

# The Wisdom of Joan Chittister, OSB

## A Biographical Sketch

Joan Chittister, OSB, Erie, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., is a social psychologist, international lecturer, and author of over twenty books. A member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie she is the executive director of Benetvision: A Resource and Research Center for Contemporary Spirituality. She is a past president of the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and has taught on all educational levels. She is a world renowned expert in Benedictine Spirituality in Religious and secular life. She can be reached at [www.eriebenedictines.org/benetvision/index.html](http://www.eriebenedictines.org/benetvision/index.html)

## The Rule Of Benedict

Benedict of Nursia was born in 480 and lived until 547. He wrote a Rule of living in community for monks which still has great life and relevance 1500 years later. Its religious setting notwithstanding, it sets forth sound principles for working and living together.

## Benedict's Rule Through Joan Chittister's Eyes and Heart

(Quoted from the The Wisdom from the Daily - Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today)

## Benedictine spirituality

"Benedictine spirituality offers insight and wisdom where pieties have lost meaning and asceticisms have lost favor...Spirituality is more than churchgoing. It is possible to go to church and never develop spirituality at all. Spirituality is the way in which we express a living faith in a real world."

"Benedictine spirituality is about listening to four realities: the Gospels, the Rule, one another, and the world around us. Most of us listen easily to one or two or these realities, but only with difficulty do we listen to all four."

"Prayer in Benedictine spirituality is not an interruption of our busy lives nor is it a higher act. Prayer is the filter through which we learn, if we listen hard enough, to see our world aright and anew and without which we live life with souls that are deaf and dumb and blind."

## On Community

"...love makes demands. It demands that we use our gifts for our communities as well as for others. It demands that we make relationships a priority. It demands that we make community for others. It demands that we share ourselves, our minds, our insights, and our time with one another. Most of all, it demands that we allow the people in our lives to be who they are and grow as they can."

"The Benedictine spirituality of community is based on life with other persons in the Spirit of Christ: to support them, to empower them, and to learn from them."

## On Work

"Work is not a private enterprise. Work is not to enable me to get ahead; the purpose of work is to enable me to get more human and to make my world more human"

"In Benedictine spirituality, work is what we do to continue what God wanted done. Work is co-creative."

"In Benedictine spirituality, work is purposeful and perfecting and valuable. It is not a time-filler or a money-maker or a necessary evil. We work because the world is unfinished and it is ours to develop. We work with a vision in mind."

"Work is a commitment to God's service."

"The implications of a Benedictine spirituality of work in a world such as this are clear, it seems:

Work is my gift to the world...

Work is the way I am saved from total self-centeredness...

Work gives me a place in salvation. It helps redeem the world from sin...

Work, in the Benedictine vision, is meant to build community...

Work leads to self-fulfillment...

Work is its own asceticism...

Work finally, in the basic Benedictine way of living poverty and being in solidarity with the poor.

## On Hospitality

"Hospitality means we take people into the space that is our lives and our mind and our hearts and our work and our efforts. Hospitality is the way we come out or ourselves. It is the first step toward dismantling the barriers of the world. Hospitality is the way we turn a prejudiced world around, on heart at a time."

"Hospitality is not an excuse for lack of organization or purpose in our own circumstances. No, hospitality is the willingness to be interrupted and inconvenienced so that others can get on with their lives as well."

"Benedictine spirituality says that we must continue to beg the stranger to come into our lives because in the stranger may come the only honesty and insight we can get in our plastic worlds."