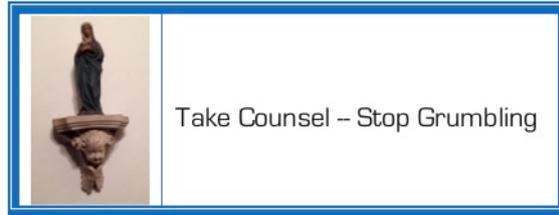


The low rumble of discontent and dissatisfaction



There are occasions when we can and should protest; but the low rumble of discontent and dissatisfaction that often accompanies our lives does no good to anyone, least of all ourselves. A useful Lenten exercise is this: ask yourself what has provoked your ire recently, and how you have expressed it. Did you explode, letting off verbal fireworks in all directions? Did you keep silent when you should have spoken out? Did you speak out as you should, with courtesy as well as conviction, or did you simply abuse another? Was the object of your anger justifiable, or was it a selfish pique? The saint we commemorate today, St Chad of Lichfield, was known for his simplicity and humility. He was by no means a fool, but he knew how to speak out and how to hold his tongue, how to moderate his anger, how to judge between a grumble and a genuine grievance. Let us pray for the grace to do the same ourselves.

From Sister Catherine on the iBenedictines web site

The sister offers us a word of caution about “justified grumbling.” Don’t be too quick in assuming that the injustice you are experiencing is worth the difficulties and suffering that can occur when our grumbling is set loose upon ourselves and others.

Our grumbling can make us miserable as it eats into our soul. We re-experience our agitation and suffering each time we repeat the story. We turn ourselves in victims and cynics. We empower our own sense of helplessness.

It can also cause great damage in the parish’s community life. Some years ago, an OA Brother was consulting with a mid-sized parish. The two wardens had saved the rector’s bacon when a significant number of members tried to push him out. There had been much grumbling. The wardens, two former military officers, had the standing to change the course of things. Now, just a couple of years later, they spoke to their consultant, “We may have made a mistake. The rector is a mess. We’re thinking we need to ask him to resign.” The priest hadn’t committed some canonical offense. He simply wasn’t as graceful as people wished he was. The consultant suggested that they do two things. First, consider the likely consequences. What would the impact be in the parish community? What effect would it have on a search for a new rector? And Secondly, what did they like about the priest? What gifts did he bring to the parish? The wardens reflected on these things and changed course. They showed humility and wisdom. The rector stayed for many years.

In Benedict’s Rule the burden is on the leader to arrange community life in a manner that doesn’t give rise to “justified grumbling.” A bit of forethought and empathy is needed. A willingness to competently “take counsel” will be important. The rector may be tempted to get defensive and dismiss any suggestion of poor leadership and injustice. The depth of the rector’s prayer life will matter greatly at this point. The need will be for reflection and humility grounded in the Eucharist and the Daily Prayers of the Church.