not given or permitted" (*RB 33:5*). When we are to ask for what we need, and then share what we are given, mutual respect is fostered, and it is easier to say, "It's ours" rather than, "It's mine."

Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB
Oblate Chaplain

Notes for Novices: **New Novice Mentor**



Br. Gregory Morris, OSB

Br. Gregory Morris, OSB, has accepted his new assignment as Oblate Novice Mentor. He aided in the oblate investiture and oblation

ceremonies in

September, November, and December of last year.

“I am eager to begin this next chapter of my monastic vocation,” says Br. Gregory. “In the *Rule*, we are asked, ‘every time you begin a good work, you must pray to him most earnestly to bring it to perfection.’ I pray and hope that my new endeavor might help myself and others seek God and serve this community.”

Br. Gregory, 34, is a native of Ft. Thomas, Kentucky. After graduation from Newport Central Catholic High

School, he earned a bachelor’s degree in history and theology from Bellarmine University.

He has worked for The Kroger Co. for 18 years in a variety of positions. His home parish was St. Catherine of Siena in Ft. Thomas.

Do you own things or are they gifts for your use?

“Day by day remind yourself that you are going to die.” —RB 4:47



Ellen Godbey

What does that admonition from the *Rule* have to do with private ownership? If I keep death ever before me, I realize that the things I own are

just that: things. Temporal, transitory, like a passing breeze. All is gift.

Everything. Life. People. Places.

Things. Therefore, I am thankful.

I own a car. We own our home along with all the accoutrements that go with it. I am grateful that I can enjoy the snow’s beauty while staying dry and warm inside. Recently, I was without wheels for over a month. I learned compassion for those who cannot drive, humility at having to depend on others for transportation, and a more willing spirit to provide that service to others.

I own things, great and small, cheap and expensive, and am thankful for the

pleasure and convenience they provide. I think I need many of them, but really, do I?

God has blessed me with people, places and opportunities. I could say I “own” my college and graduate degrees. But they, too, are gifts to be used for the greater honor and glory of God and the furtherance of the Kingdom. Again, I am thankful.

How different from the secular world is the spiritual purpose of private ownership! What I have is not for my edification, but for discipleship and service. I still have the towel I was given upon completing my master’s in pastoral studies as a symbol that I must continually be open and willing to wash others’ feet, to always follow Jesus’ example, to listen to his guidance, to go where He leads me, to give my life and use my possessions in the service of others.

With God’s help and in tune with the Holy Spirit, “I continue my pursuit

toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). I want to “own” this prize. I am thankful.

*Ellen Godbey, oblate novice
Yosemite, KY*

Abbey Caskets

A Work of Saint Meinrad Archabbey

***“May he bring us
all together to
everlasting life.”***

—Rule of St. Benedict



800.987.7380

www.abbeycaskets.com

We can choose faith over worldly attachments



Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB

Back in 1989 I was working for Montgomery Ward as a merchandise manager at the Elkhart store in the far reaches of northern Indiana. Winters

in Elkhart can be harsh. One day during the week, it was my day off and it was snowing and bitter cold outside. I was incredibly bored and wanted to get out of that old, drafty apartment to find a distraction from the loneliness I was feeling.

Since I really hate noisy places, I went to the Elkhart public library. Libraries were favorite places for me when I was a kid, I suspect because they were always so quiet. I remember wandering down the biography section and spotted at eye level a book on Thomas Becket. I loved the 1964 movie starring Richard Burton as Beckett and Peter O'Toole as Henry II.

Anyhow, the book was an old one, I think it was the Alfred Duggen biography published in the '50s. I started reading it while sitting there in the library and got so immersed that I applied for a library card just so I could take the book home and finish it. I read it in one afternoon.

What struck me about Becket's life was the choice he had to make. He found life not by choosing the road to privilege and power, which he could have had, but rather by laying aside a worldly life.

As Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas chose to serve his flock over his king. King Henry doubted Thomas's resolve, but Thomas was a man of strong will and impeccable

integrity once he made his choice to put God before the king.

By 1989, I hardly ever went to church anymore, much less spent any significant time in prayer. I was too busy pursuing worldly ambitions, believing happiness to be the product of success measured in terms of financial independence and regular career advancements. It was the "American gospel" of the 1980s I lived by, a prosperity gospel that contradicted the one taught by Jesus.

The biography of Thomas Becket acted as a catalyst in me. For whatever reason, call it grace, it helped me to begin seeing how poisonous that American gospel was. Thomas Becket taught me that I, too, had a choice – to choose truth instead of wealth, to choose vocation over career, to choose God over worldly patterns of desire that, up to that point in my life, were only making me a lonely, callous person in my pursuit of personal advantage over others.

C.S. Lewis wrote that, through the Incarnation, Christ has initiated the Springtime we all hunger for in this mid-winter world of ours. But unlike the crocus and tulip that bloom in the early spring, human beings must *choose* to bloom when spring arrives. Through the Incarnation of Christ, we have been given the power to choose either "to sink back into the cosmic winter of worldly ways, or entering into those *high midsummer poms* in which our Leader, the Son of Man, already dwells, and to which he is calling us."

It is a choice every saint has to make. Because of our Christian faith, each of us can say along with old Simeon, "We have seen the fulfillment of God's word; we know the salvation prepared in the sight of all the

nations." We've felt how our faith in Christ contradicts our attachments to comfort and privilege, and how our anxiety over them drives us to cold and lonely places, where a persistent thirst for admiration demands we work to the point of burnout just to feel alive, to feel loved, to feel secure.

Faith in the Incarnation calls us away from that cold world into the high midsummer glory of God's World, where Christ who descended has risen in glory, a world in which falling down is an opportunity for rising up again to new and more abundant life.

We are Christ's Incarnation now, Christ's 21st-century embodiment. Let this time catalyze a deeper awakening to the truth of who we are as first fruits of a new creation, transformed from a hard and winterish place into the midsummer pomp of new life in Christ.

Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey



Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord

Our 'things' can block us from getting closer to God



John Brooks

As a young boy growing up in the middle of the 20th century, my world was much different from today. My father was a high school

English/social studies/history teacher and my mother, trained as a nurse, stayed home, raised six children, and cared for her mother, who lived with us. A middle-class family living in a middle-class neighborhood on the outskirts of a large midwestern city.

Beside our house was an untouched woods that continued down to the banks of a local river. As a young boy, I spent hours wandering and exploring the woods and the river with my siblings and neighborhood playmates. My father was a wandering spirit. He should have been named Ishmael after a character in one of his favorite novels, *Moby Dick*.

His wandering spirit led us through a variety of camping adventures in tents and trailers spanning almost 20 years, 50 states, and all the provinces of Canada. It was a simpler time. We were closer to family, closer to nature, and closer to God.

Today, almost 50 years since our camping adventures ended, walking in the woods, sitting by the ocean, or walking through a garden allows me to experience the beautiful complex simplicity that lives in the nature I fondly remember as a young boy. Without all the noise of modern life, I can witness the simplicity found in nature that surrounds me.

Unchecked, undisturbed and trusting its creator, everything that is needed in nature is supplied. This orchestra of nature has just enough strings, just enough percussion, just enough wind instruments to create a beautiful symphony that lights the simple path that leads to balance, happiness and a closer relationship with God.

The beautiful symphony of our lives guided by the music of nature has become muddled, no longer clear or focused. Unlike nature, our needs have become too great. We use too many resources and give back to others too little. We have become full of ourselves, collecting goods for no need.

As I look around, I am surrounded by "things" that I have amassed after a lifetime of arduous work. It is a collection of "things" that illuminates my likes and dislikes, but does little to

define my purpose or guide me closer to God. I have a car, even though I surrendered my license years ago because of a medical condition. I live in a four-bedroom house filled with "things" that are tied to memories that carry little or no value for anyone except me.

I am overburdened, consumed and swept up with the memories associated with my collected "things." The memories keep me stuck in a happier time, but no matter how good the effect, they create a false sense of security and safety that limits my potential for growth. If our goal is to grow closer to God, then we must see past the noise and through the "things" that block our ability to know God on a deeper level.

John Brooks, oblate
Columbus, IN



Br. Zachary Wilberding, OSB, gives a talk to the new oblates and oblate novices after the Oblate Rites on March 5.

Considering the Psalms:

Psalm 104: God is the ruler over all creation

(Please take a moment to read through Psalm 104, New Revised Standard Version.)

1. Bless the Lord, O my Soul. O Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty,
2. wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
3. you set the beams of your chambers on the waters..."



Kathleen Polansky

Psalm 104 asserts that God is ruler over all that is. It reflects the understanding in Genesis 1 that all is a creation from the hand of God and all is dependent upon

God for life. "24. O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures."

This psalm reflects the Egyptian and Canaanite influence in which the earth is seen as a battleground for their many gods. Israel's faith asserts the sovereignty of Yahweh, who is Creator of any object one might choose to worship. Genesis 1 and Psalm 104 clarify that God made them all, and all belong to God.

All creatures depend on God for life and sustenance. There is an interconnectedness. The psalmist connects the human (adam אָדָם) and the ground (adamah אֲדָמָה), reminding us of our profound interdependence.

To presume that something is privately owned and that power belongs to the one whose hand holds the deed is to mistake temporary caretaking for mastery and dominance. "14. You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart..."

I sit in my living room and realize that the only personally purchased items are the rocking chair my Dad and husband got for me for Christmas about 25 years ago and the new couch we bought three years ago to replace my mother-in-law's couch of many years. There are chairs belonging to my mother and father, also their hutch and dining table. My mother-in-law has her curio cabinet in one corner.

There is a wooden rocker that rocked my grandmother in Czechoslovakia when she was just a month old. The iron dog doorstop that always stood by my Nana's front door keeps watch over our woodstove. My home is a reminder of all the people who brought me to where I am now. I have begun to consider who will be the next caretakers for these treasures.

Emphasis on private property and ownership loses touch with a sense of community and family and bends toward selfishness and entitlement, which leans toward abuse of resources and contributes to a life of waste and want. The psalmist reminds us that the land is the territory of the animals in the forest that wander about at night seeking their food from God. And in the day, it is the people who labor until evening falls. We are not to forget that our use of creation must be with constant care for the entirety of God's creative gift.

Our world, our society, is living in a difficult time to explore this topic.

Our drive is to impress others by our success, career, position, car, home, degrees – you name it. We want to show our mastery of it, and our dominance. We have created a world of idols to worship. I recall a friend getting an expensive convertible sports car. As she drove past me, her passing words were, "Status, baby. Status!"

I pray often for those who have lost all their possessions because of floods, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanoes and violence. Their gratitude for being saved is genuine; their grief over their losses is not so much over the things that are gone, but over the memories those things represent. They were caretakers of those remembrances.

St. Benedict warns us in the *Rule* that "the vice of personal ownership must be cut out by the very root" (Ch. 33). We are caring for the things we have and it is temporary. Our ownership is only as long as God deems it to be ours. "33. I will sing to the Lord as long as I have my being. 34. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord."

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate
New Salisbury, IN*

Filling in the gaps: How we do that changes the story



Fr. Harry Hagan, OSB

Every fall I teach a course in biblical narrative. It focuses on the elements of narrative: basic plots, flat and round characters, first- and third-

person narrators,

and gaps. For some reason, students have a hard time understanding gaps. This refers to what the narrator does not tell the audience.

Biblical narrators typically know everything. They know what God said at the beginning of creation. Seemingly, they could tell us anything and everything, but they don't. They leave gaps in the stories, and we have to fill them in to make sense of the whole. Some are easy to fill in; others are more complicated. To some extent, the meaning of the story will depend on how we fill in those gaps.

Jesus speaking in the synagogue offers us several intriguing gaps (Luke 4:21-30). This Gospel really began with Jesus going to the synagogue in Nazareth and unrolling the scroll to Isaiah and then reading: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor" (Luke 4:18a).

This prophecy from Isaiah is one of those Old Testament texts looking for fulfillment. As the text stands, the speaker is not clear. As Jesus sits back down, Luke (4:20b) tells us: "The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him." Luke does not tell us what they were thinking, only that they were all looking at him. That is a gap.

Jesus then lays claim to this text and says: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Luke then tells us two different things about the people's reaction:

1. "And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth" (22a).
2. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" (22b).

First, there seems to be pride in a native son; they "were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth." But then Luke tells us that they second-guess themselves: "Isn't this the son of Joseph?"

Jesus then says He will do no wonders there and tells how Elisha was sent to foreigners: to the widow of Zeraphath and to Naaman, the Syrian leper.

Luke then tells us: When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury (28). The English word "fury" conveys more than ordinary anger. These people are so angry with Jesus that, as we heard, "They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong" (29).

Why are they so angry? This is the gap I was talking about. Luke tells us they were furious – so angry they were ready to kill this son of the town. But Luke does not really tell us what made them so mad.

Jesus has told them He will do no wonders there. Are they insulted? Does that make them angry enough to kill him? He is, after all, just the "son of

Joseph." Do they think He is a charlatan, a fraud? It is easy to write off a fool. But you don't have to kill him.

What so threatened the people of Nazareth that they had to throw the son of Joseph over the cliff?

God called Jeremiah to challenge the idea that Jerusalem could not be destroyed. The people thought that since Jerusalem was the place of God's temple, they were safe – could do what they wanted. But Jeremiah tells them: "Do not trust in these deceptive words, 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord'" (Jeremiah 7:4). That was heresy to them. Some called for Jeremiah's death. Others threw him in a pit to die there. Rather than listen and change, they were ready to kill Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38:6).

Prophets make us uneasy. The present seems never good enough for them. They always want change, always want something more.

Jesus lays claim to the prophecy in Isaiah. He announces a new day. Do the people of Nazareth just hate change? Certainly, it is true that people hate change. As long as we are content with the way things are – even if others are not – we hate change. Even if things would be better – need to be better – people still hate change.

Is it really hate, or is it fear? With hate, I appear to be in charge; with fear, someone else is. We would rather hate than fear. Still, I think maybe it is really fear – fear of change, fear of what I do not know, fear of letting go of my grasp. Fear can run deep.

Change brings questions. It challenges my understanding of the world – challenges how I make sense of things. Change threatens my world, my private security.

Luke does not really tell us why the people of Nazareth take Jesus to the brow of the cliff. So, we must fill it in, but our answer is going to be more what we think, rather than what they thought.

Of course, we don't want to think of ourselves as people who would carry Jesus to the edge of the cliff. And I hope we are not. Still, there are people around today who are willing to take various things, and even people, to the edge of the cliff.

There is a righteous indignation in the air these days. This anger seems to become its own justification. Anger often comes when we don't get our way, and anger gives people permission to do things that their better selves would not approve. Anger is very seductive. It validates our actions. It makes us feel righteous or, to be exact, self-righteous. Self-righteous anger is so confident that it does not need to ask what it is hurling over the brow of the hill. It just feels right.

Sometimes, this anger is borne of the fear of change, fear of losing what we possess, fear of the future, even fear of the present, which differs from the way it used to be. Desire for the good old days is almost always half a memory. People remember the good and forget the bad. I certainly do not want to abandon the past, but we cannot live there. To have a tradition means having a foundation on which we build a future, not a past.

Our personal and our national past certainly had its injustices and its sin. Still, righteous anger can become self-righteousness and burn down the house.

There is a personal, private, self-righteousness today that glorifies whatever I want without regard for how it touches anyone else. This places me at the center of the universe. Everyone else is expendable and can be thrown over the cliff.

There is a good bit of rudeness around these days. I would not want to think of ourselves as people who would carry Jesus to the edge of the cliff. Still, we may want to examine anything that, because of our

ownership, would cause us to come closer to the brink, would carry us to the choice of harm to another, whether by word or deed.

There is one more gap in this story. The last line of the Gospel says: "But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away."

What happened that allowed Jesus to pass through their midst and go away? Did this crowd come to their senses somehow? Luke doesn't say that. He just says Jesus passes through and goes away. Somehow, we recognize that Jesus has the power to do that.

Gripping tightly to our ownership can become a force that alienates us from others. Love lets us see face to face, person to person. Love gives us the power to be known fully. We proclaim God is love, and that Jesus is divine. Perhaps in this narrative, love filled this gap.

*Fr. Harry Hagan, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*



What can I own? Perhaps the answer is ‘now’



Deepak Frank

What I try to own may end up owning me. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).

Greed and ambition sometimes consume me. To be detached is difficult. Hence, in Acts of the Apostles (4:32), “no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.” Even the *Rule of St. Benedict* discourages private ownership (Ch. 33). And when Jesus came, He owned nothing.

Lack of private ownership is difficult to practice, as I have a family to plan for. So, I will temporarily possess things. With the insecurity of our world, I try to own a car, home, and countless things that are okay as a means to an end if done in

moderation. If I seek pleasure in things and possessions, then greed, selfishness and pride can take control.

Wealth beyond necessity and some comfort has limited value. To own is to be a master. With life being temporary, I can never be a permanent master. In the daily grind, it may appear that life is long.

In the pursuit of ownership, it is easy to fall into greed, insecurity and anxiety. Seeking pleasure in things and money may provide a temporary hope of controlling my future. Frequently, I am reminded that things don’t always go my way and I need to accept and adjust.

I am expected to be a follower on a path that is often unclear. I cannot own anything, as even the grave where my body will finally go will turn it to dust. All the things that I think I own will be left behind when I die. All that

I will take with me is the account of my deeds.

So, what can I possibly own?

If I take the word “own” and rearrange it, I get an amazing answer: now. This moment right now is what is certain, and I can fully live in it. My actions and their impact are up to me right now. I would love to get rid of my fears, anger, bad habits, selfishness. This, though, is very difficult.

Being selfish and looking out only for my interests crosses boundaries and hurts others. It is my desire to own the decisions I make that lead to pain and misery. To do so, I must remain connected to God by actively seeking to understand God as the ultimate owner of my destiny. There I will find my treasure and there my heart must remain.

Deepak Frank, oblate
Columbus, IN

Journey toward oblation

As I was reflecting on the last four months of this amazing journey, I wanted to share what led me to Saint Meinrad and the call from God toward the oblates.

While vacationing in the French Lick area, my wife and I made plans to visit some of the area sites. I had heard of Saint Meinrad monastery and wanted to visit, so we added this to our vacation week itinerary.

I was taken aback by how peaceful and beautiful the grounds are and how nice and accommodating the monks and staff were to us.

When we returned home, I had a real desire to learn more about Saint Meinrad, the monks and the monastery’s history, so I started by visiting the website and there encountered a word I had never seen before. That word was “oblate.”

Since that week in mid-October 2021 and our visit to Saint Meinrad, I have read many books about the Benedictine oblates and the monastic way of life. I have learned how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and *lectio divina*. I have read the *Rule of St. Benedict* and recently returned to the monastery for another visit.

The call from God leading me to become a Saint Meinrad Benedictine oblate concerned me. I worried about my worthiness. What brought me here is definitely a nudge from God that never seems to leave me.

I will continue to strive and keep learning, centering my life around the *Rule*, and I look forward to becoming an oblate novice of Saint Meinrad.

With support from my wife, family, friends and parish, I am grateful to say I will be invested as an oblate novice in March 2022 with great honor.

Myles Piotrowski, oblate novice
Flora, IN

Meet A Monk: Fr. Lorenzo Penalosa, OSB



Fr. Lorenzo Penalosa, OSB

Fr. Lorenzo Penalosa, OSB, is fond of saying, “Just when you have it figured out, God throws you a curveball.”

In 1991, Father was born with a club foot and spina bifida, which required immediate surgery. Doctors told his parents their son would never walk.

When Fr. Lorenzo was 7 years old, his 36-year-old father died of a heart attack.

As a young boy, he dreamed of becoming a priest, then a teacher, then a lawyer like his father.

In 2006, Fr. Lorenzo’s mother remarried, and the family moved to Indianapolis, Indiana. Fr. Lorenzo was able to adjust to the change, but his Catholic faith faded. Fr. Lorenzo attended Franklin College and majored in social studies and secondary education.

As a college freshman, Fr. Lorenzo had a roommate who was a devout Christian and who helped to rekindle not only his Catholic faith, but also his priesthood dream. He met with the vocations office for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and transferred to Simon Bruté College

Seminary to prepare for diocesan priesthood.

A visit to the Archabbey for a soccer tournament in September 2009 changed Fr. Lorenzo’s trajectory. He was then sent to Saint Meinrad for his seminary studies. “I fell in love with the place, the ministry of forming future priests, and I admired the monks,” he recalls.

“Most importantly, I was drawn to the liturgical prayer here. The monastery and seminary schedules are separate, but whenever my schedule allowed for it, I would sneak over to the Archabbey Church to pray with the monks. Suddenly it clicked: monastic life at Saint Meinrad could bring together my two dreams of becoming a priest and a teacher.”

But just when he thought he had it all figured out – you guessed it, “God throws you a curveball.” In the summer of 2017, he learned he has Marfan syndrome, a serious connective tissue disorder.

For some months before making his final monastic vows in August 2018, Fr. Lorenzo began researching

graduate schools to attend. Doubting that he could manage school in Rome at Sant’ Anselmo because of his mobility limitations, he heard these words at Mass on Christmas Eve: “Nothing is impossible with God.”

Six days after his final vows, he headed for Rome and plunged into his new studies with relish. His goal was to complete a licentiate that would authorize him to teach, followed by a doctoral program.

Fr. Lorenzo had been studying in Rome for over a year when COVID hit Italy like a tsunami. He returned briefly to the Archabbey in late August for his priesthood ordination, then returned to Italy to complete the licentiate.

In March 2021, persistent pain in his right knee, along with many falls, sent him to the emergency department, where he learned his kneecap had separated into three pieces. A week later, he had surgery in Rome, then presented his thesis and completed his licentiate.

It took two more surgical repair attempts in the States before a surgeon realized that Fr. Lorenzo’s Marfan syndrome was the culprit. The offending piece in his kneecap was removed and Fr. Lorenzo finally began a long recovery.

In December 2021, Fr. Lorenzo led the oblate Advent retreat. Over three days, he shared his life story along with many spiritual applications and insights.

And his doctoral program? That remains to be seen. For now, however, one thing is sure: God is indeed the faithful God of surprises.

*Angie McDonald, oblate
Huntingburg, IN*

Serious times call for serious faith



Beverly Weinhold

COVID called me to deeper faith. Life is hard already, but the pandemic wrapped around everyday concerns about health risks, racial tension,

political splits and street violence. John Adams' letter to Thomas Jefferson (1813) sums it up to a tee: "My Friend! You and I have passed our Lives, in serious times. I know not whether we have ever seen any moments more serious than the present."¹ Serious times call for serious faith.

St. Benedict was no stranger to serious times. Disgusted by paganism's disfigurement of the Christian faith, he deepened his spiritual practices. As oblates of St. Benedict who follow Jesus, we can do no less. Benedict warns that the road "is bound to be narrow at the outset," but promises "as we progress in this way," we'll pick up speed and find our "hearts overflowing" (RB Prologue, 48-49).

Henri Nouwen resonates with Benedict's "hearts overflowing," defining spiritual formation as an "ongoing discipline to descend from the mind into the heart so that real knowledge can be found."² But how do we drop the academy of the mind into the ascesis of the heart? Christian history offers options mostly memorialized by spiritual masters: Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, Ignatius Loyola, John Wesley, Thomas Merton and so on. Noticing this, Nouwen pinpoints three themes

that shape spiritual formation: *lectio divina*, silence and guidance.

Lectio divina is from our Benedictine tradition. It is a slow, methodical, meditative reading that transcends time and transports the reader into the storyline with the original audience. Standing alongside these early hearers, we drop our head into our heart to hear a word spoken personally to us. That turns the tables: rather than you and I reading the text, the text reads us. Seen by the Living Word, sharper than any two-edged sword, we experience conversion conforming us evermore into the *Imago Dei*.

Nouwen's second theme is silence. Although our wordy world knows that "silence is golden," the press of getting work done eclipses the practice of pause. Jesus offers a counterintuitive model. Despite the treadmill of ministry, he regularly prays on a mountain and sits in a boat on a lake to listen, showing that stillness gets more done. St. Benedict followed the example of Jesus and the Desert Fathers by leaving the chaos of the city for a quiet cave in Subiaco.

Most of us don't live in a monastery and must cultivate concrete, small spaces that call us to stop striving and "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). This quest is the subject of a book written by Catherine de Hueck Doherty, titled *Poustinia*. "Poustinia" is the Russian word meaning a little place for silence, where she beckons pilgrims to intentionally carve out small spaces to practice silence.³ It may be as simple as a chair next to a desk lit by a

candle. Returning regularly to a quiet center creates an inner cell we can return to anytime.

A final theme completing this threefold cord for faithful formation is guidance. A guide is needed, says Nouwen, because "the way from the mind to the heart is not without pitfalls (20)." That said, it is important to choose wisely, seeking someone seasoned and "trained in spiritual direction," one trustworthy to "help distinguish the Holy Spirit from many unholy spirits" (*ibid.*). That said, it's good to be cautious of gurus who shun community accountability and instead find a guide who values character over credentials.

Adams was prophetic, speaking a word into society that saw far into the future. We live in serious times. May God give us grace to be so still that we hear the Spirit's call to soak in prayer, sit in silence and talk things out with a guide: "O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not: what is tedious at first will afterward be pleasant. Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way."⁴ Amen.

Beverly Weinhold, oblate novice
Louisville, KY

¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, [ca. 3–5] July 1813," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0220>.

² Henri Nouwen, "Spiritual Formation and Community," in *Community*, edited by Steven Lazarus (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021), 16-24.

³ Catherine de Hueck Doherty, "Poustinia," as quoted in *Celtic Daily Prayer*, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2002), 438.

⁴ John Wesley's letter to mentee John Trembath, quoted by Steve Harper from "Prayer and Devotional Life of United Methodists," in *A Guide to Prayer for All Who Seek* (Tennessee: UpperRoom, 2004), 92.

Faith means learning to adapt, shift gears



Mark Plaiss

Have you ever taught someone to drive a car with manual transmission? “Depress the clutch. Put it in neutral. Start the car. Now, shift up into first.

Okay, now give it a little gas, and at the same time ease out on the clutch.”

Kills engine.

Repeat that process. Do it again. Yet again. One more time.

Lurching back and forth, the driver finally manages to get the car into first gear. You calmly tell the driver it’s the most difficult gear to get into.

So you’re rolling along in first gear. “Now, speed up so the needle on the tachometer reaches the number 3, and shift into second gear.”

Grrrr.

“You have to depress the clutch when you shift gears,” you patiently tell the driver.

Okay, the car’s in second. “Now, speed up so that when the little needle is at the 3, shift into third gear. Push the gear shift up and then over to reach third.”

Chug chug chug chug.

“You’ve got it in fifth gear, not third.” An attempt is made to put it in the proper gear.

“Depress the clutch!” The driver does so and successfully jams it into third.

“Okay,” you say, wiping the sweat from your forehead with the back of

your hand. “I think you got it, now. Speed it up...”

“Yep. Speed it up then, depressing the clutch, shift into fourth by just bringing the gear shift straight back.”

A smile stretches across the driver’s face, because the car is now humming along at a good speed.

“When the tachometer reads three, push it up into fifth gear.”

Bingo. The driver slides it into the proper gear with ease.

Reverse, starting from a dead stop on a hill, and downshifting come next. In time the driver becomes adept at operating the machine without looking at the tachometer, knowing when to shift gears by the sound of the engine.

Christianity is a lot like learning to drive a car with a clutch. We forget to depress the clutch. We grind gears. We select the wrong gear. We panic

when we roll back. But we also have a swell instructor. God.

We are on a journey. Only this learning process, unlike learning to operate a manual transmission, takes a lifetime. We are not alone on this journey. “The Lord, your God, carried you, as one carries his own child, all along your journey” (Deuteronomy 1:31).

In times of stress, doubt or fear, we are like that driver learning to operate the manual transmission. Part of delving deeper into our Christianity is learning that God is right there with us helping us shift gears.

And just like driving with a clutch, our Christian faith requires us to constantly change gears to adapt to the situation: a stoplight, a car in front of you turning left, the ball rolling out into the street. Kick it into neutral, downshift, start from first gear again. It’s an ongoing, never-ending process.

Mark Plaiss, oblate
Fox Lake, IL



Eric Rosenberry receives the Rule of St. Benedict from Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, while being invested as an oblate novice on March 5.

The *Didache*: Earliest written training of Jesus' followers

In a series of four articles, we will explore what may be the oldest existing writing from the early days of Jesus' followers. The Didache, fully titled The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to The Nations, along with its history, authorship, communities, use, teachings, and how it remains vibrant 2,000 years later, will be examined. Since the term "Christian" did not exist for decades, that identification will not be used.



David Miller

Place yourself in the time when people gave firsthand accounts of Christ's ministry, miracles, death and resurrection. Apostles,

spreading the Good News throughout the Mediterranean, are being martyred. Recollections and "sayings books" are the only written records of Christ's work. There are no approved Gospels, no church organization, no clergy, and worship takes place in homes. The Eucharist is an agape celebration of thanksgiving. No dogma exists.

Jesus' followers encounter Gentiles, but no standards exist for bringing them into the community. This is the era of the *Didache*.

The *Didache*, an instruction manual, is developed to support the receiving of Gentiles and Jews into Jesus' community of followers.

Only five pages and four sections, the *Didache* begins the first section with a listing of do's and don'ts. Included is the commandment to love God and love one another, and a shortened grouping of the Ten Commandments.

The second section is a training manual for entering the community, along with a listing of required practices, prayer, fasting, baptism and celebrations. The third is a hospitality

mandate concerning traveling apostles. The fourth explains group leadership with a warning of God's judgment at hand. The *Didache* is a practical guide for common folk, not a theological dissertation.

The *Didache* offers a window into the lives of second-generation followers of Jesus. It shows how they lived, sought identity, resolved conflict, and struggled to fit into Greco-Roman culture. It reflected their desire to follow The Way and spread the faith in these writings, along with a healthy skepticism of wandering prophets.

Written at the earliest stage of the Jesus movement, the *Didache* has no citation from the Gospels, though many phrases closely track Matthew. Nor is there expressed knowledge of Pauline theology. References to "Lord" are to God, not Jesus, who is mentioned as "God's child" or "teacher." There is no message of faith in the cross, nor atonement. The forms of baptism and Eucharist are primitive. Group worship is at kitchen tables with meals. Men and women have equal roles. Each home-church elected leaders.

It is quoted in writings dated to the late first and early second century (Clement, 90s; Justin, 150s; and Ignatius of Antioch, 103). Based on this, scholars conclude the *Didache* was written about 50-60 AD, contemporaneous with Matthew. The parallel language suggests Matthew and *Didache* may have been written in the same community.

Citations continued until the 800s, after which it disappeared, replaced by more formalized manuals. The *Didache* became a lost writing.

In 1056, a monk named Leon completed copying the last manuscript into Greek. He noted his name, date and placed it in a codex of other ancient writings. There it remained, unseen until 1873, when a Greek bishop, reading in a Constantinople monastery library, opened the dust-covered binding, and found Leon's manuscript. It took the cleric several readings before he realized the treasure he held.

Like many early Jesus texts, the author is anonymous. But it is possible to identify the writer(s) by what is written. The author was likely Jewish, as the *Didache* is replete with well-written summaries of the Torah, reference to the "vine of David," "first fruits," and reliance on Jewish prayers. Daily prayer, fasting, communal meals, and baptism practices are similar to first-century Jewish traditions.

The communities for which the *Didache* was written were likely Jewish rural areas lacking experienced faith leaders, thus the need to have written directions for conversion celebrations. Jewish practices are noted without explanation. If addressed to a Gentile audience, or for Gentile implementation, these rules would need explanation.

Converts being welcomed were not always of Hebrew background and challenges to rules arose. Dietary restrictions, the prohibition on graven images, and keeping the Sabbath were relaxed to accommodate Gentile converts.

The *Didache* probably started as oral tradition that later was written by

those experienced in its use and assembled from different texts. Papyrus fragments have been found throughout the Mediterranean in Greek, Coptic, Latin, Ethiopic and Syriac, showing its wide circulation.

Knowing when the *Didache* was written, by and for whom, its general contents, purpose and history, points

us to the next two articles to discuss its teachings and method of use. The final article will explore the text's relevance to today's Benedictine life.

David Miller, oblate
Venice, FL

Sources

Brown, David Michael. *The Didache and Traditional Innovation: Shaping Christian Community in the First and Twenty-First Century*. Duke University School of Divinity. Doctoral Thesis.

Milavec, Aaron. *The Didache Text, Translation, Analysis and Commentary*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003.

O'Loughlin, Thomas. *The Didache, A Window on the Earliest Christians*. London: Baker Academic, 2010.

O'Loughlin, Thomas. *The Missionary Strategy of the Didache*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Transformation Sage Publications, 2011. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0265378810396298>.

Wilhite, Shawn J. *The Didache: A Commentary (Apostolic Fathers Commentary Series)*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019.

Reflections on Ravens: Some caveats about ownership



Edward Castronova

Benedict rejects private ownership, calling it an evil practice that must not be allowed to any degree in a monastery.

Monks are not to own anything at all. Everything belongs to the monastery. And the monastery, under the direction of the abbot, gives things to monks as justice and compassion demand.

A naïve person might wonder why we can't do this outside the monastery. Wouldn't it be best for us all to throw our goods together in one big organization and let that organization's leaders decide who gets what?

This has been tried. Unfortunately, Stalin and Mao were not kindly

abbots. Stalin's decisions about food killed 6 million Ukrainians in the Holodomor, and Mao's killed 40 million Chinese in the Great Leap Forward.

What's the difference? On the surface, the difference is that the abbot of Saint Meinrad does not act like Stalin (although the monks might occasionally jest to the contrary). But why? Why can we trust our goods to a man like Abbot Kurt, but not like Comrade Josef?

Regula. It comes down to the *Rule*. The *Rule* tells the abbot to live like the brothers, indeed, to be a model of the way of life. In the outer world, the upper class does not live like everyone else. They exempt themselves from the rules they lay down for others.

Because of the privations and exactions of the way of life prescribed

by the *Rule*, the office of abbot will tend to attract a man who cares at least as much about God as he does about himself. But executive offices will often attract people who love being powerful and important above all else.

I should be wary of putting my physical well-being in the hands of someone who cares only about being powerful and rich and famous. I should be wary of giving power to people who either dismiss God or, worse, say they love God while promoting evil. Of course, these people say they care about us. Well, I say, may the Lord protect us from such folks.

Edward (Ted) Castronova, oblate
Bloomington, IN

Perfection: A quest we can never fulfill



Kathy Kelker

Who ever conceived such a concept? Who sets the standards? Is it sometimes a good idea, but many times not? Who decides?

My simple faith-based answer is: all of God's creation is perfect in its own unique way. Our task is to see it. The natural world offers numerous examples of awesome beauty, maybe not perfect by some technical standards. Art challenges perfection. The beauty lies in our personal perception.

Humans are all beautiful and special in their own personal way. We have individual talents, physical appearances, personalities and life stories.

Perhaps the quest for perfection is a protective mechanism against the feeling of inferiority, if we have not

yet connected deeply in our unity with God. The human life journey into perfection ultimately provides us with a stumbling block as a gift, an opportunity to access who we truly are and humbly seek God in a closer relationship. To ask God, "What is your plan for my life?"

Ideally, this lifelong spiritual journey leads us deeper into understanding what love encompasses. We feel this mystical urge and guidance from God. We see that all life is connected.

The *Rule of St. Benedict* offers us a toolbox. This timeless *Rule* offers guidance for our journey through a daily commitment to prayer and spiritual reading, humility and listening, restraint in speech, and a simple life of moderation. Daily application of these aspects of Benedictine life truly offers a perfect trust in God.

Modern culture, with its competitive, materialistic and consumer-driven

ideals, challenges us. I find it so reassuring that there are fellow oblates and the monks of Saint Meinrad on the team. We support each other on our journey with God. Bless you!

During my younger years, striving for perfection was a manner in which to get started in life. I needed to test my limits to see what I was capable of. But now, my mind and heart are transforming into a new awareness and even a softness. Life is about love. Love of God, striving to connect and know Him more deeply through contemplative prayer. Love of self-acceptance of my age and limitations. Lastly, love of others through compassion and generosity of time, talents and treasure.

Perhaps perfection is a grace that comes into our lives as we simply live as God intends or, as our Franciscan friends ask, "What is mine to do?"

*Cathy Kelker, oblate
Fort Wayne, IN*

Perfection is about fulfillment



Hank Blunk

Mrs. Heil gave each of us a new piece of chalk the first morning of first grade and said, "Don't break it. Put the chalk on the ledge in your desk drawer." As

I opened the drawer, the chalk slipped from my hand and fell into the drawer!

Now, instead of a perfect piece of chalk, I had three imperfect pieces! I was mortified, embarrassed, afraid, no

longer a perfect first grader. Imperfect me couldn't wait to go home for lunch and never come back to school!

Nobody's perfect! We all have accidents, slip-ups, blemishes, foibles, unique characteristics, limitations that identify us one from another.

Biblically, perfection is about fulfillment. "Be perfect as Your Father in heaven is perfect," is the way Jesus said that (Matthew 5:48).

It was Moses who was looking for the perfect credential, authorizing him to tell Pharaoh to release the Hebrew

people from enslavement. When Moses tried to pin down that perfect authorization, the voice from the burning bush said, "I AM who I AM" (Exodus 3:1-14). That does not appear to be the perfect credential Moses was looking for!

There are similar developmental stages of life for us, each perfectly appropriate for its time and circumstance. At first, an infant is dependent for nourishment, shelter, affection, and attentive, loving care. That dependence gradually gives way to an independence of wanting things their own way.

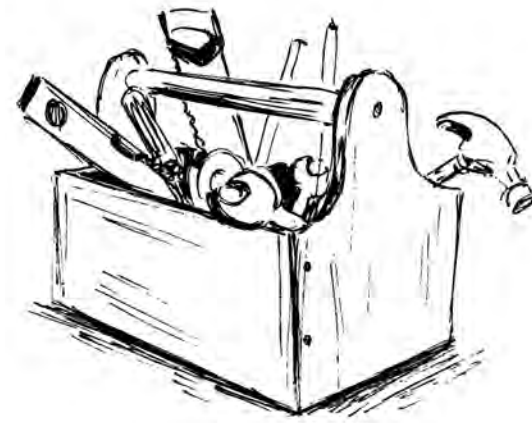
Continued on Page 18



Scenes from the oblations and investitures ceremony held March 5 in the Archabbey Church.

The Oblate Toolbox

We are only custodians of our goods



“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

I have just a few prized possessions. My Martin acoustic guitar. My set of Great Books. And all my pottery mixing bowls.

Every time I pull out Grandma’s 1926 green bowl to scramble some eggs or whip up some cornbread, I don’t see a bowl; I see her. I remember her. I feel connected to her.

The same goes for the bowls my mother handed down to me when she had to give up cooking for good. When I take one of them out of the cupboard, I am transported back to afternoons after school, when Mom would mix up a batch of oatmeal cookies in that very bowl.

I don’t know right now what will happen to these artifacts of my family. Will anyone else love them like I do? How will I pass on these treasures?

You see, they may be in my custody now, but not forever. Someone else will inherit them and take over their stewardship.

In his monastery room, Fr. Lorenzo Penalosa, OSB, (see “Meet a Monk,” this issue) has a bookcase filled with volumes on theology, liturgy and many other topics. Inside the books he has written the letters “au” – meaning “the use of.”

“It belongs to the Archabbey, but it’s for my use,” he says. He’s the steward of those books right now. Later, they will return to the Archabbey Library for someone else’s use.

This invites me to ponder my possessions and ask myself: do I really own these things? How am I letting God use them to benefit others? Am I keeping these things to myself because I don’t want to share? How can I detach from this possessiveness?

As I ponder how Jesus left Heaven behind to embrace poverty here with us, it helps me see my “stuff” in a different light. I came into this world with nothing, and I won’t be hitching up a U-Haul to the hearse when my time comes. As we think about this temporal life, our perspective can help us loosen our grip on all our possessions.

I can really only keep what I give away.

*Angie McDonald, oblate
Huntingburg, IN*

Continued from Page 16

Those “terrible twos” is evidence the child is growing into and perfecting the independence necessary for self-care, developing preferences, and learning how to get along in life. The independence is good unless it becomes self-absorbed stubbornness. Then it is imperfect, arrested development. Interdependence is a still more perfect way. It recognizes our need for one another.

It is a more perfect interdependent relational reality to which Jesus points

us in the “Great Commandment” when He says, “Love the Lord with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39). And while we don’t always get that right for a variety of reasons, it describes the perfect relationship.

The Benedictine path to perfection is found in three familiar words: stability, obedience, conversion. Simply put, it means stay with it! Listen to what life experiences show you! Develop and mature from them.

In these days, it’s easy to turn away from what is difficult or troubling, yet all of life’s experiences are invitations to perfection when we allow our lesser selves to get out of the way.

*Hank Blunk, oblate
South Bend, IN*

OBLATE NEWS

INVESTITURES

The following were invested as oblate novices on November 20, 2021: Linda Ackerman, Jasper, IN; Gregory Marx, Huber Heights, OH; Adam Altman, Bartlett, TN; Fr. John Michniuk, West Chester, OH; Earl Arseneau, Hazelwood, MO; Constance Mitchell, Clarksville, TN; James Atkinson, Lewis Center, OH; John O'Keefe, Columbus, OH; Michael Brandt, Cincinnati, OH; Michael Pirnat, Noblesville, IN; Michael Brummond, Greendale, WI; Matthew Potter, Evansville, IN; Edward Hampton, Huntingburg, IN; Jenifer Schreiner, Valparaiso, IN; Margaret Hendrixson, Bloomington, IN; Bernadette Sickmann, Hazelwood, MO; Terrence Hickey, Carmel, IN; Sherry Sopher-Potter, Evansville, IN; James Lowney, Columbus, IN; Cynthia Stille, Marion, IL; Mary Lowney, Columbus, IN; Fr. Steven Walter, Loveland, OH; Lynn Marie, Jasper, IN; Jodie Wilson, Brownsburg, IN.

The following were invested as oblate novices on December 4, 2021: Tim Allega, South Bend, IN; Mary Ellen Burkart, Columbus, IN; Jason Fornelli, Cicero, IN; Zachary Greve, Bunker Hill, IN; Keith Hipps, Farragut, TN; Richardo Montelongo, Houston, TX; Robin O'Connor, Jasper, IN; Sherry Taylor, Bloomington, IN. ♦

OBLATIONS

The following made their oblations on December 4, 2021: Todd Berry, Marshall, IL; Mary Desire, Boca Raton, FL; Christopher Collins, Independence, KY; Jacquelyn Edwards, Versailles, KY; Madeline Couch, Columbus, IN; Laurie Gessner, Cincinnati, OH; Debra Hansen, Worthington, OH; Mark Robbins, Indianapolis, IN; Kevin Hinkle, Brownsburg, IN; Philip Schraner, Jasper, IN; Jennifer Kappler,

Fisherville, KY; Richard Schuster, Indianapolis, IN; Sonia Keepes, Mt. Carmel, IL; Gordon Slack, Zionville, IN; Sandra Long, Columbus, IN; Theresa Slack, Zionville, IN; Kathy Peters, Frankfort, KY; Lynn White, Paoli, IN.

Transfer of Oblation: Curtis and Judith Robbins, both of Indianapolis, IN. ♦

DEATHS

Remi St. Onge, of Brunswick, ME, died on October 5, 2021.

Carol Work, of Bloomington, IN, died on October 6, 2021.

Raul Noe Longoria Jr., of Bartlett, TN, died on October 7, 2021.

Carol Murdock, of Anaheim, CA, died on November 9, 2021.

Charles Roth, of Port Washington, NY, died on November 10, 2021.

Clyde Dorn, of Cincinnati, OH, died on November 12, 2021.

Thomas Edward Zarworski, of Senoia, GA, died on December 9, 2021.

Gail Lyman, of Dayton, OH, died on January 2, 2022.

Dr. Cynthia Getz, of Leitchfield, KY, died on January 5, 2022.

Robert E. Pease, of Huntsville, AL, died on January 31, 2022.

Mike Head, of Owensboro, KY, died on February 20, 2022. ♦

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were Br. Michael Reyes, OSB, Br. Gregory Morris, OSB, Joanna Harris, Kathleen Polansky, Angie McDonald, Fr. Lorenzo Penalosa, OSB, Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, Fr. Colman Grabert, OSB, Fr. Denis Quinkert, OSB, and Ann Smith. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

Investiture and Oblation Rites for 2022: June 4, Oct. 1, Dec. 3

Oblate Study Days: June 7-10

Oblate Novice Only Retreat: July 29-31

Oblate Advent Retreat: Dec. 9-11

Oblate Council and Finance Meetings: April 15-17, October 21

Oblate Council Meeting: July 1 ♦

ARTICLES WANTED

Benedictine Oblate Quarterly invites oblates and oblate novices 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 write an article based upon our issue's theme.

All submissions must include your name, city and state. Submissions will be edited and published as they fit the theme or need of the publication. A maximum 500-word limit is suggested for all submitted articles. If choosing to add sources, please use endnotes and *not* footnotes.

Please send all submissions to Kathleen Polansky at kpolanskyoblate@yahoo.com.

Upcoming themes and dates:

Summer – Restraint of Speech, final due date of May 1, 2022

Fall – Reverence in Prayer, final due date of August 1, 2022

Winter – Faults, final due date of November 1, 2022 ♦



**Benedictine
Oblate** QUARTERLY

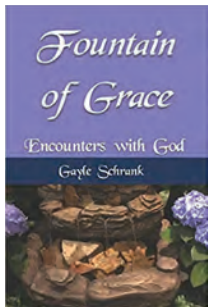
200 Hill Drive
St. Meinrad, IN 47577

Return service requested

**Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #3
St. Meinrad, IN**

Reading Room

Fountain of Grace – Encounters with God by Gayle Schrank, 2020, published by Home Crafted Artistry and Printing.



Fountain of Grace – Encounters with God is a collection of reflections that share how God's grace surrounds us and is always present to us.

Through heartfelt expression, prayers and friendship, this book delves into the paradox of our daily lives and conveys how each of us is a fountain of God's grace.

When we reflect on our life's experiences and listen to God, we allow ourselves to be molded into God's beautiful vessels. God loves all of humanity perfectly.

When we love ourselves and one another with God's perfect love, our lives are filled and overflowing with grace, goodness and peace. This book is an easy prayer companion and can be used alongside your other daily devotions.