



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 + January 2016

A Word from St. Benedict's Rule

PRAYING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

"The brothers should serve one another. Consequently, no one will be excused from the kitchen service unless she is sick or engaged in some important business of the monastery, for such service increases reward and fosters love. Let those who are not strong have help so they may serve without distress, and let everyone receive help as the size of the community or local conditions warrant. If the community is rather large, the cellarer should be excused from kitchen service, and, as we have said, those should also be excused who are engaged in important business. Let all the rest serve one another in love."

Source: The Rule of Benedict, RB 35:1-6

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM SR. PHYLLIS

My dear Oblates:

May Jesus, who comes into our world for our sake, be that gift to all of us this Christmas. We Sisters will celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy on December 20, 25, and 27 and monthly during 2016 for you and your intentions.

*Devotedly in Christ,
Sister Phyllis*

A Word from the Wise

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

"If any are in Christ they are new creatures; the old order has passed away." "New creature" refers to the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in a pure and innocent heart that is free of malice and wickedness. For when a soul conceives hatred of sin, gives itself with all its strength to the pursuit of

virtue, and, changing its way of life, welcomes the grace of the Spirit, then it is wholly healed and restored and made new.

The tempter lays many traps for our souls, and human nature is too weak to escape them by its own unaided powers. The Apostle therefore bids us don heavenly armor: "Put on the breastplate of holiness; shoe your feet in zeal for the gospel of peace; gird your loins with truth." You can see what varied ways of salvation the Apostle points out, all leading to one goal. Follow these and your way of life will easily be in accordance with God's will.

St. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-c. 395), from *The Christian Way of Life*



ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA: Detail from a 14th-century fresco in Chora Church, Istanbul.

Worship

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRAYING THE DIVINE OFFICE

Oblates gather every **Friday morning at 7:30** in the Ryan Memorial Chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, 5401 South St., Lincoln, Nebraska, to pray **Morning Prayer**. Everyone is welcome.

Two of the Lincoln cell groups begin their gatherings in the Ryan Memorial Chapel with Morning Prayer. Everyone is invited to pray with them. This month, **Morning Prayer** will be held at **8:00 a.m. on two Saturdays—January 9 and 23**. Please consider adding this prayer office to your spiritual life.

CHAPTERS	DEANS	LOCATIONS
Hastings	Julienne Bryan, julienne.bryan@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	Family Room, St. Michael's Church, Hastings
	Carol Barry, majorcarolb@yahoo.com	Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital
	Steve Blum, steve.blum@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	Sheridan Room
Lincoln	Carol Olson, carol.olson@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	5401 South St.
	Jim Rea, jim.rea@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	Lincoln
	Mary Schroer, mary.schroer@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	
Steinauer	Marcia Borchert, marcia.borchert@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org	Banquet Room, Convent House B&B, Steinauer

Two cell groups hold their gatherings on the fourth Sunday of the month—**January 24—at 7:00 p.m.** in the Ryan Memorial Chapel by praying **Evening Prayer** together. Everyone is invited to share this time for praying the Divine Office.

MONASTERY AND CHAPTER GATHER PETITIONS

If you would like to send your prayer requests to the monastery, please use Sacred Heart Monastery's prayer request form.

On the Web:

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.

On the Web:

www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/contact/.

SHORTER CHRISTIAN PRAYER INSTRUCTIONS

We are in the Christmas Season from Christmas until the Baptism of the Lord on January 10, 2016. During the Christmas Season, for weekdays after Christmas, see pp. 392–395. The Magnificat Antiphon and concluding prayers for the Epiphany of the Lord, Sunday, January 3, 2016, can be found on pp. 397–398. On the weekdays after Epiphany, January 4–9, turn to pp. 399–402 at the Reading. The Antiphons and Concluding Prayer for the Baptism of the Lord, January 10, may be found on pp. 403–404.

On the Monday after the Baptism of the Lord, January 11, 2016, we will switch to Week I on p. 54. We will be in ordinary time from January 10 until Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2016.

LINCOLN CHAPTER WORSHIP COMMITTEE WELCOMES MEMBER

Thank you to Lincoln oblate Marianne Guenther for joining the Worship Committee! Marianne joins Marti Fritzen, David Frye, and Carol Barry on the committee. The Worship Committee is responsible for coordinating prayers and music for Vespers at the Chapter Gatherings.

Chapter Gatherings

HASTINGS

The Chapter Gathering will be Saturday, January 9, 2016, 9:30–11:30 a.m., in the Family Room at St. Michael's Church.

The discussion turns to Norvene Vest's *Preferring Christ*, Chapters 17–20 and Interlude IV.

- *Facilitator:* Sharon Connor
- *Reflection:* Robin Stroot
- *Prayer Leader:* Susan Janda.

LINCOLN

The Chapter Gathering will be held on Sunday, January 10, 2016, in the Sheridan Room at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital at 7:00 p.m. The chapter will reflect on and discuss Chapters 17–20 and Interlude IV from *Preferring Christ* by Norvene Vest.

Following the discussions, everyone will gather in the Ryan Memorial Chapel for Evening Prayer.

LINCOLN CHAPTER RIDE-SHARING

Do you need a ride in order to get to the Lincoln Chapter gatherings? Are you able to give someone a ride? We'd like to match you up! Contact Carol Olson, Lead Dean, 402.486.0864 or carol.olson@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org, if you would like to be put on a list for ride sharing.

STEINAUER

The Chapter Gathering will be held on Monday, January 31, 2016, from 7:00–9:00 p.m., in the Banquet Room at Covenant House across from St. Anthony's Church. The chapter's reading is Chapters 17–20 and Interlude IV from *Preferring Christ* by Norvene Vest.

Consider Joining a Cell

Have you considered joining a cell group? The Hastings and Lincoln Chapters offer cell groups, small groups of oblates that meet monthly for study and fellowship. These small group meetings are considered supplemental to the monthly chapter gatherings. The small group format enables us to support one another in our spiritual journey as Benedictine Oblates. The Nebraska Cell groups are currently studying *Discernment Matters* by Sr. Mary Margaret Funk.

Please see the listings of cell groups below. The Hastings Chapter has cell groups in both Hastings and Grand Island. The Lincoln Chapter offers various cell groups, meeting at different times and days. The new Omaha cell group starts its gatherings in January 2016.

Cell groups are reserved for those who have made their Final Oblation in affiliation with Sacred Heart Monastery, unless other arrangements have

been made. Please see Carol Olson, Lead Dean, for more information.

Cell Groups

READING FROM DISCERNMENT MATTERS

All of the cell groups across Nebraska—except Lincoln’s Subiaco Cell—share the same plan of scheduled readings for reflection from September through May.

Discernment Matters: Listening with the Ear of the Heart, Sr. Mary Margaret Funk

- **January:** Chapter 3—“Specific Practices for Discernment: Five Steps to Making a Decision”: pp. 133–139.

Full Schedule: www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/cells/

GRAND ISLAND CELL GROUP

Brother Lawrence Cell

This cell meets Monday, January 25, 2016, 4:30–5:30 p.m. at the First Christian Church, 2400 W 14th St., Grand Island.

HASTINGS CELL GROUP

St. Scholastica Cell

This cell meets Saturday, January 23, 2016, 9:30–10:30 a.m. in the Library at St. Michael’s Church.

LINCOLN CELL GROUPS

Beginners’ Cell

- Leader: Marti Fritzen
- Meetings: Monthly on the fourth Sunday at 7:00 p.m., beginning with Vespers in the Ryan Memorial Chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. The group then moves to the Platte Room for its discussion.
- This month: January 24, 2016

The Rule of Benedict (RB 73:8) says that the rule is for beginners; we are all beginners and all are welcome to this cell.

Hildegard von Bingen Cell

- Leader: David Frye
- Meetings: Every other Saturday beginning at 8:00 a.m. with Morning Prayer in the chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital.
- This Month: January 9 and 23, 2016
- January 9: **Discernment Matters**
Morning Prayer: Jim Rea, leader
Group *Lectio Divina*: John 15:1–8, “... ask for whatever you wish ...,” Carol Brewer, leader.

Discussion: *Discernment Matters*, Mary Schroer, leader.

- January 23: “**The Benedict Option**”
Morning Prayer: member of the Subiaco Cell Group
Lectio Divina: James 1:19–27, “Religion that is pure and undefiled ...,” Steve Blum, leader.
Discussion: “The Benedict Option,” by Rod Dreher, David Frye, leader.

Pax Christi Cell

- Leader: Lorene Ludy
- Meetings: The fourth Monday from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Mary Lu Long’s house, 1615 Brent Blvd., Lincoln.
- This month: January 25, 2016.

Preferring Christ Cell

- Leaders: Paul Blotkamp and Charlotte Liggett
- Meetings: The fourth Sunday of every month at Madonna, 7:00 p.m.
- This month: January 24, 2016.

Subiaco Cell

- Leader: Tim Fisher
- Meetings: Every other Saturday beginning at 8:00 a.m. with Morning Prayer in the chapel at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. Then this cell for men moves to a designated room for conversation.
- This Month: January 9 and 23, 2016.

OMAHA CELL GROUP

Omaha’s new cell group gathers on the fourth Sunday of each month 7:00–9:00 p.m. The first gathering will be held on Sunday, December 27, 2015, 7:00 p.m., and the second one on Sunday, January 24, 2016. The cell’s leader is Phil Kelley.

News from Sacred Heart Monastery

ADVENT AT THE MONASTERY

These stained glass works of art (see the picture on the next page) light the Sisters’ Advent Wreath as we gather for the Liturgy of the Hours. As the second week of Advent begins, the candles begin to lighten in tones and shades. May their light brighten your Advent too.



MEET THE SISTERS

Greetings,

As we continue in this Year of Consecrated Life, we will be hearing from our sisters. They've been invited to share about our Benedictine life. Sister Louise Marie reflected on the faithfulness of her family and her love of the Mass in following God to her Benedictine Call to Consecrated Life.

I was born a country girl in the farming community near Turkey Ridge, S.D., a place too small for a post office.

Our Faith was very important in my family. Going to Sunday Mass somehow drew me in and seemed to be "so special" even at a young age. I wanted to go to Mass. Without being able to explain it, somehow, I sensed the presence of God.

I attended a one-room school for my elementary grades, but high school was the real gift. My parents sacrificed much so that all three of us girls came to Mount Marty High School. The Sisters, who were most of the teachers then, were attractive to me. I observed them closely and found myself admiring several of them. I can still see in my mind's eye some of them hurrying off to prayer around five p.m.

At Mount Marty, we had Mass every day, and I was there. It was an even greater thrill when on



Sr. Louise Marie

some special occasions we students would join the Sisters at their Mass! I found myself wanting to be like them. To be the goodness I saw in them.

I've always loved to be out in nature and most days as a child would go out by myself just to be out in the peace and quiet sounds of nature to watch the breeze wave the grain, or listen to the rustle of the corn leaves. One day somewhere between my Sophomore and Junior high school years I heard a new sound out in the nature I so loved. It was the soft and peaceful call of God, "Go to the Convent." Since I was the only person out in the pasture, I knew who was speaking in my heart.

Now, God had my attention. Soon I was talking with one of my high school teachers, Sr. Ann, and eventually, much later she asked if I wished to visit with Mother Jerome. I did and soon had my papers to enter. The Benedictine Sisters influenced my decision not by any gimmicks or strategies other than their prayerfulness, goodness and happiness. I am glad that I am now one of them.

*Blessings to you,
Sr. Louise Marie*

JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY

Sr. Patricia Heirigs, in her December letter to oblates, noted:

Pope Francis has declared the year of 2016 as a Jubilee Year of Mercy. He is asking all Christians to use this opportunity for everyone to collaborate in charitable works and compassion. Our Pope asks us, "to join with many people who do not consider themselves to be believers or who are in search of God and truth, people who place the face of others at the center, especially their brothers and sisters in need. But the mercy that is required of us embraces all creation, that God entrusted to us as its custodians rather than exploiters or destroyers. We must always seek to leave behind a better world than the one we found."

Retreats

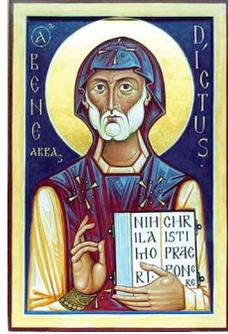
"KEEP THIS LITTLE RULE"—SHAPING A PERSONAL RULE FOR THE OBLATE LIFE

- Saturday, March 12, 2016, 12 noon–3:00 p.m.
- Serenity Acres, Bennet, Nebraska
- Presenters: Mary Schroer and David Frye, oblates.

Our oblate handbook suggests that one of the ways an oblate can grow in his or her practice of

the oblate life is to create a personal rule that helps to focus one's practice of Christian discipleship.

The presenters have been working together for over a year to shape and refine their own personal rules. Based upon this experience, they have some guidance and suggestions to share to build upon the basic material included in the handbook.



The retreat will provide resources and offer ample time for retreatants to pray for guidance and to begin crafting—or refining—their own personal rules.

The retreat will begin with Midday Prayer and end with Evening Prayer.

Registration: There is no cost to register. Please send an e-mail to one of the leaders to let them know you are interested:

davidfrye@windstream.net
mary.schroer@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org.

RETREATS AT SACRED HEART MONASTERY

Lenten Retreat: February 13, 2016. Watch Sacred Heart Monastery's Web site and Facebook page for more information.

Oblates' Retreats: Two oblate retreats are scheduled for Sacred Heart Monastery on April 22–24 and October 28–30. Full details will follow, so mark your calendars now.

TOUCHED BY GOD'S MERCY

- Sophia Spirituality Center, Atchison, Kansas
- Friday, January 22, 2016, 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
- Presenter: Sr. Bridget Dickason, OSB.
- Fee: \$55 with \$10 deposit.
- Registration Deadline: January 1, 2016.

Contemplate the joy of having been touched by God's mercy. Ponder what it can mean for us to become witnesses of God's mercy. Pope Francis has designated this year as a Jubilee Year of Mercy. We will explore together what this Year of Mercy can mean for us individually and as a church.

Details and Registration: www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org.

LECTIO DIVINA: LISTENING WITH THE EAR OF THE HEART

- Sophia Spirituality Center, Atchison, Kansas

- Saturday, February 13, 2016, 10:00 a.m.–
- Sunday, February 14, 2016, 2:00 p.m.
- Presenter: Sr. Micaela Randolph, OSB.
- Fee: \$115 with \$20 deposit.
- Registration Deadline: February 1, 2016.

Lectio Divina is what our ancestors in the faith named the kind of reading that enters the soul, feeds us, inebriates our whole being, and results in holiness and wisdom. This ancient art of prayerfully reading Scripture leads to a contemplative attitude and changes our perspective on life. Come and experience a time of sharing, silence, solitude, and reflection.

Details and Registration: www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org.

SILENT: TOOLBOX FOR INTERIORITY

- St. Benedict Center, Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, Nebraska
- 7:30 p.m., Friday, January 22, 2016 through 1:00 p.m., Sunday, January 24, 2016.
- Presenters: Teresa Monaghan, AO; Fr. Thomas Leitner, OSB; and a team of women.

This retreat for women will help you, at any stage of your life, to learn the fine art of listening and responding deeply to God's call in your life.

It offers many useful "tools for interiority," explained and practiced during the weekend, along with time for prayer and spiritual direction. Teresa Monaghan, AO, Father Thomas Leitner, OSB, and a team of consecrated life members will present various aspects of discernment, share life stories and give a chance for personal input and reflection. The schedule will include silence, Mass, Confession, fellowship, brief conferences, and spiritual direction with retreat directors.

Details: www.stbenedictcenter.com.

SILENT: LISTEN! BE ATTENTIVE!

- St. Benedict Center, Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, Nebraska
- 7:30 p.m., Friday, January 29, 2016 through 3:30 p.m., Sunday, January 31, 2016.
- Presenters: Br. Damian Cayetano, OSB; Teresa Monaghan, AO; and a team of men.

This retreat for men offers many useful "tools for attentiveness," explained and practiced during

the weekend, along with time for prayer and spiritual direction.

The retreat will assist you, whatever your stage in life, to learn the fine art of listening and responding deeply to God's call. Brother Damian, Teresa Monaghan, AO, Fr. Thomas Leitner, OSB, and a team of consecrated life members will present various aspects of discernment, share life stories and give a chance for personal input and reflection. The schedule will include silence, Mass, Confession, fellowship, brief conferences, and spiritual direction with retreat directors.

PODCAST: THE RULE OF BENEDICT

Fr. Mauritius Wilde, OSB, Prior of Christ the King Priory in Schuyler Nebraska, presents a podcast on the *Rule of Benedict*. With host Kris McGregor, Fr. Mauritius provides commentary on various verses from chapters of the Rule.

Web: www.discerninghearts.com.

Final Oblation

LINCOLN OBLATE MAKES FINAL OBLATION



Lincoln oblate John Clyne made his final oblation at the December 13, 2015, chapter gathering. He is pictured here with Lead Dean Carol Olson.

General Announcements

SNOW POLICY

It seems timely to restate our snow policy.

1. Should we have three to four inches of snow, we will cancel the meeting without notice. The meeting will not be rescheduled. The next month's meeting will occur as scheduled with that month's assignment.
2. Should we have a snowstorm that seems hard to judge, an e-mail will be sent. For those without e-mail, please call someone with e-mail. In all cases, use your best judgment: Be Safe!

CHANGE OF E-MAIL ADDRESSES

When you update your e-mail address, please send a message to:

info@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org.

This will assure that you continue to receive notices about the release of newsletters and other important chapter messages.