

What We Understand About Being a Community

Listed here are a few things we've learned about being a community as we travel the monastic journey together. Take time to reflect on these every now and then...

- Jesus is a model for living together as a community. We study Jesus in the Gospels as our primary scriptural source; while we worship Jesus as part of the Triune God, we must keep in mind his main message to "Follow me," that is, to live by the teachings and love of Christ.
- All of us are broken in some way, but we affirm our potential as children of God, and always get up after a fall. Gradually, we learn not to condemn our faults and errors, but to learn and grow from them.
- We seek reconciliation where it is possible, but if it is not, then we maintain respect, dignity, and love as guided by our Baptismal vows.
- Loving our neighbor is more important than rules and conformity to the organization. Loving is the goal; the organization is the means to do this. The organization is a tool for the greater good.
- We claim no solid answers to life, other than the love of God for us and all creation. We are all learners and explorers, passing through sacred ground that grows many new and unusual gifts. Each step may bring another question, an invitation to try another path, or a look in a new direction. This Community may be someone's home for a while, and then they are called to another path. When this is the prompting of the Holy Advocate, we support movement with our blessing.
- We all have different skills, talents, and interests; but it is all from the same Spirit, as St Paul writes. We are interconnected by our heart strings to each other and every bit of God's creation. When one of suffers, we all suffer. When one of us is honored, we are all honored.
- Relationships are vessels through which the love of God flows. Relationships have both depth and length. Some may be short-lived and not very deep, such as encounters on the street, or in a store. Other relationships may be very deep and endure for many years – often referred to as 'committed relationships.' Our relationship with God is the deepest, and is eternal. Nothing compares to it.
- Relationships are fluid. Other than our relationship with God, we can't expect relationships to be permanent, even though we are all interconnected in some way. some degree of movement from person to person may be healthy and desirable. What we gain from one relationship may be needed somewhere else – all in a vast design to nurture each person we meet. Changing relationships may be painful, or they may be welcomed; but we must remember that the love of God is steadfast and endures forever.
- Communities come in "flavors." People often unite around a specific interest, topic, or cause. It's usually what binds them together as a group. Monastics usually gravitate toward one of the classic Saints such as Benedict, Dominic, Julian, Ignatius, or Francis, to name a few! Our Community, as our

name suggests, focuses on the Gospels as a whole, rather than on the influence of one particular Saint. We are Gospelian by nature, which goes to the very core of what makes any Saint a Saint.

But this does not exclude us from learning about the contributions a Saint may have to offer us in the monastic journey to God. Our vow of study encourages us, perhaps even compels us, to explore other viewpoints to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what God is trying to teach us.

Occasionally, a Community member may feel compelled to pursue a more focused monastic emphasis than what is available here. When this is a genuine call from the Holy Advocate to walk a different path, we must not stand in that person's way, but offer our blessings on his or her new journey. While it may be viewed as disruptive in some ways, or lessens the value of life vows, we must remember that the institution is a means to an end and not the end in itself. It is a victory if the departure will actually enrich that person's spiritual journey.

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