



THE NEXT MONTHLY RETREAT IS
February 14, 2015
BEGINNING 10:00AM

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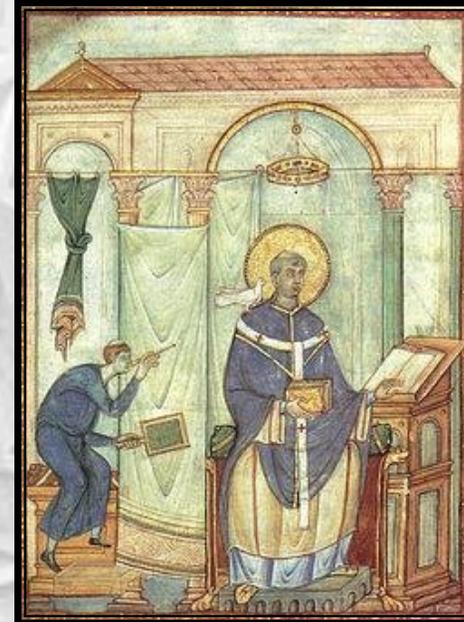
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SEPTUAGESIMA A.D. 2015

Reflections on the Rule of Benedict

Stanbrook Abbey, United Kingdom

Rule of Benedict, Chapter 7, 35-44

35 With this conclusion, the Lord waits for us daily to translate into action, as we should, his holy teachings. 36 Therefore our life span has been lengthened by way of a truce, that we may amend our misdeeds. 37 As the Apostle says: Do you not know that the patience of God is leading you to repent (Rom 2:4)? 38 And indeed the Lord assures us in his love: I do not wish the death of a sinner, but that he turn back to me and live (Ezek 33:11).

39 Brothers, now that we have asked the Lord who will dwell in his tent, we have heard the instructions for dwelling in it, but only if we fulfill the obligations of those who dwell there. 40 We must, then, prepare our hearts and bodies for the battle of holy obedience to his instructions. 41 What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace. 42 If we wish to reach eternal life, even as we avoid the torments of hell, 43 then--while there is still time, while we are in this body and have time to accomplish all these things by the light of life --44 we must run and do now what will profit us forever.

It is unlikely (but growing more possible each day) that you or I will be called to become martyrs and shed our blood for our faith. But we are called as Christians and Benedictines to the ‘white martyrdom’, to the ways of dying to ourselves for love of the Lord. Here St Benedict speaks of the martyrdom of experiencing injustice, of en-

during harsh words, of coping with contradictions and failures. Then comes the rub of working under another’s authority (with the implication of it being onerous), of being taken advantage of or being exploited. In all such situations we are called to the martyrdom of total surrender to God through the other, no matter who he or she might be. In all such events we are tempted to run away or fight back. But Benedict counsels us to forget ourselves and our natural defensive responses. All martyrdom is painful and true martyrdom comes unsought. The way to victory over ourselves is to go through the whole bitter or painful experience with an open heart! We are not to dwell on how hurt or upset we are, or how unjustly treated for this is a waste of our spiritual energy and almost certainly will make us embittered and vengeful. No, says, St Benedict, be patient (patience means to suffer and endure), do not give in or escape, but persevere in goodness ‘for the Lord’. We accept all for love of him. You can see, I think, that this is a calling to imitate Christ in his sufferings. This is the way of the paschal journey. Those who follow it with undivided heart grow to be like the Beloved who blessed even those who crucified him. It is an impossible step without God’s grace to sustain us. But in this way we are invited to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ and so become witnesses of his resurrection.

