



THE RULE
of the
Worker Sisters and Brothers
of the
Holy Spirit

**This RULE is dedicated in
Thanksgiving
To the Holy Spirit**

Acknowledgements

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1972-2017 and**

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
PROLOGUE/BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY	8
MISSION STATEMENT and VISION.....	9
AN EXPERIENCE OF PRAYER.....	10
Prayer	10
Silence and Solitude.....	11
Communal Prayer	11
Praying the Scriptures	11
AN EXPERIENCE OF WORSHIP	12
The Liturgy of the Hours	12
The Eucharist	13
AN EXPERIENCE OF BECOMING.....	13
Spirituality	14
Personal Development.....	14
Conversion.....	15
Healing.....	15
AN EXPERIENCE OF DISCOVERY	16
The Holy Spirit.....	16
The Fruit of the Spirit	17
Spiritual Formation and Training.....	17
EXPERIENCE OF BELONGING	18
Community	18
Spiritual Friendship	19
Separation.....	19
Our Communion of Saints	20
AN EXPERIENCE OF RELATING	20
Relating with the Community.....	21
Clusters	21
Cluster Leaders (Spiritual Guides)	21
Leadership.....	21
Chapter.....	22
Relating With Families	22
Relating With Parishes.....	22
Relating With Other Religious Communities	23
Relating with the Church at Large and the World	23

AN EXPERIENCE OF COMMITMENT	23
The Rule of Life.....	23
Covenant	24
Commitment	25
Stability.....	25
Obedience and Humility	25
Finances	27
AN EXPERIENCE OF MISSION.....	27
The Call	27
Mission	28
Ministry.....	28
Hospitality.....	29
PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY	31
RESOURCES	32

INTRODUCTION

Out of God's infinite glory, may we be given the power through the Holy Spirit for our hidden selves to grow strong, so that Christ may live in our hearts through faith, and then planted in love and built on love, we will, with all the saints, have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, until knowing the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge we are filled with the utter fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

We echo these words with Paul and pray that our Community will be given the power to grow strong, that Christ will be fully alive, that love will be the very fiber of our being, and that we will be “filled with the utter fullness of God.” With this undergirding, we can go forth bringing light and hope to the world. The RULE of the Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit is the underlying foundation of our Community, with the cornerstone being Jesus Christ.

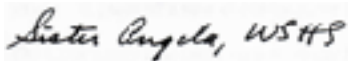
The first RULE OF LIFE was written in 1972 for Workers and Sisters. In 1979, the RULE was modified to include Brothers. In 1980, an expanded RULE OF LIFE for Lay Workers was created, resplendent with illustrations.

In commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Worker Sisters and Brothers, a Community Covenant and Commitment were written at the Annual Retreat in April 1982. Later a Mission Statement was composed. As the Community grew and developed, it became necessary to articulate more clearly the mission, ethos, charism, and vision of our Community. This RULE focuses on these values and the underlying principles of Benedictine Spirituality.

In 1984, following the enactment of a new Canon, Religious Communities were asked to submit a RULE and Constitution (as it is formally called) to the House of Bishops' Committee on Religious Orders. Our document included an endorsement by The Rt. Rev. Arthur A. Vogel, Ecclesiastical Visitor of the Community. The RULE and Constitution were approved and The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit was officially recognized in the Episcopal Church under Title III Canon 27 on October 3, 1984. It is currently Title III Canon 30, Section 2.

In preparation for the 25th anniversary on December 1, 1997, the RULE underwent a major review. Since then, the Chapter and I, along with other members of the Community, have collaborated on updates for almost three years. We recognize that our RULE is a “living document” and will undergo revisions. However, this RULE is designed to be the basic guide for years to come when the founder and early members of the Community are no longer living. We pray this RULE will continue to provide guidance for both members and future leaders of our Community.

I commend this RULE to you for your prayer and faithfulness. May the wisdom and knowledge of God's Holy Spirit lead us into new adventures on this incredible journey through The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit.



Sister Angela, WSHS
April, 2000

PROLOGUE/BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

The Worker Sisters of the Holy Spirit is the corporate name that embodies both the Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit.

We, the Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit, hold as essential to our RULE, Mission, and Life together a fourfold commitment:

to Jesus Christ

Abide in me and I in you. (John 15:4)

to the Fruit of the Spirit

As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. (John 15:4)

to mission

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. (John 15:16)

to ministry

You who believe in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will you do... (John 14:12)

This commitment is enacted through obedience to the RULE OF LIFE as prescribed by the Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit.

BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

The RULE of The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit is Benedictine in orientation. Many of the underlying principles have helped form and shape our thinking and action.

Benedict's spiritual journey was filled with temptations, battles, victories and growth toward holiness. When first produced, the RULE of St. Benedict was believed to have been an original work. Today, after many years of research, it has been suggested that Benedict adapted his RULE from a person known only as "The Master." Benedict likely took this early RULE and rewrote it in a more traditional format. Benedict's RULE contains all the necessary steps for the ordering of both one's practical and spiritual life in a monastic setting. Our Community has followed that model. We have attempted to take the best of Benedict and bring it into our contemporary society.

Most of Benedict's principles have found their way into our Community life. Of particular significance is the emphasis upon the RULE itself as being the foundation for the Christian life. In our RULE, our Life Commitment includes Stability, *Conversatio*, and Obedience. Benedict advocated the importance of a balanced life that contained three facets, Prayer, Study, and Work. Enacting these principles, our RULE includes Prayer and Lectio Divina; Study, our Formation and Training; and Work, our Mission and Ministry. Hospitality is a shared value between our Communities. Benedict's monks took a vow of poverty. Our Community has made a commitment to Simplicity which incorporates some of these essential values. In place of a vow of celibacy, we have emphasized the importance of Intimacy.

The Community also takes very seriously the importance of leadership, respect, and accountability evidenced by Benedict's monks. While our Community is postulated around this contemporary society, we still hold Benedict's basic truths about God as our underlying foundation.

MISSION STATEMENT and VISION



The Mission Statement

The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit is an International Covenant Community which seeks to respond to God's call through the power of the Holy Spirit, participate in Jesus Christ's vision of unity, become his holy people, show forth Fruit, and in obedience to his command, go forth into the world. It offers women and men—married, single, divorced, or partnered—a path for individual spiritual growth through a life commitment to a RULE which provides an opportunity to experience prayer, worship, becoming, discovery, belonging, relating, commitment, and mission.

Sr. Angela, WSHS Founder (Updated in 2014)

Our Vision

You cleared a space where it could grow; it took root and filled the whole land. (Ps 80:9)

Coming together with a hunger for God, a handful of women seated on tiny children's chairs gathered together in a small Sunday School room at St. Mary's Church in downtown Kansas City. Time after time, they wound their way up the steep circular staircase to pray, learn, ask questions, share stories of their spiritual journeys, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Out of this grew an International Covenant Community centered on a Benedictine RULE OF LIFE that would cross geographical boundaries.

The Community was founded to fulfill an evidenced yearning to experience some of the opportunities enjoyed in monastic life and to bridge the gap between the past and the future. In the face of the pressuring demands and changes in society and technology, a new means for attaining balance and Christian community was created. The Life Commitment to the RULE included Prayer, Holy Scripture, Holy Eucharist, The Fruit of the Holy Spirit, Mission and Ministry. It required accountability and continuous conversion of heart. Its name, "Sisters and Brothers," expressed desire for oneness and at the same time celebrated diversity. The concept of "Worker" was based on "Worker Priests" who lived and worked side by side with others. The charism was to carry Christ's redeeming love in the power of the "Holy Spirit" to all the world.

The Vision Lived Out

*I shall help you speak and instruct you what to do. Be strong, stand firm.
Today is not beyond your strength or beyond your reach. (Ex 4:15, Deut 31:7, 30:11)*

"Our Community is constantly being created by those who are becoming." Worker Sisters and Brothers has seen many changes over the years and yet endeavored to be faithful to its original vision. The RULE OF LIFE remains a constant and continues to embrace accountability, commitment, and responsibility. In recognition of the growing complexities of life and the needs of the poor, a commitment to simplicity was added to the RULE. As the Community lived out its life together, a Covenant and Mission Statement captured the essence of its experience. In 1982, a new Canon in the Episcopal Church was adopted recognizing newer forms of Religious Community. Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit submitted their RULE and Constitution to the House of Bishops' Committee on Religious Orders and received official recognition.

The changes in appearance and structure endeavored to put into practice the desire for oneness. Adding men, clergy, Companions, and Friends drastically changed the exterior, but the interior focus remained the same. Bringing in persons of other races and cultures enriched the life of the Community. The importance of training, formation, and education evolved into yearly and monthly themes and Annual Retreats. Topics included Covenant, Prayer, Meditation, Community, Beatitudes, Psalms, Mission, Benedictine Spirituality, Discipleship, Compassion, Sevenfold Gifts of the Spirit, Relishing the Scriptures, and Fruit of the Spirit.

Re-visioning for the 21st Century

*I will bless you and make your descendants many in number.
Be therefore sure that Yahweh your God will go in front of you. (Gen 26:24, Deut 9:3)*

What is our future vision? The shape and direction will be dependent upon the Community's faithfulness to the original vision, the RULE OF LIFE, the Mission Statement, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must strive for solid leadership, sound training, and good communication. Our spirituality for the 21st century must be deep, real, inclusive, vital, alive, viable, intimate, relevant, and compassionate. We must continue our charism to be Christ in the world and share God's love as we dialog with other denominations and religions. Above all, we must be women and men of constant prayer, continually seeking God's will and direction.

*Look down from heaven, look at this vine, visit it,
protect what your own right hand has planted. (Ps 80:15)*

AN EXPERIENCE OF PRAYER

Asking the Holy One to enter deeply into our lives,
touching the inner core of our beings
and hearing our calling forth.
Supporting one another with prayer
through the spiritual journey.

Prayer

*I say this prayer to you Yahweh, for at daybreak you listen for my voice
And at dawn, I hold myself in readiness for you. I watch for you. (Ps 5:3)*

At daybreak you listen to my voice and at dawn I hold myself in readiness for you. Thus begins each new day. God expectantly awaits our first words and we anticipate a response.

Prayer is the central core which opens us to the fullness of life. Through living prayer, we become attentive listeners and aspire to the willingness of self-surrender. In this daily dialog of listening and speaking, we become increasingly aware of the depth of God's love and call to intimacy. Members are encouraged to enter into the life of Jesus as a model for prayer.

As a Community, we are committed to the practice of personal prayer and other spiritual disciplines that root our lives more deeply in God. All forms of prayer are encouraged in order that the individual may find her or his own rhythm. The Community seeks to help us discover different methods and types of prayer which enhance our relationship with God, thereby giving us the guidance and direction to reach outside ourselves.

Silence and Solitude

*And in the morning, rising up a great while before the day,
Jesus went out, and departed into a solitary place. (Mark 1:35)*

As Jesus felt the need to go apart from the crowds to be alone with God, so too our members are exhorted to spend time in meaningful silence and solitude.

Whether it is a short period of time in a day or several days during a retreat, solitude is a necessity. Cultivating silence and a spirit of listening allows us to reflect on ourselves and our relationship with God. This encounter allows us to be confronted with truth. As we focus our hearts and minds on the Divine Savior, we are open to *metanoia*, new attitudes, and a conversion of heart. Silence leads us into the heart of Jesus where we encounter his love and concern for the world. From this contemplative stance, we draw strength and direction to go forth into the world as God's compassionate people.

As we recognize the need for individual silence, we also know it is important for our Community to be in quiet together. Over the years, the Community has realized this increasing need for more silence. These shared times of silence allow for powerfully deep interactions that allow us to seek, hear, and discern God's direction for us as a Community.

Communal Prayer

... together they devoted themselves to constant prayer. (Acts 1:14)

We are called to be in prayer together. In this spirit, when possible, we gather on various occasions with other members of Worker Sisters and Brothers to pray. A special Intercessory Prayer List is distributed monthly with the *Bulletin*. In addition the phone and e-mail provide resources for shared prayer. Each member takes personal responsibility to spend adequate time in prayer for one another, the Community, and the world. Recognizing that the power of the Holy Spirit transcends all geographical boundaries, Worker Sisters and Brothers defines Communal Prayer as all prayer offered by persons in this Community for each other and for the life and witness of this Community as a whole.

While intentional prayer is vital to the Community, it cannot stop there. Crucial to a healthy life for our Community are our intercessions for some of the larger concerns of the world such as hunger, poverty, injustice, and peace.

Praying the Scriptures

*As your word unfolds, it gives light and simple understanding.
I open my mouth panting eagerly for your word. (Ps 119:131)*

The Psalmist in 119 speaks through many vivid passages about the marvel of God's word. One Biblical scholar believes that the references to "commandments" in Psalm 119 can also be translated as "word." Passion flows throughout the Psalm.

*I have treasured your promises in my heart, my soul is overcome with an incessant longing for your word,
your decrees my delight, your statutes my counselors. (119:11, 20, 24)*

I yearn for your word. (119:39)

I stretch out my hands to your beloved word; teach me good sense and knowledge. (119:48, 66)

Meditating all day on your word, how I have come to love it. (119:97)

Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path. (119:105)

I long for you Yahweh my Saviour; your word is my delight. (119:174)

Our Community finds strength, definition, and nourishment in the life-giving word of the Sacred Scriptures. Our faith is rooted in the Bible and members seek to hear and understand God's word in the power of the Holy Spirit. The RULE is emphatic about the importance of the faithful reading and study of Holy Scriptures as being central to the life and foundation of our Community. We believe the Bible is inspired by God. In keeping with our Benedictine orientation, the practice of Lectio Divina (holy reading) is strongly encouraged. In praying the Scriptures, we often find inspiration and guidance for our journey.

The Scripture readings from the Daily Lectionary from *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Book of Alternative Services* are distributed each month and included with the *Bulletin*, the official organ of the Community. These include lessons from the Old Testament, Psalms, Epistles, and Gospels. As we share in the same readings each day, we enter into the yearly rhythm and journey through the church year within the larger church. This brings us into a closer communion with one another.

AN EXPERIENCE OF WORSHIP

Gathering together to give praise and glory to God.
Drawing strength, renewal and sustenance
through the Holy Eucharist and the liturgies of the church.

The Liturgy of the Hours

Seven times a day do I praise thee. (Ps 119:164)

I shall bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall ever be in my mouth. (Ps 34:1)

Praise and adoration are a vital part of worship. Oftentimes our individual prayers are words of petition: we clamor, cry, appeal, invoke, supplicate, beg, ask, implore, entreat, beseech, request. Many times we offer prayers of thanksgiving. Sometimes praise falls at the end of our list.

Jesus was steeped in the liturgical heritage of his people. Times of prayer were an integral part of his rhythm. He was at prayer early in the morning before sunrise (Mark 1:35) and extended his night prayers until the next dawn (Luke 6:12). In the *Shema*, two times of daily prayer are commanded over and beyond the exhortations to remember God at all times and in all places.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bend them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:4-9)

For centuries women and men have designated special times each day for prayer. The traditional hours of the Monastic Breviary, according to the HOLY RULE of St. Benedict, called for prayer seven times a day which included multiple recitations of psalms. This has been shortened in some of our monasteries and convents to a fourfold office. Our Community is asked to join with the Church in reading the appointed lessons for the Daily Office and where possible, share in additional services from the Prayer Book. *The Book of Common Prayer* Daily Office includes Morning and Evening Prayer as well as Noonday Prayer and Compline. *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada* has an excellent introduction to the Divine Office and Daily Prayer.

The Eucharist

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and after blessing it, he broke it, gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them saying: "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matt 26:1)

The Holy Eucharist is our central act of Corporate Worship in the RULE and life of the Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is both a medication for the soul and healing sacrament of the church. It provides nourishment and health for both body and soul.

This Sacrament, commanded by Christ, is a continual remembrance of his life, death, and resurrection. Through this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the Eucharist becomes a celebration and thanksgiving as we are united with him through the sharing of his body and blood. In coming to the Eucharistic table with an awareness of our own sinfulness and the brokenness of the world, we experience the power and victory of Christ's redemptive love. We seek one another's forgiveness and the peace which follows. The Eucharist, celebrated in our gatherings of Worker Sisters and Brothers all over the world, brings us closer together as we become more fully known to one another in the breaking of the bread.

In addition to regularly receiving the Holy Eucharist, members are encouraged to spend time in silence and solitude before the Blessed Sacrament. When receiving the Eucharist is not possible, a "Spiritual Communion" is encouraged.

At the conclusion of the service of Holy Communion, we are exhorted to go forth into the world. One commissioning says:

Go forth into the world
To serve God with gladness;
Be of good courage;
Hold fast to that which is good;
Render to no one evil for evil;
Strengthen the fainthearted;
Support the weak;
Help the afflicted;
Honor all people
Love and serve God,
Rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. (BW p. 108)

As the formal service of the Holy Eucharist ends, our life of service begins.

AN EXPERIENCE OF BECOMING

Exploring and developing our inner selves so that we may become God's holy people.
Focusing on "being" that we may be enabled for "doing."

Spirituality

It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them. (Hosea 11:3-4)

Spirituality is God's deep desire for us—the gentle loving God who lifts us in love, and then bends down to feed us. Spirituality is as complex as the varieties of individuals who dwell on this earth. Thomas Moore, author of *Soul Mates* and *Care of the Soul*, describes this mystery:

If we imagine ourselves as being every bit as huge, deep, mysterious, and awe-inspiring as the night sky, we might begin to appreciate how complicated we are as individuals, and how much of Who we are is unknown not only to others but to ourselves. Being an individual means allowing our innate soulfulness to find its way into our lives. We know a person best when we know the driving spirit that shapes that person's life . . . including all the many manifestations of soul-moods, fantasies, memories, longings, passions, emotions, and fear.¹

Self-understanding is one of the essential elements in our relationship with God. Our Community endeavors to offer us a place where we can safely explore our heart's desires, our longings, our thirsts, and our hungers. The RULE helps us through prayer to understand more fully what these desires are and how to address them.

Our spirituality is a choice, a move toward wholeness centered in Christ. The Community offers the freedom, challenge, love, and support to BE. In this setting we affirm the goodness of creation, recognizing life as a gift and God as the gift-giver. We seek harmony in the whole of our human experience where we celebrate our human flesh and spirit. Because the Community is vital and alive, it nourishes our spirituality. We confront life's mysteries, the tension between order and freedom, and the hard questions of life: Do I matter? Does anyone really love me? What is the meaning of my death, of my dying? These are some of the same questions Victor Frankl addressed in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*: "To live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering. If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and dying."

As individuals and as a Community, we search for meaningful responses. By harmonizing our lives together in the love of God, we are given a sense of meaning and purpose

Personal Development

It was you who created my inmost self and put me together in my mother's womb. For all these mysteries, I thank you, for the wonder of myself, for the wonder of your works. (Ps 139:13, 14)

My dear people, we are already children of God, but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed. All we know is that when it is revealed, we shall be like him. (1 John 3:2)

Children seldom really know what they want to be when they grow up. When asked however; they have many creative and wonderful ideas. As we grow and mature many facets affect our growth.

Personal development is important in Worker Sisters and Brothers. Gaining insight through discernment and the power of the Holy Spirit invites us to become God's holy people. While living

¹ Moore, Thomas. *Care of the Soul*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1992.

in a society that measures us by what we do, the Community endeavors to counter that focus by stressing the importance of “being.” To become the person God intends us to be is the essence of holiness.

Every individual who becomes a member of this Community brings her or his God-given gifts, talents, strengths, and weaknesses. Members utilize self-studies, evaluations, journals, and other means to explore the depths of our beings and heighten self-awareness.

Each new person changes the face of the Community by her or his unique presence. Our Community is constantly being recreated by those who are “becoming.”

Balance is a key to wholeness. St. Benedict advocated a rhythm of prayer, study, and work. To that we add the importance of rest and recreation. Members accept the primary responsibility for their own continuing growth and well-being in all areas: spiritual, mental, emotional, relational, and physical. The Community provides guidance in that process.

Conversion

I will remove the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 11:19)

“Conversatio,” a term often used in Benedictine Spirituality, is a call to allow God to touch our hearts and a willingness to let ourselves be changed. It is a realization of our own weakness and a call to trust in God’s strength and power of redemption. Conversion of heart requires openness, humility, new thinking, and new living as we receive the grace of God as individuals and as a Community.

As we journey together in the light of God’s love, we are better able to encounter the dark side of ourselves with deeper understanding. We also recognize that we experience times of disappointment, failures, and guilt, and yet we believe in the unfathomable redemptive power of Jesus Christ.

Reconciliation with God, the loving acceptance of one another, and the ability to forgive oneself are all essential for a healthy spiritual journey. Through the Church, we also have the opportunity to participate in the Formal Sacrament of Penance. Reconciliation and change of heart lead us to Christ’s promise, “*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*” (John 10:10)

Healing

Thus says the Lord . . . I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears; indeed, I will heal you. (2 Kings 20:5)

The healing of Hezekiah in this passage from the Book of Kings occurred after much prayer, tears, and repentance. We know that not everyone receives full restoration of body, mind, and spirit. However, we trust that God is at work in all situations restoring, renewing, and recreating. This Community recognizes that lives in every part of the world are broken and in need of healing. The Community seeks to reach out through love, acceptance, and affirmation to provide an environment for healing.

Services of healing have a Biblical heritage appropriate for the full life of a Community. Anointing and the laying on of hands are acts closely related to the covenant of faithful love between God and Israel and God and the church. In scripture, monarchs are anointed, prophets commissioned, the Holy Spirit conferred, the sick healed, and the dead raised in acts of faith accompanied by anointing with oil, the laying on of hands, or touch in another

form. . . . The power of touch in healing is finding renewed acceptance as is the unity of the total person. (BW p. 306)

In the New Testament, faith, forgiveness of sins, and healing are frequently inseparable but distinct aspect of one experience. Out of mercy and compassion, God works to bring about reconciliation that restores peace between God and humanity, among individuals and commitments, within each person, and between humankind and the creation. Guilt, anxiety, fear, broken relationships, and the loneliness of alienation all contribute to human sickness. Healing, in the Christian sense, is the reintegration of body, mind, emotion, and spirit that permits people, in community, to live fully in a creation honored by prudent and respectful use. (BW p. 306)

One of the first steps toward becoming God's holy people, which is part of our mission statement, is to be in touch with ourselves, to have a better understanding of who we are so we can meet the God who dwells within and without. We believe that God has the power to bring about healing in all levels to produce wholeness in body, mind, spirit, as well as healing of the earth and the society in which we live. We trust God in Community for discernment as to how, when, and where this healing needs to take place and what our role will be in that process. A healing service is held at every Annual Retreat. The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit embraces the interrelationship of all avenues of God's healing including intercessory prayer, reconciliation, healing of memories, anointing, laying on of hands, medical arts, and social action.

AN EXPERIENCE OF DISCOVERY

Cultivating awareness of the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives:
Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance.
Ongoing learning and teachings about the spiritual life in a lifelong process of formation.

The Holy Spirit

I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. (Ezek 36:26)

The spirit of the Lord is upon us and we are renewed by this gift. Through this "ruach" or "pneuma," God breathes into us continuous new life as individuals and as a Community.

In Matthew's Gospel, John says:

*I baptize you with water for repentance but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am . . .
he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matt 3:11)*

We recognize this Baptism as a gift for all.

The dedication of our Community to the Holy Spirit recognizes the creative power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst, bringing us together, recreating, shaping, and forming us into the life-giving body of the Risen Christ.

Our Community endeavors to be continually sensitive and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Concurrently, we are aware that each of us is responsible for decision and choice in our lives. Each member, through the discipline of our RULE, endeavors to be faithful to her or his prayer life, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit for ourselves, our leadership, and our Community as a whole.

The Fruit of the Spirit

You will know them by their fruits. (Matt 7:16).

By our fruits we shall be known. This is an awesome exhortation and challenge. The creative act of bearing good fruit is vital. While we cannot “acquire” each Fruit, the Community RULE challenges us to enact daily Acts of the Fruit which create the environment for God to manifest the Fruit through the Holy Spirit. Community members know that the Fruit of Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance cannot be produced apart from Jesus Christ who is the vine. (John 15:4)

We adopt each aspect as our values to be enacted in our daily lives. We believe bearing good fruit is the challenge of every Christian and that the Community of The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit is called to witness to this particular aspect of the Christian life.

Spiritual Formation and Training

Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift . . . to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Eph 4:7, 12, 13)

Paul recognized that each of us has been given our own measure of grace and, if we live by truth and love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ. Various gifts are given to each of us for the work of ministry. One of the important roles of our Community is to help members discern and claim their gifts. This is an integral part of the Training and Formation Program.

Our training takes into account the background, age, life story, education, and experience of each person, recognizing also the different needs of the individual. The leadership endeavors to be faithful to the leading of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of Formation for all members of the Community.

There are particular areas addressed in Formation that are the outline of this volume. The initial training is devoted to discovering the particular ethos of the Community in areas which are the heart and soul of the Christian journey: prayer, scripture, the Fruit of the Spirit, healing, mission, and ministry. This includes the eight focal experiences: Prayer, Worship, Becoming, Discovery, Belonging, Relating, Commitment, and Mission. Specific programs are written for Applicants, Workers, Sisters and Brothers, and those who become Spiritual guides. In addition, there is a continuing education program designed around research to aid members in ongoing instruction for their spiritual journey.

The Spiritual Formation and Training of members is a high priority of Worker Sisters and Brothers for all levels of membership, including Companions and Friends. The monthly *Bulletin* and the Annual Retreat have an educational component. Each year a theme is selected according to needs evidenced in the lives of Community members. To maintain a balance between the inward and outward expressions of the spiritual journey, the emphasis is alternated each year. Themes focusing inward have included *Living Prayer; Relishing the Scriptures; Spirituality: Desire and Intimacy*. Samples of themes focusing outward are *Compassion: Contemplation or Action; The Fruit of the Spirit; Mission: Heart to Heart*. Sharing the same themes throughout the various geographical locations fosters oneness in our Community. It builds the unity of our faith, increases our knowledge of the risen Christ, and shapes us for service.

EXPERIENCE OF BELONGING

A Community which seeks to promote
Christ's unity through our diversity.
A Community of joy and friendship where members
receive as well as give love.

Community

Gather to me my faithful ones. (Ps 50:5)

What draws us into Christian Community? It is a call to follow Christ and to participate in his vision of unity. As God chose persons throughout history, the search for unity took place through the covenant. Jesus, the anointed one of God, draws us into unity in the Kingdom of God.

What are some of the longings that have brought persons to this Community?

Need for a deeper spiritual commitment, desire to be with others who share that need, support of like minded people in the spiritual journey, spiritual growth, more meaningful and deeper relationship with God, live out one's love for God, discipline, structure, order, support, strengthening of faith, profound meaning in life, deeper commitment. (Responses from Community members)

What are some of the reasons members stay in our Community?

A feeling of being loved, of belonging, of acceptance, a place where we can be ourselves, a place of trust and deep caring, a family, a RULE that helps us be more intentional about our relationship with God, another home away from home, a genuine sense of God's presence. (Responses from Community members)

What elements do we believe are vital for the ongoing life of our Community?

Love, genuine deep caring for one another, trust, forgiveness, unity, faith, accountability, hope, sharing, dedication to following God, obedience, commitment, faithfulness to the RULE OF LIFE, stability, common goals, interdependence, communication, ability to hear God's voice, prayer, opportunities for growth and change, cooperation, openness to God and one another, reverence for each person, fellowship, dedication, Eucharist, willingness to work through difficulties either between individuals or with the Community itself, leadership, RULE, discipline, interaction, praying for one another, the importance of diversity, unity, shared commitment, outreach, mission. (Responses from Community members)

Of particular importance to this Community is the life and writings of Jean Vanier, especially his book *Community and Growth: Our Pilgrimage Together*. In this book he addresses many of the values that we have adopted. Vanier states:

A community is only a community when the majority of its members is making the transition from 'the community for me' to 'me for the community.'²

He also cautions that while a community can be a welcoming place, it is also the "place where our limitations and egoisms are revealed to us."

Henri Nouwen, in his book *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons*, adds a special dimension:

² Vanier, Jean. *Community and Growth*. New York: Paulist Press, 1989.

Community is first and foremost a gift of the Holy Spirit, not built upon mutual compatibility, shared affection, or common interests, but upon having received the same divine breath, having been given a heart set aflame by the same Divine fire, and having been embraced by the same divine love. It is the God-within who brings us into communion with each other and makes us one.³

We recognize that while some people continue to find family within this Community and experience oneness through the Holy Spirit, others may become disillusioned or their life situations undergo drastic changes. After deep prayerful consideration, members can be given a writ of dispensation from their life commitment. This brings closure to the relationship and frees the persons to seek other avenues in their spiritual journey. It is also a time for the Community to participate in the possible grief over the parting.

We welcome diversity, age, color, various socioeconomic levels, and a wide range of backgrounds and occupations.

Spiritual Friendship

I shall not call you servants anymore because a servant does not know his master's business. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you all that I have heard from my Father. (John 15:15).

Jesus made the distinction between servants and friends. If there were a word to describe the building of community relationships in Worker Sisters and Brothers, it would be “friend.” Community brings together people who would not necessarily choose one another, yet, through the grace of God, over a period of time, we become friends. Community members build friendships through trust, acceptance, and affirmation. Providing a climate of freedom allows us to share our joys and sorrows and a wide range of emotions as we journey together.

One of the beauties of having both women and men in the Community is the opportunity to develop valuable friendships between the sexes. Many of our Sisters who have been abused or badly hurt by men have found healing through the gentleness of our Brothers. The reverse is also true. Women and men who have undergone divorce often have found healing and renewed trust through the Community. Having women and men, young and old together, adds exciting dimensions, particularly a refreshing spirituality, enthusiasm, and simplicity.

The sharing of our lives, based on the realities of our personalities and our interfacing in the context of our spiritual journeys, leads us to intimacy with Christ. From such depth evolves the concern and caring for others.

Separation

*My little children, I shall not be with you much longer, You will look for me. . . .
Where I am going you cannot come. (John 13:33)*

³ Nouwen, Henri. *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987.

Jesus must have felt the pain of separation as he began to try to tell the disciples he was going to part from them. He also recognized that the disciples would experience loss. "You will be weeping and wailing. . . . You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy." (John 16:20) The farewell discourses in the Gospel of John include the commandment of Jesus for the disciples to love one another as he loved them and a promise of a comforter to come.

A characteristic mark of this Community is geographical separation. While the Community experiences joy, it also experiences pain; the pain in coming to know one another, the intimacy, and the cost in the caring. This is particularly evident in times of illness and death. It is an experience of the real world, a world that is filled with the pain of separation. In a small way, our participation in the pain of being separated from one another is a way of embracing our Lord's world. Parents are separated from children, families are separated from each other, refugees all over the world are separated from their homelands, and nations are divided.

Distance challenges us to wrestle constantly with the reality of separation and how to foster a close sense of Community. We continually pray and depend upon the comforting uniting power of the Holy Spirit.

Separation is real. But separation is not God's plan. The child in the manger cannot be separated from the adult on the cross. We have a God who wants to be united with us, Emmanuel, a God who offers us oneness through his death and resurrection.

Our Communion of Saints

After that I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language. . . . One of the elders spoke and asked me, "Do you know who these people are, dressed in white robes, and where they have come from? . . . These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Rev 7:9-17)

Particularly special to this Community are our members who have joined the Communion of Saints. They are remembered on the anniversaries of their deaths and at our Annual Retreat in a deeply meaningful memorial Eucharist. A special page for each of the deceased is presented at the Altar to be included in the permanent Memorial Book. Times of remembrance are encouraged so stories of their lives can be passed on. These members have molded and shaped the Community we have become and are a part of ourselves. The Community counts on the continued prayers of our Communion of Saints.

AN EXPERIENCE OF RELATING

The sharing with and the acceptance of the uniqueness
of the Incarnation of Christ in each of us.
Empowered by Jesus Christ to be involved in the world
in a "Ministry of Presence."

Relating with the Community

Be quick to listen, and slow to speak. (James 1:19)

As James sends his greetings he exhorts the Christians to listen and be patient with one another. He reminds them to pray for one another, to not lose heart, and to continue in faith and good works. This is all part of relating to one another. Relationships are vital and essential to a full life. This includes relating with ourselves, God, and one another in our Community. Important to our health as a Community is a ministry of presence, wherein we become available as listeners and establish relationships that reveal Christ and the Spirit. As we grow in the spiritual journey, we learn to be more fully present to one another.

Relating in Worker Sisters and Brothers happens in a variety of ways. The RULE OF LIFE spells out the specifics which help members bridge geographical separations. Communication is the key to building the life of the Community and new methods of dissemination of information are constantly being explored. The sense of belonging is vital to each member of the Community.

There are five categories of membership. Friends affiliate with the Community through a relationship of prayer. Companions have a personal RULE OF LIFE and make a commitment to the Community. Workers make a commitment for Life to live under the RULE in a Covenant relationship with God through the Community. Sisters and Brothers take major responsibility for the Community and have an increased RULE OF LIFE.

Clusters

Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (Matt 18:20)

The Community is configured so that Workers, Sisters, and Brothers belong to small groups known as “Clusters.” Clusters aid members to become better acquainted, thereby helping bridge the gap of geographical distances. Members and Cluster Leaders are expected to be in communication with their Cluster Leaders on a regular basis.

Cluster Leaders (Spiritual Guides)

How can I understand unless someone guides me. (Acts 8:31)

Cluster Leaders are “Spiritual Guides” as differentiated from “Spiritual Directors.” Each person in the Community is encouraged to be in regular Spiritual Direction; however, Cluster Leaders act as spiritual guides for others while at the same time being under a spiritual guide themselves. The role of the Cluster Leader in this Community is to help a member recognize the importance of being attentive and faithful to their spiritual journey as outlined in the RULE. Assessments are made periodically of the relationships between the Cluster Leader and her or his group.

Leadership

*You have been trusted to look after something precious;
guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. (2 Tim 1:14)*

As the Community grows and changes, persons are selected to fulfill leadership roles including Cluster Leaders, Provincials, Directors, and Chapter. Persons in leadership are expected to be faithful to their own RULE and prayer life. It is hoped that the Leadership will evidence the Sevenfold Gifts of the Spirit as needed: Wisdom, Counsel, Understanding, Knowledge, Ghostly Strength, Holy Fear,

and Holiness. The desired qualities of leaders include maturity, common sense, openness, a sense of humor, and a healthy respect of the uniqueness of each individual as God's creation. It is anticipated that persons in leadership roles will have a keen awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses and will continue to address these areas. This will result in a more compassionate companionship.

As members assist one another in the spiritual journey, the focus is not only on content but on the relationship. Listening, clarification, and discernment are essential to healthy relationships. The Holy Spirit is the guide and it is in this power we need to trust. As Jacques Lewis, S.J. said, "the leader doesn't rule a soul, but discerns its graces."⁴

Members and leaders are in constant prayer for one another so that the leadership may remain worthy of their authority and obedience of the members, and in turn, members will trust, affirm and help those in leadership roles.

Chapter

Now it was about this time that Jesus went out into the hills to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came, he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them. He called them apostles. (Luke 12:14)

Everyone in the entire Community is a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus felt the need to call a small group apart to be his apostles. In this spirit, the Chapter was formed. The Chapter originated out of a need for a small group of persons who would help to oversee the life of the Community. The Chapter meets at least twice a year for extensive prayers and discernment. They are also responsible for making decisions about persons being admitted to the Community and members wishing to become Sisters and Brothers.

New members of Chapter are selected as needed. Members are chosen based on the current perceived needs of the Chapter which may or may not correlate to the person's length of time in the Community.

Relating With Families

Many of our women and men have families of their own or come from families that are still living. Here the witness of their membership in this Community is fully tested and tried. Many find it easier to care for the stranger than to love those with whom they must live their daily lives. Realizing the importance of this commitment and concern, we make it a practice to explore attitudes and perceptions of family before an application to the Community is processed. Children, spouses and parents are encouraged to share the journey of members.

Relating With Parishes

The Parish is seen as the central core in the life of the Church. Members are exhorted to develop supportive relationships with their clergy and to include them in regular prayer. We are to be active participants in the ongoing fellowship and life of our congregations. In many instances, members of our Community have accepted certain responsibilities in the life of their congregations which happened as a direct outgrowth of gifts recognized through Worker Sisters and Brothers.

⁴ Lewis, Jacques. *Some Notes on the Director in the Spiritual Exercises*. Jersey City, NJ: Program to Adapt the Spiritual Exercises, 1967.

Relating With Other Religious Communities

The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit endeavors to keep open communication with other Religious Communities in the Church. When feasible, efforts are made to participate in special events or occasions at which other Communities are present. We see ourselves as supportive of Religious Orders and Christian Communities and have entered into joint ventures at various times.

Relating with the Church at Large and the World

See An Experience of Mission, below.

AN EXPERIENCE OF COMMITMENT

Embracing discipline through participation in a Covenant Community.
Bound together under a life commitment to a common RULE.

The RULE OF LIFE

Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much. (Luke 16:10)

The RULE OF LIFE is a means to nurture our relationship with God. The faithful living of the RULE enhances our spiritual growth and development just as food strengthens our physical bodies. It is important to take the time to nourish and feed our souls through certain essentials such as prayer, scripture reading, and the Eucharist.

D. Wilfrid Upson, OSB, the Benedictine Abbot of Prinknash in Gloucester, had a strong conviction of the value of the “HOLY RULE.”

Human nature is the same whether we respond to the monastic call or whether we live out our lives in a normal worldly environment. Few are so spiritually minded that they can afford to neglect the help of some sort of rule of life and standard of spirituality to which they can endeavor to conform themselves when faced with the many problems of the world.⁵

The RULE OF LIFE lived out in our Community offers members strength and encouragement through mutual support. Although the RULE OF LIFE is a discipline, we seek to embrace it as a means of deepening our relationship with God. From a rational choice, we attempt to order our prayer life and develop commitment through steady, earnestly applied effort. Our RULE does not exist to make us feel holy but is seen as a discipline that allows freedom of growth. Our RULE OF LIFE is designed with simplicity in mind so as not to add to the complexities of our daily lives. The particular RULE OF LIFE for members varies according to the category of membership and represents different levels of commitment.

Benedict realized the value of structure and discipline and yet was realistic in his expectation of his monks. Adopting a RULE allows us to be more available and accessible to God, thus allowing ourselves to be blessed and changed.

A RULE is by no means an end, in and of itself, but rather a means toward Christian maturity and depthful interaction with the Trinity. The following writing from the Brakkenstein Community titled is a good teaching about the RULE.

⁵ Quoted in Lindsay, T. F. *St. Benedict, His Life and Work*. London: Burns Oates, 1949, p. 9.

The End and the Beginning

This rule is not meant to be a burden for you.
Nor does it pretend to be complete.
It should help you discover and experience
how great is the freedom to which you are called,
and how great the responsibility
which you may take upon yourself.
Be so faithful to this rule today
that you can be faithful again tomorrow.

Set out on the road together with your sisters and brothers,
together with the numberless people of God,
all pilgrims traveling to the Father's house.
Go on your way singing,
a song of hope on your lips
and your heart burning within you.
Now we have the alleluias of the journey,
soon there will be the alleluias of consummation,
of the great Sabbath with God.
Now you are being sown
in the darkness of the earth;
when that day comes, you will bloom
in the light and warmth of God's eternity.

Set out on the road,
sisters and brothers,
and peace be with you
forever.⁶

Covenant

I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. (Exod 6:7)

The covenant is the central core of our Judeo-Christian tradition. It undergirds who we are and is found with a people being delivered from slavery into freedom and the people responding to God's covenant with faithfulness. The covenant is supremely expressed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ who delivers us from our bondage to sin and death. And so it is with the formation of this Community of Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit.

We are bound to each other in covenant with each other and with God. We come together in love and even fondness for each other, and joining us together is our mutual commitment to God and the mission of the Church. As a Covenant Community, we find strength and unity in our commitment to the RULE of the Community as well as oneness in our ritual and observance of the Eucharist. The Worker Sisters and Brothers is a Covenant Community in recollection of God's

⁶ Adapted from Brakkenstein Community of Blessed Sacrament Fathers, *Rule for a New Brother*. Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1976, p. 57.

covenant with us. The first formal covenant of the Community was written at the annual retreat in April 1982.

We, the Community of the Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit, in adoration of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and in thanksgiving for God's protective love for us, do covenant faithfully to trust in God's unconditional love, grace, and abiding guidance for our Community, in order that we may become God's holy people, respond as we are called by the promptings of the Holy Spirit to show forth Fruit, and, in obedience to God's command, witness to the world.

The Covenant later evolved into our Mission Statement, which is found above.

Commitment

Whoever obeys God's Word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. (1 John 2:5a)

St. Benedict required absolute commitment from his monks to God, to their RULE, and to their Community. Commitment today is not an easy word, and yet The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit still ask for a life commitment. We believe this provides stability in our relationship with God and the Community and allows us the freedom to grow.

The commitment for life takes place upon admission as a Worker and is reaffirmed yearly at the Community's anniversary celebration. Commitment is the recognition that despite the marvelous diversity and stories of our individual lives, we have all answered a call to consecrate our lives to God, and to deepen our journeys through a common path. We have freely chosen to live by a common RULE.

Members make their life commitment of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ through the RULE of the Community. In the admission service, the fourfold commitment is restated: "I commit myself to Jesus Christ, the Fruit of the Spirit, Mission, and Ministry."

Stability

I have learned to be content with whatever I have. (Phil 4:11b)

This scripture fits into Benedict's definition of stability and humility. He believed stability was essential to one's spiritual life and growth.

Stability in our Community means that we will no longer live capriciously—choosing to adopt only those parts of the RULE we find easiest to incorporate into our lives, and threatening to leave abruptly whenever there is a change or a new Community member we find difficult to accept.

Stability requires that we will commit ourselves to pray for others who may be very different in outlook, temperament and spirituality. Stability requires learning the art of compromise—how to sacrifice our private agendas, no matter how well-intended, for the common good. We are asked to honor our assigned responsibilities towards one another, and to practice honest reconciliation if we fail to do so. The call to stability is a call to remain faithful to the Word of God in our lives. It means staying faithful on the Journey—whatever comes.

Obedience and Humility

Whoever listens to you, listens to me. (Luke 10:16)

As we are drawn more deeply into Christ's life, we participate in his longing to fully understand and follow God's desires for us. In that power and strength, we also seek to be obedient.

The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above all. (RB 5:1)

Benedict believed that humility is the key to obedience. Self-will and obedience are often in conflict. Our acceptance of the RULE OF LIFE signifies that we place ourselves under the direction of the leaders appointed and chosen by our Community. Obedience needs to be practiced by every member of the Community.

Obedience is a blessing to be shown by all, not only to the Abbot but also to one another as (brothers and sisters) since we know that it is by way of obedience that we go to God. (RB71:1)

As a Community, we also seek to be obedient. Discerning and understanding God's will in the context of Community is done by responsible praying, listening, speaking, reflecting, and then, more listening. We endeavor to carry out God's direction through consensus, where possible, and by seeking the counsel of one another. Growth in obedience brings our Community into a greater oneness with each other and unity in Christ.

Finances

Those who are generous are blessed. (Prov 22:9)

The essence of Christian Community, the union of heart and mind, is reinforced by our sharing of material resources. Each member is asked to make a regular financial commitment. Greater financial responsibility is assumed by the Sisters and Brothers.

Moneys given to the Community are our direct gifts and yet, indirectly, they are gifts from the Lord and are for the spread of God's Kingdom. These moneys are to be used for the ongoing needs of the Community.

To foster our commitment to simplicity, the current policy of the Community prohibits owning real estate.

AN EXPERIENCE OF MISSION

Responding as we are called by the promptings of the Holy Spirit to participate in Christ's mission through specialized ministries and, in obedience to His command, witness to the world.

The Call

I am going to lure her and lead her out into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her heart. (Hosea 2:14)
Yahweh would speak with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. (Exod 33:11)

Each person is called by God into a special covenantal relationship. When God calls us, it is not only an invitation to intimacy, but an action that touches the very fiber of our being, enabling us to experience new life and capacity for loving.

The call of Samuel (1 Sam 3:1-19) is a classic illustration of God's call. Our response of prayer will allow each of us to echo with Samuel, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." (1 Sam 3:10) To be attentive and listen requires stillness—quiet, contemplation. Out of that time will come a sense of who God wants us to BE, and then what it is that we are to DO. Henri Nouwen addresses this.

Prayer requires that we stand in God's presence with open hands, naked and vulnerable, proclaiming to ourselves and to others that without God we can do nothing. In a society that seems to be filled with urgencies and emergencies, prayer appears to be an unnatural form of behavior. Without fully realizing it, we have accepted the idea that "doing things" is more important than prayer and have come to think of prayer as something for times when there is nothing urgent to do. Prayer is often seen as a waste of time. Prayer reveals to us the Spirit of the Compassionate God.⁷

God's call is lived out in various ways in the church and the world. Being called to The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit is a specific vocation. The thrust of the RULE OF LIFE of the Worker Sisters and Brothers helps individuals continue to respond to the call to a deeper commitment. In this commitment, we are strengthened by our relationships in Community to respond to God's command to go forth into the world.

⁷ McNeill, Donald; Morrison, Douglas; Nouwen, Henri. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982. pp. 104, 108.

Mission

I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide . . . (John 15:16)

The bearing of fruit is central to the life of our members. We are called and chosen to be signs of God's presence, to exemplify love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faith, humility, and temperance. Wherever we are, we represent our Lord Jesus Christ as members of Worker Sisters and Brothers.

Out of our relationship with Jesus Christ, we are commissioned and sent forth. As members of the Body of Christ, we are asked to share in the brokenness of the world around us. The incarnation of Jesus lives on in us as we reach out to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this age of complex interdependence, it is important to develop insights and to heighten skills, awareness, and attitudes. As we nurture global cognition, capture a sense of history, increase knowledge of systems interactions, ethics, and the long-range effects of planning and choices, we will be able to make thoughtful, responsible decisions. It is vital for us to listen to people of other races, religions, and lands and truly hear them in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

As a Covenant Community, we seek to erase the barriers that keep us apart. Extending hospitality through religious dialog with persons of other faiths and beliefs will keep us focused on what unites us rather than what divides us. Global Spirituality calls for compassion for the earth and its people.

Hans Kung wrote:

Over 125 religions met at the Parliament [of World Religions] in August 1993. They wrote *A Global Ethic* calling upon all communities of faith to formulate their very specific ethic: what does each faith tradition have to say, for example, about the meaning of life and death, the enduring of suffering and the forgiveness of guilt, selfless sacrifice and the necessity of renunciation, about compassion and joy? We appeal to all the inhabitants of this planet. Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed. We pledge to work for such transformation in individual and collective consciousness, for the awakening of our spiritual powers through reflection, meditation, prayer, or positive thinking for a conversion of the heart.⁸

True compassion for the earth and its peoples is the one component basic to all communities of faith. In Worker Sisters and Brothers, we echo the words from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, "*As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion.*" (Col 3:12)

Ministry

*Yahweh has anointed me...
To bring good news to the poor
To bind up hearts that are broken
To proclaim liberty to the captives
Freedom to those in prison
To give for ashes a garland
For mourning robe the oil of gladness (Isa 61:1-3)*

⁸ Kung, Hans. "A Global Ethic." *Sourcebook for Earth's Community of Religions*, ed. Beversluis, Joel. Grand Rapids, MI: CoNexus, 1995. p. 125.

Out of mission comes our ministry. This means taking seriously Jesus' command to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, visit those in prison, clothe the naked, and heal the sick. We are called to be God's holy people and to pray for understanding of our part as individuals and as a Community.

In addition, we must confront the issues of world hunger, oppression and injustice. We seek ways to promote the basic human rights of justice, freedom, and peace. Our ministry includes all creatures and "this fragile earth, our island home." One of the ways our RULE addresses this is through a daily act of simplicity. Through this action, our consciousness is raised to the needs around us. It is our attempt to enact the words "live simply so that others may simply live."

We recognize that we are the Worker Sisters and Worker Brothers. This means we are people who are in the world where there is strife and turmoil, happiness and joy, terror and tragedy. As a Community, we do not have a common work. The ministry of this Community is one of prayer support and the sustenance of individuals through the RULE OF LIFE so that members may go forth and respond to particular calls. Each person has proclivities and aptitudes, often differing from others in the Community. Our gifts are shared wherever we are, in our office, homes, villages, churches, and gathering places.

We are "sent forth" daily. How that ministry is manifested may change from day to day or year to year as our life situations change, including aging and illness. The shape of our continually evolving ministries rests on our willingness to hear the direction of the Holy Spirit. Faithfulness in prayer allows us to know where and when to say yes or no in the face of so many needs. We continue to look for the balance between prayerful contemplation and action.

Hospitality

I was a stranger and you welcomed me. (Matt 25:35)

Hospitality is a key word in Benedictine Spirituality. Joan Chittister states:

Benedictine spirituality says that we must continue to beg the stranger to come into our lives because in the stranger may come the only honesty and insight we can get in our plastic world.⁹

It is the first step toward dismantling the barriers of the world. Hospitality is the way we turn a prejudiced world around, one heart at a time. There will be racism in the world until you and I begin to take the other races in. There will be prejudice until you and I take the other groups in. There will be war until you and I begin to take the enemy in. There will be classism until you and I begin to take the other segments of society into our own worlds and lives and parties and neighborhoods.¹⁰

Matthew's Gospel presents an excellent definition of hospitality through the words of Jesus. "*I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.*"

⁹ Chittister, Joan, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. p. 125.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 130, 131.

He responds to the righteous who raised questions, “I tell you, just as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me.” (Matt 25:36-37, 40)

Jesus was a stranger in this earthly home. Some opened their hearts to him while others closed them. “He came to his own and his own received him not.” (John 1:10-11) We are challenged in the book of Hebrews, “Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels unaware.” (Heb 13:2)

The opening of our hearts to others is a sacred event. It comes out of the abundance of love that we have been given by God—a desire to share that with the world. Who is the stranger? In a sense we are all strangers, guests in God’s creation. While it may be hard to accept, we are all equal inhabitants on this earth. How open are our hearts? Many hearts are hardened through betrayal of trust, disappointment, loss, and anger. The psalmist prays in 51: “Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” This is where hospitality begins: having a willingness to be open, to be changed, renewed, and refreshed. With our cooperation, God will put a new heart in us.

Christine Pohl states:

Part of hospitality includes recognizing and valuing the stranger or guest. Hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are specially gifted for it. It is, instead, a necessary practice in the community of faith. One of the key Greek words for hospitality, *philoxinia*, combines the general word for love or affection for people who are connected by kinship or faith (*phileo*) and the word for stranger (*xenos*). Hospitality is closely connected to love. . . . Hospitality becomes for Christian community a way of being the sacrament of God’s love in the world.¹¹

Hospitality of the heart means taking into prayer and concern persons who think and live differently, the people we do not like, the unloved and unwanted, our political foes, and all our enemies. It means opening our hearts to what might be classified as the “dregs of our society,” those addicted to alcohol and drug abuse, sex offenders, murderers, and others. Jesus shared meals with prostitutes and tax collectors. Hospitality is nonjudgmental and compassionate. We also recognize that it is not without healthy limits.

This Community of faith, The Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit, is a witness to the love of Jesus Christ and an extension to one another of the same life we have been given.

¹¹ Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999. p. 31, 34.

PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Our Community Prayer

Blessed Spirit of God,
who has called us into this Community,
Come to us in all your fullness and power,
and enable us to consecrate our lives to your will.
As the branches are in the vine, so may we abide in You.
May your Fruit become evident in our lives . . .
Love, Joy, Peace, Patience,
Gentleness, Goodness, Faith,
Meekness, and Temperance.
Give us understanding of your Holy Gospel,
firmness of purpose, diligence in service,
and a beauty of life in Christ.
Help us to fulfill our commitment to You,
to each other, and to this Community,
so that it may truly be a witness to the world
of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Amen

Our Prayer for Companions and Friends

Almighty God, we pray for the Companions and
Friends of this Community.
May they be filled with the knowledge of your will
in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.
May they be fruitful in every good work and
strengthened according to Your glorious
power with patience and joyfulness.
Make them children of quietness and heirs of peace.
Enkindle in them the fire of your love.
All this we ask in Jesus name.

Amen

RESOURCES

Prayer Books

The Book of Common Prayer (BCP)
The Book of Alternative Services (BAS)
The Book of Worship (BW)
The New Zealand Prayer Book (NZPB)

Bibles

The New Revised Standard Version
The Jerusalem Bible

The Rule of St. Benedict

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