



Tucson Oblate Newsletter December, 2014

Thanksgiving and Christmas: for Christians, both are times to give thanks to God. For the commercial world, both are great opportunities for selling and buying, with SALES writ large everywhere you look. Advent has a lot of competition, but it can be a time to focus on the most important of all the gifts: the Gift of God's beloved Son, whose coming we await with prayer and song. While Advent is no longer regarded primarily as a season of penance, the liturgy invites us to be more aware of those who are in need. Perhaps this is more obvious in the familiar Advent passage from Isaiah 35, as expressed in Eugene Peterson's contemporary translation, "The Message."

Energize the limp hands,
strengthen the rubbery knees.
Tell fearful souls,
"Courage! Take heart!
God is here, right here,
on his way to put things right
And redress all wrongs.
He's on his way! He'll save you!"

Blind eyes will be opened,
deaf ears unstopped,
Lame men and women will leap like deer,
the voiceless break into song.
Springs of water will burst out in the wilderness,
streams flow in the desert.
Hot sands will become a cool oasis,
thirsty ground a splashing fountain.

To fulfill these promises God needs our hearts and hands. **Pope Francis**, speaking in a recent audience, addressed this need in our own day: "*The current situation of social and economic crisis can frighten us, disorientate us or seem so difficult that we conclude there is nothing we can do. The great temptation is to stop and tend to our own wounds, and find in that an excuse not to listen to the cry of the poor and the suffering of those*

who have lost the dignity of being able to put bread on the table because they have lost their jobs. And those who seek only to cure their own wounds end up preening themselves. This is a trap. The risk is that indifference makes us blind, deaf and mute, present only to ourselves, before the mirror, so that everything happens outside us. Men and women closed up in themselves."

At Tucson's November meeting we had a stimulating panel discussion on the monastic vow of **Stability**, with Oblate **Mila Aroskar** ably moderating.

Sr. Kathleen Gorman, the eldest member of the panel, said that her close and stable family life prior to entering the monastery helped her realize that in life you are like a tree rooted in ground, but with leaves and branches open to receiving and then bearing the fruit to be shared. She early found rootedness in her community of Sisters, and this has helped her remain firm through many changes and difficulties. Her own fidelity, self discipline and support of her Sisters helps her and others on the journey.

Sr. Maria Victoria Cutaia, the youngest member of the Tucson monastery, found that our congregation's understanding of Stability as commitment to the *whole congregation*, rather than commitment to just one monastery, enabled her to see her move to Tucson as expanding her relationships, rather than losing some. She also shared a practical tip from her junior director: look at a task ahead not as something I have to do, but something I get to do.

Oblate George Mairs credits his wife Nancy (also an oblate) with helping him to achieve Stability and rootedness in his life, especially when raising their children. Their prayer and rootedness have helped them over the more than 40 years of their marriage, as Nancy's debilitating MS continues to develop in unpredictable ways. They also keep a room in their home to share with a person in need of stability and a caring environment.



Oblate Kitty Tobin, recently retired from a career in the mental health field, is a new Oblate, now serving the community in a variety of ways. She experiences stability as a *gift* in her parish community, in a long-term committed relationship, her bridge buddies and friends. She likes the vine and branches image used by Jesus, seeing the trunk as stable while the branches get whipped around by storms at times. It is with the gift of stability and remaining other-centered that she is able to cope with the anxiety that has long plagued her life.

TUCSON: Next meeting Sunday, December 21, at 2:00 p.m. Doors open at 1:00 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** (1st door on right from chapel upstairs). **Sr. Joan Therese** will lead this group. In preparation for this session, read from the Rule of Benedict: Ch. 4, *The Tools of Good Works* (aka Guidelines for Christian and Monastic Good Practice)
1. What questions/comments do you have from last time, or from your reading?
 2. Questions for discussion:
 - a. How are these "tools" different from what non-Oblates might practice? If not very different, why do you think that Benedict stresses them?
 - b. What is the unifying principle that holds them together?
 - c. Why do you think Benedict doesn't appear to like laughter? How should we interpret this in daily life today?
 - d. How does Benedict's famous statement about "let nothing come before the love of Christ" affect an Oblate's life?

2:00: As a practical follow-up to Sr. Pascaline Coff's October presentation on *Stability of Heart*, and in response to the request for help in forming a Christian social conscience, I have invited a member of the Jordan ministry team whose mission includes spiritual and religious formation of lay ministers. We may all readily agree on the need for stability in our values, but applying them in practice is another matter. **Sr. Jane Eschweiler, SDS**, (Salvatorian) is passionate about this subject. She holds a B.A. in English from Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, an M.A. in English from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and a Masters in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in Chicago, IL. She has served as a high school teacher, retreat leader, parish administrator and pastoral associate in Mississippi and Michigan. She has also ministered in prisons.

Sister Jane is the author of a book of homilies entitled *Endless connections: Taking God's Word to heart*.

This meeting will be "hands on," so bring along a pencil or pen. It is very near Christmas, but please make an effort to be present. You are invited to bring along Christmas goodies for refreshments after the presentation, and as we will have tables set up, we can enjoy refreshments in a less crowded environment than the kitchenette. For this time, we will not pray Vespers but enjoy one another's company. *We'll appreciate help to put things away afterward.*

PRESCOTT: Next meeting, Sunday, December 21, 1:30-3:30 p.m. in the St. Anthony Claret Room.

Shirley Maday writes: With his sharing on Benedictine spirituality, Candidate Bill Lutz completed his assignments. He said he feels his study has been an enriching experience that will serve as a guide in his spiritual journey. In the sharing on Michael Casey's book, it was noted that the virtue of doing good comes only through sustained contact with Christ in prayer and that God's grace is a necessity. The next meeting will be a potluck gathering, and the lesson will be from Michael Casey's *The Road to Eternal Life*, pp 23-30.

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

PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, Saturday, December 13, 2014, 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: Please join us for a morning of prayer, community, God stories and study. As we give thanks to God for our community and for the miracle of Christ's birth, we will prayerfully ponder the great gifts and preparation during the Season of Advent. We are blessed!

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

PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: Next meeting Saturday, December 20.

Nancy Kaib writes: We are taking a short break from our book and Frank is planning something different for our Christmas meeting. We have been happy to welcome back Heather who is spending a short time at home in order to reflect on her decision to enter M. of the Glorious Cross Monastery in Branford, CT. That is a standard requirement for all new aspirants to the monastery. She is very happy with her decision and plans on returning as soon as she is allowed.

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