



## *The Benedictine Oblate Letter*

*January, 2017*

Dear Oblates and Friends,

First of all, I wish you all a very blessed and happy New Year. May it be one of health, happiness, and peace.

I am sorry that I am late with the e-mail version of this letter; I simply got busy about many things. For the snail mail version, I enclosed our new flyer for our free bi-monthly magazine *Spirit&Life*, but I can't do it for the e-mail version. I am technologically challenged. You can check it out on our website at <http://www.benedictinesisters.org/spirit-and-life-magazine-home.php>. You can enter subscriptions for yourselves or others that way. First published in 1904, *S&L* is an important part of our ministry. All oblates should be receiving it. We count on your support. Do help us keep our subscriptions up.

It has come to my attention that I have not told you about recent events at Conception Abbey, the monastery just down the road from Clyde. These events affect the entire Benedictine Order. On September 10, 2016, Abbot Gregory Polan was elected Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order at the Congress of Abbots meeting in Rome, held every four years.

What is an Abbot Primate? It is not a species of monkey or ape. The Abbot Primate is a monk who serves as liaison between Benedictine communities and the Vatican and civil authorities. He promotes unity among autonomous monasteries and congregations, and represents the order at religious gatherings. With this election, Abbot Gregory has become the abbot of the monastery Sant' Anselmo and the head of the Benedictine University in Rome. His position is one of influence, not of authority. Although he cannot tell us what to do, we will take his suggestions very seriously.

Abbot Gregory's election as Abbot Primate means that he is no longer abbot of Conception Abbey. In November, the monks of Conception Abbey elected Fr. Benedict Neenan as their new abbot. Abbot Benedict has served as prior, as President-Rector of Conception Seminary College, and as a professor of theology and church history at the seminary. He has also served as a spiritual director, the monastic Vocations Director, and has given retreats in the Abbey Guest Center. We know him well, as he has served as one of our chaplains for many years. We expect that our close relationship with the Conception monks will continue. Abbot Benedict joined us for Eucharist and brunch on New Year's Day, and we celebrated his birthday at the same time.

Later in January, our nation will celebrate the inauguration of a new president. Let's pray for the members of the new administration, that God will endow them with gifts of insight, wisdom, honesty, and integrity. Perhaps we can urge them in some way to take to heart Saint Benedict's teaching that leadership should be exercised with humility. In Chapter 64, Benedict says of the abbot or abbess that he or she should be "not be excitable and worried, nor exacting and headstrong, nor jealous and over-suspicious." He or she should be "prudent and considerate," "discreet and moderate." May our new president and his colleagues show evidence that they possess these attributes.

***And now rest of the news:***

The International Congress of Benedictine Oblates will meet Nov. 4-10, 2017, in Rome. The theme is *A Way Forward: the Benedictine Community in Movement*. I now have the link for registration. If anyone is interested, let me know.

***Tucson oblates:***

Tucson oblates are having, or will already have had, a renewal day on January 15. William Joseph will speak on *Exploring the Wisdom of Thomas Merton*. He will discuss the art of contemplation and the search for that place within us that brings goodness and creativity to the surface.

Our Tucson monastery has four oblate groups: Tucson, Prescott, East Valley, and Phoenix Central. The groups have their own newsletter, which is also posted on our website, as is this one: <http://www.benedictinesisters.org>, and click on "oblates." Prescott is sharing on Michael Casey's book, *The Road to Eternal Life*. East Valley is continuing their study of mercy.

***Clyde oblates:***

The next Clyde weekend is scheduled for March 24-26, 2017, during Lent. The theme is *Images of God in Scripture and in the Rule of Benedict*.

***Saint Louis area oblates:***

The Saint Louis group has been discussing *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* by Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB. They have also been doing group *lectio* following *Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, "Lectio Divina Shared in Community" by Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B. Meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month from 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. at St. Rose Philippine Duchesne School, Room 1 (accessible from Door 1 at the east end of the school).

***Sand Springs*** oblates are continuing their discussion of Joan Chittister's book, *In the Heart of the Temple*. I will be offering a mini-retreat there for all oblates and friends on May 5-7, 2017.

***Sheridan, Wyoming***, oblates meet monthly.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah