

Reverend Abbot Primate,

Dear Father Abbots,

Dear brothers and sisters,

I welcome you on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the Benedictine Confederation, and I thank the Abbot Primate for his kind words. I would like to express my greatest respect and gratitude for the important contribution that the Benedictines have made to the life of the Church, in every part of the world, for nearly fifteen hundred years. During this celebration of the Jubilee of the Benedictine Confederation we would like to remember, in a special way, the commitment of Pope Leo XIII, who in 1893 wanted to unite all Benedictines by founding a common house of study and prayer here in Rome. We thank God for this inspiration, as it has led Benedictines from across the world to live in a deeper spirit of communion with the See of Peter and among themselves.

Benedictine spirituality is renowned for its motto: *Ora et labora et lege*. Prayer, work, study. In the contemplative life, God often announces His presence in an unexpected way. With the meditation of the Word of God in *lectio divina*, we are called to remain in a religious spirit of listening to His voice in order to live in constant and joyful obedience. Prayer generates in our hearts a willingness to receive the surprising gifts that God is always ready to give us, a spirit of renewed fervor that leads us, through our daily work, to seek to share the gifts of God's wisdom with others: with the community, with those who come to the monastery in their search for God ("*quaerere Deum*"), and with those who study in your schools, colleges and universities. An ever renewed and invigorated spiritual life thus is generated.

Some characteristic aspects of the Easter liturgical season in which we are living – such as announcement and surprise, prompt response, and the heart willing to receive the gifts of God – are indeed part of everyday Benedictine life. Saint Benedict asks you in his *Rule* to "prefer nothing whatever to Christ" (No. 72), so that you may always be vigilant, today, ready to listen to Him and to follow Him obediently (cf. *Prologue*). Your love for the liturgy, as the primary work of God in the monastic life, is essential above all for yourselves, allowing you to be in the living presence of the Lord; and it is precious for the whole Church, which over the centuries has benefited from it as though from springing water that irrigates and makes fruitful, nourishing the capacity to live out, personally and in community, an encounter with the risen Lord.

If Saint Benedict was a luminous star – as Saint Gregory the Great called him – during his time that was marked by a profound crisis of values and institutions, he was so because he was able to discern between the essential and the secondary in the spiritual life, placing the Lord firmly in the center. May you, his children in our time, practice discernment to recognize what comes from the Holy Spirit, and what comes from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil. Discernment "calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. It is a gift which we must implore ... of the Holy Spirit. Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend" (Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*, 166-167).

In this age, when people are so busy that they do not have enough time to listen to the voice of God, your monasteries and convents become like oases, where men and women of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and religions can discover the beauty of silence and rediscover themselves, in harmony with creation, allowing God to restore proper order in their lives. The Benedictine charism of hospitality is very precious for the new evangelization, because it gives you the opportunity to welcome Christ in every person who comes, helping those who seek God to receive the spiritual gifts He has in store for each of us.

Moreover, the Benedictines have always been recognized for their commitment to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. I encourage you to continue in this important work for the Church and for the world, placing your traditional hospitality at its service. Indeed, there is no opposition between the contemplative life and service toward others. Benedictine monasteries – whether they be in cities or far from them – are places of prayer and hospitality. Your stability is also important for people who come to seek you out. Christ is present in this encounter: He is present in the monk, in the pilgrim, in the needy.

I am grateful for your service in the fields of education and formation, here in Rome and in many parts of the world. Benedictines are known for being “a school of the Lord’s service”. I urge you to give students, along with the necessary ideas and knowledge, the tools for them to grow in that wisdom which drives them to seek God continually in their lives; that same wisdom which will lead them to practice mutual understanding, as we are all children of God, brothers and sisters, in this world that thirsts so much for peace.

In conclusion, dear brothers and sisters, I hope that the celebration of the Jubilee for the anniversary of the foundation of the Benedictine Confederation may be a fruitful occasion to reflect on the search for God and His wisdom, and how most effectively to transmit His perennial richness to future generations.

Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, in communion with the heavenly Church and with Saints Benedict and Scholastica, I invoke upon each one of you my apostolic blessing. And I ask you, please, to continue to pray for me. Thank you.