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# Monastic Renewal in Australia: Holy Transfiguration Monastery

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THE RENEWAL OF Christian monasticism is a great spiritual movement of our day. Imbued with a love for God, neighbour, and self, people are going to monasteries to find peace, to deepen their relationship with God, and to pray.<sup>1</sup> In North America, traditional vocations may be declining, but some orders are growing.<sup>2</sup> In ten years the

number of Benedictine oblates has multiplied by over seventy-five per cent.<sup>3</sup> Rendering more porous the wall that often separates monastery and world, the Holy Spirit is guiding many Christians to explore contemplative practices suited to the multiple complex contexts in which they live.<sup>4</sup> For Cistercian lay associates,

the Cistercian charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed not solely on those who live within monastic enclosures. Rather, we feel it is the gift of a 'way of life' that can be as appropriate for a lay person living

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1 Ruth Fox, 'Benedictines in the Third Millennium', *American Benedictine Review* 54 (March 2003), p. 11.

2 Bonnie Thurston, 'Soli Deo Placere Desiderans', in Patrick Hart, ed., *A Monastic Vision for the 21st Century; Where Do We Go from Here?* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2006), p. 3; 'Orthodox Monastery to Move into Manton Area', *Red Bluff Daily News*, 20 May 2006; Tracy Schmidt and Lisa Takeuchi Cullen, 'Today's Nun Has a Veil—and a Blog', *Time* 20 November 2006.

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3 Linda Kulzer, 'Monasticism beyond the Walls', in *Benedict in the World*, ed. Linda Kulzer and Roberta Bondi (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2002), p. 5. On 23 September 2006 the [Memphis] *Commercial Appeal* reported there are more than 700,000 lay Franciscans worldwide.

4 Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation. Imagining a New Old Church* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2004), p. 61.

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in the world as it is for a monk or a nun living in a monastery.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1930s German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer anticipated the current of monastic renewal in a letter to his brother, Karl-Friedrich,

I think I am right in saying that I would only achieve true inner clarity and sincerity by really starting to take the Sermon on the Mount seriously. This is the only source of strength that can blow all this stuff and nonsense sky-high, in a fireworks display that will leave nothing behind but one or two charred remains. The restoration of the church will surely come from a new kind of monasticism, which will have nothing in common with the old but a life of uncompromising adherence to the Sermon on the Mount in imitation of Christ. I believe the time has come to rally people together for this.<sup>6</sup>

Writing in the late 1950s, Thomas Merton regarded monasticism as a yes to the world, a way of contemplative living by which people fulfil a calling to divinity as God's children

The most significant development of the contemplative life 'in the world' is the growth of small

groups of men and women who live in every way like the laypeople around them, except for the fact that they are dedicated to God and focus all their life of work and poverty upon a contemplative centre.<sup>7</sup>

The renewal of contemporary monasticism recalls an earlier time when monastic orders helped shape western civilization. Philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre observes,

If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we too have reached that turning point. What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages that are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds of hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict.<sup>8</sup>

Whether or not another St. Benedict

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5 Eleven Lay Associates, 'A Lay Response to the Reflections of Dom Bernardo Olivera on Charismatic Associations', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* [CSQ] 32 (1997), pp. 235-36.

6 Letter of 14 January 1935, *Gesammelte Schriften* 3, 25, cited by Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian. Christian. Contemporary*, trans. under the editorship of Edwin Robertson (London: Collins, 1977), p. 380.

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7 *The Inner Experience. Notes on Contemplation*, ed. William H. Shannon (San Francisco: Harper, 2003), p. 142.

8 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame, 1981), pp. 244-5.

or St. Scholastica emerges, or has already emerged, monasticism offers a prophetic presence in modern life. The experience of Holy Transfiguration Monastery [HTM], a Baptist monastery in Geelong, Victoria, Australia, is illustrative. HTM began to take its current form in the early 1970s.<sup>9</sup> A founder, Brother Graeme, spent a year at the Anglican Benedictine Community of the Glorious Ascension in England. He met Brother Steve of the United States. They explored monastic sources like the *Rule of Benedict* [RB]. After Brother Graeme accepted the interim pastorate at a Baptist congregation in Norlane, a suburb of Geelong, they kept in touch. By November 1976 six young Christians were gathering for contemplation and other communal practices. Members of Breakwater Baptist Church had been praying that God would bring new life and invited the community to become a mission of the congregation.

The two groups began to journey together. Brother Steve, who immigrated to Australia in 1984, and others joined. In 1989 a new constitution recognized three ways to associate with the emerging monastery: those living in the Cloister under a common purse

in accord with Acts 2:45 and Acts 4:34, those who covenant to be part of the Greater Community, and those who relate to the community as a spiritual home.

In 2007, twelve monks live in the Cloister sharing a common purse. Thirty are in the Greater Community. Over a hundred persons identify HTM as their spiritual home, including Peace Tree in Perth, Western Australia and sketes (small monastic communities) in Melbourne, the United Kingdom, and North America. According to the *Testament and Pastoral Rule* (1999):

The monk, in our present understanding, is that mysterious archetype—the ‘solitary’ in every human soul—that like Lazarus is in our baptism made alive and called by the Son of God to ‘come forth,’ still bound by the grave cloths of the past, yet alive and free, even with the evidence of the past clinging to it, called to live as a profound sign of life in the midst of death, of life after death, of life that can transcend the past.

HTM accepts accountability to Baptist authorities such as clergy, theologians, and three successive superintendents of the Baptist Union of Victoria which recognizes HTM as an ecumenical mission. Anglican, Catholic, and Uniting Church representatives serve as advisors to HTM. The community has ties with the Cistercian Tararua Abbey in the Yarra River valley and two Anglican Benedictine monasteries: the Community of Holy Name near Melbourne and St. Mark’s Abbey in Camperdown, Victoria.

HTM members articulate their commitments in a *Resolve*. Neither a Rule,

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9 For background, Paul R. Dekar, ‘Imagine a Baptist Contemplative Community in Australia’, *Baptist Peacemaker* 25 (Fall 2005), p. 4-5; Ken R. Manley, *From Woollloomooloo to ‘Eternity’: A History of Australian Baptists* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 2006); Marita Rae Munro, ‘A History of the House of the Gentle Bunyip (1975-1990)’ (M.A. diss., U. of Melbourne, 2002); Michael Smith, ‘HTM’, *Overcuppa. Christian Community Perspectives* 2 (1998), pp. 4-5.

nor a set of laws, the *Resolve* is an instrument for following the Gospel and growing in Christ-likeness. Distilled and refined over a thirty-year period, the *Resolve* describes practices by which members have come to share life together. It reads as follows:

Being perfectly assured of your salvation, with your whole life proclaim your gratitude.

Reject nothing, consecrate everything.

Be the good of love, for God, for neighbour, for all creation.

Judge no one, not even yourself.

Love beauty.

Maintain inner-silence in all things.

Show hospitality; err only on the side of generosity.

Speak truth to power, especially power without love.

Let your only experience of evil be in suffering, not its creation.

For us there is only the trying, the rest is none of our business.

### **The Practice of Gratitude: Being perfectly assured of your salvation, with your whole life proclaim your gratitude**

This opening line of the *Resolve* integrates a major tenet of sixteenth-century Reformation teaching (*sola gratia*), the Eastern Orthodox and Pauline emphasis on synergy, and monastic themes. The Benedictines affirm that God redeems us by grace; one should boast only in the Lord (*RB*, Prologue 31, 32). In France the brothers of Taizé, a Protestant monastery, affirm,

Assured of your salvation by the

unique grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you do not impose discipline on yourself for its own sake.... Let there be no useless asceticism; hold only to the works God commands... so as to share concretely in the sufferings of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

The sisters of Grandchamp in Switzerland affirm prayer is a response to God's grace,

Christians need to trust in the salvation of humanity, the pledge of the Spirit, and the coming of the Kingdom. They are called to glorify God. This is the witness of the community that prays. For those who pray are called by Christ to go up the Mountain of the Transfiguration.<sup>11</sup>

Many HTM members come from experiences in the church's life of working hard for God but not having time to be with God; speaking for God but not listening to God; and pushing agendas on God's behalf while there is little interest in being in communion with the God in whose name Christians evangelize. The culture of church life as many have known it fosters knowledge about God but does not satisfy the deepest longing in the heart to know God in intimacy as the Hebrew word *yada* connotes.

For HTM members, the grace of God is the primary source of assurance and the foundation of the community. Noth-

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<sup>10</sup> Community of Taizé, *The Rule of Taizé* (New York: Seabury, 1968), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Catherine E. Clifford citing Geneviève Micheli in, 'The Protestant Monastic Community of Grandchamp: History and Spirituality', *CSQ* 26 (1991), p. 234.

ing members do is about the earning of salvation. They do *not* work for God. Rather, they respond to God with gratitude. The *Testament and Pastoral Rule* offers this guidance: 'turn and train yourself to live in a constant state of gratitude for all things. For from gratitude is born respect, and from respect—reverence, and by reverence you will protect and preserve the entire Creator's work.'

Members experience the grace of the triune God—Creator, Christ, and Spirit—as the primary source of energy for daily living. By the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, members are being conformed to Christ's likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18). In response, members share Good News that God has become one with humankind in our humanity, including suffering.

A secondary source of gratitude is the experience of being part of a community characterized by Parker Palmer as a circle of trust, a communal place of safety that welcomes the soul, helps members to hear its voice, and reclaims what Thomas Merton called 'a hidden wholeness', an integrity that comes from knowing one's truest self.<sup>12</sup>

HTM offers assurance of salvation in part by the way community members respond to each other and to every person. This reinforces the saving influence on them of changes in their lives,

their relationships with one another, and their growth in transparency. By their responses to every person, HTM members witness that salvation is indeed happening. They see and experience it in each person. Members challenge any negative self-doubt or self-destructiveness and reflect the mind of Christ to each other.

Life in community nurtures members in a lifelong process of transfiguration into the life of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). God is manifest in the lives of members who seek to live holy lives by following the kenotic pattern of Jesus (Philp. 2:6-11), the idea that Jesus relinquished all divine attributes to experience human suffering. Community members see this as a way to live their baptism. Salvation is not an ethereal concept focused on the hereafter but a new-birth experience manifest in such events and processes as joy and human fulfilment through liberation from events of the past and their imprisoning or paralyzing impact, the stabilizing of emotions, the healing of broken human sexuality, the opening up of human life for relationship and intimacy with God and others, and freedom from a sacrificial theology that breeds self-destruction or scapegoating.

Community members experience salvation in the here and now. Who has the Son has life (1 Jn. 5:12). 'And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3). To strengthen the inner assurance one has of salvation and how it is seen in positive ways in gospel-focused moral and ethical living, HTM members let their whole lives speak. Who they are and what they do in every aspect of

12 Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness. The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), p. 22. Palmer quotes Merton's 'Hagia Sophia,' in Thomas P. McDonnell, ed., *A Thomas Merton Reader* (Garden City: Image, 1974), p. 506.

their lives, not just what they say, attest that they are disciples of Jesus. Proclaiming the gospel in all of life, members use words only as necessary.

All phrases of the *Resolve* yield to the priority of gratitude. The way members make moral decisions; deal with despair, pathology, betrayal, disputes, and suffering; share possessions; nurture loving relationships; create and maintain beautiful grounds out of what was a local rubbish dump; show themselves to be serious about unity, truth, and goodness; and offer hospitality: everything is a response of gratitude to God. Union with God radiates into all of life. Doing comes out of being a New Creation in Christ.

Often the outer environment is a parable of what has taken place on the inside. This is evident at HTM. Members are grateful for not only what God did two thousand years ago, but also their experience of God today. They express this in worship. Their Saturday liturgy expresses gratitude for ways God is present to them in daily life.

Cantor: In facing the future

All: let us never abandon Him [Jesus Christ] or others.

C: In facing the truth

A: may we find freedom from illusion.

C: In accepting wounds

A: may we know the way to healing and wholeness.

C: In embracing the scapegoated

A: may we know our own redemption.

C: In discovering our true selves

A: may we abandon self-destruction.

All: in seeking adult innocence

Cantor: may we no longer harm.

A: In yielding to dying

C: may we know love's pain and joy.

A: In the folly of Jesus' life

C: May we find our own.

Cantor: Fools to our society

All: we know the Wisdom of God.

C: Unknown

A: we cannot be ignored.

C: Dying

A: we still live on.

C: Disciplined by suffering

A: we are not beaten down.

C: Knowing sorrow

A: we always have cause for joy.

C: Emptying ourselves

A: we make others rich.

C: Owning nothing

A: we are given the world.

C: Grateful for every breath

A: life becomes a precious gift.

To summarise, the first sentence of the *Resolve* has priority for HTM members. As God infuses everything with a gracious presence, God is renewing all things. The response of radical gratitude is deep, rooted, and fruitful.

## The Practice of Consecrating All of Life: Reject nothing, consecrate everything

By the second phrase of the *Resolve*, the sisters and brothers express their determination to become inviolably vulnerable, a concept from the ancient Syrian church.<sup>13</sup> Without vulnerability, the experience of God, life, or others will be very limited. Honouring the

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<sup>13</sup> Maggie Ross, *The Fountain and the Furnace. The Way of Tears and Fire* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1987), p. 15.

need for some measure of privacy in some areas, HTM members attempt to practice discernment with a basic attitude of openness and acceptance and to preserve inner peace and stability when the unexpected, the undeserved, or the unwanted threatens the individual or community by its sudden appearance.

To reject nothing demands a considerable degree of psychological and spiritual maturity, a willingness to suffer the stress of holding opposites together without resolving the tension by getting rid of and rejecting either the one or the other, or mixing them together. It means above all to come to terms with the shadow of the personal and collective lives of members, and of the life of the world.

By personal shadow, members understand that aspect of life that is unexpressed, unseen, hidden, unacceptable, and usually unconscious. The shadow can and indeed must be brought into consciousness. It is not evil. Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) taught that perhaps ten percent of shadow is evil. The rest contains many treasures needed to balance the personality and essential for integration into wholeness.<sup>14</sup>

For community members the integration and consecration of the shadow is a moral concern. The shadow longs for incarnation. Members seek to recognize both the glory, and the demonic darkness of it, and to bring it to the light of God. They seek to understand

what is repressed, feared, rejected, hated, and despised, and how they project what is repressed on to others and other environments. Members seek knowledge of how they rationalize and deceive themselves and others, what sort of goals they have, and what they do (lie, hurt, maim, manipulate, abuse, and scapegoat) to reach those goals.

The healing of the shadow is an issue of love. Loving self is not easy. For HTM members, Jesus taught loving all of oneself, even the enemy, the inferior, the socially unacceptable, intractable weakness in stubbornness and wilful blindness, cruelty, meanness, sham, pride, and willingness to sacrifice another's life and welfare to secure one's own comfort. To love self is not to be permissive or to condone dark, destructive energies within. To love self begins by carrying all this consciously and by accepting the disconcerting pain of humiliation. As members come to accept the rejected parts of their shadow, they experience self-knowledge and humility in the presence of God who offers them, and all humankind a gift, containment of the shadow in immediate living and salvation. Learning to love and help themselves, HTM members love God and others.

To own one's shadow allows members no comfortable hiding place either in their inner world, or in communal life. Members cannot be with the poor from an insulated high-rise building in a city. To be a healing presence with a pure heart in wider society, they suffer the tension and contradictions of living with the rejected, violent, unredeemed parts of their lives in community. Before undertaking social action, members seek first to disarm the

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<sup>14</sup> James Hillman, 'The Inner Darkness: The Unconscious as a Moral Problem', ch. 3 of *Insearch. Psychology and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967).



human heart, essential for personal transformation and non-violent living.<sup>15</sup>

To consecrate is to set apart for a holy use. For example, one makes a conscious, intelligent, and educated choice to use the energy of anger not in the service of evil but of compassion. To consecrate such a source of energy or capacity is to re-direct it in the service of God and of others. Stubbornness becomes persistence; perfectionism becomes the careful creation of beauty. In these and other ways, members re-channel energy that can manifest itself in evil back to God, who works all things for good.

### The Practice of Love: Be the good of love, for God, for neighbour, for all creation

The biblical emphasis on love is key in Benedictine spirituality. We are first of all to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, and minds; and our neighbours as ourselves (Mt. 22:37-39, parallels; RB 4.1). Loving begins with God. 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us' (1 Jn. 4.10). To be the good of love for God is to respond spontaneously, immediately, passionately, and vulnerably to God's love.

Because love can be harmful, manipulative, smothering, deceived, self-serving, or violent, self-knowledge

allows one to face manipulative, smothering, deceived, and self-serving aspects of love. These are among the many ways by which people abuse others in the name of love to gain something for oneself. HTM members intentionally seek to choose the *good* of love. This is rooted in the kenotic love of Jesus. Jungian Sibylle Birkhauser-Oeri writes, 'One must not forget that it is impossible to love others so long as one does not know oneself. Sentimentality is not love; it is a state of ignorance of one's shadow. Only conscious eros has healing power.'<sup>16</sup>

To be the good of love for neighbour means engagement in social and justice issues locally and in the wider world, to be an extreme presence not by violence that separates and isolates but by compassionate, inclusive love, especially for the personal and collective enemy. To be the good of love for creation leads members to seek to care for the environment, to create and protect beauty, and to reverence all life.

### The Practice of Not Judging: Judge no-one, not even yourself

Community members understand judging as condemnation or being pharisaic by separating oneself from others as a result of thinking oneself better than others. To be non-judgmental is not an attempt to escape self-knowledge or self-confrontation, neither does it condone or cooperate with unethical

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<sup>15</sup> Brother Graeme, 'Festival Letter-Epiphany 2005', p. 6; John Dear, *Disarming the Heart: Toward a Vow of Nonviolence* (Scottsdale: Herald, 1993); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Anger. Wisdom for Cooling the Flames* (New York: Riverhead, 2001).

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<sup>16</sup> Sibylle Birkhauser-Oeri, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairytales* (Studies in Jungian Psychology 34; NY: Inner City, 1988), p. 94.

behaviour in ourselves or others. Rather, it means compassionate understanding of others and of the unredeemed, lawless parts of life. Jesus calls us, not to reject and consign to hell, but to love and transfigure. We can be genuinely non-judgmental only if we personally own, name, and embrace the edges of our own destructive affectivity. We discern the same destructive elements in ourselves that we see in others out there. As we own them, we cease to project them onto others.

In order not to judge, the human heart must first be disarmed. The acceptance of personal evil and darker self-knowledge can take place only in a safe environment that does not limit anyone's capacity courageously to own, name, and embrace needed work for change and inner peace. This is why members make ample room for contemplative prayer. A rhythm of life rooted in silence, stillness, and solitude allows members to contemplate the attitude that God has towards us in the Incarnation. God has identified the Divine Self with humankind in radical compassion. The Word-made-flesh instructs people to embrace the enemy within and without and to allow the Christ within to convert and transfigure our inner violence and rage, loving the enemy within and without.

Not to judge means the acceptance of suffering, not the avoidance of it. Bearing injuries patiently is among the 'tool for good works' (RB 4: 29-33).<sup>17</sup> It releases energy and a loving quality in

everything members do and gives life, hope, and a sense of endless new beginning. The self-knowledge gained in contemplation allows members to get in touch with one of the most powerful inner entities: the power to destroy ourselves and others. Members accept the legitimate suffering and pain of this knowledge, and the stress of the ensuing inner battle where the struggle to love as Christ loved is waged.

Putting these ideas into practice cannot be done in isolation. Evil is that strong. Disarming the heart is that challenging. Community members rely on two things principally: an experience of a Spirit that is greater than the spirit of evil; and a warm human community, '... C. G. Jung once aptly commented that only two things could keep a person's soul from falling under the power of evil: if a person's soul is filled with a power greater than the power of evil; or if a person is contained in a warm, related human community.'<sup>18</sup> Monica Furlong makes this same point, 'Wholeness demands relationship with man [*sic*] or with God, and often with both together.'<sup>19</sup>

To judge another is to do violence to that person. To judge oneself is to do violence to oneself and to others. Jesus has compassion for people. Learning compassion for self, members learn compassion for others. As they deal with the enemy in the microcosm, they are freed to deal with the enemy in the macrocosm.

17 For Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict. Insights for the Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), p. 51, this 'peacemaker's paragraph' is the centre of the monastic life.

18 John A. Sanford, *Evil. The Shadow Side of Reality* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), p. 109.

19 Monica Furlong, *Travelling In* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), p. 64.

While the community does not judge, it does discern. This means feeling the tension of the opposites within us, good and ill, love and hate. Without running away, members seek to discern what is right, what is good. In community, members have time and space for this choice, so that repentance flowers. Members suffer the creation of this space, while the enemy continues to disturb and destroy. Seeking to be like Jesus, they do not return evil for evil or use the enemy's methods. They bless instead of curse. Joy lies before them. This is the hope not simply of the redemption of the enemy within, and without, but also of reconciliation and true peace. Members suffer the tension and sorrow of the waiting, the struggle of joy-making sorrow that will be worth-while in the end. And even if not, it is the way of Jesus to which the community has said yes.

### The Practice of Loving Beauty: Love Beauty

This fifth practice of the *Resolve* draws on the idea that beauty will save the world, and nothing is as beautiful as Christ.<sup>20</sup> Love of beauty is a window on the beauty of God and a practice shaping recent Christian thinking about art, film, literature, music, utilitarian pursuits, and worldview.<sup>21</sup> Because beauty

seems to characterise the solutions to scientific questions, even scientists and mathematicians search for elegance.<sup>22</sup>

Almost all visitors to HTM attest to the beauty they experience there. The grounds where the community gathers for worship, worship and work space, personal rooms, the setting of a table, and the way flowers are arranged all speak of the grace and beauty of God and are ways of witnessing to God. The love of beauty feeds, strengthens, and brings joy to the soul. It reaches deep into human beings. It creates a resonance, a vibration within. It generates energy, unseen yet felt, and calls for response.

Where there is beauty, God is present. In a spiritual and cosmic way, creation of beauty pleases God.<sup>23</sup> The love of beauty is a strong challenge to a negative self-image and calls those who worship to find the beauty of one's own being, the lost treasure, the Christ-Self. A liturgy puts it this way, 'O Christ You came forth to restore our Ancient destiny and renew our Ancient beauty'.<sup>24</sup>

Often society creates new things that are ugly, sterilized, and violent. By

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<sup>20</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, 'From the life of the Elder Zossima', *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. David Magarshack (1880; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), p. 340.

<sup>21</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*, 50th anniversary of L'Abri edition (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005).

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<sup>22</sup> Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe. Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> In the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell states to his sister that he runs because it pleases God. At the 1924 Olympics Liddell won gold in the four hundred meters. Two years later he began teaching in China. Held a prisoner-of-war by Japan, he died in 1945.

<sup>24</sup> *Noon Office*, Monday through Friday.

the practice of loving beauty, HTM testifies to belief in the true beauty of human beings who are made in God's image. Love of beauty allows for the invisible to be made visible and makes room for the non-utilitarian pursuits of the composer, craftsperson, dancer, poet, performer, and musician to create a quality of life and of the environment that evokes ever-growing gratitude for, and ever-deepening contemplation of the beauty of God.

### The Practice of Inner Prayer: Maintain inner silence in all things

According to Benedict, we are all to listen readily to holy reading and devote ourselves often to prayer (*RB* 4:55). The sixth sentence of the *Resolve* describes inner prayer as practising the presence of God.<sup>25</sup> The whole point of being mindful of God in prayer and in regular reading of God's holy word is to listen to God, learning always to be conscious of the Divine Other in the human soul.

Consciously, members of HTM understand that they are God-bearers. All the acting, speaking, and creativity of members come out of an intuitive awareness of God within. To discover the 'deep, abiding, fertile, healing stillness' that is God present,<sup>26</sup> community members have learned to quiet body and mind as a spiritual discipline. To

maintain inner stillness or awaken the imagination, some use aids such as listening, rituals, silence, solitude, and a psycho-spiritual approach to understanding dreams.

Maintaining inner silence in all things is an essential element for any pilgrim, a continual learning that increases in intensity through life's journey. Understanding that a Christian will never arrive at the goal in this life, members nonetheless practise mental, emotional, and physical stillness. While this practice is easier to do with others than alone, members also seek out times of alone-ness and of solitude.

Inner silence is a state of active attention, a state of being, not a blank. It is a listening to the voice of God. Inner silence is being sensitized to a compassionate, inclusive response to injustice so that members attempt not to repay evil with evil or set themselves against evil as it has set itself against what is good. 'Above all, community members value interior prayer. Its blessings are silence and stillness in all vicissitudes of life. Only your love for Christ Jesus can sustain you in this to the end of your journey.'<sup>27</sup>

### The Practice of Hospitality: Show hospitality, err only on the side of generosity

The community describes itself as a Baptist hospice, a place of entertainment and rest for pilgrims, travellers, and strangers, especially those who

25 Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (1666; Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1958).

26 *Sabbath liturgy*.

27 *Testament and Pastoral Rule*, p. 54.

belong to no religion.<sup>28</sup> Hospitality is central to monastic spirituality. Benedict instructed monasteries to welcome as Christ all guests. (*RB* 53:1) In the eighteenth-century, Ephrata, the pacifist community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and an historical Baptist antecedent, served as a hospital for soldiers in the revolutionary army. During winter 1777-1778 a patient described his experience at the cloister: 'Many a poor fellow, who entered there profane, immoral, and without hope or God in the world, left it rejoicing in the Saviour.'<sup>29</sup>

HTM articulates its experience of salvation as the hospitality of God who has through the Incarnation of Christ made room for humankind within the Life of the Holy Trinity. The community cites Jesus' words to Zacchaeus, 'I must stay in your house today' (Lk. 19:5) and George Herbert's poem Love (III), 'Love bade me welcome' as expressing the idea of God welcoming us, an experience of salvation on earth.<sup>30</sup>

The Incarnation is for our inclusion. God invites us to share in the fullness of the Divine Life and empowers us to

dwell in God, for God is in us. Hospitality offers healing power that builds a bridge between enemies, between abusers and their victims, between different faith traditions, political traditions, and sexual orientations.

Hospitality includes generosity in the use of community finances, time, material possessions, and gifts. Friends of HTM attest that members go out of their way to nurture them over many years, genuinely taking them into their hearts, emotions, and being.

Citing, 'You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies' (Ps 23:5), HTM members have made room for enemies, as God has. They have engaged in dialogue with Baptist critics and in the neighbourhood. As a result, HTM has come to play a greater role in the life of the denomination and to offer leadership on local issues. For example, HTM helped organize successful resistance to efforts to divert the Barwon River, now a protected reserve. Members have helped close a source of noise pollution.

Summarising this practice, members proclaim the gospel through hospitality and generosity. These are among the most tangible forms of HTM's witness. Members have abandoned any temptation to profane these graces by using them for their own ends. By generous hospitality, they seek to manifest the ecstatic love of the Trinity to all people.

## The Practice of Truth-Telling:

Speak truth to power,  
especially power without love  
As disciples of Jesus, HTM members

<sup>28</sup> Jim Cotter, *Love Rekindled, Practicing Hospitality* (Sheffield: Cairns, 1996) 1, citing *The Times* 18 December 1894: 'The hospice provides twenty beds, soup, bread, and coals to families, and penny dinners to sandwich-men.'

<sup>29</sup> Broadsheet in commemoration of the 225th anniversary of the United States War for Independence (Ephrata: D. C. Martin, 2002); Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves. The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park; Pennsylvania State, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> George Herbert, *The Country Parson, The Temple*, ed. John N. Wall, Jr., *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1981), p. 316.

seek to deal with destructive, loveless power, within and without, by humble love. While they empty themselves, even for the enemy, what do they do if enemies do not change but resist love? Rather than resorting to force or violence, or cutting off an offending member or entity to safe-guard the community, or ignoring problems, members speak truth to power.

This is much harder than the alternatives. To speak the truth to power preserves integrity and leaves an open door for an offending power to acknowledge truth, repent, and change. A basic HTM commitment is to radical honesty about the self, transparency, revealing thoughts to a trusted person, and bringing into the open anything that troubles or disturbs the peace that Christ imparts to each person and to the community. Speaking the truth in their liturgical life, notably, members break the power of secrecy. Persons and HTM are freed from the paralysing hold of unconfessed attitudes or behaviours that otherwise infest and secretly poison community life. The *Eucharistic Liturgy* states, 'Lord, You have told us that hidden deceit saps the source of our communion with You.'

In the clearest and most compassionate ways possible members name truth as they see it. This gives them a power not of violence or of coercion but of truth, which can set free those who speak it and, ideally, those who hear it. Even if the other does not hear or accept or receive the truth, members believe they have done their best and are now free to suffer consciously, willingly, and knowingly whatever ill the other is doing. Suffering evil, they believe they are manifesting the love of

God. This gives them a sense of dignity and a deep peace even in the midst of the stress caused by living with what is hostile and unredeemed. In their *Prayer of Approach* congregants pray,

In the name of God  
 In the name of Jesus  
 Come out of darkness into the light  
 that we may understand and with-  
 stand you,  
 that we may know your name and  
 nature  
 that you may cease your hold on us  
 and  
 wound us no more.  
 Striving with you in the love of God,  
 may you come to yield your energy  
 in  
 the service of healing life and mak-  
 ing it whole,  
 transfigured by the power of that  
 love that  
 is deeper than the deepest pain...  
 However much you are held at bay,  
 your power of destruction lurks.  
 I cannot expel you, conquer, defeat  
 or destroy you.  
 We belong together,  
 we live and die together,  
 are bound hell-ward or heavenward  
 together.  
 I may have to say to you, 'Hold your  
 distance, Stay in your own  
 place.'  
 I may have to bind you.  
 Perhaps you are open to change,  
 to transfiguration.  
 Perhaps you could become my ally  
 in the purpose of a greater good.  
 If you struggle to take over and run  
 riot in my emotions,  
 my mind, my body,  
 if you resist all love—you cannot  
 destroy me.

In yourself you are power without love  
and love will triumph over mere power.

Love alone will take you, calm and soothe you of your violence and transfigure you.

### The Practice of Innocent Suffering: Let your only experience of evil be in suffering, not its creation

The ninth phrase of the *Resolve* accepts that there is no escape from knowledge of evil. Humans have become 'like God knowing good and evil' (Gen. 3:22). Humans are now responsible for choices made. This is a daily practical reality for anyone living in any community of faith and indeed for any human being. We are called not to reject the dark side of the human soul. We are clearly called to discriminate and to choose what is good, what is right, not to perpetrate evil, nor cooperate with it by silence or passivity.

As long as we make the error of imagining that evil can be done away with by 'amputation' or coercion, we will inevitably create more evil. It is in the nature of evil to be 'against'. If we set ourselves against evil, we will become *like* it by using its methods and terms. We will create more evil in the very attempt to eradicate it. Rather, 'suffering and evil must be combated by means of participation'.<sup>31</sup> It is the nature of the Word of God to be *for*, not

*against*; to save, not destroy. 'I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath' (Hos. 11:9). To save, not destroy, God suffers. God does not perpetrate evil but experiences evil by suffering, and in this way wrestles with it and overcomes it. The victory of Christ is not that of a warrior with a sword but that of a wrestler who stands her or his ground. The One who harrows hell is the Crucified One, covered with wounds but undiminished in mercy and compassion.<sup>32</sup>

Living in community is the spiritual discipline in which this choice is practised and which makes it possible to make this choice. Without a faithful human community we could be destroyed by the experience of evil. Knowing that we belong to the Body of Christ and are participating in his sufferings as we make the same choices he made, sustains us; in the fellowship of his sufferings we experience an increased intensity in our awareness of his presence.

To choose suffering rather than create more evil is not to glorify suffering for its own sake, or to make mileage out of being a victim. Nor need it imply stoicism or the shutting down of feelings, or indeed the suppression of expressions of anger or grief. If nothing is felt, nothing is suffered, then nothing and no one is loved either. Suffering is redemptive only if it is *consciously* chosen, *willingly* accepted and felt, for the sake of the good of love. 'No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord' (Jn. 10:18). HTM has members who display

31 Julia de Beausobre, *Creative Suffering* (London: Dacre, 1940), p. v.

32 *Saturday Noon Office*.

courage and love, recognized in this liturgy:

Let us not forget our faithfulness and its cost.

Let us not forget our suffering—for others' benefit, for another's redemption.

Let us not forget that what is lacking in Christ's sufferings in the church is made up in our pain.

Do not forget your suffering or dismiss its significance for the transfiguration of the world.

Let us not forget that some people become voluntary pain-bearers absorbing the anger and hurt of others and giving back acceptance and care.

Their love creates the environment for healing change.<sup>33</sup>

In choosing this way, members have found a deep peace, beyond all anguish, the peace of Jesus who 'is as near the tempted mind as He is to the broken heart'.<sup>34</sup> Like Job and the other pain-bearers of Hebrew Scripture who were hints and guesses of the truth of God, and like Jesus, Word made flesh, HTM members have sought to become with them carriers of the Divine fate. This gives meaning to a choice to suffer instead of creating evil, liberation to one's soul, and a powerful intercession for the world. It shows in microcosm what could be done in macrocosm—nationally, internationally—and so becomes light and heaven. HTM mem-

bers have sought to follow Jesus who taught always to decide to repay every fear, hatred, and evil by innocent suffering.

Loving humility is a terrible force, the emotion, energy, and passion that belong to the Incarnation. It is the strongest of all things. There is nothing else like it. Endowed with all the treasures of the abyss, members seek to

Pray for all people of evil will.

Let the way we live together be the prayer that is offered to God for the enemies of life.

Pray for all who exploit and abuse; and more -

Love them, but not on your own, together.<sup>35</sup>

Innocent suffering is the link between the righteous ones who endure suffering and the sinners who inflict it. If there were not that link, they would drift apart. Sinful and righteous persons would remain on parallel lines that never meet. In that case, the righteous would have no power over the sinner because one cannot deal with what one does not meet. But in the meeting healing and reconciliation can emerge, as suggested by the story of Abraham interceding on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:32).<sup>36</sup>

33 *Evening Prayer and Testimony for the Season of the Transfiguration of Our Lord.*

34 Julia de Beausobre, *Flame in the Snow. A Russian Legend* (London: Constable, 1945), p. 12.

35 *Testament and Pastoral Rule* 24.

36 Metropolitan Anthony [Bloom] *Living Prayer* (Springfield: Templegate, 1966) 19; Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time* (New York: Schocken, 1982), pp. 125-29.



**The Practice of Humility: For  
us there is only the trying,  
the rest is none of our  
business**

Words of the tenth and final part of the *Resolve* come from T.S. Eliot,

...And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the  
inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always  
deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision  
of feeling  
Undisciplined squads of emotion.  
And what there is to conquer  
By strength and submission, has  
already been discovered  
Once or twice, or several times, by  
men whom one cannot hope  
To emulate—but there is no competition -  
There is only the fight to recover  
what has been lost  
And found and lost again and again:  
and now, under conditions  
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps  
neither gain nor loss.  
For us, there is only the trying. The  
rest is not our business.<sup>37</sup>

Success is not the object. HTM have found that any thought of success or achievement is an attempt at power and control. But while the work that is done is not for members to complete, it is nonetheless not the case that there is no trying. In the totality of their lives, members seek greater intimacy

between God and the human soul.

The public life of Jesus was a failure. His was a path consciously chosen. He emptied himself of all social, religious, and political power. He experienced such temptation in the desert and rejected the offer of success through the use of power to manipulate and control. He chose the right use of power way and not to abuse power.

In this light, the concluding line of the *Resolve* allows members to relax. It removes the pressure to perform and to be validated by church or society. It gives members permission to be a failure, and even to perceive failure as a sacrament. HTM has decided not to worry about survival in terms of vocations or recruitment. Trusting God, HTM floats, to paraphrase Brother Roger of Taizé, on the safe waters of life as it comes, with all the rough weather it may bring. They give without counting how many years are left. They do not worry about the long-term survival of the community.<sup>38</sup> Members cite Simone Weil, 'It is not my business to think about myself. It is my business to think about God. It is for God to think about me.'<sup>39</sup>

## **Concluding Reflections**

In the history of eastern and western Christianity, monasteries and intentional communities have played several roles. At times they have been centres of survival, providing stability as the wider culture has collapsed. Early

<sup>37</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'East Coker, Four Quartets', *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1971), p. 128.

<sup>38</sup> *A Life We Never Dared Hope For* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1980), p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> *Waiting on God*, trans. Emma Graufurd (1950; London: Fontana, 1959), p. 20.

Benedictine monasticism provides one example. At times they have been prophetic, witnessing to a culture in which discipleship has been difficult if not impossible. The confessing church in Germany offers an example. At times they have been centres of church renewal, providing sensitive and thoughtful people new ways to live as Christians. Bose in Italy; the Catholic Worker movement; Corrymeela in Northern Ireland; Grandchamp in Switzerland; Iona in Scotland; Little Portion, a Franciscan community near Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario; Taizé in France; and The Church of the Saviour in Washington D. C. offer examples.

These latter communities share certain features: the centrality of Jesus Christ; communal life under a common rule; vital worship; use of the visual arts; care for creation; concern for youth; and ministries among the marginalized. In our times, such communities have engendered a renewed monasticism marked by integrity, imagination, confession of past wrongs, celebration of new relations, and commitment to the dream of God.

- HTM exhibits many of the same strengths of traditional and newer expressions monasticism. The community has been stable in its witness over many years; open to trying to change the environment for Christian witness; and powerful in its praise of God. One cannot help but to be moved by the liturgies and daily offices. I myself have been overwhelmed, down on my knees in grateful praise!
- HTM offers radical hospitality

rooted in radical gratitude.<sup>40</sup> Within the limits of their resources, members go out of their way to make room for all who come to them, offering contemplative space for members, inquirers, students, retreatants, and many who come out of the experience of sexual, religious, or other forms of abuse.

- HTM offers nurture through counselling, spiritual direction, the daily offices, and lengthy periods of residency. As many as a dozen ministers are in ministry today as a result. Perhaps no quality stands out more than the community's ability to create safe space for healing, the movement from darkness to light, from unhealth to well-being, and from lack of identity to true identity. For long-time observers of HTM, this is HTM's unique gift to the wider church, a source of inspiration and hope for the world.<sup>41</sup>

What differentiates HTM from other monasteries and intentional communities is that it is Baptist! Three marks of Baptist spirituality stand out. First, like the earliest Anabaptists of sixteenth-century Europe, the Baptists of seventeenth-century England, and the

<sup>40</sup> In *Making Room*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), Christine D. Pohl of Asbury Seminary lifts up several communities in the United States that have recovered hospitality as a central Christian practice.

<sup>41</sup> Tom Paterson, community therapist, interview, Melbourne, 29 June 2004. See also his *Family Therapy and the Good Life*, *The Geoff Goding Memorial Lecture* (2004).

Pietists of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, HTM has recovered the simplicity of early Christianity. HTM challenges some expressions of Christianity in western cultures where there is marked emphasis on size, growth, and success. That it has remained intentionally Baptist has exacerbated tension with the growth orientation of other Baptist congregations and megachurches in the region.<sup>42</sup>

Second, insightful analysts have identified loss of community, rampant materialism, and extreme individualism as causes of extraordinary stressors in western society.<sup>43</sup> Since the 1970s some have warned that modernity is not sustainable and that human-

ity is on the cusp of a new dark age.<sup>44</sup> As an antidote to loss of community, greed, and lack of concern for the common good, HTM has recovered a powerful current manifest in early Baptist congregational life, offering a path of spiritual and social renewal at a time when many perceive Christianity to be bankrupt.

Third, like the first Anabaptists, Baptists, and Pietists, HTM has created powerful liturgies and contemplative space by which people may experience the presence of God. We all need inescapably to have a sense of life's final meaning and to come into relationship with that meaning. At HTM life in Christ is not cantered on a body of doctrine, but a Person, who calls people to himself, in whom people find meaning, and whose hands and feet become one with ours. Over a lifetime of living into the values of their *Resolve*, members of HTM have come truly to pray their lives and to live their prayers. As they live a faith that transcends doctrinal formulation, they invite companions to join them in the journey of love, compassion, non-violent living, and care for creation.

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42 For parallels among the Mennonites, Amish, and Brethren, under the theme 'Pilgrims and Exiles,' *Christian History* issue 84 (Fall 2004).

43 Robert N. Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart. Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985); Albert Borgmann, *Power Failure. Christianity in the Culture of Technology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Clive Hamilton, *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005); Parker J. Palmer, *The Community of Strangers. Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution. The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2003).

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44 Donella H. Meadows, *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Signet, 1972) and *Beyond the Limits: Confronting Global Collapse. Envisioning a Sustainable Future* (White River: Chelsea Green, 1992); Tom Artin, *Earth Talk: Independent Voices on the Environment* (New York: Grossman, 1973); Jared Diamond, *Collapse* (New York: Viking, 2005); Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead* (New York: Random House, 2004); Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress* (Toronto: Anansi, 2004).