

RB 72 The Good Zeal That Monastics Ought To Have

¹Just as there is an **evil and bitter zeal** that separates one from God and leads to hell [evil and bitter zeal], ²so too there is a **good zeal** [leads to God, everlasting life & fervent love] that separates one from evil and leads to God and eternal life. [v2-12 good zeal: leads to God and everlasting life, fervent love] ³Thus monastics should practice this zeal with the **warmest love**. ⁴They should try to be the first to **show respect** (*Rom 12:10*) [enumerates the ways of love among the members of the community: respectful, mutual and reciprocal] ⁵**supporting each other's weaknesses of both body and character** with the utmost patience [patient with each other's weaknesses, supportive in carrying one another's burdens]. ⁶They must compete with one another in obedience. ⁷No one should pursue what she judges advantageous to her/himself, but rather **what benefits others** [willingness and desire to do whatever is useful for the community]. ⁸They must show **selfless love to the members** [show humble love for brothers and sisters, God, abbot/prioress]. ⁹Let them **respect God out of love**. ¹⁰They should **love their prioress with sincere and humble charity**. ¹¹Let them **prefer absolutely nothing to Christ** [prefer nothing to Christ], ¹²and **may Christ lead us all together to everlasting life**.

Good Zeal=fervent love put into action; interior disposition, that inner attitude, which motivates us to passionately seek God in the monastic way of life. It is that energy of love which runs through and unites our prayer, work and other monastic practices to form a balanced whole. It is the root and fruit of our practices. It is God's desire to be with us motivating us to be faithful to our monastic observances, and likewise, through loving fidelity to these observances that good zeal is increased in us.

It's about how we reverence and care for one another, how we bear with patience our own infirmities and another's weaknesses of body or behavior. It's about delighting in the success of another member and being on guard against the evil zeal of bitterness and jealousy. And it is about how we relate to the prioress and offer her loving support and give her the authority to be our spiritual leader. And most of all it's about keeping our focus on Christ and allowing God's love to motivate us to be Christ's presence in the community.

"Rediscovering the Essential Elements of Monastic Life" by Teresa Wolking, OSB Benedictines 1996: Winter

When do I show good zeal or evil zeal?