



Religious Education Congress 2017
John West
Moving with Trusting Hearts and Minds for
Grace to Enter from Unlikely Places
Session 4-24



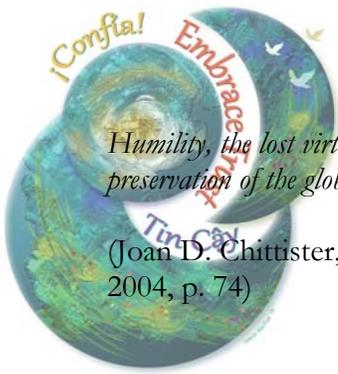
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Excerpts of Joan Chittister's Commentary on Chapter 7: The Rule of Benedict

[Chapter 7 of The Rule develops Benedict's teachings on Humility. At the end of his 12th step of humility, Joan Chittister writes what follows.]

The chapter on humility is a strangely wonderful and intriguingly distressing treatise on the process of the spiritual life. It does not say, 'Be perfect.' It says, 'Be honest about what you are and you will come to know God.' It does not say, 'Be flawless and you will earn God.' It says, 'If you recognize the presence of God in life, you will soon become more and more perfect.' But this perfection is not in the twentieth-century sense of impeccability. This perfection is in the biblical sense of having become matured, ripened, whole.

*...if we accept God's will in life where our will does not prevail, if we are willing to learn from others, if we can see ourselves and accept our selves for what we are and grow from that, if we can be a tr u stin g **[emphasis mine]** part of our world without having to strut around it controlling it, changing it, wrenching it in our own image and likeness, then we will have achieved 'perfect love that casts out fear' (1 John 4:18). There will be nothing left to fear – not God's wrath, not the loss of human respect, not the absence of control, not the achievements of others greater than our own whose success we have to smother with rejections or deride with scorn.*



Humility, the lost virtue of the twentieth century, is crying to heaven for rediscovery. The development of nations, the preservation of the globe, the achievement of human community may well depend on it.

(Joan D. Chittister, O.S. B., *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages*, Crossroad Press, N.Y., 2004, p. 74)

God Is With Us

There is one thing Benedict teaches us before all other possible insights about the spiritual life and that is this: God is with us. It is as simple as that. God does not need to be earned. God cannot be merited. God is not persuaded by human behavior to attend to us. God is not intent on ignoring us. 'The divine presence is everywhere,' St. Benedict tells us.

God is the very breath of our souls, the creative energy that gives us life and carries us through all our days. God, our hope, is the magnet that draws us and the spirit that carries us from dark to light through life. Our beginning and our end is God, our present hope and life eternal.

We come to rest in that assurance, St. Benedict says, by realizing that whatever happens to us in life – when things go wrong, when our plans go awry, when our future seems dashed and the present seems impossible – God's will for us our welfare and not woe.

Along the way, God sends guides to light our path – spiritual mentors and models to lead us, taskmasters to train us, disciplines to curb us—so that, for those 'who endure and not grow weary,' growth from the trivial to the significant may be complete. Then, aware of our own limitations, honest in our sense of self, subdued in our demands of the world and simple in our needs, we lose the demons of exaggerated expectations. [emphasis mine] We are ready now to take life as it comes to us, unafraid and secure in the presence of God to lead us through it.

[Sr. Joan Chittister, O.S.B., *Searching For Balance, Notes From a Monastery, The Sacred Way Every Day*, Path of Life Books, Abbey Press, Saint Meinrad, IN, 2010]





...dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." // Psalm 37:3-4.

Psalm 37:3-4 English Standard Version (ESV)

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good;
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.[a] 4 Delight yourself in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart

Footnotes:

1. Psalm 37:3 Or and feed on faithfulness, or and find safe pasture

Psalm 37:3-4 The Message (MSG)

3-4 Get insurance with GOD and do a good deed, settle down and stick to your last.
Keep company with GOD, get in on the best.

Psalm 37:3-4 NIV

Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
4 Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:3-4 Amplified Bible (AMP)

3

Trust [rely on and have confidence] in the LORD and do good;
Dwell in the land and feed [securely] on His faithfulness.

4

Delight yourself in the LORD,
And He will give you the desires and petitions of your heart.

Confidence in God Leads to Prosperity*

Proverbs 3 New Living Translation (NLT)

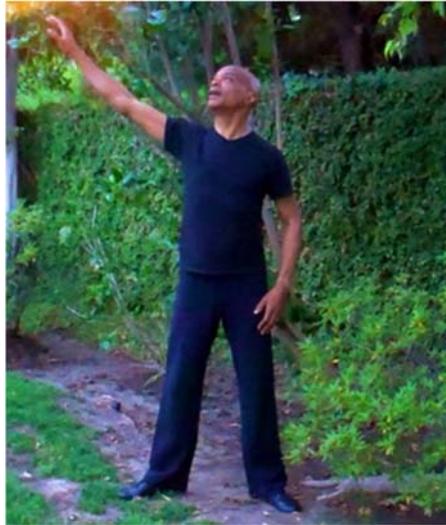
- 3 My child,[a] never forget the things I have taught you.
Store my commands in your heart.
- 2 If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying.
- 3 Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder.
Write them deep within your heart.
- 4 Then you will find favor with both God and people,
and you will earn a good reputation.
- 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.



- 6 Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.
- 7 Don't be impressed with your own wisdom.
Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil.
- 8 Then you will have healing for your body
and strength for your bones.
- 9 Honor the LORD with your wealth
and with the best part of everything you produce.
- 10 Then he will fill your barns with grain,
and your vats will overflow with good wine.
- 11 My child, don't reject the LORD's discipline,
and don't be upset when he corrects you.
- 12 For the LORD corrects those he loves,
just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.[b]
- 13 Joyful is the person who finds wisdom,
the one who gains understanding.
- 14 For wisdom is more profitable than silver,
and her wages are better than gold.
- 15 Wisdom is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.
- 16 She offers you long life in her right hand,
and riches and honor in her left.
- 17 She will guide you down delightful paths;
all her ways are satisfying.
- 18 Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her;
happy are those who hold her tightly.
- 19 By wisdom the LORD founded the earth;
by understanding he created the heavens.
- 20 By his knowledge the deep fountains of the earth burst forth,
and the dew settles beneath the night sky



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