**OBEDIENCE/LISTENING**

**Rule of Benedict**

* Prologue 6 With his good works that are in us we must obey him at all times.
* Prologue 9-10 Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God.
* Chapter 5: Obedience
* Chapter 71: Mutual Obedience
* Chapter 72: Good Zeal

**Beliefs**

* Obedience is an act of listening with the heart and begins with listening to God.
* Obedience comes out of the personal relationships of community. (Vladimiroff , 9)
* Obedience comes from love.
* Obedience occurs within the context of our communal search for God.
* Obedience involves dialogue.
* Obedience is about moving from self-centeredness to a life shaped by God-centeredness. (Vladimiroff, 11)
* Obedience is related to humility in giving one’s will
* Benedict’s approach to obedience is “communal, consultative, relational, mutual and reasonable.” (*Wisdom from the Tradition*, 46)
* To obey, we cultivate a keen awareness of the present moment.
* True obedience with the gifts we have been given makes us free.
* Obedience is always tied to a concrete situation and concrete relationships. (Domek)
* “Only one who learns and above all practices perceiving the voice of God, the voice of Jesus, the voice of the Gospel is able to hear at all what is going on and to obey when she hears the voice of the superior, of the brother and sister, of the world.” (Domek)
* Growth in inner freedom is essential for true obedience.
* Obedience requires a mature relationship to authority.
* Obedience must remain free and flexible to be faithful. (Domek)
* Obedience is putting on the mind of Christ.
* “We like to think of ourselves as independent people, able to think for ourselves and decide what is best for us. Indeed, God gives us intelligence and judgment to use. But there come times when our own stubbornness and desire are challenged by circumstances and we are left with a choice; we can either go on willfully following what we had set out to do, or we can open ourselves to what has been presented in god’s wisdom. If we are to be faithful, we must be humble enough in these circumstances to stand aside and accept the will of God. This is obedience.” Brian C. Taylor. *Spirituality for Everyday Living: An Adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 26. Quoted in Tomaine, 67.

**Practices**

* Listening attentively with the ear of the heart
* Noticing when one is grumbling and asking oneself what it is about. Changing one’s attitude.
* Generosity
* Showing love and respect to all.
* Humility
* Participation in communal discernment
* Lectio divina
* Responding to requests in a timely and respectful manner

**Resources**

Bockmann, Aquinata. “RB 5: Benedict’s Chapter on Obedience,” *The American Benedictine*

*Review* 45.2 (June 1994): 109-130.

Casey, Michael. “Mindfulness of God in the Monastic Tradition,” *Cistercian Studies* 17 (1982):

111-126.

Carruth, Shawn. “Weaving Lives of Holiness: A Feminist Perspective on the Monastic Virtues of

Obedience, Silence and Humility,” Given at the Chapter of the Federation of St. Gertrude, Yankton, SC, July 18, 1996.

* Addresses issues from women’s development relative to obedience, silence and humility

Domek, Johanna. “The Obedience of Free and Loving People,” in *Benedictines* XLVII:I (Winter

1993-94):24-36.

* The author writes about obedience from the German context and makes application to fostering freedom to obey. We need to develop a keen awareness of the present moment to obey
  + Note 2-3 key points from the article you would like to discuss.
  + Be ready to reflect on these questions:
  + How have you responded in obedience with your gifts this year?
  + How have you been obedient to your limitations this year?
  + What motivates your obedience?
  + How does love inform your obedience?

King, Jason. “The Exercise of Obedience and Authority in the Rule of Saint Benedict,”

*American Benedictine Review* 65.3 (September 2014): 257-270.

De Waal, Esther. “Listening”, in *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict*, 41-54. Collegeville,

MN: Liturgical Press, 1984.

Swan, Laura. “In the Heart of Community: Benedict on Obedience,” in *Engaging Benedict:*

*What the Rule Can Teach Us Today*, 51-70. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2005.

* + The author offers commentary on RB Prol. 1-3, RB 5, RB 58:1,7,17; RB 68, RB 71:1-8 and RB 72
  + She discusses especially the necessity of developing one’s True Self, self-awareness, trust and placing one’s heart with the heart of the community.
  + At the end of each section she offers questions for reflection

“Obedience: A Blessing to All,” *Wisdom from the Tradition: A Statement of North American*

*Benedictine Women in Response to our Times,* 45-57. Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, 2006.

* + Read the article and reflect on the questions on pages 56-57. Be ready to discuss these in class.

Nowell, Irene . “Fear of the Lord: The First Degree of Obedience – Part I,” *Benedictines*, XXIII:I

(1997-98): 18-25. [Presentation given at the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses in Mexico City in January 1997.]

* + The author comes first from a biblical background to understand the fear of the Lord.
  + We too are called to obey when there are only promises

Nowell, Irene. “The Obedience of Christ - Part II,” *Benedictines* XXXIII:II (1997-98): 26-32.

* Christ is our model for obedience
* Obedience as honesty is an antidote to perfectionism. The obedience of recognizing who we are.
* “Accepting the resurrection is daring to live from what absolutely cannot be controlled.”

“Respectful Listening Overcomes Fear,” *Wisdom from the Tradition: A Statement of North*

*American Benedictine Women in Response to our Times,* 19-32. Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, 2006.

Tomaine, Jane. “Obedience: We Listen to Respond.” In *St. Benedict’s Toolbox: The Nuts and*

*Bolts of Everyday Benedictine Living*, 61-82*.* Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2005.

Vladimiroff, Christine. “Monastic Obedience: The Art of Listening.” *LCWR Occasional Papers*

(Summer 2002): 5-12.

* The author deals especially with the Benedictine promises, authority and discernment in Benedictine communities.

**Reflection Questions**

1. Notice what causes you to grumble. How can you address this in yourself?
2. When do you find obedience most difficult? How do you move to willingness in these circumstances?
3. How do you contribute to communal discernment?
4. What has obedience in the monastery taught you?
5. How are you growing in awareness of yourself and others? How is this awareness important to your obedience?
6. How have you responded in obedience with your gifts this year?
7. How have you been obedient to your limitations this year?
8. What motivates your obedience?
9. Reflect on your areas of self-will. What do you need to let go of? How will this bring your closer to your sisters?
10. Write a 1-2 page reflection paper on your understanding of Benedictine obedience for yourself.

**Skills/Personal Growth Plan**

Expresses her commitment to obedience by

* Fostering a trusting relationship with the prioress and the community
* Supporting personal discernment through silence/solitude, *lectio divina*, prayer, especially daily Liturgy of the Hours, stability in monastic life
* Seeking community support and discernment in making decisions
* Generosity in serving others and the needs of the community
* Moving from independence to interdependence in the community

Demonstrates a growing understanding and expression of discernment by

* Respecting and receiving the wisdom of others
* Exercising collaborative listening and discussion skills
* Sharing wisdom pertinent to decision-making processes regarding herself and the community.
* Engaging in collaborative discussion with the prioress, formation director and/or delegated authority and others, especially when there are differences of opinion

**Activities**

* See the tools in *St. Benedict’s Toolbox*, pp. 73-77.