

## Common Rule Chapter 4 Reflection.

“This is the whole reason we exist as a community – to know, love and serve God in our own unique way, based on specific talents, skills, and interests that we have been given.” (para. 11)

I was tempted by *know-love-serve*. But I read, re read, and re read “unique.”

Becoming unique and appreciating the unique in others.

When I joined the CG journey I was excited; looking forward to “something more.” I had come to the inquiry stage after about six months experience in centering prayer; absorbing all I could from Fr Keating+ and Rev Bourgeault+. Well, reading a lot more about, than actually doing, but after a time that changed to more doing than reading. I wanted *to be* something more. But, I realize now, the emphasis was too much on me.

And so I began the drilling down within monasticism and dispersed monasticism. I looked at Br of St Gregory and St Luke Benedictine. Later, as I began in *Monastic Practices*, it confirmed my preconceptions. Dispersed monastics do what monastics do, just dispersed. That means of course, the Daily Offices and Contemplative Prayer. But in conversation with people I know to be very faithful and at our regional gathering, it became clear that practices varied widely. Some folks did some, none, more, less.

I registered for Convocation. My goal was to finish my discernment and move forward, or politely fall away. Do we claim to be a dispersed monastic community but in praxis are not? I posed a question at the dinner table at Convocation; who are we? What is CG? Does it, do ‘we,’ have an identifiable uniqueness? Shortly thereafter a small meeting was convened apparently for me, to answer that question. Among several comments, one brother opened my eyes. In the scripture, it says “...and at that instant the scales fell away from Saul’s eyes...” The brother explained that we are dispersed, each to his/her cloister but ... within each cloister, we pursue our faith walk as we are led. We are consistent in following the Rule: study, service and prayer; but there is no dogma about how each does that, as long as they do. Seems obvious unless, for you, it isn’t. The Convocation moved at that point past discernment, becoming an opportunity to learn and appreciate the uniqueness of the brothers and sisters in CG and to plumb more carefully the depths of CG. I learned that each was unique and I began the process of learning their unique, and my own. It stopped being about me and became about Him and ‘us.’

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My own unique journey moved to six or seven days a week in centering prayer and Morning Prayer. As I continued, it slowly became clear that we wear “a habit of the Christian heart.” That is to say where once I might have felt special, set apart; now the more of the Rule I follow, the less “I” am there. The ego that was too much a part, when I began, has been receding. It’s just not about me anymore. That has become a

language that no longer computes. As I become more detached, I also become more aware of the progress, and the lapses. For the lapses I make the effort to develop an awareness of the triggers. Slowly, incrementally, the lapses become fewer; each more startling, and more upsetting than the last.

And finally ... the path of discernment; the Rs, the Ms, the fifteen Reflections and yet much more to go, have become not a tiring endurance run but a course of study, like a refreshing pool into which I dive each day for my workout. The laps accumulate in effect and I look forward not just to the exercise, but to the incremental and cumulative effect. And it only took seven months. Now I see why there is no hurry in discernment.

It takes time to get past the me, and to the Him, and us.

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David Wynne

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