

Rule of St. Benedict

A Rule for Living and for Life

Introduction and Overview

The study of the Rule of St. Benedict is a life-long process. The goal during Year One is to move from a secular, material life to a spiritual, religious life, where everything you do is centered on Christ. The study of Benedictine Spirituality begins with learning the basic tenets of the Rule by reading of a chapter or segment of a chapter of the Rule daily. It is best that you purchase a copy of the Rule with a commentary. It is strongly suggested that you use a Rule/commentary written by either Esther deWaal or Joan Chittister. You will use Norvene Vest during Year Two, so you should use a different author for Year One. See the Benedictine Study section of the Book List.

Instructions for Study of the Rule

Formation Objectives of this Unit

1. Demonstrate a basic understanding of The Rule of St. Benedict.
2. Demonstrate that the principles from the Rule of St. Benedict are being incorporated into in your daily life.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between Benedictine vows and Baptismal vows.

Work related to the Rule to be completed during Year One

1. Read the sermon by Rowan Williams: ([Shaping Holy Lives' Conference on Benedictine Spirituality](#)), found elsewhere in this chapter. It provides important background to religious life and the importance of Benedictine religious life to the church as a whole. Please read this six page article as soon as you return from the Advent Quiet Day.
2. Begin reading a chapter of the Rule with a commentary every day. Some chapters are rather lengthy and will require two – three days to complete.
3. Jot down insights and/or implications on your spiritual life from your reading in your journal. Use these notes for your weekly report.

Optional work to enhance your understanding of the Benedictine Vows.

The book *'The Benedictine Toolbox; the Nuts and Bolts of Daily Benedictine Living'* (see the Oblate Book List, Chapter 6), is not a required text for Year One. However, if you have not read the book, it is strongly recommended that you purchase the book and read the chapters listed below to enhance your understanding of Benedictine vows and the relationship of these vows to your Baptismal vows. Discuss this option with your Formation Mentor before deciding to do this work and decide together if a reflection paper or another activity is to be completed and when.

Chapter	Chapter Title
Intro	Introduction
3	Stability
4	Obedience
5	Conversion of Life

Tying It All Together

Year One Project

Formation Objective: Complete the Year One Project

Background: To understand that: “the living out of ones’ religious vocation “is living out our baptismal vows in the most intense expression available. But what does the phrase ‘Living out our Baptismal Vows’ mean to you? The purpose of this exercise is to challenge you to think in a deeper, personal way about this question. It is critical for you to understand the relationship between Baptismal vows and the Benedictine Vows as you move from Year One to Year Two.

Instructions:

Read the following Material.

1. *Seeking Life: The Baptismal Invitation of the Rule of Benedict.* (See the Book list (Baptism Unit) for complete information)
2. *A Theology of Worship* (New Church Teaching Series) - Louis Weil (See the Book List (Baptism Unit) for complete information). This book is an easy read, but very important since it discusses the importance of Baptism in relation to Christian community.
3. The Customary

Write a reflection paper of no more than 4 typed pages discussing how the meaning and implications of the Baptismal Vows as practiced by Benedictines has changed you. Answer these questions in your paper:

- . Describe how you see the relationship between the Benedictine vows of Conversion of life, Obedience, and Stability and your Baptismal vows.
- . Say if you have you been brought closer to Christ by this deeper understanding of baptism? If so, how? If not, why not?
- . Have your relationships with the Sisters, your fellow Oblates-in-training, co-workers, church members, and strangers been changed by what you have learned? How?

When thinking on these questions think in terms of what you have done and are doing that changed you, not what you ought to have done or ought to do.

You may start this project as early as the third or fourth month of Year One. The essay must be turned in to the Formation Mentor no later than **October 15.**

Tell Us How you are Doing

Reports

Reporting Responsibilities

Formation Objective: Complete required reports each week and send them in to the Formation Mentor at the end of each month.

As a Year One candidate you are to submit the following reports to your formation Mentor:

1. Week in Review reports
2. Reflection Papers are written upon completion of a reading and sent to your Formation Mentor with your Week in Review reports.

Instructions for the reflection papers are provided elsewhere in this formation chapter.

<p><i>The Week in Review</i></p> <p>Introduction</p>	<p>If you lived within a convent or monastery environment, your formation would be under the direct supervision of superior and/ or novice guardian. They would be able to supervise your learning and spiritual growth. They would make sure that the Rule was read and studied, that daily prayer and <i>lectio divina</i>/meditation/contemplation were practiced and would meet with you periodically to discuss your insights, your growing edges, work schedule, and reflections, etc. on what was discerned from this work.</p> <p>Since that sort of supervision is not possible in your case, the form called the “Week in Review” is designed to chart your formation progress and encourage you to develop a rhythm and routine within your day. It also provides the Mentor with the information she needs to provide the level of support and supervision that is required.</p>
<p>How often do I complete the form?</p>	<p>It is suggested that you chart your progress using the reporting form as you complete part or all of a requirement. Submit the forms monthly to the Formation Mentor. The Formation Mentor should receive <u>all four weekly reports by the beginning of the following month</u>. The “Week In Review” is a self-contained reporting form requiring no other documents other than the prescribed book reflection. It is a daily report that is submitted weekly. Completing a portion of this report every day will save you time and provide you with a clear picture of your progress.</p>

Divine Offices

Mark with an "X" each service of the Divine Office performed each day. You are required to do Morning and Evening Prayer at least four times a week and either the Noon Office or Compline at least three times a week. Morning Prayer, Noon Office and Compline are optional on Sunday.

	Morning Prayer	Noon Office	Evening Prayer	Compline
Sunday			X	
Monday		X		
Tuesday	X		X	
Wednesday	X			
Thursday			X	X
Friday	X			
Saturday	X	X	X	

What difficulties are you experiencing saying the Offices? I had to make a day trip on Wednesday. No opportunity to do Morning Prayer/Noon Office.

Study

Name of Document	Customary	St. Mary's Rule
Instructions	Enter Segment studied. When reading the customary, see it as a living document made for our time	Enter the Segment studied. When reading St. Mary's Rule, remember this it expresses the basic values of the whole order which is "fleshed out" for this Province in the Customary.
Frequency	Daily	weekly
Sunday	prologue	Prologue
Monday	community	Vows
Tuesday	rule	Life of Praise and Worship
Wednesday	etc.	etc.
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		

Reading of the Rule of St. Benedict

Chapter	Read
Monday	Prefix
Tuesday	Prologue
Wednesday	Prologue
Thursday	Chapter 1
Friday	Chapter 2
Saturday	Chapter 3

Are there questions related to your study of the Rule? No

Lectio Divina – Reading and listening to the Sacred Word

A minimum of 30 minutes should be devoted to lectio divina and contemplation per day.

Use a Psalm each day. Enter the Psalm and the verse that you used for lectio divina and enter the word or phrase that you focused on.

<i>Source of Lectio divina</i>		<i>Word or words Reflected Upon</i>
Sunday	Free	Free
Monday	<i>Psalm 145, vss.8</i>	<i>"...gracious and full of compassion..."</i>
Tuesday	<i>Psalm 104 vss.25</i>	<i>"Yonder is the Sea..."</i>
Wednesday	<i>Psalm 33, vss.13</i>	<i>"The Lord looks down form Heaven..."</i>
Thursday	<i>Psalm 30 vss.1</i>	<i>"I will exalt you, O Lord, because you have lifted me up"</i>
Friday	<i>Psalm 138 vss.7</i>	<i>"Though the Lord be high, he cares for the lowly"</i>
Sat	<i>Psalm 29 vss.12</i>	<i>"the Lord shall give strength to his people ..."</i>

Meditation – Reflection made personal

Using the word or phrase of each day above, what primary question or application of the Psalms was made known to you in your prayer and reflection?

Monday	God's faithful and unlimited love.
Tuesday	God's serenity
Wednesday	God is looking over us
Thursday	God has saved me
Friday	I give thanks for God cares for the poor and lowly.
Saturday	I have been strengthened to change my life.

Contemplation – Waiting on the Spirit

Integrating the “personal applications” from the past week, what new grace or insight was learnt from your silent waiting on the Holy Spirit? Enter your response below. It need not be long, but it should be reflective of your encounter with the Holy.

As I struggle with my daily problems and challenges it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that I am alone and I have to deal with these things alone, that solutions can only be found by own efforts. The psalms that I prayed with this week have shown me the fallacy of this self-centered thinking. Most importantly they showed me, once again,

that God does love me and cares what happens to me and if I am willing to listen and hear, He will lead me to good solutions.

Do you have comments or concerns about your formation? I am having trouble meeting my Day Plan. Please call me.⁸