

It Happens All Too Often That the Constituting of a Prior

by St. Benedict of Nursia

The constituting of a Prior can lead to grave scandals and dissensions in monasteries if not done carefully, as it can give rise to pride, envy, and rivalry.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:18, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 2:3, James 3:16

Topics: "Monastic Leadership", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

St. Benedict of Nursia warns against the dangers that arise in monasteries when the constituting of a Prior leads to pride, power struggles, and dissensions within the community. He highlights the absurdity of a Prior being constituted by the same authority as the Abbot, leading to envy, quarrels, detraction, and disorder. St. Benedict emphasizes the spiritual danger faced by both the Abbot and the Prior when there is discord between them, ultimately leading to the ruin of those under their leadership.

Transcript

It happens all too often that the constituting of a Prior gives rise to grave scandals in monasteries. For there are some who become inflated with the evil spirit of pride and consider themselves second Abbots. By usurping power they foster scandals and cause dissensions in the community.

Especially does this happen in those places where the Prior is constituted by the same Bishop or the same Abbots who constitute the Abbot himself.

What an absurd procedure this is can easily be seen; for it gives the Prior an occasion for becoming proud from the very time of his constitution, by putting the thought into his mind that he is freed from the authority of his Abbot: "For," he will say to himself, "you were constituted by the same persons who constitute the Abbot." From this source are stirred up envy, quarrels, detraction, rivalry, dissensions and disorders. For while the Abbot and the Prior are at variance, their souls cannot but be endangered by this dissension; and those who are under them, currying favor with one side or the other, go to ruin.

The guilt for this dangerous state of affairs rests on the heads of those whose action brought about such disorder.

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