



Spring 2021

Oblate Lenten Retreat



March 14, 2021
1-3 pm CDT
online or in person

Monastery
 Community Room

As we begin this holy season of Lent, we are delighted to announce that Sr. Nicole Kunze, our prioress, will present the oblate Lenten retreat.

Sr. Nicole began her second term as prioress last Lent, just as the pandemic struck. Her commitment to the oblate community and your living of our shared Benedictine charism has been a mark of her leadership.

Sr. Nicole is recognized as a compelling speaker and avid champion of the

Benedictine way of life. She will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of her Monastic Profession this summer.

In her reflection to the sisters on Ash Wednesday, Sr. Nicole wrote: “God is in the newness of life. We tend to cling to the old, the familiar, the routine. We don’t like change. We are invited to begin again. We have the opportunity to start over again with whatever it is we need to start over again this Lent. That is the wonderful gift we have with God’s mercy. We start over again where we are now. We don’t have to clean up the bedroom of our lives and get it into shape before feeling worthy of starting over. God accepts us right now, as we are, as we begin again. “

Retreat Protocol:

Please RSVP to (701) 355-8909 or email

oblates@annunciationmonastery.org

We welcome guests but appreciate advance numbers to safely setup the room.

Please wear a mask if you plan to attend in person.

If you wish to attend via Zoom and are not on our distribution list, please email and a link will be sent to you before the retreat.



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Sharing our hopes and reflections this Lent

This Lent, I'm reflecting on this powerful paragraph from John Mark Comer (in "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry"): "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness because it was there, and only there, that Jesus was at the height of His spiritual powers. It was only after a month and a half of prayer and fasting in the quiet place that He had the capacity to take on the devil himself and walk away unscathed. That's why, over and over again, you see Jesus come back to the wilderness [desert place] to pray."

Daniel Barr, Oblate Advisory Committee & Formation Task Force

As a cradle Catholic, my Lent has always included prayer, fasting and almsgiving. My Benedictine roots of lectio around Jesus' 40 days in the desert have opened my eyes and heart to wider horizons. The manner of prayer, fasting and almsgiving have stretched my soul over the years. I find myself each Lent pondering how to balance these elements, living in moderation. Just as Jesus went into the desert and was tested, finding his mission, so too I find myself tested in the arena of my life. Lent is an opportunity for me to focus once again, rediscovering what God is calling me to. I am so enriched by our rich liturgies, culminating in the Sacred Triduum. My own Good Friday moments find their way to Easter.

Colleen Ressler, Oblate Advisory Committee

I no longer identify a Lenten project, a "something I will do for Lent." Instead, I choose an intentional change or re-direction to deepen my relationship with God that I will continue without end.

Zanne Ness, Oblate Advisory Committee & Formation Task Force

Sister Patricia found inspiration for this Lent in this recent quotation by Pope Francis:

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem (Mt. 20:18)
 "In our Lenten journey towards Easter, let us remember the One who 'humbled himself and became obedient unto death on the cross' (Phil. 2). During this season of conversion, let us renew our faith, draw from

the 'living water' of hope and receive with open hearts the love of God who makes us brothers and sisters in Christ. Fasting, prayer and almsgiving, as preached by Jesus in Matthew 6:1-18, enable and express our conversion. At the Easter Vigil, we will renew our Baptismal promises and experience rebirth as new men and women by the working of the Holy Spirit. The Lenten journey, like the entire pilgrimage of the Christian life is illuminated by the light of the Resurrection."

May the blessing of the living Lord accompany us on our journey towards the light of Easter.

Sr. Patricia Schap, Assistant Director

As many have reflected, this past year of pandemic has appeared to be a year of Lent. We remember that in RB 49 St. Benedict states that a monastic's life ought to be a continual Lent; however, how this Lent is observed varies from year to year. Just like a "hard winter" this has been a difficult year of losses and uncertainty. With our hope in God as our anchor, the continuity of our Lenten practice has served us well to provide the stability we so deeply seek.

In the monastery we continue our Lenten tradition of additional reflection on our selected ongoing formation study and silent Friday evenings ending in compline in our chapel. As we reflect on our personal Lenten practice with our Prioress, we are grateful for our experiences last year which showed our resilience when crisis happens. It also showed how much we cherish and value these markers of the liturgical season.

I am finding spiritual nourishment this year as part of a small group of sisters reflecting on Pope Francis' latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. As any good Lenten selection should, it is stretching me and allowing me to wrestle with uncomfortable truths.

May your Lent be blessed,

Sr. Rosemary DeGracia, Director



Remembering Sr. Claire Schmitt

Prayer for Sister Claire

Sister Claire Schmitt, OSB, 1923–2020

May the Lord bring you a tray of food
each mid-afternoon, with a clean towel
tucked neatly around the edge: a snack,
great care incarnate, manifest love.
May He with intentionality
arrange the dribs and drabs and bites
of all that was best at lunch (having
tenderly set them aside for you)
with a cup of fresh hot coffee. May
you know the same hospitality—
the welcome glad and perpetual,
the meal with all good things replete—
you both learned at His Mother's feet.

Jane Greer, oblate

Note: Sr. Claire was much beloved by the oblate switchboard volunteers she tended with loving care. Agile and alert nearing her century birthday, her sudden death was a shock to all of us. Her needs were few and her generosity to others —particularly to the poor and marginalized—was immense.

Jane's latest book of poetry: Love like a Conflagration, published in 2020 is available through Amazon.com



New Reading Recommendations

Luigi Giola, OSB. *Saint Benedict's Wisdom: Monastic Spirituality and the Life of the Church.*

2020. Liturgical Press. Collegeville, MN

Judith Sutura, OSB. *St. Benedict's Rule* (an inclusive translation available with or without daily commentary.) Available April 2021. Liturgical Press.

Rachel M. Srubas (pastor and oblate) *Benedictine Promises for Everyday People: staying put, listening well, being changed by God.* 2019. Twenty-third Publications

Rowan Williams, (former Archbishop of Canterbury). *The Way of St. Benedict.* 2020 Bloomsbury Academic & Professional Press. UK (but available at Amazon)

Oblate Formation Program

As we seek new oblates to join with our community in living the Benedictine way of life, we begin plans for the fall cohort of the formation program. The program begins anew in October and meets one Saturday morning a month for about three hours for twelve months ending with final Oblation

We have now completed the first half of the new program with a cohort of four candidates and six current oblates. Both the new and the existing oblates report a very positive experience which gives a thorough grounding in the Rule as well as the practical aspects of living the Benedictine charism as a layperson.

We are now forming next year's cohort and openings are available for newly interested persons and oblates wishing to deepen their lived experience as oblates. Sessions are presented by sisters and oblates with the guidance of an Oblate Formation Team and assisted by oblate mentors who meet monthly (electronically or in person) with the participants.

If this sounds like an opportunity you would like to be part of, please contact Sr. Rosemary at (701)355-8909 or by email at: oblates@annunciationmonastery.org

Oblate Program
Annunciation Monastery
7520 University Drive
Bismarck, ND 58504