



# Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

*Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery*

January 2006

## ASSIGNMENTS

### LINCOLN CHAPTER

Sun., Jan 8, 2006 7-9 p.m. North Commons  
Mon., Jan 9, 2006, 7-9 p.m. Flanagan Room  
Text: Path of Life, Ch 10, Private Prayer, pgs. 137-153

### HASTINGS CHAPTER, St. Michael's Church, Family Room

Sat., Jan. 7, 2006, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

#### NOTE CHANGE OF DATE

Preferring Christ, Chapt 47-53 (pp 122-133)  
New members (Dawn, Janelle, Jeff and Gay):  
Formation Handbook (2nd meeting assignment)

### STEINAUER CHAPTER, Banquet Hall, across from St. Anthony's Church

Monday, Jan 2, 2006 Pray for nice weather  
POTLUCK DINNER AT 6:15 P.M.!  
Presentation by Oblate Marti Fritzen on her trip to the World Congress.  
Text: Path of Life, Ch. 9, The Liturgy of the Hours, pgs. 122-136

**OMAHA CHAPTER:** All Saints Episcopal Church, 9302 Blondo  
Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2006, 7-9 p.m.  
Text: Preferring Christ, Chapters 45-51, pgs., 119-128  
New members (Lucille, Nancy & Nona):  
Formation Handbook assignment (Holiness+2nd meeting assign)

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND  
A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2006!**

### IMPORTANT CHANGE about ILLUMINATING

**THE WORD: St. John's Bible** It was a surprise to me when I got a formal invitation to this event and it said it was \$35 for the brunch, gallery tour and lecture. You can make the check to Benedictine Oblates and we must confirm by 1-13-06. Here are some details for Sunday, January 22, 2006.

St. Cecilia Cathedral

- 9:30-10:30 a.m. Mass with Abbot John Klassen,  
OSB

- 10:30-11:00 a.m. Reception/Cathedral Cultural Center

Joslyn Art Museum: Illuminating the Word, St. John's Bible. Gallery Tours for St. John's guests (us-signed up) every 15 minutes from 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. Witherspoon Concert Hall (Joslyn). 1:30-2:30 p.m. Lecture by Donald Jackson, Calligrapher.

### APPRECIATION TO OBLATES CAROL OLSON AND MARTI FRITZEN:

I want to send our appreciation to both Carol and Marti for the great amount of preparation they did to bring us a very nice presentation. Below I have asked them to give us several thoughts.

#### "Oblates as Colossians"

(submitted by Carol Olson)

At the First World Benedictine Oblate Congress, two speakers suggested that the Benedictine Oblates in the world 'are the Colossians' of the New Testament. You may want to read it again. Based on the themes of the Congress, here are my thoughts on the topic.

Communion with God: Colossians 3:2 "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Keep in tune with God. Use Lectio Divina to develop this skill of 'setting' your minds on God. This is the first required step, to develop a relationship with God, one of deep listening, attention, awareness and patience.

Communion with the Church: Col 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." This verse speaks to the heart of an Oblate. Norvene Vest asks the question: "How can we best cooperate with God's actions?" It starts by 'living' Lectio Divina. Once we develop a deep relationship with God, then we can develop relationships with others. It is often easier to have a bond with another person or the same beliefs and values of your own. Oblates form this bond together as we pray and sing the psalms in community.

Communion with the World: Col 4:5-6 "Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every

opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everything." These verses speak to the challenge of Inter-Religious Dialogue and ministering to the marginalized in the world. We should be careful in our interactions with others not of the same belief, values or life circumstances as our own.

We can use the Benedictine charisms of humility, hospitality and moderation to reach out to others in a positive, non-threatening way. We, as Oblates of St. Benedict, have the capability to act as mediators, helping to solve problems and answer the questions of the world. In other words, to be an ambassador of peace! The letter of Paul to the Colossians gives us a concrete idea of what a desirable Christian life should entail. It is also an accurate reflection of the potential of Oblates of St. Benedict. Carol Olson OBL OSB

### "Islam and Sufism"

by Kamran Ahmad of Pakistan (submitted by  
Oblate Marti Fritzen)

Dr. Ahmad has a Ph.D. in Religion and Philosophy, specializing in Sufism and Eastern spiritual traditions. He also has degrees in Clinical Psychology and Physics. He did not read a paper as the other presenters did. Instead he gave a speech that came from his heart, and it touched the hearts of many of the people who heard him.

Although his topic was on Sufism within Islam that was not the first subject he presented. He talked about fanaticism in Islam. He said that the non-Islamic people of the world see this fanaticism as the embodiment of the "dark side". After the fall of the USSR the world no longer had the "communists" to think of as the "dark side" and since people seem to have a psychological need to have a "bad guy" the Muslims are filling that need now. The media emphasizes that "dark side" with ugly images. The "war on terror" has helped the fanatic side to grow. In fact the "war on terror" and fanaticism seem to make a perfect fit. Before the 9/11 and the "war on terror" fanaticism was a small part of Islam in each country. Now there is a great rise in fanaticism.

If you address the problem part (fanatic part) of a person, that part comes out even stronger than before. (An example to illustrate this might be a child who has done naughty things. If you address the naughty side of this child and expect him/her to be bad then he/she probably will fulfill your expectations.) 80-90 % of the Muslims are not fanatical, but people are being pushed into the fanatical camp by the "war on terror".

At this point Ahmad began talking about the beliefs of Islam. The basic article of faith is: I bear witness that there is no other God but Allah and Mohamed is his prophet. All Islamic sects pray the same prayers and the oneness of God is primary. (They do not believe in the Trinity, and it is a concept that they have difficulty understanding.)

The Muslims see Jesus as a prophet of God. In the Koran Jesus is mentioned more times than Mohammed. (Abraham is mentioned the most and then Jesus.) The most mentioned woman is Mary. He asked, "Why Islam?"---"Why the Koran?" He answered with humor, "God needed to send a reminder."

There is no concept of monasticism in Islam. Instead it is woven into everyday life. Sufism is this mystical side of Islam. Sufi---directness to God---has been a large part of Islam for a long time. There are many orders of Sufism. It involves seeing God in everything and in the world. God is within creation and within the individual. Ahmad says that we need a sense of true pluralism. We need to honor the beliefs in other people. People become sensitive about their faith when they feel that they are under attack. His persuasive plea is that we treat Muslims evenhandedly so they can feel comfortable and be able to work on the problem of fanaticism from within Islam.

### OBLATE NOTES:

- It has been most gratifying for me to receive an Honorary Degree, Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Nebraska on Saturday, December 17 at the Commencement Exercises. I also gave the Commencement Address, "Together, We can do much more." You will probably hear some of it in the future. Sister Phyllis
- TRIBUTE: Jane Draper, a good friend of Oblate Charlena Genia, deceased, wrote a beautiful tribute about her in the Journal Star. "Although Char lived a most unassuming life, she gave generously of her time, talent and love to anyone at anytime without seeking anything in return. That is rare indeed."
- From Oblates Ebb and Lucy Munden: We are on the Gulf Coast and will miss being with you but you will be in our thoughts and prayers. Each year we (mainly Lucy) write a book for our grandchildren (David age 18 and Caroline age 12) which includes many photographs of our times together during the year, and give it to them for a Christmas gift. We hope that each of you will have a blessed Christmas and joyous and healthy New Year.