

What does it mean to you to be an Oblate?

by Teri Rose, ObISB

To me, being an Oblate means that as I try to apply spiritual values to all moments of my life I will remain tethered to the stability, strength, and experience of my Monastic Community; our bond anchored in God, His will, and His command to love. As I extend myself in the moments of my life, my Monastery offers me a place to return for mentoring, learning, and retreat. Each return strengthening my confidence and clarifying my voice as I again go forward into the environments I am to contribute to. This oscillation between extension and return strengthens both of us. I reciprocate my Monastic Community's support by offering to no longer be an extension of just my better self but to be an extension of them in the world.

To be a Benedictine Oblate means that the spiritual values I desire to embody, the guidance I seek from my Monastery, and the structure I crave for my spiritual practice are grounded in the *Rule of St. Benedict*. It means I commit to *the Rule* while at the Monastery and while away.

My receptivity to finally listen, *consistently*, to the internal nudges of the Spirit has led me to my Monastic Community. Yet for so long I felt that my good intention was all that was needed to successfully navigate who I wanted to be, enough to guide the contribution I wanted to make.

I practiced mindfulness and had the privilege and flexibility to explore various spiritual techniques but still no momentum came. Misused words like discipline and obedience, though I craved the structure they provided, were socially unacceptable to seek. Culturally, I lived a productive life. Spiritually, I was an absolute lost sailboat on stormy waters, untethered, and huddled in the hull wondering why the storm wouldn't end since I was giving all my effort to "trying." Through the whole duration of the storm I did have an anchor on deck, but one with no rope. I know just the presence of the anchor kept me from capsizing, but its true security remained hidden.

Those nudges from the Spirit, one tiny if-you-don't-pay-attention-you'll-miss-it nudge at a time, has led me to this moment of completing my application for Oblate Formation. The Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery are the rope to my anchor, *my tether*. When I come to the Monastery, I enter a harbor of calm waters. Now tethered, I am able to allow my anchor, my divinity, to nestle into the deep silent waters of stillness and love. While in the calm waters of the harbor, I rest, pray, and learn. I welcome instruction on how to go deeper into the stillness and into living *the Rule*, all in preparation to re-emerge onto the open seas.

As I pull the anchor up to leave the harbor, its security is no longer hidden. It now comes closer to me as we set sail together, *in trust*. As the Sisters watch my little boat lean this way and that, going only in circles some days, over time I will manage to learn how to consistently go straight and get to my daily destinations. I never set sail now with the expectation of controlling the weather or water conditions. I set sail with trust that I am anchored in God, His will, and His command to love. And in the confidence provided by the stability of my Monastery and the guidance of *the Rule*.

