

July 11, 2020

The Memorial of Saint Benedict

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Annunciation Parish,

On this Memorial of Saint Benedict, I write to express, for lack of a better term, my dream for Annunciation Parish. Dream in the sense of vision. Now the dream, the vision, is prompted by Saint Benedict's legacy to the Church.

Benedict, and his twin sister Scholastica, were instrumental in establishing Monasticism in the West. They lived in the aftermath of the collapse of an empire that had been around for a long time. All the old certainties were gone. Benedict and others belonged to a relatively new faith, Christianity, that had – in Benedict's understanding and actions – something to say about ordering society when it seemed to be coming apart.

I'm not asking that we become monks and nuns. I couldn't do it. I'm not even sure such a life would attract me to it. But I have great admiration and respect for those grounded in the very deep Benedictine tradition, including people like Thomas Merton, Monk of Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky and a prominent spiritual writer for a good part of the 20th Century.

Anyway, Benedict wrote a rule to guide a community of believers. In the ordering of their life together, men and women in the Benedictine tradition take a fourth vow, in addition to the more common three of poverty, obedience, and chastity. That fourth vow is the vow of stability.

Some years ago I read a reflection on this vow of stability, offered by Msgr. Charles Pope. I believe you can access the full reflection at this link: <http://oblatesosbbelmont.org/2012/07/25/a-reflection-on-the-benedictine-vow-of-stability/>. I recommend the read.

Stability's opposite, instability, Msgr. Pope wrote "is pandemic in our culture." I wonder if he would use that same word today. His point is that instability is so widespread we don't see in working in our relationships, our decisions, our ability to live and hand on our Catholic Christian faith. We are quick

to “move on” and the Christian practice and perfection of love, in relationship with others, is sacrificed.

But we also risk a disconnect with our very selves. If, Msgr. Pope suggests, moving on is the solution to challenges and difficulties, we’re not being truthful with ourselves. Because “there is no escape from oneself, and the idea that things would be better someplace else is usually an illusion.” There’s no escape from oneself. There is no escape from the hard work of charity, which alone fulfills us.

I would like to think that a healthy Catholic Christian community is marked by stability, and is a place where each one of us – every self – is supported in the work of fully becoming the person God has created us to be. Stability anchors us to one another, and to ourselves.

Not asking you to become a monk or a nun. Not asking anyone to take a vow. Just asking: is anyone ready to take hold of that anchor of stability in our life together? Especially in these very unstable times. I’d love to talk with you more about what this might look like for you, and for our parish. Let me know.

May God Bless,
Fr. Grogan



Front and Back of Traditional Medal of Saint Benedict