

The Gate

Community of the Good Shepherd

A non-residential Monastic Community in the
Diocese of The Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands.

John 10:9

Holy Cross Embertide 2025 | Issue 4

Following the Shepherd's Way Of

Beloved GCS family. Grace and Peace to you. Starting with this edition of our Embertide Newsletter, we will begin a Series entitled, ***“Following the Shepherd’s Way of”*** The second in the series will be in our ***Rod & Staff*** weekly publication, which you receive on Fridays. (Well, not this Friday, as ***The Gate*** is published instead.)

As members of the Community of the Good Shepherd, we are called to shape our lives by the motto, ***“Following the Shepherd’s Way.”*** This path is the way of Christ Himself—the Good Shepherd who leads, feeds, restores, and welcomes all into the love of God.

This series of reflections invites us to explore different dimensions of that way: welcome, prayer, compassion, service, and more. Each theme is grounded in Scripture, shaped by the monastic spirit, and lived out in the daily reality of our dispersed community.

Though we live apart, we walk together in the Shepherd’s footsteps. These meditations are offered to encourage us in faith, deepen our shared calling, and keep our eyes fixed on Christ, who goes before us and calls us each by name.



Following the Shepherd’s Way of Welcome

(Inspired by a sermon delivered by the Very Rev’d Dr. Shelly-Ann Tenia, Dean, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Trinidad)

Scripture

“Whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” — John 6:37

Reflection

To follow the Shepherd’s Way is to walk in the steps of Jesus, who welcomed all without condition. He embraced the stranger and the familiar, the poor and the wealthy, the sick and the whole. His welcome was not half-hearted courtesy, but the radical hospitality of God’s kingdom.

The Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus, the children at His side—each was drawn into the wideness of His love. In Christ’s eyes, no one was beyond reach, no one unworthy of dignity, attention, or care.

For us in the Community of the Good Shepherd, welcome is not optional—it is part of our very calling. As a dispersed monastic family, we may not live under one roof, but we share the Shepherd’s heart wherever we are. Following His way of welcome means making room in our lives for others: listening, receiving, and loving across boundaries of culture, background, or circumstance.

In a divided world, such welcome is a witness. It proclaims that God’s embrace is wider than fear, prejudice, or indifference. To welcome in the Shepherd’s Way is to allow others to glimpse Christ through us—and to create spaces where healing and community may take root.

Prayer

Good Shepherd, You welcome us with open arms and never turn us away. Teach us to follow Your way of welcome, that we may see Your image in each person we meet. Help us to create spaces of belonging, where love and grace abound. Through You, may others find rest, healing, and peace. ***Amen.***

Excerpts from our Rule On:

Being Human ~ Chapter 5

Paragraph 2.

The core of our identity, our actual being and soul, is sometimes referred to as **the True Self.** (Romans 7:20)

It knows who we really are.

It is connected to all the other True Selves in the world, and to God.

Because of this, we are all interrelated and interdependent.

Paragraph 3.

We sometimes forget this and get lost.

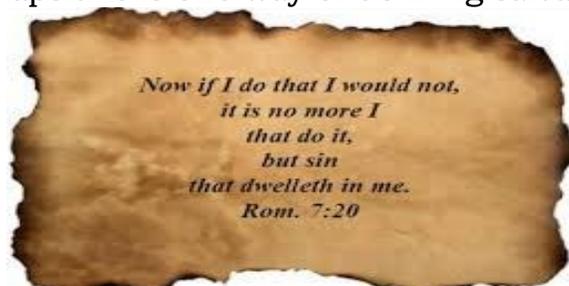
We forget that we came with a **built-in connection to our Creator,**
a love-line from God’s heart to ours.

We somehow get separated from God, at least in our minds, but not in God’s mind.

Then we try to find our identity in many of the wrong things instead of in God.

Paul tells us that one of our main challenges in life is to
reconnect to our original identity **“hidden with Christ in God.”** (Colossians 8:3)

Perhaps this is one way of defining salvation.



The Importance of Monastic Formation.

In Christian monastic life, formation is not merely a period of training—it is a **sacred journey of transformation**. Postulants and novices enter this path to be gradually shaped in heart, mind, and spirit for a life wholly consecrated to God. The process is deeply intentional, rooted in centuries of wisdom, and essential for discerning vocation with clarity and depth.

Formation begins with postulancy, a time of initial immersion into the rhythm of monastic life. Here, the candidate is encouraged to embrace how to live in community, embrace silence, and cultivate prayer. It is a season of listening—both to the voice of God and to the stirrings of one’s own soul. The community, too, listens and observes, discerning whether the postulant is truly seeking God with sincerity and perseverance.*

The novitiate follows, marked by the Rite of Reception. This stage deepens the commitment and introduces structured study. Novices also engage in projects and assignments, learning that holiness is forged not only in prayer but in humble service—The Way To Love.

Why is this formation so vital? Because **monastic life is a radical call**—a lifelong offering of self to Christ. It demands stability, obedience, and conversion of life. These virtues are not light promises; they are profound commitments that shape every moment of a monastic’s existence. Formation ensures that these commitments are embraced freely, wisely, and with spiritual maturity.

Moreover, formation **protects the integrity of the community**. It fosters unity, discernment, and shared purpose. It allows each member to be deeply rooted in the charism of the Community, contributing not just with hands, but with a heart attuned to God.

Ultimately, **monastic formation is about becoming**. It is the slow, grace-filled shaping of a soul into one who can say with truth: **“I am ready to give my whole self to Christ.”** And in that giving, the postulant becomes a novice, the novice a professed member, and the professed a living witness to the Kingdom of God.



Here is what Galatians 4:19 thought about Formation:

“My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth **until Christ is formed in you ...”**

“Until Christ is formed in you” signifies the ultimate spiritual goal for believers: to become fully conformed to the image of Jesus Christ through a continuous, Spirit-led process of formation and transformation.

One cannot be a true Monastic, and not seek transformation into Christlikeness, via the tool of monastic formation.

* minsterabbeynuns.org



Monastic Practices Spotlight:

Centring



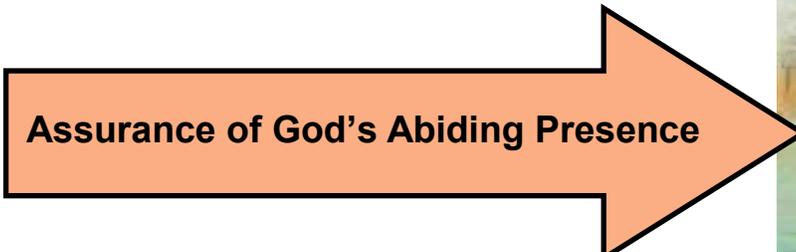
In the quiet heart of Christian monastic tradition lies the practice of **centring**—a sacred invitation to rest in God’s presence beyond words, thoughts, and striving. Rooted in the wisdom of the **Desert Fathers** and **Mothers**, and revived by contemplatives like Thomas Keating and John Main, centring is not a technique but a posture of surrender. It is the soul’s gentle return to the One who dwells within.

To centre is to **consent to God’s presence** and **action** in our lives. We sit in silence, not to escape the world, but to be reoriented by divine love. A sacred word—“Abba,” “Jesus,” “Maranatha”—becomes our **anchor**, gently **drawing us back** when distractions arise. In this stillness, we do not seek to *do* anything. We simply *are*—open, receptive, beloved.

This practice is deeply countercultural. In a world that prizes productivity and noise, centring teaches us to trust the hidden work of grace. It reminds us that **transformation often happens in silence**, like seeds germinating beneath the soil. The fruit of centring is not immediate, but over time, it softens the heart, deepens compassion, and cultivates a quiet joy rooted in God.

For those walking a spiritual path—especially in ministry or **monastic rhythm**—centring is a lifeline. It grounds us when we feel scattered, renews us when we feel weary, and humbles us when we feel self-sufficient. It is a way of abiding, echoing Jesus’ call: “Remain in me, as I remain in you.”

So let us return to the still point. Not to escape, but to be found. Not to achieve, but to receive. **In the silence, God is not absent—God is waiting.** And in that waiting, we are gently remade.



Assurance of God’s Abiding Presence

