



# 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 + **March 2016**

## A Word from St. Benedict's Rule

### HUMILITY

"Brothers, divine Scripture calls us saying: *Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11; 18:14). In saying this, therefore, it shows us that every exaltation is a kind of pride, which the Prophet indicates he has shunned, saying: *Lord, my heart is not exalted; my eyes are not lifted up and I have not walked in the ways of the great nor gone after marvels beyond me* (Ps 130[131]:1). And why? *If I had not a humble spirit, but were exalted instead, then you would treat me like a weaned child, on its mother's lap* (Ps 130[131]:2).

Source: The Rule of Benedict, RB 7:1-4

## A Word from the Wise

### "I SHALL WATCH TO SEE WHAT THE LORD SAYS TO ME"



St. Bernard of Clairvaux

We read in the Gospel that when the Lord spoke of people eating his flesh, some said: "This is a hard saying," and went about with him no more. But when his own disciples asked whether they too would go away, they answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

The situation has not changed, brothers and sisters. To some it is evident that words of Jesus are spirit and life, and so they follow him; others find his words too hard and seek some wretched consolation elsewhere. Yet Wisdom cries out in the streets, that is, in the broad and spacious way that

leads to death, and calls back those who walk there ....

God calls sinners back to their own consciences and accuses them of their sin, which is all the greater, since God dwells with them and speaks to them, doing what he had told his prophets to do: "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem."

Brothers and sisters, the prophets gave us salutary advice: If today we hear God's voice, let us not harden our hearts. Gospel and prophets here speak almost the same language, for the Lord says: "My sheep hear my voice"; and holy David had said before him: "His people and the sheep he pastures, if today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." We, too, brothers and sisters, must watch, for now is the time of battle.

From Sermons on Various Occasions by St. Bernard

## Sacred Heart Monastery News

### SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROGRAM

We are happy to announce that the application process for the 2016-2018 Spiritual Direction Ministry Formation Program is beginning soon. If you are discerning a call to companioning others in their spiritual journeys, please send a note of inquiry to me at the address below. Also, if you know of someone who might benefit from this program, please forward the information to them. Thank you!

In peace,

Sr. Jeanne Ranek, OSB

**Benedictine Peace Center**  
1005 W 8th St.  
Yankton SD 57078  
605.668.6292  
jeanneranek@mtmc.edu

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

**A MESSAGE FROM OUR OBLATE DIRECTOR**

Dear Oblates,

The beautiful season of Lent is here already. It seems like we just finished the Christmas season and already it is Ash Wednesday. Lent is a special time; it is a time to pause and pay attention to our spiritual life. Many of us think of Lent as time for prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. For some, Lent is a period of abstinence and repentance to help in our preparation for Easter. Whatever Lent is for you, reflect on the words of Pope Francis: "Lent is a favorable time for letting Christ serve us so that we in turn may become more like Him." Let us begin this journey of Lent together. We can enter into the desert with Christ where we search for a conversion in our lives. Often this is not a direct route. There will be days when we feel we are not making any spiritual progress. But never give up. Benedict's focus was on the inner condition of our hearts, on how we can change our dispositions and reflect on the changes we want to make in our lives. Choose the positive route! Father James Martin, SJ, in his article, "Teach me to Pray," suggested that we practice being kind to one another instead of giving up all kinds of things. His suggestion of kindness was threefold: first, don't be a cross to others by sharing all your aches and pains and problems. Second, honor the absent by not gossiping about them. Third, if there is any question about what people said or did, give them the benefit of the doubt. Being kind may be more difficult to do than giving up a multitude of things.

If you have not done so already, take time to read Chapter 49 in the *Holy Rule* on "The observance of Lent." Read it slowly, reflect, and begin your journey.

Sister Eileen O'Connor's sudden and unexpected death has been a shock to all of us. Her involvement in many local Yankton projects was expansive. It was evident by the large number of people who attended both her Wake and Funeral services that she touched many people's lives. She will be greatly missed. May she rest in peace! God's Blessings,

*S. Patricia Heirigs Oblate Director*

Excerpt from Sister Patricia's February Oblate Newsletter.  
Check out the Oblate News section of the Sacred Heart Monastery Web site: [www.yanktonbenedictines.org/](http://www.yanktonbenedictines.org/).

**GOD CALLED S. EILEEN O'CONNOR INTO ETERNITY  
ON JANUARY 26, 2016**

**MAY WE FOLLOW HER EXAMPLE OF GENEROUS SERVICE!**

Let me take you back to Brooklyn, N.Y., in August of 1957. I was looking for community, and I had a holy longing for more of God; one particular passage from the Bible spoke to me: "from one to whom much is given, much is expected." So I thought: Eileen,



Classroom Photo, 1988

you have a good family; what will you give back? Mom and Dad, Eileen and Hugh O'Connor, both natives of Ireland, never had a hungry day. I'm one of three girls; my sisters are Catherine Heffernan and Chrissy O'Connor. Church was a big part of my life at a young age, as well as school and the public library.

In grade school I strove to learn more about my faith and was influenced by the Sisters of Mercy who taught me. I remember every teacher I ever had. I thought being a teacher would really be something I could do that would have a great impact.

When I was in high school, my future and the possibility of Sacred Heart Monastery came to be when I received a magazine, "Children of the Prairie," from St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain, S.D. I was aware of other orders such as Maryknoll, but they wouldn't take me until I was 21, and at the time I was sixteen years old. I was captivated by a picture of a Sister with Native Americans, and I thought that could be a fit for me.



S. Eileen O'Connor

It would give me an opportunity to teach and I always wanted to be a teacher. I filled out the coupon and sent it to Mother Jerome Schmitt in Yankton, S.D., and exchanged several letters with her. In sharing this with my parents, I was surprised to find out that they not only supported me, but my father said, "I would love to see the Midwest

again." I made my first trip to the Midwest by train with my family. Once here in Yankton, I entered the Monastery on August 20, 1958, one of twenty-seven entering that year! It was an exciting time for Sacred Heart Monastery, which was establishing a new Motherhouse in Watertown in 1960. Two other classmates from that time still with me now are S. Esther Holzbauer and S. Jacquelyn Ernster. The three of us had a beautiful Golden (50th) Jubilee celebration in 2010, and were privileged to see some family members at that time.

I knew this life was for me after I had a little time to learn more about the Sisters and deal with the culture shock (most Sisters spoke German, and I was from the East Coast). Little by little, I adjusted to life here through the different areas of ministry, shaping coifs (then part of the traditional habit), and working in the garden and the kitchen. I loved my time at Mount Marty College, student teaching with S. Victorine Stoltz, and also with another influence, S. Veronica Fasbender, who taught science for teachers and who also enriched my education in astronomy. During my time as a Sister I have served in three different missions: St. Lambert's Parish in Sioux Falls, St. Patrick's parish in Lincoln, Neb., and ten years in Chamberlain, S.D. My mother passed away in 1974, and shortly after I helped my dad find a place to live in Sioux Falls, S.D. It was wonderful having him close, and he was the grandpa to several of my first grade students. One of them is now S. Kathy Burt, who remembers that he would leave candy bars on each desk.

My favorite part of Benedictine life is seeking God, every day in every way, and it's never complete.

I love the prayer, the music, the liturgy, the love of beauty, and our core values of awareness of God, hospitality, community, and life-long learning. Living in community has made me grateful and it makes me more patient. One motto I like from *The Rule of Benedict* is "be the first to show respect," which can be as simple as greeting those I meet in the hall or dining room. Another nice aspect of community life is that the Sisters are always concerned about the welfare of others.

I'm committed to this life, but I'm open to whatever new forms of it that history presents to us. Pope Francis inspires me by saying that "Our church is not a museum; it is a field house for care of the wounded." Life in a Monastery is not an escape hatch to life's problems; it is a place to have awareness of life's challenges and to know that you have the grace of God to help you with the challenges that come. I ask myself often, where did I meet God today?

What excites me about the future for Benedictines is that they "do what needs to be done." That perspective has offered some unlikely surprises, such as spending Christmas Eve in a state prison with 1,600 guys. Benedictine life is hands-on and I very much enjoy that. I also am nourished by reading and movies, finding Jesus in the movies with student oblates. I love my fifth grade pen pals at the local Catholic school; they and the Sisters write to each other and share prayer occasionally. As long as I am healthy and can continue to work with kids and prisoners, I'm happy. Whatever comes in my life's journey, I will welcome with a Benedictine heart.

**Note: Carol Olson, Lead Dean, attended S. Eileen's Wake and Funeral.**

#### **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.

Some Lincoln oblates 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—March 5 and 19.** Please consider adding this prayer office to your spiritual life.

Oblates also will gather on the fourth Sunday of this month—**March 27—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](http://www.yanktonbenedictines.org/PrayerRequest.php).

You may also send petitions to Marcia Straatmeyer at [mstraat@neb.rr.com](mailto:mstraat@neb.rr.com) or by using the Prayer Request option on the chapter's Web site.

**On the Web:**

[www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/contact/](http://www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/contact/).

#### **SHORTER CHRISTIAN PRAYER INSTRUCTIONS**

We continue in the Lenten prayers until Evening Prayer, Saturday, March 19, for Palm Sunday (p. 111), Week II of the Psalter. At the Reading, turn to p. 429. On Holy Thursday, March 24, begin on p. 160. At the Reading, turn to p. 436. and p. 456 during the Easter Triduum, Holy Thursday through Holy Saturday. On Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016, start on p. 457. On Easter Sunday we begin Week I. During the Easter Season, we will turn at the Reading to pp. 469–486.

### **Chapter Gatherings**

#### **HASTINGS**

The Chapter Gathering will be Saturday, March 12, 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*, Interlude V, Domestic Arrangements, Chapters 31-35.

- *Facilitator:* Susan Janda
- *Reflection:* Jim Hoffman
- *Prayer Leader:* Robin Stroot.

#### **LINCOLN**

The Chapter Gathering will be held on Sunday, March 13, 2016, in the Sheridan Room at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital at 7:00 p.m. The chapter will reflect on and discuss Interlude V, Domestic

Arrangements, Chapters 31-35, from *Preferring Christ* by Norvene Vest.

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

**Don't forget to turn your clocks ahead  
Saturday evening, March 12.  
It's Daylight Saving Time!**

#### **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](mailto:carol.olson@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org), if you would like to be put on a list for ride sharing.

#### **LINCOLN CHAPTER MUSICIANS**

Do you play piano or organ? We invite you to share your talents as an accompanist for Vespers at the Lincoln Chapter meetings. If interested please contact Marti Fritzen, Liturgical Committee Leader. **E-mail:** [martifritzen@yahoo.com](mailto:martifritzen@yahoo.com).

#### **STEINAUER**

The Chapter Gathering will be held on Monday, March 28, 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 Interlude V, Domestic Arrangements, Chapters 31-35, 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 started 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 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

- **March:** Chapter 3, cont.—Essentials of Discernment to Make Decisions: pp. 158–169.

Full Schedule: [www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/cells/](http://www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/cells/)

#### GRAND ISLAND CELL GROUP

##### Brother Lawrence Cell

This cell meets Monday, March 21, 2016, 4:30–5:30 p.m. at the First Christian Church, 2400 W 14th St., Grand Island.

**NOTE:** *This is one week earlier than usual, due to Easter.*

#### HASTINGS CELL GROUP

##### St. Scholastica Cell

This cell meets Saturday, March 19, 2016, 9:30–10:30 a.m. in the Library at St. Michael’s Church.

**NOTE:** *This is one week earlier than usual, due to Easter.*

#### 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: March 27, 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: March 5 and 19, 2016
- March 5: *Discernment Matters*

Morning Prayer: David Frye, leader  
Group *Lectio Divina*: Deuteronomy 30:11–14,  
Discussion: *Discernment Matters*.

- March 19: **“Bringing It to Completion”**  
Group *Lectio Divina*: *Rule of Benedict*, Prol. 1–4.  
Discussion: “‘Bringing It to Completion’: American New Monastics and the Benedictine Tradition,” by Alden Bass. Mary Schroer, 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: March 28, 2016.

##### Preferring Christ Cell

- Leader: Charlotte Liggett
- Meetings: The fourth Sunday of every month at Madonna, 7:00 p.m.
- This month: March 27, 2016.

##### Omaha Cell Group

- Leader: Phil Kelley
- Meetings: Fourth Tuesday of each month 7:00–9:00 p.m. at the New Cassel Retirement Center.
- This month: March 22, 2016.

#### Retreat: Nebraska Chapter

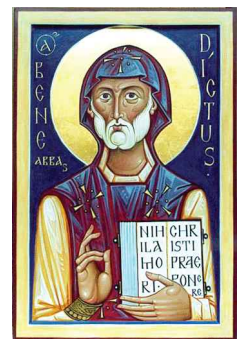
**“KEEP THIS LITTLE RULE” —**

##### 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 chapter’s 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. This experience will yield some guidance and



suggestions to share to build upon the basic material included in the handbook.

The retreat will offer resources and 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.

**NOTE:** The final day to register is March 9.

davidfrye@windstream.net

mary.schroer@nebraskabenedictineoblates.org.

### Retreats: Sacred Heart Monastery

#### PASCHAL TRIDUUM RETREAT

- Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton, S.D.
- 4:30 p.m., Holy Thursday, March 24, 2016
- Ends with Easter Dinner, noon, Sunday, March 27, 2016.
- Donation of \$130 includes a single room with private bath and meals.

Come, enter the silence and experience the rich liturgies of Holy Week with the monastic community of the Benedictine Sisters in Yankton. This Paschal Triduum Retreat at Sacred Heart Monastery begins Holy Thursday afternoon and ends on Easter Sunday. Optional conferences on the meaning and symbolism of each day and liturgical event are available.

**Reservations and questions:**

benedictinepeacectr@mtmc.edu or 605.668.6292. Space is limited. Deadline is March 19, 2016.

#### MARK YOUR CALENDARS: OBLATES' RETREAT

- *Ways of Praying*, April 22–24, 2016.
- Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton, S.D.
- Retreat given by several Benedictine sisters.

### Retreats: Sophia Spirituality Center

#### EXPLORING GOD'S MERCY WITH MYSTICS AND POETS:

##### FAUSTINA, GERTRUDE, HOPKINS, POWERS

- Sophia Spirituality Center, Atchison, Kansas
- Thursday, April 7, 2016, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Presenters: Srs. Sheila Carroll and Gabrielle Kocour, OSB
- Fee: \$55 with \$10 deposit.
- Registration Deadline: April 1, 2016.

Pope Francis said, "God never tires of us; we tire in seeking God's mercy." In addition to selections from our mystics and poets, this retreat will include talks, contemplative dialogue, prayer, guided meditation, and a DVD. We will have silence but also shared conversation.

**Details and Registration:** [www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org).

#### HILDEGARDE OF BINGEN

- Sophia Spirituality Center, Atchison, Kansas
- Wednesday, April 13, 2016, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Presenter: Sr. Therese Elias, OSB.
- Fee: \$55 with \$10 deposit.
- Registration Deadline: April 1, 2016.

Hildegard was a visionary, poet, prophet, musician, healer, and advisor to popes and emperors. The revelations of this twelfth-century Benedictine abbess continue to inspire awe for their significance for her own time and for ours as well. This presentation will focus on her cosmic vision of God's love enfolding and permeating the universe. We will explore her legacy for its relevance to our personal and communal journeys today.

**Details and Registration:** [www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.sophiaspiritualitycenter.org).

### Retreats: St. Benedict Center

#### "DO YOU LOVE ME?" A PERENNIAL EASTER QUESTION

- St. Benedict Center, Christ the King Priory, Schuyler, Nebraska
- Saturday, April 2, 2016, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Presenter: Sr. Mary Ann Schmieding, SSSF.
- Regular Registration Fee: \$40.50.

Taking a renewed look at Peter and his journey as a disciple of Jesus may be what is needed for your own re-commitment as a follower of the Risen Lord and to know its joy and consolation. Bring your bible and an unrestricted heart for a day of deep prayer and reflection.

**Details:** [www.stbenedictcenter.com](http://www.stbenedictcenter.com).

#### 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](http://www.discerninghearts.com).