



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

October, 2013

Dear Oblates and Friends,

The days are warm, but we notice that the nights are cooler as well as longer. Soon, though not yet, the leaves should be changing color. We, too, need to adjust to changing times and seasons. Flexibility is a gift, a grace to be prayed for. If we remain rigid, if we have no “give,” we won’t be able to get through the rough patches of our lives. But that flexibility must rest upon a firm foundation, a rock-solid faith.

Sacred Scripture provides the solid foundation of our lives. In October 2008, in his opening address to the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God, Pope Benedict XVI taught that the Word of God is solid; it is the true reality on which one must base one’s life. He referred to the familiar parable in which Jesus speaks of two foundations:

Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined. (Mt. 7:24-27)

Pope Benedict urged us to change our ideas about what is real. We think of material things, things we can touch, as the more solid, the more certain reality. But material things, success, and appearances are only secondary. If we build our lives on these things, we build upon sand. The Pope went on to say: “Only the Word of God is the foundation of all reality, it is as stable as the heavens and more than the heavens, it is reality.”

Scripture is central to the Rule of Benedict. Scholars have spent much time figuring out just how many citations and allusions to Scripture are found in the Rule; the determination of the exact number is somewhat subjective. In the translation most of us use, RB 1980, there are 132 references to the Old Testament and 189 to the New Testament. But more important than the

number of references, is the fact that personal and communal prayer are constructed from and nourished by scriptural texts. The psalms are at the heart of the Liturgy of the Hours, and narrative texts from the Old and New Testaments form its readings. The personal reading, the *lectio divina*, of monks centers on Scripture. Thus, Benedict requires that those who need a better knowledge of the psalms and scriptural texts spend the time that remains after the Night Office in study (Chap. 8).

Study?? Does this apply to those of us who are long out of school? To this question, I reply with a question: are not we all, sisters and oblates alike, enrolled in a “school for the service of the Lord” (Prologue)? If Scripture is to be the foundation of our lives and the heart of our prayer, we must read and study it at least enough to approach it with understanding. Otherwise, we will, in the words of St. Paul, be “tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery” (Eph. 14). We want instead to stand firm in the faith, built on rock and not on sand.

Here’s a reminder: I have been posting short video clips on the oblate website on various aspects of Benedictine spirituality and prayer. Go to www.benedictinesisters.org, click on oblates, and the videos are under “resources.”

Another reminder: Please help *Spirit & Life* continue to live and thrive. We need to increase our print subscriptions. All oblates should be receiving it. If you are not receiving it, please let me know or go to our website. *Spirit & Life* is under the tab “News Center.” Here’s the link: <http://www.benedictinesisters.org/spirit-and-life-magazine-home.php>. Also let your friends and families know about it. It is bi-monthly and free. Do promote it in whatever way you can, and send me the names and addresses of anyone who would like to receive it.

St. Louis area oblates are meeting monthly. They meet every third Saturday of the month at the St. Rose Philippine Duchesne parish office. They will be trying out a new meeting format, which will allow more time for reflection, prayer, and group lectio. Anyone in the St. Louis area is welcome to attend.

Clyde meeting dates this year, in addition to the Oct. 18-20 retreat, which is now full, are Feb. 28-Mar. 2 and May 2-4. Mark your calendars!

Peace,

Sr. Sarah, O.S.B.