



Oblate NEWSLETTER

November 2018

Advent Prepares the Way

Oblate Retreat—Dec 2, 2018

We gather as oblates and friends to designate our December gathering as the Advent Retreat. We celebrate the centrality of Mary in our dedication as Annunciation Monastery. Please note the morning start time for this retreat.

Guests are most welcome!

Presented by Sr. Susan Lardy, OSB, titled:

MARY, Full of Grace

- 10-10:45 Review of the Annunciation and Mary's openness and response to Gabriel's message
- 11:00 Mass and Lunch
- 1:00-2:30 How we open ourselves to God's message
- 2:30 Refreshments/Social



Sr. Susan, former prioress, oblate director and vice president for Mission Effectiveness at CHI St. Alexius Health, currently serves as community secretary and director of women in First Monastic Profession. She also serves on the Board of Directors of the University of Mary.

The gift shop will be open for your holiday shopping. Our cookbook with old and new favorites is also available!



Oblate Updates

New Oblates and Oblate Candidates

We are blessed! We have four new oblates and three new oblate candidates. On Oblate Sunday in October, Jane Greer, Margaret Brandt, and Joy Wesolowski made their oblation.



Two weeks later, Jeffrey Johnson, who traces his first visits to Annunciation Monastery to his childhood, drove from his home in Wisconsin where he is a Catholic school principal, to make his oblation.



During the months of September & October, three oblate candidates have also

begun their oblate journey.

Our littlest Benedictine, Gabriel Francis Barr, arrived shortly before the October meeting, and came to show off his new Benedictine threads with his proud parents, Daniel and Priscilla and Priscilla's mother, Becky Jones. We are expecting great things from his Benedictine, as well as UMary hockey, immersion.



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BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

Advent Messages

St. Benedict says in his Rule, chapter 7, that the fourth step of humility is obedience, even in the face of difficulty. He quotes Psalm 27:14: "Let your heart take courage, and wait for the Lord."

Advent is a season when we are called to muster courage and wait in obedience. Waiting always seems to involve the darkness of unknowing. We wait for God to break into the darkness of our questioning and impatience and shed Light into our lives.

Sue Monk Kidd in her book entitled, *While the Heart Waits*, tells of a time of uncertainty and discernment in her life. She daily watched a cocoon that was spun on a dead branch, wondering if there

was life inside. The cocoon became a metaphor for her own life. No change was apparent. The worm spins a cocoon around itself and bravely waits in darkness for the unknown to happen. It waits for the changes to be done unto it. If curiosity overrides development and the exterior is prematurely removed, no further progress is possible. So the little worm lies perfectly still and shrouded.

So it is with Advent. We are invited to wait for God to act. Like the little worm, we sit in silence and prayer with God's protective love spun all around us. We need to remember that God is constantly birthing new things into our lives. God does not seem to work in big

grandiose ways. God works in the silence and the darkness so that we hardly notice the changes being done unto us. Deep within us a greater awareness of God begins to grow in increments too small to notice...like a seed falling on the ground, or bread rising in a warm space, or a baby born in obscurity. Just as the butterfly waits to break open the cocoon at exactly the right time, shake out its new wings, and flutter away into new life, so it is with us. "Let your heart take courage and wait for the Lord."

**Zanne Ness, oblate
of Annunciation
Monastery**



Creating NAABOD Region 3 North Midwest Plains Chapter



First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery for the opportunity to attend the first annual Region 3 NAABOD (The North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors) Regional Meeting in St. Joseph, MN, at St. Benedict's Monastery on October 13th. It was my privilege to attend the meeting with Sr. Patricia Schap and Sr. Rosemary DeGracia. The entire experience of spending the day with 25 directors of oblate programs and oblates from four other monasteries in the region was very enriching. Those of us from Annunciation traveled the furthest since most monasteries represented were from the area.

The day opened with a brief history and introduction to each of the five monasteries represented. Then Sr. Michaela Hedican OSB, oblate program director from St. Benedict's Monastery, gave an inspirational keynote address on "Happiness Benedictine Style." She provided reflections on the origins of words such as "happiness," "blessed," "joy" and "desire" as well as offered several quotes related to happiness, including Abraham Lincoln's quote, "People are about as happy as they decide to be." She then moved onto St. Benedictine's teaching on happiness, although that word was never mentioned in the Rule. The closest word "joy" ironically only appears twice in the chapter on Lent.

Benedict saw moral duty and joy as being inseparable; and happiness is about paying attention to "right now" in order to live "the good life." She explored other ideas about the "good life" as defined by Benedict's standards.

Creating NAABOD Region 3 North Midwest Plains Chapter continued

The Rule could be considered a “guidepost”- a GPS system, rather than a set of “dos and don’ts.” Consider that the Rule might be analogous to a trellis or something that trains a thing of beauty like flowers.



Living the “good life” will be challenging and occurs over the long haul of life – it’s not just about moments. Benedict reminds us to set ourselves aside and consider others more important than self, particularly the vulnerable, such as young and old, sick and those in poverty. In contrast, the world echoes the older Burger King ad, “Have it your way.” Consider that Benedict teaches us to live Christ’s way rather than the way of the world.

Monasteries represented included St. Benedict’s Monastery, St. Joseph, MN (host community); St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, MN; St. Paul Monastery, St. Paul MN; Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Crookston, MN; and Annunciation Monastery.

Of note, recent research shows that the happiest cultures don’t have more wealth - rather they have more equality in the society. She explored step four in the chapter on humility, that in unjust conditions, the monk doesn’t try to escape the situation. She taught about the importance of “in-scaping” or finding God’s presence, rather than “escaping” when life becomes difficult. Sr. Michaela closed her comments by focusing on the importance of gratitude in relationship to happiness. As an example, she challenged us to re-frame the commonly used phrase, “There but for the Grace of God go I” to “There because of the Grace of God go I.”

Following Mass and group pictures, we broke into smaller groups. In the group of six oblates that I was involved, we discussed five beautifully written questions about the relationship between the monastic professed and oblates. This was probably one of the richest discussions I have been involved in with a group of oblates. We explored many commonalities between our monasteries and the individual relationships we have with our monasteries and the monastic professed. It was very reassuring to hear many of the same messages expressed by the individuals around the table.

One source of discussion was that we all – professed and oblates – can be at different spirituality levels and that through companioning one another or through simple presence, we can help each in our commitment to live the “good life” as described by St. Benedict. The importance of providing feedback to our monasteries was discussed as well as the need for our presence during times of difficulty.

We also began conversing about the experience for those of us who are married when the spouse is not interested in being an oblate. This discussion, again, was reassuring as most married persons in the group have comparable experiences of having a supportive spouse even though they are not oblates – and that the marriage has not strained by this different decision. The five questions used during our breakout session might be a good source of future discussions at our oblate meetings.

Claudia Dietrich, oblate of Annunciation Monastery

An October of Welcome, Advent, and Christmas

This October could have been themed “welcome month.” We welcomed four new oblates, three oblate candidates and also welcomed our three postulants to the novitiate on October 14. Krista Ferrell, Marena Hoogland and Mary Ruth Kayute just celebrated their one-month milestone of this year of prayer, study and discernment. Please pray for them and follow their stories in *Tidings*, our monastery publication.

Advent Is a Time for Waiting—

During this Advent season, we encourage you to enrich your spiritual lives and establish traditions that focus on the Reason for the Season. As we gather around the Advent wreath, some sisters cherish the opportunity to pray together the Office of Compline. This is a candled season for prayer and reflection—we wait together for Jesus birth.

You are always welcome to join us for **Christmas Eve Mass** which starts earlier than midnight—10 PM, and is followed by the Shepherd’s Breakfast of fresh rolls and hot cocoa.



Oblate Program
Annunciation Monastery
7520 University Drive
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