

January 2012



During a recent trip to Haiti, Sister Louise Laroche and Abelard Peters, a student, had a lively discussion about their relationships with Jesus.

“See how God’s love shows us the way of life... clothed with faith, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel as our guide we run there by doing good works”

—Rule of St. Benedict Prologue 20–22

Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving

By Sister Louise Laroche

As you recall, Sister Mary Ann Verkamp gave you a thorough overview of the Psalms at the September Oblate meeting. In that presentation she quoted the Biblical scholar, Brueggeman, as saying, “Our faith journey consists of:

- being securely **ORIENTED** (all is calm, tranquil, peaceful, serene, well settled, reaffirm tradition)= **PRAISE**
- being painfully **DISORIENTED** (things not working out, chaos, confusion, fragmented, overwhelmed, darkness)=**LAMENT** (majority of Psalms)
- being surprisingly **REORIENTED** (new, not same as old status quo, transformation, new faith level) =**THANKSGIVING.**”

Brueggeman has suggested that certain types of psalms fit these different stages of human life. These psalms speak to “where we’re at.”

John Craghan, in the book, *Psalms for All Seasons*, has attempted to arrange different psalm types according to our (or our community’s) place in this pattern of orientation-disorientation-reorientation.

Under **ORIENTATION** there are hymns or psalms of descriptive praise, psalms of trust or confidence, wisdom psalms, and certain royal psalms.

Under **DISORIENTATION** there are lament, both individual and communal.

Under **REORIENTATION** there are thanksgivings or psalms of declarative praise, again both individual and communal.

John Craghan also has a few words of caution regarding this order.



Monastery Immaculate Conception
802 E. 10th Street
Ferdinand, Indiana 47532-9239
812-367-1411, ext. 2827/2829
www.thedome.org/oblates
oblates@thedome.org

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First, this ORIENTATION-DISORIENTATION-REORIENTATION process is not so cut and dry in explaining the entire Book of Psalms. It is a useful approach for appreciating many of the Psalms and adapting them to our prayer life.

Second, humans experience their prayer life in cycles.

Third, we are urged to pray all the Psalms. Although I may choose to focus on psalms of ORIENTATION because that's where I'm at on my faith journey at the moment, psalms of DISORIENTATION help me to be aware of and reach out to people who feel overwhelmed, confused, fearful, and in darkness.

Our focus today will be on Psalms of Descriptive Praise, (ORIENTATION) and Psalms of Thanksgiving or Declarative Praise (REORIENTATION) as presented in the book, *Psalms for All Seasons* by John Craghan.

Psalms of Descriptive Praise

Psalms of Descriptive Praise praise God for God's ongoing care for the world and humanity. God is the one who provides, and God is worthy of praise.

Structure of Psalm of Praise: an introduction, main section, and conclusion.

Introduction: the psalmist expresses the intention to praise God or invites others to join in the praise.

Main Section: the psalmist offers reasons or motives for such praise sustaining a sense of awe and wonder in God's presence and involving the worshipping community in this God's activities.

Conclusion: the psalmist usually restates elements found in the introduction.

These psalms of descriptive praise dwell on God's ongoing care for God's creation, therefore, they express harmony, stability, and balance. (ORIENTATION)

These psalms challenge us to keep in check the self-seeking ego and to sing the goodness of the Holy One who continues to create — so often in and through others. These psalms invite us to be open to God and God's goodness in others.

An example of this psalm of praise is found in the shortest psalm in the entire Book of Psalms, Psalm 117:

The Nations Called to Praise

Praise the Lord, all you nations!

Give glory, all you peoples!

The Lord's love for us is strong;

The Lord is faithful forever.

Hallelujah!

The psalmist calls upon the foreign nations to praise and give glory.

The reasons or motives for such praise are found in the

Lord's love and faithfulness.

This psalm concludes with expression of praise, Hallelujah!

The invitation here is to reflect on God's loyal love and fidelity to us as individuals and as members of the community. Our response is one of praise.

The psalm also challenges us to speak and to act for all because of our God's concern for all humanity.

Psalm 113

Hallelujah!

I

Praise, you servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

²Blessed be the name of the LORD both now and forever.

*³From the rising of the sun to its setting
let the name of the LORD be praised.*

II

⁴High above all nations is the LORD; above the heavens his glory.

⁵Who is like the LORD our God, enthroned on high,

⁶looking down on heaven and earth?

⁷He raises the needy from the dust, lifts the poor from the ash heap,

⁸Seats them with princes, the princes of the people,

⁹Gives the childless wife a home, the joyful mother of children.

Hallelujah!

As seen in this psalm creation is not the only motive for praising God.

The Lord's actions on behalf of God's people are just as important.

The psalm opens by inviting the Lord's servants to praise their God. Although "servants" can refer to Temple personnel, it also extends to all Israel.

In verses 1-3 the name of the Lord is emphasized. According to Exodus 3:13-17 and 6:2-8 the revelation of the divine name takes place in the setting of Egyptian bondage. To mention the Lord conjures up the picture of a God who liberates slaves and offers them a future in a promised land.

The expression "from the rising of the sun to its setting" (v. 3) refers to the Diaspora, that is, those Jews scattered throughout ancient Near East after the exile (after 539 B.C.). However, where the divine name is revered, there the divine person is involved.

We never stand so tall as when we stoop to help a little child or one who is vulnerable and in need. The psalmist develops this theology in the body of the poem (vv. 4-9 a) by underlining the chasm separating the Lord and his servants. However, it is a chasm that can be overcome. To be sure, the Lord is high above all nations (v.4) and incomparable as he occupies his lofty throne (v.5). Nevertheless, he bends down to inspect the situation on heaven and earth (v.6). But this inspection is not another committee report — it is directed to action.

Who are the beautiful people? According to this psalm

there are at least two categories: 1) the needy and the poor and 2) the childless wife.

In both cases reversal is the order of the day. The One on high (v.4) raises on high the poor and the needy. They occupy seats along with the princes of God's people. The movement from dust and ash heap to throne is possible because the God of the covenant is a committed God.

With regard to the barren woman one must note that in the sociology of Israel a woman found fulfillment by becoming a wife and mother. She contributed to the covenant community by bearing children. The accounts of Israel's matriarchs are enough to point up the plight of the unfulfilled woman (see Gen 16; 30). But thanks to the Lord's intervention the barren are no longer sullen. They break out into expressions of spontaneous joy because the Lord has removed their stigma, giving them children (v.9; see 1 Sam 2:5). It is only fitting that the psalm should conclude as it began: "Hallelujah" — "Praise Yahweh!"

The psalm does not offer an exhaustive list of the down and out. However, it does suggest to our imagination that wherever the down and out are helped, the name of the Lord is present and demands recognition. In praying such psalms, we are to acknowledge those individuals who reach out from their security or insecurity to lend a helping hand. Divine presence takes many forms. To help our brothers and sisters in any way is to make God's name known and hence worthy of praise.

At prayer we are urged to break free from the grip of our ego to focus on those who demonstrate freedom by giving themselves. To pray to this God is to be involved with God's concern — everyone.

Psalm of Declarative Praise

While thanksgiving praise offer praise to God, they are distinct from hymns or psalms of descriptive praise. Thanksgiving or psalms of declarative praise assert the presence of newness, not God's ongoing care for the world and humans. They are the expression of a person's or a community's specific experience of the Lord. They express being surprisingly REORIENTED (new, not same as old status quo, transformation, new faith level) due to God's grace.

The structure of the thanksgiving or psalm of declarative praise normally consist of three elements:

1. introduction or call to thank and praise;
2. account of the newness that the Lord has brought forth;
3. conclusion that is usually a renewed call to thank and praise.

Psalm 30

I

²*I praise you, LORD, for you raised me up and did not let my enemies rejoice over me.*

³*O LORD, my God, I cried out to you for help and you healed me.*

⁴*LORD, you brought my soul up from Sheol; you let me live, from going down to the pit.*

II

⁵*Sing praise to the LORD, you faithful; give thanks to his holy memory.*

⁶*For his anger lasts but a moment; his favor a lifetime.*

At dusk weeping comes for the night;

but at dawn there is rejoicing

III

⁷*Complacent, I once said, "I shall never be shaken."*

⁸*LORD, you showed me favor, established for me mountains of virtue.*

But when you hid your face I was struck with terror.

⁹*To you, LORD, I cried out; with the Lord I pleaded for mercy:*

¹⁰*"What gain is there from my lifeblood, from my going down to the grave?"*

Does dust give you thanks or declare your faithfulness?

¹¹*Hear, O LORD, have mercy on me; LORD, be my helper."*

IV

¹²*You changed my mourning into dancing;*

you took off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness.

¹³*So that my glory may praise you and not be silent.*

O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.

This psalm of declarative praise is an individual's expression of divine deliverance from suffering and distress. The psalm may be divided as follows:

1. praise of the Lord for his intervention (v.2);
2. recounting of the psalmist's experience (vv. 3-4);
3. invitation to those present to praise the Lord and learn from the psalmist's experience (vv. 5-6);
4. more explicit description of the problem (vv. 7-12);
5. conclusion (v. 13)

There are two opposite movements that govern the psalm, namely, life and death.

In this psalm there is an ascending movement from:

1. life to death
2. sickness to health
3. punishment (God's hidden face in v. 8b to joy)
4. night to morning (v. 6b).

This psalm is about breaking through from disorientation to reorientation, which is all due to God's gift of grace.

I encourage you to pray the psalms so you may experience the psalms as God's invitation to dialogue about your deepest feelings and emotions, thus deepening your relationship with God.

Getting To Know the Oblates

Kathy Knust

I was born and raised in Dubois County as a 'cradle Catholic' in a family with solid Christian values. Throughout my formative years, my parents and extended family were practicing Catholics following traditions of German Catholics. Growing up I was the second of eight children and we lived in a house just down the hill from St. Celestine Catholic Church and the rectory, nun's house, and school. Because of this location, I consider myself blessed to have known Benedictine nuns and priests all of my life.

After attending St. Celestine Elementary School, I went to high school in Dubois and started college at St. Benedict College in Ferdinand. My experience at St. Ben's included a year as a postulant in the convent and this was my first exposure to the Oblates of St. Benedict and the Rule of Benedict. After the College closed, I transferred to Indiana State University and then to Indiana University to complete my undergraduate degree. While I was working on my undergraduate degree, my husband-to-be, Ed Knust, served three years with the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. After our marriage we moved to Purdue University where he completed his degree while I completed a second major and did my student teaching.

Our first daughter, Carolyn, was born while we were still at Purdue. She presented some special challenges as she is severely mentally handicapped with numerous developmental disabilities. Two and a half years later our daughter, Audrey, died at birth. We were devastated and convinced at that time to abandon further attempts for children. God apparently had other plans and blessed us with two healthy sons in the years that followed. When Mark was born in 1980 I felt a glimpse of what Mary and Elizabeth must have felt at the births of their miracle sons. Our family was completed in 1985 with the birth of our son Kevin. Having raised a child with special needs is not easy. However, Ed and I agree that what we have learned from and through Carey, as a special child of God, goes far beyond what she may have learned

from us. Our sons continue to bring joy into our lives.

I returned to Indiana University to complete my master's degree in library science a few years after we left Purdue. I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent at the different colleges and feel fortunate to have such a well-rounded education. I am employed by the Southeast Dubois County School Corporation as the director of library services for the corporation's four libraries. On the days I work in Ferdinand, I work literally in the shadows of the monastery. It is inspiring to view the building and to hear the church bells ringing during the day. It is also very rewarding to work with children and to learn something every day from the students I teach.

I became further interested in the Oblates through working on staff with Sister Sylvia Gehlhausen and Sister Mary Roman Dall. They have been great spiritual role models for me. Sister Mary Boniface Dewig was an inspiration and a mentor for me in choosing library science as a career. I have also had the privilege of working with Sister Rebecca Abel and Sister Jeanette Adler as fellow librarians. These holy women, along with all the nuns who were my teachers from elementary school through college, have had great influences in my spiritual direction.

Our daughter Carolyn has lived in a group home in Evansville for the past fifteen years. While her placement there was one of the most difficult decisions we had to make, we are dedicated to the cause of handicapped individuals and are advocates of the Easter Seals Rehabilitation Center. We continue to be amazed at the dedication of the staff, at all levels, within that organization. Both of our sons have musical training and are currently working in the business world. Mark is married to Lauren who is a music teacher and they live in Griffith, Indiana, which is near Chicago. Our son Kevin lives and works in Evansville.

Ed and I are parishioners at Sacred Heart Church in Schnellville, and we enjoy serving our parish together. We both serve on the Education/Faith Formation Commission

and we have just completed four years of service on the *Why Catholic?* Planning Team for our cluster

parishes. Together we are involved with the St. Vincent DePaul Society. It has been our honor to be recognized for involvement in these and other ministries by being inducted into the Brute' Society and receiving the Mother Teresa Award. Receiving these awards along with other individuals dedicated to following Christ is both humbling and inspiring.

I have grown to love the Psalms and enjoy the hour of Eucharistic Adoration I am scheduled for each week. I am coming to know and love Benedictine spirituality more deeply and feel a call to live out the Rule of St. Benedict as much as possible. I can identify with the principles of hospitality, moderation, service to others and the spirit of prayer that the Rule offers. Being an Oblate has been a way to deepen my spirituality and to surround myself with good people who can give me help and inspiration when I need it.

Being a librarian, one of my favorite hobbies is reading books and e books. I also enjoy traveling with my husband and we have been fortunate enough to visit Hawaii and Alaska and quite a few major U.S. attractions and cities. The highlight of our travels was a trip to Europe in 2003 that focused on Munich and Rome. (Thanks to Ed having his passport stolen outside the Roman Coliseum, we spent three extra days there!) I was especially impressed with the cathedrals and with the Vatican. We continue to enjoy visiting different churches when we travel. Our next travel goal is to visit the Holy Land — hopefully in 2013. Wouldn't that be something?



Monastery Moments and Oblate Offerings

February 4

Formation Day For religious community members only, Dr. Mohammad Hussain, President-elect of the Islamic Society of Evansville, will talk about Muslim culture and religion.

February 17-19

High School Come & See High school age girls can "Discover the Treasure of the Hill" during a weekend visiting, praying, and working with the sisters.

February 19

Oblate Meeting Sister Donna Marie Herr will present the "Lament Psalms." With Ash Wednesday on February 22, this presentation will be a perfect beginning to the season of Lent. The presentation begins at 1 p.m. (ET) Morning prayer is at 10 a.m. with Mass at 10:30. Dinner immediately follows Mass. Reservations required for dinner and the afternoon meeting. Contact the Oblate office.

February 19

Bona Opera Forms listing special Lenten observances are due in the Oblate office.

March 16-18

Come & See Young women will join the religious community for prayer and work and attend spiritual presentations.

March 18

Oblate Retreat "Psalms of the Triduum" will be the theme of the retreat. This

focus will help retreatants prepare for the prayers and readings for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Fr. Harry Hagan, a monk from St. Meinrad, will lead the retreat, which is from 1-4 p.m. in St. Gertrude Hall. Reservations required. Contact the Oblate office.

April 14

First Monastic Profession (tentative date) This celebration is for members of the religious community only.

April 15

Oblate Meeting Sister Michele Mohr will share the majesty of "The Royal Psalms." The presentation begins at 1 p.m. (ET) Morning prayer is at 10 a.m. with Mass at 10:30. Dinner immediately follows Mass. Reservations required for dinner and the afternoon meeting. Contact the Oblate office.

April 21

Renewal of Monastic Profession (tentative date) This celebration is for members of the religious community only.

May 20

Oblate Meeting Join Sister Mary Victor Kercher as she presents the "Wisdom Psalms." This presentation will be the last in the 2011-2012 series featuring the psalms.

July 7

Summer Social Mark your calendar for the 2012 summer social.

Oblate Birthdays

February

1 – Richard Huggins, 11 – June Berg, John Wallace, Sister Eileen Reckelhoff, 12 – Zelma Peltier, Sister Marilyn Schroering, 15 – Mary Ann Stoll, 18 – Rita Kohl, 20 – Sister Wilma Davis, 24 – Carolyn Adler, 26 – Patti Schroeder, 29 – Mary Martha Salas



March

2 – Jo Ann Desjarlais, Sister Barbara Ann Offerman, 10 – Beverly Belgarde, 12 – Scarlett Winters, 13 – Sister Mary Victor Kercher, 17 – Patty Allery, Kathy Dixon, 21 – Paula Dumont, 22 – Verna Jeanotte, Ruth Keethers, 25 – Denise Leinenbach, 29 – Gary Pope

April

4 – Sharon Cavanaugh, 6 – Lawrence Willegal, 7 – Judy Bueckert, 21 – Paula Dumont, 28 – Shirley Stern, 29 – Marcia Brown, Carole Swim, 30 – Ron Allery, Leeny Hardesty



**Pray for the deceased
relatives of
sisters and Oblates:**

Edward Dauby, father of Sisters Agnes Marie and Rosemary Dauby

Theresa Aileen Abel, mother of Sister Rebecca Abel

Arnold Cordell Bertelson, stepfather of Oblate Brenda Padgett

Oblates is published four times a year by the Oblate Leadership Team: Sisters Kathy Bilske, Mary Victor Kercher, and Barbara Ann Offerman.

Send comments to the Oblate Office
Monastery Immaculate Conception
802 E. 10th Street
Ferdinand, IN 47532
812-367-1411, ext. 2827/2829
oblates@thedome.org



You are invited to be in touch with the Sisters of St. Benedict in prayer. Use the following link:

[mms://smtp.thedome.org/churchcam](https://smtp.thedome.org/churchcam)

Join in the Summer Social Celebration

by Oblate Lynn Belli

On Saturday, July 7, 2012, our Benedictine sisters will celebrate 145 years of service in Ferdinand and the surrounding areas. As Oblates of the sisters we want to be part of the preparation and celebration for that special event.

One of the ways we can be involved in making a difference is by contributing to the "Theme Basket Booth." Various baskets will be on display in the booth. The visitor will purchase tickets, place the ticket(s) in a box placed before a basket as a chance to win that particular basket.

Baskets can be prepared in two ways. Various items can be purchased to make a basket arrangement. The theme depends on the creativity of the

individual. The theme could be a holiday theme, spa basket, pasta basket, baby items, sport, entertainment, etc. The value of the basket would need to be in the range of \$75 to \$100 each. Several Oblates can work together to create a single basket.

Another way to participate in the basket booth could be to purchase item(s) and bring the items to the monastery. These items will be used by the sisters and volunteers to create theme baskets. All items, also theme baskets, already arranged are to be at the monastery by May 31, 2012.

For more information on the theme baskets, please contact Sister Jolinda Naas, OSB. Sister Jolinda is in charge of the theme basket booth and can be



The theme basket booth at the 2007 Summer Social was very popular.

reached at 812-367-1411. Join in celebrating 145 years of the presence and service of the Sisters of St. Benedict at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Indiana and beyond.

Thank You, Oblates

Oblates joined other volunteers and sisters to host guests who attended the monastery's Christmas Eve services. They greeted, distributed programs/liturgy aids, ushered, took up the collection, and were Eucharistic ministers. The Oblates included Shirley Stern, Mary Eileen Fritz, Lynn Belli,

Denise Leinenbach, Mel Schroeder, Phyllis Claycamp, Ruth Goepfrich, and Judy and Charlie Luebbehusen. Other non-Oblate volunteers included Jerry Krampe, Del Steinhart, Steve Willis and Ed Talucci. The sisters thank all these generous people for working with us to extend Benedictine hospitality.

Oblates also helped prepare for and work during the Christkindlmarkt held in November. Inquirers John and Tena Karcher brought friends to work in the bakery prior to the big weekend. Jackie and David Richards worked in the bakery booth during the festivities. Thank you to these and any other Oblates we may have not mentioned.



Bona Opera Form

Did you know that the beginning of Lent (Ash Wednesday) is just around the corner? Yes, February 22 is the date for Ash Wednesday this year. Once again the Oblate Leadership Team would like to take advantage of the winter newsletter as a vehicle for sending the Bona Opera form to each of you in plenty of time.

For those who are new to this custom or for those who would appreciate a refresher on this custom, a bit of explanation may be helpful. In Benedictine monasteries it is the custom for each monastic to list on a Bona Opera form (Latin for good works) the good works of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that the monastic resolves to do during Lent. The Bona Opera is then submitted to the prioress or the abbot, who blesses it with a signature of approval (as recommended by St. Benedict in Chapter 49 of the Rule).

We invite you as Oblates and Oblate Candidates of Monastery Immaculate Conception to participate with us in this Benedictine custom by preparing your own Bona Opera. A prayerful and reflective reading of chapter 49 of the Rule of St. Benedict would be a good way to prepare for writing your bona Opera. Then consider what you feel God is calling you to do this Lent in the areas of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Remember you cannot do everything; choose maybe one thing that you feel you most need to focus on to deepen your relationship with God and with all your brothers and sisters.

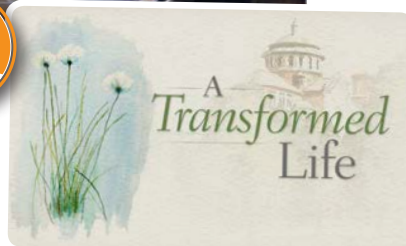
You will also notice on the Bona Opera form a space where you can list the name of a book you intend to read during Lent. This practice comes straight from Chapter 48 of St. Benedict's Rule. In that chapter St. Benedict says: "During this time of Lent each one is to receive a book from the library, and is to read the whole of it straight through. These books are to be distributed at the beginning of Lent." Now we won't be distributing any books to you, but if you wish, you may choose a spiritual book that you intend to read during Lent. Then you may wish to list that book on your Bona Opera form.

Once you decide, with the help of the Holy Spirit, what you need to do this Lent, we encourage you to write your intention(s) on the Bona Opera form included as a separate sheet with this newsletter. (This is the same form that the sisters use.) Sign the form and mail it to: Oblate Office, 802 E 10th Street, Ferdinand, IN 47532-9293.

Please post the envelope so that it reaches the Oblate office by February 19. Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau, OSB, will read and bless your Bona Opera and it will be placed at the altar for Mass on Ash Wednesday. We will then return it to you before the First Sunday of Lent. Then you will have your Bona Opera in hand as a personal reminder of your Lenten offering to God.

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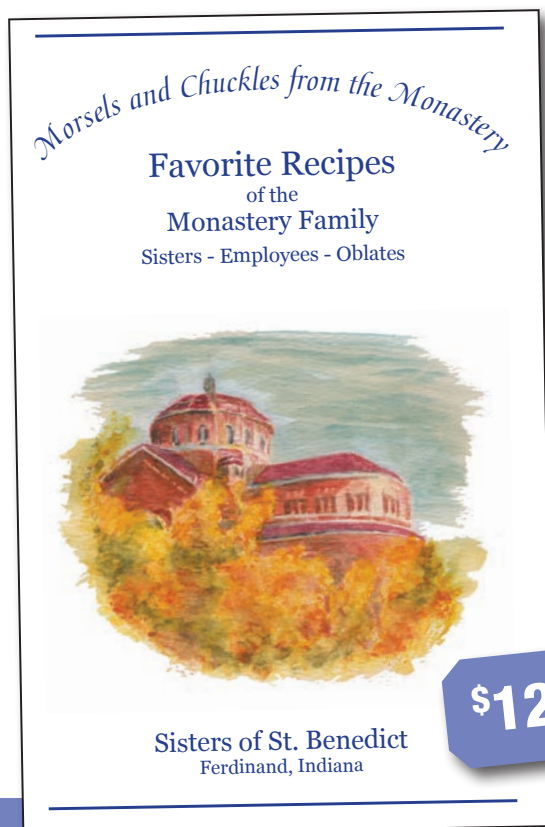
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We are excited to announce the release of our new cookbook *Morsels and Chuckles from the Monastery*. The 287-page cookbook features favorite recipes and humorous stories from the monastery family, including the sisters, Oblates, and employees. You'll also find information about the *Rule of St. Benedict*. (St. Benedict mentions food in six chapters of his Rule.)

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