



The Benedictine Oblate Letter

September, 2013

Dear Oblates and Friends,

We've had the summer off. Hopefully it's been a good one for all of you and you are feeling refreshed and renewed. By the time you receive this letter we will have celebrated a very happy event: the final monastic profession of our Sister Nancy Rose. She has committed herself to God and to us, promising to live according to the Rule of St. Benedict and our Constitution for the rest of her life.

For the rest of her life... In Chapter 58 of his Rule, St. Benedict provides for a prolonged period of discernment and deliberation. The newcomer is told all "the hard and rugged ways by which the journey to God is made." She is tested to see if she is zealous "for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials." Three times the Rule is read to her: after two months, after six months, and once more after four months. Then, if she still stands firm, "she promises before all in the oratory stability, fidelity to monastic life and obedience." From that time on, "Let her understand that, according to the law of the Rule, from that day forward she may not leave the monastery nor withdraw her neck from under the yoke of the Rule which she was free to refuse or to accept during that prolonged deliberation." So, with God's grace, Sr. Nancy Rose will be with us forever, even into eternity.

Sr. Nancy Rose has enlisted in an army that serves under Christ, our King, with "the strong, bright weapons of obedience" (Prologue) to fight against sin and the devil. She has accepted the discipline of the Rule and the authority of a prioress. She has not been drafted into this army; rather she has joined it voluntarily. Her obedience cannot be blind, unthinking obedience. She will continue to make value judgments.

Sergei Bulgakov, a Russian Orthodox theologian (1871-1944), explains that although monasticism can be distorted by mere obedience to rules, authentic monasticism "is full of audacity, for it is a form of creative personal activity." Obedience is an act of freedom. We are free to disobey but we choose to obey. Sr. Nancy Rose has made a brave choice to obey and proclaimed that choice in public, in the presence of her community, family members, and friends.

But we are all called to what Abraham Joshua Heschel termed “spiritual audacity.” We must enter into an intimate relationship with God. Then we must engage in the type of ascetic struggle that enables us to overcome our self-centeredness and to reach out to others with love and compassion. Jesus asks us to “enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few” (Mt. 7:13-14).

Here’s a reminder: I have been posting short video clips on the oblate website on various aspects of Benedictine spirituality and prayer. Go to www.benedictinesisters.org, click on oblates, and the videos are under “resources.”

Now for some news. As you know, while I continue as oblate director, I have been named editor of our magazine, *Spirit & Life*. Please help *Spirit & Life* continue to live and thrive. We need to increase our print subscriptions. All oblates should be receiving it. If you are not receiving it, please let me know or go to our website. *Spirit & Life* is under the tab “News Center.” Here’s the link: <http://www.benedictinesisters.org/spirit-and-life-magazine-home.php>. Also let your friends and families know about it. It is bi-monthly and free. Do promote it in whatever way you can, and send me the names and addresses of anyone who would like to receive it.

St. Louis area oblates will resume their meetings this month. They meet every third Saturday of the month at the St. Rose Philippine Duchesne parish office. I am hoping to hold a day of recollection for this group later in the fall; the precise date and time will be announced later.

Clyde meeting dates this year, in addition to the Oct. 18-20 retreat, are Feb. 28-Mar. 2 and May 2-4. Mark your calendars!

All oblates are welcome to the 2013 fall retreat to be held Oct. 18-20 at Clyde. The topic is “Sacred Space, Sacred Time, and Sacred People.” The retreat is open to all oblates and you are welcome to bring your spouses. Please call (660-944-2221) or email me (sarah@bspa.us) before Sept. 15 if you plan to attend. Do so even if you’ve told me that you plan to come.

Peace,

Sr. Sarah, O.S.B.