



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

December, 2017

Dear Oblates and Friends,

I'm a bit late this month. With Christmas on Monday, the Fourth Week of Advent is just a single day. Time has passed quickly, and Christmas will be here before I am ready.

I've been thinking about newness. My family frequently repeated a story about my brother. When he was very small, he was so thrilled to receive new shoes that he put them on his pillow when he went to bed. I'm not going to do that with the badly-needed new winter jacket (half-price!) that I bought this past week, but I am delighted with my purchase. Getting something new usually gives us pleasure.

Finding pleasure in material things is easy. It is often more difficult to find pleasure in spiritual newness. If we really pay attention to the liturgical cycle, it provides a catechesis that enables an inward renewal. New Year's Day and the Epiphany season that follows are in some sense a continuation of the Christmas season. Epiphany, which focuses on the visit of the Magi, celebrates Christ's revelation to the Gentiles. The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of his public ministry. Jesus attests to his divinity at Cana when he performs the first of his miracles and turns water into wine.

On Christmas Day we reflect on the tender scenes of Jesus' birth and infancy, but in the days that follow we move into witness, ministry, and mission. Many of us will renew our own baptismal vows when we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, which falls this year on January 8. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, by baptism we become members of Christ; we are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission. We become a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). Saint Paul writes in Romans 6:4: "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from

the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.” Elsewhere, in Ephesians 4:23-24, Paul explains what it means to live in newness of life. He urges us: “be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.”

Saint Benedict is perhaps reflecting on baptism, when he writes in the Prologue, “Behold, in his loving kindness the Lord shows us the way of life.” Let us once more accept his invitation to live in newness of life. How wonderful it is that we can always turn around and start anew!

And now the news:

Tucson Oblates

Sharon Hammond has graciously accepted the position of lay coordinator for the Tucson oblates. We are sure she will be a wonderful leader for the group after the monastery is closed. The group also has two new deans: Isabel Delgado and Karen Perez. Dean Bette Dickinson will be moving to another state in the near future and will be missed.

The Tucson oblate renewal day will be on Saturday, January 20 in the east gallery at St. Philip’s. Details to follow.

The contemplative prayer group that formerly met on Monday nights at the monastery will be moving to St. Philip’s. All are welcome to join beginning at 7:00 pm on Monday, January 8, in the La Paz room.

Phoenix Central: The December meeting has been cancelled. For information call Patty Williams at 602-957-1464. A Day of Benedictine Renewal will be held at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Phoenix on Saturday, January 13, 2018.

West Phoenix: The West Phoenix group meets in Glendale for a morning of prayer, community, and fellowship on the third Saturday of the month from 9:00 am -12pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, January 20. For information call Lisa Hughes at 623-374-2382.

East Valley: The East Valley oblates will meet on Saturday, January 27, from 9:30am-12:00pm.

Discussion will continue of the *Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict*. For information call Nancy Kaib 480-883-8025 or Frank Young 480-219-1505.

Sand Springs:

The next meeting will be held on January 7. Charlene Fabian will guide our discussion on the next three chapters: “The Delight of Diversity”; “The World in a Word”; and “Reshaping Our Image” from the book *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* by Richard Rohr.

Prayers are asked for oblate Caroline Biby, her sister, and their 99-year-old mother, who is in a nursing home with dementia. Please pray for strength, comfort, rest and complete healing for all.

Sheridan, Wyoming:

The group meets on the first Saturday of the month. The next meeting is January 6, and there will be treats to celebrate Epiphany. For information, contact Cel Hope at celhaus@fiberpipe.net. You may also email me at sarah@bspa.us or contact me by phone at 660-944-2221.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah