



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery

February 2010

ASSIGNMENTS:

Lincoln Chapter: Sheridan Rooms & North Commons Cafeteria on Sunday or Lancaster Room on Monday, Madonna Rehab Hosp: Sunday, February 14 or Monday, February 15: *Desiring Life* by Norvene Vest, Chapter 4, *Benedict and Virtue*, pgs 100-111, Questions for Reflection #’s 4 & 5, page 169 (Choose one question)

Steinauer Chapter: Banquet Room, across from St. Anthony’s Church Monday, February 1, 2010: Ps. 22, a Messianic psalm that must be included. It is divided acc to kinds of literature: Ps. 22 vv, 23—32; (Hymn/praise), Ps. 22:1—9 & 13—22 (Lament), Ps 11:10—12 (Confidence)

Hastings Chapter: St. Michael’s Church, Family Room, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. Saturday, February 13, 2010: *Desiring Life* by Norvene Vest, Chapter 4, *Benedict and Virtue*, pgs 100-111, Questions for Reflection #’s 4 & 5, page 169 (Choose one question) Facilitator: Gay DeMars Companion leader: Sister Phyllis

Omaha Chapter: New Cassel Retirement Center, Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, Omaha , NE, Tuesday, February 9, 2010: *Desiring Life* by Norvene Vest, Chapter 4, *Benedict and Virtue*, pgs 100-111, Questions for Reflection #’s 4 & 5, page 169 (Choose one question)

LAST CALL FOR THE OBLATE RETREAT!

Scheduled for Feb.26-28, 2010! It will begin the eve of Friday, Feb. 26th and end the morning of Sunday, Feb. 28th. Make your reservations by contacting Sr. Joelle Bauer: jbauer@mtmc.edu, or 605-668-6009.

THANK YOU for your assistance to our Benedictine Sisters in Tanzania! I got word that your total gifts of \$1745 have already been sent via a money gram to Tanzania (The Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Help of Christians Community). As I get more information I will share it with you. PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW!

PUT THIS ON YOUR CALENDAR:

“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 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. There will be a \$10 fee.

CHOIR PRACTISE: before our Sunday night Chapter meeting, Feb. 14 will be at 6:15 pm.

SNOW SCENES AT SACRED HEART

MONASTERY: If you would like to see some beautiful pictures of snow sculptures after the 18-20 inches of snow received over Christmas 09, go to our monastery website: www.yanktonbenedictines.org and click on News and Events and then Christmas Blizzard at the monastery. The snow reached the second floor of the monastery.

ASH WEDNESDAY (Feb. 17) and Renewing our Rule of Life: In the Prologue of the Rule (vs. 35) it says, “...the Lord waits for us daily to translate into action, as we should, his holy teaching.” With a contemplative spirit, seeking some quiet time, let us be united in reviewing the Rule of Life we studied in the Handbook (three ring binder) a few years back. (The new members will still be doing this.) Most of us know the importance and the need for structure in our spiritual lives. The Holy Rule provides for a supportive structure while also offering some “built-in” flexibility. The Prologue, verse 46 says, “In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome.”

First of all, let us take the Rule of Life we previously developed, review it and see how our lives have changed and evolved. Then take a new copy of the Rule of Life (see our website for a copy: <http://sites.google.com/site/nebraskabenedictineoblates>) or call me to send you a copy (488-6731) if you did not

receive one at the Chapter meetings. We are encouraged to complete the full format and then select one or two on which to concentrate.

To refresh our memories, the Rule of Life encourages us to look at our use of time and energy to assure maximum spiritual nurture, writing it specific enough to remember what it is that we are striving for while avoiding those obstacles that restrain us. Our Holy Father Benedict says in RB 73:1, "The reason we have written this rule is that by observing it...we can show that we have some degree of virtue and the beginning of monastic/spiritual lives."

I encourage you to read the full section of the Handbook special section entitled, "The Rule of Life."

SUFFERING: We have all seen and heard the devastating stories about Haiti and our hearts ache for the surviving families and friends and we are grateful for the enormous generosity of the volunteers and donors from around the world. While not in its enormity, we too are affected in some way with suffering as we rub elbows with family or friends who are fearful of their future, have feelings of helplessness, major illnesses and loss of lives. Suffering will always be with us. We can choose to ignore it or we can share in it when we seek to overcome it. Today we hear the various versions of "why" all of this suffering.

In the book of Job, the question has probably found its most vivid expression. We know the story of a just man, who without any fault of his own, is tried by innumerable kinds of suffering. In this horrible situation, three of his old acquaintances come to his house and try to convince him that since he had been struck down by such varied and terrible suffering, surely he is being punished for a crime/for his own evil. Job, however, challenges the truth of the principle that identifies suffering with punishment for sin. He knows he does not deserve such punishment and he speaks of the good he has done during his life. In the end, God himself reproves Job's friends for their accusations and recognizes Job as not guilty. Job's suffering is the suffering of someone who is innocent. It is to be accepted as a mystery which the individual is unable to penetrate completely by his own intelligence.

In order to perceive the true answer of the "why" of suffering, we look further in scripture. We read of the suffering and death of Christ, himself. In Chapter 3:16 John says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." And even though the victory of sin and death achieved by Christ does not abolish human

suffering from human life, it does throw a new light upon every suffering: the light of new life through suffering. This is the good news! Christ drew close to the world of human suffering. He healed the sick, consoled the afflicted and fed the hungry. He was sensitive to every kind of human suffering. So on the one hand, suffering is meant to be alleviated, but on the other hand, it can also be a way of entering into the redemption itself – as Christ first of all took on the suffering of all people.

It is easy to be pessimistic when looking at such vast suffering as in Haiti – it is so overwhelming. But just as we can see one dimension of society as suffering, so we can see another responding to suffering. We can join with those who are willing to share the common purpose of reducing such suffering. John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter on Human Suffering says, "A source of joy is found in the overcoming of the sense of uselessness of suffering. This feeling of uselessness consumes the person and seems to make his/her a burden to others. The discovery of the life-giving meaning of suffering in union with Christ transforms this depressed feeling." And again, "Suffering is present in the world to release love, in order to give birth to works of love toward neighbor, in order to transform the whole human civilization into a civilization of love."

And so, let us accept the challenge of suffering. As the Spirit is present in each of us, we accept the suffering necessary to bring about change, to experience that God is with us in bringing about the lessening of that burden, that act of personal love for each other.

*"And I saw the River
over which every soul must pass
to reach the Kingdom of Heaven,
and the name of the River was Suffering
and I saw the Boat which carries souls across the River.
and the name of that Boat was LOVE!
St. John of the Cross.*

Sister Phyllis Hunhoff, OSB, Associate Director ♦
Associated with the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart
Monastery, Yankton South Dakota ♦ 5441 Glade Street
♦ Lincoln, NE 68506 ♦ 402-488-6731 ♦ email:
phunhoff74@windstream.net
website:
<http://sites.google.com/site/nebraskabenedictineoblates/>