



A Common Core for Monastics

“Being” that Shapes Doing

Community of the Gospel
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INTRODUCTION

The idea for this Common Core grew out of the realization that, over time, too many of us have become human *doings*, and have forgotten that we are actually supposed to be human *beings*.

We live in a “doing” society today that moves much too fast, has too many things, and fails to connect deeply with each other – all of which erodes our moral foundation and the sense of who we really are as a people. We seem lost, but are too busy to realize it, or even care about it. We fill the voids within our souls with things and activities which provide us the alibis we need to avoid a face-to-face encounter with our own hearts. The busy life has become our habit, our excuse to escape the encounter we need to really live.

So, from within our monastic community, we pause for a while and re-examine *what it means to be a human being at the most basic levels*. What are the roots that tie us to life and living? What can provide the basis for knowing ourselves and understanding how we fit into this world, without succumbing to its illusion? What gives us the strength and bearing to be who we are truly made to be, thereby fulfilling the deep-seated desire in each of us to reach our full potential?

The pieces of this puzzle are scattered over the pages of time, written in many places throughout the world. They appear again and again, however, like a

perennial flower in the gardens of the East and West. They are the voices of prophets, sages, and mystics, beckoning us to join in the cosmic dance of love; an invitation that never ends, like love itself. Come! Follow me! Where else can we go for the truth but to the truth-givers?

The pages of this document emerge as another of these sacred invitations – a call to first understand who we are as human *beings*, and then to extend that knowledge out into the world in our own unique ways, serving as models of what life could be. The offering is a life of seeing deeply, living deeply, and loving deeply – a life that values relationships more than things, and ensures the dignity and respect of *all* persons, helping each other discover the wonders of life.

This booklet is offered as a Common Core of life for the Brothers and Sisters of the Community of the Gospel, to serve as the cornerstone from which each member’s vocation can be formed. It can also be used by anyone seeking a foundation for a loving, spiritually-based life. Perhaps it can contribute to the much-needed stability and sense of “being” in this fast-paced, hectic world that sometimes seems a little crazy.

This is a collection of ideas, sayings, and bits of wisdom that point toward time-tested concepts upon which we can formulate a value system to guide our choices, as well as our perception of life. What is written here is really a “wisdom sampler.” There is much more that could be included, therefore the reader

is encouraged to explore each of the topics further. It's a life-long journey!

The early chapters look at our relationship with the Triune God. It's quite certain, especially from a world-view perspective, that God is not just a loving God, but is love itself.

As love, we find God to be eternally merciful and forgiving. God was always that way, and will always be that way. God made all creation, including humankind, and has called it "good." God is not angry or distant. Because God loves us so much (and that means *you*, too!), God came to us in the form of a man to be with us, to teach us, to heal us, and to show us how to live together. And, on top of all that, God sent the Holy Advocate to be with each person, to teach the truth – if we would only listen. We are told that we are temples of God – God abides in us, and we in God. That means that God is both cosmic in size, but intimate in nature. God is our all in all.

The middle chapters offer insights into the nature of the human psyche. We are a mixture of many amazing things: physical matter carefully shaped by the hand of God down through the ages; a vast array of psychological archetypes that represent the cultural legacy of humanity; and an eternal soul that is placed at the core of our very being which carries within it the image and likeness of our Creator. We are very complex creatures indeed! (It's no wonder we sometimes have difficulty figuring out who and what we

are.) We are made with the ability to love as God loves us – completely and unconditionally.

But we also must know that the ability to love comes with a risk. To be able to love, we must have free will because love has to be a choice, or it isn't love. Because there is a choice, we can sometimes choose wrongly.

Occasionally our false self emerges and leads us astray. Sometimes we simply make mistakes. It's all part of being human. God's understanding and mercy always deals with us in a loving manner. God seeks to heal and restore – to set things right – not to punish or harm. God will eventually restore every soul. No soul will be left behind.

Now, what do we do with this knowledge of ourselves and the relationship we have with God? We strive to know, love, and serve God in our own unique way based on the talents, skills, and interests we have been given. We shape our lives around daily prayer, reflective study, and service to others. For a select few, this may be building nations or curing a disease, but equally important to God are the many ways that *anyone* can spread God's love through day to day living – offering a smile to another person just when it's needed, appreciating the colors of a sunset, caring for an animal that needs help, writing a line of poetry, washing a dish, or any of a thousand simple things found in each moment. All are so very important.

Everything in life is interconnected. Any thought, word, or deed has implications that we may never see or understand. But they're there. If one person is hurting, we all hurt. If one nation is suffering, we are all suffering. We learn to see deeply like this, because that is the true essence of things; that is the way the love of God moves from one thing to the next. We are not separate, we are not alone. We are One.

Take these words and discover what they mean for you. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord in tenderness, mercy, peace, and perseverance. Be in the world, but know where your roots grow best – in the loving Presence of your Creator as found in many places, including the pages of this Common Core for Monastics.

Br Daniel-Joseph
Guardian
Community of the Gospel
January 2018

“Here am I, servant of the Lord; Let it be with me according to your word.” The Blessed Mary

1. GOD AND YOU

We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. (BCP – Baptismal Covenant)

Who is this God that we proclaim belief in? What do we know of God? From the opening Baptismal statement, we understand God to be all powerful, and heavily into making things that are “good.”

We learn from scripture a lot about God. We also come to know God when we get in touch with our heart and soul. We come to realize that God is not just loving; God *is* love. And we are affirmed in many ways that God loves us; God loves *you*.

But we must go deeper than this. We must go beyond just the words, and begin to experience this love in our own lives. We must take the hand of God and begin to dance, to feel the circle that forms with God’s steps, and discover that there are so many other people joining in – and creatures, too – and the sun and moon and stars!

What is this love? What does God feel like? To get a sense for this love, go out and try it. Do some small act of love for someone today, and you will begin to get a taste for what it is. This is God’s kingdom on Earth. Love is losing ourselves within the relationships that connect everything to God, to each other, and to nature. God’s love flows through relationships.

God seeks a personal, intimate relationship with all creation.

Paul adds, “What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

And he further offers to the Ephesians, “May you have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

If God is love, then we may have to look at God differently from what we might hear. God loves us so much that God put part of God’s own image and likeness into each one of us. We are part God, and God is part us.

As love, God seeks healing and reconciliation, not punishment or vengeance. Sin is something to be healed, not punished. God will find a way to bring total unity to creation; God will leave no soul behind. God’s mercy endures forever. We have nothing to fear, because there is no fear in love. Julian of Norwich discovered that there is no wrath in God.

God loves us so much that God sent Jesus to us so that we could learn how to live with each other and all of creation. Through the incarnation He demonstrated that spirit and flesh are indeed One. They belong together. Flesh is not evil, but it used to house our souls while we visit this earth.

We are temples of God. God abides in us and we abide in God. When we find God there, we will soon see God everywhere, if we see deeply. We are a gift that should be treated with respect, and returned when God calls us.

So, regardless of what we look like, what our skin color is, how old we are, our sexual orientation, our economic status, or our political affiliation, we are beautiful people because we have a God-given soul at the core of our being, and it is good. We are children of God; every person is a child of God.

The path to knowing God more is to know our own soul more.

The path to knowing our own soul more is to know God more.

The path to each is prayer.

Love the Lord God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul; and love your neighbor as yourself.

*Our Father, who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your Name
Your kingdom come, Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,
for Yours is the kingdom
and the power
and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen*

2. JESUS AND YOU

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son. Our Lord; conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again, he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

(BCP – Baptismal Covenant)

Jesus lived love.

God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son to us so that we could learn how to live with each other and all of creation. He was sent to us to teach us, to heal us, and show us love. He was God's free gift to us – not to be earned, but to be accepted.

Jesus did not come to us to change God's mind about humans – God's love and mercy are everlasting. But Jesus *did* come to change humanity's mind about God. He did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. What is he saving us from? Ourselves. He taught about the dangers of the false self, about hypocrisy, about failing to see deeply into the heart, about inequality and inequities.

"Love one another as I have loved you," Jesus instructed. He lived and taught about love.

Almost from the moment he began his ministry, there were those who loved him and those who hated him. Why the hate? Because what he taught disrupted the

status quo, it threatened power and privilege, it toppled unfair social systems, it taught us to respect and treat the marginalized people, helping them however we could. He was a threat that had to be removed.

Eventually Jesus was murdered for what he stood for. He knew he would eventually be killed, but that didn't stop him from preaching and healing. He laid down his life for us, to make sure his message would be heard and understood. When we try to do the right thing, we may face opposition.

The Oneness of all creation is demonstrated in the unity of God and Christ. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one... If you had known me, you would also have known God." And, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." And this unity extends to us, as well. Jesus said, "You will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." We are all connected!

He gives us peace; not as the world gives, but as God gives. "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me." As Julian of Norwich observed, "Our soul will never find rest until it unites with Jesus and understands that he is the fullness of all joy."

Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. Be of good cheer. He has overcome the world.

Jesus, Walk with me.

Jesus, I am totally yours.

Jesus, I follow you.

Amen

3. HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

(BCP – Baptismal Covenant)

We first encounter the Spirit of God early in Genesis, where it moved over the face of the earth during creation. As God created humankind, God breathed into the person the breath of life, perhaps another sign of the Holy Spirit, known by several names, including wind, breath, and advocate. Julian of Norwich noted, “The Holy Spirit had the desire to create our souls, and so it was done.”

Paul wrote to the Romans about the Holy Spirit, saying, “The Holy Spirit is the power that brings the soul to life. It is the energy that drives every one of us. It is the breath of life that lets us be who we were meant to be.”

Julian further adds, “The Holy Spirit helps us to surrender and reconcile our soul with God. It forms our faith and fills us with longing that we will one day merge again with our true spiritual essence, fusing with the power of Christ, enlarged and fulfilled through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit graciously breathes into us the gifts that lead to eternal life.”

The Holy Spirit is yet another aspect of the Triune God, serving as Sustainer to the Creator and Redeemer. As Jesus neared the end of his earthly ministry, he promised to send the Holy Advocate to us, to teach us the truth. It abides in each and every person. We have to learn how to truly listen to this Holy Spirit, this teacher of truth.

The Holy Spirit helps us to realize that we are a part of God, and God abides within us. The Holy Spirit helps us to engage in the dialogue, the dance of love, and the awareness that we need.

How do we do this? How do we quiet our minds to allow this truth to emerge? Our tools and methods include silence, solitude, meditation, contemplation, present moment awareness, patience, and gentleness. Practice love and you will learn to love.

*Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be. Amen*

4. YOU AND YOU

You and you! There are actually two of us who occupy the same body. One is our big self, our true self, which is our eternal soul. It is good, and is a temple of God and feeds on love. The other self is our false self, also known as the small self, or ego self, which sometimes emerges to dominate our life. The false self feeds on separation, scarcity, comparison, fear, and anxiety.

THE TRUE SELF

Julian of Norwich notes, “The inward part of us (the true self) is the master of the outward (false self). The focus of the inner is on uniting as one (Oneing) with our beloved Jesus.”

The True Self truly knows who we are and knows who we really belong to. Our soul is who we are in God and who God is in us. Our soul is eternal, so we can never really destroy it. The soul can be forgotten, however, amid the busyness of the day and the influence of the false self.

Fr. Richard Rohr offers these observations, brought down through the monastic wisdom of the ages: “Our True Self knows that there is no place to go or to get to. We are already home – free and filled. The True Self sees everything in whole; the false self sees everything in parts and hierarchies, and in reference to itself. The True Self is conscious; the false self is

largely unconscious; you do evil only when you’re unconscious. The True Self is not the perfect self – it merely participates in the One who is perfect.”

The True Self is held together by the glue of a universal love. (1 John 4:16)

All true selves have some characteristics in common, such as patience, kindness, love, peace, joy, understanding, and the presence of God – (see Galatians 5:22). It also has some characteristics unique to each person, special interests and talents.

THE FALSE SELF

The false self, the small self, grows from a runaway ego. It emerges when we begin to separate certain things about ourselves. Sometimes we try to separate our mind from our body and soul, but these should all be in harmony. Sometimes we try to separate ourselves from people, and we forget that we are all one people, one family, under God. Perhaps we engage in too much competition, and that leads to comparisons – this person is better than that one; I’m better (or worse!) than that the person.

The false self must diminish while the true self regains prominence. This process is sometimes referred to as “dying before we die,” or emptying ourselves out of all that is not of God, so that there is room for God. Julian of Norwich writes, “This is the reason why our hearts and souls are not at perfect ease. We seek refuge in small things, but cannot find comfort there.

We do not recognize our God who is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-good. He is our only true rest. And He wishes to be known. He wants us to rest in Him. He is all that is, and He knows that anything less is not enough for us. This is why no soul can find peace until it empties itself of all forms. Only when the soul has willingly become emptied (out of love for Him who is everything) can it find true rest.”

To empty ourselves of the false self should not be a violent act, or one of direct confrontation or force. We simply work to become aware of this false self and all the waste and harm it can cause us. Soon, the scales of prejudice, pride, privilege, power, fall away. We no longer feel separated, but highly interconnected with God, other people, and the world as one family.

The path to knowing our true selves is to know God. What is God like? Once again, to know what God is like we can go out and do some small act of love for another person.

“Now let us return to our beautiful and delightful castle [which is our soul] and see how we can enter it. I seem rather to be talking nonsense; for, if this castle is the soul, there can clearly be no question of our entering it [since we are the soul we are going after]. For we ourselves are the castle: and it would be absurd to tell someone to enter a room when he was in it already!

But you must understand that there are many ways of “being” in a place.” - St. Teresa of Ávila

*God, through your goodness, give me yourself.
You are enough for me;
I cannot honor you by asking for anything less.
When I do ask for less,
I am never satisfied.
Only in You do I have all. Amen.*

5. IDENTITY

Who are we? We may have grown up being taught that we can be anything we want to be, if we try hard enough. But this is not true.

We can only be fulfilled and complete if we become who God made us to be. God made us something special and unique, to be a specific part of God's overall creation – to help further this love in many ways.

The way to glorify God, and ourselves, is to discover what our special gifts and interests are, and use them to their fullest. They don't have to be "great" things in the eyes of humankind, because God does not measure greatness using human standards. God values even the small things as equally great.

We have no idea the impact we have on the world, even the "small" acts of love that we do moment by moment – but let us do them anyway. We sow the goodness, but God reaps the harvest in God's own time.

So, explore life as it unfolds before us; seek and we shall find; journal our journey, noting things we enjoy doing, and where we seem to have lost the sense of time while we were doing them. This may be who we really are.

"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken."

- Oscar Wilde

There is no guilt or shame in being our loving selves – only joy, peace, patience, and depth of life.

KEEP TRUSTING GOD'S CALL

By Henri J. M. Nouwen

As you come to realize that God is beckoning you to a greater hiddenness, do not be afraid of that invitation. Over the years you have allowed the voices that call you to action and great visibility to dominate your life. You still think, even against your own best intuitions, that you need to do things and be seen in order to follow your vocation. But you are now discovering that God's voice is saying, "Stay home, and trust that your life will be fruitful even when hidden."

It is not going to be easy to listen to God's call. Your insecurity, your self-doubt, and your great need for affirmation make you lose trust in your inner voice and run away from yourself. But you know that God speaks to you through your inner voice and that you will find joy and peace only if you follow it. Yes, your spirit is willing to follow, but your flesh is weak.

You have friends who know that your inner voice speaks the truth and who can affirm what it says. They offer you the safe space where you can let that voice become clearer and louder. There will be people who tell you that you are wasting your time and talents, that you are fleeing from true responsibility, that you fail to use the influence you have. But don't let yourself be misled. They do not speak in God's name. Trust the few who know your inner journey and want you to be faithful to it. They will help you stay faithful to God's call.

6. THINKING

As we're growing up and going through life, we learn to distinguish between things. We learn what each thing is, and is not, to keep us safe, and to help us understand the world around us. This is hot, but this is cold. This is sharp, but this is dull. This is light, but this is dark. This type of thinking is sometimes called "either / or" thinking, or "binary" thinking.

We may run into a problem if we carry this type of thinking too far. We may begin to assign worth and moral value where it doesn't belong. We were all warned about this danger way back in the Garden of Eden story. God cautioned against eating the fruit of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

At one level, this was a warning not to assign moral labels to things we know little about, or that are based on the fears and prejudices of the false self. It is not our place, for example, to call one human ethnicity evil, and another one good. Who are we to do this?

As we grow older, and hopefully wiser, we learn to use "either / or" thinking in its proper place. But we also begin to see things in the light of "and / also" thinking. This is unitive thinking, and it can only be done when we learn to see deeply, past the surface of a thing, or of another person.

Unitive thinking accepts the paradox. It *is* possible that something could be this *and* that! The world is multi-level, so there are many things that cannot hold just one label. Seek a higher level of understanding where the differences begin to dance together.

The Trinity is a prime example of unitive thinking. Is it one God, or three? The answer is "yes." Is sunlight white or clear? If we guide it through a prism, it has many colors. So, yes, it is both many colors and it is also white or clear. Different perspectives lead to different conclusions.

When we learn the *reasons* for someone's words or deeds, to see them *deeply*, we will view them more from the eye of the heart.

*O Lord,
Help me to understand, more than to be understood.
Help me to see, more than to be seen.
Help me to hear, more than to be heard.
Help me to give, more than to be given.
Help me to help, more than to be helped.
Help me to be me, that leads to doing love.
Amen*

7. PRESENT MOMENT

We come from the past, and are headed into the future, but we do not belong in either place.

Between the past and the future is a moment in time that contains all the riches of God's kingdom. The present moment is the portal through which we can encounter the Trinity – not in the past, and not in the future. If we live in the past or the future in our mind, we are not living at all. Become aware of where you are.

To remain in the present moment, our mind, body, and spirit must all be there first. Are your senses attuned to the colors, sounds, feelings, and tastes that are around you? What is going through your mind? Troubles of the past? Worry or fear about the future?

Yes, planning for the future is helpful, but living there is not. So, plan if you must, but come back home to the present moment.

God's love can only be shared in the Now.

Attending the Holy Mass of the Eucharist can bring us into the present moment. It alerts the senses with its sights and sounds, it guides our mind with liturgy, and it beckons our heart to God's love.

But we can encounter God in washing dishes, or cutting the grass, too. We are constantly moving about in His Presence. The more we let go of ourselves, the more we come to realize this.

“So, do not worry about tomorrow,” Jesus says, “for tomorrow will care for itself. Each *day* has enough *trouble* of its own.” (Matthew 6:34)

Leave the past to God's mercy, and the future to His providence.

“I have frequently noticed that Jesus doesn't want me to lay up provisions: He nourishes me at each moment with a totally new food; I find it within me without knowing how it is there. I believe it is Jesus Himself hidden in the depths of my poor little heart: He is giving me the grace of acting within me, making me think of all He desires me to do at the present moment. What does it matter, Lord, if the future is bleak! I cannot pray for tomorrow's needs...keep my heart pure, keep me in your shade, just for today.”

- St. Therese of Lisieux

Serenity Prayer:

“God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
*Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time.”*

8. COMMUNITY AND YOU

The interconnection each of us has with God, Christ, and the Holy Advocate also extends to each other and to nature itself. This is how St. Paul describes this interconnection in his letter to the Corinthians:

There is a variety of gifts, services, and activities among us, but we all have the same Spirit, Lord and God for the common good.

Just as the body has many members, it is still one body; so it is with the body of Christ you are all a part of.

One member of the body is no less important than another; what good is it if we are all alike?

All members are to be respected with dignity and honor.

If one member suffers, all suffer together with it;

If one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

As Julian of Norwich points out, "We are all one in love. It is only in unity with my fellow spiritual seekers that I am anything at all. It is this foundation of unity that will save humanity. All souls are interconnected, united by God's Oneness, and made holy in this holiness."

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." - Mother Teresa

Because we all have one Father, we are all brothers and sisters. Therefore, we are a family. A community. God loves each of His children very deeply, and very personally.

In community, we can think globally while we act locally. While we're connected in some way to everyone in the world, we interact with only a few at any given moment, wherever we are. As we do this, know that what we do locally, we impact globally. What we do unto others, we do to all, and to ourselves.

Let us be cautious, humble and gentle when we speak or write. And if we try to impress others with our knowledge, or with all the places we have visited, we are just feeding our own ego.

"Though they be divided in their dwelling, yet do they abide bound and inseparable in spirit and faith and loving-kindness." - Historia Monachorum

While one person may fail on occasion, the whole of the community will never fail.

*"You are above us, O God, you are within.
You are in all things yet contained by no thing.
Teach us to seek you in all that has life
that we may see you as the Light of life.
Teach us to search for you in our own depths
that we may find you in every living soul."*

- John Philip Newell

9. NATURE

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and then looked upon creation, declaring it “good.”

What can be known about God is perfectly plain since God has made it plain. Ever since God created the world, God’s everlasting power and deity—however invisible—has been perfectly evident for the mind to see in the things that God has made. (Romans 1:19–20)

Mankind is part of this creation, what we more commonly call “nature.” We are here to tend to this nature, to care for it, and replenish what is naturally used up. Nature, including humankind, is sacred, and must be treated as such.

We are part of nature – we are not above it, or below it – what we do, and don’t do, affects the balances and cycles of the world we live in. Of all God’s creatures, people have the greatest impact on nature. We can learn about nature’s balances and cycles, and live within them. Let us not use too much, causing inequities among people and creatures, and causing damage to nature.

There is an abundance of resources for everyone *if* we learn about nature’s balances and cycles, live within the limits of nature’s bounty, and replace what has been used. This is what it means to replenish the earth.

“Christianity is not about avoiding punishment or gaining reward. It is about loving God and loving what God loves. And what God loves is the whole of creation.” —Marcus Borg

“Wants” and “needs” are two different things, but sometimes we get them confused. As a human being on this earth, we have needs to keep us alive and be as healthy as possible. The false self, however, sometimes adds to these desires, things that may not really be necessary. Just because we want something, it may not be needed. It’s often difficult to discern between the two.

All physical matter in nature is constantly changing. Nothing really stays the same. Sometimes things change quickly, and at other times things change very slowly – but they always change. Spiritual things, like God, angels, our own soul, are eternal.

“I care not for a man's religion whose dog and cat are not the better for it” - Abraham Lincoln

*Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon
and the stars, in heaven you formed them
clear and precious and beautiful.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which
You give sustenance to Your creatures.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and
chaste.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night and he is beautiful
and playful and robust and strong.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

- From St. Francis' *Canticle of the Sun*

10. THE SOUL'S JOURNEY

We ride each present moment through time, seeing so many changes through the windows of our eyes. So much that was, is no longer. People we knew are gone, and new ones enter our life. We feel like grasping for handles, anything to hang on to, but most slip past, leaving only images in unsettled memory. What is real? What is illusion? What can be trusted?

Discovering our true essence is the best place to begin building a foundation for living. The earlier chapters of this book will hopefully provide us with the proper insights to do this. More may be found along the way in our journey. But the essence of *being* is not complete until we translate it into *doing* as well. We must move forward, filling the moments with loving acts, serving the Lord in our own unique and special way, based on the interests, talents, and skills we have been given.

We are on a journey without end. When this life ends, another begins. God's unconditional love for us does not change when we pass from this life into the next. There's more – there's always more. Teilhard reminds us that deep hope flows over deep time. He reassures us that evolution is on a directed course; it seeks a "rise toward consciousness." If we keep the cosmic perspective in mind, life's sorrows and troubles may be more manageable.

There is truth that lives within us that will be with us forever. 2 John 2

*We can only see a little of the ocean,
a few miles distance from the sandy shore,
But out there-beyond,
beyond our eyes' horizon,
there's more-there's more.*

*We can only sense a little of our mystery
our loves and our lives-barely a core.
But out there-beyond,
beyond our minds' horizon,
there's more-there's more.*

*There's no arrival, just the journey,
each step awaiting doorways galore.
But in here-beyond,
beyond our heart's horizon,
still waiting-there's more.*

*We can only glimpse a smidgen of God's love,
Blink of treasures from a mighty store,
But out there-beyond
beyond our faith's horizon,
there's more-there's more.*

*God's love is boundless, goodness and mercy.
Flawed lovers are we-forgiveness our chore.
But in here-beyond our love's horizon,
there's more, there's more.*

*With gifts so immense, how can we thank Thee?
By passing love on, love that n'er keeps score.
But out there-Still loving, beyond our soul's horizon,
Amazing Grace-there's more.*

*Mine is the morning, mine is the sunlight.
Every day is precious, fresh gift to explore.
But out there-beyond,
beyond our life-horizons, God willing,
There's more, there's more. - Paschal Baute*

The Community of the Gospel is a network of diverse, non-cloistered monastics who help each other to know, love and serve God in unique ways within the structure of daily prayer, reflective study, and personal service to others. We are nationally recognized by the Episcopal Church.

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