



Tucson Oblate Newsletter

March 2014

Again Lent is coming and St. Benedict asks in Chapter 49 of his Rule 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).” I am not going to repeat all that I have written in the new March/April issue of *Spirit & Life*, but I do want to repeat one theme of it here—that of *giving vs. giving up*.

Many of us have probably thought of Lent in terms of what to “give up.” That may be what we are called to do, but how about considering what to *give*? What can we give to someone else “with the joy of the Holy Spirit”? How about a word of affirmation, a smile, a letter, an email message, a card? Perhaps we are able to help someone in need. If we look for opportunities, surely we will find something, and we can experience joy in the giving. It can be a win-win practice.

Giving may well involve some giving up on our part, but the focus remains on the giving: we give up precious time; we give up centering only on our own needs, in favor of responding to someone else's need; we give our own joy and spread it to another, who may then spread it further. Who knows where this may lead?

Lectio Divina

At Tucson's February meeting Tucson Oblates **Nancy and George Mairs**, were invited to share their experience of *Lectio Divina* with the group of about eight people who meet every other week at their home. *Lectio* is part of worship, and worshipping at home helps them to consecrate their home. George pointed out that their experience, like everyone's, is unique. There are many ways of doing *Lectio*, in groups and individually, and the one that they use is just one method.

George and Nancy had invited two of their group, Katharine Nutt, and Mary Whitehead, both Oblates, to join them in demonstrating their practice, using Mary Oliver's poem, “Mindful.” This poem resonated with many in the larger group, although not with everyone. (Nor will any passage work for everyone.) Scripture, literature, and a variety of other spiritual writings are all useful sources for *Lectio*.

In their demonstration, each of the four members of the group read the poem, with time for meditation and sharing after each reading. In their regular group, the presenters take 5 minutes for meditation after each reading, but because of time constraints they took 2 to 3 minutes for the demonstration

The first reading centered on listening and considering the poem as a whole. In the second reading, the

focus was on a word or phrase from the poem that had meaning to the listener. Each one was to repeat the word or phrase silently, and then share what they had chosen with the group. At this point the sharing was expanded to the entire group. For the third reading, they were asked to think about how their own life was touched by the word or phrase they had selected. For the fourth reading, all were asked to think about a possible direction or “invitation” from their reflection that they could apply to the next few days.

Lectio following this pattern ends with prayer for the person on one's right, and for the entire community. The group that meets at the Mairs home ends with a pot-luck meal. It was particularly interesting to hear the poem read by four different voices, since each one focused on different words and phrases and gave a slightly different interpretation. The openness and sharing of the presenters led to openness in the group as a whole.

TUCSON: Next meeting Sunday, March 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. **Dic Ford** will lead the sharing on Qualifications of the Cellarer, The Reception of Guests, and Assignment of Impossible Tasks. Read Chapters 31, 53, and 68 of the Rule.

1. What questions/comments have you from last time, or from your reading?

2. Questions for discussion:

a. What does hospitality mean in modern life? What are some ways we can be more “hospitable”? How does Benedict build in protections for the monastery as a whole through his regulations about guests? Are there similar protections (“boundaries”) that we need?

b. Benedict talks about caring for all property of the monastery “as the vessels of the altar.” Does this seem appropriate for modern life, when so many things are disposable? How would our lives change if we followed this part of the Rule?

c. What do you think Benedict means in his discussion of how to respond to impossible requests?

2:00: Oblate **Jerry Haas** will share with us on the subject of a book he has co-authored, called *The Cycle of Grace: Living in Sacred Balance*. The book talks about modeling our lives more closely on Jesus' life and find-

ing a rhythm or balanced approach of retreat and engagement with the needs of the world. Jerry is a Methodist minister who served as director of **The Upper Room's* Academy for Spiritual Formation** from 1990–2011, then as spiritual director of The Upper Room and worked with the Interpretation & Development department until his retirement in 2012. He was enrolled in the Tucson Oblates in 1999, but when he moved to Nashville, he made his oblation with Clyde, MO, which was closer than Tucson. He and his wife Donna now live in Green Valley.

In preparation for this meeting all are invited to familiarize themselves with the Gospel of Mark and the parts of St. John's Gospel referring to the seven "I am" sayings of Jesus (John 6:35, 8:12, 10:9, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6, and 15:1) **and his seven Signs:** (John 2:1-11; 4:46-53; 5:1-29; 6:1-14; 6:16-24; 9:1-12; 11:1-44).

* The Upper Room is a global ministry supporting the spiritual formation of Christians seeking to know and experience God more fully.

On **February 10** more than two dozen Oblates joined with the monastic community in celebrating the **Solemnity of St. Scholastica**, which included the 60th anniversary of my monastic profession. The celebration continued with coffee and doughnuts afterward, and it was wonderful to have such a great representation of Oblates. Others who couldn't come sent prayers and good wishes, and I want to thank you all.

PRESCOTT: Next meeting **Sunday, March 16, 1:30-3:30 p.m.** at Sacred Heart Church.

Shirley Maday writes: In the sharing on the Tenth Step - Knowledge - of Karen Armstrong's book, it was noted that during this step, we should cultivate respect for others by taking the time to learn about their cultural, religious and political customs. The author cited a Buddhist poem: "May our loving thoughts fill the whole world, above, below, across—without limit; Our love will know no obstacles—a boundless goodwill toward the whole world, unrestricted, free of hatred or enmity."

After discussion, it was agreed that upon completion of Karen Armstrong's book in April, the group would begin a study of Michael Casey's book, *The Road to Eternal Life—Reflections on the Prologue of Benedict's Rule*.

The Assignment for the next meeting in Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* is "The Eleventh Step: *Recognition*," pages 164-176.

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

PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, **Saturday, March 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: Our meeting in March will include prayers for a handful of our members who are involved in the Nun Run. We have runners and walkers and all are getting ready for a great event. Please join those of us who will be at Mount Claret for prayer and community.

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

PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: Next meeting, **Saturday, March 22** (See note on location change below)

Nancy Kaib writes: On Saturday, February 22, we discussed Chapter 1 and began Chapter 2 of the book by Michael Casey's book, *A Guide to Living in the Truth*. We are finding it a very good vehicle for getting into the topic of humility.

For our **March 22 meeting we decided to attend a "First Annual Day of Prayer" being offered by the Diocese of Phoenix. It will be held at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in downtown Phoenix.** It is an all day event with speakers and lunch. The event is for all lay groups, Oblates, Third Orders, Associates, and Companions.

Our April 26 meeting will our day retreat. It will be held at a home in Chandler where we have held our retreats in years past. There will be more on what is planned later.

Some exciting news concerning two of our Oblates, Heather Erhart and Laurie Zentner: Both of these young women have been discerning entering religious life. Laurie has been accepted by a teaching congregation of Dominican Women, whose motherhouse is in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Heather is hoping to enter a Benedictine Monastic community and asks prayers that our own congregation at Clyde will accept her.

For more information call Nancy Kaib, 480-883-8025 or Frank Young, 480-210-1505.

I wish you many graces as you look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing

RB Chapter 49

Lenora, osb

