

## **Some thoughts on "The Monastery of the Heart" (A book by Sister Joan Chittister OSB)**

OK, I admit it! I am a fan of Joan Chittister, and an avid reader of her books and articles. I love her honesty, her directness, her ability to ask critical and germane questions of both politicians and churchmen, indeed of all of us, based on a lifetime immersed in the Gospels and the Rule of St Benedict.

I think that in "The Monastery of the Heart" she is at her best. I don't think I have ever come across a book that so seamlessly weaves together monastic and oblate life, contemplation and action, detachment and involvement, the tightrope that is the Christian and Benedictine vocation. She truly brings alive Benedict's little school for the service of the Lord for those on either side of the monastic enclosure. I could quote her endlessly, but I think the first sentence of her book sums it up beautifully: "To live the God-life, Benedictine spirituality asserts as its foundation that we must immerse ourselves in the Word of God as model and guide, as vision and measure, of the good and happy life.... It is the gentle, tender invitation to go down deep into the self in order to find there the God who urges us to come out of ourselves to do the work of God, to live in union with God in the world around us...."

The layout of the book is very attractive – almost like poetry, with dense lapidary sentences and short chapters, as though to encourage the practice of Lectio. Like the Rule of St Benedict, it progresses from Our Search, to Our Interior life, Our Community, to Our Service, Our Promise and Our Spiritual Growth. It is a wonderful summary of the Christian journey as depicted in the Rule, and is the product of fifty years steeped in Benedictine life.

Don't just take my word for it; read it for yourselves. It is the best £10 worth I have had in a long time.

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