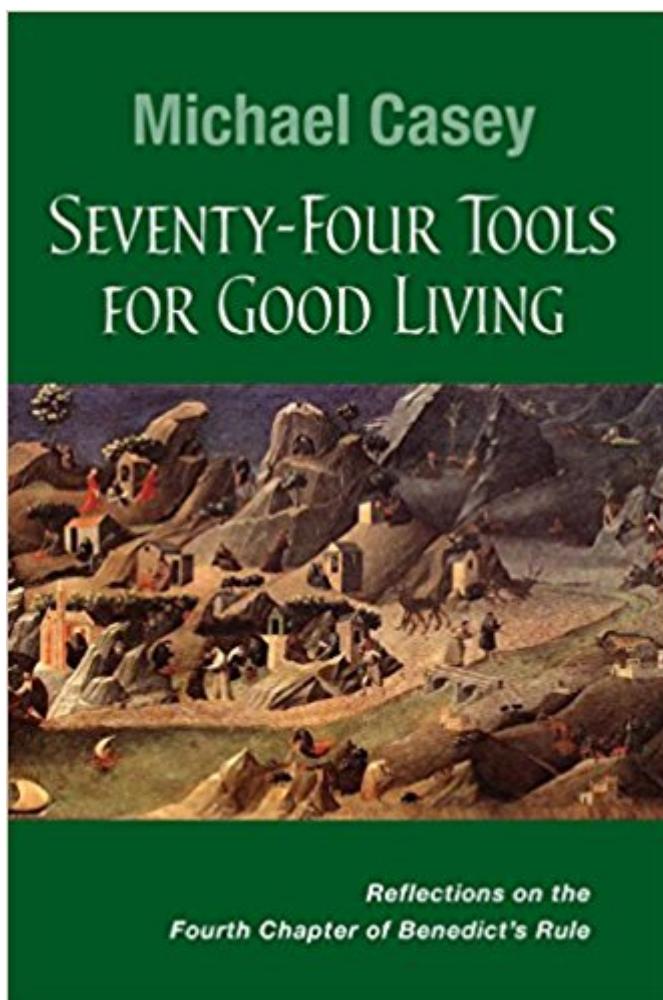


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# Seventy-Four Tools For Good Living: Reflections On The Fourth Chapter Of Benedict's Rule



## Synopsis

There is more in Benedict's Rule than meets the eye. Based on the rules of life of John Cassian and Saint Basil, Benedict invites us to go further back to the scriptural basis of all Christian and monastic living and pursue our spiritual journey by the guidance of the Gospel. This book of reflections on the tools for good living is intended to be read very slowly, one section at a time. In addition to communicating reflections on each verse of chapter 4, Casey invites readers to: continue the process of reflection for themselves apply what is written to their own lives draw on their own wisdom and insight and, ultimately, broaden their experience of monastic spirituality

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ancient monastic authors often stressed their wish to be of use to readers. Like them, Michael Casey has written a useful volume, a volume to live by. Drawing on a wealth of sources, and reading deeply in the book of experience, he shows what a vast perspective is indicated in the Little Rule of Benedict, what fullness of life is in store for those who follow it with courage and coherence. Eric Varden, OCSO Mount Saint Bernard Abbey Tolle lege (pick up this book) if you want a sustained conversation with a master

teacher of the Rule of Benedict. I am shocked how superficially I habitually read chapter 4 of the Rule of Benedict. Those seventy-four tools are no longer a list but a loving invitation.

“Michael Casey brings a deep lived knowledge of the monastic tradition to this splendid set of reflections on Benedict’s Rule. He manages to marry faith commitment to pastoral common sense in such a manner that monks and laity as well can find answers to that request made to the old desert dwellers: Give me a good word. Casey, in fact, gives us many good words.”

Lawrence S. Cunningham  
John A. O’Brien Professor of Theology (Emeritus)  
The University of Notre Dame

“In my regular university course on the Rule of St. Benedict as a mirror to present-day culture there is close reading of some chapters of the Rule. To my shame I tended to neglect chapter four a bit. Michael Casey’s deep reflections in this remarkable book are nourished by a half century of monastic reading and deep psychological and existential insight. I can now draw from nearly 300 pages of wisdom on the fourth chapter of Benedict’s Rule. Just to quote from Fr. Michael’s preface: ‘There is much more in Benedict’s Rule than meets the superficial eye.’”

Wil Derkse  
Andreas van Melsen Chair for Science, Society and Worldviews (retired)  
Catholic Radboud University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands

“This book is not an exegetical study; one goes elsewhere for such. Rather this is a wisdom text, exploring each tool in a search to comprehend these pithy sayings for good living. . . . It is his own lived experience that brightens up the text. Casey’s years of cenobitic living, coupled with his perceptive eye and peppered wit give life to the seventy-four tools.”

Timothy Joyce, OSB, Glastonbury Abbey, Hingham, MA, American Benedictine Review

“The incomparable Casey has done it again. He seems to deliberately choose the most unlikely sections of the Rule of Benedict and make them into something appealing, even compelling, for the modern reader.”

Terrence Kardong, OSB  
Tjurunga

Michael Casey, OCSO, is a monk of Tarrawarra Abbey (Australia). He holds a degree in Scripture at Leuven and a doctorate from Melbourne College of Divinity for a study of desire for God in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux. In recent decades he has been engaged in exploring different aspects of monastic spirituality, writing, and giving conferences throughout the English-speaking monastic world. His books include The Road to Eternal Life: Reflections on the Prologue of Benedict’s Rule (Liturgical Press, 2011) and Seventy-Four Tools for Good Living: Reflections on the Fourth Chapter of Benedict’s Rule (Liturgical Press, 2014).

And if one is not available to you...then settle on a spiritual tradition that the Holy Spirit will use to guide you in your journey of conversion...For me, it has long been Cistercian/Benedictine and my wise elder was Andre Louf of recent memory. Now, it is Michael Casey. His collection of writings are "as if" readings. That is while I am not a monk living in a monastery... I am living alone/together...And so in listening with the ear of my heart I find food for the journey...offered by a confrere. Some years ago, thru the internet I was able to listen to Michael Casey giving a Lectio Divina on the Prologue of the Rule of Saint Benedict. Hearing his voice, the slow cadence of his speech and the timing of movement from verse to verse...I found I was in too much of a hurry. Still am! Yet the memory of that experience compels me to consciously slow down the pace of progress through a Casey text. How slow can you go? This is not a page turner read! He specifically states ... if one reads a verse collection per day, we will be able to read the same text 5 times in a year. Did you hear that! Five times thru in a year! That would be one a day cycle...3 times a year on a one every three days cycle. Or once thru on one verse collection per week! So at the ready for this reading is The Bible, a copy of the Rule of St. Benedict... open to Chapter 4. And Kardong's Commentary on the Rule... We are to sound the depths not skim the surface. We are sharing in reflections... not studying a commentary. This is not a program or a process though, be clear about that. He offers an invitation to consider that the Holy Spirit will have us in seasons of experiential reflection on one or some of the tools of conversion. Being able to recognize the lesson, the formation, the movement of the Holy Spirit enlarges my heart to receive the prayer of my heart....5 times thru in a year... welcome to sustained lectio divina with a wise elder as a companion.

Fr. Michael Casey's book on this section of the Rule of St. Benedict is one of the best reflections on the Rule I've read. All his works on the Rule of St. Benedict are profound, yet simple and applicable to any serious religious practitioner. They are born from a rich experience of monastic life and reflection on the Rule. I highly recommend this book if you want to steep yourself in monastic wisdom, which is both spiritual and full of human wisdom. DJC

I have read several of Fr. Michael's books, and in my opinion all of them are excellent commentaries on the Rule of St. Benedict and the Benedictine way of life. I am a member of a Benedictine Community, and highly recommend this book on the fourth chapter of The Rule (The Tools). As with other of Fr. Michael's books, I recommend reading this in small segments (as he also recommends). It is a book to which I will return many times. As far as inspirational commentaries, I would rank any

of his books at the top of the list.

Outstanding! The reflections reveal wide experience, common sense, deep thought, and perseverance. There is a lot more here than "reflections

Frail. Casey guides and challenges the reader to a steadfast effort to take to heart and action St. Benedict's admonitions on living a holy life. his writing is so good, that it is like having one's spiritual director right there with you. Each point is about putting our faith into practice; practical yet profoundly based on true wisdom.

As a Benedictine oblate I read this book with much interest. While it concentrates on living the ideals of monastic community life it is very practical for those serious about Christian living. Father Casey is a masterful writer of Benedictine life and spirituality.

Here are the modern applications of the path recommended by Benedict for a good, purposeful life. This is a rule book for beginners much needed today. Practical suggestions are offered by a master of a meaningful spirituality for the ages.

One of the greatest commentators of the Rule of St Benedict ever. His approach is not just scholarly but as a way to challenge one to live more mindfully as a human being and child of God. Excellent!

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