

September 10, 2017 – Be Blessed and Be a Blessing

Last year we studied the days of creation, learning about our place in creation. This year we will reflect on our place in the Church and the moral actions that result from our identity in Christ. Included in this study is an appreciation for our baptism and the role it has in initiating us into the Christian life.

If you have not already done so, would you please consult your records or the place of your child's baptism and then share the date of your child's baptism with me?

Please feel free to log it in your child's green notebook, to talk to me during coffee hour, to call, text, or to email. If you're unable to locate the date for any reason, we will include your child in the celebration of All Saints, which is the Sunday after Pentecost (May 27 this year).

(Catechist contact information removed for online copy)

After today, the student should be able to answer the following:



1) [Review] What did God create on each of the days of creation?

2) Who is my patron saint?

Bonus points: When is my patron's feast day?

3) What are my teachers' names? The other students' names?

4) What is our bishop's name? Who is our bishop named after?

Trick question: What is our bishop's last name? *(See reading.)*

5) What is the story of our bishop's patron saint?

6) Where does our bishop live? Why does he live there?

7) What will happen when the bishop comes?

8) What will we get if our class behaves at the bishop's liturgy?

9) What do I do when the bishop blesses me?

Bonus points: The bishop forms his fingers in a particular way when giving a blessing. Explain the shape or tell its name.

10) How do I ask the bishop for a blessing when I meet him?

11) What is the story of our parish's patron saint?

12) What are the three theological virtues?

13) Which of St. Sophia's daughters is named Nadia? (What is her name in English?)

14) What jobs did I have in class? Was I in a skit? Did I put something on the timeline?

15) When a legitimate authority (like my parents) gives me a legitimate direction (like telling me to do a chore), what should I do?

16) When I do something I am told to do, how quickly should I do it?

17) When I do something I am told to do, what kind of attitude should I have while doing it?

18) Name a saint we learned about today whose vocation was to celibacy (not married; monastic). Name a saint we learned about today whose vocation was to marriage.

19) What is St. Nicholas going to do this year before giving me a treat?

20) What is my memory verse for this month?

Today in Sunday School, we:

- Marked our attendance by using an icon of our patron saints
- Prayed Morning Prayers together
- Read from 2 Chronicles 1-7 about Solomon building the temple and dedicating the altar
- Reviewed the days of creation and placed them on our timeline
- Were reminded that God is before all time, space, and creation
- Discussed that the bishop is coming to celebrate our patronal feast of St. Sophia and to bless our new altar in two weeks
- Located our parish in Texas, our eparchial cathedral in Chicago, and our patriarchal cathedral in Kyiv on a map (to identify Ukraine: just look for the Black Sea, then go up)
- Discussed that we join the Church in our baptisms, not our births
- Celebrated Natalie's September baptism with a gold crown
- Sent home a request to look up baptismal date for five children who do not have one on file with the parish (*family names removed for online copy*)
- Learned the story of St. Sophia and her three daughters Ss. Faith, Hope, and Love which we acted out in a skit. All students had some role in the skit (most were observers who oohed and ahed at the saints' composure when facing torture then buried St. Sophia following her martyrdom)
- Discussed the December visit of St. Nicholas, the patron of students, and how we will offer the gift of our studiousness to him by answering questions about what we've learned in class
- Learned the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope, and Love
- Read the story of St. Benedict, our bishop's patron saint (he was poisoned twice and once threw himself into a thorn bush!)
- Applied St. Benedict's monastic rule to our own lives by recognizing we should obey immediately, and cheerfully, when asked to do something
- Summarized our class rules with the principle of Christian Righteousness (from Psalm 24:14 and 1 Peter 3:11): Shun Evil and Do What Is Good
- Located Rome, Italy on a map where St. Sophia and St. Benedict were from (to identify Italy: just look for the Mediterranean Sea, then Italy is the boot kicking a ball jutting out into it)
- Learned the importance of blessing our food before we eat it and how to do so (three fingers, make the Sign of the Cross over it), as well as everything else we can bless: our beds, our pets, and anything we have authority over
- Practiced how to ask the bishop for a blessing and how to receive a blessing from him
- Made a deal: teacher will bring ice cream to our next class if the students behave attentively, obediently, cooperatively, and are cheerful givers when the bishop comes to bless the altar. By this it particularly means they will say, "Master, bless" and receive the bishop's blessing in their hands when they meet him; will bow and make the Sign of the Cross when he blesses us such as with his hands, his candlesticks, or his cross; will bow and make the Sign of the Cross every time we pray to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; will help each other to be holy and to stay out of trouble; will make sure others like classmates and family members have food before they do; and will encourage each other with good words and good examples.
- Were engaged participants in the class and all the students were a joy to teach. They each chose a prize from the prize box at the end of class. I'm looking forward to the next time we're together on October 15, which will be a full session including adult catechesis (and, hopefully for us, including ice cream!)

September 2017 Memory Verse: Psalm 23:5-6

St. Lubov'/Love group:

I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

St. Nadia/Hope group:

I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

St. Vera/Faith group:

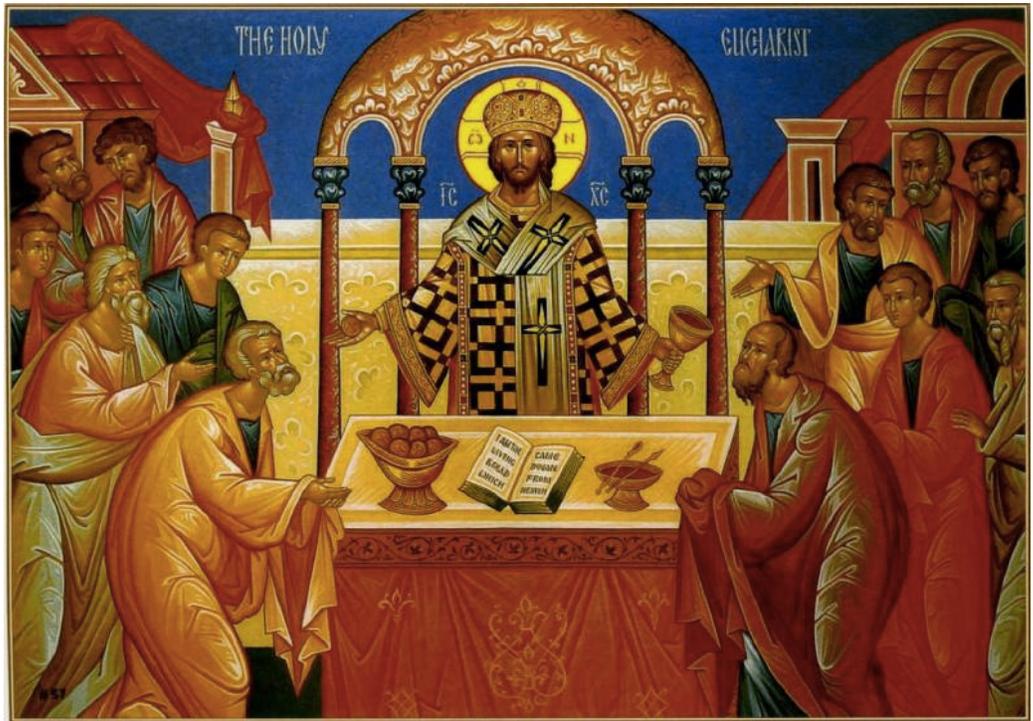
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

St. Sophia

group: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

St. Volodymyr Group: 5

Ти передо мною трапезу зготовив при моїх ворогах, мою голову Ти намастив був оливою, моя чаша то надмір пиття! 6 Тільки добро й милосердя мене супроводити будуть по всі дні мого життя, а я пробуватиму в домі Господньому довгі часи!



Christian Righteousness: Shun evil and do what is good.

Topics Your Family Might Like To Discuss This Month:

- How did I come to have the name I have? Was it chosen with a patron saint in mind?
- Tell me about my baptism. Where was it? Who are my godparents? Why were they chosen?
- Did I receive all three sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Chrismation/Confirmation, and First Eucharist) together at the same time or were the sacraments separated for some reason?
- Did you have the same type of Christian initiation as me?
- Our teacher is asking us to be “righteous” by shunning evil and doing what is good. Sometimes that’s hard; I don’t want to be left out, bossy, or a tattler. How do I find a balance?
- What is it that brought us to and keeps us at St. Sophia’s?
- Have we ever been to Ukraine? Chicago? Jerusalem? What do you like to remember?
- Did you have a catechesis class growing up? What was it like?
- Did you understand you could consider religious life or did you just fall into the life you have?
- In the Bible (James 1:27), it says “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” How can our family care for orphans and widows, like St. Sophia and her daughters?



Before all time: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. 1 Corinthians 8:6



Day 1: Light and Dark

Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12



Day 2: Sky and Water

Jesus cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" John 7:37-38



Day 3: Land and Plants

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5



Day 4: Stars, Sun, Moon

"It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." Revelations 22:16



Day 5: Birds and Fish

And Ezra said: "You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you." Nehemiah 9:6



Day 6: Land Animals and Man

Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and women alike, old and young together! Let them praise the name of the Lord. Psalm 148:10-13



Day 7: Rest

Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath." Luke 6:5



Day 8: We Worship God on the 8th Day

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. Colossians 2:11-12

Morning Prayers

Beginning Prayers

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (x3)

O Heavenly King,
Advocate, Spirit of Truth,
Who are everywhere present
and fill all things,
Treasury of Blessings, Bestower of Life,
Come and dwell within us,
cleanse us of all that defiles us,
And, Good One, save our souls.

+ Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (x3)

+ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and forever. Amen.

O most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us.
O Lord, cleanse us from our sins.
O Master, pardon our transgressions.
O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (x12)

Our Father

Our Father, Who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done
on earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive

those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Prayer for the Morning

Rising from sleep I worship You, O Good One, singing You the hymn the angels chant, O Mighty One: Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God! Through the prayers of Your angels, have mercy on us.

+ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

You have raised me from my bed and sleep. Lord, fill my mind and heart with Your light, and open my lips to sing to You, Most Holy Trinity: Holy, Holy, Holy, are You, O God!

Through the prayers of Your Saints, have mercy on us. Now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Without a warning the Judge will come, and what everyone has done will be revealed. In awe then, I sing my morning hymn to You: Holy, holy, holy are You, O God! Through the prayers of the Theotokos, have mercy on us.

Angelic Salutation

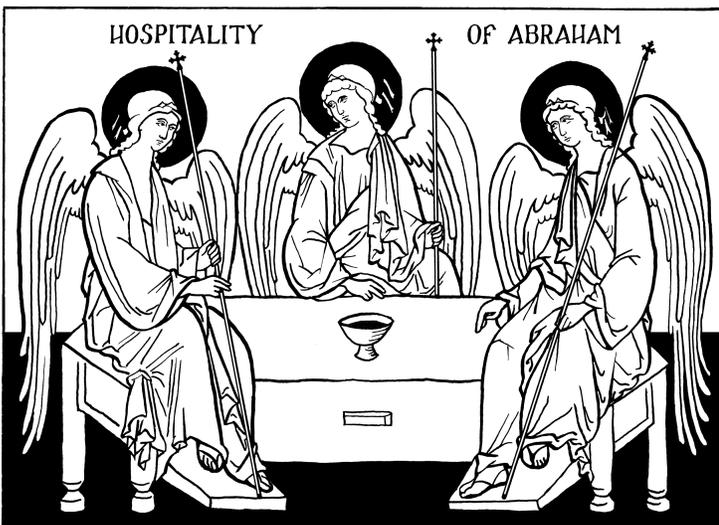
Hail, Mother of God, Virgin Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the Fruit of your womb. For you have given birth to Christ, the Savior and Deliverer of our souls.

Invocation & Bible Verse

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.
All saints, pray for me a sinner!
O Most Holy Theotokos, save us!

Recite your memory Bible verse

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (x3)



Ранішні молитви

+ В ім'я Отця, і Сина, і Святого Духа. Амінь.
(3)

Царю Небесний, Утішителю, Душе істини,
що всюди єси і все наповняєш, Скарбе
добра і життя Подателю, прийди і вселися в
нас, і очисти нас від усякої скверни, і спаси,
Благий, душі наші.

+ Святий Боже, святий кріпкий, святий
безсмертний, помилуй нас. (3)

+ Слава Отцю, і Сину, і Святому Духові, і
нині, і повсякчас, і на віки вічні. Амінь.

Пресвята Тройце, помилуй нас; Господи,
очисти гріхи наші; Владико, прости
беззаконня наші; Святий, зглянься і зціли
немочі наші імені Твого ради.

Господи, помилуй. (12)

Господня Молитва Отче наш,
що єси на небесах, нехай
святиться ім'я Твоє; нехай
прийде Царство Твоє; нехай
буде воля Твоя, як на небі, так і
на землі. Хліб наш насущний
дай нам сьогодні; і прости нам
провини наші, як і ми прощаємо
винуватцям нашим; і не введи
нас у спокусу, але визволи нас
від лукавого. Амінь.

Троїчні Тропарі Вставши зі
сну, припадаємо до тебе,
Благий, і ангельську пісню
співаємо тобі, всесильний: свят,
свят, свят єси, Боже,
заступництвом безплотних
твоїх, помилуй нас.

+ Слава Отцю, і Сину, і
Святому Духові. Ти, Господи,
що зі сну підняв мене, розум
мій просвіти, серце і уста
відкрий, щоб оспівувати Тебе,
Свята Тройце: свят, свят, свят
єси, Боже, молитвами всіх
святих твоїх, помилуй нас.

І нині, і повсякчас, і на віки віків. Амінь.

Коли несподівано Суддя прийде, тоді вчинки
кожного виявляться, тому зі страхом
взиваймо опівночі: свят, свят, свят єси,
Боже, молитвами Богородиці, помилуй нас.

Молитва до Пресвятої Богородиці

Богородице Діво, радуйся, Благодатна
Маріє, Господь з Тобою, благословенна Ти
між жінками і благословен плід лона Твого,
бо Ти породила Спаса душ наших.

Біблійний вірш Господи Ісусе Христе,
Сину Божий, молитвами Пречистої Твоєї
Матері і всіх святих помилуй нас.

+ В ім'я Отця, і Сина, і Святого Духа. Амінь.
(3)





Welcome Bishop Benedict!

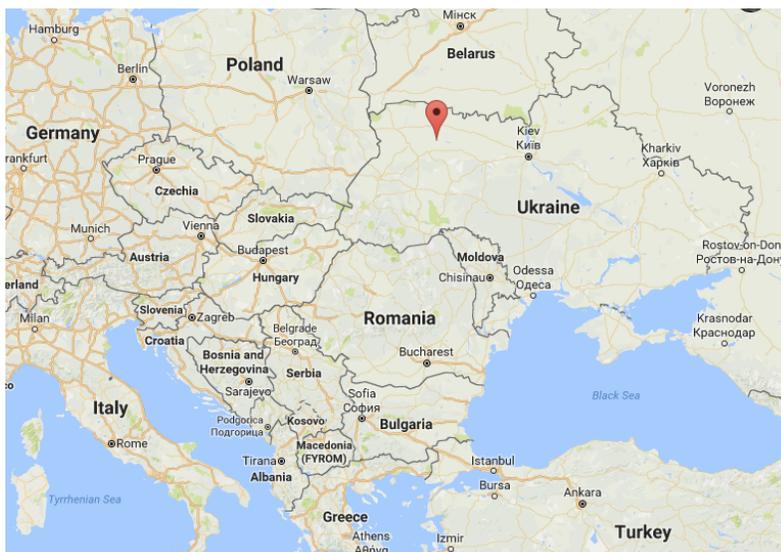
His Excellency Msgr. Benedict (Valery) Aleksiychuk, M.S.U. has been appointed as the Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Nicholas of Chicago for Ukrainians.

Active in children's and youth ministry, monastic spirituality and reform, liturgy, psychology and spirituality, His Excellency has a breadth of experience spanning parochial, consultative, administrative, and monastic leadership.

He is sure to be a blessing to our eparchy and to our nation!

У четвер, 20 квітня 2017 року, у Ватикані повідомлено про те, що Папа Франциск поблагословив рішення Синоду Єпископів УГКЦ про призначення дотеперішнього Єпископа-помічника Львівської архієпархії владика Венедикта (Алексійчука) Правлячим єпископом єпархії Святого Миколая УГКЦ з осідком у Чикаго, США, перенісши його з титулярного осідку Германіціани.

Born on 16 January 1968 in the village of Borshchivka in the region of Rivne, Ukraine, the bishop began his post-secondary studies at the Rivne Medical College, completing his degree in 1987 as a Physician's Assistant. After graduation, he worked as an Emergency Medical Technician at the ambulance station in Kostopil. From 1987 to 1989, he served in the military. Afterwards, he worked as a Physician's Assistant, initially at a city clinic and later at a sanatorium in the city of Truskavets.



After attending the major seminary of Drohobych from 1990-1993, he was ordained a deacon by His Beatitude Phylimon (Kurchaba) on October 9, 1991 and a priest by His Beatitude Myroslav-Ivan (Lyubachivskyi) on 29 March 1992. A year later, on 13 May 1993, he joined the Univ Holy Dormition Lavra of the Studite Order—the only lavra (monastic hermitage) of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. He accepted tonsure on 13 October 1993 under the monastic name of Venedykt (Benedict) and received the little schema on 31 December 1995.

In 1996, he completed a Masters of Theology degree at Lublin Catholic University with a thesis on *“Christian Spirituality According to St. John of Kronstadt.”* Later that year, he was transferred to St. Catharine's in Canada with the aim of founding a monastery there. At the time, he also served at the parishes of Grimsby and Beamsville for the Toronto Eparchy of the UGCC. He returned to Ukraine in April 1999 after being elected hegumen of the Univ Holy Dormition Lavra. In May 2000, he was re-elected hegumen and he was then elected for a third term in May 2005.

He went on to continue his theological studies at Lublin Catholic University with a licentiate degree in 2006 and a 2008 Doctorate of Philosophy with a thesis on *“The Superior as a Spiritual Father: Investigation in the Light of the Works of Saint Theodore the Studite.”*

Picking up the thread of his work as a Physician's Assistant, he focused his studies on psychology from 2008-2012, completing a course of Practical Psychology at the European School of Correspondential Education (Kharkiv), Propaedeutics of Mental Disorders with the Ukrainian Community of Psychiatrists, and Pedagogy and Psychology at the Ignatianum Academy in Krakow, Poland.

All this was accomplished while he:

- was an assistant priest at Holy Trinity Church in Drohobych,
- was responsible for children's ministry within the Drohobych deanery,
- worked for the Patriarchal Catechetical Commission where he was responsible for the organization of mission work in Eastern Ukraine,
- was a member of the Patriarchal Commission of Monasticism,
- was the administrator of St. Nicholas parish in Peremyshlyany,
- worked on the renewal of monastic life and the restoration of the Monastery of Borys and Hlib in Polotsk (Belarus) while simultaneously serving at the parishes in Polotsk, Vitebsk, Gomel, Mogilev, and Brest (Belarusian Greek Catholic Church),
- was the spiritual father of the Christian Youth Community in Minsk,
- was the head of the Secretariat of the UGCC Council of Monasticism,
- was the head of the UGCC liturgical council on preparing texts of divine services,
- was the head of the Council of Higher Superiors of Monasteries of the UGCC,
- was a member of the Secretariat of the Patriarchal Sobor,
- was the head of staff of the Lviv Archeparchy Curia,
- was the head of the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission of the UGCC,
- was the chair of the Synodal Committee on Liturgical Issues,
- and wrote four books: *A Superior as A Spiritual Father*, *Spiritual Instructions*, *Be Saints*, and *Borshchivka – A Pearl of Polesia*.



His episcopal ordination was held on 5 September 2010 at St. George's Cathedral in Lviv with Archbishop Ihor (Voznyak), the Metropolitan of Lviv, as the main consecrator and Bishop Yulian (Voronovskyi) of Sambir-Drohobych and Bishop Pavlo (Chomytskyi) of Stamford as the co-consecrators. On 3 August 2010, His Beatitude Lyubomyr (Husar), Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Galicia, by general consent of the Synod of Bishops of the UGCC, appointed hieromonk Venedykt (Aleksiychuk) the bishop-auxiliary of Lviv Archeparchy with a titular see in Germaniciana.

From 2014-2016, the bishop studied in the Key Executive MBA Program at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv and obtained a Master's Degree in Business Administration. During this time, he also published two books (*Reflections on the Liturgical Reading of the Gospel* and *Reflections on the Liturgical Reading of the Apostles*), was awarded the Cross of Military Chaplains, and named a senator of the Ukrainian Catholic University. On 20 April 2017, the synod of bishops' election was confirmed by Pope Francis, appointing him Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Nicholas of Chicago of the Ukrainians in the United States of America. We welcome him warmly to the eparchy and to St. Sophia parish!

Довідка про єпархію. Єпархія святого Миколая в Чикаго входить до Філадельфійської митрополії та є її найбільшою частиною з огляду на територію, охоплюючи території північних, центральних та західних штатів країни. Вона була заснована 1961 року та згідно з даними «Anuario Pontificio 2017», станом на минулий рік нараховувала приблизно 50 парафій, надаючи духовну опіку понад 10 тисячам вірних. Цей осідок став вакантним 16 серпня 2016 року після відходу до вічності четвертого Єпарха Чиказького владики Річарда (Семінака).

Identifying the Bishop



If you come to some of our special celebrations such as the *praznyk* (the patronal feast of the parish on St. Sophia's day in September), or a big anniversary of the parish, or an ordination, you might see the bishop celebrating the divine services. He is distinguished by his *omophor* (a wide cloth that is draped over the shoulders and hangs down both front and back). It is symbolic of Christ the Good Shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep and carries it back gently on his shoulders (Matt. 18:12-14).

The Bishop is the chief pastor (hierarchy) of the church. The bishops are the successor to the Apostles and exercise the priesthood of Christ, the great High Priest. In the early Church, the Christian community was so small that the bishop presided at all the services.

Today, the Bishop delegates his ministry and power to the *presbyters* (priests) and the deacons are the bishop's assistants. When the bishop is unable to be present at the divine services, they are given an area of jurisdiction in which they are authorized to act on the bishop's behalf.

In addition to his omophor, a bishop wears a *sakkos* (a wide-sleeved garment fastened by bells). The garment takes its theological origins from the garments of the priests of Israel, specifically the *ephod* (Exodus 28:31-35). It likewise is reminiscent of the seamless garment of Christ, whose priesthood the bishop shares in as a successor of the apostles (Matt. 27:27-29). The bishop carries a *zhezl* (a pastoral staff) with a serpent swallowing two serpents surmounted by a cross. This symbolizes the divine authority of Moses and the power of the staff of Aaron (Exodus 7:8-12).



In addition to his neck cross, a bishop wears a *panagia*, which



is an icon of Christ with his Mother the Theotokos, worn like a medallion around his neck. "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deuteronomy 11:18-19)."

Outside of divine services, a guy wearing a *pidryasnyk* (cassock) or "Roman collar" plus a panagia (with or without a neck cross) is a bishop.

Greeting the Bishop

The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy is served whenever the bishop is present. Since the bishop is the shepherd of his church, he should preside at all his church's celebrations, and that's exactly what he did in the early church when the Christian community was small. In cathedrals, especially the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom (*Hagia Sophia*, our mother church where our liturgy developed), the presidency of a bishop was the norm.

Today's eparchy can easily span thousands of people and of miles, and sometimes tens of thousands of each. It is impractical to expect today's bishop to be physically present at every

service. The bishop usually visits on special occasions such as ordinations, a big parish anniversary, or the parish *praznyk* or patronal feast. Lacking the eparch's presence the rest of the year, every celebration of Liturgy requires an *antimens* which is a small cloth icon of Christ's burial that was signed by the bishop and given to a particular priest for use in a particular parish or ministry, representing the bishop's presence and thus the authorization of the entire Christian community to celebrate the Mysteries in that place.

When the bishop arrives, he is greeted at the *royal doors*, the entrance to the nave, by the clergy and the faithful. Traditionally, members of the congregation welcome the eparch with bread and salt placed on a *rushnyk*, or decorative ceremonial towel. Ukraine is referred to as Europe's breadbasket because of the fertile soil's yield of immense wheat fields. Like many Eastern Europeans, Ukrainians regard bread as one of the holiest of all foods. The round yeast bread or *kolach* is a symbol of eternity and represents hospitality. Salt is reflected in Christ's words, "You are the salt of the earth" and it represents friendship. Bread and salt are a humble greeting to honored visitors. The recipient breaks off a small piece of bread, dips it into the salt, and bows his head slightly in thanks before eating the bread, unless he is fasting.

The Bishop prays, "*I will enter Your house, I will bow toward Your holy Temple in fear of You...*" (Psalm 5:8-9) as he goes to stand in front of the *Holy Doors* of the iconostas. Taking his place on the *orletz* (an eagle rug which represents his mission to preach the Gospel), the clergy arrange themselves in two rows behind the eparch by rank and date of ordination as they begin to pray.

As the Rus' (around present-day Ukraine) was evangelized by Byzantine missionaries, the first bishops and metropolitans of our Church were Greeks. By the work of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Equal to the Apostles and Teachers of the Slavic Nations, the Holy Scriptures and liturgical texts were translated into the local vernacular. In gratitude for the missionary bishops who had to leave their homeland to minister to our Church and in remembrance of our mother Church, certain portions of our hierarchical service are still taken in Greek.

Concluding the introductory prayers, the bishop blesses the faithful in the nave who respond, "*Ton Dhespotin kai arkhiera imon, Kyrie filate, eis polla Eti, Dhespota.*" (O Lord, protect and grant many years to our Master and High Priest. May God grant you many years, O Master.) After blessing the people, the clergy receive a blessing from the bishop and, bowing, kiss his hand in gratitude for the Lord's blessing for their appointed ministry in this Hierarchical Divine Liturgy which makes present to the people assembled the entirety of the Church through the presence of the bishop who leads them.



Asking a Bishop's Blessing



It is the practice of our Byzantine faith tradition that we ask for a blessing when we meet a priest or a bishop.

The ritual we perform in this social meeting is directed not so much at the clergyman, but at God who is everywhere present. The Church transforms even as simple a thing as greeting a priest into yet another occasion to encounter God.

The encounter with the priest or bishop is a kind of catalyst to find God in humility and grace for both the clergyman and the parishioner. It becomes an opportunity to worship God.

Receiving the clergy's blessing can also be an opportunity to receive divine blessing, for God alone is the source of all blessing. God can use the occasion of the meeting to recall our unvigilant selves back to God and back to His presence in our lives and to the grace and blessings that are proffered to those who seek Him.

"...The Hand of God is held out in blessing for all who seek Him..." (Ezra 8:18b)

Thus approaching a priest or bishop, we offer our hand to him for the blessing. Our hands should be held cross-wise, palms upward, right hand over left.

We say to him: "Blahoslovy" or "Father, bless."

In the case of a bishop, we say, "Blahoslovy Vladyko" or "Master, bless."



With his hand in the shape of the Christogram (ICXC spelled out in his fingers—a traditional symbol of blessing reserved to priests, recalling that Jesus Christ Conquers), the priest makes the Sign of the Cross over our extended hands.

Then he puts his blessing hand into our open hands. Thus doing, he invokes God's blessing with this

prayer: *"May the Lord bless you from Zion and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life."* (Psalm 128:5)

We then kiss the blessing hand of the priest as a way to express to God our response to divine love.

Saint John Chrysostom taught that if one were to meet a priest walking along with an angel, that we should greet the priest first and kiss his hand, since that hand has touched the Body and Blood of our Lord.

It is a wonderful blessing to be blessed. An opportunity not to be missed. Let us take every occasion to open our hands and our hearts to God's blessings, God's grace, and God's love!



Addressing the Bishop

Strictly speaking, monastics are addressed only by their Christian or monastic names. That is why a bishop's patronymic, or the last name which came from his family of origin, is placed in parentheses if it is used at all. Should you have need of addressing a bishop outside the request for a blessing, these guidelines should be of assistance.

Bishop

In conversation: Your Grace

Envelope address: His Grace, the Most Reverend Ivan Eparch of Toronto

Written salutation: Your Grace

Close: I remain Your Grace's obedient servant in Christ

Note this following pattern for beginning a letter to a bishop:

Most Reverend Master, bless.

Your Grace,

Archbishop

In conversation: Your Eminence

Envelope address: His Eminence, the Most Reverend Ivan Archeparch of Lviv

Written salutation: Your Eminence

Close: I remain Your Eminence's obedient servant in Christ

Note this following pattern for beginning a letter to an archbishop:

Most Reverend Master, bless.

Your Eminence,

Metropolitan

In conversation: Your Eminence or Metropolitan Ivan

Envelope address: His Eminence, the Most Reverend Ivan Metropolitan of Winnipeg

Written salutation: Your Eminence

Close: I remain Your Eminence's obedient servant in Christ

Note this following pattern for beginning a letter to a metropolitan:

Most Reverend Master, bless.

Your Eminence,

Major Archbishop or Patriarch

In conversation: Your Beatitude

Envelope address: His Beatitude, the Most Blessed Ivan Patriarch of Kiev and Galicia

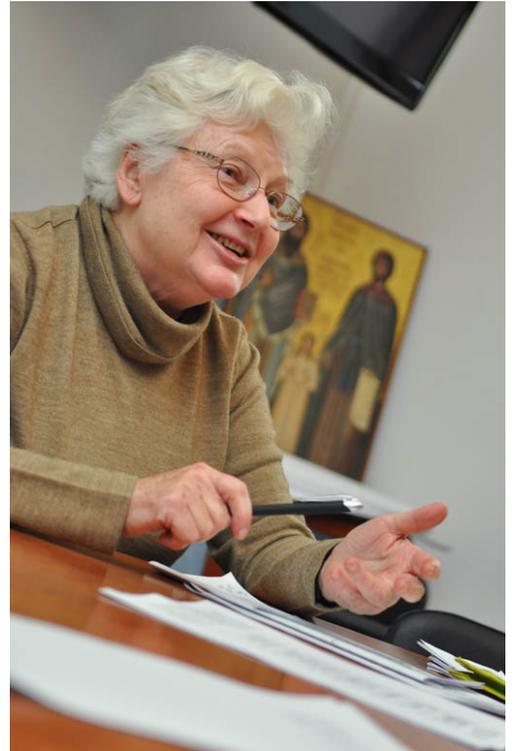
Written salutation: Your Beatitude

Close: I remain Your Beatitude's obedient servant in Christ

Note this following pattern for beginning a letter to a Major Archbishop or Patriarch:

Most Blessed Master, bless.

Your Beatitude,



St. Benedict

Feast Day: March 14
Born: 480 :: **Died:** 547



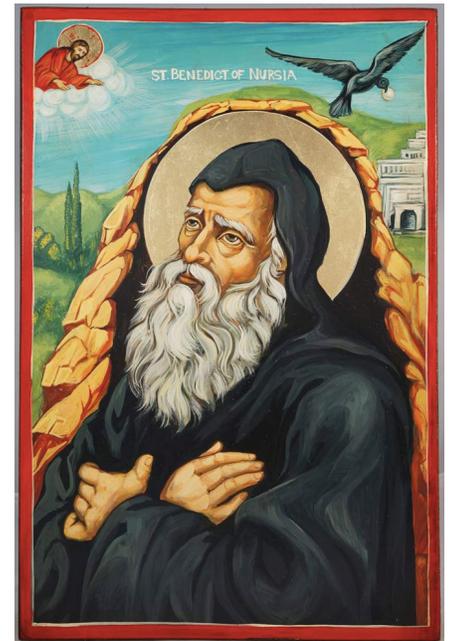
St. Benedict and his twin sister St. Scholastica were born in Nursia, Umbria, right in the middle of Italy. Italy is a long and thin country in Europe that is shaped like a boot kicking a soccer ball. Coming from a rich Italian family, Benedict's life here was full of adventure and wonderful events. As a boy, he was sent to Rome to study in the public schools. This was the first time Benedict and his sister were separated, with her life dedicated to God even from this young age. It would only take a couple hours to drive from the middle of Italy south toward the coast to make this trip now, but when St. Benedict went from Umbria to Rome it would have taken 4-5 days to walk that far. After getting to Rome, he was troubled by the horrible behavior of the other students. It only worsened as Benedict came to realize the terrible lifestyle of the pagan Romans who believed in false gods, their sins disgusting Benedict in his young adult years.

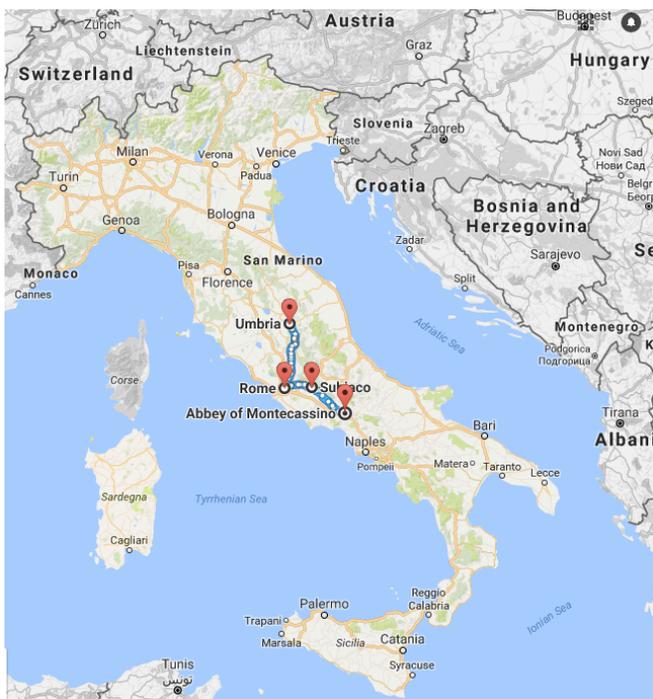
Benedict left the city and the possibility of becoming a Roman noble to look for a place where he could instead be at peace with God. About two days' walk to the east of Rome, he and his elderly nurse settled in a place called Enfide. It was here at Enfide that Benedict met a monk from the nearby mountains. Romanus of Subiaco gave Benedict a monk's habit for clothes and visited him frequently, bringing with him food and instruction. With this help, Benedict lived alone as a hermit for three years, high up on a gloomy mountain inside a triangular cave that was about the size of a small bedroom, overlooking a sparkling blue lake and the ruins of Nero's palace.

The devil often tempted Benedict to go back to his rich home and easy life but Benedict prayed and did penance and did not give in to these temptations. One day, the devil sneakily tried to tempt him with bad thoughts and Benedict *almost* gave in to the temptation. He felt so sorry for the sin he would have committed with his body that he threw himself into a bush of long, sharp thorns! He rolled around in the thorns until the temptations passed. He was covered in scratches. This is not a usual way for adults facing temptations to be holy, but it is memorable. It was so memorable that he did not feel powerful temptations like that again! From then on, the devil stopped trying to tempt him to go back to his old life.

After three years, people started coming to Benedict to learn how to become holy like him. They asked Benedict to lead them. He thought it was a bad idea because the people here were so different from him, but they asked so often that he finally gave in. It wasn't long before they couldn't stand each other, just like Benedict thought would happen. When he told the men to do penance, they grew so angry that they even tried to poison Benedict! Thankfully, he had the custom of asking God to bless his food and drinks because as he made the Sign of the Cross over the poisoned wine, the glass shattered to pieces.

As it was obvious that his time as abbot of the local monastery was not bearing good fruit, Benedict returned to his cave. He lived there with a priest who was jealous of Benedict's holy life and good reputation. The jealous priest tried to feed Benedict poisoned bread. When Benedict prayed the blessing over it before eating the bread, a raven swept in and took the loaf of bread away, saving him from poisoning again.





After the second poisoning attempt, Benedict decided to leave Subiaco. By doing so, he was able to become the leader of many good monks. Pope Saint Gregory the Great wrote about the many miracles attributed to St. Benedict by these disciples who lived with him and witnessed the miracles first hand. Because of these accounts, we know that he founded 12 monasteries around Subiaco and then he founded a famous monastery to the south called Monte Cassino, which was on a hilltop between Rome and Naples. Scholastica joined him at Monte Cassino and formed a hermitage or convent of women religious who followed St. Benedict's way of life as well.

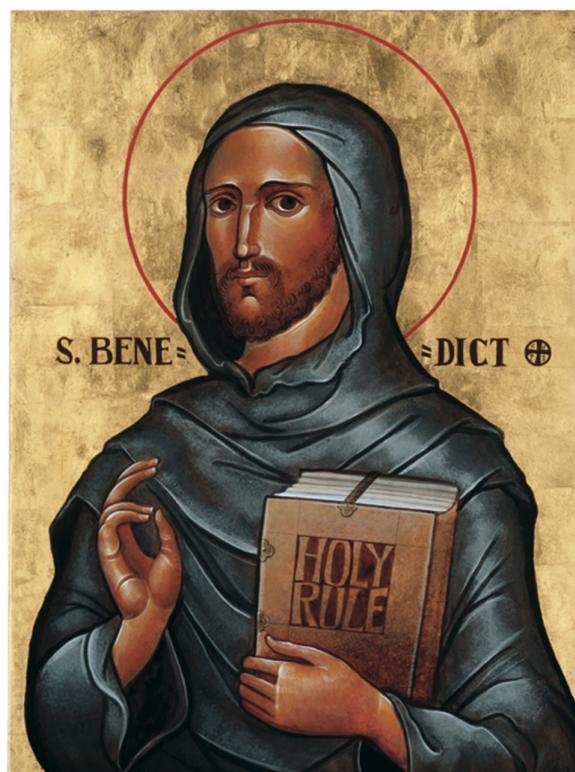
Once a year, Benedict and his twin sister Scholastica would spend a day together, worshipping and talking. One year, when Scholastica was about to die, she asked her brother to stay after dinner and continue talking with her. St. Benedict did not want to break his own rule so he told her that he must return to his cell.

At that point, St. Scholastica closed her hands in prayer and then a wild storm started outside of the guest house they were sharing. Benedict asked, "What have you done?" St. Scholastica teased her twin brother: "I asked you and you would not listen so I asked my God and he did listen. So now go off, if you can; leave me and return to your monastery." Of course, he couldn't leave. Since he was not breaking his rule to stay now, either, the twins talked all night long.

According to St. Gregory's *Dialogues*, three days later, St. Benedict was back home in his cell at his monastery when he saw his sister's soul leaving the earth and ascending to heaven in the shape of a shining white dove. Benedict had Scholastica's body brought to his monastery to be buried in the tomb he dug for her himself.

It was at Monte Cassino that St. Benedict wrote the wonderful rules by which his disciples were to live. His Rule explains how a group of people can live together and grow in holiness under a spiritual father or mother, called an abbot or abbess. Living in a monastery is just like living in a family. Benedict expected his disciples to do the spiritual work of all Christians, such as maintaining healthy and humble speech and cooking and cleaning in the kitchen. They were not allowed to hit each other or to come to the defense of one another. A whole chapter of his rule was about working cheerfully, even when the task was difficult.

The monks worked hard. They always made time to sing the hours throughout the day and the night in prayer to God, keeping a rhythm of prayer and work, which they called *ora et labora*. When everyone was silent at meals and in the evening, they read books that were good for the soul.





Benedict expected strict obedience to the monastery's spiritual father. If the abbot told them to do something, the brothers were to do it immediately without any complaints. Grumbling inside their heads to themselves was just as problematic as speaking the complaints out loud to each other. If they were disobedient, the abbot talked with them privately. If they continued to be disobedient, they were addressed in front of the other monks who could help to guide the disobedient monk back to God. If they broke the rule again, they were put in a sort of time-out, separated from the other monks at meals and other times. If they still persisted in their disobedience, they were either given a spanking—called corporal punishment—or they were kicked out of the monastery completely.

Benedict's Rule is famous for being moderate—not so loose that those following it can do whatever they want, but not so strict (rigorous or burdensome, as he called it) that disciples have trouble doing it. He found the middle way that could lead people to salvation. Because of this, he said his Rule could be used even by the elderly, sick, and children with some lessening of the fasts. Benedict wrote the rule down in his old age, when the brothers would soon face a time of running the monastery without him. It is obvious that he was familiar with the lives and writings of Eastern monastics like St. Anthony the Great who lived in the Egyptian desert. Benedict explained that the Rule was not a magic formula but a starting place for those who didn't know how a group of people could live together in peace and help each other to salvation.

Benedict and his monks greatly helped the people of their times. The monks taught the people how to read and write, how to farm, and how to work at different trades. St. Benedict was able to do good because he prayed all the time. By the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, he read minds, prophesied the future, and drove out demons. He destroyed many pagan statues and altars where the pagan people worshiped false gods.

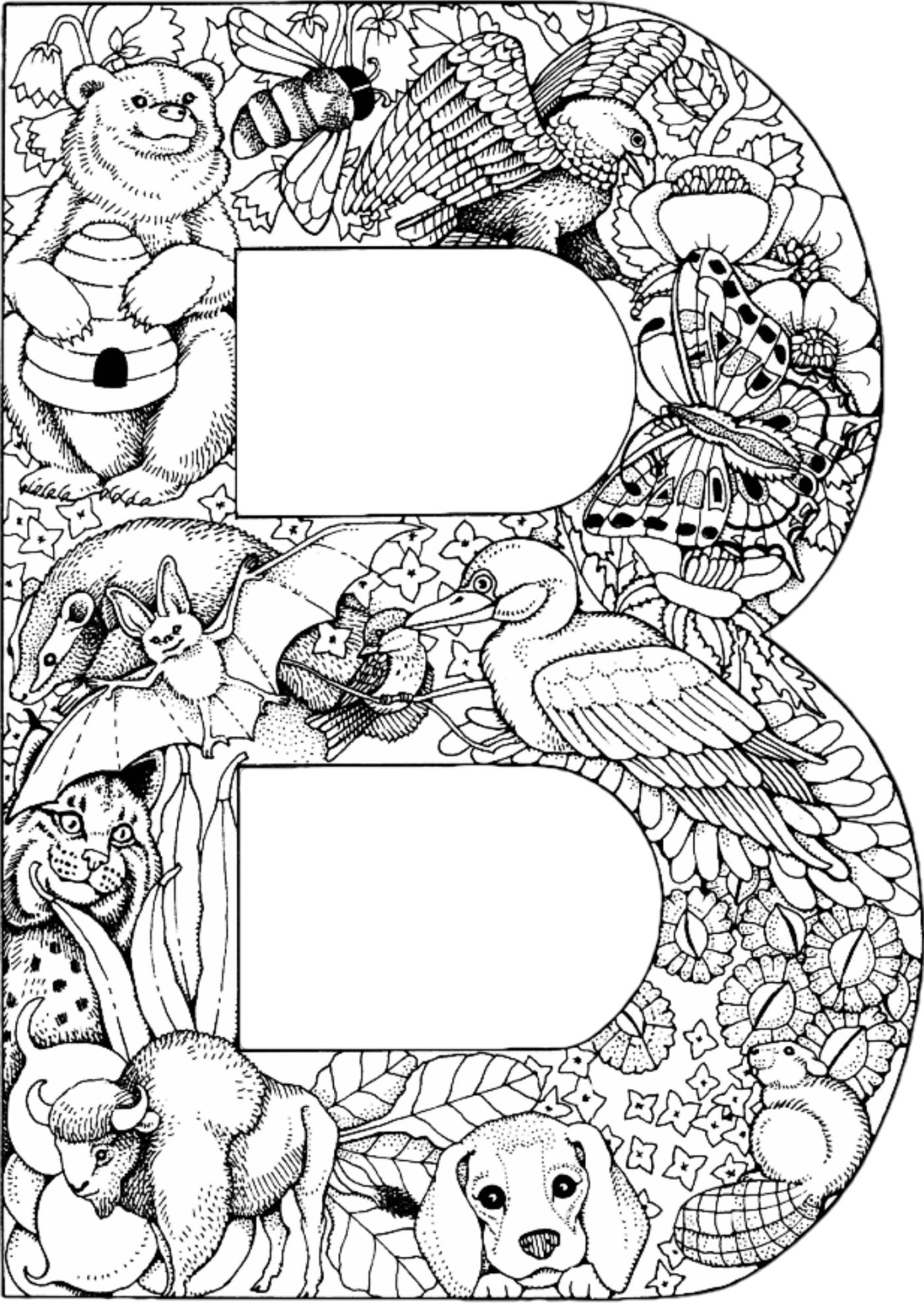
There are many monks, nuns, and lay people who follow Benedict's rule of life to this day. They are called Benedictines. Each Benedictine monastery, priory, or abbey has its own way of life, but they all wear habits and follow St. Benedict's rule through which he taught people to pray, to work hard, and to be humble always.

St. Benedict died on 21 March 547 at Monte Cassino Monastery in Italy. He is considered the father of western monasticism. Our bishop took the name of Benedict in the saint's honor when he was first tonsured a monk. Bishop Benedict now guides us with the same gentle wisdom with which St. Benedict guided his disciples many years ago.



Reflection:

Above all things let him have humility;
and if he has nothing else to give
let him give a good word in answer
for it is written,
"A good word is above the best gift" (Eccles 18:17)
-*The Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 31*



St. Sophia and her daughters

Faith, Hope, and Love

Feast Day: Sept 17 :: Died: 137

During the reign of the impious Roman Emperor Hadrian, a widow of Italian ancestry called Sophia, whose name means wisdom, lived in Rome. She was a Christian, and in accordance with her name, she lived wisely. This wise gentlewoman, Sophia, while living in honorable wedlock, bore three daughters whom she named after the three great theological virtues. The first was named Faith (Vera in Ukrainian), the second Hope (Nadia), and the third Love (Lyubov'), for to what does Christian wisdom give birth other than to God-pleasing virtues?

Soon after the birth of her three daughters, Sophia was widowed. Living piously, she pleased God by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. She reared her three daughters in a manner befitting a wise mother so that they, being the namesakes of the theological virtues, might in truth acquire those traits, the names of which they bore. As they matured, they increased in virtue, and they learned well the books of the prophets and the apostles. They became accustomed to listen to the words of their teachers and earnestly occupied themselves with spiritual reading, prayer, and household chores. Moreover, they submitted themselves in all things to their holy mother, who was filled with divine wisdom. Thus, going from strength to strength, they were successful in all things.



Word spread throughout Rome of the wisdom and beauty of the three sisters, and an official named Antiochus wished to see them. When they were brought before him, Antiochus learned that they were Christians, for they did not hide their faith in Christ. As it was illegal to be Christian, Antiochus denounced them to the Emperor Hadrian who immediately ordered that they be brought before him.

Realizing that they would be taken before the emperor, the holy virgins prayed fervently to the Lord Jesus Christ, asking that He give them the strength not to fear torture and death. When the holy virgins and their mother came before the emperor, everyone present was amazed at their composure. They looked as though they had been brought to some happy festival, rather than to torture! Hadrian urged each in turn to bow down and offer sacrifice to the goddess Artemis.

The guards first took 12-yr-old Faith in front of the emperor who promised her riches and wealth in exchange for denouncing her Christian faith. When she resolutely refused his advances, the emperor had her savagely beaten and tortured. She accepted the suffering and was martyred.

Hope, who was 10-years-old, was next brought before the emperor. She stood firm in her faith and refused to sacrifice to a pagan idol. Her boldness in continuing to confess Christ infuriated the emperor who also beat and tortured her before her martyrdom.

Nine-year-old Love was then brought before the emperor who pleaded with her to not suffer the same fate as her sisters. He thought she would surely give in to his threats or coercions considering her age; he went into a rage when he was proven wrong. After horrendous suffering, she too was martyred.



They subjected Saint Sophia to another grievous torture: the mother was forced to watch the suffering of her daughters. She displayed adamant courage, and urged her daughters to endure their torments for the sake of the Heavenly Bridegroom. All three maidens were beheaded, and joyfully bent their necks beneath the sword.

In order to intensify Saint Sophia's inner suffering, the emperor permitted her to take the bodies of her daughters. She placed their remains in coffins and loaded them on a wagon. She drove beyond the city limits and reverently buried them on a high hill. Saint Sophia sat there by the graves of her daughters for three days, and finally she gave up her soul to the Lord. Even though she did not suffer for Christ in the flesh, she was not deprived of a martyr's crown. Instead, she suffered in her heart. Believers buried her body there beside her daughters.

May we all have the courage to proclaim Christ and to give everything we have to Him as did St. Sophia and her daughters, Faith, Hope, and Love!

Apolytikion (Tone 4)

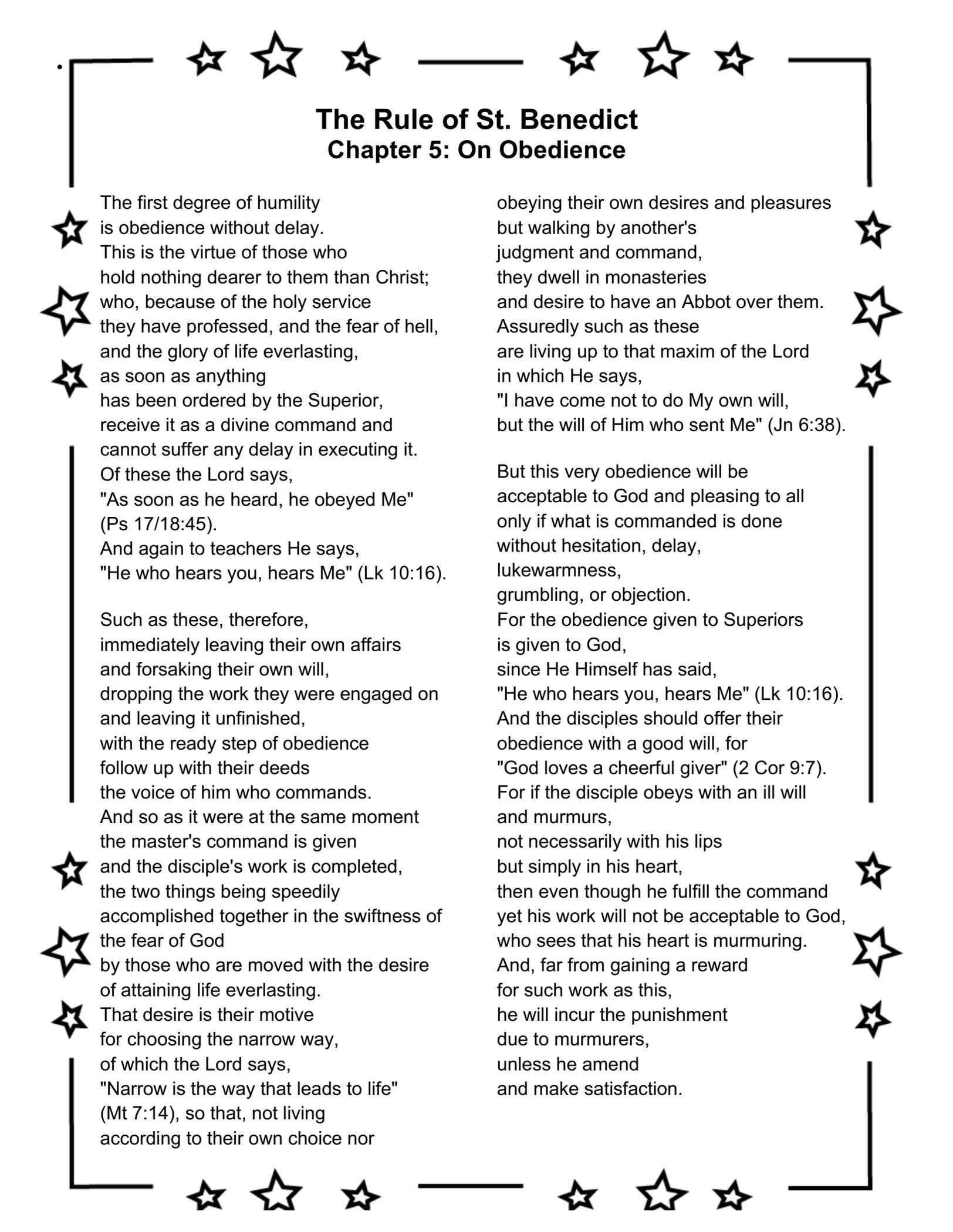
The Church celebrates and rejoices
In the feast of the three daughters: Faith, Hope, and Love
And their Mother, Sophia, so named for her Wisdom;
For in them she gave birth to the three godly virtues.
Now they eternally behold their bridegroom, God the Word.
Let us spiritually rejoice in their memory and cry out:
O, our three heavenly protectors!
Establish, confirm, and strengthen us
In Faith, Hope, and Love!

Kondak (Tone 1)

The children Faith, Hope, and Love,
Were as three young promises of holiness
to the Venerable Sophia.
Through divine grace, they confounded Greek philosophy;
They fought and obtained an incorruptible crown
from Christ, the Master of all!

Tropar (Tone 5)

Thou didst blossom in the courts of the Lord
as a fruitful olive tree, O holy Martyr Sophia;
in thy contest thou didst offer to Christ
the sweet fruit of thy womb, Love, Hope and Faith.
With them intercede for us all.



The Rule of St. Benedict Chapter 5: On Obedience

★ The first degree of humility is obedience without delay. This is the virtue of those who hold nothing dearer to them than Christ; who, because of the holy service they have professed, and the fear of hell, and the glory of life everlasting, as soon as anything has been ordered by the Superior, receive it as a divine command and cannot suffer any delay in executing it. Of these the Lord says, "As soon as he heard, he obeyed Me" (Ps 17/18:45). And again to teachers He says, "He who hears you, hears Me" (Lk 10:16).

Such as these, therefore, immediately leaving their own affairs and forsaking their own will, dropping the work they were engaged on and leaving it unfinished, with the ready step of obedience follow up with their deeds the voice of him who commands. And so as it were at the same moment the master's command is given and the disciple's work is completed, the two things being speedily accomplished together in the swiftness of the fear of God by those who are moved with the desire of attaining life everlasting. That desire is their motive for choosing the narrow way, of which the Lord says, "Narrow is the way that leads to life" (Mt 7:14), so that, not living according to their own choice nor

obeying their own desires and pleasures but walking by another's judgment and command, they dwell in monasteries and desire to have an Abbot over them. Assuredly such as these are living up to that maxim of the Lord in which He says, "I have come not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (Jn 6:38).

But this very obedience will be acceptable to God and pleasing to all only if what is commanded is done without hesitation, delay, lukewarmness, grumbling, or objection. For the obedience given to Superiors is given to God, since He Himself has said, "He who hears you, hears Me" (Lk 10:16). And the disciples should offer their obedience with a good will, for "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). For if the disciple obeys with an ill will and murmurs, not necessarily with his lips but simply in his heart, then even though he fulfill the command yet his work will not be acceptable to God, who sees that his heart is murmuring. And, far from gaining a reward for such work as this, he will incur the punishment due to murmurers, unless he amend and make satisfaction.

Obedience

Behavior in which you do what a good person tells you to do (such as a parent, teacher, boss, or priest).
The act of obeying orders from others.

Example: *Obedience is very important in an emergency as following directions promptly can sometimes mean the difference between life and death.*

Synonyms (Same Meaning)

Submission

Antonyms (Opposite Meaning)

disobedience, defiance, rebellion (ignoring)
violation (ignoring, especially rules)
control, dominance (ruling)

From the same original root as the word

obeisance: demonstration of an obedient attitude, especially by bowing deeply; a deep bow which demonstrates such an attitude.
An obedient attitude.

Usage note: Usually in the phrases *do obeisance* or *make obeisance*.

Exercise: Should you be obedient to this person? (Yes No Maybe)

Ask yourself:

- 1) Does this person have authority over me or the place where I am?
- 2) Does this person have authority over the topic?
- 3) Is this person asking me to do something acceptable to God?

If the answer to all three is yes then you should be obedient.

- Y N M Your friend asks you to not call his house after 8 PM unless it is an emergency.
- Y N M Your dad asks you to keep it private that he's planning a surprise birthday party for your mom.
- Y N M Your babysitter asks you to keep it a secret that she allowed you to have soda. Your mom allows you to have soda and would not mind that she gave you one while your dad doesn't allow any sugary beverages and would be upset enough that he might not hire her again.
- Y N M A police officer directing traffic is rude and calls you a name while directing you to not walk across the road now. You don't see any cars and suspect he's just making up a rule.
- Y N M Secret police tell you to turn over food during a famine, like Soviet Russians did in Ukraine.
- Y N M Secret police ask you if you're hiding priests they want to imprison for their faith, like the Gestapo did in Nazi Germany.
- Y N M Your friend tells you that sometimes he doesn't snap his baby sister's car seat correctly when he's asked to put the baby in the car because he doesn't like how long it takes, especially when she's fussy and squirmy. He brushes you off when you tell him that could hurt the baby. He tells you not to tell anyone else as it's only sometimes, and meant to stay between friends.
- Y N M You are walking through church and happen to overhear someone's confession. She confesses something awful, like robbing a bank. There's a reward for anyone who gives the police a tip that leads to the robber's arrest. The priest tells you that you are bound by the seal of confession, which means you need to forever pretend like you never heard the lady's confession, and that you cannot report what you overheard to the police.
- Y N M Your teacher wants everyone to wear green for her birthday. You don't own any green clothes.

If any brother happens to make some unreasonable demand of him, instead of vexing the brother with a contemptuous refusal he should humbly give the reason for denying the improper request.

*Let him keep guard over his own soul, mindful always of the Apostle's saying that "he who has ministered well will acquire for himself a good standing" (1 Tim. 3:13).
-Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 3*