



August Oblate Meeting in the Visitors' Center.

## The Gift of Conversation

- *brother Michael*

**A**S WE ALL RECOGNIZE IN OUR TIME, THERE IS SO MUCH FAST MOVEMENT ALONG with sudden and frightening acts of violence. Truthfulness is hard to find unless we really look for it. We know that our words can either cause harm, or, and here is the challenge, our words can be personal and convey a sense of vulnerability.

Benedict has a way with words that is amazing. In Chapter 20 of the Rule he writes, "Prayer should therefore be short and pure..." Our encounters with each other, surely a form of living prayer, can hold this sense of mystery and meaning.

At the beginning of our meeting with the oblates and oblate novices near the end of August, we practiced communal *lectio*. Each of us had a copy of the first reading of the day, a segment of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. The text was read aloud. We then stayed with it silently for a few minutes. It helped to have the text on a piece of paper since the mind tends to wander. Some of us closed our eyes for deeper reflection.

There was no lecture yet because of our focus the time was not a rambling of words. In a way, all that we had was the short scripture passage, our presence to each other, and some moments of silence as we let our gathering unfold.

Our commitment to *conversatio morum*, to practice conversing about what truly matters to us, is a gift to us from Benedict. In every season of our life we need to talk about what is in our hearts. In our time, the gift of conversation is among the most important gifts we can offer. ■