



Planning Committee for 2021 International Oblate Congress Emphasizes Benedictine Spirituality for the 21st Century

November 23rd, 2018

The committee coordinating the next International Oblate Congress, scheduled for 2021, met from 27 October – 4 November 2018 at Sant’Anselmo in Rome to begin the planning process. The international Congress takes place every four years and includes Oblates from across the globe, as well as Oblate directors.

The 2021 planning group chose “*Moving Forward: Living the Wisdom of the Rule*” as the theme for the next Congress. The group emphasized the importance of exploring ways in which the *Rule* represents a living tradition for the 21st century. The 2021 theme builds on progress made at the 2017 Congress, where the nearly 300 delegates in attendance adopted a five-point Vision Plan, culled from several small-group discussions about the future of Oblate life across the globe.

The 2021 planning team consists of more than 20 Oblates – including several who helped plan the 2017 Congress –as well as Father Pachomius Okogie of Sant’Anselmo. The team represents Benedictines from a dozen countries across four continents.

Father Benoit Allogia, a French-born monk of Saint Vincent Archabbey in the United States, who now resides at Sant’Anselmo, is in charge of overall planning for the new Congress. He succeeds Father Edward Linton of Saint Meinrad Archabbey (USA), who has a new assignment at the Institute for Continuing Theological Education in Rome.

The planning committee also met with Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, who

announced that he and the superiors of several Benedictine monasteries are considering establishing an Oblate Commission. Abbot Gregory described the proposed commission as recognition of the growing number of Oblates across the globe, and the important role they have in helping to pass on the Benedictine charism.

For the first time in history, there are more Oblates than Monks, Nuns, and Sisters – 25,000 Oblates to 22,000 professed Benedictines. Those numbers date back several years and likely undercount the actual number of Oblates today.

Among other topics, the 2021 Congress will address such issues as Oblate formation, appropriate roles for Oblates within their monasteries, struggles posed by the shrinking number of professed Benedictines, and effective ways in the 21st century for evangelizing the Benedictine values of listening, community, consensus, humility, hospitality, prayer and praise.

The next Congress will take place from 6-12 November 2021 at the Fraterna Domus convention center outside of Rome, the site of the 2017 Congress. The planning team will keep Oblates informed of developments related to the Congress, such as the selection of keynote speakers, through social media updates and a quarterly newsletter, as well as a “Google Docs” page on the Oblate Congress 2021, information that the team is in the process of setting up.

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