

Benedictine Order of the Holy Spirit

A religious order of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church



THE BENEDICTINE ORDER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A RELIGIOUS ORDER OF THE OLD CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH

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Rule of the Order

1. INTRODUCTION

“Prefer nothing to the love of Christ,” says our holy Father Benedict¹.

Benedict produced a detailed Rule for his monasteries in the early sixth century, known as the *Rule of St Benedict*. While suitable for monastic life, it is not suitable for Benedictines living in the contemporary world.

The purpose of this Rule is to provide a short and simple framework, taking the spirit and core values of the *Rule of St Benedict* and making them more relevant to life today outside the cloister.

It is one of the two Rules which every member of the Order promises at their admission to the Order to keep to the best of their ability. The other is their own personal Rule of Life, which builds on this Rule and shapes how the Benedictine charism plays out for each of us in our daily lives.

2. BENEDICTINE CORE VALUES

Benedictine spirituality is built on several core values. That number, and indeed the core values themselves, will depend on who one asks, and there is no canonical number or list. What follows is a short introduction to what the Order believes are some of the Benedictine core values that we have chosen to underpin the Rule of this Order.

If you think of other core values, please do share them in the Facebook group, and consider adding them to your own Rule of Life!

2.1 Prayer

“Pray without ceasing,” says the Apostle².

For the Christian, prayer is just as much a part of the daily rhythm of life as eating, drinking, sleeping. Nowhere is this better discussed than in the *Rule of St Benedict*, the writings of the Hesychasts, particularly in the *Philokalia*, the *Conferences* of our holy Father John Cassian, and *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by our holy Father John Climacus, and these, and contemporary discussions of them, are essential study for every Benedictine.

The Jesus Prayer is a wonderfully simple way to “pray without ceasing.”

The early Church adopted the Jewish custom of stopping to pray at certain hours of the day, and structured prayer punctuating the day is at the centre of the Benedictine way of life.

¹ *Rule of St Benedict* 4.21

² Thessalonians 5.17

There has been a great renewal of interest in daily prayer in recent years, and there are now many forms and systems. It is for you to try some of them out and find which works best for you in your Rule of Life.

Make time for structured daily prayer and stick with it through even the driest of times. Prayer is the beating heart of Benedictine spirituality, the oasis in the desert.

2.2 Work

“Idleness is the enemy of the soul,” says our holy Father Benedict³.

Work doesn’t only mean paid employment, or the comfortable enjoyment of deferred wages in the form of a pension. Work means to labour in Christ’s vineyard⁴, to sow and to reap profitably in his fields⁵, to engage tirelessly in doing good for others⁶. Above all, to work means to make a contribution that not only has, but which adds, value⁷.

For the earliest monastics in the Egyptian Desert, work was a vital part of their daily life. These men and women knew all too well the dangers associated with not having enough to do. You can read about their approach to all aspects of life in the *Conferences* of our holy Father John Cassian, mentioned above.

Be sure to include plenty of work in your Rule of Life to keep your hands and minds busy and your soul in good shape. And remember, there is no retirement age for God’s work!

2.3 Silence

“Those who guard their mouths preserve their lives,” says the wise Solomon⁸.

For the Benedictine, silence is a two-way thing.

We must seek out silence. We must retreat to the desert. We must quiet and still our soul “as a weaned child on its mother’s breast” as the Prophet David says⁹. And like the Prophet Elijah, if we wish to hear the voice of the Lord, we must ignore the noise and clatter and listen carefully to the “sound of sheer silence.”¹⁰

But we must also contribute to silence. We must cry out with the Psalmist, “Set a watch before my mouth, O Lord, and guard the door of my lips!”¹¹ How can we expect others to

³*Rule of St Benedict* 48.1

⁴See Matthew 20, Luke 20, John 20

⁵See Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8

⁶See Galatians 6

⁷See Matthew 25, Luke 19

⁸Proverbs 13.3

⁹Psalms 131

¹⁰1 Kings 19

¹¹Psalms 141

give us the silence we crave if we cannot keep quiet ourselves, or if the words we choose to use damage others?

The Evangelists and Apostles repeatedly warn against idle or damaging talk. For example, the Apostle says, “If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless,”¹² and Jesus himself warns us to keep our tongues under control when he says “I tell you, on the day of judgement you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter.”¹³

Silence, as both a passive and an active participant, is an essential part of every Benedictine’s Rule of Life.

2.4 Humility

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up,” says the Apostle¹⁴.

One of the titles of the Pope is “*Servus servorum Dei*”, “Servant of the servants of God”. We can’t all be Pope, but we can all take, and live, that title. The Apostle reminds us that Christ “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave”¹⁵. The Evangelist recounts that at the last supper, knowing that he was about to die, Christ nevertheless knelt at the feet of his friends and washed them¹⁶.

Spiritual pride can creep up on us at any time. It feeds on false humility, and we must be constantly on our guard. Who do we want to be today – the Pharisee or the Publican¹⁷?

If we wish to be Christlike, we must act as he did. We must hear those wonderful words and give them pride of place in our own Rule of Life: “I came not to be served, but to serve.”¹⁸

2.5 Community

“Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves,” says the Apostle¹⁹.

The *Rule of St Benedict* was written for monastics living together in walled and gated communities, brothers and sisters set apart from the world. But as contemporary Benedictines living in the world, that is not our calling. We live in, and are part of, the wider human community, and our eyes, and our hearts, must be turned outwards.

¹²James 1.26

¹³Matthew 12.36

¹⁴James 4.10

¹⁵Philippians 2.7

¹⁶John 13

¹⁷Luke 18.9-14

¹⁸See Matthew 20.28, Mark 10.45, John 13.1-17

¹⁹James 1.22

In this Rule of the Order, we've heard from Evangelists and Apostles. But as Christians, and Benedictines in particular, we are called not only to *hear* the Evangelists and Apostles, but we are also called to *be* the Evangelists and Apostles!

Our community without walls is wherever we happen to find ourselves at the time, and our brothers and sisters are the people around us, all those we encounter, all with whom we interact. Every time we look into the eyes of another human, we're looking into the eyes of Christ²⁰, and that recognition must be at the heart of our Rule of Life.

2.6 Openness to the Spirit

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,” says the Apostle²¹.

We have picked out some of the Benedictine core values to discuss briefly here, but as you can see, the full gamut of Benedictine core values is really the fruit of the Spirit, and that is precisely why we are Benedictines of the Holy Spirit, with hearts and lives open to the Spirit.

“Come, Holy Spirit, and inspire our souls!”²²

3. NEXT STEPS

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another,” says the Saviour²³.

On our admission as members of the Benedictine Order of the Holy Spirit we promise to do our best to keep this Rule, but that is only half the story. To bring it to life in the Spirit we must make these core values the foundation of our own personal Rule of Life so that, filled with the Spirit like the Apostles at Pentecost²⁴, we can go out and make a difference in the world in the love of Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be all glory and honour, together with his Father who is without beginning, and the all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and for ever and to the ages of ages. Amen!

²⁰See Matthew 25.40

²¹Galatians 5.22,23

²²Opening words of the ancient Pentecost hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*

²³John 13.34

²⁴See Acts 2

Constitution of the Order

4. FOUNDATION AND PATRONAGE

The Benedictine Order of the Holy Spirit (OHS) is a religious order founded within the Old Catholic Apostolic Church, whose Patriarch shall be the earthly Patron of the Order. The heavenly Patron of the Order is Saint Benedict of Nursia. All subsequent references in this Constitution to the Patron refer to the earthly Patron.

The Constitution and Rule of the Order shall always be consonant with the [Canons of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church](#).

5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 Aims

The aims of the Order are to promote Benedictine spirituality in everyday life, and to provide a framework for members and others to support each other in putting Benedictine core values into practice in contemporary, secular life.

5.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Order are to help members to draw up, and live by, their own Rule of Life; to encourage and enable members and others to pray regularly using a suitable system of structured daily prayer; to offer mutual spiritual and practical support with the vagaries of life; and to love one another as Christ has loved us.

6. STRUCTURE AND NATURE

The Order's distinctive charism is Benedictine. It is both contemplative and active, after our holy Father Benedict's saying "ora et labora", "prayer and work".

The Order shall not own any property or goods, nor shall it receive, hold, or disburse any funds.

6.1 Superior of the Order

The Patron shall appoint an Abbot or Abbess, who shall normally be elected by the members, to be the superior of the Order as "primus inter pares", "first among equals", acting with the Patron's devolved authority, though accountable to both the Patron and the members.

The Abbot or Abbess is appointed every five years, and outgoing holders of the role are eligible for re-election.

The Abbot or Abbess shall normally be in Holy Orders and licensed for ministry in the jurisdiction of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church.

6.2 Membership

Membership of the Order is at the discretion of the Abbot or Abbess and subject to the approval of the Patron, without regard to denomination or ecclesial affiliation of the applicant. Members of the Order may be members of other orders and societies.

Those in Minor or Holy Orders in the jurisdiction of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church are eligible for admission to the Order.

Those in Holy Orders in another jurisdiction, or who are ordained or licensed for service or ministry in a non-episcopal church, congregation, or other such group, will need to demonstrate appropriate ecclesial oversight before being admitted to the Order.

Those not already in Holy Orders, or who are not otherwise ordained or licensed for service or ministry in a non-episcopal church, congregation, or other such group, will normally be admitted by the Abbot or Abbess as a Cleric, using the form of [admission to Minor Orders of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church](#), and will swear an [Oath of Allegiance to the Old Catholic Apostolic Church](#).

Members shall be admitted formally by the Abbot or Abbess at a meeting of the Order, at which they shall promise to abide by the Constitution of the Order and to keep to the best of their ability the Rule of the Order and their own personal Rule of Life.

There is no membership fee.

There is no habit or regalia, though at meetings members who are in Holy Orders should wear the customary dress of their church. Members may wear their own choice of wooden or small metal pectoral cross.

Members may use the post-nominal letters OHS. If they wish, members may use the title “Brother” or “Sister”, though this is without obligation or compulsion, and no member may take exception to another member using, or not using, any title.

Members should suggest for consideration for membership people known to them personally to be suitable.

Members may resign from the Order by informing the Abbot or Abbess.

6.3 Rule of the Order

The Order shall have a Rule, approved by the Patron, which members shall promise at their admission to the Order to keep to the best of their ability. The Rule is in the public domain and shall be published on the web site and on social media.

6.4 Rule of Life

Each member of the Order shall have a personal Rule of Life to be drawn up, and reviewed regularly, with the Abbot or Abbess or the member's mentor. A Rule of Life is a private document.

6.5 Meetings

As the Order is dispersed, meetings shall normally take place online.

Meetings shall take place regularly, and consist of prayer, study, and discussion, and shall be chaired by the Abbot or Abbess, or their deputy.

Any decisions needing to be taken will be done so at a meeting, where possible by consensus, and where consensus is not possible, the Abbot or Abbess shall decide on the course of action.

Meetings may also take place in person, though decisions should not be taken at these meetings unless essential so as not to disenfranchise the members.

Those interested in the Order may be invited to meetings.

7. ADMINISTRATION

7.1 Data protection

The Order shall process data in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. It shall hold only the minimum quantity of members' personal data to enable efficient running of the Order and communication with members. That data will never be used for any other purpose, sold, or divulged to any third party except where required by law.

7.2 Social media and communication

The Order shall have a private Facebook group, [Benedictine Order of the Holy Spirit \(OHS\)](#), for day-to-day discussion. The Facebook group is open to interested non-members, and membership of the group neither presupposes nor implies membership of the Order, which is separate and distinct.

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The Order shall have an email list, [Benedictine Order of the Holy Spirit](#), for ease of communication. Only members of the Order will be members of the email list.

Notices of meetings and other important communications shall be made to both the Facebook group and the email list.

The Order shall have a public page on the Old Catholic Apostolic Church web site, and members' names and photographs shall normally be displayed on this page unless there is a compelling reason not to, in which case please discuss this with the Abbot or Abbess.

The Order follows the [Social Media Guidelines](#) of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church.

7.3 Safeguarding

The Order follows the [Safeguarding Policy](#) of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church.

7.4 Conduct, complaints, and appeals

Members should conduct themselves with dignity and probity.

Complaints or concerns about a member of the Order should be referred in the first instance to the Abbot or Abbess.

Membership of the Order may be suspended or removed if necessary.

If a member is dissatisfied by the Abbot or Abbess' response, decision, or the outcome of such a referral, or if the complaint or concern is about the Abbot or Abbess, the member should appeal to the Patron, whose decision shall be final.

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Version History

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OCR, OSFC, CRCC, OSM