



Oblate NEWSLETTER

Spring 2022

Oblate Lenten Retreat



March 13, 2022
10-3 pm CDT
online or
in person

Monastery
Community Room

As we anticipate this holy season of Lent, we are excited to announce that one of our newer oblates, Jeffrey Johnson, will present this year's oblate Lenten retreat.

Although Jeff formalized his commitment by making final oblation in 2018, his local roots and connections with the sisters date back many years. His career in educational leadership has led to his current position as principal at St. Vincent Pallotti Catholic School, an inner-city school in Milwaukee, WI.

Living at a distance, we would anticipate that Jeff's busy life would keep him away from his monastic home; however, he is a willing helper whenever we have major events to lend his many talents to assist the community.

The topic for this retreat is intriguing:

*The Rule—Knife in Bed and
1/2 Bottle of Wine*

The schedule promises a relaxed pace of conferences, time to reflect and time to share. If it is not possible for you to attend both morning and afternoon sessions, you are welcome to join us at 1:00 pm.

If you will be attending virtually, a Zoom link will be sent out a week before the retreat.

Retreat Protocol (at the monastery)

Please RSVP to (701) 355-8909 or email:
oblates@annunciationmonastery.org

Let us know 1) if you will be here for morning, afternoon or both sessions, 2) if you will join us for Mass, 3) if you plan to join us for lunch. If you plan to bring guests (encouraged!), please include them in your RSVP. This allows us to plan seating and adequate food.

Our Covid protocol remains cautious: if you are not fully vaccinated, please wear a mask while at the monastery.



Oblate News

From the mouth of a Benedictine Baby:



When Gabriel Barr was born, our sisters gifted his parents (oblates Daniel and Priscilla Barr) with a onesie bearing the stencil: Benedictine Baby. Gabriel is now a year older than this picture, but still associates this statue with his vision of Saint Benedict. The family was recently visiting Priscilla's parents in Arizona from where Daniel sent the following conversation—too cute not to share.

Daniel says—Today when I was getting dressed, I was putting my oblate pin on.

Gabriel—”Is that a cross?”

Daniel—”Yes, it's a special cross for St. Benedict.”

Gabriel—”Is he the one who climbed a ladder to see Jesus?”

Daniel adds: He always associates St. Benedict with the ladder statue (by the Benedictine Center on the campus of the University of Mary), but I think on the whole that's not a bad one-line description of the saint.

New Reading Recommendation

Esther de Waal, Benedictine Oblate in Wales. *The White Stone: The art of letting go*. Liturgical Press.

International Oblate Congress

The World Congress of Benedictine Oblates will hold its fifth congress at the Badia Primaziale-Sant'Anselmo, in Rome, from September 9-16, 2023. If you think that you might be interested in attending, please let us know.

Oblate Formation Program

As we seek new oblats to join with our community in living the Benedictine way of life, we again begin plans for the fall cohort of the formation program. The program begins anew in October and meets one Saturday morning a month for about three hours for twelve months ending with final Oblation.

We have now completed the first half of the second cohort of the new program with a cohort of four candidates, one inquirer and five current oblats. All report a very positive experience which gives a thorough grounding in the Rule as well as the practical aspects of living the Benedictine charism as a layperson.



Oblate formation group after the November Candidacy ritual—Candidates David Gray, Tillie Fischer, Allison Fitzgerald and Jeannine Saabye with Subprioress Sister Rosanne Zastoupil and Oblate Director Sister Rosemary DeGracia.

We are again forming next year's cohort and openings are available for newly interested persons and oblats wishing to deepen their lived experience as oblats. Sessions are presented by sisters and oblats with the guidance of an Oblate Formation Team and assisted by oblate mentors who meet monthly (electronically or in person) with Candidates.

If this sounds like an opportunity you would like to be part of, please contact Sr. Rosemary at (701)355-8909 or by email at: oblates@annunciationmonastery.org

Oblates—Joy as well as grief

Four Make Final Oblation



Left to right: Martha Iverson, Emily Lysne, Julie Yarwood, Marianne Hofer

Annunciation Monastery welcomes four new Oblates of Annunciation Monastery celebrating their oblation this past November. They completed a year of formation studying the Rule of St. Benedict and how to apply it in their daily lives. Martha made the monthly trip from Oakes to persevere in her formation. She has served as Director of Religious Education in her home parish. Emily, Julie and Marianne are part of an intentional community of women serving at the University of Mary dedicated to the intellectual apostolate, all teach at the university but also have other administrative and ministerial responsibilities there.

Oblate Poet Jane Greer



Oblate Jane Greer's poetry and literary skill has long attracted the attention of periodicals and now is appearing in the journal *First Things*. Jane's poem, *As It Turns Out*, appears in the February 2022 issue.

American Benedictine Academy

Monastic research grants and an essay contest are available from the American Benedictine Academy to oblates.

For additional information please visit: <https://americanbenedictine.org/grants-awards/>

Deceased Oblates & Family Members

We extend our prayers and sympathy to the families of these recently deceased oblates and family members:

Alvina Campbell, oblate and faithful friend of the sisters and many oblates. Alvina died May 12, 2021. Alvina was always willing to assist the oblate program in any way she could— baker, clean-up or transportation provided to oblates who did not drive. We all miss her.



Michael Blazek, husband of longtime oblate Valerie Blazek, died on December 6, 2021, surrounded by his family. Mike shared volunteering with the St. Vincent de Paul society with several of our oblates.

Rosemary Olson, mother of oblate Claudia Dietrich and frequent guest at oblate gatherings and retreats, died on January 26, 2022. We will miss her gentle presence.

Donald "Donnie" Readel, husband of oblate Jackie Readel, coordinator of the Jamestown oblate group, died on February 10, 2022. Donnie was active in the Knights of Columbus and Elks in Jamestown.



Dear Friends—Knowing that I have left little space to offer a lead-in to the Lenten season, I reflect on a call to simplicity that often strikes me at this penitential time. It stands in contrast to a consumer view of society that values acquisition instead of renunciation. Elsewhere in this newsletter I have recommended the new book by Benedictine oblate Esther deWaal— *The White Stone: The art of letting go*. We are all called to this journey, and this Lent, I am particularly called to embark upon both spiritual and material "house cleaning." When a sister passes into Eternity, it is the responsibility of some sisters in the monastery to sort through her personal possessions and make a determination of their future use. Family items are passed on to close family members, items pertaining to her religious life and ministries often go to our Archives, sisters are invited to select a memento of the sister to remember her by. This year, I seek to make this task as simple as possible for those who will do this when I die by divesting of family items to family now and leaving much less to be sorted. We all have our ways of "letting go"—not just of things, but of old hurts, regrets. May yours be an occasion of joy rather than sadness, leaving you this Lent feeling a little less burdened—ready for the Paschal Mystery to unfold once again.

Blessings, Sr. Rosemary DeGracia, Oblate Director

Oblate Program
Annunciation Monastery
7520 University Drive
Bismarck, ND 58504