

Section III

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Oblate Leadership

A. Oblate Director

The Oblate Director is appointed by the Monastery's Abbot to direct the Oblate Program of the Benedictine monastic community. In this role, the Oblate Director serves as the community's delegate to the Oblate community. The Rule of St. Benedict and the attachment to the monastery are what bind Oblates together, and the Oblate Director is the person who helps each Oblate develop a strong attachment to both the Rule and the Monastery.

B. Mentor

A person entering the Oblate formation program may consult with an Oblate Mentor chosen from the Mentor list (attached). Mentors volunteer annually and are drawn from the current Oblate membership. Oblates in formation decide how frequently he/she wishes to meet with the Mentor to assist his/her understanding of and participation in the Oblate Program.

C. Oblate Steering Committee

The Oblate Steering Committee was formed in June, 2001. It consists of and is elected by those who have made their final oblation. Members advise and assist the Oblate Director in determining and planning the future course of this Oblate Chapter as well as creating the Oblate Program for each year.

The Steering Committee will consist of five (5) members each of whom will be elected on staggered two-year terms.

The two-year term begins each year in June following the last monthly Oblate meeting.

D. Election to the Oblate Steering Committee

Elections to the Steering Committee are held every year. During the period of January to June, there will be an alternating vote for two (2) or three (3) Steering Committee members every other year. Thus, at the end of a year, two members will step down. The following year, the remaining three will step down.

Eligibility to vote for or serve on the Steering Committee is limited to those who have made final oblation.

Election to the Steering Committee is by majority of votes cast for the open positions.

A Steering Committee member will step down for two years before being eligible for re-election.

A nomination ballot preceding the election will be distributed and will include all those eligible who have made final oblation. In the year where two members will be elected, the top two nominated candidates will be selected. In the alternate year, the top three nominated candidates will be selected. Should a chosen candidate be unable to serve, the nominated oblate with the next highest number of votes will be selected. In the case of tie votes, a decision will be made by lot.

E. Oblate Steering Committee Organization and Principal Duties

A very basic structure for the Steering Committee is as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Chair: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- prepares agenda for meetings- principal contact for the Abbot in an emergency- chairs the Steering Committee meeting- creates environment of listening and sharing- facilitates full exchange of new ideas |
| Vice-Chair: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- assist chair in preparation of agenda- presides at meeting in absence of chair- prompts chair to start and end meeting on time- insures all Steering Committee members are fully informed- improves communication between Steering Committee, the Abbot, all Oblates and Glastonbury community |
| Secretary: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- records the proceedings of the meeting- presents the typed minutes in advance of the next meeting- reports which issues command most time- coordinates with Abbey staff to have Oblate and Oblate Steering Committee meeting dates entered on the Abbey Master Calendar including any Oblate Brunch and Annual Day of Recollection events |
| Oblate Website: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- coordinates with the Abbey staff to have updated information listed in the Oblate section of the Glastonbury Abbey website including the current year's calendar and coordination with the Oblate "Occurrences" scribe monthly news |
| Oblate "Occurrences": | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- creates monthly the summation of Oblate meetings and news that is listed on the Glastonbury Abbey / Oblate section web-site |
| Oblate Membership: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- maintains membership lists for mailings, email blasts |

F. Continued Oblate Formation

Opportunities for ongoing participation and growth in Benedictine life are available:

- A spiritual director is highly recommended (see RB: 7, 58, 73).
- Some resources include:
 - North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD);
 - Benedictine Oblate Facebook (Jerome Hughes, OSB, St. Mary's Abbey, Petersham, MA);
 - International Benedictine Oblates (Congress held every four years; most recent in Rome 2023);
 - American Benedictine Academy (Oblates can join).

Oblate Prayer

The Oblates' Prayer

O Loving God, I ask your blessing
this day on all the Oblates of Saint
Benedict and those with whom we
are affiliated.

Help us to become people of
prayer and peace.

Though scattered far and wide,
help us to be together in the spirit
of your love.

Give us hearts wide enough to
embrace each other as well as
those whose lives we touch.

Enable us to listen and to learn
from each and those around
us each day.

May we be models in our homes,
neighborhoods and communities
of wise stewardship, dignified
human labor, sacred leisure and
reverence for all living things.

Above all, O God, may our
presence among others be a
constant witness of justice,
compassion and hope to all.
Amen.

Alliance for International Monasticism: adapted, S. Walkoviak

Vocation Prayer

Vocation Prayer

Loving God, we praise you for the lives of Saints Benedict and Scholastica. Preferring nothing to the love of Christ, they gave themselves to you in the service of the church as monastics. Grant that through their intercession, men and women today may walk eagerly in the path of your commands and serve you in the monastic life.

We ask this through Jesus your Son. Amen.

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The Monastic Practice of Lectio Divina

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October 26, 2012; revised November 23, 2024

Definition: Lectio Divina (Latin) – Literally, Divine Reading. Synonyms: Prayerful Reading, Spiritual Reading, Holy Reading, etc. It is an approach to prayer, practiced by monastics for centuries, that typically involves a deliberately slow reading and deep meditation on “sacred” texts, primarily the Scriptures.

Purpose: To assimilate the truths contained in the sacred texts and thus sustain the monastic way of life, the purpose of which is to seek God. Since we all should seek God, this practice may be helpful to non-monastics too.

Origins: Origen(!) in the 3rd century, St. Benedict in the 6th century, Guigo II in the 12th century

Origen (185-232 ce): Laid groundwork by promoting the idea that a (spiritual) meaning lay hidden behind the actual literal sense of the text. By the 5th century reading for spiritual truths became a common practice in monasteries.

Benedict (480-547 ce): Instituted Lectio Divina as part of the daily monastic schedule. Daily communal life is divided into “ora et labora” (prayer and work). Prayer is further divided into common prayer (opus Dei – the work of God, that is the divine office), and private prayer (lectio divina). Three hours a day are specified in the Rule of St. Benedict (RB) for lectio.

RB 48 (The Daily Manual Labor) –

48.1 Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor and for prayerful reading.

Guigo II (1140-1193 ce): Expanded and systematized the practice into four stages: lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio.

Practice: There is a wide variation in how to “do” lectio – and this is a good thing!

Lectio Resources:

Bible, Church “Fathers”, daily Lectionary readings, “365-day” books, religious poetry, religious classics (ancient, modern), mystics, etc.

Examples-

Bibles – NRSV, NAB, NIV good. Choose “study or annotated versions” with footnotes. Pick a New Testament book (a Pauline letter, the Acts or a gospel) or the Psalms from the Old Testament. The daily Lectionary readings are also a good resource, and one that keeps you in tune with the Church calendar.

Church “Fathers” – These are typically dense and not for the beginner. I would avoid unless you enjoy thinking on theological topics.

There are many “365-day” books out there. Merton, Bonhoeffer, Buechner, Brennan Manning, collections (Mystics, etc.)

Spiritual-themed poetry by your favorite Christian or “metaphysical” poets.

Spiritual or spiritual-themed classics.

Ancient and modern “mystics” such as Hildegard von Bingen, Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thomas Merton.

Practical Considerations: The following are “environmental” considerations that practitioners have attended to in order to help make Lectio a successful and rewarding experience:

- Time
 - Dedicated
 - Length
 - Alertness
- Space
 - Dedicated (and private)
 - Sacredness
 - Comfort
- Resources & Ritual
 - Pre – Settle down, Prayer, Quietness
 - Post – Prayer, “travel” word/thought, Journaling
 - Be flexible! Experiment!

General Monastic Resources:

- How to be a Monastic and Not Leave your Day Job: An Invitation to Oblate Life, Br. Benet Tvedten, OSB
- Sacred Rhythms: The Monastic Way Every Day, Br. Francis de Sales Wagner, OSB, Editor
- Monk Habits for Everyday People: Benedictine Spirituality for Protestants, Dennis Okholm
- Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina, Fr. Michael Casey, OCSO

Group Lectio Divina presenter outline

I. “Quiet yourselves before the Lord, making a simple act of faith, thanksgiving, and praise.” (Ring bell or singing bowl after 1 min)

II. **Lectio** – reading the Scripture

- a. “As we listen to the Word of God for the first time, I invite you to be aware of any word or words that catches/catch your attention”
- b. Read the scripture passage out loud. Allow 1 minute of reflection. This is the first reading.
- c. “Please share out loud with the whole group if you are so moved, a word or words that caught your attention.”
- d. After sharing, “Let us take another minute of silent reflection to let these words sink deeper within us.”
- e. Ring bell or singing bowl after 1 minute.

III. **Meditatio** – meditate on the Scripture

- a. “As we listen to the Word of God for a second time, I invite you to be aware of any short thought or phrase that you became aware of as you listened – a short thought or phrase.”
- b. Read the scripture passage out loud. Allow 1 minute of reflection. This is the second reading.
- c. “Please share out loud with the whole group if you are so moved, a short thought or phrase that you became aware of as you listened.”
- d. After sharing, “Let us take another minute of silence in order to allow what was shared to sink deeper within us.”
- e. Ring bell or singing bowl after 1 minute

IV. Oratio – responding to the Word of God via affective prayer

- a. “As we listen to the Word of God for a third time, I invite you to be aware of any prayer that rises up within you that expresses what you are experiencing in the Word of God.”
- b. Read the scripture passage out loud. Allow 1 minute of reflection. This is the third reading.
- c. “Please share out loud with the whole group if you are so moved, a prayer that expresses what you experienced in this Word of God.”
- d. After sharing, “Let us take another minute of silence in order to allow what was shared to sink deeper within us.”
- e. Ring bell or singing bowl after 1 minute

V. Contemplatio – resting in the Word of God via contemplation

- a. “As we listen to the Word of God for a fourth time, I invite you to just sit with the passage and allow God to speak to you in the silence of your hearts. God’s first language is silence.”
- b. Read the scripture passage out loud. Allow 2 minutes of silence. This is the fourth or last reading.

VI. Closing Prayer [“Let us pray”]

Almighty God, thank you for the gift of your Word. May we take the word or phrase that spoke to us, the thought that we became aware of, and the prayer that came to our hearts into the activity of this meeting and into our day tomorrow as a reminder of our genuine desire to consent to your presence and action in our lives. We pray this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen
(Ring singing bowl or bell to end session)

Oblate Reading List

Suggested Reading for Observers

Preferring Christ: A Devotional Commentary and Workbook on the Rule of Saint Benedict (*Norvene Vest*)

Reaching for God: The Benedictine Oblate Way of Life (*Sr. Roberta Werner, OSB*)

Oblate Book Study

A Guide to Living in the Truth: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility (*Michael Casey, OSCO*)

A Lever and a Place to Stand: The Contemplative Stance, The Active Prayer (*Richard Rohr, OFM*)

How to Be a Monastic and Not Leave Your Day Job: An Invitation to Oblate Life (*Benet Tvedten, OSB*)

Monastery of the Heart (*Joan Chittister, OSB*)

Thoughts Matter: The Practice of the Spiritual Life (*Mary Margaret Funk, OSB*)

Other Books To Consider (by no means complete)

A Life Giving Way: A Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict (*Esther de Waal*)

A Monastic Year: Reflections from a Monastery (*Brother Victor-Antoine D'Avila-Latourrette, OSB*)

A Share in the Kingdom: A Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict for *Oblates* (*Benet Tvedten, OSB*)

Benedict's Disciples (*edited by David Hugh Farmer*)

Beyond The Walls (*Paul Wilkes*)

Commentaries on Benedict's Rule: I and II (*Terence Kardong, OSB*)

Drinking from the Hidden Fountain: A Patristic Breviary, Ancient Wisdom for Today's World (*Tom Spidlik*)

Friend of the Soul: A Benedictine Spirituality of Work (*Norvene Vest*)

Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Vatican Council II*)

Harlots of the Desert (*Benedicta Ward, SLB*)

Lectio Divina: An Ancient Prayer that is Ever New (*Mario Masini*)

Like the Deer that Yearns (*edited by Salvatore Panimolle*)

Living with Contradiction: An Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality (*Esther de Waal*)

Monastic Life: A Short History of Monasticism and Its Spirit (*M. Basil Pennington, OCSO*)

No Moment Too Small: Rhythms of Silence, Prayer and Holy Reading (*Norvene Vest*)

Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition (*Columba Stewart, OSB*)

Praying the Bible: An Introduction to Lectio Divina (*Mariano Magrassi, OSB; translated by Edward Hagman, OFM. Cap.*)

Praying the Word: An Introduction to Lectio Divina (*Enzo Bianchi; translated by James W. Zona*)

Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina (*Michael Casey, OCSO*)

Saint Benedict for the Laity (*Eric Dean*)

Sayings of the Desert Fathers (*translated with an introduction by Benedicta Ward, SLB*)

Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict (*Esther de Waal*)

The Benedictines (*Terence Kardong, OSB*)

The Benedictine Order in the United States: An interpretive History (*Joel Rippinger, OSB*)

The Cloister Walk (*Kathleen Norris*)

The Conferences (*John Cassian*)

The Desert Fathers (*translated with an introduction by Helen Waddel; preface by M. Basil Pennington, OCSO*)

The Family Cloister: Benedictine Wisdom for the Home (*David Robinson*)

The Life of Blessed Syncletica (*Pseudo-Anthanasius; translated with note by Elizabeth Bryson Bongie*)

The Life of St. Antony: And the Letter to Marcellinus (*Athanasius*)

The Lives of the Desert Fathers (*translated by Norman Russell; introduction by Benedicta Ward, SLB*)

The Philokalia: Volume 1, 2, 3, 4 (*compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth; translated and edited by G.E.H. Palm, Philip Sharrard and Kallistos Ware*)

The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages (*Joan Chittister, OSB*)

The Rule of Saint Benedict: A Doctrinal and Spiritual Commentary (*Adalbert de Vogue, OSB*)

The Rule of St. Benedict: 1980 (*edited by Timothy Fry, OSB*)

The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism (*Douglas Burton-Christie*)

To Love as God Loves (*Roberta Bondi*)

Together Unto Life Everlasting: An Introduction to the Rule of Benedict (*Terence Kardong, OSB*)

To Pray and To Love (*Roberta Bondi*)

Toward God: The Ancient Wisdom of Western Prayer (*Michael Casey, OCSO*)

Way of the Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry (*Henri J.M. Nouwen*)

What is Contemplation? (*Thomas Merton*)

Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict (*Joan Chittister, OSB*)

The Imitation of Christ (*Thomas a Kempis*)

Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully Through the Hours of the Day (*Macrina Wiederkehr*)

Abide: Keeping Vigil with the Word of God (*Macrina Wiederkehr*)

The Road to Eternal Life (*Michael Casey, OCSO*)

Finding Sanctuary: Monastic Steps for Everyday Life (*Dom Christopher Jamison*)

Blessings of St. Benedict (*John Michael Talbot*)

Commentary for Benedictine Oblates: On the Rule of St. Benedict (*G.A. Simon*)

Day by Day with St. Benedict (*Terence G. Kardong*)