



Tucson Oblate Newsletter

October, 2012

At the September meeting Tucson Oblate **Laurie Olsen** shared with the group her experience on a week-long visit to Haiti, and her plans to volunteer there for a year with the Religious of Jesus and Mary. This came about because of an accidental meeting in the Milwaukee airport with a Mercy sister whose congregation was planning missions there. Soon, Laurie found that she had agreed to go to Haiti for a week with eight representatives of the Congregation, to help them evaluate the possibilities. Thus she was able to see a number of social service and religious organizations while there.

Laurie's PowerPoint presentation included many photos, and was well-balanced. She showed both the problems that the nation faces, including continuing earthquake recovery, and the resources that it has to work with, such as volunteers from many countries. She also showed the mission where she will be working, in Gros Morne, a small town 110 miles north of Port au Prince, and discussed some of the work she will be doing. For example, because of her English language skills, she will be helping to coordinate the volunteers who come from the U.S. and Canada to that mission. (In Laurie's honor our Oblate chapter is donating \$100 to the Sisters where she will be working, and the contemplative prayer group is also planning a donation.)

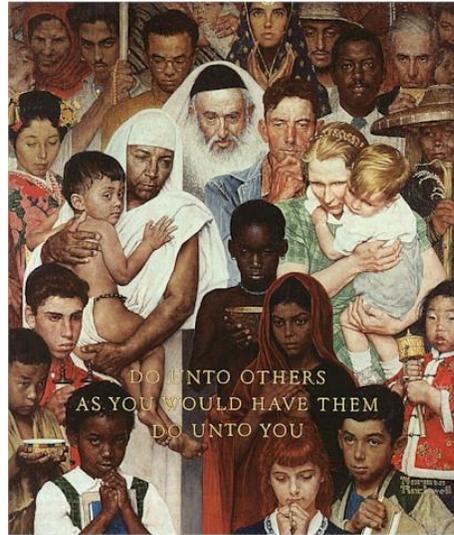
Laurie related her planned volunteer service to the Rule of St. Benedict by speaking of hospitality as well as compassion. It was clear that she has great affection for the people of Haiti, as well as a realistic understanding of challenges she will face during her year.

Laurie will be blogging during the year at:
<http://laurieinayiti.blogspot.com>

Background for Studying Compassion

Some of what I will share with the Oblates in the next few months comes from Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*. Armstrong, with twelve books about religion in print, is one of the most successful writers on religion, particularly on the the history and commonalities of the world's major religions. In 2007 she was awarded a \$100,000 prize from TED, a foundation dedicated to promoting "ideas worth spreading." Her goal was to build a global community where all people could live together in mutual respect, based on the Golden Rule: "Always treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself." After meetings with religious thinkers from around the world, in 2009 she launched on the Internet the **Charter for Compassion**. The first principle of the Charter is "to restore compassion to the center of morality and religion You can learn much more about it from the web site :

<http://charterforcompassion.org> .



The **Golden Rule** seems to have first been formulated by Confucius 500 years before Christ, but is at the heart of all the major religions of our world. We honor women and men who were known for their compassion: Mother Teresa, Florence Nightingale,

Dorothy Day, the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King, to name just a few. Today, however, in an intensively competitive, individualistic, capitalist economy, compassion seems alien to our way of life. Consider how viciously each of these persons was attacked by their critics.

Like Hillel and the rabbis, Jesus believed that the commandments to **love God with your whole heart and soul and your neighbor as yourself** were the most exalted commandments of the Torah. For Islam, in the Qur'an Muhammad said "Not one of you can be a believer, unless he desires for his neighbor what he desires for himself."

Compassion for Yourself

The commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself" was probably, for all or most of us, part of our earliest religious formation. But how often did we think of the "as yourself" portion of the commandment? If I can't love myself, I can't love anyone else. Why is it so hard for us to love ourselves? Is it because we live in a society that worships success and dreads failure? We beat on ourselves for our shortcomings, and are slow to forgive ourselves when we fail. We may believe that God can and does forgive us, but we cannot forgive ourselves—as if our judgment were more accurate than God's. Just who do we think we are?

If I accept my failures and forgive myself, I will find it much easier to forgive others for their shortcomings and failures. I can then accept the fact that they, like me, are fallible, and just as free to mess up and need forgiveness as I am. St. Paul complained to God about his "thorn in the flesh" (II Cor 12:7-9) and wanted it removed, but God reminded him that "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

In order to live by the Golden Rule, we need to acknowledge that we truly want others to be compassionate

toward us, to forgive us for our limitations and failings. That will enable us to return the gift of compassion to them.

To keep in our prayers

Tucson Oblates

Rosemary Blonigan who is housebound, and her husband, **Ray**, who died August 14.

Dean Nelson, who died September 16. His memorial service will be 2:00 p.m. Saturday, October 27, at St. Philip's.

Frank Frisina, in cancer treatment in California.

Cynthia O'Sullivan, skin cancer surgery

Sr. Joan Therese, who is happy to be on her feet now for an hour a day.

Other Oblates

Sandra Michaels (Phoenix) cancer surgery

Joanne Moses (now with Holy Trinity Monastery – working under difficult conditions in Tonga (South Pacific island))

TUCSON: Next meeting Sunday, October 21, 2:00 p.m. - Doors open at 1:15

Oblate inquirers and candidates gather at 1:30 in the left corner by stage. Theresa Keating will lead the sharing on *A Life-giving Way*, by Esther de Waal. Please read everything from the beginning of the book through (including) the chapter on the Prologue of the Rule.

Meeting at 2:00 p.m. Sr. Lenora will give a short reflection on compassion, and then we will share in small groups. Please read the paragraphs on compassion at the beginning of this letter, and also Chapter 36 of the Rule of Benedict, "The Care of the Sick." With these in mind, be ready to share on the quotes below from Oblates Jana and Charles Preble, (from *The Oblate Life*, Liturgical Press 2008). How does Chapter 36 exemplify both compassion to others and compassion to self? How do you try to balance these in your life as an Oblate? What are the obstacles to this balancing?

- "The thrust in Benedictine life is toward the preservation and maintenance of health for each person and for the community . . . Benedict gives us guidance: moderation in eating and drink, an appropriate amount of sleep at night, faithfulness to prayer and reading . . . taking care not to undermine our own health or that of others by undue complaining"
- "As Oblates we have a loving obligation to reach out to those who are cast off and alone, especially the sick. Physical sickness is to be borne with tenderness . . . the care of the ill demands compassion and a certain self-forgetfulness on the part of the healthy caretakers."

PRESCOTT: Next meeting Sunday, October 21, 1:30 p.m. , St. Anthony Claret Room, Lesson: *The Monastery of the Heart*, pp. 169-195.

At the September 16 meeting there were twelve in attendance. In the sharing on *Monastery of the Heart*, we reflected on the need to recognize that all of life is sacred and that every act of ours makes life either more—or less—holy. Even though stability is not in vogue in a world obsessed with change, with God's love, it is possible to maintain stability of heart.

For more information, call Nancy Hinshaw: 928-445-1271

PHOENIX CENTRAL: Next meeting, Saturday, October 13, 2012, 8:45 a.m. for Inquirers and Candidates, and 9:30 a.m. for all. Mount Claret Retreat Center, 4633 North 54th Street, Phoenix, 85018.

Patty Williams writes: We are continuing our study of the Holy Rule. Please come and join us! Our meeting room is in the back of the Mount Claret Retreat Center in the Pope John Paul II room.

For more information call Patty Williams: 602-957-1464 or email Benedictine@cox.net

PHOENIX EAST VALLEY: Next meeting is a retreat, Saturday, October 27 - details below

Nancy Kaib writes. The East Valley Benedictine Oblates met on Saturday, September 22. We continued our discussion of the Prologue from Fr. Michael Casey's book. We also did some planning for our annual retreat in October. The retreat will be held on October 27 at the home of Pat and Trish Welter in southeast Chandler. We will gather at 9:00am and finish at 4:00pm. Lunch and snacks are provided -the total cost being \$25.00 - which includes a stipend for the Priest who will say Mass in the morning.

For more information, please call Nancy Kaib, 480-883-8025 or Frank Young, 480-219-1505.

LIBRARY CORNER

Thanks to Laurie Olsen, Trudy D'Agostino, and others who have donated books to our library. And thanks to those who made special efforts to return books.

Dates for the coming Tucson Oblate meetings (All are 3rd Sunday of the month)

October 21

November 18

December 16

January 20 - RENEWAL DAY

February 17

March 17

April 21

May 19 - RENEWAL DAY

Blessings, Sr. Lenora, OSB

Benedictine Monastery ♦ 800 N. Country Club Rd. ♦ Tucson, AZ, 85716-4583 ♦ (520) 325-6401 ♦ email: lenora@bspa.us or benpubctr@bspa.tuccoxmail.com ♦ <http://www.tucsonmonastery.com> ♦ **Please note email addresses**