



A dusting of snow surrounds a lake at Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

Practice the silence that you seek

So much chatter: within and without. We have those constant conversations with self inside our heads. Imagined conversations, and sometimes arguments, with a spouse, our children, perhaps our boss.

The cacophony of the world: YouTube, the television, the radio, traffic noise. How often in our daily lives do we truly create the opportunity to enjoy silence? In Chapter 6 of the *Rule*, St. Benedict teaches us that “there are times when good words are to be left unsaid out of esteem for silence.”

Not all silence is interrupted by words, but words, especially those that keep popping up in our heads, our inner voice, certainly do a large amount of the interrupting. Benedictine Oblates are wired for silence. It is something our hearts yearn to know and practice.

In *A Spirituality for the 21st Century*, Joan Chittister writes, “Benedictine spirituality forms us to listen always for the voice of

God. When my own noise is what drowns that word out, the spiritual life becomes a sham.”

Many of us struggle with quieting our minds and allowing complete silence to permeate our being. As we look to the beginning of a new year, perhaps each of us can start anew to practice the silence we seek. Practice makes perfect, after all. Matthew Kelly, founder of Dynamic Catholic, teaches about the classroom of silence.

A Dynamic Catholic post written by Dominic Albano states, “For a few minutes, every day, we go to hear the voice of God in our lives. It is in the classroom of silence that we finally are able to listen to God and life can finally start to make sense.”

What if we each began a new practice of 10 minutes a day in the classroom of silence? We yearn for God and, as such, “The Word we seek is speaking in the silence within us.” (Chittister)

A POINT TO PONDER FROM *The Rule*

“Speaking and listening
are the masters;
the disciple is to be
silent and listen.”

Rule of St. Benedict, 6:6

The same letters spell both s-i-l-e-n-t and l-i-s-t-e-n. The motive that St. Benedict gives for silence is to foster listening. Listening is, indeed, a fundamental value of Benedictine spirituality.

A listening attitude characterizes our lives as monks and oblates. We must be silent to listen to the Lord in sacred Scripture, in the people around us, in those in authority, in the daily experiences of life, in the inner quiet of our hearts.

The *Rule* urges us to be silent so that we can listen to the voice of God in the midst of our work and in the center of our families and homes.

From *Benedictine Oblate*, Winter 1996 issue

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Silence can speak volumes



Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB

What is silence?
What does it mean?
Silence is “quiet.”
But as is often the
case, this one word
can mean several
things.

Silence can mean
ignorance. I ask
you a question.

You don’t know the answer, and so you say nothing. You are silent because here you have nothing of value to say. Sometimes, however, silence can “speak volumes.” I tell you about a heated argument I had with a friend. As I finish I say, “Maybe I was too hard on her, and owe her an apology.” You say nothing, but your silence does speak. In this situation, it would seem that the old proverb, “Silence denotes consent,” applies.

St. Benedict writes about silence several times in his *Rule* and, in fact, all of his Chapter 6 is devoted to “Restraint of Speech.” There, referring to Psalm 39, he reminds us that since “there are times when good words are to be left unsaid out of esteem for silence, for all the more

reason should evil speech be curbed.”

Benedict believes silence is so important “that permission to speak should seldom be granted even to mature disciples.” Continue reading through the *Rule* and you’ll discover that silence is part of humility. By remaining silent, by not presuming to speak, we remind ourselves we are not teachers, but disciples. It’s no surprise that in this same Chapter 6, Benedict quotes from the Book of Proverbs: “In a flood of words you will not avoid sin” (10:19).

There is, of course, another side to the restraint – and the gift – of speech. After all, balance – *moderation* – is one of Benedict’s favorite words. And, although he never refers to the Old Testament Book of Ecclesiastes, I think he would agree fully with its balanced observation: “Blow on a spark and up it flares, spit on it and out it goes; both are the effects of your mouth” (28:12).

Silence is golden. So is knowing when – and how – to speak.

Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB
Saint Meinrad Archabbey

From the Desk of the Director Silence: Necessary for a deeper spiritual life



Janis Dopp

What do I have to say about silence? Hopefully not much – except that I have come to recognize that it is a fundamental necessity in my spiritual life.

Without it, I find that I am drowning in a sea of noise and words, my life jerked into attention by the slightest ping of my telephone or computer with news of more news,

communication, and updates from weather to the latest post of a “friend” on Facebook.

Words have made their way into most of my day, with the exception of prayer and sleep, and even those refreshing oases can be interrupted and disrupted by the trivialities that threaten to take precedence over thoughtful reflection.

I have to fight for times of quiet. It has had to become a point of discipline that is both inviting and exasperating. There is

always so much that seems to need to be accomplished in too few hours each day. How does one give up valuable time to doing nothing?

In Chapter 6 of the *Rule*, Benedict tells us, "...so important is silence that permission to speak should seldom be granted even to mature disciples, no matter how good or holy or constructive their talk."

Why? Silence was deemed to be a virtue by St. Benedict. It was not a penance for having said the wrong thing. It was the space where one could cultivate the kind of speech that would be a blessing for

both the one hearing what was being said and the one speaking. Perhaps we can say that it is the necessary element in true humility: becoming nothing for a brief span of time so that we can become completely available to God on his terms rather than our own.

The winter months provide many opportunities for staying put and being quiet. I hope to cultivate these attitudes in a more intentional way, developing the charity of heart and mind that are the fruit of not being too quick to judge or to have the last word.

*Janis Dopp
Oblate Director*

OBLATES

In their own words



*Oblate William (Bill) Wilson
Huntington, WV*

"The real blessing of being an oblate has been my quieting and my staying grounded and focused, more than I ever have in my life. And as I often say it's about my heart health, literally and figuratively. The doctors at the Cleveland Clinic said to me, 'Medication, other things we're doing, cardiac rehab, and this prayer thing you do, that's just as important.' And it has been important."

Musings from the Chaplain



Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB

After a snow, it seems as if the outdoors is a little quieter. Sounds are muffled, and the world is calmer. Perhaps snow is God's way of telling us to quiet down.

Quiet and silence are important for us. We need some occasional stillness so that we can have mental and emotional rest in order to stay healthy. We also need quiet so that we can listen to God and let Him in.

We need it for prayer. St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "The first requirement for prayer is silence. People of prayer are people of silence." In his *Rule*, St. Benedict sets forth silence as an obligation and practice for which monks are eager to engage in at all times.

Numerous references to silence are found in the *Rule*. It leaves no doubt that the monk is to listen with the "ear of the heart" at all times and in all places. Most importantly, the noise generated by human speech must be greatly curtailed. This is for monastics, oblates, all

Christians, and really all people who are serious about developing a closer relationship with the Lord through a deeper prayer life.

Consequently, there are circumstances in which we can choose noise or silence. Choosing silence is an act of the will. If we want quiet, then we will seek it out. We can start by finding a specific time and place for it. If we have not done so already, we can begin to nurture times of quiet in our homes and other places. God waits for us to allow more space for Him to enter our lives.

*Fr. Joseph Cox, OSB
Oblate Chaplain*

Saint Meinrad
DAY OF SERVICE
has been set for
March 9, 2019.
alumni.saintmeinrad.edu/DOS



Notes for Novices

Deliberate silence is part of our prayer



Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB

Silence is a basic component of our liturgical life as Benedictines.

Guests pray with us and, without realizing it, often speed up their prayer, thus throwing us

monks off a tad. Prayer may be fast-paced in parishes since people want to

carry Christ's love into the world as quickly as possible.

In monastic liturgy, though, stability anchors us to the monastery, so our prayer is meant to be deliberate. We wait several seconds before praying the next psalm or responding to the celebrant. We allow God to speak to us through the silence.

Silence is a basic component of our liturgical life as Benedictines. Being

deliberate about our prayer enables us to listen to our Lord, who regularly beckons us to Him.

Remember to be deliberate about listening to God in the silence of your prayer.

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

Listening to God requires a search for silence



Kathleen Polansky

After graduating college, I remember going camping to get away from all the noise of growing up and living in

Chicago. The contemplatives

and ascetics of all ages and religions sought God in the silence and solitude of the desert, forest and mountains. So, in an attempt to model these ancestors, I would pitch my tent and settle in to listen to nothing but the sounds of nature.

I craved the quiet. I needed the quiet. By evening, the area would become crowded with other campers who set up camp and proceeded to blast their music, TVs and, to my astonishment, VCRs. My plan was now an evanescent memory. I cried.

I taught high school for 36 years. At the end of a school day, I was usually first to arrive home. My retired in-laws, who lived with my husband and

me, would await my arrival. They were excited to have someone to talk to and tell of their day. I, on the other hand, wanted to crawl into the recesses of my closet and shut out the whole world. I craved a time for being without any talk. I needed quiet time.

We live in a world that is bellowing at us 24/7. I would read of Jesus going to a deserted place and I desperately longed to be there. I wondered what it was like to live without electricity and media, traffic congestion and hyperactivity, chatter and mind-numbing meetings and deadlines. I was drained. I was exhausted. I was not capable of hearing the Word of God. I could read it, but its impact was lost in all the complications of living.

Then, by divine design, I visited my friend, a seminarian studying at Saint Meinrad. The quiet of the Abbey hit my ears first. They rang with a sound I seldom heard. It was the throbbing of my own head. At prayer I was caught by the pace. A turtle could run faster. The phrase about a snail's pace

became a reality to me. What was happening?

Saint Meinrad had begun to permeate my breathing. I slowed down. I needed sleep. The weariness of my frenetic living overcame me and a real sabbath day emerged. Rested, the next step was to listen. The words of the prayers and readings became whispers within. Listening turned to hearing. God had some plans. All I needed to do was to trust and agree.

St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence."

Filling our time, and consequently our living, with doing and noise, we are blocking our openness to a conversation with God. Real communication demands not just speaking but listening and hearing. If

we expect to hear God in our lives, it is imperative that we open ourselves to listening.

“The essential thing is not what we say but what God says to us and through us. In that silence, He will listen to us; there He will speak to our soul, and there we will hear His voice.” (St. Teresa)

My life took amazing turns after that first visit to Saint Meinrad Archabbey many years ago and it continues to do so. Thankfully, I still crave silence. I believe it is part of God nudging me to hear. Returning often to Saint Meinrad to pray and retreat is one of the gifts of my life.

I learned that the way to silence encompasses a greater quiet beyond environment into choices and decisions made. A great source of information on these choices is beautifully captured in the words of St. Teresa in a newly released edition of her book, *In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories and Prayers*.

According to St. Teresa, to make possible true inner silence, practice:

Silence of the eyes, by seeking always the beauty and goodness of God everywhere, and closing them to the faults of others and to all that is sinful and disturbing to the soul.

Silence of the ears, by listening always to the voice of God and to the cry of the poor and the needy, and closing them to all other voices that come from fallen human nature, such as gossip, tale bearing, and uncharitable words.

Silence of the tongue, by praising God and speaking the life-giving Word of God that is the truth, that enlightens and inspires, brings peace, hope, and joy; and by refraining from self-defense and every word that causes darkness, turmoil, pain, and death.

Silence of the mind, by opening it to the truth and knowledge of God in prayer and contemplation, like Mary who pondered the marvels of the Lord in her heart, and by closing it to all untruths, distractions, destructive thoughts, rash judgments, false suspicions of others, vengeful thoughts, and desires.

Silence of the heart, by loving God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength; loving one another as God loves; and avoiding all selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, and greed.

“We cannot put ourselves directly in the presence of God if we do not practice internal and external silence.”

*Kathleen Polansky, oblate
New Salisbury, IN*



Saint Meinrad guests walk to the Archabbey Church for Mass on the Feast of St. Benedict.

Christmas time: Thoughts for those alone

Think of those this Christmas, those who are without a home. Show a little compassion for those who'll spend this Christmas alone. Think of those whose homes have absolutely no heat. Think of those whose only home is on the street.

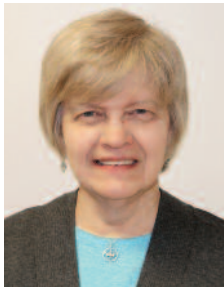
There are those who'd do better only if they could; take a look around you, you might see some in your own neighborhood. Those that seem to have lost their way, Lord

Jesus, we pray you touch them and bring them back this day.

Know there is a merciful God looking down from his heavenly seat, tugging at your heart to show love to those feeling hopelessness and so much defeat. Christmas time, Christmas time! Spread a little cheer! Christmas time, Christmas time! Smile throughout this coming New Year!

*Ron Lewis, oblate
Branchville, IN*

Experiencing the *Rule* in jail ministry



Nancy Bartkowski

Even before I was an oblate, I was attracted to Benedictine spirituality with its emphasis on hospitality and listening. I know this was learned in

childhood, mostly from my mom, who was forever welcoming people into our home, serving dinner or snacks, and listening to them. It was done cheerfully and with great care for the person.

As an adult, I try to incorporate that same service and hospitality in my life and career, first as a children's services worker for the State of Michigan and now as a college instructor. I try to welcome the person in both body and spirit by giving them a safe place to express their feelings and concerns. There are many times when their stories make me cringe and hospitality demands a lot from me emotionally. Listening to their stories, no matter how sad or painful, is part of hospitality.

When I began the journey to oblation, I learned more about both hospitality and listening as part of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. It spoke to me in ways I could never imagine. I know that, in both careers, listening for facts and events is critically important, but now I know listening with my heart is entirely different.

It goes deep into what the person is saying to what cannot be articulated with words. It is listening sometimes to what they want to say, but seem hesitant to voice out loud. I began to realize that the call to hospitality and listening with the ear of my heart were two aspects of Jesus' call to

“Love one another.” Not only do we welcome the person into our lives, but we then listen to their story. To listen effectively, we must also be silent.

For the past two years, I have been able to use both directives from the *Rule* in my jail ministry. Our team works with female inmates at the county jail using a program called “Healthy Living Skills.” It is patterned after the Trauma Recovery Program created by Fr. Kenneth Schmidt and Sharon Froom in the Diocese of Kalamazoo in 2002.

The program, originally developed to help victims of sexual abuse to heal from the abuse, has been adapted to include any type of childhood trauma. It currently is being facilitated in many dioceses throughout the United States and internationally.

Over the years, the program was adapted to work with inmates at the county jail. Skills taught the inmates include teaching them to calm themselves when triggered by emotions, identify and integrate their feelings, challenge their cognitive distortions, grieve their losses, and begin the process of forgiveness.

I watch these women find the courage to go inside themselves to that place of pain in their lives. As they share their stories, we sit in silence and listen as they address the wounds of their past, grounding themselves in the present, as they rework the abuse and abandonment issues that led them to the current choices of violence and addictive behaviors.

Sometimes minutes will go by when they sit silently and then the tears begin to fall. I would like to think that, in that silence, they are reconnecting with their inner child before the wounds of life hurt them and with the God who can heal them. They may wonder if they have the strength to make the changes and how their life might be different if they do.

Both the inmates and the facilitators understand that in the listening, the pondering, the teaching, and the silence, a space has been created for healing. And in that, our team incorporates St. Benedict's *Rule* into the work we do: “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ (RB 53.1),” and “Listen carefully, my son, to the master's



Fr. Justin DuVall, OSB, celebrates Mass at an Indiana prison.

instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart (Prologue 1).”

The women will tell us it took them time alone, in the silence of their own thoughts, before all of what we teach makes sense – not just on an educational level, but on a much deeper emotional level. To watch them blossom and hear them realize that they can heal and make better choices is beautiful and full of God.

Some will tell us they found the courage to work on those wounds, ones they didn’t even know they had at the beginning of class, because we listened to them and gave them the tools and the space to heal. I think maybe it is the listening in silent solidarity with the women that has the most impact on healing. God can fill the silence in ways words cannot. It helps all of us become more open to God’s mercy and grace working in us and through us as we heal each other.

What I have learned from using the *Rule of St. Benedict* is that it is not just for prayer and monastic use, but for all human interactions. The more we open ourselves to another person, listening to them sometimes in silence, the more God is present in that interaction, be it in a monastery, our career, family, or volunteer work in a jail.

Nancy Bartkowski, oblate
Portage, MI

Quieting the noise to find a sacred space



Bill Wilson

Sitting on my sunporch at home during a fall rain doing daily Morning Prayer and *lectio divina*, I find the quietness that becomes a sacred space of silence.

My *lectio* occupies the experience:

Psalms 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God”

Psalms 62:5: “For God alone my soul waits in silence ...”

Ecclesiastes 3:7: “... a time to be silent, a time to speak”

Lamentations 3:26: “It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”

Isaiah 30:15: “In quietness and trust is your strength.”

Mark 6:31: “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

We struggle in our culture for times to quiet ourselves, to stop the hustle and bustle of our lives, and experience the sacred space of silence.

Sr. Jeremy Hall, OSB, (St. Benedict Monastery, St. Joseph, MN) says in her book, *Silence, Solitude, Simplicity*, “... we today are inundated with

sound. We are overwhelmed with words – printed words, spoken words, painted words, neon words ... assaulted with noise ... there is that noise within – the endless, busy dialogue we carry on in our own minds, a dialogue that may surprise us when we reflect on it in silence.”

We all yearn for those times in our lives to quiet the noise. I find myself in the quiet of a rainy day on the sunporch letting go and realizing God’s holy presence. It is truly what Sr. Jeremy describes as “real silence.” “(Silence) is a positive receptivity, a creative waiting, a welcoming openness. It is openness to God, to our deepest selves, to others, both as individual persons and as the human community, and to the Word who is God’s Son,” she writes.

Silence is difficult and, for some, often avoided. Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, writes, “It is difficult to find silence in an age of technology and information. Silence challenges our cultural addictions to amusement, words, music, advertising, noise, alarms and voices.

“Silence asks for patience and waiting. And both silence and waiting make us uncomfortable. They seem unproductive. Noise protects us from

confronting ourselves, but silence speaks the language of the heart. Silence and solitude are what really bring us into contact both with ourselves and with others.”

A modern hymn in my United Methodist faith tradition says, “Come and find the quiet center, in the crowded life we lead, find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed: clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.”

Reflection Questions

1. How do I avoid or resist silence?
2. Do I find myself filling silence with sound?
3. How much time each day do I give to silence (i.e., no words, devices, news, etc.)?
4. Where do I have silence with God’s presence in my life?

William (Bill) Wilson, oblate
Huntington, WV

Smugmug

For more photos of
Saint Meinrad events, visit:

<http://saint-meinrad.smugmug.com>

The Busy Benedictine

Silence is where we can find the truth

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



Edward Castronova

The universe is mostly empty. For the atheist, emptiness proves the absence of God. For Aquinas, too, who taught that evil is the absence of good, emptiness is significant. Where there is no good at all, evil reigns supreme.

When the serial abuser decides at the last moment to let the seducing words out of his lips, when he finally allows his hands to go where they should not, he does not have vile feelings for his victim; he has no feelings at all.

The utter lack of sympathy is the most chilling thing about a serial killer. Chill is the absence of heat. The absolute zero of the heart is where man is empty of God.

Far more than what the atheists believe, he is there worse than an animal. A human utterly without God is not a simple ravenous beast, but rather a demon who will hurt other people even though it hurts himself, something no animal would do.

Therefore the land of nothing is dangerous territory. The Devil lives there. When John Cage asserted that 4'33' of silence was music, he thought he was performing a neat intellectual trick. He was, however, opening the door on the abyss. In the art of nothing, no truth or judgment is to be found; it makes no comment on the heartless killer; it condones, passes by, accepts the deed in silence.

Contemplatives pursue silence as well. What are they doing there? Fighting. Unlike the artists, who see in nothingness a deep truth, the Christian sees there is not a final truth but an eternal contest, a contest between true and false, beautiful and ugly, good and evil.

The greatest members of our order went into the desert to fight alone against the Devil in the form of their own silent thoughts (RB 1). Silence is the proving ground.

Contemplative silence removes distractions, the barriers behind which devils hide, the obstructions that keep angels away. Nothingness is not the end of the story: It is the beginning of the final conflict. The emptiness of the universe proclaims that the struggle of humanity is not about atoms; it is about souls.

In the silence of our hearts, the combat is naked and merciless. There are no prisoners there. The casualties pile up on all sides. Cherished ideas, deep-seated desires, comforts, lies. The soul is emptied until, in the darkest hour of faith, a song is faintly heard. It grows in strength and power. The nothingness is filled, but completely, utterly, because all other things were wiped away.

The gambit of Christian contemplation is that, by going bravely into the dangerous silence, the soul opens itself most radically to the eternal song.

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



Br. James Jensen, OSB, speaks about accountability during the Bloomington Oblate Chapter Meeting in September at St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

Dear Abbey:

Have questions? We have answers!

Do you have questions for Abbey? If so, submit them to boylex3@hotmail.com.

Dear Abbey,

I made my oblation 10 years ago. It truly was one of the most meaningful experiences in my life, along with my marriage and having my children, to make that kind of a promise – a promise truly from my heart to God and to all of those of the Saint Meinrad community.

It was such an amazing day. My family was with me. We were on the Hill. Fr. Meinrad gave me my blessing. But that was 10 years ago. How do I recapture that feeling? That connection? That special moment?

Yours truly,
Looking to recapture that feeling

Dear Looking,

Abbey says, “Celebrate your day!” We celebrate all sorts of special and meaningful moments in our lives and your oblation anniversary should be one of them. Abbey asked around and here are a few suggestions from other oblates:

- Keep your oblation anniversary on your calendar and celebrate it much like you would any other anniversary: go out to dinner, maybe buy yourself a little something special as a remembrance, eat cake.
- Keep a journal just for your oblation anniversary. Each year write a reflection about where you’ve been in your oblation journey and where God might take you next. Reflect on goals or promises you’ve made privately or to the community and write those in your journal.
- Finally, you could try a little retreat just for you. Visit the Hill and spend a couple of days just for you with the community of Saint Meinrad praying, helping in the Oblate Office, enjoying the surroundings, or anything else that might help make this special.

Whatever you do, remember that you are special and this promise you’ve made to Saint Meinrad and the oblate community is also special.

In Benedict,
Abbey



Oblate Council meets to discuss timely initiatives

The Saint Meinrad Archabbey Oblate Council met on July 7 and October 20, 2018, to discuss several important initiatives. The following are highlights from those meetings:

- “Accountability” became the theme for oblates for September 2018 through 2019. As is done in the monastery by the monks, the theme’s purpose is to focus our thinking about how to amend our faults by being accountable to others and ourselves for our actions. The oblate chapter deans will address this in their talks to the chapters during the year.
- Oblate Director Janis Dopp reported that the second of the regional conferences with other monasteries on leadership and leadership development was held at Saint Meinrad. The purpose of these conferences is to discuss steps to promote leadership development in the various oblate communities.
- The MCC 2019 Conference is scheduled for June 21-23, 2019, to discuss oblate chapter development. All chapter coordinators are invited to the MCC conference.
- New guidelines have been added to the oblate novice program. Self-evaluations by the novices have been added, as well as regular encouragement to each novice from Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB, the oblate novice mentor. This is an important part of his mission. The program now sets a maximum of two years to complete the lessons. An oblate novice retreat was planned for January 4-6, 2019.
- A new *Oblate Novice Companion* (second edition) has been completed. Reports back to the

Oblate Office are positive, especially for the guidance on praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

- The prison ministry at Branchville Correctional Facility led by Br. Zachary Wilberding, OSB, is benefitting prisoners who became Saint Meinrad Archabbey oblates or oblate novices. The prisoners are using Liturgy of the Hours books donated by the Oblate Council.
- Janis Dopp reported there have been 56 oblate investitures and 44 oblations from September 2017 through September 2018. She anticipates there will be 25 investitures and 29 oblations in December 2018. There are nearly 1,500 oblates of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. Next year marks the 140th anniversary of the oblate community.

Ronald DeMarco, oblate Cincinnati, OH

Judge retiring after 38 years

Oblate Judge Marc Kellams from Bloomington, IN, is retiring after 38 years on the bench. “My church would tell me that my goal in life is to love

God and to help others,” Kellams said. “I’m not sure there’s any difference when I’m out on the bench. My job is to help others in one way or another.”

Oblate receives Roncalli Award

On September 26, 2018, Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of the Archdiocese of Louisville, KY, presented the Roncalli Award to oblate Donald W. Coffman of Liberty, KY.

OBLATIONS

September 2, 2018 – Deacon Jose C. “Sonny” Ungco of New York, NY; Marlyn Batan and Gilbert “Gill” West, both of Bronx, NY

September 22, 2018 – Harriett Akins-Banman of New Albany, IN; Dr. Sean Alexander of Pompano Beach, FL; Constance Anders of Pendleton, IN; Stacey Bowling, Loogootee, IN; John Brooks of Columbus, IN; Jaime Chunda of Grandview, MO; Thomas Garcia of Connersville, IN; Anne Hall of New Palestine, IN; Jacqueline Henderson of Tallahassee, FL; William Hobbs of Brandenburg, KY; Patricia McGee of Anderson, IN; R. Harold Medsker of Sullivan, IN; Thomas Mehigan of McLean, VA;

We want you and your articles!

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.

Some of them we will publish right away and others we will file and coordinate with upcoming themes for the newsletter. Please submit all articles and images with explanations to Becky Boyle at boylex3@hotmail.com or Brenda Black at bblack@saintmeinrad.edu. The next deadline is February 15 for the spring edition to be published in April 2019 with the theme of Awakening. ♦

Martin Morasch of Indianapolis, IN; Martha Seibert of Manchester, MO; LeRoy Stewart of Hope, IN; Holly Vaughan of Belmont, IL; Jareb Youngstafel of Lebanon, IN

October 12, 2018 – Larry Hembree of Greenfield, IN ♦

TRANSFER OF OBLATION

September 22, 2018 – Frances Chigi of Greenburg, IN ♦

INVESTITURES

September 2, 2018 – Christine Scheer and William Scheer, both of Farmingdale, NY

September 22, 2018 – Barbara Allen, Carol Herzog and Joyce Voegerl, all of Jasper, IN; John Awrey of Holland, MI; Christopher Buchanan of Campbellsville, KY; Cynthia Campbell of Louisville, KY; Jim Clerc and Marilyn Clerc, both of Columbus,

IN; James Cooper of Kouts, IN; Laura Jean Flaherty of Orlando Park, IL; Kirk Graham of Three Rivers, MI; Colonel Mark Smith of Indianapolis, IN; Margaret A. Theis of Homer Glen, IL; Diane Frances Walter of Georgetown, KY; Pam Washburn of Mishawaka, IN

October 5, 2018 – Steven Sharrett of Skanida, MI ♦

DEATHS

Elizabeth “Betsy” Jones, Louisville, KY, December 30, 2017

Margaret “Peggy” Morehouse, Farmingdale, NY, September 9, 2018

Michael Morow, of Indianapolis, IN, September 13, 2018

Alice Jean Chamberlain, of Haubstadt, IN, October 19, 2018

Debbie Storer, of Georgetown, OH, November 8, 2018 ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 9, 2019: Saint Meinrad Day of Service

March 20-23, 2019: Retreat by Fr. Bede Cisco, OSB, at Saint Meinrad Archabbey

June 10-13, 2019: Oblate Study Days presented by Br. John Mark Falkenhain, OSB, at Saint Meinrad Archabbey ♦

VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED

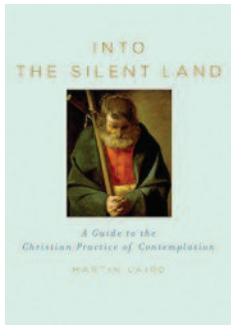
Recent volunteers in the Oblate Office were Br. Stanley Rother Wagner, OSB, Ann Smith, Mary Campanelli, Fr. Mateo Zamora, OSB, Ted Castronova, Cathey Byers, Becky Boyle, Michelle Blalock, Bill Hobbs, Dave Archer, Ruth Engs, Novice Christian Lumsden, OSB, Candidate Dennis Reyes, Marie Kobos, Bill Wilson, Ron DeMarco, Dr. Laura Bridge, Catherine Funkhouser and Clayton Nunes. ♦



Left, Christopher Buchanan of Campbellsville, KY, prays during his investiture as an oblate novice on September 22. Top, sixteen people were invested as oblate novices and 19 people made their final oblations in a ceremony in the Archabbey Church. Bottom, Barbara Allen of Jasper, IN, receives the Rule of St. Benedict from Archabbot Kurt Stasiak, OSB.

Reading Room

Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation by Martin Laird (Oxford University Press, 2006)



This is a luminous and compelling book. The very phrase “into the silent land” evokes mystery and awe, and the book will speak best to those who already have an established contemplative practice.

Benedictine *lectio divina* is, of course, an excellent way of contemplation, and the one to which we are committed as Benedictine Oblates.

According to Laird, the fundamental human illusion is that we are separate from the Divine. Probably the best thing I can do to show the enchantment of this book is to quote from it.

“People who have traveled far along the contemplative path are aware that the sense of separation from God is itself pasted up out of a mass of thoughts and feelings. When the mind comes into its own stillness and enters the silent land, the sense of separation goes.” (p. 10)

“Precisely because our deepest identity is hidden with Christ in God and beyond the grasp of comprehension, the experience of this ground-identity with God will register in our experience, if indeed it does register, as an experience of no particular thing, a great flowing abyss, a depthless depth.” (p. 14)

The marvelous world of thoughts, sensation, emotions and inspiration ... are all patterns of stunning weather on the holy mountain of God. But we are not the weather. We are the mountain ... Mount Zion.” (p. 16)

“As [the poet] R.S. Thomas puts it: ‘The silence holds with its gloved hand the wind hawk of the mind.’” (p. 23)

“This silence, as R.S. Thomas tells us, ‘is when we live best, within listening distance of the silence we call God.’” (p. 45)

“The present moment is a gateless gate opening onto a pathless path.” (p. 53)

For most of us most of the time, entry in the silent land will be a rare thing, but how blessed and welcome when it occurs!

Melanie Isaacson
Bloomington, IN