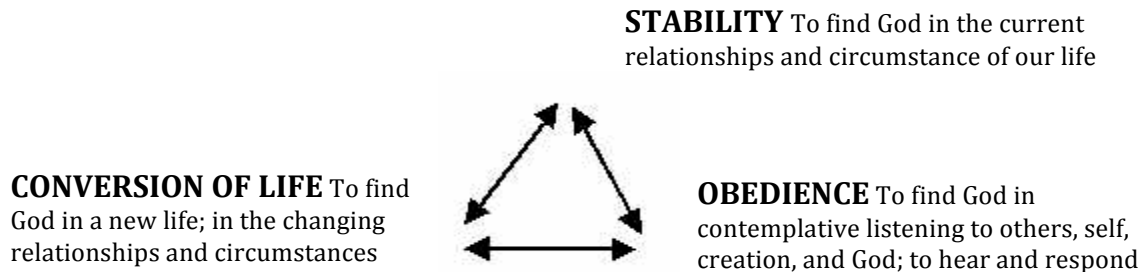


The Benedictine Promise and the Dynamics of the Spiritual Life in a Diocese

I want to begin with looking at the elements of the Promise and the dynamics among those elements in a living community of people.



Each element of the Promise is rooted in recollection and has certain internal dynamics. In stability, obedience and conversion of life there comes an awareness of God's presence. Speaking of it in general usage rather than in relationship to the spiritual life Edna O'Brien, an Irish writer, said "Recollection ... is not something that I can summon up, it simply comes and I am the servant of it." It is the Spirit praying within us.

The Promise draws us into recollection of aspects of God's presence. Each also carries within it dynamics that can draw us into maturity in Christ.

	Recollection	Inner Dynamics
Stability	God in this community, these people, this situation	Entering into a deeper acceptance of self and others; turning away from illusions drawing us into boredom, resentment, a desire to escape. Learning about the grumbling of our hearts, about how and why we flee self, others and God.
Obedience	God in this "word" to me	Living in the reality of death and resurrection, of losing life to find life. Learning to live in relationship, to listen deeply, to respond.
Conversion of Life	God in the new community, in the new life	Being on the journey that calls us into continuous change, a life-long process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ. Learning to find joy in the new life instead of weeping for the life that has passed or never was.

In the diocese's life as a community these elements of the Promise will touch and press upon one another. The static diocese might find a new stability out of having listened and responded to its own fears and longings; that is to say out of being obedient and open to a new life. The excessively anxious-to-please diocese might experience a conversion of life if leaders establish more broadly the stability of the Prayer Book Pattern (Eucharist, Office, Personal Devotions) and more "glue" among diocesan leaders.

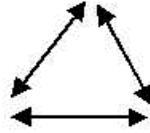
Leadership for diocesan development involves seeing the dynamics as they exist in the diocese and acting to shape diocesan life so the needed balance exists in its structures and processes.

Based on material in *Fill All Things: The Spiritual Dynamics of the Parish Church*, Robert A Gallagher, Ascension Press, Copyright 2008

The Benedictine Promise: Overall Assessment

The three elements of the Benedictine Promise, and the whole of Benedictine spirituality, can help us see some of the hidden dynamics of diocesan life.

CONVERSION OF LIFE As a diocese we find God on our journey together and in the new places we will go as a diocese; in losing life to find life; in our openness to transformation.



STABILITY As a diocese we find God here and now in the relationships and pattern of our life together

OBEDIENCE As a diocese we find God as we listen deeply to our world; to Scriptures; to the wider church, now and through the ages; to each other; and to the deepest longings and prayer of our heart.

Look at the dynamics of diocesan life

<p>What is the predisposition you see in the diocese’s behavior toward stability, change, or listening processes? Which direction do we generally tilt towards? Which is our anxiety often focused upon?</p>	
<p>In the diocese’s expression of stability, conversion of life, and obedience what seems healthy to you, what unhealthy? Is the stability simply being static? Is the conversion simply being driven by an impulse to change? Is the obedience endless listening and process or too little listening?</p>	

How are we doing in develop a diocesan culture that is marked by:

<p>Stability – Especially seen in Liturgy, prayer and relationships.</p>	<p>Very Weak Very Strong</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6</p>
<p>Obedience – Seen in our openness to listen to, and respond to, one another, our bishop and the larger church.</p>	<p>Very Weak Very Strong</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6</p>
<p>Conversion of Life – Out of our life of stability or obedience we see and act on new challenges and opportunities for mission and building up the Body of Christ.</p>	<p>Very Weak Very Strong</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6</p>

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 For more on the model see Robert Gallagher’s *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Ascension Press, 2008