

LOCKDOWN DAY 106 – 10 JULY 2020

Molweni beloved family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-8

Hymn: *To God be the glory*

We continue with our reflection on St Benedict, who is remembered in the Church's calendar today.

In all that he did, Benedict's purpose was that *"in all things God shall be glorified."* For him, God is to be found everywhere and in everything – in the abbot and in the monks, in the guests and in the pilgrims, in the Divine Office and even in the spades and hoes which the monk uses for his work. The famous motto *"Ora et labora"* (Pray and work) comes from him. Benedict's God-centredness was at the same time genuine humanism, as it reconciles the transcendence of prayer with the human work that seeks to conquer the world. In what he taught and did, Benedict stands out as "the man of God" as St Gregory the Great calls him.

Benedict also established several convents where holy women followed his rule. He appointed St Scholastica, his twin sister, as head of one of these convents.

In early 543 Benedict announced that he would die on 21 March. When he was about to die, he was taken inside the church, *"he raised his hands, and with words of prayer, gave up his spirit"*, as St Gregory records. Two monks who were far, and separated from each other, saw a beautiful path, well decorated, leading from the saint's cell to heaven. An angel said to them, *"This is the path by which the beloved of the Lord, Benedict, ascended up to heaven"*. Benedict's body was buried at Monte Cassino, in the same grave where his sister St Scholastica was buried.

The Order of St Benedict has many branches and has spread all over the world. It has provided the church with no fewer than 24 Popes, about 4 600 Bishops and more than 5 000 Saints. The Benedictines have done pioneering work in the missions and in liturgical reform and have offered the world valuable service in the field of art, natural sciences, herbal medicines and farming. During the Dark Ages the monks preserved precious Greek and Roman classics by copying them.

St Benedict is the master of combining and harmonising prayer and work, contemplation and action. He shows us that work and prayer can be beautifully blended. He teaches us the dignity of manual labour. Every monastery was to be self-supporting and a source of support to the poor and the needy. For God's sake we must bear the fatigue and pains of work doing whatever work is necessary, for in the souls of idle men and women, grace finds no response. This teaching of St Benedict only confirms the wisdom of the saying, *"An idle person's mind is the workshop of the devil."*

In the text from Philippians, we are also reminded not to rejoice in ourselves and our achievements but **in the Lord** and not just sometimes but always, however difficult our circumstances. Paul urges a **gentleness** that everyone can see, reflecting the humility of Jesus. He reminds us of the **nearness of the Lord**. When he urges the Philippians not to be **anxious about anything** he was not saying that **anxiety** is sinful.

In these days of Covid-19, let us share with one another what is causing us to be **anxious**. We are not called upon to come up with solutions, but we are called upon to pray about such things. The consequence of such a prayerful lifestyle is that the **peace of God will guard our hearts**, the centre of our emotional life and our **minds**, our intellect. Against what? Against harm in general, perhaps, but specifically against becoming anxious.

St Benedict was a teenager when he knew that God was calling him to the monastic life. As a church we need to be nurturing young vocations for the monastic life or for the ordained ministry. Remember that we have three 'Brothers' at Volmoed, outside of Hermanus, who would willingly talk to anyone about the monastic life. They are from the Order of the Holy Cross. We also need to be encouraging the vocation of the Distinctive Diaconate.

I encourage you to draw a **clock** and truthfully allocate how much time you spend doing what during the day. Do we need to improve our rhythm and balance of work, prayer, study, exercise, family and friends time, sleep and whatever else the good Lord is placing in our hearts and mind?

There is so much that St Benedict is remembered for? What would you like to be remembered for?

Today, please **reach out** to any twins who you know, anyone who bears the name Benedict or members of a church named after St Benedict. Also reach out to anyone employed in manual labour.

In our prayers, we remember the Brothers and all who live and work at Volmoed and serve on the Board. We pray that we will not lose hope in this season of the Covid-19 pandemic. Every season has an end. In the Western Cape, we are no longer the epicentre of the pandemic but we do pray for Gauteng who are. We pray for strength not to be careless in our behaviour. We thank God for the rain and we pray for the many for whom the rain is causing havoc. We pray for our blessed dead who have given up their spirit and taken the beautiful path leading to heaven. We praise God that even though times may be tough, no one or nothing can snatch us out of God's loving, holy, gentle, healing hands. Amen

I am, Because We are, Because God is ... Opening hearts to heal God's world. *God be with you this weekend.*
Goodbye