

Oblates of Saint Benedict

Saint Martin's Abbey

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A letter from the Oblate Director Brother Edmund Ebbers O.S.B.

Dear Oblate:

As I write this letter to you we are in Holy Week. The largest and single most striking characteristic about this Holy Week is Christ's **humility**. Humility has been on my mind this Lent. It is a virtue that I need more of. As I look back at my earlier life, I know I have had many opportunities to practice humility but I did not handled those opportunities well. But I'm still trying to get it right.

Scriptures tell us, "He was meek and humble of heart". Being meek is a challenge for it seems to invite others to walk all over us. It would be very difficult to let someone scold, bully, ridicule, taunt or threaten us, and just turn away with our saying anything at all? Yet this is what comes to my mind when I think of someone being "meek". I believe, I see and read this in many of the letters of the Apostles. As our Lenten season comes to a climax, I look at Jesus and his mission here on earth and the words "meek and humble of heart of Jesus" hit me hard.

Not only was our Lord treated cruelly with beatings, scourges, and accused of being a criminal; insults then finally given a heavy cross to carry and paraded through town. Most of his support fled from him. Jesus felt so alone hanging on the cross that He seemed to wonder if His Father had abandoned him as well. I have felt alone but never abandoned by my God. Yet Jesus held on to hope and faith. This must be the best example of humility.

St. Benedict lays out 12 degrees of Humility. We know about the vision of Jacob who saw a ladder stretching from earth to heaven. The rungs are degrees of humility and the sides of the ladder are the pathways of which we may choose to go down on account of pride or to climb up with humility. Here is a quick summary of the degrees of Humility.

- To keep the fear of God before your eyes always.
- Do not love your own will but the will of our Lord.
- To be obedient as Jesus was to His Father.
- In Obedience as one meets difficulties and opposition to remain patient.
- To conceal no sin from God or superior.
- Be content with the meanest and worst of everything.
- To believe and say that one is inferior to all.
- Do nothing except what the common rule encourages us to do.
- Restrain from speech and keep silent unless questioned.
- Do not be too ready to laugh haughtily.
- Speak gently, humbly and seriously with few and sensible words.
- Our humility is shown not only by our interior spirit but also by our behavior.

For more on these degrees of humility refer to the Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 7 or one of the many commentaries on the Rule of St. Benedict. As I said earlier, humility is not an easy practice and a word of wisdom from St. Benedict "to do all things in moderation" is a good thing to remember. But, if we have humbled ourselves sufficiently we can rejoice too with the Lord in the here after.

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



Image found at

<http://optimisticvoices.blogspot.com/>

Saint Benedict says that we must keep death daily before our eyes. As I grow older, I find I think about that more often! In Chapter 73 of the Rule, Benedict uses rather strong words. He writes: "But for anyone hastening on to the perfection of monastic life, there are the teachings of the holy Fathers (and Mothers)...the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments...all these are nothing less than tools for the cultivation of virtues." He holds that the observant and obedient monks avoid being slothful, unobservant, negligent-I think you get the

picture he is presenting. He poses the question to us: "Are you hastening toward your heavenly home?" I entered the monastic community as a postulant in June of 1957. I feel I have traveled a long way over the nearly 55 years. I would never say that I have got it made. I can say, though, that I have studied the Rule as carefully as I can, and so I do know something about it. I particularly used that monastic experience and knowledge as Novice Master under two different abbots, and for a time doubling as Novice Master and Abbot as well. Even so, Benedict would say I am a beginner. We are all beginners. We are all running toward that limitless final goal - the glory of eternal life. We can never reach the height we are striving to conquer-only God is Perfection. But we must have those goals on our personal horizon and sometimes we brush against them by God's grace. Sister Gladys Noreen, OSB writes in her book, *NOTES AND COMMENTS ON THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT*: "This final chapter of the Rule reminds the monk that his share in that kingdom consists in attaining greatness in doctrine and virtue, which is the perfect love of Christ. That perfection is reached when the pilgrim monk arrives at his eternal home." So, we must daily make a fresh start (*Run while you have the light of life*) and remind ourselves of Benedict's words that under God's protection we will reach the loftier summits of teaching and virtues. There is much to be said about perseverance on one's spiritual journey.

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

January 1954 found Brother Stephen Neary (1870-1958) in the hospital for a week. He was no sooner released than hemorrhaging necessitated a brief return before he was on the road to recovery. Illness dogged a number of other monks in the first weeks of 1954. Father Luke O'Donnell (1913-1999) was hospitalized December 11-22, Father Leonard Feeney (1908-1980) in mid-January, Father Philip Bagan (1905-1992) later in the month. Father David Prebula (1918-2009) had his turn February 4-12. The students also staged a run on the infirmary with all sorts of minor complaints, the flu being most of the trouble.

Brother Joseph Crowley (1884-1973), steamfitter and plumber of the abbey, was supervising the repair and replacement work in Saint Martin's kitchen. Drainage from the steam cookers had caused drain lines to be eaten out by the acids from fruit and vegetables. The terrazzo floor had to be broken to install new lines—this time using vitreous clay tile.

Abbot Raphael Heider (1903-1971) left on January 24, 1954 to attend a meeting of American abbots in Chicago on the 27TH to discuss (among other items) the status and the plans for progress of the American Benedictine Academy. Elections brought some changes to the editorial board, whose main duty is to assist the editor, Rev. Bonaventure Schwinn (who was cleric master to the Saint Martin's monks when they studied at Saint Benedict's Abbey in Atchison during the 1930's). Abbot Raphael was home by Feb. 2.

A valuable addition to the college library was made by Mrs. Mary McDermott, mother of former confrere Frater Hugh McDermott: a large part of her personal library, dealing with liturgy, the spiritual life, and the saints. It was suggested that oblates and other friends of Saint Martin's might contribute books they were no longer using to the college; and should they be duplicates, such books could be passed on to Saint Placid Priory, the Benedictine convent on the west side of Olympia.

Father Jerome Toner (1899-1977) was in Spokane on January 9 to speak to a large group of public high school students on Washington State's Fair Employment Practice law. These students were members of the debate teams in the Spokane area....Father Michael Feeney (1919-2000) and Frater Adrian Parcher, together with students from the parish, attended the dedication of Holy Family Church, White Center, on Sunday, February 7....Father Richard Cebula (1916-2004) and Mr. Malcolm McKenzie, of the college's engineering department, attended a conference in Seattle on pre-stressed concrete....Father Damian Glenn (1907-1986) was again on the road, contacting prospective students.

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

BROTHER THEODORE VAVREK renewed his monastic vows on 21st March in the presence of **ABBOT NEAL ROTH** and the monastic community and members of his family and friends. The occasion was the Feast of Saint Benedict of Nursia and the fiftieth anniversary of **BROTHER THEODORE**'s vows as a Benedictine monk in 1962. Young David Vavrek attended Mass at Holy Rosary, Tacoma, as a youth and also received his elementary education at the parish school. At that time both the parish and school were staffed by Benedictines. He attended Saint Martin's High School, and received a B.A. in history from Saint Martin's College. During his years as a member of the monastic community, **BROTHER THEODORE** has worked with the abbey fleet, and purchased supplies for the abbey's small commissary. Health issues brought him an early retirement, and he now lives in an assisted living community in Yelm, Washington.

BROTHER THEODORE was feted with a special anniversary dinner for family, including his brother and sister – in – law, and friends. **ABBOT NEAL**, **BROTHER EDMUND EBBERS** and this writer joined them for the special dessert created for **BROTHER THEODORE** for the occasion: a cake in which sponge cake, peach preserve and his favorite ice cream appeared in alternate layers. **ABBOT NEAL** presented him with an icon of Saint Nicholas on behalf of his confreres. *AD MULTOS ANNOS.*



Image found at
<http://www.elblogalternativo.com/2010/01/09/>

BROTHER NICOLAUS WILSON, a student at Mount Angel Seminary, Oregon, was recently installed in the Ministry of Reader by the Archbishop of Seattle. **BROTHER NICOLAUS** was visited by **FATHER PAUL WECKERT**, whose current assignment for the abbey is a parish in southern Washington. **BROTHER NICOLAUS** later attended a concert given by **BROTHER AELRED WOODARD** in Corvallis, Oregon. **BROTHER AELRED** spent some months learning Franz Schubert's splendid *Winterreise* (Winter Journey) and give several performances of this solo work, accompanied by piano, this spring.

FATHER PETER TYNAN dusted off his thespian hat this spring. **FATHER PETER**, who had done some acting as an undergraduate, accepted a role in Saint Martin's University's spring production of Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream". Many monks, past and present, have experience with the theater. This writer and **FATHER CHRISTOPHER ABAIR**, of happy memory, worked regularly with the Olympia chorale's Gilbert and Sullivan productions. **ABBOT NEAL** and this writer were active teaching drama in the former high school under the name "Boniroth Productions."

FATHER KILIAN MALVEY is thriving on his sabbatical in the "Big Apple" ... **FATHER CLEMENT PAN-GRATZ** experienced some health issues early in the year, but is once more in the swing of things. **BROTHER RAMON NEWELL**, postmaster and Dragon Boat paddler as well as barber, has taken over **FATHER CLEMENT**'s duties as Abbey Subprior... **FATHER PETER** and **BROTHER MARK BONNEVILLE** traveled to Oregon at the end of spring break to do a day hike with some of Mount Angel's seminarians and one of **FATHER PETER**'s former classmates, Father Ralph.

"Joyous Eastertide and blessed spring."

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Remembering in Black and White By Father Benedict Auer, O.S.B.

If only turns into why didn't I
then eventually remembering ends in remorse.

When the memory fails,
photographs restore the fiction,
reviving what is left of the brain
that is now heading towards dementia.

Someone asked me why all my baby pictures were in black-and-white,
and I had to explain that back then that was all they had, no color,
just piano colors, ebony and ivory.

In 1939, the year I was born,

The Wizard of Oz and Gone with the Wind were released in Technicolor, a first,
the munchkins danced down a real yellow brick road,
but the film started back in Kansas that was still black-and-white,
and I remind the inquirer that even Dorothy when she found Oz
she wanted to go back to Kansas and Auntie Em, her black-and-white world
was safer, color was scary, flying monkeys,
good and bad witches, Kansas was boring but safe,
a world where the only alternative was gray,
and gray was just tones of black-and-white.

My pictures are of a little boy unaware of the world he was in,
my sailor suit is just like the suit my uncle wore who was in the Pacific fighting for freedom
and another picture was in my bombardier
outfit with my face all screwed up,
but the pictures are peaceful
hidden from the real world that was being painted
in colors of blood and bombs.

Black-and-white simplified the world
and seemed to make the war go away.

It didn't. The stars in the windows meant that neighbors had died in Europe or
the Pacific, I knew what it meant but I didn't
as someone said, "You can't tell a kid of four to stop being a kid."
You can't even say "Grow up!"

The age of black-and-white was simpler, less deadly,
my cousin died at ten but that was from leukemia
and not from explosive war.

The world of my infancy was without television, DVD's,
I-pods, computers, and
even without people who revealed their lust filled
lives without shame.

"It was never too late to record the faces you love.

She thought watercolor suited beginners."

Annie Dillard, *The Maytrees*



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Reflection and Growth By Oblate J.J. Nugent



Image found at
<http://www.ccfedmonds.org>

I spent the year I was a novice trying to prepare for my final oblation. I initially enthusiastically charged off to expand on my rigorous personal prayer schedule, and I maintained it for months. Then I found that I just wasn't keeping up. Even when I was keeping up; the prayers were rushed, almost just a formality.

My prayer life seemed to nourish me less, and less. Some days I hardly noticed that I missed doing the Rosary, or Morning/Evening/Night prayer, or Lectio Devina, or silent prayerful listening or, reading the RB. It came to a cross roads in June. I had to decide if I really wanted to commit to a life of prayerful living. I searched my heart and soul and found that a life without prayer would be dead and empty. It was not an option to disconnect my ongoing dynamic friendship with God.

So what to do? I cut back the Psalter to just once a day. I cut back the Rosary to four times a week. I practice silence spontaneously, not on a schedule. I read only short sections of the RB and scripture. I'm back to praying daily. It feels good to have an easy relationship with God again. Lesson learned.

I now let God manage my prayer life. He draws me closer and closer in a variety of ways that aren't planned by me and I feel loved.

God is once again integrated into my life. His loving presence is woven into every aspect of my life. In 2010 I made my Final Act of Oblation and now eagerly look forward to the journey of transformation that will occur in my life as I continue to apply and discover the ways of being a Benedictine Oblate.

"Knock Knock."

"Whose there?"

"God."

"Oh yeah!"

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The Challenge of Change by Oblate Bill Lagreid

We are advised, as we grow older, that it is wise to have regular annual check ups with our doctor to check out our physical condition and to take the necessary precautions; prescriptions, and practices that will help us maintain our health. It is not uncommon that as we age some of our sense organs need assistance and adjustments, for example hearing aids, glasses, and nose sprays are necessary and we find that some of our old ways of eating, and drinking need adjusting.

During the last thirty or forty years medical science has given our doctors new knowledge and understanding about the human body. New methods have developed that have saved and improved our lives. Many conditions and diseases we knew during our school days no longer exist because of advances in our human understanding, some of them still linger on.

We might want to check out not only our physical senses and knowledge but also our spiritual senses and knowledge as adults as we move forward in our process and changing maturity. Some of our old ways of thinking about our spirituality, religion and living styles we learned as children and young adults need to be questioned.

Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.

We who as Catholics have been asked to embrace the changes in the liturgy and music of our services . I hope that this has been an opportunity to learn and grow. For some of us this this change has been uncomfortable, others of us have welcomed the changes and look forward to being alive during a significant period of change in our spiritual growth and practice.

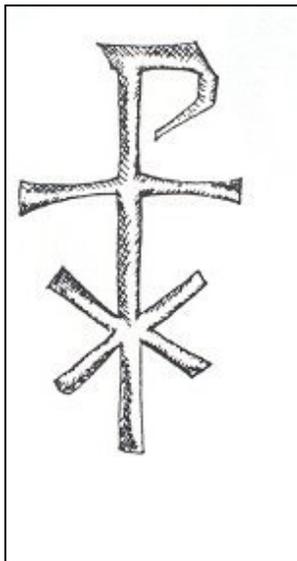
Many Oblates of St. Benedict have been called upon to participate and cooperate in supporting our pastors at the parish level. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to grow personally. At the parish level there are many opportunities for us to witness as Oblates and help others if we just apply the teachings of Benedict. I suggest that each of us re-read and give serious thought to the words of St. Benedict in the Prologue of the Rule that he has given us as our guide in our spiritual life.



Image found at: <http://www.sacredheartlacey.com/>

Oblates of Saint Benedict

Oblate Sunday May 13, 2012



Join us for Mass in the Abbey Church at 11:00 AM.

Lunch in the student cafeteria. At 1:30 join us in the upper room.

Classroom 318 on the third floor of Old Main. Fr. Peter Tynan will explain offertory prayers.

We will have investitures and oblations after the talk. Those wishing to make this next step need to contact Brother Edmund before May 13th.

It is time to renew.

Bring in if you plan to attend on May 13th or mail in your Oblation renewal with your offering.

Mark your Calendar

July 8th speaker Br. Aelred Woodard

Oblate Retreat: August 4th on Lectio Divina.

September 9th Fr. David Pratt

December 9th Presentation by Oblate Suda.

On the Book Shelf

God and the New Atheism: A Critical Response to Dawkins, Harris and Hitchens by John F. Haught.

Without Buddha I Could Not Be Christian by Paul F. Knitter

The Road to Eternal Life: Reflections on the Prologue of Benedict's Rule by Michael Casey

Running with Expanding Heart: Meeting God in Everyday Life by Mary Reuteer, OSB

Prayer Requests

The Home Bound Oblates

The sick and elderly commended to our prayers

For the end of abortions.

Rest of the soul of Father John Scott who passed away on Good Friday.

Good news regarding Oblate Father Steve Gallagher. He has returned to Alaska after recovering from a heart attack. His presence will be missed at the Abbey. And we thank him for his wonderful talk at our last Oblate

Good Works

Rosary Work

Can you spare a Saturday?
We need Rosary workers.
We have a lot of orders to fill for the military and missions.

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

We have wood to cut and stack to be given to those in need this winter. Thanks to all those who have stepped forward and volunteers in the past to help.

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

Lambert Lodge:

Work day:

Oct. 20th.

Big thanks for all those who helped this spring, it made the cleanup so much more enjoyable.



Image from <http://www.nettech.biz/services/>

Oblate Bene Reece is working on a project: Bene is putting together a St. Martin's Calendar of saints for each day with pictures of the Abbey on each month. If you can give her a hand in the project please contact her.

Another Project: A Book of Catholic Benedictine Oblate Prayers. If you have a prayer that you wouldn't mind sharing please send it to the Oblate Director. These prayers can be your own made up prayer. At times, I (Brother Edmund) get calls for such prayers and this is a great way of sharing your oblation life with others.

Oblates of Saint Benedict

American Benedictine Academy

Seek Peace and Pursue It:
Monasticism in the Midst of Global Upheaval

August 2 - 5, 2012

St. Scholastica College and Monastery, Duluth, MN

Registration Opens Spring 2012

Invitation to the Convention

Oblate Directors: the American Benedictine Academy is a wonderful and enriching place for our oblates and associates to connect with other oblates, monastics, and seekers. We have artists and poets, writers and social justice activists - not just "scholars." I ask you to invite your oblates to consider joining (www.osb.org/aba) and participating. While many of our oblates may not have the energy or interest to participate, most of our oblate groups have 2 - 3 members who would make an excellent contribution to the ABA. Please extend an invitation to find out who we are, and extend an individual invitation to those oblates you recognize as having the energy and interest to participate.

Our wonderful presenters include:

Sister Susan Mika, OSB, of St. Scholastica Monastery, Boerne, TX, has long been committed to social justice and corporate responsibility issues, currently serving as the executive director of the Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment (CRI). She works with the Socially Responsible Investment Coalition, primarily consisting of religious groups in Texas. Susan is passionate about the possibilities for a more just society.

Brother Luke Devine, OSB, of St. Martin's Abbey, Olympia, WA, has taught in the religious studies department at Saint Martin's University and is currently pursuing his doctorate in Christian Spirituality at the GTU in Berkeley. He is a board member for MID (Monastic Interreligious Dialogue), a passion of his. Brother Luke is also an artist.

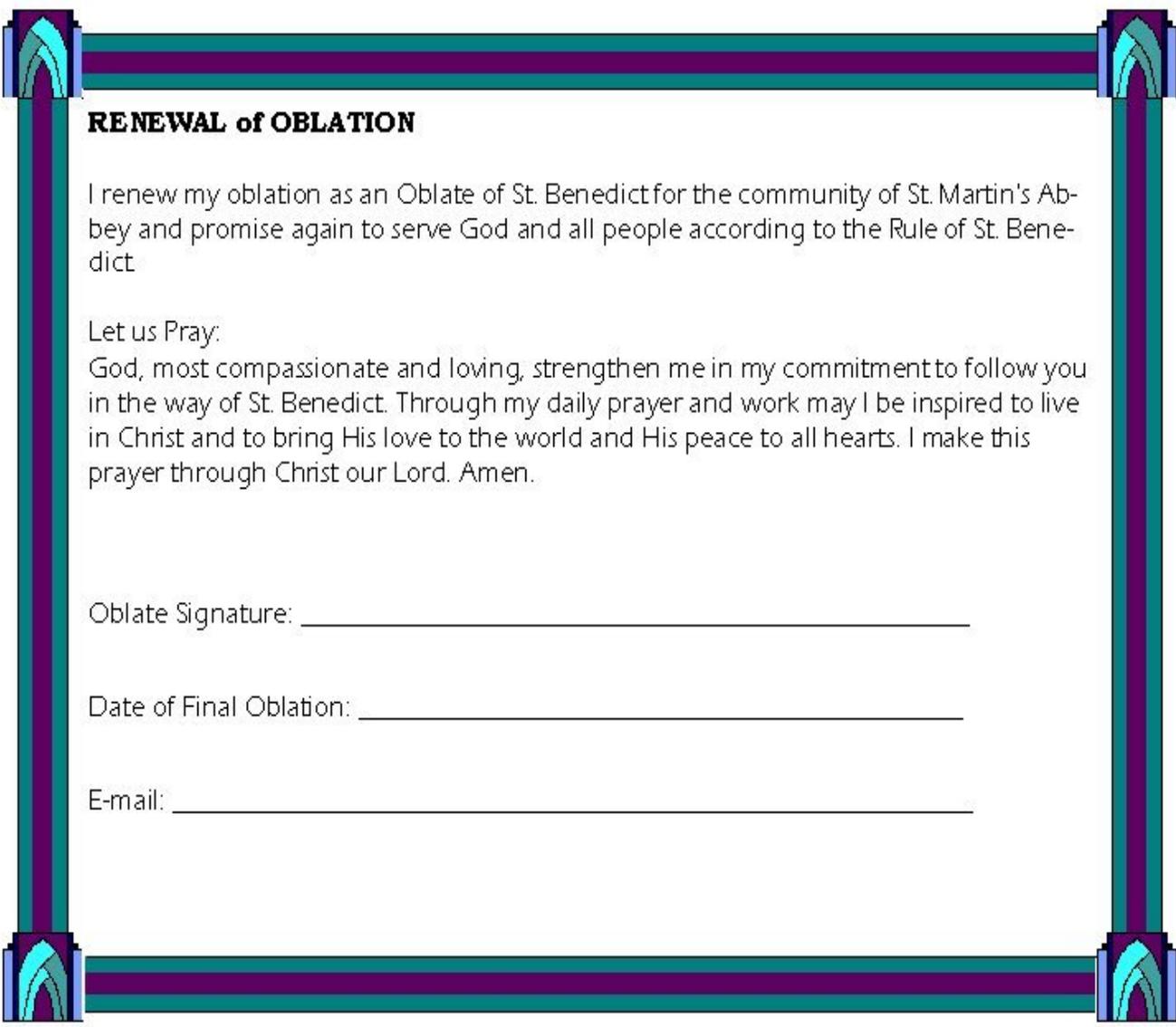
Sister Colleen Maura McGrane, OSB, of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Clyde, MO, has been dedicating her "spare" time to translating the many volume commentary on the Rule of Benedict by the French Benedictine scholar Adalbert de Vogue, OSB. She has published in The American Benedictine Review and Magistra. Sister Colleen presented a very fine paper at the Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, MI, this year.

Weldon Nisly, Oblate of Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN, is a pastor at Seattle Mennonite Church and active in peace ministry, serving with Christian Peacemaker Teams (www.cpt.org) in Iraq, as a founder of the Mennonite Catholic peace group called Bridgefolk (www.bridgefolk.net), and with the Network of Biblical Storytellers. He has been a resident scholar three times at the Collegeville Institute.

Time to renew your Oblation.

Send this form and your offering to :

Brother Edmund Ebbers
Saint Martin's Abbey
5000 Abbey Way S.E.
Lacey, WA 98503



RENEWAL of OBLATION

I renew my oblation as an Oblate of St. Benedict for the community of St. Martin's Abbey and promise again to serve God and all people according to the Rule of St. Benedict

Let us Pray:

God, most compassionate and loving, strengthen me in my commitment to follow you in the way of St. Benedict. Through my daily prayer and work may I be inspired to live in Christ and to bring His love to the world and His peace to all hearts. I make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Oblate Signature: _____

Date of Final Oblation: _____

E-mail: _____

Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oblates

E-mail:
br_edmund@stmartin.edu
Phone: 360-438-4457
Correspondence:
Brother Edmund Ebbers,
O.S.B.
St. Martin's Abbey
5000 Abbey Way SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Please help us keep our records current by letting us know of changes in your mailing address and email address. Send updates to Brother Edmund or the editor. Remember when communicating with the Oblate director send correspondence to him directly.

Editors: Wally McClure and Oblate Patricia McClure
E-mail: Ravenwings@comcast.net

Contributions welcomed

Newsletter online at
[www.stmartin.edu/abbey/Oblates/
index.htm](http://www.stmartin.edu/abbey/Oblates/index.htm)

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