

Racial Healing & The Rule of St. Benedict: Agenda for December 12, 2021

12:30pm	Welcome (Sr. Anna-Camille & Anna & Brian lighting candle) Opening Meditation (Anna and Brian) [10 mins]
12:40pm	Rule of St Benedict Teachings (5 minutes) (Bonnie)
12:45pm	(Kathy introduce) Small Group Discussion: Recovering the Voices of the Enslaved Reading and Discussion (30 minutes) Free Share Word/Phrase from Reading with Large Group (10 minutes)
1:25pm	BREAK
1:30pm	Small Group Discussion of Readings: <i>The Color of Compromise</i> (Chapter 4) and <i>Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome</i> (Half of Chapter 3) (35 minutes)
2:05pm	BREAK
2:10pm	Small Group Lectio Divina (25 minutes)
2:35pm	Large Group RSB Teaching (Sr. Anna-Camille) (10 mins) Sharing on Benedictine Values & Racial Healing
2:45pm	Large Group Closing Prayer (Susan) Anna and Brian Extinguishing Candle (10 minutes)
2:55pm	Oblate Assignments Announcements (Sr. Anna-Camille) (5 minutes)
3:00pm	Session Ends (Sr. Anna-Camille)

Reminder of assignments we completed for this December session:

Recovering the Voices of the Enslaved

- *The Color of Compromise*: Chapter 4
- *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*: Half of Chapter 3 (p. 53-72)
- Optional: *Follow the Drinking Gourd* video:
<https://www.amazon.com/Follow-Drinking-Gourd-Morgan-Freeman/dp/B009NRNF8U>
 - Or you could look on YouTube for a reading of the children's book, *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, illustrated by Jeanette Winter.

Welcome & Opening Prayer **(Anna and Brian lighting candle and leading prayer)**

Opening Prayer: “A Prayer of Protest” by Walter Brueggemann

- Reader 1: Since our mothers and fathers cried out,
 since you heard their cries and noticed,
 since we left the brick production of Egypt,
 since you foiled the production schedules of Pharaoh,
 we have known your name,
 we have sensed your passion,
 we have treasured your vision of justice.
- Reader 2: And now we turn to you again,
 whose precious name we know.
 We turn to you because there are
 still impossible production schedules,
 still exploitative systems,
 still cries of pain at injustice,
 still cheap labor that yields misery.
- Reader 3: We turn to you in impatience and exasperation,
 wondering, “How long?” before you answer
 our pleading question,
 hear our petition,
 since you are not a labor boss and do not set wages.
- Reader 4: We bid you, stir up those who can change things;
 do your stirring in the jaded halls of government;
 do your stirring in the cynical offices of the corporations;
 do your stirrings amid the voting public too anxious to care;
 do your stirring in the church that thinks too much about
 purity and not enough about wages.
- Reader 5: Move, as you moved in ancient Egyptian days.
 Move the waters and the flocks and the herds
 toward new statutes and regulations,
 new equity and good health care,
 new dignity that cannot be given on the cheap.

We have known now long since,
that you reject *cheap grace*;
even as we now know that you reject *cheap labor*.

Reader 6: You, God of justice and dignity and equity,
keep the promises you bodied in Jesus,
that the poor may be first-class members of society,
that the needy may have good care and respect,
that the poor earth may rejoice in well-being,
that we may all come to Sabbath rest together,
the owner and the worker,
the leisure class and the labor class,
all at peace in dignity and justice,
not on the cheap, but good measure,
pressed down,
running over . . . forgiven.

Walter Brueggemann
Prayers for a Privileged People
Abingdon Press, 2008

The Rule of Saint Benedict (RSB) Teachings

*Drawn from The Rule of Saint Benedict by St. Placid Oblate,
Bonnie Westmark*

“We are not to love one more than another.” {RB 2:17}

“Whether slave or free, we are all one in Christ {Gal 3:28; Eph 6:8} and share alike in the service of the one Lord, for God shows no partiality among persons.” {Rom2:11} {RB 2:20}

“You must honor everyone {1 Pet 2:17} and never do to another what you do not want done to yourself.” {Tob 4:16, Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31} {RB 4:8-9}

Small Group Discussion: Recovering the Voices of the Enslaved (30 minutes)

Facilitators, please facilitate short introductions around the group.

Step 1: To listen to someone's story is a sacred practice. As you prepare to read the story of God's child who was held in slavery, take a moment to close your eyes and invite the Spirit into the space.

Step 2: Read your narrative silently. As you read, underline words or short phrases that stand out to you.

Step 3: When everyone has finished reading, share:

- The words/phrases that stood out to you.
- How does this narrative influence your faith? How does it speak to Benedictine Spirituality?

Return to large group for 10 minutes to briefly share a word or phrase from the reading.

Small Group 1: Sojourner Truth

HER BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

THE subject of this biography, SOJOURNER TRUTH, as she now calls herself--but whose name, originally, was Isabella--was born, as near as she can now calculate, between the years 1797 and 1800. She was the daughter of James and Betsey, slaves of one Colonel Ardinburgh, Hurley, Ulster County, New York. Colonel Ardinburgh belonged to that class of people called Low Dutch.

Of her first master, she can give no account, as she must have been a mere infant when he died; and she, with her parents and some ten or twelve other fellow human chattels, became the legal property of his son, Charles Ardinburgh. She distinctly remembers hearing her father and mother say, that their lot was a fortunate one, as Master Charles was the best of the family,--being, comparatively speaking, a kind master to his slaves.

James and Betsey having, by their faithfulness, docility, and respectful behavior, won his particular regard, received from him particular favors--among which was a lot of land, lying back on the slope of a mountain, where, by improving the pleasant evenings and Sundays, they managed to raise a little tobacco, corn, or flax; which they exchanged for extras, in the articles of food or clothing for themselves and children. She has no remembrance that Saturday afternoon was ever added to their own time, as it is by some masters in the Southern States.

ACCOMMODATIONS.

Among Isabella's earliest recollections was the removal of her master, Charles Ardinburgh, into his new house, which he had built for a hotel, soon after the decease of his father. A cellar, under this hotel, was assigned to his slaves, as their sleeping apartment--all the slaves he possessed of both sexes, sleeping (as is quite common in a state of slavery) in the same room. She carries in her mind, to this day, a vivid picture of this dismal chamber; its only lights consisting of a few panes of glass, through which she thinks the sun never shone, but with thrice reflected rays; and the space between the loose boards of the floor, and the uneven earth below, was often filled with mud and water, the uncomfortable splashings of which were as annoying as its noxious vapors must have been chilling and fatal to health. She shudders, even now, as she goes back in memory and revisits this cellar, and sees its inmates, of both sexes and all ages, sleeping on those damp boards, like the horse, with a little straw and a blanket; and she wonders not at the rheumatisms, and fever-sores, and palsies, that distorted the limbs and racked the bodies of those fellow-slaves in after-life. Still, she does not attribute this cruelty--for cruelty it certainly is, to be so unmindful of the health and comfort of any being, leaving entirely out of sight his more important part, his everlasting interests,--so much to any innate or constitutional cruelty of the master as to that gigantic inconsistency, that inherited habit among slaveholders, of expecting a willing and intelligent obedience from the slave, because he is a MAN--at the same time every thing belonging to the soul-harrowing system does its best to crush the last vestige of a man within him; and when it is crushed, and often before, he is denied the comforts of life, on the plea that he knows neither the want nor the use of them, and because he is considered to be little more or little less than a beast.

HER BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

- Isabella's father was very tall and straight, when young, which gave him the name of 'Bomefree'--low Dutch for tree--at least, this is SOJOURNER'S pronunciation of it--and by this name he usually went. The most familiar appellation of her mother was 'Mau-mau Bett.' She was the mother of some ten or twelve children; though Sojourner is far from knowing the exact number of her brothers and sisters; she being the youngest, save one, and all older than herself having been sold before her remembrance. She was privileged to behold six of them while she remained a slave.

Of the two that immediately preceded her in age, a boy of five years, and a girl of three, who were sold when she was an infant, she heard much; and she wishes that all who would fain believe that slave parents have natural affection for their offspring could have listened as she did, while Bomefree and Mau-mau Bett,--their dark cellar lighted by a blazing pine-knot,--would sit for hours, recalling and recounting every endearing, as well as harrowing circumstance that taxed memory could supply, from the histories of those dear departed ones, of whom they had been robbed, and for whom their hearts still bled. Among the rest, they would relate how the little boy, on the last morning he was with them, arose with the birds, kindled a fire, calling for his Mau-mau to 'come, for all was now ready for her'--little dreaming of the dreadful separation which was so near at hand, but of which his parents had an uncertain, but all the more cruel foreboding. There was snow on the ground, at the time of which we are speaking; and a large old-fashioned sleigh was seen to drive up to the door of the late Col. Ardinburgh. This event was noticed with childish pleasure by the unsuspecting boy; but when he was taken and put into the sleigh, and saw his little sister actually shut and locked into the sleigh box, his eyes were at once opened to their intentions; and, like a frightened deer, he sprang from the sleigh, and running into the house, concealed himself under a bed. But this availed him little. He was re-conveyed to the sleigh, and separated for ever from those whom God had constituted his natural guardians and protectors, and who should have found him, in return, a stay and a staff to them in their declining years. But I make no comments on facts like these, knowing that the heart of every slave parent will make its own comment, involuntary and correctly, as soon as each heart shall make the case its own. Those who are not parents will draw their conclusions from the promptings of humanity and philanthropy: --these, enlightened by reason and revelation, are also unerring.

HER RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

Isabella and Peter, her youngest brother, remained, with their parents, the legal property of Charles Ardinburgh till his decease, which took place when Isabella was near nine years old.

After this event, she was often surprised to find her mother in tears; and when, in her simplicity, she inquired, 'Mau-mau, what makes you cry?' she would answer, 'Oh, my child, I am thinking of your brothers and sisters that have been sold away from me.' And she would proceed to detail many circumstances respecting them. But Isabella long since concluded that it was the impending fate of her only remaining children, which her mother but too well understood, even then, that called up those memories from the past, and made them crucify her heart afresh.

In the evening, when her mother's work was done, she would sit down under the sparkling vault of heaven, and calling her children to her, would talk to them of the only Being that could effectually aid or protect them. Her teachings were delivered in Low Dutch, her only language, and, translated into English, ran nearly as follows:--

'My children, there is a God, who hears and sees you.' 'A God, mau-mau! Where does he live?' asked the children. 'He lives in the sky,' she replied; 'and when you are beaten, or cruelly treated, or fall into any trouble, you must ask help of him, and he will always hear and help you.' She taught them to kneel and say the Lord's prayer. She entreated them to refrain from lying and stealing, and to strive to obey their masters.

At times, a groan would escape her, and she would break out in the language of the Psalmist--'Oh Lord, how long?' 'Oh Lord, how long?' And in reply to Isabella's question--'What ails you, mau-mau?' her only answer was, 'Oh, a good deal ails me'--'Enough ails me.' Then again, she would point them to the stars, and say, in her peculiar language, 'Those are the same stars, and that is the same moon, that look down upon you brothers and sisters, and which they see as they look up to them, though they are ever so far away from us, and each other.'

Thus, in her humble way, did she endeavor to show them their Heavenly Father, as the only being who could protect them in their perilous condition; at the same time, she would strengthen and brighten the chain of family affection, which she trusted extended itself sufficiently to connect the widely scattered members of her precious flock. These instructions of the mother were treasured up and held sacred by Isabella, as our future narrative will show

COMMENCEMENT OF ISABELLA'S TRIALS IN LIFE.

Having seen the sad end of her parents, so far as it relates to this earthly life, we will return with Isabella to that memorable auction which threatened to separate her father and mother. A slave auction is a terrible affair to its victims, and its incidents and consequences are graven on their hearts as with a pen of burning steel.

At this memorable time, Isabella was struck off, for the sum of one hundred dollars, to one John Nealy, of Ulster County, New York; and she has an impression that in this sale she was connected with a lot of sheep. She was now nine years of age, and her trials in life may be dated from this period. She says, with emphasis, 'Now the war begun.' She could only talk Dutch--and the Nealy's could only talk English. Mr. Nealy could understand Dutch, but Isabel and her mistress could neither of them understand the language of the other--and this, of itself, was a formidable obstacle in the way of a good understanding between them, and for some time was a fruitful source of dissatisfaction to the mistress, and of punishment and suffering to Isabella. She says, 'If they sent me for a frying-pan, not knowing what they meant, perhaps I carried them the pot-hooks and trammels. Then, oh! how angry mistress would be with me!' Then she suffered 'terribly--terribly,' with the cold. During the winter her feet were badly frozen, for want of proper covering. They gave her a plenty to eat, and also a plenty of whippings. One Sunday morning, in particular, she was told to go to the barn; on going there, she found her master with a bundle of rods, prepared in the embers, and bound together with cords. When he had tied her hands together before her, he gave her the most cruel whipping she was ever tortured with. He whipped her till the flesh was deeply lacerated, and the blood streamed from her wounds--and the scars remain to the present day, to testify to the fact. 'And now,' she says, 'when I hear 'em tell of whipping women on the bare flesh, it makes my flesh crawl, and my very hair rise on my head! Oh! my God!' she continues, 'what a way is this of treating human beings?' In these hours of her extremity, she did not forget the instructions of her mother, to go to God in all her trials, and every affliction; and she not only remembered, but obeyed: going to him, 'and telling him all--and asking him if he thought it was right,' and begging him to protect and shield her from her persecutors.

She always asked with an unwavering faith that she should receive just what she plead for, --'And now,' she says, 'though it seems curious, I do not remember ever asking for any thing but what I go it. And, I always received it as an answer to my prayers. When I got beaten, I never knew it long enough beforehand to pray; and I always thought if I only had had time to pray to God for help, I should have escaped the beating.' She had no idea God had any knowledge of her thoughts, save what she told him; or heard her payers, unless they were spoken audibly. And consequently, she could not pray unless she had time and opportunity to go by herself, where she could talk to God without being overheard.

TRIALS CONTINUED.

When she had been at Mr. Nealy's several months, she began to beg God most earnestly to send her father to her, and as soon as she commenced to pray, she began as confidently to look for his coming, and, ere it was long, to her great joy, he came. She had no opportunity to speak to him of the troubles that weighed so heavily on her spirit, while he remained; but when he left, she followed him to the gate, and unburdened her heart to him, inquiring if he could not do something to get her a new and better place? In this way the slaves often assist each other, by ascertaining who are kind to their slaves, comparatively; and then using their influence to get such an one to hire or buy their friends; and masters, often from policy, as well as from latent humanity, allow those they are about to sell or let, to choose their own places, if the persons they happen to select for masters are considered safe pay. He promised to do all he could, and they parted. But, every day, as long as the snow lasted, (for there was snow on the ground at the time,) she returned to the spot where they separated, and walking in the tracks her father had made in the snow, repeated her prayer that 'God would help her father get her a new and better place.'

Small Group 2: Olaudah Equiano

from
**THE INTERESTING NARRATIVE OF
THE LIFE OF OLAUDAH EQUIANO**
1750s

— *Olaudah Equiano* —

As a young boy, Olaudah Equiano (1745?–1797) was captured by African slave traders and taken from his home in the West African kingdom of Benin. He was sent to Barbados, then to colonial Virginia, and then sold to a British naval officer. Equiano purchased his freedom in 1766 and became active in the British antislavery movement. He wrote and published his *Narrative* in 1789, at the height of the movement to abolish slavery in the British colonies.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY: Clarifying

How does a personal account such as this one help historians analyze the past, and what, specifically, does Olaudah Equiano report that helps you to better understand his experience?

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast, was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled, and tossed up to see if I were sound, by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions, too, differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke (which was very different from any I had ever heard), united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed, such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who had brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair. They told me I was not, and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass; but, being afraid of him, I would not take it out

FROM *THE INTERESTING NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF OLAUDAH EQUIANO*

of his hand. One of the blacks, therefore, took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which, instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest consternation at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted any such liquor before. Soon after this, the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair.

I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long suffered to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life; so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor I had the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across, I think, the windlass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before, and, although not being used to the water, I naturally feared the element the first time I saw it, yet, nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water; and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut, for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself. In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of these what was to be done with us? They gave me to understand, we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate; but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shown towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast, that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner. I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen; I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in this hollow place (the ship)? They told me they did not, but came from a distant one. "Then," said I, "how comes it in all our country we never heard of them?" They told me because they lived so very far off. I then asked where were their

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women? had they any like themselves? I was told they had. “And why,” said I, “do we not see them?” They answered, because they were left behind. I asked how the vessel could go? They told me they could not tell; but that there was cloth put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked, in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits. I therefore wished much to be from amongst them, for I expected they would sacrifice me; but my wishes were in vain—for we were so quartered that it was impossible for any of us to make our escape. ...

At last, when the ship we were in, had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship’s cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died. ...This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains. ...The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps, for myself, I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. ...

One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat, as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings. One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea; immediately, another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very

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soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. ...

We were not many days in the merchant's custody, before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: On a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamor with which this is attended, and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers, serve not a little to increase the apprehension of terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as the ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted. In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again. I remember, in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion, to see and hear their cries at parting. O ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you—Learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you? Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends, to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? Are the dearest friends and relations now rendered more dear by their separation from their kindred, still to be parted from each other, and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery, with the small comfort of being together, and mingling their sufferings and sorrows? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely, this is a new refinement in cruelty, which . . . thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

Source: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* by Olaudah Equiano. Reprinted in *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, edited by Philip D. Curtin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967).

Small Group 3: Frederick Douglass

From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* By Frederick Douglass

I have now reached a period of my life when I can give dates. I left Baltimore, and went to live with Master Thomas Auld, at St. Michael's, in March, 1832. It was now more than seven years since I lived with him in the family of my old master, on Colonel Lloyd's plantation. We of course were now almost entire strangers to each other. He was to me a new master, and I to him a new slave. I was ignorant of his temper and disposition; he was equally so of mine. A very short time, however, brought us into full acquaintance with each other. I was made acquainted with his wife not less than with himself. They were well matched, being equally mean and cruel. I was now, for the first time during a space of more than seven years, made to feel the painful gnawings of hunger-- a something which I had not experienced before since I left Colonel Lloyd's plantation. It went hard enough with me then, when I could look back to no period at which I had enjoyed a sufficiency. It was tenfold harder after living in Master Hugh's family, where I had always had enough to eat, and of that which was good. I have said Master Thomas was a mean man. He was so. Not to give a slave enough to eat, is regarded as the most aggravated development of meanness even among slaveholders. The rule is, no matter how coarse the food, only let there be enough of it. This is the theory; and in the part of Maryland from which I came, it is the general practice,--though there are many exceptions. Master Thomas gave us enough of neither coarse nor fine food. There were four slaves of us in the kitchen--my sister Eliza, my aunt Priscilla, Henny, and myself; and we were allowed less than a half of a bushel of corn-meal per week, and very little else, either in the shape of meat or vegetables. It was not enough for us to subsist upon. We were therefore reduced to the wretched necessity of living at the expense of our neighbors. This we did by begging and stealing, whichever came handy in the time of need, the one being considered as legitimate as the other. A great many times have we poor creatures been nearly perishing with hunger, when food in abundance lay mouldering in the safe and smoke-house, **and our pious mistress was aware of the fact; and yet that mistress and her husband would kneel every morning, and pray that God would bless them in basket and store!**

Bad as all slaveholders are, we seldom meet one destitute of every element of character commanding respect. My master was one of this rare sort. I do not know of one single noble act ever performed by him. The leading trait in his character was meanness; and if there were any other element in his nature, it was made subject to this. He was mean; and, like most other mean men, he lacked the ability to conceal his meanness. Captain Auld was not born a slaveholder. He had been a poor man, master only of a Bay craft. He came into possession of all his slaves by marriage; and of all men, adopted slaveholders are the worst. He was cruel, but cowardly. He commanded without firmness. In the enforcement of his rules, he was at times rigid, and at times lax. At times, he spoke to his slaves with the firmness of Napoleon and the fury of a demon; at other times, he might well be mistaken for an inquirer who had lost his way. He did nothing of himself. He might have passed for a lion, but for his ears.

In all things noble which he attempted, his own meanness shone most conspicuous. His airs, words, and enough. He was not even a good imitator. He possessed all the disposition to deceive, but wanted the power. Having no resources within himself, he was compelled to be the copyist of many, and being such, he was forever the victim of inconsistency; and of consequence he was an object of contempt, and was held as such even by his slaves. The luxury of having slaves of his own to wait upon him was something new and unprepared for. He was a slaveholder without the ability to hold slaves. He found himself

Note: *Racial Healing & The Rule of St Benedict* is adapted from JustFaith Ministries *Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration*

incapable of managing his slaves either by force, fear, or fraud. We seldom called him "master;" we generally called him "Captain Auld," and were hardly disposed to title him at all. I doubt not that our conduct had much to do with making him appear awkward, and of consequence fretful. Our want of reverence for him must have perplexed him greatly. He wished to have us call him master, but lacked the firmness necessary to command us to do so. His wife used to insist upon our calling him so, but to no purpose.

In August, 1832, my master attended a Methodist camp-meeting held in the Bay-side, Talbot county, and there experienced religion. I indulged a faint hope that his conversion would lead him to emancipate his slaves, and that, if he did not do this, it would, at any rate, make him more kind and humane. I was disappointed in both these respects. It neither made him to be humane to his slaves, nor to emancipate them. If it had any effect on his character, it made him more cruel and hateful in all his ways; **for I believe him to have been a much worse man after his conversion than before. Prior to his conversion, he relied upon his own depravity to shield and sustain him in his savage barbarity; but after his conversion, he found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty.** He made the greatest pretensions to piety. His house was the house of prayer. He prayed morning, noon, and night. He very soon distinguished himself among his brethren, and was soon made a class-leader and exhorter. His activity in revivals was great, and he proved himself an instrument in the hands of the church in converting many souls. His house was the preachers' home. They used to take great pleasure in coming there to put up; for while he starved us, he stuffed them. We have had three or four preachers there at a time. The names of those who used to come most frequently while I lived there, were Mr. Storks, Mr. Ewery, Mr. Humphry, and Mr. Hickey. I have also seen Mr. George Cookman at our house. We slaves loved Mr. Cookman. We believed him to be a good man. We thought him instrumental in getting Mr. Samuel Harrison, a very rich slaveholder, to emancipate his slaves; and by some means got the impression that he was laboring to effect the emancipation of all the slaves. When he was at our house, we were sure to be called in to prayers. When the others were there, we were sometimes called in and sometimes not. Mr. Cookman took more notice of us than either of the other ministers. He could not come among us without betraying his sympathy for us, and, stupid as we were, we had the sagacity to see it.

While I lived with my master in St. Michael's, there was a white young man, a Mr. Wilson, who proposed to keep a Sabbath school for the instruction of such slaves as might be disposed to learn to read the New Testament. We met but three times, when Mr. West and Mr. Fairbanks, both class-leaders, with many others, came upon us with sticks and other missiles, drove us off, and forbade us to meet again. Thus ended our little Sabbath school in the pious town of St. Michael's.

I have said my master found religious sanction for his cruelty. As an example, I will state one of many facts going to prove the charge. I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture--"He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Master would keep this lacerated young, woman tied up in this horrid situation four or five hours at a time. I have known him to tie her up early in the morning, and whip her before breakfast; leave her, go to his store, return at dinner, and whip her again, cutting her in the places already made raw with his cruel lash. The secret of master's cruelty toward "Henny" is found in the fact of her being almost helpless. When quite a child, she fell into the fire, and burned herself horribly. Her hands were so burnt, that she never got the use of them. She could do very little but bear heavy burdens. She was to master a bill of expense; and as he was a mean man, she was a constant offence to him. He seemed desirous of getting the poor girl out of existence. He gave her away once to his sister; but, being a poor gift, she was not disposed to keep her. Finally, my benevolent master, to use his own words, "set her adrift to take care of herself."

Here was a recently-converted man, holding on upon the mother, and at the same time turning out her helpless child, to starve and die! Master Thomas was one of the many pious slaveholders who hold slaves for the very charitable purpose of taking care of them.

My master and myself had quite a number of differences. He found me unsuitable to his purpose. My city life, he said, had had a very pernicious effect upon me. It had almost ruined me for every good purpose, and fitted me for every thing which was bad. One of my greatest faults was that of letting his horse run away, and go down to his father-in-law's farm, which was about five miles from St. Michael's. I would then have to go after it. My reason for this kind of carelessness, or carefulness, was, that I could always get something to eat when I went there. Master William Hamilton, my master's father-in-law, always gave his slaves enough to eat. I never left there hungry, no matter how great the need of my speedy return. Master Thomas at length said he would stand it no longer. I had lived with him nine months, during which time he had given me a number of severe whippings, all to no good purpose. He resolved to put me out, as he said, to be broken; and, for this purpose, he let me for one year to a man named Edward Covey. Mr. Covey was a poor man, a farm-renter. He rented the place upon which he lived, as also the hands with which he tilled it. Mr. Covey had acquired a very high reputation for breaking young slaves, and this reputation was of immense value to him. It enabled him to get his farm tilled with much less expense to himself than he could have had it done without such a reputation. Some slaveholders thought it not much loss to allow Mr. Covey to have their slaves one year, for the sake of the training to which they were subjected, without any other compensation. He could hire young help with great ease, in consequence of this reputation. Added to the natural good qualities of Mr. Covey, he was a professor of religion--a pious soul--a member and a class-leader in the Methodist church. All of this added weight to his reputation as a "nigger-breaker." I was aware of all the facts, having been made acquainted with them by a young man who had lived there. I nevertheless made the change gladly; for I was sure of getting enough to eat, which is not the smallest consideration to a hungry man.

Small Group Discussion of Readings

(40 minutes)

Having read Chapter 4 of the *Color of Compromise*, and half of Chapter 3 (pp.53-72) of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, let us discuss the readings:

1. Please take three minutes to pick out a sentence or two in *The Color of Compromise* that was illuminating for you. We will take turns sharing the passages each of us has chosen and why they are meaningful to us.
2. Please take three minutes to pick out a sentence or two in *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* that was illuminating to you. We will take turns sharing the passages we chose and why they are meaningful to us.
3. How do the readings impact or influence your faith and your living Benedictine Spirituality?

Lectio Divina (25 minutes)

“Fairness and Equity create peace. This means we need to work on this on every level of life from the personal to the global. Communities in prayer create peace-between one another and the world. Joan Chittister says that the life of the rule “is a lifestyle that foregoes violence on every level, for any reason.” She goes on to say, “Benedictine spirituality is a recipe for peace and a prescription for a life well lived.” {*Oblate Reflections: Living The Rule of Benedict*, 2012, page 8}

Lectio Process

Prepare:

- Take a moment to come fully into the present.
- Sit comfortably alert, eyes closed, and center yourself with breathing.
- Invite yourself to be present to the Spirit.

Facilitator may ask for volunteer readers for each movement:

1. Lectio: Read/hear the Word. First reading (read twice). Listen for the word or phrase that attracts you from the passage. Repeat it over to yourself softly during a one minute silence. When the leader gives the signal, each person in the group, in turn, may **say aloud that word or phrase (no elaboration)** or they may pass.

2. Meditatio: Consider, “How is my life touched?” (by this/these words) Second reading. Listen to discover how your life is touched today by this passage. Consider possibilities or receive a sensory impression or image during the two minutes of silence. When the leader gives the signal, **speak a sentence or two beginning with “I hear, I see, or I sense” or you may pass.**

3. Oratio: Ask, “Is there an invitation here?” (for you) Third reading. Listen to discover a possible invitation relevant for this month. Ponder it for two minutes in silence. When the leader gives the signal, **share briefly with your group or you may pass.**

4. Contemplatio: Rest in prayer. Pray aloud, or silently for God to help the person on your right respond to their invitation. After each spoken or silent prayer, the one who prays says “Amen” followed by a group “Amen.”

The Rule of Saint Benedict (RSB) Teachings
Drawn from The Rule of Saint Benedict by St. Placid Oblate,
Bonnie Westmark

“We are not to love one more than another.” {RB 2:17}

“Whether slave or free, we are all one in Christ {Gal 3:28; Eph 6:8} and share alike in the service of the one Lord, for God shows no partiality among persons.” {Rom2:11} {RB 2:20}

“You must honor everyone {1 Pet 2:17} and never do to another what you do not want done to yourself.” {Tob 4:16, Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31} {RB 4:8-9}

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: *“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”*
Harriet Tubman escaped slavery but returned to the South to lead over 70 others to freedom through the Underground Railroad.
For the witness of your saints, O God.....

All: We give you thanks.

Reader 1: *“The soul that is within me no man can degrade.”*
After escaping from slavery, Frederick Douglass became one of the most influential voices for the anti-slavery movement. He wrote several books, ran for vice president of the United States, and founded the abolitionist newspaper *The North Star*.
For the witness of your saints, O God.....

All: We give you thanks.

Reader 2: *“The Lord gave me 'Sojourner,' because I was to travel up and down the land, showing the people their sins and being a sign unto them. Afterwards, I told the Lord I wanted another name 'cause everybody else had two names, and the Lord gave me 'Truth,' because I was to declare the truth to people.”*
After escaping to freedom with her infant daughter, Sojourner Truth spoke and preached messages of hope and liberation across the nation, fighting for abolition, women's rights, desegregation, and prison reform.
For the witness of your saints, O God.....

All: We give you thanks.

Reader 3: *“At such times, the heart of man turns instinctively towards his Maker. In prosperity, and whenever there is nothing to injure or make him afraid, he remembers Him not, and is ready to defy Him; but place him in the midst of dangers, cut him off from human aid, let the grave open before him, then it is, in the time of his tribulation, that the scoffer and unbelieving man turns to God for help, feeling there is no other hope, or refuge, or safety, save in his protecting arm.”*
Solomon Northup was born into freedom. But when he was out looking for a job, men drugged him, beat him, and sold him into slavery in Louisiana. With the help of friends he was released more than a decade later. He spent the rest of his life writing, lecturing, and working on the Underground Railroad.
For the witness of your saints, O God....

All: We give you thanks.

Reader 4: *"I early accustomed myself to look for the hand of God in the minutest occurrence, and to learn from it a lesson of morality and religion; and in this light every circumstance I have related was to me of importance. After all, what makes any event important, unless by its observation we become better and wiser, and learn to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God?"*

Olaudah Equiano was sold into slavery in Nigeria and traveled the middle passage. He eventually found a way to buy his own freedom. His book, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, contributed to the passage of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which abolished the African slave trade in Britain.

For the witness of your saints, O God.....

All: We give you thanks.

Facilitator: We pause now to remember those who suffered under slavery, all who fought against it, and all who died in bondage. (Pause). Empower us, Holy One, as we follow the example of your saints, working together to fight white supremacy, modern slavery, and racial injustice in our world today. **Amen.**

Assignments for January 9, 2022

Oblate Session:

Reconstruction: From Convict Leasing to Mass Incarceration

- *The Color of Compromise*: Chapter 5 and Half of Chapter 6 (p. 70-102)
- *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*: The Second Half of Chapter 3 (p. 73-94)
- Equal Justice Initiative (EJI): Presumption of Guilt:
 - [https://eji.org/racial-justice/#Presumption of Guilt](https://eji.org/racial-justice/#Presumption_of_Guilt)
- Watch “Slavery by Another Name” (1:24:46). Stop the video at 56:00 (when the uncle named Henry Malone is introduced):
 - <https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/slavery-by-another-name>

From The Rule of Benedict

"It is high time for us to arise from sleep." {Rom 13:11} {RB Prologue: 8}

"Turn away from evil and do good; let peace be your quest and aim." {Ps 33 [34]:14-15} {RB Prologue: 17}

"Who will dwell in your tent, Lord; who will find rest upon your holy mountain? {Ps.14[15]:1} {RB Pro:23} "One who has not wronged a fellowman in any way." {Ps14[15]:2-3} {RB Pro:26}

"The good of all concerned~safeguard love" {RB Pro:47}

"We are not to love one more than another." {RB 2:17}

"A man born free is not to be give higher rank than a slave who becomes a monk." {RB 2:18}

"Whether slave or free, we are all one in Christ {Gal 3:28; Eph 6:8} and share alike in bearing arms in the service of the one Lord, for God shows no partiality among persons." {Rom2:11} {RB 2:20}

"Only in this are we distinguished in his sight: if we are found better than others in good works and in humility." {RB 2:21}

"Show equal love to everyone." {RB 2:22}

"First of all, love the Lord God with your whole heart, your whole soul, and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." {Matt 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27} {RB 4:1}

"You must honor everyone {1 Pet 2:17} and never do to another what you do not want done to yourself." {Tob 4:16, Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31} {RB 4:8-9}

"Go to help the troubled and console the sorrowing." {RB 4:18}

"They should each try to be the first to show respect to one another." {Rom 12:10} {RB 72:4}

"Earnestly compete in obedience to one another." {RB 72:6}

"Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life." {RB 72:12}