

Oblate Manual



Saint Martin's Abbey

Lacey, Washington

Anno 2007

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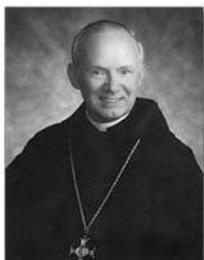
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Dear Oblates,

It gives me great pleasure to write a letter of welcome to you in this wonderful oblate manual. Special thanks must be extended to oblate Patricia McClure who, at Brother Edmund's request, has generally worked on this project to make it applicable to Saint Martin's oblates.

The oblate is a person of faith who strives to faithfully follow Christ while walking the path of life with Benedict's wise insights. It is, because of the Rule, a safe path by which the oblate faces the vicissitudes of the world and is transformed into perfect union with Christ. As Benedictines, we are all striving to do this and to one day share life in the Kingdom. It is the hope of the abbey that you will find this book a real source of spiritual food for the soul.

Sincerely in Christ,



Rt. Rev. Neal G. Roth, OSB,
Abbot

1. Saint Martin of Tours

November 11th – *Martinmas* – the Feast of Saint Martin of Tours

In some parts of the world, the feast of Saint Martin is considered, for practical purposes, the first day of winter. New wine is ready for drinking, butchering is done, and preparations for winter are complete. Martinmas is a day of celebration much like Thanksgiving Day in America. Bonfires are lit and festivities begin at the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour on this the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

The Life of Saint Martin of Tours

Martin was born to pagan parents about 315 AD in Sabaria, Upper Pannonia – modern Szombathely, Hungary. He was raised in Pavia, Italy. His father was a Roman military officer.

At the early age of ten, Martin wanted to be a Christian and secretly knocked on a priest's door begging to be made a catechumen. Martin wanted to be a soldier for Christ rather than for Rome. At age 15, according to Roman tradition, Martin was required to become a soldier. He was so opposed to this path for his life that he had to be brought in chains. Still, once he'd made his oath to serve, Martin did his duty as a soldier. Martin's tour of duty was mostly as a guard. His reputation and service obtained him the rank of officer quickly. With his promotion to officer came a servant, but it was hard to tell who the real servant was. Martin often served the man instead of the other way around.





While on duty, one very cold day, at the gates of the city of Amiens in Gaul, Martin met a shivering and half-naked beggar. Moved with compassion, he divided his cloak into two parts and gave half to the man. In a dream Martin saw Christ dressed in his cloak and saying “look what one who is not yet a Christian does for the poor.” This

encouraged Martin to continue his education as a catechumen and before his 18th birthday he was baptized into the church.

Martin desired to commit totally to Christ after his baptism. Unfortunately, the Franks and Allemanni invaded Gaul and Martin was called to fight. It was a practice to give money to the soldiers before a battle to inspire them to fight. Martin refused the money, telling Emperor Julian to give the money to the other soldiers, stating that, as a Christian it was unlawful for him to fight. When Julian called him a coward, Martin offered to face the enemy alone and unarmed. Julian had him imprisoned, but released him when the nomads began negotiations for peace. So at age twenty Martin was discharged from his military service.

Martin sought the advice of Saint Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers. Hilary was impressed with Martin, and convinced him to become ordained. Although at first Martin didn't feel he was worthy of ordination, Hilary pointed out that he needed to reconsider his stand on humility when it came to serving Christ.

On a trip home to see his parents, some robbers accosted Martin. Martin convinced one of them to give up the life of thievery. Once home Martin continued his conversions, among his converts was his mother. His father

on the other hand, and many Arians of the region, would not give up their beliefs. Life in his hometown was not easy. Martin was publicly humiliated for his beliefs. At one point, Martin was beaten and driven out of town for his zealous Christianity.

Martin found himself needing more solitude. In the region now called Ligugé and with the help of Hilary, Martin set up a hermitage. It was here that Martin performed his first miracle. A catechumen died before baptism, Martin laid himself over the body and several hours later the man came back to life. Martin's solitude drew many followers over the next ten years. The community grew into the first monastery of Gaul.

In 371, Bishop Lidorius of Tours died and the people of the region chose Martin to be their bishop. Martin declined the position. So, the people tricked him. A man begged Martin to come visit his sick wife. Martin was in the habit of tending to the needs of the ill so he came. Upon entering the city, Martin was surrounded by the people and taken bodily to the church to be consecrated and approved of by a delegation of bishops. The bishops were not impressed with the appearance of this man. He was scraggly, dressed in beggar's garb and looking nothing like a bishop. The people declared that they wanted Martin as their bishop because they had seen his holiness, poverty, charity, and grace.

Martin became Bishop, but didn't live in the palace as other bishops. Rather, he chose to live in a cell attached to the church in hopes of remaining as monastic as possible. He soon found that the task of Bishop was an intrusion into his desire for solitude. Martin fled the city and set up a stick house away from the noise and people. Unfortunately, he soon had about 80 followers, so he founded a monastery at Marmoutier and fulfilled his duties as bishop through the priests he sent as representatives.

Martin was very committed to his duties as servant to the people. One duty he took seriously was that of conversion. Instead of preaching and sending others out to do this work, Martin himself would go from home to home, speaking to the people about God. He was a successful evangelist and after converting a city he would organize the newly converted into communities under the direction of a monastic priest.



Conversion was not always an easy task. In one town the people had been worshipping a tree and Martin tried to convince them to cut it down. They agreed, but only if Martin would sit in the path of the falling tree. Martin did so and the people cut the tree down only to witness Martin make the sign of the cross and the tree fall slowly in the opposite direction.

Martin also rebuilt the non-Christian places of worship with Christian churches. In one case the people didn't want to remove a pagan tower so Martin prayed and a bolt of lightning did the job for them.

Martin was a very convincing orator. Authorities often refused to see him because they could not resist his requests on behalf of prisoners.

Martin's duties as bishop were often political. Ithacius, the bishop of Spain, had asked the emperor Maximus' help with the heretic, Priscillian. When Priscillian was captured, Ithacius demanded his execution, but Martin argued that excommunication was enough. Thinking that he had convinced the authorities and saved Priscillian, he left. Ithacius undermined Martin and all were executed.

When Martin found out about the massacre, he was appalled and returned to stop Ithacius. Martin refused to meet face to face with the murdering bishop. Emperor Maximus made a deal that the remaining prisoners would be freed if Martin shared communion with Ithacius. Martin did so, but regretted his actions deeply. He was so full of shame that God had to send an angel to admonish him. The angel warned Martin that he needed to forgive himself and continue to convert and free prisoners or lose his own salvation.

Martin's kindness to all became legendary, as did his many miracles, such as the casting out of demons and the healing of numerous illnesses. Martin also had conversations with angels and was harassed by the devil, who took great pleasure in trying to get Martin to turn away from Christ. One such story has Martin walking to Rome when the devil arrives to taunt him for not riding, as was proper for a bishop. To end the harassment Martin turned the devil into a donkey and rode him to Rome.

On November 8, 397 in Candés, Tours, France, Martin died of natural causes. At his request he was buried in the Cemetery of the Poor. After his death a chapel was built over his grave, and later a basilica replaced it. Martin was the first non-martyr to receive the status of a saint.

2. A Brief History of Saint Martin's

For more than a century, Saint Martin's Abbey has been active in the Puget Sound area. The monks' involvement in pastoral work actually began in 1891 at Tacoma's newly established Holy Rosary parish. At the bequest of German-speaking Catholics, Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, sent Fr. William Eversmann, OSB to be pastor of the new parish. Within a few years the Benedictines of Minnesota sent enough monks to found a new monastery and school about fifty miles south of Seattle in what was to become Lacey, Washington.



Saint Martin's University, founded in 1895, is the primary apostolate of the Abbey. The school went through a number of stages. First there was an abbreviated grade school, a high school, and a two-year college. In the early



1940's, the grade school was dropped and the college became a four-year institution. But by the mid-1970's the monks decided that their only educational apostolate would be the college. Saint Martin's University is one of two Roman Catholic Universities in Western Washington. A Benedictine school, the university welcomes students from all faiths and persuasions. The monks work in a variety of faculty and staff positions in the school.

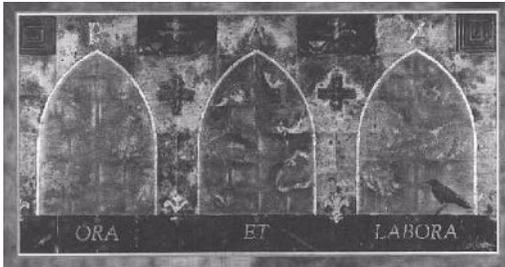
The Abbey continues to serve the archdiocese in parish work, staffing a few parishes in the area and assisting on weekends in several others. Some members minister throughout the state serving as chaplains at several Catholic hospitals.



3. Mission Statement

The Benedictine Abbey of Saint Martin's was founded in Lacey, Washington in 1895 as a monastery of the American Cassinese Congregation. It is a community of Roman Catholic men dedicated to providing Christian witness in the Pacific Northwest through a monastic life of prayer and work, education, and service to the Church.

Saint Martin's Abbey fulfills this mission through liturgical prayer and worship, through its support of Saint Martin's University and through its pastoral service to the local Church.



The basic principles and beliefs that guide the men of the Abbey are prayer, hospitality, listening to others, and service, particularly through education.

PRAYER: The seeking of God especially through common prayer as well as in private meditation and spiritual reading.

HOSPITALITY: The seeking to provide a welcoming presence to pilgrims and other visitors who come to the monastery looking for a place of prayer, peace and rest.

LISTENING TO OTHERS: The striving for a gentle and respectful heeding of the voice of God as manifested through fellow monks, campus associates, and visitors.

SERVICE TO OTHERS: Sponsorship of Saint Martin's University is the principal work of the Abbey.

All monks seek God and respond to Him through prayer. Prayer makes the monk aware that: God is found within ourselves, but also in daily encounters with others. Through prayer one can meditate on the mystery of Christ's coming and continually welcome Him into one's life.

Community prayer, called the "Work of God," by Saint Benedict, is the foundation of life at Saint Martin's Abbey. These times of prayer throughout the day unify daily life and open one up to encounter God. Communal prayer time is filled with praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to God and serves as a base for individual and private prayer. Monastic prayer traditionally is rooted in the Psalms.

Community is the essence of monastic living. It is where one encounters God and oneself as a creation of God with a divine purpose.

A monk's life is centered around prayer, which at times can be thwarted by inward and outward distractions. Nonetheless, we continue to gather daily to pray and remind the whole world of Christ's life and service. A monk's life exists as prayer; his life is not a personal schedule interrupted with moments of prayer. By his presence at community prayer and the attention to individual prayer, the monk performs the ultimate service. They remind one another of the past deeds of God, declare what He currently is doing, and proclaim the potential of the future.



As all Christians do, the monk takes up his daily work; he is filled with hope and promise by service to his brothers in community and to the Church and the world

13. Silence

Be still and know that I am.

Psalm 46

This is an important concept of Benedictine spirituality: the cultivating of both external and internal Silence. The external Silence comes when we remove ourselves from all the distractions around us and stop commenting on everything around us. When we refrain from giving our opinion we soon learn that our opinion isn't all that necessary. Internal silence comes when we begin to practice external silence first and are able to sit or pause for a moment within ourselves. It is a necessary condition for hearing the call of God and responding to Him. Before one can hear, one has to silence one's self and the outside world. When one cultivates silence, one grows closer to the awareness of true self.

Silence means slowing down, stopping and pausing. It is a refreshing mini-vacation when practiced. It offers us a time to reflect, refocus and recharge.



Silence is simply experiencing, being as a witness, not as controller or doer or thinker, but as observer.

Silence causes us to stop searching, wanting, controlling, needing, doubting, praying, keeping, dreaming, desiring, manipulating, forcing, grasping, fearing, using, wasting, lying, seeking, moving, believing, holding,

imagining, and thinking. It is in silence that we realize the meaning of the words that Jesus said, “the Kingdom of Heaven is within you.”

It is in silence that the world was created, “in the beginning, the earth was a formless void.” From this void, within this void, all was and is contained. Seeking silence draws us to creation and creativity and allows us to become transformed.

Silence also brings us focused to the moment, to the here and now, and it can even cause us to pause before we utter disparaging words.

Silence. The practice of it can heighten your powers of observation and sharpen your other senses. Benedict was wise to make room for silence and pauses throughout the day to encounter our true self and God.

How to start? Simply stop what you are doing for one second, attune to the silence and see that thoughts pass through you, allow the passing, remain silent, and open. Nature provides a good way to ease into silence. Try pausing and watching the sky, the clouds, the formations of the land, the trees in bloom or movement, the activity of animals and birds. Listen to them, to the wind, to sounds of water, be it rain or stream or ocean, closing your eyes and feeling the warmth of the sun.



14. Prayer and Work

(Ora et Labora)

The Rule of Saint Benedict summons a monk to live a life balanced between prayer and work. The Rule emphasizes growth through balance and moderation. A time to be active and a time to be reflective. Time for community and time for solitude. What one soon discovers when life becomes balanced is that there is more time. In his wisdom Benedict knew that not everyone was suited to pray constantly and we know that all work and no play makes for a cranky life. Prayer affords the monk and Oblate time to pull back and away from the hectic pace. Work gives everyone a sense of accomplishment and belonging. Work contributes to the community and eases the burden of all. The Rule is written in the context of living in a community. A community is a group of like-minded individuals, who are willing and able to assist each other in the pursuit of God. Both work and prayer are times to be members of the community. For monks it is coming together, putting aside the world and refocusing on the work of God.



Oblates can enjoy these same benefits when we set aside time on a daily basis to refocus on our small part in life. We are not praying alone because Benedictine prayer is universal. Somewhere other Benedictines are sharing our prayers whether it's the monks at Saint Martin's, Saint John's, the sisters in Kansas or oblates in Rome.

Benedictine prayer is constant and consistent. Even if our personal day falls apart, our prayer time is there, intact, waiting for us. Because we live balanced lives, the time is there. We have made a place for it in our lives.

Lectio Divina

The monastic life allows freedom for adopting and adapting a variety of methods of prayer. Benedict schedules prayer but he doesn't necessarily tell us how to pray during those times. Perhaps the most important prayerful practice in the monastic tradition is that of *Lectio Divina*, "divine" or holy reading.

This kind of practice requires listening. *Lectio Divina* is a very ancient art, which use to be practiced by all Christians. It is a slow contemplative praying of the Scriptures. Benedictines also apply *Lectio Divina* to any kind of sacred, spiritual, prayerful reading.

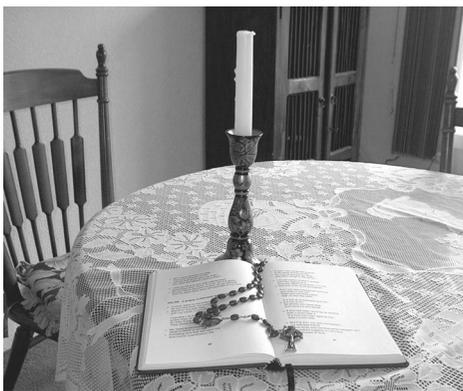
LECTIO read. Linger and repeat the text until certain words stand out.



Once we approach the text in this way, we come face to face with the fact that it speaks to the imagination. A Bible text is not like a dictionary or an encyclopedia, providing us with objective information. It was not written like that. Instead, it stirs up feelings. We find ourselves identifying with the characters, we feel for and with them, admire them or dislike them. We are caught up in the movement and drama of the text, its suspense, its mystery, its adventure.

MEDITATIO reflect, ponder, ruminate, savoring the words for deeper meaning.

Sit with the text rather than study the text. We discover now that the text is really part of us. We have experienced a part of the events written about or we have seen the events in others lives. We become caught up in the story of God's people. The story becomes us.

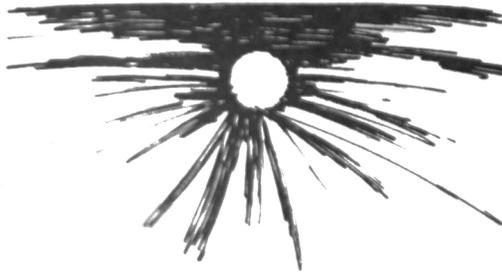


ORATIO pray the text. It is a story like every story—the events change over time, one time the story will mean one thing and another time something completely different. Discovering how and why the story affects and leads us to prayer be it thanksgiving, petition, or praise.

CONTEMPLATIO the text becomes part of life. Once we identify and live the Bible, it becomes our story.

Monastic Prayer Schedule

The monks of Saint Martin's gather daily, morning, noon and evening, to offer prayer, to praise, and to listen for God's voice. These moments are the hinges of daily life when the community is reminded of God's loving presence. Saint Benedict described this round of daily praise and prayer as the *opus Dei*, the work of God. The monks also gather daily to celebrate the Eucharist. Oblates and the public are always welcome to share in the prayer life at the Abbey.



WEEKDAYS

6:25 am..... Morning Prayer
12:00 pm..... Midday Prayer
5:00 pm..... Eucharist
7:30 pm..... Evening Prayer

SATURDAYS

6:25 am..... Morning Prayer
8:00 am..... Eucharist
12:00 pm..... Midday Prayer
5:00 pm..... Evening Prayer

SUNDAYS

8:00 am..... Morning Prayer
11:00 am..... Eucharist
5:00 pm..... Evening Prayer



During school holidays, (e.g., Christmas break and the summer), the Sunday schedule remains the same, but Monday through Saturday the monks follow the Saturday schedule as above.

Opus Dei – The Work of God

The year is divided liturgically into Ordinary time and the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. Special days, solemnities and feasts occur throughout the liturgical year, which celebrate a particular saint or event in the life of Christ and his church.

The version of Psalms used for this manual is the Grail translation from the Hebrew.

The manner in which the psalms are recited as well as sung and the importance of silence are two elements of the communal prayer which are highly valued here at Saint Martin's and the monks hope you will find them beneficial to your prayer as well.



For the sake of unity, the community has chosen a rather precise manner of recitation “sprung rhythm” which does not always follow the normal guide of punctuation and which proceeds quite slowly. We thank you for joining your voices, hearts and mind to our daily prayer. You are cordially invited to share in the prayer life of the monks of Saint Martin's.

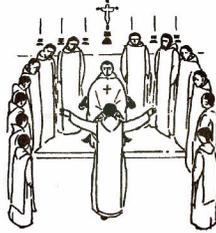
Detailed information may be found in the *Prayer* section of this manual, beginning on page 49.

Ceremonies



26. Rite of Investiture of Novice Oblate

(To be used separately from the celebration of the Eucharist or an Hour of the Divine Office)



INTRODUCTORY PRAYERS

Presider: In the name of the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

R Amen.

Presider: The Lord be with you.

R And also with you.

Presider: Let us pray.

Almighty God, you made Saint Benedict an outstanding guide to teach people how to live in Your service. Grant that by preferring Your love to everything else, we may walk in the way of your commandments. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

R Amen

READING FROM THE *RULE OF SAINT BENEDICT*

Presider: A reading from Chapter 58 of the holy *Rule* of our father, Saint Benedict:

Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry but, as the Apostle says, "Test the spirits to see if they are from God." The concern must be whether the novice truly seeks God and shows eagerness for the work of God, for obedience and for trials. The novice should be clearly told all the hardships and difficulties that lead to God.

EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATE

Presider: *Name(s) of the candidate(s):* Do you wish to be enrolled as an Oblate novice of Saint Martin's Monastery?

Candidate: I do.

Presider: May God bring to completion the good work begun in you today.

PRESENTATION OF THE *RULE OF SAINT BENEDICT*

Presider: Accept this "little rule for beginners" and "listen carefully to the master's instructions."

The Rule is then handed to each candidate.

PRESENTATION OF MEDAL OF SAINT BENEDICT

Presider: Receive this medal with its Cross of Saint Benedict, and be reminded of the need to take up your cross daily and follow Christ our Lord, and thus learn to share with patience in the sufferings of Christ that you may one day share in His heavenly kingdom.

FINAL PRAYER AND BLESSING

Presider: Let us pray.

Listen to our prayers, Lord, as we receive this Oblate Novice (*these Oblate Novices*) into union and

31. General Benedictine Books

Ælred of Riveaulx, translated by Mary Eugenia Laher.
Spiritual Friendship.

Armstrong, Karen.
Through the Narrow Gate: A Memoir of Convent Life.

Barry, Patrick.
*Wisdom from the Monastery: The Rule of Saint Benedict for
Everyday Life.*

Belisle Peter-Damian.
The Privilege of Love: Camaldolese Benedictine Spirituality.

Berthier, Rene & Marie-Helene Sigaut.
Saint Benedict and His Monks.

Bonomo, Carol.
Humble Pie: Saint Benedict's Ladder of Humility.
*The Abbey Up the Hill: A year in the life of a Monastic Day
Tripper.*

Boulding, Maria, OSB.
The Coming of God.
Gateway to hope: an Exploration of Failure.
Prayer: Our Journey Home.
A Touch of God: Eight Monastic Journeys.

Brook, John.
*The school of prayer: An Introduction to the Divine Office
for all Christians.*

Butler, Basil, OSB.
Prayer: An Adventure in Living.

Butler, Edward Cuthbert.
*Benedictine Monasticism: Studies in Benedictine Life and
Rule.*

Casey, Michael, OCSO.

Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina.

The Undivided Heart: The Western Monastic Approach to Contemplation.

Chautard, Jean-Baptiste, translated by Thomas Merton.

The Soul of the Apostolate.

Chittister, Joan, OSB.

The Rule of Benedict: Insight for the ages.

Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of Saint Benedict Today.

Light in the Darkness.

The Illuminated Life, Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of the Light.

Living the Rule Today: a Series of Conferences on the Rule of Benedict.

Colombas, Garcia.

Reading God: Lectio Divina.

Cummings, Charles, OCSO.

Monastic Practices.

The Mystery of the Ordinary.

De Dreuille, Mayeul, OSB.

From East to West: A History of Monasticism.

Seeking the Absolute Love: The Founders of Christian Monasticism.

De Vogue, Adalbert, OSB.

The rule of Saint Benedict: a Doctrinal and Spiritual Commentary.

De Waal, Ester.

A Life Giving Way: a Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Living with Contradiction: an Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality.

*Seeking God: the The Way of Saint Benedict.
Lost in Wonder: Rediscovering the Spiritual Art of
Attentiveness.*

Dean, Eric.

Saint Benedict for the Laity.

Drijvers, Pius, OCSO.

The Psalms: Their Structure and Meaning.

Dumm, Demetrius, OSB.

Cherish Christ Above All.

Earle, Mary C.

*Beginning Again: Benedictine Wisdom for Living with
Illness.*

Feiss, Hugh OSB.

*Essential Monastic Wisdom: Writings on the
Contemplative Life.*

Finley, James.

The Contemplative Heart.

Finnerty, Joseph D. Rev. and Rev. Georgy Ryan.

*Morning and Evening Prayer: Selections from the Liturgy
of the Hours.*

Fry, Timothy, OSB.

The Rule of Saint Benedict 1980 in English and Latin.

Gregory the Great, Pope Saint.

Life and Miracles of Saint Benedict.

The Life of Saint Benedict.

Gruber, Mark, OSB.

The Psalms: Their Structure and Meaning.

Gruen, Anselm OSB.

Benedict of Norcia.

The Challenge of Silence.