

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The third Benedictine vow is the vow for “conversion of life”. We often think of a conversion experience as a powerful, personal commitment of one’s life to Christ. While this is important, the Benedictine monk or nun goes further than that and seeks to live a daily life of conversion to Christ.

Conversion is therefore both the experience of a moment and an experience of a lifetime. The monks therefore make a lifetime vow to conversion of life. Every aspect of their day to day life involves the call to conversion. Their prayer, their study, their relationships—all influence the conversion of their whole lives to Christ.

The deepest meaning of conversion is not simply a personal religious experience, but the lifelong pursuit of total conversion and transformation into the image of Christ.

The need for conversion filters down into our family lives, school and parish lives so that God give us “conversion eyes” to see that he is working the work of transformation through all the daily events of life—all the joys and sorrows. We soon see that “conversion of life” means the whole of life is being converted.

It is important therefore to see that the three Benedictine vows of obedience, stability and conversion of life are braided together like a rope of three strands. Obedience strengthens stability and together they lead to a life that is converted, and a life that is being converted finds stability and obedience to be a joyful commitment not a burden.

One of the phrases I love best about the Rule of St Benedict is that he promises his monks that in the monastery there should be “nothing harsh, nothing burdensome”. This gentle guidance came during a time in church history when there was a lot of guilt and subsequently much harsh asceticism. Benedict counters this with a rule that is wise, humane, merciful and kind.

I encourage you, if you want to deepen your own spiritual life to learn more about St Benedict’s way of monastic wisdom. It will strengthen your relationship with the Lord and with one another.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker