



# Tucson Oblate Newsletter

## May, 2012

### May the joy of Jesus Risen continue in your hearts during this Easter season!

This letter comes to you somewhat early, because Saturday, April 28, I leave for our Congregation's General Assembly at the Clyde monastery in Missouri. Please keep us all in prayer during the following week.

*For Tucson's April Oblate meeting, the presenter was Oblate Valarie James, who spoke on: "Strengthening Community: Art and Faith on the Border."*

Valarie began by describing her home: "a few hundred yards from a Border Patrol checkpoint on Arivaca Rd. in Amado." She frequently sees undocumented migrants, and said, "By the time migrants reach my place on the edge of an old cattle ranch 30-40 miles from the border, they have walked for days. Many are on the verge of collapse, completely out of food and water, totally exhausted, and hobbling with blisters. The fact that they still have hope in their hearts never ceases to amaze and humble me. . . . I love that Joan Chittister in her book *The Monastery of the Heart* writes, 'Community enables us to go on when we are tired, to go forward when we are afraid.'" But she also added that, in the desert, one must keep up or be left behind.

This consciousness of the migrants and the number of deaths during migration led her and other artists to create "Las Madres: No Mas Lagrimas" ("The Mothers: No More Tears"), three sculptures created from clothing discarded by migrants in the desert. This became a community project exhibited on the Pima Community College campus—where they were shared by the PCC community. Valarie shared, via a video and a PowerPoint presentation, the creative process and the figures themselves.

Valarie showed pictures of an altar in her studio, surrounded by children's backpacks and by beautiful embroidered cloths ("bordados"), all left behind by migrants. She pointed out that these objects, and photos, letters, documents, etc., are often referred to as "trash." Yet each one tells the story of someone's life, hopes, and desperation. As with the skeletons found in the desert, we often don't know who the people are who left these possessions. We only know that we share with these migrants a common humanity.

Valarie discussed other forms that art by border artists has taken. In 2006, a Lenten vigil was held in downtown Tucson, at which the names of 4000 people who died in the desert were read out, 100 per day over the 40 days, and pinned to ribbons on the El Tiradito shrine. Names have also been inscribed in a book, pictures of the artifacts have been placed in another book, and "milagros" (religious symbols) have been installed on the border fence. The Southside Presbyterian Church commissioned an installation made from casts of shoes. Stones below the installation commemorate the dead.

Valarie talked about finding prayer cards in the desert, especially close to a shrine visited by migrants. She pointed out the importance of Our Lady of Guadalupe—Valarie called her, "The Mother of Migrants"—to these travelers. An exhibit of 24 of the prayer cards is now part of an installation at the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, Sweden, commemorating worldwide movement of economic and political refugees. She finished by discussing . . . *what it means to be an artist in times like these, participating in community works of art, and about art as spiritual activism. The path to a work like Las Madres is about being open to and led by dreams, signs and wonders. It's about allowing Spirit to lead.* Valarie said: "One of my favorite writers is the renowned art critic Suzi Gablik. In her book, *The Reenchantment of Art*, she writes,

*Community requires new modes of relatedness in which the paradigm of social conscience replaces that of individual genius. In the past we have made much of art as a mirror (reflecting the times); we have had art as a hammer (social protest); we have had art as furniture (something to hang on the walls); and we have had art as search for self. There is another kind of art which speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds, art that calls us into relationship. . . art that brings head and heart together in an ethic of care, as part of the healing of the world.*

*The more we are able to share our stories and to reveal the common grace of humanity through Art and Faith, the more our hearts can open in the kind of shared landscape that has the power to transcend temporal and cultural boundaries. Let us never forget that creativity is a radical act.*

**TUCSON: Next meeting Sunday, May 20, Renewal Day** (doors open briefly 7:30 to 7:50 a.m.)

*Those who wish are welcome to participate in our community Eucharist at 9:00 a.m.*

- 10:00** Gathering and breakfast: coffee, fruit and rolls, etc. will be available
- 10:45** Video on **community** as reflected in Jesus' relationship with his disciples, by Scripture scholar Donald Senior, CP.
- 11:30** Those being enrolled as candidates or making oblation, gather on ramp by kitchen for instruction
- 12:00** Midday prayer in chapel, enrollment of new oblate candidates and oblations
- 12:30** Lunch downstairs
- 1:45 pm** (approximately) Presentation by **Teresa Blythe** on Discernment in Community, concluding

*Please note: At this writing I do not have the name of any inquirer who will be at the renewal day, has been to several meetings, and who wants to be enrolled as a candidate. If you are eligible, please contact me SOON, by email or by phone after May 5 and before May 15.*

Candidates **Trudy d'Agostino, Mary Anderson** and **Lee Morrison** are ready for Oblation.

*If you can't come for the whole day, come for as much of it as you can!*

For those who bring food for the renewal day, your contribution counts as your donation. For others, we are grateful for a donation of about \$7.00 to help cover expenses.

**Teresa Blythe** is a full time spiritual director and author of numerous books and articles about spirituality. She graduated from San Francisco Theological Seminary (M.Div. and Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction) in 2000 and has since been serving as a spiritual director and educator for individuals and groups, leading retreats, offering workshops and keynoting conferences on various aspects of contemplative Christian spirituality.

Teresa directs the *Hesychia* School of Spiritual formation, a program for spiritual directors located at the Redemptorist Renewal Center at Picture Rocks. She also works as a vocational discernment facilitator with young adult mission volunteers for the Presbyterian Church (USA) nationally, and *Tucson Borderlands* locally.

**PRESCOTT: Next meeting Sunday, May 20: 1:30-3:30 p.m., St. Anthony Claret Room.**

In the absence of Nancy Hinshaw, Joan Terwilliger led the April meeting. The May 20 meeting will be the last one before summer break. The Lesson will be *The Monastery of the Heart, Our Community*, pages 121-135  
For more information, call Nancy Hinshaw: 928-445-1271.

**PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, Saturday, May 12, 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:* We viewed the video in April called *Monasticism-Benedict and His Rule* and had a great discussion afterwards. Please come and join us as we continue our study of the Prologue. 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, May 26.**

*Nancy Kaib writes:* We will continue our study of the Prologue. Frank will lead the discussion.

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

**REMINDER: The monastery Chapel, Office and Gift shop will be closed April 28 through May 5. They reopen Sunday, May 6.**

**Blessings,  
Lenora, OSB**



**...and have a relaxing and renewing summer!**

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