



RULE & CUSTOMARY

COMMUNITY OF ST BENEDICT



Passed by Community in Chapter,
10 August 2023.



RULE

COMMUNITY OF ST BENEDICT

The Community of St Benedict has its origins in the monastic tradition of evangelical life that found expression in the Rule for Monasteries of Saint Benedict of Nursia as reformed by the founders of the Cistercian Order, the holy abbots Robert of Molesme, Alberic, and Stephen Harding.¹

DAY 1 & DAY 16

THE COMMUNITY

THE COMMUNITY consists of uncloistered and dispersed² professed men and women of eighteen years and over: laity who are confirmed and communicant Anglicans, and deacons or priests. The Community is open to celibate, single or married people who live within the jurisdiction of the Church of Ireland, or who have strong connections with that church.

DAY 2 & DAY 17

COMMUNITY'S AIM

THE COMMUNITY's aim is to promote and endeavour to live our daily life according to the *Rule of St Benedict*, as expressed in the reformed tradition of Citeaux and our own Rule in the parishes in which we live and serve. We aspire to a life-long desire to seek God through silence, contemplation, *Lectio*, and the daily Office. We want to improve our relationship with those whom we encounter each day. We commit ourselves to daily prayer with our fellow brothers and sisters, and with Cistercians worldwide. We hope to establish a School for the Lord's service, based on the monastic *Rule of St Benedict*. It is our aim to live this out by and with the grace of God.

DAY 3 & DAY 18

PATRONS

THE PRINCIPAL Patron of the Community is our holy father and abbot St Benedict, Patron of Western Monasticism, and writer of the Rule by which we strive to live.

The Community takes as its secondary patron that great restorer of the Irish Church, St Malachy, *quondam* archbishop of Armagh, and formerly bishop of Down. St Malachy shared a great friendship with the Cistercian abbot, St Bernard of Clairvaux. We seek to more and more bring forth fruit to the glory of God in the Church in this land.

DAY 4 & DAY 19

MOTTO

THE COMMUNITY shares the great Benedictine and Cistercian motto of 'Ora et Labora,' 'Prayer and Work.'

¹ OCSO, Constitutions of the Monks, *Edition after C.I. 2013 - C.I. 2016*

² *Psalm 133:1; Acts 2:43, 432; Phil 1:27, 22; 1 Peter 3:8. Augustine's commentary on Ps 133:1 dates from 407; its whole flavour is monastic. This is where he introduced his curious etymology of *monachus* as signifying that Monks are those who live together in such a way that they form a single person, so that what was written is true of them: "They have one soul and one heart". There are many bodies but not many souls. There are many bodies but not many hearts. Rightly is *monos* applied to them for they are "one alone"*

DAY 5 & DAY 20

IN COMMUNITY we profess³ the traditional three-fold Benedictine and Cistercian commitments of *stabilitas*⁴, *obedientia*⁵, and *conversatio morum suorum*⁶.

- I. Fidelity to monastic life involves the commitment to prayer, community life, study, and hospitality.
- II. Stability means that we cast our lot in with this particular group of people for life. We belong to each other through our common commitment and vision.
- III. Obedience calls us to deep listening to the movement of God's Spirit in ourselves, each other, and the Community as a whole. We discern the shape of our lives, ministry, and commitment together, not as individuals, but as members of one body.

DAY 6 & DAY 21

LIVES OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS

MEMBERS of the Community shall aim to live deliberately and actively, corporately and singly, in a manner so as every living moment may be an exemplification of the motto of our holy father and abbot Benedict, *To prefer nothing whatever to Christ*,⁷ so that their example may bring all who may come to know them the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters must endeavour to witness to the Redeemer's love with charity, courage, humility, patience, quietness, silence, and above all with prayer, knowing that it is not they who shall bring the Light, but that they shall become messengers for the One who is the Light.

DAY 7 & DAY 22

LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

MEMBERS of the Community shall make a careful examination of conscience⁸ as to their observance of the Rule. Each member is obliged to support the work of their fellow members in their own witness to the Gospel. Each brother or sister is vital to the Community and is an integral part of the whole.⁹ Let none be lost through negligence, weakness, or pride; but let each be continually fortified and strengthened with brotherly love, one toward another.¹⁰

DAY 8 & DAY 23

OPUS DEI

THE WORK of the Community is to witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus, which has been bestowed freely upon us and all of creation. This witness grows and is nurtured by a life of conversation with God, listening to him. It is nourished by daily active prayer and meditation¹¹ while living fully in the secular world.¹² Members of the Community will develop the talents God gives them in his service in the work

³ Rule of Saint Benedict [RB] 58:17

⁴ RB 4:78, 58:17

⁵ RB Prologue:38 (Ezekiel 33:11), 49 (Ps 119:32), 7:30

⁶ RB Prologue: 3, RB 5

⁷ RB 72:11

⁸ Ps 26:2, Lamentations 3:40, Ecclesiasticus 8:20, 2 Corinthians 13:5

⁹ Romans 12:5

¹⁰ 1 Thessalonians 5:11

¹¹ RB 7:63, 16, 19:2, 43:1, 52:2, 58:7, 57:2

¹² What Dom Basil Cardinal Hume OSB referred to as 'the market-place' in *Searching for God – Monastic Formation*, p. 21

and worship of the Church. Brothers and sisters shall use these talents to the best of their ability in the apostolates and ministries to which they are called.

DAY 9 & DAY 24

COMMON PRAYER

MEMBERS of the Community pray daily according to their own rhythm with those in their close family or with whom they share a life, as well as with Cistercians and Benedictines throughout the world.¹³ They also seek to be aware of all that goes on in their immediate world and the world in general. A focus on the Eucharist and quiet, contemplative prayer is a priority. In common with Cistercians worldwide, we strive to mark the hours of the day in simple prayer, consecrating each part of the day by God's grace to the Holy Spirit. We commit ourselves to praying at least four Offices every day,¹⁴ adaptable to our family and work commitments. It is our aim that nothing should take precedence over the love of God. *Prefer nothing to the love of Christ.*¹⁵ The strength of the Community is dependent on the prayer life of each member.

DAY 10 & DAY 25

UNITED IN PRAYER

MEMBERS of the Community, although dispersed, will be united in prayer by using the common prayer forms agreed by the Community. We pray for the Church of Ireland, both as a whole and in the places where we live and work. We recall and celebrate the lives of Irish and monastic saints in the life of the Church.

DAY 11 & DAY 26

INDIVIDUAL RENEWAL

MEMBERS of the Community shall endeavour to organise a short retreat at a time closest to the patronal festival of the Community (St Malachy, 3rd November). They should reflect on their profession, or novitiate, and prayerfully consider where to improve their life in the community, especially considering the three promises and the Community's Rule.

DAY 12 & DAY 27

LECTIO DIVINA¹⁶

MEMBERS of the Community will, on a regular basis, at a quiet and pre-arranged time, read the Holy Scriptures, the Patristics, and other suitable sacred reading prayerfully, known as *Lectio Divina*.¹⁷ The Biblical readings set for the daily Eucharist are especially recommended. It is also important to read our Cistercian and Benedictine Fathers. Each member is encouraged to meditate and sit down for *lectio* daily, unless they are to hear or deliver a sermon or homily on that day. The *Rule of St Benedict* is an important part of *lectio*. It is recommended that it be read using the customary system whereby the entire *Rule* is read thrice a year. Our own *Community Rule* is read twice a month.

¹³ 'To prostrate frequently in prayer' [RB 4:56 – see also RB 16, RB 20:3-4 & RB 29:4]

¹⁴ The Community uses various Office books, see *Customary*. The praying of (at least four) of the Office reflects the Cistercian (OCSO) *Opus Dei*, i.e. Vigils, Lauds, Vespers, Compline, and at least one of the Little Offices (Terce, Sext, None). If the Office of Vigils is prayed it should be prayed as early as possible in the day. It is most appropriate (and traditional) to pray Vigils as the rest of the world is still asleep or at dawn.

¹⁵ RB 4:21

¹⁶ 'Listen, O my son... and incline the ear of your heart' [RB Prologue 1 – see also RB 4:55, RB 48:15 & RB Prologue 49]

¹⁷ RB 48:1

DAY 13 & DAY 28

SIMPLICITY

MEMBERS of the Community seek to distance themselves from our consumer-driven society. Brothers and sisters strive to live simply as have Cistercians through the ages. We ought to develop a more ecological conscience and attitude, to reduce wastefulness, and should seek ways in which we can personally reduce consumption and inspire others tactfully to do the same. We endeavour not to give in to advertising pressures, nor to be influenced by public opinion. Instead, we endeavour to live differently and in solidarity with the poor and oppressed.¹⁸

DAY 14 & DAY 29

CARE AND ATTENTION AT WORK

ALL OUR work¹⁹ can be sanctified as it is our share in creation and partnership with God in that creation. All labour is equal in glory, honour, and importance. The work of each member should reflect these qualities. All talents are gifts of the Holy Spirit; therefore our work must be to the greater glory of God. We must give the best that we can offer in our work as an oblation to God, and our service to our fellow humans.

It is paramount that we dedicate all our work with due attention and with love. Our personal work situation and our spirituality can be interwoven. All tasks will be performed with respect and dedication, even the minute and seemingly dull or insignificant. We do not want to become slaves to any form of needless over-activity.

DAY 15 & DAY 30

NOVITIATE AND PROFESSION

THOSE WHO feel called to commit themselves to this form of monasticism “outside the cloister” must examine most seriously their inner soul as to whether this Community is a real vocation for them.²⁰ After such a period of at least six months, one can in consultation with the Community negotiate entering a Novitiate of at least two years. After successfully completing the Novitiate, a Contract of Profession with Almighty God will be publicly signed. This will take place during a specially designed service. After another two years, the simple professed member may commit to profession for life.

Simple professed brothers and sisters will receive a Cross or Medal of St Benedict as a reminder of their profession and a copy of the Rule of St Benedict as a Token of Commitment and Unity.

On Day 31, repeat Day 30.

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 15:11, Job 5:16, 29:11, Psalm 12:5, 41:11, 72:4, 140:12, Proverbs 14:21, 31, Luke 13:13, James 2:5

¹⁹ ‘... for they are then truly monks when they live by the labour of their hands...’ [RB 48:8 – see also RB 48:1 & RB 48:7]

²⁰ RB Prologue:21

CUSTOMARY

COMMUNITY OF ST BENEDICT

THE HABIT

The habit of a professed member is a black cassock, extending to the ankles; a simple leather belt; and a black scapular with a hood. The Benedictine medal may be worn round the neck.

The habit of a novice member is a black cassock; a simple leather belt; and a black scapular with a hood.

The habit of a postulant is a black cassock; and a simple leather belt.

When in community the habit is the common dress of a community member. Outside the community and in local parishes, discretion, common sense, type of work and occupational guidelines may not always make its wearing possible. Balance, awareness and sensitivity should be employed in all cases regarding the wearing of the habit.

STREET DRESS

The street dress of a lay professed member may consist of any attire recognised as appropriate for lay religious, and the Profession Cross,

The street dress of a clerical professed member or a novice member may consist of normal attire with a Benedictine medal.

SENIORITY IN THE LITURGY

In procession, the more junior members of the community enter first. More junior members sit closer to the Holy Table and the choir aisle in choir.

At the Eucharist, during which a member makes their life profession, they receive communion immediately after the ministers, before the rest of the community.

The order of procession and seating may be varied if and when necessary.

OFFICIANT AT THE OFFICE

When Community members gather to say the Office, the senior member present either officiates or chooses the officiant. The officiant then chooses the reader(s).

THE COMMUNITY AND THOSE OUTSIDE ITS LIFE

Community members should never discuss personal problems or situations of a member of the community with anyone outside the community. The personal affairs of former members and private matters of other communities are not suitable for discussion by members.

THE OPUS DEI, THE DAILY OFFICE

Community members commit to praying the Daily Office in union with each other, and with all other Cistercians and Benedictines around the world. We are committed to praying Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline and another Office at the least. Members may choose to add the office of Vigils during the night.

Our particular office books include:

Book of Common Prayer 2004, of the Church of Ireland;
Common Worship Daily Prayer, of the Church of England;

Benedictine Daily Prayer, of Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota; and *Hymns of Prayer and Praise*, from Monastic Musicians.

The Community has its own Calendar and readings and collects are available for each of the days celebrated.

When the Community comes together to pray, we will share together in the common office as decided by the members. When members are at home they may use whichever form of the office using the books above they may wish.

SUNDAY EVENING MEETINGS

Members of the Community gather online to say Compline and for fellowship by mutual arrangement. This is an important part of the life of the Community. Brothers and sisters should make attendance at this this a priority in their week.

PERSONAL AND CORPORATE RETREAT

Members must make a retreat within ninety days before their first and life professions.

Members should make a retreat annually near to St Malachy's Day (3rd November). The Community may gather corporately for a day or two at this time.

FORMS OF ADDRESS

Postulants

Postulants may sign their name: _____ p/CSB. They shall not be formally addressed as 'Brother' or 'Sister'.

Novices

Novices may be formally addressed as 'Brother' or 'Sister'. They may sign their names as _____ n/CSB

Professed members

Professed members may sign their names: _____ CSB.

All novices and professed members, lay and ordained, are appropriately addressed as 'Brother' or 'Sister'.

NAMES IN RELIGION

Community members may choose a name to be known by within the Community. They may choose their current name, or another, being that of a saint, preferably a monastic saint. There is no requirement to change their name legally, however, they may choose to do so. Our custom is to use names thus: Brother Malachy CSB or Sister Etheldreda CSB. Surnames within the community are not usual.

SAFEGUARDING

The Community shall pay due regard to the principles of safeguarding in the Church of Ireland.

