Benedictionary II

A useful glossary of terms used in Benedictine circles

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INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this little booklet comes from two sources. The first source is a booklet developed in 1997 by Father George W. Traub, S.J., titled "Do You Speak Ignatian? A Glossary of Terms Used in Ignatian and Jesuit Circles." The booklet is published by the Ignatian Programs/Spiritual Development office of Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio. The second source, Beoneodicotionary, a pamphlet published by the Admissions Office of Benedictine University, was designed to be "a useful reference guide to help parents and students master the language of the college experience at Benedictine University." This booklet is not an alphabetical glossary but a directory to various offices and services.

Beoneodicotionary II provides members of the campus community, and other interested individuals, with an opportunity to understand some of the specific terms used by Benedictine men and women. While Benedictine University makes a serious attempt to have all members of the campus community understand the "Benedictine Values" that underlie the educational work of the University, we hope this booklet will take the mystery out of some of the language used commonly among Benedictine monastics.

This booklet was developed by Fr. David Turner, O.S.B., as part of the work of the Center for Mission and Identity at Benedictine University.
ABBESS The superior of a monastery of women, established as an abbey, is referred to as an abbess. The professed members of the abbey are usually referred to as nuns. The abbess is elected to office following the norms contained in the proper law of the Congregation of which the abbey is a member. (These independent communities maintain enclosure—see entry—and usually do not engage in any external apostolic work.) After election and confirmation, the abbess receives a formal blessing from the bishop of the diocese according to the “Rite for the Blessing of an Abbess” as contained in the *Rites of the Catholic Church*. During this ceremony she is presented with the abbatial ring and crosier (the pastoral staff). She uses the crosier in solemn ceremonies such as the professions of the nuns belonging to the community and during other solemn celebrations. As part of her habit, she wears a pectoral cross.

ABBOT The superior of a monastery of men, established as an abbey, is referred to as an abbot. An abbot is elected according to norms specified in the proper law of the Congregation to which the monastery belongs. Following the norms of the Congregational law, the abbot may be elected for a specific term (e.g., eight years), or he may be required to submit his resignation at a certain age (e.g., when reaching his 75th birthday). After being elected and confirmed in
office (in most instances the confirmation is done by the individual
who presides at the election), the abbot receives a formal blessing
from the bishop of the diocese. In this “Rite for the Blessing of an
Abbot,” the presiding bishop will present the abbot with some of
the “pontificals”: the abbatial ring, crosier, and miter. As part of his
habit, he wears a pectoral cross.

BENEDICTINE Technically the word is an “adjective” that is
derived from the name of Saint Benedict of Nursia. The word can be
used to modify a variety of “nouns,” as one can speak of Benedictine
spirituality or values, as well as apply the term to a school, a college,
or a university (e.g., Benedictine University). The adjective can
modify other words and ideas, such as the word “habit,” the garb
worn by the monks or nuns.

BENEDICTINE EDUCATION Most scholars place the writing
of what today we call The Rule of Saint Benedict at about the year 530
C.E. Saint Benedict was at this point established at Montecassino,
with some 30 years of monastic experience behind him: as a hermit,
as a leader of other monks, and as a founder of community living at
Subiaco, a place where he had originally lived as a hermit.

St. Benedict’s Rule assumes the presence of children, and the
Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great gives an account of the entrusting of
Maurus and Placidus to the Montecassino educational program.
Over the course of centuries, Benedictine monastics—both men and
women—have had educational programs of various kinds within their
monastic walls.

Father Dominic Milroy, at one time headmaster of
Ampleforth College in England, claims that the “educational
instinct” of Benedictine monasticism has its root in the personality
of St Benedict as revealed by the Rule. The first word of that
influential document is “Listen,” and the whole of the Prologue is
devoted to the concept of the monastic community as a “school of
the Lord’s service,” a place, a setting, a structure where everything
is designed to facilitate the deepest educational process of all, the
dialogue between the Divine Teacher and the human disciple.
The Benedictine approach to education is rooted in a certain way of relating obedience to freedom. Going a stage further, we should perhaps face the age-old question posed by educationalists, "What sort of person do Benedictine schools produce?" It may well be suggested that the formative aims of Benedictine education are fairly humble, to create good conditions in which individuals may grow. Those involved in Benedictine education may well plant and water, but the individual's character and growth are between the student and God.

**CELLARER** The "Qualifications of the Monastic Cellarer" are described by Saint Benedict in Chapter 31 of the Rule. The term comes from the Latin *cellarius*, meaning storeroom. In modern terminology one might call this person the business manager, procurator, or treasurer, though in Saint Benedict's mind the job entails much more. Chapter 31 highlights his tasks as well as the attitude he should have as he serves the community. It is here that Saint Benedict orders that "he will regard all the utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar." We thus see that in the mind of the Father of Western Monasticism everything is sacred; a rake or a hoe should be treated as a chalice or a crucifix.

**CENOBITE** Coming from the Greek words *koinos bios* (common life), as well as from the term *koinonia* (which includes as part of its meaning shared life in Christ), Saint Benedict describes cenobites as monks who live together in a community, observing a rule, and being obedient to an abbot. In Chapter 2 of his Rule, Saint Benedict calls the cenobites "the strong kind" of monks for which he draws up his Rule.

**CHAPTER MEETING** "A formal meeting of canons headed by a dean, or the members of a religious order" is called a chapter in contemporary dictionaries (see *Webster's New World College Dictionary*). The word "chapter" does not occur in Saint Benedict's Rule, though the monastic lawgiver in Chapter 3 speaks of "calling the community together for consultation." The expression probably
developed from the fact that the gathering space was referred to as the “Chapter Room” because during the office of Prime, a chapter of the Rule was read and frequently commented upon by the superior. While the word by itself, as reflected in the above definition, can be applied to the group, some may refer to “members of the chapter” to describe those who will be in such a meeting. Some will simply refer to the “chapter” and include in that word all the members who may be present and may be empowered to vote at such a gathering.

CHAPTER ROOM

Chapter meetings are held in the Chapter Room. In many monasteries, this is a designated space and is arranged in such a way as to hold a community or chapter meeting (e.g., the seats arranged in such a way that the chapter members can easily address the issues being discussed.

CHASTITY

The vow of chastity, included in the Benedictine profession ceremony when the professing novice answers yes to a question asked relative to this vow. The vow of chastity excludes marriage (celibacy) and any thoughts, words, or actions contrary to the virtue of chastity.

CLOISTER

The word “cloister” refers generally to those areas of a monastery that are restricted to the use of the monastic members. In some instances, especially in the case of communities of nuns, the word enclosure (see entry) is used, and following ecclesiastical law may be described as papal (following prescriptions established by Rome) or constitutional (following the prescription of that community’s constitutions). In many instances the prescriptions cover who can have access to the private sections of the monastery and the conditions under which others, who are not members of the community, may enter the cloistered area for specific purposes (e.g., workmen who would enter to make repairs in a monastery of nuns, or a chaplain who would minister sacramentally to a sick or dying member).
COMMUNITY OF GOODS  Taking the Holy Scriptures as his guide, Saint Benedict looked to the early communities of the New Testament times (see Acts 4:35) where property was held in common. The Rule speaks against private ownership and maintains that the monastic member will receive everything needed from the community. Some people will understand community of goods as part of a “vow of poverty,” though this vow does not imply a community without possessions. Chapters 33 and 34 along with Chapters 54, 55, and 57 provide the ways in which this value is observed in daily life.

COMPLINE  The last prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, Compline, is now called Night Prayer. Prayed before bedtime, Compline consists of three psalms in the Benedictine arrangement, one in the Roman. This office includes the “Nunc Dimittis” or Canticle of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32).

CONGREGATION (See also Monastic Federation) The Lateran Council IV in 1215 prescribed that Benedictine monasteries were to be joined together in associations for mutual support and protection. Each Congregation is regulated and governed by a proper law that regulates its juridic actions. Congregations are usually headed by a President (or an Abbot General) and his or her Council. Each Congregation’s proper law will specify periodic gatherings, usually called General Chapters, attended by the superiors of independent monasteries along with elected delegates. Saint Procopius Abbey, the sponsoring community for Benedictine University, belongs to the American-Cassinese Congregation. Other congregations represented in the United States include: The Swiss-American Congregation (men), the Congregations of Saint Scholastica (women), The English Benedictine Congregation (allows for communities of either men or women), the Congregation of Saint Gertrude (women), the Congregation of Saint Benedict (women), the Olivetan Congregation (either men or women), and the Subiaco Congregation (either men or women).
CONVERSATIO MORUM One of the three vows included in the profession formula for Benedictines, "conversatio morum," has had more ink spilled over it as commentators have tried to translate the term into English. There was a period where the phrase was expressed as "the conversion of my morals," though this hardly expresses the vow correctly. The term "conversatio" means a style of life, and one commentator translated it as "monasticity of manners" or simply "to live as a monk." The general consensus among contemporary Benedictine scholars has the vow interpreted as a promise of "fidelity to living the monastic life."

COUNCIL (OF SENIORS) At the conclusion of Chapter 3 of his Rule, Saint Benedict speaks of "questions of lesser concern" where the superior needs only consult the "seniors" and not the full community. The nature and responsibility of the council is regulated by the particular law of the congregation or federation to which the monastery belongs. In most instances, the individual community may regulate the number of members for this council, usually an equal number appointed by the superior and the same number elected by the community (e.g., 3 appointed and 3 elected). The appointed members in monasteries of men are usually the abbot's officials—the prior, subprior, and procurator/treasurer.

CUCULLA (or COWL) This is a formal choir garment that is worn over the habit. Its use differs in the various monasteries from being used only for solemn occasions to daily use (for warmth in older monastic churches!). In some traditions, the cuculla had 72 pleats to reflect the Rule, though modern tailors have in many instances reduced the number of pleats to make a lighter garment! In some traditions the cuculla is presented to the monk during the ceremony of final profession, though in other traditions all wear the garment—even the novices.

CUSTOMARY Individual monastic communities may draw up what might be considered "house rules" or modes of daily operation. These manuals will explain the varieties of actions and activities
related to living the monastic life in a specific community. Some of the customaries developed in the Middle Ages are gold mines of information relative to how the monastic day was lived.

**DEANS** The concept of deans, or leaders of smaller groups within a monastery, predates Saint Benedict and was used in the early monastic life of people like Sts. Pachomius and John Cassian. The deans in Saint Benedict’s mind were to help in the governance of larger monasteries where the monks could be assigned to groups of ten. They are to be appointed because of their leadership abilities and not because of age or rank.

**DIALOGUES OF SAINT GREGORY** Approximately 50 years after the death of St. Benedict (traditionally in the year 547), Pope Saint Gregory the Great, who had been a monk himself before being elected pope, wrote a series of “dialogues” to teach his young listener about a variety of Italian saints. The “Second Book of the Dialogues” is spent entirely on the life of Saint Benedict. Gregory claims that the miraculous accounts were provided by eye-witnesses. The “Dialogues” constitute the only written source for anything known about Saint Benedict, (e.g., his place of birth, his time in the cave at Subiaco, and his founding of Monte Cassino). Contemporary scholars have expressed serious doubts about Gregory’s historical accuracy relative to the stories recorded.

**DISPENSATION (FROM VOWS)** The Church, in her wisdom, recognizes that there are times when individuals may come to a decision that the monastic life is really not for them. For that reason there are processes by which individuals are released from their monastic profession and are allowed to leave the common life and pursue life as lay people in the world. Dispersions are regulated by the general law of the Church as well as the particular law of the specific monastic or religious institute.

**DIVINE OFFICE** (See also Liturgy of the Hours, Opus Dei, and the Work of God) In the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, Chapters 8 through 19
deal with the structures of the times of prayer. In Chapter 16, St. Benedict explains how the monks "fulfill this sacred number of seven" (Psalm 119:164) by praying the hours of Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. The same psalm also says, "At midnight I arose to give you praise," as an explanation for the night office or Vigils. These eight periods of prayer are spread out through the day to sanctify time.

ENCLOSURE  Enclosure is another word used to express that certain parts of a monastery are restricted for use by the professed members. The "laws of enclosure" can be "papal" or "constitutional." (See Cloister)

"FLIGHT FROM THE WORLD"  The pre-Benedict monastic movement (e.g., Pachomius or John Cassian) had as its goal a "white martyrdom." With the Edict of Milan (Constantine) in the early fourth century, Christians were no longer being martyred for their faith. A large number of men and women sought to "flee the world" and live for Christ alone in the desert. Many interesting tales can be found in the "Lives of the Fathers" that show how these men and women attempted to separate themselves from the world and live for God alone. As time went on and the cenobitic monastic life took root, the monks began to understand that they could not really "flee the world" but had to embrace the world and pray for all the people in the world.

GENERAL CHAPTER  In most instances, General Chapters bring together the superiors of independent monasteries, along with an elected delegate, to consider important issues affecting the lives of the individual member communities. The chapter is presided over by a president who has a council composed of people elected from the individual monasteries. At times the General Chapters may need to consider changes in juridic elements.

GREGORIAN CHANT  Many music historians use the phrase "plainchant." In its earliest days in the church, much of the
plainchant was passed on as an oral tradition collected under the guidance of Pope Saint Gregory the Great. The Benedictine Abbey in Solesmes, France, continues to examine old manuscripts to determine the original versions of the many chant compositions used in the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church. The Vatican II document *Musicam Sacram* continues to encourage the use of plainchant. However, with the liturgy now celebrated in the vernacular we find a wide variety of music being used, especially English hymns. Chant compositions do allow for a variety of interpretations. Frequently the manner of interpretation may come from a “school of chant” and may be referred to according to the source of the interpretation, e.g., using the Solesmes method.

**HABIT (Monastic or Benedictine)** The *Rule of Saint Benedict* does not prescribe a specific design of clothing, or habit, for the monks. In Saint Benedict’s day, the monks dressed similarly to their lay counterparts. The Rule does speak of a tunic, a scapular (which served as an apron) for work, a cowl to keep the head warm, stockings, sandals, and shoes. Gradually, with changes in the style of dress, there developed a uniform garb that is in use today. For monks the habit consists of a tunic (or cassock), a belt of cloth or leather, a scapular that covers both the front and back of the tunic, and a hood for the head. Monastic women in the past made use of a “coif” or “wimple” that covered most of the head along with a veil. Today, outside of monasteries of cloistered nuns, most Benedictine women wear contemporary dress.

**JUNIOR MONK** While the term “junior monk” is not found in the Rule, in contemporary usage this individual has completed the novitiate and has made temporary or triennial vows. The current Canon Law of the Catholic Church requires a minimum period of three years during which the junior monk is bound by monastic profession but has not made the final commitment or solemn vows. The monk in the juniorate usually will engage in some work in the community and continue his education in college or in theological studies. The temporary profession may be extended beyond the
three years, either at the request of the junior monk or the suggestion of the community. Under normal circumstances, the junior monk applies to make final or solemn profession at the end of the three-year period.

**LAUDS** Morning Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours is frequently referred to as “Lauds.” The Liturgy of the Hours (or the Divine Office) of the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church places a primary focus on Morning and Evening Prayer (Lauds and Vespers).

Morning Prayer is generally introduced by an “invitatory psalm” followed by an opening hymn. Two psalms are prescribed with an Old Testament Canticle between these psalms. A short reading is prescribed for each day, whether an ordinary (or ferial) day or feast. The reading is followed by a responsory. The Canticle of Zachary (Luke 2: 68-79) is sung or recited daily, followed by a series of petitions, the Our Father, and a closing prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours of the Roman Rite is arranged in a four-week cycle so that all the psalms are prayed at least once in the course of the cycle. Most Benedictine monasteries follow their own adapted structures.

**LECTIO DIVINA** The Rule of Saint Benedict prescribes about three hours of daily sacred reading. In our contemporary age, a Benedictine monastic may spend about an hour with this prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture or the writings of the Fathers. *Lectio* is sometimes described as the Benedictine version of meditation. The traditional process is (1) *lectio* (read), *meditatio* (meditate), *oratio* (pray), and *contemplatio* (contemplate). One reads a portion of Sacred Scripture, reflects on its content and meaning, prays relative to the thoughts that arise, and quietly listens to the inspiration of God. Over the last 40 years or so, a good deal has been written on the process of *lectio divina.* Workshops and lectures have also been quite popular for people interested in learning this type of prayerful reading of the Sacred Scriptures.

**LITURGY OF THE HOURS** With the reforming of the various liturgical books after the Vatican Council II, the former Divine
Office that was prayed using the *Roman Breviary* was renamed "The Liturgy of the Hours" to stress sanctifying time. Following the structure referred to by Saint Benedict in the Rule, the Roman Rite in the past used the division of the office into the traditional eight hours: Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. The revised Liturgy of the Hours now consists of Morning Prayer (Lauds) and Evening Prayer (Vespers) as the two "pivotal points" of the daily celebration (see entries). The former Matins or Vigils is now celebrated as the Office of Readings and can be prayed at any time of the day. Daytime Prayer replaces the former "minor hours" of Terce, Sext, and None. Prime was eliminated in most instances, though there are contemplative communities that have retained this office. Night Prayer or Compline ends the daily cycle.

MEDAL OF SAINT BENEDICT

In the year 1880, to celebrate the 1400th anniversary of the birth of St. Benedict (usually placed at 480 C.E.) The Abbey of Monte Cassino was entrusted with issuing a special medal, known at the Jubilee Medal of Saint Benedict. There existed for some centuries medals of Saint Benedict which contained a cross and letters indicating words and prayers. With the issuing of this medal, the Church also granted special indulgences for those who would use the medal piously. These indulgences were abrogated by Pope Paul VI in 1968. While other medals have been issued (e.g., by Subiaco Abbey in Italy, Tyniec Abbey in Poland, Conception Abbey in Missouri), the Jubilee medal continues to be the best known and most used. In our contemporary time, some religious manufacturers have the medal inserted into a crucifix.
One side of the medal has the figure of Saint Benedict holding a cross, and in Latin the words “The Cross of our Holy Father Benedict.” Around the edge are the words, “May we be strengthened by his presence in the hour of our death.” Included also is a raven about to carry away a loaf of poisoned bread as well as the cup of poisoned wine that shattered when Benedict blessed the cup.

On the other side of the medal the cross is quite dominant with the first letters of two Latin prayers: “May the Holy Cross be my light! The dragon never be my guide.” In the angles of the cross the letters stand for “The cross of our holy father Benedict.” Around the margin are the first letters of the Latin words: “Begone, Satan! Tempt me not with your vanities. What you offer me is evil. Drink the poison yourself!”

The Roman Ritual has a special blessing for this medal that may be used by any priest. During the opening convocation at Benedictine University each fall, the entering students are given a Jubilee Medal of Saint Benedict. The medal is also used by the Oblates of St. Benedict (see entry) as a sign of their membership.

MONASTERY A monastery is a community of men or women who have professed to live a monastic life, in most instances following the Rule of Saint Benedict. The term is also used to identify religious houses whose members may follow other rules of life (e.g., the Passionist religious or the Carmelite nuns).

MONASTIC FEDERATION This is a term that is sometimes used to describe a union of independent monasteries joined together in a loose-knit organization for mutual protection and encouragement. They are governed by Constitutions approved by the Holy See. (See Congregation)

MONK The English word “monk” is derived from the Greek term monachos, which means one who lives an ascetic life alone. During Saint Benedict’s time, as reflected in his Rule, there were four kinds of monks: cenobites (who lived and worked in community), anchorites or hermits (those who lived and worked alone), sarabaites
(who were "tried by no rule" and followed their own desires), and
gyrovagues (who were always on the move going from monastery to
monastery). In contemporary usage, the term is often applied to men
who have professed religious vows, even though they may not
belong to a monastic order." Thus, while the Franciscans and
Dominicans are technically "friars," they are frequently referred to as
monks, as is the case with other members of religious congregations
of men (e.g., the Congregation of Christian Brothers).

NONE In the Divine Office prior to the reform of Vatican
Council II, None was one of the "minor hours" and was ideally to
be celebrated at the "ninth hour" or about 3:00 p.m.

NOVICE St. Benedict titles Chapter 58 of the Rule "The Procedure
for Receiving Brothers." The monastic lawgiver speaks of testing the
spirits of the one who comes requesting admission. After a few days,
he is to be admitted to the "novitiate, where the novices study, eat,
and sleep." The current law of the Roman Church specifies one full
year as a minimum for the novitiate formation. During that year, the
novice studies the Rule and is exposed to other studies (e.g., liturgy,
the psalms, Christian doctrine, chant). In many communities the
entrance into the novitiate is preceded by a time of "postulancy" (see
Postulant).

NOVICE MASTER As indicated in the entry above, Saint Benedict
starts Chapter 58 with the warning, "Do not grant newcomers to the
monastic life an easy entry, but as the Apostle says, "Test the spirits
to see if they are from God (1 John 4:1). In this same chapter St.
Benedict prescribes that "a senior chosen for his skill in winning
souls should be appointed to look after [the novices] with careful
attention" (58:6). The signs of a Benedictine vocation expected to be
discerned by the novice master are: (1) whether the novice truly
seeks God, (2) whether he shows eagerness for the Work of God, (3)
for obedience, and (4) for trials. It is the novice master's task also to
make periodic reports to the community relative to the novices'
progress. Toward the end of the year of novitiate, the Chapter votes on the petition for admission to monastic profession by secret ballot.

NUN While many dictionaries define the word “nun” as describing any women belonging to a religious order, the Catholic Church distinguishes between *moniales* (nuns in the technical sense) and *sorores* (or Sisters). Nuns are members of religious orders where solemn vows are pronounced and enclosure is observed (e.g., some Benedictines, Carmelites, or Poor Clares). Sisters pronounce simple perpetual vows and very rarely observe any type of strict enclosure. (See Enclosure)

OBEEDIENCE One of the three evangelical counsels that constitute the traditional three vows of religious life (poverty, chastity, and obedience). Obedience is one of the pivotal vows for Saint Benedict, as he devotes the entire chapter five of his Rule to this topic. He sees the monk “carry out the superior’s orders as promptly as if the command came from God himself” (5:4). For Benedict, obedience is tied to listening and must be given without grumbling: “For the obedience shown to superiors is given to God” (5:15).

OBLATE The term itself comes from Chapter 59, where St. Benedict speaks of “children offered by nobles or by the poor.” The “child oblates” received their education within the internal monastic school as children today attend grade and high school. At about the age of 18, they would formally join the monastery or return to lay life with their well-developed skills. Today, the term refers to men and women who value St. Benedict’s Rule as a guide for daily living. These people, after undergoing a period of formation, make a formal commitment through the “Act of Final Oblation,” by which they associate themselves with an individual monastic community and promise to live the values of the Rule as their state in life will permit. Most monasteries that have Oblates will conduct periodic meetings that usually includes instruction and discussion of Benedictine characteristics.
Saint Benedict, writing his Rule in Latin, refers to the Divine Office as the Opus Dei (i.e., the Work of God) to which nothing is to be preferred.

**ORA ET LABORA** The Latin phrase translated as “Pray and Work” is not found anywhere in St. Benedict’s Rule, but it has become something of a motto used to describe the Benedictine monastic life and its stress on a life having an active and contemplative balance. The monastic day is built around prayer, reading, and work. The stress that St. Benedict places on *lectio divina* (see entry) makes this third aspect an important part of the contemporary monastic day.

**ORDER IN THE COMMUNITY** (See Statio) St. Benedict reflects a hierarchical community based on the time of one’s entry. This placement of the members of the community has nothing to do with educational levels, age, or social status. Many of the aspects of this element in St. Benedict’s Rule that were observed in the past (e.g., the positions in the choir section of the church or being seated at table) are no longer be observed strictly in many communities. The matter of this order can, at times, be observed as when a community processes formally into the abbey church or chapel for a period of prayer. At St. Procopius Abbey this is observed for solemn Vespers. Another aspect of order has to do with St. Benedict’s point about the junior monks respecting their elders.

**ORDO** This term is used to refer to a small book published usually by the various monastic congregations that describes the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist for the various days of the year. This book will describe the liturgical rank of each day (solemnity, feast, memorial, or ferial day) and usually list the readings for the Eucharistic celebration. It will also take into account the celebrations that are unique to individual monasteries, for example the observance of the feast of the community’s patron saint (e.g., July 4 for St. Procopius).
PASCHAL MYSTERY This phrase occurs frequently in the documents of the Vatican Council II. In its foundational meaning it seeks to focus on the saving work of Jesus Christ in his death, burial, resurrection, and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles after his ascension into heaven. In the American translation of the Rule of Saint Benedict published in 1980, the "Thematic Index" points out many places where the Rule reflects this theme. From the instructions on the use of the word "Alleluia," to his many references to the following of Christ, Benedict would have his followers be very focused on the action of Christ in their lives.

PERSEVERANCE Saint Benedict reflects the matter of perseverance a few times in his Rule. A key allusion can be found in Chapter 7 ("Humility") where in his fourth step (7:36) the Father of Western Monasticism quotes the words of Jesus recorded in St. Matthew's gospel: "Anyone who perseveres to the end will be saved" (Mt 10:22). Benedict expects the one who has made the monastic commitment to remain faithful until the end of his life.

POSTULANT While this term is not found in St. Benedict's Rule, many communities will have an applicant spend a period of time (from a few weeks to as long as six months) in a "pre-novitiate" program. Usually this will involve learning the basic "order of the day" and may include some formal classroom instruction.

POVERTY As one of the three evangelical counsels, the vow of poverty is included in the rite of monastic profession when the monk answers a question asked by the abbot relative to poverty and chastity. It is important to keep in mind that the vows are always taken "according to a rule and constitutions," so the actual observance of this vow in its details may differ among the various religious communities. The Benedictine understanding focuses on common life and community of goods as well as a dependence upon the community for whatever is needed.
**PRIME** The Rule refers to “Prime” as one of the hours of the Divine Office. Prior to the revision of the Liturgy of the Hours after Vatican II, this was the first of the “minor hours” (so called because these hours were rather short). Prime was a focal office in its day because it included reading part of a chapter of the Rule, having a commentary or instruction by the abbot, and making the work assignments to be done by the monks. For example, in Chapter 48, “On the Daily Manual Labor,” the Rule prescribes that the monks “will go out in the morning from after Prime until the fourth hour and work at whatever needs to be done.”

**PRIOR** In most monasteries, the prior is appointed by the abbot in accordance with Chapter 65 of the Rule. He is the second in command and is responsible for the daily running of the community's life. He is responsible for assigning many of the non-permanent tasks, such as assistance at local parishes by priest members. In non-abbatal monasteries, the prior may be the elected superior (in the case of an independent community) or appointed by the abbot of the monastery upon which the community is dependent as a priory.

**PRIORESS** This term may apply to the second in command in an abbey of Benedictine nuns (where the superior is an abbess) or to the superior of independent monasteries of Benedictine Sisters.

**PRIORY** A term used to describe a monastery whose superior is a prior or prioress. In the case of Benedictine Sisters in the United States, the term “monastery” is preferred since in most cases priories are dependent communities. Some of the mendicant orders (e.g., Dominicans) will refer to their religious houses as priories, while others will use the term “friaries,” indicating that the members are mendicant friars (e.g., the Franciscans).

**PROFESSION** The word profession used to describe the act by which individuals formally become members of a religious community. Customarily, the act of making religious vows will be
expressed with some descriptive modifiers such as “monastic profession” or the “profession of vows.” The word is also used in the ritual when speaking of the Rite of Profession. The novice or junior to be professed will, during a formal ritual celebration (usually joined to the Eucharist), read from a document written by the individual expressing his or her commitment. This commitment may be made for a period of time (e.g., three years) or for life. Thus, people will speak of “temporary vows” or of “perpetual or solemn vows.”

RULE (OF SAINT BENEDICT) This document contains a Prologue and 73 chapters traditionally ascribed to St. Benedict of Nursia. Historians place its composition around the year 530 A.D. at Montecassino. Usually described as “wisdom literature” rather than a legislative document, most historians of the Rule suggest Benedict’s dependence upon an earlier anonymous document known as “The Rule of the Master.” Regarded as a model of legislative discretion, the Rule became an important document in the ninth century when it was imposed upon European monasteries during the reign of Charlemagne. St. Benedict of Aniane was a key figure in this movement and is considered a second founder of what is now referred to as the Order of St. Benedict. It should be kept in mind that the Benedictines do not have a central government (e.g., a Superior General) and each monastery is autonomous, though monasteries will generally belong to a congregation or federation of monasteries joined for mutual support.

SENIORS In the Rule, the word senior is used to describe the older monks who have lived the monastic life and can share their wisdom with the juniors. The word is also used to refer to the members of the abbot’s council (see Council).

SEXT In the Divine Office prior to the reform of Vatican Council II, Sext was one of the “minor hours” and was ideally to be celebrated at the “sixth hour” or about 12:00 noon.
SISTER A term commonly used for women in religious life. In male communities, the term “Brother” is used for the non-ordained members, while priests are usually addressed as “Father.”

STABILITY One of the traditional vows mentioned in the formula of profession. This is the first of the three vows mentioned in the formula and commits the individual to live out the monastic life within the specific community. This is in stark contrast to most modern religious orders and congregations where the individual may be assigned to any number of religious houses of that institute over the course of time. Some non-Benedictine institutes include a vow of stability that is interpreted as a commitment to the vowed life and the institute. In this case it has little in common with the local stability idea of monastic living.

STATIO The Latin term used to describe “order in the community” (see entry).

SUSCIPE This Latin word, translated as “receive,” is the first word of the petition sung by the newly-professed monastic: “Receive me, O Lord, in accordance with your word and I shall live, and do not disappoint me in my hope.” Taken from Psalm 119:116, St. Benedict has this petition sung three times by the one professing vows, and each time it is repeated by the community. This action follows the prescription of the Rule in Chapter 58 where the rite of profession of vows is described. With the liturgy celebrated in the vernacular, the petition is now sung in English, though references to this action may, at times, be made using the Latin term.

TABLE READING In Chapter 38, “The Reader for the Week,” St. Benedict prescribes that “Reading will always accompany the meals of the brothers.” Thus, in most monasteries the main meal of the day (and in some instances the other meals as well) is taken in silence while a community member reads for the assembled community. The reading may include a few different elements: a reading from Holy Scripture, a short reading from a variety of monastic and other
church writers, a section from a contemporary book, and a section from the Rule. In this latter aspect, the Rule is divided in such a way that it is read in its entirety three times a year. There are occasions (e.g., solemnities and feast days) when the superior dispenses with the reading and the community members engage in conversation during the meal. The section from the Rule, however, is always read at the end of these meals.

**TERCE** In the Divine Office prior to the reform of Vatican Council II, Terce was one of the “minor hours” and was ideally to be celebrated at the “third hour” or about 9:00 a.m. In the revision of the Liturgy of the Hours after Vatican Council II, the “minor hours” were joined together as “Daytime Prayer,” though the traditional three minor hours (Terce, Sext, and None) are still celebrated in most enclosed contemplative communities of monks or nuns.

**U.I.O.G.D.** The first letters of the five words of the traditional Benedictine motto “Ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus” (That in all things God may be glorified). These words conclude Chapter 57 of St. Benedict’s Rule and are also a reference to the First Letter of St. Peter 4:11. These words are found in the official seal of Benedictine University.

**VESPERTS** Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours is also referred to as Vespers. The structure of Evening Prayer is similar to that of Morning Prayer (see Lauds) except that two psalms are followed by a New Testament Canticle, and the Magnificat (Mary's song from Luke 1:46-55) replaces the Canticle of Zachary.

**VIGILS (or MATINS)** In Saint Benedict's arrangement of the Divine Office, this was the first office of the day celebrated after the monks arose from sleep (about 3:00 a.m.). It was somewhat longer than any of the other hours of the Divine Office, consisting of a minimum of 12 psalms and the reading of lessons from both Sacred Scripture and the writings of Church Fathers.
VISITATION In the year 1215, the Church Council Lateran IV developed a “congregational system” for Benedictine monasteries (see Congregation). Each Benedictine Congregation has a structure through which monastic members from other monasteries (usually two to four people) reflect with the local community on the quality of their monastic observance, their finances, and any other matters that will help the community in their monastic living. In the American-Cassinese Congregation to which Saint Procopius Abbey belongs, visitations take place every three to five years. At the conclusion of the visitation, the head of the group will present a report of their observations to the community.

VOWS The traditional definition used in the Catholic Church defines a vow as a “promise made to God of a better good.” An individual can make a vow relative to any action that would be of spiritual good. Usually the term is applied to the profession of the evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity, and obedience. Benedictines add stability and conversatio morum. Other religious communities may include other vows with their profession of the traditional three. Vows can be temporary or perpetual. Normally, at the conclusion of the novitiate vows are taken for three years (referred to as triennial vows) after which solemn or perpetual vows may be pronounced. With solemn profession, the Benedictine monastic man or woman becomes a full member of the community and a voting member of the Chapter.

THE WORK OF GOD (see also Opus Dei and Divine Office) In Chapter 43 of his Rule, St. Benedict in speaking of the Divine Office states that “nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.” Using this rather strong language, the monastic founder wanted to stress the importance of these times of prayer designed to praise God. In Chapter 19 the Rule encourages the monks: “... let us stand to sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices.”