



## *The Benedictine Oblate Letter*

*August, 2018*

Dear Oblates and Friends,

I usually listen to the news on the radio when I get up in the morning. In the past few months, however, I have so deeply disturbed by the course of events that I often turn off the radio before the news comes on. The news gets worse day by day. According to the Trump administration there are still 559 migrant children who have not been reunited with their parents after they were separated from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border earlier this year (<http://time.com>). Some are infants. All have been wrenched from those they love and from everything familiar. They will carry the scars all their lives.

Recently I have been pondering a question that one of our oblates asked me to address: “What can we find in the Rule and Benedictine tradition to help us resist living in fear and/or anger, to keep us from becoming discouraged and depressed by the blatant injustices being perpetrated and the encouragement of people to act out of their prejudices? How can we live in peace in these times?” The Benedictine motto is *pax*, peace. Benedict says in the Prologue, quoting Psalm 34: “Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it.” But does the fifth-century Rule address our modern questions?

The Rule frowns on anger. Anger is to be put out of our minds and hearts. Among the instruments of good works we find:

- Not to give way to anger.
- Not to nurse a grudge.

Benedict does offer some solutions when angry, hostile thoughts arise, as they will of their own accord. Also in Chapter 4, Benedict instructs:

- When evil thoughts come into one’s heart, to dash them against Christ immediately.
- And to manifest them to one’s spiritual guardian.

Similarly, Benedict teaches in the Prologue, in reference to a person who seeks Christ:

This is the one who, under any temptation from the malicious devil, has brought him to naught by casting him and his temptation from the sight of his heart; and who has laid hold of his

thoughts while they were still young and dashed them against Christ

The fifth step of humility is also the confession of evil thoughts and actions to one's superior. The acknowledgement of faults is a spiritual practice that helps us grow in humility, but also serves a therapeutic purpose. We can acknowledge our anger when we articulate it to another person. Only when we recognize our own anger can we begin to deal with it.

In contrast, in our contemporary culture, we are often taught not to suppress our feelings. As we mature, we should learn ways to control them. The Mayo Clinic offers a number of tips ([www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)).

- Think before you speak.
- Once you're calm, express your anger or frustration in an assertive but non-confrontation way.
- Get some exercise.
- Take a timeout.
- Identify possible solutions.
- Stick with "I" statements.
- Don't hold a grudge.
- Use humor to release tension.
- Practice relaxation skills.
- Know when to seek help.

Neither Benedict nor the Mayo Clinic directly tells us what to do with anger fueled by politics and world affairs. One solution is involvement, channeling anger into positive action. More on that at another time.

***And now the news:***

***Clyde Oblates***

The fall weekend is scheduled for September 14-16. The theme will be *The Monastic Impulse: The Development of Benedictine Spirituality*. Information will be forthcoming.

***Tucson Oblates***

The Tucson oblates meet on the third Sunday of the month. The deans meet monthly on the Saturday following the regular meeting. If you have any questions for the deans, please email [tucsonoblates@gmail.com](mailto:tucsonoblates@gmail.com) or call 520-664-5136.

***Phoenix Central:*** The Phoenix group meets in the St. John Paul II room at the Mount Claret Retreat Center, 4633 N. 54<sup>th</sup> Street. For information call Patty Williams 602-957-1464.

***West Phoenix:*** The West Phoenix group meets in Glendale for a morning of prayer, community, and fellowship on the third Saturday of the month from 9:00 am-12pm. For information call Lisa Hughes at 623-374-2382.

***East Valley:*** The East Valley Oblates meet on the fourth Saturday of the month. The next meeting is on September 22. For information call Nancy Kaib 480-883-8025 or Frank Young 480-219-1505.

***Sand Springs:***

The oblates meet on the first Sunday of the month at 11:30 am in the Bede Building. The next meeting is on September 9. Helen Pratt will facilitate a continuing discussion on *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr and how it connects with the Rule. Visitors are always welcome.

***Sheridan, Wyoming:***

Meetings are now on Monday nights. The first meeting will be September 10. For information, contact Cel Hope at celhaus@fiberpipe.net, or email me at sarah@bspa.us or phone me at 660-944-2221.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah