

OBLATE SPIRITUALITY

Benedictine Oblates seek God in association with the Monastery: as individuals and as members of a body, they grow in love of God, neighbor, and self. With the Rule as their guide, Oblates adopt values that are part of the very fabric of Christian spirituality, such as, spending time daily reflecting on the Sacred Scriptures; cultivating an awareness of the presence of God in silence; devoting time to the praise of God; performing acts of mortification. An acquaintance with these and other Christian values presented in the Rule of St. Benedict will enable Oblates to attain that special peace and joy that Christ came to bring and promised to all who follow him.

The Monastery provides direction and instruction through letters or meetings. Conferences, group discussions, common prayers, and participation in the community's liturgical life afford Oblates the opportunity for spiritual growth. In offering this assistance to the individual Oblate, the guiding principle is that stated by St. Benedict in chapter 64 of his Rule: "Let the Abbot so moderate all things that there be something for the strong to strive after, and nothing to dishearten the weak."

For further information you may contact us by e-mail at VOCATIONDIRECTOR@HOLYCROSSMONKS.ORG or by telephone at (409) 899-3554 or through our web site at WWW.HOLYCROSSMONKS.ORG

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING

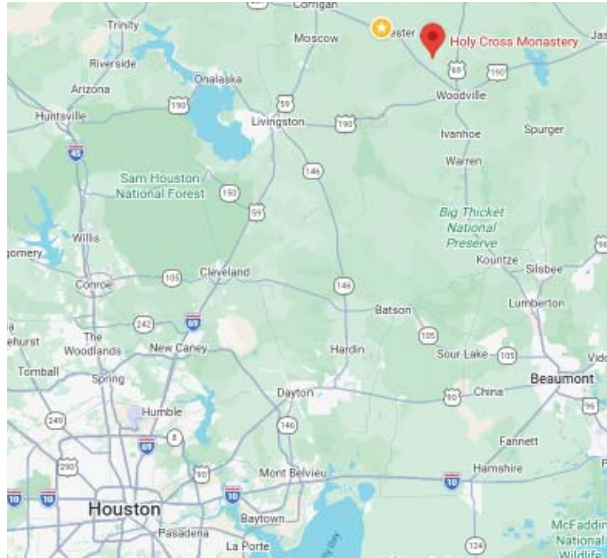
The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages. Joan D. Chittister, OSB. Crossroad Press, New York. 180 pages. \$16.95

Life and Miracles of St. Benedict. Pope St. Gregory the Great. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 87 pages. \$7.95

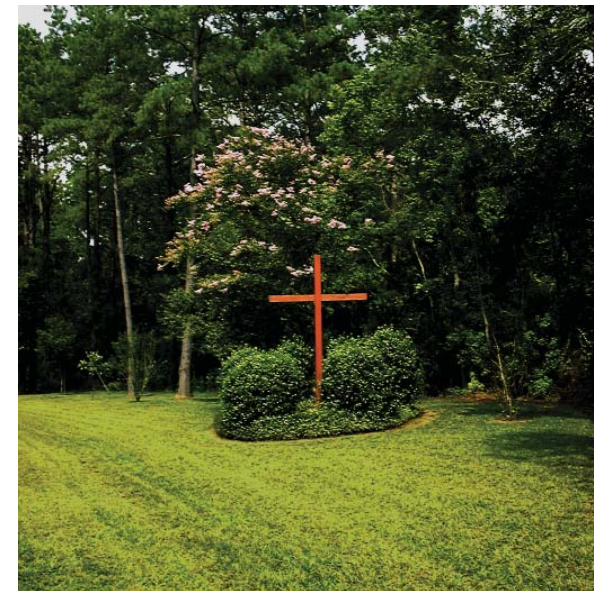
Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering *Lectio Divina*. Thelma Hall, r.c. Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ. 110 pages. \$9.95

LOCATION AND ACCESS

Woodville is located in east Texas near the Gulf coast and the Louisiana border. It is 90 miles northeast of Houston and 60 miles north of Beaumont. You can reach Woodville flying into Intercontinental (IAH) or Hobby (HOU) Airports in Houston.

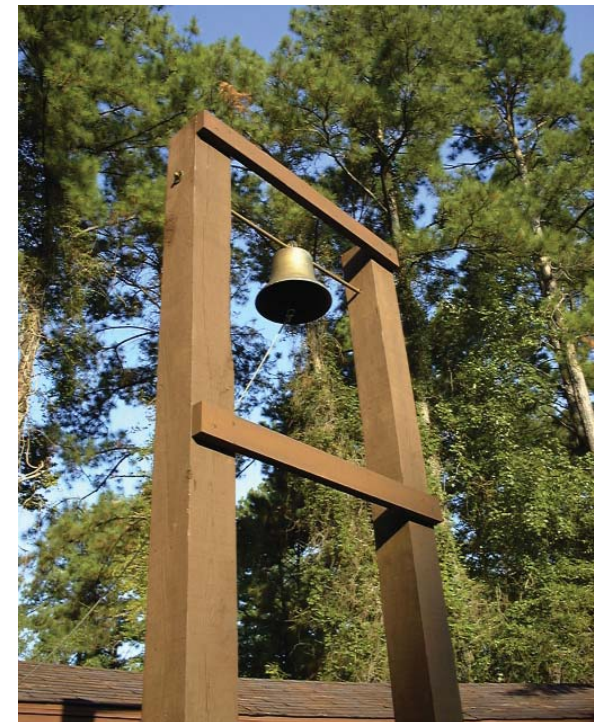


By car you reach the Monastery on US 59 and US 190 from Houston and by US 69 from the north and south. Holy Cross is approximately 2 hours from downtown Houston, 1½ hours from Intercontinental Airport, and 1 hour north of Beaumont.



Oblates of Holy Cross Monastery

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WHAT IS AN OBLATE OF ST. BENEDICT?

Oblates of St. Benedict are Christian individuals or families who have associated themselves with the Monastery in order to enrich their Christian way of life. Oblates shape their lives by living the wisdom of Christ as interpreted by St. Benedict. Oblates seek God by striving to become holy in their chosen way of life. By integrating their prayer and work, they manifest Christ's presence in society.

St. Paul tells us that each member of the body of Christ, the Church, has a special function to perform. Most are called to the married state and the raising of a family. Some are called to the single life in the world and others to the life of a priest or religious man or woman. The role of Oblates is to live in the world, to become holy in the world, to do what they can to bring the world to God by being witnesses of Christ by word and example to those around them.

Oblates concern themselves with striving to be what they are, people of God and temples of the Holy Spirit. Their prayer life will flow from this awareness, as will their willingness to offer themselves (that is the meaning of the word oblate) for the service of God and neighbor to the best of their ability. Oblates do not take on a new set of religious practices and are not required to say a certain number of prayers or engage in special devotions. They do not live in a religious community or take vows.

ST. BENEDICT AND OBLATES

St. Benedict lived in the sixth century. He was born in a small town north of Rome and came to Rome for his education. Before long he abandoned his studies and lived as a hermit for several years in Subiaco, where he acquired a reputation for holiness and miracles. Attracting many followers, Benedict established monastic communities at Subiaco, Terracina, and Monte Cassino. It was at Monte Cassino that he wrote a Rule which combined moderation with fidelity to the best traditions in Christian monasticism. During the following centuries, his monastic

way of life spread throughout Europe, and Benedictine monasteries and convents became the principal centers of prayer, culture, and education.

From the very beginning Benedictine monasteries accepted boys, and convents received girls, "offered" to them by their parents for their religious training and education. These children lived in the community, shared its daily round of religious activities, and became known as Oblates. In the course of time, lay people asked to be associated with the work of the monks and nuns, without however leaving their homes, families, and occupations. These too were received, offered themselves to God, became Oblates of a monastery or convent, and promised to regulate their lives according to the spirit of the Rule of St. Benedict. They applied the teachings of the Rule to their lives in the world, in their family circles, in their places of work, and in their civic and social activities. Today, throughout the world, there are thousands of Oblates praying and working in spiritual union with Benedictine men and women of various communities and receiving spiritual strength and inspiration from their association as Oblates.

THE RULE: A GUIDE FOR OBLATES

Oblates promise to lead an enriched Christian life according to the gospel as reflected in the Rule of St. Benedict. In this way they share in the spiritual benefits of the sons and daughters of Benedict who are dedicated to the monastic life by vow. After a time of preparation, which culminates in an act of Oblation—a rite approved by the Church—the candidates become Oblates of St. Benedict. This promise affiliates them with Holy Cross Monastery and commits them to apply to their lives the characteristic monastic principles.

Oblates strive after stability and fidelity in their lives by regular worship with other Christians and by the support they give to the social and educational apostolates of their local parishes as well as that of the Church as a whole.

In accord with the teaching of Benedict, Oblates practice moderation. This moderation manifests itself in the use of the goods of this world, an increasing concern to their neighbor, and in the way they temper and direct their desires. Their fidelity to Christian living will provide a much needed example of genuine Christianity and a stabilizing influence for or good on all around them.

In the spirit of the gospel, Oblates commit themselves to a continual conversion to Christ. They see sin and any attachment to it as basically incompatible with a serious following of Christ. Through this deepening of the baptismal promise, Oblates are free to put on Christ and to allow him to permeate their lives. In this way Oblates will come to recognize that in all the phases and events of their lives, in their joys and successes as well as in their sorrows and disappointments, they are in close union with Christ and participate in his very death and resurrection. This "putting on of Christ" is the goal Oblates pursue in their conversion of life.

In the spirit of obedience, Oblates strive to discover and maintain their proper relationship toward God, their family, and the civil and religious society in which they live. Before God, Oblates must come to recognize themselves as creatures dependent on their Creator and as sinners before their Redeemer. Aware of their own spiritual poverty and need of God, Oblates come to realize that they have no other reason for being, except to be loved by God as Creator and Redeemer and to love and seek him in return.

In loving obedience to God's plan, Oblates will develop a deep reverence for life. They will respect it as a precious gift from God and defend those groups which because of age, health or race are defenseless and most open to attack. Seeking harmony and integrity of life, they perpetuate and enhance the traditional Benedictine motto: Peace. Personally and together with other Christians, Oblates work to promote Christian family living. They take care to seek out opportunities for the practice of charity and warm hospitality to those around them.