



# Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Associated with

Sacred Heart Monastery

December 2007

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Lincoln Chapter:** Sunday, North Commons Cafeteria and Monday in the Flanagan Room Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. Sunday, December 9, 2007 or Monday, December 10, 2007: Wisdom from the Tradition, Chapter III, pp. 19-32; RB 2:5, 7:67; Matthew 28

**Steinauer Chapter:** Banquet Room, across from St. Anthony's Church, Monday, Dec. 3, 2007, 7-9p.m: Wisdom from the Tradition, Chapter III, pp. 19-32; RB 2:5, 7:67; Matthew 28

**Hastings Chapter:** St. Michael's Church, Family Room, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. Saturday, December 8, 2007: Wisdom from the Tradition, Chapter III, pp. 19-32; RB 2:5, 7:67; Matthew 28

**Omaha Chapter:** New Cassel Retirement Center , Lecture Hall, 900 N 90th Street, West Entrance, Omaha , NE. Tuesday, December 11, 2007, General Assembly: Wisdom from the Tradition, Chapter III, pp. 19-32; RB 2:5, 7:67; Matthew 28

**RENEWAL OF OBLATION:** Attached you will find the Renewal of Oblation Certificate for you to sign and return. You may do this by email or return to me by postal mail. I would love to have a note again from those of you at a distance and I will share it with the others in the next newsletter.

**KEEP MAILING LIST UP TO DATE:** If you have changes please notify Sister Phyllis. If you have email which you have not given us, please do so as it saves on postage. If you would like to get the email but not the prayers, email Teresa Harms at [thandalbo@yahoo.com](mailto:thandalbo@yahoo.com).

**THE ADVENT WREATH:** by Victor Hoagland, C.P. The origins of the Advent wreath are found in the folk practices of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples who, during the cold December darkness of Eastern Europe, gathered wreaths of evergreen and lighted fires as signs of hope in a coming spring and renewed light.

Christians kept these popular traditions alive, and by the 16th century Catholics and Protestants throughout Germany used these symbols to celebrate their Advent hope in Christ, the everlasting Light. Traditionally, the wreath is made of four candles in a circle of evergreens. Three candles are violet and the fourth is rose. Each day or week at home, the candles are lighted, perhaps before the evening meal - one candle the first week, and then another each succeeding week until December 25th. A short prayer may accompany the lighting.

- First Week: O Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, desire of every nation, Savior of all peoples, come and dwell among us.
- Second Week: O King of all nations, Jesus Christ, only joy of every heart, come and save your people.
- Third Week: O Key of David, Jesus Christ, the gates of heaven open at your command, come and show us the way to salvation.
- Fourth Week: O Wisdom, holy Word of God, Jesus Christ, all things are in your hands, come and show us the way to salvation.

(Then at Christmas time, the candles can be changed to red.)

**A JOYOUS AND MERRY CHRISTMAS:** I have been awakened to what happens in Lincoln, Nebraska for the needy. One of our student oblates told how she experienced the children in need in one of our grade schools. As she and I investigated, we found how much is already happening for these children. There is a regular food day once a month. Prior to Christmas there will be clothing from a clothing drive, canned foods from a canned food drive and a festival after Christmas. There are other organizations which will support these families with toys, food and clothing. We are fortunate to live in Lincoln Nebraska with the many fine organizations but even then, there are those who are left unattended. Let's each of us do our part to support or even seek out those with a need. The student said that she was raised with all she needed. One of her goals is to continue to help needy children as her family has done all the years she was growing up. LOVE, PEACE and JOY to you and your families! Sister Phyllis

## OBLATE NOTES:

- Those of you who know Sister Enid Dodge and would like to contact her, her mailing address is Sacred Heart Monastery, 1005 West 8th Street, Yankton, SD 57078.
- Elizabeth Rodacker, Oblate writes: there is a small group of Oblates that meets here in my city (Bakersfield, CA) once a month which I am attending. It is so nice to have that connection. I took my sister with me last month. The group is currently reading SEEKING GOD, The Way of St. Benedict by Esther de Waal. The Oblate group here travels to the Valermo monastery several times a year, and I plan to travel along in the future. Hope all is well in Lincoln!
- Congratulations to Mara Fritts and her husband on their new arrival.
- Congratulations to Jerry and Kristi Meyer of Steinauer Chapter on the arrival of their son John William.
- Congratulations to Carol Olson, Oblate who presented on Islam for the Oblates and Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery. Reports are it was a fine presentation.
- We welcome Phip Ross, Oblate back after an extended educational experience in Costa Rica.
- Please remember several of our Oblates who are very ill and needing our prayers.

**BOOK REVIEW:** The Dance of Life, Weaving Sorrows and Blessings into One Joyful Step” by Henri J. M. Nouwen, edited by Michael Ford

I probably picked up this book because of the Van Gogh painting used on the cover. Then I saw it was written by Henri Nouwen, whom I have often heard quoted, but had never actually read. Michael Ford has chosen 128 excerpts from Nouwen’s extensive writings and woven them together to create this beautiful little gem of a book filled with wisdom.

Nouwen was born in Nijkerk, Netherlands, on January 24, 1932. He was educated by the Jesuits and ordained at age 25 in St. Catherine’s cathedral in Utrecht. He studied clinical psychology and came to America in 1964 for clinical pastoral education at the Meninger Institute in Topeka, KS. He began his writing career while serving as a visiting professor at Notre Dame. He also taught at Yale and Harvard. He was a prolific writer, known for his “semi-confessional approach to spiritual writing.”

In this work Nouwen writes about seeking balance between the poles of our feelings and attitudes, such as loneliness when apart from others. Other polarities are

hostility-hospitality, illusion-prayer. We often are deluded into thinking that we are in control of our lives, but must rely always on prayer. He has a beautiful description of prayer of the heart. “To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all-seeing, within you.”

Nouwen wrote that he spent much of his life seeking God, then later came to understand that God was looking for him, while he was hiding. He advises us not to compare ourselves to others that “We are good enough to do what we are called to do. Be yourself!” The spiritual life is “not about climbing a ladder of perfection but about embracing one’s wounds and finding the transforming power of God at work” in you.

The central theme of the book, which is divided into 9 stages, is the weaving of joy and sorrow in our lives. We are inclined to think of happy times and good memories in a category and hard times, losses and sorrows in another. “Joy and sorrow are parents of our spiritual growth.” One gives meaning to the other. By embracing both we grow toward spiritual wholeness.

This little book is not suggested as a daily devotional, but it would be an excellent one. I am going to buy the book and mark it up to my heart’s content, which I couldn’t do since this book is a part of our Oblate library. Myrna Schmid, Steinauer Oblate 11/07

IF THERE ARE OTHERS OF YOU WHO HAVE READ A GOOD SPIRITUAL/BENEDICTINE BOOK AND IS WILLING TO WRITE A BOOK REVIEW FOR US, DO LET SR. PHYLLIS KNOW. THANK YOU!



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