

Lay Cistercian Community – Oblate Community Zisterzienserkloster Langwaden

Spiritual Journey

In 1961 three Cistercian monks who held the chairmanship of the „Bernhard`s College for late vocations“ in Neuss at that time discovered the rather rundown state of the former monastery of Langwaden. On the 21st of March in 1965 the new monastery and chapel of Zisterzienserkloster Langwaden was solemnly consecrated. The monastery soon became a spiritual centre also for lay people.

Langwaden`s story with lay associates began in the early 70s, 1973. Until then the Cistercian order had no oblates. The then Prior, Berhard Thebes who later became Abbot of Ossek, accepted oblates. The prior developed an oblate community, having monthly meetings, for guidance on the Rule of Saint Benedict and for mass. Since 1990 Father Basilius Ullmann OCist has been oblate master. There has always been a close link between the oblates and the monks, but also among the oblates. The lay community, together with all the other oblates, meet at the monastery every month on a Saturday. The meeting starts with a spiritual impuls, that is followed by the holy eucharist, then there is lunch together with the monks, midday prayer, exchange of ideas and, for those who wish stay, vespers. Father Prior Bruno Robeck OCist always celebrates the eucharist which on these monthly retreat days is celebrated together with the monastic community. The dates are made known for the whole year in advance. Then, in 2005, we realized that there were links within the Cistercian Family, and that it was possible for communities to join as Lay Cistercian Communities. Since then we have been linked to these other Cistercian monasteries and lay peoples` communities within the Cistercian family. In 2007 our oblate community joined the Lay Cistercians, attended the International Encounter in Huerta in 2008, and in 2012 signed as an official member of the International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities. Since Langwaden joined the Lay Cistercians in 2007 every oblate – after final oblation - has the possibility to join the Lay Cistercian Community of the Langwaden Oblates. Members have to confirm their membership in a written form to the Prior. In December 2012 5 oblates signed the membership document of the international association.

The spiritual guidance is given mainly by Father Basilius Ullmann, focusing the topics as they come up in the Rule. To Father Basilius it has always been very important to learn how to put the rule - which is already 1500 years old – into practice in everyday life, for people who do not live in the monastery, what can they learn from it, what can they integrate into their daily lives? How can we bring it across as something that can be lived? Prayer links us with the community and forms the link between the lay too. Everyday life is structured by prayer; the prayer of the hours, and, if people have time, also lectio divina.

Also a younger monk and a Lay Cistercian lead various meetings on Cistercian topics such as history of the Cistercian order, lectio divina, Cistercian Fathers, contemplation etc..

As Lay Cistercians we are a community, meeting at the monastery not only for the monthly retreat days, but also for Cistercian Feastdays and with exchanges between the meetings. Since we joined the Lay Cistercians in 2007 Cistercian teaching has become more important for the community, as well as the awareness of being a community of lay Cistercian people giving witness of Christ and His Church in everyday life.