**Prologue**

January 2, May 3, September 2

*Let us get up then, at long last, for the Scriptures rouse us when they say, “It is high time for us to arise from sleep” (Rom. 13:11). Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from heaven that every day calls out this charge: “If you hear God’s voice today, do not harden your hearts” (Ps. 94[95]:8). And again: “You that have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:7). And what does the Spirit say? “Come and listen to me sons; I will teach you the fear of the Lord” (Ps. 33[34]:11). “Run while you have the light of life, that the darkness of death may not overtake you” (John 12:35).*

We walk a temporary way in an eternal context. Experiences of Love (the eternal within and among us) as we walk awaken us to life; they rouse us from sleepwalking. Once awake, once aware that the divine life seeks our attention in the people and events of each day, we realise that time is short. We have been distracted long enough! There is no time to lose if we, in this transient experience of life, are to live life into the life of God, and grow in love.

To love is the fulfilment of human life and we cannot love alone (Rom13:8-10). The rule presents a way to live together that opens our inner eye (consciousness) to the inner ‘light that comes from God’. It will be an adjustment, much in the same way that our physical eyes must adjust each day to the morning light as we wake up. As we adjust, we come to see that we have been living largely in the dark: unaware, inner eye closed to the light. In the practicalities and struggle of loving ourselves and each other, we wake up. Loving is the way in which divine light (or presence) manifests among us. Community, loving ourselves and each other, is the embodiment of this divine light.

Benedict then moves from eyes to ears, from sight to hearing; listen, hear, and do not harden your hearts. It is in our bodies that we journey to God in this life. It is in our bodies that we glorify and manifest God. Each action, done simply with an awareness of the action itself, is a way in which God can appear in life. If we are too caught up in ourselves, too self-conscious rather than simply conscious, there is always the risk that attention will be more on theories and imaginations of our own design: ‘Why did that person do that?’ ‘Does she like me?’ ‘God is fear.’ ‘I shouldn’t have done that.’ ‘I am not good enough.’ In these designs and others similar our hearts harden: we callous ourselves into self-protection, and in so doing become deaf to the divine life that wants from us a commitment to life’s adventure.

A softening heart is one that is learning to listen to the love-life around it. For this to happen in community, the community must be safe enough. Sometimes it is. Sometimes it is not. Personalities bump and rub; likes and dislikes rise and fall; accusations and compliments fly. And during this very human journey, we meditate together; we share a way into silence that softens us and helps prepare us for the discovery together of what has calloused our hearts.

The fruit of this adventure in community can be an unexpected and at times disarming reverence. We may find ourselves in respect for the person that last week we disliked. The trick then is to not over-think what is happening. Healing is happening. Hearts are softening. There is nothing to fear. We are growing in our experience of the other as they really are, rather than as a mirror for our own projections. And as the mirror cracks, we also come to reverence ourselves. In all this we discover the light and presence of God in and for each other. A meditating community, in all its ups and downs, can be an event in which we learn to reverence God as we learn to reverence ourselves and each other.

Jesus then said: The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness does not overtake you, and nobody who walks in the dark knows where he is going. While you still have the light, believe in the light so that you may become children of light. Having said this, Jesus left them and was hidden from them. (John 12: 35-36, RNJB)