

nicate God's words to us. Swan continually concludes her reflections on aspects of the Rule by challenging her reader to ponder such "texts." For example, after considering Benedict's instructions on praying the psalms, she asks us to risk facing our own anger, pain, confusion and curses through them.

How do we let these psalm texts speak our own stories, unpacking our true feelings and the ways God might be present in the rawness of our lives? How might we risk exploring new images of God based on our honest feelings and God's possible responses to us? (p. 43).

Conclusion:

Swan's consideration of the Rule would serve well as a study guide for groups trying to incorporate Benedictine teaching into their lives. Her copious questions are so intense and demanding that the support and input of fellow travelers would help to confront and wrestle with them. At times the text seems intended primarily for vowed monastics, as when she writes of the experience of her specific monastic community, or describes in intense paragraphs Benedict's "true monastic." Gradually, however, it becomes clear that this "true monastic" (who in fact is the goal toward whom we are all still journeying) is simply that person who longs for the kind of God-orientation, God-awareness, and God-relationship which is "merely" Christian. Laura Swan's volume can help us to engage Benedict's guidance in this undertaking.

Dewey Weiss Kramer

JOHNSON, Maxwell E., Compiler and Editor, *Benedictine Daily Prayer: A Short Breviary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005). ISBN 139780-8146-2833-1, pp. 2,266 with index (plus additional unpaginated end papers with prayers, etc). \$50.00 with simulated leather cover.

This book's title page implies the love which went into its conception and composition "...Edited by Maxwell E. Johnson, oblate at Saint John's Abbey and the monks of Saint John's Abbey." It is a beautiful book made primarily for persons who are either Benedictine Oblates or friends of Benedictine monasteries. Someone ought to do a similar project with Cistercians in mind.

This prayer book is designed to assist someone who is close to the Benedictine way of life to engage in daily prayer. It would,

however, be of great value to any Christian even if there were no Benedictine connection. Its "Introduction" states:

Any who have participated frequently in the Monastic Liturgy of the Hours at Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, will find much in this book quite familiar, and, in some ways, *Benedictine Daily Prayer* is itself a version of *Saint John's Abbey Prayer* (p. xii).

This "Introduction" is fascinating for several complex reasons: 1) it is slightly defensive; 2) it provides a lot of information about Benedictine rhythms; 3) it provides the rationale for such a book—and makes it clear why there is such a strong relationship between this book and the Prayer of Saint John's Abbey:

In the interests of space, however, while the Gospel readings for all three years of the Roman Catholic Sunday lectionary are included, only one [of the] patristic readings is provided for each Sunday, which means, of course, that it will not always correspond directly to all three Gospel texts. Also in the interests of space, the readings are often printed in an abridged form, though the complete reference is given for those who may wish to read the whole passage from a Bible. [And] customarily ... at Saint John's Abbey on the evening before Sundays, solemnities, and certain feasts, one could easily replace First Vespers with the Office of Vigils on those days with the inclusion of the litany, the Our Father, and the prayer following the *Te Deum* or *Te Decet Laus* (p. xiii).

The arrangement of the full book is structured as follows: Introduction; An Aid to Praying *Benedictine Daily Prayer*; Monastic Calendar; Sunday and Weekday Readings; The Ordinary of the Liturgy of the Hours; The Weekly Psalter; Supplemental Psalms and Canticles for Vigils and Lauds; Festival Psalter; Common for Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Common for Feasts of Apostles; Common for Feasts of Martyrs; Common for Feasts of Holy Men and Women; Office of the Dead; Proper of Seasons: Advent; Christmas; Lent; Triduum; Easter; Pentecost; Proper of the Saints; and an Appendix: A Selection of Benedictine Prayers; Acknowledgements; along with an Index.

The translation chosen for the Psalms is the one currently used by the monks at St. John's, *The Psalms: An Inclusive Language Ver-*

sion Based on the Grail Translation from the Hebrew. This immediately does raise some contemporary questions of taste and/or appropriateness because while most men will perhaps not pay much attention to the wording, this language and its choices of pronouns could be problematic, especially for female readers.

The readings for each season are excellently chosen. For example, the Pentecost Sunday choice is from the treatise *Against Heresies* by St. Irenaeus:

"The mission of the Spirit" Luke tells us that after the ascension the Spirit descended on the disciples with power to enliven all nations and to make the new covenant known to them. Jesus had promised to send a Paraclete who would unite us to God. For, as the dry grain cannot become one dough or one bread without moisture, neither can we many become one in Christ without heavenly water. Our bodies enter into unity through the bath of immortality, and our souls through the Spirit (pp. 325-326).

To study the index is very informative: It stands as a separate compendium of the history of holy worship in the Church. Look only at pp. 2,254-2,256, the "A" and "B" entry readings only which include the following writers, some with multiple entries: Aelred of Rievaulx (2); Ambrose (8); Andrew of Crete (3); Anselm (4); Athanasius (5); Augustine (26); Basil the Great (3); Bede (4); Benedict (8); Bernard (7); Bonaventure (2). One could wish, since the book was done for contemporary usage, that there would be more contemporaneous readings however. We have 26 entries for St. Augustine and 8 by St. Benedict. Thomas Merton rates one.

Several distinct topics of interest are handled in the "Introduction." Among them are the following: 1) Justification for this type of book (p. vii); 2) Explanation about the Benedictine Liturgical tradition (p. x); 3) Some relationships to St. John's (Minnesota) Worship; 4) Ecumenical connections (p. xv); and 5) "An Aid to Praying" this compilation (p. xvii). One could quibble about the supporting materials. More important for any user of this handsome book is the fact that it is wonderfully printed, a pleasure to hold and remains (relatively) compact at its hefty 2,266 pages. It can still fit into a briefcase or suitcase.

This handsome book was designed by Joachim Rhoades O.S.B. and printed in Belgium. It is beautifully printed. It is a pleasure

to hold in your hand. No other book has been so beautifully produced for the purposes for which this successful "Breviary" exists. It should be welcomed by Oblates, friends of Benedictines—such as all members of Cistercian Lay Groups too. For what this book is, it is a bargain and an inspiration.

Anthony Feuerstein