

TRADITIONAL CHAPELS IN ALABAMA

Our Lady of Lourdes
Roman Catholic Chapel
Montgomery, Alabama

St. Francis of Assisi
Roman Catholic Chapel
Cullman, Alabama

St. Pius V
Roman Catholic Chapel
Birmingham, Alabama

SCHEDULE OF MASSES

10:30 A.M. - Rosary 10:45 A.M. - Mass (ONLY on First Sunday of each month)	6:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M. Every Sunday 6:00 A.M. - 8:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M. Holy Days	9:10 A.M. - Rosary 9:30 A.M. - Mass (EXCEPT on first Sunday of each month)
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THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST Weekly Bulletin # 528
 September 27, 1998 - - - Green
 Mass of Sunday - - Gl. Cr. Pref. Trin.

(N.B. - In preparation for the Vows of Sister Veronica, O.S.B. we must turn our thoughts, for a moment to Monastic ATTITUDES - but attitudes that are helpful to us - as well.)

!!!CONCERNING MONASTIC SOLITUDE - - - A PROPER CONCEPTION OF IT!!!

Ranking close to SILENCE in its influence upon prayer is MONASTIC SOLITUDE. Solitude, together with silence and reading must be accounted for in the group of formative influences, and as the background to all monastic activity. Whatever applies to the monk in such matters, certainly applies to the nun. So we speak here to both the monk and the nun.

Just as a monk's talk takes its character from his silence, so a monk's manner, movements, and general demeanor and way of behaving will reflect the use which the monk makes of the hours when he is alone. But solitude - habitual recollection - is acquired and maintained by the monk's love of his cell (his room) - his care of his cell. The monk should not leave his cell except for reasons of necessity - for his prayer in church, and for his work - any work which is for the good of his community. In his cell the monk ought to keep his mind directed towards God, so that by watchfulness over his sight and hearing, he does not give offence to God.

To some, this might appear to be rather rigorous - too selfish, if so, then we should remind ourselves that such is done in the classical Benedictine tradition.

The problem for the monk is not only that of preserving for himself a measure of physical solitude, but also that of developing a spiritual solitude out of whatever physical solitude he is able to secure. It is NO GOOD being alone for the sake of being alone! If isolation is not a disposition for something else, it might just as well be abandoned for something else. The isolation which monasticism tries to guarantee for its followers is full of purpose: it is planned as the SETTING FOR PRAYER. Solitude is not the establishment of aloneness but the open avenue for God's approach. Solitude does not stop short at hedging the soul about in the attempt to keep away distractions and interruptions; it goes on to the work of building up a cell of prayer. Solitude is meant to generate prayerfulness (one is not called to be a prayerful man as much as he is called upon to be a MAN OF PRAYER! - there is a great difference here). Solitude, rightly handled, can become charged with the presence of God.

Consequently a man who has no love for being alone, who is by nature gregarious, who loves the company of people around him, whose demeanor reflects worldliness, but who wishes to be a monastic, must soon learn to cultivate a true feeling for solitude. This is not case of living in solitude - it is a case of LIVING SOLITUDE. It will be grace that gives him the attraction in the first place, and grace again that gives him the perseverance in its living and practice. The distinction should perhaps be noted here between the feeling FOR solitude and the feeling OF it. If the solitude is to be fruitful, the attraction must be according to grace and not simply according to nature. To have the feeling of being withdrawn from the world is at best a variable emotion, and a selfish one; it may or may not deepen the soul's recollection. To have the desire of being alone for GOD ALONE - and to see God's love through the solitude, and to desire God's love beyond the love of solitude - this is the authentic quality, and cannot but deepen the soul's recollection.

It is only in solitude, prayer, and silence that a man comes to see below the surface of things and to find his true self. While it is without question that solitude, reluctantly accepted, has the effect of reducing a man's spiritual vigor, causing him to drag his soul along after him in a state of smoldering despair, the right use of both solitude and the means to attain it brings calm, detachment, happiness, peace and joy. Just as fidelity to St. Benedict's injunction about keeping silence until spoken to establishes a deep peace in the soul and helps the activity of prayer, so fidelity to the ideal of solitude does the same. The monk who cherishes his isolation to the extent of leaving the enclosure only when obedience speaks to him, who writes only such letters as are strictly necessary, who does not request ready use of the means of communication available today, finds himself not only freed of much distraction and distress but positively founded in tranquility. In excluding news, gossip, conversation, sight and sound of the outside world from his range of interest, the monk may lay himself open to the charge of narrowness or particularity or of contempt for others, but if he is imposing the restriction called for in his solitude upon himself, for the love of God and on the impulse of grace, he will be no loser. He will have found something precious beyond measure. Far from having a narrowing effect, the resolve will, in fact, widen his horizon, enabling him to see the things of God as they pertain to God, and the things of man as they pertain to man. And he will always keep things in their proper relation.

(Turn page for Conclusion)