



The timelessness of Benedictine Spirituality

Carmel Posa SGS, Adapted from *The Good Oil* - April 2012

In his little Rule for monks, Saint Benedict called his monastery “a school of the Lord’s service” (Prologue, 45). This school is one of life-long desire for God and love of learning. It has created a 1,500 year-old tradition of Benedictine wisdom which has shaped the Christian lives of many both within and beyond the walls of monasteries.

What is it about Benedictine spirituality and history that enables it to be so formative of people’s humanity across time, ecumenical boundaries and cultural divides? What makes its insights into the nature of humanity still relevant in our struggle for meaning and purpose in our own era?

Benedictine spirituality can provide a tangible experience of the presence of God in a time that has forgotten the transcendent. It stresses the necessity for making space for prayer in a time when every minute of the day is filled with anything but silence and contemplation. It emphasises the importance of community and order in a time of rampant individualism and confusion. It values hospitality in an age hostile to those who are strangers or different. It stresses the value of beauty and care for everything in a time of ecological crisis.

Benedictine spirituality appeals to

simplicity in a time of staggering abundance on the one hand and tragic scarcity on the other. It appreciates sufficiency in a time of unbridled economic greed and acquisitiveness and appeals to stewardship in a time of mindless exploitation.

Finally, and perhaps most relevant to our own times, it can provide a source of meaning in an age that has lost its bearings and sense of what it is to be human within our vast and varied global family.

The Benedictine tradition models a vision of authority and leadership that is not dominating and manipulative power but a power that is open, collaborative and continually developing. It understands the importance of obedience not as something that stifles creativity but enhances it through commitment to a process of listening deeply and discerning the wisdom of God, others and the world. It values a sense of stability that insists on staying with the difficult rather than seeking to escape the realities of everyday life, and it lives the humble acknowledgement that all is not known or knowable, and that continual conversion is at the heart of finding one’s true humanity and freedom in God.

In our world of the twenty-first century, torn by conflicts, product driven, economically

hungry, and politically divided, the Benedictine tradition can truly be a source of transformation for a humanity that continues to question its purpose and identity in the midst of life's struggle to live together with dignity and in peace and unity.

This tradition is Gospel-centred, and holds the mystery of Christ as its primary focus for our Christian lives whoever we are, from whatever denomination and walk of life. At the heart of this mystery is the rhythmic cycle of punctuating the day with the memory and presence of God through liturgical prayer in common and the awareness of the other in our midst.

It is within this environment of prayer, community and hospitality that the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and those associated with us seek to continue and expand its commitment to sharing Benedictine wisdom with others. Together, through living lives steeped in this age-old tradition, and seeking an intersection of this Benedictine tradition with life, ministry and culture, we seek to provide opportunities for all who long to deepen their wisdom and knowledge of spirituality so as to be a sign of hope in our hungry world.