

Jubilee Celebration – Feast of St. Benedict
July 11, 2023
Reflection by Prioress, Sister Mary Susan Remsgar, OSB
Proverbs 2:1-9; Matthew 19:27-29

A warm welcome to everyone, to our Oblates present with us, to those Oblates here in Chicago and in Colorado who are participating through live streaming, to our families and friends, especially those of our Jubilarians who are also participating with us virtually. We are so happy and grateful to have you join with us on this day of celebration honoring our Holy Father, St. Benedict and our Jubilarians, Sr. Jane Smith and Sr. Rita Nowak.

Our first reading this afternoon from the Book of Proverbs, sets the tone for our celebration today. The Book of Proverbs is among those Old Testament books known as wisdom literature. In this particular reading, we are called upon to focus on the gift of Wisdom. Coming from the mouth of God and creation itself, God communicates the source of all meaning about the world and the goal of all human searching. While this gift of wisdom is offered to all, a certain disposition is necessary to receive it.

We notice the conditions presented in this first reading as follows:

IF we turn our ear to wisdom and our heart to understanding,
IF we are attentive, open and receptive to wisdom,
IF we seek wisdom, look for her and recognize her,

THEN:

We will know and understand the awe of God, that is the experience of
God's loving kindness and merciful fidelity,
We will be guided to walk with integrity and uprightness,

We will be protected and we will be able to choose what is good
and right and just for ourselves and others.

We will possess wisdom.

Wisdom calls us to discern amid the appeal of the many good things
in life, to listen carefully to what God speaks to our hearts, and to
respond to Love with love.

The Rule of St. Benedict is a type of wisdom literature as it addresses a way of
life in which one seeks God in all aspects of life. St. Benedict instructs us to *listen
with the ear of the heart*. That is, to live life consciously, reflectively, mindfully and
intentionally; to listen to all of life and to respond with all of oneself.

Benedictine spirituality is about growing an open heart, a willingness to be
touched by God and one another, to receive and to be filled with God's love and
mercy. Our Benedictine vow of Fidelity to the Monastic Way of Life, helps us to
keep our hearts open, listening, seeking, loving and responding to God with trust and
fidelity. This, indeed, is the way of wisdom and throughout his Holy Rule, St.
Benedict teaches us how to grow and mature in wisdom as we keep listening and
learning in the School of the Lord's Service, and of course, in community.

In today's Gospel, we meet Peter, dear Peter. Who among us does not love Peter?
He is always right out there, often with his foot in his mouth. I think Jesus had a very
warm place in his heart for Peter. In this instance, Peter wants to know what he and
the other disciples are going to get out of this deal from Jesus for giving up their
former lifestyles, letting go of "everything" to follow Jesus. Jesus responds by saying,
"I give you my solemn word," my serious promise, determined and committed. This
promise is made to the twelve apostles and to all those who follow similarly in leaving

what they have had in life for the gift of themselves given entirely in service of God's Kingdom here on earth. Jesus tells them they will receive "many times" as much. In another translation, we read they will be repaid a "hundred times over." When God gives anything to us, God always gives much more than we can ever imagine. It is always over the top.

Sr. Jane and Sr. Rita have each given 70 years of service to the Church, to God's People, in Chicago and Colorado each one serving as teacher and principal in a number of our parish elementary schools. Sr. Rita also taught in our high school. Sr. Jane served the community for many years as Director of our Infirmary, as Sub-prioress and Prioress. As if that were not enough, she also picked up a few additional jobs along the way. Many of Sr. Jane's gifts are in her administrative abilities and skills as well as in her relaxed and easy-going style of relating. One generally feels comfortable in Sr. Jane's presence and can count on her sense of humor for a few good laughs. Sr. Jane possesses good insight and has an innate sense of practicality and good judgment.

Sr. Rita has also served the community as Sub-prioress, Coordinator of our Buildings and Grounds, resident artistic renovator and gardener extraordinaire. Among Sr. Rita's gifts are her love, appreciation and care of nature and the environment. Her gentle spirit and reverence for all of creation gives witness to God's presence all around us and reminds us to care for one another and for our earth. Spending time with Sr. Rita is a joy.

Each of these Benedictine women is steeped in God's wisdom. They came to this Benedictine community a lifetime ago to seek God with their sister companions. No matter that they have been at it for 70 years, they continue each day

to seek God in prayer and community and serve where there is need. They continue to respond to Love with love. I believe they know very well the goodness of God and the rewards, the many blessings they have received from God for lives well lived. On this day of jubilee, we rejoice with them and give thanks to them for sharing their lives with us. We also give thanks to God for the gift they are to all of us, to the Church and to God's earthly Kingdom. May St. Benedict and St. Scholastica continue to guide us today and all the days of our lives to the heart of wisdom, to our kind, gracious and merciful God. Again, wisdom calls each of us to discern, to listen to what God speaks to our hearts, and to respond to Love with love.