

Feast of St. Benedict  
in the Year of our Lord  
Two thousand thirteen.

Life is often compared to a roller coaster ride. There are some people who truly love roller coasters and are able to take all parts of the ride and enjoy them to their fullest; the highs and the lows, the curves and the straight runs are all part of the fantastic ride of life. However, there are some people who hate roller coasters and this comes through in the way they appreciate and experience life. But most of us sit somewhere in between. We can appreciate the excitement and anticipation of the climb, and we may be able to tolerate the drops to the lowest levels but nothing pleases us more than the climb out of the depths reaching back to the heights.

The life of the church is no different. Each church can look into its history and see highs and lows, smooth roads and bumpy roads, steep curves and smooth straight paths. And every once in a while, decisions need to be made that some people may look to with anticipation and excitement and others see as giving up or running away.

Over the course of the last few months, we have experienced many challenges which have prompted us to rethink our position in ministry and what would be best for our growth. The Board of Directors, two very holy and pious monks and myself, and unworthy servant, have struggled with difficulties and challenges both personally and in regard to the overall ministry, goals, and perceived mission of this monastery. We had come to the conclusion that it was time to move on and to exercise our right to function as an autocephalous Christian community, not attached to any one particular jurisdiction. Because of my position as an ordained and duly consecrated Bishop, I am able to take this monastery onto this new journey of its life.

So where will the mission of this monastery take us? Our mission, we believe, is to serve God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our spirit. But how does one go about serving this mission? For me personally, as a teacher, I intend to use education as a means of serving God. Education to the youth of our community and also to the adults of our community. Education in the basics as well as an extension of education in government and economics, history, and communication.

In the teaching world, new technology is always considered a useful tool in the spreading of this message. Social sites such as Facebook, are a means of transmitting information to the general populace. We intend to use such avenues to communicate to those who are in our community or care to listen (read).

There will be some political involvement. Why? Because I firmly believe, as did some church fathers before me, that sometimes one must fight political influence that one feels is a slow and systematic distraction of constitutional rights given to us, not by government, but by God himself. First and foremost are the rights declared in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America. This amendment guarantees that the government will not interfere in an individual's right to practice their religious beliefs as they see fit; to freely speak without the threat of government reprisal; and to freely participate in criticism and petition of their

government. However, when we systematically see the government infringing on the rights of religious organizations and people who hold strong religious beliefs in a sanctity of life and the protection of that life by any means possible, we feel that we must speak out no matter what the consequences may bring. If we allow one of these rights to, in any way, be diminished it creates a weak link in the chain or, one might suggest, a missing foundation stone of a major landmark building. Once we start to chip away at the foundation stones which support the United States of America it is only a matter of time before what is left of that foundation can no longer hold the building which is built upon it and the whole structure collapses.

What makes this so important in today's world? Because throughout our history we can see that the United States of America is a particular experiment in humanity. President Ronald Reagan often spoke of the United States of America with the use of a biblical analogy, "a shining city set upon a hill." Of course, in the Scripture, this city upon a hill refers to Jerusalem a shining city which serves as a beacon to the rest of the world. Like President Reagan, many others believe that the United States of America is a similar beacon to the world of a recognition of God's gifts of freedom to humanity and how they should be practiced, at least as the best we can from our human frailty and shortcomings.

Over the years, the beaming of this shining city has become tarnished, has diminished, and as many believe has an opportunity to be extinguished because far too many are giving up their rights given to them by God in favor of the point of view of a select few elitists who have convinced us that they know better how we should live our lives. This is the practice that many of us know as Marxism and Communism. History tells us that this creates an even greater separation between those who have and those who have not. This is our main reason for speaking out and using education, both of our youth and adults, of what is transpiring in our world.

Many people are not accepting of the outspokenness that a member of the clergy, especially one of my stature and position. However, I would suggest they look into history at a group of people who were known as, "The Black Robed Regiment," which were clergy of many denominations who spoke out during the time of our separation from England in support of the revolutionary ideals held by our founding fathers. I would also suggest that one look into the history of the newly elected Roman Pontiff, Pope Francis, Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio, SJ, who while he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, fought against the promotion of Liberation Theology especially among his own Jesuit Order.

As part of my goal, I will continue to make every effort to help educate our next generation and help them to be better prepared for the world in which we are now moving; a world which is much different from the one in which I was raised. Yes, I know that technology has improved dramatically over the last 53 years but I was speaking more in regard to interpersonal relationships. Personally, the ability to text or drop an e-mail to someone or to speak with them via Skype is something I think is great. However, what I'm speaking about is the air of selfishness which permeates our society. In efforts to look at the "collective" and to separate ourselves from the "personal" we have created a society that believes that everyone is a winner, that just showing up is enough, that vilifies the adventurous go-getter, and criticizes the charitable. Instead of thinking about others and what our actions may do to affect them, and era

of selfishness where, “what’s in it for me,” is more important. It’s no wonder, to me anyway, why so many people have become so difficult to work with.

Another issue that my ministry will focus on, is “The Truth.” What do I mean by that? I mean that political correctness will not be part of our ministry. Jesus tells us in Scripture, “All you need say is ‘Yes’ if you mean yes, ‘No’ if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the Evil One. (Mt 5:37). By these words, and in the context which it was written, it is clear that Jesus is telling us to speak directly and honestly; to speak in truth. For this reason, I will do my best to always speak the truth and refrain from political correctness which I believe is the work of the Evil One as it helps to cloud all reality and we no longer see things as they are but attempt to change their appearance to what we want them to be.

Interesting enough, there are some of my colleagues who are trying to do this to me right now. They have made claims that are somewhat true but mostly ill-informed and incomplete. They choose to discredit what you may see in these pages claiming that they lack truth or are not sincere. Unfortunately, these detractors do not know all of the facts that surround my life as well as the work of the ministry that I had been doing over the last many years. They have never been here, some have never met me, all they have is bits and pieces of information that I have given them at different times or things they have heard from others and they seem to roll them together into one. If there is something on these pages that you can validate as being incorrect, share that information with me and I will respond accordingly, but it’s not fair for someone to make claims based on information they don’t have or can back up.

I remember once hearing a teacher say, “There is no such thing as right or wrong, it’s all a matter of perspective.” While we can easily say that for one culture something may be acceptable that is not acceptable in another culture that still does not negate that there are certain things that are always right and always wrong no matter from which perspective you look at them. Some of the things I may post or speak about in a public forum may express these absolutes even in the cloud of political correctness.

I welcome you on this new journey with me in the ministry of our monastery. Right now, but we may be small and our space somewhat inadequate to serve our community in the way that is more conducive, we will not hesitate to reach out and do what we can to serve the children of God in the greater Houston area. We invite those of like mind to join us in our ministry and to consider a monastic community as a means of doing God’s will in the world and spreading God’s love and mercy to those who are in need. We may not always do so with the eloquence of Angels and sometimes it may even get as bad as having the grace of a hippopotamus, we will always function out of love for God and for his holy Church on earth.

Please feel free to contact me at any time and I will gladly answer your questions and minister to your needs as needed. May the peace of Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all and remain with you forever. Amen.