



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery

January 2009

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto man His Son hath given;
While angels sing with tender mirth,
A glad new year to all the earth.

~Martin Luther

ASSIGNMENTS:

Lincoln Chapter: Sun, North Commons Cafeteria or Mon in the Lancaster Room, Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, Sunday, January 11, 2009 or Monday, January 12, 2009: Strangers to the City, Chapter 12, Holiness pgs 169-184. RB 35, 1 Pet. 1:13-21

Steinauer Chapter: Monday, January 5, 2009, 7-9p.m. Banquet Room, across from St. Anthony's Church, Strangers to the City, Chapter 12, Holiness pgs 169-184. RB 35, 1 Pet. 1:13-21

Hastings Chapter: St. Michael's Church, Family Room, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. Saturday, January 10, 2009: The Path of Life, Chapter 8, The Eucharist, pgs.103-121. RB 38, 1 Cor: 23-34

Omaha Chapter: New Cassel Retirement Center, Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, East Entrance, Omaha, NE, Tuesday, January 13, 2008: General Assembly: The Path of Life, Chapter 8, The Eucharist, pgs.103-121. RB 38, 1 Cor: 23-34

WE NEED ALL OF YOU! If you are getting this newsletter as a paper version and you have email, please do join our yahoo group. This will help us to keep our expenses down. To get you started contact Oblate Teresa at teresamharms@yahoo.com.

FEBRUARY RETREAT FOR OBLATES: The Oblate retreat, Pursuing Harmony with an emphasis on Benedictine balance, will be held February 20th-22nd at Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton, SD. The retreat begins Friday, Feb. 20, at 5:15 p.m. with Vespers followed by supper and an opening conference at 7:15 p.m. It ends Sunday, Feb. 22 after the 11:15 a. m. brunch. It is a semi-silent retreat, joining the Benedictine Sisters for prayer, liturgy and meals. There will be conferences with adequate time for personal prayer, solitude, spending quiet time in nature and rest. Single room, meals and retreat (\$90); 2-person room, meals, retreat (\$140 or \$70 each). It is time to contact Sister Joelle Bauer for a reservation at 605-668-6009 or jbauer@mtmc.edu.

SACRED HEART OBLATES BLOG: Let's see you on the blog! We will post a new reflection each month. Do send Dan Deffenbaugh something you have been reading or you have written and wish to contribute. He will be happy to edit it for you and then will put it on the blog. See: <http://www.sacredheartyanthonoblates.blogspot.com/>

CHORAL GROUP: We will meet for the first time just prior to our Sunday, January 11, 2009 Chapter meeting at 6:15 pm in the Madonna Chapel. We already have a small selection of lovely short hymns. All are welcome to come.

SACRED HEART MONASTERY WEB PAGE: You are welcome to browse the new web site. Just go to: www.yanktonbenedictines.org.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Saturday morning, April 25, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, Sister Virginia Pieper, OSB, of Sacred Heart Monastery will speak on "Sustainability and Benedictine Values." Sister Virginia graduated from Mount Marty College in Religious Education and received an MA at St. Mary's of the Woods College in Earth Literacy. She researched Global Agribusiness, Sustainable Business and local Food Systems and now teaches the course, "Healing Nature" at that college. She is our Sacred Heart Monastery gardener.

OBLATE NOTES:

- Lou Ann Green '99, Lincoln: Thank you to all who donated food for the St. Francis Pantry. I am sure many were happy with the extra food for the holidays.
- Nancy Donovan '96, Silver City, SD: I think of "you all" often. I hope to get to a Yankton retreat in '09.
- Vivian Bowman '96 Albuquerque, NM: I continue volunteering for Richard Rohr. I took a course in Spanish Mystics this fall and I've been reading Thomas Keating who was here for a conference this summer. I would like to be a contemplative but so far it's not working (great picture, Vivian – thank you!).
- Annamaria and Paul Guidos '94 Cape Girardeau, MO: I hope this letter finds you all well. Angelina (20) is 3rd year at Truman State. Joey (17) has completed his 1st semester at Uni of MO – medical school. Tony (15) is a sophomore in HS. We see Carla and Steve Jordan '94, often as they are our neighbors. It is wonderful to see the Oblates' group grow as it has. In Christ.

- Myrna Schmid '94, Burr, NE: I'm counting all my blessings and praying about all the trouble in the world. May God Bless you and yours this holiday season.
- Vic Faesser '00, Pawnee City, NE: At this time, we (Irene and Vic) reflect on the ways in which others have helped us out in our lives, during happy times, during the drudgery, when we are sad, when we celebrate, when we move through our daily and weekly routines. May all the blessings of this Season assist you in your lives and grant you peace and contentment now and in the coming days! (Awesome pictures of SHM, the cemetery and MO River.)
- Steve Linney '02, Eden Prairie, MN: In July Noreen and I went back to Canterbury, England to volunteer at the Lambeth Conference. An experience hard for us to top! The bishops of the international Anglican (Episcopal) Church meet every 10 years; this year over 650 bishops participated. Being the only American volunteers made us unique! Noreen really enjoyed helping with a couple of computer classes for the bishops' spouses. We also attended the closing service at the Cathedral, a very moving ceremony.

BOOK REVIEW: *Silence, Solitude, Simplicity: A Hermit's Love Affair with a Noisy, Crowded and Complicated World* by Sister Jeremy Hall, OSB. Liturgical Press 2007
 With so many books on the Benedictine way of life, one wonders if another is going to tell us anything new; but indeed, this one does. It is the fruit of Sister Jeremy's lifetime of contemplative living and practice. We all know that the Benedictine way is a way of practice, not of theory: one must experience it in order to understand it. Sister Jeremy, now in her late 80's has been a member of Saint Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, Minnesota, since 1940. In addition to the communal life of the monastery, she spent twenty years living as a hermit. She has a doctorate in theology and taught at St. John's and Creighton Universities. She is familiar with the life of solitude, the life of academia and life in a monastic community.

The book is deceptive—a compilation and distillation of Sr. Jeremy's retreat talks and musings, somehow turns out to be all of a piece and impossible to read quickly. The product of her practice of Lectio Divina, it almost forces one to read it as lectio. Like the Rule itself, her writing is filled with Scripture because God's word is so embedded in her life and thought.

The book is in three parts: Part I: A Benedictine Way to God, Part II: Desert Spirituality' and Part III: God's Question. Sprinkled through the text are what she calls "Grace Notes." The editor tells us that these are "reminiscences of her early years written when living as a hermit."

The three elements of the book's title, "Silence, Solitude, Simplicity," are the three characteristics of Desert Spirituality. "Silence is not just an absence of speech or sound or noise... True silence is an affirmation... and the precondition of true reverence for speech." "Solitude opens us to communion with God, with our deeper selves, with others, with the beautiful, and with mystery." Simplicity is more difficult to capture, for "dictionaries only say what it is not, and we

understand what it is only by implication – it is not complicated, embellished or elaborate, affected, not deceitful, complex, artificial; not vain distracted, pretentious, ostentatious."

Reading Sr. Jeremy's book is like sitting listening to her talk about her life journey, which she sums up at the end of Part II as, "One simply seeks to open one's whole life to the transforming love of God, to have one's whole life become prayer, unceasing into eternity. And thus the desert blooms." (The Reverend Barbara Henry, Assisting Clergy, The Church of the Atonement, Chicago, IL)

LAKOTA BENEDICTINE EXPERIENCE: June 14-19, 2009, Martin Brokenleg, PhD., OSB, Borderland Education and Spiritual Center, Black Hills of South Dakota. Information: www.borderlandsranch.org. The Reverend Linda Kramer: 605-574-4746.

"The Gift of Monasticism in the World Today" led by the Rev. Ward Bauman, Dir. of the House of Prayer, and monastic scholars from communities of St. John's Abbey and the Sisters of St. Benedict at St. Joseph, MN, September 22-27, 2009. This is the 15th Benedictine Experience at Episcopal House of Prayer, Collegeville, MN.

(Above Book Review and Benedictine experiences taken from REGULA, the newsletter of the Friends of St. Benedict, Washington, DC)

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