



### Meet the New Oblates – February 4, 2024



**Karen "Bernadette" Dimond.** My husband Jim and I live in Puyallup Washington and have two delightful adult children. I enjoy gardening, reading, and sharing life with neighbors and friends. We love to travel as well. Since coming back to the church in December of 2011 the objective has been to become a saint. Stat! Did I mention I'm a little bit goal oriented? Turns out becoming a saint is a lifelong journey not another box I can check off my list of goals. In the last few years I've found my favorite place is Mount Angel. As I soaked up the peace found on the hill I started digging into the why. I found it's not just the holiness of the physical location but the Benedictine way. It's the slowing down, loving others, loving God, it's the hospitality, it's the discipline, it's the commitment to prayer and service. Then I found the community of oblates. An entire community of lay people, along with the monks, with the same "goal" in life. I found my people!



**Boyd "Placidus" Hemminger.** Bellingham, my birthplace, set the stage for a life steeped in education and community. High school unfolded at Westminster Abbey in Mission City, BC, laying the foundation for a career spanning 40 years in public school teaching and administration. A subsequent decade saw me immersed in the intricate workings of university-level administration. Teresa became my life partner, and together we nurtured a family of six children, complemented by the enriching dynamic of four stepchildren. Washougal, WA, emerged as our primary abode, while the allure of Redmond, OR, drew us part-time, providing a dual canvas for our shared experiences.

Amidst the ebb and flow of professional and family life, a consistent thread has been my commitment to service, finding joy in aiding neighbors and fostering community bonds. This ethos reflects not just a career but a way of life, where interconnectedness and support form the cornerstone. The culmination of my journey finds resonance in the contemplative role as an oblate of St. Benedict at Mount Angel Abbey. This spiritual commitment weaves seamlessly into the fabric of my existence, adding a layer of depth and purpose to a life dedicated to education, family, and community service.



**Denise "Bridget" Gende.** Hello, my name is Denise Bridget Gende and I made final oblation on February 4, 2024. I am truly blessed to be a part of the oblate family of Mount Angel Abbey.

I am a born and bred Oregonian, except for a brief respite in Illinois as a youth. I am passionate about my faith, and trying to live it in the world. My interests are on loom weaving, genealogy, reading, and I have recently taken up water color painting.

I am retired from 20 years of Human Resources work with a National Non-Profit and prior to that spent 10 years working in Religious Education at St. John the Baptist parish in Milwaukie and St. Wenceslaus parish in Scappoose. I am a child of God, woman, wife, mother, and grandmother. My husband, John, and I have been married for 41 ½ years living our lives in Milwaukie. He is also retired; so, planning for travel adventures is on our agenda. We have two children; a daughter and son. Both children are happily married and have blessed us with three intelligent and creative grandchildren. One girl and two boys. We enjoy spending time with them and creating adventures with the grandchildren. I am looking forward to getting to know our oblate community!



**Fernando "Louis" Ruvalcaba** was born in El Paso, TX and moved to Holy City of Las Vegas, NV when he was five years old. Fernando did all his schooling in Las Vegas and did many things for the archdiocese including altar server, sacristan, and lector. During his twenties, Fernando felt a calling to the priesthood and was accepted to the seminary at Mount Angel Abbey for the Archdiocese of Las Vegas. He spent two years as a seminarian but left the seminary. After leaving the seminary he found the love of his life, and now has three children. He spends his time now as a trainer for altar servers, teaches the pre-Baptismal class, one of the leaders for the Cub and Troop scouts and helps serve at the noon mass at his local parish. He still has hopes in the near future that he can become a Permanent Deacon and now as an oblate he will share this journey with his wife and kids.



**Sheina "Zelie" Ruvalcaba** is a native of holy city Las Vegas, Nevada. She is a wife to Fernando, working mother to Gabriel, Rafael, and Reina all while being a dedicated ministry leader within the Archdiocese of Las Vegas. Born within an interdenominational family, Sheina has always been drawn to the profound traditions of the Catholic Church. Sheina's ministry work is rooted in Youth and Young Adult Ministry and is currently the Cubmaster for a Catholic Scouting unit that meets at her parish. Sheina loves the liturgy and assists whenever and wherever needed. Although we are aware that we are "not of this world", Sheina enjoys the beauty of God's creation. Beyond the outdoors, she enjoys books and reading them. She finds peace and beauty in a quality latte especially when crafting them. Sheina is a creative; trained as a musician and visual artist. When Sheina entered her Season of Motherhood, she set many of her hobbies aside to focus on her little ones. Sheina jokes that she is "retired" from those joys... well, at least for this season! As an oblate of Mount Angel Abbey, Sheina looks forward to daily time with God through the Psalms and for community with other like-minded Catholics striving for balance through work and prayer. Saints Benedict & Zelie Martin, Ora Pro Nobis!



**Erica "Teresa of Avila" Ryan.** I was born and raised in Southern Oregon. Widely traveled, erratically educated, I finally settled in Seattle, as a photographer. Discovering a penchant for silence in solitude, and friendship in community surrounding the common goal of holiness. I met my future husband while attending Mass at St. James Cathedral. Married in December 2020, our family motto is "Angels lead the way" and by the grace of God they do, we now reside in Mt. Angel, OR with our son, Ambrose.



**Bryan "Andre" Cabrera.** My name is Bryan Cabrera I was born on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1982 in Bakersfield California. I currently serve as Sacristan in my home parish of St. Francis of Assisi here in Bakersfield and have served there for the last 22 years. I have served numerous Masses weddings, baptisms and funerals for the community and in so doing have become very connected to their lives and to the liturgy itself. The liturgy, particularly the Mass, and personal prayer are the center of my spiritual life. They are the two things that center me and give me strength to face the challenges of my life. Along with this I minister regularly in one of our local hospitals here visiting patients and bringing communion to the sick. I see in the face of the sick the face of the Crucified Christ and in their families the face of Mary standing at the foot of the Cross. What I experience at the altar in Mass,





the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, I see also made present in the experience of the suffering patient, or person that may need an ear to listen or shoulder to cry on.

In 2016 I was introduced to Mount Angel Abbey by a friend and brother in the Lord, Fr. Charles Gonzalez, who is currently there. And as I stepped on the grounds it surprised me how at home I felt, how much at peace I was. Over the years I returned to the Abbey to support my friend in his journey and in so doing became more and more attracted and called to this place. Finally after my friends final vows and with his help I discerned to start the process to become an oblate. Over the year of formation I started to realize that the Benedictine spirit had been and was a big part of my spiritual life, through love of liturgy, liturgical prayer, and contemplation. Through the oblation I feel strengthened and affirmed in my spiritual life, and supported by the brothers. I couldn't be more happy. May God continue to guide me.