



BENEDICTINE OBLATES OF NEBRASKA

Volume 8, Issue 2

"Peace"

October 2002

ASSIGNMENTS:

Lincoln Chapter: Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital
Sunday, October 13, 2002, 7-9 p.m., North Commons
Monday, October 14, 2002, 7-9 p.m., Flanagan Room
Assignment: Preferring Christ, Chapter 7, Humility,
Pages 25-57.

Special Session for Lincoln/New members: Saturday,
October 26, 9-10:30 a.m. in the Flanagan Room for
orientation to the Divine Office, confirmation of Initial
Oblation and practice for ceremony.

Ashland/Greenwood Chapter: Greenwood, St. Joseph
Church Hall
Thursday, October 3, 7-9 p.m., Lessons Conversion,
Obedience and Prayer
Thursday, October 17, 7-9 p.m., Lessons Lectio and the
Hours

Steinauer Chapter: Banquet Room across the street
from St. Anthony's Church
Monday, October 7, 7-9 p.m. Lessons: Holiness, St.
Benedict & Conversion
Monday, October 21, 7-9 p.m. Lessons: Obedience and
Prayer

Hastings Chapter: Family Room at St. Michael's
Church
Saturday, October 12, 2002, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Lessons: Conversion and Obedience, Preferring Christ,
Prologue pages. 7-9
Explanation of Oblation and details of the Ceremony

COMPANION AND CELL GROUPS: All new
members and Oblates should have or will be receiving a
call in September about being in a particular group. If
you have not been contacted, do contact me at 488-6731
or 483-9524 or email me at phunhoff@ix.netcom.com.
We do not want anyone missed. Sister Phyllis

**"FINDING HAPPINESS IN THE RULE OF
BENEDICT"** will be presented by Sister Constance
Kristolc, OSB., of Mount Saint Scholastic Monastery,
Atchison, KS on Saturday, October 5, 2002, from 9 a.m.
to 3 p.m., in the Agee Conference Room, Madonna
Rehabilitation Hospital. Sister Constance led our Oblate
Retreat in April at Atchison and was very well received.

This will be an opportunity to bring her inspirational
message closer for more of you to hear her. She has an
impressive background in Benedictine Spirituality.
There is a \$20 fee and lunch will be on your own. We
thank Lou Ann Green, Oblate, for arranging this event
for us.

FORMATION HANDBOOKS: For those of you,
who have not received your Handbook, please do feel
free to call me so we can arrange to have you pick it up
either at 5441 Glade Street or at the Madonna Reception
desk. There is cost of \$5 per handbook. Call me at 488-
6731/483-9524 or email me. Sister Phyllis

THANK YOU! Let us express our gratitude to Lou
Ann Green who will continue organizing our Oblates for
Hospitality and to Marti Fritzen for organizing our
Oblates for Sunday night refreshments.

EMAIL: Almost 2/3 of our Oblates and new members
have email. This is a tremendous cost savings for us.
Should there be some of you who can convert from
regular mail to email, we would most grateful. Email
me at phunhoff@ix.netcom.com.

PLAY PRAISE AND PRAYER, Saturday, October
12th: Once again Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 6001
A St will host three Episcopal Nuns from the
Community of the Holy Spirit in New York. Each Sister
will be leading a workshop twice during the day.

- Sister Mary Martha: "Intelligent Praying."
- Sister Emmanuel: "Praying with Nature."
- Sister Leslie: "What do You Get From This
Anyway?"

Registration is at 8:30 a.m. with concurrent workshops
throughout the day. Evening Prayer at 3:15 and Gospel
Sing at 7 p.m. A \$35 registration fee will cover cost of
food and bringing Sisters to Lincoln.

TAIZE EVENING SERVICE, every first Sunday
evening at 8 p.m. at First Plymouth Congregational
Church, 200 D St. In 1940, a 25 year old man from
Switzerland, Brother Roger, came to the small village of
Taize' in the Burgundy Region of France with the dream

of starting an ecumenical community for contemplation and for the reconciliation of Christians of all faiths. Today, the community is made up of brothers from several continents and various denominations. The 45 minute service, in the Taize tradition, includes readings from scripture, prayers of the people in which people are invited to mention a name or a phrase in prayer, sung prayers and a period of silence.

OBLATE NOTES:

- Sister Jane Gyhra (Oblate) of Michigan, will be home in Steinauer for a wedding this fall.
- It is good to see Don McCarty back at the Greenwood/Ashland Oblate Chapter meeting after his heart by-pass. There are a number of other Oblates also recovering and returning after serious illness. Our prayers are very powerful.
- Nancy Donovan, Oblate, of Silver City, SD, was in Lincoln and was able to visit with a number of you.
- Mary and John Schere, Oblates, visited. John is recovering well after significant treatments. They travel between Minnesota and New Mexico.

THE EARLY MONASTIC TRADITION

HANDBOOKS: As we begin to move into the studies of our Benedictine Formation Handbook, you will note that there are several very important early monastics that have been given brief background information under "The Early Monastic Tradition." One of these early monastics is John Cassian, born about 360 A. D., prior to the time of St. Benedict.

We have a book in our "mobile" library, entitled, Thoughts Matter, (1998) by Mary Margaret Funk, OSB., of St. Benedict's Monastery of Beech Grove, Indiana. Kathleen Norris says of this book, "Although talk of 'desert monks' may seem exotic, the good news about the practices of meditation and renunciation that Sister Mary Margaret speaks of in this book is that they are open to anyone."

Sister Mary Margaret tells us that according to John Cassian, three renunciations are required of us if we are looking seriously for the right path on the spiritual journey. First we must renounce our former way of life and move closer to our heart's desire (God), toward the interior life. Second, we must do the inner work (of asceticism) by renouncing our mindless thoughts. This renunciation is particularly difficult because we have little control over our thoughts. Third, and finally, we must renounce our own images of God so that we can enter into contemplation of God as God.

This book is about the second of those three renunciations: with thoughts, we grapple. Recurring

themes or trains of thoughts run constantly through our consciousness. These thoughts—which can lead to desires and ultimately to passions—cluster in predictable ways: they are about food, sex, things, anger, dejection, acedia (or spiritual apathy), vainglory and pride.

In a contemporary world of complex spiritual teachings, which require sophisticated knowledge and difficult study, Cassian's lessons are very direct. He simply invited his early Christian readers to seek God by knowing and stabilizing their thoughts. The Rule of St. Benedict, written one hundred years after the time of the desert fathers and mothers, was an extension of that same spirit. Benedict, in his short rule, refers seventy-eight times to Cassian's Conferences and sixty-eight times to the Institutes. Like Cassian, he invites his monks and nuns to make the three renunciations, to leave all and follow Christ, not by going to the desert but by dwelling in a monastery. We say today that lay practitioners can also enter into the same transformative experience by being faithful to inner work. It is up to each person to decide what it takes to let go of a former way of life: to remain outwardly in the same environment, or to change his or her location or lifestyle. No matter which environment is chosen, one must pay serious attention to the second renunciation: to let go of thoughts that are not toward prayer.

The miracles of the church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices or healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar off, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always. Willa Cather, Death Comes for the Archbishop, 1927.

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