



## "Nothing Dearer Than Christ"

Oblate letter of the Pluscarden Benedictines

Elgin, Moray, Scotland IV30 8UA  
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"Let nothing be preferred to the Work of God" (HR 43:3).

26 January 2009

Dear Oblates and friends

Very many thanks to all of you who kindly sent cards, greetings, prayers and/or donations at Christmas time: all kindly received with much appreciation, though I regret that good resolutions to respond personally have once again foundered. I hope you will accept this general letter as at least a token of thanks and reciprocated greetings in lieu.

Quite a few of you will already have heard of recent changes within the community here. But I write to everyone on my Oblate Letter Address List now, to announce formally the appointment of Fr. Martin Birrell as new Oblate Master. Fr. Abbot has taken me off that job and appointed me Novice Master here instead.

So in the first place I commend Fr. Martin to your prayerful support. Of his zeal and commitment in your service there can be no question or doubt; In so far as time and circumstances permit, he will be more than happy to see you when you visit, and to continue the tradition of staying in touch via an occasional letter to all the oblates.

In the second place I take the opportunity to say farewell: believe me, after 11 years in the post, not without a pang. I shall miss writing the quarterly oblate letter, and am sorry that my project of commenting on St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians has now to be abandoned after only one Chapter. But more importantly than that: I've made so many friendships among you all, profited so much from your example and support, been so aware of a close bond of reciprocal prayer and love; you've been a blessing to me personally, as well as to our community as a whole, and I acknowledge that now before you and before God with overflowing gratitude. Not indeed that we need think of it all as now at an end. Surely we will continue to pray for one another, and it should still be possible for me to keep up, to an extent, with people I've got to know well. But of course now my first priority must always be our novices and junior monks - please God new ones will continue to appear -and Fr. Martin henceforth has responsibility for all formal oblate business. May he go from strength to strength in his new task!

One little practical detail: Fr. Martin proposes to use envelopes and stamps for his letters, rather than the email machine.

Although I shall certainly miss being oblate master, I'm of course very conscious of the challenge and opportunity presented by my new responsibilities. I must admit I'm thoroughly enjoying them to date! It will ever be consoling to know of your daily prayers for our novitiate. Of your charity remember, sometimes, too, the one St. Benedict wants to be assigned "to watch over them with the closest attention". He, in turn, promises to remember you all faithfully in prayer.

ever fraternally yours,

Fr. Benedict OSB, Novice Master

Dear Oblates,

Greetings to you! May I express on behalf of Fr. Abbot & on behalf of all the community, both monks & oblates a profound & hearty "Thankyou!" to Fr. Benedict for all

his unstinting work on our behalf. He has already launched me with lots of information & help & support. He and his predecessors have set high standards. I will depend on God & your prayers to do what I can !  
With every blessing for 2009,  
Fr. Martin OSB, Oblate Master