

Fall & Winter

August 2021

The Pandemic of 2020-21 has given people worldwide many kinds of stress—including illness, deaths in families, loss of work and businesses, and great anxiety. This is still going on, even if our own particular place seems more “back to normal.” We pray every day that each of us will recommit to taking care, not just of ourselves, but to each other and the wider community. Can we reconsider what it means to be human, and a citizen of a country, a state, a city? Are we able to reconcile our own behavior with the needs and good of everyone around us? These are questions to consider as we readjust to being with each other in workplaces and in social and religious gatherings, remembering who we are and why we are here.

At St. Placid Priory, we found that pandemic times brought changes to our lives and ways of doing things, just as it has done to so many others. Below are some ways we are reconceiving and reshaping our ministries.

Reimagining: Oblates

by
Anna-Camille Wooden, OSB

For the last several years, monastics and Oblates have been engaged in discussions about the future, both with each other and among their respective communities. The St. Placid Oblate community remains vibrant and growing. We never missed a meeting during this long time of pandemic. The number of Oblates, candidates, and guests who attended the monthly meetings and retreats through Zoom was actually greater than when we had met in person.

One of the reimaginings for the future is the continued use of Zoom to reach an ever-expanding geographic area. Our meetings will remain a hybrid of in-person and Zoom modes even when we reopen completely. For example, five people made their oblations on Foundation Day. None of them live in the vicinity of Lacey/Olympia, yet all are dedicated to living Benedictine values and spreading the Benedictine charism, as well as attending meetings, retreats and supporting St. Placid Priory.

We are also imagining how, through Zoom meetings, we can strengthen bonds of Oblates outside of monthly meetings by bringing together those who have common interests or those who simply want to talk about and share living the Benedictine life. Closer bonds between other Oblate communities, especially those in our region, is also a vision we have for the future, as well as continuing the work of building the Oblate Leadership Team. Reimagining our Oblate future combines the essentials of Benedictine spirituality, greater Oblate leadership,

and the new tools we have to connect and support each other. We see a hopeful future.

Rejuvenating: Retreats

by
Janice Ariza

Going on retreat has been an integral part of the lives of many people we know. Now more than ever, all of us need to have some time to step back and settle ourselves, to take stock and see where we are, especially in the wake of the continuing pandemic. The importance of setting aside time to let the soul be soothed and allow it to be one with the silence requires stepping away from the demands of daily routines.

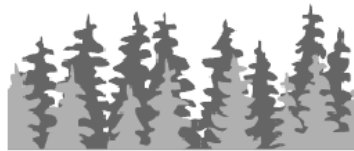
A retreat here at The Priory Spirituality Center has somewhat altered parameters these days. It is more focused on moving into a time of rejuvenation, a time of silence and listening. The Center's doors opened in June for silent retreats, welcoming two to four retreatants at a time. The grounds around the Center are available for quiet contemplation and

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prayer, to help in moving into the rhythm of your own journey. No schedules to keep, and whatever mealtime you choose, with food you have provided for yourself, is a different approach, more suited to individual tastes. You will have increased opportunities for rest, relaxation and time with God.

Our hope for you is that after spending one or several days in quiet, you will be able to reemerge into everyday life with a fresh, spiritual spark. You may also find it helpful to request Spiritual Direction with one of the Sisters during your retreat.



From the Priory

Our last newsletter was published in March of this year, a bit later than our usual timing. The COVID lockdown was still in place here in Washington State, so there was not much coming and going. Still, a few things of note have happened since then!

On March 27, **Paz Vital** arrived as a guest after two weeks of quarantine nearby.

St. Placid Priory hosted the Regional National Religious Vocation Conference/Religious Formation Conference (**NRVC/RFC**) meeting online April 30. There were forty participants, when we usually have fifteen-twenty—a wonderful day!

On May 10, **Sister Laura Swan** began her online participation in the **International Medieval Congress**, which continued until May 15. The **IMC** is an annual academic conference for those interested in, or for scholars specializing in, the study of the European Middle Ages. Sister Laura has researched and written a book called *The Wisdom of the Beguines*. Beguines were a group of women active during the Middle Ages.

Sister Sharon McDonald attended the annual meeting of the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, May 17-20, which was held online.

May was a special month for us. With all the community and our staff vaccinated, we invites three more staff back to work on May 18. **Janice Ariza** returned to the Spirituality Center and **Karin Wallner-Bickham** to our finance office, and Mariellen Carmichael to Reception.

Sister Laura Swan, who is co-teaching an online Ethics class at Saint Martin University, completed recording the last of her lectures on Zoom May 24.

Some of our Oblates met via Zoom for a retreat, June 4-6. The retreat topic, facilitated by Sisters Lucy Wynkoop and Anna-Camille Wooden, was “Keeping the Benedictine Promise.”

Because of COVID vaccinations, we were able to welcome **Sister Angela Hoffman** home for our annual community retreat, June 8-14. We were glad to be together again! Sister Angela teaches and does research at the **University of Portland**.

During the first four days of our community retreat, we gathered to process *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis’s encyclical. An able and creative team of Sisters and a Novice were our facilitators.

June 18-20 found another group of **Oblates** on retreat via Zoom, “Entering the Flow of Contemplation and Service through the 12 Steps of Humility,” facilitated by **Sister Raphaela Cady**.

Members of the **Samaritan Guild** from **Saint Michael’s** parish came on June 19 to pray the rosary around a rose bush they planted in our garden last year. The rose bush was in memory of **Johanna Mitchell**, a longtime community friend. This was the first anniversary of her death.

June 20-25, **Sister Laura Swan** gave a series of retreat talks for **Annunciation Monastery** in Bismarck, ND, on the Desert Ammas (Mothers).

A group of our **Oblates** attended a retreat June 25-27, The Art of Holy Seeing Using Benedictine Images, with online facilitation by **Sister Lucy Wynkoop** and **Oblate Roy DeLeon**.

On June 27, the vigil of our **Foundation Day**, Sisters renewed their Monastic Promise, and Oblates their oblations. See page 4 for more Oblate news.



Candidate Paz Vital

On the evening of June 28 before Evening Praise, we received **Paz Vital** as a Candidate.

As she knocked on the door to gain entrance, Raven made herself known, alighting on the edge of our fountain, and remaining there through the beginning of the ritual.



July 7-28, **Sister Anna-Camille Wooden** attended the **Benedictine Spirituality Workshop and Retreat** (BSWR) for Sisters who are preparing to make perpetual profession. Sponsored by the North American Benedictine Vocation Formation Conference, BSWR was hosted this year by the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia, Bristow, VA. The theme of the workshop and retreat was “Expanding Hearts: The Way of Profession,” co-directed by **Sister Andrea Westkamp**, Bristow, and **Sister Marcia Ziska**, Atchison, KS.

Discerning a religious vocation? Chat on “Zoom Vocations!” with Sister Julian September 19. Register at stplacid.org under Spirituality Center - Programs.

GOINGS ON AT THE CENTER

Zoom Programs

When COVID forced us into our homes and the Priory closed to protect all, the doors of the Spirituality Center opened on Zoom, and I began registering for classes, sometimes two to three a week. Through the classes, offered by the Benedictine Community of Sisters and Oblates and by other facilitators, I seemed to be participating in a kind of “graduate program” of spiritual opportunities. Not only did I get to know the facilitators, I also met other participants whom I have still not met in person. I developed a familiarity and fondness for many. I grew as a member of a spiritual community, showing up in a variety of classes and recognizing my “friends” from earlier classes. I live more than two hours from the Priory on the east slope of the Cascades and very much appreciated meeting without the need to drive over a snowy pass in the winter, saving fossil fuel as well. And I was not the farthest participant. I met others from our state, from California to New York, and even China. Zoom has given us the blessing of a virtual spiritual community that does not seem diminished though we are not in the same room. For this I am grateful.

--Susan Johnson

Spiritual Direction

As part of my path toward becoming a Benedictine Oblate at St. Placid Priory this year, I began Spiritual Direction with Sister Lucy Wynkoop. As with most new ventures in life, I was excited to begin our meetings, and also experienced some anxiety. Throughout my adult life, I had been in psychotherapy and was used to exploring my inner world, but I was uncertain how Spiritual Direction would help me deepen my relationship with God.

Sister Lucy always began our meetings with a prayer that God would be with us during our time together, and this grounded me in knowing that this was our shared spiritual time. Sister Lucy

listened as I struggled with how to live a contemplative life outside of the monastery. She modeled “listening with the ear of the heart,” was patient and kind, and shared many resources to assist me on my journey. Meeting monthly was a commitment that allowed our relationship to grow, kept me on track and helped me understand and work with my struggles to live *The Rule of Benedict* as a lay monastic. The most helpful thing for me about working with a spiritual director was that Sister Lucy so beautifully modeled living the spiritual life according to the *Rule*.

By the end of the year, my time spent in contemplation had grown and my commitment to living the *Rule* continues to grow. Spiritual Direction is not just for those seeking oblation, but for anyone who wants to deepen their relationship with God. A spiritual director is trained to listen, and to help you to develop and deepen your spiritual life. This has been a great gift for me which has brought life and depth to my day to day relationship with God, has improved my ability to listen to others, to think about what I am going to say, or not, and to be more present in my work. --Ann Sartori

Retreats

The Priory Spirituality Center is open again for retreats. As soon as I heard, I made a reservation and enjoyed 48 hours of wonderful peace. *Hiraeth* is a Welsh word that means “a spiritual longing for home; nostalgia for ancient places to which we cannot return. It is in the wind, and the rocks, and the waves. It is nowhere and it is everywhere.” It is the only word I can think of for the feeling of home I have when I’m someplace like St. Placid Priory. It’s not my physical home—but it fills that spiritual longing for home that I think we all have. I was there July 1-3, after 18 months of not being there. I had 48 hours of rest, reflection, and prayer that was much needed. Yes, there was plenty of time for that before since I was on “compassionate retreat” (also known as lockdown) through the pandemic. It’s not the same. Are you longing for home? Perhaps it is a

retreat at St Placid that will give you that sense of being home.

--Marcia McLaughlin

Oasis 2020-21

I was blessed to participate in Oasis this past season. I joined a prayerful group of participants as we gathered on Zoom from our “home retreat centers” to study six of the practices in Christine Valters Paintner’s *The Soul’s Slow Ripening: 12 Celtic Practices for Seeking the Sacred*. Facilitators were Sisters, Novices, and Oblates of our Benedictine Community. Our monthly sessions, including two retreats, offered us the opportunity to explore, practice, share, and reflect on the Celtic Way. We examined thresholds in our lives, considered the natural world as sacred, listened to the heartbeat of God, contemplated Original Blessing, shared our dreams, examined our pilgrimages, drew Celtic art, reflected on our soul friends, and even wrote our own blessings. To deepen our retreat experience, Oasis also includes Spiritual Direction, a gift for each of us. Although COVID kept us from meeting in person at the Spirituality Center, we were able to form a contemplative community around Celtic study. Several of us realized that our lives in the Pacific Northwest make it easy for each of us to ground ourselves in the natural world and see the sacred in all. Oasis was the gentle water for our peregrination which led us home.

--Susan Johnson

Listening with the Spirit

As I reflect on my LWS experience, I liken it to the creation account found in the book of Genesis where God creates a woman and a man. They were both naked and felt no shame before each other and in the presence of God. LWS was more than a training program; it was a formational experience where I grew as a human being in relationship with other human beings where we exposed our inmost selves to one another and received grace, nurture, and encouragement to embrace our own vulnerabilities, shortcomings, and shadows with compassion and non-judgment. In such a safe and

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supportive, emotional and spiritual environment, my relationship with myself healed, I felt myself being made whole/holy, and I knew that I was being formed into the kind of a person who can offer the same gift to others. The work of spiritual direction is not teaching spiritual propositional truths; rather, it is facilitating a contemplative movement towards an experience of God who is All Love. I can only offer to others that which I possess in myself. LWS nurtured and guided me to experience God in my inmost being and birthed in me a gift to be shared with others. --Anonymous

From the Archives

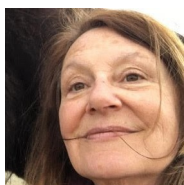
Keeping Our History Alive

A pleasant archive task during Covid lockdown was organizing and preserving **Sister Damaris Zander's** collection of recipes. Sisters and some of you who read our newsletter have memories of Sister Damaris' cooking and baking. I found all the favorites as well as some new to me: beverages, pastries, main dishes, salads, gourmet and down home. From carefully written recipes for head cheese, sausage, and Hot German Potato Salad to clippings from magazines and Sunday supplements using the latest in convenience foods. She and her family traded recipes so many cards identify where they came from. Family recipes for fudge, caramel corn, potluck casseroles and Sunday punch, all with notes on how best to prepare, what to add, what to leave out. Some, even, with notes on how to prepare a recipe designed to feed four so it would feed a hundred. I would ask the Sisters if they remembered a certain dish, and often they did, sharing their memory. They also talked about **Sister Mary Walczewski**, **Sister Myrna Fischer**, and others. The monastery has been home to many great cooks and bakers and Sister Damaris kept their recipes as well. Thinking of trying my hand at Dakota Bread! —Anna-Camille Wooden, OSB

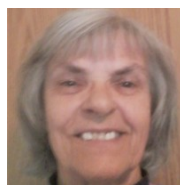
OBLATES

On June 27, via Zoom, five Oblate candidates made their oblation, and three guests became candidates. Our new Oblates speak to the changes happening in the St. Placid Oblate Community. None of the five live nearby; they are from Roslyn, White Salmon, Whidbey Island, Vancouver and Colorado. Yet, through Zoom, each one met with their mentors, attended meetings and retreats, and did the deep discernment that is asked of our candidates. And the oblation ceremony, held through Zoom, carried the same solemnity and joy that it always has. Of our three new candidates, one lives close by and the other two live out of state, in Virginia and California. They will make this journey the way our Oblates always have, accompanied by mentors, the communities' prayers and support, and the deep listening for God's call in their lives.

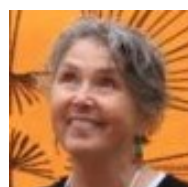
We welcome new Oblates:



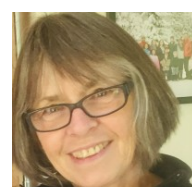
Ann Sartori



Marianne Mollett



Kathryn Rickert



Susan Johnson

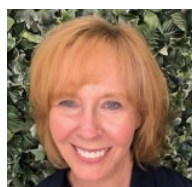


Denise Anderson

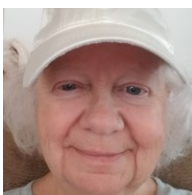


Robin Harwood

And new candidates:



Catherine Taylor



Maria Slizys

A New Birdfeeder

A few months ago, people in our area were advised to take down bird feeders for a while, and then to clean them thoroughly before putting back in place. We decided that we wanted to consolidate our several feeders outside the dining room into one.

A committee from the community offered **Volunteer Jerry Haupt** some ideas. Then Jerry designed and built it lickety-split. This feeder is much more substantial than any we've had before, and should stand the test of time.



We see chickadees, nuthatches, pileated woodpeckers and song sparrows regularly. In the summer, we enjoy seeing black headed grosbeaks, gold finches, house finches, and many others.

The pileated woodpecker, when first trying to eat from the new feeder, had to back into it. A small step was added to make that unnecessary for this big, beautiful bird.

The squirrels still make attempts on the bird feeder, but so far have been unsuccessful. We saw a T-shirt recently that had an innocent looking squirrel saying, "Excuse me, but the bird feeder is empty..."



We, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Placid Priory, a monastic community, cultivate a contemplative spirit that leads to hospitality and works of justice and peace. We witness Gospel values in building community. We are committed to nurturing spiritual growth in ourselves and others, collaborative leadership, stewardship of the environment, and taking risks in following God's call.

The Priory Spirituality Center

is an ecumenical Christian ministry that encourages people of all faiths to seek and discern the voice of God in their lives and in the world. We offer a peaceful and contemplative setting for personal reflection. We encourage and challenge people to know the presence of God in their lives through classes, workshops, retreats and individual spiritual direction.

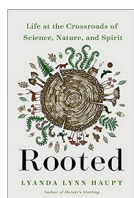
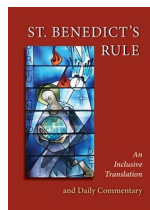
The Priory Spirituality Center is a ministry of St. Placid Priory and reflects the Benedictine values of peace, hospitality, community, learning and prayerful discernment.



Sister Laura's Scriptorium:

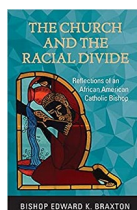
Books that Merit Attention

Saint Benedict's Rule, an Inclusive Translation, Judith Suter OSB, Liturgical Press, 2021, is available in two versions: the text only, or with commentary. She has divided the Rule for daily reading, assuming the Rule would be read through three times each year. Her commentary includes a paragraph that explores the reading within the context of St. Benedict's world; the second paragraph then considers what this might have to do with contemporary life; and her own reflection is followed by three questions for the reader's reflection.



Rooted. Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature, and Spirit, Lyanda Haupt, Little, Brown Spark, 2021. The reader is immediately drawn in, exploring the myriad ways the Divine speaks to us through creation. Her language is poetic and prophetically piercing, inviting us deeper into our humanity. Her explorations echo many Benedictine values. I highly recommend this.

The Church and the Racial Divide. Reflections of an African American Catholic Bishop, Bishop Edward Braxton, Orbis Books, 2021. Braxton has been one of our sane voices in the U.S. Church, speaking from his own experience as a Black man and attempting to draw the Church into a more honest assessment of our racial history and the call to conversion. He writes hard truths with an elegant pen, producing a worthy read.

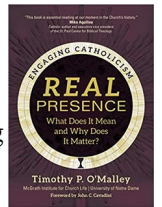


While Covid-19 is still of concern, we are offering all our programs and most retreats via ZOOM. **We are now taking a few people for in-person, private retreats.** You may **REGISTER on our website at stplacid.org** It's pretty easy but if you have trouble, you may call 360.438.2595 for help, or email spiritualityctr@stplacid.org

Find a list of programs & retreats at the web address below:
<https://stplacid.org/spirituality-center/weekend-programs/>

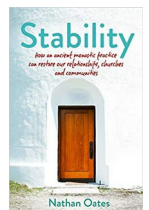
Read our newsletter online in **full color** at stplacid.org

Real Presence: What Does It Mean and Why Does It Matter?, Timothy O'Malley, Ave Maria Press, 2021. There has been much debate around the meaning of the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Claims abound that U.S. Catholics no longer understand or believe in the Real Presence, yet come forth to receive. And unfortunately some are attempting to politicize the reception of communion. This is a short, down-to-earth introduction to what "Real Presence" actually means: through history, poetry, and the mystics.



Stability. How an Ancient Monastic Practice Can Restore Our Relationships, Churches, and Communities, Nathan Oates, Paraclete Press, 2021. Of all aspects of our oblation / monastic profession, stability might be the most confusing for Americans to meaningfully apply to their lives. Yet St. Benedict considered stability to be essential and foundational to our spiritual transformation. Oates unpacks the richness to be discovered when we commit to stability in our lives.

I encourage Oblates, Associates, and all those who find wisdom in the Rule of Benedict to delve into this fine study.





Benedictine Sisters
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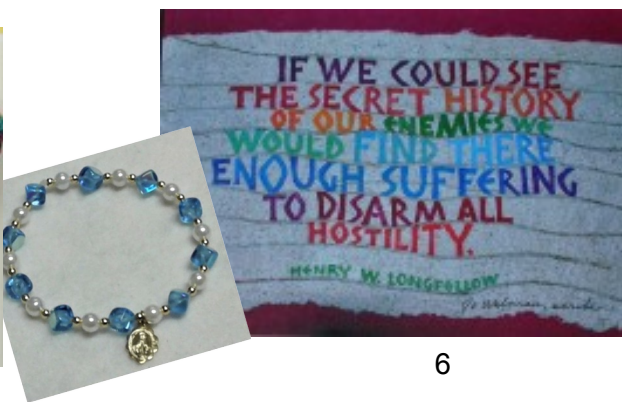
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The Priory Arts Shop at stplacid.org/shop is the newest ministry of St. Placid Priory. This ministry is about bringing beauty into people's lives. Beauty is not only healing and enchanting, but also encouraging and motivating. Beauty helps us connect with God.

The Priory Fiber Artists provide much of the online shop inventory, and this year we also feature **Oblate Roy DeLeon's** watercolors and artist **Jo Uhlman's** calligraphy. Each piece of art, each Christmas ornament, each bird or gnome has been carefully crafted by talented hands. Visit the shop to find interesting and one-of-a-kind gifts. Enjoy the beauty and inspiration there.



Spirituality Center Staff

Janice Ariza – Center Coordinator
Lucy Wynkoop, OSB – Program Coordinator
Mary Giles Mailhot, OSB – Staff
Monika Ellis, OSB – Staff

Weekend Hospitality Staff

Kathy Androes-Downes, Obl. OSB
N. Tricia Burns
Liz Langeland, Obl. OSB

Directions

Coming South on I-5

Take Exit 109
Right turn onto Martin Way
Right at next light onto College St. NE
Second Right turn is our driveway

Coming North on I-5

Take Exit 109
Left turn onto Martin Way
Right at second light onto College St. NE
Second Right turn is our driveway

The physical **Priory Store**, along with the monastery, is still closed due to the pandemic.

We continue to accept telephone orders for books and religious articles. Call us at 360-438-1771. The Priory Store welcomes as payment VISA and MasterCard.