

## **The Rule of Saint Benedict On Humility – the Eighth Step**

The eighth step of humility is that a monastic does nothing but what is sanctioned by the common rule of the monastery and the example of the elders. (*Rule of Benedict*, Chapter 7:55)

Benedict is moving from a discussion of humility as a matter of disposition of the heart to humility as expressed in daily actions. The very first things he mentions are the rules that govern the life of the faith community. For Benedict, the Christian life is most fruitfully lived in community. We do not have to live in a monastery to benefit from this insight.

Functioning as an integral part of a community of faith is essential to one committed to Christ. Fundamentally, this is a living out of the truth that as a Christian, one is a member of the body of which Christ is the head. This biblical image often seems obscure or irrelevant, but it must mean something like, there is no such thing as an individual Christian any more than there is a living set of lungs or little finger, apart from the living creature's body. (*Preferring Christ by Norvene Vest*)

As we progress, we recognize that we are just one of many who are all in this together. While some equate humility with the previous steps of feeling worthless, these are only stages, a “dark night” after which we see ourselves in a new way. Having admitted and made peace with our sins and frailties, we can go about the everyday business freed of some of the pretenses. We are not to feel that we have no talents or value but to celebrate all that we are as a gift from God. We can fully contribute to communal life because it is not about what we have or do but is a realistic assessment and acceptance of who we are. C. S. Lewis defined humility this way, “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”

*How do I feel when I don't get special treatment that I think I deserve?*

*Do I enjoy being the exception to the rule?*

*How satisfying is it to me to be “ordinary”?*

*(St. Benedict's Rule: An Inclusive Translation and Daily Commentary by Sister Judith Suter, OSB)*