

Guidelines for Oblates of St. Benedict

INTRODUCTION

In June, 1971, a group of Directors of Oblates came together at St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Illinois, to consider how Benedictine Oblates might best be served in the light of Vatican II. One year later a second meeting was held, this time at St. Mary's Abbey, Morristown, New Jersey, to review papers that had been written in the interim and to exchange ideas pertinent to Benedictine Oblates.

The second meeting resulted in a document of Guidelines for Oblates of St. Benedict, and this document has since been generally endorsed by a considerable number of Directors of Oblates in North America. It is intended to serve as both Constitution and Guidelines for the spiritual life of Oblates, and it is hoped that its availability will assist all Directors of Oblates in their efforts to interest men and women who, while retaining their position in the world, wish somehow to identify with a given Benedictine monastery or convent.

I am grateful to those Directors of Oblates who have given of their time and effort to make this document a reality and I join my prayers to theirs that the days and years ahead will see ever increasing numbers affiliated with our Benedictine houses as Oblates of St. Benedict.

Saint Mary's Abbey
Morristown, New Jersey
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PREAMBLE

Vatican II Council has made it clear that the laity should exercise a very active role in the Church's mission to the world. Oblates of St. Benedict are in a favored position for carrying out this admonition. They are spirituality associated with a Benedictine community. They have pledged themselves to order their lives in accord with the spirit of the Rule of St. Benedict. They are therefore encouraged to be faithful witnesses of Christ by striving to bring the Gospel message and God's way of holiness to the world around them. This is, in fact, the chief reason for their being Oblates of St. Benedict.

In order that the lives of Oblates may be a true and effective response to the call of God and His Church, these guidelines have been written to help Oblates in their mission as lay apostles, so that they can openly bear witness to Christ and promote the salvation of mankind.[\[i\]](#)

CONSTITUTION

1. Oblates of St. Benedict are Christian men and women admitted into spiritual union and affiliation with a Benedictine community of monks or nuns, so that they may share in the spiritual life, prayers, and good works of the community.[\[ii\]](#)

Oblates do not live in the monastic house of the community while they continue faithfully to carry out the duties of their particular state in life and occupation, wherever they may be.[\[iii\]](#)

Within the framework of their daily lives in the world, Oblates strive to lead full Christian lives enlightened by personal efforts to understand Christ's teaching in the Scriptures as interpreted by St. Benedict in his Rule for monks. Oblates are guided and inspired by their continued spiritual association with the monastic community.[\[iv\]](#)

Oblates are a "spiritual arm" of the Benedictine community, reaching out into all areas of life, seeking to share with others what they themselves gain as Oblates of St. Benedict. Their affiliation with a community of monks or nuns is not therefore for their own personal good alone. It is chiefly by their Christian example, even by their very presence among others, that they hope to bring St. Benedict's ideal of service to God and man into the world where they live and work.[\[v\]](#)

Since Oblates of St. Benedict primarily offer themselves for the service of God and Man, They will therefore strive for God's honor and glory before all else, keeping in mind the Benedictine motto: "That in all things God may be glorified."[\[vi\]](#)

Guidelines

A. OBLATES STRIVE TO BE LOYAL AND ACTIVE MEMBERS OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

Oblates involve themselves in the full life of the Church, "sharing in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ...being witnesses to Christ and promoting the salvation of mankind."[\[vii\]](#)

They foster the ecumenical spirit as called for by the Vatican II. They will meet with those not of the Catholic faith, strive to understand the religious beliefs and customs of others, look for teachings on which others agree with them, enter into friendly discussion of teachings on which there is disagreement, put aside all prejudice, and foster the spirit of universal brotherhood in God our Father.[\[viii\]](#)

They seek to true lay apostles according to their abilities and the circumstances of their lives, with a spirit of mission, a spirit of vocation from God through the Holy Spirit working in them, eager to help in proclaiming and spreading the Word of God to the ends of the earth.[\[ix\]](#)

Oblates recognize that their success as lay apostles depends on their living in close union with the Spirit of Christ in the Church, and that this intimate union with the Lord is especially nourished in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Service to others will then be the immediate effect of true union with Christ.[\[x\]](#)

B. OBLATES STRIVE FOR THEIR OWN CONTINUED CHRISTIAN RENEWAL & IMPROVEMENT

As their states in life permit, Oblates make use of various means for improving themselves spiritually, intellectually, culturally, and socially, by making a Retreat, a Day of Recollection or Renewal, attending a Workshop, Seminar, Lecture, or Prayer Meeting, as occasion offers from time to time.[\[xi\]](#)

They make the study and reading of Holy Scripture and important part of their lives, concentrating especially on the Gospel teachings of Christ.[\[xii\]](#)

They listen attentively to the public proclamation of the Word of God at Mass, and to the homily of the priest as he shows how the word of God is applied to daily life.[\[xiii\]](#)

C. OBLATES STRIVE TO BE MEN AND WOMEN OF PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

They combine prayer and work by living and working in the presence of God, aware of God's presence everywhere, knowing that God is nearer to them than they think.[\[xiv\]](#)

They are patient and content with their lot in life in so far as they cannot change it for something better, calmly and courageously accepting the sufferings and hardships, which eventually come to everyone.[\[xv\]](#)

They practice patience, especially by accepting the daily crosses and burdens of life willingly and bravely, with full trust in God, no matter how heavy these burdens may be, knowing that God can turn sufferings into blessings.[\[xvi\]](#)

They are generous and warmhearted to the poor, the needy, the unfortunate, the sick, the sad, the afflicted, and the lonely.[\[xvii\]](#)

They are concerned about the needs of others, regardless of race, nationality, creed, sex, age, occupation, profession, or social status.[\[xviii\]](#)

They give generously of themselves in working for the religious education and Christian formation of youth.[\[xix\]](#)

They faithfully fulfill the duties of their states in life, especially with regard to the care of their families and dependents.

They practice the spirit of poverty, by not being unduly attached to material things, by thanking God for what they have, and by using God's gifts in a sensible way for the glory of God and the good of mankind.[\[xx\]](#)

They seek the Christian *reformation* or constant renewal of their lives by fostering the spirit of *obedience*, *stability* and *fidelity* in accord with the three Benedictine vows or principles of Christian living, which St. Benedict asks his followers to practice.[\[xxi\]](#)

They often read some part of the Rule of St. Benedict and meditate on how it can be applied to their lives.[\[xxii\]](#)

They seek guidance and instruction when they are in doubt or troubled.[\[xxiii\]](#)

D. OBLATES STRIVE TO BE MEN AND WOMEN OF PRAYER

They highly esteem the holy sacrifice of the Mass and take an active and intelligent part in the celebration of the sacred mysteries of the altar.[\[xxiv\]](#)

They strive each day to pray some part of the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours, as the circumstances of their lives permit.[\[xxv\]](#)

They strive to appreciate the beauty and spiritual wealth contained in the Psalms, which form the core of the Church's prayer.[\[xxvi\]](#)

They harmonize their private and public prayers and devotions with the liturgical seasons and feasts of the year, as Vatican II recommends.[\[xxvii\]](#)

E. OBLATES STRIVE TO BE MEN AND WOMEN OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUE

Oblates proclaim and practice the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity, by believing, hoping, and trusting in God, and living God and man in thought, word, and deed.[\[xxviii\]](#)

Oblates foster a positive Christian attitude toward the many other virtues flowing from the practice of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

They observe Christian *prudence*, which is true divine wisdom, by directing their lives to the final attainment of God, who is known to them by faith and loved by them through charity. They therefore use the means provided them in prayer and the sacraments. Prudence guides them "in seeking first the kingdom of God and His way of Holiness: and teaches them "to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."[\[xxix\]](#)

They exercise the Christian virtue of *justice* by recognizing their personal and social moral responsibilities toward individual persons, toward their community, city, state, and nation, and toward human society in general, by striving for the common welfare of all.[\[xxx\]](#)

They foster a deep respect for the God-given rights of others, especially for human life, for the property of others, for freedom of religion, for the privacy of the home, for the right of all to know the truth and to speak the truth, for freedom in the education of one's children, for the right as well as the duty to work and provide for oneself and one's dependents.[\[xxxi\]](#)

They pay their laborers a just wage and give their own employers an honest return in labor for the wages they receive.[\[xxxii\]](#)

They protect the rights of the poor and helpless, the oppressed and the persecuted, and all who are victims of injustice of any kind.[\[xxxiii\]](#)

They practice Christian *fortitude* or courage by seeking to do God's will at all times without fear of the difficulties and sacrifices involved, bearing the burdens and trials of life with calm trust in God's mercy and goodness.[\[xxxiv\]](#)

They practice Christian *temperance* or moderation by making use of the good things of life in the way God intended them to be used for the good of mankind.[\[xxxv\]](#)

F. OBLATES FOSTER A SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

They love the Benedictine community to which they are affiliated as Oblates.[\[xxxvi\]](#)

They keep in touch with their community through their Director of Oblates.

They let others know about their monastic community, support its apostolic works, and encourage young men and women in their vocations to the monastic life.

They visit the monastery or convent occasionally, become familiar with the monastic life, and assist at the community Mass and community prayer whenever this is possible.

They tell others about the Oblates of St. Benedict and encourage them to become Oblates if they seem to be in search of such a special way of life in the world.

They foster the spirit of community in their own family circle, and within the groups and organizations to which they belong.

G OBLATES ARE MEN AND WOMEN OF PEACE

They use all rightful means for establishing peace in the world around them, mindful of the centuries old Benedictine watchword: PEACE! [\[xxxvii\]](#)

They strive to practice the truth of God in love and join all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and working to bring it about.[\[xxxviii\]](#)

[\[i\]](#) Vat II, Church Today, 43, p 244

[\[ii\]](#) RB Prolog: "The Lord seeks His worker"

[\[iii\]](#) Vat II, Church Today, 43, p. 243.

[\[iv\]](#) RB ch 73: "this least of Rules;" Prolog: "Faith and good works."

[\[v\]](#) RB ch 2: "Teachings of abbot a leaven of divine justice;" ch 7, 8th degree of humility: "example of seniors;" ch 60: "example of humility;" ch 61: "instructed by his example;" ch27: "imitate loving example of Good Shepherd;" cf also Vat II, Missions, 11, p 597

[\[vi\]](#) RB ch 57: quotation from I Pet 4:11

[\[vii\]](#) Vat II, Laity, 2, p 491.

[\[viii\]](#) RB ch 27-28: the excommunicated; cf Vat II, Ecumenism, 4, pp 348-349; Laity, 31,a), p 519.

[ix] Vat II, Missions, 11, p 597

[x] Vat II, Laity, 4, p 493

[xi] Vat II, Laity, 16,p 507

[xii] RB ch 38, 42, 47, 48, 49, 73, on reading of Scripture; Vat II, Revelation, 21, p 125.

[xiii] RB ch 38; Vat II Revelation, 25, p 127; Liturgy, 51-52, p 155.

[xiv] RB ch 48, on work; ch 4, 7, 19, 58, on the presence of God and seeking God; Vat II, Liturgy, 7, pp 140-141.

[xv] RB ch 58, on hard and rugged ways; ch 55, 48, on manual labor; ch 7, 6th degree of humility; ch 4, instruments of good works; Vat II, The Church, 41, p 70

[xvi] RB Prolog, at end; ch 25, 52, on penance and satisfaction; ch 7, 4th degree of humility; Vat II, The Church, 41, p 70.

[xvii] RB ch 4, 31, 55, 58, 59, 66, on care of needy and poor; Vat II, Laity, 31, pp 519-520.

[xviii] RB ch 4, instruments of good works; ch 55 and other parts of Rule on concern for the poor and needy; cf preceding note 16.

[xix] RB ch 59 and 63, the sons of nobles and of the poor, and training of boys; Vat II, Education, 1, p 639.

[xx] RB ch 7, 6th degree of humility; ch 58, on property; Vat II, the Church Today, 72,p 282.

[xxi] RB ch 7, 1st degree of humility; ch 58, on receiving brethren; ch 3, on discipline and observance; Vat II, Ecumenism, 6, p 350.

[xxii] RB ch 66 and 73; Vat II, Religious Life, 2, p 468.

[xxiii] RB ch 3, 4, 7, the 5th degree of humility; Vat II, The Church, 37, p 64.

[xxiv] RB ch 35, 38, 63, reference to Mass and Communion; ch 60 and 62, reference to priesthood; Vat II, Liturgy, 11-14, pp 143-144.

[xxv] RB ch 8 to 20 inclusive; Vat II, Liturgy, 100, p 167.

[xxvi] RB ch 8 to 20, praying of psalms; Vat II, Liturgy, 90, p 165.

[xxvii] Vat II, Liturgy, 13, p 143.

[xxviii] RB Prolog, good works; ch 7, 4th degree of humility; ch 4, good works; ch 55, the poor; Vat II, Laity, 4, p 493.

[xxix] Mt 6:33 and 10:16; RB ch 61.

[xxx] RB ch 2, 3, 63, 41, 9, 11, 20, 52, 6, 63, 65, 60, 4; Vat II, Church Today, 29, pp 227-228.

[xxxi] RB ch 4; Vat II Religious Freedom, 2-7, pp 678-688.

[xxxii] RB ch 57; Vat II, Church today, 67, p 275.

[\[xxxiii\]](#) Vat II, Church Today, 69, p 278.

[\[xxxiv\]](#) RB ch 64; Prolog, weapons of obedience;" ch 1; Vat II, The Church, 41, p 70.

[\[xxxv\]](#) RB ch 41 to 64; ch 22, 70, 41, 40.

[\[xxxvi\]](#) RB ch 55; ch 3 and 4; ch 17, 21 etc.

[\[xxxvii\]](#) Vat II, Church Today, 78, p 290.

[\[xxxviii\]](#) Vat II, Church Today, 78, p 291.