

8. THE BODY OF CHRIST (The Church)

1. The Church emerged over time through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to further God's kingdom on earth. It is not so much the buildings, or the dogmas, or the creeds, as it is the people bound together in the love of Christ.

2. Jesus left no specific instructions to create a Church, other than to love our neighbors as ourselves. This love is the basic value from which the institution would grow, despite its faults, and issues, and failings over time. Our love for the Church should be expressed in a union of faith with Jesus as taught in the Gospels.

3. The Church must do what Jesus did: include the excluded, heal the sick, strengthen the weak, love the despised, clothe the naked, ensure economic equity, seek restorative justice, respect and restore nature, and insist that those in power use their influence to do the same. This does not require super-natural powers, but it does require commitment.

4. We are all imperfect and fall short of God's glory. But this is not something to be condemned. Instead we must affirm our potential, and focus on our original blessing that what God created is "good." Salvation is a journey to spiritual maturity with the help of the Church.

A Common Rule for Monastics

5. The Church has the charge
to seek reconciliation,
and not to condemn.
We, the Church, must try
to seek to understand,
more than to be understood.
Seek to see deeply,
more than to be seen.
Seek to hear,
more than to be heard.
Seek to give,
more than to be given to.
Seek to help,
more than to be helped.
In helping others,
we help ourselves.

6. Our understanding
and awareness of God
grows over time.
Let the Church be flexible
to accept change
without compromising
the basic value of love.
Never let doctrine
interfere with grace.
The Church is a means,
and not the end.

7. To love Christ
is to love the Church.
Wherever two or more people
are gathered in his Name,
we have the organized Church.
The place where you are
with someone else
is holy and sacred.
It is a relationship,
a vehicle of faith, hope, and love,
a potential place of peace
that passes all understanding,
a place where the kingdom of heaven
can touch the earth.