



St. Martin Oblate Bulletin

The Oblates of St. Martin Monastery, Rapid City, SD

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Election of Prioress in April

Please join us in prayer April 13-17 as the Sisters of St. Martin Monastery prepare for and elect their prioress for the next four years. The monastic approach to an election takes a different route from the process commonly followed in most organizations. First of all, it is a time of intense personal and communal prayer. Secondly, several days are devoted to communal discernment in which the community assesses its situation and determines areas that need to be addressed in the future. Only then does the process begin to focus on the names of individual sisters who could lead the community in striving for those goals. It is not a time of campaigning; the objective of communal discernment is to sense how the Holy Spirit is inspiring the direction of the group.

When the community reaches a consensus, the actual canonical election is held.

Sister Mary Wegher's four-year term will be completed in May and she is eligible for re-election. Every perpetually professed member of the community is eligible for election, and the names of all the members will be on the election ballot. The president of our Federation of St. Gertrude or her representative will be the official canonical witness of the election. Two sisters from other Benedictine communities who are experienced facilitators will direct the discernment process.

We send our blessings to **Rachel Byrum**, who has moved with her family to Pierre. She has been invited to join the local Oblates who are affiliated with the Benedictine Sisters of Mother of God Monastery in Watertown.

Coming Events

Mark your calendars for our Oblate Picnic on Saturday, July 9, at St. Martin's.

The 2016 Oblate Institute at St. Scholastica Monastery, Atchison, KS is scheduled for July 14-17. For further information: sophia@mountosb.org

Sister Ramona Fallon, OSB, former prioress of Mother of God Monastery in Watertown, has agreed to direct our Oblate Retreat October 14-15.

Four Oblates of St. Martin Monastery provided inspiring presentations on “listening” for the annual Oblate Retreat, October 9-10, 2015. Summaries of three of the presentations were printed in the last newsletter. The following is a summary of the presentation provided by Geri Konenkamp.



“Listen carefully, my son, to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.” This is the first line of the Prologue in The Rule of St. Benedict. This exhortation is a very specific instruction. Our listening is to be heard through the “ear of our heart”. Before we can actually listen to others and “hear” them accurately, we must develop the “ear of our hearts”. We humans have many barriers to overcome in this endeavor. Some examples of these barriers are: impatience, assumptions, distractions, prejudices, putting our agendas before others, selfishness, pride, being judgmental and it goes on and on. With what there is to change, it is safe to say conversion is an ongoing, lifetime process. So, how can we understand the meaning of “the ear of our heart”? Henri Nouwen says, “The Biblical meaning of the heart is that it is the place where body, soul, and spirit come together as one. Heart in the Jewish-Christian tradition refers to the source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional and moral energies. It is the central unifying organ of our personal life; the place where God dwells.” As we participate with God in the

Listening to Others

By Geri Konenkamp

conversion of our hearts, an inner spaciousness results making room for hearing, knowing and receiving others. This inner spaciousness was called purity of heart by the desert mothers and fathers.

St. Isaac of Nineveh wrote, “When the heart becomes permeable to Gods’ presence and mystery, it becomes compassionate and merciful”. When we are compassionate and merciful, we are able to receive others, feel and hold their pain, listen to their story, share in their experiences of joy and sorrow, forgive, and respond with affirmation and understanding. Gods’ compassion and mercy extend outward through us. When we are given the gift of this kind of heart, we are patient, kind, gentle and humble”. This kind of listening validates those whom we are listening to. Emily Dickinson reminds us to “take care for God is here”.

It takes courage and energy to listen and hear with the ear of our heart. When we do this, we are vulnerable to others. Being vulnerable can be frightening, painful and may make us feel naked. With Gods’ support and the conversion of our hearts, we can grow in courage as our hearts mature. We will become more available and more open to listening with love to others. The good news is that it also brings us connection, closeness, joy, relationship, love, sharing in the wonders of God, revelation and learning. Along with being

available to others is the importance of regularly listening to ourselves and to know when we need to withdraw into quiet rest and solitude, as Jesus did. This is where we commune with God and where that rich communion re-empowers us to give His love to others through listening.

Another form of listening to others occurs when we seek out or we are given wise direction from elders, holy ones, simple ones, spiritual directors, teachers, scripture, nature, the stranger and the young. Their wisdom, experience and inspiration are

Gods' gift to us. Oh, the richness of Gods' gift of conversion of heart. Let us always be seeking, so as to be giving. Listening to others is love!

Please pray with me: Lord, in your love for us, help us to develop the ear of our hearts that others may know your love through us. Teach us to listen with the ears of Jesus that he may be light for our path. And, may this light of faith always increase in us. Amen

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Opening the Book of Psalms is like walking into a home, lived in for many generations. Photos and mementos, some ancient and some new, blend together. Some are well preserved, others were dropped and cracked by the children, still others have faded, a few are difficult to identify. Only the grandparents know the story of each precious remembrance—if only they were still with us.

We turn to our ancestors in the faith to hear what they tell us about our sacred home, their house of prayer, the Book of Psalms. As in the family homestead, some psalms are carefully preserved, like Psalm 70, and others are almost indecipherable, like Psalms 2:1-12 and 14:5-7. Still others, like Psalm 139, use rare Hebrew forms, possibly some Aramaic words or endings. Yet whatever the problem, this psalm is well loved. Another section of psalms, sometimes called the curse or vindictive psalms, for instance Psalm 69:23-29, may be translated confidently enough, but their angry outbursts against the enemy embarrass Jews and Christians alike and have been dropped from the liturgical prayer of most churches. The family home unfortunately harbors its grudges and feuds. The psalms, like the home, lead us through many stages of life, necessary to carry on, even if not our finest moments.

The psalms remained so precious that the early Christians never added their own book of prayer to the New Testament. They kept the prayer book of their religious ancestors.

Carroll Stuhlmüller, CP

In his speech before Congress on September 25, Pope Francis spoke of "four great Americans:" Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr. and a man and a woman connected with the Order of St. Benedict. Many were surprised to have the two latter names placed alongside such famous men, yet Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day have also witnessed to essential values in American life. Pope Francis said Fr. Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, "was above all a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and for the Church. He was also a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions." The Pope recognized Dorothy Day for "her social activism, her passion for justice and for the cause of the oppressed [that] were inspired by the Gospel, her faith, and the example of the saints."

Dorothy Day Benedictine Oblate: A Saint?

Although Dorothy Day rejected being considered saintly, information regarding her holiness is now being gathered in the hope that someday she may be declared a saint by the Catholic Church. She was born in Brooklyn, New York on November 8, 1897 and lived briefly in California before her family moved to Chicago. While attending the University of Illinois at Urbana, she became interested in radical social causes as a way to help workers and the poor. In 1916, she moved to New York City where she worked as a journalist on socialist newspapers, participated in protest movements, and developed friendships with many famous artists and writers. During this time, she also experienced failed love affairs, a marriage, a suicide attempt, and an abortion.

With the birth of her daughter in 1926 she decided to become a Catholic, which led to the end of her common law marriage and the loss of many of her radical friends. While covering the 1932 Hunger March in Washington, D.C. she prayed that some way would open up for her to serve the poor and the unemployed. Back in New York, she met Peter Maurin, a French immigrant who had a vision for a society constructed of Gospel values. Together they founded the *Catholic Worker* newspaper which spawned a movement of houses of hospitality and farming communes that has been replicated throughout the United States and other countries.

Dorothy Day visited the Benedictine monks at St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, IL in 1940 and returned there several times for retreats. She was particularly impressed by the poverty and hard work of the monks and the neighboring community of Benedictine Sisters, as well as their commitment to work for the reunification of the Orthodox and Roman Churches. Dorothy became a Benedictine Oblate in 1955.

At the *Catholic Worker*, Dorothy Day lived a life faithful to the injunctions of the Gospel. Often the *Catholic Worker* quoted G.K. Chesterton's famous observation that Christianity hadn't really failed — it had never really been tried. Dorothy Day's life was spent trying. Her pilgrimage ended in New York City on November 29, 1980, where she died among the poor.

The Oblates of St. Martin Monastery are Christian women and men, Catholic or non-Catholic, lay or ordained, who are spiritually united with the monastic community in seeking God according to the sixth century Rule of St. Benedict. They have discovered that the guidance of the Rule can help them develop a balanced lifestyle that will strengthen and enhance their commitment to Christ, regardless of their vocation. Ecumenism is strengthened by the participants' respect for the religious traditions and insights of each member.

The Oblates meet at the monastery from 12:30 - 2:00 pm. on the second Saturday of each month except in June, July and August. For inquiries regarding the Oblate Program at St. Martin Monastery, please contact Sister Lorane Coffin, OSB (605) 343-8011 email: lcoffin933@gmail.com