

Turning Point #4: Benedictine Monasticism (530 C.E.)



"Are you hastening toward your heavenly home? Then with Christ's help, keep this little rule that we have written for beginners. After that, you can set out for the loftier summits of the teaching and virtues we mentioned above, and under God's protection you will reach them."

—The *Rule* of St. Benedict



I. A Historical Faith

A. Foundations of Christian Monasticism

- *Antony of Egypt — "eremitic" monasticism*
- *Pachomius of Egypt — "cenobitic" monasticism*
- *Martin of Tours*
- *Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–550 C.E.)*

B. Motives of Christian Monasticism

- *Commitment to Christian Scripture*
- *Influence of Ancient Philosophy*
- *Particular Views of Christian Spirituality*

C. The *Rule* of Benedict

A Scriptural Spirituality

Listen carefully, my child, to your master's precepts, and incline the ear of your heart...

—*Rule of Benedict*, Prologue
(Prov. 4:20)

Summer Timetable for the Benedictine Monks at Durham, England (Fourteenth Century)

The monk's daily life is organized around the *opus Dei*, or "work of God," gathering for communal worship seven times a day based on Psalm 119:164, "Seven times a day I praise you." The services include Psalms, hymns, and readings from Scripture.

Midnight	Matins in the church (about one hour) Then back to bed
6 AM	Prime in the church (about ½ hour) Breakfast Work or reading
9 AM	Chapter Mass in the church
10 AM	Chapter meeting in the chapter house
11 AM	High Mass in the church
12 noon	Dinner Then siesta
2 PM	Nones in the church (about ½ hour) Work
4 PM	Vespers in the church (about ½ hour) Work
6 PM	Supper
7 PM	Compline, the evening prayer, in the church (about ½ hour) Then to bed, later in summer than in winter

In winter, Matins was a few hours later, and other adjustments were made throughout the day.¹

1. Anne Boyd, *The Monks of Durham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 16.

A Scheduled Spirituality



D. Later Developments in Christian Monasticism

- *Missionary Expansion*
- *Christian Education*
- *Christian Service*

II. The Interpretation of Scripture

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for my sake will find it**. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

Matthew 16:24–26

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God**. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Matthew 5:1–12



III. Love of God & Love of Neighbor (Matt. 22)

What do these people, places, or events teach me about God?

What do these teach me about myself?

What can I do differently this next week based on something I've learned tonight?



IV. Thought(s) for Next Session

Read and meditate on these texts—and how they relate to one another—before our next session.

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.”

Romans 13:1–4

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 Timothy 2:1–4

Session #4: Primary Sources