

## SAINTS ALIVE: JULY 11, ST. BENEDICT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY



St. Benedict lived nearly 1600 years ago and established what we know today as the Benedictine Order.

The Benedictine philosophy rests on two foundations: a proper balance of work and prayer, and the value of community life.

Work is necessary as it remains balanced; workaholism tips the scales towards a skewed sense of oneself and one's priorities. Prayer provides the counterweight of a reminder that we are not the center of the universe, God is, and after God, community. (Thus community

prayer is a central feature of the Benedictine Order.)

Community: It's too hard to be a disciple by oneself. We need each other. We need a friend, a comrade, a connection. Not only do we need (each other) but also our Catholic teaching calls us to be social, to be in relationship, to be in community. ("Love one another as I have loved you.")

Community does not just happen; it is intentional. Since we are asked to be in relationship with our brothers and sisters, how can we accomplish this?

We can create community through conversation.

Conversation creates community: after mass, on a porch or at the park; over a cup of coffee, a fence, a beer – perhaps that explains why the monks at Mt. Angel Benedictine Abbey began brewing beer – at the dining table (pay special attention to how many stories in the Gospel occurred over a meal).

Relationships are about making yourself available.

We can create community through sharing of ourselves. I hesitated after my father died, wondering if I wanted to share my private news. By asking for prayers from my parish family and my Pastoral Center brothers and sisters, and by sharing my news on Facebook, I took a step towards strengthening the bonds of these communities to which I belong.

Ministries are relationships. They are much more than to-do lists. Checking off every task, completing the list, and tossing this wadded up sense of satisfaction in the trash can is not ministry. This is not making yourself available. Relationships are not disposable. You can retire from work, unless your work is ministry – relationships. You can never retire from relationships.

You never tire of community.

We are wired by our creator to be social.

Because the universe revolves, not around us, but around God and around his creation – our brothers and sisters, our neighbors.



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