

October, 2018

Dear Oblates and Friends,

We recently celebrated two silver jubilees and one golden jubilee of monastic profession on the same day. It was a day of bright sunshine after several days of rain. We had a beautiful liturgy in which the three sisters renewed their vows, followed by a festive meal. Three tables were set up in the hall on which we could place cards and gifts. We were able to sleep late and go to bed early. It was a wonderful day for all of us as we reflected on our own commitments and renewed our enthusiasm for the life to which God calls us.

The word “jubilee” is really just a fancy word for “anniversary.” According to the dictionary, the word “jubilee” means “a special anniversary of an event.” By assimilation to the Latin word, *jubilare*, meaning “to shout for joy,” the word “jubilee” has come to mean any season or occasion of rejoicing and festivity.

“Jubilee” also has a biblical meaning. The word itself may mean “ram’s horn,” as in Joshua 4:6. When seven priests, walking around the walls of Jericho seven times, blew ram’s horns, the walls came tumbling down. The basic text concerning the jubilee year is Leviticus 25:8-10, *ff*. In the fiftieth year, hereditary properties were returned to their original owners and Hebrew slaves were freed. The fields were not sown; animals; people consumed what grew of its own accord, trusting in God’s promise, “I will command such a blessing for you in the sixth year that there will be crop enough for three years” (Lv 25:21). Jesus refers to the jubilee year when he reads from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth: “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19).

Jubilees, then, are all about freedom. It may seem to be a contradiction that we call it a “jubilee” when we celebrate binding commitments. Yet, we freely choose to pledge our fidelity to God and to one another. The Rule of Benedict, in Chapter 58 “On the Manner of Receiving Members,” emphasizes the freedom of the novice to accept or reject the yoke of the Rule.

Many people today are reluctant to make lasting commitments, whether to a particular goal or to another individual. Those who do, be they monks or married couples, serve as an inspiration and a model to be followed. I was always touched when I saw my aunt and uncle, who lived to celebrate their seventy-fifth wedding anniversary, walking hand in hand and calling each other by pet names they had used for decades.

When we freely choose to pronounce vows, we believe that God will sustain us in the promises we make. At monastic profession or on those special occasions when we renew our vows, we sing a verse from Psalm 119: "Receive me as you have promised and I shall live, and do not disappoint me in my hope." We celebrate God's fidelity, not our own.

And now the news:

Clyde Oblates

The Clyde oblates will spend a weekend at Clyde sometime during Lent. The dates have not yet been scheduled and further information will be forthcoming. All oblates are welcome to attend.

Tucson Oblates

The Tucson oblates will meet at 2:00pm on Sunday, Nov. 18, 2018, in the Murphy Gallery East They will continue the discussion on obedience. Candidates meet at 12:45pm in Ferguson. The St. Benedict's Toolbox book group meets in the Murphy Gallery East at 12:45pm. Please bring a nonperishable item for the St. Philips foodbank as Thanksgiving is right around the corner. 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. For information call Patty Williams 602-957-1464.

West Phoenix: The West Phoenix group has not resumed after their summer break, but hopes to get going again in January. For information call Lisa Hughes at 623-374-2382.

East Valley: The East Valley Oblates meet on the fourth Saturday of the month. The next meeting is on October 27. The group is discussing the vow of stability. For information call Nancy Kaib 480-883-8025 or Frank Young 480-219-1505.

Sand Springs:

Fr. John O'Neill, pastor of St. John before the Latin Gate in Bartlesville, OK, will be leading the oblates in retreat from November 2-4. Fr. John is a graduate of St. Meinrad's School of Theology. He will study, compare, and contrast the different translations of the Prologue of Rule.

Anyone who might be interested in becoming an oblate is invited to a reception at Osage Forest of Peace, Sunday, November 4, from 12:45 to 2:00 pm to meet our oblates and our oblate director, Sr. Sarah.

Gale Clark has taken over from Ginny McCann as the secretary for the oblates. You may address any questions to her at (918) 688-8992 or glclarkrdh@gmail.com. We thank Ginny for her many years of service and Gale for her willingness to assume the responsibilities!

Sheridan, Wyoming:

Meetings are now on Monday nights. For information, contact Cel Hope at celhaus@fiberpipe.net, or email me at sarah@bspa.us or phone me at 660-944-2221.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah