

# Benedictine Oblate



Saint Meinrad



*A crucifix in the Archabbey Cemetery commemorates the greatest gift, Jesus' death to redeem the human family.*

## The Greatest Gift

The word “gift” produces many responses, from childlike delight to the anxiety of never choosing the “right” gift to the peace of knowing that, as Christians, we have been given the greatest gift of all. In his Gospel, John proclaims, “Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life” (John 3:16).

As the hot summer days disappear and we return to our normal lives of work and school, we also look forward to a series of national holidays that revolve around the idea of giving: Halloween, in which children – and adults – are given a treat when they come to the door in a unique costume; Thanksgiving, a day on which, as a nation, we give thanks for the blessings we enjoy;

and Christmas, the make-or-break season for retailers who outdo themselves in promoting the “newest” and the “best” gifts for young and old.

Yet within that time frame, other days and seasons remind us Christians of where we came from and what we are all about: All Souls’ Day and All Saints’ Day, when we remember those who came before us and bore witness to our beliefs; the season of Advent, when we, as people of God, are still and waiting; and Christmas itself, when the word Gift becomes reality.

In this issue of the newsletter, we share the stories of people who themselves are a gift to all of us and whose lives make a difference in the world.

# A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“In no circumstance are monastics allowed, unless the prioress or abbot says they may, to exchange letters, blessed tokens, or small gifts of any kind, with their parents or anyone else, or with another monastic.”

*Rule of St. Benedict, 54:1*

An oblation is a gift or offering and, as such, it can aptly describe the goal of the Christian life.

St. Benedict's instruction, above, runs contrary to today's culture, in which relationship requires a tangible demonstration of connectedness, and where we are never satisfied, no matter how much we have; the notion of “enough” is foreign.

Benedict, in his wisdom, teaches us that the most satisfying possession is the possession of God, and anything that interferes with that understanding, no matter how small or inconsequential, how caring or insightful, is a roadblock in our journey.

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## From the Desk of the Director



*Janis Dopp*

As we look at the “gifts of the Spirit” in our lives as Benedictine Oblates of Saint Meinrad, it is easy to recognize and bask in the glow of the gift of our vocational call.

However, we must never forget to ask ourselves how we are to share this gift with others.

Years ago, I remember thinking how blessed I was to be an oblate. Then, I suddenly realized that, while the gift had been freely given, there was a built-in responsibility that came with it. Love and responsibility go hand in hand. When we love someone, we recognize that we are also responsible for their

well-being. It is part of the covenantal nature of love.

As oblates, we are in a loving covenant with our God. The fruit of our prayer and reflection is often an invitation to loving service. We are awakened to his call to be a healing balm for our troubled world. We are given the opportunity to gift the world around us in much the same way that we have been gifted with his love.

We are called to recognize our various talents and share them generously. So, being gifted, we become gifts, a vocation that calls us out of ourselves and our comfort zone and makes it possible for all of us to make a difference in this world.

*Janis Dopp  
Oblate Director*

## Musings from the Chaplain



*Fr. Joseph Cox*

Most of us appreciate being given gifts. Some things we receive are practical, and some are just for fun. A practical gift might be a can opener. A fun gift might be a croquet

set. Some gifts are material, and some are spiritual. If someone gave you a chair, that would be a material gift. If someone were to pray for you, that would be a spiritual gift.

Some of the spiritual gifts we have been given are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Six have a biblical basis, and one does not: “wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge and fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:2), as well as piety,

which was added to bring the list to seven.

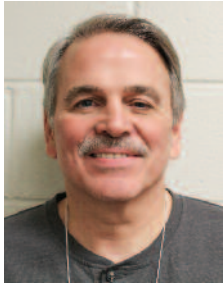
We have been given the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us to live virtuous and holy lives, and to send us forth to bear much fruit, something that is possible only when we stay firmly attached to Jesus, the vine (John 15:1-8). The graces of the Holy Spirit strengthen us to carry out our vocations for the good of others and the benefit of the Church and the world.

As followers of St. Benedict, we know that prayer is important to us, especially *lectio divina*. In prayer, we can ask God to give us the wisdom to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the best ways possible. Each of us will have our unique ways of doing this, depending on who we are.

*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB  
Oblate Chaplain*

# Oblate Study Days

## focus on the treasure of faith



Ed Karas

Community living, as depicted in St. Paul's letters and how it applies to the *Rule*, the monastic community and the Church, was the focus of the Oblate Study

Days. Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, provided six highly informative sessions on the challenges Paul faced in attempting to spread the good news of Christ and his resurrection and building up a community of believers under diverse and difficult cultural, religious and political conditions.

Fr. Eugene told us that the *Rule* was merely an expansion of sacred scripture, which therefore presupposes that to understand the *Rule* we need to first understand sacred scripture. As oblates who are associated with a monastic community and interacting with various communal structures within our daily lives, a good step would be to understand the writings of Paul in living out the *Rule*. It is no accident that the *Rule* cites Paul's letters almost 40 times.

As addressed in 1 Corinthians, Paul called for the elimination of divisions among believers in Corinth and proposed a radical form of unity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Although Paul was a fan of diversity, he did not approve of diversity at the expense of unity.

Unity builds strength and power within the community, which in turn allows for diversity – not the other way around. Fr. Eugene mentioned that we are as good as dead without this unity and reminded us why St. Benedict thought stability was so essential to the monastic community.

Paul can help us further by his descriptions of how hard communal living can be, with all the plurality of purposes within the imperfect human condition. However, if left strictly to ourselves, our self-will takes over, making us think we can go it alone. Of course, the past provides many examples of how this Gnostic-oriented belief in self-empowerment leads to human pride and breeds the seeds of self-destruction.

To counteract pride, the hymn in Chapter 2 of Paul's letter to the Philippians (starting at verse 5) states how essential and necessary obedience and humility are to living in community as followers of Christ. Fr. Eugene told us that to be humble is to be real.

Finally, if we struggle to the point of despair in proclaiming the gospel and living the *Rule* within our various communities, Fr. Eugene recommends that we read 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4. This chapter illustrates why it is not about us, but about Jesus Christ as Lord.

The Lord has given us a treasure of faith that we carry around in what Fr. Eugene referred to as a clay pot that requires careful handling and attention. By meditating on these letters of Paul, maybe we can become more humble and obedient servants of the Lord in protecting and proclaiming this treasure.

Ed Karas, oblate  
Bloomington, IN

## Sign up for the e-newsletter

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# OBLATES

## In their own words



Oblate Patrick Perry  
Kokomo, IN

"I think I've grown into a deeper spirituality by *lectio divina*, spiritual readings, but most especially by using the Divine Office, the Psalter. I often think, while I'm praying the Psalter, that these are the very prayers that Jesus used and this is very meaningful to me.

Being an oblate has changed my life. I really feel that I am alive today because of the oblate community and their prayers."



# The Busy Benedictine: Gift-giving

*The Busy Benedictine is an occasional column about trying to be like a monk when you're working and taking care of kids.*

*In no circumstances is a monk allowed, unless the abbot says he may, to exchange letters, blessed tokens or small gifts of any kind, with his parents or anyone else, or with a fellow monk. He must not presume to accept gifts sent him even by his parents without previously telling the abbot. If the abbot orders acceptance, he still has the power to give the gift to whom he will; and the brother for whom it was originally sent must not be distressed, lest occasion be given to the devil (Eph 4:27; 1 Tim 5:14). Whoever presumes to act otherwise will be subjected to the discipline of the rule. (RB 54, 1-5)*



Edward Castronova

Well, there goes Christmas! Sorry kids, Mommy and Daddy decided to become Benedictines. Therefore, unlike all your

friends, relatives, neighbors, schoolmates and hundreds of millions of people all around the globe, you get nothing, nada, zip on Christmas morning. Don't cry; instead be happy that we have not given occasion to the devil.

Wait a minute. This is impossible. How can anyone live this way! No family in North America in 2017 can be expected to live under this aspect of the *Rule*. Why is it even there? What in the world did St. Benedict have against Target?

On the other hand, imagine not having to elbow other shoppers aside on Black Friday. Imagine not being pummeled with ads from Halloween on. Not seeing the symbols of Advent used to sell everything from power tools to lady's underwear. Not having to make a list longer than Santa's and run around trying to buy whatever you guess they might want. Having peace from November 1 until December 25.

That's a pretty good vision. You can see why St. Benedict discourages gift-giving. It starts innocently enough, but quickly becomes a social compulsion. You have to do it! If you

don't, everyone will think you are a jerk. You don't want people to think you are a bad person, do you?

Of course not. In fact, you want people to think you are awesome, the most devoted generous hoo-haw on the whole planet! You're going to give away boats, diamonds, helicopters, islands! And for your daughter, who said she likes giraffes, you're going to get a tiny mechanized golden giraffe that walks, talks, spits and poops, available online at FAO Schwartz for only \$3 million.

We can see why the *Rule* wants to avoid gift-giving as a social practice. In the end, it is less about the receiver than the giver. Contrast that with humble, obedient service, which the *Rule* constantly urges. Service humbles the servant and gives true gifts of the heart to the others. It is a pure and holy practice, whereas the giving of material gifts is not.

And yet here we are, bound by massive social expectations to buy a million things, wrap them and give them away. No one can get out of it. Imagine being the first person in your family to breezily announce, "Don't nobody get me nothing, because I ain't getting nobody nothing back." As soon as they've unwound the triple negatives, they'll be asking if you're sick or something.

We can't get out of it completely. But maybe we can tone it down. Imagine a world in which everyone is paired with one other person. They give each

other a \$5 bill. Cash. So much for the material gift. Then they add upon it layers and layers of spiritual gifts: smiles, charity, service, faithfulness, trust, listening. Such a world will never be, but it gives us some ideas of where to go.

St. Benedict would probably advise oblates to ask for no gifts, but to respond with kindness to any gift received. When gifts are expected from us, we could offer small, simple gifts that reflect our particular charisms of stability of heart, fidelity to the monastic way of life, and obedience to the will of God.

To preserve peace in your life, we might try buying all of our gifts at once. Indeed, why not buy the same thing for everyone? It will seem a little weird to everyone at first, but gradually they will all come to know: "That's just Aunt Maeve's way. She likes to give the same little thing to everybody. And she's happy getting the same. She's a simple lady; her gift is her smile."

Perhaps in obedience to the Benedictine devotion to hospitality, we could perhaps buy small food items. Perhaps a jar of jam from a monastery. Or, bake loaves of bread for everyone. Who doesn't like homemade bread?

OK, OK, it's not going to work with kids. Here they come running down the stairs, and piled under the tree are

*Continued on p. 7*

# Family, Faith and Fun

## Muhs family prays and plays together at Christmas



*Irene Muhs*

Many years ago, when we were quite new at grandparenting, we watched as the babies started to outgrow their “buckets” and, one by one, were

able to walk into our house without help. In they would come on Christmas Day, and we laughed as they quickly ran for the gifts under the Christmas tree.

It was funny and fun, but as they started moving up a bit in age, we wanted to change the focus of the day. As Christmas pageants are time-tested and can never fail, we started our own little people’s theatre group. The children loved it, and the parents were delighted to watch their little stars playing Mary, Joseph, Angel Gabriel, Baby Jesus (sometimes we had more than one Baby Jesus) and the Shepherds, looking much the part in bathrobes.

We had cherubs complete in angel gowns (made from old white sheets) and sparkly tinsel halos. Practice time was much more fun than gift shopping and much less expensive.

Their move out of toddlerhood brought productions of “The Empty Tomb” during Easter time and, at the request of one 6-year-old boy, they did the Stations of the Cross. They were so serious about this one that it was beautiful in a way that only children can be beautiful. Meantime, these 20 cousins were forming a bond of faith and love that remains strong today and is being passed down to their children.

Later, our way of Christmas giving became our “Family, Faith and Fun” retreat. To this day, we spend time together, pray and play together – giving gifts from the heart instead of from the mall. The pageants have turned into a family “talent show,” which always brings plenty of laughs and sometimes great surprises, as it did at our last retreat when our youngest married couple did a clever skit that led to the announcement of their little baby-on-the-way. Cheers and hugs abounded.

Also at that gathering, one young mom was making golden paper crowns with the little ones (our great-grandchildren). “Aha! Crowns,” said I. Does that not smack of Epiphany? So out came some bath towels to wrap around the many little Magi as they, with crowns in place, took the long trip through the desert (a very large room where all the fun happens) to find Baby Jesus (a tiny newborn cousin).

No camels available at the Camel Rental, so they traveled on foot. Grandma read aloud a child’s version of Epiphany as they went. We all sang “We Six Kings from Orient Are.” As our gathering is always on the first weekend of January, I think we may have a new retreat theme brewing.

Our prayer time is central: Morning Mass and mealtime prayers, a Holy Hour at 3 p.m. and Evening Prayer. Sometimes, late at night, praise and worship can be heard coming from the chapel. The original group of cousins still likes to sing together.

Sharing prayers and cares and wintry walks, laughing and loving and making memories, we leave for home with our hearts warmed and our faith fortified by the holy exchange of our Christmas giving.

*Irene Muhs, oblate  
Farmingdale, NY*



*Hats off to the Muhs family, which gathers at Christmas to spend more time together and less time on gift giving.*

# Meeting of Chapter Coordinators witnesses transition of leadership



Jennie Latta

The Chapter Coordinators met together on the Hill on June 23-25. This was an unusual meeting because it began with parting remarks from Fr.

Meinrad Brune, OSB, outgoing oblate director, and with the commissioning of Ms. Janis Dopp, incoming director, by Fr. Subprior Guerric DeBona, OSB.

Fr. Meinrad told the chapter coordinators, Oblate Council members and Oblate Finance Committee what his work with the oblates has meant to him over the years. These ceremonies were followed by Mass and Vespers in the Guest House chapel.

After supper, MCC 2017 officially opened. The task force that planned the meeting was recognized and thanked. The members were Ron DeMarco, Al Kovacs, Mike Reffett, Jennie Latta and Rosemary Conrad, who died shortly after the last planning meeting.

Sr. Karen Joseph, OSB, of Ferdinand, IN, gave an inspiring address based upon the lives of Sts. Benedict and Scholastica. She emphasized lessons that can be learned from their lives that easily apply to our own, such as how to handle the sting of adversity and how positions of leadership may raise envy among those who are led.

She noted St. Scholastica's words to her brother: "See, I asked you, and you would not listen to me. So I asked my Lord, and he has listened to me." These, she suggested, could have

led Benedict to incorporate the directive to "listen ... with the ear of your heart" to the opening sentence of the prologue to his *Rule*.

Sr. Karen talked about the turbulent times in which we live, which are similar to the turbulent times in which St. Benedict lived. He brought calm in the midst of chaos and was able to build a community of peace. This is the role that oblates should play.

They should bring peace to their communities of family, church and workplace. They do this with the guidance of the *Rule*, practicing fidelity to prayer and bringing good order to their lives. She noted that the spiritual life is something to be worked at, not something merely hoped for.

The following day included two plenary meetings, one devoted to recruitment and retention of oblates, and the second devoted to communication within the chapter and between chapters. A final conference on Sunday was devoted to building community in the chapters.

The emphasis in these meetings was on coordinators sharing best practices with each other, not on council members or the oblate director providing answers. Many fruitful ideas resulted, and new relationships were formed between chapter coordinators. One helpful session was added to talk about the feelings that could be anticipated during this time of transition from one oblate director to another.

Fr. Meinrad served as oblate director for 22 years, and many oblates feel a strong, personal bond with him. Coordinator Pat O'Malley, who is a

palliative care nurse, helped us to understand the natural grieving process that accompanies change like this. She encouraged us to talk with each other about our feelings and to be prepared to hear the concerns of other oblates upon our return home.

At the close of the meetings, Oblate Director Janis Dopp made a number of important observations. First, she explained the increased role that Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, will play in the oblate community. He intends to be present for investitures and oblations on the Hill four times each year. Inquirers and novices will be encouraged to mark those important occasions with the monastic community.

Janis explained the role of Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB, who has served as associate oblate director for a number of years and will now serve as oblate chaplain. She said the oblate community has been divided into deaneries, which will each be assigned a dean from the monastic community. The deans will visit each chapter in their deaneries twice a year and will be in contact with the chapter coordinators throughout the year.

Janis emphasized the leadership role being assumed by the chapter coordinators in the broader oblate community, seeing it as a fruit of the vision of former Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, OSB, whose vision for Benedictine Oblates in the world led to the first and subsequent World Congress of Benedictine Oblates.

There has been an explosion of lay association with religious communities in the past 30 years, and the Benedictine Oblates are very

much a part of this movement. Going forward, centered by the foundation and formation provided by the monastic community, the oblates will take Benedictine spirituality into the world in their homes, churches and workplaces.

After the conference, the Oblate Council met briefly to discuss action steps arising from the conference. One clear direction was the need to ease communication with and among the oblates. In the coming months, oblates will be asked to provide email addresses to their chapter coordinators and to the Oblate Office. In the meantime, a public Facebook page has been started, which reaches current oblates and others who want more information about our community.

*Jennie Latta, oblate  
Memphis, TN*

*continued from p. 4*

50 loaves of bread. Imagine the wailing! The gnashing of teeth! The hurling of vile oaths at saintly parents! Not good. But perhaps as the kids age, the gifts could gradually become a smaller and smaller aspect of the holiday.

Perhaps, bit by bit, we can foster attitudes of simple gift-giving among our children, family and friends. We can and should refuse, firmly, to succumb to the world's demands as it attempts to define our holy season into something it is not. Instead, we could seek peace in the Lord through a very simple gift-giving, accompanied by heaps of service in love.

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



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*Irene Muhs with some of her grandchildren at the Christmas gathering.*



*Outgoing Oblate Director Fr. Meinrad Brune, OSB, embraces new Oblate Director Janis Dopp at her commissioning on June 23.*



*Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, offered conferences at the Oblate Study Days this past summer.*

## Day of Recollection explains need for stability of the heart

This past July, the Benedictine Oblate Day of Recollection was held at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. The presenter was Fr. Denis Quinkert, OSB, on “Daily Living of the Benedictine Stability of Heart.”

Using the story of the Prodigal Son and the *Rule of St. Benedict*, Fr. Denis developed an understanding of daily living with a Benedictine stability of heart and the prodigal son’s reasons for leaving home and then deciding to return, even as a hired hand.

When the younger son left home with his share of the inheritance, he resembled a sarabaite monk who lived only for himself and what the world could provide to satisfy his immediate desires, according to Fr. Denis.

Then a change occurred. The young son realized he belonged to a family, his community, if you will, even if he was a hired servant. He realized his true identity and what he stood for, and he had the courage to begin the long trek home to face the consequences.



*Fr. Denis Quinkert, OSB, was the presenter on stability of the heart at the Day of Recollection in July.*

The prodigal son, over time, had developed stability of heart. And his stability of heart, gained through faith and trust and prayer, was nurtured by a newly found relationship with God.

Fr. Denis focused his second conference on the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

He explained that the disciples recognized Jesus and understood what

He was telling them only when they offered him hospitality. The disciples, of course, were doing what they had been taught to do by Jesus during his ministry on earth. They welcomed this stranger they had met on the road and asked him to stay and have dinner with them.

The Prologue to the *Rule of St. Benedict* tells us to listen with the ear of our heart. This kind of listening requires sensitivity, trust and faith on the part of the listener. Fr. Denis said God’s “voice” is not just for the chosen few.

It may come from nature. It may come from a person we know and admire or from someone we don’t like or agree with. And sometimes it may come from an event in our lives. But whatever the source, we need to be ready. We need to be sensitive to the goings-on around us and we need to look for God speaking to us – even in all the wrong places!

Fr. Denis began the last conference with a story about being with two religious sisters and sitting with a



*Some of the Bloomington oblates and visitors for Saint Meinrad Oblate Day of Recollection 2017.*



dying priest during his last hours. The priest was in and out of consciousness, but at one point, he weakly muttered, "Are you three still here?"

One of the sisters said, "Yes, Father, we are." Then the priest said, with some difficulty, "It's harder in the garden than I thought it would be, but you three are still awake." A powerful story!

Because Jesus was human and experienced agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, it stands to reason that we, too, in our humanity, can relate to his stress, anxiety, despair, sickness and even death – and find strength and comfort in knowing that Jesus is with us, and he is not sleeping!

We need to take the complexities of our daily living to God the Father in prayer, and what better way to accomplish this than by establishing Benedictine stability of heart? We must know who we are and where we stand in a loving relationship with God.

Jesus says that He will be present to each of us when we are present to one another. We know that whatever our needs, our times of joy, our times of sadness, Jesus will be available to us as we daily live with stability of heart.

*Barb and E. Shannon Jennings, oblates  
Louisville, KY*

### **Conference focuses on Benedictine tools for living**

This summer I was blessed to be a part of the NAABOD Biennial Conference held at the College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, MN. NAABOD is the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors. Their focus is ongoing formation for oblate directors.

It provides a forum for discerning needs and issues associated with this formation activity and guidelines for leadership and the oblate way of life. I joined Ron DeMarco from the Cincinnati chapter and Janis Dopp, our new oblate director, on this five-day journey into Benedictine spirituality.

This year's conference focused on Benedictine "Values and Practices – Tools for Living; Tools for Life." The balance of prayer, learning and reflecting fostered an environment that allowed the spirit of our Lord to penetrate our hearts, minds and souls.

In this article, I share my thoughts on the words of Sr. Mary Reuter, OSB, of St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, MN. Her talk focused on "listening in the ordinary" – in all aspects of our life, to always be ready and awake and to allow ourselves to see and hear God, even in mundane situations.

I tend to have a restless spirit. I know that is why I am so attracted to Benedictine spirituality. I recognized a need to learn to quiet my spirit and allow God to work in me, in all aspects of my life. Each day I hope to take Sr. Mary's inspiring words and make an effort to see God always in everything.

Our lives can become filled with "busy-ness," mindlessly moving from one activity to the next, barely noticing God's presence around us. By making a conscious effort to be aware of God always, we will open ourselves up to the many graces He has in store for us.

I want to thank the sisters and staff of St. Scholastica for their wonderful hospitality. The five days spent in the

community affirmed my vocation as a Benedictine Oblate and blessed me with many tools for living and practicing Benedictine spirituality in everyday life.

*Catherine Funkhouser, oblate  
Bloomington, IN, Chapter*

### **Bloomington Oblates**

On Saturday, August 5, Diane Rivera hosted a summer social and luncheon at her home. About 20 oblates attended.

*Candace Bailey, oblate  
Bloomington, IN*



*Diane Rivera is pictured with Carney Strange and Jane Reinhart. Diane hosted a summer social and luncheon at her home in Bloomington, IN.*

### **Evansville Oblates**

The Evansville Chapter does nothing special for our first (October) meeting, but the meeting is anticipated and enjoyed by our members due to the summer layoff. We pray the Office of the Dead and read names of deceased chapter members during our November meeting. The members have embraced and appreciate this new chapter tradition.

*Mike Reffett  
Chapter Coordinator*



*Oblates gather in the Guest House Chapel for Noon Prayer during Oblate Study Days, June 12-15, 2017.*

## Memphis Oblates

Because of the presence of some outstanding musicians in our group, the Memphis Oblates have begun chanting Morning and Evening Prayer on a regular basis. We started with Morning Prayer after the Saturday Mass, then moved to Morning Prayer after other weekday Masses and, most recently, have started coming together each afternoon for Evening Prayer. We started thinking that it would be nice to chant the Office at the Cathedral, but not really sure that we would be able to sustain it. We have been surprised about how well it has worked.

Not all of us can get together every day, but at least three or four of us have been able to come together daily for chant. It has been a wonderful means of building community and has attracted others to the oblate life. Currently, two oblate novices are in formation in the Memphis Chapter, Meg Koss and Terry Starr, and three other persons pray regularly with us, but have not yet made a decision about investiture.

*Jennie Latta  
Chapter Coordinator*

## Oblate Angel Fund

Gifts are accepted year round for the Oblate Angel Fund. This fund is used to provide scholarships for traveling to investitures and oblations and for oblate retreat registration fees. No gift is too large or too small. If you are interested in participating, please send your check to the Oblate Office, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad, IN 47577.

## 2018 LOH Schedule

Watch your mail for the 2018 Liturgy of the Hours schedule. It will be mailed with your Christmas letter from the oblate director.

**Correction from the Summer Issue**  
The article entitled "Dayton Oblates Join the Day of Service" was written by oblate Candee Mackell.

## INVESTITURES

June 13, 2017 – **Walt Schmitteckert** of Dayton, OH

June 15, 2017 – **William Hobbs** of Brandenburg, KY

June 29, 2017 – **Thomas Garcia** of Connersville, IN

August 5, 2017 – **Rev. John Douglas Leedy** of Austin, TX

September 3, 2017 – **Erlinda B. Day** of Bronx, NY; **Thelma A. Delfin** of Flushing, NY; **Annabelle C. Espina** of Mt. Kisco, NY.

September 9, 2017 – **Dr. Stacey A. Bowling** of Loogootee, IN; **Dr. Laura M. Bridge** of Beavercreek, OH; **John Brooks** of Columbus, IN; **Maureen Gahan** of Bloomington, IN; **Rev. David J. Kirk** of Kokomo, IN; **Virginia J. Metzcar** of Greenville, OH; **Patricia McGee** of Anderson, IN; **Peter Reintjes** of Indianapolis, IN; **Nury Stevens** of Santa Claus, IN; **Brett-Catherine Stewart** and **LeRoy Stewart**, both of Hope, IN; **Eunice Taylor** of Utica, KY; **Holly Vaughan** of Bellmont, IL; **Christopher Williams** of Hobart, IN; **Jareb Youngstafel** of Lebanon, IN ♦

## OBLATIONS

February 25, 2017 – **Ray Anthony Gambrel** of Centerville, OH

June 13, 2017 – **Dr. Michael Gregory Seretny** of West Lafayette, IN

June 15, 2017 – **Kimberly Francis of Assisi McDaniel** of Louisville, KY

June 17, 2017 – **Shirley Ann Therese Fessell** of Elizabeth, IN; **Bernard Joseph Powers** of Owensboro, KY; **Timothy Ray Gregory the Great Tallent** of Louisville, KY

July 6, 2017 – **Jan Brigid Cottrell** and **Ken Andrew Cottrell**, both of Lexington, KY

July 27, 2017 – **Constance Ann Bridget of Sweden Cleemput** of Ottawa, OH

August 19, 2017 – **Paul Gabriel Rendine** of Wakefield, RI

September 3, 2017 – **Robert Branson** and **Martin Morasch**, both of Branchville, IN; **Mary Theresa Dymphna Shanley** of Farmingdale, NY

September 9, 2017 – **Susan Frances of Rome Melton** of Madison, IN;

Thomas Peter Morone and Jeff Dominic Pace, both of Columbus, IN; Gayle Mary Schrank of Floyds Knobs, IN; Geryl Bernadette Wright and Janice Faustina Rausch, both of Oakland City, IN ♦

## DEATHS

November 6, 2013 – Deacon Gary Lane of Charleston, WV

February 8, 2017 – Michael DeCriscio of Kernersville, NC

February 13, 2017 – Jay Rush of Shelbyville, IN

May 31, 2017 – Donald J. Becker of Mt. Vernon, IN

June 2, 2017 – John Hussung of Louisville, KY

August 3, 2017 – Eugene A. Mills, formerly of Avon, IN

August 10, 2017 – William Barks of Zanesville, OH

August 13, 2017 – Rev. Edwin J. Scherzer of Louisville, KY ♦

## UPCOMING EVENTS

December 8-10, 2017 – December Oblate Retreat at Saint Meinrad with Fr. Justin DuVall, OSB

December 9, 2017 – Investitures and oblations at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. ♦

## VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office have been Barbara Kammerlohr, Ruth Engs, Dennis Skelton, Peter Manninen, Sandra Duffee, Novice Joseph Wagner, OSB, Ann Smith, Mary Campanelli, Pat Reckelhoff, Novice Noel Zamora, OSB, Catherine Russell, Bill Busch, Marjorie Busch, Ted Castronova and Ed Lukes. ♦



*From left, oblate novices Geryl Lyn Wright, Gayle Schrank, Janice Rausch, Jeff Pace, Thomas Morone and Susan Melton receive their final oblations from Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB, with the assistance of Novice Noel Zamora, OSB.*



*Janice Rausch of Oakland City, IN, receives a blessing from Archabbot Kurt following her oblation.*



*Oblate director Janis Dopp (far left front row) is shown with the 15 new novices who were invested and the six novices who made their final oblations on September 9 in the Archabbey Church.*



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## Reading Room

We know that Christmas is the season for giving. We make lists. We haul wrapping paper out of our closets. We decorate our houses. We bake chocolate crinkle cookies using grandma's recipe. We make sure we have thank-you notecards and stamps to mail them, because we must be thankful for what we are given.

But what about God? How do we, metaphorically, write a thank-you note to God for all he has given us? What are the gifts we have been given in order to give them away, in order to help other people? How do we discover these gifts, these charisms?

The St. Austin Catholic Parish offers an online self-test at this website: [staustin.org/spiritual-gifts-inventory](http://staustin.org/spiritual-gifts-inventory). The test will help you discover what your charisms might be and how you could use them. By using them to help other people, you are writing a thank-you card to God.

As you unearth your charisms, you may want to pick up a book or two during the Advent season to increase your awareness of God. Here is a selection of titles that could enrich your journey.

*Advent and Christmas Wisdom from St. Benedict* by Judith Sutura, OSB, takes the reader through Advent day by day. Starting with the first day of Advent and ending with Epiphany, each day provides a reading from the *Rule of St. Benedict*, a scripture reading, a prayer and then an action.

The actions are realistic and meaningful and could be a great way to use your charisms. I found this to be a creative and meaningful way to walk through this holy season.

*Meditations on Mary*, illustrated with works by the Old Masters and essays by Kathleen Norris, describes Mary as depicted through the centuries by great artists, ancient scripture and contemporary essays.

It is filled with stunning works of art depicting each stage of Mary's life from the Annunciation to the Crucifixion of her son, Jesus. This book is a perfect blend of old and new and will draw you closer to Mary during this season of Advent.

*Kneeling in Bethlehem* by Ann Weems is a book of poetry for Advent and Christmas. Weems' poetry is beautiful and thought-provoking and sure to help make your pilgrimage to Bethlehem a trip to remember this year.

In "God So Loved the World," she writes, "Listen you who have ears to hear. Listen and sit down to bread and wine with strangers. Feed his sheep... Love one another and claim new life in his name." May we all claim new life in Christ this year as we journey through Advent.

*Mary Campanelli and Ann Smith, oblate librarians  
Columbus, OH, Chapter*