

RB 31 The Qualities of the Cellarer

Cellarer

Portrait of a person who is concerned with the day-to-day necessities of life

Reverences and respects people and handles things

Distributes the goods of the monastery calmly, kindly without favoritism, under the guidance of the abbot/prioress

Knows difference between needs and desires

Use and abuse of power and authority in human relationships

Model for community of nonviolence

Benedict moves naturally between the material and the spiritual and sees both as being part of an integrated unity.

31:1-2 Positive and negative qualities of the cellarer

¹The cellarer of the monastery should be chosen from the community.

She should be a wise, moderate person, of mature character and well disciplined. She should not be gluttonous, arrogant, violent, unfair, stingy or wasteful. ²Rather, she should be one who fears God and is like a parent to the whole community. [surrogate abbot/prioress figure]

31:3-6 Principle duties: pastoral care of souls and careful handling of material objects

Expands and develops 4 basic duties:

- 1. 31: 3 Have care and responsibility for all things**
- 2. 31:4 Do nothing without orders from the abbot/prioress**
- 3. 31:5 Keep to the abbot's/prioress' instructions and watch over whatever has been entrusted**
- 4. 31:6 Not to vex or sadden the brothers/sisters**

³She should take care of everyone. ⁴Let her do nothing without the prioress's order, ⁵but carry out all that has been commanded. ⁶She should not reject the members.

RB 31:7-16 Interconnection of people and things

31:7 Focus on treatment of human relationships

- Monastic asks for something unreasonably**
- Cellarer offers a good word to the monastic who asks for something impossible to give**
- Furnishes the acceptable allowance without arrogance or delay**
- Gives what must be given during the permitted hours and proper time**

31:7 Be sensitive to the feelings of the community

RB 31:7,8,13,14,16 Do not break monastic's spirit or dampen their morale

RB 31:8 Be a nonviolent model

RB 31:8 Be mindful that God sees everything

RB 31:9 Be responsible for the physical needs especially of the helpless or dependent

RB 31:10 Handle all things as sacred vessels

RB 31:11,12 May not consider any matter whatsoever as undeserving of his/her attention

RB 31:12 Must avoid greed and avarice, as well as waste and not impoverish the monastery in any way, but do all things with moderation & in accordance with the abbot's/prioress' instructions

RB 31:13 Humble: what is needed is a kind and cheerful admission that the request cannot be satisfied, and perhaps an explanation why this is so. (gentleness, kindness)

RB 31:16 The cellarer is the distributor not the judge of needs

⁷If someone should demand something in an unreasonable way, she should not crush her with a rebuke, but deny the obnoxious petitioner in a reasonable and humble manner. ⁸Let her keep guard over her own soul, remembering always that saying of the Apostle: *Whoever serves well gains a good reward (1 Tim 3:13)*. ⁹She should lavish great care on the sick, the children the guests and the poor, knowing without any doubt that she will have to give an account for all these on judgment day. ¹⁰She should consider the pots of the monastery and all its goods as if they were the holy bowls of the altar. ¹¹She must not hold anything as negligible. ¹²Let her not be controlled by avarice, nor should she waste or dissipate the goods of the monastery. But she should take a balanced approach to everything and follow the prioress's orders.

¹³Above all else she should have humility, and when she has no material goods to give someone who asks, she should at least return a friendly word.

¹⁴For it is written: *a good word is better than the best gift (Sir 18:17)* ¹⁵Let her care well for all that the prioress commits to her, but let her not presume to meddle with what she withholds from her. ¹⁶She should give the members their established allotment of food without arrogance or delay so as not to scandalize them. She should remember Christ's saying about the fate of anyone *who should scandalize one of these little ones (Matt 18:6)*.

RB 31:17-19 Helpers/respect time and schedule of Cellarer

RB 31:17 Cellarer handles self with gentleness, peacefulness and calmness and admits need for help. Peaceful person who pays attention to own equanimity

RB 31:17 Delegates

RB 31:18 Avoids giving others undue cause for grief or thoughtlessness

RB 31:19 People treat one another with sensitivity and decency

¹⁷If the community is rather large, let her be given helpers to aid her so she can peacefully perform the duties entrusted to her. ¹⁸She should give what needs to be given and they should make their requests at the proper times.

¹⁹Thus no one will be upset or vexed in the house of God.