

Autumn Issue  
November 2010



# Oblate Newsletter

Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, AL

## Highlights

From the Oblate Director

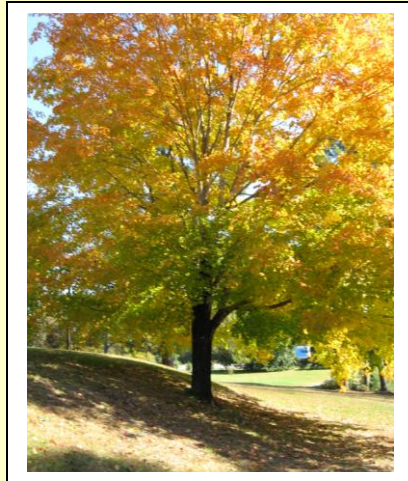
Oblate Weekend

Oblate News

Formation Corner

Community News

*"Through oblation, which means the "offering of oneself," [Oblates] shape their lives by living the wisdom of Christ as interpreted by St. Benedict. By integrating prayer and work, they manifest Christ's presence in society. ...[They] worship, learn, and work with the monastic community in order to spread the Benedictine charism in their own churches, families, and workplaces."*



*"But I believe  
I shall enjoy  
the Lord's goodness  
in the land of the living.  
Wait for the Lord,  
take courage;  
be stouthearted,  
wait for the Lord."*

## Oblate Director's Message

The season of autumn with its vibrant colors always reminds me of the following passage from Ecclesiastes 3:1-3

*"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:*

*a time to be born, and a time to die;*



*a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what was planted...a time to break down, and a time to build up..."*

The illuminative colors of the leaves that wake us to God's beauty remind me of conversion. Each year as I watch the leaves dance gently to the ground, I think of the vow of conversion and know something within me is letting go to welcome something new. Esther de Waal, in her book Seeking God, sees it this way: "...the vow of *conversatio* is a recognition of God's unpredictability, which confronts our own love of cosiness or safety. It means that we have to live provisionally, ready to respond to the new whenever and however that might appear. There is no security here, no clinging to past certainties. Rather we must expect to see our chosen idols successively

broken. It means a constant letting go."

In St. Paul's words, *"Forgetting what is behind me, and reaching out for that which lies ahead, I press towards the goal to win the prize which is God's call to the life above, in Christ Jesus."*

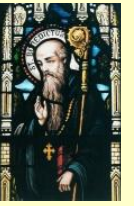
I invite you to find a quiet spot outdoors to witness the leaves falling and as you ponder their graceful "letting go" meditate on your own autumn time:

- *What must I let go of at this time in my life?*
- *How have I lived out my promise of *conversatio*?*
- *To what new thing is God calling me?*

May God bless you and your family during this time of Thanksgiving. I am truly grateful for your many gifts to us.

May you continue to grow faithfully in the Benedictine way of life.

Lovingly in St. Benedict,  
*Sister Priscilla Cohen, OSB*



*“Receive me, Lord,  
as you have  
promised,  
and I shall live;  
do not disappoint me  
in my hope.”*  
PS. 118 [119]:116



Father John Martin Shimkus.

## *“Listening with the Ear of Our Heart”*

The Oblates of Sacred Heart Monastery gathered October 8-10, 2010 for their annual retreat. Father John Martin Shimkus, OSB of St. Benedict Monastery in Oxford, Michigan directed the retreat. His theme was *“Listening with the Ear of Our Heart: The Spirituality of St. Benedict.”* We enjoyed his holy and joyous presence. Fr. John Martin shared with us that the power of Benedictine spirituality can be applied to anyone. St. Benedict was a spiritual father and his intention was to lead people to God. Therefore, the principles of St. Benedict’s teachings are appropriate to all. Spirituality is a practical thing and St. Benedict

answers real life questions. Practical spirituality begins in the heart and is a journey of listening~ to God in our hearts and in those who have claim on our hearts. Some of the tools that enable us to listen are the bell (the Voice of God), a reminder to do something important. *Lectio divina*, listening to the Word of God, is the process that changes us and becomes part of us and we in turn become the breath of God with one another. **Work** is part of what makes us people of God. We are being worked on by God and through our work in God everything assumes sacred value. **Hospitality** is the virtue by which we make room for Christ in one another.

*“As we come to recognize the reality of another person,  
we welcome Christ.” ~ Fr. John Martin Shimkus, OSB*

Hospitality is more than just room and board. It demands “befriending the stranger,” opening to another and the willingness to make contact with and see Christ available in another.

Father John Martin provided a visual reflection of stones. When stones are in constant contact with one another, they are eventually smoothed out. In our daily contact with one another, our hearts become smoother and we become more patient and gentle and move toward what God created us to be.

Forgiveness is also a vital tool that

frees our heart to know that we must rely on God’s power to make the impossible possible. We need to forgive and we need to be forgiven and that is the only way to healing.

*“Your way of acting  
should be different from  
the world’s way;  
the love of Christ  
must come before all else.”*

Rule of St. Benedict 4:20-21

## Oblation Ceremony



### Final Oblation

Mary Jane Brown- Brentwood, TN  
Shauna Schafer-Huntsville, AL  
Juana Colvin- Birmingham, AL  
Jan Vanita White- Huntsville, AL

### Candidates

Brenda Thomas- Florence, AL  
Yvonne Elmore- Montgomery, AL

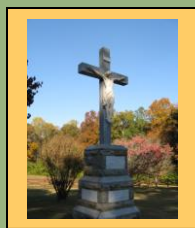
Renewal-34 Oblates renewed oblation

## In Memoriam



Oblate Judy Osmon  
November 2, 2010  
A faithful Oblate  
and  
woman of joy

*May she rest in peace.*



## Oblate News

*“Yearn  
for everlasting  
life  
with  
holy desire.”*

RB 4:47

Oblate Judy Osmon went home to God on November 2, 2010 after suffering a terminal illness. Judy was a true woman of joy, even in her illness. She saw beauty in everyone and was so hospitable to all she met. She was always ready to help out with monastery and oblate activities. She will be truly missed by the Sisters and Oblates. Please keep her husband, Dave, and family in your prayers.

Abba Lot visited Abba Joseph and summarized his religious life this way: *“Abba, I recite the liturgy the best I can, sometimes I fast, I pray and meditate, I try to live peacefully with others, and I attempt to cleanse my thoughts. What more can I do?”*

The old man Joseph stood up, stretching his hands toward heaven. His fingers seemed to be ten lamps of fire. He said to Lot, *“If you will, you can become all flame.”* *By Way of the Desert*, Bernard Bangley



*Please keep the following  
Oblates in your prayers:*

Inez Kingsley

Catherine Rice

Catherine Barrett

Libby Blanton

William Busic

Donna Pittman



## Formation Corner

[www.shmon.org](http://www.shmon.org)  
(Oblate site, several links)

**Sr. Priscilla's blog**  
*Seeing the Sacred in the Ordinary*  
<http://priscillacohen.blogspot.com>

**St. Meinrad's Fall Newsletter**  
*“Praying the Psalms: A reflection on  
'the elephant in the room’*  
Book review:  
*“Prayers and Rituals for Benedictine  
Oblates”*  
Link on [www.shmon.org](http://www.shmon.org)  
under Oblate site

## Community News

Sister Cecilia is on sabbatical in Ireland.  
Sister Virginia is now Director of Benedictine Manor.  
Sister Sherrie recently completed another computer certification.  
Sister Sara Aiden made her temporary profession and is teaching at Sacred Heart School in Cullman.  
Sister Therese and Sister Elisabeth continue to promote new and creative programs for the Retreat Center. For a list of upcoming programs see the website, [www.shmon.org](http://www.shmon.org)

**AND we all continue to pray for all of you each and every day. Please pray for us also, especially for vocations and for the success of the Capital Campaign.**

