



THE BENEDICTINE OBLATE NEWSLETTER

Westminster Abbey

P.O. Box 3310, Mission, B. C., Canada V2V 4J5 March 2025

Dear Oblates and Friends of the Abbey,

Welcome to the revival of our Westminster Abbey Oblate Newsletter! After several years of dormancy, we are blessed to reconnect through these pages as we celebrate two significant feasts in our Benedictine calendar this month: St. Frances of Rome (March 9) and the principal Feast of St. Benedict (March 21). This newsletter aims to strengthen the bonds between us as we walk together on this Benedictine path. In these pages, you'll find spiritual reflections, community updates, and most importantly, personal testimonies from fellow oblates sharing how the Rule has transformed their lives. As St. Benedict writes, "Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ" (RB 53:1) - in this same spirit, may we receive each other's stories with open hearts, finding Christ present in the shared experiences of our community. We hope this quarterly publication becomes a cherished companion on your spiritual journey.

Spiritual Reflection

"For Saint Benedict, humility being the form of the life and mystery of Christ, is the path of our conformation to him and our participation in the Paschal mystery, and so, the form according to which we freely and fully live the grace of our baptism. This means to say that the only reason to embrace humility and to progress in it is the desire for Christ, the desire to adhere and conform to Jesus Christ. It is only in Him and for Him that humility has a sense and can be lived as a fullness of life." – Mauro Giuseppi Lepori, Chapters on Humility, 7 September 2012.

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 last year: David Strutz, Barbara Van Heiningen, Josie Castillo, Georgina Taylor, Gil Villarante, Samuel Menseh, Jenny Lee. If there is anyone I have forgotten please forgive me. We can all take solace in the prophet Isaiah from time to time: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15).

Musings on Monastic Life – *by Anonymous, Oblate*

On my first visit to the Abbey, I still remember how I felt the moment our car turned right into the driveway of the Abbey – a palpable feeling of peace and being "home". In the guesthouse, I observed the first monk I'd ever seen and met. He was talking to someone as if that person was the only one in existence. He did the same when he talked to another guest. Unknowingly, I was witnessing and experiencing firsthand, on my first visit, the Benedictine charism of hospitality.

My second visit was when I attended a gathering hosted by the Abbey a few weeks later. I was talking to a monk about my search for the right order to join as a lay person. He said: “You can bob with us until you find the right one”. That statement still reverberates in my ears to this date. OSB was to be my spiritual home. So, from a day of obligation Mass attendee, I became a more active participant in my faith in my daily life and work according to the spirit of the Rule of St. Benedict.

Although I pray the Office, I still struggle to do so consistently. However, since I became an oblate, I start my day by renewing my oblation. This gives me the assurance that I have handed over to God every moment of my day, my existence. Every morning I ask Him to give me the courage, strength, humility, and wisdom to walk the hours He has set for me. In my work, every patient I see is an offering of service to Him. Anywhere I see a patient is an altar of service to Him. And in my prayers, I remind Him that my soul is prostrate at the foot of the Cross so as to be bathed in the Blood of His love and mercy. That when I am praying, I do so together with my husband and children because they are always in my heart.

It is unfortunate that I still struggle to engage in any conversation involving faith. I feel very inadequate and ignorant to be able to evangelize in words. My hope is that, with His grace, I am able to evangelize through my work and manners.

Westminster Abbey is my spiritual home. The Benedictine family – monks, nuns, oblates – is my spiritual family.

Anchored in the Lord’s Peace – *by Luc Deschamps, Oblate Novice*

Thank you for inviting me to share my personal reflections on my experiences as a novice oblate. I was recently discharged from the hospital and am now recovering from a minor stroke. In my hospital bed, I laid the Rule of Saint Benedict on the table in front of me, and I’m engrossed in reading the book “Finding the Monk Within” by Edward C. Sellner. I absolutely love it!

When I first started reading about the Rule of Benedict, it highlighted areas in my life where I needed to make changes. I was curious about the Benedictine Monastery of Westminster Abbey and after I attended my first Sunday afternoon meeting, and after speaking to Father Caesarius, I made my decision to become a Benedictine Oblate. I was blessed when Father Caesarius accepted my desire to become a Benedictine Oblate. The Rule opened my eyes to monastic ideals such as the importance of community, prayer, care for the poor, humility, obedience, stability, faith, friendship, and contemplation.

By contemplating the Rule, I was inspired and provoked to join a small neighborhood Christian community that meets weekly. I called an old friend of mine whom I had neglected over the years, and now we love to meet regularly. I joined a prayer group to intercede for the churches, and I became a food bank volunteer to provide food and clothing to anyone who needs help—all are welcomed with no questions asked. My schedule is arranged in a way that makes my week manageable.

The Rule has definitely helped me walk the talk and has deeply enriched and deepened my love for Christ and changed my life.

I love all of the shared rich wisdom of the monks and priests of Westminster Abbey and what they bring to the table at our monthly meetings.

Through my journey as a novice oblate, I have sensed Christ drawing nearer. His presence is more powerful than ever, and He is helping me trust in His friendship and in His voice. It was His voice that anchored me in His peace last Saturday when I was rushed to the emergency room struggling with a stroke. On my way to the hospital, Christ sat next to me and put His arm on my shoulder and gently whispered in my ear His promise, "It's going to be alright."

During my five-day stay in the hospital, I was afraid of experiencing another stroke, and His promise gave me great hope and comfort. It was a battle for six days to get my blood pressure under control, and all of the staff did their best to prevent the recurrence of another stroke. They were all amazing!

What does this story have to do with the Rule? Everything! Christ and my newfound friend Benedict interceded for me for protection and recovery.

Six days later, my blood pressure returned to normal, of course with the help of medication.

I live in Langley, and one of my biggest challenges is trying to connect with my oblate community. The other challenge is learning about the Divine Office and how to incorporate it into my life. Since I have been away from the Roman Catholic Church for decades, I have had oblates graciously help me, but still, I need more help.

As we close this first issue of our revived newsletter, we invite you to ponder how the Rule continues to shape your daily walk with Christ. The testimonies shared here remind us that our Benedictine journey offers both profound consolation in difficult times and gentle challenges that lead to growth. Whether you are a longtime oblate or just beginning this path, remember that you remain connected to the prayers and community life of Westminster Abbey even when physically distant. Please consider sharing your own story for our July issue, which will coincide with the Translatio of St. Benedict (July 11). Until we meet again—either in these pages or in person at our gatherings—may you find the balance, 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 journey together toward Easter.

Yours in Christ,

The Oblate Directors