



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Work

"When they live by the labor of their hands, as our fathers and the apostles did, then they are really monks. Yet, all things are to be done with moderation on account of the fainthearted." Rule of Benedict, 48

"I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do." (John 17:4) What kind of work did the Father give Jesus? For some 30 years he led a life at Nazareth about which we know almost nothing. He was believed to be the son of Joseph, the carpenter, so we may imagine that this was the trade he learnt and practiced: a routine, humdrum life of daily manual labor. For the three years of his public life he went about healing, teaching and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom. Finally on Calvary he suffered and died. He did the work he was given to do – whether the hidden, routine work at Nazareth, the sometimes dramatic "work" of his public life, or the painful "work" of suffering and submission in Gethsemane and at Calvary. The monk will find elements of each of these in the work that he is given to do in the course of his monastic life. At times he will experience the ordinary life of the daily tasks carried out with patient perseverance, at times the joy and fulfillment of a job well done, at times the pain and frustration of limitation, failure or rejection. Perhaps more often his life will be a gentle blend of all three. "I have come from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me." (John 6:38) Jesus' obedience to his Father in the work he was given is the model for the monk's obedience.

Just as the greatest freedom is to love God with all our being, and the greatest love is to lay down our lives for those we love, so our greatest work is to submit ourselves humbly, like Jesus, each day to the tasks that have been given to us. What in practice is this likely to involve?

If you become a monk at Saint Louis Abbey the work you will be given to do will depend on a number of factors: the needs of the community, your talents, your capabilities and your interests. Here are samples of the kinds of work done by the monks: teaching in the school; coaching a sport; running a practical arts program; helping the maintenance staff in the upkeep of the campus; working in the Development Office; assisting in one way or other with Saint Anselm's Parish; teaching the younger monks -this is just a brief



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selection from the life as it currently is lived in our monastery. Besides these activities there are also numerous ways in which monks are involved in various forms of ministry to the ever growing number of people who make up what we call the "Abbey Family"--alumni of the school, parents, friends, parishioners and benefactors. In the monastery itself there are also numerous responsibilities. The Abbot is the superior. He is the spiritual father of the monks and is elected by them for a term of eight years. He is believed, as Saint Benedict put it, to hold the place of Christ in the monastery. With the advice of his Council he appoints the other officials – the Prior, the Bursar or Business Manager, the Novice Master, the Guest Master and so on. If the monastery grows and the monks desire to take on a new work or to found a new monastery it will be the Abbot who takes the lead and lays the matter before the community. It will be clear from the above that there is a great variety of work done at Saint Louis Abbey. Any work that the community undertakes will be the result of a combination of factors: the needs of the local church, the desire of the community led by the Abbot to respond to a particular need, and the availability of monks to respond to that need.