



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

July, 2018

Dear Oblates and Friends,

I gave my very first oblate retreat about six years ago. Since the theme was hospitality, I decided to open the retreat by reading the Dr. Seuss book, *Thidwick the Big-Hearted Moose*. Thidwick, who lives on the far northern shore of Lake Winna-Bango, is very happy going around with his huge herd, looking for “nice tender moose moss to munch.” One hot day a tiny Bingle Bug asks Thidwick for a ride on his antlers. Thidwick is happy to comply. Then a tree-spider joins him. One by one creatures of all shapes and sizes ride on Thidwick’s antlers. Even a huge bear takes a seat. Eventually, with the coming of fall, the herd needs to cross the river in order to find more moose moss to munch. The various riders protest, but Thidwick must either cross the river or face starvation. Fortunately, he remembers that moose shed their antlers every year. Thidwick shakes off his antlers and crosses the river. His guests meet a gruesome end which some mothers don’t want to read to their children.

The story teaches us that we need to use common sense in welcoming guests. We set some limits and boundaries. Still, we are called to welcome all who come. We can do this without fear, because in love we strive to “cast out all fear” (RB 7). This phrase comes at the conclusion of the key chapter on humility and so fearlessness lies at the very heart of Benedictine spirituality.

What does Saint Benedict have to tell us today about hospitality? We are to welcome everybody. Chapter 53 of his Rule, “On the Reception of Guests” opens with the sentence, “Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for he is going to say, ‘I came as a guest, and you received me’ ” (Mt 25:35). Benedict places a strong emphasis on the word “all.” This word is repeated three more times. “All who arrive” indicates that guests may come unexpectedly and at inconvenient hours. Even so, they are to be welcomed.

More importantly, the verse from Matthew’s Gospel, quoted above, provides the theological argument for hospitality. Benedict alludes to the same verse later in the chapter when he says, “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.”

We can say, then, that Chapter 53 celebrates the coming of Christ. How are we to meet Christ? We meet Christ with the all the due honor that is to be shown guests. Receiving guests with kindness is to adore Christ. Benedict indicates this attitude of adoration when he states,

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.

Further, in Chapter 62, "On the Porters of the Monastery," the porter is to attend to guests "promptly, with all the meekness inspired by the fear of God and with the warmth of charity."

How can we say we adore Christ if we turn away the poor, refugees, and all who flee violence and oppression? If we call ourselves Christian, we must do what Jesus did. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Mt 19:14). Benedict invites us to do this in the Prologue, "Let us walk in his paths by the guidance of the Gospel, that we may deserve to see him who has called us to his kingdom (1Thes 2:12)."

And now the news:

All oblate groups are on summer recess. Be safe, be happy, and have fun!

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 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. 54th Street. The oblates are using the *Study Guide to the Rule of Benedict* by Maria-Thomas Beil, OSB. 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. The group is reading *Lessons from Saint Benedict*, a collection of letters written by Donald Raila, OSB, of Saint Vincent Archabbey. For information call Lisa Hughes at 623-374-2382.

East Valley: The East Valley Oblates meet on the fourth Saturday of the month. 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. Visitors are always welcome. The group is reading and discussing *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr.

Sheridan, Wyoming:

The group meets on the first Saturday of the month. They are enjoying lively discussions of the *Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict* and are also reading *Radical Grace* by Sister Joan Chittister. For information, contact Cel Hope at celhaus@fiberpipe.net; you can also email me at sarah@bspa.us or phone me at 660-944-2221.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah