

Magazine MonksOK

Volume IV, Number 3



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*As we progress in this way of life and in faith,
we shall run on the path of God's commandments,
our hearts overflowing
with the inexpressible delight of love.*

(Rule of St. Benedict, Prol. 49)

GAUDETE! Reflections from Abbot Lawrence



Earlier today, Prior Martin, our Novice Master, Father Boniface, our Vocation and Formation Director, and I sat down with our novice, Br. Francis, for an important exercise in our monastic tradition. Together, in one sitting, we read the *Rule of St. Benedict* from beginning to end. In doing so, we were following the instructions that St. Benedict gives in chapter

58 of the *Rule*, which is entitled “The Procedure for Receiving Brothers.” According to this chapter, the *Rule* is to be read three times to the novices during their novitiate year: after two months, after six more months, and finally after four additional months. This was the first of the called-for three readings of the *Rule* for Br. Francis.

Perhaps this formal reading of the *Rule* had a very practical purpose in the early 6th century. At that time, it was fairly common for newcomers to the monastery to be less than literate. They might have needed to have the *Rule* read to them so that they could understand clearly what they were considering. It was also a time of many monastic rules and traditions, and the specific *Rule* that St. Benedict used to guide and govern his monks was not as widely known as it is today. Other monasteries of the time might have had a different set of expectations: possibly more relaxed and possibly more demanding. St. Benedict wanted those seeking to join his monastery to have a clear understanding of the true purpose of the life and of fundamental obligations that the novice would be expected to embrace.

Clearly some of the concerns of a 6th century abbot regarding novices are not as pressing for us today. For instance, we live in a relatively literate society, and the issue of the basic literacy of inquirers would have been addressed long before the novitiate. One might also think that a person applying to enter a Benedictine monastery today would know basically what he or she is getting into. And so, one might ask why we would take the time to sit down and read the *Rule of St. Benedict* from cover to cover no less than three times during the course of the novitiate year?

That’s a good question: and I am not sure that there is an obvious answer.

We in the United States live in an age and a society that is deep into what is often referred to as the “Information Age.” While there might be some areas of our urban and rural land-

scapes that are not very well equipped or connected, most of our population has grown accustomed to, if not dependent on, easy access to information, services on demand, and constant instant “communication” with others. This is not all bad. Indeed, the tools now at our disposal can bring great benefits – from simple conveniences, to easy access to information, even to saving lives through fast emergency communications or the digital medical services being brought to the homebound or to persons in remote areas.

But the superabundance of data and instant gratification promoted by the ever increasing speed of our digital world can also create new challenges for the society in which we live – and for each of us who make up this society. First of all, with so much data at our fingertips, it becomes increasingly difficult for us to discern what is real and what is fantasy, to distinguish between what is true, what is rumor and what is downright false.

Secondly, with the ever-increasing speed of the delivery of data, information, entertainment, and communications, we can become increasingly frustrated when replies to our questions and invitations are not delivered quickly or even instantly. This creates an unrealistic expectation for fast and easy responses to any questions that we might have or problems that we might face.

And thirdly, we can be distracted easily by the latest “pop-up” advertisement or request to be “friends with” or “linked with” yet one more person we do not know. Our ability to concentrate in a disciplined way on one issue – to research it, to think it through, to explore its possibilities – becomes increasingly difficult when there are so many new messages “binging” or “chiming” for our attention.

All of these challenges, expectations and distractions of the Information Age ironically can combine to overwhelm us. We can easily end up living on a superficial level, not taking the time to understand what anchors us, or to appreciate what gives us a lasting sense of direction or meaning in our lives.

Perhaps these challenges of the early 21st century give new reasons for the leaders of the monastery to sit down with novices to give careful attention and valuable time to reading the *Rule* on a regular basis. After all, we embrace this *Rule* as a guide for our community and our journey of faith. Reading the *Rule* in its totality helps us to understand the big picture and the interconnectedness of the details of our daily life that can easily become the focus of our attention. It helps the novice to pause for just a



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GAUDETE!

couple of hours and to consider carefully the transition that he is making from a former way of life to a new path.

In those focused moments of reading the *Rule* after two months, eight months and twelve months, the novice has the opportunity to observe how his understanding of the Benedictine monastic life is changing, and to reflect on how he is changing under the influence of that life. Yes, the formal reading of the *Rule* remains an important element of vocational discernment.

Each of us, no matter our way of life, no matter our state in life, can benefit from just this type of reflective exercise. From time to time, it is good to pause for a couple of hours to reflect on what guides our lives, on what provides a sense of direction and meaning for us, and what standards we have to measure our success or to hold us accountable to and for others in our lives. Certainly a daily exercise of prayer and personal examination conscience can be of great help with this. But along with this, one might easily set aside the time for an intentional “reading” of one’s rule in life.

One could time this exercise with the changing of the seasons, or schedule it to coincide with the great liturgical feasts of the year such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and – yes – Ordinary Time. One can do this alone with the Lord, or jointly with a spouse, a close friend, a spiritual director, a confessor, or some other form of community. It could take a couple of hours or fill an entire weekend retreat. There are many possibilities.

Whatever “rule” we follow in life, whatever vocation God has given us, we all need to take the time to give thanks for that vocation, to reflect on what it asks of us, and to renew our commitment to respond positively to the grace that God offers us through it.

A Letter from Brother Simeon

I have just entered my third year of seminary studies as St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, PA. While seminary studies are a preparation for future ministry within my own monastic community of St. Gregory’s Abbey and in the greater Church in Oklahoma, they also provide a rich opportunity fulfill an essential monastic goal: seeking God. The entire monastic life is ordered toward attaining this goal, and my current seminary studies afford me the time to pray and to study the great mysteries of our Faith, so that in knowing God more fully, I may be enabled to love Him more deeply. I am very grateful to my brothers and to all who have made possible this time of preparation which will by God’s grace yield blessings for a lifelong vocation.

Br. Simeon Spitz, O.S.B.

**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.



In the previous issue of *MonksOK!*, I began an exposition on the qualities which we look for in men who might come to us. The point which I stressed in that article was that we don’t so much have a checklist, but rather we create a balance sheet. With the idea of balance in mind I would like to present in this edition some of the qualities of nature which would be of benefit to one seeking to enter monastic life.

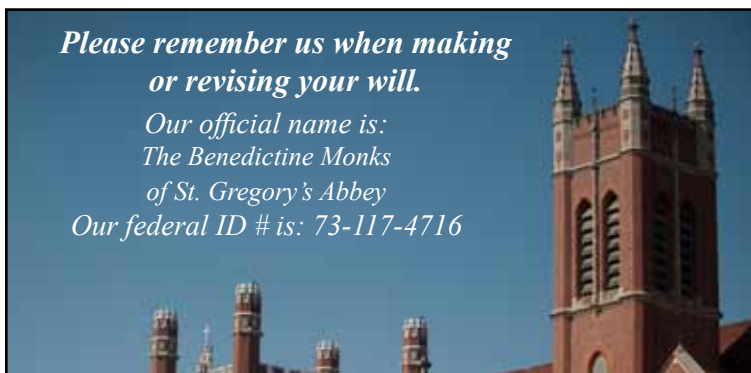
Of the human qualities for which we look is openness. Is the aspirant open to doing things the way they are done in the monastery? Is he able to adapt his manner to the manner of the house? This is an important quality because of the nature of our life together. We live, pray, work, and eat with each other every day. If one can’t be open to acceptance of the monks the way they are and the life the way it is lived there is a true question about the individual’s ability to accept himself and to grow as he changes. Linked to this openness is flexibility. While openness is about acceptance and taking in new ideas and attitudes, flexibility is about a willingness to change and to be changed by the life. One might equally call this quality adaptability.

These issues of openness and flexibility are not age dependent, but they easily can be. In general, we ask that a candidate be between the ages of 20 and 45. At the age of 20 or so one can begin to ascertain whether the candidate has the maturity to understand what he is pursuing and has the stick-to-it-iveness necessary while at the same time having the openness to learn. At the age of 45, if we are honest, we easily tend to be more rigid in our thinking than we were when we were younger. This is not to say that a man who comes seeking to follow his vocation with us at an age over 45 would be summarily dismissed but it does mean that we would be looking at this quality with a heightened awareness of the potential for problems. Similarly, just because a man is 20-something doesn’t mean that openness and flexibility are necessarily sufficiently present though in general it is less of a difficulty.

These qualities are but one facet of the diamond and just as more facets give that diamond its fire so other qualities of nature and grace go into the kind of men whom we are seeking. In future issues we will take into account others.

*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*



Monks Celebrate Independence Day with Guests



The monks were given a special treat for their annual picnic to celebrate Independence Day. Mr. Tom Campbell, Mr. Bruce Tiffin and his sons Nick and Andrew, and their friend Blake, traveled from Amarillo, TX, to celebrate the Fourth of July with the monks, and they brought with them their large mobile smoker and prepared for the community an entire roasted pig with all the trimmings.

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Br. Isidore Harden, OSB, Installed as Acolyte

On July 22, Abbot Lawrence installed Br. Isidore into the Ministry of Acolyte. The renewed role of this ministry was promulgated by Pope Paul VI as part of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. In addition to assisting with the celebration of the Mass, an acolyte is designated in a special way to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion, to have access to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, and to bring Communion to the homebound and infirm. In his role as Director of Abbey Health Care, Br.



Isidore frequently is in position to bring Communion to the infirm monks. He also regularly assists with the distribution of Communion at the Abbey Mass on Sundays when many of the ordained monks are away from the monastery for weekend assignments.

Fr. Basil Keenan, O.S.B., Reassigned to the Abbey From Pastorate at Immaculate Conception Parish

After eighteen years of service, Fr. Basil recently resigned his appointment as pastor of at Immaculate Conception Parish in Seminole, OK, and resumed residence at St. Gregory's Abbey. He made this decision in consultation with Abbot Lawrence and Archbishop Coakley of Oklahoma City due to health issues that were making it very difficult for him to provide the level of pastoral ministry that he wished. Fr. Basil hopes to continue with some form of active ministry once his health improves.

To this end, Abbot Lawrence has assigned Fr. Basil to substitute for priests in the area, to assist in preparing a revised edition of our monastery books for the Divine Office, to teach Latin to Brother Novice Francis, and to assist with the installation of the new electronic card catalogue for the Abbe Library. Needless to say, we are grateful that Fr. Basil is enjoying improved health!

Abbey Hosts Two Summer Retreats

The monastery once again hosted two public retreats this year, both of which were well attended.

Abbot Lawrence lead a retreat entitled "Life in the Spirit"



"Life in the Spirit" Retreat examined the fruits of the Holy Spirit.



"Our Hearts are Restless, Lord ..." Retreat explored whether our longings are directed toward God and how we respond to the subtle call of God.

on June 29-July 1. During this retreat, Abbot Lawrence explored 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.

Fr. Charles Buckley led a retreat entitled "Our Hearts are Restless, Lord..." on July 27-29. During the retreat Fr. Charles explored with participants the question of whether our longings are directed toward God and how we respond to the subtle call of God that comes to us in our experiences.

To receive information on future retreats at St. Gregory's Abbey, please contact the Abbey Office at 405-878-5490 and ask to be placed on the mailing list for our retreat program.



Fr. Patrick McCool, O.S.B., Attends Sabbatical

Fr. Patrick McCool, O.S.B., departed for Oakland, California, on August 25, to participate in a three month sabbatical program at the School of Applied Theology at Berkeley. During the sabbatical program, Fr. Patrick

will have opportunities to attend short courses on a variety of theological, liturgical and spiritual topics, take advantage of opportunities for spiritual direction, and interact with approximately twenty-five other religious men and women, priests and lay ministers who are also program participants.

Abbot Lawrence assigned Fr. Patrick to the program as a sabbatical from his 35 years of service as a chaplain at Tinker Air Force Base. In addition to providing pastoral ministry at Tinker AFB five and seven days a week, Fr. Patrick has served in a variety of ways in the monastery, including as prior, and in the university, including as a residence hall advisor, instructor of English, and director of the library. He will complete his sabbatical on December 7, at which time he will return to the Abbey.

Abbot Lawrence Re-elected to National Board of CMSM

Abbot Lawrence was elected to a second three-year term as an at-large member of the national board of directors for the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). The election took place during the annual CMSM National Assembly. The CMSM is comprised of the “major superiors” of the nearly 25,000 men in religious orders and societies of apostolic life in the United States. The National Board works with the CMSM Executive Staff to coordinate joint initiatives between men’s religious orders, and to foster collaboration with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and various Vatican officials. Abbot Lawrence stated: “It is a great honor and learning experience to serve on the National Board of the CMSM. The example and witness of many men in consecrated life is truly inspiring and demonstrates that the Holy Spirit continues to inspire and sustain a wide variety of charisms in the Church.”

Honey Harvest Tops 350 Pounds

It has been a busy season for the bees and bee-keepers at the monastery. Although the last half of the summer was hot and dry, the bees were able to enjoy the nectar of many blooming plants during the spring. That, combined with the addition of several new hive colonies, made it possible for Fr. Eugene and Br. Simeon to harvest just over 350 pounds of honey, compared to just about 200 pounds during the 2011 season. The delicious, light-colored pure honey has been packaged in pint jars and is available for purchase at the monastery while supplies last at \$12 per pint.



Br. Kevin McGuire, OSB, Installs Additional Pond

Two consecutive years of record high temperatures and harsh drought in Oklahoma have caused hardship for many farmers and gardeners, and have strained water resources available for animals and plants. Each year, Br. Kevin McGuire, O.S.B., makes use of pond water distributed through a campus-wide irrigation

that he has installed and maintained over many years to sustain the trees, shrubs and flowers that beautify the grounds of the abbey, university and museum.



Much of the water is provided by the large pond located on the northwest side of the campus that is sometimes referred to as “Pearl Plunge.” But even the water supply of that faithful source strains to meet the current needs of the campus.

In anticipation of possible future droughts and increased landscaping, Br. Kevin consulted a hydrologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Soil Conservation to plot the location of an additional pond on the abbey property. Having borrowed a bulldozer from Mr. Robert Nowakowski, a local rancher who leases some of the abbey pastureland, Br. Kevin began the monumental task of digging the new pond. He commented that the task was made more difficult as he was starting from scratch, with “not so much as a hole, depression or bomb crater to start with.” But over the course of two weeks of solid work, the pond began to take shape and he was nearly complete with his work as this article was being written. Located to the south of the “back yard” of the monastery, the pond will capture the run-off water from much of the eastern half of the monastery grounds, including from our new monastery parking lot.

New Boiler Installed in Monastery

Earlier this summer, friends of the monastery learned the sad news of the demise of “Benny the Boiler,” the faithful servant who had kept monks, pilgrims and guests warm for decades. Now that the well-tried boiler has been properly mourned, we are now happy to announce the arrival of our new monastery boiler on September 24. While the installation of this vital piece of equipment had not been completed by the time of publication, the new boiler should be up and running by the time that cold weather arrives.

The monks wish to thank all those who responded so well to our appeal for assistance toward the purchase and installation of our new boiler. Donors responding to our special appeal helped to pay for nearly half the estimated cost. We and our guests are grateful for this wonderful response!

Centennial Countdown for St. Gregory’s in Shawnee

Planning is underway to celebrate the centennial of the establishment of the current location of St. Gregory’s Abbey and its work of education and culture at St. Gregory’s University and the Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art. While the first monks

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ANNUAL APPEAL

ASK...THE SPIRIT WILL LEAD YOU

By Robert J. Allen

“You must ask first what is right, then the Spirit will lead you”, said St. John of the Cross. In each person’s life this question occurs frequently, as it is truly a great insight as to how we know can do God’s will.

Each year, the monks of St. Gregory’s Abbey turn to family, friends and alumni to ask for your support in our Annual Appeal Fund Drive. This single appeal is a major factor in the overall operation of the Abbey. These funds help to offset healthcare, food utilities and those less attractive everyday costs which are very essential items.

Giving is always up to the donor, the amount, the frequency, the reason is up to the individual, but is always triggered by the “ask” and how each person listens and responds to that call. We are all called to give and how we listen is often how we are lead.

There are now over 1.4 million charities in the United States, and most of them are very worthwhile, but few have been grounded in the “Rule” for over 1,500 years as are the Benedictines. They are in the Church each day, praising God and praying for you and your loved ones. And through their labor and ministry they put

their love of God into action in loving service to others.

With this issue of MonksOK magazine, we have incorporated the Annual Appeal to save another mailing and to provide a few pictures of how the Abbey is serving those who are in need and to show how God continues to bless us with vocations.

God has called these men to be Benedictine monks. In a world that is increasingly unstable, selfish and forgetful of God, they remind us to be mindful of God and loving in service to others. I pray that our readers will respond generously to support them in their important vocation.

PROMOTION OF VOCATIONS



Vocation Director Fr. Boniface teaches a class in spirituality to Novice Brother Francis.

Your contribution to the Abbey Annual Appeal will assist us as we help others in their vocational discernment and formation. Through your generosity, we can produce materials that describe our way of life, enhance our presence on the world-wide web or in social networking media, and travel to participate in vocation

awareness days, career fairs and other events. In addition to this, your contributions will assist in the training and continuing education of our vocation team and those charged with the formation of new members of our monastic community. We are grateful for your investment in these efforts that are so critical for the future of our community.

sons from all walks of life are able to benefit from time spent in one of our comfortable guest rooms for times of personal retreat or days of reflection. Contributions to our Annual Fund provide much-needed assistance to us as we strive to meet this important pastoral need for hospitality and spiritual growth



A Knights of Columbus Retreat for Married Couples was held July 21, 2012.

AN OASIS FOR ALL:

RETREATS AT ST. GREGORY’S ABBEY

For over 1,600 years, monasteries have been known as places of hospitality, rest and spiritual growth for all. St. Gregory’s Abbey continues to fulfill this important ministry of hospitality through our retreat program and guestroom facilities. Each summer, St. Gregory’s Abbey offers to the general public organized weekend retreats centered on particular themes. In addition to this, throughout the year per-

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

Blessed Pope John Paul II stressed the vital importance of Catholic higher education to the overall mission of the Church. Pope Benedict XVI has emphasized the important role that the Benedictine tradition in particular can play in the New Evangelization of the increasingly secular culture in which we live. Our monastic community considers the work and ministry of education to be one of our primary contributions to humanity and to the mission of the Church.

Through our corporate work with the Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art and St. Gregory's University, we touch the lives of thousands of children and adults each year.

The Abbey is financially responsible for the academic and profession formation that the monks need in order to be qualified to serve in our educational ministries. Your contributions to our Abbey Annual Fund assist us in this achieving success in this important work.

PASTORAL CARE

Throughout our history, monks of our community have devoted themselves tirelessly to the pastoral care of others through ordained ministry.



Br. Simeon is in preparation for future ministry at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, PA.

Members of our community continue to provide residential pastoral care in three parishes, and we assist regularly at three military bases and in numerous parishes throughout the year as we substitute for priests

who need to be away from their parishes due to meetings, conferences, illness or much-needed periods of rest and retreat.

Through your contribution to the Abbey Annual Fund, you support the ongoing formation of our community for such important ministry, as well as offset the rising costs of fuel and vehicle maintenance needed for our many missionary journeys.

HEALTH CARE FOR MONKS

Any family can understand the rising cost of health insurance and long-term health care. Our monastic household also must meet these challenges. The monastery is financially responsible for providing health care

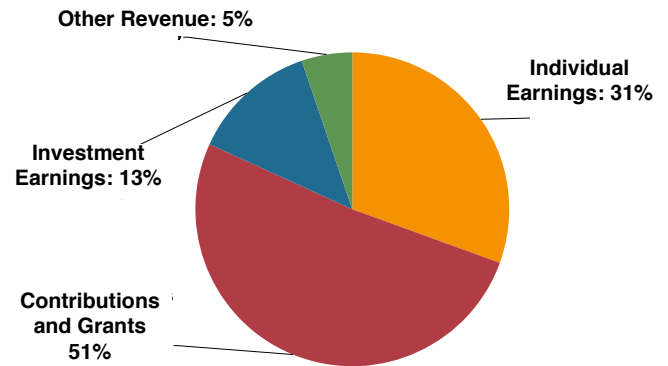


Fr. Louis and other monks receive personalized care from the Abbey Health Care Staff.

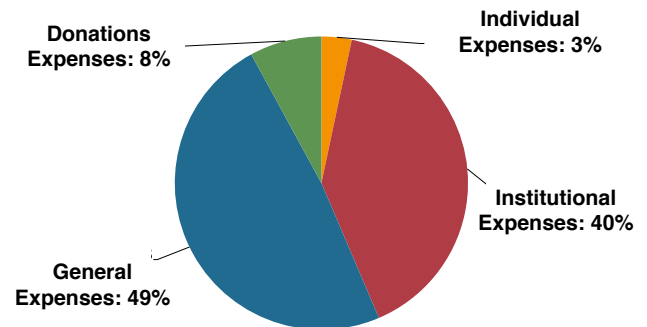
insurance for our monks under the age of 65, and we must also face the challenges of supplementing the health care coverage that we have for our men who are over age 65. Part of this cost is maintaining our own staff of health care aids who assist our elder and infirm members in daily tasks and personal care. Your contribution to our Abbey Annual Fund is an invaluable expression of support for monks who have selflessly given of themselves to others for decades and who now need a helping hand.

2012-2013 Budget St. Gregory's Abbey

Sources of Revenue



Expenses Distribution



We are very grateful to our friends and benefactors who support the Abbey and make its ministries possible.

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In a private ceremony on July 10, Abbot Lawrence and the monastic community formally accepted and vested Mr. Jason Brown as a novice of St. Gregory's Abbey. During the ceremony, Abbot Lawrence clothed the new novice in the habit proper to novices and gave him the name Br. Francis.



Br. Francis is a native of Oklahoma, having been raised near the town of Noble. After graduation from high school, he severed for a period of time in the U.S. Navy. Upon leaving the Navy, Br. Francis returned to Oklahoma to be near his family. At the time of his acceptance as a postulant for the abbey, Br. Francis was employed by an interior design company in Oklahoma City.

The novitiate is a year-long period of intense discernment and formation. As a novice, Br. Francis is formed both by the daily prayer and work of the monastery, and by a number of courses on Church history and spirituality, monastic history and tradition, liturgical prayer and music, and Sacred Scripture, especially the book of Psalms. He is assigned various tasks around the monastery that integrate him into the life of the community, while at the same time leave the primary focus of the novitiate on the development of his vocation as a Benedictine monk.

Br. Francis may petition to profess temporary vows as a monk at the end of the novitiate year. Please keep him in your prayers!

arrived in Indian Territory on October 12, 1875, and established our first monastery and schools at Sacred Heart on June 7, 1876, we did not begin our foundation at Shawnee until over 25 years later.



It was on March 20, 1910, that representatives of the City of Shawnee and the monks of Sacred Heart Abbey entered into an agreement that would make possible the foundation of what was to be known as "The Catholic University of Oklahoma." The groundbreaking for the construction of what is known as historic Benedictine Hall took place one hundred years ago this month on October 1, 1912. Construction was completed in September 1915.

Abbot Lawrence, University President Greg Main, and Museum Director and Chief Curator Dane Pollei, are working closely together to plan appropriate celebrations for the centennial of the establishment and opening of the campus that is now home to the abbey, the university and the museum. Abbot Lawrence



commented: "We hope to commemorate the centennial in such a way that all persons who are affiliated with our abbey, university and museum will be able to participate. We also hope that all will be inspired by the past to continue the mission of these vital institutions for another one hundred years and more!"

MonksOK is published four times per year by the **Benedictine Monks of St. Gregory's Abbey** for our friends, oblates, and sponsors.

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Christmas Schedule

Office of Readings for Christmas: 10:00 p.m.

Christmas Mass at Midnight: 10:30 p.m.

Mass on Christmas Morning: 10:00 a.m.

Save the Dates:

Abbot's Table Banquet and Auction – May 17, 2013

2nd Annual Abbey Golf Tournament – June 24, 2013

Retreat with Abbot Lawrence – June 28-30, 2013

Retreat with Fr. Charles B. – July 26-28, 2013

Call the monastery for more information: 405-878-5490.