



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Living by the Spirit of The Rule of St. Benedict + Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery
www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org + info@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org + **December 2013**

Living with The Rule of St. Benedict

PREPARING OUR HEARTS

From *The Rule* of our Holy Father Benedict: "Brothers, now that we have asked the Lord who will dwell in his tent, we have heard the instruction for dwelling in it, but only if we fulfill the obligations of those who live there. We must, then, prepare our hearts and bodies for the battle of holy obedience to his instructions. What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply with the help of his grace. If we wish to reach eternal life, even as we avoid the torments of hell, then—while there is still time, while we are in this body and have time to accomplish all these things by the light of life—we must run and do now what will profit us forever."

—RB Prol. 39–44.

The Oblation Ceremony was held on Sunday, November 10, 2013, in the James C. Ryan Memorial Chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. The Chapel was filled with oblates, those making their Initial and Final Oblations, and family members and friends. It was a moving service of prayer, followed by a reception in the Sheridan Room. Steve Liechti was thanked for his service as Lead Dean. Steve and his wife Rebecca are moving from Lincoln to be closer to family.



Sr. Joelle Bauer, Sr. Penny Bingham, and Sr. Phyllis Hunhoff from Sacred Heart Monastery attended the Ceremony.

Oblation Ceremony

NEBRASKA OBLATES GATHER FOR WORSHIP



Sr. Joelle Bauer, Oblate Director of Sacred Heart Monastery, installed Steve Blum as new Lincoln Dean and Carol Olson as Lead Dean for the Chapter.



Lincoln Dean Jim Rea thanks Steve Liechti for his service as Lead Dean.

CHAPTERS	DEANS	LOCATIONS
Hastings	<i>Juliene Bryan</i> , juliene.bryan@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	<i>Family Room, St. Michael's Church, Hastings</i>
	<i>Carol Barry</i> , carol.barry@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	<i>Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital</i>
	<i>Steve Blum</i> , steve.blum@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	<i>Sheridan Room (Sunday)</i>
Lincoln	<i>Carol Olson</i> , carol.olson@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	<i>Nemaha Room (Monday)</i>
	<i>Jim Rea</i> , jim.rea@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	5401 South St.
	<i>Mary Schroer</i> , mary.schroer@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	Lincoln
Omaha	<i>Rod Dolton</i> , rod.dolton@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	<i>New Cassel Retirement Ctr. Lecture Hall, Omaha</i>
Steinauer	<i>Marcia Borchert</i> , marcia.borchert@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	<i>Banquet Room, Convent House B&B, Steinauer</i>

Those oblates unable to attend the Oblation ceremony will be able to sign Renewal Certificates or—for Novices—Initial Enrollment Certificates at their Chapter meetings. The Deans will contact individuals to share options for making their Final Oblations.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW NOVICES AND OBLATES

A number of individuals made their Initial Oblation to become novice oblates of Sacred Heart Monastery:

Lincoln Chapter

Marianne Guenther
Phyllis Spence.

Omaha Chapter

Gina Love Aguilar.

Several Oblate Novices made their Final Oblations:

Lincoln Chapter

Susanna Des Marais
Donna Harrison
Amanda “Day” Hefner
Matthew Gibilisco
Judy Sholy
Dori Umphreys
Shannon Van Gerpen.

Hastings Chapter

Greg Burke.

Worship

MORNING PRAYER

Oblates gather every Friday morning at 7:30 in the chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, 5401 South St., Lincoln, Nebraska, to pray Morning Prayer. Everyone is welcome.

FEAST OF ST. THOMAS BECKETT

Sunday, December 29, 2013, we will have Vespers at 5:30 p.m. in the chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. This evening’s vespers celebrates the life of St. Thomas Beckett. Born in London on December 21, 1118 (?), Beckett was martyred at Canterbury on December 29, 1170. After a falling out with King Henry II over the rights and privileges of the Church, Beckett and was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by followers of the king. He was honored as St. Thomas of Canterbury. His tomb was a popular

pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages until it was destroyed in 1538. Thomas Beckett’s feast day is celebrated on December 29.

The Lincoln Chapter offers Vespers monthly, marking the lives of other memorable Benedictines.

SHORTER CHRISTIAN PRAYER FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Sunday, December 1, is the first Sunday of Advent and the beginning of the new liturgical year.

We begin this new church year with Week I on p. 37. Note that Psalm Antiphons 1, 2, and 3 are those for Advent. At the Reading, turn to the Advent Season, which can be found on pp. 356–378.

Christmas readings begin on Wednesday, December 25, on p. 380.

Morning and Evening Prayer for the weekdays during the Christmas Season are found on pp. 392–395. The psalms and canticles for Morning Prayer are on p. 384, while those for Evening Prayer are found on p. 387. Repeat the Christmas Season weekday readings until Epiphany, January 5.

The Sunday after Christmas is the Feast of the Holy Family. Antiphons and concluding prayer can be found on p. 396.

SHORTER CHRISTIAN PRAYER BOOK ORIENTATION

On Saturday, November 2, 2013, Lincoln Oblate Marcia Straatmeyer taught a lesson to novices and oblates on using *Shorter Christian Prayer* for the liturgies of Morning and Evening Prayer.



Prayer Book Orientation Participants: Marianne Guenther, Phyllis Spence, Judy Sholy, and Marcia Straatmeyer.

Chapter Gatherings

HASTINGS CHAPTER

The general meeting will be Saturday, December 14, 2013, 9:30–11:30 a.m., in the Family Room at St. Michael's Church.

Read Chapters 7 and 8 of *Conversation with Saint Benedict: the Rule in Today's World* by Terrence G. Kardong: "Economics without Anxiety" and "Food and Drink," pp. 57–71.

- Facilitator: Robin Stroot
- Companion Leader: Sharon Connor (Novice Lesson #4)
- Prayer Leader: Leland Ostdiek
- Reflection: Susan Janda.

HASTINGS CELL

Hastings Cell gathering (St. Scholastica Cell): Saturday, December 28, 9:30 a.m., in the Library at St. Michael's Church.

Read Chapter 7, "Compassion," pp. 97–105, from *Cherish Christ Above All* by Demetrius Dumm, OSB.

- Facilitator: Greg Burke.

Grand Island Cell gathering (Brother Lawrence Cell): Monday, December 30, 2013, 4:30–5:30 p.m., First Christian Church 2400 W. 14th St., Grand Island. The assignment is the same as for the Hastings Cell.

- Facilitator: Scott Taylor.

LINCOLN CHAPTER

General gatherings will be Sunday, December 8 and Monday, December 9, 2013. Read Chapters 1, 2, and 6, "Laughter and Tears," "Monastic Recreation," and "Work" from *Conversation with Saint Benedict: the Rule in Today's World*, by Terrence G. Kardong.

The Sunday meeting is in the Sheridan Room at Madonna, the Monday meeting is in the Nemaha Room.

Cell gatherings: Read Chapter 7, "Compassion," pp. 97–105, from *Cherish Christ Above All* by Demetrius Dumm, OSB.

OMAHA CHAPTER

General Meeting: The general gathering will be Wednesday, December 11, 2013, 7:00–9:00 p.m. at the New Cassel Retirement Center. The reading will cover Chapters 7 and 8 of *Conversation with Saint Benedict: the Rule in Today's World* by Terrence G. Kardong: "Economics with Anxiety"

and "Food and Drink," pp. 57–71. Prior to breakaway for new oblate orientation, we will continue as an entire group to review sections of our Oblate Workbook. The review replaces the facilitator reflection of prior seasons.

New Oblate Orientation: Philip Kelley and Sr. Marlene will break away with Gina, our newest member.

Facilitator and Vespers Roles: Our group determined at the beginning of this season to eliminate pre-assigning facilitators and Vespers leaders. Predetermining these responsibilities created an undue burden individually and too much of an administrative preoccupation for our small size. Hence, our reading assignment reflections seem now to result in more relaxed and spontaneous interaction within the group. Also, Vesper roles are determined immediately prior to recitation for the same reasons.

Cell Meeting: There will not be a December cell meeting due to Christmas. In addition to *Cherish Christ Above All* under review this season, our Omaha group is listening to a series of audio-recorded lectures by Thomas Merton given to novices at Gethsemane Abby near Louisville, Kentucky, in the early 1960s. The lectures are on the twelve steps of humility of Benedictine spirituality and serve in place of reflections at the beginning of the Cell meetings. God bless you and have a wonderful Advent and Christmas!

—Rod Dolton, Omaha Dean

STEINAUER CHAPTER

The general gathering will be held on Monday, December 30, 2013, 7:00–9:00 p.m. in the Banquet Room across from St. Anthony's Church.

Read Chapters 5 and 6 of *Conversation with Saint Benedict: the Rule in Today's World* by Terrence G. Kardong—"The Idolatry of Security" and "Work," pp. 40–56.

Nebraska Cell Groups

INTRODUCTION

Cell group readings for 2013–2014 come from *Cherish Christ Above All: The Bible in the Rule of Benedict*, Demetrius Dumm, OSB, Latrobe, Penn.: Saint Vincent Archabbey Publications, 2002.

The Nebraska Chapter has a variety of cell groups:

HASTINGS

Saint Scholastica Cell

- Leader: various individuals
- Meetings: The fourth Saturday of the month beginning at 9:30 a.m. in the library of St. Michael's Church, Hastings.

Brother Lawrence Cell

- Leader: various individuals
- Meets the fourth Monday of the month, 4:30–5:30 p.m. at First Christian Church, 2400 West 14th St., Grand Island, Nebraska.

LINCOLN

Pax Christi Cell

- Leader: Lorene Ludy
- Meetings: The fourth Monday from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Mary Lu Long's house, 1615 Brent Blvd., Lincoln.

Beginners' Cell

- Leader: Marti Fritzen
- Meetings: Monthly on the fourth Sunday at 7:00 p.m. in the Lancaster Room at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. The Rule of Benedict (RB 73:8) says that the rule is for beginners; we are all beginners and all are welcome to this cell.

Subiaco Cell

- Leader: Tim Fisher
- Meetings: Every other Saturday beginning at 8:00 a.m. with Morning Prayer in the chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. Then this cell for men moves to a designated room for conversation. This month's meetings are December 14 and 28.

Preferring Christ Cell

- Leaders: Paul Blotkamp and Charlotte Liggett
- Meetings: The fourth Sunday of every month at Madonna. The assignments are from *Preferring Christ* by Norvene Vest.

OMAHA

Omaha Cell

- Leaders: Various individuals
- Meetings: Monthly on the second Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at New Castle Retirement Center.

General Announcements

SNOW POLICY

It seems timely to restate our snow policy.

1. Should we have three to four inches of snow, we will cancel the meeting without notice. The meeting will not be rescheduled. The next month's meeting will occur as scheduled with that month's assignment.
2. Should we have a snowstorm that seems hard to judge, an e-mail will be sent. For those without e-mail, please call someone with e-mail. In all cases, use your best judgment: Be Safe!

CHANGE OF E-MAIL ADDRESSES

When you update your e-mail address, please send a message to:

info@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org.

This will assure that you continue to receive notices about the release of newsletters and other important chapter messages.

MONASTERY AND CHAPTER GATHER PETITIONS

If you would like to send your prayer requests to the monastery, the Web address for Sacred Heart Monastery's prayer requests is: www.yanktonbenedictines.org/PrayerRequest.php.

You may also send petitions to Marcia Straatmeyer at mstraat@neb.rr.com or by using the Prayer Request option on the chapter's Web site: www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/contact/.

Reflection

THE GREAT "O ANTIPHONS"

The "O Antiphons" refer to the seven Magnificat antiphons recited during Vespers. They cover the special period of Advent preparation known as the Octave before Christmas, Dec. 17–23. Each one highlights a title for the Messiah and refers to the prophecy of Isaiah of the coming of the Messiah.

The "O Antiphons" date back to the fourth century. The Latin versions of each of the titles of the Messiah are: *Sapientia* (Wisdom), *Adonai* (Lord), *Radix* (Root), *Clavis* (Key), *Oriens* (Dawn), *Rex* (King), and *Emmanuel* (Emmanuel). Take the first letters of each of the titles, starting with the last and working back to the first to spell: *EROCRAS* or "*ero cras*"—"I will be (there) tomorrow."

The song "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is created from the seven "O Antiphons." When you sing it, you are joining yourself to a vast throng of

Christians, stretching back across centuries and spanning the whole of the earth, who prayed as all Christians do—"Come, Lord Jesus!" (See Rev. 22:20.)

The "O Antiphons" may be substituted for the Advent antiphons in *Shorter Christian Prayer* for December 17-23.

O ANTIPHONS: THE MAGNIFICAT ANTIPHONS

Dec. 17: *O Sapientia:* "O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation."

Dec. 18: *O Adonai:* "O sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free."

Dec. 19: *O Radix Jesse:* "O Flower of Jesse's stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid."

Dec. 20: *O Clavis David:* "O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel controlling at your will the gate of Heaven: Come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom."

Dec. 21: *O Oriens:* "O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death."

Dec. 22: *O Rex Gentium:* "O King of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart; O Keystone of the mighty arch of man, come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust."

Dec. 23: *O Emmanuel:* "O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God."

Dec. 24: Christmas Vigil.

Sacred Heart Monastery News

BECOME A FACEBOOK FRIEND

"My son, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find mercy in the sight of God. For great is the power of the Lord; by the humble he is glorified" (Ben Sira 3: 17-20).

Consider "liking" Sacred Heart on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/shmvation.

INVITATION TO SUPPORT BENEDICTINE RESEARCH PROJECT

Sr. Bonita Gacnik, O.S.B., shared an invitation with us.

Dr. Julia A. Upton is engaged in a research project on Oblates for the American Benedictine Academy. The theme for the convention to be held this coming summer (2014) is "Benedictine Monasticism: The Past Receiving the Future." To that end I have been charged to survey oblates around the country and analyze the data so that we have more than anecdotal evidence with which to continue the conversation between tradition and new expressions of the Benedictine charism.

If you have made your Final Oblation and would be willing to participate in this research project, please visit this Web site:

<http://irsurveys.stjohns.edu/S11/AmericanBenedictine/>

Dr. Upton is contacting all the Oblate directors in the United States and Canada with regard to this project with the hope that this research will have a strong sense of the oblate community.

Thank you for your help, and I hope that I can also count on your prayers for this project.

Blessings & Peace,

Sr. Bonita Gacnik, O.S.B.

Sacred Heart Monastery

SR. BONITA'S BLOG

This year, Sr. Bonita Gacnik, O.S.B., has spent several months in East Africa. She kept a blog that shares her insights and reflections of her time there. Here is a sample of what she writes:

Tuesday, July 30: Just a few notes from some previous conversations. When I was talking with the Sudanese sisters last Sunday re: the war and the poverty, they said, "When you have no food, you don't feel hungry." The people would eat seeds and whatever they could find. They are very matter-of-fact about their lives. They truly live one day at a time. They love each other and live their faith. They trust in God as they live the mystery of poverty and destitution that surrounds them.

If you would like to read more and to see photographs of the places where she ministered and the people who touched her life, then visit:

<http://bgacnik.simplesite.com>.

+Ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus

+That God may be glorified in all things.