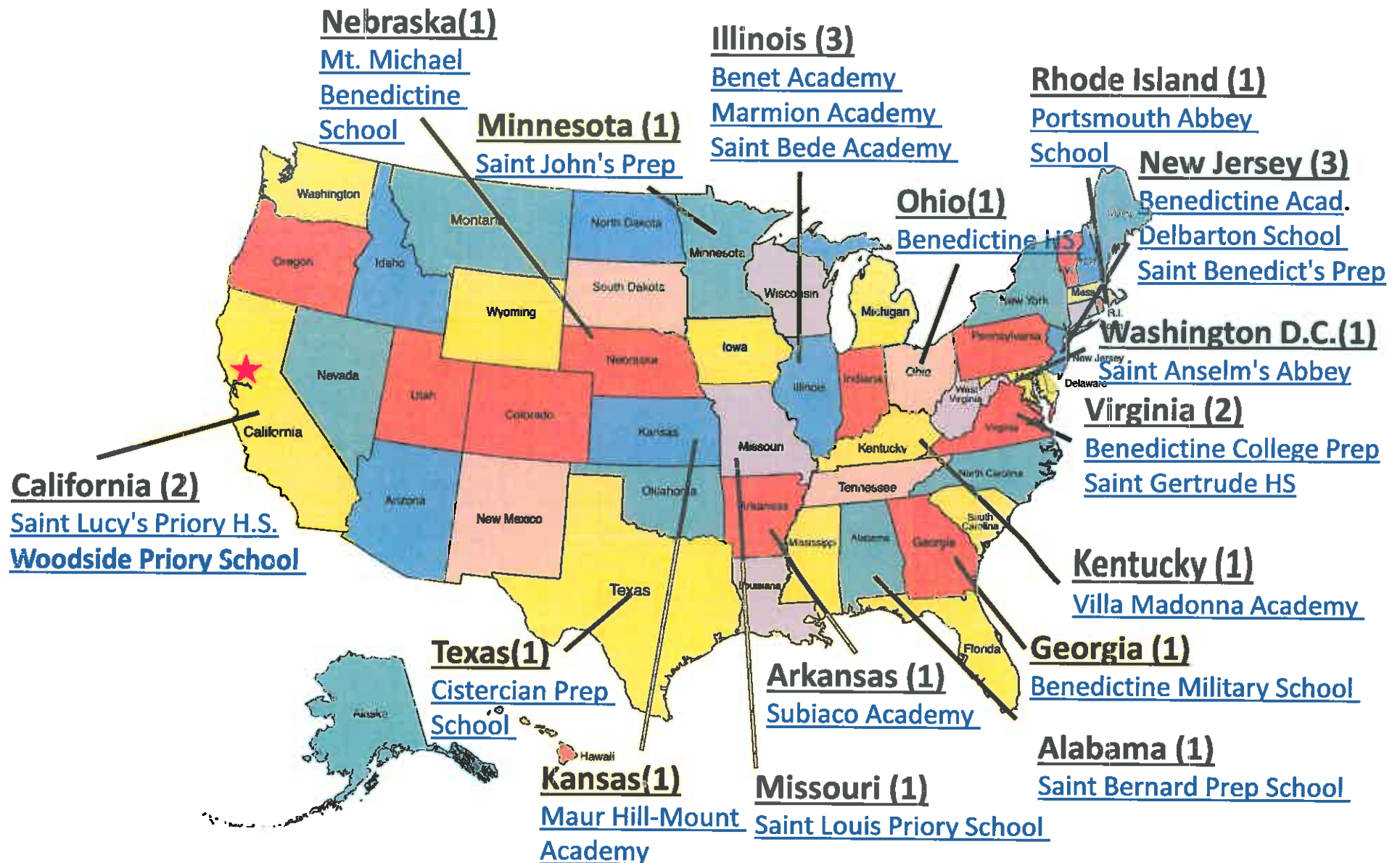


North American Benedictine High Schools



RESPECT IN THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT

Reflecting on Chapter 72 of the Rule, in which Benedict tells us to make every effort to show respect to one another, we might well read through the rest of the chapters and find other references to respect. Interestingly, there are hints of respect in every chapter!

In the Prologue: Benedict shows the respect that he himself had for the differences in people-that in laying down his Rule there would be nothing harsh, nothing burdensome.

Chapter 1: He had such respect even for the detestable kinds of monks that he passes over them in silence rather than speak of their disgraceful way of life.

Chapter 2: The abbot should show no favoritism, but have respect for all.

Chapter 3: That even the youngest would be heard with respect in community deliberations.

Chapter 4: Many examples here, but one focal point -- honor everyone and do not do to another what you would not want done to yourself.

Chapter 5: Respect the authority of the abbot.

Chapter 6: Submission and respect for the words of the abbot.

Chapter 7: Many instances of respect that lead to humility- respect for the feelings of others, common life, simplicity, etc.

Chapter 8: Respect for order in prayer; provision for time for those who need to learn the psalms; allow for the needs of nature.

Chapter 9: Respect for the Holy Trinity.

Chapter 10: Respect for the changes in the seasons - no burden on the members.

Chapter 11: Again, respect for the Trinity; respect for the Gospel; awareness of the weakness of those who may oversleep.

Chapters 12, 14, 15, 16: Respect for good order in prayer.

Chapter 13: Understanding that some may be slow in arriving; respect for human weakness and the need for forgiveness.

Chapter 17: Respect for variation-according to the size of the community.

Chapter 18: If someone has a better way, let him do it!

Chapter 19: Respect for the presence of God; all done for God's glory.

Chapter 20: Respect for the House of God.

- Chapter 21:** Respect for the need to have help with running a large group, for needs to live in smaller groups; respect for an elder to share the superior's duties.
- Chapter 22:** Respect for safety in sleep.
- Chapter 23:** Respect even for offenders-a warning comes first, and if lacking intelligence, let them undergo corporal punishment.
- Chapter 24:** Proportion for degree of offense.
- Chapter 25:** Offender given time to ponder and amend.
- Chapter 26:** Respect for the offender to be left alone-not have someone "side" with him.
- Chapter 27:** Concern of the abbot; pray for him; persistence in working for amendment; respect for the offender; respect for privacy; try not to lose any members.
- Chapter 28:** Respect for the need to have more chances, but separation to protect the community.
- Chapter 29:** Respect for changing one's mind; if one leaves, one may return three times.
- Chapter 30:** Respect for the needs of various age levels.
- Chapter 31:** Respect expected of the business manager (cellarer) for members and utensils.
- Chapter 32:** Respect even for tools-treated as vessels of the altar. **Chapter 33:** Respect for the common life — not private ownership- yet all needs are met.
- Chapter 34:** Respect for individual needs.
- Chapter 35:** That workers be blessed and get food ahead of time; tools to be left ready and in good condition; help be given if needed.
- Chapter 36:** Respect for the sick-and for their caregivers.
- Chapter 37:** Respect for the old and the young-bend the rule!
- Chapter 38:** Reader may get food and drink ahead of time if needed.
- Chapter 39:** Respect for individual differences in food needs; respect for health; prevent indigestion.
- Chapter 40:** Respect for individual drink needs--even if some need wine. Allowances for changes according to local or weather conditions; respect for peace in the monastery (no grumbling).
- Chapter 41:** Respect for the times of meals and an understanding of seasonal differences; and no grumbling!

- Chapter 42:** Respect for those of weak understanding; for those who may be late because of work; respect for night silence, yet with a concern for the guests.
- Chapter 43:** Respect for prayer; be on time, but come in even if late; respect also for table promptness.
- Chapter 44:** Respect for good order; punished if late.
- Chapter 45:** Respect for good order; make satisfaction for mistakes.
- Chapter 46:** Have respect for conscience.
- Chapter 47:** Respect for the time of prayer-let a signal be given. prayerful rendering in reading and singing -- Only those should do so who edify.
- Chapter 48:** Moderation; members must not be overworked; need for rest, respect for Sundays.
- Chapter 49:** LENT -respect shown that all are not strong; must have the abbot's approval for good works undertaken.
- Chapters 50- 51:** Respect for the needs of monks going on a journey.
- Chapter 52:** Respect for God's house, and for those who wish to pray privately.
- Chapters 53 and 56:** Respect for the guests, especially the poor. All are to be served as Christ. Respect for the good order of the monastery, and the needs of the monks to have help.
- Chapter 54:** Sharing of gifts.
- Chapter 55:** Sufficient clothing; see that it fits well. Respect for the next wearer (return washed); sufficient bedding; provide for the needs of the poor; respect for the weaknesses of the needy, but do not allow envy.
- Chapter 57:** Respect for the individual gifts of the members; artists, but no avarice! Do all for the glory of God.
- Chapter 58:** Respect the need for time to be given for one to be sure before making a final commitment; even the freedom to leave if desired.
- Chapter 59:** No distinction between rich and poor; respect all equally.
- Chapters 60 and 62:** No favoritism due to rank or status.
- Chapter 61:** Respect for visiting monastics; respect for the other monastery in the case of a transfer; again--never do to another. ...
- Chapter 63:** Respect of the young for the elderly; respect of the elderly for the young.
- Chapter 64:** Respect for the community-that the abbot consider the needs of the members.

Chapter 65: Respect for the peaceful ruling of the monastery .

Chapter 66: Respect for guests and all who come to the monastery; also respect for the boundaries of the enclosure-all things to be within the monastery area.

Chapter 67: Respect for the privacy of the interior life.

Chapter 68: Respect for weakness, but also for challenge.

Chapter 69: Respect for all, not just relatives.

Chapter 70: General respect for all; not to strike another; and repeated again-not to do to another what one would not want done to oneself.

Chapter 71: Mutual respect

Chapter 72: The main chapter of the Rule on the spirit of Good Zeal!

Chapter 73: Respect for the need to reach perfection; those who can do more, should do so! Respect for all those who have come before--especially their contributions to the spirit of monastic life!

BENEDICT WAS A VERY RESPECTFUL PERSON

ORIGIN OF THE MEDAL OF ST. BENEDICT

For the early Christians, the cross was a favorite symbol and badge of their faith in Christ. From the writings of St. Gregory the Great (540-604), we know that St. Benedict had a deep faith in the Cross and worked miracles with the sign of the cross. This faith in, and special devotion to, the Cross was passed on to succeeding generations of Benedictines.

Devotion to the Cross of Christ also gave rise to the striking of medals that bore the image of St. Benedict holding a cross aloft in his right hand and his Rule for Monks in the other hand. Thus, the Cross has always been closely associated with the Medal of St. Benedict, which is often referred to as the Medal-Cross of St. Benedict. In the course of time, other additions were made, such as the Latin petition on the margin of the medal, asking that by St. Benedict's presence we may be strengthened in the hour of death, as will be explained later.

We do not know just when the first medal of St. Benedict was struck. At some point in history a series of capital letters was placed around the large figure of the cross on the reverse side of the medal. For a long time the meaning of these letters was unknown, but in 1647 a manuscript dating back to 1415 was found at the Abbey of Metten in Bavaria, giving an explanation of these letters. They were the initial letters of a Latin prayer of exorcism against Satan, as will be explained further on.

THE JUBILEE MEDAL OF MONTECASSINO

The above features were finally incorporated in a newly designed medal struck in 1880 under the supervision of the monks of Montecassino, Italy, to mark the 1400th anniversary of the birth of St. Benedict. The design of this medal was produced at St. Martin's Abbey, Beuron, Germany, at the request of the prior of Montecassino, Boniface Krug, O.S.B. (1838-1909). Prior Boniface was a native of Baltimore and originally a monk of St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, until he was chosen to be prior and later abbot of Montecassino.

Since that time, the Jubilee Medal of 1880 has proven to be more popular throughout the Christian world than any other medal ever struck to honor St. Benedict. There is still a constant and heavy demand for this medal.

DESCRIPTION OF THE JUBILEE MEDAL

Since the Jubilee Medal of 1880 has all the important features ever associated with the Medal of St. Benedict, the following description of this medal can serve to make clear the nature and intent of any medal of St. Benedict, no matter what shape or design it may have.



Front Side of Medal

On the face of the medal is the image of St. Benedict. In his right hand he holds aloft the cross as the symbol of our salvation, also reminding us of the vast work of evangelizing and civilizing England and Europe carried out mainly by the Benedictine monks and nuns, especially from the sixth to the ninth/tenth centuries. In Benedict's left hand is his Rule for Monks, which could well be summed up in the words of the Prologue exhorting us to "walk in God's ways, with the Gospel as our guide."

On a pedestal to the right of St. Benedict is the poisoned cup, shattered when he made the sign of the cross over it.

On a pedestal to the left is a raven about to carry away a loaf of poisoned bread that a jealous enemy had sent to St. Benedict.

Above the cup and the raven are the Latin words: CRUX S. PATRIS BENEDICTI (The Cross of Our Holy Father Benedict).

On the margin of the medal, encircling the figure of St. Benedict, are the Latin words: EIUS IN OBITU NOSTRO PRAESENTIA MUNIAMUR! (May we be strengthened by his presence in the hour of our death!). Benedictines have always regarded St. Benedict as a special patron of a happy death. He himself died in the chapel at Montecassino while standing with his arms raised up to heaven, and supported by the brethren, shortly after having received Holy Communion.

Below the figure of St. Benedict is a Latin inscription giving the origin and date of the Jubilee Medal: Abbey of Montecassino, 1880.



Reverse Side of Medal

On the back of the medal, the cross is dominant. On the arms of the cross are the initial letters of a rhythmic Latin prayer: CRUX SACRA SIT MIHI LUX! NUNQUAM DRACO SIT MIHI DUX! (May the holy Cross be my light! The dragon never be my guide!).

In the angles of the cross, the letters C S P B stand for CRUX SANCTI PATRIS BENEDICTI (The cross of our holy father Benedict).

Above the cross is the word PAX (Peace), which has been a Benedictine motto for centuries.

Around the margin of the back of the medal, the letters V R S N S M V—S M Q L I V B are the initial letters, as mentioned before, of a Latin prayer of exorcism against Satan: VADE RETRO SATANA! NUNQUAM SUADE MIHI VANA! SUNT MALA QUAE LIBAS. IPSE VENENA BIBAS! (Begone, Satan! Tempt me not with your vanities! What you offer me is evil. Drink the poisoned cup yourself!).

USE OF THE MEDAL

There is no special way prescribed for carrying or wearing the Medal of St. Benedict. It can be worn on a chain around the neck, attached to one's rosary, kept in one's pocket or purse, or placed in one's car or home. The medal is often put into the foundations of houses and buildings, on the walls of barns and sheds, or in one's place of business.

The purpose of using the medal in any of the above ways is to call down God's blessing and protection upon us, wherever we are, and upon our homes and possessions, especially through the intercession of St. Benedict. By the conscious and devout use of the medal, it becomes, as it were, a constant silent prayer and reminder to us of our dignity as followers of Christ.

The medal is a prayer of exorcism against Satan, a prayer for strength in time of temptation, a prayer for a peaceful death in the Lord, a prayer for peace among ourselves and among the nations of the world, a prayer that the Cross of Christ be our light and guide, a prayer of firm rejection of all that is evil, a prayer of petition that we may with Christian courage "walk in God's ways, with the Gospel as our guide," as St. Benedict urges us.

A profitable spiritual experience can be ours if we but take the time to study the array of inscriptions and representations found on the two sides of the Medal of St. Benedict. The lessons found there can be pondered over and over to bring true peace of mind and heart into our lives as we struggle to overcome the weaknesses of our human nature and realize that our human condition is not perfect, but that with the help of God and the intercession of the saints our condition can become better.

The Medal of St. Benedict can thus serve as a constant reminder of the need for us to take up our cross daily and "follow the true King, Christ our Lord," and thus learn "to share with patience in the sufferings of Christ so that we may one day share in his heavenly kingdom," as St. Benedict urges us in the Prologue of his Rule.

TWO SPECIAL USES OF THE MEDAL

By a rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Religious (May 4, 1965), Secular Oblates of St. Benedict are permitted to wear the Medal of St. Benedict instead of the small cloth scapular formerly worn by Oblates.

By a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites (March 6, 1959), the Blessing of St. Maur over the sick is permitted to be given with a Medal of St. Benedict instead of with a relic of the True Cross, since the latter is difficult to obtain.

BLESSING OF THE MEDAL OF ST. BENEDICT

Medals of St. Benedict may be blessed by any priest (Instr. Sept. 26, 1964). The following English form may be used.

✠ Our help is in the name of the Lord.
 ✠ Who made heaven and earth.

In the name of God the Father + almighty, who made heaven and earth, the seas and all that is in them, I exorcise these medals against the power and attacks of the evil one. May all who use these medals devoutly be blessed with health of soul and body. In the name of the Father + almighty, of his Son + Jesus Christ our Lord, and of the Holy + Spirit the Paraclete, and in the love of the same Lord Jesus Christ who will come on the last day to judge the living and the dead, and the world by fire. ✠ Amen.

Let us pray. Almighty God, the boundless source of all good things, we humbly ask that, through the intercession of St. Benedict, you pour out your blessings + upon these medals. May those who use them devoutly and earnestly strive to perform good works be blessed by you with health of soul and body, the grace of a holy life, and remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. May they also, with the help of your merciful love, resist the temptations of the evil one and strive to exercise true charity and justice toward all, so that one day they may appear sinless and holy in your sight. This we ask through Christ our Lord. ✠ Amen.

The medals are then sprinkled with holy water.



The Medal or Cross of St. Benedict

Medals, crosses, rosaries, statues, paintings, and other religious articles have long been used as a means of fostering and expressing our religious devotion to God and the saints. Icons, or painted images of Christ and the saints, are especially popular among Eastern Christians as an aid to Christian piety and devotion. The use of any religious article is therefore intended as a means of reminding us of God and of stirring up in us a ready willingness and desire to serve God and our neighbor. With this understanding we shall reject any use of religious articles as if they were mere charms or had some magic power to bring us good luck. Such is not the Christian attitude.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A BENEDICTINE ENVIRONMENT

8/11/04

Gordon Tavis, OSB

As an introduction to these characteristics (a work in progress), I quote and paraphrase from Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, Wisdom Distilled From The Daily, Chapter 1, especially pages 9-11.

Benedictine Spirituality is living the ordinary life extraordinarily well. Transforming life, rather than transcending it, is what counts.

- *1st, Benedictine Spirituality is a commitment more to principles than to practices. It is more about living life well, than about keeping the law perfectly.*
- *2nd, Benedictine Spirituality is simply a guide to the Gospels, not an end in itself. It urges the contemplative awareness that the gospel and the gospel alone is fit criteria for any human action.*
- *3rd, The Rule shows clearly that the living of the gospel life is not an individual enterprise, but a conscious gathering of the wisdom of others as well, to encourage and scrutinize our choices.*
- *4th, Benedictine Spirituality rests squarely on the notion that we are not the only measure of our own spiritual needs, but that the entire human community and cosmic universe have claim on the merit of our daily actions.*

"We live in a world in which the planet has become the neighborhood. I have begun to see under the covers of this age-old monastic rule a semblance of sanity to the insanity of the world around me. We are into growth, not rules. It takes constancy, patience and balance. We are working at the sanctification of the normal, not about spiritual gymnastics. It takes a change of heart and a turn of mind."

Accountability. The condition of being accountable, liable, responsible. Each person is responsible for his/her actions, in the eyes of God, of society, of community, and as such, may be called upon to render explanation or furnish a reckoning. "Let the abbot always remember that at the judgment of God, not only his teaching but also his disciples' obedience will come under scrutiny." RB2:6

2:6-7; 2:10; 2:13; 2:34; 2:37; Chap 28; 32:3; 33:7-8; 47:1; Chap 54; 64:7; 69:4; Chap 71

Affirm. God dwells in each person. Acknowledge others when they do something outstanding, and when they do something significant but without flash. With your behavior let teachers, mentors know that you care about them and all the work they do for you. By your presence, your language, your demeanor, let parents know your love.

Pr:29; 2:19; 31:13; Chap 53; 53:7; 61:9,11,12; 62:1; 65:17 (References to the above topic in the Rule of Benedict.)

Awareness of God. Supreme Being, Creator, Ever-Present, All-Loving. To be found not in the abstract but in the ordinary events of every day life. To be found in each other; we are the Body of Christ. To be found in silence, when listening. "Never lose hope in God's mercy." RB 4:74

Prologue; 4:74; 19:1; 49:6; 53:15; 58:18

Balance. Body, mind and spirit. Development of the whole person is our goal. Willing to take a risk at trying something, you've been interested in, but never had the chance to try. Broad range of interests, in a broad range of fields, plus devoted to the "grunt" work that is involved. No one is pigeon-holed as having but one ability, one interest, one desire.

27:1,2; 29:1-3; 31:12; 34:1; 35:3; 35:12; 37:1-3; 38:1; 38:10; 39:1; 39:6; 55:1-2; 64:12;
Chap 68; 70:5

Collaborative. Sharing, helping one another on a project, or undertaking. Knowing that the goal is the growth of each individual and his or her ability to stand alone when need be.

3:1ff; 21:1-4; 32:1; 35:1; 70:4

Community. Common Good. Common purpose and social values. Change and/or exchange, shared by all (5th Discipline p509). To become who we are by our relationships with each other. Built on trust, on love, on respect. Honest interest in one another. Genuine interest and concern for one another. We are our brother's keeper. Communities are full of dynamism.

Chap 1; 3:4; 58:14; 72:8

Compassionate. Suffer with, feel for. Share the sorrow, hurt. Deep sympathy, with the urge to help. Offer presence, time, involvement of yourself on behalf of the other. A person for others.

Chap 31; 36:1; 37:1; 64:9-10; Chap 68

Conversatio. A culture that supports personal change; where personal inquiry and feedback generate growth, knowledge of self, formation of values, establishment of character. Trust that all work together, in an ongoing pursuit of each becoming the best possible.

58:17; 62:4; 73:6-7

Dignity. Nobility of the human person. Of high repute, worthy. Self-possession, self-respect. Faculty treat student with dignity and respect, earning the same in return.

22:6; 31:7; 31:13-14; 68:2-3; 71:2

Dignity of Work. Participation in creation. All work is a worthy part of God's creation. School work especially raises body, mind and spirit. Responsible citizenship within the School community. No labor is too menial, too hard. Work is meant to build community, leads to self-fulfillment, gives each person a place in salvation. (Chit p93)

Chap 48: 48:7-8; Chap 53

Disagreements Do Happen. Friends do not necessarily agree on everything. Individual differences, culture, the circumstances we have lived through, all color our understanding. "Never let the sun go down on your anger." RB 4:73 One of the greatest acts of giving of self, is forgiving. "Do not love quarreling; shun arrogance." RB 4:68

4:68; 4:73; 59:6; 70:7

Discipline. As the means of learning, of growing in wisdom and knowledge; sound personal development. As the means to becoming the person you want to be; understanding social responsibility. Learn from mentor's teaching, recommendations, example. To enable listening, to implant improvements into your person, to foster internal freedom. "A commitment to maturity (RB 4:34-62)" Chit P 166.

2:22; 2:23-25; 4:34-62; 23:2-4; 24:1; 27:8; 28:2-6

Discretion. Being careful about what one says or does. Prudence in making judgments, decisions, choices. Freedom to acting, choose or judge. "Drawing on examples of discretion, the mother of virtues, the abbot must so arrange everything that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from." RB 64:19

55:3; 64:19

Diversity. Of races, of beliefs, of cultural backgrounds. Every individual is partly the result of genes, partly the result of the environment and the combination of circumstances within which they grew up, partly the result of following their own interests and goals.

2:20; 2:22; Chap 34; 52:2; Chap 53; Chap 58; Chap 59; 60:5-7; Chap 63

Faithful. Worthy of trust. Fulfill commitments. Do what you say you'll do. Standby your associates; continued steadfast adherence. Don't abandon tasks or people.

31:18-19; 58:7; 58:9-16; 61:9-11; 62:1; 62:7; 64:20-22

Gratitude. Thankful. Appreciation for favors received. Gratuitous response to kindness. It is the response of the person who is able to see the breadth and depth of the actions being performed around you, and to see the attitudes, feelings, and love that drive them.

Pr:4; 55:7-8; 58:21; 61:4; 61:9; 62:1; 63:1

Honesty. Intellectual honesty, quoting sources, giving credits to classmates when deserved. Honesty with one another, but always in humility. Honesty in implanting the Benedictine Culture in your life. Honesty with parents, teachers.

32:3; 46:1-3; 64:11

Hospitality. Love in action. Welcoming, assisting, listening, caring, being present to the other. Also the converse: knowing that you are welcome, that others are willing to assist you, to listen to your concerns, to care and respond thoughtfully, to be present to you. "Provide a prompt answer with the warmth of love." RB 66 "Honor, courtesy, and love are the hallmarks Benedict requires for hospitality of the heart (RB 52)." Chit P 127

Chap 52; Chap 53; 53:15; Chap 61; 66:3-4

Humble. Authentic. "Know Thyself." Act in accord with who you are. Sharing what you know, but in ways that promote the other person, not yourself. "Not to love one's own will." "Hold fast to patience." "Rid your heart of all deceit." RB 4:24 "Above all, let them be humble." RB 31:13 "Be kind of speech to one another (RB 31)" Chit p. 190.

4:24; Chap 7; 31:7; 31:13; 31:14; 49:9; 57:1

Integrity. Integer. Whole. All pieces in place to form one, whole being. Perfect condition. Morally sound; uprightness, honesty, sincerity. Authentic. Actions, words are in accord with who I am. In humility recognize who I am and what actions coincide with my being.

7:62; 20:3; 65:22

Interdependence. "No Man is an Island." "It takes a village to raise a child." Taking responsibility for, and supporting one another. Interpersonal relationships are the basis of learning, of teamwork, of mature individuals. Leads us to think of all resources as shared. "You want a friend, ask the person to do something for you."

34:1; 35:1; 36:4; 38:6; 49:8; 53:18-20; Chap 69; Chap 71

Interpersonal Discourse. Open channels of sharing with friends, teachers, mentors. Testing of ideas is a primary means to being educated. Framing ideas, formulating them in words, speaking them with meaning and emphasis, is a sign of the maturing mind. Promoting growth and change.
32:6; 42:8-11; 53:6-9; Chap 68

Lectio. Primarily refers to coming into contact with God through thoughtful, meditative reading of the Scriptures. Also refers to coming into contact with God through the events of life; discerning the needs of people, seeing all creation as an interrelated pathway to the divine. Academic studies can be a path to inner growth.
48:1,5,13,15; 49:4

Joy. A deep, inner, abiding sense of happiness. In the presence of truth and beauty. A basic element in a person's spirit of well-being, love, hope. It is contagious.
2:32; 49:6-7; 66:3

Justice. Community requires mutual values and goals. Framing one's life within this culture provides stability. Assisting one another, even defending one another, in the name of values and goals is maturing. "Never do to another what you do not want done to yourself (Tob 4:16; Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31)" RB 4:9 Let the leaven of justice permeate your minds. RB 2:5
2:5; 2:19; 4:9; 61:4; 63:1; 63:2-3

Leadership. Base your words and actions on the facts. Facts are ascertainable. Willfully steering self and others toward one of the other Benedictine Characteristics. "The turtle makes no progress without sticking its neck out." Willingness to move the group toward the defined goal.
Chap 2; 21:2; Chap 27; Chap 31; Chap 56; 62:1; 63:13; Chap 64; 64:11; Chap 65

Listen. Not just hearing what another asks or says, listening to what is said, seeing in it the depth of what the other person is communicating. Ready to mentor, not just a flip response, rather an in depth reaction, with thoughtful advice. "Incline the ear of your heart." RB Pr:1 "If you hear the Lord's voice today, do not harden your hearts (Ps 94:8)." RB Pr:10 "Listen to one another (RB 3)" Chit p190.
Prologue; Chap 3

Loyalty. Jesus of Nazareth, John the Baptist, St. Benedict. Commitment. A person for others. Place the needs of others ahead of your own needs. Faithfulness to a person, cause, duty.
2:30; 62:1; Chap 71

Mentors. A loyal and wise adviser. As a person grows in book learning, in ethical behavior, in spirituality, community membership requires willingness to share your strengths with others.
Pr:11-12; 27:2; 46:5; 58:6; 71:1

Modesty. Moderation. Lack of excesses in decorum. Ties to Humility: being, dressing, acting in accord with who you are. God dwells in each person. Thinks of the other and building up the other. The Christian's vocation is to draw others to Christ.
31:12; 39:9; 42:4; 48:9; 48:21; 55:1; Chap 57; 73:1

Patience. Control of self, of emotional response. Discipline. Seeing a larger, more important goal, than the point at hand. "Hold fast to patience." See Christ in the other. "I came not to be served, but to serve." "With the greatest patience support one another's weakness of body or behavior." RB 72:5 Live life "with patience and even temper and not grow weary or give up." RB 7:35-36 36:5; 48:25; 58:3; 58:11

Peace. Sign of the disarmed heart. Calm, tranquility, "Let peace be your quest and aim (Ps 33:14-15)." RB Pr:17 Strive for peace on all levels; with self, others and God. RB Prol. Safe in the arms of God. Turmoil ceases. "If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with him before the sun goes down." RB 4:73
Pr:17; 4:73; 53:4

Perseverance. Steadfast in purpose. Stick-to-it-iveness when you commit yourself to an endeavor, plan, goal. To continue doing something in spite of difficulties.
Pr:50; 1:3; 4:78; 58:9,13; 64:19; 68:4

Person for Others. The Rule of Benedict emphasize the importance of becoming "persons for others," of pursuing not what one judges better for oneself but what one judges better for someone else. This includes learning to internalize and to find joy in, the victories of teammates and opponents alike. "Never turn away when someone needs you." RB 4:26
4:26; 63:15; 71:7-8; 72:3-6; 72:7

Respect for Persons There is respect for persons regardless of class, background, professional skill, level of authority. "No one is to pursue what is judged best for oneself, but instead, what is better for someone else." RB 72:7
38:5; 52:3; 59:21; 63:10; 71:1; 72:4; 72:7

Responsible. Answerable as the cause, agent, or source of something. Able to distinguish between right and wrong; to think and act rationally. Trustworthy, dependable, reliable. A person who acts faithfully, prudently, rightly, in carrying out duties.
35:10; 47:1; 53:21; Chap 68

Service. Service to one another, to guests, to others; giving back what we have received. "Let all serve one another in love." RB 35:6 "The members should serve one another,... for such service increase reward and fosters love." RB 35:1 "You must relieve the lot of the poor, clothe the naked, visit the sick (Matt 25:36), go to the troubled and console the sorrowing." RB 4:14-19 "The members should serve one another." RB 35:1; 4:14-19; 35:1-2; 35:6; 38:6; 53:11-15

Stability. To resist forces tending to cause distortion. Not subject to wide swings of mood or emotion. Dependable, a person you can count on, consistent. Develop and cultivate rootedness and a shared sense of mission. With a moral overtone, tried and true, steadfast. "To stand firm in one's promises." RB 58
Chap 58; 58:9

Stewardship. Care of property and material things, yes. But each person also is charged with care of the friends, of groups, and of community. Leadership is often the precise stewardship response that is needed. Involves commitment, loyalty, excellence, responsibility, community. "Treat all things as if they were the sacred vessels of the altar. (RB 31:10)"

31:1-2; 31:10; 32:4 46:1-3; 57:4,8

Tolerance. Freedom from bigotry or prejudice. The ability to endure and resist harmful effects. To bear with situations without blowing. To recognize and respect the opinions of others, without either agreeing or sympathizing. It is possible to love the person, but to dislike words and actions of the person.

18:22; 48:29; 49:6; 52:13; 61:7

Trust. Firm confidence in honesty, integrity, reliability, justice of another person. Joint projects are undertaken as part student, part teacher. Each person performs at top quality in assigned tasks. Each person is willing to assist others in any way, to learn and fully understand their assigned tasks. Each person is ready to humbly critique the work of others.

3:3; 21:3; 31:3; 32:1; 53:17; 68:5

Truth. In accord with the facts. What I say, agrees with what I know. What I know, agrees with what really is. What really is are the unembellished facts, the laws of nature, the laws of God. Ethical behavior. "Seek truth, and pursue it." "Speak the truth with heart and tongue." RB 4:28

4:28

Values. A value is an ideal, a guide, a goal; an internalized principle according to which we act; a driving force in our life. They get us reaching for the heights of performance, accomplishment, perfection. Institutional Values are the basis according to which the members of an institution intend to live and function on a day-to-day basis to accomplish their goals.

Rule of Benedict is filled with values, many of which are listed here, for individuals to adopt. SJP publishes its core values.

Zeal. Eager interest and enthusiasm. Initiative, inspired and inspiring. Ready for any assignment, ready to produce high quality work, with or without supervision. Strive for the highest standards of performance.

64:6; 64:8; 64:12-14; 65:22; Chap 72

Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina

by Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B.

1. THE PROCESS of LECTIO DIVINA

A VERY ANCIENT art, practiced at one time by all Christians, is the technique known as lectio divina - a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God. This ancient practice has been kept alive in the Christian monastic tradition, and is one of the precious treasures of Benedictine monastics and oblates. Together with the Liturgy and daily manual labor, time set aside in a special way for lectio divina enables us to discover in our daily life an underlying spiritual rhythm. Within this rhythm we discover an increasing ability to offer more of ourselves and our relationships to the Father, and to accept the embrace that God is continuously extending to us in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.

Lectio - reading/listening

THE ART of lectio divina begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear "with the ear of our hearts" as St. Benedict encourages us in the Prologue to the Rule. When we read the Scriptures we should try to imitate the prophet Elijah. We should allow ourselves to become women and men who are able to listen for the still, small voice of God (I Kings 19:12); the "faint murmuring sound" which is God's word for us, God's voice touching our hearts. This gentle listening is an "atunement" to the presence of God in that special part of God's creation which is the Scriptures.

THE CRY of the prophets to ancient Israel was the joy-filled command to "Listen!" "Sh'ma Israel: Hear, O Israel!" In lectio divina we, too, heed that command and turn to the Scriptures, knowing that we must "hear" - listen - to the voice of God, which often speaks very softly. In order to hear someone speaking softly we must learn to be silent. We must learn to love silence. If we are constantly speaking or if we are surrounded with noise, we cannot hear gentle sounds. The practice of lectio divina, therefore, requires that we first quiet down in order to hear God's word to us. This is the first step of lectio divina, appropriately called lectio - reading.

THE READING or listening which is the first step in lectio divina is very different from the speed reading which modern Christians apply to newspapers, books and even to the Bible. Lectio is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally - not loudly, but intimately. In lectio we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God's word for us this day.

Meditatio - meditation

ONCE WE have found a word or a passage in the Scriptures that speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and "ruminate" on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. Christians have always seen a scriptural invitation to lectio divina in the example of the Virgin Mary "pondering in her heart" what she saw and heard of Christ (Luke 2:19). For us today these images are a reminder that we must take in the word - that is, memorize it - and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. This is the second step or stage in lectio divina -

meditatio. Through meditatio we allow God's word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.

Oratio - prayer

THE THIRD step in lectio divina is oratio - prayer: prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration-prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. Just as a priest consecrates the elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist, God invites us in lectio divina to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our lectio and meditatio. In this oratio, this consecration-prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

Contemplatio - contemplation

FINALLY, WE simply rest in the presence of the One who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One Who loves us has a name in the Christian tradition - contemplatio, contemplation. Once again we practice silence, letting go of our own words; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.

2. THE UNDERLYING RHYTHM of LECTIO DIVINA

IF WE are to practice lectio divina effectively, we must travel back in time to an understanding that today is in danger of being almost completely lost. In the Christian past the words action (or practice, from the Greek praktikos) and contemplation did not describe different kinds of Christians engaging (or not engaging) in different forms of prayer and apostolates. Practice and contemplation were understood as the two poles of our underlying, ongoing spiritual rhythm: a gentle oscillation back and forth between spiritual "activity" with regard to God and "receptivity."

PRACTICE - spiritual "activity" - referred in ancient times to our active cooperation with God's grace in rooting out vices and allowing the virtues to flourish. The direction of spiritual activity was not outward in the sense of an apostolate, but inward - down into the depths of the soul where the Spirit of God is constantly transforming us, refashioning us in God's image. The active life is thus coming to see who we truly are and allowing ourselves to be remade into what God intends us to become.

IN THE early monastic tradition contemplation was understood in two ways. First was theoria physike, the contemplation of God in creation - God in "the many." Second was theologia, the contemplation of God in Himself without images or words - God as "The One." From this perspective lectio divina serves as a training-ground for the contemplation of God in His creation.

IN CONTEMPLATION we cease from interior spiritual doing and learn simply to be, that is to rest in the presence of our loving Father. Just as we constantly move back and forth in our exterior lives between speaking and listening, between questioning and reflecting, so in our spiritual lives we must

learn to enjoy the refreshment of simply being in God's presence, an experience that naturally alternates (if we let it!) with our spiritual practice.

IN ANCIENT times contemplation was not regarded as a goal to be achieved through some method of prayer, but was simply accepted with gratitude as God's recurring gift. At intervals the Lord invites us to cease from speaking so that we can simply rest in his embrace. This is the pole of our inner spiritual rhythm called contemplation.

HOW DIFFERENT this ancient understanding is from our modern approach! Instead of recognizing that we all gently oscillate back and forth between spiritual activity and receptivity, between practice and contemplation, we today tend to set contemplation before ourselves as a goal - something we imagine we can achieve through some spiritual technique. We must be willing to sacrifice our "goal-oriented" approach if we are to practice lectio divina, because lectio divina has no other goal than spending time with God through the medium of His word. The amount of time we spend in any aspect of lectio divina, whether it be rumination, consecration or contemplation depends on God's Spirit, not on us. Lectio divina teaches us to savor and delight in all the different flavors of God's presence, whether they be active or receptive modes of experiencing Him.

IN lectio divina we offer ourselves to God; and we are people in motion. In ancient times this inner spiritual motion was described as a helix - an ascending spiral. Viewed in only two dimensions it appears as a circular motion back and forth; seen with the added dimension of time it becomes a helix, an ascending spiral by means of which we are drawn ever closer to God. The whole of our spiritual lives were viewed in this way, as a gentle oscillation between spiritual activity and receptivity by means of which God unites us ever closer to Himself. In just the same way the steps or stages of lectio divina represent an oscillation back and forth between these spiritual poles. In lectio divina we recognize our underlying spiritual rhythm and discover many different ways of experiencing God's presence - many different ways of praying.

3. THE PRACTICE of LECTIO DIVINA

Private Lectio Divina

CHOOSE a text of the Scriptures that you wish to pray. Many Christians use in their daily lectio divina one of the readings from the Eucharistic liturgy for the day; others prefer to slowly work through a particular book of the Bible. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as one has no set goal of "covering" a certain amount of text: the amount of text "covered" is in God's hands, not yours.

PLACE YOURSELF in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some Christians focus for a few moments on their breathing; other have a beloved "prayer word" or "prayer phrase" they gently recite in order to become interiorly silent. For some the practice known as "centering prayer" makes a good, brief introduction to lectio divina. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments.

THEN TURN to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." Do not expect lightening or ecstasies. In lectio divina God is teaching us to listen to Him, to seek Him in

silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, He softly, gently invites us ever more deeply into His presence.

NEXT TAKE the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Do not be afraid of "distractions." Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself which, when they rise up during lectio divina, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

THEN, SPEAK to God. Whether you use words or ideas or images or all three is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to Him what you have discovered in yourself during your experience of meditation. Experience yourself as the priest that you are. Experience God using the word or phrase that He has given you as a means of blessing, of transforming the ideas and memories, which your pondering on His word has awakened. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

FINALLY, SIMPLY rest in God's embrace. And when He invites you to return to your pondering of His word or to your inner dialogue with Him, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

SOMETIMES IN lectio divina one will return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given, or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for lectio divina. It is not necessary to anxiously assess the quality of one's lectio divina as if one were "performing" or seeking some goal: lectio divina has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

Lectio Divina as a Group Exercise

THE most authentic and traditional form of Christian lectio divina is the solitary or "private" practice described to this point. In recent years, however, many different forms of so-called "group lectio" have become popular and are now widely-practiced. These group exercises can be very useful means of introducing and encouraging the practice of lectio divina; but they should not become a substitute for an encounter and communion with the Living God that can only take place in that privileged solitude where the biblical Word of God becomes transparent to the Very Word Himself - namely private lectio divina.

IN churches of the Third World where books are rare, a form of corporate lectio divina is becoming common in which a text from the Scriptures is pondered by Christians praying together in a group. The method of group lectio divina described here was introduced at St. Andrew's Abbey by oblates Doug and Norvene Vest: it is used as part of the Benedictine Spirituality for Laity workshops conducted at the Abbey each summer.

THIS FORM of lectio divina works best in a group of between four and eight people. A group leader coordinates the process and facilitates sharing. The same text from the Scriptures is read out three

times, followed each time by a period of silence and an opportunity for each member of the group to share the fruit of her or his lectio.

THE FIRST reading (the text is actually read twice on this occasion) is for the purpose of hearing a word or passage that touches the heart. When the word or phrase is found, it is silently taken in, and gently recited and pondered during the silence which follows. After the silence each person shares which word or phrase has touched his or her heart.

THE SECOND reading (by a member of the opposite sex from the first reader) is for the purpose of "hearing" or "seeing" Christ in the text. Each ponders the word that has touched the heart and asks where the word or phrase touches his or her life that day. In other words, how is Christ the Word touching his own experience, his own life? How are the various members of the group seeing or hearing Christ reach out to them through the text? Then, after the silence, each member of the group shares what he or she has "heard" or "seen."

THE THIRD and final reading is for the purpose of experiencing Christ "calling us forth" into doing or being. Members ask themselves what Christ in the text is calling them to do or to become today or this week. After the silence, each shares for the last time; and the exercise concludes with each person praying for the person on the right.

THOSE WHO who regularly practice this method of praying and sharing the Scriptures regularly find it to be an excellent way of developing trust within a group; it also is an excellent way of consecrating projects and hopes to Christ before more formal group meetings. A summary of this method for group lectio divina is appended at the end of this article.

Lectio Divina on Life

IN THE ancient tradition lectio divina was understood as being one of the most important ways in which Christians experience God in creation. After all, the Scriptures are part of creation! If one is daily growing in the art of finding Christ in the pages of the Bible, one naturally begins to discover Him more clearly in aspects of the other things He has made. This includes, of course, our own personal history.

OUR OWN lives are fit matter for lectio divina. Very often our concerns, our relationships, our hopes and aspirations naturally intertwine with our pondering on the Scriptures, as has been described above. But sometimes it is fitting to simply sit down and "read" the experiences of the last few days or weeks in our hearts, much as we might slowly read and savor the words of Scripture in lectio divina. We can attend "with the ear of our hearts" to our own memories, listening for God's gentle presence in the events of our lives. We thus allow ourselves the joy of experiencing Christ reaching out to us through our own memories. Our own personal story becomes "salvation history."

FOR THOSE who are new to the practice of lectio divina a group experience of "lectio on life" can provide a helpful introduction. An approach that has been used at workshops at St. Andrew's Priory is detailed at the end of this article. Like the experience of lectio divina shared in community, this group experience of lectio on life can foster relationships in community and enable personal experiences to be consecrated - offered to Christ - in a concrete way.

HOWEVER, UNLIKE scriptural lectio divina shared in community, this group lectio on life contains more silence than sharing. The role of group facilitators or leaders is important, since they will be guiding the group through several periods of silence and reflection without the "interruption" of individual sharing until the end of the exercise. Since the experiences we choose to "read" or "listen to" may be intensely personal, it is important in this group exercise to safeguard privacy by making sharing completely optional.

IN BRIEF, one begins with restful silence, then gently reviews the events of a given period of time. One seeks an event, a memory, which touches the heart just as a word or phrase in scriptural lectio divina does. One then recalls the setting, the circumstances; one seeks to discover how God seemed to be present or absent from the experience. One then offers the event to God and rests for a time in silence. A suggested method for group lectio divina on life is given in the Appendix to this article.

CONCLUSION

LECTIO DIVINA is an ancient spiritual art that is being rediscovered in our day. It is a way of allowing the Scriptures to become again what God intended that they should be - a means of uniting us to Himself. In lectio divina we discover our own underlying spiritual rhythm. We experience God in a gentle oscillation back and forth between spiritual activity and receptivity, in the movement from practice into contemplation and back again into spiritual practice.

LECTIO DIVINA teaches us about the God who truly loves us. In lectio divina we dare to believe that our loving Father continues to extend His embrace to us today. And His embrace is real. In His word we experience ourselves as personally loved by God; as the recipients of a word which He gives uniquely to each of us whenever we turn to Him in the Scriptures.

FINALLY, lectio divina teaches us about ourselves. In lectio divina we discover that there is no place in our hearts, no interior corner or closet that cannot be opened and offered to God. God teaches us in lectio divina what it means to be members of His royal priesthood - a people called to consecrate all of our memories, our hopes and our dreams to Christ.

APPENDIX: TWO APPROACHES to GROUP LECTIO DIVINA

1. Lectio Divina Shared in Community

(A) Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word (The Literal Sense)

1. One person reads aloud (twice) the passage of scripture, as others are attentive to some segment that is especially meaningful to them.
2. Silence for 1-2 minutes. Each hears and silently repeats a word or phrase that attracts.
3. Sharing aloud: [A word or phrase that has attracted each person]. A simple statement of one or a few words. No elaboration.

(B) How Christ the Word speaks to ME (The Allegorical Sense)

4. Second reading of same passage by another person.
5. Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?"
6. Sharing aloud: Briefly: "I hear, I see..."

(C) What Christ the Word Invites me to DO

(The Moral Sense)

7. Third reading by still another person.

8. Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "I believe that God wants me to today/this week."

9. Sharing aloud: at somewhat greater length the results of each one's reflection. [Be especially aware of what is shared by the person to your right.]

10. After full sharing, pray for the person to your right.

Note: Anyone may "pass" at any time. If instead of sharing with the group you prefer to pray silently, simply state this aloud and conclude your silent prayer with Amen.

2. Lectio on Life: Applying Lectio Divina to my personal Salvation History

Purpose: to apply a method of prayerful reflection to a life/work incident (instead of to a scripture passage)

(A) Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word

(The Literal Sense)

1. Each person quiets the body and mind: relax, sit comfortably but alert, close eyes, attune to breathing...

2. Each person gently reviews events, situations, sights, encounters that have happened since the beginning of the retreat/or during the last month at work.

(B) Gently Ruminating, Reflecting

(Meditatio - Meditation)

3. Each person allows the self to focus on one such offering.

a) Recollect the setting, sensory details, sequence of events, etc.

b) Notice where the greatest energy seemed to be evoked. Was there a turning point or shift?

c) In what ways did God seem to be present? To what extent was I aware then? Now?

(C) Prayerful Consecration, Blessing

(Oratio - Prayer)

4. Use a word or phrase from the Scriptures to inwardly consecrate - to offer up to God in prayer - the incident and interior reflections. Allow God to accept and bless them as your gift.

(D) Accepting Christ's Embrace; Silent Presence to the Lord

(Contemplatio - Contemplation)

5. Remain in silence for some period.

(E) Sharing our Lectio Experience with Each Other

(Operatio - Action; works)

6. Leader calls the group back into "community."

7. All share briefly (or remain in continuing silence).

Praying with Art – Visio Divina

While *Lectio Divina* is a method of praying with scripture, *Visio Divina* (Latin for "divine seeing") is a method for praying with images or other media.

While the Orthodox tradition has long practiced praying with images through icons, the western church, and Protestantism in particular, is less comfortable with this type of prayer. But as a cursory glance through scripture will show, images have been an important part of God's way of communicating. Ezekiel's vision of dry bones, and Peter's dream on the rooftop in Acts 10, are just two instances of how images and prayer are vitally connected.

With our culture becoming more and more visually oriented, an intentional way of praying with images is needed now more than ever. Visio Divina invites us to see at a more contemplative pace. It invites us to see all there is to see, exploring the entirety of the image. It invites us to see deeply, beyond first and second impressions, below initial ideas, judgments, or understandings. It invites us to be seen, addressed, surprised, and transformed by God who is never limited or tied to any image, but speaks through them.

There is no set time frame for the guided prayer below, but twenty to thirty minutes is suggested. As your prayer begins, take a few moments to open your heart and mind to God. When you are ready, slowly look and notice the image, taking your time to let feelings and thoughts come to you as you take in forms, figures, colors, lines, textures, and shapes. What does it look like, or remind you of? What do you find yourself drawn to? What do you like and not like? What are your initial thoughts? What feelings are evoked?

In this initial stage of your prayer simply notice these responses without judgment or evaluation. If you don't like the image, or the feelings evoked, simply acknowledge that this is your initial response and continue to stay open to the image and the prayer. If you have an immediate idea as to what the image means, again, simply acknowledge that this is your initial response and stay open to "the more" as the prayer unfolds.

As your prayer expands, return to the image with an open heart and mind. New thoughts, meanings, and feelings may arise; initial impressions may expand and deepen. Explore more fully the meanings that come to you, and the feelings associated with the image and its colors and forms. Be aware of any assumptions or expectations that you bring to the image. No matter what your response is to the image -- delight, disgust, indifference, confusion -- ponder prayerfully the reason for your various responses and what these responses might mean for you.

As your prayer deepens, open yourself to what the image might reveal to you. What does it and the Spirit want to say, evoke, make known, or express to you as you attend to it in quiet meditation? Become aware of the feelings, thoughts, desires, and meanings evoked by the image and how they are directly connected to your life.

Does it evoke for you important meanings or values, remind you of an important event or season, or suggest a new or different way of being? What desires and longings are evoked in your prayer? How do you find yourself wanting to respond to what you are experiencing? Take the time to respond to God in ways commensurate with your prayer: gratitude, supplication, wonder, lament, confession, dance, song, praise, etc.

In the remaining few minutes of your prayer with this image, bring to mind or jot down in a journal (whatever way is most helpful for you) the insights you want to remember, actions you are invited to take, wisdom you hope to embody, or any feelings or thoughts you wish to express. Bring your prayer to a close by resting in God's grace and love.

Audio Divina

For many of us, music is often a transcendent experience, lifting us above the worries and distractions of daily life. Consider using music as a doorway into prayer and cultivating your ability to listen with the ear of your heart. We call this audio divina, or sacred listening. You might begin with a selection of explicitly sacred music such as Mozart's Requiem Mass, or you might try this practice with a piece of sacred jazz, such as the title track from Deanna Witkowski's new CD, "From This Place."

Preparation

Prepare for your prayer by finding a quiet place and take some time to settle yourself into stillness and rest in silence. Become aware of the sacredness of this time you have set aside. Breathe in an awareness of God's presence, breathe out distractions and worries. Slowly allow your focus to move from your head down into your heart. See if you can visualize this movement of your attention and awareness shifting.

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