

A Declaration on Benedictine Monastic Life  
*for the Monasteries*  
*of the Swiss-American Benedictine Congregation*

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## Preface

In the Apostolic Letter *Ecclesiae sanctae*, issued *motu proprio* the 6th of August 1966, Pope Paul VI set down norms for implementing certain decrees of the second Vatican Council. Among them was the Decree *Perfectae caritatis* on the renewal of religious life. According to the norms for implementing the latter, the general chapter of each religious institute was to go about revising that institute's constitutions. *Ecclesiae sanctae*, presupposing the constitutions typical of modern religious institutes, distinguished two kinds of material which were to be found in revised constitutions: the theological principles of religious life in the Church, and the juridic norms needed for defining the nature of the institute, its purpose, and the means to be used in achieving that purpose. This led the Swiss-American Benedictine Congregation's general chapter of 1969 to adopt two separate documents: one called a Constitution, containing the juridic elements, and the other called a Declaration, containing theological principles.

St. Benedict's Rule itself, however, abounds in statements of principle for the pursuit of the monastic ideal, as well as in prescriptions and prohibitions which constitute elements of proper law, indeed the only proper law shared by all Benedictine and Cistercian institutes today. Mindful of this, the general capitulars of 1969 tried to be attentive both to the Roman norms for constitutional revision and to the reality of our Benedictine polity by recognizing not two but three normative documents of the Swiss-American Congregation: the Rule, the new Declaration, and the new Constitution. They saw these three documents as integral parts of a whole to which they gave the name *Covenant of Peace*.

The choice of the terms "declaration" and "constitution" was inspired by the two parts of our previous code of proper law, the "Declarations on the Holy Rule" and the "Constitutions of the Swiss-American Congregation." In customary Benedictine usage, declarations are actually laws, by which a monastic congregation officially adapts sections of the Rule to the congregation's own observances and circumstances. Since 1969 our laws of this type have been placed either in our new Constitution or in the Customary which each monastery has drawn up to regulate its own observance. The new Declaration on Monastic Life is thus not a collection of declarations in the classical Benedictine sense. It is an attempt rather to draw vital principles from the Rule and other sources and to apply them to our life in the Church today, in order to complement our juridic elements, in response to *Ecclesiae sanctae*.

The general chapter of 1975 adopted a revised Declaration on Monastic Life, without repudiating the Declaration of 1969. In conformity with the original intention of *Ecclesiae sanctae*, a copy of this revised Declaration accompanied the definitive text of

our Constitution and Statutes when it was submitted to the Apostolic See for the approval which it received on the 8th of December 1988.

By that time, however, the Declaration had gone out of print. Although by its nature it is always open to revision, the general chapter of 1990 determined that the Declaration of 1975, with its introduction and index, be reprinted without change, except for the adjustment of terminology and references which are now obsolete, and the alteration of expressions which are needlessly exclusive of women.

Acceding gladly to this wish, I direct that it be carried into effect as it was proposed.

+ Patrick Regan, O.S.B.

President

of the Swiss-American Benedictine Congregation

Saint Joseph Abbey

The eighth day of December 1990

*Foreword to the 2006 Edition*

A few years ago, in the course of an Abbot President's Council meeting, the suggestion was made that the Swiss American Benedictine Congregation's *Declaration of Benedictine Life* be reedited. The Council agreed, a committee was appointed, and it produced a revised text which was presented to, and approved by the 2005 General Chapter.

There was no intention to make a completely Revised Edition. Rather relatively minor changes were made in the text to improve the flow or replace slightly dated expressions or terms with more contemporary language.

The new edition was timely because the supply of the 1990 edition was almost exhausted. The *Declaration of Benedictine Life* would therefore have to be reprinted. However, when this matter was brought up at the 2005 General Chapter, it was suggested that the present edition doesn't need to be printed; it could simply be posted on the Swiss American Congregation Website. The abbots and delegates agreed with this proposal and this posting is the result. I hope that through this means, these *Declarations* will enjoy an even wider dissemination than the printed word would have given them.

Abbot Peter Eberle, O.S.B.  
President  
Swiss American Congregation

Ash Wednesday, March 1, 2006.

## *Introduction*

The Rule of Benedict establishes a structure of monastic life. This Rule remains for succeeding ages the touchstone of authentic Benedictine life, but its principles must be applied to the present age with understanding and reflection.

This Declaration is an attempt to translate the lasting heritage of the Rule for monks of the Swiss-American Benedictine Congregation, preserving its unchanging principles while applying them to modern life. It brings to the understanding of the Rule the experience of monks of our day, and relates the particular goals and values of these monks to the larger communities of Church and world.

This statement, like others before it, serves for the current period. It aims to promote a better understanding of the monastic life for our times and hopes to encourage faithful response to its challenge.

In the column listing references to Scripture, the Rule and Council documents, the following are used for abbreviations:

LG - *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

SC - *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Liturgy

PC - *Perfectae Caritatis*, Decree on Religious Life

GS - *Gaudium et Spes*, Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

DV - *Dei Verbum* Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

AG - *Ad Gentes*, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity

UI - *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism

RB - Rule of Benedict

<p>1 Pt. 2:9 Col. 1:13 Eph. 1:3-5 1 Cor. 12:4-11 Gal. 4:6 Rom. 8:15</p> <p>RB Prologue 22</p>	<p><b>A. The Trinity</b></p> <p><b>D1</b> Benedictine monastic life is rooted in the mystery of the revealing God. The Father calls his children out of darkness into the light of the divine Son, bestowing the gift of the Spirit. The monk hears the Father calling him personally and cries out "Abba, Father" like every Christian, opening his heart to the particular demands of this beckoning love. Through Christ, the Spirit imparts a variety of gifts to those called by the Father. The monastic life springs up from within this Christian mystery in response to a particular gift which accompanies the Father's call. C3,4</p>
<p>Jn. 1:14 Phil. 2:5-11; 3:10-11 Heb. 5:7ff.; 10:16 Gal. 4:19</p> <p>RB Prologue:20, 50 LG 5</p>	<p><b>D2</b> The Triune God reveals himself in the space and time of human history. The Father creates the world for human beings and continues to create by calling them into a covenant with himself. He spoke through the prophets, and then he revealed himself in his own Son, a model of faithful obedience and humble surrender to the will of the Father. All God's revelation is finally Word made flesh, and monks, with other Christians, are summoned to bring Christ to birth in themselves by the power of the Holy Spirit. Their response to the Father's call is life in a monastic community under a rule and an abbot. They strive to live out their vocation to holiness with their brothers, so that by perseverance in the monastery, all may learn to participate in the passion of Christ and together be made sharers in His kingdom.</p>
<p>RB 71 LG 1, 41, 44, 46</p>	<p><b>B. The Church</b></p> <p><b>D3</b> The monk is first a member of the Church, the larger community of faith. Baptism is his first public Christian response to the Word of God. Each Christian accepts the initial invitation and then seeks prayerfully to learn its special meaning in his own life. How does the Father want me to serve? How will my life reveal God's love and promote his glory? When the monk joins a community, it is not in answer to a different call, but because the original word to him is understood in a new way. He senses the Spirit leading him along the path of obedience in community. His membership in the Church remains the same, but his role changes. By binding himself to his brothers in following Christ, the monk enters a covenant within the Covenant. The life he lives as a Christian is sacramental, a sign to the world of Christ's victory; it will be a sign from within this community, a shared witness to the kingdom. The community of monks becomes a focus of the Church as a sacrament of Christ.</p>

<p>1 Thess. 5:17</p> <p>SC 2. 10</p> <p>PC 7,9</p> <p>LG 9</p> <p>RB 19:2; 43:3</p>	<p><b>D4</b> The community finds and expresses its unity in the liturgy, the summit of the Church's activity and the source of her power. The monk's day is anchored by the Liturgy of the Hours. Coming together at regular times to pray, monks testify to the importance of prayer in their life. The hours set the tone for a contemplative spirit and support the monk's desire to pray always. At the center of the Church's sacramental life is the Eucharist. Here, above all, the Church appears as a sign of unity, peace and salvation for the whole world. In this climax of worship around the altar, all that the monastic community believes about itself as the People of God is celebrated in hope. <i>C47</i></p>
<p>Eph. 4:16</p> <p>1 Cor. 12:4-11</p> <p>PC 6</p>	<p><b>D5</b> The monastic vocation is one of many charisms in the Church, a specific gift of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ. The Spirit pours forth his gifts to each as he wills. Charisms in the Church do not depend on the teaching authority for existence or authenticity. But every charism is under the guidance, protection and discernment of the Church's teachers, who are themselves guided by the gift-giving Spirit. There are different gifts but the same Spirit, different ministries but the same Lord, all of them given to enrich and strengthen the unity of believers.</p>
<p>Jn. 17:21</p> <p>1 Cor. 12:7</p> <p>Rom. 8:19-21</p> <p>2 Tim. 1:9</p> <p>PC 9</p> <p>LG 43, 46</p> <p>Jn. 2:24-25; 18:36</p>	<p><b>D6</b> The Church does not seek this unity for her own sake alone, but that the world may believe, and monastic life within the Church does not exist only for itself but as a gift to the world. Every charism is a call to service, every faithful response an act of love for the entire human family. The monk expresses his love for all people by being true to his gift from the Spirit. His life in community calls the whole of humanity to grace and freedom, and hastens the redemption of all creation.</p>
<p>1 Cor. 7:31</p> <p>2 Cor. 5:7; 4:18</p> <p>Heb. 13:14;</p> <p>RB Prologue: 3</p>	<p><b>D7</b> The monastic community shares in the mission of the Church first of all by the life it lives. Monks reveal God to one another and to the world, taking up the strong, bright weapons of obedience to seek him in faith through prayer, work, silence, asceticism, a common life in peace. They carry forward the Gospel-tradition by love and mutual service, especially attentive, through their Liturgy of the Hours and holy reading, to the voice of the Spirit in Sacred Scripture. By refusing to trust itself to the world or to be seduced by the values of an earthly kingdom, the monastic community proclaims that the world as we</p>

<p>Mt. 25:31-46</p>	<p>know it is passing away and bears witness to a kingdom visible only to the eyes of faith. C 3-4 39, 47, 50, 53, 63</p>
<p>PC 9</p>	<p><b>D8</b> The life of the community radiates outward also through its apostolates. Monks broaden the scope of their service by sharing the concerns of world, Church and neighborhood, mindful always that they, like all Christians, will be judged on the basis of what they have done for Christ in the least of his brothers. This involvement adds an important dimension to community life, keeping the monks aware of the needs of others, and arousing energy and talent for the spreading of the kingdom. C3, 4</p>
<p>Is. 45:15  Jn. 1:4-9  2 Cor 4:10-12;  12:10  1 Cor. 1:26-2:5  Col. 1:12-13  1 Jn. 3:2  LG 8,9, 48-51</p>	<p><b>D9</b> The monk rejoices in the Father's word to him, but he knows that the God who is revealing remains a hidden God. One who walks with God must walk in faith. The mystery of Christ is full of contrasts, tensions of grace in the life of every believer: light and darkness, life and death, present and future. The monk knows the feeling of pilgrimage. He is not what he once was, but he is not yet what God calls him to be. Tempted to give in to defeat, he and his community still struggle to remain faithful to their call. The monk goes forward with his brothers, believing in the power of Christ to reveal divine strength through human weakness.</p>
<p>Mt. 16:24-26; 20:28  Mk. 10:45;  Rom. 6:1-4; 8:14  Phil. 2:5-11; 3:10-11  1 Jn. 3:16  RB Prologue: 2,50  PC 1</p>	<p><b>D10</b> The Rule of Benedict invites monks to a labor of obedience in returning to the Father, imitating his son Jesus who humbled himself, becoming obedient to death on the Cross. Led by the Spirit, monks are called to serve one another in self-forgetfulness, laying down their lives for their brothers in love and trust. They were plunged into Jesus' death and raised to new life at baptism. Their Christian dying to sin and living to God is carried out in the daily giving of themselves to the life of the community. Here they lose their lives that they may find life. Their asceticism is full of hope, a formation into the pattern of Jesus' death, a pledge of resurrection with him to glory.</p>
<p>1 Cor. 12:11-26  1 Jn. 3:14-16; 21-24  RB 5, 6, 7</p>	<p><b>PART II</b>  <b>LIFE IN THE MONASTERY</b>  <b>D11</b> By the gift of a monastic vocation, the Spirit invites the monk to membership in a particular community. The Spirit's promptings are quiet and mysterious, but persistent. The monk discovers that his gift is to be accepted and shared in a life structured according to the Rule of</p>

<p>RB 1:1-2</p>	<p>Benedict. He gives himself to this life in a spirit of love and service, seeking God in obedience, silence and humility. The Spirit continues to speak to him through the prayer and work of this community under the guidance of its abbot. But in the last analysis, it is through the experience of every monk living together in love that the Spirit speaks to the community. <i>C63</i></p>
<p>Mt. 16:25 Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35 Phil. 3:20 Eph. 4:16 RB Prologue: 22-24, 39, 45 RB 31:19; 53:22; 64:5</p>	<p><b>A. Community</b></p> <p><b>D12</b> Benedictine monks accept and appreciate the variety of monastic traditions, but their Rule commits them to a specific form of monasticism. They are cenobites, living in monasteries under a Rule and an abbot. Community life is the indispensable framework for the realization of the ideals to which the monks are committed by their profession. Still, the Benedictine monastic charism remains open to the Spirit's call to a life of solitude in the tradition of hermits. <i>C39, 40, 48, S48</i></p> <p><b>D13</b> The community of monks is created by the divine call which brings them together, and they are knit together by the sharing of faith, hope and love. The Rule calls the monks into the "school of the Lord's service," the "house of God," the "tent of his kingdom," where the heavenly citizenship is already begun. Expressing their unity in community of goods, monks strengthen their common bonds through their prayer and work together and by their mutual support and compassion. With the encouragement and good example of his brothers, a monk can sacrifice his life in order to find it. <i>C39, 63</i></p>
<p>Mt. 18:20 1 Thess. 5:19-21</p>	<p><b>1. Authority</b></p>
<p>RB 3:3; 61:4</p>	<p><b>D14</b> Monks remain individually responsible to the call of God in their hearts, but as a community they place themselves in a new way under the authority of Christ, who is present even when only two or three are gathered in his Name. The Benedictine monastic community has an authority proper to itself as a group of Christians living in brotherhood, under a rule and an abbot. The source and foundation of this authority is the Spirit; the exercise of this authority within the community must always remain under his inspiration. No monk can rightfully shirk his part in the work of discerning and responding to the divine call in matters that affect the whole community; for example, decisions about community prayer, kinds and amount of work, the acceptance and formation of candidates, the good order of the house, and the monastery's apostolic mission. <i>S10</i></p>
<p>RB 5:12; 64; 2:2; 63:13; 3 RB 65:11 PC 4, 14</p>	

<p>GS 24, 26, 30, 31</p> <p>Mt. 18:15 Acts 2:45 2 Tim. 4:2 1 Pt. 5:2-4 RB 2</p> <p>Jn. 10:11 Col. 3:16 1 Pt. 2:25</p> <p>RB 2:1-3; 2:7-9; 27:8 RB 72:10</p> <p>Lk. 12:48 Acts 2:42-47</p> <p>RB 2:20; 36; 37 RB 49:5; 50:4 PC 15</p>	<p><b>D15</b> The monks choose an abbot to lead them in fulfilling the vocation they have undertaken together. He is believed to represent Christ in the monastery. He is the focus of the unity, love and common striving of the brotherhood. All in the community must be obedient and docile to the Spirit and accountable to his promptings, but the abbot is entrusted with a special role in the exercise of Christ's authority. He shares the work of decision making with the whole community, realizing that the Spirit speaks in every member down to the youngest, but that he must shoulder the cross of final responsibility in the community. <i>C6-7, S5</i></p> <p><b>D16</b> The abbot exercises authority in loving service, guided by the Gospel and the Rule. As the leader, he must discern the needs of the community and the real direction of its initiatives. He is a teacher by example and by word, distributing the bread of God's Word to each and all as they need. He prays for discretion, kindness, and understanding, seeking obedience to the divine command, so that the obedience he asks of his brothers will not be submission to his own will but to the Spirit of God who sent him to this service. With God's help, he exercises a responsible stewardship over the flock committed to his care, and helps his brothers by encouragement and correction to surrender to the Lord. <i>S11</i></p> <p><b>D17</b> The other monks in their turn encourage their abbot, support and cooperate with him, and love him. They know that he cannot single-handedly make the community what it professes and desires to be. He must look to his brothers for a corresponding gift of self to the community. Though he is called father and accepts the role of a good shepherd among them, he is still also a brother to his fellow monks. The monks recognize the concern of Christ and the action of the Spirit in all the abbot's dealings with them, and therefore they do not fear to share with him their joys, sufferings, hopes and fears. Should the abbot fail, the monks know that they themselves are partly to blame, since the abbot as their brother needs encouragement, support, edification, possible correction and, above all, personal love.</p> <p><b>2. Order in the community S32,33</b></p> <p><b>D18</b> Bound together by baptism and a common monastic calling, all members of the community are brothers to one another, sharing the common table and goods of the monastery, carrying their burden of service in the prayer and work. There should be no divisions on the</p>
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<p>1 Cor. 7:7; 12:4-27</p>	<p>basis of talent, training, ministry or office where all share the same basic rights and responsibilities. Equality does not deny individuality, however. God gives the community a mixture of personalities and talents to be developed for the growth and health of the whole community. Equality does not mean, either, that special consideration should not be given for individual needs, especially those of the young, the old and the infirm, as directed in the Rule; nor does it rule out special demands on those to whom more has been given.</p>
<p>1 Cor. 10-13 RB 21</p>	<p><b>D19</b> The community grows and deepens as the monks discover together, under the abbot's leadership, how best to apply the values of monastic tradition to new challenges and opportunities. Each monk has a personal gift from God to be treasured by the community and developed for the greater glory of the Giver of all good gifts. The discernment and development of these gifts in the light of community needs is a responsibility of abbot, monk, and community. The abbot sees to it that education and training are provided and encourages each monk to give his best to the community.</p>
<p>Gen. 12:1-2 Ex. 3:12 Mt. 28:20 Rom. 8:29 Eph. 4:3 Gal. 6:1-5</p>	<p><b>D20</b> In larger monasteries deaneries may benefit the whole community and individual monks. These smaller circles may allow more personal contact and encourage friendships; and when individual growth is supported, community life is enriched. Wise direction and a sense of accountability to the total community are needed to keep these groups from turning in on themselves. S33</p>
<p>RB 23-29; 33:4 RB 44-46</p>	<p><b>3. Monastic Profession C32-34; S42, 43</b></p> <p><b>D21</b> By his public monastic profession, the Benedictine monk intensifies his baptismal commitment to God in Christ and enters into a covenant with his community. He surrenders all he is and has to his brothers in expression of his total gift of self to God with them. From now on his life, his talents, his own will are not his to direct or govern, but are submitted to the good of the community under the abbot. The monk can make this act of faith because he believes that the God who gave the call is present in the brotherhood and will be faithful to his promise. He relies, too, on the support of his brothers in faith, prayer, example and encouragement, hoping to mature with them into the image of Christ. The monk's union with his brothers is in many ways the measure of his union with God, so he fears the excommunication that comes when he cuts himself off from other monks and the common exercises.</p>
<p>Rom. 6:1-6 Phil. 3:10-11 RB Prologue 50 RB 58:17</p>	



<p>Jn. 4:34, 6:38  Acts 13:2-3  Phil. 2:8-10  1 Thess. 5:12  Heb. 10:5-7</p> <p>RB 5:12; 71  LG 42  PC 14</p> <p>Mt. 19:12  1 Cor. 7  2 Cor. 11:2</p> <p>RB 4:12, 41, 59, 64</p> <p>1 Jn 3:1-2</p> <p>RB 4:21  LG 46; 48-51  PC 12</p> <p>Col 1:24</p> <p>RB 4:30, 31. 70</p>	<p>with him, that they too are struggling to imitate Jesus who humbled himself and became obedient to death--even to death on a cross. Stability and <i>conversatio</i> together express an aspect of the mystery of redemption: the kingdom of Christ is already in our midst, the source of grace and hope, but it is still being built in us gradually until the final hour.</p> <p><b>Obedience C43</b></p> <p><b>D25</b> The cenobite surrenders himself in service to God by his public profession of a life of obedience. This surrender is realized in his obedience to his abbot, and to his brothers, but in root his obedience is always to God. By this monastic commitment, the monk begins to live in and with the community the obedience to which he was called in baptism. His obedience is part of the gift the monastic community as a whole offers to the Father. Now the monk listens for the divine summons as a member of the brotherhood, submitting his own will to the call discerned in common. The voice of God is expressed above all through the Rule and the abbot, and the monk sacrifices his own desires and pleasures to walk by another's judgment and command. But all members of the community, including the abbot and officials, are called to be obedient to the Lord and to one another in love and service. Believing that the divine command is heard throughout the community, the monk binds himself to be sensitive to God's active presence among all his brother monks.</p> <p><b>Celibate Chastity and Community of Goods C44-46; S44-46</b></p> <p><b>D26</b> The way of life promised by stability and <i>conversatio</i> involves celibacy and the community of goods. Consecrated celibacy is a gift of God given to one with whom God wishes to unite himself in a special way. The acceptance of this gift for the sake of the kingdom is a supreme act of faith that God can and will satisfy the human heart's desire for unique love. To renounce the fulfillment of life which another person can give as partner and lifelong companion is only the negative side of the profession of God's all-giving and perfectly satisfying fullness.</p> <p><b>D27</b> Celibate love has its own fruitfulness. When freely accepted it sets the monk free to bring others into this mystery of the love of Christ. It broadens the monk's vision of Christ's love and makes him all the more eager to gather others into that love. It engenders a dynamism that ever seeks to extend this love of Christ. A celibate love that does not broaden its vision of Christ's love must destroy itself, either as celibate or as love.</p>
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<p>Mk. 12:25  Jn 6:54  Rev 21:1-4    RB 4:26, 69; 72:8    Gen. 1:4, 9, 12  Acts 2:42; 4:32-35</p>	<p><b>D28</b> The monk in his celibacy does his share in the construction of the world-in- the-making by bringing to bear upon it the most profound value of the world and of humanity, by resisting the everlasting tendency of the creature to make itself an absolute and to proclaim its independence from the Source of life. Moreover, the transforming effects of this commitment depend on a loving and ever deepening prayer life. Consecrated celibacy always requires support and protection but especially in its developing years. Sure of God’s love, eager to respond to it, and thus able to support the suffering inherent in all love, the monk, rooted in Christ, will become ever stronger and more reliable. In this way the monk by his celibate chastity will be an authentic and faithful image of God's love.</p>
<p>RB 31:10  PC 13</p>	<p><b>D29</b> For the Benedictine monk, true fraternal love is a necessary environment for successful cultivation of vowed celibacy. The monk is a vulnerable human being who needs to experience human fellowship. He does not desire to live in isolation. Thus celibacy does not at all mean to renounce true human love. Friendship is not a luxury within a community but a necessity that is self-evident. By consecrated celibacy the monk professes his faith in his own immortality, in the resurrection of the body, in the continuing existence of his own soul.</p>
<p>Lk. 12:22-34  ! Cor. 10:23-24  James 2:1-9; 5:1-6    2 Cor. 3:18    RB 58:7</p>	<p><b>D30</b> Monks express their commitment to one another by sharing their possessions. This community of goods expresses their community life, helping to bind them together in dependence on one another for earthly needs and their trust in God. Together they strive for an attitude of simplicity and stewardship. Whatever goods or equipment are needed for work are adequate but simple. These and all things in the monastery are handled like the vessels of the altar. In this way the monks respect the goodness and beauty of God's creation, especially as reflected in the craft and art of these vessels. This corporate and personal poverty allows the community to share its blessings, no matter how meager, with those less fortunate. <i>S 44</i></p>
	<p><b>D31</b> Further than this, monastic poverty entails the surrender of one's own body, talents, time and will to the brotherhood. It fosters a sense of solidarity with the poor and suffering of the world. By this detachment, monks hope to free themselves from the trap of worldly goods, no longer worrying about what they will eat or drink or wear, but depending on God's bounty. This single focus on God lies at the heart of</p>

<p>RB 66; 73 PC 2, espec. 2a</p> <p>Jn 14:26; 16:13</p> <p>RB 3:11; 64:20,22 DV 9-10</p> <p>PC 22</p> <p>Heb. 4:12 Rev. 1:16; 2:12; 3:1-</p>	<p>all monastic asceticism. Each member tries to show the self-emptying of Jesus in his own way of living and so to manifest a search for God alone.</p> <p><b>4. Entrance and Lifelong Growth C 26-38, 47-54; S47-49</b></p> <p><b>D32</b> Entry into life of a Benedictine monastic community is marked by three stages. The foundation is laid in the novitiate, before any promises are made. The novice examines his vocation and is given a chance to find out, in the presence of the community, whether he is called and able to seek God in this kind of service. If he and the community decide that his beginning justifies a further step, the novice commits himself to God in the monastery for a limited period. The growth already begun is nurtured during these years of temporary profession, as he learns the meaning of his profession by doing what he has promised. He is guided in prayer, instructed in monastic tradition, trained in work and given some responsibility. The community continues to weigh his progress to determine whether he can be faithful in a lifelong monastic profession. Solemn profession is the climax of this preparation, but is still the beginning of monastic growth. It engages the monk permanently in a process of growth in Christ in the community, under the Rule and its abbot. Still special care should be given to these newly professed to help them in this new stage of life. <i>C3, S76</i></p> <p><b>B. The Rule C 3, S76</b></p> <p><b>D33</b> The inspiration for this community life of monks comes from the Rule of Benedict, second only to the Sacred Scriptures as a charter for Benedictine living. Through centuries the Church has recognized in the Rule a faithful interpretation of the gospel. It brings the Spirit's voice to monks of every age, calling back to foundational norms while urging adaptation to new conditions. As a guide and norm of life for Benedictine monks, the Rule is not a code to which monks conform in every detail in spite of changing circumstances. The Rule comes to life in the daily experience of monks, as each community reads it in the light of monastic tradition and under the abbot's direction.</p> <p><b>D34</b> In serving his brothers, the abbot is not set adrift in this decision making but bases his decisions on the Rule, tradition, and the life of the community. This framework provides a firm foundation for leadership. The interplay of Rule and community resembles the relationship of Bible and Church. In both instances, the Spirit's aid is needed for authentic interpretation, and is sought in prayer, silence, study and discussion.</p>
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<p>3; 19:15 Eph. 6:17 1 Pt. 5:8 PC 6 DV 5,21</p> <p>Mt. 13: 9-17 1 Sam. 3</p> <p>Jn. 1:14, 18 Acts 2:11 2 Cor. 4:6-8, 10 Col. 3:16 Rev. 1:12-16</p> <p>RB 16:5; 43:3 SC 7: 83-101</p> <p>Col. 3:16 DV 21</p>	<p><b>D35</b> Because of the autonomy each monastery enjoys in living according to the Rule, Benedictine life may be different from house to house and still authentic in each. Admitting this variety, monasteries are still able to league themselves together for support and cooperation. The Swiss-American Congregation respects differences among the member monasteries, but recognizes that links in origin and tradition have produced a common spirit and purpose in interpreting the Rule. The communities help one another hold to this tradition and bring forth the best it has to offer. <i>C1,3, 64-75; S 66-86</i></p> <p><b>C. The Word of God</b></p> <p><b>D36</b> Christian life is a continuing response to the creating and redeeming Word of God. Monasticism highlights the attitude of faithful listening all believers must have as they stand before the Lord, aware of their own weakness and trusting in the saving power of this two-edged sword, the Word of God. The Rule provides the structures a community of monks needs to remain at constant attention to the divine call: the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, holy reading, individual prayer, fasting, silence, obedience.</p> <p><b>D37</b> God speaks everywhere, but his message is muted because people do not have ears to hear. Their hearts are dulled by many noises. They cannot always distinguish the Word of God from merely human words. By remaining close to the inspired Scriptures in his public and private prayer and in his reading, the monk learns to recognize the echo of God's Word in all his daily experience, in the lives of others, and in the events of the world. He is silent lest the voice of the Spirit be drowned out by his own chatter. For guidance, he has apostolic tradition and the teaching Church, and for help and example he has his brothers, with whom he is listening to the Lord.</p> <p><b>1. Opus Dei C 47</b></p> <p><b>D38</b> The monk prefers nothing to the Work of God, the community's daily offering of public prayer and praise. By faith he recognizes Jesus Christ risen and present in the midst of the community, praying with the monks, offering himself to them, inviting them to a total surrender of their persons, their time and talents, as they participate in his work of manifesting the Father's glory. The Liturgy of the Hours is a sacramental sign of the Father's work in building the community. In</p>
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<p>Isa. 56:7  Jn. 17:3  1 Thess. 5:17  RB 20; 52:3  Col. 3:17  1 Cor. 4:12  RB 48  GS 35  AG 18</p>	<p>choir the monks respond in psalms and sacred songs to the revealing Word, praising, blessing and thanking God for his gifts. They proclaim to one another the wonderful works of creation and redemption in Christ. The community Eucharist celebrates the unity of the monks, sealed with one another in the Lord's new covenant through passion, death and resurrection. The reverent and careful celebration of the Work of God, both its music and its ritual, has been a hallmark of the Benedictine tradition. In this time of liturgical renewal, monastic communities should seek to recreate this tradition of liturgy for themselves and for the wider Church.</p> <p><b>2. Lectio Divina and Individual Prayer C 48, 50</b></p> <p><b>D39</b> The fervor and intensity of the public prayer of the community hinges on the holy reading and private prayer monks do individually. This hidden part of their service requires determination, discipline and time. It needs mutual encouragement, support, and sometimes correction, because human nature glorifies production and is doubtful about effects which cannot be measured. Holy reading concentrates on Sacred Scripture but extends to other writings, ancient and modern, that reflect God's Word. In solitude and meditative silence the divine message finds its own depth in the monk, opening him to the transforming action of the Holy Spirit. Monks do well to share insights obtained from reading, thereby encouraging one another to a more intense life in Christ. This may profitably lead them to share prayer outside the Liturgy of the Hours.</p> <p><b>D40</b> The monk needs private prayer to grow in knowledge of Jesus Christ and to fathom the meaning of his own life and vocation. This quiet prayer personalizes the community's response to the divine summons, and helps the monk form a spirit of unceasing prayer. The monk takes inspiration from the Divine Office for his personal spiritual life and, reinforced by holy reading and private prayer, returns to the common prayer and the common life with more of himself to give. The monastery therefore should be a place of silence and reflection and so a house of prayer.</p> <p><b>D. Work C 3-4, 53</b></p> <p><b>D41</b> The Rule of Benedict insists on work as an important part of the monk's labor of obedience. The Rule does not put work above everything else, however, or single out one type of work as more</p>
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<p>Acts 20:35 1 Jn. 3:17 James 2:16 GS 69</p>	<p>monastic than all others. Monks show their love by serving one another in whatever work they do, invoking God's blessing on tasks large and small. They share in God's continuing creation while supporting themselves by earnings and by producing for their needs.</p> <p><b>D42</b> Some kinds of work, however, fit the monastic life better than others. A community needs to remember this when it is faced with new work opportunities. Benedictines do not work as a corps of independents or careerists, but as a community. They are interested in all the involvements of the monastery, for each monk carries the community's presence and influence to his particular task. Though like most people of our time monks must often specialize in one area or another, the community should not let individuals become isolated from the common life they have professed.</p>
<p>Mt. 25:31-46 Heb. 13:2 1 Pt. 4:9 RB 53:1,7,13,15,16</p>	<p><b>D43</b> Many works of the monastery are directly ministerial. Missions are founded in places where the Church is in an early stage of development. Pastoral needs of the local Church are cared for in retreats, in other types of religious ministry, in counseling. Monks educate in various kinds of schools and training programs. These are community works in which all share and for which all are responsible. A monk does not have to leave his monastery to participate in the apostolate. C35, S45</p> <p><b>D44</b> A responsible approach to the work of the community fosters the monk's solidarity with the poor and all who must support themselves by their daily labor. However, the Benedictine vocation to be poor like Christ does not commit the monks to a life of bare survival. With hard work and good management they may have more than they need and more to share with others by almsgiving and hospitality. Both the work and the sharing are gospel signs in a world obsessed by production and gain.</p>
<p>Jn. 13:35; 15:9-12 RB 53:8-9  UR 5,9</p>	<p><b>D45</b> As important as work is in the Benedictine community, it is not an end in itself. Healthy life in the community requires times of recreation and relaxation. Even the work itself, performed with dedication and thoroughness, must be governed by peaceful and prayerful composure, for as God's work its success does not depend on the speed, intensity, or amount of the monk's labor.</p>



<p>GS 23-32</p> <p>RB 4:78</p> <p>GS 4-10</p>	<p><b>D50</b> The monastic pattern of life constitutes a challenge to the values of the earthly kingdom. But it is meant to be more than that: a witness to unseen realities, a sign of the true kingdom. Above all, monastic life proclaims to all the good news of the gospel, a message of joy and hope. Humanly speaking, the world often seems a place of evil, but by the blood of Christ it has been filled with grace. Death has been mortally wounded, and faith, hope and love have taken the place of fear. The monastic life announces that there is no real security in material advantages, but that the future is assured by loosing the bonds that chain one to the earth, that joy and peace come from self-giving love for others, that life is received when it is given. C3</p>
<p>1 Kgs. 18:28</p> <p>Mt.10:40; 25:35-40</p> <p>Acts 9:5</p> <p>1 Cor. 8:12</p> <p>RB 2:2; 36:1-2, 53:1, 7, 15</p>	<p><b>B. Witness of Incarnation</b></p> <p><b>D51</b> The community of monks bears witness to the action of God in a world being transformed by Incarnation. The monastic life proclaims the goodness of all human life. Though monks renounce sin-centeredness, the "wisdom of the flesh," they do not turn their back on the world. By their dedication to seeking God in community life and in solitude, monks encourage the search for divine communion to which every person is called. C39, 48, 52, 57, S47</p> <p><b>D52</b> Benedictine tradition affirms the values of human development, and monks have preserved and furthered art, music, literature and science. Monks celebrate the progress of humanity as a continuation of creation and redemption. In their own programs of education, monks try not to confuse learning with information, but aim at the training of the whole person. Their service to learning and human development is fulfilled primarily in the sphere of the monastery, but monks can also assist growth and progress in the Church's mission to other lands. C4</p>
<p>Rom. 12:10</p> <p>Eph. 4:13</p> <p>RB 71; 72:4, 6</p> <p>PC 15</p>	<p><b>D53</b> Monks participate as citizens in the civil and social programs that further the spread of God's kingdom. They too ask questions sparked by the events of the day, and they listen for the voice of the Spirit amid the confusing noises of the modern world. Their contribution to the puzzling questions of life should be a sensitivity to the plan of God, sharpened by prayer, fasting and holy reading. C39</p>
<p>Ps. 148</p> <p>Acts 14:17-18</p>	<p><b>C. Reverence for Creation</b></p> <p><b>D54</b> The sinfulness that draws people down makes heavy attacks on</p>

<p>Mk. 11:25  Jn. 15:9-17  Acts 2:42-46; 4:32-35  RB Prologue: 50  RB 33:6; 34:1; 55:20</p>	<p>human life. It sees human life as a commodity, an instrument for achieving goals, and a higher form along the scale of animal life. In such a limited view, life's value is in its usefulness. Because it is merely human in origin, people consider it their own business. But human life is a sacred gift from God.</p> <p><b>D55</b> The Benedictine brotherhood pays close attention to the gospel command to see Christ in everyone. He is in the abbot, in the sick, in the guest, in the poor, in every brother. Every person is the image of God even before being able to know it, and this is the primary consideration before or after talents are measured, decisions are taken, or products are weighed. The monk respects and loves human life, and stands against any challenge to it.</p>
<p>2 Cor. 12:9-10</p>	<p><b>D56</b> The quality of monastic community living is gauged by the sincerity of this reverence for life in the brotherhood. The monk shows by his concern, love, and honesty in his dealings with others that he regards life as a grace, not as an obstacle. When all anticipate one another in honor, each monk feels encouraged to grow into full maturity in Christ, and supported in searching for new ways to serve. The obedience monks show to one another is response to the Spirit living in their midst and forming them into Christ.</p>
<p>1 Kgs. 18:28  Mk. 2:17  Heb. 3:7-8  RB 5,6,7</p>	<p><b>D57</b> Because of his reverence for creation, the monk is concerned about the protection of the natural environment of the monastery. He conserves its beauties and resources as part of his stewardship of all the gifts of the Lord. His care reaches out to created life in all its forms, and in his prayer he sums up and offers the praise of all creation. He also seeks to participate in God's creation and so values artistic beauty as an essential manifestation of God's mystery.</p>
<p>Rom. 8:6;8:9, 13  Gal. 5:24  Phil. 4:7  Col. 3:15  Heb. 12:14  RB 72</p>	<p><b>D. Pattern for Christian Life</b></p> <p><b>D58</b> In modeling its life on the ideal community of the early Church, a monastery gives expression to values shared by all human beings. Unity and peace are possible, the first Christians preached, if in imitation of Christ, people will love one another, share their goods, pray together, forgive each other's failings and help one another. The monastery does not approach this gospel life as a burdensome task, but finds in it freedom and joy.</p>

**D59** The monastic profession of stability in community is based on the conviction that God helps those with commitments made in faith. Opposed to infidelity, stability proclaims covenant perseverance. Human beings can promise the future even in present darkness, if they humbly admit their weakness and rely on God's fidelity for strength.

**D60** Monasticism believes in the grandeur of daily living. Saving grace does not have to be hunted in the elite and the heroic; it is everywhere, but human hearts are hardened by pride, selfishness and fear. People cannot readily conceive sanctity within the reach of everyone, though Jesus said he came to save sinners, not the righteous, and he mixed mostly with the poor, the uneducated and the outcast. God is a loving Father who only wants human beings to open their hearts to him. The discipline of the monastery opens monks and others to the divine presence through a regular observance of prayer and work in obedience, silence and humility.

**D61** In a world ruled by sin, monks cannot be smug about themselves. They know that sin still plays a part in their own lives. The victory already won by Christ has yet to be established completely in his followers both inside and outside the monastery. But the choice is not between complacency and defeat. Monks go forward, joyful in hope, putting to death the deeds of the flesh. The search for God is never finished, but God is always present. Trusting that their own confidence in God will be a strength to them and to their brothers and to all who witness their life together, monks commit themselves to God and to their community in a covenant of peace.

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### **Silence**

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### **Sin**

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### **Sinfulness**

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### **Solidarity**

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### **Spirit**

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### **Stability**

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### **Standard**

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### **Support**

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### **Surrender**

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### **Talent**

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### **Tradition**

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### **Training**

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### **Trap**

of worldly goods: 31.

### **Trust**

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### **Unity**

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### **Values**

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### **Victory**

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### **Vocation**

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### **Word**

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