



Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska

Living by the Spirit of The Rule of St. Benedict + Associated with Sacred Heart Monastery
www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org + info@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org + **September 2013**

Living with the Rule

VISITING GRACIOUSLY

From the *Rule* of our Holy Father Benedict:
“A visiting monk from far away will perhaps present himself and wish to stay as a guest in the monastery. Provided that he is content with the life as he finds it, and does not make excessive demands that upset the monastery, but is simply content with what he finds, he should be received for as long a time as he wishes. He may, indeed, with all humility and love make some reasonable criticisms or observations, which the abbot should prudently consider; it is possible that the Lord guided him to the monastery for this very purpose”—RB 61:1-4.

Greetings

WELCOME BACK!

The new year of oblate gatherings and newsletters has begun. We look forward to study, prayer, and community as oblates of St. Benedict.

Chapter Gatherings

HASTINGS CHAPTER

Saturday, September 14, 2013, 9:30–11:30 a.m.
Chapters 1 and 2 of *Conversation with Saint Benedict: the Rule in Today's World* by Terrence G. Kardong: “Laughter and Tears” and “Monastic Recreation,” pp. 1–17. Leader: Sharon Connor; Reflection: Leland Ostdiek; Novice Lesson One—Companion Leader: Robin Stroot. The meeting is held in the Family Room of St Michael’s Church

Hastings Cell gathering: September 28, 2013, 9:30 a.m. Read Chapter 6, “Trust,” pp. 71–77, from *Cherish Christ Above All* by Demetrius Dumm, OSB.

The leader is Kathy Schroder. The meeting is held at St Michael’s Church in the Library.

Grand Island Cell gathering: Monday, September 23, 2013. Read the same assignment as in Hastings. The leader is Scott Taylor. Gather from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. at First Christian Church, 2400 W. 14th St., Grand Island.

LINCOLN CHAPTER

Sunday, September 8, 2013, 7:00 p.m., in the Sheridan Room at Madonna and Monday, September 9, 2013, 7:00 p.m. in the Nemaha Room at Madonna.

We have no reading in September; instead we will hear a talk from Deb Miller and Jim Potter, entitled “Spiritual Impact of Living in Southeast Asia.”

Jim Potter and Deb Miller returned last November after spending two years living in Malaysia and travelling extensively in southeast Asia. Their interest in spiritual practices of all kinds led them to many fascinating places and some new conclusions about the heritage and traditions that unify and separate us. They’ll share photos and insights about what they learned and how it’s impacting their spiritual lives today.

Cell gatherings: Read Chapter 6, “Trust,” pp. 71–77, in *Cherish Christ Above All* by Demetrius Dum, OSB. The Lincoln Chapter has several cells:

- Beginners’ Cell: Marti Fritzen—402.488.7351.
- Pax Christi Cell: Lorene Ludy—402.476.4948.
- Subiaco Cell: Tim Fisher—402.421.3211.
- Cell: Paul Blotkamp—402.483.0480—and Charlotte Liggett—402.261.9465.

| CHAPTERS | DEANS | LOCATIONS |
|------------------|---|---|
| Hastings | <i>Juliene Bryan</i> , juliene.bryan@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org | <i>Family Room, St. Michael’s Church, Hastings</i> |
| | <i>Carol Barry</i> , carol.barry@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org | <i>Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital</i> |
| | <i>Steve Liechti</i> , steve.liechti@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org | <i>Sheridan Room (Sunday)</i> |
| Lincoln | <i>Carol Olson</i> , carol.olson@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org | <i>Nemaha Room (Monday)</i> |
| | <i>Jim Rea</i> , jim.rea@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org | 5401 South St. |
| | <i>Mary Schroer</i> , mary.schroer@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org | Lincoln |
| Omaha | <i>Rod Dolton</i> , rod.dolton@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org | <i>New Cassel Retirement Ctr. Lecture Hall, Omaha</i> |
| Steinauer | <i>Marcia Borchert</i> , marcia.borchert@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org | <i>Banquet Room, Convent House B&B, Steinauer</i> |

Last year Charlotte Liggett and Paul Blotkamp, Lincoln Oblates, started a cell group for first-year oblates. They have decided to continue this group as a permanent cell and to invite others to join. The cell will continue its study of *Preferring Christ* by Norvene Vest. Those wishing to join this group should obtain a copy of this book. The cell's next meeting will be on Sunday, September 29, 7:00 p.m., in the Chapel at Madonna.

OMAHA CHAPTER

Tuesday, September 10, 7:00 p.m., in the New Cassel Retirement Center, 1st Floor Lecture Hall, 900 N. 90th St., Omaha. This gathering will also serve as Oblate Orientation.

STEINAUER CHAPTER

The Chapter meeting will feature Benedictine Oblate Orientation, Monday, August 26, 2013, at Convent House Bed and Breakfast Banquet Room, 311 Hickory, Steinauer, across from St. Michael's Church at 7:00 p.m.

Chapter News: Benedictine Oblate Orientation

INTRODUCTION

Please take note of the orientation information for your chapter and share with your friends.

Do you know someone who would be interested? Give them your dean's contact information at the bottom of the front page of this newsletter.

HASTINGS CHAPTER

Benedictine Oblate Orientation will be held at St. Michael's Church, Family Room, 715 Creighton Ave., Hastings, at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, August 24, 2013. For more information, contact Juliene Bryan, Dean, Hastings Chapter:
wjbryan@gtmc.net.

LINCOLN CHAPTER

Benedictine Oblate Orientation will be held at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital at 7 p.m., Sunday, August 25, in the Sheridan Rooms A and B and Monday, August 26 in Sheridan Room C. You may attend either session. For additional information, call Jim Rea, Lincoln Oblate Dean:
402.423.8694.

OMAHA CHAPTER

Benedictine Oblate Orientation will be held in the New Cassel Retirement Center, 1st Floor Lecture Hall, 900 N. 90th St., Omaha, at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 10, 2013. The orientation will also be the September chapter gathering. Christian Oblates learn *Lectio Divina* (contemplative reading), prayer, and Liturgy of Hours in the monastic tradition. No cost except occasional books. For more information, contact Rod Dolton, Dean, Omaha Chapter:
rdolton@cox.net.

STEINAUER CHAPTER

Benedictine Oblate Orientation will be held at the Convent House Bed and Breakfast Banquet Room, 311 Hickory, Steinauer, at 7:00 p.m., Monday August 26, 2013. For more information, contact Marcia Borchers, Dean, Steinauer Chapter:
db92140@windstream.net.

Resources for Understanding the Rule

DISCERNING HEARTS PODCAST

Shannon Van Gerpen, Lincoln Oblate, alerted the chapter to an insightful series of talks on *The Rule of St. Benedict*.

Discerning Hearts is a Web site providing a variety of podcasts and information. A podcast series on the *Rule*, conducted by Fr. Mauritius Wilde, OSB, Prior of Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, Nebraska, is now available. In one episode, Fr. Wilde talks about Chapter 34: "Distributions of Goods According to Need." This conversation from *Discerning Hearts* is worth the twenty-five minutes to devote to deepening one's insights into the *Rule*.

So far, two episodes are available:

- HR#1: Materialism vs. Gratitude (RB 34)
 - HR#2: In Place of Many Words, Silence (RB 6)
- Links to the episodes of this continuing series are on the Web:

www.discerninghearts.com/?p=wilde.

Memorial of St. Hildegard von Bingen

LINCOLN CHAPTER GATHERS FOR EVENING PRAYER

On Tuesday, September 17, 2013 those who can attend will gather for Vespers to celebrate the feast of St. Hildegard von Bingen.

Hildegard, 1098–1197, was a Benedictine nun and visionary. She has been called one of the most important figures of the Middle Ages and is

renowned for her books, poetry, and study of music and medicine. On October 7, 2012, Pope Benedict named Hildegard of Bingen a Doctor of the Church.

Here are the details:

Evening Prayer

Tuesday, September 17, 5:30 p.m.

Chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital

5401 South St.

Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Lincoln Chapter will gather for Vespers monthly, marking the living of other memorable Benedictines. Here is the schedule for the rest of 2013:

- Wednesday, October 16: Gall
- Tuesday, November 19: Mechtilde
- Sunday, December 29: Thomas Becket.

Retreat: The Gift of Faith

KATHLEEN NORRIS, OBLATE AND AUTHOR, VISITS SCHUYLER

Fr. Thomas Leitner, OSB, announced an event of interest for all who are interested in the monastic life. Here in Schuyler, at St. Benedict Center, the monks will have the joy to welcome the well-known author and Benedictine Oblate Kathleen Norris from Hawaii. The retreat with Kathleen is a Friday to Saturday retreat; the parts of the retreat stand in themselves, however. It is possible to attend only Saturday or only Friday night.

On October 4–5, 2013, award-winning poet, writer, and best-selling author Kathleen Norris will come to St. Benedict Center, four miles north of Schuyler, and speak on the topic of “The Gift of Faith.” On Friday, October 4, 2013, at 7:30 p.m., she will give an evening presentation, followed by discussion and sharing. On Saturday, October 5, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., she will present a one-day retreat.

The spiritual world is not separated from the chaos and the beauty of daily life. Kathleen Norris’s presentations on the gift of faith in her life will be at once intimate and historical, rich in poetry and meditations, brimming with exasperation and reverence, deeply grounded in both nature and spirit, sometimes funny, often provocative and always important. Norris, a Benedictine Oblate of Assumption Abbey in Richardton, North Dakota, is the award-winning poet, writer, and author of the *New York Times*’s bestsellers: *The Cloister Walk*; *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*; *Amazing Grace: A*

Vocabulary of Faith; and *The Virgin of Bennington*. Her latest book is a theological memoir titled *Acedia and me: A Marriage, Monks and a Writer’s Life* (Riverhead 2008).

For information on registration and costs contact:

St. Benedict Center

402.352.8819

www.StBenedictCenter.com.

Chapter Gatherings

NEW BOOK FOR THIS YEAR!

The book we will use for general gatherings this year is *Conversations with Saint Benedict—The Rule in Today’s World* by Terrence G. Kardong, OSB. It is available on Amazon.com or through local bookstores.

CHAPTER READINGS FOR 2013–2014

The chapter readings for the year come from *Conversation with Saint Benedict: The Rule in Today’s World*, by Terrence G. Kardong.

The Lincoln, Omaha, and Steinauer Chapters will use the following plan:

- September: No assignment
- October: Chapter 11 and 17 (“The Cell Phone and the Monk” and “Channel Surfing”)
- November: Oblation Ceremony, no readings or discussion
- December: Chapters 1, 2, and 6 (“Laughter and Tears”, “Monastic Recreation”, and “Work”)
- January: Chapters 4 and 14 (“Paternalism” and “The Prior of the Monastery”)
- February: Chapters 5 and 8 (“The Idolatry of Security” and “Food and Drink”)
- March: Chapters 3 and 7 (“Partisan Politics and the Benedictine Chapter” and “Economics without Anxiety”)
- April: Chapters 12 and 13 (“Table Reading” and “Competition”)
- May: Chapters 15 and 16 (“Zeal, Good and Bad” and “Hierarchy”).

The Hastings Chapter will read the book’s chapters in order.

Retreats: Enquirers, Novices, and Cell Leaders

LEARNING MORE ABOUT LIVING BY THE RULE

There will be a retreat for the enquirers and novices (those who will make their final oblations in November) at Serenity House, Bennet, Nebraska, on September 28, 2013. The retreat will begin at

noon, with lunch provided, and end at 3:00 p.m. We will cover the first lessons of the *Oblate Handbook*, give an overview of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, and discuss questions enquirers may have. We invite novices to come and share their experiences as novice oblates with the enquirers.

The Chapter cell leaders and Deans will meet 9:30 a.m. to noon that same day, prior to the retreat. This will be a facilitator training session.

Prayer Requests

MONASTERY AND CHAPTER GATHER PETITIONS

If you would like to send your prayer requests to the monastery, the Web address for Sacred Heart Monastery's prayer requests is:

www.yanktonbenedictines.org/PrayerRequest.php.

You may also send petitions to Marcia Straatmeyer at mstraat@neb.rr.com or by using the Prayer Request option on the chapter's Web site: www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/contact/.

Reflection

"PREFERRING ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO CHRIST"

On July 11 each year, the Church remembers and honors St. Benedict as the patriarch of Western monasticism. This movement of many branches traces its roots to his writing, entitled *Benedict's Rule*.

Most of what we know of St. Benedict's life comes from *The Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great, which he wrote in the sixth century.

Benedict was born in Nursia, a town in Umbria, Italy, around A.D. 480. He studied in Rome, where he grew discouraged by the increasing coarseness of late imperial culture.

He decided to become a hermit, moving to a cave near Subiaco, a small town about forty miles west of Rome. Word about his holy living spread, and he soon attracted followers and disciples who desired to live according to his example.

After a time, due to conflicts with local residents, he moved to Monte Cassino, about halfway between Rome and Naples. This became the home of the first Benedictine monastery.

St. Benedict wrote his *Rule*, based upon *The Rule of the Master*, which was longer and more stringent than his own *Rule*. His little work is treasured for its balance and wisdom. In its Prologue, he wrote,

Therefore we must establish a school for the Lord's service. In its organization, we have tried not to create anything grim or oppressive. (*RB* Prologue 45–46).

St. Benedict filled his work with references to the Scriptures. It helps those who follow his Rule to hear our Lord's voice, to follow it, and to find ways to abide by it while carrying out the tasks of daily life.

Benedict's Rule begins with a simple plea:

Listen, O my son, to the teachings of your master, and turn to them with the ear of your heart. Willingly accept the advice of a devoted father and put it into action. Thus you will return by the labor of obedience to the one from whom you drifted through the inertia of disobedience. Now then I address my words to you: whoever is willing to renounce self-will, and take up the powerful and shining weapons of obedience to fight for the Lord Christ, the true king. (*RB* Prologue 1–3)

The Rule ends by reminding all who follow Benedict's teachings that the Christian life is always one of beginning anew:

Therefore, if you long to attain the heavenly homeland, with Christ's assistance carry out this modest Rule for beginners that we have sketched out. (*RB* 73:8)

In addition to the multitudes of religious in the Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran traditions—both monks and nuns—who live by *Benedict's Rule*, there are thousands of Christians who have become oblates of St. Benedict. They are not monks and nuns, but they are people who find themselves drawn to the quiet beauty of a life that emphasizes sufficiency, stability, and obedience and that practices humility and hospitality.

They continue their vocations in daily life, while attaching themselves to a religious community and making promises to offer themselves as oblations to the Lord's service.

Whether Christians take religious vows, make the promises of oblates, or simply embrace their desire to live out the covenant of Holy Baptism, St. Benedict's teachings may serve as a guide for faithful living. Toward the end of *The Rule*, he writes:

They should bear each other's weaknesses of both body and character with the utmost patience. No one should pursue what he judges advantageous to himself, but rather what benefits others. They must show selfless love to the brothers. Let them fear God out of love. Let them prefer absolutely nothing to Christ, and may he lead us all together to everlasting life. (RB 72:5,7,9,11-12)

Each day, as we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, practice *lectio divina*, endeavor to live in humility, and welcome others as Christ, we can remember to bless God for giving St. Benedict to the whole Church as our guide for faithful and holy living.

Reflection by David Frye, Lincoln Oblate

NAABOD Conference

GATHERING IN BISMARCK INSPIRES, INFORMS

Four sisters from Sacred Heart Monastery and two Lincoln Oblates attended a conference organized by the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors. Everyone attending gathered for a group picture in the lecture hall at the University of Mary, Bismarck, North Dakota, during a break in the conference, held July 12-17, 2013. The conference theme was "Living the Benedictine Charism Faithfully in the World."



NAABOD Conference Participants: Ss. Joelle Bauer, Barbara McTague, and Phyllis Hunhoff are in the third row, first, second, and fourth from the left. Oblates David Frye and Steve Liechti are in the fourth row, first and second from the left. S. Bonita Gacnik is in the fifth row, first from the left.

Words From a Church Father

FROM THE SERMONS BEFORE HIS EXILE

BY ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The waves may rise higher and the storm grows fiercer, but we are not afraid of drowning, for we stand on rock. Let the sea rage; it cannot destroy the rock. Let the waves rise; they cannot sink Jesus' boat.

What am I supposed to fear—death? "For me life means Christ and death is gain."

Exile? But "the earth and all that fills it belongs to the Lord!"

Confiscation of goods? "We

brought nothing into the world and shall certainly take nothing out of it." This world's errors are contemptible, its "goods" laughable. I do not fear poverty or desire riches. I do not fear death or desire to live, save to be useful to all of you.

Do you not hear Jesus' saying: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in their midst?" Will he not be present, then, where so many people are linked together in love? I have his promise, and need not rely on my own strength. I have his book as my staff, my security, my peaceful harbor. Let the world be turned upside down. I read his words to me: "I am with you all days even to the end of the world."

Christ is with me; whom shall I fear? Waves, storms, raging officials—these are less to me than a cobweb. I say always: "Lord, your will be done!" That is my tower, my immovable rock, my unbreakable staff. Wherever he wants me to be, there do I thank him.



St. John Chrysostom:

Bishop and Doctor of the Church. A.D. 347-407.