

# Oblate Benedictine



Saint Meinrad



*The crucifix at Monte Cassino Shrine is seen on a rainy afternoon.*

## Set aside your own will and walk alongside the Lord

It is only three words: “dying to self.” It seems disarmingly simple, but in reality, and especially in today’s world, the idea of dying to self is confoundingly complex. The idea of dying to self is based in Benedict’s words, when he reminds us in Chapter 5 of the *Rule* that obedience to the abbot or prioress is essentially obedience to God.

Imagine if we oblates, and the whole world, chose to obey God – and each other – casting aside our own concerns, abandoning our own will, and stepping away from whatever we are doing at the moment, leaving it unfinished – and leaving it to God: choosing to “empty ourselves out so that the presence of God can come in, tangible and present and divinely human” (Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict, A Spirituality for the 21st Century*).

As Paul said to the Ephesians, “You were taught to put away your way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to

be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

To the Corinthians, Paul declared, “Do not deceive yourselves. If you think you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:18-19).

The instructions to us Christians are many – and clear. If only we choose to listen! Perhaps, then, the greatest challenge from Old Testament law – to “choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him and holding fast to him” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20) – would be answered by all of us, and we would seize the opportunity to die to self and to walk with our Lord.

# A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience, which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above all.”

*Rule of St. Benedict, 5:1-2*

“Who so would be a man must be a nonconformist,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Self-Reliance*. In this view of things, does the monastic become untrue to himself in his willingness to conform to the *Rule*?

In the democratic order, we are taught to express our own judgments with vigor and confidence. To some it may seem that to surrender one’s will constitutes a denial of responsible personhood. Do we face a fundamental conflict in the order of things? Certainly not!

St. Benedict’s *Rule* simply repeats Christ’s call to his disciples everywhere. “Drop what you are doing. Follow me!” Life’s brevity reminds us that we must act in submission to rightful authority. Such an act, then, is not self-diminishment, but a growth in self.

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

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## Are we dying to be like Him?



*Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB*

Following Jesus means following Him all the way. For Christians, the *Via Crucis*, the Way of the Cross, includes all 14 stations – from trial to tomb.

How do we do that? How do we carry the cross from trial to tomb? How do I, as the Gospel instructs me, “lose my life so that I might save it” (Mark 8:34-35)? How do I die to myself?

The first people our Christian tradition venerated as saints were the martyrs – those who, most unmistakably, followed Jesus all the way. The martyrs died to themselves by, literally, shedding their blood.

But what about the rest of us? How do we “die to ourselves”?

For most of us, dying to ourselves won’t require a “bloody mess.” But it will take some sweat and some tears. And it will take constant practice. Ironically, we

practice dying to ourselves every time we practice living for someone else.

I’ve often thought that spouses and parents have lots of opportunities to become experts at dying to themselves. (That doesn’t let the rest of us off the hook!)

It’s not that the husband or the wife was selfish before they took their marriage vows. It’s that as they begin – and as they continue to build – their marriage, they ask “what’s best for me?” less, and “what’s best for us?” a lot more.

And parents! They learn pretty quickly about dying to themselves – about denying themselves, about sacrificing some things they might prefer to do – for the sake of another. In fact, any mother and father will testify they have to begin caring for their child even *before* it is born.

In one sense, dying to oneself isn’t so much about *giving up* our life as it is *giving our life over* to someone else. Our Christian hope is that the more we do that, the more life we will actually be given!

*Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB*  
*Saint Meinrad Archabbey*

## We are challenged to give up our own will



*Janis Dopp*

In the Prologue to the *Rule*, St. Benedict says, “This message of mine is for you, then, if you are ready to give up your own will, once and for all, and armed with the strong and noble weapons of obedience to do battle for the true King, Christ the Lord” (Prol. 3).

There it is, right at the beginning, that challenge to die to self, because that is what giving up your own will actually means. Sometimes we soften the idea and use the word “transformation.” Sometimes we lean in the direction of “finding ourselves in Christ.”

We like the idea of newness and rebirth. It makes us feel fresh and young. But, dying to self? Really? Giving up my own will? Is that possible? I like to fashion my days, my adventures and my life! I am



comfortable being in charge. So why am I doing this Benedictine thing? Why am I an oblate?

There is something much deeper that calls us to this vocation of oblation – deeper than wanting to be in charge. It is the voice of the Lord echoing in the chambers of our hearts and beckoning us to a way of living that is out of the ordinary. “Your way of acting should be different from the world’s way” (RB 4:20). Benedict quotes Matthew’s Gospel, “Renounce yourself in order to follow Christ” (RB 4:10).

But, at the same time, this life is not intended for spiritual athletes. It is for “beginners.” All we have to do is let go of what we hold most dear – our will – and allow God to direct our lives. Dying to self is not meant to be harsh or burdensome in Benedict’s perspective.

It is intended, instead, to be freeing. Oblation is a way of wrapping our minds around an idea that is totally counter-cultural. By not protecting who we think we are, we find out who we really are – and that is something to celebrate.

*Janis Dopp  
Oblate Director*

## Musings from the Chaplain



*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB*

One of the characteristics of being a Christian is the ability to die to self. Dying to self is not easy to do. Due to our fallen nature, we want to put ourselves first. Today’s culture reinforces this with messages such as, “Indulge yourself,” “Me first” and “I want it my way.” The secular world would say that to die to self is just craziness.

Yet, St. Benedict says that our way of acting is to be different from the world’s way. Dying to self makes no sense if our reason for doing it is for anything except for love of the Lord. To die to self means to follow Jesus and to love Him.

In the *Rule*, St. Benedict says to prefer nothing to the love of Christ. A good way to love the Lord is to do as He says, such as, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

How do we die to self? Since we are all different, we may have various ways. It is

usually not in big things, but in little everyday things.

Consider giving time and attention to someone you don’t especially like, yielding to others in traffic, doing daily *lectio* when you would rather do something else, not always insisting on having your own way, being patient with those who exasperate you, and many other ways. Basically, it means we shift away from self-centeredness and get closer to becoming open-hearted followers of Jesus who care deeply for others.

*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB  
Oblate Chaplain*

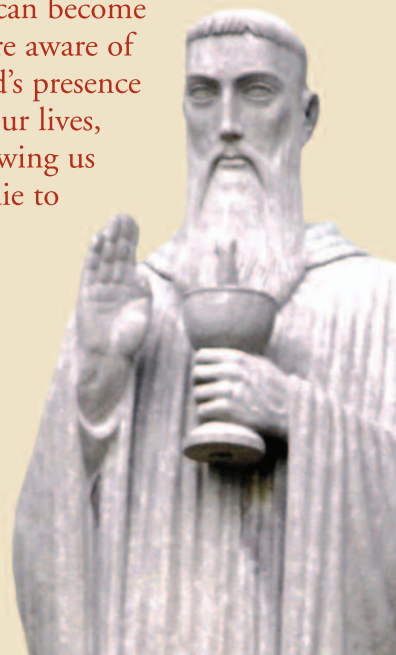
## OBLATES *In their own words*



*Oblate Pat Dorn  
Cincinnati, OH*

A greater awareness of God’s presence in our lives is an important first step in dying to self. For oblate Pat Dorn, a growing awareness of God’s presence in the little things of life and the ordinary things of life is an important part of listening, looking, and thinking in a specific kind of way that has resulted in her spiritual growth.

She believes she has become more caring, more understanding and able to see her faults more easily. As oblates, we can learn the lessons that Pat has learned, and thus we can become more aware of God’s presence in our lives, allowing us to die to self.



# Smugmug

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Saint Meinrad events, visit:*

<http://saintmeinrad.smugmug.com>



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# Notes for Novices

## The Benedictine charism of living in the moment



*Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB*

“Day by day remind yourself that you are going to die” (RB 4:47). Maybe not the best cold open one would expect. Then again, this is about dying to self. I was once

asked why I would choose such a morose quote from the *Rule* as an inspirational quote. My response was swift: “This quote reminds me to live in the moment.”

Benedict was not a monk who wished to overburden his confreres with endless pieties and relentless asceticism. Rather, Benedict wanted each of his monks to live in the truth of who each of them was: a child of God, called to share in the glory of the Trinity. By reminding ourselves of our deaths, we do not turn in on ourselves and take on a dour attitude; at least we should not.

Instead, Benedict wants us to remember who is in control (God, not us) and live in the knowledge that, if we live according to the precepts of the master (cf. RB Prol. 1), we can begin to share in the divine life of the Father, Son and Spirit.

And yet, the prospect of our deaths can still haunt us, lurking around the corner and ready to strike when we are preoccupied with ourselves. This was a lesson I learned when I was 17 years old and diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. I was so afraid of my death at that point in my life that God needed to remind me that I was not in control of everything around me.

I never viewed my cancer diagnosis as a punishment or a curse, but rather as a gift. God wanted me to be attentive to my surroundings, not to mention the people in them. Ask anyone who knew me during that time, and they will say something changed. God’s grace changed me for the better.

Benedict’s injunction is not about making us worry about the end of our lives, nor is he interested in paralyzing us with fear. Keeping death daily before our eyes allows us to look beyond ourselves and tune into the moment in all its vibrant detail: the colors of leaves during a crisp autumn morning; the sounds of birds singing their praises before Mass; the friend who is sullen after a break-up; or the exuberant face of a spouse after a good day at the office. Benedict challenges us even today to remove the gaze from ourselves and focus on God and those He sends our way.

No, reminding ourselves of our deaths is not a sickly practice for the sake of asceticism. Reminding ourselves of our deaths is God’s way of saying, “Snap out of it!”

So, will you live in the moment God is giving you?

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



*Oblates join Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, for his conferences on conversation at Saint Meinrad Archabbey on July 11.*



*Oblates take notes during Fr. Thomas Gricoski’s conference on conversion in June.*



# Denial of self is the theme of Christian life



Jennie D. Latta

Christ the Lord” (RB, Prol. 3).

Giving up or giving over of one’s will is a theme throughout the New Testament. The Lord said, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt. 16:24-25). And, “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit” (John 12:24).

Likewise, St. Paul said, “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me” (Gal. 2:19-20).

And St. Peter instructed us to, “Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, insincerity, envy, and all slander; like newborn infants, long for pure spiritual milk so that through it you may grow into salvation, for you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Pet. 2:1-3). Each of these describes what the Christian life is like: the surrendering of an old way of life in favor of new life in Christ.

The denial of self that is the theme of the Christian life is lived out very concretely in the monastery. Monks

live in community under the direction of an abbot. Monks set aside their own wills about where they will go, what they will do, and what they will wear when they vow obedience to their abbot and his successors. In the monastery, self-denial takes the form of obedience to a superior.

Outside the monastery, self-denial is a bit more challenging. Those who have decided to live the Christian life must learn to deny their own wills to take up the will of Christ. At their oblation, oblates promise stability of heart, fidelity to the spirit of the monastic life, and obedience to the will of God. While not under the direction of an abbot, oblates use the tools of obedience just as monks do to discern God’s will for their lives.

These tools include prayer, spiritual direction and faithfulness to their religious traditions. Oblates who are members of a chapter may turn to each other for mutual support in conforming their wills to the will of Christ, and oblates who are members of families have available yet another school for the Lord’s service.

Even in the *Rule*, it is not merely the obedience owed to the abbot, but also the mutual obedience owed to the brothers, that leads to God (RB 71:1-2). It is in our respective communities that we learn the virtues of humility, patience, perseverance and self-control. It is in our communities that we learn to die to ourselves and take up the cross of Christ.

Jennie D. Latta, oblate  
Memphis, TN



Oblates react to a story told by Fr. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, during the Oblate Study Days in June.

# The Busy Benedictine

## ‘Have you considered surrendering your need to be loved?’



Edward Castronova

I was astonished. My confessor spoke these words as if such a thing were possible. How could a person give up the need to be loved?

The context: I was confessing anger at work colleagues. I work in a hostile environment as far as Church things go (a large state university). Colleagues will say things offensive to a Christian worldview, which is bad enough, but what really bothers me is the way they assume that everyone in the room agrees.

Example: Several of us took a job candidate out to lunch and the conversation turned to some research finding about religious people. As the candidate was discussing this finding, he jokingly put his head down, as if some crazy Christian was about to leap out of the shadows and assault him over his heresy. Everybody chuckled. I guess nobody thought there might be a Christian sitting right there at the table.

I struggle to keep my patience and the anger burns a long time. That is why I took my anger to the confessional at Saint Meinrad – only to be asked to reconsider my need to be loved.

I can't imagine anything more shocking to the world we live in. Our culture trumpets the importance of me – me – me! I deserve this, I have the right to that, my voice needs to be heard, what about my feelings?

The message is hammered indirectly, too, when we talk about the needs of others. We speak as if it is the worst

thing in the world to be ignored, to have unmet desires, to be unloved. Everyone needs to be loved, we say. How could they possibly live without the love of others?

In this context, it was shocking to hear a monk, a follower of Jesus, who is Love itself, say that we should surrender our need for it. But he's right.

When I say that I need love, that I have a right to be loved, I'm making a demand on the world. If I don't get what I want, I get mad. Then I lash out at the oh-so-cruel world. My hate makes someone else feel unloved, and that person lashes out, too. We're seeing a lot of this lately in the public sphere.

A thought experiment: Suppose that every time someone failed to give us the love we felt we needed, instead of lashing out, we went into our rooms and cried. What if we got sad instead of mad? Think how much more peaceful our world would be.

Choosing sorrow over anger is a surrender of self. It admits that we can't always get love from the world. But it also affirms that we don't need it. It hurts, but it is not the end.

We want love, but we don't need it. Eventually, the crying stops. We've hurt no one, caused no further pain to others, and can go about our lives. We move on. We didn't get the love we wanted, but we didn't need it to survive.

By surrendering the need to be loved, we sever yet another unhealthy attachment to the things of this world. I think the monk was telling me to cut that attachment. By surrendering the need to be loved, we let ourselves fall into the arms of the Love that satisfies all.

Edward (Ted) Castronova, oblate  
Bloomington, IN

## Sign up for the e-newsletter

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

To sign up, go to the "Newsletters" link on the front page of the website: [www.saintmeinrad.edu](http://www.saintmeinrad.edu). Or, send an email to [news@saintmeinrad.edu](mailto:news@saintmeinrad.edu).

*Saint Meinrad*  
**DAY OF SERVICE**  
*has been set for*  
**March 9, 2019**  
[alumni.saintmeinrad.edu/DOS](http://alumni.saintmeinrad.edu/DOS)

Opposite page: On Saturday, June 9, seven oblate novices made their final oblation as oblates of Saint Meinrad and 18 people were invested as novices by Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, in the Archabbey Church.

For more photos of Saint Meinrad events, visit <https://saint-meinrad.smugmug.com>.



# Secure My Spirit

Awake my soul, O Lord.  
Gently, O Lord, rouse my spirit,  
Open my eyes and chase away the darkness.  
Scatter my anxiety so that I may hide in you.  
Shield me from distraction,  
Unease and doubt,  
From all that threatens to harm me  
Or separate me from you.  
Show me your face this day.  
Look upon me, and pierce my inner being  
With your unfailing light.  
Conquer all that divides me,  
And center all my affections on your love alone.  
Invigorate me, enliven my spirit,  
Uplift my mind and lighten my step.  
You are at the center of my entire being.  
Shower me with your grace  
So I may be radiant in your presence.  
Preserve me in peace  
So it may flow into and feed  
My prayer, my work and my union  
With all your creation.  
Strengthen me in your service  
And shelter me from all sin  
So that your will alone is my sentry.  
Awake my soul,  
Surrender my heart,  
And secure my spirit, O Lord.

*Br. Francis de Sales Wagner, OSB (2008)*



Poem was taken from *Thirsting for God: Prayers from a Monastery* (Abbey Press, 2011).

# Study Days:

## Oblates learn how *conversatio* relies on God's grace



Mark van Lummel

During the Oblate Study Days in June, participants were led by Fr. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, to examine the role of *conversatio*

(conversion) through the lens of creation, Church, St. Benedict and our lives. Along with Fr. Thomas' presentations, oblates met for small group discussions. Each group answered questions on hospitality and prayer and shared their findings with the whole group. In the ensuing discussions, we looked for practical ways to enhance hospitality and prayer in our lives as oblates.

Fr. Thomas invited us to look at *conversatio* from a wide perspective, encompassing the time before matter, through the creation of matter, through the development of life to where we as human beings exist as created in God's image. What does *conversatio* mean in those varying contexts?

Often, we assume that *conversatio* is something we do. However, it is not our action, but God's action in us that brings change. Conversion is not always, or even often, one-time and dramatic. Rather, the changes are made within us as we live the life prescribed in the *Rule of St. Benedict*. By perseverance to the Benedictine life, we are converted by God's grace.

Creation mirrors God's love in being relational. Before creation, the Father fully loves the Son and is fully loved in return by the Son through the Holy Spirit. As human beings, we long to

know and love God, but we cannot completely expand our hearts, nor even "bear God's glory." Original sin, our attempt to try to know and love God on our own, our lack of trust in God, prevents us from returning God's love.

To love God, we need Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, who became fully human by his own will, while remaining fully divine by nature. Christ emptied himself of his divine glory, but not his divinity, and became fully human, except in sin. Through our union with Jesus Christ, we begin to return God's love, not by our will, but through our accepting of God's grace.

Hospitality and prayer are keys to our loving God and to our conversion. Christ extends the gift of union to us through the Paschal Mystery. This is hospitality we receive. Prayer, whether

liturgical or private, allows God to work through Christ in expanding our hearts toward God and others. We are called to be a "priestly people," who offer personal sacrifice by our attention, concern and prayers for others.

St. Benedict is an excellent example of God working through *conversatio*. Rejecting the world and living as a hermit, St. Benedict learned that his first try as an abbot ended with his monks trying to kill him with poisoned wine. In his second try, poisoned bread was used to try to remove him. Even at Monte Cassino, St. Benedict continued his conversion with the help of his sister's prayers. By the end, St. Benedict saw the world in a singular mystical vision of love, as we are called to do.

Mark van Lummel, oblate  
Granger, IN



Fr. Thomas Gricoski, OSB, presents at the Oblate Study Days on June 14.



# July Day of Recollection: 'Are you sure you want *conversatio*?'



Ann Tully

Saint Meinrad Archabbey hosted a day of recollection for oblates on July 11, the feast of St. Benedict. In his presentations, Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, challenged us to shift our point of view from a comfortable complacency to the light of the Gospel and all that demands. Can we do it? Do we want this challenge? What is the price?

Our daily encounters with others can be moments of grace, an opportunity to be a source and recipient of love of other. In our faithfulness to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, we are called to communion with others in our search for God. We are also called to a fidelity to prayer.

Br. Martin challenged us to be "trapped by the Gospel!" We cannot escape love of God and others in the Gospel. He used several real-life examples of interactions with others that offered an opportunity to engage or to scorn. Scorn leads us down a dark path. Engagement comes with a price, too, but also the opportunity for a grace beyond our capacity – a grace only from God.

Is it challenging to listen to a lonely neighbor when we would rather be watching television? Is it challenging to volunteer in-person rather than write a check? Of course! It is also our opportunity for an encounter with the grace of God. We are imperfect but, with God's grace, He can make our imperfection the presence and grace another may need at that moment. Conversely, others may be the presence of grace in our own brokenness.

Br. Martin also presented us with some challenging questions in the context of our lives as oblates, including our life of individual prayer and prayer in chapter. The ultimate question is: "How does God get closer to you in your life?"

As oblates, we are called to spiritual growth and commitment to daily prayer in communion with other Benedictines throughout the world. This life of prayer will strengthen us to continue forward in a difficult world where it often feels like we are swimming upstream.

Br. Martin encouraged us to rely on the Gospel so we can be that vessel, however imperfect and however hard

we resist, to let God's grace shine in us and through us. We all need God's love, mercy and forgiveness. We must always strive to turn toward Christ and the truth. We must turn toward the light of Christ.

Br. Martin incorporated poetry and music in his presentations. The lyrics to the song "Anthem," by Leonard Cohen captured our day of prayer and reflection so well:

Ring the bells that can still ring.  
Forget your perfect offering.  
There is a crack, a crack in  
everything.  
That's how the light gets in.

*Ann Tully, oblate  
Indianapolis, IN*



*Oblates enjoy the Day of Recollection presented by Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, on July 11.*

# OBLATE NEWS

**Oblate named pastor in Pittsfield, IL**  
Oblate Michael Ray “Mick” John of the Cross Laflin, formerly of Oblong, IL, was appointed by his bishop to serve as the new pastor of Pittsfield United Methodist Church in Pittsfield, IL. He and his wife Karen moved to Pittsfield at the end of June.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**December 1, 2018** – New York Day of Recollection

**December 14-16, 2018** – Saint Meinrad Oblate Retreat

**December 15, 2018** – Investitures and Oblations at Saint Meinrad Archabbey ♦

## INVESTITURES

March 17, 2018 – **Jim Rosati** of Whiting, NJ

March 24, 2018 – **Rev. Tom Davis** of Cordova, TN; **Dr. David Freyer** of Pasadena, CA; **Mark Milliron** and **Amanda Milliron**, both of Cincinnati, OH; **Craig W. Medlyn** of Bloomington, IN; **Keith Turner** of Evansville, IN; **Charles Thatcher** of Winter Springs, FL; **Shawn Way** of Mishawaka, IN; **Virginia White** of Cannelton, IN

June 9, 2018 – **Steve Anslinger** of Loveland, OH; **Dan Beavers** of Cambria, IL; **Rachel Bourneuf** of St. Louis, MO; **Katherine Hempel** of Bachanan, MI; **David L. Lacey** of Hermitage, TN; **Abigail McFeely** of Connersville, IN; **Thomas Murray** of Union, KY; **Ellen Micheletti** of Bowling Green, KY; **David Miller** of South Milford, IN, and Venice, FL; **Amy Marie Mitchell** and **Mark Robbins**, both of Indianapolis, IN; **Mary Ortwein** of Frankfort, KY; **Billy Patterson** of Pittsboro, IN; **John Radez** of Evansville, IN; **John Reynolds** of Cincinnati, OH; **Gordon Slack** and **Theresa Slack**, both of

Zionsville, IN; **Norbert Strobel** of Coldwater, MI

July 11, 2018 – **Brandon Kraft** of Austin, TX

July 15, 2018 – **Guy Whipple** of Branchville, IN ♦

## OBLATIONS

March 24, 2018 – **Nora Negron** of Dayton, OH, and **Richard Rader Jr.**, Plainfield, IN

June 9, 2018 – **Edward Eckerly** of Columbus, OH; **William Grant** of Evansville, IN; **Carol Hopf** of Jasper, IN; **Jay Loucks** of LaPorte, IN; **Marian Prentice** of Pataskala, OH; **Orval Schierholz** of Fishers, IN; **Terry Starr** of Memphis, TN ♦

## DEATHS

**Fred Gervat**, Little Neck, NY, April 21, 2018

**Victor Pfister**, Whitestown, IN, May 28, 2018

**Fr. Thomas D’Angelo**, Bronx, NY, June 20, 2018

**Herbert Messerly**, Lancaster, OH, July 20, 2018

**Priscilla Wolfschlag**, Madison, IN, and Louisville, KY, August 3, 2018

**Cynthia Ashworth**, Bloomington, IN, August 5, 2018

**Becky Goebel**, Richmond, KY, August 6, 2018

**Timothy Aubuchon**, St. Charles, MO, August 17, 2018 ♦

## VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office include Br. Stanley Wagner, OSB, Ann Smith, Mary Campanelli, Fr. Mateo Zamora, OSB, Ted Castronova, Michelle Blalock, Bill Hobbs, Dave Archer, Catherine Russell, Ruth Engs and Novice Christian Lumsden, OSB. ♦



## Wanted: Your oblate articles and photos

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

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

Please submit all articles and images with explanations to Cathey Byers at [cpbyers1@embarqmail.com](mailto:cpbyers1@embarqmail.com). The next deadline is November 1 for the Winter edition, to be published January 2019 with the theme of Silence. ♦



# Dear Abbey:

## Have questions? We have answers!

*Editor's note: With this issue, we begin a new column to answer questions and offer advice. Do you have questions for Abbey? If so, submit them to [boylex3@hotmail.com](mailto:boylex3@hotmail.com).*

Dear Abbey,

When I'm on the Hill at Saint Meinrad, it is so easy for me to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. I have the bells calling me to prayer. I have the beauty of the Archabbey surrounding me. And I have the companionship of community prayer with the monks. But, when I leave the Hill and go back to my world, I struggle with praying my daily prayers, especially Noon or Midday Prayer and Compline. Any advice?

Yours truly,  
The Struggle is Real

Dear SIR,

Yes, I understand how difficult that can be. Creating a time and space for prayer is so important and requires a bit of discipline and creativity. You might begin with making a checklist of the prayers and monitoring your daily prayer schedule. Which prayers are you able to pray regularly and which prayers are a struggle for you? Then you can begin to add in one more prayer a day. Once you have the new prayer as part of your daily routine, then try adding one more.

I typically need reminders throughout my day. I have a copy of Noon Prayer on my desk at work and a copy of Compline on the dresser next to my bed to help remind me. Others I know set their phone alarm to signal when it's time to pray and they use the [www.osb.org](http://www.osb.org) website.

In Benedict,  
Abbey



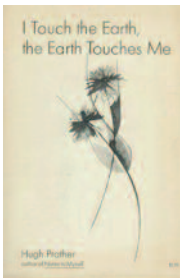


200 Hill Drive  
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*Return service requested*

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## Reading Room



In 1972, *I Touch the Earth, the Earth Touches Me* (Doubleday and Company Inc.) was published. It was written by Hugh Prather (1928-2010), an American self-help writer, lay minister educated at Southern Methodist University, and counselor.

According to Prather, the book evolved from a notebook he wrote in from time to time.

The entries, he says, are in chronological order, at least in terms of internal time, if not external, and exhibit the fact that every time he thinks he has learned something, his life seems to set about contradicting it. For him, “every entry in this book is at best an asymptotic shot at life,” his life, that is. If his words are affirming, savor them, he recommends. If they are not, spit them out.

The words themselves are nuggets – large and small – speaking to Prather’s humanity, and the reader’s. For instance, “It’s not that ‘today is the first day of the rest of my life,’ but that now is all there is of my life.” And, “So often my confessions are a request for permission: I am

testing to see if it will be OK with everyone if I happen to be myself. I tell them what I am like, before I risk being that way.”

Here’s another: “I don’t want to do it but I want to do it *for you*, so I will do it;” and “if all my striving, planning, rehearsing came true, this would only give me a bigger version of myself. Real progress can’t be imagined. I can’t anticipate in thought what new vision life will lay before me or in which direction it will next demand growth.”

By reading this book, we can become more aware of the miracle of our humanity and the complexity of God’s plan for us. We can see ourselves in our failures and our successes, and in our relationships to and dependence on each other.

The words are beautiful – and challenging – and comforting in their familiarity, and the illustrations by Paul Kinslow are a lovely addition. It is a book to place with other books for meditation, to pick up and put down and pick up again, whenever the mood demands.

*Cathey Byers, oblate  
Nineveh, IN*