

The Leaven of Divine Justice

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Saint Benedict affirms in the Rule of Benedict (RB) 2:2 that the abbot is to hold the place of Christ in the monastic community. By example of life and wise teaching (RB 2:11-12) he is not to deviate in his teaching or leadership from the Lord's instructions (RB 2:4). The abbot's life and teaching is to manifest "the leaven of divine justice" and "be kneaded into the minds of the disciples" (RB 2:5).

The place of the abbot in the monastic community may be seen, in a liturgical context, as the presence of Christ in the Assembly during the Eucharist. In the same way that the bread and wine are transformed by grace and become Christ for us, so we and the persons around us become Christ, as abbots and abbesses, present within our human community.

The effect of the abbot's example (active presence) and teaching (knowledge and wisdom) is to become "the leaven of justice" and be "kneaded into" the lives of the members of the monastic community. Just as yeast gives life to the loaf, the abbot is to give life to the monastic community. The sign of this life is "justice", the life-giving goodness of God present in the human relationships which form the monastic community. The authority of the abbot lies in the congruity of his life and teaching with "the leaven of divine justice".

In the same way, the members of the Assembly receive Christ and become Christ, once again, at the Eucharist and are transformed into "the leaven of divine justice". They are sent with divine authority to become "the leaven of divine justice" in the world and knead God's active presence and transforming wisdom into society.

In the election of an abbot, Benedict emphasizes that **any** member of the monastic community, "even if he is the last in

community rank" (RB 64:2) may be chosen. The fundamental characteristics of the person chosen must be example of life, wisdom (RB:2:11-12) and the desire to be "a worthy steward in charge of God's house" (RB 64:5).

In the same manner, every member of the Eucharistic Assembly is worthy and chosen to become Christ for each other and the world. Each person in her or his way of life is challenged to assume responsibility to become Christ's living presence in family, work place and society. Each person can become, in an appropriate and real sense, an abbot or abbess of his or her immediate community, not in a juridical sense, but with authority to be a steward of the mysteries of God in a complex world. Each person who becomes Christ is called to act, speak and care for the world in a manner congruent with God's will. In other words, to be "a leaven of divine justice".