

Magazine
MonksOK

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*Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!*

– Psalm 95:1



GAUDETE! Reflections from Abbot Lawrence



Summertime. It's hard for me to say that word by itself. It always makes me want to continue with the lyric "...and the livin' is easy," from *Porgy and Bess*. While there are plenty of tasks and hard work to be done during summertime, including the duties that we have throughout the year, summertime is nonetheless the time we most commonly associate with long days that give much more time for relaxation, vacation, and leisure.

Even the liturgical year of the Church seems to relax a bit with summer as we finish with the intense seasons and big celebrations of Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, First Communion and Confirmations. We now enter again into "Ordinary Time" marked by the green vestments that reflect the green of the natural world around us in summer.

Taking time for leisure and relaxation is an important part of healthy living. For some, this means the opportunity to take a vacation, or to spend time at a lake, on a beach, in the mountains or in a pool. For others, summer leisure and relaxation might need to be simpler and closer to home. It might mean a backyard cookout, attending a baseball game, a picnic with the kids at a local park, a stroll in the long evening around one's neighborhood, or a visit to a zoo or a museum – such as the Mabee-Gerrer Museum on our campus at St. Gregory's (where admission is free again this summer!).

No matter what form one's leisure time or summer vacation might take, one thing remains true: we cannot take a vacation from our relationship with God or our need to be nourished through the sacra-

ments and our community of faith. In fact, prayer and attendance at Mass or other church services can be seen as our most important forms of "leisure." Liturgical and personal prayer are opportunities for us to bring the difficulties, struggles, and concerns of our everyday lives before the Lord, and find some relief. After all, Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Matthew: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light" (MT 11:28-30). We also know that sacred rest is deeply rooted in the revealed Word of God, finding emphasis in the story of Creation in Genesis 2:2-3, and as one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:8-11.

Both Blessed Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have stressed the importance of maintaining Sunday as a day for rest, leisure, and – most of all – for prayerful gathering with the Church to praise God and to be nourished by grace. In a homily delivered on May 29, 2005, Pope Benedict reminded the faithful that attendance at Mass should not be considered a burden or heavy obligation. He said, "... taking part in the Celebration, being nourished by the Eucharistic Bread and experiencing the communion of their brothers and sisters in Christ is a need for Christians, it is a joy; Christians can thus replenish the energy they need to continue on the journey we must make every week."

In his 1998 encyclical letter *Dies Domini – The Day of the Lord*, Blessed Pope John Paul II described Sunday as the "soul of other days" and a day that should be devoted to true leisure. He wrote that "... Christians today must face the enticements of a culture which has accepted the benefits of rest and free time, but which often uses them frivolously and is at times attracted by morally questionable forms of entertainment. Certainly, Christians are no different from other people in enjoying the weekly day of rest; but at the same time they are keenly aware of the unique-

ness and originality of Sunday, the day on which they are called to celebrate their salvation and the salvation of all humanity. Sunday is the day of joy and the day of rest precisely because it is "the Lord's Day", the day of the Risen Lord" (*Dies Domini* 82).

My parents gave a beautiful example to my brothers and me when we were growing up. Weekly participation at Mass was a given – even when we were traveling.

Ironically, sometimes folks can easily get so caught up in their summer activities and vacations that they forget about getting up on Sunday morning to attend Church, or to take a few moments in the morning and/or evening to be mindful of God's goodness and our need for grace. In fact, we can be tempted to take advantage of the allowance that the Church gives us to take into consideration travel as a reason to not attend Mass or Church services.

My parents gave a beautiful example to my brothers and me when we were growing up. Weekly participation at Mass was a given – even when we were traveling. When it became possible for our family to afford a summer vacation, part of our trip was finding a Catholic church no matter where we were so that we could attend Mass on Sunday. One such experience that sticks out in my memory is from trip that my parents took us five boys on to Carlsbad Caverns in 1970. We found a parish somewhere in New Mexico that met in a small simple church. Mass was in Spanish. I did not understand what was being said, but even at age six I knew it was the same Mass and I was so impressed by the devotion of the local people that I still remember them!

With this issue of *MonksOK!* we share some reflections on the importance of leisure, and a few examples of the summer activities of some of our monks. Please know, however, that even though individual monks will be taking some vacation time away from the Abbey this summer to visit family and friends, the rhythm of the Divine Office and Holy Mass will continue at the Abbey throughout the summer months as it does throughout the year. We hope that you also will find summertime to be a great opportunity to increase your time for private prayer and communal worship.

Leisure at the Monastery: Monks Find Time for Healthy Hobbies During the Summer Months

Many people are familiar with the Benedictine motto of “*Ora et Labora – Work and Pray.*” While the phrase does not actually appear in the Rule, prayer and work do comprise two of the three pillars of the balanced daily life of a monk as prescribed by St. Benedict in his Rule. (The third pillar is that of *lectio*, or reading and study.) Monks are typically assigned some official work duties in service to the monastery or to the various entities such as schools or

parishes that are sponsored or staffed by the monastery.

In addition to their official work assignments and prayer obligations of the monastery, most monks also find some time for leisure on a regular basis. One might be surprised to find that many such monastic leisure activities involve some type of labor and discipline. Even with that, however, the activities are a form of leisure in that they provide opportunities for the monks to relax, to prayerfully con-

template God’s goodness, and to express their creative energies.

The following pages describe several of the summer leisure activities of some of the monks. In the first article below, Br. Damian explains how he has found a healthy form of leisure in practice of bird watching, and how this form of leisure illustrates well the principles of leisure that were given by the famous 20th century philosopher Josef Pieper in his book **Leisure, the Basis of Culture.**

Leisurely Watching for the Birds

By Br. Damian Whalen, O.S.B.

Watching birds compels the bird watcher to step away from expectations as to what will happen, to let go of any sense of control over the situation. The birds, after all, are not perching in the trees waiting to be seen. Bird watching calls for a quiet receptivity to whatever is there to be observed.

As a form of leisure, watching birds is for me a chance to step away from the noisy rush of ordinary activities, plans and projects in order to be attentive to the world around me and receptive to the beauty of God’s creation.



Br. Damian scanning the trees, trying to catch sight of an Indigo Bunting. (Photo by Donald Winslow)



An American Goldfinch at a feeder. (Photo by Br. Damian)

ests requires the watcher and hearer to be quiet and still. Walking slowly and quietly makes it possible for me to catch a full and almost close-up view of a Cedar Waxwing on the lowest branch of a tree out-

side of the Abbey Church. The sight of a bird, especially a species that one has not seen before, evokes an attitude of delight in the glory of God’s creation. Patience and receptivity brings the sight of an Indigo Bunting at a feeder in early spring (not a common sight).

Bird watching produces nothing of utility or economic value, but does bring the satisfaction of being able to add a few more names to my “Life List” of birds I have seen. So what’s the point? - the outside of me is immersed in fresh air and sunshine and the inside of me is refreshed and renewed by an activity which gives life to the soul.

...the outside of me is immersed in fresh air and sunshine and the inside of me is refreshed and renewed by an activity which gives life to the soul.

The philosopher Joseph Pieper once asserted that “leisure is not the attitude of the one who intervenes but of the one who opens himself, not of someone who seizes but of one who lets go, who lets himself go...” Although leisure can take many forms, Pieper maintains that true leisure has three essential elements: leisure is a form of silence and stillness, leisure is a form of celebration and delight, and leisure produces nothing of economic utility.

Bird watching contains all three of these elements. Seeing and hearing the birds that inhabit our gardens and for-



Fr. Joachim enjoys working in the gardens during his leisure time.

Monks Use Creative Hobbies for Leisure and Balance

Fr. Eugene: Keeping Bees

Although there is always something to keep a bee-keeper like Fr. Eugene busy throughout the year, things really get “buzzing” when the months of April and May arrive. Honey bees be-



come very active visiting spring flowers and often bee colonies swarm in search of a new home. Fr. Eugene has captured five swarms this year, nearly doubling the number of hives at the Abbey. Honey collection should be much better this year than last as Oklahoma’s long drought seems to have ended making more flowers for the bees. Yes, bee keeping involves a lot of work, but as many bee keepers know it also is also a very rewarding way to work with some of nature’s most fascinating creatures.

When he is not tending to the bees and repairing hives, Fr. Eugene often can be found in the Abbey vegetable garden cultivating other treats for the monks and Abbey friends.

Br. Andrew: Precision Woodworking

Many people know that Br. Andrew spends a great deal of time in the Abbey greenhouse, where he expertly cultivates orchids, roses, poinsettias and lilies. Along with this, however, “Br. Andy” also makes beautiful handcrafted items out of wood using precision scroll saw techniques. Br. Andy has used his skills with wood to design and make crosses, decorative clocks, back scratchers, Christmas ornaments, and intricate plaques featuring *The Lord’s Prayer*. Of course, if he finishes with that work, he finds time to spend with his flock of geese and his dog Lacey.



Br. Isidore: Native Flute Music

Br. Isidore is always on call as the Abbey Health Care Director, and keeps busy looking after the Abbey computers, giving tours of the Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art and teaching life-safety and CPR classes for many local organizations. Even with all this, however, he finds time to relax while cultivating various herbs for teas and food preparation, and to reflect while playing the Native American Flute. Br. Isidore began playing the Native American Flute several years ago and each month joins with others as part of a “flute circle.” In addition to playing the flute, he has designed and crafted well-toned flutes out of PVC pipe.



Br. George: Raising Chickens

Br. George has brought a pastoral sound to our Abbey campus with his hobby of keeping a small flock of chickens. The Abbey chicks arrived a year ago and have grown into hens. They can be heard clucking as they forage around their coop and lay a nice number of eggs each day. Br. George either sells the eggs to friends of the Abbey or cooks them for the enjoyment of the monks. Recently, Br. George adopted a new hen and a beautiful champion Faverolle show rooster named Crockett. In the evening, Br. George enjoys reading or reflecting in the evening air while observing the antics of his faithful flock before it’s time for them to “hit the roost” for the day.



Br. Simeon: Cultivating Blackberries

Having just completed his first year of study at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, PA, Br. Simeon is happy to be home at the Abbey where he can enjoy some of his favorite leisure activities. One of these is cultivating, harvesting and preserving blackberries. Br. Simeon cultivates the berries without fertilizers or pesticides. He is now experimenting with recipes for jam and has developed one sweetened with honey from our own Abbey hives. In one sense it represents a circle of life as the Abbey bees probably pollinated the berry plants, and then used the pollen to produce the honey used to sweeten the jam! The outdoor manual labor provides Br. Simeon with good physical exercise, time for silent reflection, and contact with the beauty of creation. On top of all that, the jam is available for purchase and so provides some revenue for the monastery!



Fr. Joachim and Abbot Lawrence: Landscaping Work

Subprior Joachim and Abbot Lawrence share a common interest and form of leisure – landscape gardening. Fr. Joachim focuses his attention on designing and maintaining areas behind the monastery for the monks to enjoy. One area is our “Sacred Heart Garden,” which features the historic statue of Jesus and his Sacred Heart that once was on the grounds of our original location thirty miles to the south. Under the shade of ancient cedars and secluded by a wall



Hobbies

of honeysuckle, the Sacred Heart Garden features benches, colorful flowers and a menagerie of figurine animals and angels.

Abbot Lawrence, with the help of Postulant Jason and Br. Simeon, enjoys working on ornamental landscaping to enhance the exterior of the monastery and Abbey Church. He sees it as a way of taking pride in our monastery home, of cultivating a place for contemplation of God's beautiful creation, and of reducing stress by physical work in the outdoors where he can listen to the breeze, the chimes of the Abbey clock tower and the songs of birds.



Our Oblate Family Grows Or other heading....



Oblate Novices were welcomed to the oblate family during the April 15 ceremony.



Three women made their final oblation and one transferred from another monastery.

ABBEY NEWS

Abbey Welcomes Postulant

On Tuesday, April 10, Abbot Lawrence and the monks received and blessed Jason Brown as a Postulant for the community. A member of St. Joseph Parish in Oklahoma City, Postulant Jason became an observer at the monastery in January. As a postulant, Jason continues his discernment process while living full-time in the monastery, joining the monks for the daily schedule of the monastery, the study of monastic spirituality, and a variety of tasks around the abbey. After a period of three months Postulant Jason may apply to become a novice in the community.



Monks Participate in Annual Retreat

The monks engaged in their annual community retreat May 19-25. Leading the retreat this year was Fr. Meinrad Miller, O.S.B., of St. Benedict's Abbey in Atchison, KS, where he serves as the Abbey Subprior and Vocation Director. Fr. Meinrad has given retreats at other monastic communities, to the priests of several dioceses, and in formation programs for the Missionary Sisters of Charity in India.



Fr. Meinrad Miller, O.S.B.

Oblate Days

Oblates gathered at St. Gregory's in Shawnee and at St. Benedict Parish in Montebello, CA, for their annual spring gatherings. The Oblate Family of St. Gregory's Abbey continues to grow. During the Shawnee gathering on April 15, Abbot Lawrence accepted seven oblate novices, three final oblations and one transfer of oblation. Accepted as Oblate novices were: Daniel Lay – Shawnee, OK; Frances Merrill – Yukon, OK; Rev. Larry W. Schiller, Jennings, OK; Carolyn Synovitz – Altus, OK; George Zampaloni – Yukon, OK; Diane Zampaloni – Yukon, OK; Anne O'Day – Harrah, OK. Making their final oblation were: Anne E. Machado – Seminole, OK; Peggy Dorman – Yukon, OK; Doni McLerran – Euless, TX. Transferring her Act of Oblation to St. Gregory's Abbey was Sharon Gayle Fore.

In Memoriam

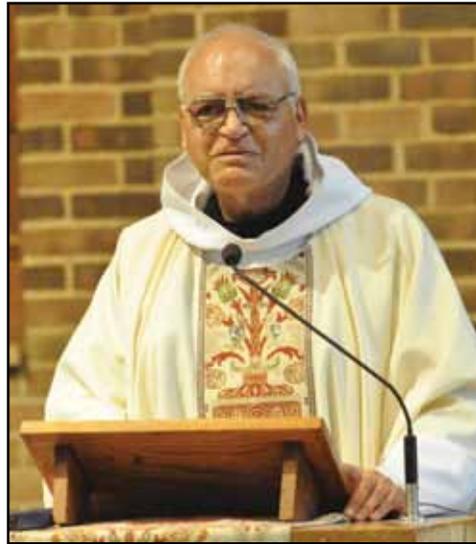
+ Anna Mae Junk, Oblate
Entered Eternal Life on June 6, 2012

Prior Martin and Fr. Paul Reach Golden Jubilee of Priestly Ordination

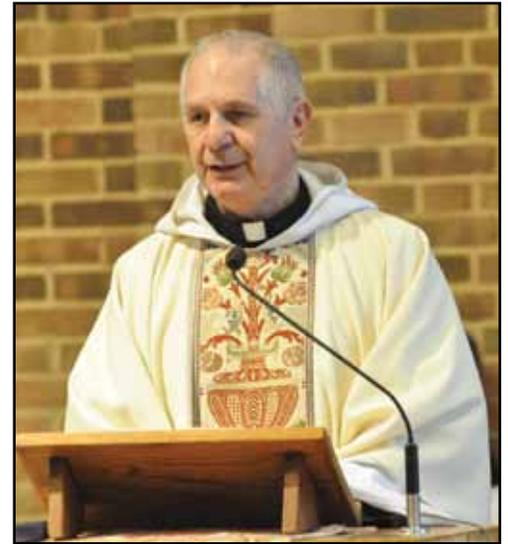
Prior Martin Lugo, O.S.B., and Fr. Paul Zahler, O.S.B., reached the 50th anniversary of their ordination to the priesthood on May 1, 2012. Their Golden Jubilee of Ordination was celebrated formally at St. Gregory's Abbey on Friday, May 25. The Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley, Archbishop of Oklahoma City, presided at Mass in the Abbey Church. The Most Rev. Eusebius Beltran, Archbishop Emeritus, and the Most Rev. Edward J. Slattery, Bishop of Tulsa, joined Abbot Lawrence, Fr. Martin and Fr. Paul as principal concelebrants. Over 100 guests joined the monks for this celebration, including several priests and deacons of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, religious sisters, oblates of St. Gregory's Abbey, and a number family members and friends from around the country.

As a boy in East Los Angeles, young "Richard" Lugo was inspired by the *Maryknoll Magazine* to be a missionary to far-off lands. His dreams were dashed, however, when a Maryknoll official told him that his academic background was not strong enough for him to apply for the society. Fortunately, even with this set-back, he continued to be inspired the priestly zeal and hard work of the two priests in his parish of Our Lady of Lourdes – Fr. Robert Dodson, O.S.B. and Fr. Matthew Brown, O.S.B., both monks of St. Gregory's Abbey in far-away Oklahoma. When Fr. Robert suggested that he consider St. Gregory's, the future Fr. Martin, at age 17, decided to spend the \$75 bond that he had won in a city-wide poetry contest not on a much-desired car, but on train and bus fare to take him farther from home than he had ever gone before: all the way to the plains of Oklahoma.

Fr. Martin sees that it was in this way that God made him a missionary, moving him to leave behind his family and his urban culture to embrace a way of life and a ministry that has taken him to places he never could have imagined. He is especially grateful for how priestly ministry has called him to be with families and individuals in good times and in bad, to journey with others through the course of their lives, and to communicate the hope that comes from knowing God's presence even in the midst of suffering and difficulty. For this he has found special



Prior Martin Lugo, O.S.B.



Fr. Paul Zahler, O.S.B.

inspiration in the courageous martyrs and faithful Catholics of Mexico who suffered much during the great persecution experienced by his grandmother's generation, and in the loving gaze of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Growing up in St. Michael, MN, the future Fr. Paul also had a boyhood dream of being a missionary with either the Maryknoll society or the Franciscan order. An enthusiastic athlete, he decided to come to St. Gregory's when a priest from his hometown, Fr. John Bloms, OSB, told him that he could study toward the priesthood while playing varsity sports at this school in faraway Shawnee, Oklahoma. Eventually, he came to see Benedictine life at St. Gregory's as an opportunity to follow his dream of being a missionary in an area where the few and widely-scattered Catholics longed for the sacraments. Eventually, he discerned a special priestly and missionary ministry when he became a mediator of God's grace and justice for those who are most vulnerable and misunderstood members of our society – the mentally retarded, the developmentally delayed and all persons who are marginalized or even discarded because of handicapping conditions.

Fr. Paul has found the inspiration to proclaim and to advocate for the dignity of every human being and of all humanity in his patron St. Paul, who emphasized the resurrection of the body and the redemption of all creation through Christ, and in Our Lady of the Assumption, on whose

feast day he professed his vows. With the support of his monastic community, he has been able to perform this priestly ministry of mediation to the ends of the earth, on the continents of North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Australia and the sub-continent of India.

God called Fr. Martin and Fr. Paul from very different backgrounds to the same place, to the same monastic community, and to a deep share in the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God's love, as the embodiment of human dignity, and as the mediator of redemptive and life-giving grace. They continue to respond to this call from the God who is love. Even after fifty years they feel that they continue to enter more deeply into the central mystery of the Eucharist: a mystery that touches us not only in the confines of a single celebration of the Mass, but that also draws all that we are as individuals, all that is humanity, and indeed all that is creation, into the redeeming love of Christ.



We are Called to Give Back to God

By Robert Allen

Twenty years have passed since the first draft of the Pastoral letter; “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response” was given to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in February 1992. The main author was Archbishop Thomas Murphy, now deceased.

So, why bring this up now? Well, for two reasons. It was my privilege to read this draft before it was given to the Bishop’s Conference and I just came across my copy that Archbishop Murphy sent to me. But more importantly, because the title spoke to me during my Easter Reflection – on how Christ appeared to the Apostles to reassure them of His Resurrection. It was Saint Thomas who was/is misjudged in his questioning. He gave

us the gift to know that it is better to believe without seeing.

The fact that Archbishop Murphy entitled this “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response” and not “A Disciple’s Responsibility” is a key and very important distinction. Yes, as good stewards, it is the response to the call, not the guilt we place on ourselves of doing or not doing, but our call from Baptism to be leaders, to share our Faith, by living our faith.

“Although faith is a strong force in the lives of Americans, our country’s dominant secular culture contradicts the values of the Judaio-Christian tradition in so many ways. We Christians are part of a culture! This is a culture in which destructive “isms” materialism, relativism, hedonism, individualism, consumerism; are at work in our lives. There is a strong tendency

to privatize our faith, to push it to the margins of society and exclude it from the marketplace where social policy is formed and people acquire their ideas about life and what it means.”

There is a CHOICE and this is why “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response” calls us to acknowledge that we are created and are not a product of evolution – to acknowledge that we are Baptized into the life of Christ and that we are called to give back to God all He has given to us. Yes, all He wants is “us”.

How we love God and one another will ultimately be how we will be judged as we managed our Stewardship.

Dear Readers:

We have been sending you our *MonksOK* magazine as a free subscription and hope you are enjoying visiting with us through this media. However, if for any reason you do not want us to mail this to you, or if you wish to be removed from any of our mailings, please let us know.

Thank you for your interest in our Abbey.

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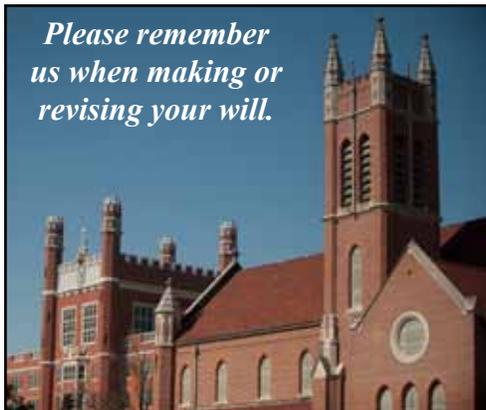
www.monksok.com

Positive Response to **Green Up**

The grounds around the Abbey are more colorful this month after the installation of dozens of new flowers, decorative plants, shrubs and trees: azaleas, hydrangeas, hollies, red maples, Chinese pistaches, yews, dogwoods, spireas, roses, hostas,

barberries, and numerous varieties of flowers. Due to the positive response of many friends of the monastery to our “Green Up 2012 Appeal,” we were able not only to purchase and install a wide variety of ornamental plants but we also purchased three pallets of mulch as well as some basic landscaping equipment. The monks and the guests who now enjoy these plants say “thank you” to all those who contributed. Untold numbers of birds, squirrels, butterflies, bees and other critters no doubt are also grateful!

Please remember us when making or revising your will.



*Our official name is:
The Benedictine Monks
of St. Gregory's Abbey
Our federal ID # is: 73-117-4716*

To our Friends and Benefactors:

It is our concern to protect your name and to assure you of this, OUR POLICY, to never rent, sell or lend your name to any other organization.

– Abbot Lawrence Staszyszen, O.S.B.



Summer Retreats At the Abbey 2012

Two retreats will be offered to the public this summer at St. Gregory's Abbey, providing great opportunities for holy leisure.

Abbot Lawrence will lead a retreat entitled "Life in the Spirit" on June 29-July 1. During this retreat, Abbot Lawrence will explore the fruits of the Holy Spirit listed by St. Paul in Galatians 5:24-25 as the evidence that one is living an authentic Christian life. Participants should bring a Bible for use in discussion and private reflection.

Fr. Charles Buckley will lead a retreat entitled "Our Hearts are Restless, Lord..." on July 27-29. During the retreat Fr. Charles will explore with participants the question of whether or not our longings are directed toward God and how we respond to the subtle call of God that comes to us in our experiences. Of assistance in this retreat will be the book The Human Poetry of Faith: A Spiritual Guide to Life by Rev. John Paul Gallagher, S.J.

Retreats will begin at 6:00 p.m. on Friday evening and will end by 3:00 p.m. on Sunday. Cost for Abbey Retreats is \$90 per person for early payment, \$95 for those who pay at registration. This fee includes lodging, meals and registration fee. The cost for those not needing lodging is \$50 in advance, \$55 at registration. Special payment plans may be arranged.

For more information about schedules and registration please call 405-878-5490, or e-mail Fr. Charles at cjbuckley@stgregorys.edu.

**Do you ever wonder
where God is leading you?
Are you interested
in becoming a monk
of St. Gregory's Abbey?**

**Contact
Fr. Boniface Copelin, O.S.B.,
for more information.
405-878-5455 or frboniface@stgregorys.edu**

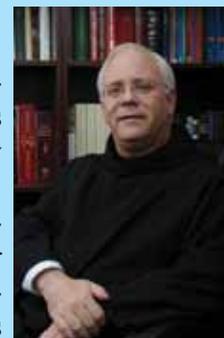
From the Vocation Director

Rev. Boniface Copelin, O.S.B.

As vocation director, I am sometimes asked about the qualities we seek in men joining the monastery. This is not always an easy question to answer. And so, this is the first in what may turn into a series of brief expositions of what we are seeking.

I would state from the first that there is no one specific personality type which makes a monk. Anyone who knows our community knows that we are all sorts of men. Some are extroverts; others are introverts. Some are studious and others are more mechanically inclined. In our history we have been farmers, philosophers, ranchers, businessmen, mechanics, coaches, mathematicians, teachers, theologians, etc. We have engaged in all kinds of occupations and our monks have been of all personality types. But even with all of this diversity, we all seek God in the monastic life.

In light of this, we are looking for balanced men to come to St. Gregory's. As we consider a candidate, we are not looking at a one-size-fits-all checklist, but at the whole picture of the individual. We consider the whole man as he presents himself to us. We look for balanced man whose faith, talents, abilities, potential and overall health indicate the ability to live this life joyfully and well. It is important to keep this general notion in mind as we begin examining the various qualities of balance in future articles.



Shawnee Oblate Day on April 15 ended with a solemn celebration of Vespers in the Abbey Church, during which Abbot Lawrence accepted seven oblate novices, the transfer of one oblate from another monastery and the final oblation of three oblates for St. Gregory's Abbey.



Abbey Vocation Director, Fr. Boniface Copelin, O.S.B., speaks to Oblates during their Shawnee spring gathering about the qualities to look for in potential candidates for the monastery.



Abbey Oblate Director, Prior Martin Lugo, O.S.B., gives a reflection on the spiritual life to Oblates gathered for their annual spring-time meeting on April 15.