



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE FRIARS OF THE BENEDICTINE CONFEDERATION

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 19 April 2018*

[Multimedia]

Reverend Abbot Primate, Dear Father Abbots, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Benedictine Confederation and I thank the Abbot Primate for his kind words. I would like to express all my consideration and gratitude for the considerable contribution that the Benedictines have brought to the life of the Church, in every part of the world, for nearly 1,500 years. In this celebration of the Jubilee of the Benedictine Confederation we wish to remember, in a special way, the commitment of [Pope Leo XIII](#), who in 1893 wished to unite all Benedictines by founding a common house of study and prayer here in Rome. Let us thank God for this inspiration, because this has led the Benedictines throughout the world to live a more profound spirit of communion with the See of Peter and among themselves.

Benedictine spirituality is renowned for its motto: *Ora et labora et lege*. Prayer, work, study. In contemplative life, God often announces his presence in unexpected ways. In meditating on the Word of God in the *Lectio Divina*, we are called to abide in religious listening to his voice in order to live in constant and joyful obedience. Prayer engenders in our hearts — ready to receive the surprising gifts that God is always ready to give us — a spirit of renewed fervour which leads us, through our daily work, to seek to share the gifts of God's wisdom with others: with the community, with those who come to the monastery in their search for God ("*quaerere Deum*"), and with those who study in your schools, colleges and universities. Thus an ever renewed and reinvigorated spiritual life is thereby created.

Some characteristic aspects of the liturgical Time of Easter, which we are living, such as the

announcement and the surprise, the swift response, and the heart ready to receive God's gifts, in reality are part of everyday Benedictine life. In his *Rule*, Saint Benedict asks that you "on no account let [anyone] exalt anything above Christ" (n. 72), so that you may be ever vigilant, in the *present*, ready to listen to him and follow him (cf. *ibid.*, Prologue). Your love for the liturgy, which is the essential work of God in monastic life, is essential first and foremost for you yourselves, enabling you to abide in the living presence of the Lord; and it is valuable for the whole Church which, in the course of centuries has benefited from it as from spring water which irrigates and fertilizes, nourishing the capacity to experience, personally and in community, the encounter with the Risen Lord.

If Saint Benedict was a shining star — as Saint Gregory the Great called him — in his time marked by a profound crisis of values and of institutions, it was so because he was able to discern between the essential and the secondary in spiritual life, placing the Lord firmly at the centre. May you too, his children in this age of ours, practice discernment so as to recognize what comes from the Holy Spirit and what comes from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil. Discernment which "calls for something more than intelligence or common sense" but "is a gift which we must implore" of the Holy Spirit; "without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend" (Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*, 166-167).

In this era, in which people are so busy that they do not have enough time to listen to God's voice, your monasteries and your convents become as oases, where men and women of every age, origin, culture and religion can discover the beauty of silence and rediscover themselves, in harmony with creation, allowing God to re-establish just order in their life. The Benedictine charism of welcoming is extremely valuable for the new evangelization, because it offers you a way to welcome Christ in every person who arrives, helping those who seek God to receive the spiritual gifts he has in store for each of us.

The Benedictines have always been recognized for their commitment to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. I encourage you to continue in this important work for the Church and for the world, placing also at her service your customary hospitality. In effect, there is no opposition between contemplative life and service to others. The Benedictine monasteries — whether in cities or far from them — are places of prayer and welcome. Your establishment is also important for the people who come searching for you. Christ is present in this encounter: he is present in the monk, in the pilgrim, in the needy.

I am grateful to you for your service in the educational and formative field, here in Rome and in many parts of the world. Benedictines are known for being "a school at the service of the Lord". I exhort you to give students, along with the necessary ideas and knowledge, the instruments that can enable them to grow in that wisdom that spurs them to continually seek God in their life; that same wisdom that will lead them to practice mutual understanding, because we are all children of God, brothers and sisters, in this world so thirsty for peace.

In conclusion, dear brothers and sisters, I hope that the Jubilee celebrations for the anniversary of the founding of the Benedictine Confederation may be a fruitful occasion to reflect on the search for God and his wisdom, and on how to pass on more efficiently his perennial richness to future generations.

Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, in communion with the heavenly Church and Saints Benedict and Scholastica, I invoke the Apostolic Blessing upon each of you. And I ask you, please, to continue to pray for me. Thank you.