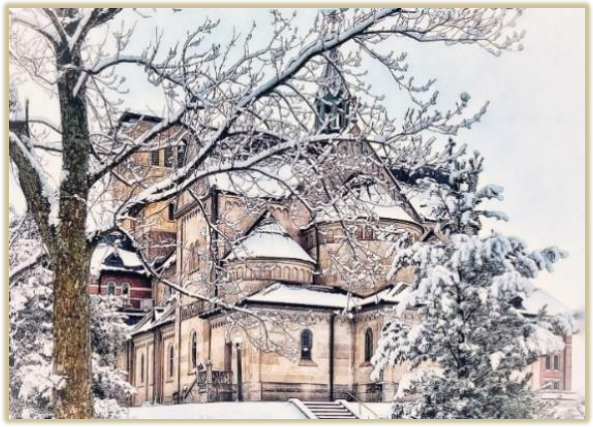


Benedictine Oblate Letter
January 2024

Dear Oblates and Friends,

For many it is customary to begin the new year by reflecting upon the past and making resolutions for the future. Often these resolutions made in good faith do not extend far into the months ahead, but in even making them we are acknowledging something in our lives that is calling out for positive change.

Saint Benedict has much to say to us in his rule about walking a path of life that is transformative and leads to fullness of life. The aim of his instruction means to ground us in God- the whole of our life and experience grounded in God. In choosing to live daily according to the values and practices found in the rule, our lives take on shape, meaning, and direction. Michael Casey, OSB coined the phrase *antecedent willingness* in describing an essential prerequisite for this journey. Choosing to stay engaged in the ups and downs of daily living, and persevering in beginning anew again and again when we fail in our intentions, requires serious commitment. Benedict asks in the prologue of his rule, "*Who desires life and longs to see good days? If you hear this and answer, "I am the one," God directs these words to you…." Listen!* Listen deeply to the word of God speaking in your heart… and respond. Benedictine practices aid us in being attentive and responsive to God's presence and grace in the ordinary moments of life. They ground us in each new day's experience leading us into an ever-deepening relationship with the divine. We are drawn by grace into the light that purifies us, the *light of life,* that little by little frees us to be all that we are created to be.

Each part of Benedict's rule meshes with the others to form a plan for becoming more aware of how God's voice is present all the time in everything and everyone, if we are just listening. If we are *not* listening, *not* attentive, then we will be unable to receive wisdom. But if we listen with our hearts, if we pay attention, Benedict says, we will hear God's voice everywhere leading us to humility and love and the nearness of the divine. Benedict would have us reach the *loftier summits* of the teachings and virtues pointed out in his rule. With perseverance we come to know the truth of Benedict's statement: *It is God's power and not our own that brings about the good in us – God working in us. (RB)*

Benedict's rule is centered on Christ and the daily living of Gospel values. With Christ as our guide, Benedict would have us support one another and be peacemakers, never ending a day without making peace where there has been a dispute. Benedict would have us love our neighbors as ourselves, those whom we know and live with, and the stranger, the traveler, the pilgrim, and guest whom we are to receive with reverence as Christ himself. We are to be aware of the needs of others, serve Christ in the sick, and never turn away when someone needs our love.

Benedict encourages us to be the wise ones who build our house on the rock that is Christ. We are to prefer nothing to Christ, dashing against Christ the wrongful thoughts and inclinations that come into our hearts. We are to trust him who is leading us to eternal life. In our commitment to following the light from God that has come into the world, Emmanuel, God with us, we walk the path to eternal life and in so doing we become the manifestation of God's love in this world.

Sr. Judith Sutera in her commentary on the Rule of Benedict writes*: "Now that the listener has shown desire, God offers a challenge, The one who has answered has to make some investment of time and effort. The prologue invites us to make a covenant with God, but it doesn't stop there. The demands that God makes in this conversation show most clearly that salvation is found in relationship to others. I can't say I'm here and then just stand there. If the inviting voice has sounded sweet, then I have to follow. After hearing about the conditions, I must be ready to act justly. After stepping out and saying I am here, there has to be some passion in the relationship, some desire to do what is asked. If we say yes to an invitation, we have to show up and participate."* (St. Benedict's Rule and Daily Commentary, Liturgical Press; Judith Sutera, OSB)

May this new year be blessed with our heart-felt commitment to following Christ.

Reflections

I SAID TO THE MAN
who stood at the gate of the year,
"Give me a light that I may tread
safely into the unknown."
And he replied,
"Go out into the darkness
and put your hand
into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light
and safer than a known way!
Minnie Louise Haskins

We only begin to love God genuinely
when we realize our total dependence upon him,
his compassion, and his mercy.
Cyprian Smith, OSB; (The Path of Life)

With faith and the performance of good works,
let us set out on the way under the guidance of the Gospel,
that we may be found worthy of seeing the one who has called us to the kingdom. RB

It will never be possible to follow Christ
while I put myself and my own pleasures first.
Esther de Waal; (A Life-Giving Way)

God is a friend of silence.
The more we engage in silent prayer,
the more we can give in our active life.
The essential thing is not what we say to God
but what God says to us
and what he says through us.
Mother Teresa

Blessing the Journey

May you see all of life as a pilgrimage,
Walking a sacred path toward intimacy
with all the invisible ones
who journey alongside us.
Ask that your steps each be blessed
with guidance and humility,
that you release the need to know
where you are headed
and trust the path itself.
May you be blessed with an open heart
to receive the stranger along the way
as well as deep within.

Christine Valters Paintner; (The Love of Thousands)

Oblate News

This past September over 150 oblate delegates from around the world assembled in Rome for the 5th International Benedictine Oblate Congress. Sharon Hammond, dean of the Tucson Oblates generously accepted the invitation to represent oblates affiliated with our monastic community, Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Sharon engaged in extensive preparation for this "working Congress," themed *Moving Forward: Living the Wisdom of the Rule,* which focused on addressing the future of Benedictine Oblates and the Benedictine Family as a whole. Before setting off for Rome, Sharon gathered responses to a relevant questionnaire (you may remember answering this) and summarized the feedback to be used in discussion with the other oblate delegates from around the world. She also prepared a lovely Power Point presentation introducing our monastic community and its oblates to the Congress. At the conclusion of 8 days of conferences, workshops, discussion, and prayer, the delegates were received in an unanticipated audience with Pope Francis. The Address given by the Pope emphasized the characteristics of the Benedictine spirit and encouraged those present to continue bearing witness to it with enthusiasm. The Sisters of our monastic community are most grateful to Sharon for her participation in this important worldwide event and for sharing with us the wisdom and experience she has gained.

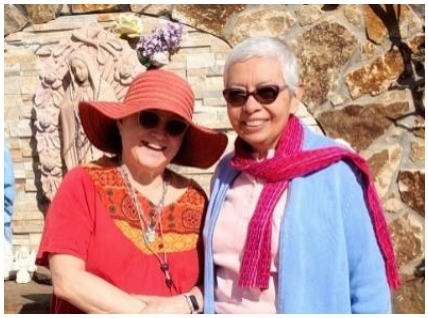
Sharon Hammond

Oblate delegates from around the world

Phoenix Oblates hosted a Day of Renewal in November centered around the Ceremony of Oblation of our newest oblate Deborah Crosbie. Oblates from Tucson and East Valley joined in celebration with a delicious luncheon, and joyful sharing. It's so good to have you with us, Deborah!

Back Row: Left to Right: Susan Edmiston, Mary Sheridan, Betsy Bernfeld, Sharon Hammond
Front Row: Linda Kapucinski, Jan Pflugfelder, Teresa Warnick, Irma Gloria Ramirez

Left to Right: seated: Deborah Crosbie, Joan Manson
standing: Nancy Kaib, Patricia Williams, Nancy Serwint, Toni Kronschnabel



Left: Barbara Singer (photographer of the day)
Right: Irma Gloria Ramirez

For information about the Phoenix Oblates contact Patty Williams at benedictine@cox.net]

Clyde Monastery

"Talks from the Monastery" presented by the Sisters, continues online via Zoom. All are welcome to join us in our monthly sessions as we share and discuss this year's topic: *Humility: Ongoing Growth in Holiness*.

As the new year of 2024 begins, so will our year-long celebration of the 150th Anniversary of our Founding.

An **Oblate retreat** will take place at the Clyde monastery **July 10-14,** with the Feast of St. Benedict celebrated on the 11th. We hope you can join us. For further information and reservations *contact Sr. Kathleen Clare at* oblates@bspa.us

Oblates in Sheridan, Wyoming

Our meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month at 2 PM. Join us in reading and discussing *The Coming of God* by Maria Boulding.
For information contact Cel at celhaus@fiberpipe.net

East Valley Benedictine Oblates

For information call Nancy Kaib at 480-883-8025 or email nancykaib@hotmail.com or jan.pflugfelder@asu.edu

Oblates in Tucson, Arizona

For information about either onsite meetings or Zoom online call Sharon at 520-664-5136 or email tucsonoblates@gmail.com

Phoenix Oblates, Arizona

For information about the Phoenix Oblates contact Patty Williams at benedictine@cox.net]

Osage Forest of Peace Oblates in Sand Springs, Oklahoma

Meetings in person at Osage Forest of Peace (with a Zoom option) are held on the first Sunday of the month. We have begun a book study of *How to Live, What the Rule of St. Benedict Teaches Us About Happiness, Meaning, and Community* by Judith Valente. *For further information contact Gale Clark at* glclarkrdh@gmail.com

Peace,
Sr. Kathleen Clare