



# Tucson Oblate Newsletter

## February, 2012

**"Paradoxes and symbols emerging from St. Scholastica's story have meanings for contemporary living and spiritual life. These include the daily struggle for balance, the transcendence of love and compassion over dogmatic law, strength of character, the ability to listen, the importance of prayer and love in mending relationships, the significance of talking to God, 'seeing the light,' and the ability to live within a framework that can open the door to eternity."\***

Professor Ruth Clifford Engs offers these lessons to be learned from the famous rainstorm story of Saint Scholastica, whose feast is celebrated **Friday, February 10**. You are invited to be with us personally or join us spiritually in our celebration. Lauds will be at 8:00 a.m., Mass at 9:00 a.m., Vespers at 5:30 p.m. For the benefit of any who may not know the story of the storm, it is summarized at the end of this letter. Since **Lent** begins this month on **February 22**, could we consider these meanings or lessons as Lenten challenges?

At Tucson's January Oblate meeting, Novice Clissene Lewis, who is spending a year of novitiate at our Tucson monastery, was invited to share her thoughts on community with us. Using Power Point, she told us about her own Ft. McDowell Native community, and her work to found a new religious order, the Little Servants of the Cross, for work among Native peoples.

**"The heart of the community is the spirit of the people"** was her theme. Reviewing the history of Native peoples in the U.S., Novice Clissene said frankly that they have had difficulty relating to Jesus because he is associated with missionaries and colonizers who attempted to "civilize" them. Encounter with these forever changed the history of Native peoples. The results of this effort are visible daily, and thus "history is contemporary."

Novice Clissene said that that individualism and materialism are foreign to the Native worldview. The concept of community goes far beyond the family. Natives see themselves as related to one another, to the animals, the environment, and the universe. The Great Spirit dwells in the center of the universe and

thus is everywhere and within everyone.

Natives were not given citizenship until 1924, and it took many more years for them to achieve full voting rights. Novice Clissene was proud that the Ft. McDowell community, although small, was instrumental in the fight for voting rights, as well as in defeating the Orme Dam proposal that would have flooded their lands. This effort included a 40 mile march from the reservation to the State Capitol in Phoenix. The community also successfully defended their right to have gaming on the reservation. These victories are celebrated annually.

Novice Clissene also showed pictures of the Crown Dancers who were present for a special ceremony held to inaugurate her year of canonical novitiate with the Benedictine Sisters, under the direction of Sr. Pascaline. She also described how her habit is based on a simple Native camp dress, brown to symbolize the earth, and with rickrack that represents life's journey. Her cross is of cottonwood, and was made for her by her brother. She now wears the white veil of a novice; white also has the Native symbolism of learning.

In all her efforts, Novice Clissene embodies the Ft. McDowell motto: **"Never give up. Always give back."**

**PRAYERS:** No details, but I just received a note from Tucson Oblate **Frank Frisina:** *"Still in Houston, TX for cancer treatment....I would appreciate a prayer or two from you for my guidance and recovery miracles."*

**TUCSON: Next meeting Sunday, February 19, 2:00-3:30 p.m. - doors open at 1:15**

**Candidates class 1:30. Bette Dickinson will lead the sharing on Prayer - folder, page 14.**

**Rev. Greg Foraker**, from St. Philip's Church, will be with us to share from his years of experience with ecumenism. His topic is **"Building Community in an Interfaith World."** By way of preparation, he encourages participants to explore the websites of the ecumenical and interfaith work of their own tradition at either the local, national or international level and

try to discover something that is happening that they did not know. For example, Roman Catholics can explore <http://www.usccb.org/about/ecumenical-and-interreligious-affairs/>. Some will remember that he was with us a few years ago when we were studying the subject of hospitality in depth. I suggest that you also re-read Chapter 53 of the Rule: *On the Reception of Guests*, asking why it is, that for many decades important ecumenical meetings have taken place at monasteries following the Rule of Benedict. And why do Benedictine Oblates come from such a variety of denominations?

**PRESCOTT: Next meeting Sunday, February 19, 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.** in the St. Anthony Claret Room, Sacred Heart Church

*Shirley Maday writes:* At our January 15 meeting, the Prescott Chapter reflected on the Introduction and first unit of Joan Chittister's book, *The Monastery of the Heart*. There was discussion on how to use this guide following the Rule of Benedict as a new way to live a meaningful spiritual life in the center of the world today. The study will continue at our February 19 meeting. Lesson: *The Monastery of the Heart*, "Our Interior Life," pp. 33-57.

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

**PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, Saturday, February 11, 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 will be studying the Prologue of the Holy Rule this year so in January we started devouring it line by line. The Prologue is 50 versus long and covers just 4½ pages in the *Holy Rule of St. Benedict in English*. Are you wondering why we will take so long to study it? The Prologue is described by Brother Leo as "the most tender and loving of beginnings." Come and join us and learn why a book was written by Fr. Casey on just those 50 versus and why so many other great writers describe its importance. 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](mailto:Benedictine@cox.net).

**PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: Next meeting, Saturday, February 25**

*Nancy Kaib writes:* The East Valley Benedictine Oblates met on Saturday, January 28. We viewed a DVD on the history of monasticism produced by the Great Courses and called "The Catholic Church: A History" by Professor William R. Cook. It was excellent and gave a good overview of how and why monasticism began. There are other lessons on the subject that we will view at upcoming meetings. At our February meeting we will begin our study of the Prologue of St. Benedict's Rule.

For more information contact Nancy Kaib: 480-883-8025

Saint Gregory tells the charming story of the last meeting of the two saints on earth. Scholastica and Benedict had spent the day in the "mutual comfort of heavenly talk" and with nightfall approaching, Benedict prepared to leave. Scholastica, having a presentiment that it would be their last opportunity to see each other alive, asked him to spend the evening in conversation. Benedict sternly refused because he did not wish to break his own rule by spending a night away from Monte Cassino. Thereupon, Scholastica cried openly, laid her head upon the table, and prayed that God would intercede for her. As she did so, a sudden storm arose. The violent rain and hail came in such a torrential downpour that Benedict and his companions were unable to depart.

"May Almighty God forgive you, sister" said Benedict, "for what you have done."

"I asked a favor of you," Scholastica replied simply, "and you refused it. I asked it of God, and He has granted it!"

**Wishing you many blessings for her feast and for the coming season of Lent, Sr. Lenora OSB**



Art from "Our Father Benedict" by M. Regina Goberna, OSB, 1983, used with permission of the author.