

## Moravian Women's Association- Devotional Paper – June 2024

### Fruits of the Spirit

*But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and **self-control**.* (Galatians 5:22-23a GNB)

Self-control was the fruit of the Spirit I was least looking forward to writing about. The word is often used to criticise people – those who it is perceived are eating or drinking too much for example. It is often used so that the people using it can feel a certain sense of superiority that they are not like that person. It stops people understanding that maybe the person who apparently lacks self-control may have a problem, a problem they are trying to solve, ineffectively admittedly, by over-eating or drinking. I have also known the word self-control be used to silence people from expressing an opinion that someone in authority doesn't want to hear. Self-control doesn't seem much like a gift from God in these situations.

Sr Claire Maxwell's address at our annual MWA Day in Birmingham in April, gave me a new perspective on the fruit of self-control, so I give credit to what follows to Claire. Claire spoke about the need for all of us, for our own good to sometimes say 'No.' To say 'No' when there are too many demands being made of us.

Jesus frequently took himself away from people's demands:

#### **Read Luke 4:42 – 5:3 and then Luke 5:16**

Jesus understood the necessity of withdrawing from people, even people in need, and spending some time in prayerful conversation with God and, if Jesus needed to do this, it is going to be the case that we need to do this also.

Benedict of Nursia lived in the mid-sixth century and founded the abbey of Monte Cassino. Although there had been previous monastic guides, Benedict's rule for monastic living became the most influential in Western Europe gradually replacing other monastic traditions. The Rule is structured and detailed, recommending a balance in life between work, prayer and rest. The Rule focused on individual spiritual development but also instructed the monks how to live in community with each other. The key word here is balance. The monks' lives were governed by a structured movement between physical labour, worship, study and rest. Each component was given equal value in their lives together.

So how does this apply to us then, women of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century who live out in the real world not tucked away in a monastery – or convent in our case? I think we all can learn from thinking about a rule of life for ourselves. Perhaps you can think about the things in your life that are important to

you – work, home, friends, leisure, church, prayer etc and decide if you are giving enough priority to each of them.

### **To Discuss**

How easy do you find it to say 'No' to people?

When you have said 'No' how does that make you feel?

What do you do if you feel overwhelmed by life?

Runcorn (2006 p.59) describes the Rule of Benedict as a 'hugely renewing gift to a society struggling through the violent turmoil of the Dark Ages' and writes that it has relevance to us in our 'chaotic and unstable world.'