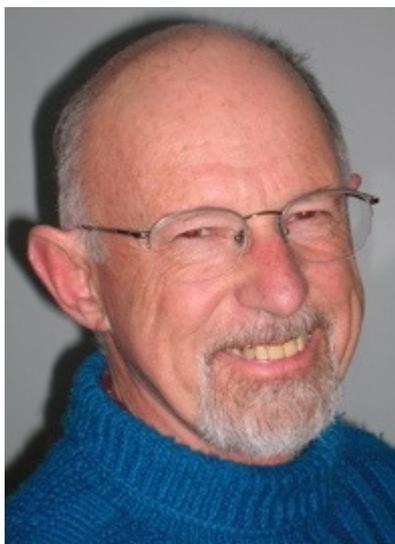


## OBLATE REFLECTION: SEPTEMBER 2006 - Don Myrick



Dear Friends,

Here we are in the month of September once again. The laid back days of summer have pretty much come to an end, the kids are back to school and we approach life with a renewed sense of purpose and seriousness. It is also a time when many of us plan our year and the personal projects we will undertake, and probably a good time as well to take a fresh look at our ongoing commitments such as the oblate community.

I had never really considered the oblate community as having a mission per se but a recent conversation I had with an old friend has made me rethink this whole idea of mission, or apostolate as some prefer to call it.

We ran into each other at a neighbourhood barbecue. As well as being a neighbour, he is a fellow parishioner, and a member of the Knights of Columbus (fourth degree excuse me). We became acquainted when our children were little and got to know each other quite well - to the point we are able to kid each other about our very different approaches to the whole business of religion and spirituality.

Despite the fact we both come from similar small town Irish Catholic backgrounds we see religion and even life from quite different perspectives. He is a big guy with a gregarious easy-going personality and is one of those people who knows how to go about getting things done. And he is good nattered - to the point of being able to hurl an insult at you without actually offending you, and is also able to take it on the chin in return. On the subject of meditation he said to me that he doubted that the Kingdom could be established by a bunch of people sitting around doing nothing (ouch!).

Rather than get into a heavy dialogue with him I came back with a line about the Knights parading around with their Napoleon hats and swords. He chuckled a good nattered "Touché" and we moved on to lighter subject matter. The truth of the matter is - although I would never tell him this - that the Knights really are in a sense, the backbone of our parish and do all kinds of good work in the fields of fund raising, organizing community building events and youth work.

As oblates we might not have the profile of the of the Knights but we do have our own unique ministry. The following quote from Father John's Letters from the Heart. is probably the closest thing we have to a mission statement. In Letter Ten he writes the following: "I would like to tell you about the establishment of a group of Oblates around the monastery. An Oblate is a person who shares the ideals of the community and seeks to follow these ideals in the circumstances of his or her own life.

We hope to establish groups of Oblates in any place where there are sufficient interested people. The oblate seeks to live by the spirit of the rule of St Benedict - a spirit characterised by its priority of love, generosity, liberty, and discretion and seeks to realise and communicate the kingdom of peace. The Oblate joins the community in this spirit each day by saying the morning Prayer and evening Vespers of our Office and, after each of these, spends half an hour in meditation."

There is little doubt that in Father John's view job one for an oblate is fidelity to the twice daily meditation but also I think it is fairly safe to assume that when he talks about sharing in the ideals of the community, on a practical level that would translate into sharing in the work of the community - and he alludes to this in other writings as well - a work that consists of sharing the teaching of meditation and helping to provide the necessary support systems for the community that inevitably grows out of the practice of meditation.

There may be many different ways a person could contribute to the meditation community, however one of the most important and probably less obvious would be to be a core member of a meditation group. The local meditation group is the essential community through which the practice of mediation is communicated and it seems that the groups that survive and do well are the groups that have four or five core meditators who are seriously committed to the group as well as to their own daily practice.

When you have a committed core like this, others may come and move on after a bit, but the fact that you do have this solid core, the group is able to survive and do its job. The group I am personally involved in has been in business for about twenty-six years thanks to the ongoing participation of some very good people. There is probably no better way to live out our commitment to stability than this.

If one does not live close to a group then this is always a good time of year to start one. All you need is a quiet place (not always easy to find) and three or four people, There is excellent resource material available now for those wishing to start a new group and again this is a wonderful way to live out the "active" dimension of our commitment

. There is even an apostolic dimension to one's own daily practice. Our personal fidelity does become apparent in time to newcomers and more than anything else can be a source of encouragement and inspiration to them. I remember during my early days as a meditator I would sometimes go through periods of doubt and discouragement. On these cold January mornings I would often think of the monastic community in Montreal and draw strength from the fact that they would be up and doing their communal meditation at the same time as myself. This business of being a beacon of encouragement for the larger meditation community would seem to be a natural for the oblate community.

These are indeed interesting times we live in. An age in which the church is not only wrestling with its own demons but going through the painful process of trying to find its place in the modern world. Not an easy task in an age in which hedonism and narcissism walk hand in hand - albeit awkwardly - with sacrificial love and great kindness. Forces that are all at work, not only in society, but probably to some degree in most of us as well.

The young have a hard time identifying with the traditional religious culture and much of the old symbolism is meaningless to them. In all of this, it is the practice of meditation that has the potential to bring us to that purity of heart that brings proper perspective, balance and simple unity to the different forces that are at work in us, and ultimately enable us to touch into the mystery of God-In-The-Present-Moment. The work of sharing this gift may lack the flare of some of the projects that the Knights undertake, however few could argue as to its value.

---

Congratulations to Joan McGuinness who made her final oblation at the teachers retreat in Toronto in August with Father Laurence officiating. Joan has been a very active member of the Ottawa meditation community for many years and a few years ago walked the entire 800k Camino de Santiago, the ancient pilgrimage route from southern France to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Best wishes from the entire community, Joan!

---

A picnic for the Montreal/Ottawa oblate was held on July 8th at a lovely private lake near the home of Vincent Lavoie just north of Montabello, Quebec. The picnic was organised by Vincent but unfortunately he was not able to attend himself due to illness. In attendance there were members of the oblate community and their families from Montreal, Grenville, Ottawa and the Eastern Townships. Polly Schofield in her wonderful maternal manner organised us for meditation followed by a great shared picnic lunch. Hope your back on your feet there, Vincent!

---

If anyone has any news they would like to share with the community just Email it to me and I will include it in the next reflection.

May God's peace be with you all,

**Don Myrick.**

**Oblates**

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.wccm.org/content/oblate-reflection-september-2006-don-myrick>