



The Rule of St Benedict and your rules at school

A monastery is a place where men live together as monks to devote their lives to the service of God. A nunnery or convent is where women live as nuns with the same purpose.

When these groups formed they needed a set of rules by which they could organise their lives. St Benedict drew up his rule and it was followed here at the Benedictine monastery at Binham.

Here are some extracts from these 73 rules (chapters)

Chapter 3 On summoning the Brethren to Council

Whenever anything important has to be done in the monastery the Abbot must assemble the whole community and explain what is under consideration. When he had heard the counsel of the brethren, he should give it consideration and then take what seems to him the best course. The reason why we say that all should be called to council is this: It is often a younger brother that the Lord reveals the best course. But the brethren must give their counsel submissively and humbly and not presume stubbornly to defend their opinions. The decision should, however, depend mainly on the Abbot's judgement, and all should be joined in obedience to what he considers the soundest course. But just as it is fitting that disciples should obey their master, so it is incumbent on him to settle everything with foresight and justice.

Chapter 35 The weekly servers in the Kitchen

The brethren should serve one another, and no one should be excused from kitchen duty except for sickness or because he is more usefully engaged elsewhere, because through this service the reward of an increase in charity is gained. For the weak, however, help should be provided so that this duty shall not cause them dejection. Indeed all should have help according to the size of the community and the location. If the community is rather large the cellarer should be excused from kitchen duty and, as we said before, and those who are engaged in more important tasks. The rest should serve one another in turn with charity. The one who is finishing his week's duty does the washing on the Saturday; he should also wash the towels with which the brethren dry their hands and feet. Moreover, he who is ending his week's service together with him who is about to start should wash the feet of all. The outgoing server must restore the crockery he has made use of, washed and intact to the cellarer, and the cellarer must hand it over to the incomer, so that he knows what he is giving out and what he is getting back.

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Chapter 66 The Doorkeepers of the Monastery

At the gate of the monastery, a wise man old man is to be posted, one capable of receiving a message and giving a reply, and whose maturity guarantees that he will not wander round. This doorkeeper should have a cell near the gate, so that persons who arrive may always find someone at hand to give them a reply, As soon as anyone knocks; or a poor man calls out, he should answer 'Thanks be to God', or 'God bless you.' Then with all the gentleness that comes from the fear of God, he should speedily and with the warmth of charity attend to the enquirer.

Compare these rules with those in your school.

How your school is managed and organised?

What are your classroom rules?

Why do communities of people need to have rules?

What is your most important school rule?