



# Tucson Oblate Newsletter

## January, 2012

**Happy New Year!** Or, if that seems unlikely, how about a HOPEFUL New Year? In the spirit of the Christmas Gospel, we all need to witness to that hope.

Tucson Oblates are looking forward to having our Native American Novice Clissene Lewis share with us in January, and when I asked her for a theme for her presentation, she suggested the following, which I invite all of us to ponder: *"The Heartbeat of Community Is the Spirit of the People."* She followed this with a quotation from Black Elk, of the Oglala Sioux

*"The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us."*

After a breakfast shared by members of the monastic community, **Tucson's Oblate Renewal Day in December** opened with a panel moderated by Oblate Mila Aroskar. She questioned four sisters of the Tucson monastery on the four elements of community (mutuality, equality, direction and counseling, sufficiency and sharing), identified in Chittister's *The Monastery of the Heart*. Sisters Lupita Barajas, Dolores Dowling, Kathleen Gorman, and Kathleen Claire Lahl participated.

***"What does the listening heart mean to you?"***

The sisters agreed that listening is vital for relationships with other people and with God, but is often neglected. Listening is important for community living; in meetings, for example, one really has to listen to others, and be willing to give up one's own opinion. Listening also includes paying attention to nonverbal behaviors, and keeping quiet so as not to interfere with what God might be doing in the life of someone else.

***"How have you experienced conflict and its resolution in the monastery?"***

Conflict most often arises around elements of the spiritual life. In the past, some of these conflicts have required the congregation to seek outside help to understand the issues and communicate better. Conflict also arises from the inevitable mixture of personality styles and backgrounds. Being open to others, respecting them, understanding oneself, prayer, forgiving and forgetting, are all helpful in resolving conflict in a caring way.

***"How have you learned to see God in everyone?"***

Again, patience, self-awareness, and acceptance of others were mentioned. It is helpful to remember that

each sister was called by God, and is trying her best. We are called to accept others as God accepts us.

***"What examples have you seen of outstanding leadership and followership?"***

Good leaders are able to encourage and support, and also address what needs to be addressed. They set a good example, are objective, are wise, and have a sense of humor. Good followers accept decisions even if they disagree. They see what needs to be done, and do it without being asked. Because of good leadership and followership, the community has accomplished a great deal, and so enabled its members to have the peace and silence they need.

***"How does the community live out sufficiency and draw the balance among sufficiency, overconsumption, and frugality?"***

This is not so different from the kind of discernment a family needs to do. The community helps its members separate wants from needs, but also must provide compassionately for the varying physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of its members. Sharing, fixing rather than replacing, good maintenance, and not getting the latest upgrades are ways this works out in practice.

***"How can Oblates support the monastic community?"***

The sisters were united in feeling that Oblates are a blessing to the community, helping them to keep in touch with the world outside the Monastery. The Oblates are a spiritual support, and some also volunteer their services. The value that Oblates place on monasticism is an encouragement to the community, and may also eventually be a source of vocations.

**New candidates and oblation:** As part of Midday Prayer, sung with the community in Chapel, Diane Geitenbeek from the East Valley group, along with Maureen O'Malley, Christina Asaro, and Lance and Helen Waring of Tucson were enrolled as Oblate candidates. Joe Allen of the Tucson Chapter made his oblation.

After lunch together, the Oblates divided into small groups, discussing practical ways that Chittister's elements of community could be put into action. Suggestions included:

***Mutuality:***

"If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything." Look for the positive. Don't gossip. Send clear messages. Encourage others to share their thoughts, feelings, and vulnerabilities, and share your own. Reach out to others—greet them, smile at them, ask someone to

dance. The Father, Son, and Spirit are constantly sharing among themselves. Engage in "Trinity living." Nurture a few new relationships.

**Equality:**

Don't be status-conscious. Be other-oriented. Know your own strengths and weaknesses. Show respect for others; see God in others and in everything. Recognize that God loves everyone as much as God loves you. Think of the person you love the least; that's how much you love God. Develop understanding, acceptance, and methods of resolving conflict. Give up personal preferences and stubbornness. Listen to others. Don't be thinking of your reply before the other has finished speaking.

**Direction and Counsel:**

Use indirect styles of sharing orders or advice. Be willing to lead when you are qualified and available. Remember that a good leader has a "heart" for others, and makes sure that others are successful. Encourage the skills of others in the group. Set formal and regular times for meetings, so that concerns get addressed. Remember that the good of the group or family is more important than individual wants and ideas. Understand that others also have the group's welfare in mind; Make greater effort to attend oblate meetings.

**Sufficiency and Sharing:**

Try for the "middle way," not austere and not indulgent. Don't always "need" the latest upgrades. Know what is enough, and that this differs at different ages. When offered more than that, learn to say no. Give away what you don't need. Look for the reasons you hold onto your possessions. Count your blessings.

**PRAYERS** and sympathy go to Prescott Dean Nancy Hinshaw, in the loss of her dear father on December 18.

**Tucson:** Next meeting Sunday, January 15

For the Candidate Class, Lance Dickinson will lead the sharing on **Obedience**, pg. 11 in folder.

(WATCH OUT! That's *early* in the month) 2:00 p.m. (Doors open at 1:15, and candidate class is at 1:30)

Please be here promptly for the presentation by Novice Clissene Lewis. See the first part of this letter.

**Prescott:** Next meeting Sunday, January 15, 1:30-3:30 p.m. in the St. Anthony Claret Room. Lesson: *The Monastery of the Heart*, Introduction, Our Search unit through page 30.

After a potluck lunch the group shared on the last chapter from *St. Benedict's Toolbox*, "Living in the Present Moment." We reflected that we must accept where God has placed us in self-surrender, trust, and

faith, and offer no resistance to life. "To find the Divine Purpose, we are to love God in the present moment."

**Bob Nelson** was enrolled as an Oblate candidate, and members renewed their Oblation.

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

**Phoenix Central:** Next meeting, Saturday, January 14, 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:* The December meeting was full of great food and Benedictine community during our annual joint meeting with the Phoenix East Valley group. Sr. Sarah O'Malley, OSB, MA joined us for hospitality and gave a talk with some handouts and sharing. 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, January 28 at St. Andrew the Apostle Church.

*Nancy Kaib writes:* The East Valley Oblates had their annual joint meeting with the Phoenix Central Oblates on December 10. We like this time to reconnect to our other Phoenix Oblates. At our next meeting we will view a video presenting some of the history of Monasticism.

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



*As my New Year's wish* I offer these lines from my favorite poem, T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, (East Coker V). After reminding us that "For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business," Eliot challenges us to be *explorers* and writes

**"We must be still and still moving  
Into another intensity  
For a further union, a deeper communion . . .  
In my end is my beginning."**

*Love and prayers, Lenora, OSB*

**An Invitation to all Oblates**  
Sunday, January 8, at 6:00 p.m., ALL Oblates are invited to our annual Epiphany celebration for our friends and benefactors. Join us at Second Vespers of the *Feast of the Epiphany*, and a reception afterward in the Assembly Room. There is usually a big crowd, so you might want to arrive early, in order to find parking.