



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Mass of Oblate Promise of Dr. Robb Janas October 23, 2004

“We have put everything aside to follow you.” The words of Saint Peter in the Gospel we have just heard.

Saint Peter had not learned that he had not yet put aside everything in order to follow the Lord. Nevertheless, it is given to him to express in these words the great principle of the consecrated Christian life: the whole of such a life is to be directed to the Lord -- as Saint Benedict puts it, “Let them prefer nothing to Christ” -- the whole of the life is to be directed, dedicated to the Lord, and whatever gets in the way of this total dedication is to be put aside.

Saint Benedict gave Western Christianity its first and most fundamental lessons in how to lead that life dedicated to Christ. Such a life can be lived in both a monastic form and a lay form. In the monastic form, the putting aside of everything which can get in the way of total dedication to Christ takes the form of actually giving these things up, insofar as the requirements of our work and our human strength allow: so monks give up the exercise of their own will by the vow of obedience, they give up the blessing of marriage and family life, they give up owning their own property, and so forth, by the vow of *conversatio morum*, they give up the possibility of moving to new circumstances of life by the vow of stability. In the lay form of this dedicated life, the dedication to Christ must be as total and as intense. But in this form of Christian life the giving up of what can get in the way of the dedication takes the form of an inner detachment, an inner poverty of spirit: the dedicated lay Christian practices obedience to God in every circumstance of life, lives marriage and family life as loving and joyful service to those joined with him in this great vocation, owns and uses goods as a steward entrusted with them by the Lord, practices stability of mind and spirit on the one thing needful, whatever the circumstances of life.

So it is that we can speak of lay Benedictines as well as monastic Benedictines, and so it is that, associated with our Abbey, is the community of Oblates of the Abbey of Saint Mary and Saint Louis, as it were an extended Benedictine community of lay men living the dedicated Christian life according to the way of Saint Benedict. You have come this morning, Rob, to make your oblation, your dedication of self, to the Lord as a full member of this Oblate community, promising to live out that dedication according to the Oblates' Rule and customs. In your manifest dedication to the way of prayer of Saint Benedict and to the form of fraternal charity which he commends, you have clearly manifested your call to become an Oblate. So we gladly invite you to make your oblation this morning.

Before you do, may I commend to your reflection, and that of your brother oblates, this final reflection: as an Oblate, you undertake to be of service to Saint



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Louis Abbey, in the ways that is possible given your obligations and responsibilities as a lay Christian and a married Christian. May I remind you that the Church has often said since the Second Vatican Council that the new evangelization, the bringing of the Gospel to those who have not heard it, and the renewal of faith in Catholics who have become distant from the Church, is often a work which lay people are in the best circumstances to perform. Could you, Rob, and each of our Oblates, consider how you might draw Catholics who have grown distant from regular practice to return to their home the Church, how you could witness to the Gospel, and invite to the Church, those -- and there are many now in our society -- who have practically never heard of Christ or of his Church? I ask you to reflect deeply on this question. The Scripture tells us that we are to be always ready to give an account of the hope that is within us.