

Class: Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality and Discussion on Chapters 6-10 of *Why We're Catholic* by Trent Horn

Objective – *The class objective is to introduce attendees to the major tenets of Benedictine Spirituality and get them to practice and understand how Benedictine spirituality can be used in their prayer life. Students are also expected to engage in fruitful discussion around the reading assignment.*

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

1. Saint Benedict of Nursia – A monk from the late 400s and early 500s who founded a community of monks and established a rule of life for that community.
2. OSB (Order of Saint Benedict) – The community of monks created by Saint Benedict. They live in accord to the Rule of Saint Benedict.
3. The Rule of Saint Benedict – A set of daily habits, rules, and regulations that guide Benedictine Monks through a daily life of prayer, work, and study.
4. Abbot – The head of a Benedictine monastic community.
5. Ora et Labora – Latin for “prayer and work” a core element of Benedictine spirituality that highlights how prayer is not a reserved action for solitude, but it is something that can be applied in all aspects of life, including the work that one does throughout the day.
6. Vows – A set of promises that monks take swearing themselves to the life and rules of the Benedictine monastic community.
7. Lectio Divina – A way of praying with scripture in which repetitive reading of the same text mingles with divine contemplation in order to discern how God’s message is present in scripture.
8. Liturgy of the Hours – A series of prayers marked by various hours throughout the day that sanctify the day and remind the reciter of God’s presence in every moment of the day.
9. Obedience – The free and loving response to God rooted in the example of Christ Himself.
10. Quaerere Deum – Latin for “To seek God.” In the Benedictine context, to seek God means to seek him in the ordinary and the everyday aspects of life, in contrast to those that seek God exclusively in sacred spaces such as a church, chapel, or intimate prayer space.

The Steps of Lectio Divina

Place yourself in a quiet environment. Calm your anxieties and thoughts, and acknowledge God's presence.

Offer a prayer to the Holy Spirit for inspiration and guidance: Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart and mind to listen to your Word.

1. **Lectio:** Read the text slowly and prayerfully, constantly listening for that word that God has prepared for you. You may want to re-read the same text multiple times to help quiet yourself interiorly and focus on God's voice. Listen and receive the Word that God speaks to you.

2. **Meditatio:** When a word or phrase strikes you, stop and rest with it. Repeat the word or phrase to yourself. Allow it to speak to you in a personal way by pondering the word in your heart, reflecting on what it means to you. Memorize it and repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your thoughts, hopes, memories, and desires.

3. **Oratio:** Prayer is your response to God's word. It begins your dialogue with God that comes from your heart. Formulate a prayer, as a response to God. *What do you want to say to the Lord in response to the Word spoken to you?* Enter into this loving conversation with God.

4. **Contemplatio:** Rest in God's presence and receive His transforming embrace. Sit still with God, realizing that in this deep and profound relationship, words are not necessary. Be content and at peace with a wordless, quiet rest in God, which brings joy to the heart. Remember that contemplation is not *your* action or doing, rather it is allowing God to act in you.

The Medal of St. Benedict



“The devil-chasing Medal.”

A Franciscan exorcist named Father Dominic Szymanski (a one time companion of St. Maximilian Kolbe) had the ability to detect the presence of the devil in the form of a small blue light. One day he was working with a Benedictine priest, when Fr. Dominic asked him if he was wearing his Medal of St. Benedict. “Yes, I am,” the Benedictine responded. Father Szymanski told him that he saw the devil circling around him, and that the evil spirit was unable to touch him because he was wearing the Medal. (From A Notebook on the Devil and Exorcism, Szymanski, et al.)

ORIGIN OF THE MEDAL

The origin of the Medal dates back to the time of St. Benedict himself, of whom we know that, in his frequent combats with the evil spirit, he generally made use of the Sign of the Cross and wrought many miracles thereby. He also taught his disciples to use the Sign of our redemption against the assaults of Satan and in other dangers. St. Maurus and St. Placid, his first and most renowned disciples, wrought their numerous miracles through the power of the holy Cross and in the name and by the merits of their holy Founder. The Medal of St. Benedict became more widely known through the following wonderful occurrence: Bruno, afterwards Pope Leo IX, had in his youth been bitten by a venomous reptile, in consequence of which he was seriously ill for two months. He had lost the use of speech and was soon reduced to a skeleton. All hopes of his recovery had been abandoned, when suddenly he beheld a luminous ladder that reached to Heaven, from which descended a venerable old man wearing the habit of a monk. It was St. Benedict, bearing in his hand a radiant cross, with which he touched the swollen face of Bruno and instantly cured him. Then the apparition disappeared. Bruno, who had been healed in such a miraculous manner, later on entered the Order of St. Benedict and subsequently ascended the papal throne under the name of Leo IX. Through this Pope the Medal of St. Benedict was enriched with special blessings and indulgences, and its veneration spread everywhere.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MEDAL

On one side, the Medal has a cross, the sign of our redemption, the protecting shield given us by God to ward off the fiery arrows of the evil spirit.

At the top of the cross is the word PAX – Peace. In the angles of the cross are found these four letters: **C.S.P.B.** They stand for the words: **Crux Sancti Patris Benedicti – The Cross of the Holy Father Benedict.**

On the vertical bar of the cross itself are found the letters: **C.S.S.M.L.**, and on the horizontal bar of the cross: **N.D.S.M.D.** They signify:

**Crux Sacra Sit Mihi Lux,
Non Draco Sit Mihi Dux.
May the holy Cross be my light,
Let not the dragon be my guide.**

Round the margin of the Medal, beginning at the right hand on top, we have the following letters: **V.R.S.N.S.M.V.--S.M.Q.L.I.V.B.**, They stand for the verses:

**Vade Retro, Satana!
Nunquam Suade Mihi Vana.
Sunt Mala Quae Libas
Ipse Venena Bibas.**

The English words are:

**Begone, Satan!
Suggest not vain things to me.
Evil is the cup thou offerest;
Drink thou thine own poison.**

The reverse of the Medal bears the image of St. Benedict holding in his right hand the Cross, in the power of which he wrought so many miracles, and in his left hand bearing the holy Rule, which leads all its followers by the way of the Cross to eternal light.



To the right of St. Benedict is a serpent and cup, representing a poisoned drink with which some monks tried to kill him, yet shattered when the saint made the Sign of the Cross over it. On the left is a raven, carrying away a poisoned loaf of bread, which an envious enemy had gifted to him to try and slay him.

Above the cup and the raven are the Latin words:
Crux S-Patrís Benedicti - The Cross of the Holy Father Benedict.

Round the margin is the inscription:

Eius in obitunostræpresentia muniamur.
May his presence protect us in the hour of our death.

THE POWER AND EFFECTS OF THE MEDAL

Let us state here that we do not ascribe any unknown or hidden power to the Medal, a power which the superstitious ascribe to their charms. We know wherein its power lies, and we protest that the graces and favors are due, not to the gold or the silver, the brass or aluminum of the Medal, but to our faith in the merits of Christ crucified, to the efficacious prayers of the holy Father St. Benedict, and to the blessings which the holy Church bestows upon the Medal and upon those who wear it. This Medal excludes every power or influence which is not from above.

There is indeed no medal which possesses such wonderful power and none so highly esteemed by the holy Church as the Medal of St. Benedict. Through the pious use of the Medal thousands of miracles, most remarkable cures and extraordinary favors have been obtained. It is powerful to ward off all dangers of body and soul coming from the evil spirit. We are exposed to the wicked assaults of the devil day and night. St. Peter says, "Your adversary the devil, as roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8). In the life of St. Benedict we see how the devil tried to do harm to his soul and body, and also to his spiritual children. Father Paul of Moll, saintly Flemish Benedictine wonder-worker (1824-1896), frustrated the evil doings of the spirit of darkness chiefly through the use of the Medal of St. Benedict, which has proved a most powerful protection against the snares and delusions of the old enemy. Missionaries in pagan lands use this Medal with so great effect that it has been given the remarkable name, "The devil-chasing Medal."

The Medal is, therefore, a powerful means:

- To destroy witchcraft and all other diabolical influences. To keep away the spells of magicians, of wicked and evil-minded persons.
- To impart protection to persons tempted, deluded or tormented by evil spirits.
- To obtain the conversion of sinners, especially when they are in danger of death.
- To serve as an armor in temptations against holy purity.
- To destroy the effects of poison.
- To secure a timely and healthy birth for children.
- To afford protection against storms and lightning.
- To serve as an efficacious remedy for bodily afflictions and a means of protection against contagious diseases.

Finally, the Medal has often been used with admirable effect even for animals infected with plague or other maladies, and for fields when invaded by harmful in-sects.

THE BLESSING OF THE MEDAL OF ST. BENEDICT

To be most effective, the Medal of St. Benedict should be blessed by a priest, using the special Benedictine blessing, which contains three solemn prayers of the Church for the blessing of the Medal. The first prayer is an exorcism of the wicked spirit, to make void his evil influence, with the earnest petition that the Medal be for the welfare of the body and soul of the wearer. The second prayer is a fervent petition for the wearer. The third prayer is very impressive in virtue of the detailed and solemn commemoration of the agony, sufferings and death of Our Lord.

THE USE OF THE MEDAL

The Medal may be worn about the neck, or attached to the scapular or the rosary. For the sick it can be placed on wounds, dipped in medicine or in water which is given to them to drink. It is frequently put into the foundation of houses or in walls, hung over doors, or fastened on stables and barns to call down God's protection and blessing. It is also buried in fields. In times of temptation, it is advisable to hold the Medal in one's hand, to kiss it reverently, and make use of the prayers on the Medal.

Those who devoutly wear the Medal of St. Benedict and pray for the propagation of his holy Order, share in all the good works, Masses, Communions, Divine Office, prayers, and fasts of the entire Order.

ST. BENEDICT MEDAL PRAYER

May the intercession of the Blessed Patriarch and Abbot Benedict render Thee merciful unto us, O Lord, that what our own unworthiness cannot obtain, we may receive through his powerful patronage. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

NOVENA PRAYER TO ST. BENEDICT

O glorious St. Benedict, sublime model of virtue, pure vessel of God's grace! Behold me humbly kneeling at thy feet. I implore thee, in thy loving kindness, to pray for me before the throne of God. To thee do I have recourse in the dangers that daily surround me. Shield me against my selfishness and my indifference to God and to my neighbor. Inspire me to imitate thee in all things. May thy blessing be with me always, so that I may see and serve Christ in others and work for His kingdom.

Graciously obtain for me from God these favors and graces which I need so much in the trials, miseries and afflictions of life. Thy heart was always full of love, compassion and mercy toward those who were afflicted or troubled in any way. Thou didst never dismiss without consolation and assistance anyone who had recourse to thee. I therefore invoke thy powerful intercession, confident in the hope that thou wilt hear my prayers and obtain for me the special grace and favor I earnestly implore. (Name your petition.)

Help me, great St. Benedict, to live and die as a faithful child of God, to run in the sweetness of His loving will and to attain the eternal happiness of Heaven. Amen.

