

Bona Opera

Rule of St. Benedict, ch. 49

At all times the lifestyle of a monk should have a Lenten quality. However, because few have that kind of strength, we urge them to guard their lives with all purity during these Lenten days. All should work together at effacing during this holy season the negligences of other times. The proper way to do this is to restrain ourselves from all evil habits and to devote ourselves to tearful prayer, reading, compunction of heart and asceticism. Therefore in these days, we should increase the regular measure of our service in the form of special prayers and abstinence from food and drink. In this way each one, of his own free will with the joy of the Holy Spirit, can offer God something beyond what is imposed on him. Let him deny his body some food, some drink, some sleep, some chatter, some joking and let him await Holy Easter with the joy of spiritual desire. Yet, let each one propose to his abbot what he wishes to offer (to God) so that it is done with his blessing and approval. For whatever is done without the permission of the spiritual father will be counted as presumption and vainglory, not reward. Therefore, everything is to be done with the abbot's approval.

In accordance with this chapter of the Rule, it is customary that each Benedictine monk submit a list of practices ("bona opera" = "good works") that he will undertake as his Lenten discipline. If any oblates would like to do the same, they may fill out the following form and send it to the Prior of the monastery, the oblate director or their own spiritual director or confessor.

Dear....

In keeping with the prescriptions of the Rule of Benedict and the customs of the Monastery of the Ascension, I request your blessing as I undertake to keep the following Lenten observances:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Name _____

Address _____

Prior's Signature _____