

Mission Statement: *We, the Oblates of St. Benedict Monastery, Oxford Michigan, are Christian men and women sharing a common commitment to grow in the understanding of the Rule of St. Benedict in order to live it in the secular world, while maintaining a spiritual union with the Benedictine community in its spiritual life, prayers, and good works.*

Director's Corner

Dear friends,

Most of you who have made the somewhat arduous trip to our monastery are aware of the particular challenges that await you on the trek up Drahner Road. For me it calls to mind the passage from Isaiah that speaks of a highway that needs to be made straight, valleys that need to be filled, hills made low, and rugged land made plain!

The road God must take into our heart can also be quite arduous. But Advent is a time when we invite the Lord – beg Him, really – to COME and smooth out our rough spots with His gentleness, level the steep hills with His courage and, yes, fill the gaping holes with His unconditional love!

Whatever else we do in the few short days leading up to Christmas, may we give some prayerful thought to the pathways of our hearts. And may we know that the One who prepares God's way comes not with steamrollers and jackhammers and noisy patching crews, but in peace and humility. Jesus comes as one like us, and if we open our hearts to him, he will prepare - and repair - the way with His footsteps.

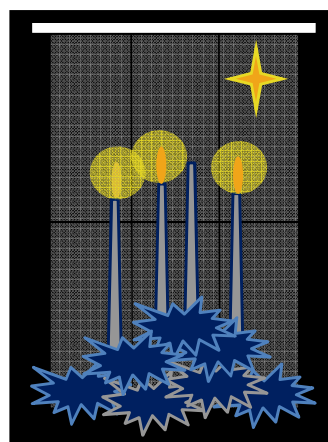
Advent Peace and Blessings,
Fr. John

In Memory of Fr. Dan Homan

Several of our oblates have suggested that it would be appropriate to create a special remembrance of our Fr. Dan; he was Prior of St. Benedict's when our group was established and during his tenure received the oblation of most of the monastery's oblates (and the profession of many of the monks!)

Some of the ideas that are being considered are: planting a tree, installing a park bench, dedicating a window in Subiaco Retreat House, placing a framed picture of Fr. Dan, or establishing a scholarship for youth retreatants in his name. What would you like to see? What do you think would be a fitting remembrance of our friend and brother?

Please write to Fr. John and let him know if any of these suggestions seems right to you (or if you have something else in mind).



Winter Events and Meetings



Saturday, December 10, 2011

8:00 a.m.

Conventual Mass followed by Group Lectio Divina (optional)
Refreshments

9:15 a.m.

Formation meeting

“A Time to Plant:
Life Lessons in Prayer, Work and Dirt”
A video presentation by Kyle T. Kramer
Director of Lay Degree Programs
St. Meinrad School of Theology
St. Meinrad, Indiana

Saturday, January 14, 2012

3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Book Study Meeting

The Oblate Life, pages 96 - 118

5:30 p.m.

Vespers followed by a light meal



Saturday, February 11, 2012 - Feast of St. Scholastica

8:00 a.m.

Conventual Mass followed by Group Lectio Divina (optional)
Refreshments

9:15 a.m.

Formation meeting

“The Liturgy of the Hours:
Prayer Ancient and New”
Presented by Fr. John Martin Shimkus
and Br. Jacob Orcutt

Saturday, March 10, 2012

3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Book Study Meeting

The Oblate Life, pages 119 - 139

5:30 p.m.

Vespers followed by a light meal

St. Benedict Monastery Psalter

As part of our upcoming February meeting, we are planning to have copies of our community's four week psalter (the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours) available to our oblates for a \$15 donation. This is to cover the cost of paper and printing the two volume book which totals over 300 pages. St. Benedict's psalter is an easy way to pray along with the monastic community. Although it does not include the prayers and readings for the Office of Readings, feast days or the special seasons of Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter, an additional resource, such as “Christian Prayer” can be used to incorporate these elements.

To get some idea of how many copies are needed, if you are interested please contact Fr. John at oblates_saintben@yahoo.com or call the monastery at 248-628-2249.

Prayers offered and answered

That the “new words for worship” the Church has given us in the Mass may help God’s people to pray with one heart and voice.

For safety and security, and the coming of God’s Kingdom in a world torn apart by violence and competition.

That the coming of Christ this Christmas may be an occasion for reconciliation and hope in families afflicted by conflict and abuse.

For our many oblates, family and friends who are suffering from illness at this time, that they may experience the Lord’s healing in mind, body and spirit.

In thanksgiving for God’s continued blessing on the Subiaco Youth Ministry at St. Benedict’s, the faithful service of the “retreat team”, and new directions, too.

In gratitude for the support of friends and benefactors who have helped to commemorate and honor Fr. Dan Homan with their heartfelt prayers, good wishes and generous contributions.

Lectio Divina: Listening to God’s Word

I’m very excited to be able to announce our first “Group Lectio Divina” here at St. Benedict’s. It will take place on Saturday, December 10 right after the 8:00 a.m. Mass. Lectio Divina – Latin for “Sacred Reading” is that ancient way of prayer practiced by monks and other early Christians. It is a listening to God’s word, particularly in Scripture, but also in nature, other Christian writings and the events of daily life. This is usually done in an individual setting, monastic communities generally set time aside each day for this form of prayer.

“Group Lectio” is a listening to God’s word in a communal setting. During this prayer, the group leader reads a short passage of Scripture aloud several times, allowing the participants some time to quietly reflect on what they have heard. There are also opportunities for each person to share, if desired, how God has spoken to him or her, and to respond to God’s word through verbal or silent prayer.

At our Steering Committee meeting on November 12 we evaluated our group lectio experience during the October retreat and considered ways to include this prayer in our regular Oblate meetings. The consensus was to recommend a period of group lectio before our morning meetings, immediately following the 8:00 a.m. Mass. These

.....
.....
..... **Together!**

prayer times would last approximately 30 minutes - depending on the sharing that takes place – and would be followed by a light breakfast and our usual formation meeting. When I offered this proposal to our Prior, Fr. Mike Green, he was very welcoming of it. In fact, he suggested that rather than remaining in the chapel for lectio – as the committee had envisioned – we could use the side room next to the chapel, which would be more intimate and allow us to arrange the chairs in a more suitable way.

Just as the 8:00 a.m. Mass is offered as an option for those who would like to begin our oblate morning with this most perfect of prayers, so also, participation in the group lectio is up to each oblate. Anyone who comes to the Mass is also not required to participate in lectio. However, I encourage anyone who is able and is even slightly interested, drawn or curious to consider sitting in on this. I believe it will and has strengthened the spiritual connection within our oblate group and is also a great instruction and encouragement for practicing lectio divina on our own!

Hope to see you in on the 12th!
Fr. John

WOW GOD

by Sister Francis Clare, S.S.N.D.

page 86

I will open for you every door I want
and close those I do not want . . .

When you are beset by doubts, know that
I am still here. These plans are My plans,
not yours. You've asked to be used by
Me and I've told you that I will use you.
The plan is Mine to work out. I've not
given the plan to you.

I'm only asking you to be My tool. The
hammer does not know what the
carpenter is doing. It only follows the
hand of the carpenter. I will pick you up
and I will lay you down. When I need
you I will use you. I know what I am
doing. I know what I am building. All I
ask is that you be on hand when I need
you.

Because I have called you a hammer, do
not think that I despise you. A carpenter
loves his tools and the more he loves
them, the better he handles them and the
better work they will do for him.

I have many tools. They are arrayed
before Me and I pick the one I need. Be
content to lie still if I do not need you,
for I know where you are and I will pick
you up when I need you.

Submitted by Tina Lucido

Lectio Divina suggestion

He remained outside in deserted places, and
people kept coming to him from everywhere.

Mark 1:45 (NAB)

Submitted by Krystal Gwisdalla

I've Heard

by Krystal Gwisdalla

I've heard,
Hard words and great words,
Sweet songs and bitter cries,
First breaths and last sighs.

I've heard,
Whispered fear and shouted triumph,
Shaking storm and quiet breeze,
Lawn mowers and shuffling leaves.

I've heard,
Chain saws and bird songs,
Words of wisdom and ceaseless chatter,
Endless worries that do not matter.

I've heard,
Precious gift of calling owl,
Assurance of a loved one's breath,
Strength of faith in life not death.

I've heard,
Buzzing jewel of hummingbird,
Rattling glinting dragonfly wings,
Wordless answers seeking brings.

I've heard.



Snow Geese
by Mary Oliver



Oh, to love what is lovely, and will not last!

What a task
to ask

of anything, or anyone,

yet it is ours,
and not by the century or the year, but by the hours.

One fall day I heard
above me, and above the sting of the wind, a sound
I did not know, and my look shot upward; it was

a flock of snow geese, winging it
faster than the ones we usually see,
and, being the color of snow, catching the sun

so they were, in part at least, golden.



I held my breath
as we do
sometimes
to stop time
when something wonderful
has touched us

as with a match
which is lit, and bright,
but does not hurt
in the common way,

but delightfully,
as if delight
were the most serious thing
you ever felt.



The geese
flew on.
I have never
seen them again.

Maybe I will, someday, somewhere.
Maybe I won't.
It doesn't matter.
What matters
is that, when I saw them,
I saw them
as through the veil, secretly, joyfully, clearly.

The Way It Is by William Stafford

There's a thread you follow.
It goes among things that change.
But it doesn't change.

People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.

While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen;
people get hurt or die;
and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

Prayer of Saint Benedict

Gracious and holy Father,
grant us the intellect to understand you,
reason to discern you, diligence to seek you,
wisdom to find you, a spirit to know you,
and a heart to meditate upon you.

May our ears hear you, may our eyes behold you,
and may our tongues proclaim you.

Give us grace that our way of life may be
pleasing to you,
that we may have patience to wait for you
and the perseverance to look for you.

Grant us a perfect end: your holy presence,
a blessed resurrection, and life everlasting.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

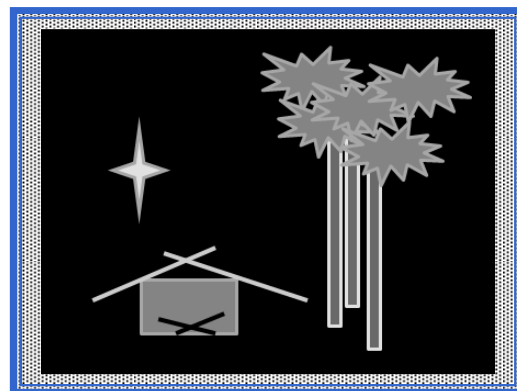
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Please pray for vocations



O come, divine Messiah!
The world in silence waits the day
When hope shall sing its triumph,
And sadness flee away.