

The Journal of the Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani Abbey SUMMER EDITION 2024

– Linda Boerstler cover art

The Journal of the Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani Abbey

SUMMER July 27, 2024



INTRODUCTION

The stability of the monastic enclosure, combined with centuries of tradition, provides a structure and model for growth that offers support and guidance, as well as rich resources for contemplation. This is true for those who are cloistered and for those who are seeking to follow the monastic life on the other side of the monastic wall.

It is my hope that this journal serves as a tool for expression for those who wish to share the blessings and challenges of monastic life regardless of what side of the wall they are on. It is my belief that in having the ability to share with other members of the Body of Christ, the opportunity for maturity and growth is present.

We invite contributions of different forms of reflection through essays, photography, poetry, artwork, music, and other methods of artistic expression that will allow a dialogue to flourish between us as we work to draw closer in our relationship with one another and with our relationship with our Beloved Savior Jesus Christ. Please consider submitting the aforementioned items to enhance our Cistercian experience as we travel this journey together. Sound bites can also be submitted, to be included in our digital publication.

Please note that this, and other issues, are meant to be available digitally only. However, feel free to print a hard copy for yourself, should you desire to do so. I will attempt to make a hard copy available in the Retreatants Library, on the corner shelf by the window. Please leave that copy so that it will be available for others to view when they are spending time at the Abbey. That shelf also contains information that pertain to the Cistercian Order, the Charism, Thomas Merton and others, and other things that are helpful to us, the Lay Cistercian of Gethsemani Abbey. This can also include book excerpts, articles, and reviews.

It is our goal to get a Journal published a minimum of three times per year, those times being Advent, Lent, and sometime during the summer months. However, should we receive enough submissions, it may be possible for us to create an additional issue at other times in the year.

In this issue, the reader will find the following:

- An article written by Chaplain Allen Thyssen, *Reengineering the Christian Life*. What are the “Best Practices, to live each of the activities of your life? What are some ways that one can facilitate to create a life that “works better,” for us, particularly in light of our desire to live as a Contemplative? (p4)
- A short piece written by Linda Boerstler, *“Deliberate Slowness.”* How do we slow ourselves down in a world that is demanding more, and giving us less time to do what we are already doing? How do we “stop and smell the roses?” (p6)
- A poem written by Linda Boerstler, *“At Gethsemani.”* How does being at Gethsemani in a retreat benefit our lives when we are stuck in our day-by-day routine? What can we carry with us, as we make the long journey home again? (p7)
- Two small submissions from a Lay Cistercian that asked to be anonymous. A poem entitled *“Darkness,”* (p8) and a *“Memo: From God,”* both meant to encourage us.
- *Silence and Simplicity*, a book excerpt from the Marian Press book *“52 Weeks with St. Faustina.”* (p10)
- *The History and Meaning of the Medal of Saint Benedict.* (p14)
- *Sirach: A Perfect Prayer as You Stand Vigil Before the Blessed Sacrament* (p22)

If after reading these items, you wish to offer feedback, please do so by emailing Linda Boerstler at poetry328@aol.com. Any questions about submissions, and actual pieces that you would like to present, can also be sent to this email. We will be doing our next issue for the Advent Season, so think about themed articles, poems, photos, etc., that would be appropriate for publication. Other items that do not specifically support the Advent themes are also appreciated.

25 JANUARY 2021

REENGINEERING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

I worked in the corporate world for some 30 years before transitioning to the vocation of Chaplain. My fundamental skill set began as a "production engineer" in the oil fields. That led to project management and ultimately large project investment appraisal. Toward the end I spent a year serving as a "reengineering consultant", helping chemical plants improve their workflow. I recall two aspects that popped up over and over again. The first we called "best practices". The second was "continuous improvement". I saw it in the oil industry. I saw it in the chemical business. And I have observed it in major hospital systems. For example, each used long workflow charts that adorned the walls and encouraged people to add "yellow sticky" notes suggesting areas for improvement. What might be the "best practice" in caring for a hospital patient? What might be the "best practice" for using contracted services in a large chemical plant? How can we become more efficient and productive in getting oil out of the ground? How could we move from where we are to that more effective place? Does our work reflect "continuous improvement"?

That was my world. And it made sense. Almost all of us want to be the best we can as soon as we can for as long as we can. Isn't the same especially true for living the Christian life? The Bible defines "best practices". The Holy Spirit empowers us to move "continuously" toward that more perfect life. And our never-ending search for fulfillment, happiness and peace is enhanced as we consciously choose to install these "best practices" that are only be found in Jesus. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you." (John 14:27)

Best practices: What is the best way to live each of the activities of your life? What works best? How about eating? Do we eat off and on during the day or are we disciplined to eat modestly at regularly scheduled intervals? How about sleep? Benjamin Franklin, and early American statesman. wrote, "Early to bed early to rise makes a man healthy wealthy and wise." How

attentive are we to our sleeping habits? How about exercise? And, of course, how do we manage our money? Do we operate based on a thought-through budget or do we just deplete our resources impulsively? Do we control these aspects of life, or do they control us? I have a personal saying, "What you measure grows. What you do not measure goes." How we pursue each of these areas of life will have an impact on our happiness and peace and success. And, of course, how attentive we are to our spiritual disciplines is even more critical. What is our prayer life like? How effective is our worship? What does our Bible study look like? Does our life reflect the "agape" love that Jesus demonstrated? What would the "best practice" for each of these look like?

Continuous improvement: It is said that "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." There is often a great gap between where we are and where we want to be. Ask anyone who wishes to lose weight! The concept of "continuous improvement" encourages us to simply move in the direction we wish to go "one step at a time". Measure it. Control it. Savor the positive movements! And then from time to time look back and see how far you have gone.

Let us live the most effective and worthy lives that we can. And the God of peace will reward us.

Blessings and peace, Chaplain Allen

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Deliberate Slowness

Linda Boerstler

I did not rise early this morning. It took me a couple of awakenings before I realized where I was. When I realized that I was at the Abbey my anxiety lessened. And so, I chose to remain in my nestled position in my bed. Truly, there has been so much rushing and other activity that I have longed to disengage, flip the off switch, and cease all activity. I yearn to make myself unavailable.

As I get older I am more averse to work that is useless, rushing, anxiety, especially when I determine it not to be necessary. There is much to be said for deliberate slowness. In my opinion, deliberate slowness demonstrates one's desire to savor the moment, and to reconsider it in a way that brings a new sense of awareness and life to it. It is not doing something just for the sake of doing it, or just "getting it done," for the lack of a real purpose or even for a sense of accomplishment, though sometimes that might be required.

Deliberate slowness means that one intentionally takes the time to notice what one is doing and perhaps think about why one is doing it. It is not necessarily an analysis of the method used. It is more a sense of relationship and attitude and motivation. There is a message within the movement and the motivation.

All good things come from God, specifically the deep love from His heart of being. Yes, God loves, His primary activity, but love is not just something that He does, because He can, but more deeply, He loves because above everything else, love is His greatest attribute. He is love and I would suggest that He can do nothing but love, and it is what drives His eternal existence. Every thought, every notion, every created thing, comes through this same basis of love. If love could not exist then neither could God.

If then, there is this Being of Love, this being that has always existed, with no beginning and no end, would we not assume that there needs to be an object, recipient, or beneficiary of such love? I cannot imagine the existence of love without a way for that love to express itself.

So, God created the world, and using all of His creative prowess, skills, and development, he expressed his love. Expressed in a way that ALL things were made perfect, and beautiful, and exquisitely alive. Scents, color and textures and sounds and flavors, and visions made for the single purpose of expression of that love. And All things made by God, thrived, and grew and stretched and formed and breathed. Somehow though, something was missing. He saw that in His deliberate slowness, in the exceptional care that He took in His creation, and the magnitude of the love in His heart. There was no one who could appreciate and enjoy what He had made.

And so – He made a Human Being. A living being that could live and experience this Great Love designed for no one else! There were animals and plants and planets, and stars but their purpose was twofold: one. To exist and be what they were created to be and two; A manifestation of love that could be enjoyed. "FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD – THAT HE GAVE --.

So it is with deliberate slowness that we bask in the fragrance and atmosphere of this love. We are designed for the long walks in the gardens, in the soft evening breezes, small creatures gathering at our feet, bird song so pure as any natural orchestra could produce, colors so vibrant and alive, seen in amazement and unable to comprehend in description. Do not hesitate to be deliberately slow when navigating through the dailyness of life. There is so much to be seen, to be loved, to be experienced and

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one does not want to miss ANYTHING. Allow yourself to be refreshed, rejuvenated. And healed. Take a long and slow walk.

At Gethsemani

The road to the Abbey is never long.
The days that I spend here are never wrong.
Each visit feels like I am coming home –
A place that tells me I always belong.
And though I may be separated by miles
Each new arrival brings me smiles.
Gethsemani springs up the joy in my heart.
My beautiful, sweet Virgin will never depart.

Written 07-15-2024

Linda Boerstler.



Photo by Brother Paul Quenon



Darkness

I stir

In the ever-silent hour

Before first light.

I softly whisper a prayer,

Disturbing not Man, nor beast,

Nor the order of the Universe.

Closing my eyes,

I rest confident

In the presence of God.

I stir

Walking to find an inimitable day

Created by the Ultimate Artist.

Colors beyond imagination.

A voice on the wind prompts,

“Drink it in!

For you will never see

Another as such.

Given to inspire Love and Joy.

Trust that All is Good

And all will be well.

anonymous



MEMO: FROM GOD

To: You

Date: Today

Subject: Yourself

Reference: Life

I AM GOD! Today I will be handling all of your problems.

PLEASE, remember that I Do Not Need Your Help!

**If life happens to deliver to you a situation that you just cannot Handle,
Do Not Attempt To Resolve it!**

Kindly put it into the S.F.G.T.D box. (something for God to do)

PLEASE NOTE: All situations will be resolved IN MY TIME – Not Yours!

**Once the matter has been place into the S.F.G.T.D box, Do not hold on to it
Any longer. Do not stress, stew over, nor worry anymore about it.**

IT IS IN MY HANDS NOW!

**Instead, PLEASE, focus on all of the Wonderful Things that are present in your
Life right now. Remember, YOU CANNOT CHANGE THE PAST, NEITHER CAN YOU
CHANGE THE FUTURE.**

Be kind to others and to yourself!

**(Keep in mind – whatever you do for the least of MY children, you also do for me. I was
tired, I was lonely, I was thirsty, I was lost, I was oppressed, I was hungry, I was
helpless, I was naked, I was poor, I was sick, I was falsely imprisoned, I was hurt ...)**

+May Your Days Be Abundantly Blessed +



The following is an excerpt from the Marian Press book 52 Weeks with St. Faustina by Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle:

“Silent lips are pure gold and bear witness to holiness within.”

— Diary, 552

This week’s spiritual exercise focuses on the need for silence and simplicity in our lives. We might think they are impossible to find and achieve, but silence and simplicity are necessary for spiritual survival, as St. Faustina shows us so well. In addition, we might struggle with temptations to voice our personal opinion at all costs and not listen very well to the opinions of others. Let us take a look!

We need silence to pray. The Catechism speaks of the silence necessary for contemplative prayer: “Contemplative prayer is silence, the ‘symbol of the world to come’ or ‘silent love.’ Words in this kind of prayer are not speeches; they are like kindling that feeds the fire of love. In this silence, unbearable to the ‘outer’ man, the Father speaks to us His incarnate Word, who suffered, died, and rose; in this silence the Spirit of adoption enables us to share in the prayer of Jesus” (CCC, 2717, emphasis in original).

Sister Faustina wrote, “[I]n order to hear the voice of God, one has to have silence in one’s soul and to keep silence; not a gloomy silence but an interior silence; that is to say, recollection in God” (Diary, 118). Unless you are living the life of a hermit, you might not

have ample opportunities to rest your heart and soul in a bit of silence so as to refresh your batteries and to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to you. Our fast-paced lives seem to be getting more hurried by the day. Many people lament that they lack the time to properly carve out quiet intervals to spend with the Lord. That is tragic, actually. We cannot exist in a spiritually healthy way if we are not communicating with our Creator. Eventually, that lack of communication with God will wreak havoc on our whole person, not merely our spiritual lives. We must not wait. We need to correct the lack of quiet in our lives now by putting a concrete plan into practice to make it happen. Immerse yourself into as many quiet moments and oases of serenity as possible in which you can better communicate with your Savior. Form those invaluable prayer habits! When it seems impossible to retreat to silence, due to your hectic schedule and your environment, do your best to silence your mind and give your full attention to Jesus — even for a moment. He will be there waiting.

“Silent Lips are Pure Gold”

There is another kind of important silence. It is a silence of discretion, of governing one’s tongue. This is necessary for religious and laity alike. Saint Faustina wrote about a number of topics in her Diary that she believed were key spiritual attributes and important rules for her religious congregation. She said that in addition to the vows, there was one specific rule that stood out in her mind as most important. “Truly, if this rule were to be observed strictly, I would not worry about the others.” Since she was dealing with a congregation of women, she pointed out a prevalent problem for women, as well as the opposite traits of the Holy Spirit. “Women are very fond of talking, but the Holy Spirit does not speak to a soul that is distracted and garrulous,” she stated. “He speaks by His quiet inspirations to a soul that is recollected, to a soul that knows how to keep silence” (Diary, 552).

Sister Faustina added. “If silence were strictly observed, there would not be any grumbling, bitterness, slandering, or gossip, and charity would not be tarnished. In a word, many wrongs would not be done. Silent lips are pure gold and bear witness to holiness within” (Diary, 552). Sister Faustina was wise beyond her years. It should not come as a surprise though, because she was being trained by Jesus Himself! We should take some time to ponder our own lives and the possibility that we may have formed bad habits along the lines St. Faustina describes. But more on that later. I might add that men are equally guilty of gossip and talking too much. Man or woman, we need to curb our tendency to chatter away unnecessarily. The temptation to speak up and answer back when it would be better to remain silent will always poke at us.

Sister Faustina believed, “Silence is a sword in the spiritual struggle. A talkative soul will never attain sanctity. The sword of silence will cut off everything that would like to cling to the soul.” She reminded us, “We are sensitive to words and quickly want to answer back,

without taking any regard as to whether it is God's will that we should speak." Yet "a silent soul is strong; no adversities will harm it if it perseveres in silence." Also, "the silent soul is capable of attaining the closest union with God. It lives almost always under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God works in a silent soul without hindrance" (Diary, 477). Powerful words to ponder.

When to Speak and When to be Quiet

Though Sr. Faustina believed that silence was essential for a soul to be able to grow in holiness, and that keeping silent and not giving into the temptation to talk too much (or even worse, to gossip) was indispensable, she also knew without a doubt that there are times when it is most appropriate to express oneself. Sister Faustina made sure to bring up another important rule for the congregation after writing about silence. She wrote, "Keeping silent when one ought to speak is an imperfection and sometimes even a sin." Naturally, conversation is sometimes needed in the performance of certain duties. She also pointed out that permission to speak was granted to the sisters twice a day during recreation. "Recreation is an opportunity for getting to know one another. Let each sister speak her mind in all simplicity for the edification of the others and not in a spirit of superiority nor, God forbid, in a quarrelsome manner, for that would not be keeping with perfection and the spirit of our vocation, which should be especially characterized by love." Sister Faustina completed her explanation on silence for the sisters, saying that if a sister breaks silence when she is supposed to be quiet, she would be punished with public penances by the superior, "or else she will answer for this before the Lord" (Diary, 553).

An elderly priest friend of mine used to suffer from a swollen tongue on occasion because of certain allergies. It flared up suddenly out of the blue. Antihistamines got it under control again. Whenever I tried to console him because of the mysterious malady, he quickly explained that it was "good penance" for him "for sins of the tongue" in his younger days. Sister Faustina once wrote, "I tremble to think that I have to give an account of my tongue. There is life, but there is also death in the tongue." She explained a particular grave sin of the tongue. "Sometimes we kill with the tongue: we commit real murders. And we are still to regard that as a small thing? I truly do not understand such consciences." Sister Faustina had a gentle heart and recalled a situation in which an acquaintance was seriously harmed by gossip. "I have known a person who, when she learned from someone that a certain thing was being said about her, fell seriously ill. She lost a good deal of blood and shed many tears, and the outcome was very sad. It was not the sword that did all this, but the tongue," she explained. "O my silent Jesus, have mercy on us!" (Diary, 119). Will we learn from her teaching? Can we control our tongues? Yes, I believe we can and must.

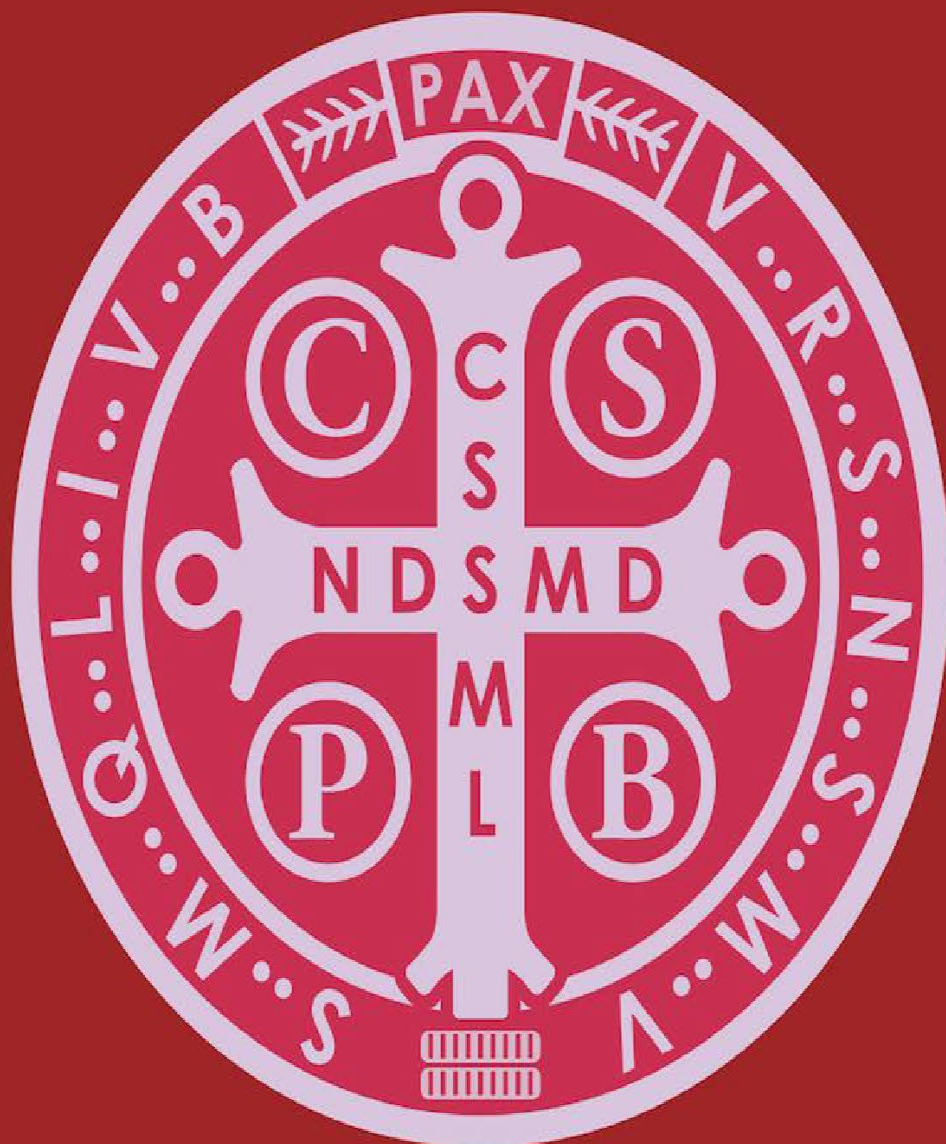
Silence and Prayer

Silence should be an important part of our prayer lives. Sister Faustina was not the only saint who knew the value of silence. So many of the saints learned the intrinsic value of silence. Mother Teresa was one who spoke a lot about silence and prayer — both to her sisters and to the world. For instance, she said, “We need to find God and God cannot be found in noise and restlessness. We cannot place ourselves directly in God’s presence without imposing upon ourselves interior and exterior silence. That is why we must accustom ourselves to the stillness of the soul, of the eyes, of the tongue. There is no life of prayer without silence.” Before throwing in the towel, fearing you cannot possibly achieve this treasured silence in your heart and soul, read a bit further.

Mother Teresa exclaimed, “In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence.” Those are powerful words to ponder in our hearts. Mother Teresa recommended finding times of silence to be alone with God. She said, “We too are called to withdraw at certain intervals into deeper silence and aloneness with God, together as a community as well as personally; to be alone with Him — not with our books, thoughts, and memories but completely stripped of everything — to dwell lovingly in His presence, silent, empty, expectant, and motionless.” She continued, “We need silence to be alone with God, to speak to him, to listen to him, to ponder his words deep in our hearts. We need to be alone with God in silence to be renewed and to be transformed. Silence gives us a new outlook on life. In it we are filled with the grace of God himself, which makes us do all things with joy.” This petite saint of the gutters warned of the danger of our prayer lives suffering when we are too chatty. She said, “If we are careful of silence it will be easy to pray. There is so much talk, so much repetition, so much carrying on of tales in words and in writing. Our prayer life suffers so much because our hearts are not silent.”

— THE HISTORY —
AND MEANING OF
THE JUBILEE MEDAL OF
SAINT BENEDICT

AND PRAYERS FOR THE
INTERCESSION OF ST. BENEDICT



The History and Meaning of the Medal of Saint Benedict
And prayers for the intercession of St. Benedict

Medals, crosses, rosaries, statues, paintings, and other religious articles have been used for centuries to grow and express a religious devotion to God and the saints. The use of these religious articles is a way of reminding us of God and encouraging a willingness and desire to serve God and neighbor. With this understanding, the use of religious articles as if they were mere charms or had some magic power to bring us good luck or better health must be rejected.

The Origin of the Medal of Saint Benedict

The cross was first used as a symbol and badge of faith by early Christians. According to St. Gregory the Great (540-604), St. Benedict had deep faith in the Cross and when he worked miracles, used the sign of the cross. This known devotion of St. Benedict resulted in the creation of a medal that showed an image of St. Benedict holding a cross in his right hand and his Rule for Monasteries in his left hand. Over time, other additions were made, such as the Latin petition asking for strength in the hour of death. It is unknown when the first medal of St. Benedict was struck, but manuscripts dating back to 1415 discovered at the Abbey of Metten give an explanation of some of the letters on the medal, so we know that it is more than six centuries old.

The Jubilee Medal of Monte Cassino

In celebration of the 1400th anniversary of St. Benedict's birth, a newly designed medal was created in 1880 under the supervision of the monks of Monte Cassino, Italy— the Monastery constructed by St. Benedict in place of a temple dedicated to Apollo. Since its creation, the Jubilee Medal of 1880 has remained one of the most popular medals throughout the Christian world.

The Elements of the Jubilee Medal

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 Benedictine monks and nuns evangelizing and civilizing England and Europe, especially for the sixth to the ninth/tenth centuries.



In St. Benedict's left hand is his *Rule for Monasteries* that could well be summed up in the words of the Prolog exhorting us to "walk in God's ways, with the Gospel as our guide".

On a pedestal to the right of St. Benedict is the poisoned cup, shattered when he made the sign of the cross over it. On a pedestal to the left is a raven about to carry away a loaf of poisoned bread that a jealous enemy had sent to St. Benedict.

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 St. Benedict as a special patron of a happy death. He himself died in the chapel at Montecassino while standing with his arms raised up to heaven, supported by the brothers of the monastery, shortly after St. Benedict had received Holy Communion.

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.

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).

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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!)

How is the Jubilee Medal Used

You may carry or wear the Medal of St. Benedict however you would like. Some wear it on a chain or attached to their rosary, some place it in their home or car, some even include it as a part of the foundation of their home. The purpose of this medal is to ask for God's blessing and protection, wherever we are through the intercession of St. Benedict. By using this medal, it becomes a reminder—a constant, silent prayer.

The medal is also used as a prayer of exorcism against Satan, a prayer for strength during temptation, a prayer for peace, a prayer that the Cross of Christ be our guide, a prayer that rejects evil, and a prayer of petition that we may “walk in God's ways, with the Gospel as our guide,” as St. Benedict directs us.

These Prayers for the intercession of St. Benedict can be used with the medal.

PRAYER OF SAINT BENEDICT

O Lord, I place myself in your hands and dedicate myself to you. I pledge myself to do your will in all things: To love the Lord God with all my heart, all my soul, all my strength.

Not to kill. Not to steal. Not to covet. Not to bear false witness. To honor all persons. Not to do to another what I would not wish done to myself. To chastise the body. Not to seek after pleasures. To love fasting. To relieve the poor. To clothe the naked. To visit the sick. To bury the dead. To help in trouble. To console the sorrowing. To hold myself aloof from worldly ways. To prefer nothing to the love of Christ.

Not to give way to anger. Not to foster a desire for revenge. Not to entertain deceit in the heart. Not to make a false peace. Not to forsake charity. Not to swear, lest I swear falsely. To speak the truth with heart and tongue. Not to return evil for evil. To do no injury: yea, even to bear patiently any injury done to me. To love my enemies. Not to curse those who curse me, but rather to bless them. To bear persecution for justice's sake.

Not to be proud. Not to be given to intoxicating drink. Not to be an over-eater. Not to be lazy. Not to be slothful. Not to be a murmurer. Not to be a detractor. To put my trust in God.

To refer the good I see in myself to God. To refer any evil in myself to myself. To fear the Day of Judgment. To be in dread of hell. To desire eternal life with spiritual longing. To keep death before my eyes daily. To keep constant watch over my actions. To remember that God sees me everywhere. To call upon Christ for defense against evil thoughts that arises in my heart.

To guard my tongue against wicked speech. To avoid much speaking. To avoid idle talk. To read only what is good to read. To look at only what is good to see. To pray often. To ask forgiveness daily for my sins, and to seek ways to amend my life. To obey my superiors in all things rightful. Not to desire to be thought holy, but to seek holiness.

To fulfill the commandments of God by good works. To love chastity. To hate no one. Not to be jealous or envious of anyone. Not to love strife. Not to love pride. To honor the aged. To pray for my enemies. To make peace after a quarrel, before the setting of the sun. Never to despair of your mercy, O God of Mercy. Amen.

Prayer to St. Benedict

O glorious St. Benedict, sublime model of all virtues, pure vessel of God's grace! Behold me, humbly kneeling at thy feet. I implore thy loving heart to pray for me before the throne of God. To thee I have recourse in all the dangers which daily surround me. Shield me against my enemies, inspire me to imitate thee in all things. May thy blessing be with me always, so that I may shun whatever God forbids and avoid the occasions of sin.

Graciously obtain for me from God those favors and graces of which I stand so much in need, in the trials, miseries and afflictions of life. Thy heart was always so full of love, compassion, and mercy towards those who were afflicted or troubled in any way. Thou didst never dismiss without consolation and assistance any one who had re-course to thee. I therefore invoke thy powerful intercession, in the confident hope that thou wilt hear my prayers and obtain for me the special grace and favor I so earnestly implore (mention it), if it be for the greater glory of God and the welfare of my soul.

Help me, O great St. Benedict, to live and die as a faithful child of God, to be ever submissive to His holy will, and to attain the eternal happiness of heaven. Amen.

Prayer to St. Benedict for a Happy Death

O holy Father, St. Benedict, blessed by God both in grace and in name, who, while standing in prayer, with hands raised to heaven, didst most happily yield thy angelic spirit into the hands of thy Creator, and hast promised zealously to defend against all the snares of the enemy in the last struggle of death, those who shall daily remind thee of thy glorious departure and heavenly joys; protect me, I beseech thee, O glorious Father, this day and every day, by thy holy blessings, that I may never be separated from our dear Lord, from the society of thyself, and of all the blessed. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

St. Benedict himself revealed to St. Gertrude - also one of the greatest saints in the history of the Catholic Church, and herself a Benedictine nun - that "whoever reminds me of the extraordinary privilege with which God deigned to glorify my last moments, shall experience my particular assistance in his final combat. I will be a faithful protector against the assaults of the enemy. Fortified by my presence, he will escape the snares of the evil one and safely attain eternal happiness."

Short Prayer to St. Benedict

Admirable Saint and Doctor of Humility, you practiced what you taught, assiduously praying for God's glory and lovingly fulfilling all work for God and the benefit of all human beings. You know the many physical dangers that surround us today often caused or occasioned by human inventions. Guard us against poisoning of the body as well as of mind and soul, and thus be truly a "Blessed" one for us. Amen.

Prayers to St. Benedict, Patron Against Poisoning, Patron of Religious

Admirable Saint and Doctor of Humility, you practiced what you taught, assiduously praying for God's glory and lovingly fulfilling all work for God and the benefit of all human beings. You know the many physical dangers that surround us today often caused or occasioned by human inventions. Guard us against poisoning of the body as well as of mind and soul, and thus be truly a "Blessed" one for us. Amen.

Dear St. Benedict, you are a "blessing" indeed, as your name indicates. Practicing what you preached, you founded the monastic tradition of the West by joining prayer to labor for God & -both liturgical and private prayer. Help all religious to follow their Rule and be true to their vocation. May they labor and pray for the world to the greater glory of God. Amen.

A Prayer to Seek and Find God

Father, in Your goodness

grant me the intellect to comprehend You,

the perception to discern You,

and the reason to appreciate You.

In Your kindness

endow me with the diligence to look for You,

the wisdom, to discover You,

and the spirit to apprehend You.

In Your graciousness

bestow on me a heart to contemplate You,

ears to hear You,

eyes to see You,

and a tongue to speak of You.

In Your mercy to confer on me

*a conversation pleasing to You,
the patience to wait for You,
and the perseverance to long for You.*

*Grant me a perfect end, Your holy presence. I ask this in the name of Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.*

A prayer for seekers of faith

*Gracious and Holy Father,
give us the wisdom to discover You,
the intelligence to understand You,
the diligence to seek after You,
the patience to wait for You,
eyes to behold You,
a heart to meditate upon You,
and a life to proclaim You,
through the power of the Spirit of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

A Prayer to Saint Benedict for Protection

Dear Saint Benedict, I thank God for showering you with His grace to love Him above all else and to establish a monastic rule that has helped so many of His children live full and holy lives.

Through the cross of Jesus Christ, I ask you to please intercede that God might protect me, my loved ones, my home, property, possessions, and workplace today and always by your holy blessing, that we may never be separated from Jesus, Mary, and the company of all the blessed. Through your intercession may we be delivered from temptation, spiritual oppression, physical ills, and disease. Protect us from drug and alcohol abuse, impurity and immorality, objectionable companions, and negative attitudes. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

A prayer in honor of Saint Benedict

Dear God, we praise and thank You for Who You are: The Creator and Master of the Universe, and our Father who loves us and has sent Your Son Jesus to save us from our sins.

Dear Father, You provided your holy monk, Benedict, as a leader and master in the spiritual life for a countless number of followers. Filled as he was with the spirit of all the just, You flooded him with the

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splendor of Your light. In the intense radiance of this light his mind was freed of hindrance and he was able to discern how incomplete all things are here below. Because of this the entire monastic company in every part of the world sings out its joy, and the Virtues on high, with all the angels, continuously praise Your glory in song.

Stir up in your Church, O Lord, the spirit that animated our Father Benedict. Fill us again with Your Holy Spirit, in order that we may learn to love what he loved and practice what he taught.

As You filled Saint Benedict with the spirit of all the righteous, grant us, your servants, who celebrate his life and all the good You have accomplished through him, his followers, and his holy Rule, to be filled with his spirit, that we may faithfully accomplish Your complete Will. We ask all this through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who with You lives and reigns, one God, world without end. Amen.

SIRACH: A Perfect Prayer As You Stand Vigil Before The Blessed Sacrament

From the Center for Contemplative Practice



As I learned about Lectio Divina from Brother Michael, O.C.S.O., our Junior Instructor for **Lay Cistercians at Our Lady of the Holy Spirit (Trappist), Conyers, Georgia**, this way of praying is at the center of Cistercian spirituality, and so is what we Lay Cistercians place towards the top of our practices. Lectio Divina has four steps (some say five) where its practitioners move through four stages or steps: lectio— a reading from Holy Scripture that we are to read over and over and then move to meditatio — in silence and solitude, reflecting on the various levels of meaning contained in that phrase or sentence; this leads to oratio, a prayer to the Holy Spirit to move to the next level, contemplatio. Contemplation is moving to that inner room all of us have where we retire and seek refreshment. Lectio Divina is all about moving from head to the heart and transforming self because of the presence of the Holy Spirit to be more like Christ and less like your false self.

Sirach is recognized by the Church as being canonical or inspired. It is often overlooked when people stand vigil before the Blessed Sacrament. Standing in the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament can be a somewhat conflicting experience because we humans

always want to fill up our time with something, anything, that means our time is productive. Who wants to stand before God and just do nothing. Yet, ironically that is exactly what contemplation is all about, with one exception. The nothingness of God contains more energy than all matter in all universes in whatever is out there. I do not have the capability nor the capacity to begin to wrap my mind around the love that God has just for me (and all of us). What I can do is be there in Lectio sitting on a park bench in the dead of Winter straining to see Jesus walking towards me to sit and talk. Lectio Divina is when Jesus wraps me in the blanket of the Holy Spirit and gives me what I can absorb about love to make me toasty warm. Once that happens to you, particularly as you take time to stand vigil before the Blessed Sacrament, you will sell all you have and empty yourself of all human “things” just to sit next to Christ and feel that warmth again.

I recommend that you read the book of Sirach as you kneel or sit before Christ, present in the Eucharist. Read just one sentence and say it over and over. Savor it and see how it applies to your life, then assimilate it into who you are and how you look at reality. The Wisdom of Sirach is heaven on earth. The Gospels and St. Paul quote from it to show us that being a disciple of Christ is all about “doing” what Christ did to those around you. As Jesus tells us, if you love those who love you, what merit is that? His disciples are called to love those who hate you and belittle you and tell you Jesus is just a wandering carpenter who had thoughts about being God, some say. Don’t forget to use Sirach to help you open yourself to the Spirit, so the transforming grace of God overshadows you each day.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/sirach/1>

A prayer from Sirach 39:12-15

Once more I will set forth my theme
To shine like the moon in its fullness!
Listen, my faithful children:
Open up your petals,
Like roses planted near the running waters;
Send up the sweet odor of incense,
Break forth in blossoms like the lily,
Send up the sweet odor of your hymn of praise;
Bless the LORD for all He has done!
Proclaim the greatness of His name,
Loudly sing His praises,
With music on the harp and all stringed instruments.
Sing out with joy as you proclaim:

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The works of God are all of them good;
In its own time every need is supplied.

The word of the LORD.