

TUCSON OBLATE NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER, 2016

This month we are celebrating two special Feasts, November 1st All Saints and November 2nd All Souls. The Church has canonized many saints in our own time--Pope John the 23rd, Pope John Paul the 2nd, Mother Theresa of Calcutta, and many more. But only a miniscule number of holy people are canonized and officially recognized by the Church as saints. Let us not forget the saints who formed us, loved us, and are still present in our hearts, memories, and lives. Every time I get in a car, I ask my Dad--who was a traveling salesman in the 1940s--60s--to keep me safe, and also a friend who taught me how to drive when I was 30. When I go hiking by myself, I also ask this friend to get me home safe, or when I am crossing a river not to fall on the rocks. My Mom is also very helpful when I ask her for help. I believe we have many of our own saints in heaven who watch over and protect us. Let us continue to ask them to help us on our journey in life.

One definition by a Bishop for All Souls day is, "Purgatory is a place where one learns how much God loves them." The afterlife is a mystery for all of us, but we do know that God's Mercy is in abundance.

OCTOBER MEETING

At our October meeting, Sharon Hammond spoke on "Moral Injury: The invisible Wound and the Community." Because her experience is with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Sharon used many military examples. However, she stressed that moral injury is much wider than just service members and veterans. Police, nurses, first responders, and those who work with or repatriate the dead may also be morally injured.

Sharon defined moral injury as "pain that results from damage to a person's moral foundation" or deep-seated sense of right and wrong. For example, a helicopter pilot was sent during wartime to rescue another soldier. At the last minute, the order was changed. Although he could see the soldier in danger, he had to leave the man for another mission. As a member of the military, the pilot had to follow orders. But in doing so, he had to violate his conscience. Such moral injuries may be the source of guilt and regret for many years.

Sharon said that moral injuries are sometimes called "a bruise to the soul." The injured person may feel as though their soul has been lost, or that what they have done is unforgivable. Shame and regret are typical elements of moral injury. Often moral injuries also have elements of helplessness if the individual was not able to save others, or betrayal by colleagues or those in charge. Survivor guilt is common. The morally injured may be self-destructive in behaviors such as driving, and/or may be suicidal. They may struggle with questions about where God was in battle, or why God allows evil and suffering.

Like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), moral injury may show up immediately or years later when a chance incident triggers memories. However, moral injury is not the same as PTSD. Moral injury is not officially established as a medical/psychiatric diagnosis. It is specific to the sense of violated morals. It has only recently received attention, and treatment has not been well developed.

Sharon talked about morality as being experienced on at least three levels: in thinking and reasoning, emotions and physical sensations, and at the community level. The community is where we learn right and wrong, and one place where we are judged for our actions. The community is also the place where decisions are made that send young people to combat, and the community receives them back—often changed because of their wartime experiences.

Turning to ways that moral injuries may be healed, Sharon asked us to think about the role of the Church. For St. Benedict, everything takes place in community. So as Oblates we are supported in listening “with the ear of the heart;” loving, respecting, and honoring the morally wounded; welcoming them as Christ; treating them with gentleness and compassion; forgiving them and ourselves; and supporting/encouraging them. We can also be informed about and support community resources that are available to treat the morally injured. These include the parish/spiritual center, counselors who are informed about moral injury, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Rituals of forgiveness that are part of one’s tradition, such as sacramental confession, burning sage, sweat lodges, etc. can also be effective in healing moral injury.

Sharon pointed out that moral injuries affect not only individuals, but also the family members and communities of those individuals. She asked the group to think about what morality means during wartime, what culpability should be felt by those whose actions led to war or continued it, and what responsibility all of us have for these situations. She urged us to consider advocating for an end to conditions that produce moral injury.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Please update email and street addresses and phone numbers when these change.
- Joan Marcoux has been very sick this year and asks us for prayers.
- The Lectio group continues to meet from 10AM to 11AM, every Saturday in the prayer room (off the chapel). All are welcome.
- November 12th Sister Hope and Mary Sheridan will visit our Phoenix Oblates. Both groups will meet at St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church, 3450 W. Ray Rd. Chandler AZ.

NOVEMBER 20TH OBLATE MEETING

Our next meeting will be November 20th at 2 p.m. The doors open at 12:45 for inquirers, candidates and anyone else who would like to come early to use the library or visit with others. Mary Sheridan will be our presenter, speaking on “Listening.” She plans to use participation exercises to help the group explore what listening means in practice.

INQUIRERS’ AND CANDIDATES’ CLASS. This class will start at 1:00 p.m. and finish at 1:45 to join the others in the basement. The class is in the prayer room on the right side as you enter the Chapel. Sr. Kathleen Clare will talk about the Kinds of Monks, and life in community. For the meeting, please read Ch. 1, The Kinds of Monks. Questions for discussion: What kind of “monk” have you been up to now? Does being a cenobite fit you? What are the responsibilities of being in any kind of a community? The drawbacks? The benefits?

PRESCOTT: Shirley Maday reports: We shared on Michael Casey’s book, The Road to Eternal Life, Chs. 24 and 25. Casey wrote, “To encounter God deeply we need to take time out . . . to seek the place where it is possible to speak with the Lord face-to-face, giving God our full attention.” In Ch. 25, Casey quoted 2 Peter 3:13: “Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with God.” Next Meeting Nov. 20th . Lesson: Chs. 26 & 27 in Casey’s book, pp. 91-99. We meet from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at St. Anthony Claret Room.

EAST VALLEY OBLATES: Nancy Kaib said the Oblates met Oct 22 and continued the DVD on Mercy. They also talked about the changes coming our way with the decision to close the Tucson Monastery. Sr. Hope and Mary Sheridan will come for our meeting on Nov 12th at 9:30 AM. The

Phoenix Central group will join with us. For more information, call Nancy Kaib 480-883 8025 or Frank Young 480-219-1505.

PHOENIX CENTRAL: For information call Patty Williams 602-957-1464. We normally meet at Mount Claret Retreat Center, 4633 N. 54th St., Phoenix, in the St. John Paul II room at the back of the parking lot. Our group will meet with the East Valley Oblates on Nov. 12 as described above.

May All the Saints intercede for us on our journey in this life, especially our loved ones in the Heart of God. And may we know the true spirit of gratitude this Thanksgiving.

Sr. Hope