

Wanted: 93,000 bricks

We Oblates have fallen in love with bricks! There is something so solid and satisfying about a brick wall. It resists wind and rain, snow and hail. From our childhood days of fairy tales, we always wanted to be the pig who built his house of brick. He was the smart one. No straw house for him!

Although our interest in bricks was casual, of late we have become passionate about them. They are so solid, so symmetrical – it is so comforting to sense the weight of even one brick. There is something special about the red clay brick that seems to be the most common among builders. For centuries they have held their place among architects and builders as being the most popular of building materials.

Our interest in bricks came about when we heard that construction on our new Mother House wing was about to stop! There was no more money to buy bricks and whatever it takes to put them into place in our building. We asked the architect how many bricks we needed to complete our wing. His answer astonished us: 96,000 bricks to do the job!

We swallowed hard and said, “We can handle that! We’ll ask our friends and families to buy a brick or two at \$25 apiece!” It seemed like such a simple solution. We called on our artistic friends to draw us a thermometer divided into increments of a thousand. As we sold a thousand bricks, we would move the thermometer up until we had sold all 96,000 bricks. The sale was on!

Well, six months later we are huffing and puffing under the weight of the bricks we haven’t sold! All 93,000 of them! Unbelievably, it has taken us all that time to sell 3,000 bricks!

What can we do, we asked ourselves, to get these bricks sold? Whom can we ask who hasn’t already bought a brick, or two, or 10? There must be some way that our bricks could serve more than one purpose!

It occurred to us that bricks can be purchased in memory of a dear one. They can be bought in lieu of Christmas gifts. Who wouldn’t be delighted to know that they have been remembered by the purchase of bricks for the Oblate Sisters of Providence new

mother house wing? So here we are with our suggestions. Let us know what you think about our bricks as gifts?

There may be readers who have not yet heard of our brick drive. We depend upon our friends to tell them about it. Some of you may be in a situation where you can distribute brick flyers to those who do not know about our building plans but who would like to help us. If you wish to participate in this way, you may call or write to Sister Helene Therese, our development director, at 410-536-5684 or 410 242 8500. You may wish to visit our Web site at www.oblatesisters.com. Wouldn't you like to be part of helping a building go up, brick by brick? You can be God's providence to us!

Robert Frost, in his poem "Mending Wall," says "Before I build a wall I'd ask to know What I was walling in or walling out."

But we know what we are walling in! Within our walls will be aging and frail sisters who have spent their lives in ministry to the young. Now these sisters need help simply to get through the day. Our brick walls will wall out the cold and the heat, the rain and the snow. They will create an environment in which these sisters can spend their last days surrounded by nurses and aides who will keep them comfortable. Will you be God's providence to us?

Sister Mary Alice Chineworth is an Oblate Sister of Providence and has served as superior general for the religious community.