



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

June, 2018

Dear Oblates and Friends,

The oblates who met at Clyde earlier this month had the opportunity to witness Sister Marie-Jona transfer from her Korean Olivetan Benedictine community to our Congregation. The ceremony was beautiful and meaning, almost identical to a final profession. Sister Marie-Jona renewed her vows of obedience and *conversatio* and transferred her vow of stability. The celebration was a joy for her and for all of us as we welcomed her as a permanent member of our community.

What is the meaning of this vow of stability? The vow of stability is a commitment to remain until death in a particular community, to remain rooted in place. This vow may be especially difficult to accept in modern times. I lived in the same apartment building from infancy to adulthood, surrounded by extended family, but now many people move around much more and families are scattered all over the country. Young people change jobs much more frequently than they did in the past. We all tend to think that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. It is often an illusion or temptation to think that things will go better elsewhere. We take ourselves with us wherever we go.

In her book *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict*, Esther de Waal describes the Benedictine vow of stability as “accepting this particular community, this place and these people, this and no other, as the way to God” and rejecting the “bewildering and exhausting rushing from one thing to another” that is so easy in a world full of endless choices like ours. Stability is not in and of itself the goal; rather it is how “the individual may have space and time to enter into his or her personal dialogue with God” (57-58).

The purpose of stability is to make monastic conversion effective. Only someone who has decided on stability in a fixed place and with a particular group of people can really modify habits and modes of behavior.

When interpersonal conflicts arise, we need to work things out and restore peace. This means learning the practices of love: acknowledging one's own offenses, giving up one's preferences, forgiving. This is why Saint Benedict, in Chapter One of his Rule, allows for hermits only after long probation in the monastery. Gyrovagues, those who wander from place to place, are the worst kind of monk: “Always on

the move, with no stability, they indulge their own wills and succumb to the allurements of gluttony. . . Of the miserable conduct of all such it is better to be silent than to speak.”

We all strive to respond to God’s call in our lives, in whatever way we understand it. Benedict gave us a scriptural illustration of stability in the Prologue to his Rule:

Hence the Lord says in the Gospel, “Whoever listens to these words of mine and acts upon them, I will liken to a wise person who built a house on rock. The floods came, the winds blew and beat against that house, and it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock” (Mt 7:24-25).

May we all build our houses upon the rock that is Christ.

And now the news:

All oblate groups are on summer recess. Be safe, be happy, and have fun!

Clyde Oblates

The fall weekend is scheduled for September 14-16. The theme will be *The Monastic Impulse: The Development of Benedictine Spirituality*. Information will be forthcoming.

Tucson Oblates

The Tucson oblates meet on the third Sunday of the month. The deans meet monthly on the Saturday following the regular meeting. If you have any questions for the deans, please email tucsonoblates@gmail.com or call 520-664-5136. The group is now on summer recess until September.

Phoenix Central: The Phoenix group meets in the St. John Paul II room at the Mount Claret Retreat Center, 4633 N. 54th Street. The oblates are using the *Study Guide to the Rule of Benedict* by Maria-Thomas Beil, OSB. For information call Patty Williams 602-957-1464.

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 group is reading *Lessons from Saint Benedict*, a collection of letters written by Donald Raila, OSB, of Saint Vincent Archabbey. For information call Lisa Hughes at 623-374-2382. At present the group is on summer recess.

East Valley: The East Valley Oblates meet on the fourth Saturday of the month. The next meeting is on Saturday, February 24. For information call Nancy Kaib 480-883-8025 or Frank Young 480-219-1505.

Sand Springs:

The oblates meet on the first Sunday of the month at 11:30 am in the Bede Building. Visitors are always welcome. The group is reading and discussing *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr.

Sheridan, Wyoming:

The group meets on the first Saturday of the month. They are enjoying lively discussions of the *Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict* and are also reading *Radical Grace* by Sister Joan Chittister. For information, contact Cel Hope at celhaus@fiberpipe.net; you can also email me at sarah@bspa.us or phone me at 660-944-2221.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah