



*The Benedictine Oblate Letter*

*October, 2017*

Dear Oblates and Friends,

I recently attended a meeting of the Board of Directors of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue.

MID is a Roman Catholic organization of women and men religious from the western monastic tradition. It is dedicated to fostering dialogue with the monastic traditions of other religions. It is part of the larger international organization *Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique* / Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (DIMMID), which works under the aegis of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in Rome.

I have been a MID Board member for several years. I usually return home from the meetings with new insights and enthusiasm. Sharing our monastic values and practices with monks and nuns of other religious faith is a means by which we deepen and expand them. After all, our goals are similar: to create a space of peace and compassion; to live a balanced life of work and prayer.

During the MID meeting, one of the Board members mentioned that she would like to study the principles of dialogue as developed by Leonard Swidler, Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University. In 1978, he founded the Dialogue Institute, which teaches the skills of critical thinking and deep dialogue that develop the capacity to reconcile differences.

Swidler's ten principles, dubbed the *Dialogue Decalogue*, were formulated to provide a framework for interreligious dialogue, but, additionally, they also have the potential to dampen heated political rhetoric and partisan gridlock. I have abbreviated Swidler's principles below; the list can be found in full at <http://dialogueinstitute.org/dialogue-principles>.

1. The essential purpose of dialogue is to learn, which entails change.
2. Dialogue must be a two-sided project: both between religious/ideological groups, and within religious/ideological groups.

3. It is imperative that each participant comes to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity.
4. One must compare only her/his ideals with their partner's ideals and her/his practice with the partner's practice, not one's ideals with one's partner's practice.
5. Each participant needs to describe her/himself.
6. Participants must not come to the dialogue with any preconceptions as to where the points of disagreement lie. A process of agreeing with one's partner [in dialogue] as much as possible, without violating the integrity of one's own tradition, will reveal where the real boundaries between the traditions lie: the point where her or she cannot agree without going against the principles of one's own tradition.
7. Dialogue can take place only between equals, which means that partners learn from each other—*par cum pari* according to the Second Vatican Council—and do not merely seek to teach one another.
8. Dialogue can only take place on the basis of mutual trust. To encourage this it is important that less controversial matters are discussed before dealing with more controversial ones.
9. Participants in dialogue should have a healthy level of criticism toward their own traditions. The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, which is impossible if one's tradition is seen as having all the answers.
10. To understand another religion or ideology one must try to experience it from within, which requires a "passing over," even if only momentarily, into another's religious or ideological experience.

I think these ten principles are worth pondering and practicing.

*And now the news:*

*Tucson oblates* now meet at St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church at River & Campbell. Doors will be open at 1:30 p.m. to Murphey Gallery East Meetings remain at the usual time from 2:00-3:30 p.m.

*Phoenix oblates* meet at Mount Claret Retreat Center, 4633 N. 54<sup>th</sup> St. Phoenix, 85018. The meeting room is the Saint John Paul II room in the back of the parking lot. The Phoenix oblates are continuing their study of the Rule of Benedict by Maria-Thomas Beil, OSB. The contact for this group is

is Patty at [Benedictine@cox.net](mailto:Benedictine@cox.net).

*West Side Phoenix oblates* meet at 19204 N. 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Glendale, for a morning of prayer, community, and fellowship on the third Saturday of the month from 9:00 a.m. -12:00. For information on meetings call Lisa at 623-374-2382. Lisa may also be reached at [lisa\\_hughes@cox.net](mailto:lisa_hughes@cox.net).

*Chandler oblates*- the contact for this group is Nancy at Nancykaib@hotmail.com.

*Clyde oblates*: The fall meeting, which is October 20-22, will be over before you receive this letter. The theme is *Chutes and Ladders: Humility in Scripture and 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, 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 resumed their meetings on September 10. They are reading a new book for this year: *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* by Richard Rohr.

*Sheridan, Wyoming, oblates* meet the on the first and third Saturdays of the month through May. On third Saturdays, the group is discussing Joan Chittister's new book, *Radical Spirit*, on the steps of humility. On first Saturdays the group is using the *Study Guide for the Rule of St. Benedict with Reflections for Oblates* by Sr. Maria-Thomas Beil, OSB.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah