



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2008

CHRISTMAS 2008: "Christ was made human that we may be made God." (St. Augustine) Christmas celebrates God's incarnation in time and history. The God who promised to be among us has come and continues to be with us, now and always through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. (Living with Christ) May you each experience the depth and meaningfulness of this great happening in each of your lives! You will be remembered in my personal prayers and in the prayers of Sacred Heart Monastery throughout this Christmas season.
Sister Phyllis

A CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR SOMEONE:

Lincoln Oblate Lou Ann Green, who gathers food for the St. Francis Food Pantry has told me how low the food is and whether the Oblates might be able to help. If any of you are able to bring canned or dry foods to our December meeting at Madonna, she is happy to take it to the Pantry. Some often needed items: peanut butter, jelly, cereal, canned fruits & veggies, pasta & rice. We will have a box. If any of the other Chapters would like also to contribute, I will be happy to take it in my car and see that Lou Ann gets it to the right place. I know that there are many who are seeking contributions so do not feel obligated to this request – just a reminder of a need and a convenient way.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Lincoln Chapter: Sunday, North Commons Cafeteria and Monday in the Lancaster Room Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, **Sunday, December 14, 2008 or Monday, December 15, 2008:** Strangers to the City, Chapter 11, Contemplation pgs 155-168. RB Prologue vs. 39-50, Psalm 119:97-104. I would also recommend re-reading Chapter 10, "Christ" as it will be a nice prelude to the chapter on Contemplation.

Steinauer Chapter: Banquet Room, across from St. Anthony's Church, Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2008, 7-9p.m – CHANGED FOR THIS MONTH: Strangers to the City, Chapter 11, Contemplation pgs 155-168. RB Prologue vs. 39-50, Psalm 119:97-104. I would also recommend re-reading Chapter 10, "Christ" as it will be a nice prelude to the chapter on Contemplation.

Hastings Chapter: St. Michael's Church, Family Room, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. **Saturday, December 13, 2008:** The Path of Life, Chapter 12, Making Life a Unity, pgs. 168-180. RB 72, John 17:20-25

Omaha Chapter: New Cassel Retirement Center, Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, East Entrance, Omaha, NE, **Tuesday, December 9, 2008, General Assembly:** The Path of Life, Chapter 12, Making Life a Unity, pgs. 168-180. RB 72, John 17:20-25

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR NEW

NOVICES: (*Lincoln Chapter:* Doris Buechel, Denise Dean, Mara Fritts, Thomas Fritts, David Frye, Joanna Kennedy, David Schmidt, Shirley Wenzel, Maureen Worden and from the *Hastings Chapter:* Juliene Bryan **AND OBLATES:** *Lincoln Chapter:* Tim Adams, Charlene Gondring, Linda Horton and from *Steinauer Chapter:* Deloris Lewis, Robert L. Lewis and from *Hastings Chapter:* John Fertig, Cathy Mohnike, Leland Ostdiek, Bob Phillips, Maria Wendland, Myron Wendland and from *Omaha Chapter:* Ida Mary Leistner and Joyce Kinsey **AND ALL THOSE WHO WERE PRESENT FOR THEIR RENEWAL OF OBLATION.** It was a joy to have so many of your family and friends there to share with us. And thank you for those of you who have already renewed your oblation through the email. I will be including a copy for those with postal mail.

WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS: At least 20 more of you were able to join our Yahoo Group last month to receive the newsletter and prayers. If you are getting this newsletter as a paper version and you have email, please do join our yahoo group. Our regular email group could no longer accommodate the number for our mailing. This will help us to keep our expenses down. To get you started contact Oblate Teresa at teresamharms@yahoo.com.

CHORAL GROUP: A small group of Oblates have met and we are happy to announce that we will begin under the direction of Oblate Kathryn Robson, Choir Director for St. David's Episcopal Church. Oblate Colleen Baade will accompany us. We will meet for the first time just prior to our Sunday, January 11, 2009 Chapter meeting at 6:16 pm in the Madonna Chapel. We already have a small selection of lovely short hymns. All are welcome to come.

OBLATE NOTES:

- Death of Oblate Kaye Schafer '93: For those of you who are away, Kaye died 11-7-08. She was among the very first of our Lincoln Oblates. Some of us were able to attend her evening wake along with our Oblate Memorial Service and also the funeral the next day. May she rest in peace!
- Congratulations to Oblate Mary Drell who married Calvin Kroon Saturday, October 18 at St. Mary's Church here in Lincoln.
- Oblate Michael Flaherty writes from Chicago: I spent 10 days in October at St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, CO. It was a wonderful, uplifting experience. At dinner one night I sat next to Fr. Thomas Keating (famous for Contemplative Prayer and author) and that was a real pleasure. I hope all is well in Nebraska. With great affection!

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Advent (from the Latin word *adventus*, means "coming") is a season of the Christian church, the period of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus, the period immediately before Christmas.

By the end of the fourth century, this season which opens the liturgical year, was given some framework, about the same time as the celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany (the three kings) were being organized. The length and time of these preparations differed from place to place. It was in the seventh century that Christmas and also Advent took on a significant meaning. And gradually Christmas and Epiphany, each a separate feast, became the celebrations of the birth of Christ the King. Hence, we do not see Advent and Christmas mentioned in any of the twelve chapters on the liturgy of the Holy Rule of St. Benedict.

Advent has three dimensions. We constantly shift our attention to the past, the present and future comings of Jesus. We remember Jesus' past birth over 2,000 years ago and hope for his future return in glory. But we cannot neglect the present.

Through the mysterious activity of God's Holy Spirit, the Jesus who was born in the past in Bethlehem and who will come in the future is now present to us and within us through grace. Jesus comes to us now in word and sacrament, in prayer and praise, in one another, in body, the Church and in all creation.

So in this Advent season as we begin a new Church year, we focus our attention on the demands of responding to Jesus' presence by following him on the way to discipleship. The lectionary focus for the first two Sunday's of this year on Mark's gospel is particularly suited to enhance our experience of preparing and following this way of commitment, conversion and cooperation in the saving work of Jesus for our world today.

As we live through the seasons of the Church year, we will learn that the way of Christian discipleship leads from the joys and difficulties of ministry through suffering of the cross to

the experience of new life. Preparing the way is the first step to which our Advent experience is directed. (Living in Christ 08-09)

November 30: First Sunday of Advent (Mark 13:33-37)

Theme: Lord-Redeemer

Jesus said: "Be careful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge.....May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

December 7: Second Sunday of Advent (Mark 1:1-8) Theme: Repentance

John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.....This is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

December 14: Third Sunday of Advent (John 1:6-8, 19-28)

Theme: Rejoice

"A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony to testify to the light so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light....they sent those to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted, "I am not the Christ." Are you Elijah? Are you the prophet? He answered, "No." "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert; make straight the way of the Lord."

December 21: Fourth Sunday of Advent (Luke 1:26-38)

Theme: Saying "Yes" to God.

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph....and coming to her, he said, 'Hail full of grace! The Lord is with you.'Then the angel said, 'Do not be afraid, Mary for you have found favor with God.....The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child will be called holy, the Son of God.'"

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