



Tucson Oblate Newsletter

December, 2012

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you (I Thess. 3:12). St. Paul's words in the second reading at Eucharist for the 1st Sunday of Advent are a perfect introduction to our exploration of the rich meanings of compassion and the Golden Rule.

At our Tucson Oblate meeting in November we welcomed Novice Clissene Lewis back to speak with us about compassion from a Native American perspective. She began by defining compassion as suffering together with someone, and reminded us that no one suffered like Christ, who feels what we feel and suffers with us. Jesus is the Compassion of God for us, selfless and obedient to the will of the Father, the "suffering servant."

What does a servant do? Above all, a servant obeys the master. The roots of "obey" are in listening; "Listen with the ear of your heart," the Prologue to the RB says. "Authentic love listens," Clissene added.

Compassion has this element of listening with the heart. Native people are "spirit people." They carry God's spirit naturally, and thus are filled with compassion. Native people believe that we are all born with compassion, that children are the greatest gift of the Creator, and that compassion starts even before birth in the relationship between mother and child.

Black Elk, Sioux elder and Catholic catechist, said, "We should help one another to have compassion." And he set as his most important prayer, "O Great Spirit, have compassion on me that my people may live."

Nature's compassion is free, the "heartbeat of all creation." (The drumbeat so frequently used in Native ceremonies connects us to this heartbeat of Mother Earth.) In nature, there is no attitude of one form or species dominant over or superior to another. Rather, earth has compassion on us by providing us with food and meeting our other needs. Earth is humble, letting us walk on her. In turn, we should walk softly. Native Americans believe that no one is homeless because all have Mother Earth.

Water also has compassion. Water represents Spirit, sustains life, and comes through the veins of Mother Earth. Black Elk said that rain is the Creator's way of baptizing all. We should cherish water, including tears—which are "holy water."

Likewise, air has compassion for us, keeping us alive. The Creator gives us breath at birth, and takes it back at death. Thus, all life is sacred from birth to death, since it is a gift from the Creator. The sun shows compassion in warming us, making fire, and bringing light

into darkness.

Clissene finished with a prayer from Chief Seattle, Suquamish chief, warrior, and orator:

We are all related.

All things are connected.

God is the same for all.

Give thanks for the web

Of life that connects us.

TUCSON: Next meeting Sunday, December 16 at 2:00 p.m. - Doors open at 1:15

Candidates and inquirers meet upstairs in the PRAYER ROOM at 1:30 promptly. The assignment for the December meeting is to read **Chapter 7 On Humility**

1. What questions/comments do you have from last time, or from your reading?
2. Discussion of Ch. 7
 - a. Definition of humility: "Knowing who God is and who I am in relation to God"
 - b. Various approaches to Ch. 7 (Chittister, et al.)
 - c. Humility and self-esteem—not incompatible
 - d. Humility in lay life

Those ready to enroll as candidates or make Oblation, please plan to stay for 10-15 minutes right after the main meeting closes. (there will be enough refreshments left for you!) **Discussion with those who have been Candidates at least a year—do you feel ready to move forward with Oblation in January? Discussion with Inquirers: Do you feel ready to move into Candidacy in January? (You can also contact Sr. Lenora personally if you prefer. Phone number is 520-325-6401; email, see end of next page).**

At the December meeting, there will be a signup sheet for inquirers wishing to enroll as candidates, and candidates ready to make their oblation.

Inquirers are eligible to enter into candidacy if they have attended several meetings and feel called to this next step towards oblation.

Candidates are eligible to make their oblation if they have been candidates for a year, attended most of the formation classes, and feel called and ready for this commitment.

TUCSON Main meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Continuing with the theme of compassion, Advent seems a fine time to consider Karen Armstrong's 5th and 6th steps to a compassionate life: **Mindfulness**

and **Action**. After Sr. Lenora's brief presentation, there will be time for small group sharing.

Armstrong reminds us that **mindfulness** is not a meditation we should perform in solitude, apart from our ordinary routines. She writes:

“Mindfulness is a form of meditation that we perform as we go about our daily lives, and is designed to give us more control over our minds so that we can reverse ingrained tendencies and cultivate new ones . . . In mindfulness we mentally stand back and observe our behavior while we are engaged in the normal process of living, in order to discover more about the way we interact with people, what makes us angry and unhappy . . . and how to pay attention to the present moment.

“With mindfulness . . . we live in the moment, observing the way we speak, walk, eat and think . . . Once we know that the cause of so much human pain is within ourselves, we have the motivation to change. We will find that we are happier when we are peaceful than when we are angry or restless . . . that when we perform an act of kindness we ourselves feel better.”

Mindfulness leads naturally into action, and accompanies action. One area that Armstrong especially emphasizes is the effect of words in our lives--both unkind words and kind words.

“We have the ability, with disciplined, repetitive action, to construct new habits of thought, feeling, and behavior.” What if, before we open our mouths to criticize someone, we reflexively ask ourselves, “How would I like this said about me and mine?” This is an example of the reverse version of the Golden Rule: “Do not do unto others what I do not want done to me.”

We can start to live the positive version of the Golden Rule by consciously practicing one action or word of kindness each day, then working up to three conscious actions or words of kindness daily. At the end of the day, check on yourself “as you brush your teeth or put out the cat,” and if you find that you haven't lived up to your intention, “recall what you learned during the third step and have compassion on yourself, smile wryly at your omission, and resolve to do better tomorrow.”

For the small group sharing, after reflecting on the above, think about sharing with the small group:

1. Is there a recent or remembered experience where an unkind action or words to you by someone else powerfully affected your life negatively? Does it still affect your relationship with that person?

2. Is there an occasion where you went out of your way to act or speak kindly to someone else, and how did you feel after that? An occasion where you refrained from acting or speaking unkindly and how that felt?

PRESCOTT: Next meeting: Christmas Potluck, Sunday, December 16, 1:00 p.m., St. Anthony Claret Room.

After considering reviews of several books for our next study, we chose Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. Joanie Allen led a discussion on Sacred Art, one of the assigned units of *The Monastery of the Heart*. In keeping with the author's charge that “we spend ourselves making the world as beautiful as God, the Artist, the Word, meant it to be,” Joan Terwilliger said that several Chapter members have used their creative gifts to produce works of art for others. Angie Lawson was asked to lead the discussion of Peace and the Epilogue of *The Monastery of the Heart* at the December 16 meeting. Next meeting the lesson from *The Monastery of the Heart* will be pages 207-219.

For more information, call Nancy Hinshaw: 928-445-1271

PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, Saturday, December 8, 2012, 8:45 a.m. for Inquirers and Candidates, and 9:30 a.m. for all. Mount Claret Retreat Center, 4633 North 54th Street, Phoenix, 85018.

Patty Williams writes: We always look forward to our annual Christmas get-together with the Chandler group in December. Everyone is welcome to come! Mary Gibson will give a presentation about her pilgrimage to Poland and what it brought to her life as an oblate. In January we will continue our study of the Holy Rule and we will also talk about the personal evaluation of our oblate life. Please come and join us. Our meeting room is in the back of the Mount Claret Retreat Center in the Pope John Paul II room.

For more information call Patty Williams: 602-957-1464 or email Benedictine@cox.net

PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: Next meeting: December 8 with the Phoenix Central Oblates.

Nancy Kaib writes: East Valley met on Saturday, November 24. We discussed what we were thankful for. We also talked about what being an Oblate has meant to us and how we feel we have been changed by our commitment. Our December meeting will be held on Saturday, December 8. We enjoy connecting to our other Phoenix oblates at this once a year joint meeting.

For more information call Nancy Kaib, 480-883-8025 or Frank Young, 480-219-1505.

May your Advent season be filled with the grace of mindfulness, and your Christmas full of peace and joy!

Sister Lenora, osb