

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

By the end of the fifth century the Roman Empire had disintegrated. It collapsed from the pressures of immorality and corruption from within and the threat of barbarian invasions from without.

In the little town of Norcia twins were born who would change the world. St. Benedict and his sister St. Scholastica were faced with a society in chaos. With the collapse of the empire people fled to the hills and fortified towns. They scraped by with subsistence farming and survived by helping one another.

Benedict established small communities of men, and his sister built communities of women. They lived together, worked hard, prayed and studied. Out of their monastic communal lives a foundation for a new civilization of love was established.

For the next thousand years, all across Europe Benedictine monasteries and convents were established, built up and flourished. Eventually the monasteries became centers of health, education and welfare. The people looked to the monks for employment, education, health and community support. The entire enterprise was built around the daily worship of God in the Divine Liturgy.

Sometimes we overlook the moral decay in our own society. We forget how drastic the breakdown of the family has been. We don't pay attention to the loneliness, the spiritual poverty and the chaos in our own broken society.

Rod Dreher has written an important book called *The Benedict Option*. He recounts the story of St. Benedict and how his way of life changed the world. He sees the "Benedict Option" as one of the ways forward in our present situation. The Benedict Option is not complicated. It simply means doing what we can, with what we have, where we are.

I am a Benedictine oblate of Belmont Abbey and one of the reasons I chose to have a statue of St. Benedict in our new church is because I believe the Benedict Option is something we can do in our parish. Therefore, over the next few weeks I will be writing more about The Benedict Option and what it means to put this into effect at Our Lady of the Rosary

I hope you will follow these letters with interest, prayer and enthusiasm!

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker