

## **TUCSON OBLATE NEWS LETTER**

**APRIL 2017**

Lent is a season to reflect on Jesus, His self-gift, and His ultimate act of love. Psalm 105 says "Remember the marvels the Lord has done." Through Jesus' dying on the cross we are set free to live our life in Jesus Christ. The gift of the Resurrection is not only that we are saved, but we also are called to be Christ in our world, and as Christians to transform our world. Let us ponder the ways of God who continues to lead us to freedom. Jesus is the only one who can judge our hearts. Peter and the Apostles failed, they fled from Him and betrayed Him. After Jesus' death they must have been tortured with guilt and failure. Only Jesus could transform them by appearing as the Risen Christ in all His glory, with rays of His love, mercy, and forgiveness radiating from His wounds. "Peace I give you, I give you my love, forgiveness and mercy. Now go transform the world," Jesus said to them. Can we love those who scorn us? It may seem at this time in our culture that God is silent. There is always a dance among doubt and Faith, Hope and Mercy, grace that is unconditional and mysterious, the gift of divine presence. Jesus is always beside us. The Risen Christ, transformed from death to radiant life, continues to gift us with His grace and mercy just as He did Peter and the Apostles. We too are called to offer this same grace as gift to others, to love those who scorn us. Jesus is Risen, Alleluia! Let us give thanks and praise to our Lord.

### **NEWS**

- Sister Mary Hope will be transferring to the Motherhouse in Clyde, MO the end of May or early June. Sister Kathleen Clare will be the Oblate Director.
- William Joseph is now one of our deans. The other deans are Betty Dickinson, Sharon Hammond, Mary Sheridan, and Jessie Zander. You can talk with any of them about how you see the future of the Oblates. You are all so important to our Congregation, and the Church, and will be even more important after the Monastery closes. You are the Body of Christ in our world.
- We would like to have another ice cream social in July, and at that time to talk about how the Oblate Chapter will continue after the Monastery is closed. Sharon Hammond is asking whether we can use Sts. Peter and Paul Parish for the meetings; other suggestions are welcome. There is strong leadership among the Oblates, which I really appreciate and know you do as well.
- Sharon Hammond and William Joseph will attend the International Oblate Congress in Rome from November 4-10, 2017. Oblates attend from all over the world. The Theme is: "A Way Forward – the Benedictine Community in Movement." I would like all the Oblates who can to make a donation to help them with the expenses for travel and registration.
- The Lectio group meets from 10 a.m. to 11a.m. every Saturday in the prayer room (off the Chapel). All are Welcome.

### **APRIL 9TH OBLATE MEETING**

Our next meeting will be April 9<sup>th</sup>, Palm Sunday, at 2 p.m. NOT April 16, which is Easter. Doors will open at 12:45 for inquirers, candidates and anyone else who would like to come

early to use the library or visit with others. Sharon Hammond will give the class on “End of Life Choices.”

**Inquirers’ and Candidates’ Class:** The class will start at 1:00 p.m. and finish at 1:45 to join the others in the basement. It is held in the Prayer Room, on the right side as you enter the Chapel. The Class is by Sr. Gladys Noreen OSB on Benedictine Ways of Prayer, with emphasis on the Divine Office. In preparation for the class, please read from the Rule : Chs. 19 The Discipline of Psalmody, Ch. 20 Reverence in Prayer, Ch. 48 Daily Manual Labor, and Ch. 52 The Oratory of the Monastery. Optional: as much of Chs. 8-18 as you wish. Questions for discussion: What forms of prayer have you tried? What “works” for you? Have you observed or participated in the Divine Office? Lectio?

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**PRESCOTT OBLATE NEWS:** Shirley Maday reports their next meeting will be April 30<sup>th</sup> 1:30-3:30 p.m. at St. Anthony Claret Room. Prayers were asked for Henry Riviere, deceased husband of Rebecca Riviere; Joan Terwilliger, recovering from surgery; and Sonya Munding, recuperating from blood clot in her lung. The study of *The Road to Eternal Life*, Ch. 30 pp. 107-111 will continue.

**EAST VALLEY OBLATE NEWS:** This group has started using the study guide for the Rule of St. Benedict by Sr. Maria Thomas Beil, OSB. “The Art of Listening” was the March Lesson. For more Information on meetings call Nancy Kaib 480-883 8025 or Frank Young 480-219-1505.

**PHOENIX CENTRAL OBLATE NEWS:** For information call Patty Williams 602-957-1464. The Phoenix group meets at Mount Claret Retreat Center, 4633 N. 54<sup>th</sup> St. Phoenix, 85018. The meeting room is in the St. John Paul II room in the back of the parking lot. This group is also studying the Rule of Benedict by Maria-Thomas Beil OSB

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**SUMMARY OF MARCH PRESENTATION**

At our March meeting, Sr. Gladys Noreen spoke on “The Spirituality of the Liturgy of the Hours.” (Alternate names for the Liturgy of the Hours include “Divine Office” and “the Work of God.”)

Praying at different times of the day, especially morning, noon, and evening, goes back at least to the Third Century. So by the time Benedict wrote the Rule, there was already an established pattern of common prayer. Benedict added the hours of Vigils and Compline for a total of 7 times of prayer.

Benedict said that we should “prefer nothing to the Work of God” (RB 43:3). The Divine Office, Sr. Gladys said, “is the core of our lives.” It unites the monastic community and is the “source and summit of community life.” It is where we allow God to work in our lives, where we respond to God in prayer. Benedict said that all 150 Psalms should be prayed in a week, but he allowed for change as circumstances demand. The Psalms that we pray are literally Israel’s faith, expressed in metaphors, judgments, and images. God’s mystery and all human emotions are in the Psalms.

The first Office of the day begins with “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will give you praise” (Ps. 51:7). Since the sisters keep silence at night, these are the first words said in the morning. The other hours begin with “O God come to my assistance, O Lord make haste to

help me.” Benedict said that “when you begin a good work, you must pray most earnestly to bring it to completion” (Prol: 4). We are beggars who must depend on God even for help in praying. The “Glory be” is said, bowing, as a sign of humility and faith in the Trinity. This is a reaction to the Arian heresy.

Since most people think of RB Chs. 8-20 as the material covering the Office, Sr. Gladys pointed out other chapters that are pertinent:

- Ch. 42 -- spiritual reading during the meal, with Compline at its conclusion.
- Ch. 43 – the bell calls the community to Office. Everything else is put aside if one truly “prefers nothing to the Work of God.” Tardiness can mean indolence, half-heartedness, or an improper valuing of other things. Being present on time is essential for the individual and the community.
- Ch. 45 and 47 – Dignified and beautiful singing. We immerse ourselves in the meaning of the Psalms and Scripture. We listen attentively. We find in this prayer beauty, substance, and structure.
- Ch. 52 -- The place for prayer is called the Oratory (ora = prayer). It is where we are especially in the presence of God. It is the center of Benedictine life, which calls for the discipline of fidelity to prayer. In the Oratory we are aware of, alert to, immersed in the service of God.

In summary, the Divine Office is a prayerful dialogue between God and the community. It is the Church at prayer. We are shaped by the presence of Christ, and expose ourselves consciously to God’s action when we pray. But we can only profit from it when we are physically and mentally prepared, pure of heart to keep our focus on God. Our postures and voices should be signs of our inner devotion. Through the Office we consecrate the day, emptying ourselves so that we can be filled with Christ.

Sr. Gladys closed with this quote from Anselm of Canterbury: “Teach me to seek you, and reveal yourself to me as I seek. For unless you instruct me I cannot seek you, and unless you reveal yourself, I cannot find you.”

#### Questions and Answers with Sr. Dawn Annette Mills

At the end of the meeting, Sr. Dawn Annette, Prioress General of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, joined the Oblates to answer questions.

**Q:** What will happen to the Oblate program after the monastery closes? **A:** It will continue. The Congregation has closed other monasteries, and their Oblates have continued with lay leadership. There will be communication between Sr. Sarah Schwarzberg, Congregational Oblate Director, and the deans for the Tucson Oblates. The time between now and closure will be a time of building structures, and making sure that potential leaders for the Oblates are solid in Benedictine spirituality. Sisters will come to Tucson periodically to keep the connection strong. Sr. Dawn Annette also reminded us that we are Oblates of the Congregation, not just the Tucson monastery, and that won’t change.

**Q:** What are the timeline/plans for the closure? **A:** “This has not yet been revealed by God.” They would like to sell to another religious community if possible.

**Q:** Will there still be perpetual adoration in the chapel? **A:** That depends on who buys the monastery, and what they want to do. However, there are other churches in Tucson with perpetual adoration. [Note that a list of churches with adoration can be found at: <http://www.therealpresence.org/states/arizona.htm> Most of these churches have adoration only on specific days/times.]

**Q:** Could Oblate meeting presentations be taped and perhaps even put on the internet? **A:** That's up to the Oblate Director.

**Q:** Would Sr. Dawn Annette be in Tucson long enough that people could meet with her? **A:** Not on this visit, but she can plan a future visit around an Oblate meeting.

**Q:** Does the monastery's being on the Historic Register mean that it couldn't be torn down? **A:** No, but the process is difficult. Also, the sisters will try to protect the building and its use(s) through elements in the sales contract.

**Q:** Is there no way that the Tucson community could be saved? **A:** No. The main issue is personnel. There are fewer nuns, and most of them are "old enough to be grandmothers." There are fewer women joining the convent, so two communities are just not sustainable.

**Q:** Is it possible that there could be a relationship with St. David's Monastery? **A:** No. They are part of the Olivetan Congregation [a different branch of Benedictines], which we are not. Besides, although they have active Oblates and volunteers, they have few monks.

**Q:** Could the monastery building be leased out? **A:** It's possible, but unlikely, because there will be no nuns in Tucson to supervise/maintain the building, as must be done when property is leased. There is also a problem that the building is not up to the current building code. The nuns have been "grandfathered in" because of the age of the building. If it were to be leased, however, it would have to be brought up to code. The Congregation cannot afford to do that. Sr. Dawn Annette concluded by saying that today's shortage of priests and religious is going on worldwide. This is one reason Oblates are important: they spread Benedictine spirituality in the community.

## **Feast of the Annunciation**

Just a short reflection on Mary's feast of the Annunciation. Mary stood unknowingly at the crux of time when God came to her as if a beggar. The great God whose word created the universe, who fashioned creatures to share in divine life, that God of majesty was once more at the mercy of human freedom. God in the guise of an angel came to ask a simple girl, "Will you let my will be done?" Mary responded, "This is my body for you." The call, the response, and the new reality. No one will ever again be the Mother of God.

*Sr. Hope*

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