To the Reader,

The origin of this document came in the early summer of this year when Abbot President Elias Lorenzo secured the participation of a small group of vocations directors to collaborate in service of the larger Congregation. The following monks agreed to serve in this capacity:

Br. Leven Harton – St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison Kansas (chair)
Br. Canice McMullen – St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe Pennsylvania
Fr. Paul-Vincent Neibaur – St. John's Abbey, Collegeville Minnesota
Fr. Paul Weckert – St. Martin Abbey, Lacey Washington
Br. Patrick Winbush – Newark Abbey, Newark New Jersey

Abbot Elias requested that the group generate content for posting on the Congregation website, materials that could be used generally by all American-Cassinese Monasteries. Communicating via email, the committee exchanged ideas and content from the beginning of June through the end of August, attempting to submit to generate such a project. The results of this collaboration are the following materials. This document is proposed as an aid to all monasteries in the American-Cassinese Congregation, giving both direction and advice about creating a web presence, as well as offering a leg-up to starting a website in the way of ready-to-use content. As a group, we are confident that much of what is submitted below will be useful to the vocations directors across our Congregation.

Br. Leven Harton, OSB

7th September 2017

U. I. O. G. D.

# Resources for Generating Vocations Websites for Monasteries in the American-Cassinese Congregation

This Document will be divided into three parts:

1) Best practices document for construction of vocations websites
2) Example of a webpage
3) Specific content that can be used across the congregation

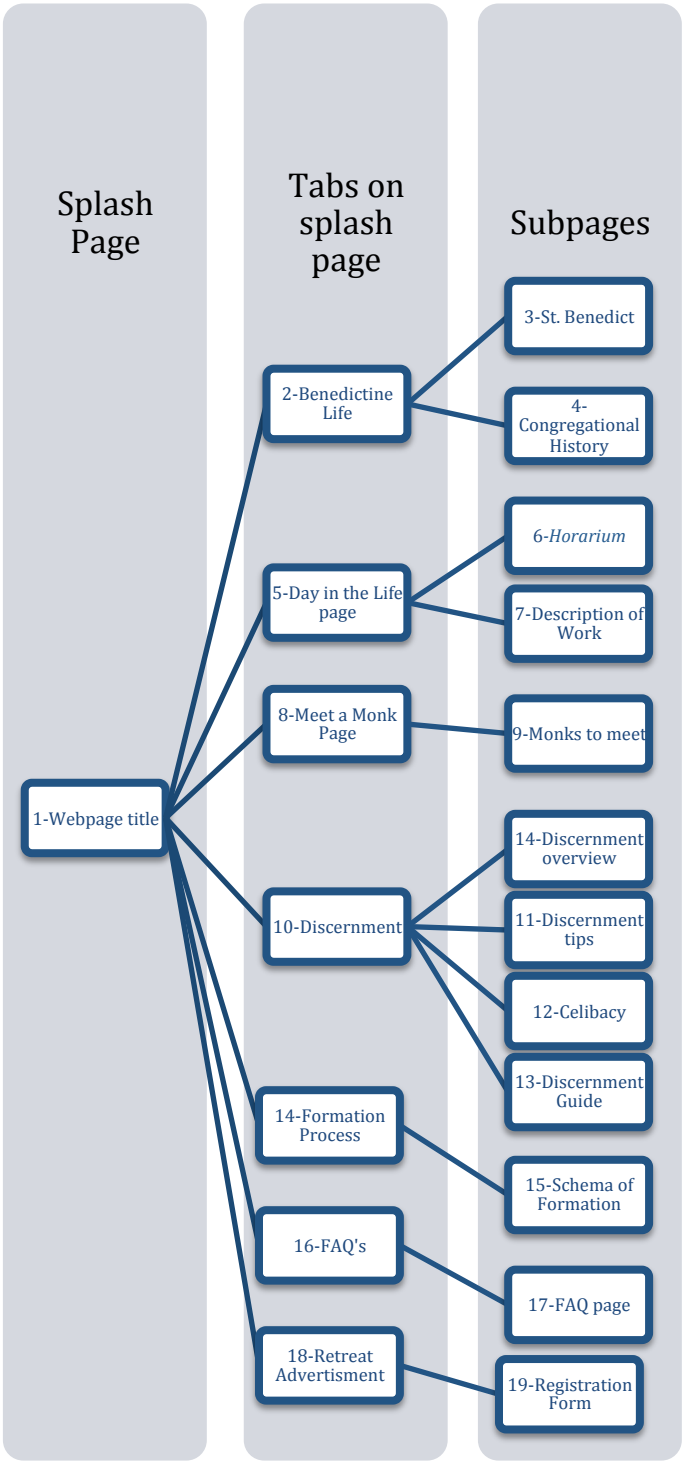
## Part I: Best Practices for the Construction of a Vocations Website

Best Practices:

- *Invest resources to generate a good webpage, engineered by professionals.* Whether you outlay money or request help from friends connected to the community, a professional effort in constructing the webpage is important to guarantee the quality of the product. This website represents your community to the wider world and to discerning men. Whatever means can be generated to communicate faithfully and clearly the beauty of your life should be worth the resources.
- *Make the website mobile friendly.* One community in our congregation reported that metrics showed that almost one-third of the traffic to their vocations site was accessed via mobile devices. Young people increasingly use phones, tablets, ipads, etc. So a good vocations site will accommodate this preference.
- *Maintain a simple but up-to-date appearance and functionality*. Youth are exposed to ever more functional and clean presentation of products by savvy marketers; an up-to-date web presence is very important to make a good first impression. Websites do not need to be complicated or impressive, but smooth and user friendly.
- *Limit the upfront information, inviting the user **into** the website.* Having an abundance of information on the splash page might seem attractive, to answer any question that might come up at once. But one needs to be careful not to cause a system overload to the viewer. A limited number of tabs that invite the viewer to explore the website in response to some basic questions might be a better approach. And adding links at the end of shorter passages can offer truly interested parties the opportunity to dig deeper.
- *Use the website to facilitate a relationship with the discerning men before inviting them to make a visit*. Employing the website in this fashion can invest in the candidate a sense of community involvement, comfort, and familiarity before they arrive for a retreat. Helping them build an attachment to the place is an important step in discerning with Benedictines and the website can be used to begin this process.
- *Leverage any multimedia content that your community has rights and privileges to use.* Any kind of multimedia can make a powerful impression. This could include Youtube channels, film projects executed by outside agencies (e.g. "The Brothers" on Newark Abbey), or other products. The same caution to quality would be apropos on this point.

## Part II: An Example Schema of a Vocations Webpage

The following chart outlines what a website for a Benedictine community in our congregation might look like. This layout is offered to help generate ideas for the construction of your own site. Obviously, your site could go deeper or shallower for individual categories and threads. It is hoped that this schema provides insight into how a site might be arranged. See Page 2 for brief descriptions of each section.



1. This opening page is the first thing candidates see, an opening impression that you can give, identifying who you are and what you are about.
2. The Benedictine Life page invites candidates into a basic understanding of monastic life, simply an overview of the lived experience.
3. The origins of western monasticism should be explained in this page, digging deeper into the Benedictine Life page (2) and providing context for understanding the lived experience.
4. Our congregation is unique! And our history is important for understanding who we are, why we live monastic life as we do. We can capitalize on the mission of Archabbot Boniface Wimmer and the good service we do to the American Church in this section, describing our congregation's beautiful history.
5. Presenting a quick overview of the monastic day, based on your community's schedule.
6. Give detail for (5), list out the actual *horarium*.
7. Describe the various works the monks could be involved in, how they interact with the prayer life, etc.
8. This page houses the subpage content (individual bios of monks) or could be a step to those subpages, presenting a picture of the whole community.
9. If needed, this page has the individual monk biographies.
10. An overview of discernment (but not too lengthy!), setting the context for subpages.
11. A simple listing of practices or considerations for a discerning young man to engage as he contemplates joining your community.
12. This is a special challenge to our era and, perhaps, should be addressed head-on! Why is celibacy is beautiful choice? What is given to the person who takes on this discipline? This page, I suggest, should offer wisdom to young men on the highest motivations for living a state of life that is so foreign in contemporary America.
13. This page is most fully developed on St. John's website, with their offer to put each application in contact with a St. John's monk. Inviting the men to interact with the community via email, deepening their connect with your house.
14. Offer a general schema of formation, with broad statements about where a monk goes through the process, what the outcome would be of a good formation.
15. Get more detailed than (14), walking the candidate through the formation process. Dig more deeply into both the process and the outcome, and make it aspirational.
16. This page (again) could simply be FAQ's or an invitation into the FAQ's.
17. If needed, make good on the promise in (16). Some examples: "Who do I contact if I am interested in joining the monastery?"; "Does your community have an age restriction?"; "Can I enter the monastery with debt?"; "How long is the formation process?" "Do I have to have a college degree to enter?" "What is beautiful about the monastic life?"; "Why choose celibacy?"etc.
18. A retreat advertisement that is always current, inviting men to come up for a specific event or for a general visit.
19. This page could link in with the discernment guide above, or be a general registration. Whatever can get you the information you need before welcoming a candidate for a visit.

# Part III: Specific Content Available for General Use by Monasteries in the American Cassinese Congregation

Material from this section (of course) should be rendered to fit your own website. The monastery from whom each section comes will be indicated at the start of the content.

*This section graciously provided by St. Vincent Archabbey Website*

**Spiritual direction**
**Speak Lord, your servant is listening.**

Have you taken the time to honestly pray and think about the vocation which God is calling you to give your life? Has your deep love for Christ or a certain encounter with Him touched your soul, making you desire to surrender yourself completely to Him? Are you restless? Can you no longer deny that God might be calling you to consider the vocation of religious life and/or the priesthood? If this is so, then take comfort, God has a special and distinct plan for you and He is calling you in a unique way. However, for one who begins discerning a vocation, fear, anxiety, and confusion are not uncommon feelings. For this reason, the role of a spiritual director in your life is indispensible.

**What is Spiritual Direction and why should I consider it?**

The job of a spiritual director is not to command or pressure you into a vocation. Rather, a good spiritual director will guide, advise, teach and encourage you on your path to sanctity. The relationship you have with your spiritual director is within the internal forum, meaning that it is extremely confidential. A man can pour out his heart and soul to his spiritual director, confident that whatever he says will not be repeated. During regularly scheduled meetings, you will be free to discuss not only your vocation but also your strengths and weaknesses, vices and virtues. You will discuss the health of your relationships with family and friends and how to improve them. In addition, your prayer life and love for Jesus are essential areas that must be addressed. Overall, growing in self-knowledge under the guidance of a spiritual director, one becomes freer to discern the life to which the Lord is calling him. Be cautious. Don't think that spiritual direction will not benefit you. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux understood the necessity of a spiritual guide when he said, "He who is his own master is a disciple of a fool!" In discerning a vocation, the help of a good spiritual director will be indispensible.

**How do I find a spiritual director?**
Begin your search by praying for a spiritual director who will aid your discernment. Next, contact a priest whom you trust such as your parish priest. If he is unable to become your spiritual director, he will be able to point you in the right direction, perhaps even recommend a potential spiritual director to you.

## Benedictine Spirituality

## Life of St. Benedict, Founder of Western Monasticism (480 – 547)

According to the *Diaogues* of Pope Saint Gregory the Great, Saint Benedict was born to a noble family in a small village high in the mountains of Nursia, a province located 100 miles northeast of Rome. Sent to Rome for classical studies as a young man, Benedict found that the godless lifestyle of his classmates was too distracting for his taste. Fearing that he too would become acquainted with their vulgar behavior, Benedict fled Rome to serve God alone. Journeying 50 miles east of Rome, Benedict did not return to the wealth and comfort of his father's house. Rather, for three years he chose to live as a hermit in the caves of Subiaco. This solitude, however, was short-lived.

Soon the holy-man was discovered by a group of wayward monks who prevailed upon him to become their Abbot. As Benedict had predicted, the lukewarm monks found his regime to be too severe, so they plotted to poison him. Gregory the Great recounts the story of Benedict's rescue; when Benedict blessed the poisoned glass of wine with the Sign of the Cross, the glass shattered into many pieces. Perceiving this evil attack on his life, Benedict left these wayward and undisciplined monks in order to establish a new monastery.

Journeying southeast to Monte Cassino, Benedict destroyed a pagan temple dedicated to Apollo, and upon its ruins built the monastery of Monte Cassino. It was here that the holy man of God would go on to write the foundational Rule for monastic life, a Rule which continues to be relevant and essential for monks throughout the world even to this day. Benedict spent the rest of his life at this monastery and when he had sensed that his days were coming to an end, he desired to praise God one last time. As his brother monks supported his tired body, Benedict took his last breath as he stood with his hands raised in praise of God.

## The Rule of Saint Benedict

Written in the sixth century for a diverse group of monks, the *Rule* contains guidelines for holiness that are equally relevant today as they were 1,500 years ago. In the *Rule,* Saint Benedict not only instructs his monks in the basic monastic virtues of humility, silence, and obedience, but he also prescribes times for spiritual matters such as communal prayer and meditative reading. Unlike many of the Monastic Rules that preceded his, the *Rule* of Saint Benedict does not wish to prescribe anything that is too harsh or burdensome. Rather, a monk was to find God in the ordinary and simple circumstances of daily life. For St. Benedict, holiness could be found in a balanced and harmonious life of prayer and work, all in the context of communal living.

## Divine Office

One of the most readily recognizable passages in the Rule of Saint Benedict concerns the public prayer of the monastic community: "Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the work of God" (Chapter 43, first paragraph). When Benedict uses such an unusual expression as "work of God" for the public prayer of the monastery, he is drawing on monastic tradition, where the term probably refers to God's prior claim on human activity as opposed to

merely human projects or ambitions.

In any case, Benedict emphasizes the importance of this public prayer by devoting no less than twelve chapters of the Rule to his description of how the "work of God" is to be structured. He is also very concerned about the timetable for public prayer, as he sets aside seven distinct periods during the day when the monks are to drop whatever work may be engaging their attention in order to gather for prayerful recognition of God's claim on their lives.

Time is one of the most precious gifts that we humans receive from God. It is clear that Benedict wants his monks to acknowledge this gift by returning choice portions of their time each day to God. In this way, they will practice the most basic form of hospitality, which is to make room in their schedules for the entertainment of God's real but mysterious presence. All other forms of hospitality, whether it is welcoming guests or respecting nature, derive from this profound respect for the mystery of God. Thus, the apparent folly of "wasting" time on God becomes the wisest possible use of this precious gift.

This public prayer of the monastic community is made up primarily of biblical psalms, but there are also readings from other parts of Scripture, as well as special prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer. The constant chanting of the psalms is intended to immerse the monk in a world where God's presence is felt and where God’s goodness is praised. This world is made accessible to the monk through personal faith, which finds the gift of God at the center of all reality, in spite of much evil and violence on the surface of human life.
For the purpose of achieving this prayerful immersion, Benedict prescribed that his monks should memorize the entire Psalter. This must have been a daunting task for the younger members of the monastery. But they would have been greatly assisted and encouraged by the older members, for we can well imagine that they were carried along, as it were, on the waves of biblical words provided by their elders. Over the years, the effect would be that the minds and memories of all the monks would be filled more and more with expressions of praise and gratitude.

Living with the psalms in this way would become like a second nature and would color the consciousness of the monks in every circumstance of life. This would in turn gradually realize the ideal of monastic holiness, namely, a constant, loving awareness of the reality and presence of God in all of human life. With this awareness would also come a deep inner sense of peace and harmony, regardless of external chaos or even the final disruption we call death.

These unvarying and regular periods of praise and thanksgiving were thus intended to bring about that spiritual conversion which Benedict valued so highly. Such a transformation finds expression ultimately in liberation from self-centred preoccupation and anxiety, as the monk commits himself to unselfish love and service. The inner peace and calm realized through prayer will then permit greater awareness of the needs of others and the freedom to respond to those needs.

Such generosity is made possible through an ever-deeper trust in God's goodness as

reflected in the reality of divine promises. The future will accordingly be changed from a time of threat and darkness to an illuminated horizon producing invincible hope and joyful expectation. The monastic tradition has recognized this dimension of Benedictine spirituality by making Benedict the patron of a happy death.

It is well worth noting that Benedict, in spite of his meticulous concern for the structure of this public prayer of the community, makes explicit provision for the right of future abbots to modify the timetable and structure of this prayer. This makes it quite clear that Benedict did not believe that an exact, much less a scrupulous, observance of the "work of God" would produce the salvation of monks in some magical or mechanical way. Such prayerful attention to God will greatly assist them, however, in the painful conversion demanded by unselfish and sensitive behavior in all areas of their lives.

This public monastic prayer is not to be understood, therefore, as scheduled moments of explicit prayers totally divorced from the rest of the monks' lives. They are to be understood rather as times when God's loving presence is at center stage, as it were, while at other times of the day God is not totally forgotten but is allowed to recede to the wings. From there his presence can be recalled at any moment, especially when there is that atmosphere of silence and recollection that Benedict wishes his monks to foster in the cloister.

We know that Benedict's spiritual wisdom is valid for all Christians. Many lay people would like to share in that wisdom and they can do so even when they are prevented from regular participation in the public prayer of the monastery. There are breviaries available, which contain prayers very similar to those used in monasteries. By saying these prayers, lay people will also be able to consecrate each day to God and to enter into that same loving awareness of the divine presence in their lives.

***—Father Demetrius Dumm O.S.B.***

## Medal of Saint Benedict

**The Front Side of the Medal The Cross of Eternal Salvation:**

On the face of the medal is the image of Saint Benedict. In his right hand he holds the cross, the Christian's symbol of salvation. The cross reminds us of the zealous work of evangelizing and civilizing England and Europe carried out mainly by the Benedictine monks and nuns, especially for the sixth to the ninth/tenth centuries.

**Rule and Raven:**

In Saint Benedict's left hand is his *Rule* for Monasteries that 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 Saint 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 Saint Benedict.

**C. S. P. B.**

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 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 Saint 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, supported by the brothers of the monastery, shortly after Saint Benedict had received Holy Communion.

**Monte Cassino:**
Below Benedict we read: *ex SM Casino MDCCCLXXX* (from holy Monte Cassino, 1880). This is the medal struck to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of the birth of Saint Benedict.

**Reverse Side of the Medal**

**Crux mihi lux:**
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! May 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).

**Peace:**
Above the cross is the word *pax* (peace), that 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 above, of a Latin prayer of exorcism against Satan: *Vade retro Satana! Nunquam suade mihi vana! Sunt mala quae libas. Ipse venena bibas!* (Begone Satan! Never tempt me with your vanities! What you offer me is evil. Drink the poison yourself!)

**Use of the Medal:**
There is no special way prescribed for carrying or wearing the Medal of Saint 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 building, 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 Saint 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 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 Saint 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. 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 Saint Benedict can 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 in his heavenly kingdom," as St. Benedict urges us in the Prolog of his Rule.

**Two Special Uses of the Medal:**
By a rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Religious (4 May 1965) lay Oblates of Saint Benedict are permitted to wear the Medal of Saint Benedict instead of the small black cloth scapular formerly worn.

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

*This section graciously provided by St. John's Abbey Vocations Website*

**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 meditatio. 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

*T*HE 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).

## Liturgy of the Hours

Benedictines often use the motto "Ora et Labora" to summarize Saint Benedict's monastic way of life. Translated the words mean "worship and labor," or "prayer and work." But still, the meaning is greater than the sum of its part. Together, intertwined, alternating back and forth every day from morning to night to ultimately form a union. The unity of prayer and work is a particular balance that sets Benedictines apart from other religious communities. Significantly, Saint Benedict considers the community's prayer a kind of work in and of itself, a work so important that he calls it the Opus Dei, or the "Work of God." He devotes multiple chapters to it in his Rule, describing with great care how to carry out the day's work.

While Benedict did not invent the idea of praying in common, he took what Christians were already doing both in their homes and in their churches, and gave an order to it to fit the monastic need. There is evidence that it was an early Christian custom to pray, either privately or communally, at certain times of the day. Originally, the two major prayer times were the morning, commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord and blessing the coming day, and then in the evening to give thanks for the blessings that the day has brought. Later, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, and night came to be added, especially in religious communities, dedicating every part of the day to the praise of the Creator. Because of this hallowing of time, we call this prayer form the Liturgy of the Hours.
At Saint John's we gather for Morning Prayer (7:00 a.m.), Mid-Day Prayer (noon), and Evening Prayer (7:00 p.m.), as well as daily Eucharist (5:00 p.m.). The schedule is the same every weekday and is adjusted somewhat on weekends (see Vocation Guest's Schedule).

### The Psalms

At the core of the Liturgy of the Hours are the Psalms. The Psalms are 150 prayers, central to the prayer life of the Jewish people, collected into one book of the Old Testament. Initially attributed to King David, we know now that David was not the author of the entire collection, though some psalms are attributed directly to him, such as Psalm 23, as a "Song of David." The early Christians, many of whom were Jewish and accustomed to praying the Psalter (the book of Psalms), saw Christ prefigured there. Thus, Christ became the Good

Shepherd; the Passover Lamb slaughtered to redeem His people; Christ who led his followers from death to life by His death on the Cross and His Resurrection to new life.

**Praying with the Community**

As a vocation guest, when you pray with the monastic community, you will join the newer members of the community in the front of the monastic choir, with the senior members filling in the choir stalls behind you. One of the monks sitting near you will help you feel comfortable and become proficient using the prayer books. After the first day, you likely will be very comfortable navigating the Liturgy of the Hours at Saint John's.

Learning to pray with the monks also includes learning the slow and deliberate pace followed in both spoken and chanted psalms at Saint John's. Prayer is nothing to rush through or to treat as a chore to get out of the way. The monastic tradition of slow pacing and periods of silence between psalms, readings, and hymns allows for reflection and patient listening to God. It may seem awkward, or even difficult to sit in quiet meditation. This challenge to patience and listening is only overcome with prayerful practice and persistence, but will quickly become intuitive and natural even to private prayer.

## The Process of Becoming a Monk

What is a monk? Possibly the moment when a young man stands before the Abbot and the monastic community and is asked, "What do you seek?" will give us a starting point. The novice replies, "The mercy of God and fellowship in this community." He is then clothed in the habit of the community, and if he perseveres, begins a lifelong journey of doing just that. Eventually making vows of stability, obedience, and conversion to the monastic way of life, he lives with the same group of men, praying, dining, learning and working with them in pursuit of Christ, in service to the Church. Of course, the life of the monk may take him away from the day-to-day life of the community to travel, obtain an advanced degree, or become a pastor of a parish, but he always returns to his home, the monastery.

Becoming a monk is a continuing process of listening and responding to God's Call to Holiness; throughout a minimum 5-year series of choice, experiences, reflection, and again, choice.

**Steps of Monastic Discernment**

1. GOD IS CALLING YOU TO HOLINESS This call may be challenging to "hear" and even harder to define. But God is Calling you to Holiness, your part at this point, is to work to understand and identify that call, and to understand and identify God's Call for you, you must prayerfully explore the four Catholic vocations: Single Life, Married Life, Priesthood, and Religious Life.

2. PRAY, STUDY, & TALK A vocation is a relationship and role within the Church, in response to God's Call to you, and the needs of His people. Your vocation is not just about you and your will and hopes for your life but intimately ties to God, His Church, and His Will for creation. Begin with prayer, and continue for the rest of your life. Research the four vocations, and come to know what role each plays in the Church, and the nature of the relationship each builds with God. Since you are not alone in this pursuit, ask for advice from friends, family, and your parish. These others, also inspired by God in their search for

fuller discipleship, may see things about you that you never knew existed, and give you the insight to make the next step.

3. CONNECT, EXPERIENCE, & REFLECT Very few people chose a spouse without a first meeting, becoming friends, and building a deep relationship with that person. Likewise, very few men become priests without first meeting other priests, bishops, and living a life of service and deep involvement in the parish. Discerning your call means engaging the call. Get away from the computer and experience the vocations. "Experiencing the vocations" means meeting new people and dating; talking with your local priests and visiting the seminary; studying the missions of religious orders and visiting the communities. You don't have to try them all, but follow your heart and where you believe God is calling you. Should you discover that one vocation is not for you, or, one community is not for you, great! Now try another. If you go through all four vocations with no luck, try again with different people and communities, seek out a Vocation Guide, and continue seeking God – continue to LISTEN.

4. GET A VOCATION GUIDE A Vocation Guide is your first connection to the monastic community, he listens and offers advice. Similar to a spiritual director, a Vocation Guide should fit your spiritual needs, and if he does not, it's OK to find another. Accepting the guidance of a Vocation Guide is not a commitment beyond that – he is only there to help your vocation discernment process; you will not be pressured to become a monk or a priest.

5. VISIT SAINT JOHN'S ABBEY You will likely have to visit the Abbey at least three times. These visits will give you a fuller and fuller understanding of the monastic call, and through the spiritual education and disciple gained through your time in the monastery, you will better understand if this is God's call for you. You will meet many members of the monastic community, live the monastic life and spirituality, and the monks will come to know you and offer wisdom in your search.

6. APPLY FOR CANDIDACY Here is the first big step: applying for candidacy means you are asking the monks of Saint John's Abbey to consider you to become a monk, while you live with them for three months in keen discernment. Candidacy is only a discernment step; candidates are not monks and make no vows.

7. MONASTIC CANDIDACY For three months, you will live with the monks, following the monastic Rule of Saint Benedict, praying, working, and studying with the monastic community. You may leave at any time, should you discern you do not have a Call to the monastic life at Saint John's Abbey. Likewise, the monastic community may ask you to leave at any time, should we discern you do not have a Call to the monastic life at Saint John's Abbey.

8. NOVITIATE The novitiate is the first phase of monastic life, and a probationary period of discernment and formation before making profession (vows.) Upon leaving candidacy, each man stands before the community, confessing their intention to become a monk of Saint John's Abbey, and are clothed with the monastic habit (black robes, consisting of a

cassock, scapular, and hood.) Novices live the life of a monk: they pray and work with the community while studing the monastic life with the Abbot, religious scholars, and the formation director. The novitiate is a year-long period of strict discipline, prayer, discernment, and formation. The daily work of a novice explores the monastic vocation, teaching humility and obedience, and the wide variety of apostolates of Saint John's Abbey. Novices may leave at any time, and the monastic community may ask novices to leave at any time.

9. JUNIORATE OR SIMPLE PROFESSION After the training period of the novitiate, monks enter into temporary vowed profession for three years, with the option of adding years if further discernment is needed. No longer living under the strict discipline of the novitiate, but still, under the guidance of the formation director, this stage of discernment offers more freedom than the novitiate and a clearer experience of the monastic life as lived by a solemnly professed monk. A junior monk's work is more focused than in the novitiate, and takes advantage of the monks individual talents, allowing the monk to invest himself into the ministry and identity of Saint John's. At this point, many monks will explore new areas of interest and hobbies, learn new practical skills, and advance their professional studies.

10. FINAL OR SOLEMN PROFESSION On the Feast of Saint Benedict, as the monks before you, you will make the solemn profession of the Order of Saint Benedict, vowing yourself to this community in obedience, stability, and conversion to the monastic way of life. You are now a Catholic monk of Saint John's Abbey, of the Order of Saint Benedict, part of the 1,500-year-old spiritual tradition, seeking God and serving the Church and World. Over the habit which you received on the day you entered the novitiate (the cassock, scapular, and hood), you are clothed with the cuculla, the symbol of a fully professed Benedictine monk. From this day forward, you are a Brother in Christ and will continue to LISTEN to God's Call for yourself and your community, for the Church and the World. Your work as a Benedictine monk is prayer, and your prayer expresses itself in helping to build the Kingdom of God in countless ways, as your talents, your community, and God Calls you.

*This section graciously provided by St. John's Abbey Website*

## An Introduction to Saint Benedict

Saint Benedict has been a guide in the search for God since the early sixth century. It was then that he wrote his Rule for Monks, and it outlines a life of work and prayer -- done for the glory of God.

The second source for understanding Benedict is the biography by Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604). Gregory writes that Benedict was born into a comfortable family in Nursia, a small city in central Italy. In pursuit of a bright future, the young Benedict went off to Rome for studies. But the call to seek God soon drew him into a very different sort of life. Benedict's first taste of the monastic life was as a hermit. In solitude he prayed, read and worked. Not surprisingly, he began to draw a steady stream of visitors who sought his wisdom and advice. This life had its challenges; and while many came to admire him, a few resented his reputation for holiness.

Benedict's next venture came when a group of monks invited him to be their abbot. According to Gregory, they were an independent lot, and soon they wearied of his leadership. Fortunately, Benedict resisted the poisoned cup they offered one day, and wisely he moved on. From his experience he distilled a shrewd understanding of human nature, and this became the foundation of a Rule that even today inspires a wide range of people.

In his Rule Benedict sought to impose nothing harsh or burdensome. His monastery was a school of the Lord's service, where the abbot served as father, and the monks were brothers. Permeating all was the presence of Christ. One was to see Christ in everyone: in the abbot, in the young and old, and in the guest.

A balance of prayer, work and sacred reading were the key elements of this life. But monks were also to have proper food, sleep, and clothing. For Benedict, extreme self-denial did not lead to God. Instead, in a balanced life one would better discern the hand of God.

Nor was this a community that shut out the world. In a highly symbolic story, Gregory recounts the barbarian chief who threatened the monastery. Rather than flee, Benedict went out to meet him, and with his words he turned back the invaders. That set a tone that ever since has caused Benedictine monks and nuns to be in conversation with the world. Part of the genius of Benedict lay in his awareness of human differences. He sought to challenge the robust and to nurse along the weaker brethren. All were individuals, each needing distinctive support.

Particularly important was his teaching on work. Monks should work, but Benedict did not specify the sort of work they should do. All talents were useful. And so, ever since, monks and nuns in the Benedictine tradition have labored not only as contemplatives, but also as missionaries and pastors, scholars and teachers, tillers of the soil, and guestmasters. In everything they work toward a common goal: the experience of God in the school of the Lord's service.

*This section graciously provided by St. Benedict's Abbey Vocations website*

**Theologies of Celibacy**

Ascetic

- "Chastity includes an *apprenticeship in self-mastery* which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy" (CCC #2339).
- "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal" (*Guadium et Spes* #17).
- St. Jerome by El Greco (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5e/El_Greco_-_San_Jer%C3%B3nimo_%28Galer%C3%ADa_nacional_de_Escocia%29.jpg)

Imitation of Christ

- "[Chastity] shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends, who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine state. Chastity is a promise of immortality" (CCC #2347).
- "By the profession of the evangelical counsels the characteristic features of Jesus—the chaste, poor and obedient one—are made constantly "visible" in the midst of the world and the eyes of the faithful are directed towards the mystery of the Kingdom of God already at work in history, even as it awaits its full realization in heaven" (*Vita Consecrata*, #1).
- Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi by Fra Angelico (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Paintings_of_the_Stigmatisation_of_Francis_of_Assisi#/media/File:Angelico,_stimmate_di_san_francesco,_pinacoteca_vaticana.jpg)

Spousal

- "All the baptized are called to chastity. The Christian has 'put on Christ,' the model for all chastity. [They] should cultivate [chastity] in the way that is suited to their state of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner" (CCC #2348 & 2349).
- "In watchful waiting for the Lord's return, the cloister becomes a response to the absolute love of God for his creature and the fulfilment of his eternal desire to welcome the creature into the mystery of intimacy with the Word, who gave himself as Bridegroom in the Eucharist" (*Verbi Sponsa*, #3)
- Ecstasy of St. Teresa of Ávila by Francesco Fontebasso (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7d/Francesco_Fontebasso_-

_The_Ecstasy_of_St_Therese_-_WGA7994.jpg)

Kingdom of Heaven

- "Virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven is an unfolding of baptismal grace, a powerful sign of the supremacy of the bond with Christ and of the ardent expectation of his return, a sign which also recalls that marriage is a reality of this present age which is passing away" (CCC #1619).
- "The life of virginity is the image of the blessedness that awaits us in the life to come" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *de Virginitate*)

http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-eYsM52r8O4M/TwvugxBKWQI/AAAAAAAALjY/A2OSbq1jC8o/s1600/1_10_St_Gregory_of_Nyssa.jpg