

When Anyone Is Newly Come for the Reformation of Her Life

by St. Benedict of Nursia

The sermon outlines a process for assessing and receiving newcomers into a monastic community, emphasizing the importance of testing their intentions and demonstrating patience and perseverance.

Scripture: Proverbs 17:3, Luke 14:27, Colossians 3:23, James 1:12, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Monastic Life", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

St. Benedict of Nursia emphasizes the importance of testing newcomers who seek reformation, requiring them to endure challenges and trials to prove their commitment. He instructs that novices should be carefully observed to ensure their sincerity in seeking God, obedience, and perseverance. The process involves progressively introducing the Rule to the novice, allowing time for reflection and commitment before full acceptance into the community, where they are bound by the Rule's laws.

Transcript

When anyone is newly come for the reformation of her life,

let her not be granted an easy entrance;

but, as the Apostle says,

"Test the spirits to see whether they are from God."

If the newcomer, therefore, perseveres in her knocking,

and if it is seen after four or five days

that she bears patiently the harsh treatment offered her

and the difficulty of admission,

and that she persists in her petition,

then let entrance be granted her,

and let her stay in the guest house for a few days.

After that let her live in the novitiate,

where the novices study, eat and sleep.

A senior shall be assigned to them who is skilled in winning souls,

to watch over them with the utmost care.

Let her examine whether the novice is truly seeking God,

and whether she is zealous

for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials.

Let the novice be told all the hard and rugged ways

by which the journey to God is made.

If she promises stability and perseverance,

then at the end of two months

let this rule be read through to her,

and let her be addressed thus:

"Here is the law under which you wish to fight.

If you can observe it, enter;

if you cannot, you are free to depart."

If she still stands firm,

let her be taken to the above-mentioned novitiate

and again tested in all patience.

And after the lapse of six months let the Rule be read to her,

that she may know on what she is entering.

And if she still remains firm,

after four months let the same Rule be read to her again.

Then, having deliberated with herself,

if she promises to keep it in its entirety

and to observe everything that is commanded,

let her be received into the community.
But let her understand that,
according to the law of the Rule,
from that day forward she may not leave the monastery
nor withdraw her neck from under the yoke of the Rule
which she was free to refuse or to accept
during that prolonged deliberation.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-benedict-of-nursia/when-anyone-is-newly-come-for-the-reformation-of-her-life/>

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