

Michel van Parys

Michel van Parys was born in 1942 in Gent, Belgium, and in 1959 he entered the Benedictine monastery of Chevetogne. He has studied philosophy, theology, and classical and oriental languages at the Sorbonne University, Paris, discussing a Thesis on Gregory of Nissa. Ordained priest in 1969 he served as Master of the Novices at the Chevetogne monastery, where he was elected Prior in 1971 and Abbot in 1991. After his resign from the abbacy, he has worked for the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in Rome, of which he has also been nominated "consultor" in 1997. From 2002 to 2013 he has been editorial director of the the trimestral Review "Irénikon" published by the Monastery of Cheveogne. From 2008 to 2013 he held the office of Pontifical Delegate for the Armenian Mechitarist Congregation of Venice. In November 2013 Pope Francis nominated him new hegumenos of the Abbey of Santa Maria di Grottaferrata near Rome and he held this minister until 2016. At present, he serves as the spiritual father of the Greek Pontifical College in Rome. He is currently member of the Scientific Comitee of the "International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality" held every year at the Monastery of Bose.

Criteria for Community Decisions in St Benedict's Rule and its reception

ABSTRACT

St. Benedict of Nursia (ca.480-ca.550) devotes chapter 3 of his Rule (RB 3) to the discernment of the will of God by the community. He invites the Abbot to take advice from the whole community in important decisions (praecipua) and to consult the council of older brothers in minor decisions (minora).

It sets out the procedure to follow, but insists on the spirit of faith which is to animate the community chapter. The Abbot would convoke all the brothers, listen to the opinion of each one (because the Spirit of God speaks sometimes by the mouths of the less considered brothers), meditate, take his decision and implement it. The brothers and the council must be animated by the same spirit of faith. They will give their opinion without trying to impose themselves and will be inwardly willing to accept with loyal obedience the final decision of the Abbot.

St Benedict is concerned above all with the quality of mutual listening and the climate of brotherly trust which guarantees the sincere desire of all to obey the will of God. He emphasizes the authority of the written Rule, a fruit of the discernment and the experience of earlier monastic generations. He warns the Abbot against arbitrary or tyrannical decisions, reminding him, as he does many times, that he will be judged one day before the dreadful tribunal of God.

In the course of the following fifteen centuries Latin monasticism received and developed the Benedictine institution of the chapter and council. The numerous comments on the RB, as well as the even more numerous 'Regulations' and 'Constitutions' of monasteries and monastic Congregations, elaborated, according to different times and places, legislative frameworks and governance, which are to support the infinite task of community discernment.

ALL SPEAKERS