

January 26, 2008 - Retreat

The Oblate Retreat began, as usual, with sung Morning Prayer, followed by a short period of silence. Father Connely then read a letter from Dom James Deschene, Abbot of Christminster, the first of what we hope to be many letters explaining the meaning of the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Following Dom Deschene's letter, Br. Benedict (Andersen) gave a short lecture explaining the words of the Statutes for Oblates of Christminster, that Oblates "shall daily read a portion of the Rule of our holy Father Benedict and seek always to live by its spirit, and, wherever possible, by its prescriptions, as adapted to their state in life." Br. Benedict emphasized that Benedictine spirituality is not strange, or esoteric, or extra-ordinary. The Benedictine way is simply the Christian way, the baptismal life. The Benedictine Oblate is simply a Christian who lives out his or her baptismal vocation of seeking God through prayer, silence, humility, obedience, moderation, simplicity, diligence and family life. The only difference is that the Oblate has for his father, guide, and heavenly intercessor Benedict, and is counted among the innumerable company of his sons and daughters.

Finally, Father Lester Bundy introduced the Oblates to the figure of Brother Lawrence, the seventeenth century French Carmelite lay brother and author of the classic *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Brother Lawrence lived a life of extreme simplicity within the monastery, yet many became attracted by his obvious holiness and his simple spiritual message. He believed that Christians can commune with and experience God anywhere and at any time, not just when they in the presence of the Most Holy Sacrament, or reciting their formal prayers. Christians ought to seek God every minute of the day in their mundane, everyday, workaday lives. It is not hard to see how this simple spirituality applies to Oblates, or to any Christian, living in the world.