



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

Embertide III 2024 | Issue 2

Sacred Spaces

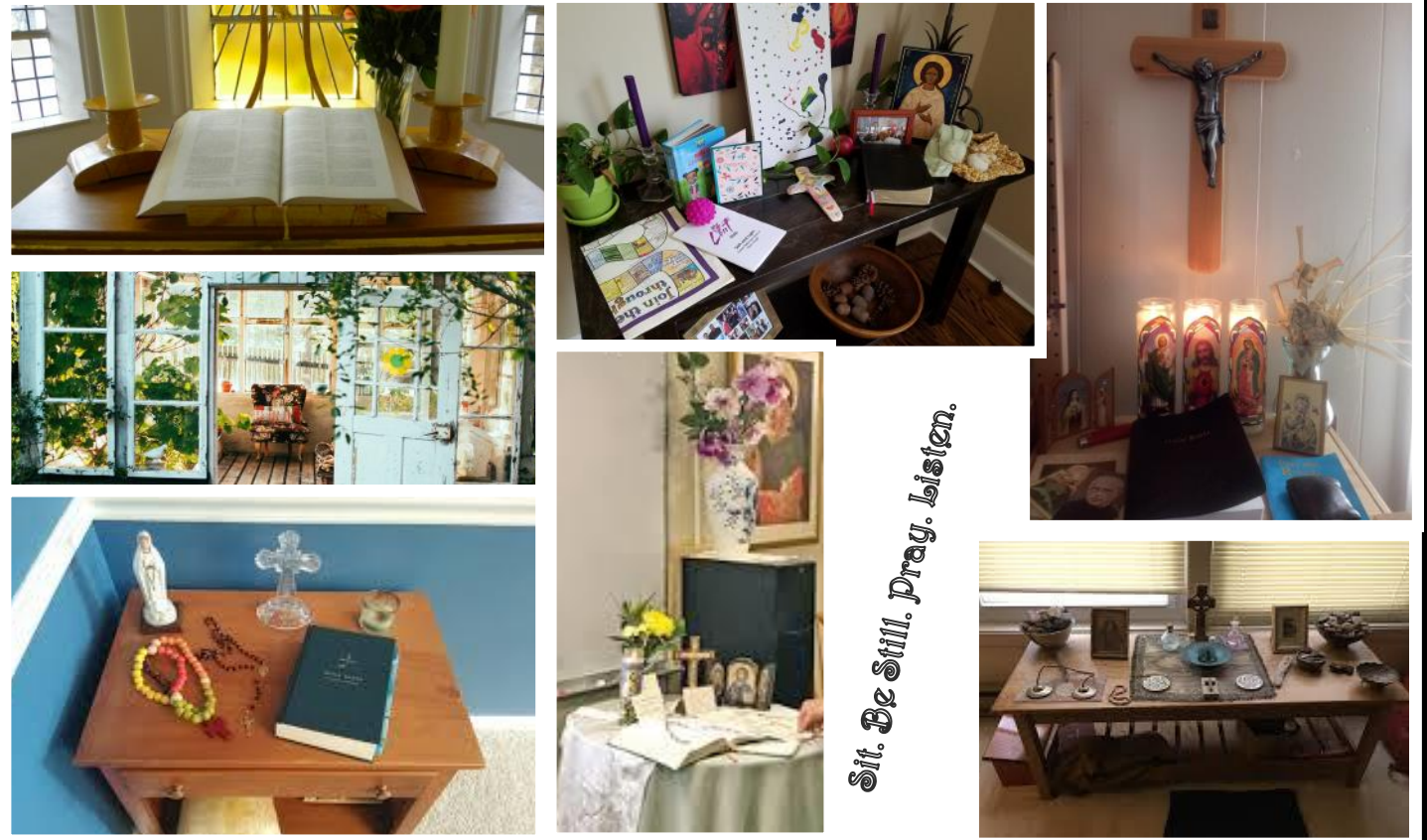
In the New Testament our Lord admonished His followers to withdraw to pray, so that they may find renewal, to refreshment, and to be recharged for the purpose of returning to do ministry. He Himself did so. At the beginning of His ministry, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, after which He started His public ministry. We see Him again in solitude in Mark 1:35.

We may not always have the opportunity to just pick up and leave, so we do what we can to have some alone time with God. **This is especially important for dispersed Monastics who don't have the rhythm of a Monastery to guide them in such practices.**

One way we may be able to do this, is to create a **Sacred Space** in our homes—spending quiet time with the Divine. Yes, we may still be at home, but we will have a sense of having withdrawn; going to our place of solitude which is reserved **exclusively** for our quality time with God.

This place can be as simple or as elaborate as you wish; whatever space and logistics allow. It can be a table or a shelf. It can be a corner of a room. In can be in the house or in the garden. It can have candles, icons, incense, crosses/crucifixes, prayer beads, oils, etc. Whatever draws you closer to God should be a part of what some call the Home Altar. Create that Sacred Space, sit/or kneel, be still, pray, listen.

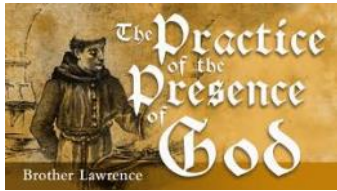
Here are some examples:



Sit. Be Still. Pray. Listen.

Book Review - - -

- - - A Testimony



As I reflect on my spiritual journey, I am reminded that it all began some forty years ago when I became an Associate of the Order of St. Helena. Once I took that first step I was introduced to wonderful authors on the subject of prayer and the practice of the presence of God.

Several books were on the book list for reading and the one that has stuck with me throughout is the Devotional book by Brother Lawrence *“The Practice of the Presence of God”*.

As I prepared to make my profession, I reread the book with intention and started my new journey into ‘religious life’ with confidence. The book largely revolves around Brother Lawrence and his conversations with several travelers along the way.

What I take away from his writing is that we need to intentionally **converse with God daily, love God above all else** and **walk the way of the Good Shepherd**.

I highly recommend this book for those who wish to stay focused on the love of, and for God. To quote Brother Lawrence *“we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.”*

Sister Anna Francis, CGS

Recommended Reading

The Wisdom Of The Cloister

365 Daily Readings From The Greatest Monastic Writings.

Published by Doubleday,
a Division of Random House, Inc

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From The Rule

Chapter 10 (Service), Paragraph 9

We do the act of love, and then we let the Holy Spirit take over to do with it as the Spirit desires. The foundation of our service rests on our love for God, our neighbours, creation, and ourselves, (Matt. 22:37-40) as the Great Commandment dictates.

We do what we can with what we have been given, and in the place where we have been planted.

Our efforts are based in truth, and are non-violent to others, to nature, and to ourselves.

Violence is always costly and the hurt doesn't always heal.



Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

St. Francis

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Inquiry/Application for Membership

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What are the Ember Days?

The Ember Days are special days for prayer and fasting during the liturgical year.

They correspond to the four seasons, and they **focus our attention especially on the blessings of nature**. On the Ember Days, we give thanks for blessings we've received, but also remind ourselves of our need for penance and grace.

The roots of the Ember Days go back to the Old Testament. The Book of Zechariah describes an ancient Jewish practice of fasting four times a year (8:19). Christians adapted this tradition into what was referred to in Latin as "Quatuor Tempora," or "four times." Somewhere through the centuries the Latin "tempora" became "ember" in colloquial speech, and thus the name "Ember Days."

When are they?

There are four "sets" of Ember Days during the year. Each "set" is a successive Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. They occur every year near the beginning of the four seasons.

- **Spring:** after Ash Wednesday.
- **Summer:** after Pentecost Sunday.
- **Fall:** after Sept. 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.
- **Winter:** after Dec. 13, the Feast of St. Lucy.

A traditional way of remembering these dates is the rhyme "Lenty, Penty, Crucy, Lucy" (or the more prosaic "Lucy, Ashes, Dove and Cross").

catholicgentleman.com

Ember Days Prayer Focus

Wednesday (the day Christ was betrayed): **For those to be ordained/professed.**

Friday (the day Christ was crucified): **For fit persons for ministry/the monastic life.**

Saturday (the day Christ was entombed): **All Christians in their vocations.**

Let's Learn About:

Julian of Norwich

David Holgate's statue of Julian



Julian of Norwich (c. 1343 – after 1416), also known as Juliana of Norwich, the Lady Julian, Dame Julian or Mother Julian, was an English anchoress of the Middle Ages. Her writings, now known as *Revelations of Divine Love*, are the earliest surviving English-language works by a woman, although it is possible that some anonymous works may have had female authors. They are also the only surviving English-language works by an anchoress.

Julian lived in permanent seclusion as an anchoress in her cell, which was attached to St. Julian's Church, Norwich. Four wills are known in which sums were bequeathed to a Norwich anchoress named Julian, and an account by the celebrated mystic Margery Kempe exists which provides evidence of counsel Kempe was given by the anchoress.

Details of Julian's family, education, or of her life before becoming an anchoress are not known; it is unclear whether her actual name was Julian. Preferring to write anonymously, and seeking isolation from the world, she was nevertheless influential in her lifetime. While her writings were carefully preserved, the Reformation prevented their publication in print. The *Long Text* was first published in 1670 by the Benedictine monk Serenus de Cressy, reissued by George Hargreaves Parker in 1843, and published in a modernised version in 1864. Julian's writings emerged from obscurity in 1901 when a manuscript in the British Museum was transcribed and published with notes by Grace Warrack; many translations have been made since. Julian is today considered to be an important Christian mystic and theologian.

As an anchoress living in the heart of an urban environment, Julian would not have been entirely secluded. She would have enjoyed the financial support of the more prosperous members of the local community, as well as the general affection of the population. She would have in turn provided prayers and given advice to visitors, serving as an example of devout holiness.

According to one edition of the Cambridge Medieval History, it is possible that she met the English mystic Walter Hilton, who died when Julian was in her fifties, and who may have influenced her writings in a small way.

Wikipedia



Monastic Practices Spotlight:

The Monastic Cell

“The monastic cell is the Abby in miniature, the abby reduced to its essential components: solitude, silence, and the Spirit of God...In the solitude of the cell, the Monastic encounters God.” C Cummings

The use of one’s “cell” or “private space” is important to one’s spiritual welfare. Some branches of Monasticism use the Cell as a space for daily private prayer and even where one takes at least two meals a day if not all. More and more there is a deep understanding that Monastics in general need spaces for themselves to do as Jesus asked his followers to do, ***“to lock themselves in their room alone with God and pray to God in secret who knows what they need in secret.”***

It makes no difference whether we are monks or not, or professed in a religious community, **ALL Christian people need a space outside of chapels and churches to pray daily.** Many cultures have built in the idea of a sacred space in one’s house. Most orthodox homes have an *Iconostasis* where there is perpetually lit a lamp in front of one or two icons where people say prayers daily.

Finding a sacred space where you can go and sit and be quiet and light a candle and say prayers is essential I believe to modern living of the Christian life. I do not think one should be without this amenity.

Members of Dispersed communities, rely and depend upon our their “cells” that they create in their homes. For us, our Homes are our Monasteries and Cloisters. They are our enclosures where we find God daily in the recital of the Daily Office, in Meditation, in Prayer, and in the Reading of Sacred Scripture. We may be surrounded by our beloved pets, our loved ones at home, or sit quietly with coffee or tea in hand, which is different from other monastic settings but we are in our cells, praying daily and faithfully with lifted hands and hearts.

“A spirituality of the cell will be based not only on the human need for privacy and solitude but also on the faithful conviction that God is truly present in the monastic cell.....Thomas a Kempis wrote, ‘Shut yourself in, and call the well-loved presence of Jesus to your side; let him share your cell with you; nowhere else will you find such peace.’” - Cummings

The cell is a place of safety and homecoming for the sojourner in his or her daily travels, comings and goings. **“The monastic cell will be the scene of many struggles, defeats and triumphs, many joys and many tears. The cell is more like a womb from which I merge again and again, reborn as a more mature, experienced self, ready one again to meet the challenges of the day.”**

Extracted and Adapted from monksmusings.com

Samples of Cells in Monasteries



Silence,
Solitude,
Spirit of God,
Presence,
Peace, &
Power.

