

Benedictine Spirituality– Walking in Love

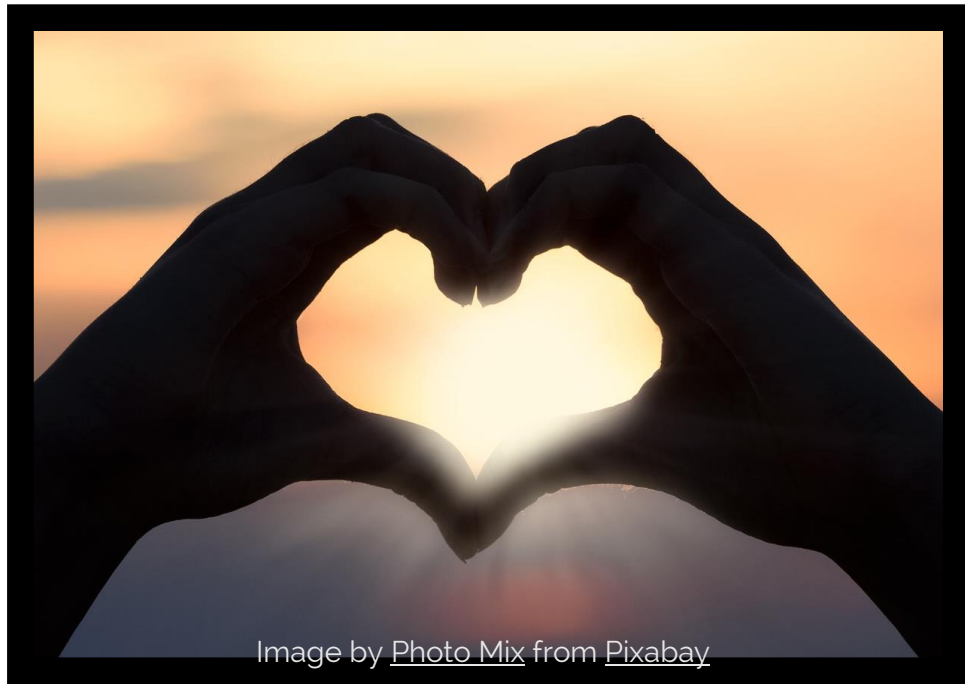


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Going Deeper

Benedictine Spirituality– Walking in Love

Prayer Opportunity One

We Reflect

St Benedict was the founder of a monastic order and numerous monasteries. His Rule for monastic living was widely adopted throughout the middle ages and is still used by the many Benedictine orders present today.

On the charism of love Benedict wrote in his Rule:

Your way of acting should be different from the world's way: the love of Christ must come before all else. You are not to act in anger or nurse a grudge. Rid your heart of all deceit. Never give a hollow greeting of peace or turn away when someone needs your love. (Rule of St. Benedict 4:20-26)

This message is as relevant today as when it was first written.

Benedict reminds his communities that love is the basis of all that it means to follow Jesus.

He says "the love of Christ must come before all else."

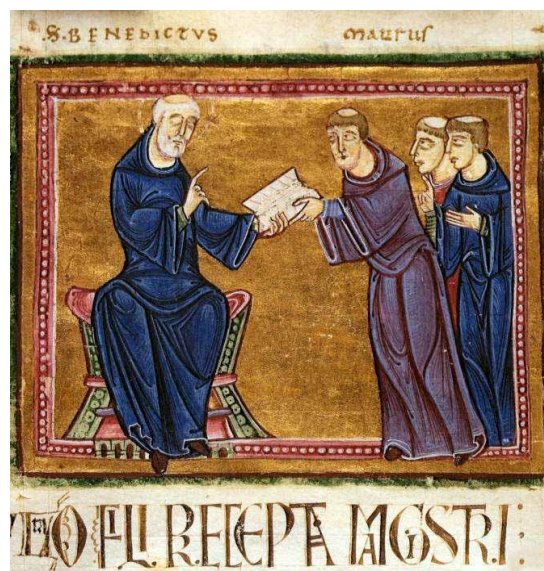
Learning to love is one of the most important tasks of our entire lives.

It's in the daily living out of our lives that this love is shown.

As we deal with difficult people and the challenging situations life presents for us we should be asking ourselves:

Are we loving others?

Are we putting the love of Christ before all else?



Saint Benedict delivering his rule to the monks of his order, Monastery of St. Gilles, Nimes, France, 1129

Lectio Divina.

The prayer practice of Lectio Divina is an ancient approach to prayer.

With this prayer we listen and reflect, as St. Benedict instructed, "*with the ear of the heart*" on a word, a phrase, an emotion or an image that holds for us a message from God.

In its traditional form Lectio Divina is a contemplative praying of the scriptures central to the Christian monastic tradition.

There are four steps:

Lectio – We quieten down by reading slowly and attentively, listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally.

Meditatio – Once we have found a word or passage that speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and ruminate on it. We repeat it gently and let it interact with our thoughts and feelings. This meditation on the word opens us to a deeper level.

Oratio – We then offer this in dialogue with God. Here we can use the healing word or phrase to touch and change our deepest selves.

Contemplatio – Finally, we simply rest in the transforming loving presence of God.

This following prayer suggestion is a variation of Lectio Divina and involves the same process but with the use of music instead of scripture.

Remember, Lectio Divina is about taking one small part of scripture (or in this variation music) and relishing it as you listen for God.

Lectio Divina. – Music

Before you start, select a piece of music that you feel would suit this prayer exercise. Instrumental music may be a good starting point, or a mantra, or a favourite song or hymn.

To begin, find a position which is comfortable.
Slow your breathing with deliberately slow breaths....
Take a moment to feel God in your presence.....

Softly play the music you have selected
Listen for how it is making you feel
Or what thoughts it draws to your mind.
Keep your focus on how this feeling connects you to God .
As you listen to the music, sit with it.....
Relish it...

Think about what parts of your life come to mind as you listen.....

Take the opportunity to talk to God about this part of your life....

As the music finishes -listen and feel God's presence about you.
Allow this prayer gift to deepen in you.....

As you finish *simply* whisper *thank-you*.
It is always good to end prayer time with a gesture or word of gratitude.

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Prayer Opportunity Two

We Reflect

The Good Samaritan Sisters here in Australia live by the Rule of St. Benedict and are sometimes called the Australian Benedictines!

<https://www.goodsams.org.au/>

A number of schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane were founded by the 'Good Sams'.

In a world which can be hostile and suspicious the 'Good Sams' remain a strong presence of Benedictine love in many communities.

Benedictine love requires that we welcome the stranger, not only into our homes, but into our hearts. Benedictine love demands the extra effort and sacrifice. It demands that we put others above ourselves and claims that we open our lives to one another – to friends and to strangers, to colleagues and to neighbours, to our students and to their families.

It is about making others feel welcome and being sure that they know we value them and are pleased they are here with us. Simply put, it is making sure they know that they are special – that they are loved.

We Listen

A reading from Matthew 7:7-12 (NRSV)

Jesus said: "Ask and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask!

In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the meaning of the law and the prophets."

Lectio Divina.

Try Lectio Divina with different forms.

Select the form that you enjoy the most.

Choose a favourite piece of music or a favourite piece of writing or scripture.

You may like to use this piece.

Soul and Risk

To risk appearing a fool is to laugh.

To risk appearing sentimental is to weep.

To risk involvement is to reach out for another person.

To risk being your true self is to expose your feelings.

To risk their rejection is to place your dreams and ideas before the crowd.

To risk dying is to live.

To risk despair is to hope.

To risk failure is to try.

Risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.

The person who risks nothing, does nothing.

This person can avoid suffering and sorrow but cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love or really live.

They are chained by their certitude.

They are a slave. They have forfeited freedom.

A person who risks is free.

Lectio Divina. – choice

To begin, find a position which is comfortable.
Slow your breathing with deliberately slow breaths....
Take a moment to feel God in your presence.....

Reflect on the poem provided or the music or scripture you have selected.

Listen for how it is making you feel. Choose words or phrases that stand out for you.

Keep your focus on how this feeling connects you to God.
Sit with it.....
Relish it....

Think about what parts of your life come to mind
Or how this is relevant to your life as you listen.....

Take the opportunity to talk to God about this part of your life....

As your time finishes -listen and feel God's presence about you.
Allow this prayer gift to deepen in you.....

As you finish simply whisper *thank-you*.
It is always good to end prayer time with a gesture or word of gratitude.