

CHURCH HISTORY LITERACY

Lesson 37

St. Benedict – Part 2

On a recent trip to a neighborhood Christian Bookstore, I was amazed to see row upon row of “self help” books. These are books that one reads and applies for help in the Christian walk. They are targeted to help one with abuse issues, addictions, parenting, co-dependency, walking the Christian walk, and many others areas.

Self-help is not limited to books at a Christian bookstore. Consider many of the sermons one hears from the pulpit, as well as from television and radio. Haven't we all heard sermons and lessons on marriage and on having the right attitudes and lifestyles?

We have other outside helps for emotional and spiritual issues as well. Whether outside counselors, medications for depression, or other personal issues, we have many avenues that are designed to enable us to better and more enjoyably live productively for God.

Now one might ask, why? Why have all these self-help aids in the name of Christianity when one has the Bible? Why have self-help or outside aids when a Christian has the indwelling of the very creator of the universe, God?

The Christian answer is that God is behind the aids and God is at work in these approaches to help and to heal our fallen natures. The reason the books are for sale at a “Christian” bookstore, ostensibly, is that they are Christian books. They are written to help us understand how God and faith apply to our situations to target real problems we face today. Counselors are for the same purpose. Sermons are the expositions of Biblical principles in ways that are digestible and motivating for us to motivate and teach us much the same.¹

Does this mean the Bible is deficient in what it offers to the Christian today? Of course not. The Bible gives us a historical interaction of God with his people in ways that provide what we need for “teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for *every* good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Even within the history we have in the Bible, it is clear

¹ For example, this coming Wednesday night Wade Liberator will be preaching on helping us break free from a life of performance into God's acceptance. Wade will give practical aids to help us realize who we are in Christ, how the Lord has accepted us, what true grace means to the believer, why we must accept ourselves, and why we must accept others.

prophets and others taught the ways of God by expounding and applying scriptures. That is the work of a teacher.

So, we have these aids to the Christian walk. I am rather confident most (if not everyone) in this class have at times read or heard sermons directed to assisting one's Christian walk. In light of that, consider this question: What have you read or heard that has not only helped you in your walk, but that you also believe will still be used by many in their walk in 1,500 years?

Although I have read a number of these books myself, I am not sure of many resources outside the Bible that I readily believe will be in use in the church in 1,500 years, should Jesus tarry that long. But, we are going to study just such a resource today: the Rule of St.. Benedict.

Our study will first put the rule into historical context with a brief review of last week. We will then take a moment to understand the personal history of Benedict before looking at his Rule and noting some of its lasting effects.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As we discussed last week, the widespread acceptance and popularity of the church in the Roman world brought about great good for civilization and the church, but it also brought many negatives as well. Among the negatives was the pervasive problem of people who confessed a Christian faith, but lived a pagan life. Whether they were involved deeply in the church, or merely in its fringes, a considerable number of people lived fully self-centered lives rather than loving God first and then their neighbors. The opulence of much of the church contributed to this attitude, as did the government endorsement and breaks offered to certain Christians.

In response to these actions, a number of holy people chose to abandon the trappings of the world and seek holiness and love of God in isolation. Known as "hermits," these folks found in solitary contemplation holiness and answer to the distractions of materialism. Now, many of the hermits we know of today were not without some contact and service with the world, but that contact was limited.

Over time, some in the hermiting movement began banding together forming cloisters or monasteries seeking to unite in some ways while still maintaining the austere and somewhat solitary aspects of their individual walks with God.

The natural problem that arose from these monasteries was over how the "community" would interact and get along. An abbot (for male monasteries) or abbess (for female monasteries) generally oversaw the monasteries, but how that

Abbot or Abbess would preside over the group varied from monastery to monastery.

Certain monastic movements had leaders that set up “Rules” for the monastery. Some of the rules began to catch on and get used by other monasteries beyond where they were actually written. After all, why re-invent the wheel?

In this historical context, we now find Benedict.

BENEDICT’S PERSONAL HISTORY

Benedict was born around 480 in Nursia (modern Norcia, Italy, north of Rome) along with his twin sister Scholastica. Our most reliable information on him comes from the writings of St. (Pope) Gregory the Great some 45 to 50 years after Benedict died.²

Reading Gregory on Benedict does not give us that much information on the formative life experiences that went into Benedict’s Rule for monastic life. What we do glean from Gregory’s *Dialogue* is that Benedict was a godly man who cared deeply about holiness.

In his prologue to the Life of Benedict, Gregory sets out that Benedict led a “venerable life, blessed by grace, and blessed in name.” The blessing in name is a reference to “Benedict.” The Latin *benedictus* means “blessed.” Gregory tells us that Benedict, even at an early age, had the mind of an old man. By this comment, he did not mean Benedict was feeble or forgetful (nor should we assume “old men” are today!) Gregory was trying to convey that at an age when young men typically sow wild oats, Benedict thought more maturely. Benedict never esteemed the world’s good. Its vanities were “as nothing” to Benedict from early life on. This is especially interesting in light of the family into which Benedict was born. His parents were wealthy nobility.

The wealth and prestige of his family enabled them to send Benedict and his nurse (read that more as “nannie” or “caretaker”) to Rome for his education. We do not know how long Benedict stayed in Rome, he never finished his course of studies. While studying Humanities, Benedict decided to quit and leave. He was concerned at how many students were led by their studies into sin. Rather than dabble in or get near to such sin, Benedict left Rome and went, with his nurse, to the town of Enfide (modern Affile, Italy).

² See Gregory’s *Dialogues*, Book 2, “The Life of Benedict.” The writings were not biographical in the sense of biographies we have today. Instead, it was written to convey the important point that in a very troubled time in history, God still worked for and through virtuous people.

At Enfide, Benedict and his nurse stayed with others at the Church of St. Peter. The nurse borrowed a sieve to sift wheat. While left on the table, the sieve broke, to the horror of the nurse. Benedict saw the distress of his nurse over the accident and took the sieve, praying over it. As Gregory relates the story, God made the sieve whole, and the break could not even be identified.

Benedict's fame from this miracle quickly spread throughout the community. Rather than enjoy the praises of men, Benedict stole away from the church (leaving even his nurse behind) and went into solitude for 3 years, living out of a cave.

While in solitude, God provided for Benedict through several individuals. Gregory notes that eventually God called Benedict out of his solitude so that such a bright light should shine in the world and church (as opposed to being hidden under a bushel or in a cave!).

Gregory recounts a number of other miracles worked through the life of Benedict. In the process of the account, Gregory tells us about several attempts on Benedict's life. The first came from a set of monks! These monks came to Benedict and asked him to head up their monastery. Benedict politely refused, explaining that his lifestyle was quite a bit different from theirs. The monks insisted, and eventually Benedict said, "okay." The monks had no idea what they were in for!

Benedict was not one to allow casual devotion to God. As that became apparent to the other monks, they decided to get rid of Benedict – for good! The monks put poison into his drink! Gregory recounts that Benedict prayed over his drink prior to the meal and the cup shattered. When it became apparent to Benedict that the other monks would kill him to get rid of him, he decided it was time to move on. In the words of Gregory, "the life of virtuous men is always grievous to those that be of wicked conditions."³

In the process of relating the life of Benedict, periodically Gregory answers questions posed to him by "Peter" (a fellow who is listening to Gregory recount the life of Benedict). Peter wonders why a godly man like Benedict would leave monks who are in such bad shape that they would attempt murder. In Peter's mind, it seems that those monks would be in greatest need of Benedict's ministry.

Gregory responds with sort of a mathematical analogy! Gregory explains that the likelihood of success among those few monks that tried to kill Benedict was far

³ *Dialogues*, Book 2, chapter 3.

outweighed by the masses of people Benedict could influence for good if he left the murderous monks.

Benedict went out and started 12 monasteries of his own. These monasteries were home not only to the monks in each, but also to a number of children that parents would leave in the care of Benedict. These monasteries were the sites of other miraculous occurrences told us by Gregory.

Benedict likely wrote the rules for his monasteries while living and serving at the monastery he constructed at Monte Cassino (this is the place where Benedict died on March 21, 543). These rules would be the mark that Benedict would leave on church history that far exceeds any of the miracles he supposedly wrought. As Gregory recounted it, no one should be ignorant of the fact that “among so many miracles” was a “man of God” so “learned in divinity!”

THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

This brings us to the Rule of St. Benedict. This is a self-help book on steroids! It is a rule written to govern the monastic life in ways that make constructive Christian growth in community life. But it is also a simply written, clear guide to assist in general Christian holiness. The Rule of Saint Benedict has a prologue and 73 chapters. Many people have written whole books devoted to the Rule. Some of these books are critical studies, some are commentaries, and some are basic devotionals. While it would be easy for us to spend a great deal of time on the rules (as in weeks and months), we would be losing the “literacy” aspect of this class! So in the spirit of what we need to learn to be literate in church history, we will condense the Rule down to bite-size portions for this class. We will reproduce a bit of the rule here in the lesson, but it is easily accessed both in bookstores and on the internet from sources like Amazon.com.

The prologue sets out valuable information to understanding the Rule. We read that the rule is written not only for monks who seek to live productively and harmoniously in community life, but it is also written for all who seek greater holiness before God. Benedict writes, “To you, therefore, I direct my speech, you who give up your own will and take up the strong and excellent weapons of obedience to do battle for Christ the Lord, the true King.”⁴

⁴ Most versions of the rule will have a “King James-ish” English with “thee’s” and “thou’s” and “takest” instead of “take.” As I quote it here, I am taking the liberty of changing it into vulgar (everyday) English. In fact, Benedict wrote the rule in everyday (vulgar) Latin, not classical Latin. Much like the New Testament (which was written in everyday or *Koine* Greek), thee’s and thou’s carry a holy sound, but do not really reflect the informal language of the writing.

Having noted the Rule's general application as an early "Self-help" book, we must quickly add that the Rule has some specific instructions for those seeking to follow a monastic life in a cloistered community. As we study the Rule, we will break down the chapters in our own organization, rather than the sequential listing of the chapters by Benedict.

PROLOGUE.

This is general instruction and motivation for the Rule itself. Relying heavily on scripture, Benedict urges the Christian to use the right attitude and approach to holiness. For example, the first word in the Prologue, and hence, the first word in the Rule itself, is "Listen..." for listening is of paramount importance in the Christian walk. Much as James said, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak" (James 1:19).

Benedict then urges his followers to beg of God, "by most earnest prayer, that he perfect whatever good you begin." Again, although Benedict does not quote the scripture itself, this hearkens back to Paul's comment to the Philippians that, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6 NAS).

Benedict does quote a good bit of scripture directly from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Attached to this lesson as an Appendix, is the Prologue. Reading it, you will note quotes from five different Psalms, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Matthew, Romans, John, 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Revelation. Not bad for eleven paragraphs!

1. GENERAL TRAITS APPROPRIATE FOR MONKS. (Chapters 1-2; 4-7; 21, 31-33, and 69-72)

These sections take different approaches for the Christian traits espoused. Some of the chapters deal with general Christian traits appropriate for any follower of Christ (more of the "self-help" type chapters). Other chapters deal with specific characteristics for people who take roles in the monastic community.

The general chapters are four through seven. Chapter four is reproduced in its entirety in the Appendix to this lesson. Chapter four sets out basic commands that echo scripture either verbatim or at least in spirit. It is a list of 73 things people should work on for their holiness in life. It is interesting to note not only the things that

make the list, but also the ordering of the list. For example, the first instruction is, “In the first place to love the Lord God with the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole strength.” The second instruction is, “Then, [love] one’s neighbor as one’s self.” Of course, when Jesus was asked the greatest commandment, he listed these two commands as the first and second commands on which the whole law hinged.

Immediately following these two commands, Benedict put as his third instruction, “Not to kill.” No doubt, this point hit close to home, considering his experience at his first monastery!

Many of the commands echo the clear ethics and instructions of the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. There are also some delightful twists on the ethics taught in scripture. For example, instruction 42 reads, “To refer what good one sees in himself, not to self, but to God.” This is a wonderful way to express the biblical admonitions that any good we do, is good God does through us, and never the basis for our pride. Even our salvation, Paul writes is not by our works, “lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship...” (Eph 2:9-10). Or, as Peter would later write, “Clothe yourself with humility...for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

Beyond these chapters (four through seven), we have chapters that pertain to the godliness among monks (for example, Chapter 1, where four kinds of monks are set out: (1) those in community, (2) those who are hermits, (3) those who live by any standard that please them, without regard to what is right or wrong, and (4) those who move from place to place and mooch off others. Benedict speaks very poorly of types 3 and 4!).⁵

2. SPECIFIC RULES FOR WORSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE INDIVIDUALS. (Chapters 8-20, 41 – 42, 49, 52)

⁵ Chapter 2 deals with the kind of man that is appropriate for the role of Abbot. Chapter 21 concerns the men who would be “Deans” in the monastery. Chapter 31 deals with the kind of man who would be the cellarer of the monastery (the person responsible for maintaining the food and drink of the monastery). Chapter 32 deals with the people who have oversight and responsibility for the tools of the monastery. Chapter 33 deals with whether monks should own any possessions (the answer to that is “No!” Monks should not even own a pen!). Chapters 69-71 concern interactions and disputes among the monks. Chapter 72 urges the monks to have great zeal for virtue.

These chapters set out the times for prayer, worship, and performing the work of God. One of the readily transparent and impressive aspects of this is the seamless integration of worship into the community life. The monks were expected to spend about a third of their waking time in prayer, a third in work and service, and a third in study and reflection. The balance is quite noteworthy.

3. THE STRUCTURE AND WORKINGS OF THE COMMUNITY.

This grouping of chapters deals with counsel before decisions are made (3). They deal with disciplinary matters (23-30). They concern how much people eat, how the ill and aged are tended to, and who should work in the kitchen (34-40). These sections also concern when correcting those who fail or make mistakes (43-46). The work schedules, the timekeepers, and the other issues with work are also covered (47-48, 50-51). Rules for the elections of leaders, the admission of brethren and hospitality, and contact with the outside world are also set out (53-54, 56-67). Chapter 55 deals with the monks clothing. Finally, chapter 68 gives the response expected when a monk is asked to do something he cannot do.

These rules governed not only the monasteries for Benedict, but they also became the core rules for many monastic communities in Western Christendom even today. They have withstood the tests of time and have produced some of the church's greatest scholars, greatest missionaries, and greatest achievements (including the transcriptions of many books and scriptures that we would have lost over the centuries without their hard work and commitment).

It is interesting to note that Benedict was convinced of the need for poverty among the monastic residents, and yet even that austerity was not without balance. Whereas many of the Egyptian monks wore only rags, shunning any clothing that would be picked up if left by the side of the road, Benedict had his monks wear comfortable clothing appropriate for the weather and seasons. Similar balance was found in the life style. While the extreme ascetics would not allow themselves much sleep, Benedict provided for 6 to 8 hours sleep a night for his monks. A final point to emphasize concerns the duty to work. To Benedict, idle hands were the devil's workshop. He would not have any of that! Holiness required that his monks work, not just for the monastic community but for charity as well.

POINTS FOR HOME

And, so we have it. The Rule of Benedict, an early book that helps Christians in the monastic community with focus on living with holiness and reverence toward God and toward each other.

Our points for home will center on the basics:

1. Our works and holiness are not our salvation, “for by grace you have been saved through faith, not by works lest any man should boast...” (Eph. 2:8-9).
2. But, our works are extremely important. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:7-10).
3. Care for your brothers and sisters in Christ recognizing God has made us all one. “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts... [T]here should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:12, 25-26).
4. “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:12-16).

APPENDIX – Excerpts from The Rule of Benedict

PROLOGUE

Listen, O my son, to the precepts of thy master, and incline the ear of thy heart, and cheerfully receive and faithfully execute the admonitions of thy loving Father, that by the toil of obedience thou mayest return to Him from whom by the sloth of disobedience thou hast gone away.

To thee, therefore, my speech is now directed, who, giving up thine own will, takest up the strong and most excellent arms of obedience, to do battle for Christ the Lord, the true King.

In the first place, beg of Him by most earnest prayer, that He perfect whatever good thou dost begin, in order that He who hath been pleased to count us in the number of His children, need never be grieved at our evil deeds. For we ought at all times so to serve Him with the good things which He hath given us, that He may not, like an angry father, disinherit his children, nor, like a dread lord, enraged at our evil deeds, hand us over to everlasting punishment as most wicked servants, who would not follow Him to glory.

Let us then rise at length, since the Scripture arouseth us, saying: "It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep" (Rom 13:11); and having opened our eyes to the deifying light, let us hear with awestruck ears what the divine voice, crying out daily, doth admonish us, saying: "Today, if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps 94[95]:8). And again: "He that hath ears to hear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev 2:7). And what doth He say? -- "Come, children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps 33[34]:12). "Run whilst you have the light of life, that the darkness of death overtake you not" (Jn 12:35).

And the Lord seeking His workman in the multitude of the people, to whom He proclaimeth these words, saith again: "Who is the man that desireth life and loveth to see good days" (Ps 33[34]:13)? If hearing this thou answerest, "I am he," God saith to thee: "If thou wilt have true and everlasting life, keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile; turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it" (Ps 33[34]:14-15). And when you shall have done these things, my eyes shall be upon you, and my ears unto your prayers. And before you shall call upon me I will say: "Behold, I am here" (Is 58:9).

What, dearest brethren, can be sweeter to us than this voice of the Lord inviting us? See, in His loving kindness, the Lord showeth us the way of life. Therefore, having our loins girt with faith and the performance of good works, let us walk His ways under the guidance of the Gospel, that we may be found worthy of seeing Him who hath called us to His kingdom (cf 1 Thes 2:12).

If we desire to dwell in the tabernacle of His kingdom, we cannot reach it in any way, unless we run thither by good works. But let us ask the Lord with the Prophet, saying to Him: "Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest in Thy holy hill" (Ps 14[15]:1)?

After this question, brethren, let us listen to the Lord answering and showing us the way to this tabernacle, saying: "He that walketh without blemish and worketh justice; he that speaketh truth in his heart; who hath not used deceit in his tongue, nor hath done evil to his neighbor, nor hath taken up a reproach against his neighbor" (Ps 14[15]:2-3), who hath brought to naught the foul demon tempting him, casting him out of his heart with his temptation, and hath taken his evil thoughts whilst they were yet weak and hath dashed them against Christ (cf Ps 14[15]:4; Ps 136[137]:9); who fearing the Lord are not puffed up by their goodness of life, but holding that the actual good which is in them cannot be done by themselves, but by the Lord, they praise the Lord working in them (cf Ps 14[15]:4), saying with the Prophet: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us; by to Thy name give glory" (Ps 113[115]:1:9). Thus also the Apostle Paul hath not taken to himself any credit for his preaching, saying: "By the grace of God, I am what I am" (1 Cor 15:10). And again he saith: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (2 Cor 10:17).

Hence, the Lord also saith in the Gospel: "He that heareth these my words and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man who built his house upon a rock; the floods came, the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock" (Mt 7:24-25). The Lord fulfilling these words waiteth for us from day to day, that we respond to His holy admonitions by our works. Therefore, our days are lengthened to a truce for the amendment of the misdeeds of our present life; as the Apostle saith: "Knowest thou not that the patience of God leadeth thee to penance" (Rom 2:4)? For the good Lord saith: "I will not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live" (Ezek 33:11).

Now, brethren, that we have asked the Lord who it is that shall dwell in His tabernacle, we have heard the conditions for dwelling there; and if we fulfill the duties of tenants, we shall be heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Our hearts and our bodies must, therefore, be ready to do battle under the biddings of holy obedience; and let us ask the Lord that He supply by the help of His grace what is impossible to us by nature. And if, flying from the pains of hell, we desire to reach life

everlasting, then, while there is yet time, and we are still in the flesh, and are able during the present life to fulfill all these things, we must make haste to do now what will profit us forever.

We are, therefore, about to found a school of the Lord's service, in which we hope to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome. But even if, to correct vices or to preserve charity, sound reason dictateth anything that turneth out somewhat stringent, do not at once fly in dismay from the way of salvation, the beginning of which cannot but be narrow. But as we advance in the religious life and faith, we shall run the way of God's commandments with expanded hearts and unspeakable sweetness of love; so that never departing from His guidance and persevering in the monastery in His doctrine till death, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ, and be found worthy to be coheirs with Him of His kingdom.

CHAPTER IV *The Instruments of Good Works*

(1) In the first place to love the Lord God with the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole strength.

(2) Then, one's neighbor as one's self (cf Mt 22:37-39; Mk 12:30-31; Lk 10:27).

(3) Then, not to kill.

(4) Not to commit adultery.

(5) Not to steal.

(6) Not to covet (cf Rom 13:9).

(7) Not to bear false witness (cf Mt 19:18; Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20).

(8) To honor all men (cf 1 Pt 2:17).

(9) And what one would not have done to himself, not to do to another (cf Tob 4:16; Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31).

(10) To deny one's self in order to follow Christ (cf Mt 16:24; Lk 9:23).

(11) To chastise the body (cf 1 Cor 9:27).

(12) Not to seek after pleasures.

- (13) To love fasting.
- (14) To relieve the poor.
- (15) To clothe the naked.
- (16) To visit the sick (cf Mt 25:36).
- (17) To bury the dead.
- (18) To help in trouble.
- (19) To console the sorrowing.
- (20) To hold one's self aloof from worldly ways.
- (21) To prefer nothing to the love of Christ.
- (22) Not to give way to anger.
- (23) Not to foster a desire for revenge.
- (24) Not to entertain deceit in the heart.
- (25) Not to make a false peace.
- (26) Not to forsake charity.
- (27) Not to swear, lest perchance one swear falsely.
- (28) To speak the truth with heart and tongue.
- (29) Not to return evil for evil (cf 1 Thes 5:15; 1 Pt 3:9).
- (30) To do no injury, yea, even patiently to bear the injury done us.
- (31) To love one's enemies (cf Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27).
- (32) Not to curse them that curse us, but rather to bless them.
- (33) To bear persecution for justice sake (cf Mt 5:10).

- (34) Not to be proud...
- (35) Not to be given to wine (cf Ti 1:7; 1 Tm 3:3).
- (36) Not to be a great eater.
- (37) Not to be drowsy.
- (38) Not to be slothful (cf Rom 12:11).
- (39) Not to be a murmurer.
- (40) Not to be a detractor.
- (41) To put one's trust in God.
- (42) To refer what good one sees in himself, not to self, but to God.
- (43) But as to any evil in himself, let him be convinced that it is his own and charge it to himself.
- (44) To fear the day of judgment.
- (45) To be in dread of hell.
- (46) To desire eternal life with all spiritual longing.
- (47) To keep death before one's eyes daily.
- (48) To keep a constant watch over the actions of our life.
- (49) To hold as certain that God sees us everywhere.
- (50) To dash at once against Christ the evil thoughts which rise in one's heart.
- (51) And to disclose them to our spiritual father.
- (52) To guard one's tongue against bad and wicked speech.
- (53) Not to love much speaking.

- (54) Not to speak useless words and such as provoke laughter.
- (55) Not to love much or boisterous laughter.
- (56) To listen willingly to holy reading.
- (57) To apply one's self often to prayer.
- (58) To confess one's past sins to God daily in prayer with sighs and tears, and to amend them for the future.
- (59) Not to fulfill the desires of the flesh (cf Gal 5:16).
- (60) To hate one's own will.
- (61) To obey the commands of the Abbot in all things, even though he himself (which Heaven forbid) act otherwise, mindful of that precept of the Lord: "What they say, do ye; what they do, do ye not" (Mt 23:3).
- (62) Not to desire to be called holy before one is; but to be holy first, that one may be truly so called.
- (63) To fulfill daily the commandments of God by works.
- (64) To love chastity.
- (65) To hate no one.
- (66) Not to be jealous; not to entertain envy.
- (67) Not to love strife.
- (68) Not to love pride.
- (69) To honor the aged.
- (70) To love the younger.
- (71) To pray for one's enemies in the love of Christ.
- (72) To make peace with an adversary before the setting of the sun.

(73) And never to despair of God's mercy.

Behold, these are the instruments of the spiritual art, which, if they have been applied without ceasing day and night and approved on judgment day, will merit for us from the Lord that reward which He hath promised: "The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor 2:9). But the workshop in which we perform all these works with diligence is the enclosure of the monastery, and stability in the community.