



Tucson Oblate Newsletter July, 2014



Special midsummer greetings for the **Feast of St. Benedict July 11!** As Sr. Verna Holyhead observes in *The Gift of Saint Benedict*, our holy founder lived in a time not unlike our own. There were wars, a collapsing empire, “and social and economic insecurity which widened the gap between rich and poor. Within the Church there was turmoil and controversy about faith issues. . . Benedict chose a middle way, a lifestyle in which he tried to hold in dynamic balance both individual differences and commitment to community, work and prayer, nature and grace.”

The main purpose of this letter is to alert Oblates living in the Tucson area to our summer gathering at 12:30 Sunday, July 13. This is the closest date to the Feast that we and the monastic community schedule could agree on. This will not be a regular meeting, but it is in response to a request by some of the Oblates in Tucson that we do something together in the summer. Since we all eat, a leisurely potluck meal will be the one thing we are planning for sure. Who knows what else may turn up? Come and be surprised! We will try to start around 12:30, but realize some may be delayed by Church services. Come anyway, even if a little late. We need to know how many to plan for, so please RSVP by the end of June. The monastery will provide coffee, water, and juice, and we will count on those present to provide the rest. If you are going to be present, would you please mention in your reply what you plan to bring? (just so we don't end up with everyone bringing dessert!).

Anyone who is able to do so is welcome to join the monastic community in celebrating the Feast at the Saturday morning Mass, July 11, or Vespers Friday or Saturday evening. Check later with the monastery for times: 325-6401.

At the May renewal day we welcomed two new Oblate candidates: **Sylvia Aguayo** and **Paul Mather** from Tucson. We received the Oblation of three candidates: **Isabel Delgado** from Tucson; **Debbie Zimmer** and **Theresa Angel** from Phoenix East Valley.

Since we are sending out a newsletter, **Mary Sheridan** is contributing here a summary of the fine presentation she gave at the May renewal day. She presented on “**Balance in the Rule of St. Benedict.**” Mary began by saying that she thought balance was mostly about time management. In her preparation for this presentation, she found that it encompassed much more.

Balance is one of the characteristics of the Rule that, commentators note, has allowed it to remain a living document for more than 1500 years. Although writers on Benedictine balance usually cite Chapter 39, “The Proper Amount of Food,” and Ch. 40, “The Proper Amount of Drink,” balance is found throughout the Rule. For example, Benedict prescribes discipline, but also mercy. Both individual and group needs are met in the Rule. A middle way must be found between too little and too much. The Abbot holds authority, but also must be a servant leader. There is room for liturgical and private prayer, and the life is one of prayer, work, and leisure. The daily schedule changes with the changing seasons. Monks are to separate themselves from the “world,” but still offer hospitality. They are to embrace stability, but also *conversatio*.

As Joan Chittister says, “The Rule of Benedict is full of rules that are never kept, always shifting, forever being stretched.” The underlying message, is a life of moderation, of avoiding extremes wherever they appear. This sounds easier than it is, but it is vital if we are to persevere.

The goal of monastic life, Oblate life, Christian life, is not to give as much time and effort as possible to God. God is the giver of all our time and energy, and all of it belongs to God, to be used as we believe God wants us to use it. In our allocation, we must balance God, neighbor, and self, unifying all things in Christ. Having a “theme” and a guide for our lives, such as the Rule of Benedict, can make this task easier.



In her afternoon presentation, Mary used the image of the seesaw to talk about some of the practical elements of balance in our lives. These include:

1. Without balance on the seesaw, no one has a good time.
2. The strong ought to lift the weak.
3. Keeping balance requires flexibility and avoidance of extremes.
4. Avoid “all or nothing” thinking.
5. The balance point is not always in the middle. One can’t simply “average” two extremes. Discernment and identifying what is essential are required to find the appropriate middle way.
6. Balance must be dynamic, not static. Sometimes one area must take precedence, but equilibrium should be restored when possible.
7. On a seesaw, everybody wins or nobody wins. “Win-win” solutions are an example of balance.
8. Playing on a seesaw is a united function, not separate ups and downs. In the same way, our lives should be a unified whole. Again, the Rule of Benedict can provide a means of unification.

Mary finished by pointing out that life is always more complicated than a presentation like this, but she hoped these principles would provide some guidance.

Some “business” was also taken care of at Renewal Day. This includes:

1. Those present were asked if they would like to add to the meeting the praying of a brief liturgical hour. There was general agreement to do so.

[note from Sr. Lenora: To facilitate this liturgical prayer, we are purchasing additional copies of *The Benedictine Handbook* for use at meetings by those who do not have their own personal copy, which we hope they will bring to meetings each time.]

2. Mary Sheridan will likely be spending the fall teaching English in China. Sr. Joan Therese and Isabel Delgado have volunteered to help with the library. Help is still needed with writing summaries of the meetings for the newsletter.

3. Some Oblates have expressed the desire for mentoring. As a first step, they should approach the person whom they would like for their mentor. If they cannot reach an agreement, Sr. Joan Therese will mentor or will work on finding a match.

4. Oblates were asked to pray for the Sisters’ General Chapter which is going on at this time.

The monastery Chapel, Office, and Gift Shop are closed from June 5 through 20, and will reopen Saturday, June 21.

Hoping that this summer you will experience a renewing BALANCE in your work, prayer and leisure,

**Blessings,
Lenora, OSB**



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