

Call of the Cloister

*A novena of prayer for an increase in
vocations to the Religious Life*



This booklet is jointly issued by The Church Union, Religious of orthodox Tradition (RootT) and The Society,
whose work is supported by Forward in Faith

Introduction

Please forgive a slightly longer introduction on this occasion as there is so much to say on this subject. I do hope that, regardless of its length or whatever other pressures you might be facing, elements of the material which we are presenting through this booklet will speak to you in some way or other and uplift you during these testing times.

We are inviting you to join us in a novena of prayer for an increase in vocations to the Religious Life. The novena will be prayed in the period between the feast of St Hilda, which is marked in some calendars on 17 November (the day she died) and by the Church of England on 19 November, and the holy season of Advent, which begins on 29 November this year.

The novena will therefore be prayed from **Friday 20 November to Saturday 28 November**. More information on what a novena involves is set out in the following section of this booklet.

You will not be surprised to hear that the timing of this novena has been carefully chosen and allow me to explain what underlies that choice.

St Hilda was the founding Abbess of Whitby Abbey and therefore a very fitting saint on which to base this novena for Religious Life. Indeed, St Hilda is the co-patron, along with St Wilfrid, of our own Society which is an ecclesial body seeking to promote and maintain Catholic teaching and practice within the Church of England.

The Religious Life is at the very centre of our Catholic heritage within the Church of England. Those living the Religious Life represent a beating heart of prayer within our tradition and the wisdom of the cloister has had much to teach us during this time of pandemic.

The Venerable Bede wrote of St Hilda "All who knew her called her mother because of her outstanding devotion and grace." As we pray this novena, may we seek to invoke St Hilda's devotion and grace.

Advent is a holy season, a time of expectant waiting and preparation for us all, whatever role we might play in the Church. It marks the beginning of our Christian year and we pray, as we wait and as we prepare, for Our Lord's Incarnation to be made manifest to all people.

In this period of reflection, we might care to think about our own calling, whether it is to the Religious Life or whether it takes on a different form. We do of course have a common baptismal vocation and from that shared vocation we need to discern – through prayer – not only what our individual vocations might be but also how we can support others to discern and live out their vocations.

I wonder whether it might also be worth us reflecting on the biblical account of Mary and Martha. We read the following in St Luke's Gospel (chapter 10, verses 38 to 42):

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what He said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

*"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it **will not be taken away** from her."*

Mary and Martha point us to two different sorts of Religious Life; the active and the contemplative. We know that both are a necessity not only in Religious Life but in other aspects of life too. May we see our vocations in similar terms: some active in their focus and some contemplative.

We know that the precious value of vocations and that the call of the cloister through the Religious Life **will not be taken away** from us. By praying this novena, we can become closer to those holy people and places so cherished by our tradition and, through that, closer to Our Lord.

+Tony Wakefield

Chairman of The Society's Council of Bishops

How to pray the Novena

A novena (from the Latin for 'nine') is an ancient practice of prayer in the Church. A novena consists of a series of prayers for a particular intention or theme over a period of nine days.

The tradition of having a novena started with that period of prayer between the Ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when the disciples were gathered in prayer.

In this novena we are praying for an increase in vocations to the religious life over a period of nine days between **Friday 20 November and Saturday 28 November**.

However, you may also want to use this novena at other times of the year as, it is vital that we keep on praying for an increase in vocations to the religious life.

You might want to include the prayers in this booklet as part of your daily prayers, or set aside a separate time each day to pray them.

On each day there will be a different intention for which to focus our prayers on, which looks at a different aspect of the religious life. For each day, we start the prayer by making the sign of the cross and then there is a short verse from scripture, followed by some information on the theme of prayer for that day. There is then a passage from scripture or a monastic resource to reflect on and a prayer related to that day's intention. The time of prayer ends each day with a prayer for an increase in vocations to the religious life.

Day 1 – Thanksgiving for the Religious Life in the Church of England

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules. (*Psalm 119 v. 164*)

Today we give thanks for the Religious Life in the Church of England, and all those who have followed God's call to this way of life. The life of the Church is greatly enriched by those who live this life of prayer, and we are grateful for their lives of prayer and service. The Church of England has been greatly blessed by its religious communities, and we pray that their prayerful witness will continue to bless the Church.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. (*Thessalonians 5: 15-22*)

God our Father, we thank you for calling men and women to serve in your Son's Kingdom as monks and nuns, friars, sisters, brothers, consecrated virgins and hermits. Renew their knowledge and love of you, and send your Holy Spirit to help them respond generously and courageously to your will. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name.

Amen.

Day 2 – For in increase in vocations to the Religious Life

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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

Today we pray that God will call more people to serve him in the Religious Life and to consecrate their lives to him in this way, and that they may be open to this call and respond. This may be a call to an enclosed contemplative order, or a religious community that has a more active role in the world. We pray that God will move men and women to follow his call to live this life of love and service.

Listen to the instructions of your Master, turn the ear of your heart to the advice of a loving father; accept it willingly and carry it out vigorously. (*from the Prologue of the Rule of St Benedict*)

Loving God, you call all who believe in you
to grow perfect in love by following in the footsteps
of Christ your Son.

Call from among us more men and women
who will serve you as religious.

By their way of life, may they provide a convincing sign
of your Kingdom for the Church and the whole world.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women
the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily
and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name.

Amen.

Day 3 – For those discerning a vocation to the Religious Life

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here I am; send me!' (*Isaiah 6:8*)

We pray for all those who are discerning whether their vocation is to serve God in a religious community, that they will have their hearts open to the will of God. We pray that they will have strength and perseverance, and an openness throughout their time of discernment. We pray too for all those who are helping them discern the will of God; for spiritual directors and those in religious communities who have responsibility for this work.

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. (*From a prayer by Thomas Merton*)

Almighty and everlasting God, guide and strengthen all those exploring a vocation to the Monastic and Religious Life. Bless their families, friends, and communities at home with understanding and joy in their choice to explore the possibility of Religious vocation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gracious Father, we ask you to pour gifts of wisdom and discernment on all who share the burden of guiding and evaluating those preparing to enter the Religious Life. Give them welcoming hearts and faith in your guidance through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name. Amen.

Day 4 – For Novices and those guiding them

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path. (*Psalm 143:10*)

We pray for all those who are in those early months and years of the Religious Life, as they continue to learn about the way that they are following. May they be upheld in their prayer life, in their study, in the life of community that they live. May God sustain them in the ups and downs, the joys and the struggles that they will face. Pray too for all those who are charged with the guidance and support of those who are following this way of life.

Are you hastening towards your heavenly home? Then with Christ's help, keep this little rule that we have written for beginners. After that, you can set out for loftier summits of the teaching and virtues we mentioned above, and under God's protection you will reach them. (*Rule of St Benedict, Chapter 73*)

Father, we pray for the men and women whom you have called to live the religious life and who are being formed as novices. We put into your hands their lives, their hopes, and their vocation.

We pray that the novitiate may be for them an opportunity of meeting with Christ, your Son and our Lord. May this encounter with Christ be source of life, of living their vocation with dedication, of deeper knowledge of their heart, of growth, of loyalty and, if it is your will, of true desire of consecration of their life to the only Lord. Amen.

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name. Amen.

Day 5 – For those who live the contemplative life

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. (*Acts 2: 42-44*)

There are many different types of religious community and today we pray for those who live the contemplative life. Contemplative communities revolve around set times of prayer and worship. Much time is given over to seeking God in private prayer and silence. Some members will leave the monastery at times to preach and minister, but such outside commitments are secondary to the life of prayer. Some communities confine their work to the home and its grounds, maintaining what is called 'enclosure'. This helps keep distractions from prayer to a minimum. Their life is an offering of prayer on behalf of the whole Church, and this prayer is a vital part of the life and ministry of the Church. This is what St Benedict calls the *Opus Dei* – the work of God.

Therefore, let nothing be preferred to the Work of God. (*Rule of St Benedict, chapter 43*)

Stir up in your Church, O Lord, the spirit that fired the heart of St Benedict. Fill us again with Your Holy Spirit, in order that we may learn to love what he loved and practice what he taught. As You filled Saint Benedict with the spirit of all the righteous, grant us, your servants, who celebrate his life and all the good You have accomplished through him, his followers, and his holy Rule, to be filled with his spirit, that we may faithfully accomplish Your complete Will. We ask all this through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who with You lives and reigns, one God, world without end. Amen.

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name. Amen.

Day 6 – For Franciscan communities

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. (*Song of Solomon 8:6*)

We pray for all Franciscan communities today. The stories of St Francis and St Clare have inspired many people over the centuries to follow this way of living, under the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Franciscan communities in the Church of England have elements of the contemplative life as well as a more active role in preaching the Gospel, and service of the poor and needy, embracing a life of poverty to serve those who are in any kind of poverty.

The brothers and sisters, therefore, seek to be poor in spirit. They desire to escape from love of the world and the things that are in the world and rather, like their patron St Francis, to be in love with poverty. They covet only the unsearchable riches of Christ. They recognise, indeed, that while some of their members may be called to a literal following of St Francis in a life of actual penury and extreme simplicity, for most so high an ideal will not be possible. (*From the Society of St Francis, Principles of the Order*)

Most high, glorious God,
Enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me
True faith,
Certain hope,
And perfect charity,
Sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out
Your holy and true command. Amen. (*A prayer by St Francis*)

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women
the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily
and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name. Amen.

Day 7 – For religious communities whose vocation is to be active in their local communities

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands! (*Psalm 90:17*)

Not all those who live the religious life live in contemplative, enclosed communities; there are those who live lives of prayer combined with work or activity in the world. The early female religious communities in the Church of England were heavily involved in parish work, or were involved in nursing and caring. This important work of combining lives devoted to God and prayer combined with service of his people is still an important area of the religious life.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (*1 Corinthians 12: 4-7*)

Father, we pray for all those that seek you in a consecrated life of prayer and service. That they may seek and serve Jesus in the hungry, thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner, that in these encounters they may bright your light and love to a darkened world. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name. Amen.

Day 8 – For New Monastic communities and initiatives

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Brothers, pray for us. (*1 Thessalonians 5:24-25*)

New monastic communities and initiatives are a very diverse movement. It seeks to take the positive aspects of the monastic tradition from the past and apply them to life today. The intention is to become more like Jesus. People may live the ideals of new monasticism alongside their day to day life, and that may involve following a monastic pattern of prayer and worship, and living that out in the secular world, they may also live in formal, informal or dispersed communities.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. (*1 Thessalonians 5: 16-22*)

Pour your blessing on all who seek You, Lord, through new expressions of Community life, inspired by the monastic ideal. Bring them to a full knowledge of You in stability of purpose, and the abiding strength of mutual love and prayer. Amen.

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name. Amen.

Day 9 - For those connected with religious communities as oblates, tertiaries, associates and companions

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts. (*Psalms 119:63*)

Many religious communities will have groups of people associated with them, who support the community by prayer, donations and in some cases living alongside them. These are people who are not called to the religious life, or not at the moment, but feel a connection with a monastic spirituality or way of life and seek to live this out in their own vocation and way of life. Being associated with a religious community in this way it is a wonderful way to support those who live the religious life and help others to explore the treasury of the religious life.

A vocation is an extremely mysterious reality. The call of God is not something extrinsic; it penetrates to the most intimate centre of the heart. We are what we are on account of this call. (*By a Carthusian monk*)

Strengthen by your Holy Spirit, O Lord, our Associates, Oblates and Tertiaries, and all who support the religious life through their Oblation and Rule of Life; give them grace to persevere in the way of prayer, so their witness may inspire and uphold those who long for the blessings of consecrated life to be shared in the Church. Amen

Prayer for vocations to the religious life

Lord Jesus Christ

In your great love you draw all people to yourself;

And in your wisdom you call us to your service.

We pray at this time you will kindle in the hearts of men and women the desire to follow you in the Religious life.

Give to those whom you call, grace to accept their vocation readily and thankfully, to make the whole-hearted surrender

which you ask of them, and for love of you, to persevere to the end.

This we ask in your name. Amen.

Other prayers and resources

A Prayer for One's Own Vocation

God our Father, life is your gift to me. Through baptism, you invite me to share in the gift of my life in service to others. Be with me as I choose each day to show your presence in our world. Give me the courage and generosity to respond to your love, to your call. I pray especially for those who serve you as priests, brothers, sisters, deacons and lay ministers. Keep them close to you. Open the minds and hearts of many other men and women that they may accept your challenge to build the Kingdom. Amen.

Prayer for the Consecrated Life

Loving Father
touch and transform us by the joy of your love.
Make us missionary disciples, empowered
to carry the love of Christ to our neighbour.
May young people be inspired by our example
to take up the path of Christian discipleship
and dedicate their lives to the service of the Gospel.
Rise up new vocations by the power of your holy spirit
to the priesthood and consecrated life:
send us men and women,
inspired to be living signs of your mercy.
Grant us all an openness of heart,
that we might readily respond to your call,
and proclaim with joy
the Good News of the whole world.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Intercessions for the Consecrated Life

For those consecrated to God by the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience that they may seek to live their baptismal promises more intensely and have the grace to persevere in their commitment to the Lord and serve with open hearts and willing spirits. We pray to the Lord...

For those who have responded to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to be a consecrated person that they may experience the support of the Church as they continue their growth in holiness. We pray to the Lord...

We pray for those who are consecrated to God by the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. May they always reveal the love of Christ to those they encounter and continue to enrich our world by their dedicated lives of prayer. Lord hear us...

We pray for all those who are discerning their vocation in life, particularly those whom the Lord is calling to consecrated life. May they be given the wisdom to hear God's call and the courage to respond generously. Lord hear us...

For those who are called to the consecrated life, may they be faithful witnesses of God's love. May others be inspired to live their baptismal commitment by professing the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We pray to the Lord...

For all who actively support the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, that they may see the fruit of their efforts in a rich harvest of vocations. We pray to the Lord...

That the life and mission of the men and women in consecrated life be a means of sanctification for them and building up the kingdom of God. We pray to the Lord...
For all pastors and parish priests of our diocese, that they will recognise and invite those men and women being called to ordained and consecrated lives to answer the call. We pray to the Lord...

For all involved in the examination of candidates to priesthood or to consecrated life, that their choices will benefit the Church. We pray to the Lord...

That this be a time of grace and growth throughout the diocese, and that there will be a renewal of interest in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. We pray to the Lord...

That many young women will be open to Jesus' call to consecrated life to serve the many needs of the Church and of the world. We pray to the Lord...

God's Dream – a poem by Charles Peguy

The Lord God said: I myself will dream a dream within you,
Good dreaming comes from me, you know.

My dreams seem impossible,
not too practical nor for the cautious man or woman;
a little risky sometimes,
a trifle brash perhaps.

Some of my friends prefer to rest more comfortably
in sounder sleep with visionless eyes.

But from those who share my dreams

I ask a little patience,

a little humour,

some small courage,

and a listening heart – I will do the rest.

Then they will risk and wonder at their daring;

run, and marvel at their speed;

build, and stand in awe

at the beauty of their building.

You will meet me often

as you work in your companions who share the risk,

in your friends who believe in you

enough to lend their own dreams,

their own hands,

their own hearts,

to your building.

In the people who will stand in your doorway,

stay awhile

And walk away knowing that they too can find a dream.

There will be sun-filled days

And sometimes a little rain –

a little variety both come from me.

So come now, be content.

It is my dream you dream,

my house you build,

my caring you witness;

my love you share

And this is the heart of the matter.

Anglican Religious Life

“There has never been a renewal of the Church in Western Europe without a renewal of prayer and the life of religious communities.”

—Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, 29/7/13

Religious of orthodox Tradition (RooT)

RooT (Religious of orthodox Tradition) is a group of Anglican Religious who support the aims of The Society and are committed to the Five Guiding Principles which provide a place for all Religious to flourish in the Church of England.

We are Anglican Monks and Nuns who aspire to live the Monastic way of life developed over the last 2000 years.

We wish to promote the monastic way of living for the 21st century and encourage vocations to the Religious Life.

Early beginnings

The call of the first monks and nuns dates from about the year 250 AD, and their ‘flight’ to the desert where they led a life of unceasing prayer and heroic sanctity. They heard the call of Christ to renounce all, and followed it literally.

This monastic life or religious life began with these solitaries of the desert. They then spread to communities and were further developed in the return to the centres of civilisation, the great cities of the Roman Empire. Here they ministered to the needs of the poor, sick and needy, and contributed to the building up of social and cultural life through the spread of education in schools and other places of learning.

Since that time such witnesses, following in the footsteps of the early Christian martyrs, have fortified the Church. Religious life has been a stronghold for defending the Church’s faith and inspiring mission through prayer and action.

Anglican Revival

In the upheaval of the 16th Century all convents and monasteries in Britain were closed or destroyed. It was not until the early part of the 19th century that religious life was fully revived in the Church of England. Through the Oxford Movement new monastic communities were formed and many Anglo-Catholic devotional and priestly societies were founded.

The women and men at the heart of the monastic revival included many devoted priests including Dr Pusey and John Mason Neale. They were convinced that the Church of England could not seriously claim to be part of the one catholic and apostolic church if it lacked monastic/religious life. Interestingly this revival happened in exactly the reverse order to the original monastic movement. The first communities to be founded were active Sisterhoods working in the slums, poverty and disease of our cities as later depicted in *'Call the Midwife'*.

This was followed by groups of mission priests and lay brothers such as the *Community of the Resurrection* at Mirfield. With the turn of the nineteenth century enclosed contemplative communities of women emerged such as the *Sisters of the Love of God* at Fairacres, Oxford. Then came the founding of Benedictine Communities and enclosed contemplative orders for men. Also throughout this period a small number of Religious once again began living the solitary life of a hermit.

Vocations to the Religious Life

'Vocation' in this context means that God is somehow calling a person to be a monk or a nun. Despite a likely sense of disbelief and bewilderment to start off with, and persistent attempts on our part to turn a deaf ear, God does not let go, the nagging feeling remains. Something therefore has to be done about it.

Where to turn?

Firstly pray about it. Then ask your parish priest, or someone else who might sympathetically understand. If possible visit a Religious Community - a convent or monastery. Most of them have websites.

Root holds annual Monastic Taster Days which allow inquirers to meet members of a variety of Religious Communities, ask questions, hear testimonies and participate in Monastic-style worship.

What is involved?

A radical change of life-style through a response to the call of Jesus to leave everything and follow him — taking up the cross in total trust, day by day.

Living in community with others not of our own choosing but whom God has equally called to this way of life, however different they may be from ourselves.

Expecting to discover God's will for us, individually and corporately, through the guidance and directives of those God has appointed for this purpose. Like Jesus, we come not to do our own will but rather that of the One who invites us, in humble recognition and acceptance of our own fallibility — an obedience even unto death.

A letting go of possessiveness and the accumulation of unnecessary things; living simply and joyfully, in thanksgiving for God's gift of Creation and so cherishing it and sharing its riches with all. Thus, in true poverty of spirit, the religious seeks to put nothing in place of the love of Christ.

A commitment to complete purity of body and spirit, by God's grace. As a temple of the Holy Spirit the monk or nun is wedded to Christ in a unique and permanent relationship and is especially called to love God with the whole heart, soul, mind and strength. Thus freed from self-motivated lesser loves, the monastic person is enabled to love others, and the self, within that LOVE which is God Himself.

A deep attraction is felt to draw close to God in prayer, liturgical and contemplative. A daily Eucharist is the norm, surrounded by the traditional 'Hours of Prayer' the 'Divine Office', spread throughout the day. Time is also set aside for spiritual reading (Lectio Divina) - prayerful meditation of Scripture and the Fathers of the Early Church in particular. Intercession and contemplation have their place too, and study where appropriate — all balanced by simple work with our hands.

A love of the Church, a deep concern for its unity and integrity with a desire to be at its heart despite being paradoxically set apart. Every kind of Religious Community — from the strictly enclosed to the most active — shares in evangelism and service to others, as God appoints.



Finding out More

Here are some websites and resources to help you find out more about the Religious Life

Root

For more information on Anglican Religious Life and Religious of orthodox Tradition, please visit <https://www.sswsh.com/Root/> where there is lots of helpful information, or email us nunsandmonks@gmail.com

You will find members of Root in many different religious communities. To give you a sense of the different types of community they live in, here are the links to the communities of our committee members:

Fr Peter CSWG (Chairman) <https://servants-of-the-will-of-god-cswg-monastery-of-the.business.site>

Br Steven CR www.mirfield.org.uk

Sr Mary Clare SSM www.saintmarysconventchiswick.org

Br Joseph Emmanuel SSF www.franciscans.org.uk

Religious Life in the Church of England

The Church of England's website has information on the Religious Life and the importance to our life together.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/vocations/religious-life#na>

Wisdom from the Cloister

During the Covid-19 pandemic, members of Root produced a resource about how we can learn from the monastic tradition in our own prayer lives. You can find the resource here: <https://www.sswsh.com/Root/news.php>

