

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The second tool in the Benedictine toolbox is work. St. Benedict is credited for being the first person to actually grant work a special human dignity. Humans have always had to work by the sweat of their brow for their daily bread, but when he made work one of the tools of holiness, St. Benedict granted work a special dignity.

In Benedict's day, in the sixth century Italy, "work" meant physical labor. Fields had to be plowed, crops planted and watered, crops harvested and food prepared. Life was hard and no one was spared the hard physical labor required for survival.

By weaving prayer and study into the life of work, St. Benedict not only dignified work itself, but added a new dimension to the mundane drudgery most people experienced. By living in community, the work was shared and the load lightened. By interspersing prayer and study the back-breaking work was eased a little as the monk knelt in the coolness of the chapel to worship the Lord or spent time in the library expanding his knowledge.

The three tools together therefore became interdependent. During work the monk had something to think about because of his reading and because of prayer his reading was also an act of worship. Prayer became work and study. Study became work and prayer. Work became prayer and study. Thus, a unified and whole life was built up.

In our modern world these three are often imbalanced. We work too much, then our leisure time is wasted in shallow entertainment and fun. We neglect prayer because we are too busy and we don't take time for the hard, but rewarding work of study and serious reading.

To build an abundant Benedictine life in our parish, our school and our families we should strive for a balance of work, prayer and study and the area where most of us need to back down a little is work. To achieve balance, we should spend a bit more time in study and prayer.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker