

STATIO JANUARY 2011

THE GOAL OF LIFE ACCORDING TO St. BENEDICT

The beginning of each year is a gift of God and a challenge to use the time given well. We do not know whether we shall see the end of this year alive or will God call us to give account? Let us go back to the basics of our religious life and plan and live accordingly.

St. Benedict speaks:

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. Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset.

But as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love.

Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom.

RB Prol 45-50

Now, therefore, after ascending all these steps of humility, the monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear.

Through this love, all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue.

All this the Lord will by the Holy Spirit graciously manifest in his workman now cleansed of vices and sins.

RB 7:67-70

These, then, are the tools of the spiritual craft.

When we have used them without ceasing day and night and have returned them on judgment day, our wages will be the reward the Lord has promised. *What the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, God has prepared for those who love Him.*

The workshop where we are to toil faithfully at all these tasks is the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the community.

RB 4:75-78

Therefore:

- There is a goal in the Kingdom to come;
- There is a goal in this life: the heart overflowing with love, inexpressible delight of love, good habit and delight in virtue and doing good, out of love for Christ.

- In order to arrive there a spiritual discipline is needed, spiritual tools to cleanse the heart and to overcome the obstacles (that is the “vices”, the negative mechanisms). That means the spiritual battle of our hearts and bodies, Prol 40.

The Spiritual battle – militia Christi

This is an important expression with Benedict and with the desert monks.

The battle for the true King, Christ the Lord Prol 3

To fight the spiritual battle for the sake of Christ, or

To fight in the spirit.

St. Paul advises us as follows:

Finally, grow strong in the Lord, with the strength of his power. Put on the full armour of God so as to be able to resist the devil’s tactics. For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the principalities and the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world, the spirits of evil in the heavens. That is why you must take up all God’s armour, or you will not be able to put up any resistance on the evil day, or stand your ground even though you exert yourselves to the full. Eph 6:10-13

We must then prepare our hearts and bodies for the battle of holy obedience to his instructions. Prol 40

The ladder erected is our life on earth, and if we humble our hearts the Lord will raise it to heaven. We may call our body and soul the sides of this ladder. RB 7:8

All these texts we know well.

- What do they mean for my life in the year of 2011?
- What are my goals?
- What does the spiritual battle mean for me, for my body and for my soul?
- What is my spiritual discipline?
- Do I practice daily for the battle as every sportsman, soldier has to do?

In our society it is strange to be poor, celibate, obedient, prayerful. But if we water down these basic values so that our life becomes comfortable and just like the life everyone leads, then religious life will have lost its inner meaning. When we make religious life so comfortable that we have everything we want, then there is no reason to leave, but then there is no reason to enter either. *Peter van Breemen SJ*

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