



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery

September 2007

OBLATE ASSIGNMENTS

LINCOLN CHAPTER: Sunday Chapter: north Commons 7-9 p.m. Monday Chapter meetings: Flanagan Room 7-9 p.m. . Sunday, Sept 9, 2007 and Monday, Sept 10, 2007:

To open our fall meeting, we will have a presentation by Oblates Vic Faesser, Steinauer Chapter and Catherine Hornig, Lincoln Chapter about their trip to the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors Biennial meeting in Lacy WA. You will be getting your new text at this meeting, *Wisdom From the Tradition, Statement of North American Benedictine Women in Response to Our Times*.

STEINAUER CHAPTER: Banquet Room, across from St. Anthony's Church

Tuesday, September 4, 2007 7-9 p.m. (NOTE: ONE DAY LATER)

Since Sept. 3 is Labor Day, we will move the first meeting ONE DAY LATER. This will be our introduction and orientation time for new members. We will also have a presentation by Vic Faesser about his trip to the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors Biennial meeting in Lacy WA. You will receive your new text, *Wisdom from the Tradition, A Statement of North American Benedictine Women in Response to Our Times* at this time.

HASTINGS CHAPER: St. Michael's Church, Family Room, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Saturday September 8, 2007: (This will be our orientation for new members) We will also have presentation on the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors meeting in Lacy, WA. You will be getting your new text at this meeting, *Wisdom From the Tradition, Statement of North American Benedictine Women in Response to Our Time*.

OMAHA CHAPTER: New Cassel Retirement Center, Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, West Entrance, Omaha, NE, Tuesday, September 11, 2007, 7 p.m., General Assembly: This will be our orientation for new members. Some of you have assignments. You will be

getting your new text, *Wisdom from the Tradition, A Statement of North American Benedictine Women in Response to Our Times* at this meeting. We will also have presentation on the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors meeting in Lacy, WA.

WISDOM FROM THE TRADITION: This text will be "Joyfully bringing Monastic Wisdom to today's world." Our goal will be for every Oblate to complete a careful, prayerful reflective reading of the Prioress' document. After reading the designated sections, please reflect on the questions at the end of each section. Then make notes in the space allotted so you can share your comments during faith sharing. Each assignment has specific references from the Rule and Scripture.

CELL STUDY: For all of our Oblates who wish to take a "step-up" in their spiritual journey, using the text, *Thoughts Matter* by Mary Margaret Funk, OSB, should do this. In her introduction, Meg (as she is called), starts out by saying, "God is our heart's desire." She takes the particular section of the *Conferences of John Cassian (360-435)* regarding "the inner work (of asceticism) of renunciation of our inner thoughts" and helps us rediscover a mind at peace, stilled and available for conscious thinking in our world of chaos, confusion, noise and numbness. St. Benedict in his short rule refers seventy-eight times to Cassian's *Conferences* and sixty-eight times to Cassian's *Institutes*. Religious and lay practitioners can enter into the transformative experience by being faithful to inner work. It is up to each person to decide what it takes to let go of a former way of life: to remain outwardly in the same environment, or to change his or her location or lifestyle. You will receive this text (\$12) at the September Chapter meetings. If you have not chosen a Cell group, do get in touch with Sister Phyllis. Any of the Cell groups will welcome you.

ANNUAL OBLATE RETREATS: October 5, 6 & 7 are the dates for our fall retreat at Sacred Heart Monastery. February 22, 23 & 24 will be the early 2008 retreat. They will begin Friday evening and end Sunday noon. The theme is "Hospitality" and will again be a semi-quiet retreat. I would recommend that you make contact soon with Sister Joelle Bauer for a reservation at 605-668-6009 or jbauer@mtmc.edu.

EUROPEAN TOURS

In celebration of St. Benedict's Abbey's 150 years (Atchison, KS), Abbot Barnabas will lead a pilgrimage April 7-17, 2008. It will go from Munich, Germany through Bavaria and Austria including Salzburg and Vienna. It will cost around \$3000. Contact: development@kansasmonks.org. Mount Angel Abbey is hosting a 21 day study - bible lands tour and retreat to Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Israel May 18-June 7, 2008. The cost is \$4,150 leaving from Portland. Contact: zerny@bossig.com.

The book, *Benedictine Men and Women of Courage, Roots and History* by our own Sister Ann Kessler of Sacred Heart Monastery is now posted in its entirety, including illustrations on the web: <http://sacredfaith.org/default.aspx>. It is a vast treasury of Benedictine History.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW ASPIRING OBLATES! We will introduce them at our September Chapter meetings and list them in the next newsletter.

THE HISTORY OF LITURGY OF THE HOURS / DIVINE OFFICE / BREVIARY by *Novice Oblate Paul Blotkamp*

The Divine Office, Liturgy of the Hours, and the Breviary refer to the official prayer of the Church offered at various times of the day in order to sanctify it. The Divine Office is also called the *Opus dei* (Work of God) often referred to in the Rule of Benedict. This is a prayer-filled communal celebration, an extension of our oblation of ourselves with Christ in the Eucharist.

Clergy have a canonical obligation to pray the Liturgy of the Hours as official representatives of the Church. Even the private recitation of the Office by lay men and women is in union with the faithful and is considered a communal activity. Those with family responsibilities saying even one or two of the Hours is still a beneficial discipline and an offering to the glory of God. Spiritual tradition has always considered the celebration of praise at the Office to be a truly angelic function. Reciting the Office is a way of anticipating the life of heaven by the sanctification of time. Praising God at regular intervals during the day makes the entire day holy to God. Increasingly, the laity are praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Divine Office owes its remote origin to the inspiration of the Old Covenant. God commanded the Old Testament priests to offer a morning and evening sacrifice (Ex. 29:38-29). During the Babylonian Exile (587-521 BC), when the Temple did not exist, the synagogue services of Torah readings, psalms and hymns developed as a substitute for the bloody sacrifices of the Temple, a sacrifice of praise. The inspiration to do this may have been the fulfillment of Psalm 119:164 "Seven times a day I praise you" as well as, Psalm 1:2 "the just man meditates on the law day and night".

The early eremitical (hermit) and monastic practice recognized the Psalms as the perfect form of prayer. The practices were quite individual from monastery to monastery. At first some tried to do the entire Psalter (150 Psalms) each day, but eventually that was abandoned for a weekly cycle built around certain hours of the day. The development of the Divine Office may be divided into three periods.

- The first period extending from the Apostolic age to the pontificate of Gregory I (6th century) witnesses the formation of the fundamental parts.

From Apostolic days, the Church dedicated certain fixed hours to public prayer. These hours were comprised in the vigils extending from evening to dawn. From these vigils which were daily celebrated in the 4th century emerged

the major hours of the Office, Vespers, Matins, and Lauds (morning prayers), Terce (9 a.m.), Sext (12 pm.), and None (3 p.m.), the day hours, which previously had been hours of private prayer, became a public custom. The hour of Compline was instituted in the 6th century. Jewish prayer times were fixed in a schedule that coincided with a Roman timetable.

In the West Saint Benedict (6th century) rearranged systematic distribution of the psalms over the canonical hours and in other ways regulated the structure and content of the Office.

- The second period (6th to 16th century) the Roman Office as celebrated in the Roman basilicas spread into France, England, and Germany. To it were added the festivals of many saints. Through monastic influences, it received periodic additions; e.g., hymns and final antiphons. Fixed-hour prayer continued in the early centuries of the Christian church, both in homes and church settings, but it was the church's first monastics, the Desert Fathers of the third and fourth centuries, who amplified fixed-hour prayer to fulfill St. Paul's admonition (1 Thessalonians 5:17) to "pray without ceasing."
- The third period, from the 16th century to our own day, is characterized by the simplification of the Office and a rearrangement of the psalms to restore the traditional ideal of the recitation of the entire Psalter within the compass of a week. Each complete daily Office requires 33 psalms which are divided among the canonical hours; the longer psalms are divided into two or more parts. The Divine Office is intimately connected with the Eucharist which regulates the Office of the day. With the reforms of the Second Vatican Council the traditional one-week Psalter cycle became a four-week cycle.

Although the Divine Office has gone through various forms, and reforms, including that of Vatican II, its basic structure, combining Psalms, prayers, canticles and readings, has been relatively constant since the 11th century. Fixed prayer is a way of infusing a whole day, a whole week, a whole year with prayer. (Summarized from many references)

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