

The meals of the sisters should not be without reading

~Other Speakers M-R: St. Benedict of Nursia:

The meals of the sisters should not be without reading.
Nor should the reader be
anyone who happens to take up the book;
but there should be a reader for the whole week,
entering that office on Sunday.
Let this incoming reader,
after Mass and Communion,
ask all to pray for her
that God may keep her from the spirit of pride
And let her intone the following verse,
which shall be said three times by all in the oratory:
"O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall declare Your praise."
Then, having received a blessing,
let her enter on the reading.
And let absolute silence be kept at table,
so that no whispering may be heard
nor any voice except the reader's.
As to the things they need while they eat and drink,
let the sisters pass them to one another
so that no one need ask for anything.
If anything is needed, however,
let it be asked for by means of some audible sign
rather than by speech.
Nor shall anyone at table presume to ask questions
about the reading or anything else,
lest that give occasion for talking;
except that the Superior may perhaps wish
to say something briefly for the purpose of edification.
The sister who is reader for the week
shall take a little ablution before she begins to read,
on account of the Holy Communion
and lest perhaps the fast be hard for her to bear.
She shall take her meal afterwards
with the kitchen and table servers of the week.
The sisters are not to read or chant in order,
but only those who edify their hearers.