



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

March, 2018

Dear Oblates and Friends,

I am writing this letter on the Feast of Saint Benedict. This is not a major feast for us, although we celebrate it even though it falls in Lent. The Solemnity of Saint Benedict is July 11.

March 21 is called the “Transitus of Saint Benedict.” *Transitus* is the Latin word for “passing.” The word means a passing from this life to the next, from one state to another, and is used to mark the death of the saints.

Saint Benedict died a holy death. In Chapter 37 of his *Dialogues*, Saint Gregory the Great tells us that Saint Benedict prophesied his death and died with his arms raised up to heaven:

In the year that was to be his last, the man of God foretold the day of his holy death to a number of his disciples. In mentioning it to some who were with him in the monastery, he bound them to strict secrecy. Some others, however, who were stationed elsewhere he only informed of the special sign they would receive at the time of his death.

Six days before he died, he gave orders for his tomb to be opened. Almost immediately he was seized with a violent fever that rapidly wasted his remaining energy. Each day his condition grew worse until finally, on the sixth day, he had his disciples carry him into the chapel where he received the Body and Blood of our Lord to gain strength for his approaching end. Then, supporting his weakened body on the arms of his brethren, he stood with his hands raised to heaven and, as he prayed, breathed his last. (<http://www.osb.org/gen/greg/>)

More important than hagiography, however, is what Saint Benedict tells us about death and dying in his Rule. In Chapter Four, “The Instruments of Good Works,” he instructs us “to keep death daily before one’s eyes.” This remembrance is not morbid; rather, it is a component of Benedict’s spirituality and should be considered in context. The next two instruments are:

To keep constant guard over the actions of one’s life.

To know for certain that God sees one everywhere.

We are reminded of these instruments in Chapter 7, on humility, where Benedict says: “Let a man consider that God is always looking at him from heaven, that his actions are everywhere visible to the divine eyes and are constantly being reported to God by the angels.” This is the first step of humility and we must begin here. Without humility, we cannot develop an intimate relationship with the Almighty.

There is another important instrument that is perhaps easier to overlook: “To desire eternal life with all the passion of the spirit.” We need to enter upon the spiritual journey with passion and zeal. In the Prologue, Benedict tells us that, if we are to attain everlasting life, “we must hasten to do now what will profit us for eternity.” Thus, we must know our goal and press forward.

And now the news:

Clyde Oblates

The spring weekend is scheduled for June 1-3. The theme is “Praying with Rule of Saint Benedict.” Corpus Christi is on June 3, and this will be a wonderful weekend for oblates to come to Clyde. All are welcome!

Tucson Oblates

The Tucson oblates meet on the third Sunday of the month. The next oblate meeting is April 15 at 1 pm for Inquirers and Candidates, and at 2 pm for the whole group. 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.

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.

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 to attend. The group is reading and discussing *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr. Different oblates facilitate the discussion each month.

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