



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

September 2003

OBLATE ASSIGNMENTS

LINCOLN CHAPTER, Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital
Sunday, Sept 14, 2003, 7-9 p.m. North Commons or
Monday, Sept 15, 2003, 7-9 p.m. Flanagan Room
Text: Preferring Christ, Domestic Arrangements, Chapters 31-35, pages 107-115

ASHLAND/GREENWOOD CHAPTER

Thursday, September 4, 2003, St. Joseph Church Hall, 7-9 p.m.
Preferring Christ, Chapters 37-41, pages 109-113
Thursday, September 18, 2003, Chapters 42-45 plus Interlude VII, pages 114-119

HASTINGS CHAPTER

, St. Michael's Church, Family Room

Saturday, May 13, 2003, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Handbook: Read Contemplative Availability. Write down how you can apply Contemplative Availability into your life. Be prepared to present to others. (*Receive forms to prepare for Rule of Life*)

STEINAUER CHAPTER

, Banquet Hall, across from St.

Anthony's Church
Monday, Sept. 8, 2003, 7-9 p.m.
Preferring Christ, Chapter 36, p.107 thru Chapter 42, p.114
Monday, Sept 22, 2003, 7-9 p.m.
Cell Meeting: Seeking God. Read Chapter 1 & 2, review study questions.
Leader: Oblate Marcia Borchers

OMAHA CHAPTER, All Saints Episcopal Church, 9302 Blondo, Omaha,
Tuesday, September 23, 2003, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m., conference room, lower level.

Handbook: Monastic Tradition including Benedict, Rule, Early Monasticism, Monasticism in the Modern World and Sacred Heart Monastery (www.yanktonbenedictines.org).

WELCOME BACK TO ALL OF OUR OBLATES, NOVICE OBLATES AND WELCOME TO OUR NEW INQUIRERS. The highlight of my summer was the meeting of the North American Association of Oblate Directors at the Benedictine Abbey in Atchison - "Forming a Monastic Heart." There are several exciting outcomes. First, Sacred Heart Monastery will host the Association in 2005, July 29th through August 3rd (also the year of our 125th anniversary). We will need Oblate assistance so put it on your calendar. Secondly, there will be an International Congress for Oblates (not directors) in Rome, September, 2005. Only about 250 Oblates will attend from all over the world so there will be only a few from North America. A process is underway to determine which monastery will send an Oblate. I have five tapes of the conferences which will be in our library for signing-out.

Just a note to tell you that 2/3rds of the monastery cookbooks have been sold (1000 remaining). I will have them available at our Lincoln Chapter meetings. All other chapters have had them. Thank you to all you have purchased one and a special thank you to those who have been selling them. Remember Christmas is coming! Sister Phyllis

OBLATE ANNUAL RETREAT: With the final construction at Mount Marty College and Sacred Heart Monastery, the Monastery and MMC Campus will host our next retreat, Saturday and Sunday, July 17-18, 2004. This will include Oblates, Novices and Spouses (plus family members 18 or over). The title will be, "Living the Benedictine Rule in a Non-Monastic Setting." Housing will be in the Corbey Dorm for those who stay overnight Saturday and/or come in Friday night. Costs will follow and reservations will begin in January.

FALL THEOLOGY INSTITUTE: Saturday, October 18, 2003, 9 a.m. to noon, Sacred Heart Monastery on "Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility: The Wisdom of Knowing One's Place," by Margaret Michaud, OSB. S. Margaret is Prioress of Saint Bede Monastery in Eau Claire, Wis. She teaches Scripture and ministers through spiritual direction, retreats and speaking engagements. To REGISTER: E-mail S. Jeanne Ranek, OSB / 605-668-6292, No admission fee.

HANDBOOK EXPERIENCE: If there is anyone who has not had the opportunity to go through the Oblate Handbook and would like to develop a "Personal Rule of Life," please notify me and we will arrange a time according to the participants. Sister Phyllis

OBLATE SERVICE PROJECT: The first Oblate Service Project went very well serving supper to all who came to the Matt Talbot Kitchen, Sat. July 19. The Team was: Oblates Brigid Amos, Carol Barry, Dar Christen, Mary Drell, Marti Fritzen, Ginger Goomis, Teresa Harms, Peggy Loos, Marcia Straatmeyer and Sister Phyllis. Lucy Kahler, who could not be present provided food. Meals served: 95 adults, 5 children, 35 second helpings, for a total of 135. Menu: chicken divine casserole, rice, watermelon, home made buns with margarine, cookies, milk & coffee. Marcia Straatmeyer and Teresa Harms, Co-Chair.

EMAIL PRAYER REQUESTS can now be sent to Joann Krumwiede at jk51915@alltel.net. She will forward requests to oblates with email access.

OBLATE NOTES:

- Congratulations to Jim O'Hanlon, Lincoln Oblate, on the creation of the James O'Hanlon Outstanding Educator Award announced May 9 at the annual Teacher's College Celebration of Excellence. After being Dean of the Teacher's College at UNL for 21 years, Jim will return to teaching.
- Congratulations to Vic Faesser, Steinauer Oblate, who had his reflection "Simplifying Life" published in the *Spirit and Life* magazine, July-August 2003 issue.
- Mary and John Schere (spent time in Lincoln): It was wonderful to know the Oblate program is going so well. We haven't used the cookbook yet but with so many good recipes, we will be experimenting. We left the farm in Burwell with the "wagon" pointed West, to Spokane, for our family's reunion.
- Tammy Whitney, Ashland Oblate will be entering Sacred Heart Monastery on August 17, 2003. Do keep her in your prayers.
- Nancy Ludden, Lincoln Oblate, has compiled the Haiku (a Japanese poem), written by the retreatants during the Oblate retreat presented by S. Kathleen Courtney, SHM, July 19. These will be handouts at our September meetings.
- Oblate Colleen Baade has received a three-month grant from the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue her research into nuns' music in 17th-century Spain (the subject of her PhD dissertation, completed in 2001). She will be working in archives in Madrid and Toledo, looking for documentary evidence of nuns' musical activities in old monastery account books, profession records and the like. She's also hoping to be able to visit at least a few of the sixteen female monasteries still functioning in Toledo. Most of these communities were founded during the Middle Ages, including one Benedictine house established in 1487.

"Listening With the Ear of Our Heart" Sermon delivered by Fr. Jerome Machar, O.C.S.O. (Cistercian) on the solemnity of St. Benedict, July 11, 2003, Abbey of Genesee, Piffard, NY. Submitted by Oblates Father Maurice and Mary Beth Champion-Garthe, McAllister, MT

We are familiar with the words St. Benedict used to begin his Rule. "Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart" (RB Prol.1). The Master who speaks to our hearts is the God of our salvation. It might be helpful to paraphrase the passage from the book of Deuteronomy that is read most Saturdays at Complin. "Listen carefully, O Israel: the Lord is your Master, the Lord alone. Do not stand idle, but serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (cf. Deut. 6:4-5). The quality of our listening cannot be indifferent or superficial, centered in the head. It must be personal and active, centered in the core of our being, in our heart. The Lord who knows the secrets of the heart (cf. Ps. 44:21) will help us discover the mysteries of divine love. The one who speaks to our heart is He who is nearest the Father's heart (cf. Jn. 1:18). In Jesus the Father's Love was made tangible. During His sojourn on earth Jesus had no place to rest His head (cf. Mat. 8:20). For those who were willing to leave everything to sojourn with Him He prepared a resting place

close to His heart (cf. Jn. 13: 25). The notion of resting in the heart of the Word is found in the Constitutions of our Order, in the section dealing with the practice of *Lectio Divina*. "This excellent monastic practice, by which God's Word is heard and pondered, is a source of prayer and a school of contemplation, where the monk speaks heart to heart with God" (Cst. 21).

This heart to heart dialogue with the Lord is an essential element of the monastic life. In the classroom of the heart we are instructed by our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ (cf. Mat. 23:10). Resting our heads upon the Master's heart, we can listen again to these words attributed to Solomon. "If you cry out for discernment, if you look for it as if it were silver... you will discover the knowledge of God" (Pro. 2:3-5). We have Jesus' word. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you" (Mat. 7:7). Whenever we cry out to the Lord in prayer, our primary concern must be to truly seek God and His will for us (cf. RB 58.7). This attentiveness to the matters of the heart may seem like foolishness to the worldly minded, yet it is this foolishness that overcomes the wisdom of the world (cf. 1Jn. 5:4). Gregory the Great recounted St. Benedict's pursuit of divine wisdom. "In his desire to please God alone, he turned his back on further studies, gave up home and inheritance and resolved to embrace the religious life. He took this step, fully aware of his ignorance; yet he was truly wise, uneducated though he may have been" (Dialogues 2.1). We number St. Benedict among those who have left all things (cf. Mat. 19:27) for the sake of the one thing that really matters (cf. Lk. 10:41). He wrote his Rule in order to pass on to future generations the lessons the Lord of wisdom taught him (cf. Ps. 71: 17).

The disciples of St. Benedict are to conform their lives to the Holy One Who has spoken to them in the depths of their hearts (cf. Rom. 8:29). The more the individual is transformed into Christ, the more he or she is able to see what God sees, to know what God knows, and to love what God loves. Gregory the Great put it this way. "Keep this in mind, Peter. All creation is bound to appear small to a soul that sees the Creator. Once it beholds a little of His light, it finds all creatures small indeed. The light of holy contemplation enlarges and expands the mind in God until it stands above the world" (Dialogues 2.35). It is this vision that binds us together in peace and sustains our hope (cf. Eph. 4:3-4). "As we progress in this way of life and in faith, let us run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts expanded with the inexpressible sweetness of love" (RB Prol. 49). When we reach our goal, may Christ bring us to everlasting life.

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