



## *The Benedictine Oblate Letter*

*May, 2017*

Dear Oblates and Friends,

Every year we pray the Pentecost Novena, and for nine days we pray to receive the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The timing coincides with the period between Ascension, when that solemnity was still celebrated on a Thursday, and Pentecost Sunday. Now that we celebrate Ascension on a Sunday, the timing has become a bit awkward, but we still pray the Novena as we always have.

The number forty is, of course, symbolic. There were forty days and forty nights of the flood and forty years of wandering in the desert. Jesus spent forty days and forty nights fasting in the desert. Luke tells us in Acts that, after the resurrection and before he ascended into heaven, Jesus “presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). The number forty indicates a sacred time. It was another ten days until Pentecost, the Jewish feast of *Shavuot*, commemorating the giving of the Torah to Moses on Sinai. Ten is also a symbolic number: ten commandments, ten plagues. Some say that the number ten signifies fullness or completion.

The Pentecost Novena is modelled on the prayer of the apostles, who were fearful as they hid in the upper room before they received the Holy Spirit. In Acts, Luke tells us only that the apostles were gathered together; he does not tell us where they were:

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts 2:1-3).

Still, while the Pentecost Novena may be more symbolic than historical, it is deeply rooted in our minds and

hearts. We long for the Spirit's sweet refreshment, grateful coolness, light, solace, healing, strength, and rest. We sing in the Pentecost sequence:

On the faithful, who adore  
And confess you, evermore  
In your sevenfold gift descend;  
Give them virtue's sure reward;  
Give them your salvation, Lord;  
Give them joys that never end. Amen.  
Alleluia.

Let us pray, then, for the Spirit's gifts, which will enable us to live a life of faithful discipleship: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

***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*. Sharon Hammond and William Joseph will attend the International Oblate Congress in Rome from November 4-10, 2017. Early bird registration is now closed, but it is still possible to register. If anyone is interested, let me know.

***Tucson oblates:***

Sister Mary Hope will be transferring to the monastery in Clyde in early June. Sister Kathleen Clare will be the Oblate Director, with help from Mary Sheridan. Deans are William Joseph, Kitty Tobin Betty Dickinson, Sharon Hammond, Mary Sheridan, and Jessie Zander. Tucson oblates can approach any of the deans to talk about the future of the Tucson oblates.

Eight *Phoenix* oblates will be coming for retreat at the monastery on the last weekend in May. An ice cream social will be held in July to celebrate the Feast of Saint Benedict.

*Prescott Oblate Chapter:* Due to low attendance at monthly meetings, the three remaining members of the Prescott Chapter decided to disband the Chapter and to donate their remaining funds to the Benedictine Sisters. There will be a final get-together in honor of Saint Benedict's feast in July.

**Clyde oblates:** The Clyde oblate weekend that had been scheduled for June 2-4 has been cancelled. The fall weekend has not yet been scheduled. 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:** Several oblates enjoyed a renewal day on *Images of God in Scripture and in the Rule of Benedict*. The group is considering which book to use for their meetings next year. Suggestions are welcome. Two books have been recommended thus far: *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr and *Everyday Mysticism: Cherishing the Holy* by Fr. Anthony J. Ciorra. Other suggestions are welcome.

Rev. Don Chatfield, executive director of Osage Forest of Peace, made his oblation on Sunday, May 7. He anxious to maintain a Benedictine spirit at the Forest, which continues to be a place of peace and prayer. Visit their website at: <http://www.forestofpeace.org>.

**Sheridan, Wyoming,** oblates have been using the *Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict with Reflections for Oblates and All Who Seek God* by Sr. Maria-Thomas Beil. They are having lively discussions about the role of the abbot in Benedict’s rule and how to live those qualities in their roles as parents, employees, and bosses. Sheridan oblates meet monthly, but are now off until September. To celebrate the Feast of Saint Benedict, they are having a potluck on July 8. At that time, the oblates will renew their oblations and Mary Slipp will make her oblation.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah