

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY OF THE GOSPEL

Daniel Schroeder was born and raised in the Milwaukee area, one of four sons. He met his life partner, Mary, in high school, and they were married a few years later in 1969. They have one daughter, Nicole Leah. Brother completed his undergraduate studies in Classical Hebrew at the University of Wisconsin, then went on to complete a Masters at Northern Illinois specializing in Adult Educational Psychology. He also received an MBA in Finance from Concordia University.

After spending much of his career in law enforcement and corporate management, Daniel acted on a life-long desire for monastic life when he joined the Companions of St. Luke ~ Benedictine on May 7, 2003. There, he learned the Benedictine ways, served as Director of Oblates, and received his Religious name, Daniel-Joseph.

In late 2006, the Abbot announced building plans for the Abbey, which suggested a change in mission and vision. At that time, Brother was also considering a more ecumenical approach to his monasticism that explored a broader range of ideas while still focusing on basic Christian principles.

In early 2007, Brother resigned from the Companions and spent time as a solitary, formulating what would eventually become the Community of the Gospel. After several months of prayer and discernment, the Community concept gradually took shape. The vows of the Community would be based on the ancient foundations of building a relationship with the Triune God: the Way of Devotion (Daily Prayer), the Way of Knowledge (Reflective Study), and the Way of Action (Personal Service). These would be tied together using several key spiritual principles (next page).

Brother assembled a small team of advisors to draft a Constitution and Customary for the new Community. The name became obvious: we need Community to grow spiritually, and it must be centered on the Gospel. The monastic framework was eventually ready to share, so a rough web site was built. An LLC was formed with the state of Wisconsin on March 28, 2007.

In April Brother met with Bishop Russell Jacobus, Bishop of the Diocese of Fond du Lac, and head of the House of Bishops Committee on Religious Orders and Communities for the Episcopal Church. A request was made to him for permission to officially establish the Community in the Diocese, which was granted on May 3, 2007. National Recognition was granted on February 14, 2013.

The Community's first Convocation was held in April of 2008 at Monte Alverno Retreat Center in Appleton. All four CG Members attended for three days of prayer and learning.

Key underlying principles that tie the three vows together:

- 1) **God is love** – S/He is not vengeful, hateful, punitive, or needful of retribution. God is loving, merciful, compassionate, and understanding. God is a healer, not a destroyer.
- 2) **Justice** means reformation, restoration and wholeness – not punishment and damnation. Yes, getting to wholeness *may* be painful, especially when one experiences the awareness of the implications of past behavior. There may indeed be “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” but this is not caused by God; healing can sometimes be painful. But God in Christ will be present to comfort and restore, no matter how long it takes.
- 3) Christ’s table is **diverse and welcoming**. It is not segregated by race, age, economic status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or gender. Anyone who pursues a loving relationship with Christ, God’s Children, and the Earth may sit at the Table.
- 4) The **Gospel** is our core Scripture. It is our core reason for prayer, it is our core resource for study, and it is our core example for service. All scripture, tradition, and experience must be in alignment with the love and wisdom given to us through Jesus Christ. This does not preclude new growth and understanding – we were promised that the Advocate would be sent to teach us.
- 5) The **key events** in Christianity are the Incarnation and the Resurrection. The Incarnation being the gift of God to us; binding spirit and matter, heaven and earth, in a tremendous act of love. God sent His Son to heal, teach, and show us how to live together – not to condemn the world, but to save it (from ourselves!). The Resurrection demonstrated the Truth of God’s love and of Christ’s life – that nothing can come between us and the love of God – nothing! Even when mankind sinks to the lowest point and kills God’s Son, God trumps that with renewed life.
- 6) **Free will** is a necessary part of love. Without free will, there can be no love, because love is a choice. Unfortunately, free will can also be used to nurture self-interests created by a dysfunctional ego. Most of mankind’s problems can be traced back to poor decisions of free will. True, there are many uncontrollable intervening factors in life that we can’t predict – but a misunderstanding of the human psyche is at the root of most ills and foibles. Psychology and theology are closely linked. The key to solid spiritual growth, and becoming who we were meant to be, necessitates a good understanding of the nature of the human mind.
- 7) While the members of the Community all commit to a monastic practice built on the vows of Prayer, Study, and Service, each member fulfill these vows in their own **unique way**.
- 8) **Our Charism** – the gift and purpose for which we exist – is to live the monastic values of Daily Prayer, Reflective Study and Personal Service that lead to nurturing of the soul at the hands of Christ. Although we live and work in different places, we have common roots that lead to unique responses to God’s love in our lives.