The Rule of Saint Benedict

The Rule of Benedict is an ancient document stemming from the 6th century. In a Prologue and 73 chapters, it takes us on a journey of discovering deep echoes of wisdom, faith and trust. For instance, Saint Benedict gives guidance on how to live a life with Christ as the center. He calls us to be aware that "…the divine presence is everywhere…" (RB 19.1). Benedict invites an all-embracing stance of attentiveness that is also expressed in the verb "listen" with which he begins the Rule. Listen attentively to everyday experiences, the daily grind, as they are the opportunities to perceive Christ. The nitty gritty calls forth hospitality: Receiving everything and everybody as Christ.

Since this Rule is not just for those living in monasteries, many people from all different ways of life are inspired by Benedict's notion that *Prayer* and *Community* are important opportunities to glorify and meet Christ. Benedict wants the community to be immersed in Scripture by praying the psalms together and listening to biblical readings several times a day. Daily life is permeated and accompanied by prayer, and the community gradually hones its ability to view everything through the lens of Scriptures.

The Rule introduces some characters to us like the abbot (or prioress), the porter, and the cellarer. These are role models exemplifying how we can embody aspects of Christ's attitude towards life. *Be hospitable to Christ in all his different appearances and manifestations in our lives,* the Rule invites. *Listen with the ear of your heart,* the Rule exhorts. *Be the first to show respect,* the Rule reminds.

The Rule of Saint Benedict is an invitation to follow a path to a personal transformation far beyond our imagining. May we all walk this journey that Benedict lays out for us. His deepest wish and blessing for all who seek God: "Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may He bring us all together to everlasting life" (RB 73.11-12).
(Sister Andrea Westkamp, OSB)