



THE BENEDICTINE OBLATE NEWSLETTER

Westminster Abbey

P.O. Box 3310, Mission, B. C., Canada V2V 4J5

August 2026

Dear Oblates and Friends of the Abbey,

In my three years as Acting Oblate Director, I had hoped to be more regular in publishing this Newsletter, and I apologize for my tardiness. Well, here we are, summer of 2026. I am grateful for all the prayers and support the Oblates have offered during these past three years. Father Leo placed me in good hands, and now it seems the Lord is keeping me in your hands and you in mine: as of July 1, Father Leo has retired as Oblate Director, having been appointed Novice and Junior Master to the monks of our monastic community, and I have taken on the role of Oblate Director. I must admit that while I forgo the title of “Acting,” with the help of the Lord’s grace I will hold fast to the dramatic and lively spirit with which I serve the Oblate community. In light of these changes, I would like to give Father Leo the opportunity to share his own words of gratitude and farewell.

Words of Gratitude and Farewell— *by Father Leo Barker OSB*

Dear Oblates,

As I step into my new role as Novice and Junior Master for our monastic community, my heart is filled with deep gratitude for the time we have shared together, even though I served as Oblate Director for only a short time. I am profoundly thankful for your prayers and your faithful witness to the Rule of St. Benedict.

For those who may be wondering what a Novice and Junior Master does: my primary focus will now be assisting our young monks as they discern and grow in their monastic calling. Yet, the Oblate family will always hold a very special place in my heart.

Thank you for your kindness, your prayers, and your steady commitment to our Abbey. I leave you in wonderful hands, and I pray that our Lord continues to deepen your faith, hope, and love in the years ahead.

In the Peace of Christ.

Community Updates

Over the course of this year, the Lord has blessed our community with new members. We give thanks to God for this great blessing. We also extend our prayers to those who have made their final oblation since March 2025: Father Patrick Le, Deacon Ryan Sales, Luke Deschamps, Carol and Greg Anderson, Oanh (Mary) McDaniel, Angela Frendo and Michal Mieszkowski and Anna Mieszkoska, and David Minor.

Potluck on September 20

On Sunday, September 20, there will also be a potluck lunch at 11:30 a.m. held at Larina Reyes-Smith’s home. Father Abbot Alban and Father Leo will be present. If you are interested in attending, please contact Veronica Frembling at Veronica@atsi.biz.

Oblate Sundays

On Sunday, September 20, Oblate Conferences will resume at 3:00 p.m. This year's topic, "The Anthropology of Christ's Love", will be inspired from a set of talks by Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori, O.Cist, Abbot General of the Cistercian Order. Various monks will present throughout the year.

Renovation Updates

Throughout July, the monastic community has been dining in the high school refectory while the elevator undergoes renovation. Those who use the elevator will notice little change in its outward appearance, but all of the underlying circuitry and mechanisms that move it are being replaced.

On another renovation note, the kitchen is mostly on schedule to be completed by September, just in time for the upcoming school year. Brother Joseph informed me that in a couple of weeks time, we will begin moving kitchen equipment from the temporary kitchen back into the renovated kitchen. Currently, the community has received \$511,817.00 in donations for the Kitchen Renovation Project, the total cost being \$1,500,000. If you know anyone who would like to support the project, please share with them the following link: [Kitchen Renovation Project](#).

Learning to Be Loved: Reflections on My Oblate Journey – *by Gil Villarante, Oblate*

On the first day of the Oblate retreat, summer of 2024, I got to my room, unpacked my things, and brought out my Bible and laid it open on my desk. My hope was to seek God, as this was something I had desired since I started this journey attending the talks on the Rule of St. Benedict in September of 2022.

During Brother Maximus's talk on "Hospitality" on a Saturday morning, the second day of the retreat, a word came to me: "Allow God to love you."

At my confession with Father Joseph that afternoon, he said exactly the same words. This stayed with me the whole day—during personal prayer time, during our meal, during chores washing dishes, and during our vigil. So my question to myself was: how can I allow God to love me?

When I came back to my room that night, I saw my Bible opened to Matthew 13, and my eyes fell on verses 44–45: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

I think the parable of the treasure and the pearl was telling me that I was invited—called—to enter the Kingdom of God, and not to let this opportunity of becoming a lay oblate pass by.

In the Bible reflection, the parable says he hides it again. Ordinarily, it is God who hides the treasure again after showing it to us, for it will truly be ours only when we have worked for it and persevered. Everything must be sold. We have to divest ourselves of all those habits and pleasures that occupy our hearts.

This spoke to me about working hard to fight my own weaknesses and to allow God to love me. This is difficult to do. I have been in this situation before, and I feel like I'm just going in circles. I need help.

I sensed He brought me to this community of oblates to “listen”—to abide in the Rule—and to change. If I stay with my brothers and sisters, I have a better chance of overcoming my spiritual struggles.

Also, one essential thing I've learned since I started attending the oblate conferences is that I need to consecrate myself to the Lord each day, so that I too may be able to “participate” in offering myself through the Holy Eucharist during Mass.

On December 2, after my morning rosary, I was inspired by Mother Mary's “yes” to the Angel Gabriel. After meditating on Isaiah 2:3, the first reading that day, I found the courage to email Father Caesarius and ask him if I could make my final oblation. On December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Father Caesarius finally responded to my email, and I was filled with joy, a joy I had not experienced before.

I thank God for His mercy and love. I thank God for my sisters and brothers, and for the whole Benedictine community.

Please pray for me, so that I may journey with you in seeking our Lord in every hour of each day.

St. Benedict, pray for us.

Conclusion

As we wrap up this second issue of our “revived” newsletter, we continue to invite you, our oblates, to send us your own reflections, however brief, for future issues. Whether you have walked this path for decades or are just discerning your first steps, your story matters to this community and may be exactly the word another oblate needs to hear. Until we meet again, either in these pages or in person, may you find the stability and peace that St. Benedict's wisdom offers. “Listen carefully, my child, to your master's precepts, and incline the ear of your heart” (RB, Prologue). May God bless you abundantly as we continue this journey together.

Yours in Christ,
Father Caesarius Marple, osb
Oblate Director