

15. THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

1. The desire to travel the spiritual road
from our head to our heart
is deeply embedded in the fiber of our soul.
This desire is created by God,
assured by the Son,
and sustained by the Holy Spirit,
and is fueled by the love of God.

2. Sacred words throughout the world,
and over many millennia,
describe a three-fold response
to this desire for unity with God:
The Way of Devotion,
which has become our vow of Prayer;
The Way of Knowledge,
which has become our vow of Study;
And the Way of Action,
which has become our vow of Service.

3. These vows were not meant to be burdens
but rather the blessings of nourishment
that are needed to keep us going.
They will lighten our paths
and reveal the Kingdom of God
all around us.

4. Our journey becomes ever lighter
as we leave things behind along the way.
At one point we surrender pride,
and at another we surrender the false self.
Around the corner we begin to share privileges,
and gradually we drop anything
that causes our separation from others.
These are the scales that must be shed
for reconciliation to blossom,
for salvation to show its way,
and for peace to make its home with us.

5. Our attention may be on each step
of the trail, our eyes pointing downward.
But footsteps of others can still be heard;
we don't travel alone.
We can't travel alone –
because we can't do it alone.
God within us, and Christ by our side,
nature at our feet,
and companions all around.
We grow in gentleness and strength
within this nest of hearts
as we nourish each other's souls
along the way.

A Common Rule for Monastics

6. And as we walk this road through life,
like the two on the road to Emmaus,
we never forget to break the bread of life.
It renews our strength and purpose,
but more importantly it reminds us that we
are in the Presence of God
whenever we are with another person,
or creature, or cloud,
or even when we're alone.

7. We ride each moment through time,
seeing so many changes
through the windows of our eyes.
So much that once was,
but is no longer.
People we knew are gone,
and new ones enter our lives.
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?
Jesus said, "I am the way,
and the truth, and the life."

8. The road ahead has hills and valleys;
there are dark places and dry places.
But wherever we are, so is God.

The Lord is our shepherd,
helping us to find the still waters
and green pastures.
For his goodness and mercy will follow us
all the days of our lives,
and we shall dwell
in the House of the Lord forever.

9. The essence of *being* is not complete
until we translate it into *doing*.
We must move forward in service,
filling our journey with loving acts,
serving the Lord in our own unique and special
way, based on the interests, talents, and skills
we have been given.
Learn when to move forward,
and when to draw back.
There is a balance that must be achieved.

10. 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.
May the love and presence of Our Lord Jesus
Christ be with us all.