



# Tucson Oblate Newsletter

## February, 2013

**January 20** was a day to remember. On that day new candidates were enrolled from all four of our Oblate deaneries, plus five oblations and one transfer were received. Bill Lutz was enrolled as a candidate in Prescott. In Tucson, new candidates were Debbie Zimmer from Phoenix East Valley; Lisa Hughes and Christina DuBois from Phoenix Central; and Barbara Isaacson, Kellyanne Hale, and Mayola McCrary from Tucson. Those making Oblation were James Young from East Valley; and Maureen O'Malley, Amy Cormode, Chris Asaro, and Lance Waring from Tucson. Rachel Chowniec, now living in Albuquerque, NM, transferred her stability from New Jersey to the Tucson monastery Oblates.

At this January Renewal Day, **Mary Sheridan** gave a masterful presentation tying together the fall theme of "Compassion" with the spring theme of "Benedictine Heritage." Working with the steps of compassion as defined in Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, Mary showed how sections of the Rule of Benedict correspond. Although the emphasis of the two books is different, in part because they were written more than 1500 years apart, Benedict includes compassion in the way he organizes the monastery's daily life—in the care of the vulnerable, and in the role of the superior. Many thanks, Mary!

**The steps of compassion, along with some of their similarities to the Rule, are as follows:**

1. Learn about compassion  
*In the Prologue, Benedict talks about the monastery as a "school for the Lord's service"*
2. Look at your own world [to see what is going on from an outsider's perspective]  
*Through hospitality, the monastery gets to know the situation of travelers and the poor*
3. [Have] compassion for yourself  
*Benedict's "school," and climbing the steps of humility, should not be too "harsh or burdensome," and will lead us to love*
4. [Have] empathy [for others]  
*Benedict gives an example of empathy in ordering the daily schedule, food, care of the sick/aged/young, etc.*
5. [Practice] mindfulness [to learn more about your own feelings and behaviors]  
*In Ch. 19, we are to say the office with "mind-fulness"*
6. [Take] action [to treat others as you want to be treated]  
*The superior is to "adapt to a variety of characters."  
The Golden Rule is included in the "Instruments of Good Works."*

7. [Recognize] how little we know  
*The steps of humility*
8. [Speak compassionately to others, searching together for the truth]  
*The 11th degree of humility: "when a monk speaks he does so gently . . . , humbly and seriously, in few and sensible words"*
9. [Have] concern for everybody [globally]  
*Monasteries were lodging places for travelers, and the first hospitals*
10. [Learn more about other nations, cultures, and traditions. Don't automatically defend "our side"]  
*Ch. 69: Monks are not to defend one another*
11. [See how God manifests in our lives. Practice hospitality.]  
*Recognizing Christ in the visitor.*
12. Love your enemies.  
*The Golden Rule in the Instruments of Good Works.*

***Both those who were present for the day and those who were not might find it fruitful to reflect on some of those comparisons.***

After the Oblate rituals in Chapel at the monastic community's Midday Prayer, more than fifty Oblates and their guests, including many from Phoenix, enjoyed a good meal and fellowship. In the afternoon, those in attendance completed questionnaires about self-compassion and compassion for others. After assessing their own attitudes, they discussed the results with tablemates.

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### **PRAYERS:**

Please keep Tucson Oblate **Libby Grabert** in your prayers as she recovers from cancer surgery on her foot.

Sr. Joan Therese and I represented the Oblates at the funeral for Tucson Oblate **Kathlyn Holt**, who died Christmas Day. Please keep her husband, Oblate **Don Holt** in prayer.

**TUCSON: Next meeting Sunday, February 17 at 2:00 p.m. - Doors open at 1:15**

**Candidates and inquirers meet upstairs in the PRAYER ROOM at 1:30 promptly.** Bette Dickinson will lead a discussion of prayer in the life of an Oblate, and the Liturgy of the Hours. The assignment for the February meeting is to read from "A Life-giving Way": Ch. 19-20, on the Office and Reverence at Prayer.

For this last part of the Oblate year we will study **OUR BENEDICTINE HERITAGE**. As a resource, we will be using several DVDs from "The Great Courses." Some of these DVDs were used with appreciation by our Phoenix Oblates, and we purchased the entire set of 36 half-hour DVDs from a donation made for our library by the East Valley Oblate who had shared his DVDs with them. The course is entitled *The Catholic Church: A History*. We will use only the disks relative to monasticism, and allow time for group reflection on the matter presented.

The period of history we will consider during these months is long before the Protestant Reformation, so is a major part of the history of all those who follow Christ. (It took a while for me to realize in my Protestant days that there were 1500 years of Christian history *before* the Reformation!) The whole course is devoted both to continuity and change, and the DVD we will watch is *Monasticism--Benedict and His Rule*. Professor William Cook is a dedicated historian who covers a great deal of history with unflagging enthusiasm.

I asked Mary Sheridan to watch the DVD, and she came up with the following reflection questions which will be used in small groups after the lecture. They may give you a preview of the presentation, and something to think about in advance.

1. Dr. Cook says that there has been a "monastic impulse" throughout the history of Christianity. What do you see as the origins of your own "monastic impulse"?
2. Dr. Cook suggests that, to many people, monasticism doesn't make sense, or seems like a left-over from another era. How would you respond to this? Are there parts of the Rule that seem outdated to you? (Can your fellow group members offer any modern interpretations that might help?)
3. Does the idea of monastic observance as a "daily martyrdom" appeal to you? Why or why not?
4. Benedict describes monks as pilgrims, students, laborers, soldiers, and athletes. Which of these metaphors comes closest to your own view of monasticism? Is there another metaphor that expresses your view better?
5. A strong abbot, alternation of prayer and work, and lack of private ownership (leaving behind the social structure of the "world") are identified as major principles of Benedictine monasticism. How can oblates translate these into their daily lives? Are there other principles that you would identify as more key to the Rule?

**PRESCOTT:** Next meeting is Sunday, February 17, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m., in the St. Anthony Claret Room.

The January 19 meeting included viewing the video, "Vision," about the life of St. Hildegard. At the February meeting we begin our study of Karen Armstrong's

book, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. Please read pages 3-24 in preparation.

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

**PHOENIX CENTRAL:** Next meeting, Saturday, February 9, 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.

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

**PHOENIX EAST VALLEY:** (sorry, no time to get news from here!)

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

**REMINDER: February 10, a Sunday, is the feast of St. Scholastica, St. Benedict's twin sister. Here at the monastery it will be celebrated as a solemnity, and you are welcome to join us in person or in spirit at the 9:00 a.m. Mass and/or 8:00 a.m. Lauds and 6:00 p.m. Vespers.**

## LIBRARY CORNER

Thanks to everyone who participated in our book sale. Most of the books available were sold, and the money received will go to support the Oblate program as well as new books.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg**, Oblate Director for the Congregation as a whole, has expanded online offerings on the Congregation's oblate site, [www.benedictineoblate.com](http://www.benedictineoblate.com). The site includes 12 video presentations on "Prayer in the Rule of Benedict," as well as a members-only forum.

If you would like to receive a **daily selection from the Rule of Benedict** via email, go to <http://www.osb.org/rb/show.asp?mode=today>. Enter your email address in the box. You will then receive a daily message telling you that the page you are monitoring (i.e., the daily reading page) has changed (because it's a new day), and containing a link to that day's reading.

*I have run out of space, so will simply wish you a truly renewing Lenten season, as we "look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing" (Chapter 49 of the Rule).*

*Love and prayers,  
Sr. Lenora, OSB*

**Benedictine Monastery** ♦ 800 N. Country Club Rd. ♦ Tucson, AZ, 85716-4583 ♦ (520) 325-6401 ♦ email: [lenora@bspa.us](mailto:lenora@bspa.us) or [benpubctr@bspa.tuccoxmail.com](mailto:benpubctr@bspa.tuccoxmail.com) ♦ <http://www.tucsonmonastery.com> ♦ **Please note email addresses**