



Oblates of Saint Benedict Saint Martin's Abbey

A Letter From the Oblate Director

Brother and Sister Oblates:

Just a little reminder that Lent is around the bend, arriving on the 22nd of February. It is a quick turn around from the anticipation of Advent. Be awake! Be alert for he is coming! It seems like we just put away the decorations of the joyous celebration of Christ birth and now must do the serious reflection of our lives and "Repent".

Scriptures tell us, Christ does not ask for offerings and sacrifice but a contrite heart. What do you hear or expect from this passage? For me, I believe our Lord wants a change of heart, a spring cleaning of one's house, clearing the cobwebs and dusting the shelves, tossing out the old. A time to make new that which is old, give our souls a polishing with greater spiritual care. Removing everything that may be cause for injury or that would darken the brightness of the soul. Perhaps, rather than taking on a sacrifice or doing some sort of mortification such as not having sweets, it would be better to put this time to improving something in ourselves or our relationship with that other person who rubs us the wrong way. When living or working in close proximity of others there is bound to be conflict. We have our way of doing our thing and sometimes our way can annoy those around us. Face it, we are not perfect and if we think we are, all we have to do is to ask a close friend, and I'm sure they will give us a list of things to work on. I heard Abbot Neal remind us monks once, "one day when I die there will be at least one person that will be made happy". For me, I believe there will be many and remembering that is humbling!

Lent is also a good time to look at our activities and see if we cannot improve our active presence in the world. Are we actively participating in one's parish or church ministries serving the poor, home-bound and sick? When was the last time we turned off the television or computer and picked up the sacred Scriptures or another spiritually inspired material and read? There are great little books that can take you on a spiritual journey up to and including Easter or Christmas. These can be great jump starters for each day. I like to read through the various books of the New Testament on accounts that pertain to the feast. Even though I have read these passages many times, slowly meditating on the words brings me closer to the Lord. The scriptures are food for our souls and meant to be digested again and again. They never lose their nutrients or flavor, and each time gives us more nutrition.

A quote from the Prologue of the Holy Rule comes to mind to sum up what I have said, "Come, My children, listen to Me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 33[34]:12). "Run while you have the light of life, lest the darkness of death overtake you" (John 12:35). And the Lord, seeking His laborer in the multitude to whom He thus cries out, says again, "Who is the person who will have life, and desires to see good days?" (Ps 33[34]:13) And if, hearing Him, you answer, "I am he," God says to you, "If you will have true and everlasting life, keep your tongue from evil and your lips that they speak no guile. Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it." (Ps 33[34]:14-15) And then as if our Lord had Easter, the resurrection, in mind, St. Benedict goes ahead to add Christ's words, "And when you have done these things, My eyes shall be upon you and My ears open to your prayers; and before you call upon Me, I will say to you, 'Behold, here I am.'" (Ps. 33[34]:16; Is. 65:24; 58:9).

I wish you all to have a Blessed Lent/Easter ! *Br. Edmund Ebbers O.S.B.*

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Abbot's Reflection by Abbot Neal Roth, O.S.B.

Early in the year (usually in the month of February) most of the abbots in North America gather for an annual meeting and workshop at one of the abbeys located in the warmer parts of the country. During the breaks or at meals one can be sure to hear talk about how many candidates or novices they have, or don't have. The number of vocations to the monastic life remains a topic of great interest for the abbots.

At Saint Martin's Abbey, we work hard at promoting the monastic life. Fr. Peter is our vocation director and a member of our vocations team composed of Fr. Gerard, Br. Ramon, Br. Mark, Br. Bede, Br. Luke, and Br. Nicholas. All of these monks assist with recruitment in some way such as showing a potential candidate the campus, sitting with the person during the meals, taking photographs for the website, etc.

In Saint Benedict's time, adult men were accepted into the monastic life but also children were offered by their parents to be educated and for service to God. This was a common practice. The children lived with the monks, prayed with them, studied and worked with them. Parents saw this as a high calling and a wonderful life for their children. This was formalized by a ceremony of *oblation*. Parents, if able, could give alms to the community but this was not absolutely required. The ceremony of oblation was sufficient.

Benedict legislated the care of boys, the discipline of the young men, and how they were to obey and respect seniors. There was, then, a good deal of corporal punishment for breaking rules. Today we might not conduct the young men exactly as outlined in the Rule, but over 1500 years ago, many things were done differently! But in the end, one can see that Benedict wanted to ensure the solid education of the youth and to safeguard his vocation, not to mention promoting peace in the community. You can read this and more in the 1980 Rule of Saint Benedict edited by Timothy Fry, O.S.B.

What does this have to do with being an Oblate in the modern world? I once overheard a monk say that if we lived the monastic life the way it should be lived, we would attract vocations to the monastic life. Good is attracted to good. True enough, but as Oblates, we can, in the family, also observe obedience to the needs of the



family (community), respect of our elders, and conduct ourselves in ways that promote peace and harmony in the family. We can endeavor to live our lives in such a way that does not cause inconvenience and discontent in the family. We can refrain from complaining. We can judge people on their merits, and hopefully our good example will give them encouragement! These are tools of sorts that lead us to a positive and loving life-not a poor calling for Oblates or anyone who is serious about their spiritual journey.

In the Beginning ...by Father Gerard Kirsch, O.S.B.

The clerics entertained the monastic community with their annual Christmas party on the evening of December 28, 1953. The highlight of the program was a selection of numbers played on the blockflute - more commonly called the recorder brought back by **Abbot Raphael Heider (1903-1971)** from his recent tour of Europe. These wooden instruments were gradually being mastered by the clerics, who hoped some day to give a full-scale concert on them. **Father Nicholas Rausch (1928-2003)** and **Father Luke O'Donnell (1913-1999)** were particularly adept.

Bernard Anderson (1898-1971), an oblate from Visitation parish in Tacoma, arrived at Saint Martin's on December 26, 1953 to start his postulancy for the Benedictine brotherhood. A barber by profession, he contributed significantly to the better quality of haircuts among the monks. Earlier in December, another oblate, Emil Bader, from Holy Rosary in Tacoma, was fatally injured in an automobile accident. He had made his final profession on March 26, 1933 - the first layman to make his final oblation for Saint Martin's Abbey when **Abbot Lambert Burton (1878-1943)** started the oblate program for our monastery.

The Saint Martin's clerics at Mount Angel - **Fraters Timothy Lamm, Placidus Reichman (1926-2000), Urban Feucht, Nicholas Rausch, Ambrose Turner, Thaddeus Arledge, and Maurus Keller**, returned to their studies on January 3, 1954. Also away was **Father Vincent Carey (1895-1967)**, at Saint Aloysius Church in New Plymouth, Idaho. **Father Luke O'Donnell** attended on January 9 the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Catholic Library Association at Seattle University.

During the Christmas holidays, **Father Jerome Toner (1899-1977)** assisted at Saint Joseph's Church in Maplewood, New Jersey. Thereafter he went to Washington D.C. where he attended meetings of the American Economic Association, the Industrial Relations Research Association and the Catholic Economic Association. Father Jerome was vice president of the Catholic Economic Association and had acted in that capacity at the last meeting.



Two new Plymouth cars were purchased during the Christmas holidays by the abbey to replace some of the older vehicles which were becoming rather unsafe for transportation - a commendable understatement in light of subsequent machines known with wry affection as "The Pink Fink" and "The Green Crummy". Several of the cars replaced in 1953 had gone over the 150,000 mark - not surprising when parish work, retreats, and lectures (and meetings!) required so much travel.

*Blessed Lent,
and watch
for God's
flowering
gifts of life as
they appear.*

From the Hill...by Boniface V. Lazzari, O.S.B.

Camellias, like the flowering quince, can be harbingers of spring in the dead of winter. At the Abbey, our earliest blooming camellia, a delicate scented flower, blooms in late November. Not too long afterward, the red camellia in our new Japanese-style garden about the Abbey church blossomed forth. It was a beautiful thing of hope to see it blooming even amidst the unusually heavy snowfall that we experienced in mid-January.

Many years ago, when spending Christmas with cousins in Germany, I experience both flowers when I arrived several days before Christmas. There was a red camellia in bloom in my cousins' winter garden at a bay window of their living room-cum-library, and there was a vase full of forced quince, cut on the feast of Saint Barbara, in full bloom in my room. "The Lord is the giver of life to all..." We have flowers to remind us that even in the darkest days we ought to have hope. By Easter, which cannot be too far off, we ought to have garden flowers in abundance.

Our student monks were welcomed back to the Abbey by **ABBOT NEAL ROTH** for a month-long Christmas break in studies. **BROTHER NICOLAUS WILSON** arrived from Mount Angel Abbey, where he is doing undergraduate working theology, and **BROTHER LUKE DEVINE** flew up from Berkeley, California, where he is doing graduate work in theology at the Graduate Theological Union. It was great having our confreres back with us, even if for only such a short time.

The Abbey has been gifted a long-term guest in the person of Father Steve Gallagher. Father Steve, who was ordained for Alaska last spring, has long ties to Saint Martin's. He is a graduate of Saint Martin's High School. And had been a member of the monastic community for about a year and a half before discerning that God had other plans for him. Father Steve had a heart attack last fall, and his quiet time at the Abbey is part of the recovery process. It is a joy to have him with us!

In mid-January, **ABBOT NEAL**, **FATHER PETER TYNAN**, and Father Steve joined many others in the Seattle Archdiocese for the annual Mass for Life. This year, the Archbishop of Seattle was the principal celebrant and the Mass was celebrated in our own Marcus Pavilion... Later in the winter, **ABBOT NEAL** made two major trips. The first was to St. Benedict, Louisiana, to attend the annual workshop for Benedictine abbots; the second was to attend a Saint Martin's University golf tournament in Palm Desert, California. Though not himself a golfer, **ABBOT NEAL** was there to meet with the alums of our schools. As both trips were in mid-February, he was able to "escape" some of our Pacific Northwest winter... **FATHER KILIAN MALVEY** is in New York City on sabbatical this semester... Both **FATHER** Subprior **CLEMENT PANGRATZ** and **FATHER BEDE CLASSICK** spent time at Saint Peter Hospital, Olympia, this winter for heart related illnesses. Both are now back at the Abbey and are doing well.

BROTHER AELRED WOODARD and **FATHER GEORGE SEIDEL** transitioned the monastic community into the changes in the Mass that began in Advent, and we are doing well, though we miss the voice of **BROTHER NICOLAUS**. He is "on loan" to the schola at Mount Angel this year. **FATHER PETER** works as Vocation Director, Librarian, for Abbey and University and in Campus Ministry. He gives a series of very successful talks on things religious and spiritual and in addition to presiding at the Sunday night liturgy in the Abbey church, he offers Mass two evenings a week in the University Residence Halls. As if that were not enough, he also does some weekend supply work--- offering Mass in parishes where the priest must be absent.



The Geranium By Father Benedict Auer, O.S.B.

"We live far away and anonymous; disguised, we suffer as unknowns."
 Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*

I heard my geranium blooming this morning,
 its blossoms unfurling so softly when beckoned by
 the sun,
 it cried to be replanted in a larger container,
 I had to reply that I did not have one,
 so it just continued blooming,
 but the buds keep getting smaller,
 a miniature plant that speaks if you listen,
 listens if you speak.

Nothing I plant ever seems to last for more than one bloom,
 African violets seem to shrivel at my approach,
 I speak English and they speak Swahili,
 it is a language difficulty,
 a barrier that cannot be bridged.

I have tried Boston Ivy,
 but I am not from its home,
 it lasts a few months,
 and then it starts to go deaf, even music does not speak to its
 soul,
 my words fail,
 my stereo is not enough, and eventually
 the plant's leaves turn brown and eventually all I have is a vine without leaves.

But the geranium has lasted,
 it is on its third bloom,



Faith without Works is a Waste of God's Grace by Oblate J.J. Nugent



About a year ago, I started trying to support pro-life. I am sure that I have helped save children from being aborted but I have slowly become aware of why Scripture compels us to do both works and have faith. It is for the benefit of those in our community and for the maturing of our personal spirituality.

When we respond to God's love, we become more loving. While modern monks are primarily called to minister inside the monastic community and its missions. Oblates are called to minister primarily in the world.

Taking this call to heart can be a very challenging and even dangerous task. As I have taken my faith to the streets and participated in Pro life vigils and protests; I have noticed that many of my fears and failings have been taken away from my personality. As I have moved from simple faith to simple

works I have also gained a deeper understanding of Roman Catholic Theology and an even deeper awareness of God as an active force in our lives.

For example, when one stands on the sidewalk in front of an abortion clinic, there is often a stream of verbal insults and the occasional obscene gesture aimed at Pro life advocates. Vanity is quickly set aside, for whatever reasons one chooses, be it called by God to witness or just a fundamental belief that all is precious, pride and self righteousness has no place on the sidewalk in front of an emotionally charged issue as pro-life. At times, fear threatens to send one scurrying away, especially when approached by a person hurling verbal and possibly physically abuses your way. There is the challenge, one must always keep ones passions in check and not give way to anger.

"We become more loving."

The point is that when we have faith and move to do the work of faith, our faith is purified by the testing. Maybe you are called to do works that are less dramatic but the principle remains the same. There are always challenges and with the help of God, we will overcome.

Ministering God's love in the world can also be a powerful and moving experience. Being the hands that God uses to fight for justice and relieve the suffering of others is a humbling and acutely joyful experience.

It took me most of my life to understand the importance of good works. I can't go back and change my past but intend to use the years I have left to continue to build my faith and then use that faith to help others. I will not waste God's grace.

Cultivating Growth by Oblate Bill Lagreid

The snow and ice storm we all experienced in the Northwest and Puget Sound area in the middle of January 2012 reminds us that there are many things that are out of our control. Deep snow, slippery ice and gray skies will tend to do that. We are also reminded that as individuals we are required to use sound judgment while coping with the conditions we face or suffer the consequences.

Our tools for coping with every day life are training, experience, failures, disappointments, observations and our foundation of faith in a power greater than ourselves. As oblates we have the Rule of Benedict as our guide. Chapter 4, "Guidelines for Christian and Monastic Good Practice" is a chapter that deserves frequent reading.

Our spiritual life of regular daily prayer helps us to set aside times in our daily life to focus our thoughts and reflections with God at a time and in a place where we feel most comfortable. This can be one of our greatest challenges as oblates, depending on our unique living circumstances, but setting aside that time is essential and rewarding.

The struggles we all experience while coping with the January snowstorm will pass after a few days of trials and tribulations. It will be followed by the spring of the year where new life and growth can abound to balance our effort to grow our personal faith and service to God.

The Pope and I Agree by Oblate Patricia McClure

This month Pope Benedict spoke of the relationship between silence and words. The power went out for 102 hours. I have the fortune to experience life, in my little monastery with a lot of silence, so this event didn't send me into shock. What became difficult were my encounters with others. After a 24 hours those around me complained, "Why wasn't our power back first?" I reminded them that others were not as blessed as we were, we had heat, a way to cook and water. Soon those around me observed that they had nothing to do. They couldn't tolerate the inability to connect with the virtual world and be entertained. I found myself surrounded by grumpy neighbors and friends. Being Benedictine I was able to adapt. I had no trouble finding things to do. The house still needed cleaning, dishes washing, meals cooked. Tasks took a little longer to do but I could still do them. At times, I was tempted to run to someplace that had power and check my emails but I resisted, there really wasn't anything **that** important. Instead, I used my time to read and converse. As soon as the power came back everyone scurried back to their various form of electronic salve and blissful silence prevailed.



*"...striking a
balance between
silence, words,
images and
sounds."*



Oblate Sunday March 4th 2012

Join us for Mass in the Abbey church at 11AM.

Lunch in the cafeteria

Then at 1:30 in our upstairs room a talk with Oblate Fr. Steve Gallagher.

Do you have questions about the recitation of the Divine Office? Write out your questions and if we have an opportunity we will discuss them at our March or May meeting.

Planning on making your final oblation? Please notify Br. Edmund by Oblate Sunday March 4th so that you can be included in the ceremony.

Interested in becoming an oblate ? If you notify Br. Edmund before Oblate Sunday March 4th you could become a novice.

Mark the Calendar

May 13th speaker Fr. Peter Tynan

July 8th speaker Br. Aelred Woodard

Oblate Retreat: August 4th on Lectio Divina.

September 9th Fr. David Pratt

December 9th Fr. Qui Tac

On the Book Shelf

Conversations In The Abbey by St. Meinrad's Archabbey

The Divine Office for Dodos by Madeline P. Nugent

Building a Culture of the Family by Msgr. Livio Melina

John Cardinal O'Conner And The Culture of Life by Rev. Charles P. Conner Ph.D.,L.Th.

Prayer Requests

Oblate Fr. Steve Gallagher - recovering at the Abbey from a heart attack.

Fr. Kilian recovered from cancer surgery and now on a few months sabbatical in New York.

Oblate Vincent DeBellis - recovering from a heart attack.

Oblate Bill Lagried and wife Barbara's health.

Good Works

Rosary Work

Saturdays, 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm.
Meet in the Guest dining room of Old Main.

Feb. 11, March 3, April 14, May 12, June 9, July 7, Aug. 11, Sept. 8, Oct. 13, Nov. 10, Dec. 8

Gardening

Saturdays 1:00pm to 3:30pm when rosary making isn't in session come join us in beautifying the grounds. Weather permitting.

If you join us for noon prayer, we will feed you before we go out to work.

Lambert Lodge:

Work days:

March 17th

Oct. 20th.

Did you know...

That Oblate Bene Reece will be our St. Martin's Oblate representative for the next Oblate Congress to be held in Rome, Italy in the fall of 2013. We will be looking forward to her learned wisdom when she returns.

That St. Martin's Abbey and St. Placid's Priory will be hosting the next Regional Oblate Directors and Oblate conference here at St. Martin's Abbey on June 23– 25th 2012? Workers are needed for various tasks. We have a limited number of Oblates that may attend. If you are interested know that there is a cost and that your help is needed. The topic of discussion is Creatively and Constructively Living the Rule. If you plan to attend or desire to work contact Director Br. Edmund for the paper work, which must be filled out by April 30th.

That we welcome your thoughts, insights and questions. Please consider writing a few words to be added to our newsletter. We all have wisdom to share.

