

Monastics Ought to Be Zealous for Silence at All Times

by St. Benedict of Nursia

Monastics should be zealous for silence at all times, especially during the hours of the night, to aid in their spiritual growth and focus on their relationship with God.

Scripture: Exodus 14:14, Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 17:28, Ecclesiastes 3:7, James 1:19

Topics: "Monastic Life", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

St. Benedict of Nursia emphasizes the importance of silence, especially during the night hours, for monastics. He outlines a structured program for different seasons, whether fasting or having two meals, including communal reading of spiritual texts like the *Conferences* or *Lives of the Fathers*. St. Benedict advises against reading certain parts of Scripture late at night to protect weaker minds. He enforces strict silence after Compline, allowing exceptions only for necessary communication with guests or orders from the Abbess, to be done with seriousness and restraint.

Transcript

Monastics ought to be zealous for silence at all times, but especially during the hours of the night. For every season, therefore, whether there be fasting or two meals, let the program be as follows: If it be a season when there are two meals, then as soon as they have risen from supper they shall all sit together, and one of them shall read the *Conferences* or the *Lives of the Fathers* or something else that may edify the hearers; not the *Heptateuch* or the *Books of Kings*, however, because it will not be expedient for weak minds to hear those parts of Scripture at that hour; but they shall be read at other times.

If it be a day of fast, then having allowed a short interval after Vespers they shall proceed at once to the reading of the *Conferences*, as prescribed above; four or five pages being read, or as much as time permits, so that during the delay provided by this reading all may come together, including those who may have been occupied in some work assigned them. When all, therefore, are gathered together, let them say Compline; and when they come out from Compline, no one shall be allowed to say anything from that time on. And if anyone should be found evading this rule of silence, let her undergo severe punishment. An exception shall be made if the need of speaking to guests should arise or if the Abbess should give someone an order.

But even this should be done with the utmost gravity and the most becoming restraint.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-benedict-of-nursia/monastics-ought-to-be-zealous-for-silence-at-all-times/>

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