



## From the Director

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) once said:

*“store up the word of God as you would food. The word of God is living bread, the food of the soul. Let it sink into your inmost heart and pass into your affection and way of life. Eat plentifully of it and your soul will rejoice.”*

I find Bernard’s words both heartening and challenging. They encourage us to take our spiritual life seriously and to look for opportunities to nurture and embrace it. The benefits from doing so seem to be quite evident. I wonder why so many of us balk at taking the spiritual life seriously? What is holding us back from making it a priority?



I recently read the book **‘St Benedict’s Toolbox’** written by Jane Tomaine. St Benedict offered many wise words to his monks. Frequently mentioned in his rule was the word ‘listen’, in fact it is the first word used in his rule for the monks. *“Benedict wants us to open our eyes and to listen with the ear of our heart to the call that can make the difference between a life that is half asleep and one that is fully alive and on the move.”* (p22)

Listening implies being still and totally focussed on the other. To sit still in prayer is not always easy. Many distractions can come to disturb or unease us. Being faithful to times of personal prayer, despite the challenges that may come will bear great fruit. Transformation often comes when we least expect it. It may appear via a challenging experience or a moment of great joy. Robert Wicks in his book **‘Availability’** reminds us that *“prayer is not a nicety but actually is essential for the survival of anyone committed to Christian ministry. To forget this is to open oneself to the serious dangers of inner fragmentation and depletion of personal enthusiasm.”* (p79)

Those are quite forceful words but they underscore the importance of taking time to be attentive and receptive to the spirit at work in our life. Wicks states further that *“we will only make sense as ministers to others when they see in our faces, hear in our words and experience in our actions true hope and true prayerfulness.”* (p84) In other words that our witness matches our rhetoric.

I frequently revisit the Gospel passage of the blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52).

Jesus asks him :

*“what do you want  
me to do for you?”*

I often wonder how I would respond if asked the same question.

*“Rabbi, I want to see”* was the response from Bartimaeus. That I may see the Lord in the midst of the positive and challenging events of my life; that I may be open to listening to God’s call in prayer; that I may have the courage to respond and take seriously the path I am being asked to tread.

*How would you respond  
to the same question?*

Robert Wicks tells this great little story that might sum up the strength of purpose I could hope to emulate as I continue on my spiritual journey.

*“There is an old Talmudic story that says the sea did not divide when Moses put the rod over it until the first person took a step into the water. We will not be refused the gentle healing of Jesus, but for our part we must also respond by trusting God and acting accordingly.” (P116)*

*That I might have the courage  
to take that first step,  
responding and open to where  
the Lord is guiding me!*

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Director