



# THE CYBER TOOLBOX

A Monthly E-Newsletter of Benedictine  
Spirituality

Volume 1. No. 1

July, 2009

Welcome the “The Cyber Toolbox!” This is the first 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. 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!”

## **A Note about the Articles in This Issue and To Follow...**

In the initial articles for “The Cyber Toolbox” we will be exploring the connection between the Fruits of the Spirit found in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians and what The Rule of St. Benedict brings to the actualization of these fruits in our lives.

### ***Patience - “Getting Out of the Way”***

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

Galatians 5:22-23

Have you ever been in a busy supermarket in line behind three or four people, when the person at the checkout presents a fistful of coupons? *Groannnnnn*. Or have you ever been thrown into the grip of frustration upon hearing those *four dreaded words*: “I need a price!” Or how about *the other four dreaded words*: “I need a key!” *Grrrrrrrr*.

I’ve never been a particularly patient person. Certainly the practice of the Rule has helped me to moderate zealotry for expediency at all costs, but it’s still a struggle to put on the brakes, rein myself in, take a deep breath...and wait.

The truth is—most of us want things to happen when we want them to. We want people to do things the way we want them to. We want to be a certain kind of person, look a certain way and achieve right now what we deem is important. There’s nothing but frustration and stress when any of these plans are thwarted, expectations not met or visions not achieved. We can struggle against the flow of life, doing battle with others, ourselves and God.

I think most of us do want to be patient; patient with others, with ourselves and with the circumstances of our lives. But patience, like any other Fruit of the Spirit, cannot be manufactured. I have found that the harder I try to be patient the more impatient we become. Sound familiar? So what can we do??

May I have the liberty to quote a Jesuit? In his book *In His Spirit*, priest Richard Hauser gives us this blueprint for living in the Spirit:

“The goal of the spiritual life is to allow the Spirit of Christ to influence all our activity...Our role in this process is *to provide conditions in our lives to enable us to live in tune with his Spirit*. Our effort is *not* a self-conscious striving to fill ourselves with the important Christian virtues; it is more *getting out of the way* and allowing his Spirit to transform all our activities. Christ will do the rest.” (112)

I believe that the *Rule of St. Benedict* is be a manual for *getting out of the way* so that the Spirit can transform hearts, minds and actions. The practice of Benedictine Spirituality can *provide conditions in our lives to enable us to live in tune with [Christ’s] Spirit*. From the opening word– *LISTEN* – to Benedict’s closing words to “keep this little Rule for beginners” the Rule gives us ways to get *ourselves* out of the way so that we can be a supportive, loving, *and* patient member of any community of which we are a part. While many places in the Rule could be cited for their wisdom and practicality as “tools” for getting out of the way and living in tune with Christ’s Spirit, in this brief article I’ll offer Benedictine hospitality as a path towards patience.

In Chapter 53, “The Reception of Guests, Benedict asks the monks to welcome guests as Christ.

“All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me* (Matt 25:35).”

*Rule of St. Benedict (RB)*, Chapter 53, Verse 1 or RB 53.1

(A note to those who are new to the Rule – Scriptural references used in the Rule will be italicized.)

To help us know what welcoming others as Christ looks like, Benedict continues...

“Proper honor must be shown *to all, especially to those who share our faith* (Gal 6:10) and to pilgrims.

RB 53.2

Benedictine hospitality is opening our heart to the other person, whether stranger, family member, friend, co-worker, church member, checkout clerk or bus driver. We treat the person as Christ and show them proper honor. Key is that through hospitality we are focusing on the other person “as Christ” and letting ourselves step back from expecting that our needs and desires are what move the universe to do “A” or “B”. This practice of hospitality enables Christ’s Spirit to work within us. So will patience be there? I believe so. Instead of thinking, “Lord, help me to be patient while secretly articulating with a *grumble*, we can pray, “Lord, help me to welcome this person as if this person were you.”

In Chapter 72, “The Good Zeal of Monks,” Benedict shows us a way to practice this kind of hospitality. As you read this, think about the opportunities for hospitality in the many areas of your life.

“This, then, is the good zeal which monks [and you and me!] must foster with fervent love [or with understanding and care if we just can’t muster up ‘fervent love’]:

*They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other* (Roman 12:10),

supporting with the greatest patience one another’s weaknesses of body or behavior,

and earnestly competing in obedience to one another.” (i.e., discerning what another person needs and doing this) RB 72.3-6

Showing respect, supporting the weaknesses of others and doing things for another person are all actions that promote *getting ourselves out of the way* because we are thinking and acting with our heart and mind on another person, and not on ourselves. *Showing respect* may translate into allowing the other person to move at their own pace, or to be listened to without hurry or to do a task themselves that we could do in one-tenth the time. *Supporting weaknesses* in the other person as Christ might mean not returning an angry word. *Competing in obedience* could mean we are willing to set aside our own plans to help another person who is the Christ before us. Then we are not just practicing patience, we are living it!

So let's embrace Benedictine hospitality and let patience become a fruit of the Spirit.

July, 2009  
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### ***“Press Releases”***

This first issue of “The Cyber Toolbox” is being released at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church where I have taken a booth in the Exhibitors’ Hall, entitling my ministry

#### ***St. Benedict’s Toolbox Ministries***

The main attraction in the booth are two display boards covered with pictures and testimonials of people who have attended my programs. Seeing the pictures of these wonderful people brought great joy. I was heartened as well by the many kind words about their experiences in the programs that they had attended. So in my booth I have a community of “Benedictines” to encourage others to explore the practicality and beauty of this spirituality.

Also in the booth are four small jigsaw puzzles with “kid-sized” pieces that I created with materials found while haunting A.C. Moore and Michael’s. Instead of bunnies and puppies, these jigsaw puzzles are covered with Benedictine thoughts and teachings. The astute puzzler who completes one of the puzzles (easy – only 24 pieces) will receive a handout of the puzzle just completed. Puzzle topics are 1) The Jigsaw Puzzle of Life, 2) A Welcome to *St. Benedict’s Toolbox*, 3) *Ways to Practice the Presence of God*, and 4) *The Fine Art of Grumbling!* The last puzzle was included especially for General Convention attendees! If you would like to have one of these handouts (not a puzzle, sorry – too hard!) email me at [jtomaine1685@verizon.net](mailto:jtomaine1685@verizon.net).

In my next issue I’ll share my experiences of being at General Convention.

### ***Upcoming Programs***

Jane will be leading two Benedictine experiences this fall. These are retreats modeled after the way of life set out by St. Benedict in his Rule, giving balanced attention to body, mind and spirit.

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

Dates: Monday evening – Friday morning, October 19-23, 2009

Place: 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@prospect-tech.com](mailto:saintbenedict@prospect-tech.com)

[www.benedictfriend.org](http://www.benedictfriend.org)

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

Dates: Tuesday eve– Friday morning, Nov. 10-13, 2009  
or Thursday eve – Sunday morning, Nov. 12 – 15, 2009 *TBD*

Place: Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, NY

For more information contact Holy Cross:

Phone: 845-384-6660

Email: [guesthouse@hcmnet.org](mailto:guesthouse@hcmnet.org)

[www.holycrossmonastery.org](http://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](mailto:jtomaine1685@verizon.net).

Visit Jane's website at [www.stbenedictstoolbox.org](http://www.stbenedictstoolbox.org).