



The

Benedictine Oblate Letter

December, 2014

Dear Oblates and Friends,

I wish you all a blessed Advent and a very merry Christmas.

One of our oblates, commenting on the Year for Consecrated Life, wrote recently: “I think all baptized persons are (or should be) living consecrated lives.” My first response was, “Right! That would make a good oblate letter.” Baptism does consecrate our lives. The Catechism states:

The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ. Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. (#2279-2280, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P30.HTM)

The Year for Consecrated Life began on the First Sunday of Advent and will close on the World Day of Consecrated Life, February 2, 2016. We can all celebrate this year as baptized, consecrated persons.

We read Pope Francis’ message on this Year in the refectory. After we read the third section, Sr. Dawn Annette commented, “This has significance for our oblates too!” I agree. However, Pope Francis does not refer to baptism in his letter. Instead, he discusses the identification of many lay people with the ideals, spirit, and mission of a religious institute. That’s you. As we grow in the spirit of St. Benedict and in the Eucharistic charism of our foundress, Mother Mary Anselma Felber, we support and inspire one another.

I will quote Pope Francis at some length. For the full text you can go to: http://en.radio vaticana.va/news/2014/11/29/pope_issues_letter_for_year_of_consecrated_life/1112885.

In this letter, I wish to speak not only to consecrated persons, but also to the laity, who share with them the same ideals, spirit and mission. Some Religious Institutes have a long tradition in this regard, while the experience of others is more recent. Indeed, around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a “charismatic

family”, which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality.

I urge you, as laity, to live this Year for Consecrated Life as a grace which can make you more aware of the gift you yourselves have received. Celebrate it with your entire “family”, so that you can grow and respond together to the promptings of the Spirit in society today.

The Year for Consecrated Life concerns not only consecrated persons, but the entire Church. Consequently, I ask the whole Christian people to be increasingly aware of the gift which is the presence of our many consecrated men and women, heirs of the great saints who have written the history of Christianity. What would the Church be without Saint Benedict and Saint Basil, without Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard, without Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Angelica Merici and Saint Vincent de Paul. The list could go on and on, up to Saint John Bosco and Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. As Blessed Paul VI pointed out: “Without this concrete sign there would be a danger that the charity which animates the entire Church would grow cold, that the salvific paradox of the Gospel would be blunted, and that the “salt” of faith would lose its savor in a world undergoing secularization” (*Evangelica Testificatio*, 3).

So I invite every Christian community to experience this Year above all as a moment of thanksgiving to the Lord and grateful remembrance for all the gifts we continue to receive, thanks to the sanctity of founders and foundresses, and from the fidelity to their charism shown by so many consecrated men and women. I ask all of you to draw close to these men and women, to rejoice with them, to share their difficulties and to assist them, to whatever degree possible, in their ministries and works, for the latter are, in the end, those of the entire Church. Let them know the affection and the warmth which the entire Christian people feels for them.

Ponder this message. You may want to discuss it with your family and friends. Let me know your thoughts, too, so I can share them in the January letter.

And now the news:

Clyde oblates mark your calendars! The next weekend will be March 20-22, 2015. Thus you will be here for the Feast of St. Benedict, March 21, which commemorates his death.

St. Louis area oblates are meeting monthly. Meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month from 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 at St. Rose Philippine Duchesne School. Meetings are held in Room 1, which is accessible from Door 1 at the east end of the school.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah, O.S.B.