The Rule of St. Benedict

The Benedictine Center
of St. Paul's Monastery

Oblate Handbook
www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Oblates-Handbook.pdf

Developing a Personal Rule of Life

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Affiliated with Sacred Heart Monastery, Yankton, SD. 2020

The original intent for March 2020 was to have an in-person Rule of Life Spiritual Pause to meet together and consider various approaches to developing a Personal Rule of Life. In light of the coronavirus pandemic, this is a more in-depth personal study of how to develop or update a Rule of Life. It is not intended to be overwhelming! Consider taking your time as you read through each section. There is no time limit for when your Rule should be complete. In fact, it is an ongoing process and you should be adjusting your Rule as your life circumstances change. Be gentle with the expectations that you bring to this process.

The Rule of Life Spiritual Pause includes background information about the Rule of Benedict, resources to use including the Oblate Handbook, and some options for ways to approach your Personal Rule.

First, find an extended time with few distractions, and have your Rule of Benedict and Oblate Handbook and some writing materials close by. If you do not have a Handbook, see below for a link to our website.

Arriving practice: Start by taking a few deep breaths and let yourself become aware of the weight of your body being supported by your chair. Notice the sensations in your body and especially to notice how you arrive at today's spiritual pause. Are you anxious? Hopeful? Uncertain? Please know that God is here to meet you where you are.

Take a few minutes of silent prayer to begin.

The Rule of St. Benedict and developing a Personal Rule of Life

If you do not have a Rule of Benedict, here's a link for daily readings of the Rule:

http://archive.osb.org/rb/index.html

St. Benedict wrote the Rule for a specific group of monks in the early 6th century. This "little rule for beginners" spread over the years and resulted in the rise of monasticism in Europe and all over the world. The Rule continues to be relevant and helpful today. It is not intended to be "harsh or burdensome" (RB Prologue vs 46), so we should also be gentle on our own expectations of developing and following our Personal Rule of Life.

Generally speaking, the Rule has several themes woven throughout its pages: a balance between prayer and work or daily manual labor, preferring Christ above all, stewardship for the items and utensils we use, and the humility to serve others in various ways. One may start with these general themes, and reflect on our own life and how we might want to continue our current efforts or to cultivate in greater depth certain practices or tasks that uphold these themes.

Using the Oblate Handbook

The Oblate Handbook has a section on a Rule of Life; Chapter IV, p. 71.

Here is a link to the online Handbook:

https://www.nebraskabenedictineoblates.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/OblatesHandbook-SacredHeartMonastery.pdf

In addition to providing background information and study resources about becoming a Benedictine Oblate, the Handbook is also a reference for spiritual formation including developing a Personal Rule of Life. Review the definitions of a rule and think of ways it can be adaptable to one's own life. We are reminded that when we have made or will make our Final Oblation, we promise to follow the Rule of Benedict "as our state in life permits"; even in our promises we are given the flexibility to change with our personal circumstances. The Rule of Life section has valuable information and processes and even samples of personal rules.

Highlighted selections from the Rule of Benedict

Rule of Benedict (RB) Prologue, v. 46*: "In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome."* This particular verse encourages us to not be too hard on ourselves. For many, if not most, people, there is a little voice that tends to judge oneself harshly and it can be difficult to turn down the volume on that voice. Be gentle with yourself. Give yourself permission to change the personal Rule so that you are able to follow it more closely. Find the way of moderation with your Rule; not too strict and not too loose. We are reminded of a story where a visitor once asked what the monks or nuns do in the monastery all day. The response is: "we fall down, we get back up; we fall down, and then we get back up." Isn't that what life feels like most days? The implicit message is that between the falling down and getting back up, that we don't chastise ourselves excessively. Being aware of missing the mark on your Rule is helpful to regain the focus on continuing to follow the guidelines. If you find your thoughts are mostly of negativity and self-blame, consider stopping and asking where that voice is coming from. You may want to talk to a Spiritual Director for support. Pray for the ability to start over with a clean slate.

Reading the Rule from a different translation, or in this case, a contemporary paraphrase, can help us to get the sense of a chapter that really helps us with the big picture:

RB 72: The Good Zeal/Passion of Monastics*

*"Just as there are bad passions that lead us away from God to our own destruction, so too there are good passions that set us on fire to chase after God and the life that's really life. This is the right kind of passion that monastics must foster with fervent love: They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other (Romans12:10b). We're on this road together, and so we must patiently bear with one another's spiritual and physical weaknesses, giving our all to learn to listen carefully to one another. No one should look after themselves, but each one should strive to serve the others in everything. To one another, members should show pure love; to God, loving reverence; to leadership, humble love. We should not want anything more than Christ, who can bring us together to the life that lasts forever. "**From: "The Rule of St. Benedict: A Contemporary Paraphrase", by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, 2012.

Note that in this section from the RB, the emphasis is on supporting each other, including spiritual *and* physical weaknesses. Is there someone you know that is going through a difficult time? Is there someone who physically needs support? Consider including in your Rule a way to be listening for the call for help by others.

RB 48: The daily manual labor: "*specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading*" which provides a safeguard against frenetic activity and the dissipation of energies. In what way can you visualize including a balance of action and contemplation in your daily life?

Approaches to developing a Rule of Life:

Using a schematic for organizing facets of life (see: Figure 1) Look at the circular schematic image including the themes of Health, Relationship, Rest and Work (*credit: Brian Carrier*). Take note of the detailed examples of each theme that fit into each parts of one's life. How might you organize your day following this schematic as a guide?

Using a daily or weekly schedule (see: Figures 2-4). Perhaps you decide on a schedule for a typical day, including the time that a task is to be completed, such as praying upon waking, or time set aside for Lectio Divina or another contemplative practice. Perhaps each day you would like to include tasks that help you be healthier, such as exercise or including time for food preparation, recreation or leisure, whether alone or with others. Figure 2 is a visualization of how your time is spent each day in pie chart form. You may want to do the same for your daily life today and rework the chart for how you would like your day to be more in balance.

Scheduling Sabbath time throughout the year (see Figure 5). Consider times for extended Sabbath that may include 1 day each week or month, a few days each quarter, and/or a week every year for time spent in more intensive prayer and contemplative practices. Write down specific examples of what practices you might participate in and whether this includes travel to a sacred or special place. (Example: an annual retreat at Sacred Heart Monastery)

Please note: Not every person prefers or is able to have a rigid structure to their day. Instead, an alternative approach may be to reflect on and answer specific questions, such as

"How can I care for my relationships with God or the Divine, with myself, and with others?"

"What are some concrete ways to include tasks or themes that help me to tend to and care for these relationships?"

"How can I further develop the relationships I have as an Oblate, including with the sisters at Sacred Heart, and with other Oblates?"

Revisit these questions frequently throughout the year.

Tree of Contemplative Practices and Options for Spiritual Practices

The word contemplative means "sitting or being inside something whole". It is a way of being, whether in a passive or still moment or physically moving our bodies or even listening carefully and intentionally to others. Contemplative practices provide us with a holistic way of being with what's happening our daily lives. The Tree of Contemplative Practices was developed by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, which is a secular non-profit in Massachusetts. The Tree is included below (Figure 6) and here is an online link if you would like more information:

http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree

On the website there is a free video explaining in more detail how the Tree of Contemplative Practices was developed and in-depth descriptions of each branch. Maia Duerr, one of the creators of the Tree, describes contemplative practice as *"shining a light on what we're doing, building self-awareness and compassion for others, and resilience to what comes to us in life."* This definition is helpful to consider how these practices can support our efforts in developing and following a Personal Rule of Life.

Description of the Tree of Contemplative Practices (TCP)

There are two roots to the TCP—communion and connection with something greater than yourself, AND awareness—of the wisdom that lives inside of you, also your habits, choices and patterns.

As you look over the seven branches of the TCP, take note to what branches you connect with already, and give yourself credit for already 'practicing' the practices. Jot down some examples of practices you already do, and some possible ways to include others into your daily tasks, or plan to set aside time to complete them.

Using one's creativity can be helpful to move beyond words and lists when developing or updating a Personal Rule of Life. Using markers, paper, pencils, and magazines as another option to cultivate a personal Rule by using colors and images. Take your time in this process; it isn't necessarily the end result of a Personal Rule of Life that is important. The process of noticing and being aware of our reactions and usual modes of operations every day has great value.

We are all individuals. We know what types of guidelines help prod us along in our day and what types tend to inhibit our participation. For some, a detailed list placed in a prominent place in our home is a helpful reminder. Others may use a colorful poster or a file that we can refer to every time we use a computer to help remind us of our Personal Rule.

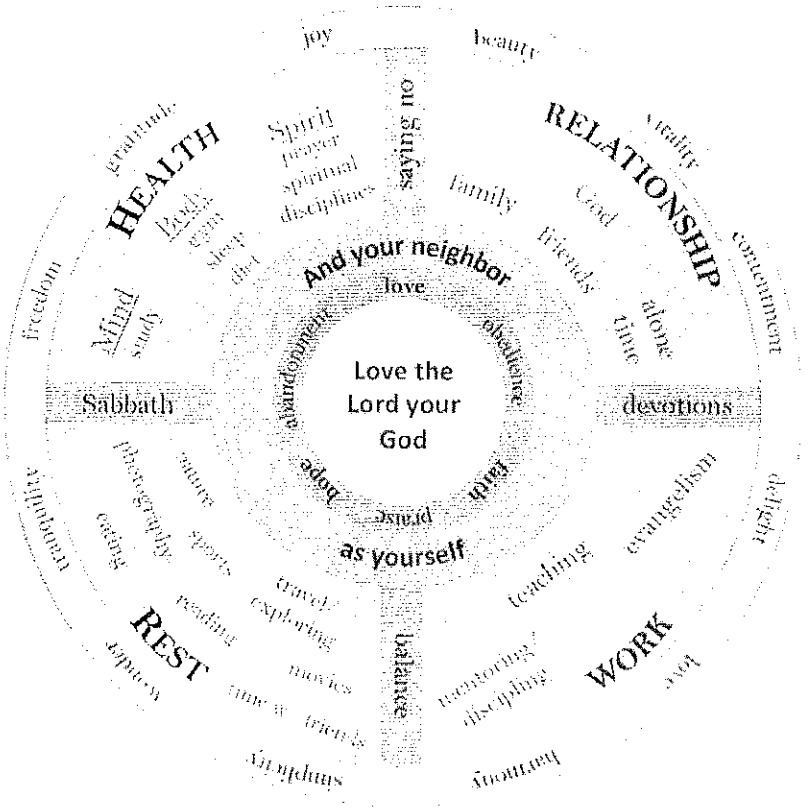
Using the Oblate's Prayer (see Figure 7) instead of viewing a Rule of Life as a schedule. Instead, it can be a catalyst for a personal reminder about a one's Rule of Life. Look at all the parts of an Oblates' life that is included in the prayer. Perhaps you may want to say this prayer frequently throughout your week as a reminder to what an Oblate life could look like.

Next steps:

Take some time in quiet reflection and consider what mode of developing a Personal Rule of Life would be the best for you: detailed schedule, themes, creative, Pie chart, Tree of Contemplative Practices, Oblate's Prayer, or another mode that works for you. Find the best way of reminding yourself what your Personal Rule is and frequently reflect on it and how you are able to follow it. Be gentle with your expectations, and understand that you may adapt it at any time.

We are reminded of St. Benedict's admonition that his rule should be "nothing harsh, nothing burdensome", and so should your Rule be as well!

Figure 1



Rule of Life
Spring 2013

Brian Carrier

https://ruleoflife.com/myrule/

Figure 2

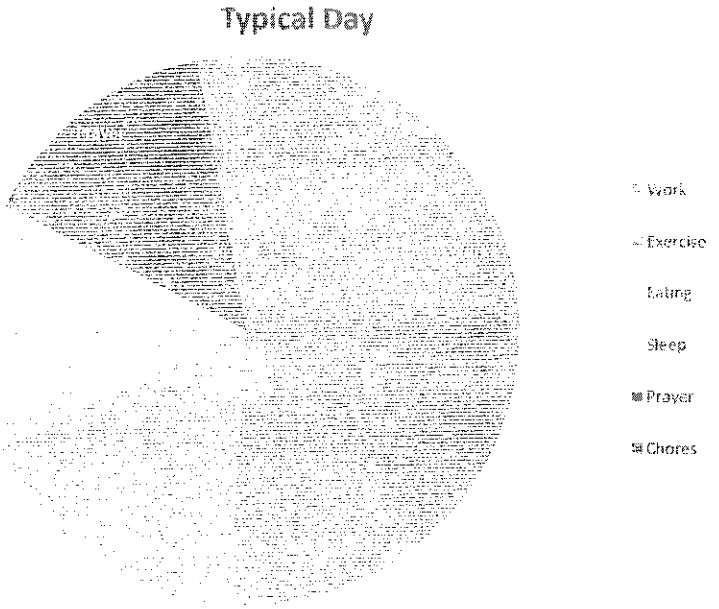


Figure 3 **My Personal Rule of Life Weekly Schedule**

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Contemplative practices/prayer							
Chores							
Rest							
Leisure							
Work							
Exercise							

Figure 4 **My Personal Rule of Life Daily Calendar**

Early morning
8 a.m.
9 a.m.
10 a.m.
11 a.m.
12 p.m.
1 p.m.
2 p.m.
3 p.m.
4 p.m.
5 p.m.
6 p.m.
Evening

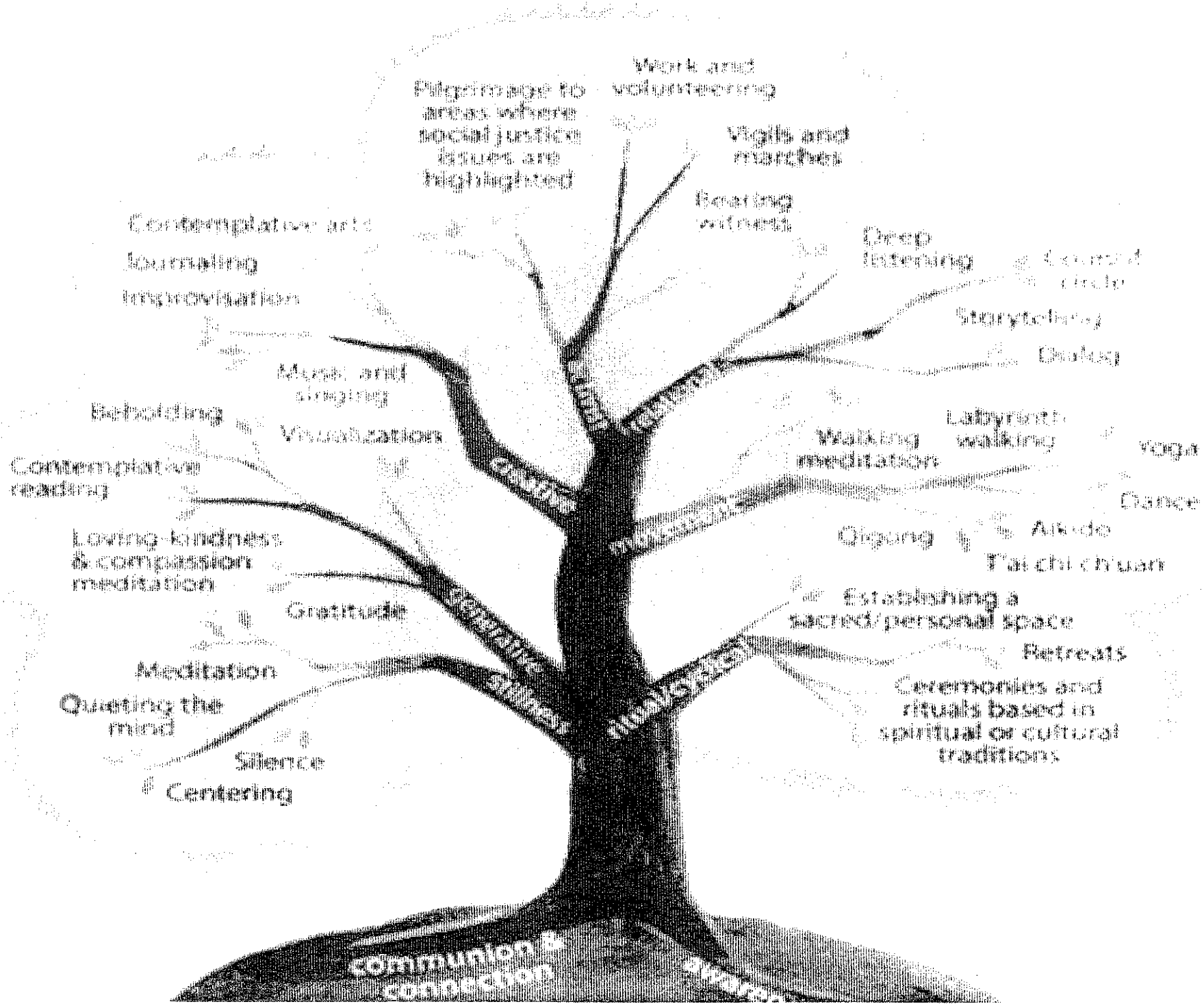

Work and volunteering
Pilgrimage to areas where social justice issues are highlighted
Vigils and marches
Bearing witness
Contemplative arts
Journaling
Improvisation
Deep listening
Storytelling
Dialog
Music and singing
Beholding
Visualization
Labyrinth walking
Walking meditation
Yoga
Contemplative reading
Dance
Loving-kindness & compassion meditation
Qigong
Aikido
Tai chi chuan
Gratitude
Establishing a sacred/personal space
Retreats
Meditation
Quieting the mind
Ceremonies and rituals based in spiritual or cultural traditions
Silence
Centering
communion &
connection

Figure 7

The Oblate's Prayer and a Rule of Life

O Loving God,
I ask your blessing this day
on all the Oblates of Saint Benedict
and those with whom we are affiliated.

Help us to become people
of prayer and peace.

Though scattered far and wide,
help us to be together
in the spirit of your love.
Give us hearts wide enough
to embrace each other
as well as those
whose lives we touch.
Enable us to listen and to learn
from each other
and those around us each day.
May we be models
in our homes, neighborhoods,
and communities
of wise stewardship,
dignified human labor,
sacred leisure,
and reverence for all living things.

Above all, O God, may our presence
among others
be a constant witness of justice,
compassion, and hope to all. Amen.

Self-reflection:

Review the themes of the Oblates' prayer below, noting which areas tend to be 'easy' and which are challenging. Prayerfully consider how you may address 2 or 3 areas to emphasize over the coming year. Be as specific as you can, and also be gentle with your expectations. You may prefer to write out your plan, or use creative ways such as using images or drawing to do the same. Place your Rule of Life in an area of your home where you can look at it frequently as a reminder.

Prayer

Peace

Community—Oblates, work, home

Wide hearts/embracing

Listening

Learning

Wise stewardship

Dignified human labor

Sacred leisure

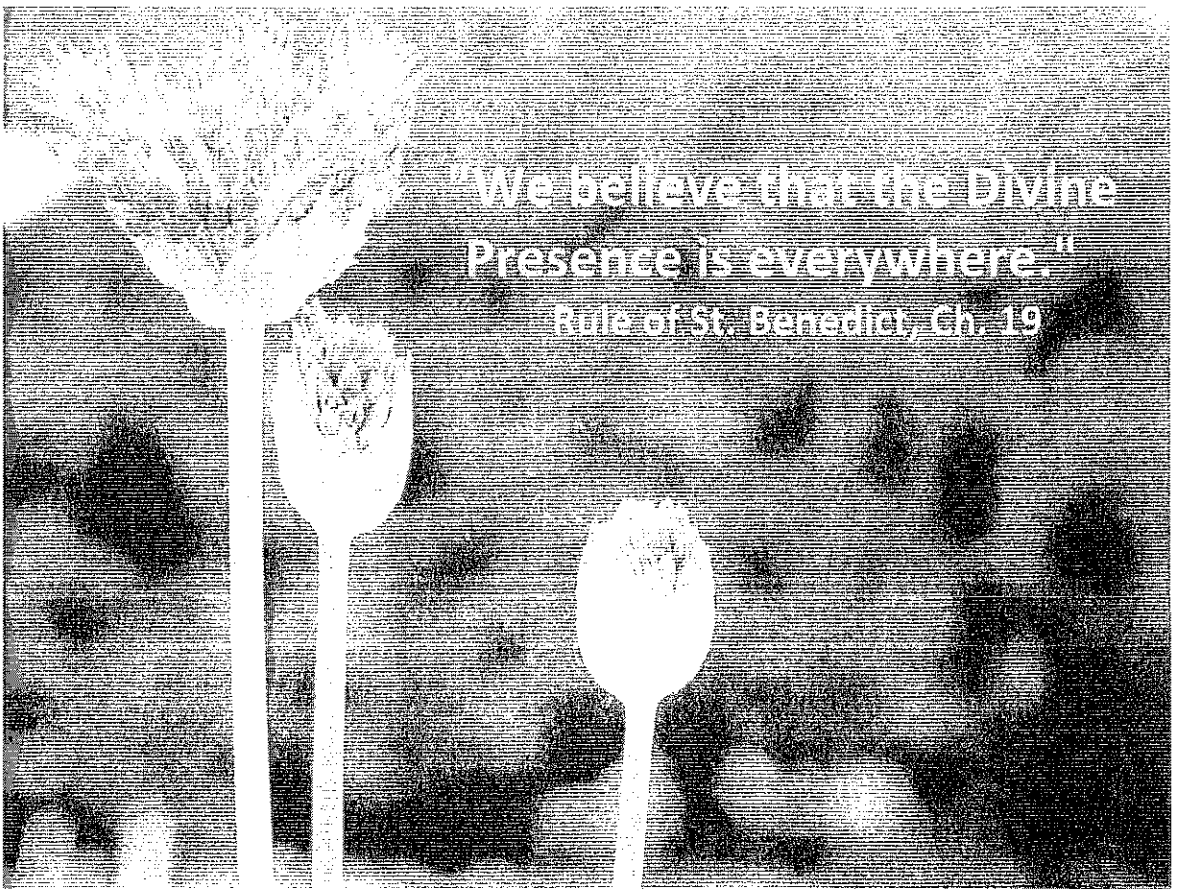
Reverence for all living things

Justice

Compassion

Hope

Thank you for taking the time to further deepen your spiritual and daily life as an Oblate of St Benedict!



The Rule of Saint Benedict

The Rule of St. Benedict is a timeless document - in so many ways as fresh and relevant as it was when it was written almost fifteen hundred years ago. Although written for monastics, many of the issues addressed in the Rule can be applied to life in the world outside the monastic community. The qualities which make up a valued life - humility, patience, simplicity, solitude, caring for others, and living in community - concern everyone. These specifics of the Rule, and the framework it provides, have great meaning for people who are seeking to live out their faith in the world today.

The Rule offers people a plan for living a balanced, simple, and prayerful life.

The Rule of Benedict (RB) constitutes a basic guide for living the Christian life and continues to be followed by every Benedictine monastery and convent in the world today. Just the idea that a guide for living could not only last 1500 years, but continue to be followed by thousands of people makes its study valuable for monks and nuns as well as laypeople.

The Vows

In the Rule, Benedict tells his monks and nuns that a balance of prayer, work, study, and leisure (renewal) is their way, that the Divine Office is their work (*opus dei*), and the vows of **stability, conversion**, and **obedience** are their commitments. These vows have much to say to those of us not living in a monastery or convent:

Stability

Stability refers to the importance of community and commitment in life. For a monk or nun it refers directly to a commitment to the monastery where they will live for the rest of their life. While we all may not be a member of a monastic order, we can make our vow of stability to our families, to our faith communities, to our local and global communities, and to our fellow pilgrims along the journey of faith. The vow of stability also speaks to our current environmental crisis—for when we remain committed to the earth we learn how to be good stewards of that which God has given us.

Conversion

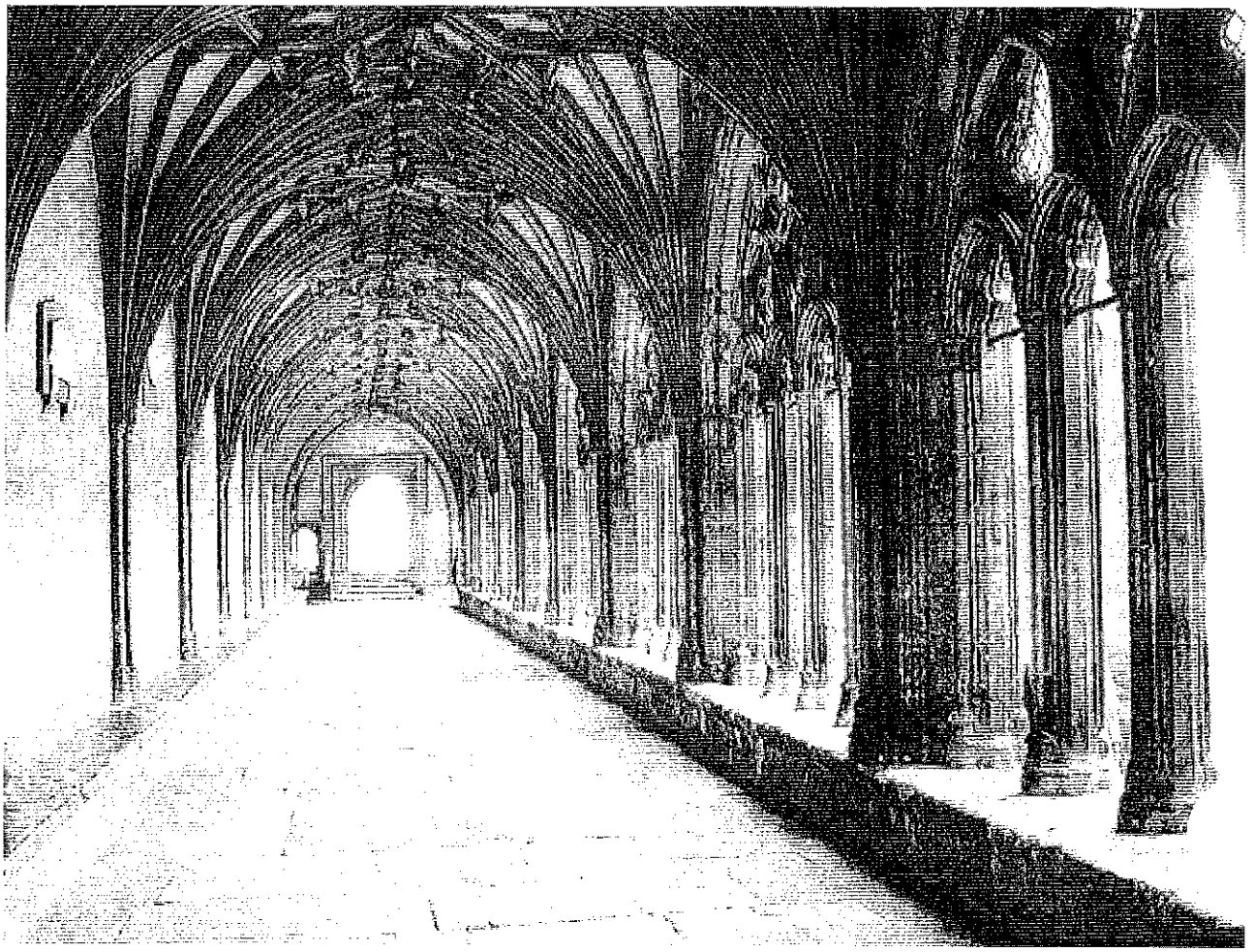
Conversion is not confined to a one time experience. To a monk or nun, conversion of life reminds ther everything they do is from, for, and with God and that God converts us continually. The vow tells the mo... they are to acknowledge that conversion and be open to it. For those of us not in the monastery conversion is an ongoing process as well, one that helps us walk continually in the presence of God. In order to open our ears to God's voice and our eyes to God's presence among us, Benedict tells us we must keep our hearts and our minds

open to the ways that God is moving us. When we block the transformation that God is working within us, then we are not living into the Benedictine Way. An open heart is one that allows balanced practices of prayer, work, study, hospitality, and renewal to illuminate the ways that God is working within us and within the world.

Obedience

Obedience comes from the Latin word for "listen". The practice of attentive listening is foundational to the Benedictine Rule of Life. Benedict wrote that everyone in the community needed to listen to one another, and that sometimes God speaks through the youngest person in the community. Nonetheless, it is the Abbot who needs to make the decisions in end, and each member of the community must obey him. Obedience can be a heavy word for us today. Yet a healthy, balanced view of obedience - as a way of cultivating a disciplined, intentional life that is yearning to be obedient to God - is a desire that many people in today's world have and this makes the vow of obedience relevant. Obedience can entail a healthy sense of humility (self-knowledge) and of respecting and following the guides, leaders, teachers, and fellow travelers who are guiding you on your path towards God.

The Rule revolves around five practices:
Prayer, Work, Study, Hospitality and Renewal.



St. Benedict

Part I **Overview of Benedictine Spirituality**
Part II **Biography of St. Benedict**

Part I. Overview of Benedictine Spirituality

Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, and all people are welcomed as Christ according to Benedictine hospitality under the Rule of St. Benedict.

The Rule of St. Benedict is a set of rules and principles for monks living together in monasteries, but it can apply to all those who are not monks who feel the need to seek God and to become closer to the sovereign God of the universe. A safe harbor.

Benedictine spirituality is what first attracts many to the Rule of St. Benedict even as they 'keep their day job.' The reason people from all backgrounds including non-Catholic ones find deep spirituality in the Divine Office and the other Benedictine practices in the Rule such as the emphasis on work and *lectio divina* (slow prayerful reading), is difficult to state briefly. However, it may involve the following characteristics:

Antiquity of 3,000 and 1,500 years. Benedictine practices of daily singing of the psalms (songs) are based on ancient traditions dating back nearly 3,000 years to King Solomon and the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Benedict wrote and compiled the Rule in the year 530. For the 1,500 years since, monks have been conducting the Divine Office several times a day, each day. This makes the Benedictine Divine Office one of the oldest, daily observances of any kind anywhere in the world.

Before the Divisions. The use of the Psalms has continued in an unbroken chain of tradition from the days of antiquity before any division between Jews and Christians. Protestants can quickly feel an affinity with St. Benedict and an era which is about a 1,000 years prior to Martin Luther's publication of his *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517 which led to the Reformation and a split in Christianity. For major parts of the Divine Office, the texts are taken from times when those who acknowledged God's sovereignty were in greatest unity.

From the Human Ancestors of Jesus. The personal accounts of the struggles and unbending faith of those in the human lineage of Jesus (the Jewish authors of the Psalms) makes it easier for us to feel a kinship with these most ancient songs to God.

Presence of the Holy Spirit. There are no unique elements in the Benedictine Divine Office. Most everyone has sung a hymn and read the Psalms. But in some way, the balance of the Divine Office or the filling of those elements by the Holy Spirit makes participation in the Divine Office either with monks or privately something different in kind from just the sum of its parts.

Purity of Message. In the Divine Office the participants sing or recite the psalms and meditate upon them. There is no sermon; it is God that interprets the message within you. Silence and quiet reflection are important parts of this form of worship.

Structure and Completeness. The Benedictine lifestyle instills a strong sense of fullness and participation in practices that return to the earliest days of a life-filling Christianity.

Under the Rule of St. Benedict, between 4 and 7 times a day monks sing a hymn, sing and read several psalms responsively (two alternating choirs), read from the Bible and early church fathers, and pray. These sessions are called the Divine Office, or Liturgy of the Hours, or the Work of God (*Opus Dei*). Those who are not monks read and pray the Divine Office individually or in small groups as often as their lifestyle permits.

Not an Advanced Theological Degree. The Benedictine Way is not an intellectual education. Perhaps because of its extensive reliance on Biblical texts, Benedictine practices might be seen best as a pathway, well traveled by the ancient feet of spiritual pilgrims and by those who are still on the pathway today.

Part II Biography of St. Benedict

Summary. St. Benedict of Nursia, Italy. Born at Nursia, c. 480 AD; died at Monte Cassino, Italy, 543 AD. Benedict was author/compiler of a Rule for monks. Benedict's Rule became the foundation of western monasticism.

If you have a mental image from history class of ancient monks copying books by hand, teaching the local population to read, spreading the Gospel among pagan tribes across Europe, and preserving the light of civilization through the Dark Ages, you have a fairly accurate picture. And you can put a name to most of those monks, they were Benedictines.

Fall of Rome, Foundations of a New Civilization. Flavius Romulus Augustus, the last Roman emperor was removed in 476 AD by the barbarian chief Odoacer. This date is used as the official end of the 1,000-year existence of the Roman Empire. With the decay of the Roman Empire, Europe saw the collapse of civilization. It was also into this world that Benedict was born.

Wealthy Family and Good Education. Benedict and his sister, St. Scholastica, came from a wealthy family in the beautiful mountainous region of Nursia, 75 miles northeast of Rome. Perhaps to put the great antiquity of Benedict's work in perspective with the other great religious orders, St. Francis of Assisi was born in the same region about 700 years after St. Benedict.

Benedict was well-educated in Rome where, after a religious experience probably in his late teens or early 20s, he withdrew from the fast-paced and deteriorating remnants of the Roman world around him.

At Enfide. "Benedict does not seem to have left Rome for the purpose of becoming a hermit, but only to find some place away from the life of the great city; moreover, he took his old nurse with him as a servant and they settled down to live in Enfide, near a church dedicated to St. Peter, in some kind of association with "a company of virtuous men" who were in sympathy with his feelings and his views of life." At Enfide, St. Benedict became well known and because of his many visitors he left Enfide seeking even greater separation from the world. From *Catholic Encyclopedia — St. Benedict.*

At Subiaco. Benedict went to Subiaco (about 35 miles east of Rome) where he lived as a hermit for three years in a cave. He was aided by monk Romanus whose monastery was nearby. Romanus gave Benedict monk's clothing and brought Benedict food at scheduled times.

As a New Abbot. At Subiaco, Benedict also became well-respected among the local religious communities and when the abbot of a nearby

monastery died, the monks sought Benedict to become their abbot. Benedict knew that he and the group of monks did not agree on how monks should live, but Benedict reluctantly agreed to be their abbot. The monks did become dissatisfied and perhaps jealous of Benedict. The monks who had begged him to become their abbot now tried to poison him.

Poisoned Wine. "So when the glass which contained the empoisoned drink was, according to the custom of the Monastery, presented at table to be blessed by the Abbot, Benedict putting forth his hand and making the sign of the Cross, the glass which was held far off brake in pieces, as if instead of blessing the vase of death, he had thrown a stone against it. By this the man of God perceived that the glass had in it the drink of death which could not endure the sign of life. So presently rising up with a mild countenance and tranquil mind, having called the Brethren together, he thus spake unto them: "Almighty God of His mercy forgive you, Brethren, why have you dealt thus with me? Did not I foretell you that my manner of life and yours would not agree? Go, and seek a Superior to your liking; for you can have me no longer with you." From *The Life of Our Most Holy Father Saint Benedict* by Pope Saint Gregory the Great.

Twelve Monasteries. Benedict returned to Subiaco. There Benedict, accompanied by some faithful men, established 12 monasteries near Subiaco. Each monastery had 12 monks. Benedict appointed deans over these small groups of men. Whether these monasteries followed the pattern of life that is found in Benedict's Rule is not known, but certainly all of Benedict's experiences helped shape the rest of Benedict's life.

At Monte Cassino, the Abbey. After the monasteries near Subiaco were self-sufficient, Benedict made his final major move — to the hill above the town of Cassino (70 miles southeast of Rome).

In 529 AD Benedict established the abbey of Monte Cassino which is recognized as the heart and founding center of Benedictine monasticism.

"Once established at Monte Cassino, St. Benedict never left it." From *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* — Abbey of Monte Cassino.

Monte Cassino Abbey has been destroyed three times by armies, including the 1944 bombing by the Allies during the World War II Battle of Monte Cassino. [The decision of the allies to bomb Monte

Cassino is controversial to this day.] The Abbey was rebuilt by the Italian government and consecrated by Pope Paul VI in 1964.

While at Monte Cassino Abbey, in about 530 Benedict wrote and compiled the Rule. Its influence spread over all Western monasticism.

Vision of the Single Ray of Light. It seems clear that Benedict was used by God in a way to help build a new civilization after the fall of the Roman Empire.

St. Benedict's contribution was his famous Rule by which monks could live together successfully in prayer and work in the Lord's service. His ability to create a balance in living the full Christian life has not been surpassed. His insight into the weakness of people as well as their longing to grow closer to God came from a man who had, himself, been close to the Glory of God. For example:

> One night "when it was time to go to rest, venerable Benedict went up to the top of the tower .... While as yet the Monks were at rest, the man of God, Benedict, being diligent in watching, rose up before the night office and stood at the window making his prayer to Almighty God about midnight, when suddenly, looking forth, there was a light glancing from above, so bright and resplendent that it not only dispersed the darkness of the night, but shined more clear than the day itself. Upon this sight a marvellous strange thing followed, for, as he afterwards related, the whole world, compacted as it were together, was represented to his eyes in one ray of light." *The Life of Our Most Holy Father Saint Benedict* by Pope Saint Gregory the Great.

The Greater Power of Love. Always close to her brother, Scholastica founded a religious community for women at Plombariola which is about five miles from Monte Cassino. Scholastica, "who was consecrated to God from her very childhood," would visit her bother once a year at small cottage located not far from the entrance of Monte Cassino Abbey. On her last visit to see her brother at his abbey she said to Benedict "I beseech you, leave me not this night, that we may talk until morning of the joys of the heavenly life." To whom he answered: "What is this you say, sister? By no means can I stay out of my Monastery."

"But Scholastica prayed that it might rain and a storm of great intensity kept Benedict from returning to the monastery.

"Benedict said to his sister 'God Almighty forgive you, sister, what is this you have done?' She replied, 'I prayed you to stay and you would not hear me; I prayed to Almighty God and he heard me! Now, therefore, if you can, go forth to the Monastery and leave me.' But he could not leave.

"Thus it fell out that they spent the night in watching, and received full content in spiritual discourse of heavenly matters. .... he found a miracle worked by the courage of a woman in the strength of Almighty God. And no wonder if at that time a woman were more powerful than he, considering she had long desired to see her brother. For according to the saying of Saint John:

> '"God is charity," and with good reason she was more powerful who loved more.'" From *The Life of Our Most Holy Father Saint Benedict* by Pope Saint Gregory the Great.

After returning to the monastery, a few days later on February 6, 543, Benedict knew that his sister Scholastica had died when in a vision he saw her soul ascending to heaven in the form of a dove. He understood then why she had wanted a little more time with him.

Death of Benedict 543. Not too long thereafter, on March 21, 543 at 3 o'clock in the morning, standing in the chapel of his Monastery of Mount Cassino, Benedict died at the age of 63 (From Haften's Disgnis. Monast.) From http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/stg02003.htm

Both St. Benedict and St. Scholastica are buried at Monte Cassino Abbey.

Rule of Choice for Western Monastic Life. In the following years and centuries, Benedict's Rule was adopted by greater numbers of monks as the Rule under which they wanted to live. Later the Rule was championed by Charlemagne (747 -818) and his son Louis (778-840), and the Rule became the most common rule across Europe.

Stability, Fidelity to the Monastic Life, and Obedience. Today Monks around the world continue to sing and pray the Divine Office several times a day. But monks have always had an impact on the wider world.

In 1309 "three busy officials of the King of England, Edward I .... had been sent to the last remaining fragments of the King's regions in France, and specifically to the island of Jersey, to enquire into the state of Royal property. [The officials heard about] two monks, by birth loyal to the King of France, by monastic vow attached to a Norman monastery and by chance of appointment abandoned on a remote outcrop of rock between Jersey and the Cherbourg peninsula. Their rock was truly tiny - at high tide little more than a break in the waves — but the King of England was nevertheless interested in who owned it, and, more particularly, in what its only two residents did. Their answer [provided a good insight into Benedictine life]:

> 'He who is called Prior and his companion ... dwelling in the chapel throughout the whole year maintain a light burning in that chapel so that the sailors crossing the sea by that light may avoid the peril of the reef ... where the greatest danger exists of being wrecked. These two always perform the divine office.'" From *The Benedictine Handbook* by Anthony Marett-Crosby, Editor.

It has been said that other than the Bible, the Rule for monks has been the most influential book in the development of western civilization. And sometimes its light is for just one sailor upon the sea.