

# The Oblate

Newsletter of the Oblates of Saint John's Abbey

Fall 2011

Volume 55, Issue 4

## Features:

- November Day of Reflection: Saint John's Abbey, Sunday November 6th (Pg. 3)
- Report from National Meeting of Oblate Directors (Pg. 6)
- Prison and a monastic way of life (Pg. 8-9)

## From the Oblate Director: Donald Tauscher, OSB



This may be the first time you learn that as of August, 2011, I've been Father Michael Kwatera's successor as oblate director. You might remember me from when I was director of the Spiritual Life Program, but maybe not. On page 2 you can read Abbot John's letter of appointment.

These first months have taught me that I really am a beginner in the oblate world. I may be able to teach you something about Benedictine spirituality after 52+ years in vows, but I want you to teach me all sorts of things. I want to meet you, even if only by mail. Therefore I am asking you to introduce yourself by sending me a letter, either

by surface mail or by e-mail to [oblates@osb.org](mailto:oblates@osb.org).

Tell me how you are doing. How is your family, and your health? What are your most urgent prayer intentions?

Are you in contact with other oblates? What are you finding most valuable about being an oblate of Saint John's? If you feel distant, how can we help you feel connected?

Do you know of an oblate who has died in the past six months or so? I know only of Donna Tembrock, who died in July. I was privileged to join some oblates at her funeral. Please know that we rely on you to keep us informed and we want to remember our beloved dead in our prayers.

What are you reading for spiritual nourishment? How are you finding daily divine office (Liturgy of the Hours) and *lectio divina*? Any problems? Any questions for us? Do

you enjoy *The Oblate* enough to want to keep receiving it or do you want us to remove your name from the mailing list?

All of the above relates to what I believe is the very heart and soul of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Rule of Saint Benedict, and Oblate life. That is relationship. Everything always comes down to relationship, and as we all know, a good relationship needs good communication—along with a lot of God's grace. From Genesis to Revelation, from the Prologue to the end of the Rule, we are urged to come together on our journey to everlasting life.

As we proceed, we again recommit ourselves to "prefer nothing whatever to Christ." In the name of Jesus, may you enjoy peace and all good.

Father Don

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## Letter from Abbot John Klassen, OSB

Dear Oblate of Saint John's:

In July 2011 we made a transition from Father Michael Kwatera, OSB, who has served as oblate director for the past nine years, to Father Don Tauscher, OSB, as new oblate director.

I wish to extend a huge thanks to Father Michael for guiding the oblate program over the past nine years. He has brought a wealth of knowledge of liturgical, biblical, and Benedictine tradition to this work, as well as a strong sense of pastoral and spiritual guidance. In addition he has strengthened the Oblate Advisory Committee and its role in our oblate program.

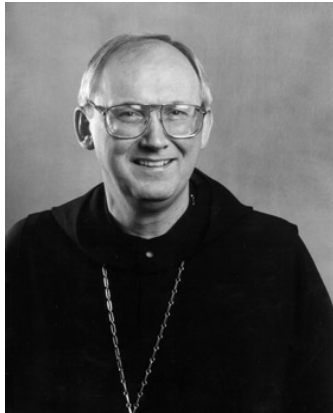
Father Michael asked me one year ago to be relieved of this position because he has too much on his plate. He also serves as director of liturgy here at the Abbey, faculty resident for undergraduate students in the University, and part-time chaplain for the Sisters of Saint Francis in Little Falls. In addition, Father Michael does a significant amount of writing for the Liturgical Press and the *Saint Cloud Visitor*.

Father Don founded the Spiritual Life Program here at Saint John's Abbey in 1983 and was its director for 23 years. In January 1996 he invented the Benedictine Day of Prayer, still a fundamental and staple program in our retreat outreach.

In the late 1980s, in two hospital settings, he completed two years (8 units) of clinical pastoral education (CPE). His goal was professional development enabling him to offer spiritual direction that integrated spiritual and emotional health and their interconnection.

During these many years, Father Don has served as a spiritual director for people in all different walks of life, including lay men and women, men and women religious, and clergy of several denominations. He also served on the formation staff of Saint John's Diocesan Seminary (1990-94) and on our monastic formation staff (1994-99).

I am confident that Father Don will bring a rich pastoral and spiritual sense to the oblate program and will build on the good work of the monks who preceded him as oblate directors.



## Remember in Prayer

### Prayer for the sick and infirm

Gil Daniel, who suffered two strokes after heart surgery.

Mary Secord, daughter of Oblates Jim Secord and Theresa Roberts, seriously injured in car crash.

Marian P. Callaghan, M.D., recently diagnosed with cancer.

Oblate Irene Hoffman recovering from injuries caused by a fall.

Oblate candidate Marilyn Thelen, sister of Oblates Joe, Bill, Jim and Paul Tembrock, suffering from a bone infection.

**May our Lord sustain you with his presence, drive away all sickness of body and spirit, and give you the victory of his life and his peace.**

**May our Lord Jesus Christ uphold you and fill you with his grace, that you may know the healing power of his love in every area of your life.**

### Remembering our faithful departed

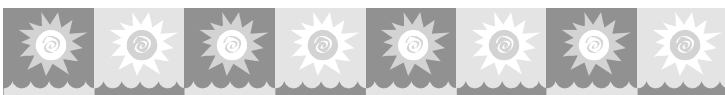
Oblate Donna Tembrock, wife of Oblate Jim Tembrock.

Della Donovan, mother of Oblate Pat Donovan Lounsbury.

Delores Backous, mother of Father Timothy Backous, OSB.

John Beckman, father of Oblate Aimee Beckman-Collier.

**Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let your perpetual light shine upon them. May they and all who have died rest in your peace.**



## November 6, 2011 "Advent" Day of Reflection

By popular demand of oblates, the Advent Day of Reflection has been moved to an earlier date.

On November 6, Father Dale Launderville, OSB, professor of Scripture in the School of Theology, will be our feature presenter. Father Dale will focus his remarks on the question: What do prophets have to teach us about God's dwelling among us? We are, he says, all familiar with the prediction of the birth of a savior from the Virgin in Isaiah 7:14 and about a savior who will bring justice and peace in Isaiah 9:1-7. But prophets also speak to us about the way that God is with us in dark and confusing times such as that found in Jeremiah 15:15-18.

In this session, we will hear passages from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel that challenge us to deepen our awareness of how God is present with us in dark times as well as in the good. The words of the prophets continue to prepare the way for God to come among us and take on the full range of human experience.

**To register**, simply inform the Oblate office of your intention to attend. Call 320-363-2018, e-mail [oblates@osb.org](mailto:oblates@osb.org) or write to Oblate Director at Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN 56321. Plan to arrive in the Great Hall by 10 a.m., or gather right after Mass near the Mary chapel. We will meet in Q264 for lunch, learning, and much more.



### House Call

Shortly after learning, by way of a prayer request, that Dick Iten stays close to home except when he is receiving dialysis four times a week, and also that he was desirous of making final oblation, Oblate Director Father Don Tauscher, OSB, and Deacon, Brother Walter Kieffer, OSB, visited him in his home to fulfill his desire.

They report a wonderful visit, and within one hour after returning to the abbey, Father Don and Brother Walter received the following e-mail from our newest oblate!

**Dear Father Don, Brother Walter, and Oblates of Saint John's Abbey:**

I am sitting here in front of my computer trying to believe that I just made my Final Oblation just a few hours ago here in my home. Father Donald Tauscher, OSB, the Oblate Director and Brother Walter Kieffer, OSB, were here when I made my oblate promises on the Birthday of Our Blessed Lady. I am happy and feel a deep inner peace. Thank you Father Don, Brother Walter and my brother Bob Iten who took the

attached photos. My younger brother always seems to be there when I need him.

I thank all the Oblates of Saint John's Abbey who have sent me emails over the past weeks and for all their prayers. I know your prayers have helped me in both my physical and spiritual health.

Please keep your prayers coming for my children, grandchildren, and myself. Peace!

Dick Iten, OblSB



With Brother Walter (center) serving as official witness, Dick and Father Don sign the appropriate Oblate certificates.

## Saint Joan of Arc Meetings: by Ron Joki, ObISB

Saint John's oblates began their schedule of small group meetings on September 18 with the introduction of the theme for the 2011-2012 gatherings. The material will come from the summer retreat conferences of Father Eric Hollas, OSB, and the book by Father Michael Casey, OCSO, *Strangers to the City: Reflections on the Beliefs and Values on the Rule of St. Benedict*.

As is typical of our retreats, so much richness and spiritual insight poured forth that retreatants hardly had sufficient time to absorb, much less sufficiently to discuss it. This leaves much to be gleaned from both the conferences and text and then to put them in the

context of our lives. In this way, we will allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us personally, as well as collectively to discern God's direction for us. One challenge for us is to remain committed to our oblation and energized in our spiritual path. We must believe that, whatever our station in life, whether or not we are able to visit the abbey or participate in gatherings of monks or oblates, we are, by our oblation and affiliation with Saint John's community, a part of God's work in the monastery.

As was stated in the September SJA meeting announcement, "the more you feel the potential significance of this, the more you invite God to enrich and enliven your participa-

tion. Even if you can't be at the monastery, the monastery can, in some way, be in you, and you can actively contribute to the work and worship of the community. You may not always see how this is possible if you are physically apart from the monastic campus (or other oblates), but have faith. If God means for you to have a mission in this dear place, and you say 'yes,' it will happen."

Our future readings will explore some of the ways that this can happen, whether through prayer ministry, writing for this newsletter, being a member, phoning those who can't attend meetings or in whatever other wonderful ways God calls you to participate.

Twin Cities Meetings:  
Saint Joan of Arc Church,  
Minneapolis, 3:00 p.m.

- October 16<sup>th</sup>
- November 20<sup>th</sup>
- January 15<sup>th</sup>
- February 19<sup>th</sup>
- March 18<sup>th</sup>
- April 15<sup>th</sup>
- May 20<sup>th</sup>

All are welcome to attend.

Contact Ron Joki  
reislp@aol.com  
952.544.4525



## News from Other Chapters

### **Red River—**

Father Don met with the Fargo group the second Saturday of October at Holy Spirit Church in Fargo at 9:30 a.m. Note: In December, they will meet on the third Sunday (17th) in order to accommodate Father Don's travel schedule.

Contact Barry Cox :  
barrycox@Juno.com  
701.235.3955

### **Collegeville—**

Peggy Stokman, along with Angie Del Greco and Mary Theisen, visited by phone or e-mail with many of the Collegeville group with a personal invitation to come to Saint John's. Many are long-time oblates who are unable to travel, enjoy *The Oblate*, and assure us of their prayers while appreciating ours. Others responded with renewed interest in

participating at future meetings.

Collegeville oblate meetings are held the third Sunday of the month, September-November and January-May at Saint John's Abbey. 10:30 Eucharist is followed by lunch and meeting.

Contact the Oblate Office:  
Oblates@osb.org  
320.363.2018

### **Red River Meetings:**

Holy Spirit Church (Fargo)  
9:30 a.m.-11 a.m.

- November 12
- December 17
- January 14
- February 11

### **Collegeville Meetings:**

Saint John's Abbey  
10:30 a.m. -1:30 p.m.

- November 20
- January 15
- February 19

## Volunteer World at Saint John's

### **New Volunteer Coordinator:**

Eileen Haeg is Volunteer Coordinator for Saint John's Abbey. Seen here in her new office located in first floor Quad, she warmly welcomes calls, notes, and visits from people who are ready to serve the abbey in one or more areas of need. Any oblate who would consider becoming a volunteer, especially in the oblate program, is invited to register with Eileen. She will be happy to show you a list of volunteer opportunities from which you may choose your favorite.



To contact Eileen:

e-mail at [ehaeg@csbsju.edu](mailto:ehaeg@csbsju.edu)

phone at 320.363.3304

### **Oblate Advisory Committee—2011-2012**



Present at the September 11th Advisory Committee meeting were the following: Peggy Stokman, Father Don, Phil Boelter, Committee Chair Chuck Seashore, Nan Gianoli, Ford Royer, Ron Joki. (Photo by Brother Walter Kieffer, OSB.)

### **Speaking of Volunteers:**

The first and largest source of volunteer contributions is the Advisory Committee. In addition to "advising" the director, members do a lot of work. For example, they all had tasks to perform to get the July retreat up and running. By every estimate the event was a huge success.

In January the committee plans a day-retreat at the abbey for prayer and "visioning," not business.

Besides submitting her book reviews, Peggy and two other members of the Collegeville chapter (Angie Del Greco and Mary Theisen) called oblates who had not been attending monthly meetings for some time. Result: the number of

attendees grew from six in September to sixteen in October. And they are not finished yet. The chapter may need to find a larger meeting space.

Nan Gianoli helps with office work, organizing and filing.

Phil Boelter assists with financial management.

Chuck Seashore is kept busy arranging and chairing advisory committee meetings.

Patsy Jones is researching Saint John's Oblate history with plans to write a masterpiece. Mary Fran Karanikolas has some material of interest remaining from an earlier book project on another subject.

Jim Tembrock does more work than anyone imagines on *The Oblate*.

Lucie Johnson is busy nearly every day with updating the listserv.

Brother Walter Kieffer, OSB, a permanent deacon, will assist with pastoral outreach and whatever other hospitality he can provide. Another good idea of Abbot John.

Bob Kirkley helped Father Michael and Father Don in the office with computer expertise until his full-time chemistry teaching has made further help impossible for the present time.

Surely there are other oblates who contribute goods and services beyond those mentioned above. All oblates can and should be grateful for the good zeal that inspires so much generous caring and sharing.

This issue would never have seen the light without the help of Josie Stang.

When you let your voice be heard as you volunteer your service, in one more thing, God will be glorified.

## NAABOD Conference Held at Saint Meinrad's Archabbey

The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors met at Saint Meinrad's Archabbey in southern Indiana from July 1 to 6, 2011. Saint Meinrad's originated in 1854 with monks coming to minister to the German Catholic population. The Archabbey Church is named Our Lady of Einsiedeln, after the motherhouse in Einsiedeln, Switzerland. This beautiful church and monastery serve as the centerpiece of the Saint Meinrad campus featuring study facilities, abbey press, Christian gifts, books and cards, as well as Abbey caskets.

One of the primary works of Saint Meinrad's monks is the education of future leaders of the Church in America. The Seminary and School of Theology provide formation programs for priests, permanent deacons and lay ministers.

Representing the oblates of Saint John's Abbey were Chuck and Dolores Seashore, as well as Bob Kirkley. Approximately seventy persons from oblate groups associated with various monasteries in the United States were in attendance. These included eight persons from Minnesota, among whom was Sister Laureen Virnig, OSB, Director of Oblates of Saint Benedict's Monastery.

Speakers for the conference included Sister Kathryn Huber, OSB, of Immaculate Conception Monastery in Ferdinand, Indiana; Sister Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, OSB, of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beach Grove, Indiana; and Kyle

T. Kramer from Indiana University. Each of the speakers addressed the theme of "The Self-Consciousness of Living in Creation through the Discipline of Conservation."

A number of very impressive women, religious and lay, served as leaders of the various discussion groups during the conference. These were all related to the general theme: "Embracing Creation with Reverence and Hospitality: Listening to Scripture and the Rule Speak."

The agenda also included guest speakers anchored in the Liturgy, and meditation served up on a daily basis. The highlight of the program for us was a gathering of oblate directors and individual oblates from the upper Midwest. We enjoyed the roundtable discussion of oblate organizations and their many challenges, such as encouraging growth and active participation. This sounded familiar to us because of issues that we continue to address for oblates at Saint John's Abbey.

In summary, this was an important event in terms of understanding the National Oblate Directors organization and attempting to address the important topic of conservation in our daily lives. The next Directors' meeting will be held in two years with Minnesota as a possible location, particularly at Saint John's Abbey.

Chuck Seashore, OblSB  
Advisory Committee Chair

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## Some Highlights from Father Eric Hollas's Summer Retreat Conferences

Father Eric emphasized the preeminence of the reality of Jesus Christ and our search for God through a balanced lifestyle. He was practical, with an emphasis on doing. One has to show up and do over and over. One example he gave was that of Donald Jackson who spent years on the Saint John's Bible. Mr. Jackson stated that reading the entire Bible for so many years washed through his entire system, making him a considerably scriptural person. This is also what monks do in the *Liturgy of the Hours*, showing up and praising God, becoming scriptural persons. This can be done also by oblates — praying the *Breviary*, using *Give Us this Day* from the Liturgical Press, *lectio divina*, and many other ways — at home, in groups, or visiting the abbey.

Saint Benedict established a school for monks in which no one ever graduates. The perseverance of Saint John of God and of Mother Theresa is needed for a whole life through, as all is not always the bliss of earthly paradise. Praise every day can seem monotonous, but we are creatures, not in charge, and God deserves praise and gratitude. We are always, no matter how powerful and/or wealthy, nev-

er self-sufficient; we all have people serving us and vice-versa. Thus gratitude, even for the gift of attending retreats or days of recollection/reflection, must be given, for they are truly great gifts, both from the presenter, and from all those attending.

We must keep death daily before our eyes, not to be morbid, but because our time here is limited for praising God and doing good through loving others, and time should not be wasted. While many self-help books promise self-improvement and self-accomplishment, we concentrate on Christ the Pantocrator, as seen in the apse of the Great Hall. He is the truth, the way, and the life.

A complete set of four CDs of Father Eric's conferences is available from the Oblate Office for \$10.



## OBLATE RETREAT PHOTO REVIEW—JULY, 2011

July 8-10, 2011, brought some 80 oblates back to Saint John's for the annual retreat, featuring Father Eric Hollas, OSB, discussing change and balance in our lives. His four conferences are available on CD.



Oblates and monks at evening prayer.



Father Michael Kwatera poses with Rev. Dr. Kathleen Weller, Rev. Dr. Theresa Roberts, and Steve Arnold, who made their final oblation in the abbey church.



When not giving conferences, Father Eric enjoys visiting with oblates.



One reason for being an oblate is to commune with fellow oblates.

Abbot John recognized these oblates who have 25 or more years of commitment.

Front: Jeannette Clements, Patricia Klarkowski, Patsy Jones, and Dorothy Callahan.

Back: Joe Clements, John Lawyer, Abbot John, Jim Tembrock, Joe Tembrock and Bill Tembrock.



# Experiencing Prison as a Monastic Way of Life

By Joseph Nurek, Ph.D, ObISB

Many men enter prison having felt that a God they once may have believed in either doesn't exist or has abandoned them. Some become interested in religion while in prison and become "holier than thou," casting aspersions and judgments upon those they feel have committed crimes worse than their own. Other inmates may go hopping from religion to religion hoping to find a "God" who meets their needs and expectations.



For inmates who are serious about seeking a meaning for their life, the Rule of Saint Benedict provides a structure that can be readily applied to prison. While prison environments and procedures vary in type, purpose, and location, many characteristics are similar. The Rule provides spiritual teaching as well as practical regulations for the ordering of daily life, priorities, and self-directed discipline.

Inmates are required to work, which is necessary for the operation of the prison (e.g. clerks, orderlies, food service personnel, teacher aides, etc.). As the day is structured around controlled movements, prison logistics, meals, education classes (if required) and leisure activities, it provides for time that can be constructively used for *lectio*, prayer, and Liturgy of the Hours. The work activity of prison life can actually provide a time of welcomed relaxation

from the mental activities required during reading and prayer.

Inmates and monks are both searching for God in similar environments. Like the walls of a monastery, the fenced in walls of prison do not restrict one from a life that is completely dedicated to God. Neither of these walls or fences restrains the resident from responsibility to the world outside.

Seeking God above all else is the foundation of Benedictine values. The prison environment provides an exciting, but demanding, quest to realize God's work in everyday life. It's easy to become discouraged while attempting to discover how God leads moment-by-moment. However, it is this very action of seeking that facilitates friendship with God.

A prison population in many respects is a microcosm of society. It is home to rich and poor, the educated and uneducated, the mannered and ill-mannered, the kind and the malicious. As in a monastery, inmates are enmeshed in their environment. A major difference, however, is that the inmate's placement was not a direct reflection of personal choice.

Saint Benedict's Rule offers insights into human nature and the principles that regulate human relationships. These remain the same whether one is a monk or an inmate. As the Rule indicates, God is everywhere, at all times, and is present in every aspect of our daily lives. An effective method of applying the Rule, while helping to make prison life both tolerable and beneficial, is to seek God in every person that one meets as well as to look for God in every life situation. This searching for discovery and meaning can keep the inmate focused on God, rather, than on the day-to-day conflicts that arise from

pride, anger, and selfishness. The searching can be enhanced by asking the following questions: What can I learn—beneficial or otherwise—from my interaction with this individual?

In the Rule, Benedict indicates that monks should not be permitted to have possession of anything beyond the simple staples of life. An inmate is seriously limited in the possession of personal items. All materials must be maintained in a locker (1'x1.5'x5'), while any single item must be valued under one hundred dollars. By viewing the imposed limitations in a positive light, simplicity can be seen as a key to personal freedom. Clothing and footwear are distributed to the inmate by the prison. It is consistent among inmates and designed to reflect an air of humility.

The Rule of Benedict devotes itself to the virtue of moderation. While the diet presented to inmates does not force mortification, as such, it does restrict the amount and type of items available. The menu gives the inmate the ability to employ the Benedictine principle of self-control, as the desire to consume too much of any food or drink can have a negative effect on the body as well as the spirit.



Obedience, stability, and conversion of life are all values that can enhance an



## Write to Death Row Inmates

Inmates on death row are the most forgotten people in the prison system. Each week the names and addresses of several inmates can be found at <http://www.preacherexchange.com>. Click on "First Impressions" and scroll down to "Postcards to Death Row Inmates."

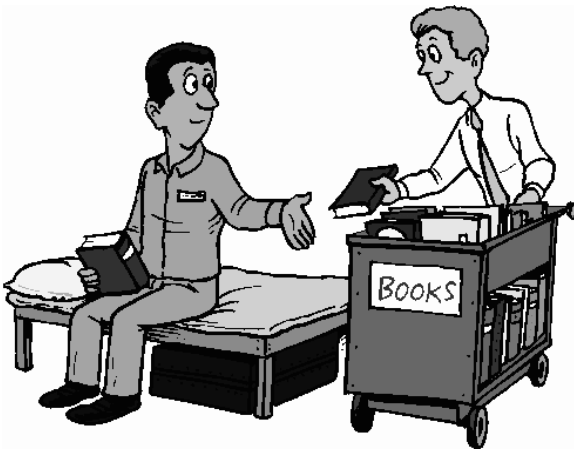
Please consider a weekly or monthly letter or postcard to one or more of them to let them know that they are not forgotten. If the inmate responds you might consider becoming pen pals.

Lawrence E. Peterson #0320825  
(On death row since 12/12/96)  
Henry L. Wallace #0422350  
(1/29/97)  
Terrence Taylor #0539901  
(2/18/97)

They all have the same address!  
Central Prison  
1300 Western Blvd.  
Raleigh, N.C. 27606

Jeanne Woodford, a former warden, writes: "I never was in favor of the death penalty, but my experience at San Quentin allowed me to see it from all points of view. I had a duty to carry out, and I tried to do it with professionalism." Woodford explains how she had to put her personal abhorrence of execution aside to do her job. "The death penalty serves no one. It doesn't serve the victims. It doesn't serve prevention. It's truly all about retribution." Woodford oversaw four executions, and now she is executive director of the non-profit abolitionist "Death Penalty Focus."

Death row inmates don't have computers, but they can read.



the obligations of their daily lives. Through sustained faith, the prisoner acknowledges the small blessings with which they are confronted on a daily basis. Physical stability is provided through the structure of the prison environment. Spiritual stability is developed by prayer and sincere concern for fellow inmates.

Those who follow the Rule come to realize that it is through their own sufferings that they come to share in the Cross of Christ. Through this suffering the inmate becomes more tolerant and understanding of fellow inmates as they too have extreme crosses to bear.



Through God's grace and by following Benedict's Rule, an inmate can live a monastic style of life. When he is seeking Christ in the ordinary of daily life, every moment provides an opportunity for ongoing conversion. Living in a cube (8'x'6'8') with two other inmates necessitates the self-sacrificing of one's will. As trust in God deepens and one surrenders himself to Christ, charity grows, murmuring lessens, and the prison experiences provide an ongoing opportunity for conversion of life.

inmate's prison stay. Dedicating oneself to the service of God, as well as neighbor, reflects the scriptural foundation of the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Fundamental to the virtue of obedience is that the life-situation in which we find ourselves, the here and now, is a result of our decisions and choices. As we cultivate a loving relationship with God, obedience becomes an attitude of the heart. Obedience reflects ongoing conversion that can be demonstrated both physically and spiritually. An inmate's state of life is largely determined by the prison setting, where rules and obligations are clearly defined. By following the Rule and listening to God in one's own heart, the inmate seeks God's will.

As a prisoner grows through suffering, the "unknowing" of daily life, by faith and prayer, he comes to more closely imitate the life of Christ. Obedience increases the bonds of fidelity to Christ, thereby enhancing one's responsibility to the prison community.

Stability means being rooted in Christ at all times. By perseverance inmates can learn to focus on

## Benedictine Spirituality - Father Don

Spirituality is vibrant in many forms. There is prayer, of course, and reading. Saint Benedict was certainly fond of both, and he promoted reading for prayer and study. So do I, and this page is dedicated to good reading and study.



Several excellent books will bolster any oblate's library. On the next page, Peggy Stokman recommends two recent publications that relate to Benedictine life. Ron Joki (p. 4) uses portions of Michael Casey's work along with his own gleanings from the summer retreat. Below is an excerpt from Casey's book and a recommendation by Father Kevin Seasoltz, OSB.

### **Spirituality Study Group**—by Oblate Phil Boelter

A **Benedictine Study Group** meets on the first Sunday of most months at St Mary's Episcopal Church in St. Paul. This group is not for oblates only, but all oblates are cordially invited to join the group for *convivium*, study, and evening prayer. This group's purpose is different, at least at this time, from the area chapters, as it focuses on study. Area chapters set their own goals and direction.

The first meeting of the Fall was Sunday, October 2, treating RB 53 and 56, on the reception of guests.

Schedule for the next several months is:

Nov. Chapters 54, 55, 57 - Monastic needs for common life.

Dec. Chapters 58-61—On those who seek the monastic life.

Jan. Chapters 62, 63 - On the order of community

Feb. Chapter 64 - On constituting an abbot

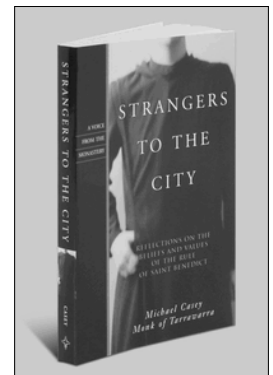
A study document on the chapters of the Rule to be studied and discussed is available in good time before the meeting.

Contact Bjorn Gustafson  
bkg8@msn.com  
612.991.1055

## Michael Casey, OCSO, On the Importance of Reading...

*Strangers to the City*, pp. 48-49.

All reading is good, and useful in coming to a personal stance before reality. Best of all, however, is that reading that allows us to keep deepening our grasp on our central convictions and commitments. This means that some species of "spiritual reading" is important for all who want to remain faithful to their baptismal promise to live by the Spirit and not according to the flesh. It must be something to keep the flame of faith burning bright. . . . Whatever our present circumstances, however, we cannot afford to ignore God's self-revelation, because in it are contained the challenges that will guide our choices and the comfort that will sustain them. Cut off from God's Word, our lives are adrift. This is not to say that everyone has to curl up in a corner with a Greek New Testament, desirable though that may be. But all of us need to ensure that God's Word has access to our lives, whether by reading the Scriptures directly or at one or several removes, by hearing them read, by having their meaning mediated by fellow believers, or in some other way. We need to feed our minds on the gospel message, to ponder it in our hearts and to become, in our own small way, doers of God's Word.



**Father Kevin Seasoltz, OSB**, professor emeritus of Saint John's School of Theology-Seminary, recommends another valuable book for oblates. Macrina Wiederkehr, *Abide: Keeping Vigil with the Word of God* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011). This is a collection of biblical meditations, reflective questions, and personal prayers meant to lead the reader into a deeper relationship with God.

## Book Reviews - Peggy Stokman, ObISB

### *St. Benedict's Rule for Fair Play in Sports*, by Larry Haeg

Is the *Rule* of Saint Benedict relevant to the rule of sports? Minnesota writer Larry Haeg thinks so, and so did my athletic grandson David who asked to borrow my copy of Haeg's book.

A good team focuses on building community—love of the game, team effort, team relationships, not individual achievement.

Hospitality is practiced when the guest team and

their fans are welcomed cordially and when all fans act respectfully towards everyone, even referees.

Listening is a necessary exercise for all participants—especially for the coaches and players.

Both Saint Benedict and most coaches believe in the importance of a disciplined, balanced life. Athletes, too, need to balance sports, study, family, social and spiritual life.

If you need a spiritual reason to inspire your children to pick up the sports equipment that collects at your back door, quote Saint Benedict in chapter 32 of the *Rule* to them, on the importance of caring for material things as though they were the sacred vessels of the altar.

*St. Benedict's Rule for Fair Play in Sports*, by Larry Haeg, is inspiring—and relevant.



Oblate Peggy Stokman is a frequent contributor to *The Oblate*, a member of the Advisory Committee, and a generous volunteer.

### *The Monks of Tiburine*, by John W. Kiser

I recommend the book *The Monks of Tiburine* by John W. Kiser to anyone who wants to be inspired by the lives of a small group of Cistercian monks who lived in Algeria during the civil wars of the 1990's.

The monks extend almost incredible hospitality to the Muslims they live with, but

also to the rebels and Church authorities who don't understand their monastic way of life.

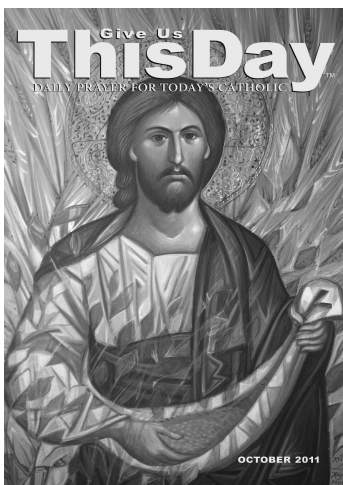
Stability helps them move from "me" to "we" as each monk wrestles with his decision to stay or leave when violence erupts. We learn much about witness.

This book also provides a solid historical background

of the existing factions amongst the Muslims.

The movie *Of Gods and Men* is based on Kiser's book and is both beautiful and moving. I saw the movie first and was compelled to read the book. My recommendation is to experience both. They will surely deepen your own Benedictine life.

The movie *Of Gods and Men* is based on John W. Kiser's book, *The Monks of Tiburine*.



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Oblates@osb.org

www.saintjohnsabbey.org/  
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## Upcoming Events

### Oblate Days at the Abbey

6 November 2011, Advent Day of Reflection

4 March 2012, Lent Day of Reflection

13-15 July 2012, Annual Retreat

### Area Chapter Meetings

Twin Cities, contact Ron Joki,  
reislp@aol.com  
952.544.4525

Collegeville, contact Oblate Office,  
oblates@osb.org  
320.363.2018

Fargo/Moorhead, contact Barry Cox,  
barrycox@Juno.com  
701.235.3955

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## The Oblate

THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED

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