

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The second Benedictine vow which helps guide our spiritual lives is the vow of Stability. The simplest explanation of this vow is “If you can’t find God here you won’t find him anywhere.” The Benedictine monk or nun makes their vow of stability to a particular monastic community. That’s why, when you meet a monk he will say, “I am a monk of Belmont Abbey” or “I am a monk of Norcia”.

The Franciscan and Dominican friars, in contrast, are on the move—their vow of poverty gives them the freedom to move about and live and preach the gospel in a life that is intentionally itinerant. The monk or nun, however, vows to remain faithful to a particular community and place for life. They stay put, and this permanence of commitment enables them to put down deep roots in one place, with one community and in one rule of life.

Our own fast-paced life can do with a dose of stability! How quickly we flit from one entertainment to another! How quickly we search for the latest thrill, the latest toy, the latest thing we think will make us happy, and the reason we are so restless and discontented is because we have not learned the discipline of stability.

For most of us who are not monks or nuns the vow of Holy Matrimony helps us to learn stability. On our wedding day we vow to be faithful to that one person, and if God blesses us with children, we have one God given community to which we are devoted for life. The importance of this gift of stability should not be overlooked. It is there in our ordinary day to day lives that we can find God and it is there in our ordinary struggles that we learn to depend on God and on the others he gives us. The road to heaven is full of bumps and potholes. It takes a steady, persistent kind of perseverance to complete the journey. St. Benedict knew this, and this reveals the deep wisdom of the vow of stability.

This plays out in our parish, school and family life. So often people come to our parish and school and like what they find, but too often they become disenchanting or discouraged. Maybe the school doesn’t seem to offer exactly what they want. Maybe the parish disappoints them. Maybe the music isn’t right, or the youth work is not what we wanted. The temptation is to switch parishes, put the kids in a different school, look around for greener grass on the other side of the fence. When we do this, we undermine the grace of stability and plant in our kids’ minds that the solution is not to stay and work things out, but to cut and run.

Of course, there must be balanced by the proper need to find the best solutions—but this is done through patient discernment and consultation. Benedict’s vow of stability encourages mature, prudent decision making and discourages the instinct to look for quick fixes and easy solutions.

Your Pastor,  
Fr. Longenecker