



# Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2011

**REMEMBRANCE:** As I am preparing this newsletter, we are saddened by the loss and presence of Oblate Marva Wasser – saddened by the loss but rejoicing in her wonderful life and legacy that she leaves us. Oblate Linda Horton said this poem was delivered to her computer and she thought of Marva.

American Life in Poetry: BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006: When we're on all fours in a garden, planting or weeding, we're as close to our ancient ancestors as we're going to get. Here, while he works in the dirt, Richard Levine feels the sacred looking over his shoulder.

## Believe This

All morning, doing the hard, root-wrestling work of turning a yard from the wild to a gardener's will, I heard a bird singing from a hidden, though not distant, perch; a song of swift, syncopated syllables sounding like, *Can you believe this, believe this, believe? Can you believe this, believe this, believe?* And all morning, I did believe. All morning, between break-even bouts with the unwanted, I wanted to see that bird, and looked up so I might later recognize it in a guide, and know and call its name, but even more, I wanted to join its church. For all morning, and many a time in my life, I have wondered who, beyond this plot I work, has called the order of being, that givers of food are deemed lesser than are the receivers. All morning, muscling my will against that of the wild, to claim a place in the bounty of earth, seed, root, sun and rain, I offered my labor as a kind of grace, and gave thanks even for the aching in my body, which reached beyond this work and this gift of struggle.

## REFLECTION FROM MARVA WASSER

Sister Phyllis asked that I contribute some sort of spiritual writing for the October newsletter. At that time, I requested a later date, preferring a time that I would no longer be plagued by "chemo brain". Little did I know that this journey would take me to a place more debilitating. It's either "pain brain" or "pain relief

brain" depending on where I am in the cycle of prescriptions given to minimize pain.

Along the way, I have been exposed to a number of books and CD's as well as loads of advice and admonitions. I have also developed a new vocabulary that includes new medical terms and a deeper understanding of and respect for the mysteries of the human body.

While not necessarily able to process complex information and concepts, I have had the opportunity to "rediscover" some simple truths. The first of these is that these sorts of things can happen to anyone – no one deserves them and no one is exempt. Regardless, it is important to remember that I am not going through this alone. Besides the compassion and caring of Christ, I have been blessed by an army of angels to help navigate this new terrain. They come in the way of spiritual direction, insights and knowing that someone is praying for you when you are too tired to put your own thoughts into prayers. These angels also appear as compassionate medical care, a wonderful family that is always on call and make me laugh when a laugh seems all but impossible, ladies who clean my house even though most don't clean their own, a friend willing to share chicken noodle soup and conversation about anything BUT my circumstances, a meditation group that helps me find the moments of gratitude in each day and constant reminders that one needs to live in the moment and to let go of thoughts from the past or worries about the future.

I've learned that when one's brain is not fully functional, there comes a time to put your heart in charge. The reading materials speak to my head while the angels speak to my heart. In the end I may find that living from my heart is where God intended that this journey lead me and that place feels more like home than where I once spent so much of my time.

## RENEWAL OF OBLATION CERTIFICATES: I

have asked Oblate Teresa to attach an Oblation Renewal Certificate for you, if you were not present for the Oblation Ceremony. I will look forward to receiving it. Sister Phyllis

**OBLATE ASSIGNMENT FOR LINCOLN, HASTINGS AND OMAHA:** The Oblate Life by Gervase Holdaway, OSB, Chapter 24, Cyberspace, Community and the Oblate, Chapter 25, Serving the Local Community, Chapter 26, Serving the Local Church & Chapter 27, Building Christian Community. QUESTION: Can you give an example of positive “listening and responding” in your own life?

**LINCOLN: Sunday, December 11, 2011 or Monday December 12, 2011:** Sheridan Rooms & North Commons on Sunday and Sheridan Rooms on Monday, Madonna Rehab Hosp: NOTE ROOM CHANGE FOR MONDAY EVENING. See assignment and question above. We will look forward to hear Oblate Carol Olson give the reflection on Sunday and Oblate Ron Sedlacek on Monday. **Choir Practice at 6:15 pm prior to meeting.**

**STEINAUER:** No Chapter meeting in December.

**HASTINGS:** *St. Michael's Church, Family Room*, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. **Saturday, December 10, 2011**, See assignment and question above. We will look forward to hear Oblate Scott Taylor give the reflection and facilitate the meeting. Companion: Bob Phillips, Prayer: Dixie Tripe

**OMAHA CHAPTER:** New Cassel Retirement Center, Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, Omaha, NE, 7-9 pm, **Tuesday, December 13, 2011**. See assignment and question above. We will look forward to hear Oblate Rod Dolton give the Reflection and facilitate the meeting. Prayer: orienting to the Shorter Christian Prayer book.

**AMERICAN BENEDICTINE ACADEMY,** August 2-5, 2012, “Seek Peace and Pursue it: Monasticism in the Midst of Global Upheaval,” at St. Scholastica College and Monastery, Duluth, MN. A note was sent inviting Oblates to attend this conference saying it is a wonderful and enriching place for our oblates to connect with other oblates, monastics and seekers. You can find it on [www.osb.org/aba](http://www.osb.org/aba). There are artists, poets, writers, social justice activists and scholars. They recognize that we have oblates that would make an excellent contribution to the ABA. Click on the American Benedictine Newsletter, Current Issue and see the excellent speakers planned for this convention and consider becoming a part of this group.

## NOTE FROM OBLATE MICHAEL

**FLAHERTY** (Chicago): The Centering Prayer retreat at the Siena, Wisconsin, retreat center was very good. Father Thomas Keating has recorded some new DVD's for a Heartfulness Retreat (see Contemplative Outreach). To me, the material is quite complicated yet very rewarding. The main focus is on increasing our silent time and our centering time. During our daily activities as normal people, we are usually not very aware about what is really important. What is important is God, and how we behave with our fellow humans. And, in order to behave and live in a more Godly manner, we have to spend more time closer to God and the Holy Spirit. When we do this, we are more in touch with the immense love that God has for each one of us. And, the more we feel this love, the more loving we can be with each other. In short, we have to lessen our reliance on our own agendas and pay more attention to the divine. How we do this, is to begin to spend more time in silence and listening to the Holy Spirit. More later and I will be happy to give a more complete report in April. Happy Thanksgiving!

**FACEBOOK UPDATE:** Oblate Jim Rea, our Facebook administrator (along with Oblate Teresa Harms) has alerted all of us Facebook members that the Facebook Discussions tab has been removed as of October 31, 2011 (even though there were 22 million active users). This Discussion Board has allowed us to host our reflections and responses. They are now all gone. They are saying that it is better to have our conversations on the wall and will make them more visible. Hence we will put our “Nebraska Oblates” reflections within “Write something” box - as well as our responses to the reflection. You may continue to send them to Jim Rea ([jim.rea@nsea.org](mailto:jim.rea@nsea.org)) who can post them for you if you wish.

**THE SEASON OF ADVENT:** The liturgical year begins with Saturday Evening Prayer, November 26 (using Week I of the Psalter), with the First Sunday of Advent, Sunday, November 17. It prepares us for the annual celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas and his revelation to the nations at Epiphany. Let us be united in prayer during this holy time.

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](mailto:phunhoff74@windstream.net)  
Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/nebraskabenedictineoblates/>