from **MRS. BÁEZ SERVES COFFEE ON THE THIRD FLOOR** by Martín Espada (b.1957)

…Someone poured gasoline

on the steps outside her door,

but Mrs. Báez

still serves coffee

in porcelain cups

to strangers,

coffee the color

of a young girl's skin

in Santo Domingo. *Read more: www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/07202007/espadapoems2.html*

**THE WISDOM OF ROUTINE: BENEDICT & SCHOLASTICA (480-547/543, Italy)**

**AN INVITATION TO THE GOOD LIFE**

Seeking his workers in a multitude of people, the Lord calls out and lifts us his voice again: Is there anyone here who yearns for life and who desires to see good days?  Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God and our ears to the voice from heaven that every day calls out this charge:  If you hear God’s voice today, do not harden your hearts. We must, then, prepare our hearts and bodies for the battle of holy obedience to God’s instructions.  What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace.   We intend to establish a school for the Lord’s service.  In drawing up it 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.  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. Listen carefully to these instructions and attend to them with the ear of your heart.  It is advice from one who loves you; welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice. (the Prologue to the Rule of St. Benedict) Are you hastening toward your heavenly home? Then with Christ’s help, keep this little rule that we have written for beginners. (The Rule, 73)

**NUTS AND BOLTS**

In the craft of life with God, we need tools to work with. Most of all, keep this tool close to hand: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might…and love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22). And never let these get buried too deep in the tool box: Do not kill, and do not commit adultery…neither steal nor long for what belongs to someone else (Romans 13); do not give a false report about anything (Matthew 19). Respect everyone (I Peter) and never do to someone elase what you wouldn’t want done to yourself. (Matthew 7). Leave your own will behind so you can follow Christ (Matthew 16); put your body into training (I Corinthians 9); don’t cater to your every desire, but love fasting as an opportunity to rush ahead in your pursuit of Christ. …Assist the poor, clothe the naked, visit the sick, bury the dead…You should not live the same way other people do: for you, the love of Christ takes first place….Listen to the wisdom of those who’ve gone before you and devote yourself to prayer…There’s no sense in acting like you’ve achieved sainthood. Instead, work on becoming a saint in every little thing you do so your actions might one day speak for themselves. Make God’s good words your constant guide….Last of all, never lose hope in God’s mercy. These are the tools of the spiritual craft that I want to pass on to you as a master carpenter passes his toolbox on to an apprentice. ….The workshop where we put all these tools to constant use is the community where God has called us to stay put. (The Rule, 4)

*DAILY SCHEDULE The Abbey of the Genesee, Piffard, NY*

*3:15 AM – Rise*

*3:30 AM– Vigils service, Breakfast, Lectio/reading*

*6:30 AM – Lauds service*

*7:00AM – Mass, Thanksgiving*

*8:00AM – Terce service, Work*

*11:30AM – End of Work, Lectio/reading*

*12:00PM – Sext service, Dinner, Optional Siesta*

*2:00PM – End of Siesta, None service, Work*

*4:30 PM – End of Work, Lectio/reading*

*5:30 PM – Vespers service, Supper, Lectio/reading*

*7:20 PM – Chapter*

*7:30 PM – Compline service*

*7:50PM – Retire*

*“All must be given its due, but only its due. There should be something of everything and not too much of anything.” Joan Chittister, Benedictine*

**SERVE**

Sisters and brothers should serve one another. This is why there’s no excused absence from kitchen duty unless someone is sick or busy serving the community in another capacity, for service that grows our love for one another is the goal.  Anyone who needs help should have it so they can serve without frustration.  As a matter of fact, everyone should have some help; it is better to work better together than alone.…Let everyone serve on another in love.  On Saturday the member who is completing her rotation will do the kitchen laundry.  She should wash the hand towels that hand by the sink where the members wash their hands… All the pots and pans and dishes should be washed and returned in good order to the business manager, who will re-issue them to the member starting her kitchen duty …The server who is completing her week should say: Blessed are you, Lord God, who have helped me and comforted me (Psalm 86:17b).  After she says this three times, she receives a blessing.  Then the one who is beginning her service says: God, come to my assistance; Lord, make haste to help me. (Psalm 70:1). And everyone repeats this verse together three times.  When she has received a blessing, her kitchen duty begins. (35)

Every community needs a business manager.  Someone chosen from the ranks who is wise, mature, and careful, not gluttonous, proud, excitable or wasteful…. She will handle the community’s pots and pans, furniture and supplies, like a priest handles the sacred vessels at the altar, careful not to neglect anything….More than anything else, let her be humble.  She will provide community members with the food that is allotted to each of them without any pride or delay, so as not to distract anyone from their task…Whatever is necessary should be requested and provided at the proper time so that one is agitated or distressed in the house of God. (31)

**LISTEN**

The first step of humility is to listen without delay.  When we love Christ more than anything else, this becomes our natural reflex….The Lord is talking about this kind of good listener when he says: As soon as they heard me they listened and did what I asked (Psalm 18:44) and again, the Lord says to teachers: Whoever listens to you, listens to me (Luke 10:16).  Good listeners quickly put aside their own concerns.  They’re not obsessed with what they want but will lay down their own projects, leaving them unfinished. Because they’re always ready to listen, their actions are determined by an authority other than themselves.  As soon as the community has a need, they are ready to meet it in humble submission to God.  In this way, the sharing of the need by one member and the meeting of it by another happen as if they were a single act. (5) We should be willing to listen to everyone—not just those in leadership but every member—for we know that we go to God by the way of obedience… This is how unity is maintained—through mutual submission to one another out of reverence for Christ.  Anyone who will not learn and follow this way cannot remain as part of the community. (71)

*The ‘little rule for beginners’ is Benedict’s call to his monks to live out the Gospel in everything that they do…Even though I am not called to live the life of a monk, I am called to live a life that becomes the Gospel.  I too am called to pray without ceasing.  I too long to be the sort of person who brings honor and glory to the Kingdom by the way that I live my life. {Robert Benson in A Good Life: Benedict’s Guide to Everyday Joy}*

**WELCOME**

Anyone who knocks at the door of the community should be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me. (Matthew 25:35) We ought to honor the image of God in everyone, especially those how share our faith (Galatians 6:10), and in pilgrims. Once a guest’s arrival has been announced, everyone should come out to greet her warmly. First, they should pray together and be united in peace: prayer should always precede a warm embrace because love easily twisted and misunderstood. Humility should always be demonstrated toward a guest upon their arrival and departure. With bowed heads—or even on their knees—community members should adore Christ in the guests they welcome. After guests have been greeted and invited to pray, an appointed host should sit with them. The Rule should be read to them so they can understand the community’s life together, after which they should be served a meal….The host should wash the guests’ hands herself…. Wash their feet. When the foot washing is done, they say together: God, we have received your mercy within your temple. (Psalm 48:9) Be especially careful and eager to welcome poor people and pilgrims, because Christ is particularly in them. (The Rule. Ch. 53)

**READ, REST & KEEP SILENCE**

Day to day remind yourself that you are going to die. Do not show too great a concern for the fleeting and temporal things of this world…There should be specified periods for both labor and for prayerful reading. All things are to be done with moderation on account of the fainthearted….Arrange everything so that the strong have something to yearn for and so that the weak have nothing to run from. Always try to find space for silence, but especially at night.  This should be written into the schedule: when there are two meals, everyone will sit together after supper and listen to a spiritual classic like Cassian’s Conferences or a saint’s biography—something that will benefit everyone, though it shouldn’t be too hard to complicated, since it’s easy for some monastics to get confused at the end of the day.  Save the hard reading for another time. …Once everyone is together, they should pray the Compline; and when they are finished, they should depart in silence.  If anyone breaks this rule of silence, it should be taken very seriously (unless guests require attention or leadership needs to give special instruction; but even necessary conversation should be kept to an absolute minimum). (42)

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