



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

St. Scholastica Feast Day
February 10, 2025
Sr. Mary Susan Remsgar

Sg 8: 6-7
Ps 148: 1-2, 11-13, 13-14
Lk 10: 38-42

Recently I read the newly published book by Carmel Posa, SGS, entitled, The “Lost” Dialogue of Gregory the Great, The Life of Saint Scholastica. Sr. Carmel is a member of the Good Samaritan Sisters of the Order of St. Benedict in Melbourne, Australia. In writing the life story of St. Scholastica, Sr. Carmel employed a technique in which theology, history and disciplined imagination are blended together. In her use of this methodology, Sr. Carmel tells somewhat of a detailed story of St. Scholastica’s life that depicts her as a deeply loving and compassionate woman whose holiness and wisdom inspired many and likely had a great deal of influence upon her beloved brother, Benedict.

One cannot help but wonder to what extent Scholastica assisted Benedict in the writing of the Holy Rule. The Rule of the Master, which Benedict eventually revised, was originally quite harsh and stern, so much so that at one point some of his monks were driven to get rid of him by poisoning him. It may be that following the attempt on his life, Scholastica became exceedingly distressed and engaged Benedict in some lengthy conversations. We know from the story of her last meeting with her brother that her relationship with him was more important to her than the prescribed monastic rules Benedict was unable to let go of. Because of her loving relationship with God, her reverence for and care of others, and her acquired wisdom, Scholastica may have significantly contributed toward a change in Benedict’s understanding of the human condition and the need to form a community of loving relationships wherein God’s call is to welcome and receive all as Christ.

We know from the Dialogue of St. Gregory that the bond Scholastica had with her brother was unlike any other. That said, there were other very significant and loving relationships in Scholastica’s life. Let me share a few of them with you as recounted by Sr. Carmel.

Beginning at a very early age, Scholastica was given a surrogate mother by her father as Scholastica and Benedict’s own mother died giving birth to them. Sophia became a spiritual mother who guided Scholastica in her spiritual maturation. The bond between Scholastica and Sophia was deep and longstanding. Scholastica was also very close to her father, Euproprius, and Scholastica became a singular compassionate presence to him after Benedict left their home to study in Rome. Scholastica and Euproprius worked together to care for the needs of the people in their village by extending hospitality to all.

After the death of her beloved father, it is said that” Scholastica and Sophia followed the path of both Martha and Mary in their manner of life and combined the qualities of outward love of neighbor with interior contemplation of God’s love. In time, Scholastica drew others especially

other women to join her and Sophia in the works of charity and prayer together. There is mention of a young man, Justus, with whom Scholastica developed a deep spiritual friendship. They would spend time together in prayer and holy conversation. At that time in history, women in general, were looked upon with suspicion and were often considered to be temptresses. Scholastica was criticized by the village priest and accused of seducing this young man. After prayerful discernment with Sophia and the community, Scholastica and Justus agreed to maintain their spiritual friendship by way of correspondence as Scholastica had been doing with her brother. Though painful, the experience did not destroy their love for one another in Christ. And then, there was Otrain, a wounded Goth soldier whom Scholastica found, near death, on the side of the road. She tended to his wounds and brought him along with her and her sisters as they made their way to Cassino. Otrain was eventually converted to believe in Christ due to the gentle and compassionate care given him by Scholastica and her sisters.

For those of us who are Benedictine, especially Benedictine women, Scholastica holds a sacred place of honor among the many holy and wise monastic women whose religious lives were formed and nurtured by loving relationships. These women whose lives have been largely hidden, are the spiritual mothers, healers, scholars, teachers, and mystics who understood that it is in and through our human relationships that we come to know and love God.

Our Scripture readings this evening each speak of relationships. Our first reading is from the Song of Songs which is a collection of love poems. In the context of human love, this book is meant to mirror our own yearning for God and God for each of us. "Set me as a seal upon your heart," suggests a deep bond of love which cannot, will not be broken. The book reflects the way in which God desires to be in the closest, most intimate relationship with us. In love, God wants to know us and to be known by us. In our second reading from Corinthians, Paul is struggling in his relationship with his young church which is critical of him, challenging his authenticity and authority to preach. Nevertheless, Paul admits to his inadequacies and still preaches the message that God's relationship to the church is reflective of the intimacy between a bride and her husband. Paul attests that God's love can only be imagined through the experience of human love. In today's gospel we hear Jesus' invitation to Martha and Mary and to us, to live in intimacy with him and in loving presence with and service to one another. Not only are we called to serve others, we are called to be with one another and with the God who is always present within and among us.

Scholastica shows us how to be in loving relationship with God and with one another. We are grateful for her faithful witness to this blessed and graced way of life to which we are called. May St. Scholastica guide us as together we continue on the way of seeking God in all persons and in all creation.