



Tucson Oblate Newsletter

February 2014

"Sister, what have you done!" According to St. Gregory, the source for most of the stories we have about Benedict, these were St. Benedict's indignant words reproaching his twin sister, Scholastica, whose feast we celebrate on February 10. Most of you know the story, but in case some don't, Benedict and Scholastica, late in their lives, were meeting for their annual visit. They met at a place between the two monasteries, and as night approached Scholastica begged her brother to stay and continue their holy conversation. Benedict insisted that his Rule obliged him to return to his monastery, so Scholastica bowed her head and prayed. God answered her prayer by sending a severe storm that prevented Benedict from leaving, so they spoke together all evening.

Whatever the actual details of that meeting may have been, what is important are the lessons the story teaches. With typical Roman stress on the letter of the law, Benedict invoked his own Rule to refuse Scholastica's earnest plea. Scholastica responded from her heart, trusting in God to grant her desire, though Benedict refused her. The contrast between the letter of a Rule written by human hands, and the law of love written on the heart by God is obvious, as are the differences between the masculine and feminine approaches. It is all too easy to get stuck in the letter of almost any law and neglect a higher law, which calls for more reflection, and more openness to a new interpretation.

An Invitation to All Tucson Oblates

You are most welcome to join with the monastic community in celebrating the **Feast of Saint Scholastica**. The schedule is: **8:00 a.m. Lauds**
9:00 a.m. Eucharist, Fr. Chris Corbally, SJ as presider. **Your Oblate Director will celebrate 60 years of monastic profession and renew her vows during this celebration.** (This is a simple celebration, not like the 50th anniversary, which was a much "bigger" event)

Oblates, candidates and inquirers who are present at this 60th anniversary Mass are invited to remain afterwards for light refreshments in the monastic refectory. If you plan to stay, please remain in your pews until others have left after Mass, and you will then be ushered to the refectory. Please let us know if you do plan to stay, (email, or phone 325-6401) so we have an idea how many are coming,

5:30 p.m. Vespers

At our January Renewal Day, Mike Schroeder gave an excellent presentation on the World Oblate Congress in Rome, where he represented us. An Oblate since 2006, and in his first year of Deaconate studies, Mike

brought greetings and blessings from other attendees and from the Abbot Primate Notker Wolf. He also said that he had taken all our prayer requests with him to the holy sites he visited in Rome.

Having never been outside of the U.S. before, Mike felt both overwhelmed by, and enthusiastic about all that Rome and the Congress offered. The Congress included liturgy, formal presentations, and field trips to Benedictine sites such as Monte Cassino and Subiaco. Mike showed pictures of all of these.

Mike focused on two of the talks at the Congress, one by Sr. M. John Mananzan, a prioress and activist from the Philippines, and one by Fr. Michael Casey, a Cistercian monk and author from Australia. Both talks carried the title of "Obsculta—The Oblate Listening in the World," but the presenters had very different suggestions for Oblate listening.

Mike described Sr. M. John's presentation as very powerful and inspiring. She spoke of listening to God in many ways—in our hearts, in Scripture, in creation, and in the people around us. She pointed out that we can't talk or inspire change unless we have listened first. To listen to God in prayer, we must seek silence and solitude. These can be hard to find in today's world, but they are essential if we are to be present to God.

If we listen to "the voices of the people of God and the cry of the poor," we may achieve "conversion that leads to action." The voices of the oppressed include those of women, indigenous people, cultural minorities, the old, the physically challenged, and the ostracized. When we have heard them with "the ear of the heart," we must ask ourselves what we are going to do as Oblates to address these issues. Some will pray. Others will study the issues. Others will be able to do one small thing a day, leading to "small, continuous improvements," "one day at a time." Our call, Sr. M. John said, is always to be aware of the world's problems. Prayer, she said, is key. When we have a question, change starts with our asking in prayer what God wants us to do. See: <http://www.benedictine-oblates.org/2013/txt/txt-02-en.pdf> for full text.

In his presentation, Fr. Casey said that "the Word became flesh at one time and one place, but also the Word became text." This is one reason that *Lectio Divina* is so important. In *Lectio*, the text moves our emotions, enlightens our minds, and empowers us to say "yes" to God. It strengthens our faith to carry God out to others in the world, and increases our perseverance in faith. *Lectio* is "transactional," a "contact sport" that prolongs the Word proclaimed in liturgy. The Rule of Benedict alludes to it in references to listening. Its goal is not *information*, but reformation and conformation to Christ. To help us under-

stand *Lectio* better, Mike led us in a brief experience of it. He read part of Ps. 85 four times, with silence between each reading, and asked us to "go deeper" with a phrase at each reading. See <http://www.benedictine-oblates.org/2013/txt/txt-03-en.pdf> for full text.

We are very grateful to Mike for the effort he put into his presentation, the souvenirs he shared, and for coming down from Chandler very early in the morning--he arrived at the monastery at 7:30 a.m.!

NEW CANDIDATES AND OBLATES:

At midday prayer with the monastic community we received the following:

Candidates:

Tucson - **Beverly Gonda** and **Fr. Pete Forbes**

Phoenix - **Michele Headrick**

Oblates:

Tucson - **Kellyanne Hale, Kitty Tobin,**

Mayola McCrary, and Barbara Isaacson

Phoenix: **Lisa Hughes and Christine DeBois**

TUCSON: Next meeting **Sunday, February 16, 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. Bette Dickinson will lead the sharing on Psalmody, Reverence at Prayer and Lent. In preparation, read Chapters 19-20 and Chapter 49 of the Rule.

1. What questions/comments do you have from last time, or from your reading?
2. Questions for Discussion:
 - a. What is the importance of prayer in the life of the monastery? In the life of an Oblate?
 - b. Have you had experience praying the office? Praying with psalms? What benefits and challenges did you encounter? How would you apply to daily life the Benedictine motto, "Nothing should be preferred to the Work of God"?

2:00: Tucson Oblates **Nancy and George Mairs** will share their insights and experience with various aspects of *Lectio Divina* and how it affects their lives.

GROUP LECTIO DIVINA INVITATION:

A small group has been meeting weekly on Saturday mornings for about ten years, but attendance has dropped off considerably. **We will try meeting monthly now, 10:00 a.m. on the first Saturday of every month,** to see if there may be new interest in participating. Anyone is welcome, and various members take turns choosing a reading (Scripture or other source) and leading the meeting. Gatherings are in the prayer room--first door to the right after you enter the Chapel. There will be a sign on the door.

PRESCOTT: Next meeting **Sunday, February 16, 1:30-3:30 p.m.**

Shirley Maday writes: We shared on Karen Armstrong's Ninth Step - *Concern for Everyone*, and noted that we should get to know one another and cultivate a concern and responsibility for *all* our neighbors in the global village. The media should report conflicts in other regions objectively and explain their background. Respect for others is needed for a peaceful global society. The reading assignment for the next meeting is Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, the Tenth Step: "Knowledge," pp. 156-163.

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

PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, **Saturday, February 8, 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: The January meeting in Tucson was wonderful. We enjoyed Mike's Rome presentation and then were blessed by the oblation of Lisa and Christina and the enrollment of Michele. Blessings were felt by all. We look forward to our new study on Benedictine saints in 2014. 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

PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: *Nancy did not mention the date of the next meeting, but presumably it is as usual*

Nancy Kaib writes: The East Valley Oblates began their study of Benedictine humility, using the book by Michael Casey, *Living in the Truth*. We began our study, as suggested by Michael Casey, by discussing what the word "humility" means to us. Father Casey sees that approach as necessary due to our 21st. Century definition of the word likely being different from how St. Benedict's time defined the word. We talked about some of the attitudes towards humility that most of us see as unhealthy, such as being totally passive, accepting humiliation, or being a "door mat" to others. We are looking forward to a lively and very insightful study in the months to come.

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

LIBRARY CORNER

Thanks to Amber St. John for the very generous gift of a full 7-volume set of Merton's Journals. We have also have a biography of Pope John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*, and a copy of Pope Francis' *Gaudium Evangelii: The Joy of the Gospel*. This latter is widely acclaimed by people of many faiths.

Love and Blessings,

Sr. Lenora, OSB