**Benedictine Reflection: Ora et Labora**

By Andrew Lee

(from Vena Eastwood “Benedict Rules”, Chapter 48: Daily Manual Labor)

In the Rule of St. Benedict, Prayer and Work (Ora et Labora) are two sides of the same coin.  There is a balance, just as there has to be a balance in our lives between study and leisure.

As we enter the last couple of weeks of school and prepare for final exams and possibly college, may we remember that moderation is key to gaining the most out of each day, and ultimately our lives.  Just as we should not spend all of our day on leisure activities (e.g. social media, parties, playing video games, gym), we should not spend all of our day working (e.g. homework, studying, chores).  By going overboard on one “side of the coin”, we lack the rejuvenation that the other “side of the coin” provides for us.  We are left tired and unable to deliver the best of ourselves to ourselves and to others.  Yes, one could argue that work is important, talking is important, or having a laugh is important.  But there is a time and place for everything and each has to be done at the right time.

So, when is *the* right time?  This is a difficult question that many struggle with throughout their lives.  The answer comes with personal growth and awareness of oneself and others.  Let us help keep each other accountable.  Listen with the ear of your heart to yourself and to others.  If you or someone seems off-balanced, distracted, or stressed, provide a space for that person to take a step back and take deep breath, and have that person reevaluate their balance and use of time on certain activities.  By providing this intentional pause for reflection, we are giving ourselves an opportunity to balance our lives for the better.

Prayer:

“God, sometimes we go over the top and swing out of balance.  Help us to maintain a sense of balance in our lives, remembering the things we have to do as well as the things we want to do.  Amen.”