

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

St. Benedict established his monastic communities so that men and women could live a life dedicated to God and in service to his people. Life in the sixth century was hard for everyone, and Benedict's monks and nuns lived the simple lives of subsistence farmers, but with the difference that they followed three vows, and three tools.

The three vows a Benedictine monk or nun makes become the skeleton or structure for their whole life. The three tools are the three aspects of day to day life through which they work out their vows. In the pastor's letter over the next few weeks I will share some thoughts on the three vows and three tools and how they can help build up our life in the parish at OLR.

The first vow the monk takes is the vow of obedience. At first St. Benedict expects instant and complete obedience from the young monks. They are to obey the abbot--the leader of the community--without question. Benedict says they should do this so that when the Lord calls, they will already be in the habit of instant obedience.

As baptized Catholics we too should be bound to obedience. We do not make vows of obedience to our pastor or the bishop, but we do pledge to follow Jesus Christ in the way of the gospel, and we should seek to obey him in our daily lives. We do this by being obedient to the teachings of Sacred Scripture, the teaching and precepts of the church and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

However, the word "obedience" has a deeper root. It means "to listen" The whole point of obedience is not to become mindless robots of the Pope. Instead, we are called to obedience so that our hearts and minds will be conformed to the working of God's will. We should listen carefully to the commandments of the Lord in order to understand them more fully.

One of the reasons the church and the world are in such a chaotic state is because true, heartfelt obedience is missing. Everyone expects to "do their own thing" and to follow their desires and instincts rather than being obedient to a higher call.

Therefore, if we are to build a Benedictine type of community in our parish we need to learn obedience. The final aspect of obedience is not only listening carefully to the commandments of the church, but also listening to the needs of one another and the wider community. Then once we have listened, we respond in action to proclaim and live Christ's love in the world.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker