

## FOUNDING VISION OF THE COMMUNITY OF THE GOSPEL

The challenges in forming an organization, especially a religious one, can be difficult and yet rewarding. The Community of the Gospel grew out of an idea by Br Daniel-Joseph in 2007 that people could come to recognize their interconnectedness with each other and with the Triune God, thereby discovering their True selves which enable them to better know, love, and serve the Lord in unique and special ways. This Community is a group response to loving God, and our neighbor as ourselves.

The common threads upon which the hopes and dreams for this Community were developed include the following (not in any particular order of importance – think of them as a Circle of Values):

- 1) Know the Gospel; Live the Gospel. The living words of the Gospel bind us together in our prayers, study, and service to others. The Gospels and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are the ultimate sources for understanding Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the New Testament Epistles. The Gospels nurture our Prayer life, provide the resource for our study, and the reason for our service.
- 2) God is Love. If we truly believe this, then we begin to understand and see deeply into scripture, traditions, and experience. God IS love, and God truly loves us – unconditionally. That means without conditions! This was always true, and always will be true, regardless of what we've been told by those around us. God is not wrathful and seeking vengeance against the children that were created and placed in this beautiful but difficult world. We face many challenges and God knows this. But no soul will be left behind! Everything will be reconciled in due course. God came to us in human form because God wanted to be with what was loved. Jesus came to teach us, heal us, reveal to us what God is really like, and show us how to live together – the beginnings of the Kingdom on earth.
- 3) Prayer, Study, and Service are ancient paths to knowing ourselves and God. The Way of Devotion to God is our vow of Prayer. The Way of Knowledge of God (with limitations, of course!) is our vow of Reflective Study. And the Way of Action to God is our vow of Service to Others. Our charge is to awaken to the Spirit within us, which will help us awaken to ourselves so that we can be fulfilled, and serve Our Lord in our own unique ways.
- 4) Strength comes from Unity in Diversity. While we all commit to the vows of prayer, study, and service, we all fulfill these vows in unique ways. (We may use common liturgy, study material, or group service when we are together, but fulfilling our vows depends a lot on our individual temperaments, ethnicities, orientations, age, perspectives, preferences, and needs. Like the

different parts of a body all serve the whole (yet they are all different), so, too, do we serve God by being who we were made to be. It works best when we all respect and honor all the parts of the Body.

- 5) We are ecumenical. In its earliest sense (16<sup>th</sup> century), the word applied to a worldwide or general unity in extent; a fellowship and collaboration. Christ's table is open and welcoming to anyone sincerely seeking a seat, and so it should be with us. Commitment to the Gospel is a foundational need. This commitment is normally expressed in one's Baptism and participation in the Eucharist. (Keeping in mind that this commitment may come after sitting at the Table for awhile to gain the basic understanding and love of the Gospel.) If someone is honestly seeking this commitment, then we, as a Community, should walk the journey with them as far as we can to help that person toward commitment. Sometimes this takes a while. Let's be patient.
  
- 6) We are a Mission of the Church, and we are a Mission to the Church. Our Community is an extension of the body of Christ, the Church. As such, we are a mission of this Church. *But the Organized Church is also a mission of our Community.* As monastics, we enjoy a long tradition serving as the conscience of the Church. That is one of our roles; we serve as a model for the Church. When the Church goes astray, we need to speak up about it. If it occurs, we must persist in the way of our knowing and living the Gospel. To serve as the conscience of the Church, we need to keep some distance apart to be able to see clearly; yet remain united in cause. It is a difficult balance at times, to be sure. A member of our community in "good standing" with the Church only has worth if the Church is in good standing with the Gospel.
  
- 7) Form follows Function. The "function" of this Community is what we believe and what we do. It is itemized above in this vision and, later, the Common Rule. The form of this Community is found in the official documents such as the Constitution, and the Customary. The "form" of this Community is what we look like and how we are structured. The form we take should be based on the function. Every so often we need to check our progress. Does our function follow our Founding Vision and Common Rule? Does our form properly reflect our function? Reinforce what we're doing right. Are we going astray? Find out why, and make mid-course corrections.

May this vision and our Common Rule be our guide in this Community with the loving Grace of God.

Br Daniel-Joseph Schroeder, Founder