

# Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

(St Francis of Assisi Chapel)

[www.christthekingabbey.org](http://www.christthekingabbey.org)

Cullman, Alabama

Every Sunday: 6:00 AM and 10:00 AM

Daily: 6:00 AM

Holy Days of Obligation:

6:00 AM - 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel  
Montgomery, Alabama  
10:45 AM  
Only on first Sunday  
of each month

St Pius V Chapel  
Birmingham, Alabama  
9:30 AM  
Every Sunday except  
first Sunday of each month

FEAST OF SAINT MAURUS, BENEDICTINE ABBOT

Weekly Bulletin #918

## Second Sunday after Epiphany

January 15, 2006 – White

Mass of Feast; GI; Cr; Pref. Saint Benedict; Comm. Sunday

### **THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE**

Character is not imposed. Character is generated. Character is never forced nor imposed upon a child or student or spouse by the parent or teacher or spouse or disciplinarian. Character is never imposed on anybody. Character is generated, and it is generated by example – good and proper and prudent and consistent and honest example – not by the force of words or strict discipline. Words, sometimes firm words, sometimes simple admonitions, are very important to be sure, but the effectiveness of meaningful and good example is by far more powerful and long lasting. The old adage: “Actions speak louder than words,” is certainly true.

Everything said above about character can, but with much greater emphasis, be said about holiness of life. Holiness is not imposed. Holiness cannot be imposed or forced on anybody. Holiness is generated. The force of argument, authoritative directives, threats of hell, polemical words, all these rarely, if ever, bring one to a single degree of lasting holiness of life. Forceful words hardly ever convince. They subdue! They conquer! They do not convince or motivate! More often than not, one submits simply for the sake of peace. Just as subjection does absolutely nothing for any deep rooting of character, neither does subjection do the slightest good for the deep rooting of holiness or sanctity in the soul of anyone. A child (or anyone else) can be trained to be devout, but that does not at all mean that true devotion has been developed in the heart. Subjection does away with all freedom of action. Subjection can easily bring about a permanent deformation of mind and soul in those thus subjected. As a consequence, the one subjected to the unpleasant force of strong and unreasonable religious supervision will always be on the lookout for any opportunity to break away – to “escape”. When the opportunity presents itself – AND IT WILL – the swirling winds of freedom will whirl one around and around and intoxicating excitement and exhilaration will quickly take over with devastating results. Very quickly do the subjection and the discipline of earlier days blow away with the wind. Newfound companions – freedom riding companions – make their dramatic appearance, and soon they will all together go merrily down the road of no return.

When it comes to holiness of life, nothing can or will take the place of quiet, humble, consistent and honest good example which is intermingled with gentle and prudent admonition. A good word given together with good example, consistent good example, sincere and honest good example, cannot but influence the child or the student or the monk or the nun or the husband or the wife. Once the impression of an example – good or bad – has been observed it is then cut into the granite of one’s subconscious recollection and it will never again be totally forgotten. The impression will last throughout one’s entire life. If a break with good and proper religious behavior does ever take place, which God forbid, it can only be hoped that the force and strength of the earlier good formative impressions will always keep some ray of light shining in the shadow of darkness. Whatever action, for good or for bad, that one sees done by another will unfailingly make an impression on somebody. There is always somebody looking and listening, and because of that we place great importance on example.

More than strong words or eloquent dissertations or strict discipline, good example has brought help to souls we know not of, it has had a good effect upon countless numbers of souls, and it has opened the gates of heaven to no telling how many souls who had been racing toward the fiery furnaces of hell.

A final word to just anybody. Self determined and imprudent religious devotions and usages as well as misguided acts of penance and uncontrolled mortification, are, in most cases, harmful and unproductive of the good that is hoped for. The advice of the priest is very necessary. Self determined practices are not nearly so fruitful and efficacious as the unexpected and unplanned acts of patiently born penance and contradictions and suffering which God allows to be imposed upon us by His loving will. Prudence is always the mother of virtue.