



Tucson Oblate Newsletter

February 2015

It hardly seems possible that Lent is just around the corner, so I'll remind everyone that the feast of St. Scholastica, Tuesday, February 10, comes first. Benedictine women observe the Feast with special solemnity, and in the spirit of holy rivalry, we rejoice that the wishes of her twin brother, St. Benedict, were overcome by her prayers in the often-told story of their meeting on a stormy night. He was determined to return to his monastery because his Rule obliged him to do so. However, his sister's prayers that he remain to spend the night in holy conversation-- their last sharing before her death--were more powerful. He was forced by a sudden violent storm to remain.

Those not familiar with the story should look it up when they have a chance. Anyone who would like to join in our community celebration, is welcome at the 9:00 a.m. Mass on February 10 and/or Vespers at 5:30 p.m.

In regard to Lent, all of us would do well to prayerfully read chapter 49 of the Rule of Benedict. Lest Lent be considered only in terms of penance and long faces, keep in mind the words: (vss. 5-6) "During these days, therefore, we will add to the usual measure of our service something by way of private prayer and abstinence from food or drink, so that each of us will have something above the assigned measure to offer God of his own will *with the joy of the Holy Spirit*" (1 Thess 1-6).

Our Sr. Gladys Noreen was the welcome presenter at Tucson's renewal day, January 18, and thanks to Mary Sheridan and Isabel Delgado, we have the following notes to share.

During the morning, we were treated to a talk by Sr. Gladys Noreen on the Rule of Benedict and Scripture. She began by pointing out that when Benedict wrote the Rule, people were immersed in Scripture. They knew it well, often having memorized it, and so they were fully aware of the many Scripture references Benedict incorporated. In fact, it is likely that they knew the context of these Scripture references, not only the phrase or sentence itself, but what came before and after.

Sr. Gladys began by looking at the Prologue (using the RB 1980 translation): "Listen carefully to the instructions of the master." There is a similar phrase in Proverbs: "My child, listen attentively to my word." So we should look at Benedict's sentence as incorporating both careful listening and attentive listening. Putting together such similar passages gives a broader dimension from the very beginning of the Rule. This approach can be used throughout. For example, Prologue verse 3 speaks of the "weapons of obedience," and can be compared to Ephesians, which says, "Draw your strength from God and put on the armor of God so you can stand against the devil."

Regarding obedience, Sr. Gladys spoke of the phrase in Ephesians, "obedience from the heart." In verse 21 of the Prologue, Benedict also says, "with the Gospel for your guide." Obedience for the sake of obedience, Sr. Gladys said, is not enough. Nor is

obedience from fear, which demonstrates a failure to understand that God is love. There must be a right motivation for obedience, along with a belief that God is leading us. One cannot be obedient without faith and knowledge of God's love. Benedict speaks here about living from the heart. One listens first, then makes the decision to obey.

Sr. Gladys suggested that, when reading the Rule, we should use a method similar to *lectio*. When we come to a significant word, stop and look for Scripture references and associations, and what comes before and after. This will help the Rule come alive for us. "There is so much more in the Rule," she said, "than just the verse."

Sr. Gladys said that God is always just and merciful, but does not necessarily explain Godself to us. This is clearest in the Book of Job. When we are going through painful times, God will only say, "I love you." We will likely not know the reason that bad things happen until we are in eternity. We can only trust that someday we will understand why it was necessary, and pray for the strength to bear it. But that is all we will get. The most important thing is that God loves us--no matter what happens. God's love is the basis of life, and the purpose of the Rule is to draw us closer to that love. Sr. Gladys encouraged us to read Scripture: "The word is living and can bring you great blessings."

In the afternoon, Sister Gladys continued to speak from her personal reflections on the Rule of St. Benedict, accompanied by Sacred Scripture, rather than from books or articles. Continuing with the Prologue from the Rule, she took sections and then turned to the appropriate Scripture passage to give fuller meaning to the text. The Rule of Benedict becomes richer as we see St. Benedict quoting from Scripture. In her reflections, Sister Gladys looks at the Scripture passages before and after the ones quoted by St. Benedict, giving the text of the Rule even more richness and food for reflection. Throughout the talk she paused to ask all those present if what she was saying made sense, and invited everyone to share their own thoughts.

Sister Gladys reflected on the last verses of the Prologue where St. Benedict urges each person to translate into action the holy teachings, and run to do what will profit us forever, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ. One Oblate commented that St. Benedict did not say walk or stroll or meander but "run" into action. Another shared that the reflections on the Prologue had taken her from an enclosed room into a meadow. Sister Gladys clearly showed the vast opportunities for reflection contained in the Rule of Benedict.

Sister Gladys ended the afternoon session urging everyone to read and meditate on the Scriptures along with the Rule. The Old Testament is her great love but each of us can choose the parts of Scripture we love and meditate on a few verses at a time each

day. Everyone applauded with approval when Sister Lenora asked Sr. Gladys to return and continue her reflections at the February Oblate meeting.

We were delighted to have a large delegation of Oblates from Phoenix, including Michele Headrick, who made her Oblation along with Tucson's Beverly Gonda. Four Tucson inquirers were enrolled as candidates: Ellen Duax, William Joseph, James Lundberg and Holiday Woodward. Phoenix Oblates, please come again any time! You are always welcome.

NEW! Bible Study group starts February 12.

At the request of several Oblates, Sr. Gladys is offering to lead a Bible Study group that will meet the 2nd Thursday of each month, starting February 12, at 3:30 p.m. Come to the front door of the monastery, and bring your Bible with you. Sister said that three women approached her at the meeting and asked for this, but she does not know their names. Could you please identify yourselves? You can call the monastery (325-6401) or send an email to Sr. Gladys: gladys@bspa.us. Anyone is welcome. If you are interested, you might call first or email so we have some idea of how many are coming.

PRAYERS: Several Oblates are facing health problems and I'm sure prayers would be appreciated: **Deacon William Martin**, who has resigned from his ministry in the Episcopal church because of health issues; **Jessie Zander**, who had a painful fall, but no bones broken; **Dic Ford** who is unable to drive from Green Valley for meetings.

TUCSON: (Watch out--the 3rd Sunday comes early!)

Next meeting Sunday, February 15, 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). Sharon Hammond will lead the group. In preparation for this session, read from the Rule of Benedict: Chapter 7 on Humility

1. What questions/comments do you have from last time, or from your reading?
2. Questions for Discussion:
 - a. What do you understand about humility? Is the metaphor of the ladder meaningful?
 - b. How do you reconcile Benedict's views of being "lower than a worm" with modern understandings of self-esteem?
 - c. How does humility apply in lay life? Is it a help or hindrance? (e.g., self-promotion as a means of getting ahead in the workplace.)

2:00: Sr. Gladys Noreen will follow up on her Renewal Day Presentation by going into more detail about how she studies the Rule herself and coordinates that with Scripture. Please bring your small red paperback copy of the Rule, the one you received

at enrollment, if you still have it. We have ordered another 20 copies so that everyone can be *on the same page* literally. The translation in the Benedictine Handbook is excellent, but does not have verse numbers. If you have your own Handbook, you could write in verse numbers if you wish, but for the purposes of this meeting, bring both the large Handbook and the small paperback edition. You can borrow one of the extras at the meeting, but please do not take it home with you to keep. We will use the large Handbook for Vespers at the end of the meeting.

PRESCOTT: Next meeting Sunday, February 15, 1:30 p.m.

Nancy Hinshaw wrote: Among the guests at our January meeting were Tom and Florence McGuire. Tom was at one time a Maryknoll priest stationed in Hong Kong. Florence was his Canton Chinese language teacher whom he eventually married. Tom was the keynote speaker for our parish morning of renewal on the 17th. They are Benedictine Oblates and are currently established at Holy Trinity Monastery in St. David, AZ.

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

PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, Saturday, February 14, 2015, 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. In January we celebrated the oblation of Michele Headrick and then we attended the presentations given by Sr. Gladys Noreen. Sr. Gladys has a wonderful sense of humor and is quite accomplished so if you have a chance to hear her speak, I would suggest making a trip to Tucson. We are blessed!

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

PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: Next meeting Saturday, February 28.

Nancy Kaib writes: The East Valley Oblates met on January 24. We discussed Chapter 10 of the book, *Living in The Truth*, by Fr. Michael Casey. It is an excellent book on the topic of humility as viewed by a monk who lives under St. Benedict's Rule. It provided us with many good points for discussion and much to contemplate on the subject. Present at our meeting was Heather Erhart. Heather was home for about 2 months before entering her Postulant year in the Benedictines of Jesus Crucified Monastery of the Glorious Cross in Branford, CT. She is very happy to be on her way back to begin her formation as a Benedictine Sister. We wish her every blessing in her new life journey.

At our February 28 meeting we will discuss the final chapter of our book, Chapter 11.

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

*With prayerful wishes that you have a grace-full Lent,
Lenora, OSB*

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