

# Homily Of The Most Reverend Jean Jadot

APOSTOLIC DELEGATE IN THE UNITED STATES,  
AT A MASS ON THE FEAST OF SAINT BENEDICT,  
MARCH 21, 1974, IN BELMONT ABBEY NULLIUS,  
BELMONT, NORTH CAROLINA

We live in a time when certain words appear over and over in almost every article we read or talk we hear. I have only to mention the words "prophetic mission" or "charism" and immediately many people react not to the reality expressed by these words, but to the vague impressions occasioned by their excessive use in the last few years.

This is unfortunate, for these words do have a very specific, personal and important meaning for each of us.

The II Vatican Council stressed that every Christian



SAINT BENEDICT



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For more than 1400 years,  
men and women have followed  
the Way of the Cross according  
to the rule of Saint Benedict.

must share in the prophetic mission of Christ, according to his own vocation, gifts, and state of life. The Holy Spirit distributes special graces - charisms - among the faithful of every rank. "By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks or offices for the renewal and up-building of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: 'to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good' (1 Cor. 12:7)" (Lumen gentium, n. 12).

A prophetic mission, therefore, is given for the growth of the entire People of God and relies upon charisms, special gifts of the Spirit.

Although the words may not have been used as frequently in the past as in our day, the Church has always recognized that distinctive charisms and prophetic missions are given not only to individuals, but also to communities within the Church.

Monasticism - and for us in the Latin Church this means monasticism mostly in the Benedictine tradition - has fulfilled a special role in the growth of the People of God. The saving effects and the profound influence of the rule and the order of Saint Benedict can be seen not only in the churches of Europe and the development of western civilization, but also in the churches of America and mission lands throughout the world.

Pope Paul VI, in two addresses, one at Monte Cassino in 1964 and the second to a gathering of 207 Benedictine abbots and priors in Rome in 1970, spoke of the prophetic mission that is yours in the church and the world of today. I invite you to study these messages, to meditate upon their relevance to your vocation as monks and to express their spirit in your daily lives and activities.

For the world has need of your prophetic mission. It must come to know and appreciate the special virtues of the rule of Saint Benedict, of "...your constitution based on the fatherly exercise of authority,



Archbishop Jadot distributes communion to an Abbey Student.

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the brotherly practice of communal life and the filial spirit of obedience; your silence and prayer; your enclosure and your openness to the poor and to guests, as if they were Christ; your intellectual and manual industry, your austerity and simplicity; your Benedictine style, at once humble and distinctive, artistic according to the aesthetics of the spirit" (Pope Paul VI at Subiaco, September 8, 1971).

Above all, the world has need of that special charism of the Benedictine life which has been summarized in three words: Ora et labora.

Each of the three words of your celebrated motto is important, but I believe that the most important in our days is the smallest word, "et," ora et labora.

Your way of life as Benedictines must make men realize that presence to God in prayer is the only sure guarantee of our presence to the world; that only because we pray to God, do we truly work for each other, that our prayer gives rise to and is the source of our work.

Your special mission is to make men and women aware of the possibility of being open to God simultaneously with being open to this world, of God being present to us as we are present to each other.

Under the influence of Marxist philosophy - whose influence is much deeper than many of us would like to believe - many of our contemporaries look at this presence to God as a sort of alienation. Prayer is seen as something apart from concern for our fellow man. We are thought to lose our identity as men and to abandon our sense of personal responsibility toward history if we look to God as our Creator. They can not see how we can consider ourselves as sons of God through Christ and at

the same time united to one another as human beings responsible for the growth of this world. According to them, prayer is separated from work. They would set one up against the other: God and world, God and nature. Ora et labora, prayer and work as forms of the same thing, is impossible.

You must give the world in your own lives the example and lesson of the primacy of prayer. This is why the Holy Father in his message of 1970 reminded the abbots of your Order that "in the various forms of external activity - studies, teaching, manual work, the apostolate among the young, in parishes and in missions - the interior spirit shall always and only be developed through that common fountain of life which is prayer" (Osservatore Romano, English edition, October 15, 1970, page 9).

This is your special mission in the Church and in the world, to pray and to work. For this, you will be given in abundance the special gifts of the spirit.

The Order of Saint Benedict is "made for strong, vigorous, resolute and ardent souls" (ibid.). We praise the Benedictines of the past; we give thanks to God for the Benedictines of the present; we pray that the Holy Spirit will call many generous young men and women to embrace the Rule of Saint Benedict so that in the future the world will have the example of their acceptance of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit and will experience the influence of their prophetic mission to live according to the one rule: Ora et Labora.

