BENEDICTINES OF HOLY WISDOM
AN INTRODUCTION

The Benedictines of Holy Wisdom is a communion of autonomous monastic communities bound together by their fidelity to the 1500 year old Rule of St. Benedict, a spirituality for the 21st century, and by being guided by the teachings in the Gospels. St. Benedict referred to the monastic community as a school of disciples who are in perpetual formation in order to fully live out the monastic vows¹, and to observe the monastic practices that are fundamental to the unity of the community.

Benedictine monasticism is community life that is lived within the context of four key components. The first is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which gives meaning and purpose for the community. The teachings and spiritual guidance of the monastic leader² is the second key component that gives depth and direction to the community. The third is the lived experience and wisdom of the community that are shared by monastic members during official community meetings. The fourth is the Rule of St. Benedict, which contains spiritual wisdom essential in creating a reasonable path for spiritual growth in a community, and to foster true and lasting relationships with the guidance of a spiritual leader.³

St. Benedict had a tremendous love for Christ and saw Christ in all things. In his Rule, St. Benedict specifically writes that Christ is the center of one’s spiritual life and is the center of community life. Christ is the interruptions in our life when a stranger seeks hospitable refuge. Christ is served in ministry to the sick and infirmed members of the community. Christ is in our daily prayer and liturgy, in the daily work that we do, and in the silence. Christ is the head of the community who is represented in the community by the monastic leader, which is the first step

¹ Benedictine monastic vows are: (1) Obedience to the Rule of St. Benedict and a commitment to build consensus among the members of the community around important decisions and direction of the community, (2) Stability of membership in a monastic community, (3) Conversion of life, and an additional one, which is: (4) Non-violent peacemaking. It may be taken separately or as part of the third vow.

² A monastic leader is typically the Abbot or Abbess, or the Prior or Prioress in a community without an Abbot or Abbess. They are the “Christ figure” who leads, directs, counsels, corrects, and loves in the manner of Christ.

of humility. Christ is cherished above all else by listening with the heart to the words and directions of the monastic leader. Christ’s love is the reason that monastics are to pray for their enemies. Unequivocally, St. Benedict stressed that in all things, “Nothing is to be preferred to Christ.” Thus, monastic living is nothing less than a life centered in Christ.

As Benedictines of Holy Wisdom, we have eight specific charisms and a customary that describes how we strive to live a monastic life in contemporary society. Charisms are genuine spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit that aid a community in building up the Kingdom of God on earth. They aid in the pursuit of a life of holiness and perfect charity, as well as spiritually benefitting the entire body of Christ, the Church universal.

Eight spiritual gifts, or charisms of the Holy Spirit have been identified for the Benedictines of Holy Wisdom. The charisms are what unify us. They are gifts to be shared for the common good of all, so that as one body, Christ may live in each member and work through each member who is journeying toward the kingdom. The charisms of the Benedictines of Holy Wisdom are:

† Hospitality
† Mutuality – Community
† Primacy of Liturgy
† Humility
† Listening
† Our Promises to the Church and to the World
† Sacred Reading – Lectio Divina
† Silence

Members commit to live a genuine and sincere monastic life. We are not a traditional monastic community that lives in one primary residence such as a monastery, although it may occur at the choosing of a community of members in one location. The monastery of the heart actually is our monastic enclosure, and we gather regularly for community meetings and prayer using appropriate electronic means. Members of the community follow an established daily rhythm of praying the psalms, observing times for silence and for sacred reading, and to work in jobs that best fit their life situation and commitments. This rhythm of prayer, contemplation and work is our way of deepening our lives in Christ envisioned by Saint Benedict.

If you are interested in learning more about the Benedictines of Holy Wisdom, please email Fr. Michael Kieran Seger, OSB, Prior at: Benedictinesofhw@gmail.com.