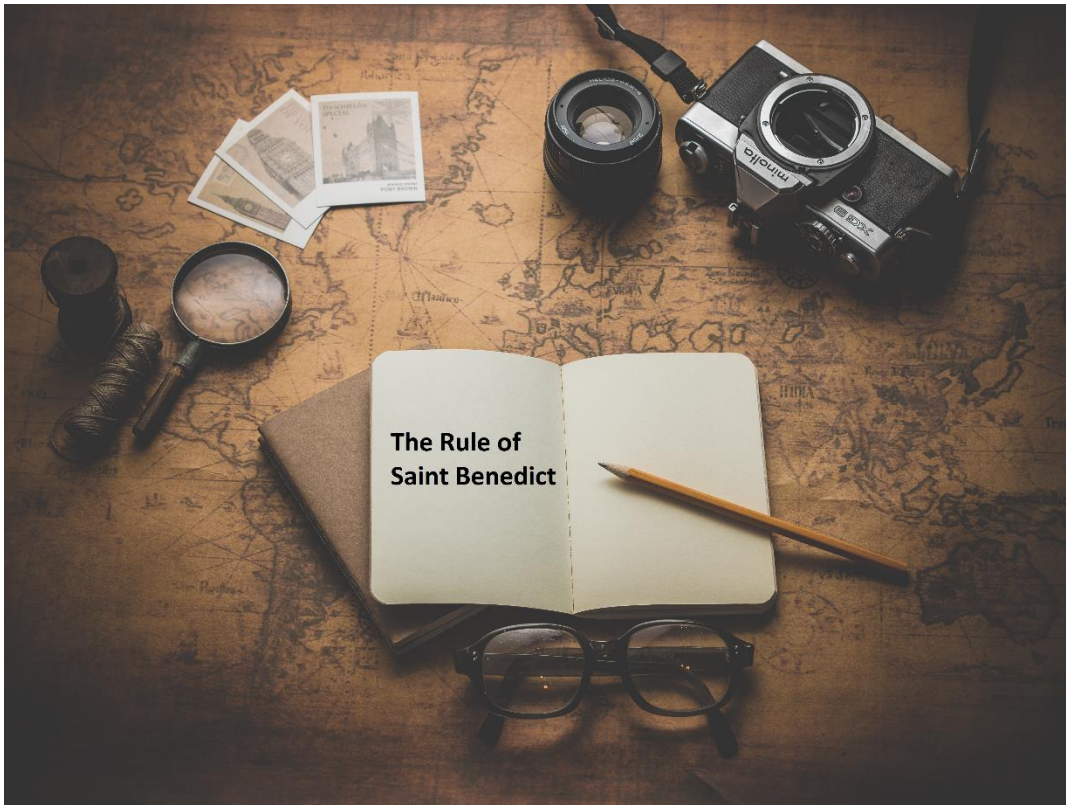


Passport Journey Through the Rule of St. Benedict



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Welcome to the Passport Journey for Benedictine Oblates!

This passport is intended as a guide for interacting with the Rule of St. Benedict in a new and holistic way. Using the idea of passport 'stops' along a journey, you are invited to stop at any or all of these as you make your way through the Rule of St. Benedict. There is no limitation on the amount of time needed to complete all of these, but if you like, you can check them off as you go. Mark the space next to the Benedict Medal stamp at each stop. The most important thing is to notice how you arrive at these stops, take time to experience the essence of each, and to take with you a few mementos and souvenirs as you continue your spiritual journey. Consider having a journal just for this trip and jot down what you noticed at each stop. You could even take some pictures and make an album to share with others! Bon Voyage!



_____ *Reflection on Beginnings*

RB Prologue v 4: First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to God most earnestly to bring it to perfection.

Just for today, as you prepare to begin a task, any task, take a few moments and breathe deeply, and then pray, asking for God's presence and guidance just for this task. Notice any shifts that occur in how your body, mind, and especially attitude from before the first task to after the last task. How might you further develop this habit of praying as you begin a task? Be gentle with your expectations as you integrate this into your everyday life.



_____ *Reflection on a Call to Prayer*

RB 43:1-3 On hearing the signal for an hour of the divine office, the monk will immediately set aside what he has in hand and go with utmost speed, yet with gravity and without giving occasion for frivolity. Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.

RB 22:5-6 They sleep clothed and girded with belts or cords; but they should remove their knives, lest they accidentally cut themselves in their sleep. Thus the monks will always be ready to arise without delay when the signal is given; each will hasten to arrive at the Work of God before the others, yet with all dignity and decorum.

Our daily lives are full of small details, and many different sounds, voices, and pressures, and it can be difficult to notice when one needs to stop and pray. Prayer may be during regular, set times of community prayer or worship, or the call can be felt unexpectedly in the middle of a conversation or a complex task. Listening for the voice of the Divine to spur us into prayer is a helpful sense and habit to develop. Just for today; if you have a sense of the need to converse with God or to ask for help, and are able to stop what you are doing, then follow the Rule as described above, drop what you are doing, and pray. If not, promise yourself that you will return and attend to this need for prayer, and then remember your promise!



_____ *Considering Ordinary Tasks as Sacred*

RB 31:10-11 She will regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar, aware that nothing is to be neglected.

The next time that you are tidying or cleaning an object or an area of the house; consider how you might approach it as if it were the 'sacred vessels of the altar'. What do you notice in your body as you do this task? Does seeing the objects as a chalice, cross, or other altar vessels change how you approach this task? What might you do differently in this new understanding?



_____ *Reflection on the Benedictine Charism of Stability*

RB 1:2 First, there are the cenobites, that is to say, those who belong to a monastery, where they serve under a rule and an abbot/abbess.

When the women at Sacred Heart became sisters, they made a vow to remain in service of that monastery for the rest of their lives. Similarly, Benedictine Oblates promise to stay connected to a particular monastery as they are able. We try to stay connected with the sisters in Yankton through prayer, conversation, visits, and retreats. Here is an invitation to reflect on the Benedictine charism of stability. Go outside for a walk, and find a tree. Sit down and take some time (at least 10 minutes) to observe the tree. What do you see that gives it stability in times of quiet and in storm? Can you imagine how deep and extensive the roots that you can't see may enhance the trees stability? What gave the sisters at Sacred Heart stability to remain since 1880? Consider that the Nebraska Oblates were formed in 1993. What gives our Oblate community stability?



_____ *Reflection on Welcoming*

Others as Christ

RB 53:1-2, 15. All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt 25:35). Proper honor must be shown to all, especially to those who share our faith (Gal 6:10) and to pilgrims. Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received; our very awe of the rich guarantees them special respect.

The next time you greet someone, consider how you might welcome them as Christ. This could be in person or on a video conference or phone call. Is there something to add besides the common greetings and responses? Listen carefully to them and take note of how they arrive today. Take some time to consider how your greeting might be received by others. How might you let the other person know, without words, they are loved by Christ, and welcomed like him?



_____ *Reflection on the Awareness of God through Silence and Breathing*

RB 19:1-2 We believe that the divine presence is everywhere...

From Rachel Srubas, Benedictine Oblate: “the Holy Spirit breathes life into you by way of your literal breath, and receives all that you release. If you’re a breathing Christian, you’re a Holy Spirited, a spiritual being. Knowing this, knowing yourself to be God-filled, then emptied to take in fresh breath, then God-filled again, depends in large part on your capacity for silence.” Set a timer for 15 minutes. Turn off anything that makes additional noise (tv, radio, phone), so that you only have background sounds of the environment, whether inside or outside. You may sit, stand, or even walk; it doesn’t matter. During this time, notice the sensations of breathing inside your body, such as the movement of air through your mouth or nose, and the sensation of your chest and belly rising and falling with each breath. Pay attention, but try not to change how you are breathing. What do you notice? In this moment, what are you releasing as you breathe out that the Holy Spirit can receive?



_____ *Reflection on Awareness of God by Experiencing the Weather*

RB 19:1 We believe that the divine presence is everywhere.

RB 55:1-2 The clothing distributed to the brothers and sisters should vary according to local conditions and climate, because more is needed in cold regions and less in warmer.

Bonus reading: the story of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica on their last meeting together.

Nebraska weather is known to change quickly from quiet and calm to a windy storm. As you are outside today, notice how the effect of sunlight or clouds, wind or calm, or even rain and snow, are received by your body. Do you notice the wind or sun on your skin? How do you receive the changing temperature on your skin and inside your body? Consider how you usually prepare for an upcoming storm or change in seasons. What kind of preparation do you need to weather upcoming 'storms' in your life?



_____ *Reflection on Where to Pray*

RB 52:1 The oratory (place of prayer/church or chapel) ought to be what it is called, and nothing else is to be done or stored there.

RB 52: 4 Moreover, if at other times someone chooses to pray privately, he may simply go in and pray, not in a loud voice, but with tears and heartfelt devotion.

During the pandemic, we are not able to regularly go to a church and pray, whether by ourselves or with others. Has the pandemic changed how you view a church as a place of prayer? Has your view of where to pray expanded or is it more limited? Do you have a special place in your home where you pray? Consider making a small altar where you can pray. You can include a comfortable chair, a candle, a cross, or other objects that help you to keep this a holy area of your home. It should be a quiet area where you can read, pray, do Lectio Divina, or just reflect or meditate in silence. Where else can you pray?



_____ *Reflection on a Balance of Activity and Prayer*

RB 48: 1, 24. Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading...Brothers who are sick or weak should be given a type of work or craft that will keep them busy without overwhelming them or driving them away.

RB 57:1 If there are artisans in the monastery, they are to practice their craft with all humility, but only with the abbot's permission.

Consider what your plans are for today: is there a balance of body activity (work, caregiving, volunteering, play, creativity) and body stillness (study, prayer, rest) present during the day? If the term 'balance' seems difficult to achieve, perhaps the term 'synergy' might work better. Synergy is defined as: "the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects." How might you plan for a combination of body stillness and body activity throughout the day today? What means might you use to help yourself stay true to that synergy?



_____ *Reflection on the Benedictine Oblate Way of Life*

RB prologue v 49: But 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 inexpressible delight of love.

Set a timer for 15 or 20 minutes, and read the verse from the Rule listed above very slowly. Use your imagination and see yourself running on this path of the Rule of Benedict. Take time to observe in your mind what this scene may look like with details such as: colors, locations, environment, and also take note of what you feel in your body. What might your heart feel like as it overflows? What does this path look like? What do you notice about your energy level as you imagine this scene? Have there been times in your life where you have felt this way before? How might you cultivate this perception of living the Oblate way of life?

Congratulations!

You have completed your Passport Journey through the Rule of St. Benedict! Hopefully, this journey was beneficial for you to see the Rule of Benedict in a new way. May you continue to look at the Rule with wonder and curiosity.

“But 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 inexpressible delight of love.”

RB Prologue v49

References & Resources:

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