



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 + Fall 2021

A WORD FROM RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

A Schedule for Prayer – Why does Benedict go to such great lengths to tell us exactly how to pray the psalms? After all, he says himself that another arrangement could work just as well, provided it doesn't leave any psalms out. The painstaking detail of these chapters (Chps 8 – 18 in the Rule of St. Benedict) is a reminder that conversation with God, however lofty or spiritual it may seem, comes down to details. When are we going to pray? Where? With whom? How?

People who go on retreat at a monastic community often comment how grounding it is to be part of a community that knows when to pray together. Yet, however spiritual we may be, most modern people don't set aside specific times of the day to stop and pray. Travel to a Muslim country, and the public call to prayer rings out as a peculiar interruption. Fixed-hour prayer is strange to most of us.

But a commitment to prayer that never gets down to the details of schedule is hardly a commitment at all. Though seven times a day is a goal with biblical resonance, we need not be put off by Benedict's apparent high standards. He is after all, presenting a rule that is intentionally less harsh than those he inherited. The heart of the fixed-hour prayer tradition is morning, midday, and evening prayer. To begin and end our days in common prayer is a big step away from the individualism of contemporary

spirituality and toward the kind of community with God and neighbor that Benedict imagined.

Source - The Rule of Saint Benedict: A Contemporary Paraphrase by Jonathan Wilson-Hargrove

SHORTER CHRISTIAN PRAYER INSTRUCTIONS

We remain in Ordinary Time until the first Sunday of Advent, which is Sunday – November 28, 2021. And on that Sunday we start with Psalm Week 1. Until then we will continue to follow the four-week psalter in the Shorter Christian Prayer book. As a reference on Sunday, September 19, 2021 we will be in Week 1, page 48. Find the antiphon for Cantic of Mary on page 530 (25th Sunday in Ordinary Time). One resource you might like to check for the Liturgy of the Hours for the current day can be found at universalis.com.

THE O ANTIPHONS

Since we are getting closer to Advent, we would like to provide information about the O antiphons that you might want to use during Advent. The final eight days of Advent are accentuated by the "O" statements that lead to the eight days of the Christmas octave. They are called the O Antiphons because they each begin with the letter O and address Jesus with a traditional title primarily from the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah. The O Antiphons may be read

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at Evening Prayer, December 17th – December 23rd, before the Canticle of Mary. The O Antiphons end December 23rd because evening prayer on December 24th is the beginning of the Christmas vigil. If you are interested in using the O Antiphons you can find them at this link -

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/the-o-antiphons-of-advent>

2022 YEAR OF GRACE LITURGICAL CALENDAR

If you are interested in purchasing the 2022 Year of Grace Liturgical Calendar, you can find them for sale at the following link -

<https://www.ltp.org/>

DEANS RETREAT

In August, the Deans of the Nebraska Benedictine Oblates participated in a Dean's retreat at the Convent House B & B in Steinauer, NE (home base of the Steinauer Oblate Chapter). They were joined via Zoom by Sr. Maribeth Wentzlaff, Sacred Heart Monastery Prioress. Marcia Borchert gave us a quick tour of the Convent House B&B (formerly a Benedictine convent), and we shared Morning Prayer in the cozy and beautiful chapel before the day's meetings. Topics included "The ABC's of Benedictine Leadership" presented by Sr. Maribeth, and "Julian of Norwich: Life in a Pandemic" by Steve Blum. Discussion was centered on the impact of the pandemic on Oblate life, Julian's experience of and wisdom from a pandemic, and ways to connect more with Sacred Heart in Yankton and with our Oblates in the midst of it all. It has been a difficult and challenging year, and we are all grateful for technology that allows us to continue to gather, share, and pray safely together. The Deans appreciated Sr. Maribeth taking time out of her busy schedule to join us and share her wisdom of Benedictine leadership. We ask all Oblates to continue to keep Sr. Maribeth, the sisters at Sacred Heart, and the leadership (Deans) of the Benedictine Oblates of Nebraska in prayer. The Nebraska Deans are: Lincoln: Carol Barry, Steve Blum, Charlotte Liggett, Carol Olson and Jim Rea.

Steinauer: Marcia Borchert. Hastings: Juliene Bryan. Carol Olson serves as Lead Dean for all Nebraska Chapters.

The following is a picture of a portion of the chapel at the Convent House B&B.



REFLECTIONS FROM SR. MARIBETH, prioress OF SACRED HEART MONASTERY

ABC's of Benedictine Leadership -

Nebraska Benedictine Oblate Deans Retreat – Sr. Maribeth Wentzlaff. The following are three of the key components of Benedictine Leadership that are taken from the Rule of St. Benedict and/or reflect Benedictine Spirituality. First, **Ora et Labora** – pray and work. Benedictine life is a balance between the two and needs to also include leisure time. Second, **Divine Office** – this is the formal prayer of the church which occurs throughout the day. It is important to build a rhythm of prayer into our days. Third, **Humility** – this is so important that Benedict has a whole chapter and twelve steps devoted to it. Humility means being grounded and willing to admit one's own mistakes.

Annual Theme from Sacred Heart

Monastery – Sr. Maribeth shared the theme she has chosen for this year (August 2021 – August 2022). The theme is to be transformed by the renewal of our mind, heart, and soul. The inspiration for this theme is Romans 12:2. Sr. Maribeth encourages all the Sisters and Oblates of Sacred Heart Monastery to spend the year

before us focusing on ways to renew ourselves, loved ones, co-workers, and all those around us.

If you are interested in hearing more from Sr. Maribeth, you can find her Monday Moments on Facebook by going to Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton SD.

REFLECTIONS ON JULIAN OF NORWICH BY STEVE BLUM

Julian of Norwich was an anchoress who lived in England; 1343-1416. She was an anchoress at St. Julian's church during the bubonic plague. She knew what it was like to live during a time of pandemic. Her goal was to seek a simple life devoted to prayer away and apart from the distractions of society. She lived in a cell attached to the church. Her cell probably had two windows. Through one window she received the Eucharist and the other window allowed people to approach her for spiritual advice and direction.

Julian writes that life will be full of both joys and sorrows. She calls this "well and woe." We are to face both without denial, learning to bear with suffering patiently, and enduring it lightly. While we are facing painful trials openly, we are not to lose sight of the big picture. Our suffering here is only temporary. In this regard, she is very much in line with the teaching of St. Benedict.

In light of Julian's wisdom, we might ask ourselves:

- How did I / do I manage the uncertainty and turmoil of the pandemic?
- How have I been aware of experienced God's presence in both the well and the woe of this past year?
- What am I experiencing now?

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Lincoln Chapter Meetings – Attention Lincoln Oblates and those outside of Lincoln that join us via Zoom for Lincoln Chapter Gatherings:

We had planned to begin meeting in a hybrid format on September 12th--in person at First Lutheran Church in Lincoln and via Zoom for anyone wanting to join virtually. However, with the recent increase in Covid-19 infections, we are pausing that plan until at least October. **In September we will meet 9-12-2021 at 7p via Zoom as usual.**

Please note, if we do plan to meet in a hybrid format (in person or zoom combination), our meeting will begin at 6p, **NOT** 7p as is usual. This is per First Lutheran's policy for meetings. We will keep you apprised via email approximately 2 weeks prior to the meeting for the current plans. We want to offer in person meeting when it is safe to do so. We will always keep the Zoom option, and we appreciate your understanding in these uncertain times.

Fall Lincoln Chapter Meetings:

- October 10, 2021
- November 14, 2021
- December 12, 2021

Friday Morning Prayer at 7:30 am (Zoom) – if you are interested in doing Lauds every Friday morning via Zoom with other Oblates, please send your request to Barb Michael at babsie0626@aol.com

Spiritual Pause: Composing a Rule of Life.
Saturday, **January 8, 2022 at 9:30 am Zoom.**

Spiritual Pause: Visio Divina: St. John's Bible Illuminations and Icons. Saturday, **March 12, 2022 at 9:30 am Zoom.**

CHAPTER BOOK SELECTION



***Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way* by David Robinson**

The chapter book we are starting this coming Oblate year is *Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way* by David Robinson. This book provides the classic path for growing a Christian community. This innovative guide to Christian formation offers an ancient-yet-contemporary approach to growth in Christ. The book is available as a paperback or an eBook. We will read the book over a two-year period.

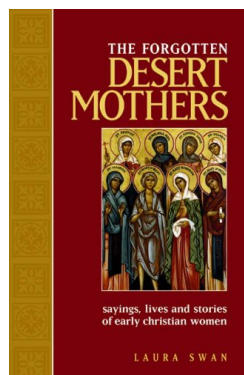
Reading assignments for this next Oblate year (September, 2021 – April, 2022) are as follows:

- September – Preface & Introduction (10 pages)
- October – Chapter 1 (pp. 3-17)
- November – Chapter 2A (pp. 18-28)
- December – Chapter 2B (pp. 29-40)
- January – Chapter 3 (pp. 41-55)
- February – Chapter 4 (pp. 56-75)
- March – Chapter 5 (pp. 76-91)
- April – Chapter 6 (pp. 92-108)

For all reading assignments for the Chapter, you may also use the following link

<https://www.nebrskabenedictineoblates.org/gatherings/monthly-readings/>

CELL GROUP BOOK SELECTION



The Forgotten Desert Mothers: The Sayings, Lives, and Stories of Early Christian Women.

The cell book we continue to use this coming Oblate year is *The Forgotten Desert Mothers* by Laura Swan, O.S.B. This book is an introduction to the sayings, lives, stories, and spirituality of women in the postbiblical, early Christian movement. Reading assignments for our next Oblate year (September, 2021 – May, 2022) are as follows:

- September – Chapter 4; Matrona of Perge (pp. 94-105)
- October – Chapter 5; Deaconesses of the Early Church & Ordination Rite of Deacons (pp. 106-114 & 171-177)
- November – Chapter 5; Melania the Elder (pp. 114-126)
- December – Chapter 6; Mentors of the Monastic Way (pp. 127-135)
- January – Chapter 6; Rome through end of chapter (pp. 135-149)
- February – Epilogue; The Gift of the Desert (pp. 151-169)
- March – *Oblate Handbook*; Monastic Tradition – Life of Anthony, Basil's Rule, Evagrius Ponticus (pp. 40-42)
- April – *Oblate Handbook*; Monastic Tradition – John Cassian, the Place of Monasticism in the Modern World (pp. 43-45)
- May – *Oblate Handbook*; Monastic Tradition – Contemplative Availability (pp. 58-62)

For all reading assignments for the Cell Groups you may also use the following link

<https://www.nebrskabenedictineoblates.org/cells/>

BENEDICTINE OBLATE INFORMATION

As Benedictine Oblates we have many opportunities to live out the Holy Rule in our daily lives. Our commitment to the Benedictine way of life becomes evident as we worship, serve our communities in various ways, and live a life of peace and love. If you have friend or family member interested in being a Benedictine Oblate, please invite them to contact one of the deans as listed below in the following communities:

In Lincoln – Interested parties contact Lead Dean, Carol Olson, at 402-486-0864 or carol.olson@nebrskabenedictineoblates.org.

In Steinauer – Interested parties contact Marcia Borchert at 402-869-2342 or db92140@windstream.net

In Hastings – Interested parties contact Juliene Bryan at 402-984-4674 or julienebryan47@gmail.com

SACRED HEART MONASTERY

We are excited to share with you the following message from the Peace Center at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, SD, "We are currently accepting fully vaccinated retreatants at the Benedictine Peace Center on a very limited basis. You are welcome to contact us for reservations at 605-668-6292."

<https://yanktonbenedictines.org/center/>

The Benedictine Peace Center offers the following to retreatants:

- A peaceful place to rest a while and renew your relationship with God
- Walk in nature on the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River
- Meet with a trained spiritual director who can listen and guide your retreat
- Join the monastic community for prayer and meals or cherish your solitude