

# When She Is to Be Received

by St. Benedict of Nursia

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*St. Benedict's sermon emphasizes the solemn promises made by a novice upon entering monastic life and the community's role in supporting her commitment.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:116, Matthew 5:37, Luke 14:33, Romans 12:1, Philippians 2:3

**Topics:** "Monastic Life", "Spiritual Obedience"

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## Description

St. Benedict of Nursia emphasizes the solemn commitment and obedience required for those entering monastic life, highlighting the importance of making promises before God and His Saints, with the awareness of facing condemnation if those promises are broken. He instructs novices to write a document of their commitment, place it on the altar, and seek prayers from the community for support. St. Benedict also stresses the renunciation of personal possessions and the complete surrender of one's will and body to the monastery, symbolized by changing into the monastery's clothes.

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## Transcript

When she is to be received

she promises before all in the oratory

stability,

fidelity to monastic life

and obedience.

This promise she shall make before God and His Saints,

so that if she should ever act otherwise,

she may know that she will be condemned by Him whom she mocks.

Of this promise of hers let her draw up a document

in the name of the Saints whose relics are there

and of the Abbess who is present.

Let her write this document with her own hand;  
or if she is illiterate, let another write it at her request,  
and let the novice put her mark to it.

Then let her place it with her own hand upon the altar;  
and when she has placed it there,  
let the novice at once intone this verse:

"Receive me, O Lord, according to Your word, and I shall live:  
and let me not be confounded in my hope" (Ps. 118[119]:116).

Let the whole community answer this verse three times  
and add the "Glory be to the Father."

Then let the novice prostrate herself at each one's feet,  
that they may pray for her.

And from that day forward  
let her be counted as one of the community.

If she has any property,  
let her either give it beforehand to the poor  
or by solemn donation bestow it on the monastery,  
reserving nothing at all for herself,  
as indeed she knows that from that day forward  
she will no longer have power even over her own body.

At once, therefore, in the oratory,  
let her be divested of her own clothes which she is wearing  
and dressed in the clothes of the monastery.

But let the clothes of which she was divested  
be put aside in the wardrobe and kept there.

Then if she should ever listen to the persuasions of the devil  
and decide to leave the monastery (which God forbid),

she may be divested of the monastic clothes and cast out.

Her document, however,

which the Abbess has taken from the altar,

shall not be returned to her, but shall be kept in the monastery.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-benedict-of-nursia/when-she-is-to-be-received/>

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