

SUGGESTED READING

The Rule of St Benedict is available in English. A short book (c. 80 pages) and easy to read, it is the best source for learning about Benedictine life.

- RULE** *RB 1980: The Rule of St Benedict in English* ed. Timothy Fry OSB
pub. Collegeville 1982
- Work & Prayer* Columba Cary-Elwes OSB Catherine Wymbourne OSB
(Rule & commentary) pub. Continuum 2001

BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

- Searching for God* Basil Hume OSB Hodder & Stoughton 1977
- Touched by God* ed. Laurentia Johns OSB (S) Continuum 2008
- Gateway to Resurrection* Maria Boulding (S) Continuum 2010
- The Coming of God* Maria Boulding (S) SPCK 1982
- Seeking God* Esther de Waal, Fount 1982
- Crossing* Mark Barrett DLT 2006
- The Path of Life* Cyprian Smith OSB Ampleforth 1996
- Cherish Christ Above All* Demetrius Dumm OSB Gracewing 1996
- The Cloister Walk* Kathleen Norris Lion 1999
- Reading with God* David Foster Continuum 2005

PRAYER

- Deep Calls to Deep* David Foster Continuum 2007
- The Wisdom of the Western Isles: the Making of a Mystic* by David Torkington 2008
- Spiritual Letters* John Chapman OSB Bums & Oates 2002
- Into the Silent Land* Martin Laird DLT 2006

SCRIPTURE

Anything by Raniero Cantalamessa eg *The Ascent of Mount Sinai*

STANBROOK

- In a Great Tradition* (out of print but maybe available in libraries)
- Friends of a Lifetime* Felicitas Corrigan OSB(S)
- The Saints, Humanly Speaking* Felicitas Corrigan (S)
- Dame Gertrude More* Frideswide Sandeman OSB(S)

Our cassette, 'The Long Walk into God', includes a meditation on 'pilgrimage' which you may find helpful.

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THE BENEDICTINE WAY

some pointers

*Christ is the Way,
the only way to lead us to God.*
Bl. Columba Marmion OSB

See how the Lord, in his loving-kindness, shows us the way of life

RB Prologue v. 20

These words, from the *Rule of St Benedict*, written in the sixth century, provide a summary of the whole Benedictine way - a way of life centred on Christ who said: 'I am the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6). All Christians are called to follow Christ but the monk or nun is called to do so with particular intensity. This desire to put nothing before the love of Christ - to give oneself totally to him - was what drove the earliest monks into the desert and remains the mainspring of monastic life today.

Living in community, under the Rule and an abbot/abbess, and focussed on the worship of God, Benedictines reflect the first Christian community in Jerusalem: *all those whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common... with one mind they kept up their daily attendance at the temple* (Acts 2: 45-46).

For those following the monastic way, as for all Christ's disciples, there is no new life without passing through death: the way of life is gained by way of the cross - the Gospel paradox. To the initial renunciations of home, family, possessions and career is added the daily dying to self demanded of those who *prefer nothing to Christ*. (RB 72:11)

St Benedict warns of the difficulties of the road which he says is *bound to be narrow at the start*, but he adds encouragingly, *as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the indescribable delight of love* (RB Prologue v. 49).

SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART

Benedictine spirituality is, above all then, a spirituality of the heart. This is what makes it as relevant for us in the twenty-first century as it was fifteen hundred years ago. All the monastic practices: prayer, sacred reading, worship, work, silence and mutual service, open the heart to the healing, integrating presence of the Holy Spirit, leading to inner peace and unity. In fact, *monos* (from which derives 'monastic') carries this sense of wholeness. It recalls that moment at the end of his life when St Benedict saw the whole world caught up in a ray of light. To attain that vision is the goal of Benedictine life.

I shall always praise your name and day after day fulfil my vows

Psalms 60

Vows

Our commitment to God is anchored in the Benedictine vows of *stability, conversion of life and obedience*. (No specific vow of poverty or chastity is taken - these are implied under *conversion of life*.)

- **STABILITY** - A Benedictine takes vows to one particular community and cannot normally be transferred to another monastery.

- **CONVERSION OF LIFE** - By this vow we promise to remain faithful to the whole monastic way of life and to allow ourselves to be changed by it.

- **OBEDIENCE** - An active listening to God, the superior and each member of the community is the key to this vow.

ENCLOSURE

The workshop where we are to toil faithfully at all these tasks is the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the community. (RB 4:78)

Benedictine nuns do not usually undertake work outside the monastic enclosure and family/friends visit us at the monastery rather than vice versa. Far from being a restriction, the practice of enclosure fosters an environment of prayer and is a symbol of our single-hearted search for God.