

## Life in Balance—A Benedictine Study Group

Welcome! We are glad that you are here tonight. Here are a few notes on tonight's gathering that we hope will help you make the most of this experience. We use the Rule of Benedict, an ancient yet still wise guide, in our search for a life centered in God. We journey together, sharing our joys and concerns, as we seek a life of balance, a way to live well with those around us and discovery of the holy in our everyday lives.

There is a facilitator who will guide us through the evening schedule as follows:

- 7:15 – Quiet time, personal prayer
  - Welcome
  - Reading from *The Rule of Benedict - Insights for the Ages*
  - Discussion
- 7:55 – Centering Prayer (18 minutes)
- 8:15 – next week's reading
- 8:25 – Compline
- 8:30 – Farewell

About silence – You'll note that we begin with a time of silence as we transition from the noise and the business of our lives bringing us to this time and place. You are invited to use these few minutes of quiet to let go of the cares of the day and to open your centers of awareness and listening. After our discussion we will enter into a longer period of silence in Centering Prayer.

We take time for Centering Prayer after our discussion to offer ourselves to God in silence and with intention simply to "be". At the beginning of this time, you may move about the room to sit or be more comfortable in chairs or on the floor. The beginning of prayer time will be signaled by the ringing of the bell. If you have never practiced this type of prayer before, it might feel strange, and, undoubtedly, your grocery or to-do lists and today's concerns, etc., will cross your mind. The idea is to let them go, opening your mind and heart to God's leading and guidance. Some people find it helpful to have a word, such as alleluia, Jesus, balance...to repeat when these other thoughts break into your mind. In the stillness of the room and of your mind, may your awareness of God's presence and love give you peace.

Sharing and discussion – We have gathered together to share our experience of this way of life. In this group we share about our lives infused with the principles of Benedictine spirituality. It is through sharing our experiences that we find God-given strength, wisdom and hope. We treat one another's reflections and statements, as such – God given. We ask that you share how the reading, your daily practice of the Rule and the sharing in the group has opened a way to greater understanding or learning in your own life and not judge or give advice directly to another person. Remember that each person will find their own path and guide on this journey of gospel living.

### Covenant of Respect and Confidentiality

Our time together is guided by Benedictine principles as set forth in Benedict's Rule of Life. We find these rules to be sound and wise for our own way of living with one another. As such, here are the community norms and expectations that guide our time together:

1. Allow others to speak without interrupting.
2. Acknowledge differences of opinion or values in a positive way.
3. Support one another through joys and concerns. Respect privacy and keep confidentiality.
4. Respect and maintain the silences in our gathering time.
5. Pause before talking, giving others an opportunity to take in what has just been said.
6. Respect and maintain beginning and end times; Set your intentions to arrive on time...
7. Maintain non-threatening body language.
8. Be flexible and remember, "There is much grace"!

**Still have questions?** Great - we welcome them! We ask that you would join in the evening as best you can and then find someone at the end of our time together for a more relaxed time to learn about this gathering.