

The Oblate

THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED

Newsletter of the Oblates of St. Benedict
St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321

Winter 2010

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Newsletter of the Oblates of St. John's Abbey

Special points of interest:

Remember the March 7th Day of Recollection, held in the Alumni Lounge. Please let Fr. Michael know that you are coming if possible: 320-363-2018. Or via the web at: mkwatera@CSBSJU.EDU

Winter 2010

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From the Oblate Director: A New Year's Reflection

When the ancient Romans portrayed the god Janus, the god for which the month of January is named, they gave him two heads. Thus this god of doors and gates could look backward and forward at the same time.

That's what the two disciples who heard John the Baptist's words in the gospel (John 1:35-42) had to do. Jesus, the Lamb of God, walked by, and they had to look backward and forward. They had to look back upon the divine truth that they had learned from

John the Baptist; they had to peer ahead to the greater things that they might expect to learn from Jesus, the Son of God whom John baptized. And the two disciples followed Jesus, eager to see how he lived, even more eager to hear what he taught.

It is good for us to do the same in this first month of the new year. We, too, find the signs of God's saving love for us here and now. The preaching of the Gospel, the sharing and self-sacrifice of believers for each other; all these ac-

tions continue the mission to all people that Jesus began in Galilee. We are part of that mission right here, right now. We are called to be part of Jesus' ministry to others, just as the first disciples were.

So we do well to look backward and forward. The calendar gives us two special opportunities to do so. (Continued on inserted page)



Gary B. Reierson: To Lent or Not to Lent

Gary B. Reierson has graciously agreed to be the presenter at the Lenten Day of Recollection, March 7th in the Alumni Lounge.

Gary Reierson is an Oblate of St. John's Abbey (since 1999), president

of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, chair of the board of Directors of the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, and regular visiting faculty member of the St. John's School of Theol-

ogy-Seminary.

NB: Abbot Timothy Kelly OSB will lead an optional session of lectio divina directly after the presentation and discussion from 2:00-3:00, Quad 261. (Continued on following insert/page.)

CONTINUATION OF: FROM THE OBLATE DIRECTOR: A NEW YEAR'S REFLECTION

Thirty –seven years ago, on January 22,1973, the United States Supreme Court rendered a decision that legalized abortion in the United States. That was a black day in our nation's history. But its anniversary leads me to commend the work being done by Oblate J. Patrick Mullins for the organization, Democrats for Life. Pat's commitment to this work invites us to confront the darkness in our society and in our own hearts. And so we must ask ourselves: Do I really believe that all human life, especially the life of God's tiniest and weakest human creatures is sacred? Do I believe that the disabled and elderly are especially close to heart of Jesus, and so must be especially close to my heart as well? Am I opposed to anything that weakens or destroys human life, God's beautiful choice for each of us?

The second opportunity for looking backward and forward is the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25). This year's theme is: "You are Witnesses of These Things." The Twelve Apostles were the original witnesses to God's triumph over sin and death in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Their witness was at the heart of their preaching and teaching, but also of their giving thanks and praise to God in memory of the Lord Jesus as they broke the bread of His Body and shared the cup of his Blood in the Eucharist. Today, the Pope and the bishops are the successors of these original witnesses. But along with them, we are witnesses to the presence and action of the risen Lord in the Eucharist.

Certainly much progress has been made in the search of the unity of his disciples that Jesus prayed for. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a time to celebrate the growing understanding and cooperation between different Christian churches and ecclesial communities as well as a time to lament the divisions that still exist. Complete unity remains part of God's future. But where we want to be in God's future tells us what we should be doing in our present.

In May, 1995, at a time when many people thought that the Vatican's interest in ecumenism was waning, Pope John Paul II issued an encyclical on this topic entitled *Ut Unum Sint (That They May Be One)*. This encyclical ends with a call to "everyone to renew their commitment to work for full and visible communion" and with a specific exhortation to the world's Catholic bishops "to be especially mindful" of their mission and duty to work for Christian unity. Pope John Paul even asked forgiveness for whatever he and his predecessors may have done to hurt the cause of Christian unity.

Reflected in the pope's encyclical is this truth: international agreements worked out between scholars and theologians and approved by prelates will not achieve Christian unity, unless individual believers and congregations promote such unity. I believe that one of the riches of the St. John's Oblate program is that its members, who belong to diverse Christian denominations, are trying to live according to a Rule that pre-dates the unfortunate divisions of the sixteenth century. But we should ask ourselves: Do I lament the divisions between Christians? Am I more inclined or content to mark the differences between Christians rather than their similarities? Do I rejoice in the gifts of music and culture that other Christian traditions offer? Do I think that there is nothing I can do to promote Christian unity?

THE OBLATE is a newsletter devoted to those interested in the Benedictine way of life, and provides a sense of community for Oblates of Saint John's Abbey living throughout the world.

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Clearly the first disciples of Jesus had to leave behind much that was old and familiar if they were to welcome the new and surprising in Jesus Christ. We must do the same, if our proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ is to bring light to this world. Looking backward and forward, it may not be too late to make some new year's resolutions: to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God in this respect for life and in efforts for Christian unity.

Michael Kwatera, O.S.B.

Report from Keith E.O. Homstad, ObISb

The "Faribault—Northfield Branch" is the informal name for the group of Benedictine Oblates who are affiliated with St. John's Abbey, and happen to live in the general area of Faribault and Northfield. The group has a long standing practice of gathering on Saturdays at 7:00 a.m. for brief morning prayers and then breakfast and conversation. Not all of our area Oblates are early birds, of course, but generally a visitor will find Milo Larson, Pete Johnson, Keith Homstad, and Greg Caron, in attendance. Greg is not "technically" an Oblate, but he's a fellow traveler, and a long time Cursillista—along with Milo and Pete.

Every Sunday, year around, rain or shine, but NOT in bitter cold or blizzard conditions, we can be found sharing a cup of coffee after prayers. Our common prayers are rather simple since we don't have access to a chapel anymore. When Rev. Keith E.O. Homstad was Chaplain at Three Links Care Center in Northfield, we would meet there in his chapel on the first Saturday of the month. But since his retirement we meet either at a truck stop next to I-35 at the Highway #21 entrance, or else we gather at Roberd's Lake Resort. In the summer time, we're at the resort. All other times, we're at the truck stop.

Morning prayer for us consists of 7 simple prayers: Gathering in the name of the Triune God as we make the sign of the cross, the Ultreya gathering prayer, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and two other special prayers. We pray each week a Prayer for the Diversity Coalition and the Oblate Prayer, and then any special petitions we may bring. The Diversity Coalition is a Faribault organization that works to integrate the newest immigrants to our community.

After prayers, we settle the affairs of the world as we breakfast and drink our coffee. And, just in case you might think that is a joke, you are welcome to join us most any Saturday at 7:00 a.m. and find out whether it's true or not! Welcome!

Rev. Keith E.O. Homstad

A Relevant Rule: Balance by Peggy Stokman, OblSB

BALANCE is a frequent instruction from our Father Benedict. Perhaps, balance was as counter-cultural in the 6th century as it is in the 21st. It has become my litmus test for many decisions. Balance offers me a healthier, happier and holier life.

Dr. Suzette E. Sutherland, a 1984 graduate of St. Benedict's, grasped the wisdom of Benedict in her article published in the April '09 Bennie Connection. "As women, we are

natural nurturers and caretakers; we are hard-wired to take care of others. But we can't play those important roles in our families and communities unless we maintain our own personal health. Women [and men—my addiction] need to maintain some semblance of balance—physical, mental, spiritual and social—in order to be in a better position to take care of others. We need to invert the pyramid from time-to-time,

and not always put ourselves at the bottom..."

How is Benedictine BALANCE guiding your life, especially in the area of serving and self-care?

"All humanity is seen to have a spark of the divine"

Christmas Message by Ron Joki, OblSB

Ron Joki, in his announcement of the January meeting of the Oblate St. Joan of Arc group, described his appreciation of the Christ Child in relation to the St. John's Prison Ministry. The Christ Child must be welcomed as any new life should, with full imagination and participation. All humanity is seen

to have a spark of the divine, indeed, we must strive for a realization of "each soul's sacredness", even in difficult situations. Ron has been involved in Sunday worship services at the Hennepin County Correctional Facility, and is now applying to the prison mentoring program through the Greater Min-

neapolis Council of Churches. The St. Joan of Arc's January Oblate meeting discussed the history of the St. John's Prison Ministry program. Anyone interested in this, or new directions to the Saint Joan of Arc Church for their meetings, please contact Ron at (952)544-4525.

Twin Cities Oblate Meetings: Saint Joan of Arc

A small group of faithful Oblates meets monthly September-November and January-May in south Minneapolis at the Parish of Saint Joan of Arc. We pray the psalms and come together to hear and discuss a topic of interest, a ministry shared by the members of the group as they are able.

So for this year the dis-

cussions have focused around the monks of the abbey, their history and ministry, the goal being to become better acquainted with our community and our place within it. In this vein we have touched on the life of Father Virgil Michel, OSB, on the history of the carpentry shop and the Abbey's long term commitment to prison min-

istry. With each topic we included reflection questions to make each presentation more relevant to our own lives.

(Continued on following insert—contact Ron Joki at rejslp@aol.com.)

United States World Congress blog by Katherine Wallace and myself with updates since the congress: <http://oblatesworldcongress09.blogspot.com/>

United Kingdom's Oblate Website by Zina Neagle, National Coordinator for the Delegates of the United Kingdom and Ireland, with report from coordinator's meeting with Abbot Primate Notker Wolf and informative Oblate summaries of the world congress: <http://www.benedictine-oblates.net/congress.htm>

United States blog by Colorado Oblate, Barb Neilon, describing each day's activities at the congress with thoughtful commentary: <http://barbneilon.wordpress.com/category/rome-2009/>

Video about "What is an Oblate," produced by the oblates of St. Meinrad's Abbey: http://www.saintmeinrad.edu/monastery_oblates.aspx

(There is an underlining done twice above between monastery and oblates).

Mary Fran Karanikolas

Continuation of Twin Cities Meeting at the Parish of Saint Joan of Arc

Having several members of the Saint John's Oblate Advisory Committee among our regulars, we stay current on the group's agenda which helps us all to stay involved with other Oblates in keeping active in our lives utilizing Benedictine principles and practices. Many of those who attend the meetings have developed close friendships and a mutual support network. We bless all of our Oblate sisters and brothers in their paths as Benedictines.

Ron Joki

Continuation of Gary Reiersen: To Lent or Not to Lent

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from degree from the College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota; a Master of Divinity degree from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities; and a Doctor of Ministry degree from the consortium of Minnesota theological faculties. He has done post-graduate work at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Centro Pro Unione, Rome; Oxford University, and the Bossey Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches, Geneva. He is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, and with his wife, Pam, has two grown daughters, one of whom is a graduate of the College of St. Benedict.

The Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches' mission is to unite people of faith to serve people in need, and it operates a family of 31 programs and is the largest council of churches in America and the largest volunteer organization in Minnesota with 25,000 volunteers. Gary has served as its president since 1989. Prior to that he was a parish pastor and served two congregations in the Twin Cities area: Plymouth Congregational Church of Minneapolis and the United Church of Christ in New Brighton.