



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

OBLATE ASSIGNMENTS

LINCOLN CHAPTER, Madonna

Sun., Apr. 18, 2004 7-9 p.m. North Commons

Mon., Apr. 19, 2004, 7-9 p.m. Flanagan Room

Preferring Christ, Chapters 64-66, pages 155-163

ASHLAND/GREENWOOD CHAPTER, Ashland,

CCD Center

Thurs. Apr. 1, 2004, 7-9 p.m.

Seeking God, Chapter II, Invitation

HASTINGS CHAPTER, St. Michael's Church, Family

Room

Sat., Apr. 3, 2004, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Preferring Christ, Chapter 7, Humility, pages 52-60

STEINAUER CHAPTER, Banquet Hall, across from

St. Anthony's Church

Mon., Apr. 5, 2004 7-9 p.m.

Preferring Christ, Chapter 64, p. 156 + Interlude IX p. 163

Mon. Apr. 19, 2004 7-9 p.m.

Seeking God, Chapter 10, + questions

OMAHA CHAPTER, All Saints Episcopal Church,

9302 Blondo, Omaha,

Tues. Apr. 13, 2004, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Preferring Christ, Interlude I, Chapter 1, Various Kinds of Monks, pgs. 15-18

Tues. Apr. 27, 2004, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Preferring Christ, Chapter 2, What Kind of Man the Abbot Ought To Be, pgs. 19-25

UNL CHAPTER, Newman Center, 320 North 16th St.,

Lincoln

Sun. Apr. 4, 2004, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Orientation: the Divine Office/Liturgy of the Hours,

Lesson: The Hours

Chapter X, Seeking God, "Praying"

Sun. Apr. 18, 2004, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Lesson: Obedience, Chapter III, Seeking God, Listening

Explanation: Group Lectio

EASTER SUNDAY – ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!

A SIGN OF LOVE: The resurrection of Jesus was a hidden event. Jesus didn't rise from the grave to baffle his opponents, to make a victory statement or to prove to

those who crucified him that he was right after all. Jesus rose as a sign to those who loved him and followed him that God's divine love is stronger than death. To the men and women who committed themselves to him, he revealed that his mission had been fulfilled. To those who shared in his ministry, he gave the sacred task to call all people into the new life within him.

The world didn't take notice. Only those whom he called by name, with whom he broke bread and to whom he spoke words of peace, were aware of what happened. Still, it is this hidden event that freed humanity from the shackles of death. (Eternal Seasons by Ford)

LIVING THE BENEDICTINE RULE OUTSIDE THE MONASTERY:

Sr. Ann Kessler is encouraging us to send our registrations for our Annual Oblate Retreat at Sacred Heart Monastery, July 17-18.

Applications are available at all of our meetings. For those of you who have not been to SHM monastery, you will find it a most rewarding experience. For transportation, many Oblates offer rides. We will work on sharing rides prior to the retreat.

BRIEFS:

- If any Oblate has recommended reading or other suggestions for our Cell groups next year, please send them to your Cell leader.
- The next meeting of the Sacred Poet's Society will be Wed., Apr. 28th, 7 p.m. at Madonna, in the Platte Room. The meeting will begin with a poem writing exercise after meditating on a painting of The Last Supper. They will explore how to support each other in their writing practice and will end the meetings with a poetry reading (bring a poem to share).
- Share your insights of "The Passion" and would like to share their insights, we Wed. Apr 7 at Madonna (Nemaha Room - left and up the ramp from front lobby) at 6:30 p.m.
- Prayer requests may go directly to Sister Leonette at SHM monastery: prayerline@mtmc.edu.
- Join us for Morning Prayer, every Fri at 7:30 a.m. in the Madonna Chapel. It helps in saying the Liturgy of the Hours.

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL EVENTS:

The first World Congress of Benedictine Oblates (not directors) will be held in Rome, Sept. 19th – 25th, 2005. Plans are underway to select the possible 40 Oblates who will be invited from North America – but still unknown as is the cost. The website is www.oblatesworldcongress.com

The North American Association of Oblate Directors will meet at Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton, SD, July 30-August 3, 2005. Sister Bonita Gacnik of SHM is the Chair of the Planning Committee. You are invited to submit a one-page proposal for a general or a break-out session on the theme, "Benedictine Oblation: A Way of Life." This must be received by May 15, 2004. Mail or email your proposal to Sr. Bonita at SHM or bgacnik@mtmc.edu.

The American Benedictine Academy 2004 Convention will be held August 12-15 at St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, MN with the theme: "Monastic Culture: Revitalizing Mind and Spirit." For more information, contact: Teresa Schumacher, OSB, 320-363-7100 or Tschumacher@csbsju.edu.

OBLATE NEWS:

- My new position is "intentional interim priest with St. Mark's-on-the-Campus Episcopal Church." As a Lutheran (ELCA) pastor, I am serving there both with a call extended by the Nebraska Synod (ELCA) Council and the blessings of The Rt. Rev. Joe Burnett, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska--and all made possible by the "Call to Common Mission," an agreement in 1999 between the two groups at the national level. Gretchen Naugle, Oblate

BOOK REVIEW: Norvene Vest, *Friend of the Soul: A Benedictine Spirituality of Work*

Sometimes when reading the Rule of St. Benedict I cannot help but feel a kind of longing for the "good old days" when roles and responsibilities among members of the community seemed so well defined. What a contrast to our present context where the bounds of community are sometimes ambiguous, and the lure of individuality often eclipses any sense of responsibility to the group. To make matters worse, we have been taught to acknowledge a very real separation between things secular and sacred. This being the case, how can we possibly expect Benedict, our sixth-century guide, to be relevant to our postmodern lives? It is the peculiar gift of Norvene Vest to discover openings in our secular world where the wisdom of Benedict can seep in. And what

better place to begin than where our spirituality is so frequently assailed, in our jobs?

In *Friend of the Soul*, Vest reminds us that our work can be an act of co-creation. Indeed, each of us is called to a special vocation, a place where, as Frederick Buechner says, our great longing and the world's great hunger meet. Benedict certainly affirms this. Our manual labor is "the friend of the soul," the means by which we create and thus become the image of our Creator. Yet the pressures of the modern work environment too often transform our creativity into meaningless production. We are chided to compete, not cooperate. In such a context, Vest argues, we must learn to be good stewards of our calling and care for "the necessary things of life."

Vest proves herself to be an able interpreter of Benedict when she refuses to shy away from what seems like a sure anomaly in the modern work place: obedience. This, she says, should not be seen as a kind of begrudging resignation, but a willful and liberating compliance to authority. The final section of her book is especially helpful for those of us who have struggled with knowing to whom in our communities we are to be obedient. Abbots do not exactly abound among us! Benedict provides the way in his observation that we should "prefer Christ" in all things. We must recognize and be obedient to the presence of Christ in those with whom we share our work. Vest acknowledges that this is not always easy. "Obedience indeed is a laborious task" (p. 118). But it is also the exercise which best helps us to realize our true humanity.

As Benedict indicates throughout the Rule, work should be an art, an act of co-creation by which we actualize our true calling. This is especially true if it is done in obedience to the face of our Lord seen in those among us. Norvene Vest does a wonderful job of reminding us that our work is a friend of the soul, a discipline which draws us closer to God, to creation, and to each other. *Daniel G. Deffenbaugh, Hastings*

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