



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2009

ASSIGNMENTS:

Lincoln Chapter: Sheridan Rooms & North Commons Cafeteria on Sunday and Lancaster Room on Monday, Madonna Rehab Hosp: Sunday, December 13 or Monday December 14: *Desiring Life* by Norvene Vest: Chapter 3, *Developing Character*, pgs: 72-86, Questions for Reflection # 2, page 169. Oblate Darla Weisbeck will be giving us a reflection on Psalm 35.

Steinauer Chapter: Banquet Room, across from St. Anthony's Church Monday, December 7, 2009: Ps. 47 (Liturgical Hymn), Ps. 88 (Individual Lament), Ps. 92 (Thanksgiving)

Hastings Chapter: St. Michael's Church, Family Room, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. Saturday, December 12, 2009: *Desiring Life* by Norvene Vest: Chapter 3, *Developing Character*, pgs: 72-86, Questions for Reflection # 2, page 169 Facilitator: Kathleen Schroeder Companion leader: Mary Anna Fertig. We will be enjoying the guitar music of Oblate Scott Taylor.

Omaha Chapter: New Cassel Retirement Center, Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, Omaha, NE, Tuesday, December 8, 2009: *Desiring Life* by Norvene Vest: Chapter 3, *Developing Character*, pgs: 72-86, Questions for Reflection # 2, page 169

TWO SPECIAL EVENTS:

- **“A Benedictine Visit to Tanzania”**
Sister Joyce Feterl, OSB of our monastery will be here Saturday, December 5 at 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. in the North Commons of Madonna (our regular meeting place) to tell us of the unprecedented work of our monastery in Africa. (No cost) She will give a short history of Sacred Heart Monastery's missionary work, a summary of the places visited, show touching pictures of the Benedictine Sisters and their ministries and some time for questions. Sister Mildred Busch, Procurator asked her to accompany her to Tanzania as an extra set of eyes and ears to observe how our monastery can further assist the Sisters beyond offering them education.

The monastery regularly has two Sisters from Tanzania, educating them at our college, Mount

Marty College. Sister Joyce graduated from MMC, taught elementary physical education and later received an MBA from the University of Sioux Falls. More recently she has worked in the business office for the Sioux Falls Catholic School system and now at MMC.

- **“The Psalms: Primer for Prayer”**
Another beautiful opportunity to learn about the psalms from an international speaker! Sister Irene Nowell, OSB, a Benedictine of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kansas, will be with us Saturday, March 20, 2010 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon in the Sheridan Rooms at Madonna. She is highly recommended by those who have heard her. She says: “At the beginning of the twenty-first century John Paul II said, ‘The book of Psalms remains the ideal source of Christian prayer, and the Church of the new millennium will continue to be inspired in it (Wednesday papal audience, March 28, 2001).’ The psalms, even though they are thousands of years old, speak compellingly to us in the third millennium.

Rooted in ordinary human experience, the psalms give us words to tell our story, cry out our pain, and give praise to our generous God. The psalms truly teach us how to pray.” Sister Irene Nowell is the director for the sisters in formation. She holds a bachelor's degree in music from Mount St. Scholastica College, a master's degree in theology from St. John's University, and a doctorate in biblical studies from Catholic University. She is an adjunct professor of St. John's University School of Theology, teaching Scripture both in the classroom and on the web and is a member of the Board of Directors of Benedictine College. She is a past president of the Catholic Biblical Association. She has written two books, *Sing a New Song: The Responsorial Psalm in the Sunday Liturgy*, and *Women in the Old Testament*, both published by Liturgical Press. She is on the editorial board of *The Bible Today and Worship* and also writes regularly for other biblical and liturgical periodicals. There will be a \$10 fee.

CHOIR PRACTICE: before our Sunday night Chapter meeting, December 13 will be at 6:15 pm.

OBLATE NOTES:

- I miss our meetings (unable to attend because of health issues) and hearing others. I learned a lot. Thank you and God bless you and all of the group. Love and prayers, Dorothy Conradt, Oblate, Steinauer.
- Dear Sister: Could I ask that you pray for the poor people that we serve? We have many, many homeless men and families here in Lincoln who are struggling and with the holidays it is very sad. It takes its toll on the volunteers who work at the store as well. Denise M. Dean, Oblate (she volunteers at St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store)

OUR GROUP SPIRITUAL DIRECTION (Faith Sharing): During some recent study, I became aware of “group spiritual direction.” Over the years I have thought that our Chapter meetings and Cell discussions/faith sharing have often exemplified a form of spiritual direction. Our Oblates had told me how their lives have benefited from these discussions. Whereas our format is not strictly outlined as such, the faith sharing does become a process of spiritual formation. The intention of our sharing is to help each participant become more aware of God in our lives. It leads to an awakening of the soul and individuals grow in their faith and in loving others more fully.

To get the most benefit from our group spiritual direction, it takes an effort on our part to prepare for the sessions. Our study requires that we thoughtfully use Lectio Divina between sessions with our assignments. We then take our experiences of God from our reflections and share them with the others. We are invited to share our own spiritual journey, being personal and authentic - seeking transformation for myself and the sake of others. We can help each other see God’s loving work in our lives. This on-going personal reflection helps me refocus my attention on what God is doing and the evidence of that in my life. It helps me recall the main events over the month, to bring them into focus and see where God has been at work. When this happens, it is especially valuable.

Often, new members come to our faith sharing groups, hesitant and anxious about possible participation. This is a very legitimate reaction. It is not uncommon in any spiritual direction setting. It may take a few sessions for a person to become comfortable enough to share. We use facilitators who may begin with a few words and

then open to the responses of those present. As we listen to a response, we may want to dwell on that response - to absorb how this has impacted the person’s life. How has God become a part of the experience shared? Insights, questions and affirmation may assist in deepening a meaningful response. Short times of silence often help us internalize and recognize how God may be speaking to us. We usually begin and close with prayer. As we have mentioned a number of times before, with this level of sharing, it is necessary that we have a level of trust not often found in other situations. It is a respect and reverence for what each is saying and knowing that the information will be confidential within the group. What draws us to this faith sharing is our inner desire to deepen our relationship with God.

There is a definite energy that comes from such a group. Sharing with others in this welcoming environment is a help that goes beyond individual reflection. It provides insight into my own inner thoughts and into the inner process of others. Seeing how God moves in others’ lives can broaden my own perspective. It is like listening to God through others. Reflecting back to others what I understand them to be sharing often stimulates my own insights and sometimes uncovers feelings associated with the experience of which they/I were unaware.

If you have further thoughts about our group spiritual sharing, please feel free to email me, call me or drop me a note. Sister Phyllis

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