The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Oblates World Congress 2005

The First World Congress for Benedictine Oblates was held at the Salesianum in Rome 19th – 25th September. Over 300 oblates attended from 36 countries. Members of the organising committee were Abbott Primate Notker Wolf, O.S.B. (President), Mrs. Caterina Feliziani, Fr. Luigi Bertocchi, O.S.B. (Coordinator) and Mr. Giorgio Marte.

They led a team of 40 volunteers who worked tirelessly for almost 2 years before and during the Congress to bring it to fruition. I was honoured to represent our oblate community at this event. In June 2004 I accepted the role of National Lay Coordinator for Australia and New Zealand for all Benedictine groups.

This gave me a great insight into the workings of the various groups in this part of the world. Being on the English desk for registrations was another enlivening experience. [Photo left: Welcome Table]
Prior to the Congress I joined a pilgrimage through Italy with some oblates from Holy Trinity Monastery, St. David's, Arizona, led by Fr Henri Capdeville, O.S.B. After the Congress I met with some of our oblate community in Italy who traveled down to Rome for our meeting.

This was a beautiful meeting in every way and for me it was a real gift getting to know Devis, Claudio and Lina and experiencing a deep connection with them. In spite of the language limitations we had a very fruitful meeting for well over an hour and then we found a beautiful quiet spot in the grounds of the Salesianum and meditated before they departed.

[Photo left: Congress Vespers] On Monday 26th I went to London, and in true Benedictine hospitality, Rita McKenna, UK Oblate Coordinator, met me at Heathrow airport. We then traveled by tube to Oakwood station and then to the Meditation Retreat Centre at Cockfosters.

A visit to the International Centre, St Mark's, Myddelton Square was a must on Tuesday. On Wednesday Rita had organised a meeting with some of the UK oblates at the Retreat Centre. Our afternoon together was all too short. I spoke of my experience and some conclusions of the Congress and a lively conversation ensued.

I was so pleased to be able to stay at the retreat centre, join in with the meditation groups as well as morning meditation and Lauds with the Monks in the church. The amenities at the retreat centre were very comfortable and welcoming and my stay was all too short.

[Photo: Trish Panton] For the next edition of Via Vitae I will write about some conclusions that emerged from the Congress. In the meantime you can access the texts of the conferences, in your language of choice, along with photos and slides at: **Oblates World Congress 2005**

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