

The Benedictine/Cistercian values will help you contemplate the real meaning and experience a simple life of utmost good and happiness in your present day, time, and circumstance.

The following pages are intended to motivate you in your spiritual growth by illustrating God's call to everyone toward holiness and how the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross will help you to respond to God's grace in your call to the Oblature or a Monastic.

These pages also present brief but helpful and inspiring information explaining the Rule of St. Benedict and how you can apply it to develop a lifestyle more responsive to and blessed by God.



St. Benedict, in full Saint Benedict of Nursia, Nursia (born c. 480 CE, Nursia [Italy]—died c. 547, Monte Cassino; feast day July 11, formerly March 21), founder of the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino and father of Western monasticism; the Rule that he established became the norm for monastic living throughout Europe. In 1964, in view of the work of monks following the Benedictine Rule in the evangelization and civilization of so many European countries in the Middle Ages, Pope Paul VI proclaimed him the patron saint of all Europe.

The Rule of St. Benedict was composed over 1,500 years ago illuminates timeless spiritual principles that can be of immense value today.

Prefer moderation in speech and speak only what will give glory to God.

The Rule stresses the importance of obedience and service.

Consistency in the practice of daily prayer.

Cultivate a holy detachment from material goods, living simply.

When our lives are centered on Jesus Christ, everything else is placed in its proper perspective.

A life of learning to help grow in virtue, holiness.

Benedictine Core Values

The silence of the Benedictine lifestyle is a quietness of heart and mind and spirit.

St. Benedict directs that nothing is to be preferred to prayer.

Listening “with the ear of the heart” is a willingness to submit to imperatives outside of the self.

Foster a reverence toward the creation that God has made.

Listening in solitude, reflective, read, and study.

To strive for peace on all levels: with self, others, and God.

Be true to self. No pretense or arrogance rather personal growth, and giving self for the good of others.

Appreciate the dignity of work

Offer warmth, acceptance, and joy in welcoming others.



One fashion or another, we are all seekers. We seek safety, security, love, and community. It is easy enough to know when what seek has been achieved. Seeking a Godly life and doing His perfect seems fraught with confusion and often despair. That need not be the case.

Scripture and tradition are filled with direction. Essentially, God calls each of us to seek perfection and holiness. Unfortunately, we make it difficult to understand and practice because we fill the journey with unrealistic expectations.

Some of us want God to speak directly to us. Others wish to receive a level of peace and certainty. And most want the short easy road to perfection and holiness. Let us use common sense and reason.

Scripture is clear. God wants every one of us to seek perfection and holiness. It is reasonable that He would provide the grace to empower us and a methodology whereby plain folks can achieve the seemingly impossible. We can conclude that our role is to cooperate with God's grace.

We use the Holy Rule of Saint Benedict to aid in developing a lifestyle that sets the stage for our Godly cooperation. We can teach you how to do the same.

**The following pages will introduce you to some of our members. We are real people with real lives.
Listen to what we have to say.**

Listen carefully, my son, to the Master's instruction, attend to them with the ear of your heart.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The Master is authoritatively calling the student *not only to listen but to take committed action to substantive change.*

Today's culture falsely teaches that we have the answers within us and that all voices have equal weight.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

**The Most Rev., Abbot General
Oscar Joseph, M.S., Ph.D., D.S.T., OCCO, OCR, AWP**
**Yes, I have lots of fancy titles, letters after my name, and even some fancy clothes.
But I prefer my Cistercian habit or a pair of jeans and to be called simply, Abbot.**

I AM A REAL PERSON / WE ARE ALL REAL PERSONS

Once I was very young, taught high school and college, I am married and have grandchildren. I was once a top Ultra Trail Runner, got old and become a hiker. I love hiking with my daughter and want to love everyone, young and old.

I am fulfilled by my role in the Cistercians. Helping real genuine people come together to fulfill their spiritual dreams is a real joy.

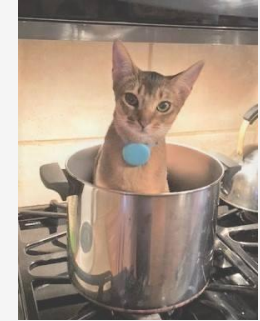


Br. Matthew Pius, OCCO is a Prior and parish priest. He is one of the most gifted young men I have ever met. He is a theologian, liturgist, spiritual director, farmer, horseman, gardener, mechanic, artist, and social activist just to name a few of his many talents.

For me, being a monk was a logically practical application of Christ's call to us all, "come follow me." There was no mystery to overcome or the necessity of a divine call specifically given hand-delivered by Gabriel himself. The call to perfection has been given to every Christian.

The only "issue," if there was an issue, was how I was to play this out. I studied the various traditional religious orders. The Rule of St. Benedict found its way into my heart. It was universal, kind to the weak, practical, orderly, and very specific. I liked that. Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Meet some of our Real people



Dr. Kathleen is a retired Child Protective Supervisor, our Marion scholar, member of the Abbot's Council, Volunteer on "We Got Your Back" program, and St. Stephen Harding faculty. She was a contributing editor of an international cook book. Kathleen is married to the Abbot, has an interesting dry sense of humor, loves her cats who are always following her, even into the kitchen.



Br. Raphael, OCCO is a Cistercian hermit priest. He is a retired college professor, avid fisherman, and is developing a rather mystical life style.

Father Ellis, OCCO, is one of our Orthodox monks and one of our confessors. He is married and quite the artist, singer, song writer, and author.

There are two essential notes in a religious vocation: a divine invitation and a human acceptance or response. Because of man's necessary dependence in every motion, however, God not only invites but also moves the subject to respond. He does so without violence to the freedom of human action, in both the natural and the supernatural orders. *Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery*, By Fr. Richard Butler, O.P.

Meet some of our Real people



Br. Columcille, OCCO is a Cistercian priest and assists the Abbot with research projects. His military service resulted in a long list of disabilities. He lives with his parents to produce a Trinity of support.

Jay, OBL/OCCO, is a Cistercian Oblate. Jay is a volunteer in the "We Got Your Back" program. He and his wife are devout Baptists. They play in a number of local bands,

The sincere disposition of the faithful Christian, cooperating with the daily graces offered him, can prepare for that series of graces which culminate in the vows of religion. While the gift of perseverance in the religious state is likewise a gift from God, it is the ordinary fulfillment of all that has preceded if the religious does not oppose the graces of his state. St. Thomas says, "Those whom God chooses for something, He prepares and disposes so that they will be found fit for that for which they are selected." *Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery*, By Fr. Richard Butler, O.P.

Every time you begin a good work, you must pray to Him most earnestly to bring it to perfection.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Trust and obedience to God can be inspiring if we steadfastly listen and get out of the way.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

In God's goodness He has already counted us as His sons, and therefore we should never grieve Him by our evil actions.

The Rule of St. Benedict

If we genuinely love God being disobedient will hurt and inspire us to be obedient.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Meet some of our Real people



Janice, OBL/OCCO, is an Oblate, single grandmother, wine connoisseur, art historian, writes children's books, and loves to socialize.



Lance is a corporate trustee, on the Abbot's Advisory Council and volunteer for the "We Got Your Back" program. His wife Karen often helps us on social events. Lance has commercially raised chickens They now focus on their grandchildren .

Br. Brendan, OCCO is a Cistercian priest, corporate trustee, and on the Abbot's Advisory Council. He is retired from instructing federal prisoners. He loves to travel and love his pets.

It is not by natural power that this ability to accept the counsel arises; for if one depended on natural power alone, no one could take it. But, says St. Thomas, if this strength is from grace then anyone can; for Christ said: "Ask and it shall be given to you." (Luke 11:9) And so, he concludes, by the grace of God all can take this counsel. For God is ready to give the grace of response to those who want it. And a generous soul, sincere in his intentions, can proceed unafraid. Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery, By Fr. Richard Butler, O.P.

Meet some of our Real people



Julie has received the Cistercian's highest honor, "Companions of the Holy Cross". Her husband Lucas is a volunteer for the "We Got Your Back" program. Julie is a teacher, perhaps that is why she loves to point! Lucas has a background in auto mechanics and insurance sales. *Preg* Julie was carrying Liam in her arms and Levi, the baby, in her tummy. Lucas is the best daddy in the land.

In his Scriptural commentaries, St. Thomas explains the passage in this way: This counsel is given by God to those who ask for it and are willing to work for it. Not all take it because not all have the strength ... not that any have such a strength in themselves, but by a gift of grace.

Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery, By Fr. Richard Butler, O.P.

***The labor of obedience will bring you back to Him
from whom you had drifted through the sloth of disobedience.***

The Rule of St. Benedict

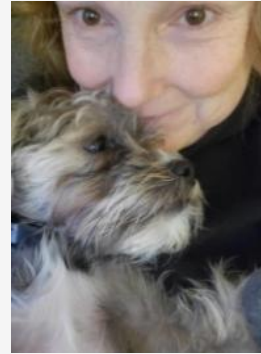
It often seems easier to go with what feels good.

Obedience often requires the difficult work of radical change.

Christ clearly stated, "If you want to follow me, do what I have told you."

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Meet some of our Real people



Michelle is a member of the Abbot's Advisory Council, our translator, and a school teacher. She loves to run races including marathons. Her husband is an ex-marine and Active Iron Man. Together they have inspired the children to be champions in several sports including running. Michelle loves animals and often takes her dog hiking with her.

Ordinarily, however, the movement of grace in religious vocation is neither rare nor exceptional. With remarkable brevity, St. Thomas refers to this act of acceptance as *propositum religionis*, the simple resolve to enter religion, or the religious state. This is an act of the will, a deliberate choice and resolution, consequent upon intellectual consideration of the object willed.

Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery, By Fr. Richard Butler, O.P.

Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God.

The Rule of St. Benedict

We must move outside of ourselves and our culture to find true confidence void of confusion.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

See how the Lord in His love shows us the way of life.

The Rule of St. Benedict

God is always the initiator. We are the respondents. He graces us to choose His way.

Perfection follows perseverance, prayer, and charity.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Meet some of our Real people

MONASTERY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY
UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN MÉXICO

Prior Daniel, OCCO, (Bishop)

Br. Konstantin, OCCO, (Priest)

Br. Vlad, OCCO, (Priest)



We are very honored to have these incredible men as a part of our Cistercian family. They are loved and respected by their local community and have a worldwide ministry focused on the health of the individual's mind, body, and soul. We have done some major projects together very successfully.

Essentially what is required is a sincere and deliberate resolve to seek perfection in charity through the religious state of life, according to the rule and constitutions of a certain religious institute.

The indispensable natural virtues required, according to Father Philippe, are: a right conscience, a profoundly honest character, sincerity and sociability. The required religious virtues are: true piety, docility for direction, a spirit of penance to accept the renunciations required, the practice of chastity, and true devotion to a way of life dedicated to the service of neighbor for the love of God

Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery, By Fr. Richard Butler, O.P.

From The Abbot:

Rather than list the qualities of the Cistercian Charism and discuss what we can do for you I am listing below some comments from members on what we have done for them.

“The Cistercian charism is a refuge for ardent lovers of God. The adherence to the Holy Rule of St. Benedict and focus on contemplating God in prayer is a precious balm on hearts aching for closer union with the Lord. The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is an opportunity for men or women to become a true monk or nun in this revered tradition.”

“The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross serves God in a variety of ministries throughout the world. Our union with each other, developed through common prayer also unites us to Jesus Christ, whom we ultimately serve with joy.”

“There were certain things that prayer, study, and scriptural research have convinced me are required in my own path. It was important for me that the order be contemplative, and that it adhered to the traditional orthodox teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I was not interested in joining an order that was too easy, or that bent over too far to be politically amenable. It was important to me that I would be well guided along the way.”

“Indeed, our affiliation with the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross has brought tremendous spiritual blessings to us and our dear ones. The Cistercian habit has become an effective and visible sign of the healing and reconciling presence of our Lord Jesus.”

“When I joined the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, the first thing that changed was my prayer life. Before, it was a life-less obligation, a burden my wife and I committed ourselves to pray at least the Morning and Evening Prayers and whenever time allows, to pray the other offices as well. This helped us to become more prayerful, teaching us to offer everything to God each day; referring to Him even the mundane things of our daily life. I started seeing myself opening more and more to my wife in terms of communication, becoming more forgiving and affirming. My relationship with the Lord started improving tremendously. Whereas before, obeying God is a duty, now it is a joy.”

Suspicious Signs of a Call to Contemplative Religious Life

**Desire to grow in union with God through prayer. Love of God that manifests itself in a desire to give one’s life to Him. Desire to live simply. The wish to live life with less stress and more order. Generosity. Ability to listen to others and accept direction when needed. Desire to worship God
In all the moments of life.**

**Summary report of findings from
research project commissioned
by Lord Abbot General
researched by Br. Columcille, OCCO+**

As the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross approaches our 40th anniversary, ++Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO asked for research regarding any other religious orders/communities based in the United States that are like ours. The following information sketches my methods and results.

There are approximately 140 internet search engines and web directories available today. I decided to limit myself to the five most commonly used in the United States: Google, Yahoo, Bing, Ask, and Duck Duck Go.

Then, I made a list of descriptors for our Order, our mission and the opportunities/services provided to members. These included (but were not limited to): *dispersed, non-residential, religious order/community, apostolic succession, Independent Anglican, Independent Catholic, conservative, monastic, monks, vowed religious, priests, ordination/incardination, brothers, sisters, novice, life-professed, formation, postulant, oblate, seminary/theological college, extern, rule, constitution, abbot.*

With these descriptors identified, I began the process of searching for them singularly, or in conjunction with one another, using my five search engines one at a time. I started with directories and continued on to individual sites. With the vast results, I limited my time for each group, concentrating on any “about us” information that could provide structure, membership and mission statements. I used this data in comparison with the aforementioned descriptor criteria related to the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

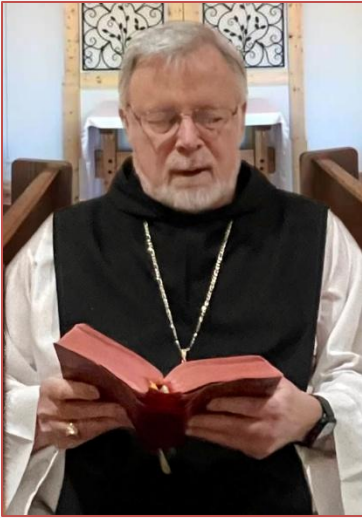
Over the course of about seventy hours, I collected, categorized, and edited a pool of religious groups. The vast majority of these groups were easily culled by failing to meet the key descriptors of our Order. Many were exclusively Roman Catholic or Anglican, etc. so failed in comparison to our more ecumenical membership. Others were extremely liberal, ordaining women to the priesthood, having no claim to apostolic succession, etc. These were removed when compared to our more conservative charism both socially and liturgically. Others failed by a lack of clear structure and/or mission statement. These were more like loose confraternities made up of mostly laypeople more of a Third Order aspiration, but without any guiding Rule or discernable leadership. And of course, there were dozens of dead links and references to groups I could not find, or that had a severely outdated “cover page” and nothing else. One has to assume that these groups are now defunct, if they ever existed in the first place.

Lastly and sadly, there were the pretenders. And there were *a lot of them!* These groups usually had very few members and seemed more to be *role playing* at being monks, hermits, even priests and bishops. I shudder to think of the people they have misled into grievous spiritual harm.

**To conclude, i can proudly say this to you:
Father abbot, brothers, sisters, oblates and friends;**

**We are *unique*. there is *no other group* that can lay claim to
our holy foundation, structure and government, programs,
membership, formation opportunities and requirements, not
to mention our longevity at 40 years!**

**The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common
Observance Is alone in its legitimacy, tenacity, and
excellence.**



We will teach you the meaning of prayer and how to pray.

That includes helping you pick a prayer book and how to utilize Lectio Divina.

You will discover just how wonderful prayer can be and become closer to God than you ever thought possible.

The discipline of Lectio Divina is a well-founded vehicle that enables you to seek God. Lectio Divina means reading something holy. The reading is thoughtfully done, unlike reading a newspaper. Read very slowly, letting each word, each character speak to you. You may want to study secondary readings to better know the contents of the passage. You are not attempting to be a biblical scholar. Just let the short passage speak to you.

Lectio Divina is meant to go slowly. Stay with each of the following steps until the Lord inspires you to move to the next step. You could possibly spend a week, a month or more on each step. When I first began doing Lectio Divina, the Lord gave me for eight years three simple words, “in the beginning.” When I look back on those eight years, those three words were life-sustaining.

1. *Lectio* means reading. I have included several Lectio Divinas with questions for meditation to help you to get started. When you are ready to go on your own, let God choose what your reading should be. It is okay if it takes you some time to understand where He is leading you. Remember, He initiates everything.

2. *Meditatio* means meditation. While reading your short Scriptural passage, certain ideas or questions may come to mind. Write them down. These ideas may or may not have a direct connection to the reading. The Lectio Divinas that are included in this book have some questions listed to give you a helping hand. Those questions may not be the end of the meditation. God might want you to go further. Since you are not in a rush, take your time and let the Holy Spirit lead.

Go to following page

• **3. *Oratio*** means prayer. After a period of meditation, the Holy Spirit will impress upon you certain significant ideas. It may take some time for you to be aware of which items are most important. That is okay. Keep meditating and asking God questions.

• Let God direct your prayers. For example, He might lead you to pray concerning your fear of failure. Your simple prayer might be, “Lord, help me. I am terribly frightful of failure.”

• **4. *Contemplatio*** means contemplation. This is your holy moment when you turn your prayer over to God. Be quiet. Let God do the work. Do not expect anything or have an agenda.

• It is difficult to remain quiet for any length of time. When your mind wanders, bring it back. Have something to focus on like a crucifix. Your contemplation may be relatively short. Come back to it sometime later. This is a slow experience worthy of investment.

• Silence requires you to put away your selfish efforts to control and receive rewards or satisfactions. Contemplation is the ultimate expression of trust. Contemplation is a grace given by God. There is nothing that you can do to make contemplation happen other than be still and be willing to be led by God.

• The true contemplative’s prayer is simply, “Here I am, Lord. Do with me what You will.”

**A video series
by our Abbot General
to help us.**

Welcome to the Cistercian Order

What is a Monk?

Where do we go from here?

(How to Maintain a Prayerful Life)

The Rule of St. Benedict

Habit of Prayers

Protecting your vocation

Perfectionism

(Gold Medal Monk)

Lectio Divina

(Praying the Scriptures)

Building Courage and Charity through

Humility

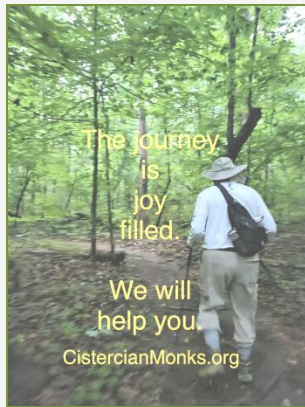
Stability

Obedience

Conversatio

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/9316848>

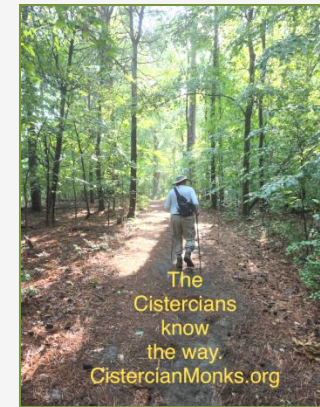
https://youtube.com/channel/UC8n9vm_1zLZ72yIj2RoH2Vg



***A monastic life style has real
value no matter where you
live.***

***from the Abbot General
Oscar Joseph, OCCO***

Page 1/3



I was recently asked: Do residential monastics offer more opportunities for spiritual maturity than external monastics?

During my seven years of residential monastic-style living, I used to think one needs to be in the monastery for real spiritual growth. When I stepped out into the world, my eyes were opened.

Each charism has unique perspectives, goals, and methodologies; thus, it is impossible to say whether a residential monastic life is more valuable than a nonresidential one. Throughout much of Christian history, both groups have been present and have contributed to the kingdom of God according to their missions.

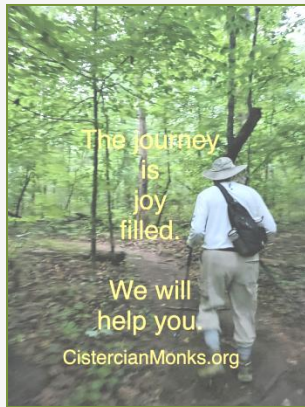
If you stood two men with true contemplative, monastic vocations, one residential and the other external, together, their vocal style, vocabulary, and experiences would quickly identify the one living behind the walls and who was living in the world.

The question is not answered based on one's presentation, appearance, or missionary work. Rather we must examine which monastic environment produces the opportunity for a more mature spirituality, external or residential.

What is spiritual maturity?

Using the model found in the Rule of St. Benedict, we might say that the more spiritually mature individual would be willing to listen wholeheartedly to God and others and act on it through stability, obedience, and conversatio. The behaviors of which are illustrated in the chapters 4, and 7 in the Rule of St. Benedict.

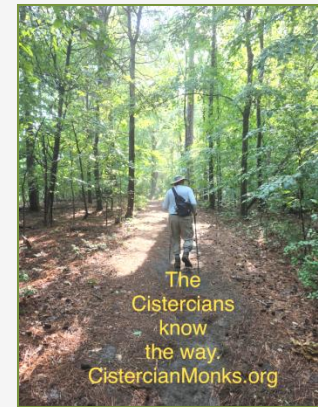
The Rule of Saint Benedict is the practical application of the Holy Scripture. It operates from within, like yeast, inspiring and enabling change.



A monastic life style has real value no matter where you live.

***from the Abbot General
Oscar Joseph, OCCO***

Page 2/3



Define the different environments.

Benedictine/Cistercian residential monks usually live in a protected, disciplined environment that gives them the necessary direction and support to mature spirituality. They are aided by a clear structure of disciplines and authority to help them process personal and corporate conflicts. They are also influenced by the community's particular limitations, prejudices, and frailties.

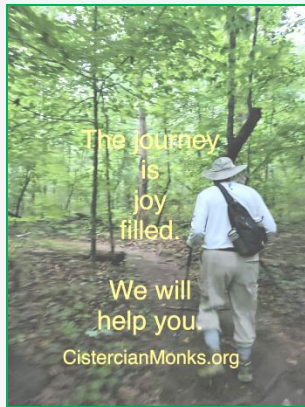
The external monk has to face and conquer the harsh realities of life, countless relationships, marriage, financial failure, and perhaps hunger and loneliness.

These trials are often within a wide variety of communities such as family, employment, and church, with their particular limitations, prejudices, and frailties.

These broader and more threatening life experiences give the external monk more significant opportunities to listen, exercise his vows, and live humbly with a greater capacity to love than those residing in a monastery.

How do the external monks accomplish this positive growth without an already existing residential structure?

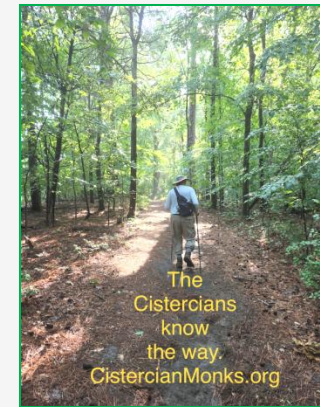
Those who come to us seeking to be first order monks or oblates have frequently survived many hardships. They are responding to a God inspired yearning for a simpler Spirit filled life which is focused on the God who has already taught them about courage and true charity. Their only yearning is for humble, prayerful service.



A monastic life style has real value no matter where you live.

***from the Abbot General
Oscar Joseph, OCCO***

Page 3/3



External monks model, but do not attempt to duplicate, the residential monastic lifestyle. Instead, while living in a heretic and often threatening world, they create an environment pleasant to God that will sustain a life of prayerful listening and provide the opportunity for spiritual growth/maturity.

The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross provides an extensive detailed Manual of readings, writings, reflections, and disciplines that teach the Benedictine/Cistercian way. Each person receives mentorship and support. Our members feel part of a contemplative community.

We are incredibly thankful for our Orthodox residential monastery. They have developed a deep spirituality among themselves, the people to whom they minister and have been a real asset in guiding the externals.

A rather famous residential Cistercian monk was asked which population had more miracles, those living in our outside of the monastery. He said, "those living outside the monastery because they need them more." He recognized the difficulties of pursuing a religious life in the world.

***Want to Learn About living life well? Talk to Your Cat.
Stability is how we commit to our lives and the people in them.***

Stability



Stability is a rooted engaging commitment to place, time and relationships.

Expectations found in genuine stability:

External

Reliable patterns in persons and life events where one can productively live their life while attending to the present moment.

Internal

Inner stability is focusing on God and responding to the moment with love. Face one's pain and destructive emotions.

Look for the best in others and an eagerness to forgive.

Stability is achieved through persistence, patience, and humility. Focus on God and prayer.

If we wish to dwell in the tent of this kingdom, we will never arrive unless we run there by doing good deeds.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Grace saves, and deeds give evidence and life to faith. A grateful person eagerly turns faith into action.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

They do not become elated over their good deeds; they judge it is the Lord's power, not their own, that brings about the good in them.

The Rule of St. Benedict

True happiness comes from service to God and others.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

***Want to Learn About living life well? Talk to Your Cat.
Obedience is how we respond to those who are leading us.***

Obedience



Cistercian Obedience is not blindly obeying the law under threat of punishment.

For Benedict obedience is an action taken when we exercise both physical and emotional stability.

Obedience to others is the way that we live out our obedience to God.

Obedience is accountability in community and in relationships by focusing on the needs of others.

Obedience is putting God at the center of our lives thus giving a balance between our needs and the needs of others.

Obedience is the recognition that I cannot always be in control and to listen to those who are.

Obedience is to take only an action that is endorsed by those who show wisdom and understand.

The Lord waits for us daily to translate into action, as we should, His holy teachings.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Waiting, action, and holiness describes the life of a seeker.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

We must prepare our hearts and bodies for the battle of holy obedience.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Holy obedience takes time, preparation, courage, and charity.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

***Want to Learn About living life well? Talk to Your Cat.
Conversatio is the process we use to improve our lives.
Conversatio***

Your life's journey need not always be a rocky, difficult uphill battle. You can drop burdensome beliefs, attitudes, behaviors that hinder you in your search for God in all things and your decision to prefer nothing to the love of Christ

As you grow spiritually you will find yet more hindrances to let go of so continually strive for conversion in your own personal behavior and faithfully persevere in living the monastic observance.

Never become complacent or slothful in your efforts to grow in holiness or careless or lazy in performing your religious duties or serving the community.

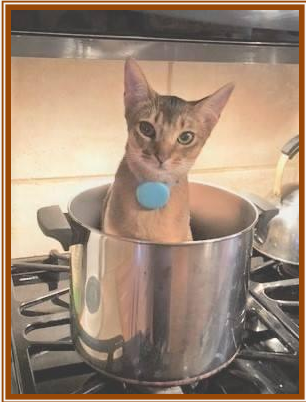
Constant renunciation of things, ideas, judgments, behaviors you would have thought you couldn't do without.

Change your ways so that your heart will change. Your new and opposite behaviors will change who you are. Criticism can become mercy. Fear of rejection can become confidence.

Do things differently so that you will come to see things differently.

Conversatio is changing behaviors to respond to God's plan for your life and your vows of stability and obedience by practicing the presence of God.

Keep your death always before your eyes so you are reminded to live everyday to its fullest in the very presence of God.



The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.



Your formation as a Cistercian oblate or monastic will focus on learning how to pray and incorporate The Holy Rule of St. Benedict into your life. The Rule gives you direction, much like an arbor supports and directs the vine and changes you from within, much like yeast.

In the following pages, I have commented on several direct quotes from the Rule. In the side notes, I will take some quotes further.

Every quote is worthy of your Lectio Divina.

Have you noticed that your mind is far too busy with negative thoughts? The thoughts are often filled with fear and a desire to get your way. Even when you get charitable, you want something in return.

As long as "me" fills your head, your heart will never be filled with "thee." Prayer becomes the most important thing that you can do. When prayer becomes a passion, you will begin to focus more and more on God. You can then understand just how sinful you are.

Repenting with genuine sorrow will set you free. The grace, joy, freedom, and the new life you have will enable you to wish the same for others, including our enemies.

Pray for those who hate you. I know that it is difficult to forgive those who have inflicted hurt. Remember, as you forgive others, so are you forgiven. Bitterness is a significant block to spiritual growth.

Pray that God blesses and tends to your enemies. It will free you to see them as God sees them.

Compassion goes a long way to unity with the cross.

Prefer moderation in speech and speak no foolish chatter.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Conversations can quickly turn into unproductive criticism.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Listen readily to holy reading.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Listen or read meaningful things. It is easy to get distracted

by tick tock your clock runs out.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Devote yourself often to prayer.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Devotion leads to driven, involved, and committed passion.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Every day with tears and sighs confess your past sins to God in prayer.

The Rule of St. Benedict

If you are passionate with your sorrow you will hear better His forgiveness.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.

Hate the urgings of self-will.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Self-will is frequented with self interest. It is hard to hear God when our voice dominates.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Do not aspire to be called holy before you really are.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Holiness is not yours to earn It is His to be received.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Live by God's commandments every day.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Without a rule of Life, life will rule you.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Harbor neither hatred nor jealousy of anyone and do nothing out of envy.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Focusing on your personal lack will blind you to God's true gifts already given to you.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Do not love quarreling.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Pressing your will hinders yourself and others to seek God's will.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Shun arrogance.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Your arrogance or an other's is time wasted in foolery.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Respect the elders and love the young.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Elders have wisdom to be heard. The young are needy.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Pray for your enemies out of love for Christ.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Pray that Christ will fill them with His love.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.



Your formation as a Cistercian oblate or monastic will focus on learning how to pray and incorporate The Holy Rule of St. Benedict into your life. The Rule gives you direction, much like an arbor supports and directs the vine and changes you from within, much like yeast.

In the following pages, I have commented on several direct quotes from the Rule. In the side notes, I will take some quotes further.

Every quote is worthy of your Lectio Divina.

St. Benedict often speaks of "the fear of God" as motivational. We must remember that he was dealing with rough-necked "monks," some of whom wanted to kill him. Fear is not for long-term motivation. Scripture often speaks about not living in a state of fear. The better definition for fear is not emotional fear that is debilitating but "reverence we are to have of offending God who is the very principle of life and existence for all things."

God Himself initially gave us that reverence. We stand in awe and desire to please. That desire to please keeps us aware of God's call to follow Him by obedience to His laws and how we treat each other.

Cistercians treat everyone with the greatest respect. When there is discord, we attend to it quickly and humbly. We never speak ugly or gossip. It is good to remember that no one is perfect, but we can rely on God's mercy.

If we humble our hearts the Lord will raise them to heaven.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The more thee and less me, the more of thee we become.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

He must constantly remember everything God has commanded.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Remembrance comes easily when couched in love.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

All who fear God have everlasting life awaiting them.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Spiritual fear is the desire to please.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

His actions everywhere are in God's sight and are reported by angels at every hour.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Everything we are and do is in, with, and through our Lord.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.

If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with him before the sun goes down.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Obtaining peace is easier when it has not grown into a monster.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Never lose hope in God's mercy.

The Rule of St. Benedict

God never loses hope in you. Just ask.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

It is love that impels them to pursue everlasting life.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Once you understand that God has loved you, you will desire to rest in His arms forever.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The disciples' obedience must be given gladly.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Gladness is the fruit of trust.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

There are times when good words are to be left unsaid out of esteem for silence.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Silence allows listening.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Speaking and teaching are the master's task; the disciple is to be silent and listen.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The soul cannot hear when the mouth is raging in ignorance.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

We absolutely condemn in all places any vulgarity and gossip.

The Rule of St. Benedict

It pollutes the air and kills the soul.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

We descend by exaltation and ascend by humility.

The Rule of St. Benedict

If you want a virtue, act the virtue.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.



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Sowing and reaping are the first cause of most good or evil. It is best for us to look into ourselves for what went wrong, why we are unhappy, and why people do not like us. Generally, what we do is what we get.

Grumbling, murmuring, and speaking falsely or with half-truths creates distrust. Being sincere and honest with charity makes grace, charity, and joy.

St. Benedict emphasizes the importance of doing over speaking. Pray briefly and do what the prayer inspires.

If we appreciate an awareness that God is not only everywhere but we are living in, with, and through Him, our motivations will change.

The brothers should serve one another.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Serving those we encounter daily imperfections is evidence of our willingness to obey our leaders and God.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Service increases reward and fosters love.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Sowing and reaping.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Let those who are not strong have help so that they may serve without distress.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Being burdened with essential needs can diminish our spiritual desires.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Nothing is so inconsistent with the life of any Christian as overindulgence.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Overindulgence is seeking self-satisfaction.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.

We must be on guard against every base desire, because death is stationed near the gateway of pleasure.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The ongoing pursuit of physical pleasure misdirects our focus on the source of true joy.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

All that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Happiness prevails when we understand that God begins and completes all that is good.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere.

The Rule of St. Benedict

God continues His creation. Everything can become growth.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Let us consider how we ought to behave in the presence of God and his angels.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Everything is God created and sacred.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Let us sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Singled-minded and acting with joy

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

God regards our purity of heart and tears of compunction, not our many words.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Words without action are meaningless.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Prayer should be short and pure unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Too many words can make us self-focused.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

There must be no word or sign of the evil of grumbling for any reason at all.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Grumbling is an illustration of believing you know more than others.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.



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One of my favorite passages in the Life of St. Benedict is the description of St. Benedict looking out of his window into the darkness and suddenly overwhelmed by a brightness that reveals how God sees the world.

I pray for that daily. "Lord, help me to see the world as you do." Frequently my eyes are opened to new possibilities, and my limited awareness is dissolved.

That same prayer can be extended to, "Lord, help me to see myself as you do." I have asked many people to describe themselves as God sees them.

Their life radically changes when they consent to listen to what God says. You are God's gift. He has given you gifts and talents to affect His Kingdom positively. You are wonderfully made. He has a purpose for you. Imagine focusing on those wonders. There would be no more self-focus, no more states of fear. You would be giving God all the glory.

Excitable, anxious, extreme, obstinate, jealous or over suspicious he must not be. Such a man is never at rest.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Lord, let me see the world as you do.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Trusting in God's help, he must in love obey.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Knowing engenders trust. Trust engenders confidence. Confidence engenders love.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

It is by the way of obedience that we go to God.

The Rule of St. Benedict

God knows the way. Obeying is the only way.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

There is a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Zeal is the fire that burns sloth.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.

Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The work of God is prayer. Pray unceasingly.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Idleness is the enemy of the soul.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Faith and acts give us life.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people, because in them more particularly Christ is received.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The poor cannot give anything back, so we give from a place to receive our Good Lord.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The concern must be whether he truly seeks God and whether he shows eagerness for the Work of God for obedience and trials.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Seeking, praying, obedience, and being other-centered are evidence of a true religious vocation.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The younger ones must respect their seniors, and the seniors must love their juniors.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The young need wisdom. The seniors respond to the lack in the juniors with compassion.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

He must be chaste, temperate and merciful.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Living a simple life well.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

He must be chaste, temperate and merciful.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Living a simple life well.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Let him strive to be loved rather than feared.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Love can motivate others. Fear diminishes.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.



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Imagine focusing on those wonders. There would be no more self-focus, no more states of fear. You would be giving God all the glory.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things will be given you as well.

The Rule of St. Benedict

I trust thee, Lord.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard what God has prepared for those who love Him.

The Rule of St. Benedict

We are too limited to perceive the infinite.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Oh God, come to my assistance. Oh Lord, make haste to help me.

The Rule of St. Benedict

We, not God, need to express our neediness.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Everyone has his own gift from God.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Realizing that we are God's gift for each other will change everything.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

The Rule of St. Benedict with Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO responding.

Let them prefer nothing whatsoever to Christ.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Not me, Lord, but thee.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

If you hear His voice today, do not harden your heart.

The Rule of St. Benedict

If you do not daily hear His voice your heart is already hardened.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Keep your tongue free from all deceit.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Lies, half-truths, and misdirection are evidence of self-focus and abandoning God.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Turn away from evil and do good.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Doing good for the glory of God will shun all evil.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Let peace be your request and aim.

The Rule of St. Benedict

True peace is found in resting in God.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Even before you ask me, I will say to you: Here I am.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Living in the will of God enables us to know He is always there.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Not to us, Lord, not to us give the glory, but to your name alone.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Not me but thee.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Do you not know that the patience of God is leading you to repent?

The Rule of St. Benedict

God is gentle. He leads by inspiration.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of His grace.

The Rule of St. Benedict

By nature, we are slothfully disobedient. God's Good Grace moves us beyond our nature.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO



St. Benedict Steps of Humility

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO Comments

At first glance, the Twelve Steps to Humility seem impossible and unwanted. Who would want to destroy their self-esteem and all they had accomplished over a lifetime?

Fortunately, that is NOT what God or St. Benedict are requiring.

Think about this... We have been taught that self-esteem is vital to our happiness and is gained by acquiring things, positions, and power.

How quickly all that can be destroyed by one simple mistake, someone's critical judgment on our efforts or even a natural disaster. The consequences of this erroneous teaching are anxiety and depression.

When challenged, my self-esteem crumbles, even with my best efforts at positive thinking. When I look at myself, I see garbage.

Introduction to *Study the Holy Rule of Saint Benedict* and Abbot

Philip Lawrence's accompanying commentary.

[Study the Holy Rule of St. Benedict - Benedictine Abbey of Christ in the Desert \(christdesert.org\)](http://christdesert.org)

St. Benedict writes that to ascend the ladder of humility to Heaven one must lower himself and to descend the ladder away from Heaven one would have to exalt himself. This is the principle figure then in regarding for St. Benedict that to ascend the ladder of humility the soul must travel through different stages and levels of humility.

The First Step of Humility:

“The first step of humility, then, is that a man keeps the fear of God always before his eyes (Psalm 36:2) and to never forget what God has commanded of us.

Though we must just as well say that the fear of God is that reverence we are to have of offending God who is the very principle of life and existence for all things.

All of our desires, our thoughts, our willful actions must be on guard and willing to lovingly offer up our entire selves up to God for Him to lead us and guide us to keep His commandments.



St. Benedict Steps of Humility

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO Comments

The Steps to Humility teach us how to change what we see in that mirror.

Rather than seeing with our eyes and self-judgment, we now see how God sees and judges.

The all-knowing, merciful, and loving God sees us, you, as precious creations that He has uniquely gifted with eternal, everlasting empowerment to continue His work of creation.

He will never change His mind or abandon you.

You are in, with, and through Him every moment of every day.

You are an heir to His Kingdom NOW and FOREVER. Let us call that God's esteem.

The Second Step of Humility: Not my will, But Yours O Lord.

The second step of humility is that a man loves not his own will nor takes pleasure in the satisfaction of his desires; rather he shall imitate by his actions that saying of the Lord: "I have come not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me."

The Third Step of Humility

The third step of humility regards obedience to our superiors. In the case of us lay people this means to be obedient to our priest, our bishop, our parents, lawful authorities, etc. all for the love of God.

In this step we must submit ourselves to the yoke of Christ which He Himself bore in humility and obedience, even obedience unto death, death on a cross. And so then we must submit ourselves to God's care, especially to the care of those who are our superiors.

The Fourth Step of Humility: Embrace Suffering Patiently and Obediently

"The fourth step of humility is that in this obedience under difficult, unfavorable, or even unjust conditions, his heart quietly embrace suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape."

Then Jesus said to his disciples: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.



St. Benedict Steps of Humility

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO Comments

The Steps to Humility teach us how to move from our failing self-interest and self-promotion to the never-failing God's esteem to happily giving our loving Creator all the Glory.

We were created to want that Godly point of view. However, the world wants to claim us with lies and deception.

It misdirects us by seemingly pleasurable self-indulgence. The ultimate consequences are exhaustion, anxiety, and depression.

Yes, moving from self-focus to God-focus will take some effort. At first, the journey can be confusing.

Fortunately, God the Father has graced us. He has given us the redemption of Jesus. Jesus, in turn, empowered the apostles with the authority and Holy Spirit to continue His mission through His Church.

St. Benedict and the Cistercians are fruits of that Church.

The Fifth Step of Humility:

Confess thy Sins and Faults

The fifth step of humility is to regularly confess one's sins, and in St. Benedict's rule it is clear that he writes that monks confess directly to their abbot any sinful thoughts that they have in their Hearts or any secret wrongdoings that they have committed against him or others.

The Sixth Step of Humility

Content Yourself with Lowliness

The litany of humility reads, That I should not desire to be approved, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it, and so the sixth step of humility is to content ourselves with lowliness and to accept the lowest ranks and treatment that others have to offer.

We recognize our sinfulness and our frailty and in such a manner recognize that of our own selves, left to our own devices, we are of little value, and yet not of no value because God saw in us a precious value so as to atone for our sins and bring us into His life.

We are of little value because of our sins but of great value on account of the image we behold of Him.



St. Benedict Steps of Humility

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO Comments

We, the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, are icons of hope.

We will guide and help you towards humble intimacy with God and His creation.

What is required from you is cooperation with God's grace and your willingness to listen.

Please understand that the Twelve Steps are a metaphor. There could be a hundred steps or a thousand.

No one is ever perfectly on one step. You could have a toe on one step and a foot on another. You could trip and fall.

This is a journey. Do not judge yourself by how you think it should go. Do not measure yourself by the success or failure of others.

Be patient. Persevere in prayer. Listen.

The Seventh Step of Humility:

Interior Mediocrity

The seventh step of humility is that we recognize and admit not only with our voice but with the fullness of our heart that we are inferior to all because of how we have been given specific, unique, and beloved gifts of God which we have squandered.

They were specific to us and beautifully made for us specifically, but we spoiled God's gifts and abused them. For this, we ought to consider ourselves inferior to others on account of how we abused ourselves through our sins and how we abused God's gifts.

The Eighth Step of Humility:

To Keep the Rule St. Benedict writes that the eighth step of humility is for a Benedictine monk to uphold the common rule of the monastery and to follow the example of his superiors.

So too is it with us that we seek to keep peace in the Church, following the common example and good-will of our parish priests and bishops and this ought to be our interpretation of how to keep the rule of our parish community and of the Church as a whole.



St. Benedict Steps of Humility

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO Comments

We will focus on Scripture, The Rule of St. Benedict, The Liturgy of the Hours, and Lectio Divina.

We will direct our efforts toward humility using the three steps of Stability, Obedience, and Conversatio.

Stability is a rooted engaging commitment to place, time, and relationships.

Obedience is an action taken when we exercise both physical and emotional stability.

Conversatio is changing behaviors to respond to God's plan for your life.

The Ninth Step of Humility: Silence and Solitude

A monk, St. Benedict writes, ought only speak when questioned by his superiors or by others, and in all other matters hold his tongue.

Do we avoid speaking ill of others, or embrace silence and solitude whenever God provides for us?

Do we avoid listening to too much music or videos so as to keep our internal tongue (our mind's tongue) silent and awaiting the contemplation of God in every moment?

Remain silent in the heart and in the tongue, for God's first language, St. John of the Cross says, is silence.

The Tenth Step of Humility: Keep Your Peace in Times of Laughter

The tenth step of humility is to avoid excessive laughter.

This may sound excessive, but there is a certain extent to which jocularly, that is joking around too much, or acting a fool can be a major distraction and even arise to use making fun of holy things.

Laughing at people or things which are not humorous or good-natured is to show a sort of superiority over a thing, to point to the silliness of a thing and to place one above it.

So then for the lay person we must be careful not to laugh at things such as people falling down, or to put people down in our astonishment of their failures.



St. Benedict Steps of Humility

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO Comments

You are not alone on this journey.

Your Cistercian family and leaders will guide and encourage you.

We will show you how to persevere in prayer and create a supporting lifestyle.

In turn, we ask that you do your best, respect your leaders and the Cistercian family through your cooperation, tithes, prayers, and participation.

St. Benedict encourages honest transparency and service to one another.

Know that God has graced you to this monastic call as an oblate or monastic.

He will grace and empower you.

A new and exciting life is available to you and your loved ones.

Eleventh Step of Humility:

Speak Calmly and Modestly

As the tongue is difficult to control and lends us over to quick decisions, so we must train the heart and the tongue to speak modestly, without laughter, gently, lovingly, endearingly, and forever to be conscious of our divine destination.

Desire more solitude and quietness so that you might embrace God more readily and more fully.

Twelfth Step of Humility:

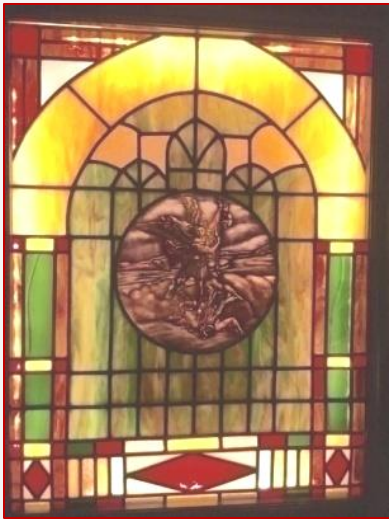
Everlasting Humility and Meekness

The final step of humility is to bear all these things in one's heart at all manners of the night and day.

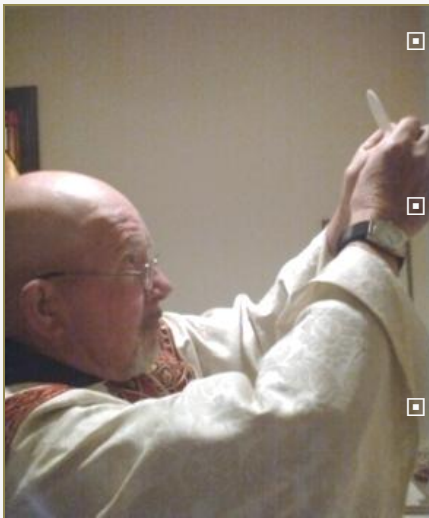
No matter what ordinary or small deed the humble man does it will all be done with the greatest care and offering up to the Lord.

In this manner then, perfect love is bloomed, says St. Benedict, a love that casts out all fear, that is to say that what was once toil and suffering has been transformed in Christ

Monks make great Priests



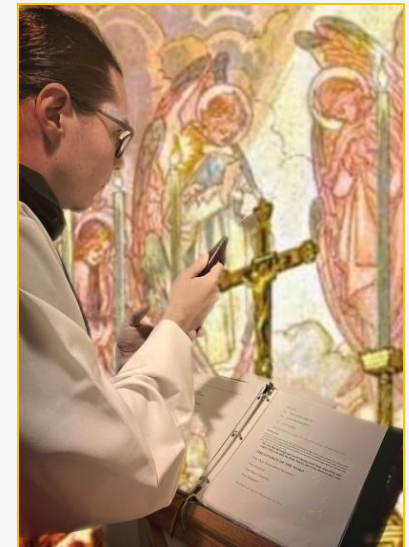
The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is happy to receive male applicants for Holy Orders, Priests. We would also consider incardination for other rightfully ordained clerics.



While we require the traditional qualifications for ordination/incardination, the educational requirements may be individually tailored.

We celebrate valid apostolic lines of succession, the seven sacraments and liturgical worship consistent with the historical churches. We adhere to true apostolic teaching.

If you are interested in ordination or incardination, complete the application found on our website and forward it to the Abbot General. His office will then contact you.





The “We Got Your Back Program” was inspired by Br. Benedict, OCCO.

Br. Benedict often said, "Miracles are always happening because God loves you. He's got your back."

Br. Benedict was a life professed Cistercian monk who went on to heaven on September 13, 2018.

He was an exceptionally holy monk. Br. Benedict was humorous, captivating, and a dear lover of our Lord.

His wife, Alexis, describes Br. Benedict as “a deeply devoted man, not only to

God, but to his family, friends, and any stranger who needed a prayer or a friendly conversation.

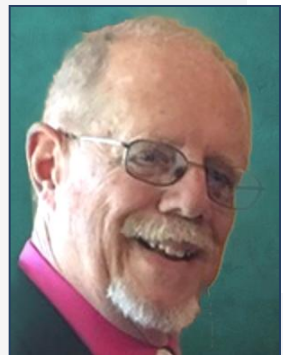
He had a gift for making anyone feel like family. He could see people's hearts and never held a grudge.”

In loving memory of Br. Benedict and our love for the Cistercian Order we have founded

The “We Got Your Back Program”
Four areas of support

- Spiritual Support
- Enrichment Support
- Making Life Easier Support
- Financial Support

These are Your Volunteers





Cistercian Oxford Long Sleeve Button-up Shirt (Men & Ladies Fit)



Cistercian Polo Shirt (Men & Ladies Fit)



Cistercian Fitted V-Neck Shirt (Men & Ladies Fit)



Cistercian Unisex 1/4 Zip Sweatshirt

***The Cistercian Shop is open and doing business.
Find it on our website:***



Cistercian Shield Decal / Sticker

The Shop is reserved only for our members, oblates, their families, benefactors and friends of the Order. It is not available to the general population.



Cistercian Coffee Mug



One option for each cup placed on both sides of cup

This is what God told us to be.

“We, The Cistercians of the Holy Cross, are embedded icons, living sacramentals; who sustain, grace, and hold together the fiber of our communities. Our martyrdom is conversatio, stability, and obedience.

We live in and are influenced by the heretic nature of our culture. However, while clothed in our holy habits we become sacred icons. When people gaze upon us they look into their hope and see reflected back the Source of all Hope. We become sacred signs, living sacramentals.

The Pax of our contemplative lives provides the necessary stillness to speak without words. The rhythm of ora et labora and the earnestness of our vows are our martyr’s cross.

Persevere in prayer. Gratitude will open our souls to the unity of God, self, and others. Gratitude moves us from limitations and fear to expansion and love.

Gentleness will lead others to God’s eternal intent of true joy and freedom.”

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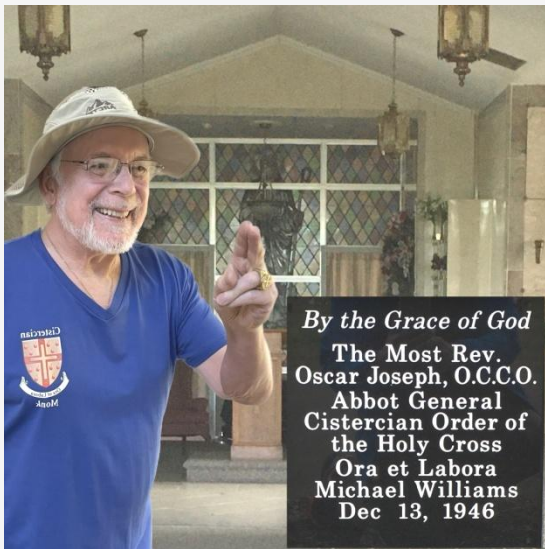
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**Saint Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary
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I have already consecrated my marker and visit it from time to time.

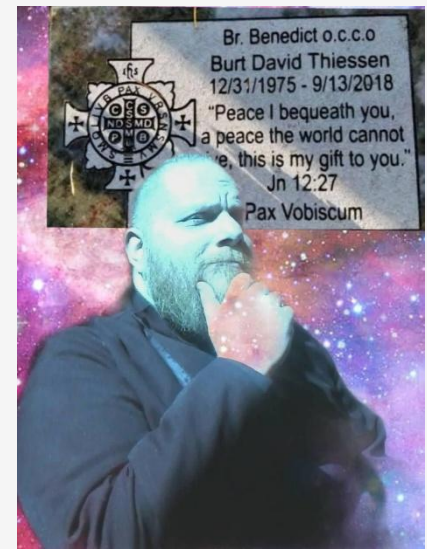
A reflection by Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

In the spirit of conversatio I was inspired to transform our most fearful event into a motivation for leading a joy filled life.

“Remember to keep death before your eyes daily

Notice our grave markers. My joy is prayer, work, and my God given tasks.

Br. Benedict’s joy was in giving peace to others.



At the moment of his death his family and medical staff felt Angels in his room.

Br. Benedict often said, "Miracles are always happening because God loves you. He's got your back."

Br. Benedict was a life professed Cistercian monk who went on to heaven on September 13, 2018.

He was an exceptionally holy monk whom the Abbot loved dearly. Br. Benedict was humorous, captivating and a dear lover of our Lord.

His wife, Alexis, describes Br. Benedict as *“a deeply devoted man, not only to God but to his family, friends and any stranger who needed prayer or a friendly conversation. He had a gift for making anyone feel like family. He could see people’s hearts and never held a grudge.”*

In loving memory of Br. Benedict and our love for the Cistercian Order we have founded the **“We Got Your Back Program”**.

“Remember to keep death before your eyes daily.” St Benedict is reminding us to live life to the fullest. Self indulgence, the modern definition of living to the fullest, ultimately leads to an earlier death. St. Benedict defines the fullest in the Holy Rule.

1. “LISTEN, MY SON.”

Silence allows us to reflect on ourselves and to be more attentive to others, it helps us be more peaceful, and it puts us in God’s presence.

2. WORK HELPS US KEEP A HEALTHY MIND.

“Idleness is the enemy of the soul,” Benedict writes. He mandated that his monks divide their time between work, reading, and prayer, in such a way that they developed a balanced body, mind, and soul.

“Remember to keep death before your eyes daily”

The Rule of St. Benedict

3. TRANSFORM EVERY TASK INTO PRAYER.

For St. Benedict, every task participates in the creative work of God and the sufferings of Christ. Work should be considered as a service to others and as a form of prayer.

4. OUR DAYS SHOULD FOLLOW A RHYTHM.

The Holy Rule imposes a time for everything: prayer, work, reading, reflection ... There is a beginning and end time for each task.

5. BE ATTENTIVE TO OTHERS.

For St. Benedict, respect must characterize all our relationships with other people. “Let all be received as Christ,” he said, speaking of visitors, “especially the poor and travelers.” If we are all attentive and considerate to each other—even to our enemies—we will contribute to building a world that reflects God’s love.

6. PRACTICE DISCIPLINE.

Forcing ourselves to follow a well-designed schedule actually frees us from slavery to our impulses.

7. READ OFTEN TO FEED YOUR MIND AND SOUL.

Reading good books can give us fresh ideas, make us more empathetic, broaden our mind, and teach us wisdom from the past and the present.

8. UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT YOUR OWN PRIORITIES.

For monks, the highest priority is to seek God, especially in prayer. Everything in the Rule is organized around this principle; St. Benedict repeats over and over, in slightly different formulations, “Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ.” We need to know what our own priorities are, and respect those priorities in the way we use our time.

9. MAKE PEACE WITH OTHERS.

In various ways and circumstances, St. Benedict urges his monks to apologize whenever they may have offended others. He reminds them of the injunction from Holy Scripture to “seek after peace and pursue it” and, “in case of discord with anyone, to make peace before the setting of the sun.” This helps us grow in goodness, as well as contributing to the stability of the community.

10. LIVE EACH DAY AS IF IT WERE YOUR LAST.

The holy abbot told his monks to “keep death before your eyes daily.” This helps us remember our priorities and focus on the essentials.

St. Benedict’s insight into humanity continues to be valuable today. We can be happier, better people, with God’s help.

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