

## **RB 4 Tools of Good Works**

**Main structure: RB 1 Cenobites, RB 2 Prioress, RB 3 Council**

**(Structure taken from Auqinata Bockmann OSB's The Tools of Good Works to the Heart of Humility)**

Instruments or tools generate associations of work or workshop.

Pithy statements easy to memorize which penetrate the heart and from there affect the whole person.

Collection of sayings, a manual of monastic life in the hands of the monks.

### **Structure of RB 4**

#### **A Love of God and neighbor vv1-2**

<sup>1</sup>First, to **love God with all your heart**, all your soul and all your strength, <sup>2</sup>then, your **neighbor** as yourself (Matt 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31)

#### **B Main emphasis on the conduct toward neighbor vv 3-9**

##### **Hebrew Scriptures: theme of nonviolence**

<sup>3</sup>not to kill,

<sup>4</sup>not to commit adultery,

<sup>5</sup>not to steal,

<sup>6</sup>not to covet (Rom 13:9),

<sup>7</sup>not to give false witness (Matt 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20),

<sup>8</sup>to honor all persons (1 Pet 2:17)

<sup>9</sup>and not to do to another what you do not want done to yourself (Tob 4:16; Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31).

##### **Christian Scripture vv 10-19: Corporal Works of Mercy**

<sup>10</sup>Deny yourself in order to follow Christ (Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23).

<sup>11</sup>Chastise the body (1 Cor 9:27).

<sup>12</sup>Do not cling to pleasures.

<sup>13</sup>Love fasting.

<sup>14</sup>Assist the poor.

<sup>15</sup>Clothe the naked.

<sup>16</sup>Visit the sick (Matt 25:36),

<sup>17</sup>Bury the dead.

<sup>18</sup>Come to the aid of those in trouble.

<sup>19</sup>Console the sorrowful.

**Transition vv 20-21 (vv 20-28 Transparent Personality)**

<sup>20</sup>You should become a stranger to the world's ways.

<sup>21</sup>Prefer nothing to the love of Christ.

**Love of neighbor, modeled after the Beatitudes vv 22-33—good community person**

<sup>22</sup>Do not act under the impulse of anger.

<sup>23</sup>Do not wait for vengeance.

<sup>24</sup>Do not plot deceit.

<sup>25</sup>Do not give a false peace.

<sup>26</sup>Do not abandon charity.

<sup>27</sup>Do not swear oaths for fear of swearing falsely.

<sup>28</sup>Speak the truth both in your heart and with your mouth.

<sup>29</sup>Do not return evil for evil (1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9). **vv 29-33 Peacemakers**

<sup>30</sup>Do not wrong others, but suffer patiently the wrongs done to you.

<sup>31</sup>Love your enemies (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27).

<sup>32</sup>Do not curse those who curse you, but bless them instead.

<sup>33</sup>Bear persecution on behalf of justice (Matt 5:10).

**C Renunciation (list of how not to be) vv 34-40**

<sup>34</sup>Do not be proud,

<sup>35</sup>nor a great wine-drinker (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3).

<sup>36</sup>Do not be a glutton,

<sup>37</sup>nor indulge in excessive sleep.

<sup>38</sup>Do not be a loafer (Rom 12:11),

<sup>39</sup> do not grumbler,

<sup>40</sup>nor one who runs down the reputation of others.

**D Living in God's Presence vv 41-50 (vv 41-62 Spiritual growth)**

<sup>41</sup>Put your hope in God.

<sup>42</sup>When you see something good in yourself, credit it to God, not to yourself.

<sup>43</sup>As for evil, know that you are always the agent of it, and therefore take responsibility.

<sup>44</sup>Fear Judgment Day. **(vv44-51 Motives for spiritual life change as we change)**

<sup>45</sup>Have a healthy fear of hell.

<sup>46</sup>Long for eternal life with the desire of the Spirit.

<sup>47</sup>Keep your eye on death every day.

<sup>48</sup>Maintain a strict control over your actions at every moment.

<sup>49</sup>Know for sure that God sees you wherever you are.

<sup>50</sup>When bad thoughts arrive in your heart, smash them against Christ and manifest them to a spiritual elder.

**D Means to be about this (silence, reading, prayer) vv 51-58**

<sup>51</sup>Close your mouth on evil and perverse talk.

<sup>52</sup>Prefer **moderation** in speech. (**Benedict wants balance; walk in the middle**)

<sup>53</sup>Do not engage in empty babbling or joking. (**speak no foolish chatter**)

<sup>54</sup>Don't indulge in prolonged or explosive laughter.

<sup>55</sup>Listen intently to holy readings. (**vv 55-58 Formation**)

<sup>56</sup>Give yourself frequently to prayer.

<sup>57</sup>Confess your past sins to God with tears and groaning at daily prayer.

<sup>58</sup>Correct these sins for the future.

**C Renouncing oneself vv 59-64**

<sup>59</sup>Do not carry out the urgings of the flesh (Gal 5:16). <sup>60</sup>Hate your own will. <sup>61</sup>**Obey** the Prioresses orders in all things, even if she—God forbid—acts otherwise.

Remember God's command: do what they say, not what they do.

<sup>62</sup>Do not wish to **be called holy** before you really are; first be holy, and then the term will be truer in your case.

<sup>63</sup>You must put the commands of God into action every day.

<sup>64</sup>Love chastity.

**B<sup>1</sup> Main emphasis on conduct toward neighbor vv 65-73**

<sup>63</sup>You must put the commands of God into action every day.

<sup>64</sup>Love chastity.

<sup>65</sup>Do not hate anyone

<sup>66</sup>do not be jealous

<sup>67</sup>do not act out of envy

<sup>68</sup> do not love contention

<sup>69</sup>Flee pride.

<sup>70</sup>Respect the seniors.

<sup>71</sup>Love the young.

<sup>72</sup>Pray for your enemies for the love of Christ.

<sup>73</sup>If you have a quarrel with someone, make peace before sundown.

## **A<sup>1</sup> Love of God, “what God works for those who love God” vv 74-75**

<sup>74</sup>And never despair of **God’s mercy. (God revels in weakness that tries.)**

<sup>75</sup>These, then, are the **tools of the spiritual craft.** (justice, peacemaking, respect, trust)

## **Conclusion vv 76-78**

<sup>76</sup>If we have wielded them ceaselessly day and night, and returned them on Judgment Day, we will receive that reward from God:

<sup>77</sup>*What eye has not seen nor ear heard, God has prepared for those who love* (1 Cor 2:9).

<sup>78</sup>The workshop where we should work hard at all these things is the monastic enclosure and stability in the community.

## **Monastic spirituality is a way of life.**

Benedict created his own circular structure in which God’s love (**A**) forms the embracing ring; the love of neighbor (**B**) is treated broadly in the middle. Of course this requires renunciation (**C and C<sup>1</sup>**). In the center, the focus is again on God, the Lord, the last things (**D**), and is then followed by the instruments, which will help us to guard ourselves (**D<sup>1</sup>**)(living in God’s presence and the means to go about this.)

Joan Chittister’s Living the Rule Today pp 45-49

1. vv 1-21 Spiritual and corporal works of mercy
2. vv 22-33 How to be a good community member
3. vv 32-42 Psychological maturity
4. vv 35-36 Addictions
5. vv 37-38 Lethargy
6. vv 39-40 Speech patterns
7. vv 41-47 Spiritual growth
8. vv 48-51 Spiritual adulthood
9. vv 52-62 Feeling for the presence of God in ourselves, in others, and in the daily circumstances of our lives
10. vv 63-73 Seriousness of purpose
11. v 74 Social and emotional adulthood

“Saint Benedict’s tools are also pithy sentences, not chosen at random, but taken from passages of Scripture frequently quoted by the Fathers. They are a condensed version of a spiritual experience, made to be remembered easily. Benedict often mentions scriptural words in the Rule, words that the disciple ought to repeat without ceasing so as to develop the attitude of heart that is required in his current situation. The tools of Good Works are like a catalogue of phrases which, when repeated knowingly, become the kind of hammer to break the bad thoughts against the person of Christ, or like a chisel, which engraves the image of the Redeemer on our hearts.”

Mayeul de Dreuille, OSB The Rule of Saint Benedict: A Commentary in Light of World Ascetic Traditions pp 96-97 4

## **Questions**

- 1. Benedict's list of the "Tools of Good Work" are a collection of sayings meant to penetrate your heart. As you look at the 74 tools, how might these tools help you be a better Monastic Christian?**
- 2. Brother Bruno created stain glass windows on some of the "Tools of Good Works." As you view each one, how do these visual images speak to you?**