

we seek to be
in a Monastery of the Heart.

Then our Rule is this one.
Our spiritual guide is the Word of God.
Our formative community
is with those of one heart with whom
we join on this way
in a Monastery of the Heart—
to find the God who emerges
with inexorable fidelity
in human form.

A Single Vision

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*"Perform the Opus Dei where you are . . .
Those on a journey are not to omit the prescribed hours but to
observe them as best they can."*

The Benedictine Rule
is based on the notion
that community life
is the preeminent form
of the spiritual journey,
because it provides for
immersion in communal worship,
private contemplation,
shared wisdom,
common ownership,
and mutual service.
But community life,
life in concert

with like-minded people,
and cloistered life—
life lived with a group
that is independent
of the world around it—
are not necessarily the same thing.

There is no doubt
that the Rule is intent on creating
a community of heart,
a oneness of mind and soul,
a commonness of vision and intent
among the brothers and sisters
that binds them in the common endeavor
of commitment to an intense form
of the spiritual life.

But the Rule
does not necessarily
require community of place—
the geographical confinement
of all the members of one community
to one location.

If and when distance made
common sharing,
common worship,
the common life—
with all the daily human contact and support

such a phrase implies—
impossible,
large monasteries,
whose ministries and members
were far-flung,
have for centuries routinely organized the community
into smaller units of a single system—
such as granges and missions—
for the sake of the intimacy and bonding
that a sense of
real human community demands.

At base,
the Rule asks two major things of us:
First, we are to be constant
at prayer.
We are to perform the work of God—
our commitment to the psalms and scripture—
faithfully,
wherever we are.

In the fields at the hour of prayer,
monastics were to
“kneel out of reverence for God”
rather than return to the monastery
to pray with the entire community.
Clearly, it is prayer itself that is the bond.

We are to make prayer
be the bond and constant source
of inspiration and purpose and glue
that holds us together,
the touchstone of everything
that has meaning to us.

We are to pray by ourselves,
if necessary, "as best we can,"
but in the way
the community, as community, is praying,
so that our hearts and minds
stay in the place
where our bodies cannot now be.

Second, we are to live a single vision of life
together, even when apart.

We are to live
Benedictine spirituality
wherever we are,
whatever we are doing.

We are to care for those
who commit themselves with us
to create this new world within a world.

We are to go the way together
in heart and mind and soul.

We are to be there for the other
as signs of the coming Reign of God
We are not to take on
the customs and the conversations,
the values and the interests
of a society
whose heart is in another place
than the one
we nourish in our vision.
We are not to make "away"
our home.

To be "in the world
but not of it"
has always demanded
an uneasy truce
between the monastery
and the society in which it blooms.

But for the Benedictine heart,
to which all things are sacred,
the very act of making
the crooked way straight
and the desert blossom
is itself a trust,
one more reminder of
the sacrament of ordinary life
lived extraordinarily well.

For a monastic to be
anywhere in the world
is meant to be simply another way
of being present
to what and why
we say we are.

Wherever we are,
we are rooted in
the spirituality of the Rule.

A Monastery of the Heart
is our means now
of taking what we have
to where it is needed,
beyond the geography
of a monastery itself.

The function of Benedictine life,
with its community commitment,
is *not* to hide from the world.

It is to make community
for others around it,
to enable others
to also draw from its well.

We join hands with those

who, like us,
are committed to stay this path
until it brings us—
wiser and more seasoned
than when we began—
all the way to God,
all the way home.

The bearer of the monastic heart,
either alone or with an intentional group
must radiate
what is within
to a wider world
and respond to it.

Those who commit themselves
to live by monastic values
in a Monastery of the Heart
must be bridges to a world without them
must be models and signs
of another way to live.

They must find their strength
and their purpose
by holding hands with those
who join them on this way,
so that no one can lose contact—
not with the Benedictine tradition
that has spawned them,
not with the society

in which they are embedded,
not with one another—
however far off
the rest of the circle of seekers
may seem.

To the monastic of the heart,
community is not as simple
as geographic location alone,
however important, or good, or growthful
the physical relationship among members
is meant to be.

More than that, community requires
meaningful contact,
a common vision,
and the beating of a cosmic heart
big enough to embrace all of life—
as did Benedict himself
when “he saw the whole world
in a single ray of light.”

OUR INTERIOR LIFE

