

Retreat Talks

I.

“Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.”

Richard Foster, “The world needs not more gifted people or intelligent people, but more deep people”

Who was Benedict of Nursia? 6th century born somewhere between 480-490. 529 moved to Monte Cassino. 20men.

Rule of St. Benedict—a school of Christ and his service Rules exist to focus community on Christ and eliminate those things that won't help us attain the goal. Dedicated to the idea that God is present everywhere. Our job is to seek Him out. Similar to Fox, “Walk cheerfully over the earth, answering that of God in every one.” “If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart.” PS 95:8 LISTEN!!!

St. Benedict points to Christ, It is as simple as that. Christ is the beginning, the way and the end.

The Rule continually points beyond itself to Christ himself, and in this it has allowed and will

Continue to allow, men and women in every age to find in what it says, depths and levels

Relevant to their needs and their understanding at any stage on their Journey, provided that

They are truly seeking God. Esther de Waal 23.

stability—You leave only because you and the community perceive this isn't God's will or you die or the order moves you. It is far too easy in our world to solve our problems with others by moving—don't like your boss or coworkers, change jobs. School doesn't fit needs, change schools. Children are discarded when they cause trouble or just life is better without them. Rule of St. Benedict says, the problem may be you, you change, the community acts as a means through which God speaks. Ps 119:128 “Accept me, O Lord according to your promises, and let me not be confounded in my expectations” Ps. 119:116 Ephesians 4:11-6. Matt. 18:20. Community Ephesians 4 Proverbs 27:17

Conversion of manners—covers old vow of poverty and chastity. Material greed and sexual transgressions destroy community. Peoples' possessions not mine but ours. Ps 34:12-4., Ezek 33:11

Obedience and humility PS 17:44 “At the hearing of the ear, he has obeyed me.”—people's rank except for official roles depends on date they entered. Everyone does hard physical work. Humility awareness of one's weakness, sin and fallibility Luke 14:11 “He who humbles himself shall be exalted.” Phil. 2:3-7.

Work and prayer—life has a rhythm—one is never more than a short time away from worshipping God in community the use of lectio divina and Opus Dei means that the heard word of God becomes the word of God for me through meditation on it and informs my private search for God. Opus Dei: 119:164 “Seven Times a Day shall I praise you”

Hospitality. "Receive the guest as Christ" early medieval Europe didn't have any Motel 6. Biblical basis in Hebrew Bible "Remember you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Matt 25:35 "I was a stranger and you took me in"

Importance of silence—Thomas Merton *Contemplation in a World of Action* "The need for a certain distance from the world does not make the monk love the world the less. Nor does it imply that he never has any contact with the outside world. Certainly the monastic community has the right and duty to create a certain solitude for the monk.... But at the same time the monastic community owes other men a share in that quiet and that solitude. Obviously the balance must be very delicate, for quiet and solitude are destroyed by the movement of crowds. But the fact remains all the more true; the monk has a quiet relatively isolated existence in which it is possible to concentrate more on the quality of life and its mystery, and, thus, to escape in some measure from the senseless tyranny of quantity. (10)

The Examination of Conscience. Jesuit practice. What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What should I do for Christ? (Where is God calling me to go?) Goal of Rule: Let us prefer nothing whatever to Christ *Opus Dei*: Cycle of work and prayer.

Ps. 26:2 Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and mind" Psalm 139: 23-4 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Richard Foster in *Prayer* "Journey through ourselves so that we can emerge from the deepest level of the self into God. Be aware of feelings "Test the spirits to see whether they are from God I John 4:1

Three steps of Prayer of Examen

1. Acts 17:28 In him we live and move and have our being. Prepare yourselves by quietly focusing your attention on God.
2. Step 2 Calling on Holy Spirit John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all truth.
 - a. Phil. 4:8 When did you live out of love and freedom in Christ.
 - b. Lamentations 3:20 When did you not live out of love and freedom in Christ Let us test and examine our ways and return to the Lord.
3. Thank God for what he has shone you through this exercise and ask for guidance and grace for tomorrow Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to whom be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever, Amen Ephesians 3:20

Talk 2

Ps. 119:164 Seven times a day shall I praise you."Prefer nothing to the love of Christ."

Smaragdus: early commentator, while on the outside, the hands are occupied with work: on the inside the heart becomes sweet through meditating the psalms with the tongue and remembering the scriptures."

Liturgy of Hours: Each has symbolism for progress of day and for human life. Modern hours such as Mount Angel in Oregon adapt them for life of Community Vigils: 520 Lauds 6:30 Communion 8:00 Noon Sext Vespers 5:20 Compline 7:30

Matins Midnight sometimes called Night Office or Vigils. Awaiting the arrival of the Bridegroom We meditate on whole history of salvation

Lauds 3:00 morning Office Often combined with Matins St. Benedict advised a very short break between them. Rising of Sun considered symbol of resurrection. Called lauds because it is devoted to praise. Hour is joyful optimistic reflected by hymns psalms and canticles, youth innocence, blossoming spring.

Prime 6:00 first hour avoids laziness calls monks together by calling them together to pray and sending them out to tasks.

Terce 9:00a.m. short pray one of little hours, coming of Holy Spirit as told in Acts. One prays for light and strength as day waxes strong and work begins.

Sext: Noon another of little hours. Sun is at apex and one has become a bit weary. Mindfulness becomes difficult Earnest prayer to resist temptation to keep from being overcome by demands and pressures of life. We are reminded of Christ's crucifixion and we unite ourselves with him. One aware of one's failures and mistakes and prays for conversion of life even to the point of sacrifice.

None: 3:00 Pray for perseverance, third of little hours. Prays for strength and to continue bearing fruit in mid life. One becomes aware of sun's descent and strength one needs for full demands and responsibility of life.

Vespers 6:00 day almost over, work is done. Golden years autumn retirement gold transfigures world and makes it transparent to God. Hour of wise age, resting in thanksgiving and humility after struggles failures and successes of life and one's productive day.

Compline 900 Daily exercise in dying. Completion of day and life's end. Darkness of God's presence, falling into abyss of his mercy. Sleep is petit mort or little death Prayer Simeon's Nunc Dimittis. Now Lord you will let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your saving

deed which you have set before all: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory to your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32)

Your Rule of Life—Divide into 3 parts, daily, weekly or monthly, yearly Also use long term calls. Above all, do it only with God’s guidance, a spiritual director helps. Build spiritual practices such as lectio divina, contemplative prayer, prayer of examen, community or liturgical prayer. Your personal rule will be defined by Goals you reach for a specific plan of action, guidelines to assist in making ordinary choices every day, habits for the sake of physical emotional and spiritual health, values that determine what is important and direct your everyday actions.

Talk III

III. Lectio Divina Chapters 20 and 48 of Rule of St. Benedict.

Robert Benson in *Living Prayer*: "The longer we hold on to the old. . . the longer it holds on to us, and the longer it keeps us from hearing the Word that we so long to hear. It becomes a matter of not being able to hear God's voice because we are so full of our own. We cannot hear the Word because our own words are in our way. We cannot be filled with God until we are not so full of ourselves. Our hearts and minds wonderful as they are, are simply too small. We cannot give our hearts to God, or anyone else for that matter, as long as they are too heavy for us to lift." (27)

Tony Campolo: "if it is important to get into the scriptures, it is more important to get the scriptures into us.

Liturgy of hours involves all 150 Psalms every week, why. Practice of lectio continues praying the scriptures into work. Challenge is not so much getting Christians into the Scriptures as getting the scriptures into Christians. Cow goes out and eats good grass (lectio) and lies under a tree and chews her cud (meditation) Until she extracts milk and cream, (contemplation). She gives milk to others action or incarnatio. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together*. "The Word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your ears and working in you all day long. Just like the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart as Mary did. That is all...Do not ask 'How shall I pass this on?' but what does this say to me?' This ponder this word long in your heart until it has gone right unto you and taken possession of you."

Lectio Divina is reading for transformation not information, for relationship.

How do I feel about what is being said. Where do I resist, where do I feel uncomfortable, where do I feel both resonance and resistance, I can't do this. This is place where God wants to work on you. Why do I feel this way? What aspects of my inner life are being touched. What do my reactions tell me about myself, my desires, reactions, past experiences, habits and fixed patterns. Lectio Divina balances silence and word. Word is read aloud and heard "Taste and see, the Lord is good. Heard word is different from read silent word. You can't go fast, you can't skip, you can't turn word as easily in to propositions.

Scriptural basis of Lectio

Psalm 119:11 I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.

Psalm 119:15 I will meditate on your precepts, and fix my eyes on your ways. Ps. 119:15

Psalm 119 105 and 48 "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of God dwell in you richly

Good Passages for Lectio: Matthew 25:31-46

John 15, John 20:19-29

Isaiah 43:1-7, Isaiah 58

Romans 8:31-39

Philippians 2:1-11, 3:7-14

Lectio Divina: Step 1: Lectio read aloud twice with space between each reading and before you begin

Meditatio: Meditation reflect on reading You might also try Ignatian application of senses. Put yourself in the story which character are you, what do you see, hear, smell, taste, touch John 21:17 Jesus and feed my sheep

Oratio: Pray with the words that stick out in the passage.

Contemplatio : Enter silence and fall through the word to the presence of God

Actio or Incarnatio What does God want you to do to make the word part of your life. Change actions or attitudes, Perform a specific Action

Prayer is “an opening of the self so that the Word of God can break in and make us new.” Joan Chittister

Four Moments of Lectio Divina

Sense	Faculty	Function	Prayer
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1. Literal	Intellect	Understanding Text	Lectio
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2. Christological	Memory	Contextualizing Meaning	typology Meditatio
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3. Behavioral moral or Allegorical	Conscience	Living Meaning	Oratio
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4. Mystical	Spirit	meeting God in Text	Contemplatio
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Anagogical

Fourth Session

Someone once asked how does one become a Contemplative? Say the Lord's Prayer St. Teresa of Avila said but have it take one hour.

Prayer and Contemplation Romans 8:26 How God prays through us. St. Augustine "May I know you, may I know myself." Prayer of the heart, finding oneself in God's truth. It is not discovering a formula or one's place in the order of the cosmos. Grace Mercy and faith are not permanent possessions we own or maintain, rather constantly renewed gifts of God for which we are dependent on God according to Thomas Merton. Discovering the ejaculatory prayer or monologian.

Luke 18:13 Jesus Prayer, Lord have Mercy, Christ Have Mercy. God come to my assistance, Lord make haste to help me. Lord Jesus Christ, only son of the Everlasting God, Have mercy on me, a sinner.

1 Set aside at least fifteen minutes and gradually increase the time. Enter recollection, quietly focus your attention on God, collecting it from all the places where it has been dissipated.

2 take a comfortable position Select a simple word that expresses God to you love peace grace fire, wind, water, the rock let this word guard your attention

3. Take time to be quiet. If unwanted thoughts intrude themselves, turn them into clouds or balloons and let them float by. Use your word or prayer to control your thoughts

a. Imagine there is a deep river of life floating within you. Calm and strong in the depths, but with all sorts of debris and trash on the surface. Let the debris and trash float by as you plunge deeply in the depths.

b. You are visiting a friend who lives on a busy city street. It is summer and the windows are open. You know noises are coming in the window, car noises and horns, dogs barking, people talking, the wind rustling. You concentrate so hard on what your friend is saying that you soon don't hear the horns and noises. If distractions try to drag your attention away from Jesus, return to your word.

4. Rest in the Lord. Pray to the Holy Spirit to connect you to God. At the end, come out of the inner experience using the Lord's prayer or some other prayer.

5. As you come out prayer come out slowly Offer yourself to God in the form of a brief prayer. All yours

Three steps of Centering prayer

1. Put yourself into the loving presence of God and Find a word
2. If your thoughts distract you, return to your word
3. When you come out of contemplation, pray a simple prayer such as the Lord's Prayer or the Gloria Patri

