

Saint Benedict's Rule: Guide for the Ages

*"Listen, child of God, to the guidance of your teacher. Attend to the message
you hear and make sure that it pierces to your heart..."*
~Prologue to the Rule

While living in Italy during the 6th century, Benedict of Nursia wrote a guide for community life, which he called a "little rule for beginners." The Rule quickly became the foundation for monastic communities across Europe, giving direction for ordinary people wanting to live extraordinarily well. The spirituality of the Rule is essentially lay in its origins.

Eager disciples came to Benedict's small cave, seeking guidance in their search for God. Benedict and his followers founded monasteries for both women and men throughout Europe, which served as places of hope and hospitality and as a witness to God's love during dark period of history. At Monte Cassino, Benedict wrote his monastic rule, drawing on many years of experience and wisdom toward the end of his life.

Today, the Rule of Benedict continues to serve as a guide for those who seek God individually and in community. Short in length, written in clear language and translated in many languages, it combines practical rules for living with pages of sublime spirituality. Fifteen centuries after its creation, the key values inherent in the Rule are pertinent to ordinary life.

Suggesting ways to seek and celebrate God in daily life, the Rule fosters listening, hospitality, humility, embracing change, respect for people, learning, prayer and work. It envisions a community that works to support each person's developing relationship with God and others. Members live and work together, seeking God through living the Christian life.

The Rule of Benedict calls the community to open their hearts in service to those in the community and to others, wherever they may be. Benedictines are to receive all who come to the monastery, believers and nonbelievers, as Christ.

The Rule highlights the importance of a balance of daily work and prayer. No work is considered beneath a monastic. The purpose of work is to provide service to others and an opportunity for personal development. A commitment to a balanced life is the backbone of Benedict's document and this message still resonates among those who seek to incorporate spirituality into their everyday lives.

The Benedictine tradition lives through the centuries as testament to the strength and applicability of its message. Modern Benedictine communities live the values of the Rule in ways that apply to their local environment and to the unique skills of each member.

Benedictine Women of Madison emphasizes values from the Rule in a mission of weaving prayer, hospitality, justice and care for the earth into a shared way of life. The community leads a balanced, communal lifestyle, welcoming guests to join in a journey of spiritual discovery and providing the tools needed for individuals to recognize their own spirituality through the Benedictine tradition. All are invited to engage in our spiritual offerings: retreats, spiritual guidance, prayer and further exploration of resources available at Holy Wisdom Monastery.