

FIDELITY – PERSEVERANCE

In Monastic Life (Guidelines for reflection)

- A Divine Attribute

“If we are faithless, he remains faithful - for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim 2:13)

- He has chosen us before we ever chose Him.

- Meaning of the Words

- Faithfulness or fidelity: love that perseveres through time, as though time were eternal.

- Amen. Amen. Amen!

- Question and Answer

- Why do some faithful persons persevere and others do not? A mystery!

- Fidelity is not easy. We need to accept God’s gift, but correspond to the grace we receive.

- The Difference between Monks and Nuns

- In many countries and throughout the ages, the “instability” of men seems to be one of the cultural reasons for their lack of perseverance when facing difficulties.

- Nuns seem to be more faithful and persevering than monks.

- Causes of the Problem

- The absolute and definitive nature of the monastic vocation requires a personal transformation.

- Monastic *conversatio*, when it is lived well, is the way to this transformation.

- When primacy of place is given to “umbilical” fascination (egoism), fidelity is impossible!

- Present-day western culture thinks that it is “natural” to change our opinion and commitments.

- Factors that Help

- *A sense of belonging*: feeling oneself identified with monastic life in our particular tradition.

- It is a process of giving oneself to a community that lives a charism and knows how to accept it.

- *Creativity*: the faithful person does not just “stick it out,” but “re-creates” himself.

- It is important to be flexible and to adapt, to bend without breaking oneself.

- *Motivation*: which means wanting to catch fire and being oriented accordingly.

- Superiors should continually nourish and channel such motivation.

- *Clarity* concerning the end in view, namely the hope and experience of happiness.

- Cenobitic happiness is achieved by giving oneself to the community, to each person and to the Lord.
- *Above all*: communal and personal relationship with Jesus Christ by a life of prayer.
 - To be faithful one has to have faith and always return to one's first and most meaningful love
 - I believe and trust Him who called me. That is why I stay here with Him.
- *Other important factors*:
 - The example of persevering old-timers.
 - A solid monastic formation during the first years.
 - Learning the art of discernment, so as to choose willingly and wisely.
 - Personal self-appropriation of the Cistercian charism.
 - Spiritual accompaniment for a long period of time.
 - A communal core of persevering vocations.
 - A clear and strong community spirit:
 - The abbot's teaching on the Gospel, the Rule and the Constitutions.
 - Reciprocal and welcoming love between younger members and older ones.
 - Generational groups and mutual support.
 - Study groups.

Limits

- Since fidelity is a mystery, to be faithful can require, in certain exceptional cases, a change of the road one is following, so as to keep following.
- Sometimes the cause of infidelity or lack of perseverance is, for different reasons, in the community. There can be an incapacity to welcome others, a lack of motivation, a "liquid" monastic life, little ability to discern or to accompany a process of discernment, a twisted view of human nature, superiors who lack flexibility or who are unable to promote and accept originalities and differences....

Bernardo – October, 2019