



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Benedictine Spirituality and the Saint Louis Priory School

Reverend Gregory Mohrman, O.S.B., 3/18/96

Introduction

*Therefore we intend to establish a school for the Lord's service.
In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh,
nothing burdensome. The good of all concerned, however, may
prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to
safeguard love.*

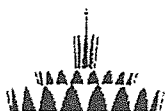
I have long believed that the Rule which St. Benedict established in the 5th century for his monks, and which to this day provides the spiritual and moral foundation for hundreds of Christian communities throughout the world, could form the basis for a kind of “operating ethos” for a school. The most obvious connections Benedict himself makes—he calls his monastery a “school” for the Lord’s service, and makes the teacher/disciple theme one of the most prominent ways to describe the relationship between a monk and his Abbot.

But in other, less obvious ways, the Rule seems a fit blueprint for establishing the moral and spiritual guidelines of a school, for both a monastery and a Catholic school are intentional communities where members gather together around a common vision (centered in an experience of God). Whether monastery or school, whether ancient or modern, the fundamental struggles are the same, because the basic challenge of forming a Christian community of mutual love and respect from a conglomeration of weak (and sinful) human beings is as real to us as it was to St. Benedict. And so I believe that his wisdom and vision of how to form a Christian community has much to say to us who strive to form a Catholic school in the Benedictine tradition. What follows is my attempt to articulate what in his Rule speaks to our school.

Listening

*Listen carefully my son, to the (master's) instructions, and attend
to them with the ear of your heart. This is advise from a (father)
who loves you; welcome it and faithfully put it into practice.*

The Rule of St. Benedict begins with the word “listen,” and the notion of listening forms a prominent motif throughout. A monastery (and therefore a school in the Benedictine tradition) should be a place of listening—where people listen to one another, to the written word, to that inner voice of inspiration and discernment. Most important is the quality of the listening—with the ear of the heart. This suggests an attention to the other, but not in order to launch the next critical salvo, not to score points or make



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



someone look bad. Listening with the ear of the heart means listening in order to take into oneself the core (the heart) of what the other person is saying.

For a Benedictine School, this quality of listening has enormous implications for how teachers attend to students, students to one another, to their teachers, etc. A Benedictine School that is true to the spirit of the founder would be a place where a lot more listening was done than talking.

A (brother) may be assigned a burdensome task or something (he) cannot do. If so, (he) should, with complete gentleness and obedience, accept the order given. Should (he) see, however, that the weight of the burden is altogether too much for (his) strength, then (he) should choose the appropriate moment and explain patiently to (his superior) the reasons why (he) cannot perform the task. This (he) ought to do without pride, obstinency, or refusal. If after the explanation the (superior) is still determined to hold his original order, then the (junior) must recognize that this is the best for (him). Trusting in God's help, (he) must in love obey.

Perhaps nowhere would such listening be more important than in cases when "impossible" tasks occur. Hardly a day goes by in a school that some teacher or student isn't put into what feels like an impossible situation. St. Benedict makes it clear that when placed in such a situation, the person in distress should feel "listened" to, even if the burden is not removed, and that such attention "with the ear of the heart" can offer great strength to the individual and even empower him or her to accomplish the task that seemed impossible. But clearly, such listening on the part of the "superior" (be it teacher, Department head, or administrator) must also convey compassion and concern, never arrogance or cruelty.

In the end, such listening with the heart, by teacher and student, is what Benedict understands lies at the center of obedience.

Worship and Prayer

The defining characteristic of a Benedictine monastery is that it is a community whose very identity is rooted in the liturgical worship of God. That being the case, a school rooted in the Benedictine tradition would likewise find its identity significantly in liturgical worship. Benedict's rationale for the prominence of the liturgical life in the monastery is clear in his Rule:

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere and that in every place the eyes of the Lord are watching the good and the wicked. But beyond the least doubt we should believe this is to be especially true when we celebrate (the divine office). We must always remember,



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



therefore, what the Prophet says: "Serve the Lord with fear," and again "Sing praise wisely;" and "In the presence of the angels I will sing to you." Let us consider, then, how we ought to behave in the presence of God and his angels, and let us stand to sing (the psalms) in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices.

For Benedict, the liturgy is merely the place where we become more clearly aware of what is always the case—that God is present and active at every moment in every place. Thus the liturgy helps us see God better, and is a tool to make mind and voice (will and action) harmonize (become integrated in the presence of divine grace). For the Benedictine School, public worship is the moment when we tell ourselves who we are, why we are here, and who is at the center of our lives. Yet, public worship should not be unduly burdensome. For Benedict sees prayer as something short and to the point:

We must know that God regards our purity of heart. . .not our many words. Prayer should therefore be short and pure, unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace. In community, however, prayer should always be brief; and when the (superior) gives the signal, all should rise together.

Benedict also admonishes that the *Our Father* be said regularly, in order to focus everyone's attention on the need for mutual forgiveness

Assuredly, the celebration of (Lauds and Vespers) must never pass by without the reciting of the entire Lord's Prayer at the end for all to hear, because thorns of contention are likely to spring up. Thus warned by the pledge they make to one another in the very words of this prayer: "Forgive us as we forgive," they may cleanse themselves of this kind of vice.

Thus, every time during the week that the School gathers is an opportunity for (and a reminder of) the need all have (students and teachers alike) to give and receive forgiveness from one another. Each time prayer is said—at Assemblies and Mass, at the beginning of class or a meeting, before a game or event—is a moment for all gathered to recognize the debt each owes to the other—the debt of forgiveness.

First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to God most earnestly to bring it to perfection.

Finally, Benedict admonishes that prayer should begin any (and every) good work; so in a Benedictine School, a short prayer beginning class, sports, a meal, should be the norm.

The Art of Teaching



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Most of what Benedict has to say about teaching comes from those chapters that give the “job description” for the Abbot. As can be seen from the excerpts that follow, several important themes emerge.

First, in Benedict’s mind one teaches far more by example than by actual instruction, so teachers, coaches, and administrators in a Benedictine School should be very conscious of the “teaching” they give in their actions.

The (Abbot) must never teach or decree or command anything that would deviate from the Lord’s instructions. On the contrary, everything (he) teaches and commands should, like the heaven of divine justice, permeate the minds of (his) (disciples).

The example that adults set in a Benedictine School (or any school for that matter) is crucial to the “teaching” they impart to their students. Thus, it is imperative that all adults be vigorously diligent that they do not “send mixed messages” by what they do or how they act, and that they are as sensitive as they can be to how their example will be perceived by the young.

Anyone who receives the name of (Abbot) is to lead (his) (disciples) by a twofold teaching: (he) must point out to them all that is good and holy more by example than by words, proposing the commandments of the Lord to receptive (disciples) with words, but demonstrating God’s instructions to the stubborn and the dull by a living example. Again, if (he) teaches (his) (disciples) that something is not to be done, then neither must (he) do it. . . .

Another prominent theme applicable to teaching concerns the need for the teacher (or administrator) to be sensitive to the weaknesses of those under his or her care. While Benedictine monasteries were obviously places of strict discipline, and while Benedict himself will not tolerate making any excuses for faults (and especially for stubborn willfulness), there is throughout the Rule a concern that those who hold authority over others (be they teacher, coach or administrator) be understanding and compassionate in the face of human frailty.

Excitable, anxious, extreme, obstinate, jealous or over suspicious (he) must not be. Such a one is never at rest. Instead, (he) must show forethought and consideration in (his) (orders), and whether the task he assigns concerns God or the world, (he) should be discerning and moderate, bearing in mind the discretion of holy Jacob, who said: ‘If I drive my flocks too hard, they will all die in a single day.’ Therefore, drawing on this and other examples of discretion, the mother of virtues, (he) must so arrange everything that the



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from.

In addition, Benedict's admonition that the Abbot "play fair" in his dealings with his monks, strikes a chord when considering teachers and their students.

The (abbot) should avoid all favoritism in the (monastery). (He) is not to love one more than another unless (he) finds someone better in good actions (and obedience). (. . .) Only in this are we distinguished in (God's) sight: if we are found better than others in good works (and in humility). Therefore, the (Abbot) is to show equal love to everyone and apply the same discipline to all according to their merits.

In a Benedictine School, the goal is for all teachers and administrators to love each and every student equally, passing on the love they themselves have received from Christ. While this may never happen fully in the midst of our human frailty, the minimum expectation of such a school would be that each and every student is treated with fairness and respect, according to the merit of his deeds.

The (Abbot) must always remember what (he) is and remember what (he) is called, aware that more will be expected of one to whom more has been entrusted. (He) must know what a difficult and demanding burden (he) has undertaken: coaxing, reproving and encouraging them as appropriate. (He) must accommodate and adapt (himself) to each one's character and intelligence . . .

Discipline

A great deal of the Rule of St. Benedict is given over to the disciplinary issues—how one deals with those who break the rules. In the Rule, the chief disciplinarian is the Abbot, but what is said of him is quite applicable to the teacher in the classroom, the Advisor, or the Dean of Students

In (his) teaching, the (Abbot) should always observe the Apostle's recommendation, in which he says: "Use argument, appeal, reproof (2. Tim. 4:2)." This means (he) must vary with circumstances, threatening and coaxing by turns, stern as a taskmaster, devoted and tender as only a (father) can be. With the undisciplined and restless, he will use firm argument;



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



with the obedient and docile and patient, he will appeal for greater virtue; but as for the negligent and disdainful, we charge (him) to use reproof and rebuke. (He) should not gloss over the (sins) of those who err, but cut them out while (he) can, as soon as they begin to sprout. . . .

There ought to be due proportion between the seriousness of a fault and the measure of . . . discipline.

It is clear that Benedict does not subscribe to a “one size fits all” mentality. One must tailor the response to the situation, the person concerned, and the severity of the infraction. This suggests there is no simple way to draw up a “penal code” in a Benedictine School, for each case needs to be taken on its own merits. But, Benedict does not advocate toleration of wrongdoing, since he urges that the situation be attended to as soon as “the bud sprouts.”

The (Abbot) must exercise the utmost care and concern for wayward (brothers), because it is not the healthy who need a physician, but the sick. Therefore, (he) ought to use every skill of a wise physician and send in senpectae, that is, mature and wise (brothers) who, under the cloak of secrecy, may support the wavering (brother), urge (him) to be humble as a way of making satisfaction, and console (him) lest he be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Rather, as the Apostle also says: Let love for him be reaffirmed, and let all pray for him.

The Rule places a high value on discretion; thus, wayward “brothers” are dealt with in ways that safeguard their dignity and reputation. A Benedictine School would likewise follow this principle and try to employ ways of discipline and correction that do not humiliate or defame.

It is the (Abbot's) responsibility to have great concern and to act with all speed, discernment and diligence in order not to lose any of the (sheep) entrusted to (him). (He) should realize that he has undertaken care of the sick, not tyranny over the healthy. (. . .) (He) is to imitate the loving example of the Good Shepherd who left the ninety-nine and went in search of the one who was lost. So great was his compassion for its weakness, that he mercifully placed it on his sacred shoulders and so carried it back to the flock.

It is vital to note how Benedict handles extreme cases—when all else fails, the Abbot calls the community together to pray for the person, that God might intervene and work a miracle of grace. While a Benedictine School might not be so blatant in its



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



method, those involved in discipline should see fervent intercessory prayer as an essential component of the most serious disciplinary cases. All those involved in such cases should take to heart Benedict's instruction.

If a (brother) has been reproved frequently for any fault, . . . yet does not amend, let (him) receive a sharper punishment. . . But if even then (he) does not reform, or perhaps becomes proud and would actually defend (his) conduct, which God forbid, the (Abbot) should follow the procedure of a wise physician. After (he) has applied compresses, the ointment of encouragement, the medicine of divine Scripture, (. . .) and if (he) then perceives that (his) earnest efforts are unavailing, let (him) apply an even better remedy: (he) and all the (brothers) should pray for the wrongdoer so that the Lord, who can do all things, may bring about the health of the sick (brother). Yet, if even this procedure does not heal them, then finally, the (abbot) must use the knife and amputate. . . lest one diseased sheep infect the whole flock.

In a school founded on such a tradition, only after such fervent prayer would ultimate sanctions be an option.

The discipline code of the Rule also makes an important distinction that a Benedictine School should keep in mind. While Benedict does not tolerate infractions, he responds with compassion to those instances rooted in weakness or negligence. What generates the severest response is obstinacy or willfulness (what in Benedict's mind is an offense against humility). Likewise, in a Benedictine School, it is the manner in which one responds to correction that is perhaps more important than the original fault itself.

Finally, the Rule makes clear that discipline is a tool used for the good of the individual and the community, not a club in the hand of a tyrant. The purpose of discipline is not to give a teacher or administrator a sense of power over a student. Thus, the goal in Benedictine schools would be for all those who must exercise discipline to do so in a way that they strive "to be loved rather than feared."

(He) should always let "mercy triumph over judgment" so that (he) too may win mercy. (He) must hate faults but love the (brothers). When (he) must punish them, (he) should use prudence and avoid extremes; otherwise, by rubbing too hard to remove the rust, (he) may break the vessel. (He) is to distrust (his) own frailty and remember 'not to crush the bruised reed.' By this we do not mean that (he) should allow faults to flourish, but rather, as we have already said (he) should prune them away with prudence and love as (he) sees best for each individual. Let him strive to be loved rather than feared.



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Leadership/Delegation

Benedict's monastery was an autocracy, where the will of the Abbot was the final arbiter of all decisions. Yet, despite this, Benedict incorporated into the life of the monastery a variety of ways for delegation and consensus building. While the Abbot made the decision, he was obligated to listen (with the ear of his heart) to all the members of the community, in order to make the best decision.

As often as anything important is to be done in the (monastery), the (abbot) shall call the whole (community) together and (himself) explain what the business is; and after hearing the advice of the (brothers), let (him) ponder it and follow what (he) judges the wiser course. The reason why we have said all should be called for counsel is that the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger. The (brothers), for their part, are to express their own opinions with all humility, and not presume to defend their own views obstinately. The decision is rather the (Abbot's) to make, so that when (he) has determined what is more prudent, all may obey. Nevertheless, just as it is proper for (disciples) to obey their (master), so it is becoming for the (master) on (his) part to settle everything with foresight and fairness. (. . .) If less important business of the (monastery) is to be transacted, he shall take counsel with the (seniors) only. . . .

Thus, despite its apparent undemocratic structure, the monastery was a place where what people had to say got listened to. Clearly, in schools (in the classroom) Benedict's political perspective can be quite valuable—while schools may not be democracies (and classrooms certainly aren't), a Benedictine school should be a place where everyone has a voice and feels heard (even if their advice is not always followed). Similarly, such a school should be a place where, once one has been "heard" (whether student or faculty), one is able to accept the decision made by those in authority (teachers, Department head, Administration).

If the (community) is rather large, some (brothers) chosen for their good repute and holy life should be made (deans). They will take care of their (groups of ten), managing all affairs accordingly to the commandments of God and the order of their (Abbot). The (deans) selected should be the kind of (men) with whom the (Abbot) can confidently share the burdens of (his) office. They are to be chosen for virtuous living and wise teaching, not for their rank.



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Benedict allowed for delegation in his monastery. In the school setting, what is telling is the sense one has that the “Deans” of the school have even more of a responsibility to set the proper example, and have those qualities of character and disposition that puts others at ease. Benedict’s description of the cellarer (a kind of business manager) is applicable to all school administrators and department heads (as well as to teachers in the classroom).

As (cellarer of the monastery), there should be chosen from the (community) someone who is wise, mature in conduct, temperate, not an excessive eater, not proud, excitable, offensive, dilatory or wasteful, but God-fearing, and like a (father) to the whole (community). (. . .) (He) should not annoy the (brothers). If any (brother) happens to make an unreasonable demand of (him), (he) should not reject (him) with disdain and cause (him) distress, but reasonably and humbly deny the improper request. (. . .) (He) must show every concern for the sick, children, guests and the poor. . . (He) will regard all utensils and goods of the (Monastery) as sacred vessels of the altar, aware that nothing is to be neglected. (He) should not be prone to greed, nor be wasteful and extravagant with the goods of the (monastery), but should do everything with moderation. . . .

Benedict’s discussion of the cellarer also raises the issue of stewardship. In his Rule, Benedict links liturgy with life, the chapel with the dining hall, the tools of one’s craft with the vessels of the altar. If one succeeds in allowing liturgy to speak of the whole of one’s life, then one’s work becomes a kind of para-liturgy (an act of worship). Thus all one does, all the tools and resources of the monastery (the school) are charged with a spiritual significance.

The theme of stewardship is also picked up by Benedict in his chapter on the Artisans of the Monastery, which becomes particularly applicable if one sees the work of education in a Benedictine school as a kind of “craft.”

Whenever products of these artisans are sold, those responsible for the sale must not dare to practice any fraud. Let them always remember Ananias and Sapphira, who incurred bodily death, lest they and all who perpetrate fraud in (monastery) affairs suffer spiritual death. The evil of avarice must have no part in establishing prices, which should, therefore, always be a little lower than people outside the monastery are able to set, “so that in all things God may be glorified.”



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Whether or not this theme in the Rule has any direct impact on how a Benedictine school sets its fees, the underlying notion of frugality and modesty should be operative in any school formed by the Benedictine tradition. Above all, it is important to see the complementary elements at work—first to avoid the vice of avarice and second to see the fixing of a lower price as an offering to God. In a world that is so consumed by commercialism and materialism, even the most frugal of charitable institutions needs to avoid that form of avarice which is an excessive preoccupation with fiscal affairs, for such as these “are never at rest.” While it is important that those responsible for such matters exercise prudent stewardship, it is equally important that they keep such preoccupations in proper perspective, which ultimately entails an act of faith that God will be the final good steward of the school.

Finally, in this matter, Benedict seems to suggest that the fixing of a lower price (eg. tuition) is a kind of witness. It may well be that in our time, such a witness will be even more needed.

Hospitality

All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me. (. . .) Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received. . . .

Benedict’s teaching on hospitality is particularly important for a Benedictine school because hospitality operates on so many levels. The key notion in hospitality is to see and reverence in each and every guest the presence of Christ.

Clearly, this applies most directly to those “guests” the school receives regularly—a visitor or guest speaker; prospective new students and their parents who come to visit for a day; those who deliver the mail or packages. But it also applies equally to some others—visiting teams and opponents in competitions; our students’ dates at school dances; those visitors attending school functions. Ultimately every student and every lay teacher, all the parents and families associated with the school are “guests” and all should be revered by every member of the school community accordingly.

The Moral Climate of the School



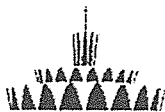
SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



What follows are three excerpts from the Rule which detail the norms of behavior in the monastery that seem applicable to a Benedictine School. Taken as a whole, they sketch a portrait of a community where individuals are respected, differences resolved in a timely and charitable manner, and all live and work with a sensitivity to each other's needs. A utopia, certainly, yet it is not a bad thing to strive for.

*Love the Lord God with your whole heart, your whole soul
and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.
You are not to steal nor to covet.
You are not to bear false witness.
You must honor everyone, and never do to another what you
do not want done to yourself.
Renounce yourself in order to follow Christ.
You must relieve the lot of the poor, clothe the naked, visit the
sick, and bury the dead.
Go to help the troubled and console the sorrowing.
Your way of acting should be different from the world's way.
You are not to act in anger or nurse a grudge.
Rid your heart of all deceit.
Never give a hollow greeting of peace or turn away when
someone needs your love.
... speak the truth with heart and tongue.
Do not repay one bad turn with another.
Do not injure anyone, but bear injuries patiently.
Love your enemies.
If people curse you, do not curse them back but bless them instead.
You must not be proud, nor be given to wine.
Refrain from too much eating or sleeping and from laziness.
Do not grumble or speak ill of others.
Place your hope in God alone.
Listen readily to holy readings and devote yourself often
to prayer.
Do not aspire to be called holy before you really are, but
first be holy that you may more truly be called so.
Live by God's commandments every day; harbor neither
hatred nor jealousy of anyone, and do nothing out of envy.
Do not love quarreling; shun arrogance.
Respect the elders and love the young.
Pray for your enemies out of love for Christ.
If you have a dispute with someone, make peace before the
sun goes down.
And finally, never lose hope in God's mercy.*

We absolutely condemn in all places any vulgarity and



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



*gossip. . .and we do not permit a (disciple) to engage
in words of that kind.*

Benedict closes his Rule with this vision of a community striving to grow in love and mutual respect. Needless to say, any school would be well served by such a vision.

*This, then, is the good zeal which (monks) must foster with
fervent love: "They should each try to be first to show respect
to the other," supporting with the greatest patience, one another's
weaknesses of body or behavior. . . . No one is to pursue
what (he) judges better for (himself), but instead, what (he)
judges better for someone else. To their fellow (monks) they
show the pure love of brothers; to God, loving fear; to their
(Abbot), unfeigned and humble love.*

Contemplation

While Benedict never actually uses the term 'contemplation' in his Rule, it is evident that what contemplation is and the effect it has on human life is central to the Benedictine ideal. That being the case, the notion of contemplation and the contemplative life should also find a place in a Benedictine School.

In his 'biography' of Benedict, St. Gregory the Great relates an incident which occurred shortly before Benedict's death, where he was granted a powerful mystical experience by God—according to St. Gregory, Benedict saw the whole world gathered into a single ray of light. It became the "peak experience" for the man of God, who had been schooled in the discipline of monastic life for so many years.

What makes contemplation important to Benedictine spirituality is precisely this notion of "gathering all things together," and in that holistic experience touching into the heart of God. Contemplation is what happens when one experiences the unity of all things in the Spirit—it is a joining together of heaven and earth, the material and physical, in a moment of insight and vision. It leaves one humbled, with a sense of awe and gratitude, and above all with a conviction of the ultimate unity of all things.

Benedict hints at this contemplative vision when he talks about the Divine presence being everywhere. A contemplative vision makes one powerfully aware of that presence.

I believe that this understanding of contemplation should have a profound effect on a Benedictine School—on the way people in it see one another, experience the environment in which they live and work, and even the way they teach and learn.

Clearly contemplation should lead us to see even more powerfully the presence (the "real" presence) of Christ in each other—that should have a profound effect on how we treat each other. Secondly, the more one gains a contemplative vision, the more one sees in the world (in nature, in art, the physical environment) "signs" of the presence of God—that should have a profound effect on how a school treats the facilities and values the environment in which it is situated. Finally, a contemplative vision has a profound



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



effect on learning, for every academic discipline becomes a reflection of some facet of the divine mind—teaching and learning become occasions for union

with that mind, a kind of act of worship. Learning and teaching are no longer means to an end, no longer learning for “learning’s sake,” but rather for “God’s sake.”

Humility

I cannot conclude these reflections without some discussion of humility—that core spiritual value that Benedict sees as absolutely central to the monastic way of life. If this is so, then humility must be important in a Benedictine School.

Benedict’s teaching on humility is long and highly contextualized by the culture of his time. What strikes me as important for a Benedictine School is the key notion that humility is about truth—it is not about false modesty, nor about low self-esteem. Humility is about seeing oneself as God sees. It is about acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses—about taking credit and accepting proper blame. But, above all, humility is about my understanding that I am not the center of the universe—it is about rejecting narcissism and egoism, and accepting that I must live in an interdependent relationship with others. Humility is about accepting that what I do has an impact on others, that what they do has an impact on me, and that together we must all live in the light of that truth. Ultimately, humility demands I accept my dependent relationship to God—the virtue of humility makes that acceptance joyful.

What would characterize humility in a Benedictine School? It would be joy—a joyful acceptance that one is in one’s place, in right relationship with others, an absence of resentment that I am not in control, not the one to make decisions, etc. And I believe the key to fostering humility is “listening with the ear of one’s heart.” Most students will be genuinely humble, and gladly accept the fact that they are not in control of much of what determines their lives in school, if they feel that what is in their hearts is listened to by their teachers and administrators; and I believe the same is true for most faculty with respect to the School Administration. Humility is what happens when people experience being affirmed for who they are—that is why it is at the heart of Benedict’s Rule, and at the heart of every Benedictine School.

There, at the center of it all is the humility of God himself, whose example shows us the way to live not for ourselves but for him. If a Benedictine School is anything at all, it must be centered on the Lord, whose presence is manifested in worship and work, in the bonds of compassion between teacher and student, and among all students and teachers; whose wisdom is spoken in class and at church; whose love guides the decisions and actions of all. If Christ is not at the heart

of the school, then it is nothing; if he is, then it truly is a “school of the Lord’s service.” As Benedict himself says:

Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.