

Home Retreat 3.2.24

Life of St Benedict

Fr Chad

If you want to follow up some of the references, here is a modern online version:

<https://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/life%20of%20st%20benedict.pdf>

Prologue	Beginnings / Nurse
1.3-1.5	Romanus
1.8	Shepherds
2.1-2.2	Temptations
3.2-3.4	Vicovaro / first poisoning
7.1-7.3	Maurus and Placid
14.1-14.4	Totila
31.1-31.3	Zalla
33.2-33.5	Scholastica
35.2-35.3	Final vision
36.2	Death

Here are the brief monologues I read out:-

1 - Damaris the nurse

I had always looked after him, from the moment he first opened his lungs and greeted his arrival in the world. His family looked after me and we prayed together every day. I watched him develop, an intense boy with serious eyes and a gentle heart. He didn't say much but when he spoke, it was worth hearing. It was only natural when it came to him going away to study that I should go with him to make sure he was ok. But he wasn't ok. He tried to study, and he worked hard, but he hated the city. It wasn't just people drinking till they were sick, or snatching whatever pleasures they could force from each other. It was the sadness of it all, the desperate grabbing for what was immediate, as though no-one had any faith or hope for a future. He knew his own mind, he knew there must be more than this – and so he just left. I had to go with him though...

2 - The Subiaco shepherds

We couldn't believe it when we found him in that cave. At first we thought we had stumbled across some sort of wild animal, his hair and his beard were so long and his tunic was just rough leather. Once we realised that he was actually a young man, and the shock had worn off, he surprised us even more by the way he welcomed us, as though he had found something in that cave that he wanted to pass on, as though he could see what really mattered. His body was battered and gaunt, but he seemed peaceful and there was this strange mixture of sadness in his eyes and joy in his voice. We're a pretty crude lot of shepherds, but now we want to go back...

3 - The boy Maurus

I still can't believe what happened. In fact I don't like to talk about it. It's sort of spooky when I'm asked to describe it. At the time it didn't feel special and certainly nothing for me to boast about. There were a few of us playing outside the main house, when the master suddenly shouted out for me to help. He told me that my friend was drowning in the lake. He was so clear and calm and even had time to bless me - and I knew what I had to do - I just ran and ran and dragged him out of the water back to the land. It was only then that I realised that I had hadn't just been running over the land...

4 - Totila, King of the Goths

I had heard so much about this man, this monk. I was intrigued by the stories about his wisdom, his 'second sight', his miraculous powers. I know a lot about power and authority and so I thought I'd put him to the test. I got my slave to dress up as me and to trick this holy abbot. I suppose with hindsight it was not the most convincing disguise, and it didn't take long for him to see through my little game. I felt foolish and fell at his feet. Then to my surprise he lifted me back onto my feet, looked straight at me, telling me that I had to change my ways, and that my power and authority would last only for nine years, and then I would face the one with real power. Well, it's now ten years on, and I know the man of God was right. But I don't seem to be afraid of death. Those few moments with him changed me...

5 - His sister Scholastica

Sometimes he just wouldn't listen - strange really when you think how often he encouraged others to listen. I wanted him to be my older brother, not the holy father. He knew me better than anyone else, even though we met up only once a year. When we talked, I could be myself and share all my doubts and questions, and his heart always seemed big enough for the two of us. I knew I was dying, and I needed his wisdom, his time. But tonight he was, well, he was just annoying and stubborn, saying he had to get back to his brothers. What about his sister? I realised I had nothing to lose, and like any sibling trying to prove an argument, I appealed to a higher authority! To my delight and his horror, my silent prayer was answered. The rain was torrential, the wind ferocious, and his face was a picture....