



Tucson Oblate Newsletter

May 2013

Yes, there is still another week of April left, but all our sisters are gathering at Clyde from April 25 through May 8, so I need to send this early. Please do pray for us as these discussions are important. May we be open to the Spirit and to one another, through whom the Spirit speaks. The Chapel, office, and gift shop will be closed during this time.

At Tucson's April meeting our topic was **mysticism**. Lest anyone think mysticism is reserved to an elite few, "Each and every human being's experience of immense longing for complete happiness contains within itself the seeds of mysticism. Strictly speaking, therefore, **everyone is a least a sleeping, distracted, or repressed mystic**. To deny this experience with one's entire being—not simply with words—is to deny one's deepest self. It is damnation," writes Harvey Egan SJ, in *Karl Rahner: Mystic of Everyday Life*, (1998, pg. 57). According to Rahner, "**The devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic,' one who has experienced 'something,' or he will cease to be anything at all**" (pg. 56).

Egan also comments, "A genuine Christian who lives the mysticism of daily life possesses the bold, but often hidden, confidence that ordinary daily life is the stuff of authentic life and real Christianity. It is instructive to note how often the words 'ordinary,' 'banal [commonplace],' 'humdrum,' 'routine,' and the like show up in Rahner's writings. For him, 'grace has its history in [our] day-to-day existence with its splendors and failures and is actually experienced there' (p. 59). Rahner urges us to look to our everyday lives to find the presence of God's grace, his loving presence."

Mysticism is defined and described in many ways, but *finding God in all things*, which is basic to Jesuit spirituality, resonates with St. Benedict's "*That in all things God may be glorified*," (RB Ch. 57) In Chapter 31 of Benedict's Rule, the exhortation to regard the tools of the monastery as the sacred vessels of the altar definitely has a mystical quality to it.

As the immediate preparation for watching the DVD on **Medieval Mysticism** we considered some of the contemporary understandings of mysticism and mystical experience, particularly the **mysticism of everyday life**. In the DVD Dr. Cook described mysticism as a way of approaching God that seeks some *direct* experience of the divine, rather than primarily knowledge *about* God. While we can read about ecstasies, visions and such

phenomena in the lives of some mystics, these are by no means necessarily present.

The mystical experience in everyday life can be either negative or positive—emptiness or fullness. God can be experienced as either absent or present, and in both cases God truly **is** present. We can talk of the experience of immense longing, the heart restless until it rests in God (St. Augustine). Then there is what Rahner calls the mysticism of joy in the world—experiencing the good and beautiful things of life, because they promise and point to eternal light and everlasting life. This is an Easter faith that finds God in all things.

After watching the DVD, we reflected on several statements regarding mysticism and mystical experience.

TUCSON: Next meeting is our RENEWAL DAY, Sunday, May 19. If you cannot come for the whole day, please come for whatever time you can. The Assembly Room will be open from about 8:35 a.m. to 8:55 a.m. in case you have food to leave downstairs.

9:00 a.m. Any who wish are welcome to join with the monastic community for Mass.
10:00 Light breakfast: Coffee, donuts, bagels, etc., in assembly room; Some of the Sisters will join with us.
10:30 (or as soon as we can start) Sr. Lenora and Mary Sheridan will share reflections on the **Benedictine Legacy** during the day, assisted by visuals that we hope will make it more interesting. Topics will include the monastic influence on history, social welfare, missionary activity, etc.
11:30 Inquirers being enrolled as candidates, and candidates making oblation, meet upstairs with directors. Others have QUIET time for reflection: in chapel, outside, browsing in the library, etc.; some will be setting up for noon meal.
12:00 Midday prayer in Chapel with community, concluding with enrollments and oblations.
12:30 Lunch downstairs: Sandwiches, potluck for salads and dessert
1:30 (approximately) to 2:15, then break for 10 minutes, continuing 2:30-3:15: Monastic influence on culture: art, music, architecture, literature, education, agriculture, animal husbandry, medicine, etc.
3:15 Closing and cleanup.

Since I am writing so early, I do not have a complete list

of those who may be making oblation or becoming candidates in May, and so I am not listing them here.

PRESCOTT: Next meeting Sunday, May 19, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Shirley Maday writes: A \$110.00 check from the Prescott Oblate Chapter will be forwarded to Mike Schroeder, an Oblate from the East Valley, to assist in covering his expenses in attending the World Congress of Oblates in Rome.

There was a sharing on "Look at Your Own World" of Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. In response to the question: "How can you make your family a school for compassion, where children learn the value of treating all others with respect?" members cited the need for parents to model good behavior. While making each member of the family feel valued, children would be expected to observe the parameters set by their parents. The assignment for next month is pages 75-90 of the Armstrong book.

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

PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, Saturday, May 11, 2013, 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 had a wonderful surprise at our April meeting. Brother Michael was visiting Mount Claret and came to our meeting for prayer and study. He did a great deal of sharing which we all enjoyed. We will continue our study of the Prologue of the Holy Rule in May with Christina presenting Chapters 30-31. In June we will put Fr. Casey's book on hold and start a study on Benedictine leadership and management. The "management secrets that have endured for fifteen centuries" apply to business as well as personal management and leadership. Everyone is welcome to come so please join us. 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

PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: Next meeting Saturday, April 27.

Nancy Kaib writes: In March the East Valley Oblates discussed what we might do for the next few months before starting a study of Humility in the Fall. Several ideas were discussed. We have decided to focus

our summer meetings on learning more about some of the female mystics who have affected our spiritual development. We will start with Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen.

At our April meeting we will finish our study of the Prologue as developed by Michael Casey, OCSO.

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

LIBRARY CORNER

We are planning a small book sale at the May Renewal Day. Low prices and good books!

Remember that if you take books out in May, you can keep them without penalty until September.

We have received books from various sources, especially extras from the Monastery's community library. Thanks to Sr. Cecilia Rose for her contributions.

Among the books received:

* A revised copy of Chittister's *In Search of Belief*, and a copy of Chittister's *Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men*.

* *Christian Mysticism East & West: What the Masters Teach Us*, by Maria Jaoudi. Also, *Sayings and Tales of Zen Buddhism: Reflections for Every Day* by William Wray.

* Flora Wuellner's *Forgiveness, the Passionate Journey*, which is based on the Beatitudes.

* John Main's *Word into Silence*. For those not familiar with John Main, he was a Benedictine and a teacher of mantra-based contemplative prayer, especially through the World Community of Christian Meditation (<http://www.wccm.org/>)

* Robin Davis's *Recipe for Joy: A Stepmom's Story of Finding Faith, Following Love, and Feeding a Family*. The chapters in this book are each titled after a course during a meal, and recipes are included.

* Thomas Merton books: *I Have Seen what I was Looking For* (Selected Spiritual Writings), *Follow the Ecstasy: The Hermitage Years* (by John Howard Griffin). In addition, *Compassionate Fire: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Catherine de Hueck Doherty* has returned after a long absence.

Have a renewing summer!

Blessings, Lenora, OSB

"GOD CAN BE FOUND . . . there is a resting place of absolute peace and joy and power and radiance and security. There is a Divine Center into which your life can slip, a new and absolute orientation in God, a Center where you live with Him and out of which you see all of life, through new and radiant vision, tinged with new sorrows and pangs, new joys unspeakable and full of glory." Thomas Kelly, Quaker scholar, philosopher, and mystic, in *A Testament of Devotion*, p. 118.