



*The Benedictine Oblate Letter*

*December, 2016*

Dear Oblates and Friends,

Late one Christmas Eve, nearly fifty years ago, I took the subway from Queens to downtown Manhattan, to attend midnight mass at Holy Trinity Chapel at New York University. At that time of my life, it was my spiritual home base. Although in the midst of renewal, the liturgy was always beautiful. People came from all over the city and the suburbs to attend Eucharist there

This is all ancient history. The chapel was demolished several years ago. Now I would be too afraid and too prudent to take the subway at such a late hour. But I still remember the two-sentence homily that the NYU chaplain gave that night. Christmas, he said, is the celebration of the incarnation, of God who took on our nature and our flesh. Christmas is a celebration of human flesh, of our own flesh and blood.

The incarnation is a deep mystery, beyond our explanation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tries to enlighten us by giving us four good reasons that the Word became flesh ([http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p122a3p1.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p122a3p1.htm), articles 456-460):

- in order to save us by reconciling us with God
- so that we might know God's love
- to be our model of holiness
- to make us "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pt 1:4)

We ponder the mystery, but how do we make it active in our lives? The Rule of Saint Benedict can be our guide. Consider what he says about us human beings. We are to be treasured, both body and soul. The abbot "is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery" (RB 2), and "the abbot, since he is believed to represent Christ, shall be called Lord and Abbot, not for any pretensions of his

own but out of honor and love for Christ” (RB 64). All monastics, not only superiors, are to be listened to with compassion and love, because “the Lord often reveals to the younger what is best” (RB 3).

Special consideration is to be given to the old and to children (RB 37). Of the sick, Benedict says in Chapter 36: “Before all things and above all things, care must be taken of the sick, so that they will be served as if they were Christ in person.” In Chapter 53, on the reception of guests, Benedict states: “Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ.” He adds, “In the salutation of all guests, whether arriving or departing, let all humility be shown. Let the head be bowed or the whole body prostrated on the ground in adoration of Christ, who indeed is received in their persons.”

Close to the end of the Rule this: “Prefer nothing whatever to Christ” (RB 72). We must always remember that Christ is not only found in moments of silence and adoration. He is found in us, in you and in me. Sometimes we see him in other people, but not in ourselves. At other times, we realize that we have put ourselves at the center and make little room in our lives for others. We cannot love Christ if we do not love ourselves and others: “whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20).

### *A couple of reminders:*

If anyone has news that you wish to be included in this letter, please let me know. I usually get mail it out toward the end of the month, every month.

All oblates should be receiving our bi-monthly magazine, *Spirit&Life*. It includes congregational news and provides articles relevant to the spiritual life. *S&L* is free to our oblates, friends, and benefactors. If you do not receive it, please let me know and I will add you to our subscription list. Please help us keep our subscriptions up.

### *And now the news:*

The International Congress of Benedictine Oblates will meet Nov. 4-10, 2017, in Rome. The theme is *A Way Forward: the Benedictine Community in Movement*. I now have the link for registration. If anyone is interested, let me know.

***Tucson oblates:*** There are four oblate groups affiliated with our Tucson Monastery: Tucson, Prescott, East Valley, and Phoenix Central. The groups have their own newsletter, which is also posted on our website, as is this one: <http://www.benedictinesisters.org>, and click on “oblates.” Prescott is sharing on Michael Casey’s book, *The Road to Eternal Life*. East Valley is continuing their study of mercy through DVDs produced by Fr. Michael Gaitley.

***Clyde oblates:*** The next Clyde weekend is scheduled for March 24-26, 2017, during Lent. The theme is *Images of God in Scripture and in the Rule of Benedict*.

***Saint Louis area oblates:*** The Saint Louis group has been discussing *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* by Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB. They have also been doing group *lectio* following *Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, “Lectio Divina Shared in Community” by Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B. Meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month from 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. at St. Rose Philippine Duchesne School, Room 1 (accessible from Door 1 at the east end of the school).

***Sand Springs*** oblates are continuing their discussion of Joan Chittister’s book, *In the Heart of the Temple*. I will be offering a mini-retreat there for all oblates and friends on May 5-7, 2017.

***Sheridan, Wyoming***, oblates meet monthly.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah