

Fall Issue

November 2020

Dear Oblate Directors,

Greetings to all. I hope all of you and your Oblates are staying well. I know that several abbeys and monasteries have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. I am sure that we all feel that this pandemic cloud has brought us to a deeper sense of prayer and concern for our world.

During the past eight months of our “pandemic cloister”, we have most likely come to feel the absence of our guests, retreatants, Oblates, and friends in our sacred space. Yet, this has not deterred us from sharing the gift of our Benedictine hospitality beyond the monastery walls. Technology has become an essential instrument for our hospitable outreach. Connections with Oblates via Zoom have been a sacred gift for keeping in touch and for continuing our ministry as Oblate Directors. Oblate lessons, retreats, and ongoing book studies have been able to continue. It is even possible to conduct an Oblate inquirer interview via Zoom and even share screen a virtual monastery tour.

Perhaps many of us are taking the time to stay connected with other Oblate Directors by exploring the various monastery websites. There are so many inspirational blogs and newsletters to provide us with spiritual and nourishing ideas.

I thank all of you that contributed content for this newsletter. We are all on this sacred path of Oblate ministry together.

As you know, the next NAABOD Conference is scheduled for August 5-10, 2021 at St. Meinrad Archabbey. Due to the uncertainty of the pandemic, I am not sure if it will be safe to have the conference at that time as scheduled. I have been in dialogue with the NAABOD Executive Council (Vice-President Sister Celine Schock and Secretary Sister Linda Larkman), as well as Janis Dopp (St. Meinrad Oblate Director). Janis is in the process of checking with St. Meinrad Guest Services regarding the possibility of having the conference on the above dates. We will make a decision in January 2021.

Let us keep each other and our world in prayer.

Lovingly in St. Benedict,
Sister Priscilla Cohen
NAABOD President
Sacred Heart Monastery
916 Convent Road NE
Cullman, AL 35055
Cell: (205) 617-2512



North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors

Mission Statement

The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors provides assistance to and ongoing formation for directors of oblates. It provides a forum for discerning needs and issues associated with this formation activity and guidelines for leadership and the oblate way of life.

News from Monasteries

Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove, IN

From Sister Antoinette Purcell

Oblates of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, IN are keeping in touch via Zoom. We have had several meetings that way and have been able to gather as a group with one speaker, then use break out rooms to form small discussion groups, then come back together as large group. We are able to accept participation by voice on phone as well as by computer or phone with screen and sound. We have also used the voting feature to get feedback. Necessity is the mother of new life which is pushing us forward in using technology to connect in ways we did not pursue in the past. Our oblates who live at a distance and those who live locally are now able to get to know each other. Our blind oblate and deaf oblate have been able to participate using Zoom. Our concern is that not all of our oblates have the technology or choose not to participate in that way. It is a challenge to keep them abreast of everything. Communication by snail mail does not offer the same dynamic as interactivity through technology. While technology is not the same as personal interaction, it at least provides us with a way for meaningful connectivity. Even when we are eventually able to meet personally again we will continue to use it to connect with those unable to be physically present.

St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, IL

From Sister Benita Coffey

On February 23, our Oblates sponsored a talk by Oblate Judith Valente, free and open to the public. We started this a few years ago, with Oblates doing all the hosting, welcoming, etc. People have welcomed the opportunity and the Sisters, of course, also have the benefit of the presentation. Last year we had Sister Christine Schenk, CSJ.

We have been continuing our Oblate meeting with its “ongoing formation” using Zoom. Also Oblates are being urged to use their Oblate directory to phone or e-mail other Oblates, especially those living alone.

St. Paul's Monastery, St. Paul, MN

From Sister Mary Lou Dummer

These are exciting times we are living in. I am hopeful that God will grant me a couple more years as director. I am presently in the process of naming an oblate as my co-director who will then become director when I no longer can function in this ministry.

Prince of Peace Abbey, Oceanside, CA

From Brother Daniel Sokol

Brother Daniel submitted the following as a reminder for those who cannot attend Mass and receive the precious gift of the Eucharistic during this pandemic time:

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION PRAYER TO BE SAID ANYWHERE

Oh Jesus, I turn toward the holy tabernacle where you live hidden for love of me. I love you, O my God. I cannot receive you in Holy Communion. Come, nevertheless, and visit me with Your grace. Come spiritually into my heart. Purify it. Sanctify it. Render it like unto Your own. Amen.

Lord, I am not worthy that Thou should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed. Amen.

Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, NE

From Father Volker Futter

To stay in touch with the Oblates and friends we streamed all our services and Vespers and Compline on Facebook. The last two Oblate Meetings we conducted very successfully with ZOOM Video. The first meeting I had 28 participants, quite a few from outside states.

St. Benedict's Monastery, Winnipeg, MB

Sister Mary Coswin

We did manage to have a zoom Oblate gathering where 14 of our 20 Oblates gathered for a short prayer, song and a check-in that lasted over one hour. Everyone expressed how good it was to 'see' one another. We plan to have another virtual gathering in June 2020.

St. Benedict's Abbey, Bartonville, IL

Fr. Harold Camacho

Fr. Harold presented a conference on the Benedictine value of silence at the Abbey's annual gathering for the Oblates. Here is an excerpt from the conference:

"Wisdom don't come easy; only if life teaches us enough to pay attention... Silence is a culture worth adopting and developing- especially as a spiritual tool! It makes us 'aware' of God's location (which normally is not too far...) and how are we to "keep (and stick) to his commands". It helps us build our house on solid rock- instead of sand, which no wind or storm could destroy! It makes us prophets- if we stick to only using our voice to echo His voice; priests- if we earnestly endeavor to serve others, rather than being served; kings- for we will actively engage in bringing His kingdom to come- rather than to sit and wait!" †

Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, ID

From Sister Teresa Jackson and Oblate Jeannette Kelley

Oblates of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, are excited to announce the formation of our new Leadership Team and the July 1, 2020 retirement of our current coordinators, Teresa Jackson, OSB and Jeannette Kelley, OblSB. They have been our coordinators for almost fourteen years, with Jeannette being our primary representative at NAABOD gatherings since before that time.

Our process of changing leaders began with a task force of three oblates, Sr. Teresa, and Jeannette, to suggest a good model. Having a Lead Coordinator, Formation Coordinator, and Administrative Coordinator was approved at our October 2019 retreat. Nominations for those positions were solicited, Sr. Teresa and Jeannette interviewed potential leaders and made a recommendation to our Prioress Sr. Mary Forman for the final selection. Our new leaders are oblates Jane Somerton, Lead Coordinator; Barbara Wodynski, Formation Coordinator; and Debbie McCoy, Administrative Coordinator.

The impact of the COVID-19 virus caused the cancellation of both our spring and June retreats. Our tradition is for oblations to take place at the monastery during the spring retreat. As an alternative, this year those oblations will take place in our area oblate community groups sometime during the summer. A member of our Leadership Team will take part in each of these rituals. There are oblate and novice candidates in five of our nine oblate communities.

St. Joseph Monastery, Tulsa, OK

From Sister Christine Ereiser



Sister Christine Ereiser was appointed Oblate Director for St. Joseph Monastery on July 1, 2020. She is the immediate past Prioress of her monastery and has just completed a sabbatical year. Welcome to NAABOD, Sister Christine!

Monastery Immaculate Conception, Ferdinand, IN

From Sister Brenda Engleman

In March, one of our Oblates purchased a new church cam for our monastic and Oblate communities. Now we have many more Oblates participating in our services from all over the U.S. – from Washington, D.C., Ohio, Missouri, Georgia, Virginia, and North Carolina...to mention only a few. With our churches being closed for so long, the church cam has been a Godsend for many people. The Oblates have come to recognize many of us. When I leave after each service, I wave at the Oblates. They always comment that they wave back.

Like many of you reading this message, we needed to cancel many Oblate meetings. Disappointed as we were, we agreed not to have our annual picnic. Also, we chose to cancel a bus trip to Central Kentucky, concerned about the risks involved. However, most all of the Oblates and the Sisters supported the above events, knowing that there WILL be other opportunities in the future for us.

Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, AL

Sister Priscilla Cohen

Our annual Oblate Retreat was held via Zoom on October 9-10, 2020. There were twenty-eight Oblates in attendance. Sister Mary Jo Polak, OSB from Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, South Dakota was the Retreat Director. The overall theme was “Matters of the Heart in the Rule of St. Benedict.” The following is an excerpt of her presentation:



Sr. Mary Jo Polak, OSB

Sometimes we think of Benedict as the Rule-giver, a wise but strict Father-figure. But with a closer look, we see how often Benedict talks about matters of the heart and the attitudes of our hearts needed to be good monastics.

The retreat began with an online gathering Friday evening at 7 p.m. for an introductory talk inviting all to enter into the inner room of their hearts.

Saturday’s talks explored the themes that St. Benedict uses when describing the heart of a monk in the thirty-one times he uses “heart” in the Rule. The retreat closed with a short talk to remind all of the courage — and encouragement — with which to carry on our Christian journey. The Oblates virtually renewed their annual oblation in the presence of Prioress Sister Tonette Sperando.



Sister Priscilla has been conducting Oblate Candidate classes via Zoom, as well as a book study on [St. Benedict's Toolbox](#) (Jane Tomaine). She has also interviewed inquirers via Zoom, including a virtual tour of the monastery.

Some of our Oblates are contributing blogs to our monastery website. Oblate Jan Vinita White describes her pandemic experience in her blog entitled “Pandemic Sheltering and St. Benedict”:

<https://www.shmon.org/community/blog/pandemic-sheltering-and-st-benedict/>





Dorothy Day, Benedictine Oblate and Servant of God

Submitted by Oblate Rosalie G. Riegler, St. Scholastica Monastery, Chicago, IL

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) became a Roman Catholic when she was a young radical writer living in New York. Several years later, Peter Maurin, a French intellectual, educated her into our deep European heritage, often quoting St. Benedict's "ore et labore." This phrase became a touchstone for the Catholic Worker newspaper and movement they founded together in 1933. In one of the first issues of *The Catholic Worker*, Dorothy pointed out that "The early monasteries designated monks as hospitallers and almoners, . . . giving food, clothing, and shelter to the needy." While not a religious order, the Catholic Worker strives to help the needy in just that way. In farms and houses of hospitality all over the world, Workers live in simplicity with the poor they serve and protest against war and injustice.

As the movement grew, Dorothy's life became very busy, but she always started and ended her day in prayer and attended Mass whenever she could. In fact, she was known to say that if one is busy, one needed to take even more time for prayer. Keeping the balance.

In the early 1930s, Dorothy was attracted to St. Procopius Benedictine Abbey in Lisle, Illinois because of its mission to promote unity between Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodoxy. Years later she became an oblate of that abbey, with her investiture taking place in NYC in April 26, 1955. Oblation in those days seems to have been primarily for spiritual nourishment, not for the building of community one finds today, but several Catholic Workers have become Benedictine Oblates, following Dorothy's lead.

Dorothy's life as a lay Catholic leader was often at odds with both her country's and her church's leadership, making her a fitting saint for today's tumultuous times. So Catholic Workers everywhere were excited when the Vatican opened the cause for her canonization in 2000. (See <http://dorothydayguild.org/> for full details.)

On March 2 of 2018, the title "Benedictine Oblate" was added to Dorothy's official cause, so oblates will now stand tall to have her as part of their heritage. To pray for hope in these hard times, please join in a novena with her, beginning on November 20 and ending on November 29, the 40th anniversary of her death. (See www.NovenaWithDorothyDay.org.) And please pray for her canonization, as well. Who knows? Perhaps in our lifetime, oblates from all over the world will be able to celebrate together in Rome as St. Dorothy Day joins St. Frances of Rome as a canonized oblate saint.

"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us."

— Dorothy Day

NAABOD Annual Membership Dues

(see form on pg. 10 or on website naabod.org)

**Please mail your Monastery's \$50.00 membership dues
for January 1, 2021-December 31, 2021.**

Make check payable to NAABOD

Mail to:

Sister Priscilla Cohen, OSB

916 Convent Road NE

Cullman, Alabama 35055

Oblate Director News

What exciting things are happening with your Oblates?

Please send any news you wish to share for future newsletters.

Please send content to Sister Priscilla Cohen– priscillacohen@hotmail.com

Save the Date

NAABOD Biennial Conference

August 5-10, 2021

St. Meinrad Archabbey

St. Meinrad, Indiana

Hopefully!!!



A decision will be made in January 2021





The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD)

Membership Dues Invoice

Monastery Membership in North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors
Membership in the Association is open to all monasteries following the Rule of St. Benedict that have oblates or are considering inviting oblate members. Monastery membership includes Oblate Director (s) of a monastery officially appointed by the monastic leadership and Professed monastics or oblates officially appointed as Associate Directors by the monastic leadership.

Dues: \$50 for ONE YEAR January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021

We appreciate your prompt response.

Please make check payable to NAABOD

FROM

Name: _____

Title: _____

Community Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ FAX _____

Email address: _____

On separate page, please provide name, address, phone, email address and FAX of Associate Directors that are included in your monastery membership.

Please, mail this invoice with your check to:

Sr. Priscilla Cohen, OSB

Sacred Heart Monastery

916 Convent Road NE

Cullman, AL 35055

Make a copy of this for your own records.