

# Handbook



## for the Fellowship of Saint Benedict

**Adopted by the Director's Council**  
April 24, 2018

FELLOWSHIP DIRECTOR  
The Venerable William G. McLoughlin

## PREFACE

*We intend to establish a school for the Lord's service. In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome. The good of all concerned, however may prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to safeguard love. Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset. But as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict, Prologue 45-49

### **Purpose**

The Fellowship of Saint Benedict is a structured fellowship of prayer and discipline based on the Rule of Saint Benedict for like-minded members of the Charismatic Episcopal Church.

### **Membership**

Membership is open to any confirmed communicant in the CEC, clergy and laity, men and women, adult and youth.

Members promise to lead an enriched Christian life according to the Gospel as reflected in the Rule of Saint Benedict. In this way they share in the spiritual benefits of a disciplined life of prayer and service.

The Members strive after obedience, stability, and fidelity in their lives by regular worship in their local parish and in service to Church and community. They pledge their support to the clergy and members of the parish, as well as to the wider Church.

If a Member transfers parish membership within the CEC, their membership in the Fellowship can be transferred at the same time. If a member chooses to leave the CEC, his or her affiliation with the Fellowship will end.

## PREAMBLE

*Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict 4:20-21

Members of the Fellowship of Saint Benedict promise to order their lives in accord with the spirit of the Rule of Saint Benedict and seek to live their lives wholly consecrated to God's will. They are therefore encouraged to be faithful witnesses of Christ by striving to bring the Gospel message and God's way of holiness to the world around them. Each member promises to strive for God's honor and glory before all else, thereby fulfilling the Benedictine motto: "That in all things God may be glorified." This is, in fact, the chief reason for their being a member of the Fellowship of Saint Benedict.

These guidelines have been written to help the members of the Fellowship in their mission to become more faithful in their relationship with Christ and openly bear witness to Him, serving the Church and the wider community where they live and work in humility and fidelity to Christ, and in accordance with the teachings in the Rule of Saint Benedict.

## GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINT BENEDICT

### **Inquirer:**

*The reason we have written this rule is that, by observing it...we can show that we have some degree of virtue and the beginning of monastic life.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict 73:1

An Inquirer is a Confirmed Communicant in good standing in the Charismatic Episcopal Church who has expressed an interest in this deeper seeking after Christ and the mission of the Church. An Inquirer must work with his or her Rector to discern this calling.

Together, the Rector and Inquirer would then approach their Bishop and the Fellowship Director about becoming a Novice and complete an application. Application for admission as a Novice is submitted to the Fellowship Director with a one-time \$5.00 membership fee. At a convenient time the Inquirer would be invested as a Novice in a ceremony conducted as part of a Sunday morning Eucharist in the Inquirer's home parish. At the service the new Novice will receive a copy of the Rule of Saint Benedict.

### **Novice:**

*The concern must be whether the novice truly seeks God and whether he shows eagerness for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials. The novice should be clearly told all the hardships and difficulties that will lead him to God.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict 58:7-8

The novitiate is a period of six months. This is a time for the Novice to spend in intensive reflection on the Rule of Saint Benedict and to make efforts to develop the personal discipline to live out those Benedictine values.

Novices must maintain regular communication with the Fellowship Director and other members of the Fellowship. Attendance at the monthly meetings of the Fellowship, reading and studying the Rule of Saint Benedict, and praying for the other members of the Fellowship are important during this novitiate. Regular personal daily prayer, fidelity in worship and reception of the Holy Eucharist, and support of the parish in tithes and service are also essential elements of a productive novitiate.

The novitiate is a time for testing the call. The Novice must use this time in the novitiate to actively and patiently seek the Lord's will for the deeper commitment of profession—the offering of oneself in full membership in the Fellowship. The Novice must strive to draw closer in union with the Holy Spirit and with the

Church. The Novice will also seek new and productive ways to serve the local parish and the wider Church.

At the conclusion of the novitiate, the Novice, with the Rector's approval makes application for full membership in the Fellowship of Saint Benedict as one Professed.

**Professed:**

*Are you hastening toward your heavenly home? Then with Christ's help, keep this little rule that we have written for beginners. After that, you can set out for the loftier summits of the teachings and virtues we mentioned above and under God's protection you will reach them. Amen.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict 73:8-9

Reception as a Professed Member in the Fellowship of Saint Benedict takes place in an "Act of Profession". This ceremony occurs at a Sunday morning Eucharist in the member's home parish. At the service the candidate recites the Act of Profession before the congregation, signs the certificate in the sight of all, and places the certificate on the Altar. He or she is then given a Saint Benedict medallion, and receives the blessing of the Fellowship Director, or in his absence, the Rector of the parish.

The offering is completed and sealed in the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. The Professed's original "Act of Professed" certificate is kept by the individual member, and duplicate copies are deposited with the Fellowship Director and in the Diocesan Office.

**GUIDELINES FOR A PERSONAL RULE OF LIFE IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINT BENEDICT**

*Do not aspire to be called holy before you really are, but first be holy that you may more truly be called so. Live by God's commandments every day.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict 4:62-63

Members of the Fellowship of Saint Benedict must commit themselves to developing a personal rule of life informed by the Gospel and the Rule of Saint Benedict. Each member's rule should reflect the desire to "live by God's commandments every day." Here are some minimal expectations in developing a personal rule of life.

**Daily:** Members are expected to:

1. Say the Daily Office in the form of the Liturgy of the Hours, or if constrained by circumstances, Daily Prayer in the Morning (Lauds), Noonday (Sext), Evening (Vespers), and Compline.
2. Read the Holy Scriptures appointed in the daily lectionary.
3. Spend time meditating on the Holy Scriptures in Lectio Divina.
4. Read a chapter or assigned portion of the Rule of Saint Benedict.

**Weekly:** Members are expected to:

1. Actively participate in the service of Holy Eucharist and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord.
2. Recite the entire Psalter in their personal devotions. The recitation of all 150 Psalms may be done on a bi-monthly or longer rotation if necessary.

**Monthly:** Members are expected to:

Attend the regularly scheduled meeting of the Fellowship.

**Seasonally:** Members are expected to:

Observe the seasons of the liturgical Church year.

**Annually:** Members are expected to:  
Make an annual retreat in a monastic setting.

- Generally:** Members are expected to:
1. Give liberally to the Church of their time, talents, and treasure.
  2. Regularly seek spiritual direction and make sacramental confession.
  3. Study the Holy Scriptures. Read Fellowship of Saint Benedict teachings. Read books, listen to recordings, and study other teachings recommended by the Director of the Fellowship.
  4. Attend to other duties assigned by the Director.

### **GUIDELINES FOR THE WORK AND MINISTRY OF THE PROFESSED IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINT BENEDICT**

#### **Strive for Continued Christian Renewal and Personal Improvement**

*Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from heaven...*

—Rule of Saint Benedict, Prologue 9

As their states in life permit, Professed Members of the Fellowship make use of various means for improving themselves spiritually, intellectually, culturally, and socially by regular participation in the gatherings of the Fellowship on-line and in person, making an annual retreat, reading the teachings offered through the Fellowship, by regular participation in Eucharistic worship in the parish, and regular disciplined daily prayer.

Professed of the Fellowship of Saint Benedict make the study and reading of Holy Scripture an important part of their daily lives, following the Daily Lectionary available through the CEC.

#### **Strive to be Men and Women of Practical Spirituality**

*Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide...*

—Rule of Saint Benedict, Prologue 21

Professed Members seek to combine prayer and work by prayerfully living and working daily in the presence of God, aware of the Holy Spirit's presence everywhere. The Professed's desire is to be wholly consecrated to God's will in every aspect of his or her daily living.

They practice patience, especially by accepting the daily crosses and burdens of life willingly and bravely, with full trust in God, no matter how heavy these burdens may be, as a witness to those whom they meet, that God can turn sufferings into blessings. They pray regularly for, and seek opportunities to, serve the poor, the needy, the unfortunate, the sick, the sad, the afflicted, and the lonely. They champion the cause of the pre-born, and affirm the sanctity of human life.

They give generously to their parish, being faithful in the tithe, and making offerings and giving alms above and beyond the tithe.

They faithfully fulfill their duties concerning the care of their families and dependents.

They practice the spirit of poverty, by not being unduly attached to material things, by thanking God for what they have, and by using God's gifts for the glory of God and the good of all.

They seek the constant renewal of their lives by fostering the spirit of obedience, stability and fidelity in accord with these three Benedictine principles of Christian living which Saint Benedict asks his followers to practice.

They faithfully read the Rule of Saint Benedict and meditate on how it can be applied to their lives.

They seek guidance and instruction from the Fellowship Director, their parish Rector, Spiritual Director, or other person in authority when they are in doubt or troubled.

### **Strive to be Men and Women of Prayer**

*Whenever we want to ask some favor of a powerful man, we do it humbly and respectfully, for fear of presumption. How much more important, then, to lay our petitions before the Lord God of all things with the utmost humility and sincere devotion.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict 20:1-2

Professed Members highly esteem the Eucharist and take an active and participatory role in the celebration of the sacred mysteries of the Holy Altar.

They pray the Liturgy of the Hours or Daily Office every day, and in accordance with the directive in the Rule of Saint Benedict, the Professed pray the entire Psalter in a regular pattern, which forms the core of the Benedictine rule of prayer.

### **Strive to be Men and Women of Christian Virtue**

*Now, therefore, after ascending all these steps of humility, the monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Through this love, all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict 7:67-69

Professed Members proclaim and practice the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love, by believing, hoping, and trusting in God, and loving God and others in thought, word, and deed. They earnestly seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and exercise them for the common good of the Church.

Professed Members foster a positive Christian attitude toward the many other virtues flowing from the practice of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

Prudence guides them “in seeking first the kingdom of God and His way of holiness” and teaches them “to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

They exercise the Christian virtue of justice by recognizing their personal and social moral responsibilities toward individual persons, toward their community, city, state, and nation, by striving for the common welfare of all. They foster a deep respect for the God-given rights of others, especially for all human life, born and pre-born.

They practice Christian fortitude or courage by seeking to do God’s will at all times without fear of the difficulties and sacrifices involved, bearing the burdens and trials of life with calm trust in God’s mercy and goodness.

They practice Christian temperance or moderation by making use of the good things of life in the way God intended them to be used for the good of humanity.

### **Foster a Spirit of Community**

*As often as anything important is to be done in the monastery, the abbot shall call the whole community together and himself explain what the business is; and after hearing the advice of the brothers, let him ponder it and follow what he judges the wiser course.*

—Rule of Saint Benedict 3:1-2

The Professed take an active role in the Fellowship of Saint Benedict under the direction of the Fellowship Director. They keep in touch with the community through regular gatherings and personal contact. They actively support the work of the Fellowship, and encourage other men and women in their vocation and calling.

They tell others about the Fellowship of Saint Benedict and encourage them to become members if they seem to be in search of such a special way of life in the world.

### **Strive to be Men and Women of Peace**

*If you desire true and eternal life, keep your tongue free from vicious talk and your lips from all deceit; turn away from evil and do good; **let peace be your quest and aim*** (Ps. 33:14-15 bold added).

—*Rule of Saint Benedict, Prologue 17*

Professed Members use all rightful means for establishing peace in the world, especially in their home, workplace, and community where they live, mindful of the centuries old Benedictine watchword: *Pax* — PEACE!

## **SUMMARY**

*Here begins the text of the Rule. It is called a rule because it regulates the lives of those who obey it.*

—*Rule of Saint Benedict, Text between Prologue and Chapter 1*

This handbook is intended as a guide for those walking the path toward greater holiness within the Community of the CEC, in the Fellowship of Saint Benedict, and in fidelity to the Gospel and the Rule of Saint Benedict. May the Lord bless those who choose this disciplined path toward righteousness, toward Calvary, toward Christ, and may the light of the Gospel and the Rule of Saint Benedict be their guide.

## **ATTESTATION**

This Handbook, like the lives of Professed, is a work in progress. Changes to the Handbook may be made from time to time, with the consensus of the Director's Council.

Adopted by the Fellowship Director's Council

April 24, 2018