



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery

April, 2009

HAPPY EASTER: As we have walked this Lenten pilgrimage, we are now ready to begin the Easter Tridium. The tridium designates the three-day period from the evening of Holy Thursday to the evening of Easter Sunday. These days are also known as "the still days." During services, music is not played, church bells are silenced and the faithful are encouraged to observe silence at home (TV's and radios are off.). We slow down in order to immerse ourselves into the great event of Christ's life, death and resurrection. On Holy Thursday evening we are united in the bread of Christ's body and the one cup of Christ's blood poured out of self-giving love. On Good Friday we walk with Christ in his dying, entrusting to him our own dying of selves. Gathering in the dark of Holy Saturday night, we follow the light of Christ symbolized in the new fire of the Easter candle singing the joyful Alleluia again on the dawning of this Easter Day. And we rejoice on this feast of Easter! As we continue on this life's journey, we live in hope for the Easter of that Eternal Day in which our joy will never end.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Lincoln Chapter: Sheridan Rooms & North Commons Cafeteria, Madonna Rehab Hosp, **Sunday, April 5, 2009, 7 p.m. (One week earlier because of Easter.)**

NO MEETING MONDAY NIGHT in April as discussed with the Monday night group: **Desiring Life by Norvene Vest**, Chapter 1. Desiring Life, pgs. 13-28, Questions for Reflection: #'s 1 & 2 page 168 back of text.

Steinauer Chapter: *Banquet Room, across from St. Anthony's Church* **Monday, April 6, 2009, 7-9p.m:** Desiring Life by Norvene Vest, Chapter 1. pgs. 13-28, Questions for Reflection: #'s 1 & 2 page 168 back of text.

Hastings Chapter: St. Michael's Church, Family Room, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. **Saturday, April 4, 2009: (one week earlier because of Easter)** Desiring Life by Norvene Vest, Chapter 1, pgs. 13-28, Questions for Reflection: #'s 1 & 2 page 168 back of text.

Omaha Chapter: New Cassel Retirement Center , Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, East Entrance, Omaha , NE, **Tuesday, April 14, 2009, General Assembly:** Desiring Life by Norvene Vest, Chapter 1. Desiring Life, pgs. 13-28, Questions for Reflection: #'s 1 & 2 page 168 back of text.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Saturday morning, April 25, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, in the Sheridan Rooms at Madonna, our regular meeting place. Sister Virginia Pieper, OSB, of Sacred Heart Monastery will speak on "Sustainability and Benedictine Values." Sister Virginia graduated from Mount Marty College in Religious Education and received an MA at St. Mary's of the Woods College in Earth Literacy. She researched Global Agribusiness, Sustainable Business and local Food Systems and now teaches the course, "Healing Nature" at that college. She is our Sacred Heart Monastery gardener. (A \$10 fee) We will have a sign-up at out Chapter meetings.

PILGRIMAGE TO CONCEPTION ABBEY AND CLYDE MONASTERIES:

Saturday, August 8, 2009, we have the opportunity to visit these two monasteries. We will leave from the Madonna front entrance (car pooling) at 7:30 a.m. arriving at Conception Abbey at 10 a.m. We will have a tour (1 hour), Mass in the Abbey Basilica with the Benedictine monks and lunch (tour and lunch - \$10). Then we will drive the short distance to the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Clyde MO for a tour. After that we will return home. You will need to SIGN-UP for this and we will do this at the next several meetings as they will need an exact count for lunch. Please do sign up, knowing that you may have changes in your life before then. I believe you will enjoy this little pilgrimage.

AMAZING GRACE: A VOCABLUARY OF

FAITH – RETREAT: The spiritual world is rooted in the chaos and the beauty of daily life. Kathleen Norris will shed light on difficult theological concepts such as grace, repentance, dogma, and faith. **Kathleen Norris**, a Benedictine Oblate of Assumption Abbey in Richardton,

North Dakota, is the award-winning poet, writer, and author of *The New York Times* bestseller, *The Cloister Walk*. **June 5 - 6, 2009, Friday, 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** in the St. Benedict Retreat Center, Schuyler, NE. Contact: 402-352-8819 or retreats@stbenedictcenter.com. Limited space, register soon.

OBLATE CHOIR: Meeting, Sunday, April 5 at 6:15 p.m. All are welcome to come.

By God's Grace . . .

Almost 10:00 A.M. and we are eagerly waiting
Waiting for inspiration, for comfort, for God
Inspiration during a South Dakota winter
May seem hard to find, however
We watch the river, the red sky, and wait
Wait for something elusive, in the air
In our hearts, in our minds
Waiting to be tapped, to be opened, set free
And then our leader arrives and asks us all to pray
She wears a warm loving smile
Love of God is such a gift, the ultimate treasure
Freedom to grow, to be wrapped in His arms
Seeking this gift always, we pray and hope and find
God's grace is, has been, and always will be with us

Maureen Worden, Oblate Novice
February 23, 2009
SHMonastery Oblate Retreat

BOOK REVIEW by Oblate Jim Potter: The book I will discuss is *Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* by Sharon Salzberg (1995) Shambhala Publications, Inc. It describes a spiritual path that leads to the liberation of the heart which is love, a path that moves the heart out of isolating contradiction into true connection. Although the material comes to us from the Buddhist tradition, I believe there are many ways we can connect it with the path Jesus has set before us. The path of loving-kindness is a living tradition of meditation practices that cultivate love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. I will focus this discussion on one chapter, Chapter 7 – Developing the Compassionate Heart.

Sometimes we think that to develop an open heart, to be truly loving and compassionate, is a passive activity. Quite the contrary. Compassion is not at all weak. It is the strength that arises out of seeing the true nature of

suffering in the world. To develop this mind-state of compassion is to learn to live with compassion for all living beings, without exception. This is the kind of compassion that Jesus shows when he reaches out, touches the leper (one shunned by others), and heals him (Mark 1:40-45).

In the book Salzberg relates the following story. Once a monk was stricken with a terrible disease. He had oozing sores that looked and smelled so horrible everybody avoided him. However, the Buddha went to the monk's hut, bathed his wounds, cared for him, giving him reassurance and spiritual instruction. Later, the Buddha addressed the monastic community, saying that if somebody wanted to serve him, they should look after the sick. Does this remind us of Jesus exhortation, *Whatsoever you do unto the least of these, so also you do unto me* (Matthew 25:40)?

To develop a compassionate heart is not just an idealistic overlay. It comes from seeing the truth of suffering and opening to it. Out of this arises a sense of purpose, a sense of meaning so strong in our lives that no matter what the circumstances, no matter what the situation, our goal or greatest desire at any moment is to express genuine love. This is boundless, unconditional love.

The Bible tells us that "God is Love" (1 John 4:8). But how can we even begin to understand that truth? Possibly John 3:16 can help us understand God's love, *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. So one way God defines love is in the act of giving. It seems the love that parents have for their children is as close to unconditional love as we can get without the help of God's love in our lives. We make a choice to give our love to our children even when we consider them unlovable; our love doesn't stop when we don't "feel" love for them at some particular point in time. During this Lenten period, leading up to the resurrection of Christ, can we think of ways we can give of ourselves? Are there ways we can extending unconditional love to those of other faith traditions in the spirit of Pax or peace (our Benedictine motto)?

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