



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

July, 2017

Dear Oblates and Friends,

With all the political rhetoric and partisan bickering going on today about travel bans and border walls, we need to remember that we are all refugees of one sort or another. From the very beginning of salvation history, our story as people of faith begins with exile.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were forced out of the Garden of Eden: “The Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he had been taken. He expelled the man, stationing the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword east of the Garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gn 3:22-24). Apparently Adam and Eve went east. Cain went in the same direction after he murdered his brother Abel. We don’t know where the garden was, but, if it indicates a real place, it was probably located in Mesopotamia. Its name is thought to be derived from an Akkadian or Aramaic word.

In the beginning, Noah built an ark and took refuge from the flood (Gn 7, 8). Scripture tells us that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (Gn 8:4), possibly in eastern Turkey or Armenia.

In the beginning, the Lord called Abraham to “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Gn 12:1). Abraham travelled by stages from Ur, a city in what is now Iraq, to the land of Canaan.

Also in the beginning, and a little later, Abram decided down to Egypt because of a famine in Canaan (Gn 12:10). Jacob followed suit, moving his family to Egypt because of famine (Gn

46:1-7). Years later, still aliens in Egypt, the people were oppressed until the Lord called Moses to lead them to freedom. After many signs and wonders, Scripture tells us, “The Israelites were driven out of Egypt so fast they had no time to make provisions and had to bake unleavened cakes of bread” (Ex 12:37-39). The people wandered homeless in the desert until they enter the Promised Land. The Exodus story is the key narrative of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is also an analogy for the death and resurrection of Christ.

What did Saint Benedict have to say about receiving refugees? Poor people and pilgrims were to be received as Christ and treated with honor and respect: “In the reception of the poor and of pilgrims the greatest care and solicitude should be shown, because it is especially in them that Christ is received (RB 53).” Read Chapter 53 of the Holy Rule, “On the Reception of Guests.” How would you apply these teachings in today’s world?

And now the news:

Tucson oblates:

St. Philip’s in the Hills Church will be the site for future oblate meetings. The church is on Campbell just north of River Rd., and has generous parking. We will continue to meet on the 3rd Sunday at 1pm for candidates and inquirers, and 2pm for the larger meeting. St. Philip’s already has a library with a good selection of books on Benedictine topics and will make a home for the oblate books as well.

There will be an ice cream social at the monastery on Sunday, July 16, from 2:00- 3:30 pm to celebrate the Feast of St. Benedict

Phoenix oblates will enjoy an ice cream social in July to celebrate the Feast of Saint Benedict. For information call Patty Williams, 602-957-1464. The Phoenix group meets at Mount Claret Retreat Center, 4633 N. 54th St. Phoenix, 85018. The meeting room is the Saint John Paul II room in the back of the parking lot. The Phoenix oblates will continue our study of the Rule of Benedict by Maria-Thomas Beil, OSB.

West Side Phoenix oblates—this is a new chapter in Phoenix. Oblates meet for a morning of prayer, study, community and fellowship. Children are included. They meet at 19204 N. 70th Avenue, Glendale, on the third Saturday of the month from 9-12am. In August the meeting will

be on the second Saturday of the month. For information call Lisa at 623-374-2382.

Prescott Oblate Chapter: The Prescott Chapter, now disbanded, will have a final get-together in honor of Saint Benedict's feast in July.

Clyde oblates: The fall weekend will be held from October 20-22. The schedule and theme has not yet been determined. Further information will be forthcoming.

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, OSB. 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: The Sand Springs oblates are off for the summer. The meetings will resume on September 10. The group has yet to decide on a book to use for discussion.

Sheridan, Wyoming, oblates are off for the summer. To celebrate the Feast of Saint Benedict, they are having a potluck on July 9. At that time, the oblates will renew their oblations and Mary Slipp will make her oblation.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah, O.S.B.