

## **RB 71 Mutual Obedience (RB 71:1-5)**

<sup>1</sup>The  **blessing of obedience**  is not only something that everyone ought to show to the **prioress**, but the members should also **obey one another**. <sup>2</sup>They know that they will **go to God by this path of obedience**. <sup>3</sup>**Therefore**, except for an order of the prioress or subprioress that no private command is to override, <sup>4</sup>**all must obey** one another in **mutual obedience** with **every mark of loving attention**. <sup>5</sup>Anyone found **objecting to this** should be reprovved.

### ***RB 71:6-9 Moves back to hierarchical obedience***

<sup>6</sup>If a member is reprovved in any way by the **prioress or by one of the elders**, even for some very **small matter**, <sup>7</sup>or **gets the impression** that one of the elders is **angry** or disturbed with them, **however slightly**, <sup>8</sup>that member must, **then and there** without delay, fall down on the ground at the other's feet to **make satisfaction**, and lie there until the disturbance is **calmed by a blessing**. <sup>9</sup>Anyone who refuses to do this should be subjected to corporal punishment, or if **stubborn**, should be **expelled** from the monastery.

RB 69-71 are 3 chapters that all deal with **fraternal relations**

- RB 69-70 discuss 2 abuses of communal life

**RB 71** presents **communal life in its ideal form, namely, mutual obedience**

- The chapter begins with mutual obedience but soon veers off into other possible abuses of obedience.
- It ends with a harsh condemnation of those who fail to make satisfaction for offenses against mutual obedience.
- Benedict's pattern of ideal beginnings and harsh endings repeat itself
- RB 71: 1 At the **beginning of the monastic life, obedience is indeed a "labor"**, but if this central cenobitic value is sufficiently **internalized**, then **one can come to love obedience as a "blessing"**
- **RB 5** dealt with **ascetical aspects of obedience**, now the focus is on its **communal dimensions**. The purpose of RB 5 was to further the spiritual growth of the individual monastic by reducing ego; now the mutual obedience is to **bind the community closer together in Christian love**

RB 71:1 "prioress"—Benedict sets out to discuss mutual obedience, but he is well aware that the **dominant form of obedience is hierarchical**

- Benedict's preoccupation with rank will take him completely off the track of his subject and eventually lead him to exaggerated claims for hierarchical obedience

"one another"—**equality and mutuality** have come up at times in RB

**RB 72 develops Mutual Obedience more than RB 71.**

## **Reflection Questions RB 5, 71**

### **How might you cultivate Obedience as**

- Inner disposition
- Listening and responding
- Speedy Obedience
- Knowing that Obedience is in imitation of Christ and listening to God
- Progress toward eternal life
- Mutual Obedience