



BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE

Fall 2005



Benedictine Nuns • St. Emma Monastery • Greensburg, PA 15601

Phone: (724) 834-3060 • Fax (724) 834-5772 • Website www.stemma.org • Email benedictinenuns@stemma.org

*God our Father,
you made St. Benedict an outstanding guide
to teach all how to live in your service.*



*Grant that by preferring your love to everything else,
we may walk in the way of your commandments.*

Source: Roman Missal

Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



A Monastery: Apart from and A Part of the World

Last winter two visitors were looking at the photos on our vocation display showing aspects of our Benedictine life here at St. Emma Monastery. The striking quote, "To prefer nothing whatever above the love of Christ," (RB) hung above the photos. I overheard one woman asking her friend what "RB" meant? When I simply answered her, the "Rule of Benedict," what did she understand?

Living in the West, we moderns of the twenty-first century ask our obvious questions, "Who was Benedict? What was his Rule? How did it work? What plan did he devise and fulfill that Christianized Europe and earned him the title of "patron of Europe"? What difference does Benedict and his Rule make today? What earthly good is a monastery?

Born in 480 in Nursia, Italy, Benedict's studies in Rome disillusioned him. For the next three years, he sought God as a hermit living in a cave near Subiaco. What would we think that a college dropout who lived in a cave could teach us!

But indeed the feet-planted-firmly-on-the-earth farmers and peasants found themselves wanting to speak with Benedict. They were amazed that this unusual young man who lived apart from the world, even separated from it, seemed to be a part of their questions and to have a deep insight about the meaning and purpose of life. Was there a pattern that made sense out of the daily pieces of life? Where was God in their daily lives amid eking out a living, caring for loved ones, facing loss and tragedy, and knowing kindness and compassion?

Neighboring monks also came to know Benedict and they asked him to become their Abbot. While foreseeing that it would not work, Benedict acceded to their request.

Later he and some monks moved to Monte Cassino where he wrote a document now known as the Rule of St. Benedict.

This practical directive for the Christian life was not just based on his monastic experience. Benedict also reflected on the lives of the previous monks and nuns who often had lived the monastic life as hermits: what helped them to grow in the love of God and what tended to hold them back by being their own spiritual guides.

Benedict's Rule is a way of applying the Gospel to daily life. Although directed to monks who live somehow apart from the world, the Rule "speaks to" many lay people who are so much a part of the world. These lay people find inspiration for their

spiritual lives in this Rule whose realities, means and ends are very much a part of their lives.

What did Benedict require of his monks—1500 years ago—and today? "To seek God." This answer perhaps strikes us as too simplistic. But is it truly God whom we seek or one of the lesser gods of our fallen nature and/or of the culture? Does my false god come disguised as "my way, my rights, my need to be in the spotlight or my belief that "Toys R Us"?

Other contemporary gods include wanting to be politically correct so we do not voice our conscience and let the vocal minority rule. Not wanting to wear our religion on our sleeve, we keep our faith in the private sector rather than letting our faith influence everything that we do.

"To seek God" – what a strong verb. We seek a lost child, a better job, a time of relaxation, the person who will make us happy and the job that will bring us self-fulfillment. We buy what is supposed to make us complete. We human beings are "seekers".

Benedict asks the monks to seek Christ in the superior, the guest at the door, the sick, and to reverence the old and to love the young. When dealing with material goods and their pricing, Benedict says it should be done in a manner that in all things God might be glorified.

Benedict's faith-perspective states that the "tools of the monastery should be treated as sacred vessels of the altar" (RB 31). What transforming wisdom from monasteries apart from the world! Should that awareness become a part of the wider world, people would see that their daily lives are





Sr. Sandra Makes Temporary Vows

On Saturday, July 30, Sr. Sandra Chverchko professed temporary vows (for three years), and received the black veil and her religious name: Sr. M. Veronica.

Her patroness is the woman in the Sixth Station of the Cross who had compassion on Christ on his way to Golgotha and wiped the blood and sweat from his face. For her kindness, Christ left the imprint of his face upon her veil. Sr. Veronica grew up in Chest Springs, PA and was a member of St. Monica Parish. Having lived in the Greensburg area since 1997, she worked as an assistant manger at Christopher & Banks, Greensburg, PA before entering the monastery.



Sister Sandra speaks her vows.

A Monastery: *Continued from page 2*

connected to God. Indeed, whatever we do at a particular moment is our “sacred vessel” through which we offer ourselves to God at any given moment—just like the chalice.

Children love to play “hide and seek.” If there is no place to hide, it is no fun to seek. We discover that we need to seek God because God has some incredible hiding places. God hides in the complexity of our personalities, in the people who grate on our nerves, in the disappointments or tragedies that befall us. His disguises also include broken relationships, poor health, changes in the economy, the humdrum of going to work.

How does Benedict structure the monk’s day? Benedict organizes everything during the day and night towards God. What did the monastic do? He prayed and he worked trying to live always more consciously in the presence of God.

“Prayer and work” has become the motto of Benedictines. Prayer and work are a part of every person’s life. Prayer points to our source, what drives us, what keeps us going, what practically dictates our life. For the monastic, the Divine Office, now known as *The Liturgy of the Hours*, forms the structure of the day. We nuns

come together six times a day to praise God in our name, your name, the name of the Church and of the entire world.

What does a monastery do? It is a visible, human and architectural reminder to all, that God is the center and source of our being. A monastery is a reminder that our constant desire to always want “more,” to never know more than temporary fulfillment is the expression of our spiritual nature. It is this thirst for God, this God-hole, that makes us human and separates us from the animal kingdom.

A monastery is a God-pointer, the visible sign of the church at prayer. A monastery consists of an intentional community trying to become more Christ-like. Guests often comment on how peaceful a monastery is.

By coming apart to follow our monastic vocation to follow Christ within the monastery, we explore the depths of our being and focus in a visible way on the meaning and purpose of life. From within the center of our lives who is Jesus Christ, we become a part of and connected to every person on earth.

Thank you, Benedict, for your life and your Rule and for our Benedictine heritage.

Prayer Requests and Intentions

Please use the enclosed envelope to send us your prayer requests and intentions.

+In Memoriam

We extend our sympathy to the family of Margaret Pastva (the mother of our volunteer, Jeannie Brouwer). We are deeply touched and honored that the family designated St. Emma to receive memorial contributions in their mother’s name.



Please remember us when revising or making your will.

*Our legal name is:
The Sisters of Saint Benedict
of Westmoreland County*

Our Federal ID-# is: 75-231-104

Excerpts from

Why Are Monasteries Important?

By Rich Schulte

Graduate of St. Vincent Prep (1964)

St. Vincent College (1968)

Latrobe, PA

When people come to monasteries, they feel that they are in a place powerful with grace—because monasteries are houses of prayer. While monks and nuns may do various

kinds of work, their primary vocation is to pray. The sisters punctuate their day with community prayer – from morning prayer and Mass, to prayers around noon, to evening prayers, to night prayers. In between they will often pray and meditate privately. The old sisters who cannot work much anymore and the sick, the wheelchair bound, and those confined to bed are

constant pray-ers. Their prayers and their suffering are offered up for all and for the special intentions of those who ask the sisters for prayer.

Why are monasteries important? Monks and nuns are models for prayer and meditation. Buddhism and other religions understand this too.

In addition to praying the sisters work hard. The motto of the Benedictines is *Ora et Labora* (Pray and Work). St. Benedict's great gift to the world is to sanctify work. Work done for the greater glory of God is no curse. There's usually some manual labor for all: meals to make, cleaning to do, grass to cut, snow to shovel, laundry to wash, altars to decorate, old sisters to attend. The sisters are models to all for the sanctification of all the chores of everyday life. The sisters aspire to follow St. Benedict's Rule so that the dinner dishes, the garden rake and shovel, and the bucket of paint are treated as the vessels of the altar.

Monasteries in a world of constant change seem changeless. Though their chapel is new, it's designed for the kind of prayer defined in St. Benedict's 6th century Rule.

Monasteries continue to be places of refuge for travelers, of rest for the weary in body and spirit. Monasteries welcome both saints and sinners. The call to holiness is repeated to all. St. Emma welcomes non-Catholics and non-Christians. Monasteries work very hard to practice hospitality. Visitors are often surprised by the genuine warmth of the greeting they receive.

Monks and nuns tend to take a long-term view of things. They expect that their buildings will still be in use centuries in the future so they build simple but well. They plant trees whose fruit they will never eat. They are constantly hopeful and always like to have some room for the monastery to grow.

Excerpts from *Emersonian Nuns*

By Kate Ridinger

Senior at Duquesne University

Pittsburgh, PA

I am proud to state that I believe I have found a group of women, a small community who does demonstrate, at least in part, the glory of Emerson's vision by not only converting life into truth, but also converting truth into life. I devoted some time one summer to volunteering at St. Emma Monastery in Greensburg, PA. It may seem strange at first glance to propose to apply Emerson's teachings to the lifestyle of a Roman Catholic community of faith; however, I believe their lives and ministry go profoundly beyond that which would fulfill their "religious" responsibilities.

The sisters live according to the code of conduct outlined by St. Benedict in the 6th century; however, they are effective at letting "the breath of new life be breathed into [them] through the forms already existing." Instead of preaching they teach unwittingly by example: they live simply, productively, and reverently. Indeed, "only the spirit can teach." These women have chosen a quiet life, a unique but perhaps larger experience than society can provide.

By living a life of peace outside of the cacophony of public culture, they have the opportunity to communicate with God without dis-

traction, but also to connect deeply with their true inner self. In this way, through intuition and the mind functioning without interruption, they are able to contemplate and experience pure spirituality.

By extending themselves beyond the mere senses and the dictates of society they are open to the highest "moral sentiment" of virtue, through which they willingly perform noble acts that purify and redeem themselves and others.

The sisters come into contact with many people on a daily basis, from volunteers to roofers to priests. St. Emma hosts groups of various religious denominations year-round at their retreat center, some for silent retreats. They do not presume to lecture these individuals or deliver self-righteous theological instruction; in their interactions the sisters respond to other human beings using the warmth, simple respect, and dignity due to them. In this way, they minister to society not by words, which are inadequate in expressing true moral sentiment, but by true virtue displayed in their actions, works, and lifestyle.

In my experience, St. Emma serves as a kind of haven where people come to find peace. There is a special calming presence that pervades the monastery and grounds, refreshing and renewing one's soul. Some would refer to it as the presence of God.

Lifeline to the Divine

By Kathy Pino, Benedictine Oblate

Spending time at St. Emma is my lifeline to the Divine. In the fast-paced lives we lead, cluttered with noise and chaos, everyone must take the time, as St. Benedict says, “to listen with the ear of your heart.” At St. Emma, there are many opportunities for personal prayer, reflection, silence, and solitude...opportunities to “rest in the Lord’s presence.”

In the monastic tradition of St. Benedict, over 1500 years later, the Sisters provide many examples of faith in action. My favorite is the monastic prayer times throughout the day. No matter what “the work of the day” might be, the Sisters have taught me to stop...quiet myself...refocus on God...and give praise and thanks each time we gather for prayer. Even in my very different way of life, I take those prayers with me and pray the *Divine Office* in union with my friends at St. Emma, together in heart. And I savor that sustaining gift until I can visit again and join them in prayer.

As we empty ourselves daily to our work in the Church, our family, our jobs...St. Emma provides an opportunity to get “filled-up” with life-giving grace which allows us to share our gifts with others.

Benedictine Nuns • Daily Prayer Schedule



5:30 a.m. Vigils ~ *Lectio Divina I*

6:30 a.m. Lauds

7:00 a.m. Eucharist

Terce

* 11:45 a.m. Sext/None

* 5 p.m. Vespers

(* Times may vary)

7:30 p.m. Compline ~ *Lectio Divina II*

All are welcome to join us in prayer.



Monasticism cannot fail to have a beneficial influence also on civil society on which every kind of novelty introduced by rapid technological progress often causes confusion and bewilderment.

– Pope John Paul II *Speaks to Religious*

Excerpts from *Diary*

By Kate Ridinger

Senior at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA

I’ve always been fascinated by monastic life; in the summer I volunteer at a Benedictine convent, and I never cease to be amazed at the simplicity and happiness of the sisters. Every time I enter the grounds of St. Emma’s, I feel a certain aura, the air itself feels different there. There is such a feeling of peace, of silence, as if time has slowed down. My favorite part of the day there is when the sisters sing their midday Sext/None. That particular community is very small, and it is wonderful to see all of them leave their various daily activities, remove their blue striped aprons, and gather in the chapel to raise their high, thin voices in chant. I truly admire every one of the sisters.

The purpose of their life is to serve, and they find such peace in their service to God and to others. I know I would never be able to live this type of life, but I marvel at their simplicity and their faith. Religious communities are an enigma—somehow they manage to counter modern society by the nature of their lifestyle, somehow they are successful at finding a balance between work and quiet contemplation in a world of chaos. Yet they also serve this modern society in outward acts, or simply by the fact that they exist, praying for all of us and a world in need.

All Souls Day

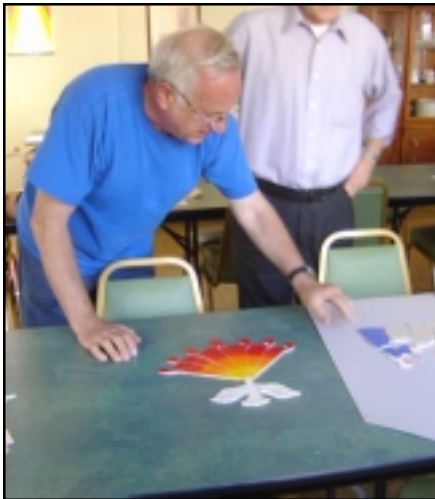
The Feast of All Souls' has its roots with St. Odilo, an abbot of Cluny who died in 1048. He had ordered the commemoration of the faithful departed to be celebrated annually in the monasteries belonging to his congregation. (Cluny was a reform that began in 910 as a new and

somewhat stricter form of Benedictine monastic life.) This commemoration of the faithful departed later extended to Benedictine and Carthusian monasteries and then to the Church in general. Before the end of the 13th century, it was almost universally celebrated on the day following All Saints.



Remembering those who have gone before us to God: Sisters care for the cemetery located on the monastery grounds.

We would be honored to remember your deceased loved ones in our prayer during the month of November. The names we receive will be read aloud to the community and then placed before the Sacred Heart statue in the Atrium. Not only will we keep the names in mind, but we will also have a visual reminder on our way to and from the Cor Jesu Monastic Chapel to lift your loved ones to the Lord in our prayer. In October you will receive information on how to send us your loved ones' names.



Rosary Walk

What began approximately six years ago as a "quick and easy" idea utilizing 4" x 6" cards of the mysteries of the rosary mounted on small boards and attached to various scrub trees along the nature path has now matured into a beautiful rosary walk.

Matt Deibert of Greensburg, PA constructed the 20 wayside shrines and mounted them to posts that he had cemented into place for his Eagle Scout project.

A community friend for many years, Brother Don Smith, SM, Dayton, OH designed and executed the ceramic representation of each Mystery of the rosary.

Above left: Brother Don explains the technique he used to make the ceramic Mysteries of the Rosary.

Left: Delivering the ready-made shrines, Matt Deibert is assisted by his family.



You are invited!

*Blessing of
Rosary Walk*

Sunday, October 30

2:00 p.m. Blessing

Reception and Open House

4:30 p.m. Sung Vespers

RSVP by Friday, October 28

724-834-3060

benedictinenuns@stemma.org

Monastic Life Is for Everyone: Reflections and Observations

By Robert J. Allen
Development Consultant

Cardinal Ratzinger chose Benedict XVI as the name he wished to be called as Pope of the Catholic Church, partially because of the monastic presence in his native country of Germany but also because he was calling our attention to the universal church and the "Communion of Saints" as part of that monastic life that exists to empower all people to do God's will.

As I travel across the United States, working with over 40 Benedictine women and men's communities, there are two constants: every community is different and every community has a prayer schedule that structures the life of that community. Let the bell for prayer be rung at the wrong time and the members are filled with confusion. Let the world face a major tragedy or disaster and they are clairvoyant on how to pray. I refer to it as the habit of "volun-

teer compulsion" because each monk or nun is committed to a life of prayer, in common works that create their true stability.

We who choose to follow a different vocation pray and work; but we are lifted up in spirit by our Benedictine Brothers and Sisters hourly in their prayers. We don't even need to ask for their prayer; but when we do, they intercede for us, no questions asked.

Why do we have monasteries? Because the "monastic presence" transcends space and time and allows us to be assured and reassured that our lives are totally intermingled with theirs and God's. In fact, I would argue that we could not function as we do without a monastic aura in our world.

Saint Benedict did not create a monastic rule for monks or hermits, but for society. The monastery is not apart from the world but is very much a part of each of us in the world.

Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop

Item No.	Size of	Made of	Description	Cost
1057SS/24S	Silver dollar	Sterling Silver	Jubilee Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 42.00
1057GF/24G	Silver dollar	Gold Filled	Jubilee Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 80.00
1057KT	Silver dollar	14kt Gold	Jubilee Medal – boxed (no chain)	\$920.00
0027BSS/24S	Nickel	Sterling Silver	Jubilee Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 24.00
0027BGF/24G	Nickel	Gold Filled	Jubilee Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 32.00
0027BKT	Nickel	14kt Gold	Jubilee Medal – boxed (no chain)	\$241.50
0026BSS/18SS	Dime	Sterling Silver	Jubilee Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 24.50
0026BGF/18GF	Dime	Gold Filled	Jubilee Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 28.00
0026BKT	Dime	14kt Gold	Jubilee Medal – boxed (no chain)	\$126.50
2341SS/18SS	Charm	Sterling Silver	Jubilee Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 22.50
2341GF/24GF	Charm	Gold Filled	Jubilee Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 24.00
2341KT	Charm	14kt Gold	Jubilee Medal – boxed (no chain)	\$ 40.00
Oval				
7008SS/24S	1 1/4"	Sterling Silver	St. Benedict Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 24.50
7008GF/24G	1 1/4"	Gold Filled	St. Benedict Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 30.00
7008KT	1 1/4"	14kt Gold	St. Benedict Medal – boxed (no chain)	\$218.50
808SS/18S	7/8"	Sterling Silver	St. Benedict Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 21.50
8008GF/18G	7/8"	Gold Filled	St. Benedict Medal – boxed w/chain	\$ 24.00
8008KT	7/8"	14kt Gold	St. Benedict Medal – boxed (no chain)	\$138.00
9008SS/18S	5/8"	Sterling Silver	St. Benedict Medal – medal only, carded	\$ 13.50
9008GF/18G	5/8"	Gold Filled	St. Benedict Medal – medal only, carded	\$ 15.00
9008KT	5/8"	14kt Gold	St. Benedict Medal – medal only, boxed	\$ 51.50



Jubilee Medal



Benedictine Crucifix



Benedict Medal

For a complete list of items offered by
the Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop, go to:
www.stemma.org

Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop



1. Anselm Grün OSB, **Benedict of Norcia** – \$3.95
2. **The Rule of St. Benedict** (RB 1980) English text only – \$2.95
3. **RB 1980** in Latin and English with Notes (soft cover) – \$29.95
4. Eric Dean, **Saint Benedict for the Laity** – \$9.95
5. Norvene Vest, **Preferring Christ, A Devotional Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict** – \$19.95
6. Dwight Longenecker, **Listen My Son, St. Benedict for Fathers** – \$17.95
7. Garcia M. Colombas, **Reading God, "Lectio Divina"** – \$4.50
8. Francis Kline, **Lovers of the Place, Monasticism Loose in the Church** – \$11.95
8. Columba Stewart OSB, **Prayer and Community, The Benedictine Tradition** – \$13.00
10. Michael Casey OCSO, **Strangers To The City, Reflections on the Beliefs and Values of the Rule of St. Benedict** – \$15.95
11. **The Liturgy of the Hours** – *The Official English Edition of the Divine Office*, 4 Volume Set (single volumes available) – \$139.00; 4 Volume Set – Leather Binding (available in sets only) – \$164.00
12. **Christian Prayer** – \$33.00 (one volume compendium)
13. **Christian Prayer** – Large Print Edition – \$34.95
14. **Shorter Christian Prayer** (Morning and Evening Prayer) – \$13.95

Pro-Life Day of Recollection



On Saturday, October 15, Rev. Thomas Smith will lead the Fall Pro-Life Day of Recollection.

Program begins with registration at 8:45 a.m. and concludes with Eucharist at 4 p.m. (anticipated Sunday). Fee is \$23.00. Registration is required.

When we are called home by the Lord, what will we say to the Lord regarding our life's thoughts, words and deeds defending, supporting, and providing for the dignity and quality of human life?

Retreat House Schedule

Weekend Retreats

October	14-16	Women, Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald CP (\$110)
	21-23	Married Couples, Rev. Thomas Kram (\$210)
	28-30	Married Couples, Rev. Mark Gruber OSB (\$210)
November	4- 6	Legion of Mary and OTHERS (\$110) Rev. Francis Lendacky
December	3	Day of Recollection for Religious and Lay
March 2006	3- 5	Silent (men/ women) Rev. Mark Gruber
	10-12	Men Rev. Tom Smith
	17-19	Women Rev. Mark Gruber OSB
	24-26	Silent (men/ women) Most Rev. Anthony G. Bosco
	31- Apr 2	Silent (men/ women) Rev. Mark Gruber OSB
June	2- 4	Legion of Mary and OTHERS
	16-22	6 Day SILENT (lay and religious) Rev. Mark Gruber OSB
August	4-10	6 Day SILENT (lay and religious) Rev. Tom Smith
	25-27	Men/Women Rev. Bill Kiel

Days/Evenings of Recollection

November 30, 2005		Advent for Men and Women 8:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Rev. Bill Kiel \$23
December	1	Advent for Women 4:45p.m.- 9:00 p.m. Rev. Justin Matro OSB \$17
	2	Day of Recollection "Divine Mercy" 8:45 a.m. — 4:30 p.m. Rev. Jacques Daley OSB \$23
	3	Advent for lay and religious 9:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.
January	28, 2006	"Divine Mercy" 8:45 a.m. — 6:00 p.m. Rev. Jacques Daley OSB \$32
March	11	"Divine Mercy" 8:45 a.m. — 6:00 p.m. Rev. Jacques Daley OSB \$32

Monastic Guest House Schedule

Priests Silent Guided Retreat

January 2-6, 2006 Rev. Lester Knoll OFMCap, Theme: "The Priest: Witness to the Mysteries" (Daily outline: Mass, One conference, one optional discussion session (evening), Eucharistic Adoration each evening, Silence.) Limited to 9.

Priests Directed Silent Retreat

March 5-10, 2006 Rev. Thomas Acklin OSB

Directed Silent Retreat

May 21-26, 2006 Rev. Thomas Acklin OSB

June 2-8, 2006 Rev. Mark Gruber OSB

August 4-10, 2006 Rev. Mark Gruber OSB

Encounter With Silence

July 7-14 Rev. Frank Erdeljac