



Artwork by Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB

Spiritual Poverty

“Poor in spirit’ is in part a synonym for the people who have enough humility that they do not operate from a sense of pride: the poor in spirit are those who recognize that they are both the beneficiaries of the help of others and part of a system in which they are to pay it forward and help those whom they can” (Amy Jill Levine: *Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner’s Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven*).

Spiritual poverty compels us to let go of our self-centeredness so we may be open to becoming more God-centered. It invites us to live with authenticity and full obedience. God calls us to hear his voice in the needs of our world. It beseeches us to an emptying of self, so that it is God’s life and love that fill us and move us to action.

Dead Sea Scroll, 1QM, uses the phrase “poor in spirit” juxtaposed with the “righteous of God,” to speak of those who align themselves to God and to others, rather than to selfishness.

“The cross is the sacrament of poverty of spirit, the sacrament of authentic humanness in a sinful world. It is the sign that one human being remained true to his own humanity, that he accepted it in full obedience” (*Poverty of Spirit*, Johannas Baptist Metz, “God Becomes Human”).

Jesus is the ultimate example of spiritual poverty. He tells his disciples, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” He is speaking to us. This issue of the *Benedictine Oblate Quarterly* focuses on our call as oblates to live spiritual poverty.

Kathleen Polansky, oblate
New Salisbury, IN



A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

Truly we are forbidden to do our own will, for Scripture tells us: Turn away from your desires (Sir. 18:30). And in the prayer too we ask God that his will be done in us (Matt. 6:10).

We are rightly taught not to do our own will, since we dread what Scripture says: There are ways which some call right that in the end plunge into the depths of hell (Prov. 16:25).

Rule of St. Benedict, 7:19-21

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Blessed are the Poor in Spirit: They remember all too well



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB

You need a good memory to practice humility. I don't mean you have to know what happened on December 7, 1941, or on November 22, 1963 – as nation-changing as the events on those days truly were. I'm talking about having a good memory of your own history.

St. Benedict's Chapter 7 on humility is no humble chapter, for it can boast it is the longest chapter in the *Rule*. It speaks of "12 Degrees of Humility," and each one reminds us that God is God and that we are not.

That's not a put-down. God values us beyond our wildest imagination. Recall Psalm 8: "What are we humans that you should keep us in mind, that you should care for us?" The answer is one we can be proud of! "You have made us little less than a god; with glory and honor you crowned us."

Being poor in spirit doesn't mean denying our greatness. It means remembering we are great because of what God has done for us – not because of any claim to fame we have earned or deserve.

Being poor in spirit runs throughout the *Rule*. When speaking of "The Artisans of the Monastery" in Chapter 57, for example, Benedict warns his monks not to sell their handcrafted goods for more than they are really worth. An honest work for an honest price.

But it's clear that Benedict is concerned about "spiritual inflation" as well. Sometimes a monk's successful handiwork can do harm to that monk's

heart. If an artisan becomes proud and ends up believing the monastery owes him more than he owes the monastery, well, in that case, Benedict says he is to be removed from practicing his craft so that he may learn again how to practice his humility.

The truly humble have truly good memories. They remember their skills and talents are gifts from God, not something they have earned. And so they give those gifts back to God by using them for the good of others. Then they truly use them for the greater honor and glory of God.

The ultimate criterion of the success of the work of our hands is that it serves, not the "*opus mei*," my work, but the *Opus Dei*, the work of God.

*Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB
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Spiritual Poverty: Letting go in the darkness



Janis Dopp

On the Fifth Sunday of Lent this year, Fr. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, preached a homily that really struck me. He started out by saying,

“Easter is for those who know loss.” That really caught my attention. He concluded with the thought that “Jesus is calling us to meet Him in the depths, in the darkness.”

I was so struck by the backdrop of these two phrases, and they kept resonating in my heart for days. Perhaps it was because I recently have been dealing with some health issues. When my struggle has been the greatest, I have felt alone. Did God

hear my prayer? But this is exactly where He had been waiting to meet me, and I wasn't getting it.

Both of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke recount that Jesus promises the kingdom of heaven to those who are poor in spirit. This has nothing to do with what we possess or not. Poverty of spirit is about vulnerability and the acceptance of our powerlessness.

If I can allow myself to be surprised by God, who loves me, has created me for a specific reason, and guides me every step of the way, perhaps I will not feel alone during times of difficulty. I have always carefully guarded my ability to be in control of my life. Poverty of spirit, however, offers nothing but uncertainty. And yet, this is a key to the kingdom of heaven.

If the reality of my relationship with God is highlighted by what I hope God will provide for me, am I trusting God or myself to determine what is best for me? Throughout the pandemic, I have been using the Spiritual Communion Prayer of St. Gertrude when I attend the daily livestreamed Mass from Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

A part of the prayer reads: “Give to my heart to be perfectly in accord with Thee in what I place before Thee.” With trust in God's unending love and care, this is what I long for at the end of the day. Spiritual poverty is about letting go in the darkness so that I can claim a oneness with my Creator in the light.

*Janis Dopp
Oblate Director*

Words of wisdom from Mother Teresa



Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

Mother Teresa, now known as St. Teresa of Calcutta, founded the Order of the Missionaries of Charity, who care for the blind, the

elderly, the dying, and people afflicted with leprosy in the poorest sections of Calcutta and other cities around the world.

In one of her many interviews, she was asked about a visit that she made to the United States. She said that New York City was the first place she saw there. She had previously heard about the U.S., and that it was a superpower, and that it was the country with the highest standard of

living in the world. As her guide showed her around, Mother Teresa noticed the beautiful buildings, luxury shops and the expensive clothes that many people were wearing.

She also noticed that no one smiled. Whether on the streets or in stores, she did not see one person who appeared happy or joyful. She said that even in the slums of Calcutta, people smiled, but not here. She had never seen so much material plenty alongside spiritual poverty as in the U.S.

She said, “The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece

of bread, but there are many more dying for a little love.

“The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty – it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. It is a form of spiritual poverty. There is a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.”

*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB
Oblate Chaplain*

Notes for Novices:

Poverty enables us to live in humility



Br. Stanley Rother
Wagner, OSB

The Franciscans (Friars of the Sacred Heart Province) have long been a part of my family's history, as well as my own personal history.

Beginning with my paternal grandfather's parents getting married at St. Augustine Church at 51st and Laflin in Chicago, my grandfather receiving all his sacraments at that church, my time working at St. Peter's-in-the-Loop while I was in the high school seminary, and even after my time as an undergraduate at Quincy University in Quincy, IL, I have seen the Franciscans binding themselves to "Lady Poverty."

Though I love the Franciscans and they will always have a place in my heart, I know God is calling me to remain stable and obedient in living out my vow of *conversatio* as a Benedictine monk. I understand my calling in light of a Franciscan-like poverty.

Bonnie Kirk, OMI, has written that poverty "... embraces a simple lifestyle that frees one from the rat race, and to share time, talent and treasure." In Benedictine terms, poverty enables us to live in humility, freed from the ways of the world, which should not be our own (see RB 4:21).

Practicing poverty in the 21st century does not have to mean living paycheck-to-paycheck, giving all our money to the poor when we have a family to shelter and feed, or ignoring

the "check engine" light in our cars when we have to earn a living.

Benedictine poverty means giving our gently used clothing to the St. Vincent de Paul Society, making supper with what we have in the refrigerator instead of ordering a pizza, or opting for a car that is neither a lemon nor ostentatious. Poverty means living in humility, living in the truth of who God is calling each one of us to be in the present.

How you will practice poverty will differ from the way I practice poverty in the monastery. What links this spirit of poverty is the call to become more like Christ Jesus every moment of our lives – the same Christ who is true God and true human, the Risen One in whom we find our salvation.

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Notes from Novices:

Endurance, patience are keys to oblate life



Mark Plaiss

As an oblate novice, the delay in making oblations has been trying.

I was scheduled to make oblation in June 2020. When

that was scrapped, I set my sights on June 2021. Once again, postponed. So now I'm looking at June 2022.

The reticence of Abbot Kurt to reopen the monastery to guests is perfectly understandable. I questioned

the result of this. Is God trying to tell me something? Is oblation really the route God wants for me?

The opening sentence of Chapter 58 of the *Rule* states, "Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry." Though I am not seeking entry to Saint Meinrad as a monk, I am seeking a filial association with the house. As a lover of the place, I have been confident that Saint Meinrad was the place to seek that filial association.

The COVID shutdown brought all that into question.

Born and raised in southern Indiana, I have been visiting Saint Meinrad since I was a child. The beauty of the grounds, the buildings, the relative isolation, its place atop a hill, and the liturgy have all tugged at my heart. When I was director of diaconate formation for the Diocese of Gary, Saint Meinrad was my first choice for the canonical five-day retreat. It pleased me when the candidates, most of whom had never been to Saint Meinrad, found the monastery as appealing as I did.

The interest in becoming an oblate of Saint Meinrad was something I

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Quieting the interior noise: The discipline of *lectio divina*



Fr. Adrian Burke

We 21st-century Americans live in a very noisy world. When I imagine noisy places, I usually call to mind the busy streets of a large American city. I think of the traffic, the crowds of people making their way to shop, to work, to eat, chatting on cell phones or masking the city noise with sound piped from cell phones into earbuds.

I think of workers tearing up streets or sidewalks for repairs or improvements, the mechanical noise of a backhoe or the ear-jolting percussive pounding of a jackhammer. I think of the ear-piercing commotion of sirens clearing the way for emergency vehicles moving through traffic.

Such a scene is not unusual in the urban landscapes of America's busy cities. But, here in southern Indiana, the noises are different. Birds and squirrels and breezes through the trees make the sounds of a rural landscape.

Outdoor sounds here are gentle and peaceful, except for the occasional upset expressed by ubiquitous blue jays or the melodious tittering of Carolina wrens driving me away from nests built in low-lying bushes or birdhouses. From the gazebo in front of the monastery, one is more likely to hear the lowing of cattle or a rooster's crow than the sounds of traffic on the highway some distance off.

Amid all that tranquility, there is another kind of "noise." The kind that distracts us from within, pulling us

away from the peace of one's deep center. This noise comes from a fractured and alienated sense-of-self, an ego entangled by distracting thoughts rooted in earthly attachments (both spiritual and material) and worldly patterns of desire.

One reason monks and nuns have typically located their monasteries at some distance from busy urban centers is to better hear the voice of God that speaks from a Christ-centered self. Whether the din of a hectic life overloaded with demands on our time or the distractions we rely on to fill unoccupied moments and relieve boredom, our 21st-century lives are replete with noisy diversions that can keep one from the inner work so necessary to connect with the deep self – what the Cistercian monk Thomas Merton called one's "True Self" in Christ.

To even realize how disruptive interior distractions and attachments have heretofore been, one must collaborate with God's grace to liberate the mind and recenter the spirit on Christ, God's Word, continually voiced from within. This requires practice, a certain amount of dedicated time each day for simple, quiet listening.

For the Benedictine, listening is the first precept of the holy *Rule*: "Listen carefully to the master's instructions and attend to them with the ear of your heart" (RB Prol. 1). So, for the Benedictine, listening is fundamental. We read in the *Rule* regarding the restraint of speech, "the disciple is to be silent and listen" (RB 6.6). Silence is required, then, for the sake of listening.

In a previous *Oblate Quarterly*, I wrote of interior dispositions and attitudes as "spiritual possessions" that we attach to, maybe because they make us feel more powerful (less vulnerable), or right (as opposed to "wrong"), or holy (as compared to our neighbor with whom we all too often compare ourselves).

These interior dispositions and attitudes attach to our minds and hearts and inhibit the peace and tranquility that comes from attaching to Christ. To attach to Christ, we must dispossess ourselves of (detach from) all that is *not* Christ.

To better understand how our attachments and unwholesome dispositions possess us and inhibit our true freedom, we must cultivate interior silence. We must sift through all the interior "noise" and find our way to our center, where Christ waits wrapped in silence. This requires discipline, and there is no better discipline than prayer for cultivating interior silence and a disposition of deep listening.

The pattern of Benedictine prayer is *lectio divina*. This quiet, reflective encounter with the Word of God in Scripture opens the ears of the heart to God's Presence voiced as Christ. The liturgy follows this pattern as a kind of communal *lectio divina* in which we collectively exercise the listening needed "to obey the master's instructions."

Mysteriously present in the biblical texts is God's Word voiced as God's *Self-poured-out* (Christ), which is the

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Reflections on Ravens



Edward Castronova

A monk once came to Gandhi's ashram and asked to join. Gandhi said, "Yes, but you will have to put away your robes." The monk replied, "I am a monk, my robes reflect my Sanyas (vow)." Gandhi said, "It is not about your vow or even your clothes. It is just that if you wear those monk robes here, people will serve you. But, we are here to serve, not to be served."

How did this spiritual poverty influence Gandhi's civil disobedience?

Perhaps by emptying himself and allowing God to fill him up, he obtained courage to resist, and the wisdom to do so peacefully.

My few experiences as a kinda-sorta-dissident have taught me that people outside the Church are furious right now. They yell pretty fast. People inside the Church are angry, too, of course, and I get angry myself – it keeps my confessor busy.

But the situation is so tense that it has gotten to where a person who publicly states an opinion on a certain topic can be ostracized, yelled at, targeted on social media, fired, or even receive death threats.

What has happened to us? Whatever it is, all I know is that one way to help the situation and do better is to embrace spiritual poverty. That will keep me quiet when I should be quiet, and it will help me resist if that time ever comes.

So I pray: God, empty me of me, fill me with you. On days when I am most afraid: O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me.

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

Rediscovering spiritual practices to enrich your faith life



Ron Lewis

Rediscovering the spiritual dimension of Christianity has given me a new, yet ancient way of being a practicing Christian. The contemplative dimension of spiritual practices, in addition to a daily practice, gently began to answer my "how" questions. How can I abide with God in Christ? (John 15:4). How can I become a participant in the divine nature? (2 Peter 1:4). How can I die to self and live to God? (Galatians 2:20).

I call spiritual practices the rhythms of silence, singing love into the still space of grace within me. It has been my experience in my inner journey that when meditative prayer is also paired

with select spiritual practices, something special can happen to and within our life and faith communities.

Practices are habits of doing that shape being. Practices are a patterned way of life. They are traditionally described as a rule of life. Somewhat like St. Benedict's *Rule*, we become what we do. We can, by God's grace, change. What we can't do, we can ask for help.

The menu of spiritual and contemplative practices that I use and suggest is not exhaustive, but I believe that these seven practices can help deepen our spiritual lives and flourish in our churches: *lectio divina*, prayer of the Hours, self-observation, silence, simplicity, solitude and stillness.

These seven practices can change and deepen our being by grace and work!

As our doing shifts, our being changes. When our being develops, our entire life transforms. As our life changes, our community does, too. When our community changes for the better, our world can, too.

*Ron Lewis, oblate
Bloomington, IN*

Season your chant with St. Meinrad psalm tones



Terry Starr

I am an oblate of Saint Meinrad and a lifelong church musician who loves to cook. If psalm texts are the meat and vegetables of the *Opus Dei*, the psalm tones are its herbs and spices.

Theoretically, any psalm may be sung using any of the eight customary Meinrad tones. But pairing Psalm 136, in which the psalmist invokes a blessing on those who “seize and dash [the enemies’] children on the rock,” with the sunny innocence of Mode V is like pairing broccoli with chocolate. Both foods are good, but together? No.

So, what flavors do tones I–VIII, derived from ancient Gregorian modes and adapted for English by Fr. Columba Kelly, OSB, impart to our daily monastic psalm-meal? What moods do these tones evoke? What makes one tone distinct from another, giving each tone its unique musical ethos?

While reading about each tone, have at hand the written chant modes on pages 414–415 of *Liturgy of the Hours for Benedictine Oblates*,



or scan QR code 1.



Even better, listen to a monk chant each mode and scan QR code 2.

Look for #16, Psalm Tone Demonstrations under the heading: Other.

Mode I is serious. It ranges widely for five lines before proceeding downward to its solemn conclusion. Royal and

historical psalms go well with this mode.

Notice Psalm tone II’s limited range – only four pitches span its first three lines. It is sad (*tristis*) and reflective, pairing well with individual psalms of lament.

Tone III is passionate. Look at the melody in line 6. Its dramatic downward scale, and especially its two final notes, echo fiery Spanish flamenco music. No problem singing “By the streams of Babylon” in this mode!

Here’s a metaphor switch. Have you ever examined a wooden puzzle box? Look at the first and last measures of Tone IV. The four note patterns interlock like puzzle pieces, especially when only two-line verses are sung. The last line seems suspended in mid-air, mysterious and unresolved.

Mode V, the “playground mode” according to Fr. Columba, is easy to find when playing on a piano’s five black keys. Childlike and happy, this mode naturally accompanies Psalm 130.

Mode VI breathes stability and contentment. Lines 4 and 6 match exactly. Four of its six lines end solidly on its home tone, or tonic. This is musical comfort food, good for wisdom psalmody.

The second line of Mode VII sweeps jubilantly upward to its characteristic high note. It shouts in triumph. The Hallel psalms, Easter and Christmas texts are just right for this mode.

Mode VIII narrates a story. It wanders freely, ending line 6 with a dramatic five-pitch drop.

Try long narrative psalms in this mode.

If you are new to chanting the *Opus Dei*, listen to the monks during livestreamed Masses and Vespers. Chant psalms on one pitch, then move to two. Pick your favorite psalm tone. Our cathedral choir opens choir practice with the psalm for the coming Sunday using Tone VII.

During the pandemic, the Memphis Oblate Chapter has moved from chanting every Saturday morning Mass to daily Lauds and Vespers on Zoom – one person at a time. You will be amazed at the blessing these eight musical flavors bring to your daily prayer.

Terry Starr, oblate
Memphis, TN

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Finally, my dear oblate novices, I have some news for you. Fr. Abbot Kurt has assigned me to finish my MA in American history at the University of Louisville beginning this August. I am excited about this opportunity, and I am grateful to my community for the gift of finishing this degree, which I started at another university seven years ago.

What this means for you is that I will cease my duties as Oblate Novice Mentor on June 30. Do not fret, though, Br. Michael Reyes will become the new oblate novice mentor. Janis Dopp and I rely on Br. Michael for the diverse skills that he brings for your benefit and edification. Please help me welcome Br. Michael into his new role beginning July 1.

Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB
Oblate Novice Mentor

Meet A Monk: Fr. Colman Grabert, OSB



Fr. Colman Grabert

Fr. Colman Grabert, former impressionable lover of movies and self-described “devout kid,” has been a monk for over 60 years and a priest for almost that long.

The Evansville, IN, native grew up steeped in the Catholic faith, attending parochial school under the watchful eyes of Benedictine religious sisters. These nuns would play a pivotal role in moving Fr. Colman along the path to Saint Meinrad Archabbey and its monastic community.

“The sisters were great promoters,” he remembers. While teaching the “three Rs” to their young charges, they also shared the heritage and spirituality of St. Benedict, and they talked to parents about their sons and to pastors about possible vocations among the students.

The seed of a vocation can take root in all kinds of soil and be nurtured by all kinds of experiences. One Friday afternoon before going home from school, Fr. Colman saw “The Song of Bernadette” (1943) at the movies. Afterward, filled with the wonder of St. Bernadette’s visions of the Blessed Mother at Lourdes, he was awestruck at the sight of brilliant rays backlighting a bank of clouds. It was a kind of vision of his own, he recalls.

But was it his idea to come to Saint Meinrad College after graduating from high school in the early 1950s? “I came here because people said I should,” he says.

Step by step, his direction became clearer with time. It was during his first year of college that he began to get ideas about the monastic life. “I liked the feel of it,” he says. “I had great admiration of the men teaching.”

It soon became less of an idea and more of a life direction. On August 15, 1960, Fr. Colman professed his vows to become a monk and joined the Archabbey monastic community. As many before him have done, he was ordained to the priesthood five years later on September 5, 1965.

“It’s a culture, a way of life,” he explains, “to follow Christ, to seek communion and union with God.” Distractions from even good things drop away in this single-hearted search for Him.

Throughout his years as a monk, he has served in many capacities, including as organist, secretary to the archabbot, house prefect, gardener, teacher, mail deliverer and, most recently, as director of guided retreats and group retreats.

It’s not so much the jobs he has held throughout his life; it’s more about the changes he has gone through.

For example, at one time he played all the liturgical music as principal organist. “I liked the liturgies. They drew me in,” he remembers. It was a great place to be. With advancing age, however, he had to let even that wonderful task drop away and allow the younger men coming up through the community to step into that role. “The synapses just don’t fire like they

used to,” he says.

Was this an easy transition? Not necessarily. He is not shy about the struggle. And this has not been the only such challenge; Fr. Colman does not shy away from voicing his ongoing recovery from alcoholism.

He has lived what he shares: we must recognize our absolute dependence on God, which can be difficult for those used to being in control. The critical point? “We are utterly incapable of sustaining a worthwhile life, which is always by God’s grace.”

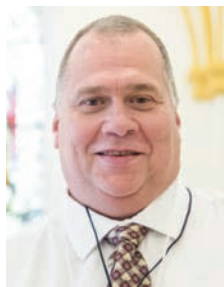
In his low times, he has had to accept help. “My biggest humiliation was being an alcoholic. I had to let go completely. It took me falling on my face.” When a man professes his monastic vows after many years of formation, he has not arrived and he is not finished. At that point, “life is just beginning.”

Fr. Colman gladly shares the bounty of his lived experience with others through guided retreats tailored to the individual. They last anywhere from a weekend to a full week at the Guest House and Retreat Center. The person on the retreat usually meets with Fr. Colman once or twice a day to receive counsel regarding current life issues. Fr. Colman assists with Scripture and has the retreatant keep a journal of the retreat. “I listen very carefully to what they’re saying,” he explains.

In his ninth decade, Fr. Colman continues to seek God and help others do the same. With all the change he has experienced, one constant remains: “It’s been God through the years ... you are where you are because this is where God wanted you to be.”

*Angie McDonald, oblate
Huntingburg, IN*

Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord



John Brooks

A couple of years ago, I attended the Easter Vigil at St. Bartholomew. I got home at a little before 2 a.m. I was scheduled to volunteer the morning shift at Brighter Days, the homeless shelter. My shift started at 6 a.m. and, since it took about 20 minutes to walk from my house, I awoke at 5 a.m. and left the house about 5:30 a.m.

It was a beautiful cool Easter morning, but the beauty was escaping me because I was feeling tired and empty. But what I noticed was how quiet it was, just the sounds of a few cars in the distance.

As I turned to walk down Main Street, I noticed the singing of birds on my right. They subsided and birds on my left started singing as if answering the birds on my right. While walking, it seemed the birds were following me, singing first from

my right, then my left. As I walked, the singing grew louder as each new group joined the previous.

Approaching the end of Main Street and my turn, it had become a beautiful symphony of sounds. Each bird's song, individual and unique, melding together in a beautiful song, showcasing the wonder, beauty and majesty of God's creation. It was only as I turned, and the song faded, that I appreciated the transformation that had begun and was now overwhelming me.

It was a feeling of joy, happiness, optimism, strength and hope. Silently and alone through Lent, I had been struggling after my wife of 35 years had passed away three years before at age 59. I was going through the motions of life, but I was feeling empty, alone, sad, distant and angry with God.

What my Easter walk taught me was that when we are going through difficult times in life, we miss opportunities to experience the majesty, wonder and beauty of God that surround us. During those times,

we turn away, hide and push God away. We find ourselves numb to the beauty that surrounds us. We find ourselves poor in Spirit, unable or unwilling to grab the wealth of the gifts God has given us and the beauty and love that God surrounds us every minute of every day.

It is easy to imagine that when we are living in the sadness, sorrow, loneliness, confusion, frustration and anger of life, we find our hearts cold and hardened to God. We become self-centered in our own importance, searching for anything that will fill the void, if only temporarily, of the emptiness, loneliness and distance we have accepted.

We only need to slow down, look around and listen to find God. It was on a cool Easter morning, as I walked feeling empty, lost and alone, that I found a renewed spirit of God in the birds singing that lifted me from the depths of sorrow to the clouds of hope and from the darkness of doubt to the light of faith.

John Brooks, oblate
Columbus, IN

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creative ground of our "True Self." That deep and responsive place where God rests within each of us, uniting us with ourselves, with our neighbor, and with God.

Thus, *lectio divina* is practical training in spiritual poverty. By continually returning the distracted attention back to the "silence" of the Word, we learn to be centered on Christ, and thus more receptive and responsive to the "demands of charity" (God's will) encountered in every moment of the day.

The practice of *lectio divina* also enables us to discover in ourselves what yet must be renounced of those "spiritual possessions" that inhibit the realization and expression of our True Self in Christ. The Word of God thus impacts the whole of our lives as we learn to "read" and respond to each situation from our deep and simple center in Christ!

Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB, monk
Saint Meinrad Archabbey

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Spiritual Direction: Doorways to Deeper Faith



Beverly Weinhold

At a 12-step program, someone shared: “When I was a kid, I relied only on myself because there was no one at home to help me. But I’m no longer alone. Now I turn my ‘will and my life over to the care of God as I understand God’ (Step 3).” This cameo captures how I see spiritual poverty. It is a soul shift from self-reliance toward God dependence. No longer the captain of my soul, I turn my life over to the care of God.

I first heard the term “spiritual poverty” years ago when my then-husband and I were campus ministers at Harvard University. A mentor used the term to sum up the Beatitudes, saying, “Happy are the unhappy.” I struggled with the paradox. But it rang true.

Still curious some years later, I taught a women’s Bible study on the Beatitudes. Reading them in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, I saw spiritual poverty as a blueprint for Christian character. Counterintuitive to the world’s way of striving for success, status and money, the Beatitudes invited me to self-insight, humility and riches money can’t buy. Like St. Benedict’s descending and ascending ladder, the way up is down (RB 7:7-8).

The Beatitudes were taught to followers of Christ. An overarching theme throughout Scripture is God calling out a people to be holy. Like oblates, Christ’s disciples were

ordinary people seeking God. When we seek God, God finds us. Standing aside God’s glory, the only reasonable response is to realize my spiritual poverty. In this spirit, the Beatitudes show with relentless logic what spiritual poverty looks like:

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
(Matthew 5:1-3)

Poor in spirit isn’t about low self-esteem or a pittance in my bank account. It’s coming to my knees and knowing that I don’t have the power to fix my problems, reconcile my relationships or live out my life. Theologian Howard Thurman calls this having one’s “back against the wall”¹. Sewing fig leaves over shortcomings won’t work, which is why St. Paul cried out, “Wretched man that I am, who will save me from this body of sin” (Romans 7:24).

Blessed are they that mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

Seeing ourselves as poor in spirit, it is only natural to mourn. The mourning mentioned here is less about bereaving the loss of a loved one and more about the sorrow of repentance. Godly sorrow begets conversion. Like the “Man in the Mirror” song² suggests: “I’m starting with the man in the mirror; I’m asking him to change his ways, and no message could have been any clearer; Take a look at yourself, then make a change.”

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5)

Being poor in spirit and mourning about it softens our hearts. Humility makes us meek. St. Benedict saw this

in spades, dedicating an entire chapter to humility and suggesting 12 steps (RB:7). Meekness is not weakness. It is not a victim mentality. Meekness is tensile strength. It’s a sober assessment of the true self (Romans 12:3), seeing both gifts and limitations. Its confidence is not having to compare oneself to anyone at all.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
(Matthew 5:6)

Coming full circle, seeing God see us, we are poor in spirit. Mourning over sin, our stance is softened. This meekness makes us hunger for God’s justice summed up in this song:

My eyes are dry
My faith is old
My heart is hard
My prayers are cold
And I know how I ought to be
Alive to You and dead to me
But what can be done
For an old heart like mine
Soften it up
With oil and wine
The oil is You, Your Spirit of love
Please wash me anew
With the wine of Your Blood.³

Summing up, spiritual poverty, like the Beatitudes, begets blessings. Beyond happy, the Hebrew Scriptures suggest two root words for blessing: kneel and pool. It’s a word picture of camels coming home after a hard day’s work and kneeling at a pool for water and rest. Now that’s a blessing.

Beverly Weinhold, oblate novice
Louisville, KY

¹ Howard Thurman (1976). *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Beacon: Boston.

² Glen Ballard and Siedah Garrett (1987). Producers: Quincy Jones and Michael Jackson.

³ Keith Green (1977-1979). © Universal Music Publishing Group.

Considering the Psalms:

Psalm 34: Moving beyond our fears

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed. This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble.

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.

O fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. ...

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all. He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken. ...

The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

—*NRSV Bible with the Apocrypha, eBook Kindle Edition, by Harper Bibles*



Kathleen Polansky

I grew up in the pre-Vatican II Church. Fear was a dominant feature when confronting our sins and God. I recall many a “first” Thursday of the month

hoping to not be assigned to the Monsignor’s confession line, because he would shout out your sins for all to hear and then berate you for them.

Upon moving and attending a public high school, I left the Church. College drew me back into a new post-Vatican II Catholicism – to a degree. Four weeks after returning to the Church and the sacraments, I was home for the holidays and went to confession.

When I announced that it “has been four weeks since my last confession,”

I immediately got a lecture about waiting so long. I repeated, “It was four weeks.” That did not change the tenor of the scolding. I walked away from that sacrament for another four years.

Fear and criticism do not invite vulnerability or humility. Admonishment does not encourage openness or repentance. To open our hearts, our wounds, our scabs, our transgressions to God, we must know that our cry for help will not be turned against us. To have a relationship with God, we first need the experience of God as love.

We are living in a time of immense fear. Every action, every word, even every breath one breathes can bring massive suffering. Distress and anxiety are reaching levels that destroy trust and compassion. People are crying out in frustration and anguish.

Living in trepidation and being the bearer of consternation to another opposes the love that God offers. The psalmist instructs us to look to God as the one who protects and sustains us. Poverty of spirit invites us to empty ourselves and allow vulnerability so God can fill us with life and love.

The practice of spiritual poverty summons us to move beyond the self-protection that fear instigates and enter into a predisposition of self-giving based in love. We can then allow others to approach us without preconceived arguments, biases or condemnations, and then truly encounter the mystery of the other.

Turning toward God requires a relationship that is not based in fear of censure and reprimand, but implores healing and hope. Psalm 34/33 praises

Continued on Page 18

A fresh look at the Parable of the Talents



Fr. Adrian Burke

When homilies on the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) are preached, likely you've heard a pretty standard interpretation.

The gist of the message becomes how we are called by Christ to use our gifts and talents, our inventive creativity, skills, and proficiencies to build up God's kingdom – to increase it, like invested money that grows from interest accrued and compounded over time.

I've often thought how odd it is to represent the Kingdom of God in terms of accruing worldly wealth. In another part of the Gospel, Jesus disparages mammon as an idol or false god, which some people choose to serve instead of the true God! Just a couple chapters earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus cast out of God's Temple those who were selling and buying, making God's house a marketplace, so it seems odd that, in this passage from Matthew, he would use the image of commercial "mammon-building" to describe what staying awake for the coming of God's Kingdom amounts to!

As a seminarian, I took a course at Presbyterian Seminary from Rabbi Diamond, an expert in Jewish midrash and the parabolic teachings of Jesus. He taught that rabbinic parables usually have more than one possible meaning. One must not domesticate them by reducing their meaning to only one possibility.

Now I am not saying that the conventional interpretation of today's parable is wrong – it has some good qualities about it – but, nonetheless, it's a bit stale.

Conventional interpretations lull us into a complacent attitude that no longer requires engagement. Predictable, stale approaches render parables inert and incapable of provoking a change in our usual ways of thinking, thus undermining real and lasting conversion. So, I'd like to offer a different take on the Parable of the Talents.

Context for this Gospel passage is provided by the unit consisting of Matthew's Chapters 24 and 25. The first verse of Chapter 24 has Jesus departing from the temple with his disciples in tow, and they're awed by the beautiful buildings. Jesus startles them by telling them that "not one stone will be left upon another, all will be thrown down!" His comment troubles them and they ask him about it: "When will this happen?"

Jesus addresses the need for staying awake, being attentive to the times, and remaining vigilant for "you know not the hour when the Son of Man is coming." In a sense, Chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew are meant to reinvigorate our vigilance. We still await the Coming – and we, too, are urged by Jesus to stay awake!

Jesus speaks to them privately. He warns about false prophets, fake "messiahs" that will come along and attempt to convince you to follow them. False religious leaders that teach a different Gospel will lead many astray. Do not believe them!

Those who are faithful to Jesus will be found at work when He arrives. But the one who says, "The Master is delayed" and proceeds to abuse the other servants for personal gain will be severely punished when the Son of Man arrives, cast out of God's household, like money changers from the Temple, and put with the

hypocrites who will weep and gnash their teeth!

The Parable of the Ten Virgins, or Bridesmaids, is located just before this Gospel passage. Its message, too, is about staying awake and remaining vigilant.

The segue into this parable is a verse that begins, "For it is as if . . .," a phrase that seems to convey that the Parable of the Talents is meant to expound on what Jesus said about keeping awake, for we know not the hour, and I would suggest it does so by presenting an image of the cost entailed in "staying awake" – the true cost of discipleship.

So, what if we didn't rush to assume the standard metaphorical interpretation that the wealthy slave owner was meant to represent God? What if we examined this parable from another angle – that of the slave, who occupies the lowest stratum in a worldly system of wealth-building and whose life is lived entirely for the sake of his wealthy and privileged owner?

How can a slave-based caste system evoke Jesus' paradigm for the Kingdom of God? Given the Exodus story, so central to Israel's identity as God's people, I'm not convinced it can.

What if the rich man is not meant by Jesus to represent God? What if he represents the economically privileged of society, those who dominate worldly economic systems where, usually, the rich get richer and the poor, who often have little enough as it is, wind up even further behind?

What if, instead, this is a story about being prepared for the coming of the True King by refusing to play the world's game and investing instead in God's Kingdom by saying "Enough!"

and having the courage to stand against such unjust systems of mammon-pursuit?

The personal cost would be great. Removing oneself from the pursuit of mammon as a means of securing one's future will likely lead to being cast out, judged lazy and worthless by the masters of such worldly systems. As for the slaves in this parable, what security they enjoy is an illusion.

No matter how great the return on the investment, the money was not theirs. They remain slaves, in bondage to the system. Their "master" loves them because they've earned it! Their reward is rooted in placating the master.

Parables are meant to provoke, and the conventional interpretation of the Parable of the Talents has ceased to be provocative. If anything, the usual interpretation comes dangerously close to giving religious sanction to worldly patterns of competition over-against others.

Perhaps more crucially, the conventional interpretation shields us a bit from the demands of the Gospel: the self-renunciation required for disciples who wish to follow Jesus into a new world order, by taking up the cross and following Him who was cast out and crucified.

Perhaps through a less conventional interpretation, Jesus is saying that, to be open and receptive to the coming Kingdom, and thus ready to welcome the Bridegroom, we must withdraw our investment in worldly systems of certitude, the in-group ideologies that anchor us in a false sense of security. We will need faith to be brave enough to stand with those lorded over by the privileged, whose resources allow them to work the system and "reap where they do not sow."

The third and final parable in this unit of Matthew's Gospel, at the end

of Chapter 25, makes plausible this unconventional interpretation of this parable. It's the one about the sheep and the goats, which sheds light on what it means, in practical terms, to be a faithful servant "found at work," remaining vigilant and awake at the Coming of the Lord.

Feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, visiting the incarcerated, caring for the sick, clothing the naked – that is the stuff of standing with the outcast and the marginalized. If charity is the fuel by which our lamps remain lit, the fire is our opposition to unjust worldly systems. Busy and vigilant disciples find their "peace" secured by Christ and in Christ, rather than seeking security through worldly means – we remain in Christ by striving to be Christ for others.

Jesus doesn't demand destitution. He said we must remain in the world, but be not of the world. But that's the rub – too often, from a desire to secure one's life in the world, we become more entrenched in worldly ways of thinking and acting. Too often, we invest in worldly ideologies and identify with a particular party or in-group rather than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Too often, we act as if our salvation is found in worldly systems of economics and politics. Too often, Christians have sown division and discord, scattering what Jesus came to gather.

"The truly great problem," wrote Thomas Merton, "is the salvation of those who, being good, think they have no further need to be saved and imagine their task is to make others 'good' like themselves!" Every in-group, every political party, every church thinks they are the standard for what is true and good – but belief in our own "goodness" may, in fact, be the greatest threat to our salvation.

The Word of God demands a change of mind and heart and the self-renunciation required to take up one's cross by disavowing the peace and security the world gives and refusing to invest ourselves in secular and sacred ideologies. The Gospel demands that we stand with the least of our brothers and sisters, ready to demand from the powerful and the privileged, on behalf of the outcast, what human dignity requires: respect and justice.

Once he is "cast out," the so-called lazy slave is ready for a new Master, one Who will raise him up with a message of good news and true freedom – a new life, a new vision, a new humanity!

And if we, too, are willing to be identified with Christ-among-the-least, who, though cast out by the world, are known by God as his very children, then we might discover what true freedom means as those welcomed into his wedding banquet when the Son of Man comes in glory. Now that is a community in which to belong.

*Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*



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Responding to Life's Challenges that are Out of Your Control
by Diane Pharo, SCN

Prayer to St. Euphrosynos of Alexandria

O Holy Father Euphrosynos, thou began life's journey poor, obscure and nameless; drifting among the lands, seeking the spiritual simplicity of God's love. With saints and angels watching over you, thou was led by the Spirit to monastic life, as a cook in the lowest of regard; toiling day and night, in the mundane; scoffed at and disregarded by your brother monks, not unlike Righteous Joseph with his brothers.

Thou received their rebukes humbly and patiently, serene and unruffled, emanating the truth of your name's meaning, "He of the cheerful soul," modeling Christ's humility, at the feet of the monks in prostration, seeking blessing from all, otherwise, detractors. O most holy banquet of humility, teach us the recipes of this divine virtue.

Father Euphrosynos, sanctified embodiment of humble virtue, who after laboring in the daily menial kitchen duties assigned, and in the lengthy prayer services of monastic life, spent your nights in the wonder and quiet solitude within the church, among the beauty of the saints and prophets, the Lord and His most holy

Mother, depicted in iconic imagery upon the walls; with whom in enraptured mysticism pondered the spiritual reality of the wall-adorned images, eternally alive and shining reflectively in the candlelight, experienced an other-worldly radiance, returning your gaze with Godly friendship and love, allowing the enjoyment of sublime peace and serene happiness of Heaven on earth.

O living icon of God's radiant beauty, knead into the dough of our pliable hearts, the image, once lost, the likeness of the Only Begotten.

O perennial Feeder of the Hungry, whose brother monks in the monastery never failed to laugh and scoff at bumbling ways, seeing a dullard, fit only to be a cook; who was seen by the elderly and venerable hieromonk, in a longed-for answered dream, a vision of Heaven's Paradise, as the gardener of an angelic abode of delights; feed our dreams the sublime delicacies of God's holy pleasure.

Most Holy Father of simplicity and serenity, who answered the priest in wondered confusion as to why the cook-monk was in this abode of such

otherworldly beauty; responded to the venerable. "I am Lord of this paradise," you said, "Lord over everything you see here"; and then, in entreaty, gave the father priest a branch of apples, picked from the garden. O Gardener of the virtuous life, till into our souls' furrows, the radiant pure peace of the Lord's love and grace.

O Master of Edible Delights, once the manifested revelation of the dream was made known, and with the subsequent renown of your miraculous nature and virtue, O Father Euphrosynos, you left the cenobium for the wilderness of solitary desert, in anonymity, living out your days in the Heaven's dream of the old saintly priest; show us the way of the desert's purifying fire of perfected life.

Pray for us to be granted the virtues you attained, through humble service of feeding the hungry, both in body and soul. Amen.

*Kevin Maloney, oblate
Louisville, KY*

Continued from Page 4

pondered for years while the desire grew in intensity. Currently, I live hours from the monastery. Would oblation be workable? Through prayer and communication with Janis, I decided yes.

So here I am, an oblate in waiting.

Two passages from Scripture have sustained me.

"You need endurance to do the will of God and receive what he promised"

(Hebrews 10:36). I believe oblation is something God has called me to, though I must wait for it. Patience, not being one of my virtues, makes this rather tough. Perhaps God is using this COVID experience to help me grow in patience.

The second passage: "And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be...complete and lacking in nothing" (James 1:4). Endurance and perseverance are key to the Christian life, whether one is a monk or an

oblate. This recent pandemic drives home those two virtues.

Of course, if my only hardship during this pandemic is a delayed oblation, then I have no right to complain. Death, misery and anguish have been the plight of too many people during all this. I have simply been challenged to learn to endure and persevere.

*Mark Plaiss, oblate novice
Fox Lake, IL*

Candidate feels drawn to the oblate life

I wanted to share an experience I had recently regarding my adherence to the *Rule* and desire to join the Order of St. Benedict.

On February 7, I was looking through drawers of various paraphernalia I'd collected over the years. I did so to find my crucifix necklace, purchased several years ago. As I pulled it out to wear on the Lord's Day, as a reminder of what my Lord endured as the penalty for our sins, I looked at the crucifix more carefully and made a remarkable discovery. It is a St. Benedict Crucifix.

What is remarkable is that I did not know about the Order of St. Benedict when I purchased the crucifix. I only learned about the order while researching Pope St. Celestine V, who

lived a very stringent life as a Benedictine monk, even founding his own sub-order. Through him, I learned more about St. Benedict and his life of devotion, and I was drawn with a desire to become an oblate.

What do I mean in sharing all of this? It's because I believe that I have been led to this order. Ever since I received Christ into my heart, trusting in Him for my salvation (cf. Ephesians 13), I have sought a deeper, fuller and richer walk with Him. I believe becoming an oblate is a way of entering that deeper walk with the Lord, inviting me to remain contemplative by keeping my heart and mind focused upon Him.

As I draw near to Him, He will draw near to me (James 4:8), for He desires to sup with me, and my heart's desire

is to follow Him and please Him, just as it was on St. Benedict's heart and on the heart of St. Celestine V.

I wish to be an encouragement, and to continue seeking our Lord, and living for Jesus every day. He is worthy of no less than our complete and total devotion to Him, for all that He has done for us. And wherever you are, in whatever you do, live for Him so that this fallen, sinful world may see the love of our Risen Lord, and be drawn by the working of his Holy Spirit to enter that beautiful, loving relationship that we enjoy with Him today.

*Jeffrey Kern, candidate
Canyon Country, CA*



Remembrance of Tom Rillo



In this 2012 photo, Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, talks with Tom Rillo.

Tom Rillo – a tall man, a wide smile, a faithful and loving husband to his wife Joan, and a conscientious Benedictine Oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and the Oblate Community. Tom passed away on May 25, 2021, in Bloomington, IN.

Tom made his oblation on May 15, 1999. Archabbot Lambert Reilly, OSB, received his oblation. Tom took Augustine as his oblate name. He mentioned that he was interested in the oblate way of life because it emphasized personal and meaningful prayer and close ties to the monks.

Tom and his wife Joan were active in the Bloomington Oblate Chapter and attended retreats and other spiritual programs at the Archabbey. Then in 2003 he offered his creative writing skill to Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, the oblate director at that time. Tom and Joan began to assist him in writing, editing and assembling the oblate newsletter.

Tom did the writings: Point to Ponder from the *Rule*, book reviews, articles

on Benedictine topics, interviews with monks and oblates, and text for various pamphlets. He loved to write, and he was good. Joan did the editing, correcting and telling her husband to cut the words and make it shorter. He would listen to Joan. He and Joan worked on the newsletter until 2017.

They would come to Saint Meinrad quarterly to create the newsletter and stay about a week to complete a draft copy of the newsletter, which was then sent to the Communications Office at Saint Meinrad.

When they were on the hill, they would join the monks for the Liturgy of the Hours and Mass. For these 15 years, the two of them would write and assemble the *Benedictine Oblate Newsletter*. They were the mainstay and the major players in bringing the issues together.

During their years of traveling to Saint Meinrad, there were some personal and pleasant things that brought joy to me. Tom's wide smile was a delight to see and experience.

Every morning before they went to work, I would join them for breakfast in the Guest House dining room. They shared and laughed about family stories and, at the same time, we discussed topics of spiritual growth. They loved their children and kept me informed of their lives.

Tom said to me, "I love your stories," and he always wanted me to share more with them. This was kind of him to do this. Then I would say, "It's time for work!"

They knew that I liked chocolates and one time when they came to work on the newsletter, they presented me with a five-pound box of Whitman's chocolates.

The oblate community provided a rhythm of prayer in their daily lives, by praying the Liturgy of the Hours. When I would stay overnight with them, we prayed the Hours together. They found in this rhythm the heartbeat of Benedictine monastic spirituality. Being an oblate strengthened Tom in soul and spirit. He gained a love of praying the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours.

Their prayer life together became the center of their lives and connected them more closely with God.

I rejoice, above all, in my Christian conviction that at this moment – Tom with Joan is more thrillingly alive and at peace than he has ever been. For that conviction and belief, I rejoice!

*Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, monk
Saint Meinrad Archabbey*



J O Y



H O P E



L O V E

In Honor of our Deceased Oblates

The Saint Meinrad Oblate Office has wanted to find a way to honor our deceased oblates here at Saint Meinrad. Just as the memory of the deceased monks of the monastery continues to influence the lives of the monastic community, the oblates will always hold a place of honor on this Holy Hill.

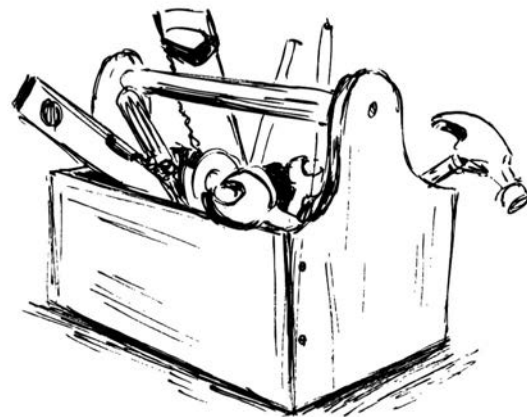
Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, is designing a shrine for the sanctuary of the Saint Meinrad Guest House Chapel, which will house a book listing the names of all deceased oblates of Saint Meinrad. Each year, in a special ritual, we will add to the book the names of oblates who have died in the past year.

We invite you to participate in making this tribute of love and respect a reality. To raise funds for the shrine, we are selling a limited edition set of Christmas cards. Each set of 12 quality cards features three different angels from the artwork collection of Br. Martin. Only 250 sets will be printed. Each set will cost \$25, plus \$8 for shipping and handling.

Beginning September 1, please visit www.saintmeinrad.org/oblates to purchase your set and be part of this important project for our Oblate Community. Additional donations for this project are also welcomed.

The Oblate Toolbox

Aging brings spiritual poverty to forefront



“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

What does it mean to be poor in spirit, and how can we cultivate this beatitude?

This past December, my mother

celebrated her 90th birthday. In recent years, I have watched as she has faced a steady decline in her abilities. A licensed marriage, family and child counselor, my mother was still seeing clients in her early 80s and living a fully independent life.

Before that, she had served tirelessly as an advocate for homeless families in a couple of nonprofit agencies. Her home was always a haven for us, where we shared innumerable family celebrations of life, holidays and special occasions. Those times have changed, and not in a small way.

Over the past seven or eight years, my mother has experienced a series of falls, minor strokes and other frailties of old age. In early 2018, my brother and sister-in-law opened their home to her and are her full-time caregivers. This big change required her to reduce her possessions to the bare minimum. She no longer needs an extensive wardrobe, a well-stocked kitchen or space for entertaining guests. So much has dropped away.

And yet, my mother’s essence has not waned, but only sharpened. She is quiet these days, but she doesn’t really need a lot of activity. She is content to read, listen, and just sit and watch the wind in the trees.

I would say my mother is solidly planted in the sphere of spiritual poverty. She lives it daily, in stark contrast to the frenetic pace of the world and its insatiable need to

acquire possessions and wall itself off from the needs of others.

Sometimes we don’t come up with the proper tools to pursue the spiritual life; God provides those through the circumstances we face.

For my mother, aging has been that tool to bring her spiritual poverty to the forefront. This Scripture is particularly poignant to me in these waning days of my mother’s incredible life: “Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

*Angie McDonald, oblate
Huntingburg, IN*

Continued from Page 11

God for deliverance from distress and turmoil. The psalmist in poverty cried to God and God answered.

The psalmist teaches that God will hear those who genuinely live with integrity, especially those in greatest need, those who are brokenhearted and crushed in spirit. Once this is known, committing ourselves to the will of God is an act of love and not of trembling panic.

Practicing spiritual poverty will nullify our fear. It takes love and trust to empty oneself and be free to accept God’s will and purpose for life and to ask: where in my life must I decrease so that God may increase?

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate
New Salisbury, IN*

Online Store

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online store*

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

OBLATE NEWS

DEATHS

John Obst of Georgetown, TX, died on May 27, 2019.

Arnul F. Esterer of Conneaut, OH, died on October 28, 2020.

Richard Peters of Lowell, IN, died on February 19, 2021.

Thomas Turner of Columbus, OH, died on February 23, 2021.

Thomas Rillo of Bloomington, IN, died on May 25, 2021. ♦

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were Fr. Mateo Zamora, OSB, Br. Michael Reyes, OSB, Nov. Benjamin Ziegler, OSB, Nov. Matthew Morris, OSB, Nov. Connor Zink, OSB, and Darren Sroufe, PhD. ♦

We want you and your articles!

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 send in photos of you or your chapter engaged in oblate activities.

All submissions must include your name, city and state, and an explanation of how it connects to the theme. Submissions will be edited and published as they fit the theme or need of the quarterly. A maximum of 500 words is suggested for all submitted articles.

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

Upcoming themes and submission dates:

Fall 2021 – Forgiveness (Final date of submission August 1)
Winter 2022 – Perfection (Final date of submission November 1)

Darren Sroufe receives state award



Darren Sroufe

Darren Sroufe, an oblate of Newburgh, IN, received the Addie Maddox Award from the Indiana Fraternal Order of Police Lodge on June 9th at the 86th Annual State Conference.

Darren was nominated and selected as the recipient from among some 15,000 members of the Indiana Fraternal Order of Police Lodge, to whom Darren has served as State Chaplain for the past 25 years. The Addie Maddox Award is as follows:

Addie Maddox was born January 29, 1884. Her father Thomas Maddox was town marshal in Nortonville, Kentucky. Later, he moved to Hopkinsville, Kentucky and to Evansville, Indiana.

Addie joined the Evansville Police Department on January 6, 1921. She was forced off the department on January 1, 1935, but was returned five and a half years later on July 12, 1940. In 1959, at the age of 65, with 33 years of service to her credit, Addie Maddox retired.

She was a charter member of Evansville Lodge No. 73, and attended every conference and local lodge meeting until her health prevented it.

This award is presented annually, at the State Conference, to the brother or sister who best exemplifies, as Sister Addie Maddox did, the following traits:

1. Devotion to duty
2. Love of the fraternalism
3. Sincerity of purpose
4. Concern for the well-being of all fellow officers

The Addie Maddox Award was started in 1971 by National and State Past President, Robert Pat Stark.



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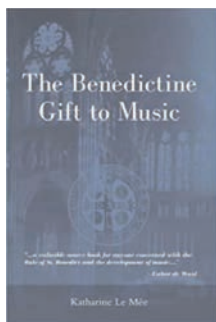
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Reading Room

The Benedictine Gift to Music by Katharine Le Mée;
Paulist Press, 2003.



First, a tip of the hat to the author! Writing on such a subject could easily run to a multi-volume treatise; yet Le Mée manages a credible survey in just over 200 pages. Her writing is clear; examples are well chosen; the layout is attractive.

The approach is a series of essays connected by their relation to the Benedictine ethos: “The Foundations,” an outline of the musical implications of the *Rule of St. Benedict* and commentary of early Benedictine luminaries; “Opus Dei and the Liturgical Year,” a concise look at the structure of the Divine Office; “Gregorian Chant and the Mass,”

venturing into a speculative association of the structure of the Mass with the musical octave.

In “Skilled Benedictine Musicians” are Hildegard of Bingen, whose work was too long neglected; Guido d’Arezzo; and the labors of the Abbey of Solesmes in research and publication of chant.

“Our Lady and Her Music” covers much of the Marian musical tradition, and “The Elaboration and Vertical Expansion of Chant” traces the development of polyphony from its roots into the Renaissance and later periods.

Notes, which are extensive, and Resources for Further Study are included.

*George Hubbard, oblate
St. Meinrad, IN*