



Oblate Newsletter

SACRED HEART MONASTERY
Yankton, South Dakota

JANUARY 2026

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Each day is a new day. Always we begin again. (Wisdom St. Benedict)

Dear Oblates,

I hope all of you had a wonderful celebration with family and friends this Christmas. The Christmas Season is a time to reflect on Christ's love for us as He becomes one of us, God with us.

We had several Christmas events that the Sisters were invited to participate in. The MMU Choral and Band Concerts and Christmas Vespers, which was in our Chapel. Some of the Sisters participated in the SHM Holiday Parade. We are also blessed to have such beautiful and meaningful Advent and Christmas liturgies.

We're happy that the destruction of our old Monastery is completed for Phase One and now they are in the building process. Completion of phase one is scheduled for a year from now. Then we will begin the taking down of the last part. This will be a little more personal as it involves our bedrooms. We all have been doing some cleaning out and down-sizing, to get ready for the move.

We ask your prayers for our Sister Carol Baumert, who is now on Hospice and for S. Barbara Kowalkowski, who had a stroke in early November. She is in Rehab and doing amazingly well.

As we pack away our Christmas decorations and enter into ordinary time, I hope you will have renewed energy and commitment to Liturgy of the Hours and personal prayer. Our oblate meetings will resume in January. We look forward to seeing you in this new year.

Know of my prayers for all of you.

In the Peace of Christ,

Sister Sharon Ann Haas

UPCOMING MEETING - Chapter Room

Sunday, January 18, 2026

CURRENT OBLATES

1:00 P.M.- Read Chap 4
(Leadership) in the book *Saint
Benedict's Wisdom* by Luigi Gioia.

BEGINNING OBLATES

2:30 P.M. - Read Ch. 3 (p. 61
-63) in the book *Reaching
for God*.



Message for MMU Oblates

Dear MMU Oblates -- **Happy New Year!** As the new year begins and we come to the end of the liturgical season of Christmas with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, I find myself reflecting on the following poem "The Work of Christmas" by Howard Thurman:

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.*

JANUARY MEETINGS

Tuesday group – Jan 27 @ Noon
Wednesday group – Jan 28 @ 4:00pm
Friday group – Jan 30 @ 3:00pm
Sunday group – Feb 1 @ 3:00pm

The last few years our choir has ended the Vespers concert with this poem set to music. I think this is so fitting because it is a good reminder of what Christmas is all about; it's not just a day, an octave, or twelve days. This poem helps me stay focused on our call to live the mystery of the Incarnation by giving witness to Emmanuel - God is with us, and proclaim that *The Word became flesh and dwells among us* (John 1:14) every day of the year.

My prayer is that each of us has the grace to allow Christ to be born in our heart, so that our words and actions become evidence that God is with us, and thus, with each person we meet in our day to day living. If we are able to do this, to help others experience God's presence, compassion and love in their life, we will be doing the work of Christmas.

May the Christmas blessings of hope, peace & joy remain with you all through the New Year!

Sister Rosemarie Mały



Mark Nesladek, an Oblate from Chamberlain, SD, received the Mount Marty Services to Church and Community Award in 2025 during Lancer Days. A graduate of Mount Marty in 1990, Mark earned a bachelor's degree in Communication Arts with a minor in Spanish. He is very active in his church, St. James, where he has served on the parish council for 13 years, and as an usher and greeter at Mass. He is a 31-year member of the Knights of Columbus, serving in many positions and receiving several awards; among them the Dailey Award, inspired by a man who never let anything keep him from serving his brother Knights. Mark became an Oblate in 2002 and often drives to meetings from Chamberlain. He has been employed with four different newspapers over 16 years, and is now employed at St. Joseph Indian School. His devotion and service to church and community is inspiring.

Mark is pictured here with S. Pat and S. Kathleen Courtney

Upcoming Opportunities

January 24: Desert Day.

January 26-30: Catholic Schools Week. How can you support and encourage Catholic education in your community?

February 13: Last day to register for the Spring Scripture Study: *Encountering the God of Faith, Hope, and Love in the Bible*. Wednesday mornings (9:30-11:00 a.m.) or Wednesday evenings (7:00-8:30 p.m.) via Zoom. Feb 18-Apr 1. Learn more at [Yankton Benedictines.org/scripture](https://YanktonBenedictines.org/scripture)



February 18: Ash Wednesday

February 19: Last day to register for the Lenten Retreat: *A Paschal Christ at the Heart of Benedict's Rule* presented by Sister Marielle Frigge, OSB. February 21 via Zoom: 9:30-11:30 a.m. Learn more at YanktonBenedictines.org/lent



Apr 2-5 – Register for the Triduum Retreat at Sacred Heart Monastery. Immerse yourself in extended time of quiet, prayerful silence, and rich liturgical celebration of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. Learn more at YanktonBenedictines.org/triduum

Monastery Happenings

We had many feast days and special occasions to celebrate in November and December. **All Saints Day** on Nov 1 and **All Soul's Day** on Nov 2 were days to help us remember the living and the dead.

National Vocation Awareness Week was November 2-8 with some surprises during the week.

Some of the Sisters attended Mount Marty University's (MMU) **Fall Musical** "Rock of Ages."

On November 13, we had the talk given by **Father John Klassen, OSB** from St. John's in Collegeville Minnesota. Many Oblates and residents of Yankton attended with the Sisters. We heard Fr. John on Zoom talk about "Deep Listening: Obedience and Humility in the Rule of Benedict."

Nearly 20 sisters celebrated the **Avera 25th Anniversary** in Sioux Falls on November 14. Avera was formed by the Benedictine and Presentation sisters joining together their health care systems.

The Oblates had their monthly meeting on November 16, the **Feast of St. Gertrude**.

Sister Kathy Burt is in the MMU Band and performed in their concert on November 23.

Some of the sisters helped prepare **food baskets for families in need** at Thanksgiving time. They bought the groceries, prepared the baskets, and delivered the meals to the homes.

Once again, the community of Yankton came together to prepare a **Thanksgiving meal for the town**. Sisters Sharon Ann, Pat, Peggy, Kathleen Courtney, and Marietta attended.

Sisters Bonita, Sharon Ann, Peggy, Pat, Carmy, and Communications Director, Julie Amsberry rode on the Monastery's float in the **Parade of Lights**. The theme this year was "Winter Wonderland."



MONASTERY HAPPENINGS CONT.

The Retreat Center presented the **Advent retreat** which focused on “Joseph’s Fiat: Making a Home for Jesus.” Several Sisters were present for it.

The community of MMU hosted a retirement gathering for **Dr. Marc Long, President of MMU**, on December 3. The Sisters were invited, and many of them attended. Dr. Long retired as president of MMU at the end of December. **Dr. Mark Brown** began as the 13th president of MMU on January 1st.

MMU Choral groups performed the **Advent Vespers** two times on Saturday, December 6. Nearly all the sisters attended.

We celebrated the **Feasts of Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Guadalupe** in honor of Mary, our Mother. These feasts remind us of our need to pray through Mary for peace and unity in the world.

Many Oblates and Benedictines heard **Sister Lynn McKenzie’s** presentation via Zoom as she spoke about the Benedictines in Tanzania and Ukraine. We need to pray for peace in these countries.

The Sisters and employees enjoyed a **Christmas Coffee** together in the Chapter Room on December 27.

On New Year’s Eve, the Sisters' emphasis on their prayer service was on **immigrants and migrants**. After the prayers, the Sisters enjoyed a party.

The **Yankton Catholic Churches Combined Choirs** had a concert in our Bishop Marty Chapel on January 4, 2026. The Catholic and Lutheran Bell Choirs also performed. What a beautiful performance echoing in our chapel!

The University hosted a **staff formation** program in the Monastery Chapter Room on January 5 for all faculty and staff.



Dr. Brown and his family

Prayer Requests

- For Sister Barbara Kowalkowski as she recovers from a stroke.
- For Sister Carol Baumert as she suffers from cancer.
- For all the sisters who have had recent surgeries.
- For peace and justice in the world, especially in war-torn countries.
- For all the prayer requests on our prayer board.
- For all the Oblates and their families.

In Memory

- Sister Joanne Koblasch of Madison, WI
- Sharon Busch, sister-in-law of S. Mildred Busch



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TBA

News from Nebraska

CHAPTER GATHERINGS

The Nebraska Benedictine Oblates in Lincoln continue to meet at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital for our Chapter Gatherings on the second Sunday evening of every month, September through May. All Gatherings are offered hybrid, in-person and on Zoom. **Except February 2026 Gathering will be via Zoom only.** Oblates are warmly encouraged to attend for fellowship, discussions, and praying the Liturgy of the Hours. We start our Gatherings in the Donlan Conference Center and then adjourn to the Chapel for Vespers. The Donlan is to the right of the front door as you enter Madonna.

Reflections are being offered by different Oblates as we focus on the Oblate Prayer. Thanks are extended to **Donna Washburn** who provided our reflection in December. **January reflection:** Ginny Adams. **February reflection:** David Weyrauch.



This photo shows the beautiful poinsettia and sculptures present in the Madonna Chapel for Christmas.

FRIDAY MORNING PRAYERS OFFERED TO PATIENTS AND STAFF AT MADONNA

Nebraska Benedictine Oblates continue to say Liturgy of the Hours (LOTH) or Lauds every Friday morning at 7:30 am., in-person in Madonna's Chapel and via Zoom. In addition, LOTH is being offered to patients at Madonna via closed-circuit TV. Staff are welcome to join us in the Chapel. If you are interested in receiving the Zoom link for LOTH on Friday mornings, please contact Carol Barry at majorcarolb@yahoo.com.

These photos show Oblates ready to say LOTH on Friday mornings in-person and via Zoom. We would love to have you join us.



SNOW/ICE AND CHAPTER GATHERINGS

It's that time of year again! If we have more than three inches of snow we will NOT meet in person, but WILL meet entirely via Zoom. Should we have a snowstorm that seems hard to judge, an email will be sent. For those without email, please call someone with email. This announcement applies to Chapter meetings and Spiritual Pauses. In all cases, use your best judgment. Be safe!

SAVE THE DATE

Chapter Gatherings:

2nd Sunday of each month @ 7:00pm:

Jan 11, Feb 8 (Zoom only), Mar 8

All meetings are in Lincoln at Madonna in the Donlan Conference Room. Meetings are in-person and via Zoom. After our meeting we will adjourn to the Chapel for Vespers. Please watch for email notifications from Lead Dean Carol Olson.

News from Nebraska

SHORTER CHRISTIAN PRAYER INSTRUCTIONS

We remain in **Ordinary time** from Monday, January 5, 2026, until Ash Wednesday, which is February 18, 2026. On the **first Sunday of Lent**, which is February 22, 2026, we begin Week I with Sunday Evening Prayer I on page 37.

The **antiphons for Sundays in Lent** are in red. At the Reading turn to pages 405-428. One week of text is given for the Lenten season. We repeat these daily prayers every week of Lent. We continue in the Lenten prayers until Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026. At the Reading, turn to page 429.

The **Easter Triduum** begins on Holy Thursday, April 2, 2026, so turn to page 436. On Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026, we start again with Week I. During the Easter Season, we turn at the Reading to pp. 464-486. We remain in the Easter season until Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2026.

After Pentecost Sunday we will return to 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.

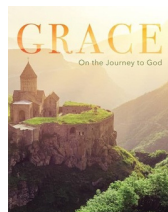
PRAYING WITH *The Cloud of Unknowing*

Steve Blum, PhD, a Nebraska Benedictine Oblate, will host six Zoom sessions: **April 13 & 27, May 11 & 25, and June 8 & 22 from 7-8 pm CDT**. The sessions will involve

praying with *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a 14th-century classic text that provides the Christian seeker with a path and guidance toward developing a deeper union with God through the practice of loving contemplation. As the anonymous author of the *Cloud* wrote, "Let the mind be still and the heart be open; and God shall reveal Himself in the depth of your being." Through reading, discussion and prayer, we will strive to cultivate humility and receptivity to this practice. There is no cost for this retreat other than the expense of purchasing the book.

Following the completion of the six Zoom sessions, participants are invited to attend an optional on-site one-day retreat focused on the *Cloud* at St. Benedict Center in Schuyler, NE on **Saturday, July 25, 2026 9:30am – 2:30 pm**. The cost of the one-day is \$40.00 which includes lunch. Please contact St. Benedict Center to register – 402-352-8819 or www.StBenedictCenter.com.

CELL BOOK READINGS



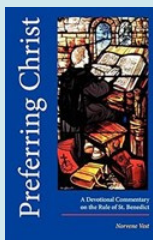
Reading assignments for *Grace: On the Journey to God* by Michael Casey are as follows:

January - Ch. 11 *Grace of Revelation*

February - Ch. 12 *Grace of Leisure*

March - Ch. 13 *Grace of Silence*

CHAPTER BOOK READINGS



Preferring Christ: A Devotional Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict by Norvene Vest.

Reading Assignments:

January: Ch. 3-4 (vs. 1-38)

February: Ch. 4 (vs. 39-78)

March: Interlude II, Ch. 5-6

SPIRITUAL PAUSES

Hybrid meetings (Donlan Conf Room and/or via Zoom). Zoom links will be sent via email prior to the Spiritual Pause.

Sat, Jan 17 at 9:30 a.m. - *Commitment to a Monastic Way of Life* (formerly *Composing a Personal Rule of Life*)

March 21 at 9:30 a.m. - *Visio Divina with Illuminations & Icons*

CONTACTS

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