



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery

March 2008

ASSIGNMENTS ARE THE SAME FOR ALL

CHAPTERS: Wisdom from the Tradition, "Receiving Christ in All" Chapter VI, pp. 58-70; RB 53; 1 Kings 17:7-16

Lincoln Chapter: Sunday, North Commons Cafeteria or Monday in the Sheridan Rooms A & B. NOTE ROOM CHANGE FOR MONDAY, Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, Sunday, Feb 9, 2008 or Monday, Feb 10, 2008:

Steinauer Chapter: Banquet Room, across from St. Anthony's Church, Monday, Mar 3, 2008, 7-9p.m.

Hastings Chapter: St. Michael's Church, Family Room, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., Saturday, Mar 8, 2008

Omaha Chapter: New Cassel Retirement Center, Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, East Entrance, Omaha, NE, Tuesday, March 11, 2008

around the Madonna House next door where families of Madonna patients stay while the patient recovers. They come from states all around. They touch our hearts.

Just let me know by email or telephone (see end of newsletter) if you have an interest in doing any of the above. It will be another opportunity for us to get better acquainted with our community of Oblates and share in the joys of being outdoors with God's nature. Your ideas are always welcome. Sister Phyllis

OBLATE NOTES:

- Oblate Dan Deffenbaugh: I wanted to let you know about my new writing project on the web -- a "blog." I am planning to post a reflection every two weeks. So, if you'd like to check it please go to: www.seedsofshalom.com.

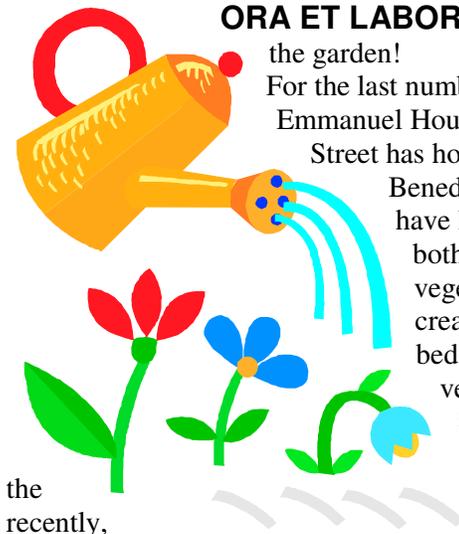
BOOK REVIEW: Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

David Relin is a journalist who is captured by the adventures of Greg Mortenson, a Mountain Climber who by a fate of mishap becomes determined to build schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Greg grew up in Africa being a child of Lutheran missionaries who originated from Minnesota, right out of Lake Wobegon, author Relin declares. This upbringing allows his character to be patient and open to whatever tribal customs and attitudes he will soon encounter.

The three cups of tea are the ritual metaphor that divides the book along three phases. Among the Balti people who live along the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the first cup is for the stranger. It is a ritual of hospitality and nourishment for the stranger, Greg Mortenson whom they help recover from a failed climb. He is so taken by the generosity of these people who would slaughter their finest goat so he would have the protein he needed to recover. It compares to the widows mite of the New Testament parable. In appreciation, he promises to return and help them build a school. Much of the first part of this book is his attempts to get funding for materials. Purchasing the materials and getting it up to this rugged terrain without bridges and good roads leads to experiences of bartering and dealing to get other

ORA ET LABORA: Springtime in the garden!

For the last number of years, Emmanuel House at 5441 Glade Street has housed a number of Benedictine Sisters who have loved to garden, both flower and vegetable gardening creating many flower beds and a plot for vegetables. After Sisters Enid and Janice returned to monastery just recently, it has left me



the recently, (Sister Phyllis) alone until Sisters Patricia and Carmella come in May. I have visited with Rich O'Neil, a master gardener and Oblate and he will come to review the gardens. We will see what we need to do to bring new life to the areas through transplanting, new plants and fertilizing. Then I will welcome those of you who love to dig and plant to join me in some communal gardening enjoying God's gift of blessings and benefits from gardening. Your time will be as you wish to spend it: day, evening or weekend beginning when the weather permits. PS: We have also been doing a little gardening

tribesman to cooperate. When he arrives back at the village of promised school, he gets his second cup of tea.

The second cup is for the honored guest, Greg, who has kept his promise and won the hearts of a grateful people. However, he soon learns that there is some differing opinion among the tribe about whether the school is the most important project or should they build a bridge first so that the locals can more easily travel to fertile plateaus for trade and commerce? Rather than stomping off with ingratitude for his efforts, he quickly joins their plan with a negotiated agreement that after the bridge, the school would be built. Greg returns to the States to get more money so that workers could be hired to build the bridge. He returns the third time. He pushes the workers and leaders to get the bridge built. He has less patience this time for he knows that the season for building is very short. He wants the bridge and school built before harsh winter arrives. After a few weeks of tolerating Greg's push, he is offered the third cup of tea. They insist that he take a break from his pushing.

"The third time you share a cup of tea you become family, and for our family, we are prepared to do anything, even die," he (Haji Ali) said, laying his hand warmly on Mortenson's own. "Doctor Greg, you must take time to share three cups of tea. We may be uneducated. But we are not stupid. We have lived here and survived here a long time." (p. 150) Here Greg got the message to slow down and spend as much time building the relationships as well as accomplishing the work. He demoted himself from foreman to spectator. When large wood beams were needed to stretch the span, Greg headed down to lower camp and bartered for them. By then the neighboring villages had heard about Dr. Greg, and started volunteering to help out. Even the holy men of the villages, who were not supposed to do manual labor, were helping to hand carrying these beams along the rugged trails.

The book is full of insights about these people for whom the greatest enemy is not Al Qaeda, or the Taliban, but ignorance. Yet, when America fails to keep its promises to provide money for schools, after we helped locals rout out the Russians, the extremist move in from Saudi Arabia later to be known as the Taliban. They foster fear and pledge of revenge on Americans, hence 911. Yet, Greg Mortenson is protected by other tribal leaders since he has kept his promise for schools. When Taliban accuses him of fostering Christian and American principals among the Muslims, the tribal leaders defend him. In fact he has made it a practice to join in their prayers to Allah. If he would have professed Christ openly, he would be dead. This provides some interesting reflection for us as we are to be Christ to the

world. Greg is honored for his humanitarian commitment and continues to do amazing work there.

As Benedictines, one can readily see the fruits of hospitality building a trust both ways in the ever expanding network among the tribes. His work also stirs insight on American policy there. Many American generals privately gave him money for schools agreeing that education was the answer to the enemy of ignorance. Dr. Gregg was unusually open to the local culture working hard not to impose any of his own agenda. Even though he never professed Christ, his caring heart became a witness to all who encountered him.

The book is difficult to follow sometimes because of the "strange" names and places. This speaks to how little this reader knows about that part of the world. While I too admired his commitment, I am not sure that the sacrifice of his family weighed in balance. The book has all the struggles that come from a calling. It does inspire me to continue to seek where God would want me to be and do, even here in Lincoln. Steven E. Liechti, D.Min. Obl.OSB, Lincoln



*The Lord can clear the darkest skies
Can give us day for night.
Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
To rivers of delight.*

- Isaac Watts



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