



# Tucson Oblate Newsletter

## December, 2013

Eternal God who made the stars,  
Your people's everlasting light!  
O Lord, Redeemer, save us all  
And hear your servants when they call.

You came with healing power to save  
A world that languished, self-condemned:  
The wounds of sin were wide and deep,  
The cure for guilt was your free gift.

When this old world drew on toward night,  
You came; but not in splendor bright,  
Not as a monarch, but the child  
Of Mary, blameless mother mild.

We stand at the opening of a new liturgical year, and in the spirit of Advent silence, I will not say much more about this hauntingly beautiful season beyond the above composite translation of the first verses of an ancient hymn sung at Vespers to open Advent. It offers richer food for reflection than I could, and each Saturday and Sunday of Advent we sing it again. I encourage those of you in Tucson to join us at the monastery for Advent Vespers, especially Saturday and/or Sunday. I'll list the times at the end of the letter. If you come, do sit up front and take a book to follow along with us.

For **Tucson's November meeting**, Mary Sheridan gave a presentation on the Liturgy of the Hours, as had been requested by several Oblates in September. In preparation for the meeting, we had put together two tables of books that would be helpful to praying the Liturgy—e.g., the single and 4 volumes of Christian Prayer, Macrina Wiederkehr's *Seven Sacred Pauses, Morning and Evening Prayer*, and the *Little Office of the Blessed Virgin*. For those wanting online resources, <http://www.universalis.com/> was suggested for the standard texts. The Benedictine Sisters' Morning Prayer is podcasted daily from Clyde at <http://monasterypodcast.com/>. Texts are included.

The Liturgy of the Hours, which is described in such detail in the Rule of St. Benedict, is a form of prayer that truly belongs to the laity, although it has become associated with priests and religious over the years. The major purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours is to help us to affirm and celebrate the holiness of each hour of the day, and, through frequent moving between work and prayer, help us unify the two.

Traditionally there were eight liturgical "Hours": Matins (now often called Vigils or Readings), Lauds (often called

Morning Prayer), Prime and Terce (now conflated into Mid-Morning prayer), Sext (often called Mid-Day or Noon Prayer), None (Mid-Afternoon Prayer), Vespers (often called Evening Prayer), and Compline (sometimes called Night Prayer). Morning and Evening Prayer are the "hinges" of the Office, and in practice few people or communities say all 7 hours. It is best to say the prayer that is appropriate for the time of day—e.g., if it's late in the day, even if one has not prayed Morning Prayer, it is best to pray Evening Prayer.

While there is an "official" Catholic version of the Liturgy of the Hours (Christian Prayer, and comparable liturgy in the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer), many monasteries and individuals have adapted the Office to their own needs. This is true of the Benedictine Sisters in Tucson, and the Sisters' Liturgy books were available for the Oblates to look at. Oblates were encouraged to make the the prayer personally meaningful and appropriate for their lives.

***The basic pattern of a major liturgical Hour is as follows:***  
*(The minor Hours omit some elements)*

- Invocation  
1st hour of the day: O Lord, open my lips  
and my mouth will proclaim your praise.  
Later: O God come to my assistance/  
O Lord make haste to help me, with Glory be . . .
- Hymn
- Psalms/canticle with antiphons and Gloria
- Reading with response
- Lauds & Vespers: Canticle (Lauds—Canticle of Zechariah, Vespers—Magnificat)
- Intercessory prayer
- Our Father, followed by prayer of the day
- Blessing

*Knowing this basic pattern makes it easier for those who want to make their own adaptations of the Liturgy of the Hours.*

***The "cycle" of the Hours can be said to be:***

- **Vigils:** Wake up and listen to Christ.
- **Lauds:** Thank God for the new day.
- **Mid-Morning Prayer:** Work mindfully and with enthusiasm
- **Noon Prayer:** Don't give up!
- **Mid-Afternoon Prayer:** Forgive us our faults of the day
- **Vespers:** Celebrate the end of the day and its accomplishments; light the lamp of fellowship.
- **Compline:** Do not fear the night. Go to sleep in the peace of Christ.

Questions and answers followed and any who might need in learning to pray the Office were encouraged to ask for it. This is something that people have to learn.

The meeting concluded with all praying Mid-afternoon Prayer together.

**TUCSON: Next meeting Sunday, DECEMBER 8 at 2:00 p.m.** (*This is the second Sunday, because the Arizona Repertory Singers have two concerts at the monastery on our usual Sunday*). Doors open at 1:00 p.m. for inquirers, candidates and anyone else who would like to come early, use the library, and/or visit with others.

**1:15: Oblate candidates and inquirers meet in prayer room;** Sharon Hammond will lead the sharing on humility. For preparation, read Ch. 7 of the Rule, "Humility."

- What questions/comments do you have from last time, or from the reading?
- **Candidates** who have been Candidates at least a year—do you feel ready to move forward with Oblation on January 19?
- **Inquirers:** Do you feel ready to move into Candidacy January 19?

(ALL) What do you understand about humility? Is the metaphor of the ladder meaningful? How do you reconcile Benedict's views of being "lower than a worm" with modern understandings of self-esteem? Is being humble a help or a hindrance in lay life? (e.g., self-promotion as a means of getting ahead in the workplace.)

**2:00: Meeting for all.** This meeting will focus on the season of Advent, particularly on Advent Vespers and the ancient "O Antiphons." For over a thousand years in monasteries, cathedrals and sometimes parishes, these antiphons have been solemnly sung at Vespers from December 17 through 23. On December 24, the First Vespers of Christmas is sung. At the meeting we will listen to music from Advent Vespers, including the "O Antiphons," and explore some of their meaning and history.

In preparation for the meeting, please think about these questions:

What words and feelings do you associate with the season of Advent?

How do you, or could you, celebrate Advent and keep it separate from Christmas?

How can you keep it more quiet and prayerful?

**PRESCOTT: Next meeting/Potluck Sunday, December 15, 1:00-3:30 p.m.** in the St. Anthony Mary Claret room in the lower level of Sacred Heart Parish.

*Shirley Maday writes:* In sharing on the Eighth Step of Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, "How Should We Speak to One Another," it was noted that during this step, we try to make ourselves mindful of the way we speak to others. And before we embark on an argument or a debate, we should ask ourselves honestly if we are ready to change our minds.

Assignment: Karen Armstrong's book, "The Ninth Step: Concern for Everybody," pages 143-155.

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

**PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, Saturday, December 14, 2013, 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 had our regular meeting at Mount Claret and then were blessed to be invited to Benedictine University in Mesa for another meeting, prayers and a tour. The facility is absolutely amazing. I hope all of you have a chance to see it. Happy Thanksgiving blessings. Everyone is welcome to come on Saturday so please join us.

For more information call Patty Williams: 602-957-1464 or email [Benedictine@cox.net](mailto:Benedictine@cox.net)

**PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: I'm sorry, but I was unable to contact anyone in time for information about the next meeting.**

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

### Library Corner

We are always glad to receive suggestions for books or authors that Oblates want in the library. There is usually a sheet on the table at meetings, or suggestions can be made directly to Mary at [msh Sheridanhp@gmail.com](mailto:msh Sheridanhp@gmail.com).

*The times for Advent Vespers at the monastery are as follows:*

**Saturdays** (1st Vespers): Nov. 30, Dec. 7 and 21, at 5:30 p.m.; **December 14, at 7:00 p.m.**

**Sundays:** December 1, 8 and 22, at 6:00 p.m.; **December 15, at 5:15 p.m.**

*In the words of the first "O Antiphon,"*

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God's mouth,  
you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care.  
Come, and teach us all the ways that lead to life.

*Blessings,*

*Sr. Lenora, OSB*

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