

To Serve a Soul Name: _____ Prd: ____ Score: _____ / 20

Directions: Highlight the answer in the text on the left *before* answering the questions on the right.

How was civilization able to survive the disorders & terror of the early Middle Ages? It happened in a way that *no one* could have predicted. Small groups of men, dedicating themselves to God, gathered together in religious communities. *Set apart from the semi-barbaric world*, they became centers of light & learning. Within their walls, they **preserved & protected both classical culture & Christian teachings.**

These men became known as **monks**, & their communities as **monasteries**. The word monk came from the Greek word *monos*, which means alone or solitary.

The first monks were hermits who went to live in the deserts of Egypt & Syria around the last part of the 4th century A.D. These men wanted to get away from the city & town life which they considered corrupt. They devoted themselves in ways that were *often extreme*. They ate very little, spent years in silence, refused to bathe or wear comfortable clothes, & sat for days in the heat of the desert sun.

Gradually, monks also began to gather in organized communities where they lived under a common rule, or **discipline**. So, from living alone, monasticism came to mean *just the opposite*. Monks lived together, but still apart from the world ~ life's general society.

Monastic life spread rapidly over the Roman Empire during the last century of its existence. But there was very little unity from one monastery to another because there were as many rules as there were individual monasteries.

Then the *greatest of all* monastic lawgivers appeared on the scene ~ **St. Benedict** of Nursia. And he gave to the monastic world the same gift of organization that the ancient Romans gave to the political world. Structure! And that was not only able to survive the disorders of the time, but also eventually able to restore

What was preserved within the walls?

1) _____

(Greek & Roman)

2) _____



Monasteries were where _____ lived.

- a. nuns
b. monks
c. both nuns & monks
d. neither

Drawing conclusions: *Why* would these men choose to live *in isolation* from the outside world?

Describe a monk's life: 1) _____

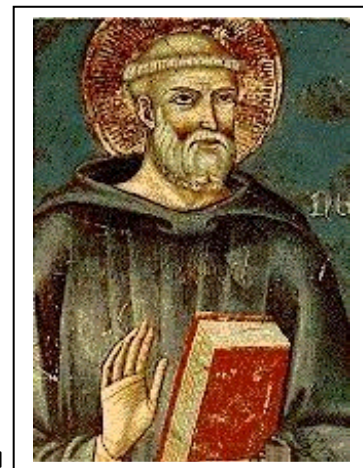
2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Discipline is defined as _____.

- a. living alone
b. universal rules
c. monasticism
d. living apart from



St. Benedict gave the monastic world

St. Benedict ↑: "father of

a world that was in physical & social ruin. Oddly, very little is known about the life of St. Benedict. His fame rests almost entirely upon his rule. But it is possible to reconstruct at least *some* of St. Benedict's life.

Benedict was born to a prosperous country family in the province of Nursia (Norcia), Italy sometime around 480. This was soon after the last Roman emperor, a boy named Romulus Augustulus, was thrown out by Odoacer, a Germanic chief. At that time, Rome had been already plundered twice by Germanic invaders.

During Benedict's youth, Odoacer was overthrown & killed by Theodoric, king of the Germanic Ostrogoths. Theodoric became the new ruler of Italy. So war & insecurity formed the background of Benedict's early life.

After learning to read & write at a local school, Benedict was sent by his parents to study in Rome. At that time, Rome was no longer a center of government, but it still was a great city with magnificent buildings. There were many Christian churches, but there were almost as many **pagan** (worshipping other gods *not* found in the Bible) temples. He thought both "Christians & pagans were corrupted with shameful **vices**."

When Benedict saw how Rome could ruin people, he eventually left, but stayed long enough to get a good education. His rule shows a wide knowledge of the Fathers of the Church, &, of course, the Bible as well as being familiar with great Roman authors such as **Virgil**.

Benedict then decided to become a monk. He retreated to a wild, deserted region called Subiaco, some 35 miles from Rome. There he found a cave about 1,000 feet above a river gorge. It was lonely enough to warm any hermit's heart. There he met a monk who lived in a nearby monastery. This friend gave him a monk's cloak, some religious advice, & a small supply of bread.

western European civilization"



A **synonym** for **vice** is _____. (Use the thesaurus.)

- | | |
|-----------|----------------|
| a. fault | c. strength |
| b. virtue | d. moral habit |

How did Benedict see Rome? _____

BONUS: Virgil is credited with **writing** the **epic poem**, the _____.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| a. <i>Aeneid</i> | c. <i>Odyssey</i> |
| b. <i>Hymn to Aphrodite</i> | d. <i>Iliad</i> |



↑ Monastery at Subiaco

Soon, Benedict acquired a group of devoted followers, and although he was young & inexperienced, he organized them into 12 monasteries, each with 12 monks. These monasteries were simply communities of huts. Benedict was hard on himself, but also disciplined his monks strictly.

After many years, Benedict decided to leave Subiaco & start fresh. With a small group of monks, he traveled south finally stopping at the little town of Cassino. Benedict climbed the mountain, where there were still some pagan shrines & a temple to Jupiter. On top of the mountain, he & his followers built a small monastery high above the countryside.

Benedict was more than 50 years old when he wrote the rule that would strongly affect the future of monasticism & Western Europe. By this time, he was no longer so hard on himself & others. In fact, he had become a calm & moderate man. This was reflected in his rule.

The rule addressed those who wished to live apart from the world & serve God. Early monks, especially in the East, treated their bodies like enemies that had to suffer cold, hunger & tests of endurance. But Benedict believed that the body should be treated *well* so that it could better "serve the soul."

To some at the time, it may have seemed that the monks at Monte Cassino led an easy life. Every day they spent four hours praying together, four hours praying alone & about eight hours working. The monks were poor, but they had enough food, clothing & rest. They slept in quiet dormitories, each with a straw mattress, a rough sheet, blanket & pillow.

The monks always ate together. During the winter, they had one meal a day & two in the summer. This does not seem like a lot today, but to the desert monks of old it would have seemed far too much. All meals were vegetarian consisting of mainly vegetables, fruit, & grains. Benedict wrote a "good pound



↑ Benedictine monastery at Cassino

Applying past knowledge: Jupiter is the Roman name for Greece's _____, (who?)
god of the sky.



How did monks treat their bodies like enemies? They suffered:

_____, _____
& _____.

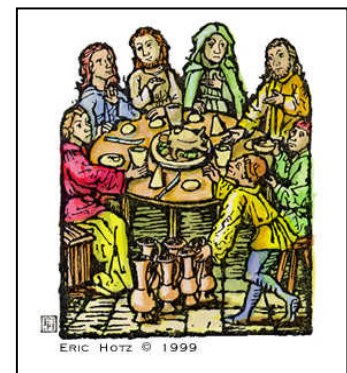
BONUS: What does it *mean* to "serve the soul"? _____

With details, describe a typical day for a monk:

_____ (2 pts)

Describe in detail a monk's sleeping "arrangements":

Their meals consisted of a *vegetarian* diet of:



of bread should suffice for the day." (Imagine that!) Benedict wrote, "He is not a *true* monk who does not live by the work of his own hands." Monks worked within or without monastery walls. They grew enough food & produced enough articles in workshops to sustain their simple life. Monasteries were completely **self-sufficient** & could survive the worst conditions.

Benedict believed that the better he treated his fellow monks, the more he could require of them spiritually. Instead of putting too great a strain on human nature, he had faith in it. His rule was based on simple virtues such as common sense, good judgment, & discretion. He saw himself as the father of a family ~ one who had to be firm, but also just & generous.

The men who followed Benedict's rule at Monte Cassino were from all classes. Many were peasants from the immediate neighborhood, & some were from Germanic tribes. Although many were uneducated to start with, they all learned to read & write. To Benedict, books were important because they could give spiritual guidance. His monks read the Bible & many books by other monks. At Lent, each monk was given a book that he was expected to read during that period. The library at Monte Cassino must have been fairly large & impressive!

Benedict wrote his rule at a time when Italy was experiencing the *worst* suffering in its history with famine & disease! Survivors did not even bury their dead. In the midst of these horrors, Benedict's monastery offered a haven of peace & security to all who entered.

Benedict remained there until his death. It is very unlikely that he could have foreseen the far-reaching effects that his rule would have. But in time, his monasteries would multiply by 100s & spread throughout the Western world influencing the lives of all western Europeans. **Benedictine monks** built schools, libraries & infirmaries for the sick as well as cultivated farms & forests, & constructed houses for the needy. Above all, Benedictine monks stressed

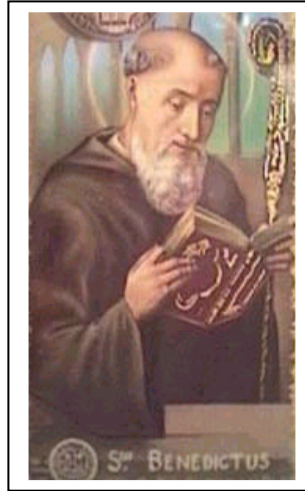
& _____ →
Another word for "simple life" learned from our Greek unit was _____.

- a. Paris Hilton
- b. Spartan
- c. Nicole Richie
- d. Athenian

Applying past knowledge: What other Medieval "institution" was **self-sufficient**? _____
(Use your lecture notes, if necessary, to answer this.)

List 3 of Benedict's basic virtues (qualities):

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

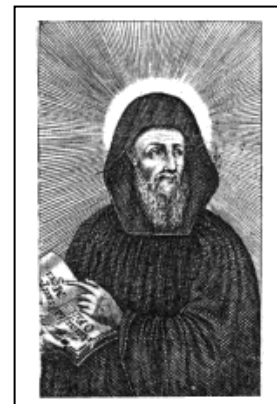


Though from varied backgrounds, *all* of Benedict's monks **learned to** _____ & _____.
(Applause, applause! You go, Monks!)

What did Benedict's monastery *provide for society during* these difficult times? _____

List "good deeds" done by Benedictine monks:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____



the ideals of personal worth & serving others. _____