

## Reverencing Life

- A. Reverence as “Letting be”
  - a. Common slogan: “Respect . . .” What? Life. Usually in the context of stop abortion. Respect life. The opposite of respecting life is taking life, killing. Respecting life in the first place is letting it be, letting it go on existing. Respect or reverence is “letting be.”
  - b. In showing this kind of reverence for life, we share to some small degree in the Creator’s perspective towards creation. According to the account in Genesis, God first creates things and then surveys them and finds them good, admirable, well done. God lets be: “Let there be light.” Then God stands back, so to speak, and admires his handiwork, judging it very good. He lets it be what it is, respecting what it is because it is fundamentally good. Maybe with a few rough edges, that’s all.
  - c. On our part, an attitude of respecting, even reverencing, all God’s creatures, including other human beings, is a way of imitating and participating in God’s respectful gaze upon his newly-made creation and God’s judgment that it was all very good. Reverence is first of all “letting be.”
- B. Examples of Reverence/Irreverence in our society
  - a. Examples of irreverence are multiple, on the street, in homes, in the media. The opposite—reverence/respect—is less prevalent in our culture. In other cultures, e.g. Fijian, it is taken for granted in the context of an extended family.
  - b. The most common example of reverence in US culture may be politeness, both in language and in behavior.
  - c. In the military, respect is shown by a salute and service.
  - d. Acknowledging the other when passing him/her on the sidewalk. A nod of the head, a glance in the eye, a smile.
  - e. Charity, letting others go first, be first, take first. Being courteous, holding open a door.
  - f. Forbearance. Patience with the pace of others, including children. Not retaliating. Not getting caught up in road rage.
  - g. Not using God’s name in vain when others around you are using it freely, or the holy name of Jesus. Reverence for God is

prescribed by the second commandment, because the name stands for the person. It forbids blasphemy.

- h. In our culture, it seems that one does not show respect unless the other has earned respect, with an exception for some lawful authorities and religious authorities.

C. Reverencing all that has being, in a certain hierarchy of importance. Living beings before non-living things. [God is not a being among other beings but being itself who deals out existence to all creatures.] Among living beings, persons have priority over non-persons: the dog-owner has priority over the dog. Among non-living beings, the natural has priority of reverence over the fabricated. Sometimes the fabricated may have more monetary value than the natural (a painting is worth more than its wooden frame); or it might be the other way round (a gold nugget is worth more than the prospector's tin pan). We are concerned most with reverence toward created or natural beings.

- a) The reverent religious person begins to discover God in all beings. He sees that every being points to a mystery beyond itself, just as a footprint in the sand points to the individual who walked there before me. If we could see it, every being created by God, living or non-living, bears an imprint of the One who made it. Every created being proclaims the presence of the One who stands back in the shadows, waiting to be noticed and revered, the Creator. Creatures have the quality of pointing to their Creator. We call this quality the sacramentality of the things. Sacraments in the life of the Church mean outward signs of inward effects, the effects of grace. The word *sacrament* in Greek is *mysterion*, that is, *mystery*. We reverence things as mysteries concealing a reality greater than themselves. Some things seem worthy of reverence in themselves, such as an eagle in flight, but all things are worthy of reverence because of the divine mystery that they point to.
- b) Someone might object that this way of looking at things is a bit esoteric, and one shouldn't overdo the respect especially for little things that don't matter. To someone with a reverent attitude, even the little things matter. As British theologian Aelred Squire (who died as a Camaldolese at Big Sur in 1997)

says: “Human experience tends to show that an intelligent attention to detail, even in matters which appear to be trivial, develops and strengthens all kinds of qualities which may seem at first blush to have no connection with little things. A respect for the tools of living is part of sound living itself.” I think St Benedict had that respect for the tools of monastic living when he says in chapter 31 on the cellarer: “Let him look upon all the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as upon the dedicated vessels of the altar.” (Which is probably an allusion to Zech 14:20 “On that day there shall be [written] upon the bells of the horses ‘Holy to the Lord’. And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be like the sacrificial bowls before the altar, since every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holy to the Lord of hosts.”) Since the monastery is God’s house, nothing in it is essentially profane. It is all somehow sacred. Therefore deserving of respect and reverence. If we are careless in using little things—It’s only a screwdriver, it’s only a towel, it’s only a magazine—we lose the edge of our sense of universal reverence. Learn to respect and care for the little things, the screwdriver, the towel, the magazine, because it is part of the property of God’s house. Learn to use things for the purpose they were intended, not for other purposes, and you will be respecting them.

- c) The reverent person doesn’t take a neutral or indifferent stance toward any object or situation in the monastery, no matter how commonplace or familiar it may be. Instead he responds with a reverent awareness and concern and even love. He respects universally. He respects the laws of things, the nature of things. His respectful attitude comes out in the way he handles utensils or books, in the way he speaks about others (not ridiculing or making fun of them), and in the way he speaks about traditions or customs.
- d) We reverence everything, especially persons and living things, because behind them stands our Creator, whom we definitely want to reverence. We do not abuse them, because to do so would be to disrespect our Creator. The persons and living things around us are like fragments broken from the Holy One.

They are like sparks from the fire of creation. The Jewish mystics called Hasidim have a mythology about creation and the sparks of creation that gives them a rationale for universal reverence. According to the Kabbalah, which is a set of esoteric teachings about the Bible and the universe, In the beginning the divine light-substance burst, and the sparks fell into the lower depths, filling the shells of things, leaving a reflection of the divine glimmering in every being. Hasids knew the sparks were there, knew how to approach them reverently, how to lift or liberate them, so that they could re-connect with their original source, the divine substance of light. [maybe read “A Bit of Soul” p. 249, Buber, *Tales Later Masters*.] “The sparks lie everywhere within the multitudinous shells,” says M. C. Richards, *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person*, p 144. <http://www.themista.com/>

D. The Hasidic Jewish tradition about liberating the sparks of things, their inner divine fire, helps us understand why they hold things and persons in respect. So does St Benedict’s teaching in RB 31 that tells the cellarer to “look upon all the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as upon the dedicated vessels of the altar.” Likewise in the tradition of Japanese Zen, we find a similar example of respecting such common articles as a wooden bowl. Here is a description by a certain Zen master named Roshi Maezumi (1931–95) who founded Zen Mountain Monastery in New York:

“When we eat our meals during sesshin [Zen meditation retreat] we use a set of nested bowls, the largest of which is called the Buddha bowl or *oryoki*. In the sutras [scriptures] we chant before meals, we approximately translate *oryoki* as ‘Buddha Tathagata’s eating bowls.’ [*Tathagata* means ‘The One who has come’ and is used as an alternate name for Buddha.] But the *oryoki* is not just the bowl provided by the zendo [monastery]. The Buddha Tathagata’s eating bowl is your bowl. You are the Buddha eating from the bowl of the Buddha. Realize this fact.

“In the original Chinese, it does not quite say ‘eating bowls.’ Just *oryoki*, which literally means a container which holds just the necessary amount. That is what it means, no more, no less. That is [the necessary amount of] existence, life itself. [There are individual differences, some container hold more some less.] . . . .

“But we need not think that we are speaking only of eating bowls when we mention *oryoki*. More fundamentally, *oryoki* is just the Tathagata’s [Buddha’s] container. We can appreciate everything as the container of the Buddha. [reverence] We are *oryoki* ourselves. Not only us, but Buddha’s picture, candle holders, vase, bowing mat, floor, ceiling—each contains everything completely [like Indra’s net]. It is all *oryoki*. The whole universe itself is the container of the Buddha Tathagata.

[Conclusion] “This is our bowl. And this is the bowl from which we eat and maintain our life. So that as we become more aware of this fact, we will appreciate life more. [reverence] We eat food. But what is our food? It is the Buddha too. That is to say, it is life, giving life to life. [Buddha means living one or enlightened one] Again here is total harmony, and that is the way of existence. When we eat, we had better be aware of at least these facts.”

E. These examples of reverence from non-Christian traditions teach us that reverence is an attitude or practice that is valued widely throughout the world. Next we can focus our attention on our own revealed Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments.

a) We begin with Moses and his famous encounter with Yahweh, or the angel of the Lord, in the burning bush on Mt Horeb or Sinai. “Exodus 3:1 Leading the flock beyond the wilderness, he came to the mountain of God, Horeb.\* 2 There the angel of the LORD\* appeared to him as fire flaming out of a bush. When he looked, although the bush was on fire, it was not being consumed. 3So Moses decided, “I must turn aside to look at this remarkable sight. Why does the bush not burn up?” 4When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called out to him from the bush: Moses! Moses! He answered, “Here I am.” 5God said: Do not come near! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. 6 I am the God of your father, he continued, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.”

Moses was standing on holy ground, ground made holy precisely by the presence of the Holy One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was not showing appropriate reverence until God, or the angel, told him to remove his sandals. That is to say, “Feel it from the soles of your feet to the top of your head, feel that you are on holy ground, feel that you are in the

presence of the Holy One, the presence of the Sacred.” Br David Steindler-Rast says: “To take off one’s shoes means being truly there, fully alive. The shoes or sandals we take off are made from the skin of dead animals. As long as we wear them, there is something dead between the live soles of our feet and the ground on which we are standing. To take off this deadness means taking off that familiarity which breeds contempt and boredom; it means coming alive in primordial freshness to the place where we are.” The place that is Holy, the place where the Sacred is encountered here and now. But not only here. There is a further stage. “You come to realize that wherever you take off your shoes, you stand on holy ground. ‘All around in every direction: Holy of Holies’ (Ez 45:1 NAB: “When you apportion the land heritage by heritage, you shall set apart a holy portion for the LORD, holier than the rest of the land—twenty-five thousand cubits long and twenty thousand cubits wide; the entire area shall be holy”) [about 10 miles by 8 miles] , a passage Father Damasus never tired of quoting to his monks. All you have to do is ‘take off your shoes’ and you will realize this. In the Benedictine tradition this insight determines the attitude required toward every detail of the environment. . . .” (David S-R as in *Cross Currents: Word out of Silence* Symposium, August 1972)

b) Let us move on to the inaugural vision of the prophet Isaiah, or it could be called his vocational experience. It takes place in the temple of Jerusalem, about the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> c BC. Isaiah witnesses a theophany (all in Is 6). “I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple.” On either side, seraph angels cried out one to the other, “Holy, holy, holy\* is the LORD of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!” [Christians have repeated their cry for centuries at the Eucharistic liturgy.] There are further sound effects: “the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke.” Isaiah knew he was in the presence of the Divine and was overcome with a sense of his own unworthiness. He expresses his creatureliness and his reverence for the Lord by saying, “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” He thought he was going to die, because no one who sees God can live. However, at that moment, “one of

the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. "See," he said, "now that this has touched your lips, \* your wickedness is removed, your sin purged." Purged by fire, Isaiah is no longer unclean, no longer doomed to die. The feeling of deserving death for being in the presence of the Thrice-Holy One is the extreme of the feeling of reverence and respect.

Throughout the OT and NT we see this reverential reaction to any manifestation of Divine power and majesty. Think of Gideon (Judges 6:22: "Gideon, now aware that it had been the messenger of the LORD, said, "Alas, Lord GOD, that I have seen the messenger of the LORD face to face!" The LORD answered him: You are safe. Do not fear. You shall not die.")

c) Moving on to the NT, we recall several examples of reverence shown to Jesus, for example, at the miraculous catch of fish (Lk 5:9-11); at the raising of the son of the widow of Naim (Lk 7:16); when Jesus walked on the waves (Mk 6:51). Also the miracles worked by the apostles aroused awe and wonder in the crowds (Ac 2:43).

Before the Holy, confronted with the Holy, a human being's first response is often an awareness of his/her creatureliness. Meaning a sense of one's personal littleness and nothingness before this overpowering reality. The astronauts on the space station have only to look out the window at the vastness of space around them to get this feeling of creatureliness. This creature-feeling seems to have two components, as analyzed by Rudolph Otto in his classic book *The Idea of the Holy*. By 'Holy' he means the "awe-inspiring yet fascinating Mystery" that people usually call *God*. "Awe-inspiring" and "fascinating" are contrary feelings that exist together to make a sense of creatureliness. The component of "awe" makes us keep our distance for fear of death, while the component of "fascination" draws us closer, attracts us, like iron is attracted by a magnet. Let us focus on each of these.

—Awe can be a synonym of reverence. It can include a whole register of feelings: fear, dread, shuddering, being overpowered, being before a reality that is absolutely unapproachable, being in the presence of incredible energy or vitality, being in the presence of majesty.

—Fascination on the other hand evokes the idea of entrancing attractiveness; a dizzying, ravishing, captivating drawing power, almost irresistible; something that allures with great charm; an element that compels us to desire it, yearn for it, seek it, surrender to it.

So the creature-feeling in the presence of the mystery of the Holy has this dual character, according to Rudolph Otto. An example that he gives is the child's fear of the dark, the kind that goes beyond simple fear and touches the center of the child's awareness with the sense of the unknown, the Mystery. Or perhaps the example of an adult standing on the edge of a vast, empty desert; or looking out the window of a spacecraft into the infinity of outer space.

#### F. Respect for life, particularly human life

a) Reverence or respect is a delicate, subtle movement in the heart and can be ignored, brushed aside, or forgotten in the presence of distractions. I think reverence or respect comes naturally, for example, to parents in the presence their first baby, the feeling that human life is something almost sacred and worthy of total respect. Perhaps people naturally have a similar feeling in the presence of a departed loved one at the funeral parlor or at the cemetery. It is a sense that once life is gone, we realize how precious and important it is.

At these two extremes of the human life cycle—birth and death—reverence comes more easily than during the stages in between birth and death. However, the spark of human life that we reverence is the same throughout, from the beginning of life to its end. The hard part for us is always to be attuned to the inherent dignity of human life at all its stages, and to watch respectfully as that life unfolds according to its own plan or God's plan, even if we do not understand that plan. That means we try to respect other people's opinions, their style of life, their own personal way to God, even though these differ from ours. Reverence knows that every human being has his or her destiny and inner meaning, beauty, and worth simply as a player on the stage of life. We all have our own unique role to play in the total drama of reality. An irreverent, disrespectful attitude toward anyone violates the mystery of that person, and the inner laws according to which people develop and change in their own good time and manner. Reverence stands back, watches and waits for people to grow,

even if they are in their eighth or ninth decade of life. To live is to change, to adapt.

b) We include ourselves in our attitude of reverence. Some people have a very low self esteem or have lost their self respect altogether. They say things and do things that are beneath their dignity as human beings and especially as baptized children of God. Others do not respect them because they do not respect themselves. Examples abound in the film industry and in the pornography industry. Or else people may lose their self-respect because they are treated like slaves in the workplace or like replaceable cogs in the wheel of industry. Or else people, especially the poor, feel that society has run over them like a freight train and they are powerless to fight back. They are overwhelmed by a gargantuan government that depersonalizes them, reduces them to a computer number, and sends them computerized letters saying that their Medicaid benefits are being terminated, with the implication that they are a burden on society and would be less of a burden if they went away or simply died.

In a monastery everyone should respect everyone else. A monastery should be a different kind of society from secular society. Being should have priority over productivity in a monastery, meaning that everyone is valued for who they are even if they are not productive. In a monastery we believe that each human being is known by God, called by name, created and loved into being, given an eternal destiny, a place at the table in the kingdom of God. In a monastery, other people should not have to earn our respect. They may have to earn our trust in them, but we owe them basic respect as our brothers in Christ with whom we hope to share eternal life. We reverence and honor God by reverencing and honoring our brothers whom God has made.

c) Can we extend the circle of our respect further than our fellow Catholics? We are talking now about the sensitive subject of showing respect toward the religious beliefs of those who are protestants. Catholics believe that we have the fullness of saving truth, but Vatican II, in the Decree on Ecumenism #2, assures us that other Christian churches may also have both the Word of God in the Bible and the life of grace—including theological faith, hope, and love, and perhaps even valid Baptism. These gifts are the basis for showing them basic respect. We do not agree with their doctrines, but we can respect them as seekers of religious truth,

seekers of God, seekers of salvation. Perhaps we notice that they are sinful or hypocrites, but so are some Catholics to whom we show some respect. The longer you live here and have meals in the retreat house, you will observe that a certain amount of Mormon bashing goes on. Our attitude of respect for the beliefs of others should prevent us from joining in the slander and ridicule.

Now we are going to see if we can extend the circle of our respect still further to non-Christian religions like Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism. Almost all of these religions include within them groups that have a monastic character, and we might be able to find some common ground with them. In Judaism, for instance, it would be some of the Hasidim. Perhaps there are monastic practices that we can learn from these traditions because we sense a certain spiritual kinship with them, maybe even more than we might sense with some of our own Catholic brothers and sisters who are not on the search for God. Perhaps there are things we can learn even from Zen and Yoga, or perhaps not. I know that some Catholics judge everything in non-Christian religions as coming from the Devil. From the little I know, it looks to me like some non-Christian seekers have their own valid forms of meditation, their own religious experience of the Absolute whom we acknowledge as God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, while they may acknowledge God under some other name. We believe we have a fuller revelation of God than other religions, but God remains an incomprehensible mystery for us as much as he does for non-Christian seekers.

#### G. The Liturgy as a School of Reverence

a) The liturgy can be a school of reverence in which we learn respectful attitudes toward God, ourselves, others, and all creation. Liturgy, reverently executed, communicates a living spirit of reverence. Liturgy sloppily and carelessly executed is disrespectful to the One to whom it is supposed to be offering respect. Pope Blessed JP II said to some bishops who were making their prescribed visit to him: "After the experience of more than thirty years of liturgical renewal we are well placed to assess both the strengths and weaknesses of what has been done in order more confidently to plot our course into the future, which God has in mind for His cherished people. The challenge now is to move beyond whatever misunderstandings there have been and to reach the

proper point of balance, *especially by entering more deeply into the contemplative dimension of worship, which includes a sense of awe, reverence and adoration which are fundamental attitudes in our relationship with God.*”

Liturgical language is different from ordinary daily speech because it tries to communicate with greater reverence than everyday language. So we may smile when we hear in church some translations like the verse at the episode of the wedding at Cana when it says: “When the Master of Ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine . . . he called the bridegroom over. ‘This is wonderful stuff!’ he said.” [LIVING NT, Ken Taylor] The translation of the Mass introduced in December 2011 was intended to use language that was higher in tone, more elevated and hopefully reverent. How successful it is can be disputed, but not necessarily here. We grow accustomed to everything, and eventually the elevated language becomes commonplace again.

By using created things like water, wax, fire, sound, different colors, the liturgy teaches reverence toward all created things. Also for things that are fabricated by humans, the work of human hands, such as bread and wine, incense, stained glass, crosses, altars, candlesticks, vestments, altar cloths, chalices, etc. The liturgy calls on everything that lives and breathes to praise and reverence the Lord. It teaches us that we are all children of a loving Father who rejoices in beauty because he is infinite beauty.

b) One of the most obvious signs of reverence in church and in the liturgy is our profound bow to the Blessed Sacrament. The profound bow is reverence incarnate when it is made as it should be made. Monks have the custom of bowing instead of genuflecting. The custom of bowing is more common perhaps in Oriental cultures, such as Japanese, or even in Slavic and Russian countries. In the Orthodox church, everyone bows to kiss the icons or kneels down to kiss the floor, or makes a full length prostration. I have seen this at Madonna House. Catherine Doherty writes: “. . . man doesn’t stand as he is in the fullness of his height before god. He bends. He adores . . . What does it mean, this ‘bending’? It means surrender. It means that I acknowledge who I am, and Who God is . . . Man begins to bend lower, and lower, and lower, until he knows with every part of his

body—his muscles, his heart, his emotions, his conscience . . . [that God] is the Creator and I am His creature. It is good to know that!” [from SOBORNOST pp 27-8, excerpted in “Restoration” Vol XXX, No 9, Sept 77, p. 2]

Recall that a deep bow is not only a matter of going down but also of rising up again, straightening up, something like the Paschal Mystery in miniature. The Paschal Mystery is Jesus going down into death and straightening up or rising up again on the third day. When I have understood who God is and who I am before God, I can rise again as a child of God. After that deep bow, I can stand before my Maker as a child stands before his Father, with filial reverence.

Be aware also that my bow, for example as I enter the church, is one more bow in the long succession of bows and reverences made in this church. Not only that, but it adds one more to the succession of bows made by worshippers of God from ancient history until the present time. It has a relation to the past, but it also anticipates and looks forward to the future veneration and adoration we will offer in the heavenly Jerusalem, where as Rev 4:10 tells us, “the 24 elders bow down before the One seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever.” They *bow down*.

Bowing is an important sign of a reverent attitude, if it is done properly. Not if it is a Pinocchio bow, jerky and wooden. Not the sloppy nod of the head and shoulders, as if you’ve got a broken back that will not bend. Not the interminably slow bow where you move so slow you neither come nor go. The appropriate bow is a deliberate, thoughtful, sincere bow before the presence of the great King and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and before Jesus himself present in the tabernacle. The psalmist invites us in the Vigils invitatory “Come in; let us bow and bend low; let us kneel before the God who made us . . . ” (Ps 95:6). Kneeling in genuflection is sometimes more appropriate than a bow, as when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, or when passing in front of the tabernacle, but if a genuflection is too athletic for a person’s arthritic body, a reverent bow can substitute.

[c) reverence for one’s monastic habit, which was blessed when first given] [see card by Gerlac, *Vocation* 201, the Baptismal rite of early Christians as described in Bouyer, *Rite and Man*. Gerlac: “After the triple

immersion, the initiate is clothed in white. 'These white robes are given to replace the old garments taken off before Baptism which were figures of the 'old man'.' [p. 49]. The white robes symbolize the new man robed in innocence and incorruptibility in place of sin. He has recovered the robe of light and grace which Adam had before the fall." Recall how RB speaks of divesting the new monk of the clothes he had been wearing, but keeping these in the monastery wardrobe so that he could resume them if he ever gave up his vocation. He was not allowed to take the monastic habit into the secular world.

#### H) Reverence in RB

We recall that RB has a chapter on "Reverence in Prayer," (RB 20), but without defining exactly what he means by reverence, although he may be suggesting how he understands reverence when he says we should lay our petitions before God "with the utmost humility and sincere devotion" (RB 20.2).

In our society we still show a certain amount of reverence toward certain people. We dress up in clean, shine our shoes, watch our manners and language, maybe even bow if we are in the presence of the pope or the Queen of England. Ditto for when we meet people who are super rich or who are wearing a police uniform. It is a mixture of respect and servile fear even in a country where all are supposed to be equal, a democratic society. At the same time, in our liturgy and our private devotions some people regard God with a familiarity and casualness that borders on arrogance. We know we are children of God and have a right to call God Abba, but it is going too far to treat God as a buddy or a divine teddy bear. In this connection Fr. Kardong writes: "In our age of egalitarian democracy and breezy casualness, Benedict's extremely verticalized spirituality of reverential awe before the towering majesty of God may be hard to appreciate. Certainly it is humanized and mitigated in various ways throughout the Rule, and it should not be used to introduce an atmosphere of fussiness and tension into the liturgy, as sometimes happened in the recent past. But if the Divine Office is not to become slovenly and ultimately banal, there must be a strong conviction by all who pray it that it is indeed done in the presence of the Creator of the Universe." (Kardong, p 216)

We may recall also what St Benedict commands the cellarer, “He will regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar, aware that nothing is to be neglected” (RB 31.10-11). I think it is likely that Benedict has in mind Zech 14:20 ‘On that day, “Holy to the LORD” will be written on the horses’ bells.\* The pots in the house of the LORD will be as the basins before the altar. Every pot\* in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts.’ The deeper implication is that on the Day of the Lord, the Sacred will prevail, swallowing up the secular or transforming it into something holy to the Lord. It will be the result of the coming of the glory of the Lord, the coming of his final kingship, his reign over all, even the pots and pans and the war horses’ bells, over all and in all.

Perhaps St Benedict envisions the monastery as an actualization of the kingdom of God in a particular place where the distinction between sacred and secular has been transcended, and “in his temple all cry glory” as the psalmist says (Ps 29:9). Everything rings out the glory of God. All the tools and utensils of the monastery are things of value to glorify God. I believe that this vision is the deeper implication suggested by the casual comment that Benedict makes. The theology that he lived by is revealed in casual references, comparisons, and Biblical allusions.

#### l) Christ as the model of Reverence for the Sacred

As in everything, Jesus is our model of reverence. We see reverence in his unquestioning obedience to the one he call “Abba.” For him to obey was to show reverence and give honor to his father. “Son though he was,\* he learned obedience from what he suffered,” says the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 10:8). We also see reverence in his dealings ith people of every station in life, especially the poor, the sick, and the troubled, people who seem to have no claim to the world’s respect. {Examples: lepers, adulteress who was to be stoned] We see his reverence for his native land, for the customs and culture of his people, for the honest toil of fishermen, farmers and carpenters. His parables often reflect respect for nature itself: the sparrows, the seeds, the wind, the water. Jesus respect the Mosaic Law, even though he knew he had to bring that law to a new fulfillment by going back to the original intention of the lawgiver, who was his Father. When he broke the Sabbath rest, he did so out of reverence for the original hierarchy of values. “The Sabbath was made for man, not man

for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27). He respected the temple in Jerusalem and insisted that it be honored as a house of prayer for all nations, not a den of robbers (Mk 11:17).

[End]