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Prayer: the heartbeat of Benedictine spirituality

by Joan Chittister

Benedictine prayer,
the heartbeat of Benedictine spirituality
is always about
the presence of God in time --
this time, our time, my time.

Benedictine prayer is not mindless repetition
of endless formulas.

It is about the immersion in the mind of God
that living the God-life requires,
if we are to be faithful to it
all our living days.

Prayer restores the soul
that is dry and dulled
by years of trying
to create a world
that never completely comes.

It heals the wounds of the day
and reminds us who we want to be
at the deepest, truest part of us.

Prayer lightens the load.
It gives fresh direction and new energy.

It fixes the eye of the soul
on the real ends of life,
when the real goals of real time
seem unattainable.

It feeds the streams
of silence and sacred reading,
public and private prayer,
that are the pulse
of Benedictine life.

Benedictine prayer is steeped
in the psalms --
the cry of the poor throughout time.

It immerses us in the fullness of the scriptures
and their history of salvation.

It fills us with the Gospel accounts
of the life and message of Jesus.

As regular as the movement of the clock,
Benedictine prayer becomes for us
the pulse of the day,
the rhythm of a life that might otherwise
be caught in the drumbeat
of ambition or profit or self-centeredness.

Prayer is the sustaining force
of a Monastery of the Heart
in a demanding world.

Prayer in the Benedictine tradition,
and so in a Monastery of the Heart,
springs from the reflection and soul-wrestling
that brings us to the bar of our deepest selves,
seeking forgiveness, pleading for strength.

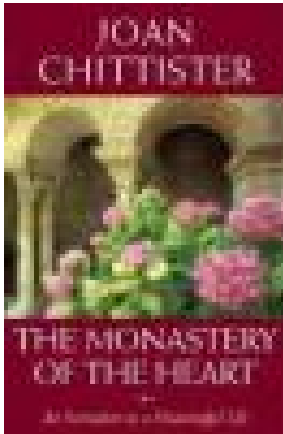
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It is said in concert
with monastics of the heart everywhere,
with those for whom care for the soul
and care for the world
are always equal concerns.

In a Monastery of the Heart,
we do not pray merely to pray.

We pray to become
more a sign of the mind of God today
than we were yesterday.

The Benedictine prays
to put on the mind of God
more and more
and forever more.



[This reflection comes from Sr. Joan Chittister's book *The Monastery of the Heart:*

An Invitation to a Meaningful Life (BlueBridge).]

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