



# Holy Cross Monastery

## The Associates Rule

### Principles

Holy Cross Associates intend to love and serve God through a relationship with the Order of the Holy Cross, adapting to their lives the Benedictine principles on which the monks base their common life.

- As the monks are grounded in obedience, so we will listen for the voice of God speaking to us in Sacred Scripture and the traditions of the Church, in our daily circumstances and relationships, in the words of other people and in our own hearts. And hearing, we will try to translate God's word into action.
- As the monks center their lives in stability, so we will be steady and regular in our prayer life and in the obligations of family, work and community.
- As the monks seek conversion of life, so we will reflect on our own lives in regular self-examination, believing that what God wants of us, as of every human being, is growth toward the fullness of the Image in which we are made. We will strive to be open to the changes required by and for that growth.

## Values

As Holy Cross Associates, we are committed to centering our lives in the basic values of Benedictine spirituality. Among these are:

- *Community.* This is not only a primary Benedictine value, but also an essential Christian virtue and a basic human need. As Associates, we will work to build, nurture and heal community in all the environments we are a part of. Since we are all part of Christ's body, our parish or local church is an important community for each of us, demanding our care and our love. It needs to be a living presence in our lives. We will seek, if possible, to support each other's lives as Associates by meeting in small groups or forming correspondence groups.
- *Hospitality.* We take seriously Benedict's instruction to welcome all guests and receive them as Christ. As Associates, we are called to consider all whom we meet as guests whom God has sent to us, remembering that it is particularly in the stranger that Christ is to be encountered.
- *Humility.* Benedict reminds us continually that humility is foundational to Christian living. Humility is not self-denigration; it is honest appraisal. We have gifts and deficiencies, as does everyone else. We start from there, remembering that God loves each of us with a unique but equal love. It is that love which is the measure of our worth.
- *Balance.* Our ordinary life is our spiritual life. We plan for a balance between prayer, work, study and recreation, keeping an inner balance even in the face of life's contradictions and complications.
- *Mindfulness.* Since all life is holy, we don't want to let it pass by unnoticed. We give our attention as fully as we can to what we are doing at the moment and to what is going on around us. Being present here and now helps us to be mindful of the continuing presence of God.

## Disciplines

Each Associate will work out a Rule of Life that fits the day-to-day world of home and workplace where we are called to live out our vocation. In constructing our rule we try to be specific about what we actually intend to do in each of the core disciplines that support the principles and values we try to live by.

- *Holy Eucharist.* We participate in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist every Sunday and on principal feasts and holy days if it is available. Some may find that they also are fed by weekday celebrations.
- *Daily Office.* For Benedict, the Daily Office is the work of God. It roots our life in the Psalms and Scripture and helps us live into the seasons of the church. The recitation of the Daily Office marks the holiness of our days and teaches us to live with right faith, certain hope and perfect charity. Associates may use one or more of the Daily Offices from the Book of Common Prayer, the Monastic Breviary, or some other collection for daily worship. Or they may pray shorter offices or adopt some alternative form of regular reading of the Psalms and Scripture. Consistency is key. The Daily Office may provide the framework for personal prayer and self-examination.
- *Personal Prayer.* Finding time each day to spend alone with God in silence is central to our spiritual life. Our part is to be there, offering the time and listening with the ear of our heart for the Holy Spirit's leading. God may draw us to penitence, thanksgiving, intercession, meditation, adoration or other form of prayer, expressed either in words or in the inner silence of the heart. *Lectio divina*, the monastic tradition of slow and prayerful reading and pondering of Sacred Scripture or other holy texts to feed the heart as well as the mind, is especially to be recommended as an appropriate form of personal prayer.
- *Self-examination.* Regular self-examination, confession and reconciliation are central to a loving relationship with God and our neighbors. This may include, but is not limited to, the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- *Study.* An inquiring and enlightened heart and mind are fundamental to the transformation of our lives and the widening our horizons. All study, whether explicitly religious or not, can enrich our prayer.
- *Stewardship.* We are called as Christians to appreciate and to use the gifts God provides us, but at the same time to nurture a certain degree of inner freedom with regard to them. We are called to be in the world, but not of the world. We are to be faithful stewards of our bodies, our hearts, our minds, our goods and our natural environment in gratitude to God and to God's glory.

- *Mission.* Jesus modeled for us a life of compassion where the call to love our neighbors is to be understood as a call to love and serve others, especially the poor and the afflicted.

## Spiritual Tools

The following are traditional aids offered to us so that “*as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we [can] run on the path of God’s commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love.*” RB, Prologue 49.

- A spiritual director or spiritual friend can assist in keeping us on the narrow way, challenging us when we attempt to domesticate God.
- A spiritual journal can mark our course and help us to see our way more clearly.
- Participation in a small faith sharing group can serve to support us and hold us accountable.

## Requirements

- *Rule of Life.* As indicated above, each Associate must develop a Rule of Life which incorporates and expresses the principles, values and disciplines outlined. This can best be done in consultation with a pastor, spiritual director or trusted friend, so that we might avoid, on the one hand, the danger of being unrealistic or overly scrupulous and, on the other hand, the danger of shrinking back from the challenge of Christian growth. The Rule must be accepted by the Director of Associates. It may be revised as necessary. Any significant changes should be reported to the Director of Associates.
- *Annual Report.* Each Associate will report annually to the Director of Associates within one month of Holy Cross Day, September 14. The report will include the results of a review of the Rule of Life by the Associate in consultation with his or her pastor, spiritual director or trusted friend.
- *Annual Retreat.* Each Associate will set aside time for at least one annual retreat. A retreat should ideally be over two or more overnights at a religious house or retreat center. If a formal retreat is not possible, the Associate may develop an alternative means of setting time aside, such as parish quiet days or individual days of reflection.

- *Support of the Order.* In thanksgiving for the support that the monks offer in open-hearted hospitality, in prayer, and in their examples of intentional living, each Associate will in turn support the Order with regular prayer and with financial and whatever other support they can.

## History

St. Benedict St. Benedict (480 – 547 AD), the Father of Western monasticism, lived at a time of tremendous social upheaval and cultural change. Wanting to ensure a way of life which was both stable and flexible, he wrote his Rule for monasteries. Borrowing heavily from previous monastic sources, he crafted a Rule which was distinguished by a high degree of balance and sanity. Benedict himself says that in drawing up his rule, he hoped “*to set down nothing harsh, nothing burdensome.*”

Rather, outlining a day divided between prayer, work, study and sleep, and in tune with the seasons, both ecclesiastical and natural, he hoped to provide a model of Christian living. Like the good abbot, Benedict desired to: “*so arrange everything that the strong have something to strive for and the weak nothing to run from.*” (RB 64:19) It was the eminent practicality and good sense of this Rule which lead to its ultimately being adopted as the normative guide to Western monastic life.

## Confraternity of the Christian Life and Associates

As early as 1887, the fledgling Order of the Holy Cross instituted its first associate group of laity who were involved in some way with the life, work and vision of the Order. Known as the Confraternity of the Christian Life (CCL), its Rule of Life set out a pattern of observance which was simple but comprehensive, explicitly intended for those who worked actively in secular environments.

The CCL proved so popular, that other similar fellowships were established. Among the earliest of these were the Priest Associates and the Seminarist Associates. These groups adopted a more stringent and demanding Rule of Life, modeled on a pattern thought appropriate for parish clergy and those preparing for ordained ministry.

During the 1970’s, the priest and seminary Associates were combined and the fellowship was opened to men and women, lay as well as ordained. It became known as simply the Associates of Holy Cross.