

Reflections from the UK Oblate Retreat

Reflections from Sharon Kramers

After meditating with the WCCM for years I sensed God's call to deeper silence, stillness and simplicity. This led to being on the Oblate Path: a journey in dispersed community of ongoing formation, mutual acceptance and support. Each day I am learning to integrate this commitment to meditation, daily prayer, lectio and the deeper meaning of the Rule of Benedict. The annual oblate retreat was an expression of spiritual unity and physical community. We celebrated a joyful Eucharist during which I was received as a full oblate. A new beginning as part of the UK and worldwide community.

Reflections from Jan Bundy

As I write it was only 2 weeks ago when members of the Oblate community met for a retreat in the lovely Kairos Centre in Roehampton which offered us great hospitality and delicious food! Only 2 weeks and I am still absorbing the import of that weekend when four of us novices were received as Oblates, when we committed to following the Rule of St Benedict, to "strive for God and make your spiritual journey the underpinning reality of your life, finding its influence in everything you do, in everything you are" (John Main). So for me this commitment has arisen as the only possible next step to honouring the Christ within me and live according to his/her precepts. Not a receiving of a diploma but a seeking to an ever broadening out into following that inner light.

The ceremony, which included Rev Jude Carpenter leading the Eucharist and blessings and a talk from Father Laurence on line, was beautiful and prayerful. During the ceremony I was asked to read from Ephesians 3:14-21, which was highly significant as these verses have always resonated for me and been an important part of my journey "...and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love...."

What was particularly moving for me, and I think for all of us becoming Oblates, was that we were meeting at last with those with whom we had had spiritual sharings with on line over the past few years, and this included my wonderful mentor who stayed with me on the path of formation. Despite technology, (which could be seen as a barrier), we had formed spiritual friendships. I felt, and feel, very blessed to be received in to this loving spiritual family. How true it is that meditation creates community!

Reflections from Jude Carpenter

If I were to sum up our annual oblate retreat in one word that word would be JOY (yes ! in capital letters) It was such a joy to meet up again with old friends and to meet in person those friends whom previously we had only known as tiny images on our screens (There's so much more to us than the digital "eye " can begin to perceive !) It was pure joy to spend time together in silence and then in-between times to pray and reflect together. It was especially helpful, I thought, to do our lectio together in small breakout groups and to stay in those groups for each of the three sessions. It enabled us to attend to each other at ever deeper levels and to be increasingly open and honest together and that was profoundly helpful. Of course, it was nothing but joy to receive and accompany our four novices as they made their full oblation during our Eucharist on Sunday. Their offering of themselves to the service of God through WCCM was such a significant moment for them and for all of us as we, too, re-affirmed our baptismal promises. And then for me it was a great privilege and pure joy to be invited to celebrate our contemplative Eucharist together on Sunday. For a long time now I

have bemoaned the wordiness of our standard (anglican) liturgies. For me they have become so deadening. To be able to slow things down, to let go of the barrage of words, to include pauses for reflection, to introduce silences which allowed us to savour the moment, to be still, to pray and to remember our Lord's presence with us..for me this is how it should be and it gave me more joy than words could ever express. To cap it all there was for me an additional joy..I was greeted by the Sisters at the Kairos Centre with absolute delight ! For them I was tangible proof that with God all things are possible, even women priests, for heaven's sake !! praise God indeed. It was fitting that we danced our way out at the end of the service to the song, " You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace.." Our special thanks must go to Angela, Julia and Janet for all they did, and do, to nurture and strengthen the bonds between us and to build up the community of love to which we are so very privileged to belong. It was such a lovely weekend. Thankyou !

Reflections from Robert Laughlin

I entered the weekend as a seeker but left as a postulate. At the age of 19 I was given the gift of meditation while working as a volunteer at the Grail in Pinner, Middlesex. We had a weekly Christian meditation group that was, at that time, referred to as prayer of the heart. During my time at the Grail John Main lead a retreat about Christian meditation. On leaving the Grail this gift reminded in my possession but rarely appreciated. Some 45 years later during the Covid pandemic I discovered, to my amazement, via the internet, the WCCM and joined a local meditation group at Axbridge in Somerset. Attending the annual Oblate retreat brought me back full circle to a community of love which I felt compelled to commit myself to as a follower of Jesus Christ on my spiritual journey.