

Guidelines for Oblate Candidates of St. Placid Priory

St. Placid Community welcomes you as a new Oblate Candidate to the oblate formation stage. Thank you for working with your Oblate Mentor and Sister Mentor. This next year, or as long as you need, is primarily a time for you to explore more deeply what it means to be an oblate of the Monastery of St. Placid and to explore whether you are called to this **life-long** commitment.

Goals

For the Oblate Candidate this next year, or longer, has three major goals. During this time of discernment you should come to the point where you have:

1. a basic understanding of Benedictine spirituality and familiarity with the Rule of Benedict. This goal should be met through the study of books on Benedictine spirituality and the Rule.
2. an ability to incorporate Benedictine spirituality and values into your daily life. Are you able to identify core Benedictine values and regularly evaluate your life as to whether or not you are incorporating Benedictine values in your everyday life?
3. an ability to demonstrate that you are an active member connecting with St. Placid's community as you are able, involved in a regular prayer life, and available to help out in service either at St. Placid or in your local community. The Oblate handbook makes possible suggestions for connection with St. Placid. This goal would be met if you participate regularly in oblate and community gatherings or are on Zoom meetings, demonstrate appropriate boundaries, and demonstrate an ability to live the Benedictine values.

Specific Tasks:

1. **Meeting together:** As you journey with your Oblate Mentors we hope that you will be able to meet in person once a month via Skype, Zoom, or a phone call. We know how busy everybody is and how difficult it can be to make schedules work, so please just do the best you can to make this a priority.
 - **First meeting:** The first meeting might be a good time to share your faith stories, how you came to the oblate program, what it is about Benedictine spirituality that you find nourishing and challenging and how you understand discernment. The Oblate Candidate may want to talk about their hopes for the process. At this first meeting you can then set some goals for the next year in terms of how often to meet, what you want to study (see guide), tools for reflection, etc.
 - Invite Oblate Candidate, Oblate Mentor and Sister Mentor to meet for the first meeting.
 - Discuss the relationship between Sister and Oblate Mentors with the Candidates and decide what sources might be used for meetings.
 - This year we recommend Judith Valente's How to Live: What the Rule of St. Benedict Teaches Us about Happiness, Meaning and Community be done with the Oblate mentor. If another source would be better, please use it but be clear what the Sister Mentor and Oblate Mentor does with the Oblate Candidate.
 - See #2 Sign of Growth
 - **Subsequent meetings:** In the next meetings the discussion with your Oblate mentors can focus on the book/reflection articles you are reading and how the insights of the book and life experiences of Benedictine spirituality apply to everyday life. You will share with the mentors how you have learned to integrate the Rule and Benedictine spirituality into your daily life. Likewise, they will share their reflections on integrating the Rule and Benedictine spirituality.

- You will be invited to read an article by the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses Upon This Tradition. V. With a Listening Heart. Go to www.stplacid.org Home/Oblate Home (under Essential Readings called “With a Listening Heart.”)
- Your mentors may suggest a plan or assignment for next meeting or ask you for suggestions.
- Your mentors may ask you a question such as “What you have done since the last meeting to be an active, supportive part of the community e.g. prayer, attending meetings, helping with specific tasks?”

2. Signs of Growth, Commitment: as you journey as an Oblate Candidate these are signs of maturity and commitment to watch for. They include:

- Is there a commitment to grow spiritually and to go in depth in learning Benedictine spirituality?
- Are you willing to move more deeply into your faith journey, to be challenged and grow?
- Do you demonstrate appropriate behavior and attitudes? Do you demonstrate respect and openness to all people? Do you demonstrate appropriate social boundaries e.g. not intrusive, able to understand limits? Are you able to be supportive of others and not be focused just on yourself?
- Do you participate in the oblate formation program primarily as a spiritual exercise rather than simply a social group or one that nourishes only you?
- Do you demonstrate a high level of commitment and participation? Do you regularly attend meetings and sessions with your Oblate Mentors? Have you made the oblate program a priority in their life?
- Do you demonstrate an ability to be part of a diverse group? (e.g. appropriate behavior and attitude towards other members, acceptance of beliefs different from your own, ability and willingness to respect and tolerate people with whom you find difficult.)
- Do you demonstrate a willingness and commitment to be involved in oblates as well as with the Priory?
- Do you understand that a long term commitment is a way of life and do you understand the way the promises: Obedience, Stability, and Conversion of Life pertain to your life? (can be dealt with at any session)?
- Do you participate in the ministry and/or financial support of the St. Placid community? (see Oblate handbook for possibilities)
- Do you incorporate service into their daily life (through work, Church, volunteer activity, etc.)?

3. Daily Life: In between the meetings you may want to pick a particular value or topic from your reading to be your focus during the month. Focus on how you integrate that value in your daily life. Tools for doing this could include journaling, daily exam, further reading on the topic, discussion, etc. The important thing is to specify exactly what values you are going to focus on and how you are going to evaluate how you incorporate them into your life. For example “this month I am going to focus on hospitality and I will do some additional reading and each night I will write down how I have lived or not lived this value in my life.” By having some specific accountability for how you are going to do this it is more likely that it will actually happen.

- ??Liturgy of the Hours sources: (Liturgy Committee)
 - Is there a way the Liturgy of the Hours’ books of the community might be shared with Oblates in any stage or recorded? (checking on copyrite)
 - Can the monthly Scripture readings be put on the website? (S Raphaela)
 - Can the Evening Praise readings be put on the website? (Liturgy Committee).

2. **Sharing:** During your time together you will probably want to primarily focus on a book and your reflections on how you have been incorporating Benedictine values in everyday life. In addition, it would be good to also discuss these topics (and always remember, these are suggestions and guidelines, not mandates!)

- What does it mean to be part of a Benedictine and an Oblate community?
- What are the positive aspects and the challenges of living the Benedictine way of life?
- What have you done since the last meeting to be an active, supportive part of the community e.g. prayer, attending meetings, helping with specific tasks
- Where do you feel you need to grow in incorporating Benedictine values? are there areas that are easy? difficult?
- Do you have an active prayer life?
- Do you try to pray with Scripture, lectio...?
- Are you active in your local faith community?

Summary: These are simply guidelines and suggestions. Always be flexible in determining what is going to work best for you given your needs, personality and lifestyle. Draw on your own experience of what is and is not helpful. Share from your heart and your own life. There is no right or wrong way to do this, there is simply the commitment to seek God in community and prayer according to the Gospel and the Rule of Benedict.

Thank you for the great gift of your time, presence and commitment in journeying as an Oblate Candidate on this journey! We deeply appreciate you. Please know that the oblate coordinators are here to help and support you as well as your mentors in any way we can.

Blessings,

Lucy Wynkoop, OSB and Novice Camille Wooden,
Oblate Formation Team 2019-2020 (July 7, 2019)

Revisions suggested by the Oblate Formation Team are in red and are in process.