



THE CYBER TOOLBOX

A Monthly E-Newsletter of Benedictine Spirituality

Volume 1. No. 2

August, 2009

Welcome the “The Cyber Toolbox!” This is the second of what I hope to be many monthly E-Newsletters giving practical suggestions and ideas for bringing the teachings of St. Benedict alive in your daily life. My reflections will initially be on Paul’s fruit of the Spirit and the Rule.

I would appreciate your feedback on this newsletter so that I can make changes and improvements – too short, too long, more this, less that, etc. Let me know too if anything “quirky” happens technically. I’ll call in the gurus.

Again, welcome, and as Benedict requests the porter say to all who come to the monastery, “Your blessing, please!”

“The First Fruit of the Spirit: Love”

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Galatians 5:22-23

One day several years ago I was in a religious book and gift store and came upon a sign that read “Vitamins.” Hmmmm...I looked below the sign and saw a jumble of little bottles in various sizes filling a small bin. Puzzled at what vitamins might be doing in a store that purveyed Christian fiction, knick-knacks and Bibles, I picked one up of the small bottles. My eyebrows popped up as I read this label.

ETERNAL CHOICE

Women’s

VITAL MINUTES

MULTI-VITAMINS FOR THE SOUL

125 tablets 1000MG (Megagrace)

NO ARTIFICIAL PROMISES – NO ARTIFICIAL TRUTHS
– NO ARTIFICIAL WISDOM

Spiritual Nutritional Facts

	Amount per tablet	% Daily Value for a Strong Christian Life
Calvary	1000 MG	100%
Promises	1000 I.O.U.	100%
Love	1000 I.2.U.	100%
Peace	1000 B.2.U.	100%
Patience	1000 I.½.4 U	100%
Forgiveness	70 x 7 4.U	100%
Heaven	1000 4.U.I.C	100%
Pray	1000 4.1.U.No.	100%

INGREDIENTS: 100% Pure Truths in a 100% Pure Love Base Extracted from the Word of God.

WARNING:

Consistent use of this product may result in increased Bible knowledge, greater Godly wisdom, and real life knowledge of the awesome power of God.

NOTE: Consult the Great Physician regularly while using this product.

I bought one of the bottles which were, incidentally, filled with small slips of paper on which verses of Scripture were printed. As a bit of tongue-in-cheek fun I would occasionally have the women in my spirituality group at the church pull a “Vital-Min” from the bottle as a “spiritual antidote.”

But seriously, oh that we could really pop pill to cure our spiritual inconsistencies and personal foibles. Oh, that we could take a pill for the 100% Daily Value of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, Paul’s list of fruit of the Spirit. Alas, we can’t take a pill for an instant fix or manufacture such fruit on our own via some clever and life-transforming way. Like a vine which must be nourished and tended in order to produce good and abundant fruit, so too we need the Spirit of Christ to nourish, tend and shape us. The difficulty is that too often we live in ways that impede the movement of his Spirit in our lives. Most often, I

confess, I forget “whose” I am! Enter the Rule of St. Benedict to remind me. In Chapter 4 – “The Tools for Good Works” St. Benedict writes:

Your way of acting should be different from
the world’s way;
the love of Christ must come before all else.
RB 4 (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 4),20 -21

Author Esther de Waal sums up the focus of the Rule:

It is all about love.

It points me to Christ.

Ultimately the whole meaning and purpose of the Rule is simply, [in Benedict’s own words] “Prefer nothing to the love of Christ.”¹

The real path to the fruit of the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and that Spirit is love. Our love of Christ, Christ’s love for us and our living as Christ’s love in the world can be the springs from waters of our lives flow. I continually remind myself that love is not primarily a *feeling*. Even though I may not *feel* loving towards someone, I can will to treat this person with respect and kindness. As Benedict says,

This then is the good zeal which monastics must foster with fervent love; *They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other.*
RB 72, vs 3-4 and Rom 12:10

If I don’t have “fervent love” right now (a pill, please?), at least I can do my best to show respect!

Stating that “the love of Christ must come before all else,” Benedict gives ways to put that love into action.

We are not to act in anger, nurse a grudge, give a hollow greeting of peace or turn from anyone who needs our love; or grumble about or speak ill of others. RB 4 – The Tools for Good Works, vvs 22-24, 26, 39-40

Do not harbor hatred, jealousy or envy and do not *love* quarreling...make peace instead.

RB 4, vvs 65-68,73

Everyone is to help out in the kitchen “for such service increases reward and fosters love.”
RB 35 – Kitchen Servers of the Week, 1-2

¹ De Waal, Esther. *Living with Contradiction: An Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality*. Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1997, p. 38.

The abbot or abbess (the heads of the monastery) is to show equal love to everyone.
RB 2 – Qualities of the Abbot, 22

The abbot or abbess is to “hate the faults but love the brothers/sisters,” and should “strive to be loved rather than feared.”
RB 64 – The Election of an Abbot, 11, 15

Guests to the monastery are to be met “with all the courtesy of love.”
RB 53 – The Reception of Guests, 3

Juniors and to obey the seniors with love.
RB 71 – Mutual Obedience, 4

All are to show the “pure love of the brothers (or sisters). RB 72 – The Good Zeal of Monks, 8

Love begins with the love of Christ. Our love and our loving acts are made possible by his love, a fruit of his Spirit permeating our pores and brains. So let’s brand RB 4.20-21 in our hearts and run along the pathway of Christ.

Our way of acting should be different from
the world’s way;
the love of Christ must come before all else.
RB 4. 20-21

August 1, 2009
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The Tool of the Month

Intentionally Practice Loving Actions
(even if our heart isn’t in it just yet)

Purpose of this Tool

To intentionally practice loving actions...even if our heart isn’t there yet.

Background on the Tool

It has been said that the journey of a lifetime begins with a single step. The same for the fruit of the Spirit that is love.

The Tool

TOOL #1: In the text of the article I listed a number of ways that St. Benedict suggests that we can act in a loving way. You will find that some apply more readily to your situation than others, some may be harder than others. In prayer, choose one or two tools to focus on and intentionally practice for the coming week. After that, choose others.

TOOL #2: Note with whom and in what situations it is difficult to act, think, speak according to the "love of Christ." Experiment with what it might look like/sound like/be like to put the love of Christ first.

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A Note on the Tools

Perhaps some would like to share how it is going to use these tools. I will explore with my techno guru as to what I could set up to make this possible. Stay tuned...

Reflections on the General Convention

It was an amazing experience to be in Anaheim for the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. Energy and excitement permeated the gigantic convention hall. People were there from many parts of the world and accents abounded. As an exhibitor even with helpers (the first part of the Convention with my husband John aka "Gunga Din" and the second half with my long-time friend Mary Beth Starrett), I was not able to attend a Eucharist or one of the sessions. A wonderful number of people stopped by my booth to visit and learn about St. Benedict's Toolbox Ministries. To all who stopped by, thank you and bless you. I gave away ten books and ten journals plus a free retreat. The winner of the retreat was The Rev. James Liggett of St. Nicholas' Episcopal Church in Midland, Texas. "Yippee-I-O-Ki-Yay." (It will be tough being a vegetarian in Texas!) I had the honor and pleasure to do two workshops for the ECW Triennial – "Clearing the Clutter for Grace" and "Seeing Grace in the Ordinary." My prayer is that the attendees who are reading this newsletter (Hello again!) are pursuing the "clearing" and/or the "seeing."

Cconvention was an incredible experience!

Upcoming Programs

Jane will be leading two Benedictine Experiences this fall in addition to other programs requested by churches and spirituality centers. Benedictine Experiences are retreats modeled after the way of life set out by St. Benedict in his Rule, giving

balanced attention to body, mind and spirit. **All are welcome!**

Living with Christ at the Center – The Benedictine Way of Hope

Oct 19-23, 2009 - Monday eve – Friday morning,
St. Mary's Convent in Greenwich, New York

Sponsored by *The Friends of St. Benedict*

For more information contact The Friends of St. Benedict:

Phone: 202-363-8061

Email: saintbenedict@verizon.net
www.benedictfriend.org

The Benedictine Path to Living Simply: Living with Peace in Your Heart

Nov 12 – 15, 2009 Thursday eve – Sunday morning
Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, NY

For more information contact Holy Cross:

Phone: 845-384-6660

Email: guesthouse@hcmnet.org

www.holycrossmonastery.org

Plan a Retreat or Program

Jane is available to do retreats and programs in the Benedictine Tradition. Content is personalized for the church or group requesting the program to maximize the relevance and benefit to attendees. **Programs will bring the ideas to life** in a practical and down-to-earth way. Retreats are modeled by Benedictine balance—time alone and time together, and time for rest, study and prayer. **To schedule a retreat or seminar or if you have questions** about a program, contact Jane at 908-233-0134, cell-908-463-3252 or send an email to Jane at jtomaine1685@verizon.net.

Visit Jane's website at www.stbenedictstoolbox.org.

*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.*

Prologue to the Rule of St. Benedict 49