



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

December 2002

Peace

ASSIGNMENTS

LINCOLN CHAPTER, Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, **Sunday, December 8, 2002, 7-9 p.m.** North Commons or **Monday, December 9, 2002, 7-9 p.m.** Flanagan Room, Text: Preferring Christ, Chapter 7, Humility, Pages 58-63.

GREENWICK/ASHLAND CHAPTER, St. Joseph Church Hall, Greenwood

- **Thursday, December 5, 2002, 7-9 p.m.**, Respond in writing, "Am I willing to commit to on-going conversion? Lectio: Monastic Tradition and Rule of St. Benedict through the Summary.
- **Thursday, December 19, 2003, 7-9 p.m.**, Lectio: The Place of Monasticism in the Modern World, Sacred Heart Monastery Family Tree and the Daily Office.

HASTINGS CHAPTER, Family Room, St. Michael's Church, **Saturday, December 14, 2002, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.**, Lessons: Prayer and Lectio, also read Articles on Lectio in Handbook Preferring Christ, Prologue pages 10-13.

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

Monday, December 2, 2002, 7-9 p.m.

Respond in writing, "What draws me specifically to Benedictine Spirituality?"

Lectio: Work and Hospitality

Monday, December 16, 2002, 7-9 p.m.

Respond in writing "Am I willing to commit to ongoing conversion?"

Lectio: Monastic Tradition and Rule of St. Benedict through the Summary

CONGRATULATIONS to the 24 new Novice Oblates who made their Initial Oblation and to the 22 new Oblates who made their final Oblation. May each of you continue to live your commitment faithfully, may you always, "prefer nothing whatever to Christ and may God bring us all together to everlasting life."

ADVENT: "COME LORD JESUS!"

Once again we begin this beautiful season of Advent with words of caution and promise from the Lord. Rather than considering Advent simply as a time of waiting for Christmas, let us look at it as a time of transformation and miracles. So much can happen over the next few weeks, if only we stay alert to the Spirit's movements. Taking a few simple steps will help us to watch and to wait.

- Spend some special time each day in lectio (reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation) praising and thanking God for sending us Jesus. During Advent consider using the Sunday and daily scripture readings as we "prepare the way."
- As we decorate and seek appropriate gifts, recall Benedict's admonition for simplicity and good stewardship of our resources.

"Lord, help me to prepare for the coming of your Son. I want to accept the grace that he has won for me. During this season of expectation, fill my heart with your love and my mind with our truth."

CHRISTMAS 2002: In this season of "Bringing Christ's peace to the World," when we seem to be on the brink of war, let us implore God through prayer that our leaders find resolutions to peace and not war.

"This day true peace has come down to us from heaven, this day the heavens drip honey upon the entire world. This day brought the dawn of new redemption, of deliverance announced of old, of eternal happiness."
(Matins of the Divine Office)

This is my Christmas message to each of you! Lovingly,
Sister Phyllis

WARNING: The following are the guidelines to help us decide if we will have a meeting in the event of a major snow storm.

1. Should we have 4-6 inches of snow, we will cancel the meeting without notice. The meeting will not be rescheduled. The next months meeting will occur as scheduled with that month's assignment.

2. Should we have a snowstorm which will be hard to judge, we will send an email to those with computers. Others should call the Madonna switchboard as we will leave a notice there.

MONASTERY NOTES:

- "The Mosaic of your Life" is a weekend retreat to explore the seasons of your life with stained glass and prayer, Friday evening to Sunday noon, December 6-8. To reserve space: email kcourtney@mtmc.edu or call (605) 668-6000 or -6236. For more information, see Peace Center links at www.yanktonbenedictines.org.
- The book about noted Oblates, *BENEDICT IN THE WORLD*, is now on S. Ann Kessler's desk. If interested, Sister Anne can get you a discounted copy for about \$14-16. Please let her know. (Sister Ann's chapter about Elena is on pp. 19-29). Email Sister Anne Kessler (akessler@mtmc.edu) or call 605-668-6169.

OBLATE NOTES:

- Welcome Oblate Rich O'Neill, who is an Oblate from Conception Abbey, MO. He will be sharing in our Lincoln Oblate Community.
- Let us remember Margaret Kepford's sister, Mary Haller who died last week. May she rest in peace.
- Please keep Sheila Weiss in your prayers as she recovers from hip surgery. She is recovering at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital.

TOOLS OF THE SPIRITUAL CRAFT: A conference on The Tools of Good Works--RB 4 given by a friend of mine, Abbess Paula Fairlie, of Chester, England. S. Ann K. Here are a few excerpts:

Let us now begin to look at some of the seventy-four carefully selected tools listed in RB4

We are given the goal, our final end, the vision we see in the distance, in the first two tools: First of all, love the Lord God with your whole heart, your whole soul and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. The end of the journey is the capacity to give and receive love: the means is learning through human experience how to do this. The *telos* is love of God, the *scopos* is the love of human beings. In the end, they are one.

These commandments are both the foundation stones of God's temple and a distant hope. We can stand in the cool darkness and marvel at the beauty of the night sky, with the moon partially obscured by the clouds, and the stars twinkling before the rush of a cloud hides them. We may be filled with great longing but have no realistic way of becoming part of this cool beauty. Yet scientists

have proved, and mystics have experienced, that we - and all creation - are made out of star dust. In our heart there is a divine spark, and it is this spark which Christ Himself wished to kindle in us: I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! So we are not faced with an impossible goal but with a possible task of love.

If we want to make a fire, a bonfire or bone-fire, we have to be sure that we have kindling material, a source of fire, and that we have gathered the rubbish we want to burn. Some of the tools of the spiritual craft are kindling wood and paper, while others are the precepts we want to make our own, and others are the repugnant things we want to burn to ashes.

God Himself selected both what He wanted and what He did not want when Moses received the Commandments on Mount Sinai. These ten precepts became more than 365 as holy men tried to apply them to the details of daily life by refining them and elaborating them. In a way, our monastic discipline follows in the footsteps of these God-fearing men and women by providing us with special guidance for a specialized Christian life in community. We are given 74 precepts, even though Our Lord had reduced the commandments to the sign of the cross: love of God connecting earth and heaven, and love of neighbor forming a band of relationships which was to embrace the whole world, intersecting in Christ. In fact, if we see the earth as a circle, the whole is intersected by the cross. In some religions this is called a 'mandala', a means of focusing prayer.

We can take the two Commandments as our mandala, the means by which we search for wholeness. All the rest of the commandments are an elaboration of what leads to life and what leads to death. The gift on which these commandments are based, and without which they have no root in creation, is the primal gift of Life.

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