

Community of Divine Love

An Episcopal Monastery in the Benedictine Tradition

Rule of Life

The Call of the Community

We are a residential community of men and women drawn to the monastic way of life by our desire for love of God and neighbor. We are committed to the contemplative way of life and dedicated to works of justice and acts of mercy. We seek to further the Kingdom of God on earth with a steady and committed focus on the Divine through the vows of *Stability*, *Conversion of Life* and *Obedience*. Our daily living is framed in *Ora et Labora* – Prayer and Work.

We strive to see God in all things and in all people. We hope to be instruments of God's peace and serve as an icon that might draw others into a closer union with The Divine. The discipline of our Rule of Life is undertaken not as a set of limitations but rather as a means to profound freedom. We accept The Rule of St. Benedict as our guide for inspiration, yet not binding, so to allow ourselves the freedom to live fully into God's will for us knowing that God is always calling us to new and deeper places with ongoing freshness and newness of life.

The Monastic Vow

Stability

Stability is our commitment to life in the monastery. We bind ourselves entirely to the Community of Divine Love, offering our lives to God. In giving ourselves to stability we foster a deepening sense of equanimity. Just as "*No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God*", we commit to live until death as fervent monks.

Conversion of Life

We seek to evolve, transform, and grow in grace by turning away from self-will and turning toward the will of God. We vow to be always a pilgrim, guided by the Holy Spirit, living in ongoing conversion, mindful that God is always calling us into deeper places with ongoing newness and fullness of life. It is in the challenges of living in community that we confront that part of ourselves that needs to die, where conversion meets the loving commitment of stability. Through our conversion of life we strive to reveal Christ Consciousness in ourselves and in the greater community.

Obedience

Obedience is understood as listening for the will of God with the *ear of the heart* and the common mind of the community. Love without obedience is a shallow love asking of us only what is comfortable and convenient. Committing to obedience we fully enter the life that we have been called to, growing beyond the confines of the self with its desires and whims. As the Lord says: "*Narrow is the road that leads to life*". We look for the fruits of obedience to be manifested as generosity, humility, and purity of heart.

Disciplines

Poverty

The vow of poverty is a commitment of faithfulness to the Gospel itself which summons us to a new vision and way of life which reverses the values of the world. It means that we have made the conscious choice to dissociate ourselves from the structures of privilege, power and wealth. We maintain a healthy distance from the trappings of the world in order to remain focused on the kingdom of God. Monastic poverty is interpreted as having no possessions of one's own and living with simplicity and thankfulness for God's provisions, holding all goods in common. Living in simplicity means that we need less and take less from the world and allows to be good and prudent stewards of God's resources.

Celibacy

Through the act of life profession we commit to be faithful to God in this single, chaste celibate state of life. Drawn by the power of God's love, we are free to respect ourselves and others, welcoming all as brothers and sisters in Christ with equal modesty, decency and love. Living a chaste and celibate life helps us to keep our devout attention on Divine Love. Jesus taught chastity of heart, not merely of outward behavior. We will need to examine our hearts for our emotional honesty in our relations with others.

The disciplines that foster celibacy help us to prevent our spirits from becoming solemn and heavy and help us to live with vitality and spirit. We can all contribute to the harmony and balance of our life together in community by allowing playfulness and humor to help keep us in touch with our humanity and to release tension. It is important to keep our hearts open to the wisdom of our spiritual directors or confessors, for secrecy makes us more likely to deceive ourselves. It is through friendship that we can be of most support to one another. Celibacy could become lonely and arid unless we support one another in true friendship and affection in Christ.

Ora et Labora

Pray and Work

Prayer

Prayer is foundational to the vocation of the monastic life. It is the *Opus Dei* – the work of God. We bring ourselves with deep intention to meet God in prayer. Engaging in the daily office means that we are willing to commit to the repetitive rhythm of prayer. The purpose behind these frequent interruptions in the momentum of one's day helps us to stop and remember God. The office mostly consist of the recitation of psalms, reading of scripture, confession, and intercessory prayers.

Contemplative practices such as Lectio Divina, The Jesus Prayer, Centering Prayer and praying with icons are essential to cultivating the inner-soil of our spiritual life.

Work

Work is seen as both a practical means of support for the monastic community as well as a means to grow deeper into the mystery of God in our lives. Whether it be manual labor in the monastery, things we do in order to help create financial security for the community, or the *Opus Dei* – the *Work of God* in prayer, we seek to see God in all things.

Values

Study

St. Benedict puts great importance on the relationship between prayer, work and study. Study is part of the necessary balance that brings the God-given use of the mind into both our prayer and work life. Learning is an integral part of our being. What we learn becomes integrated into our lives.

We seek at all times to offer ourselves to the continuing challenge of intellectual growth. Regular study that is consistent over time can help us to expand our minds and deepen our understanding of ourselves, others, and the complexities of an ever-changing world. The ultimate desired goal of regular study and learning is to become a fully integrated human being.

All learning is a gift of our Creator. In addition to study of Holy Scripture and theological pursuits, we also see value in study of other sacred texts and attention to current world events.

Humility

Humility is an honest appraisal of who we really are. No amount of praise or dismissing can shake this inherent sense of our strengths and shortcomings. St Benedict puts great emphasis on the importance of the value of humility. We attempt to relinquish ourselves of our ego enabling the Holy Spirit to work through us. The path that will make us more like Jesus is the path to humility.

Silence

Our life in community calls for keeping a respectful silence at all times, free of pointless chatter in which words can become empty. Silence in community is different than solitary silence and requires a more mindful intention. Silence in community reaches beyond the words from our mouths into silence of our entire being. It is in this silence that we hope to hear the heart of God speak.

Just as Jesus would withdraw to be alone with God, so too are we called to withdraw at certain intervals into deeper silence and aloneness with the Divine, together as a community as well as personally, to be free of distractions and to dwell lovingly in His presence. It is hard to hear God in noise or agitation. We aspire to an inner silence that welcomes the voice of God.

It is our intention to cultivate an ever-increasing spirit of silence within the cloistered life.

Worship

The sacrament of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on the first day of the week is our central act of worship as members of the people of God. It is in the Eucharist that our worship of God finds its fullest expression. All that we do and all that we are as Christians is bound in this holy sacrifice and sharing of bread and wine, the holy food and drink of unending life in Christ. It is the meal that brings us together in community and through which we are caught up in the mystical communion of saints on earth and in heaven, the mystical body of Christ.

Our seeking to abide in Christ and to feed on him constantly as our daily bread may move us to celebrate the Eucharist also on other days of the week.

Ministry

Ministry is an important part of our community life and our lives as Christians. We are well-established in our ministry with our brothers and sisters incarcerated in jails and prisons. Although this work may remain as foundational to our ministry in and for the world, we are not restricted to this as exclusive in any way. We are always open to responding to need. New brothers and sisters entering the community may bring ministry gifts with them and new opportunities will surely always present themselves.

Our ministry also includes individual spiritual direction, leading retreats, teaching, preaching and writing.

When considering the many ministry opportunities that come our way, we must always discern carefully the impact on the community. We must be mindful and alert to the tension between the balance of responding to the needs of others and our own needs of the community. Discerning which opportunities we should respond to brings into play the wisdom of the whole community. The coordination of our tasks, responsibilities, and ministries means that we must often turn down requests. This prudence is not meant to hold us back from responding generously, but to respond responsibly, ever mindful of the mission priorities of the community. Without faithfulness to our limitations we can jeopardize our community life and its balance.

Balance

Our ordinary life is our spiritual life. We look to create a balance between prayer, study, work, ministry, recreation and retreat. The demands of the world are often great and the community should be a place of peace and renewal. We strive to maintain a healthy balance of mind, body and spirit through physical exercise, meditation, relaxation and healthy eating that can help us to remain grounded as individuals and as a community.

Mindfulness

Since all of life is holy, we don't want to let it pass by unnoticed. We give our attention as full as we can to what we are doing in any given moment and to what is going on around us. Being fully present in each moment helps us to be aware of the presence of God.

Hospitality

As a community we are mindful of recognizing all who come to us in the form of a guest, stranger, or pilgrim, as the Lord Himself. If we are to truly meet Christ face to face in these encounters, we must acknowledge the gift of hospitality we have been given and remember how deeply people are yearning for the things of God. We offer silence, our stream of prayer, and our fellowship where our guests are safe from intrusion and free to pray. We may also offer our gifts of teaching, guidance, and encouragement by where our guests can grow in the love and knowledge of God.

We must also remain mindful and true to our limitations. The claims upon our community life and ministries mean that we cannot take all who come to us with the desire for retreat time. If

we do not honor the boundaries that protect our life in community, we endanger our life together and the resources we have to offer.

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