

# The Oblate

*News Magazine of the Oblates of Saint John's Abbey*

October 2023

Volume 67 Number 3

## Fall 2023 Day of Reflection, November 19

### Gateways of Grace

The gate of the monastery can be both a place of new beginnings (Rule 58) and a place of hospitality (Rule 66). These important moments in any Benedictine's life can be a rich source of reflection, and daily reminders of them literally surround us. In "Gateways of Grace" Brother Jacob Berns, OSB, explores these chapters of the Rule of Benedict, seeking to find in them ways to live our vocation more faithfully.

Br. Jacob has been a monk of Saint John's Abbey since first professing his vows there in 2018. He studied



Photo by Br. Paul-Vincent Niebauer, OSB

### Schedule for the Day

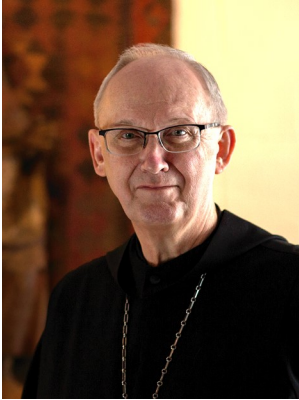
- 9:30 Arrive in Great Hall for fellowship
- 10:30 Eucharist in Abbey Church
- 11:45 Lunch in Quad 264
- 12:30 Small group discussion
- 1:30 Conference followed by discussion
- 2:50 Blessing and Dismissal

**There is no fee, but a free will offering is appreciated.**

music and theology at Saint John's University, completing his B.A. in 2014 and M.A. in 2021. He is a regular sight around campus, presently serving as an accountant in the Abbey Business Office and as a faculty resident to students of Saint John's University. Br. Jacob also enjoys cooking, reading, and finding raspberries in Saint John's Arboretum.

**Please register by November 13 by emailing  
Emily Wilmer  
at [amma.emily.wilmer@gmail.com](mailto:amma.emily.wilmer@gmail.com)**

## Abbot John Klassen, OSB



### Expanding Theological and Spiritual Vision

Over the past years, I have written a good number of columns that deal with the spiritual practices that are relevant to being an oblate of Saint Benedict. I

intended my reflections to be relevant and accessible. After all, we don't live at 25,000 feet: we live on the good earth. However, I do believe that the overall theological frame of reference that envelops our spiritual imagination matters hugely. I have recently read a book that I strongly recommend to you because of its accessibility and its theological relevance. A seasoned teacher and prolific author, John Haught, has written a book entitled *The Cosmic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin*. The work synthesizes his own understanding of Teilhard's groundbreaking thought in integrating Christian faith with an evolutionary understanding of the universe.

What does it mean to live in a universe that is unfinished, incomplete, still evolving? Such a view suggests that we need to change our imagination for God, so that God is more Omega than Alpha, not pushing creation from behind, but drawing it forward, as elements within creation move toward a higher level of both consciousness and complexity.

This understanding of God gives us access to an entirely different kind of hope because our hope is no longer limited to our personal salvation or even this beautiful Earth. Our God is bigger than the universe and our hope is now for the whole of creation, for the life and the structures of intelligibility making life possible that are in (Continued on page 3.)

## Fr. Michael Peterson, OSB



There's a monastic practice we call *statio*. *Statio* happens in our monastery when the community lines up in a row, two by two, and members are silent for a few minutes. We set down what we just have been doing and we prepare ourselves to process into the church for liturgy. *Statio* reminds us that we're in the presence of God. *Statio* is an intentional, sacred stop. Then the signal is given to "go," and we all begin moving together.

We all need moments of *statio* -- just stopping before the next thing. Stopping is a practice, and the more we get used to stopping, the more it becomes part of who we are.

One of our oblates who teaches at Saint John's told me that he begins each class with *statio*. He says, "Ok, class, *statio*." The cell phones are pocketed, there is silence for a few minutes, and "Ahhh," class begins. Students love *statio* for it allows them space and intentionality in a distracted world.

The Prologue of the Rule encourages us, "If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts." Allowing a fleshy, natural heart is not a quick, slam-dunk decision we make once and for all. Rather, heart-work is a lifelong process of letting God into our lives. Heart-work calls for moments of intentional, sacred stops. Permit this for yourself please.

Stop. Am I hardening my heart to God? Then why?

Stop. Can I hear God's sweet voice? Then how?

Stop. Am I able to say "yes" to God's work within me? Then when?

(Cont. from page 2.) **Expanding Theological and Spiritual Vision**

billions of stars and countless planets that we don't even know yet.

This understanding of God and the cosmos changes the way we think about ethics and what we owe each other, not just person to person, but living creature to living creature, and one planet to the rest of the cosmos. We have countless junkyards on this planet because of a lack of spiritual and moral imagination. Our economics does not help us understand the full costs of the way we live. We have also been careless with putting instruments into space and

having no way to bring them back. The universe can teach us how to live. For example, its recycling program is a work of genius.

In his work, Haught explores also the limits of evolutionary thought. For example, evolutionary thought cannot give an adequate account of the meaning of suffering and death. Nor can it give a fulsome explanation of consciousness as it exists in varying levels of the creation. In this column, I can point to these major questions. This work by Haught will open up some new pathways for thought, questions, wonder, and prayer. If you are so inclined, try it.

## Milestones

### Monastic Jubilee



Fr. Michael Peterson, OSB, celebrating his 25th anniversary of monastic vows, July 11, 2023, and seen here with his former abbot from Blue Cloud Abbey, SD, Fr. Thomas Hillenbrand, OSB.

### Candidacies



Paul Crawford of Marion, IA,  
August 1, 2023

Kurt Swanson of Mahtomedi, MN,  
August 8, 2023





## More Milestones

### Oblations made July 15, 2023



Also seen, back row, Abbot John Klassen, OSB, Br. Walter Kieffer, OSB, Fr. Michael Peterson, OSB.

Photo by Br. Dan Morgan, OSB

Names are left to right. Jayan Koshy (Saint Paul, MN), Andrew Preston (Minneapolis, MN), Caroline Oldershaw (Minneapolis, MN), Christine Peterson (Minneapolis, MN), Abbey Dupuy (Sartell, MN), Bruce Bonnicksen (Rochester, MN), Rodger Narloch (Cold Spring, MN).

## Deaths

**Beloved Lucy Fallon, ObISB (Ham Lake, MN), 1935-2023**

by Sheila Hannon, ObISB

I think we elevate people when they leave us. My cousin Lucy wasn't perfect, but pretty darn close!

She fiercely loved and was loved by those who crossed her path. Family of course. So many and varied close friends because to be her friend was to be a close one. All the oblates and the monks of Saint John's (she had favorites). Her patients at Hennepin County Medical Center. I could go on.

Lucy was the big sister I never had, the one I looked up to and desperately tried to emulate. She's the one who has been with me through it all, all of my life. Now she's gone from life, but never away from my heart.



Photo by John Fraune, ObISB

## Meet an Oblate

Philip Gerlach, OblSB



I am Philip Gerlach from Bloomington, Minnesota. I became an oblate in 1958 while at Saint John's Seminary. After my 1959 priestly ordination, I returned to the

Diocese of Winona. I knew of no oblates in my diocese and lost contact with the oblate community. In those days the oblates were not as organized as today with newsletters, days of reflection and retreats. One day when I was at a Theology Day at the School of Theology, Fr. Don Tauscher introduced himself to me as the Oblate Director. He put me in touch with Ron Joki's oblate chapter at Saint Joan of Arc in Minneapolis.

As a priest I served parishes in Mankato, Wells, Fairmont, Minneiska, and Winona. In 1972 I attended The Catholic University of America and received a JCL in Canon Law in 1974. I was then appointed the Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Winona. I reorganized the Tribunal and granted marriage annulments for nine years, after which time I chose to leave the active ministry. I went to work for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C., as District Manager for the Midwest States. After retirement I worked part-time for Wells Fargo Bank in the Operation Center for 20 years. I am now fully retired.

My seminary professors instilled in me Benedictine spirituality which has continued to grow and develop my spiritual life. I have tried to live by the Rule of Benedict. The Psalms, the Work of God as Benedict

calls it, helped me to grow in love of God and trust in Him. I have been able to become more aware of God's presence, not only in myself but in other people and in the world around me. When I experienced difficulties or a loss, I knew God was carrying me and supporting me. I have tried to live out the Gospel in my life.

Though I left the active ministry, I never left the priesthood. I have always been a priest in my relationships with people at work, in my church and in my community. At present I am active in St. Edward Church in Bloomington as a Stephen Minister, Lector, Eucharistic Minister, and leader of Hospital Ministry and Homebound Eucharistic Ministry. I try to see the face of Christ in every person I meet and share my gifts with them.

### CHAPTER NEWS

#### Southeast Wisconsin Chapter

Due to distance, we meet via Zoom every two months. After midday prayer, we discuss a topic or a chapter from a common text, most recently *Reaching for God* by Roberta Werner, OSB. Please join us. Contact Tracy Deredzinski at - Tracy089@gmail.com

#### Minneapolis Chapter at Lutheran Church of Hope

We meet at 10 a.m. on fourth Saturdays. We pray psalms, practice Centering Prayer, and discuss the Rule of Benedict. All are welcome! Contact Nicholas Tangen at - nicholastangen@gmail.com

#### Minneapolis Saint Joan of Arc Chapter

Contact Ron Joki at - rejslp@aol.com

#### Collegeville Chapter

We share lunch in the Guesthouse September through May on third Sundays after Mass. Then we discuss part of a book—now *Living with Contradiction* by Esther de Waal. Join us! Contact Emily Wilmer at - amma.emily.wilmer@gmail.com

**Also see** [saintjohnsabbey.org/oblates-chapters](http://saintjohnsabbey.org/oblates-chapters)



## My Wrestling Match with Silence

Pam Keul, OblSB



Through the oblate grapevine, I learned that a certain monk of Saint John's Abbey knows a thing or two about silence, so I asked him to write something about that topic for our oblate newsletter. His response was that he's otherwise engaged these days, and that perhaps I could write about silence, a prospect I found ludicrous. I know about complicating things, cramming a lot into small spaces, and being impulsive, but silence? At least I could recognize my ignorance of the subject, reminding me of my first encounter with *The Divine Comedy*, and also how I came to awareness of the virtue of humility. Like silence, both the epic poem and humility are way big, rich with lifetime possibility for us.

Some years ago I was writing an article for publication on *The Divine Comedy*, about which I knew nothing. You may know it's the poem written by Italian Dante Alighieri, who finished it around 1321, shortly before his death. Widely considered to be one of the greatest works of world literature, it represents the soul's journey toward God.

Fortunately for me, a generous Sister of St. Joseph of Carondolet, a professor at the College of Saint Catherine who had taught *The Divine Comedy* for decades, spent three days doing her best to get me up to speed

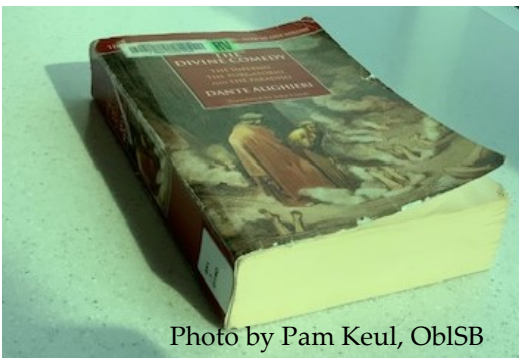


Photo by Pam Keul, OblSB

on it. At the end of our time together, I wrote what I believe was a worthwhile

article, but do I understand more than a drip of what can be gleaned from the 14,233 lines of Dante's majestic mountain of a poem? I'm in awe of it, and of humility, too.

When I became an oblate, I started hearing about humility. "Oh, humility. I know what that is," I thought. As time has gone on, it seems I know less and less about humility. Often I assume I'm behaving in a perfectly humble manner but then come to realize that's untrue.

And so it is with formidable silence that so plainly exposes my ignorance of it. Although I'm a member of a weekly meditation group, I have no reason to believe I know silence, and I don't know what I don't know about it. It does, however, have my interest and attention.

I could explore silence by reserving some days for myself at Saint John's Abbey Guesthouse. At and beyond Saint John's, one can find silent retreats, or I could just let silence come to me. A week ago I unexpectedly ended up on the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus green between Northrop Auditorium

and Coffman Union. I was struck by its beauty and peacefulness, complete with

lovely gardens, hammocks, and Adirondack chairs, many of them unoccupied. By golly, I could sit myself down in one of those chairs and maybe be silent.



Photo by Pam Keul, OblSB

I was blessed with ten years of monthly visits with my spiritual director. I cherished her and what she did for me. When she retired, I was honored to be her close friend; when she died, I planned her funeral. Once she said to me, "Why don't you go to a window and spend some time looking outside?" My silent response to her suggestion was, "Why would I do that? What a time waster." Do you see how fortunate I was to become her friend? Have I ever yet gone to a window to spend time looking outside without looking for some certain something? I have made my way to a window if I spotted a deer or turkeys or a red-tailed hawk in my yard. But over the years I've come to see the simple brilliance of allowing oneself time at a window or doorway for its own sake, and certainly for mine.

From 2002 until 2012, Rowan Williams served as the 104<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury. In his chapter on silence in his book, *Being Human*, he says, "Silence is something to do with acknowledging a lack of control." Later he writes, "But the more humanity falls in love with this strange idea of domesticating, absorbing and controlling, the less human we actually get."

I've heard Max Picard's book, *The World of Silence*, published in Switzerland in 1948, is a favorite of that monk of Saint John's Abbey who first turned me on to the subject of silence. It's not easy for me to choose just a few quotations from Picard's fascinating writing. "The man whose nature is still possessed by silence moves out from silence into the outside world. The silence is central to the man." To me that means the practice of silence can help us be peace in the world. "There is something holy in almost every silence," wrote Picard. Holy! And "there is more silence than language in love." May we be blessed with silence. May we allow silence to come to us.

## Oblate Volunteer Days Return

The post-pandemic kickoff was Saturday, August 26, 2023. After Mass, 16 oblates shared a simple lunch with Br. Walter and Fr. Michael, and then they went to work for two hours. Some concluding fellowship capped the event. More such days to come in 2024!

Oblates Christine Peterson (left) and Caroline Oldershaw cleaning in the abbey church.



Photo by Fr. Michael Peterson, OSB



Photo by Fr. Michael Peterson, OSB

With Br. Walter (center), oblates David Sorenson (left) and Nicholas Reuter making maple syrup taps.

*The Oblate's next submission deadline is December 1, and we need you!* Submit short thoughts of 100 to 300 words or longer stories and essays - ideally in a Word document accompanied by your headshot and maybe a photograph that illustrates your topic. Maybe tell and show us where you pray. Or what is your prayer rhythm? How does oblate life hearten you? Send it all or questions to [oblatenewsletter@cbsju.edu](mailto:oblatenewsletter@cbsju.edu), Charlotte Martin, 319-573-2824.



## Prefer Nothing to Christ

Bill Griffiths, OblSB



**“Let them prefer absolutely nothing to Christ, and may he lead us all together to everlasting life” (Rule 72:11-12).**

I write this on Sunday, 13 August, from Adelaide, Australia. Today’s Gospel is Matthew 14:22-33, the story of Peter walking on the water to meet Jesus, who has to save Peter when his faith fails him.

I have just listened to the conferences from the oblate retreat at SJA—a very worthwhile retreat, I thought. And by chance, I have three helpful books open on the desk today, all published by Liturgical Press. Each emphasizes the importance of 72:11-12 in the Rule; these verses provide the key for understanding our oblate commitments. I was so chuffed to have all these ducks line up—that Gospel reading, the retreat talks, and the analysis by two scholars of the Rule!

The books are these: *Benedictine Daily Prayer* (2015), pages 556-557 on Mt 14:22-33 plus an excerpt from Sermon 76 by St. Augustine, emphasizing the need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus; *Benedict’s Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (1996) by Fr. Terrence Kardong, OSB, pages 596-602; and *Perspectives on the Rule of St. Benedict: Expanding our Hearts in Christ* (2005) by Sr. Aquinata Boeckmann, OSB, pages 70-73 and 214-216.

Benedict’s teaching in 72:11-12 of the Rule is indeed the key to helping us oblats understand and benefit from our “ora et labora” inheritance from our vowed monastic brothers and sisters. Three cheers for Liturgical Press!

## And about that Retreat

Pam Keul, OblSB

In four conferences over the weekend of July 14-16, Dr. Michael Rubbelke, Assistant Professor of Spirituality and Monastic Studies at Saint John’s School of Theology and Seminary, presented “Discovering My Story with Saint Benedict.” Friday evening he focused on what lies behind us, and Saturday on what we have available to us now, as well as how humility can save us from dead ends. Rubbelke described his topic for Sunday as “our unexpected future fulfillment” and offering “the work of God in humble service.”

“Framing Our Narrative” launched the retreat. Rubbelke spoke of how we’re born in the middle of things, that the history and perspectives of others impact the stories we create about our births and our lives. He reminded us that we are chosen, placed by God in unique circumstances we often take for granted. He said we’re called to respond to this one-of-a-kind life each of us has been given, and can do that if we don’t cling to a dead end narrative about the life we’ve lived up to this point.

Retreatants  
Henry Schwalbenberg, OblSB,  
Bronx, NY, and  
Rev. Keith  
Homstad,  
OblSB, North-  
field, MN.



Photo by Tom Keul, OblSB

Chosen and blessed with a unique life, aware that we’re here to make use of that gift, and with enough humility to see beyond our own noses, we’re helped to answer Rubbelke’s Sunday morning questions. “What ‘tastes’ of eternity do you sense in your life,” such as people, nature, learning, discipline and growth? How will we offer ourselves, “that in all things God may be glorified”?



## Stability as the Still Point

Caroline Oldershaw, OblSB

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh  
nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the  
dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it  
fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither move-  
ment from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the  
still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
- T.S. Eliot, "Four Quartets"



For oblates in formation, discerning the call to affiliate with a Benedictine monastery requires reading and reflecting on the Rule of St. Benedict. Translating the practices contained in this small yet dense book to life outside the monastery—that is, the life of the

oblate—is part wrestling match and part wonder. For instance, in one simple sentence, Chapter 58 of the Rule says “the novice [monk] to be received comes before all in the oratory and promises stability, fidelity to the monastic way of life, and obedience.” Stability? What is that exactly?

Monks express stability through a commitment to a geographic place that holds their specific monastic community. Geography is just the beginning though. Joining a community means entering into relationship with others who also have chosen that monastery and applying one’s talents to the work unique to that monastic setting. But oblates and just about all others live in a time of forced or chosen hyper-mobility and face days of increasing complexity, ambiguity, and stress. Today stability seems a foreign concept.

As early as 1970, futurist Alvin Toffler predicted that the accelerated rate of technological and social change would leave people disconnected and suffering from

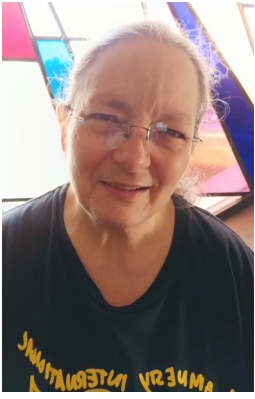
“shattering stress and disorientation,” a state he described in his book *Future Shock*. Much earlier, just after World War I, poet William Butler Yeats described in “The Second Coming” an upheaval bordering on despair that fits our own reality:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Amidst such intensity, oblates can understand stability as an inner quality that we cultivate through Benedictine practices. It starts with creating structure. Daily prayer. Sacred reading. A day composed of effort and rest—moving between prayer, work, rest, time in nature, play, meals, and human connection. And oblates can and do form small regional groups for the inspiration and support only community can provide. Over time, such practices foster presence, patience, equanimity, and an internal stability that inevitably radiates outward to all relationships—bringing with it a steadiness and an ability to be present to others in ways our world desperately needs. Think of stability as fierce fidelity.

One day after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recorded a message to the Ukrainian people. Some watched by video, others listened through earbuds as the terrifying attack was unfolding. “Listen, I am here. Don’t believe what they’re telling you. I have not left you, and I will not leave you.” In that moment and since, Zelenskyy has been the center that holds. The still point amidst shattering violence and destruction. In his voice is God’s voice too. Assurance always that “I will not leave you.” This very gift stability brings.

## How Gratitude Found Me



I keep my promises. Mostly. But after each Sunday's creed, the Mass revealed a consistent failing. Once we'd prayed for the Church and true public servants, our sick and our dead, we'd add "for the prayers we hold in the silence of our hearts," a pause, and "we pray to the Lord." Bright red let-

ters told us lectors to wait *five* seconds. I'd race frantically through all the names that moment allowed: parents and sister until they passed, best friend, her kid (my godson), Alberic, OSB, who ends our phone conversations with "mutual prayers," kids I sponsor, Frs. Bill and Phil, and ..., and ..., and.... Frantically because, despite promising prayers as earnestly as I'd sought them, this mad dash was it for another week.

Now I pray for multitudes. Yet numbers are not my concern. I want rather to share how this has evolved into my peculiar way of practicing gratitude and how it thus contributes fittingly for me to *conversatio morum*, ongoing conversion of life (see the Rule 58:17).

Being retired helps, after teaching responsibilities that exhausted me. Even so, I improved little until I moved to St. Joseph near Saint John's. My last year in Iowa I did start praying (barely a minute) for the usual suspects with my breakfast "thanks, God" grace—closest friends, godson, priest-friends (occupational hazard of Catholic theologians), sick acquaintances.

Days before my move, on 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Through decades witnessing for peace and against war, I'd imagined nothing so disturbing. Yes, wars go on always—indeed, already in Ukrainian lands—in Myanmar and Israeli-Palestinian flare-ups and Syria still and now Sudan and Colombia ever since my first birthday. But Russia attempt-

Charlotte Joy Martin, ObISB

ing permanent conquest of its neighbor? When all you can do is pray, how do you not pray?!

My routine now starts with a morning offering from St. Thérèse (Martin) of Lisieux—a relative of mine, claimed an oddball aunt. Then I pray "for a just and lasting peace soon" for Ukraine, Russia, the Koreas, and every other country that I, with a Faustian appetite for news, can think of. Countries fighting now or only tentatively not fighting. Places where wars could cross borders (Romania). Entities one misstep from war (China and Taiwan—read: China and the U.S.). Countries marred by gang violence (Haiti) or coups (Gabon) or terrorism (half of Africa). I throw in our gun-violence drenched country. And cases of systemic repression (China's Uyghurs) or ethnic violence (Manipur, India). Nations where rulers flout their electoral loss (Thailand), risking violent protests and their violent suppression. I name over a third of the world's countries. Then I ask God to "bring the dead to new life in your love, comfort the grieving, heal and strengthen the wounded, steady the shaken, release the captives, restore the children [Google Ukrainian children], rescue the refugees."

After war, I pray that natural disasters spare people. And that someone feed and love and school Yamily, Carlos Arturo, and Wesley—the kids I sponsor (and millions like them) until poverty-ending opportunities provide solutions.

Then I settle into praying for sets of beloved and fondly remembered people I've known (and just a few friends turned "enemies"). First up: Amos and Missy, my feline people. Next, two best friends and their families and dogs, the Vanderbilt professor who hooded me when I got my Ph.D., and my peace-nik buddies.

Then comes every oblate I can name and, as the last set, every monk, concluding with Alberic. In the middle I pray for groups like “the cousins” and the parish choirs I sang with in Cedar Rapids. I name neighbors old and new with their dogs, and one stranger, Keith, who inflated my nearly flat tire on a wintery day.

But what has made me think of all this in terms of gratitude and *conversatio morum* is a bunch of individuals tucked between cousins and choirs. They are people who entered my life where I taught, Mount Mercy University.

Landing a tenure-track position right away was great. I had some hope for the place early, mainly because the president then talked a great game about liberal arts education, the principal passion of my life. A dozen years in, a new administrator had this wild theory that we could buy extremely bright students with huge scholarships and create a milieu that’d attract other smart kids for normal scholarships. He got fired, but what a wonderful few years I had teaching some kids who wanted to learn and not just pocket a credential! Mostly though, I remembered the place in a grumbly mood. Having studied at Saint John’s and CSB, I missed that ethos. Yet I felt trapped at Mount Mercy, because teaching many students in many courses meant producing few of the publications better schools would expect. Grumble, grumble.

But with all this praying, I’d think of the librarian who’d traverse campus instantly to untangle my classroom tech problems.

And individuals who authorized my peace group’s free use of campus space. Professors with whom I’d share a chuckle. Staff who efficiently unriddled some bureaucratic riddle miring a student of mine.

***conversatio  
morum*** — ongoing  
conversion of life  
(See Rule 58:17)

Few of the people I pray for would suspect I’m doing so, but least of all these Mount Mercy folks, as they mostly ignore or disdain religion. Yet praying for *them* has redounded the most to my own good. It gives me an attitude adjustment, little by little, through the sense of gratitude I first noticed in praying for *those* individuals. I can’t help but be grateful when I recall librarian and staff members working such miracles on the regular for me. I can’t help but be grateful when I think of the few colleagues who made committee work bearable, even sane. Those observations then taught me to recognize gratitude within my prayers for friends and neighbors, choirs and cousins, oblates and monks as well.

I have needed this attitude adjustment. By both temperament and habit, I grumble through life, rarely satisfied, always seeing the glass’ half-empty part. And never more than when I contrast my career with that of some Vanderbilt graduates. I’m not saying I’ve progressed much yet in turning that grumbly, whiny Charlotte into straight puppies and sunshine. But I do think that, by God’s grace, some conversion of life has begun.

For a while I’d worked at gratitude by singing along on “Oh Happy Day,” “Down by the Riverside,” etc. But with this praying thing that I’ve fallen into—regretting not praying for my godson, aghast at the warring, and glad for helpful librarians—a sense of gratitude arises now from within.

So I’ll keep praying. It can take half the day, because I pray while I splash around in the bathroom and while I feed Amos and Missy, Wilbur the sourdough culture and myself, and while I water my vegetable garden. Other thoughts distract me, then I return, meaning that this gratitude soundtrack of my life is hours long. And God willing, it’s become a good thing that has begun in me. Amen. Alleluia!





## The Oblate

THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED

NEWSLETTER OF THE OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT: *published three times annually (February, June, October).*

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### Mark Your Calendar

**November 19, 2023 Day of Reflection**

**March 17, 2024 Day of Reflection**



Photo by Br. Gabriel Gerrits, OSB

As per Brother Walter, this "good looking bunch" was the happy set of July 2023 retreatants.

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