



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Reflections for Feast of St. Benedict
March 21, 2025
Sr. Judith Murphy

Pv 2: 1-9
Ps 16: 1-2, 5, 7-8, 11
Eph 6: 10-13, 18
Mt 19: 27-29

Today we celebrate our holy Father Benedict. We are grateful for this holy man and for the wisdom found in his Holy Rule; and for this Benedictine community and for our life together. History tells us that Benedict followed and built on earlier writings, such as the Rule of the Master and the Institutes of Cassian. Whole courses are taught on this literature and its development and its basic framework of spirituality and a way of life.

I want to acknowledge the Rule of Benedict as the received tradition of monasticism on which our life together is built. As part of our early formation in our Chicago Benedictine community, we were encouraged to memorize the chapters on Humility, Obedience, and the centrality of Prayer. Like other and previous monastic literature, the Rule of Benedict comments on the wisdom in the monastic tradition he had received along with received practices, and he acknowledges that the received document complements the authority of the Abbot/Abbess. And Benedict also acknowledges that this received tradition also relies on and connects to the Wisdom tradition in the Scriptures. And thus our monastic life together calls us to grow spiritually through exposure to lived and living wisdom. Spiritual growth is a gift this life offers.

“Listen carefully to the Master’s instruction and *attend to them with the ear of your heart.*”

These first words of Benedict’s Rule are fairly engrained in us and in our minds and hearts. We pay attention in various ways to this exhortation to **Listen**. I think it actualizes in our reverence for contemplation and meditation. I believe also it can impact a thoughtful approach to and engagement with words, with the printed word, and books in general. (There is a rich conversation to be had about words and respect for **LISTENING**.) And as I began preparation for these reflections, I wanted to acknowledge this phrase, ***Listen with the ear of your heart.*** There is another rich conversation to be had in that phrase, as well.

Think of the variety of times when we are called to *listen with the ear of our heart*. This may have something to do with the value we put on **Reverence** (another rich conversation). But the word that catches my attention today is **HEART...** and how important it is for us to take care of our hearts—the seat of feelings, loving, emotional integrity, personal commitment, psychological health, vital spirituality. All of these aspects of our person—of who we are, who each of us is, are part of what our heart encompasses. The ears of our hearts may be working overtime in these days when the airwaves are full of so much for us to hear: truth, fear, facts, information and misinformation, exhortation, distortion.

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There is a quote that came to mind for me, from Frank Lloyd Wright, of all people: “The heart is the chief feature of a functioning mind.” How do we take care of our hearts as we “rely on the ear of our heart” as we strive to listen with discernment?

We are blessed to be able to share complexities and understandings with each other in community as we face realities and decisions together... and as we participate actively in our lives and community and country and culture and world and society... and rely on words to understand and express what we value in our hearts; and share our life and journey and concerns in this year of 2025.

May we come to know that we are beloved by God and created as expressions of God’s love.