

President's Message....

Blessings on the New Year!

I hope that the past celebration of the Christmas season has gifted you with many blessings as you enter into another year of fruitfully living the Benedictine way of life. In this Lenten season, God calls each of us to the desert, for time out, for solitude to come to grips with our afflictions, and to cast out all that keeps us from traveling the path of the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As I gaze out my window, I see the gray skies and the barren trees of winter, a scene of a dreary and despondent nature. Yet, deep down in the interior of my heart, I know within the barrenness of the trees is the "greenness" that will burst forth within a few weeks and lift my spirits with the newness of Easter Life. Henri Nouwen describes Lent "as the season during which winter and spring struggle with each other for dominance... As the buds open on trees and the days lengthen, this is a spiritual season which calls for greater openness to the word of God and a conversion in every area of our lives. It is a time to face the darkness within and expose it to the light."

As I take on the role of NAABOD President, I immediately think of St. Benedict's admonition from the Prologue: "*First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to him most earnestly to bring it to perfection.*" Let us all continue this holy work together. May our quest and aim be to bring forth the newness of Easter Life within NAABOD, our individual monasteries, and our Oblate chapters.

The 2017 NAABOD (July 14-19, 2017) gathering at St. Scholastica Monastery in Duluth, Minnesota, with its theme of "*Benedictine Values and Practices; Tools for Living, Tools for Life,*" was such a rich experience for Oblate Directors and Oblates to renew their commitment in Benedictine daily living. The following quotes from the presenters are mantras that we can take as tools for our daily living:

◆ **Father Renee McGraw, OSB, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota**

"[Our call] is to create a place that is reflective of the City of God where people are welcomed into the City of God. Let us make the monastery a place where people come to catch the glimpse of God being created in place."





◆ *Sister Theresa Schumacher, OSB*

St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, Minnesota

Sister Theresa invited participants to reflect on the holy woman Scholastica, and to ponder what tools she may have had in her toolbox for living/life: *"inspiration, motivation, influence, delight, challenge, value, beauty, creativity, teaching, prayer, guidance, gentleness..."*



◆ *Sister Mary Reuter, OSB*

St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, Minnesota

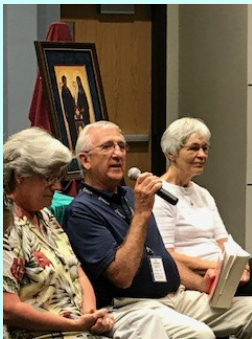
"God is speaking— Listen today. Be ready, be awake." Some of the daily tools needed for daily Benedictine living are lectio divina, Liturgy of the Hours, study and ongoing formation, nature, leisure, rituals, relationships, journaling, commitment to stability, obedience, and fidelity to the monastic way of life.



The presentations were video recorded, but DVDs have not yet been produced due to some technical difficulties. If the issues cannot be resolved, your money will be refunded.

Meetings were held for new Oblate Directors and for seasoned Oblate Directors. Some of the ideas shared are as follows:

- ◆ Ongoing formation is never ending.
- ◆ Oblates are happiest when they can join the monastics at festive occasions, participate in formation events, and assist with needed activities.
- ◆ Inclusivity is needed for Oblates unable to attend regular Oblate gatherings (Zoom conferencing).
- ◆ Our monasteries must be open to seekers.
- ◆ We should seek ways to enable inquirers to connect with the Oblate community, and provide "come and learn" days for those who may be interested in the Oblate way of life.



May the fruits of this Lenten season enflame our hearts to be God's gift of love to all we meet.

Lovingly in St. Benedict,
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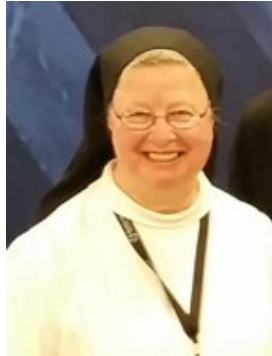
Newly Elected NAABOD Administrative Team July 18, 2017



President

Sister Priscilla Cohen

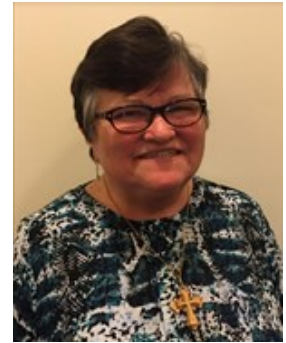
Sacred Heart Monastery
Cullman, Alabama



Vice-President

Sister Celine Schock

Immaculata Monastery
Norfolk, Nebraska



Secretary

Sister Linda Larkman

St. Benedict's Monastery
Bakersville, Pennsylvania

Thanks to the Outgoing Administrative Team



President

Sister Bonita Gacnik

Sacred Heart Monastery
Yankton, South Dakota



VicePresident

Father Mark Stengel

Subiaco Abbey
Subiaco, Arkansas



Secretary

Sister Priscilla Cohen

Sacred Heart Monastery
Cullman, Alabama

Sister Bonita Gacnik has agreed to continue to manage the NAABOD website. Thank you, Sister Bonita.

Presentations Given at World Congress of Benedictine Oblates November 4-10, 2017

- ◆ **Joan Chittister— “Let the Call Be Heard”** <http://www.benedictineoblates.com/downloads/SrJoanChittister-OblateCongress-2017.pdf>
- ◆ **ADDRESS OF THE ABBOT PRIMATE** <http://www.benedictineoblates.com/downloads/AP-GregoryPolan-OblateCongress-2017.pdf>
- ◆ **Father Edward Linton Address** <http://www.benedictineoblates.com/downloads/FrEdwardLinton-OblateCongress-2017.pdf>

Oblate Judith Valente (Mount St. Scholastica Monastery, Atchison, Kansas) attended the 2017 World Congress and subsequently submitted the following article to National Catholic Reporter: <http://globalsistersreport.org/blog/gsr-today/trends/benedictine-oblates-stand-crossroads-monastic-history-50531>

The article includes a vision statement developed at the World Congress.

Host Site Needed for the NAABOD 2019 Conference

If you are willing to host the next conference or if you have any suggestions for hosting sites, please let me know: priscillacohen@hotmail.com

The Conference is usually held in the month of July.

Membership Dues

Please remember to send in your \$50 annual membership dues. Forms are available on the NAABOD website: www.naabod.org

Regional Meetings

Regional Meetings should be scheduled for 2018. I would appreciate knowing the dates of your meetings. Please submit a summary to me so that I can share it in the NAABOD Newsletter.

Share What Is Happening In Your Oblate Groups

I invite you to share events of your Oblate groups for the Spring 2018 NAABOD newsletter. Please submit information to me by April 1, 2018.



Sister Mary Tewes, Oblate Director, St. Walburg Monastery, Covington, Kentucky submitted the following blog :



What do we really know about St. Scholastica?

At the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors' Conference in July 2017 at St. Scholastica's Monastery in Duluth, Minnesota, one of the presenters lead us on a creative journey through St. Scholastica's story - in words, various artists' interpretations, Scholastica as twin of St. Benedict, and Scholastica alone.

We read the brief account in the *Dialogues of St. Gregory* of the last encounter of the twins that is familiar to most everyone, where the rain storm kept him from returning to his monastery as his rule prescribed. After Scholastica's tears they were able to continue their dialogue about spiritual things the rest of the night. Three days later Benedict sees the soul of his sister ascend to heaven in the form of a dove, somewhere around the year 543.

We understand that she was born a twin of Benedict in 480 to a noble Roman family in Nursia of Umbria, and was dedicated to God at an early age. It is thought that she probably became a nun even before her brother underwent his conversion and became a monk. From my visit to Nursia in 1999, I became aware that there were Augustinians in that area early on. St. Augustine is in the large painting of the twins' baptism in their church. The tour guide, Sr. Aquinata Bachmann, OSB, shared that she is of the opinion that Scholastica gathered with young women who followed her, at the family's summer cottage, which is outside the walls of Nursia. Now the grounds include a small church called St. Scholastica and the local cemetery. The frescos on the walls depict her with young women, and her with Benedict as an older man painted over her as a young nun. It would have been very risky, and dangerous for a woman to be in the area around Monte Casino until much later. So, it is presumed that Benedict traveled back to Nursia to visit his family and discuss with his sister the concerns about leading a group of nuns or monks. It would have been much later that she, as Abbess, would have moved her community to Plombariolo, near Monte Casino, where it is thought that their final visit took place. Benedict and Scholastic surely helped each other in finalizing the Holy Rule, as we know it today.



Sr. Teresa Schumacher shared slides of many artists' featuring Scholastica, both alone and or with Benedict. We noticed many symbols in the various pictures: Dove (seen at her ascent to heaven), crozier, and pectoral Cross (signs of an Abbess), rain, Rule in her hand. Other characteristics included: youthfulness, listening, moving forward, attentive, crying, strong and powerful woman, equal in intellect and holiness to her brother, yet a gentle soul able to communicate with, nurture, challenge and delight in her brother.



Following these observations, we were asked to be a bit creative by pairing up and developing a new interpretation of her story. Some members of the group then read their stories or poems. Sr. Teresa was very interested in our creations, because she is hoping to publish a book of many interpretations of the Story of St. Scholastica for future generations to enjoy as well.

I hope to do a similar project with our Oblates at our Gathering on the Feast of St. Scholastica, Feb. 10th.

Sr. Mary Tewes 2-7-18 Blog